



SUSTAINING INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

PRT Process Impact through Spring 2025

Themes | Conclusions | Recommendations

The PARTNERSHIP RESOURCE TEAM (PRT) component of the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) offers no-cost technical assistance to colleges, districts, centers and the system office in support of their self-identified Areas of Focus (AOFs). Using a positive “colleagues-helping-colleagues” model, the PRT process promotes collaboration to strengthen institutional effectiveness.

Institutions interested in participating submit a Letter of Interest (LOI), which includes their institution’s successes and outlines their challenges, opportunities for improvement, and goals. The Project Director reviews each LOI and assembles a team with expertise aligned to the institution’s needs.

The PRT process typically includes three visits. The first is focused on listening and gathering information; the second is on supporting the development of an Innovation and Effectiveness Plan (I&EP); and the third is on follow-up and continued guidance.

Institutions that complete the PRT process and submit an Innovation & Effectiveness Plan (I&EP) are eligible for Seed Grants of up to \$250,000 to support plan implementation.

INTRODUCTION

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE NINTH annual evaluation assessing the Partnership Resource Team (PRT) technical assistance process. It examines the impact on colleges and districts as Client Institutions, particularly in their efforts to strengthen and expand institutional effectiveness.

In addition to institutional outcomes, the report also explores the effects of participation in the process on PRT Members – specifically in the areas of leadership development, professional skill-building, peer connection, networking, and application of insights at their home institutions. For the purposes in this report, the term “members” refers to both PRT Leads and participating team members, unless otherwise noted.

Each year, this evaluation builds upon the previous year’s evaluation efforts to strengthen the quality and depth of data collection, analysis, and actionable recommendations. Previous evaluations have drawn on a variety of sources, including interviews with the college and the district teams, as well as individual and group interviews with key participants, such as CEOs, substantive and logistical point persons, institutional representatives, and PRT Members.

This year’s evaluation report placed a greater emphasis on understanding the specific roles and functions within PRTs, with focused attention on faculty, classified, and confidential professionals, as well as the experiences of first-time participants in the process.

In addition to qualitative inquiry, this evaluation incorporated surveys administered to key Client Institution and PRT participants. The Client Institution survey explored several areas, including both initial and sustained progress in the areas of focus identified in their I&EPs, and the broader impact of PRT technical assistance on institutional systems and processes. The PRT Member survey examined participants' preparedness for the visits, the impact of the PRT experience on their professional development and networking, and how the experience influenced their work at their home institutions.

Survey and interview data were analyzed to identify key themes, draw conclusions, and

develop recommendations to further enhance the effectiveness of the PRT process. Participants shared perspectives on broader issues and priorities affecting the California Community College system, including enrollment management, strategic planning, diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA), and Vision 2030.

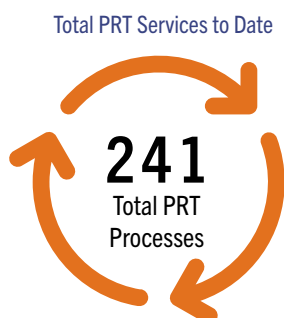
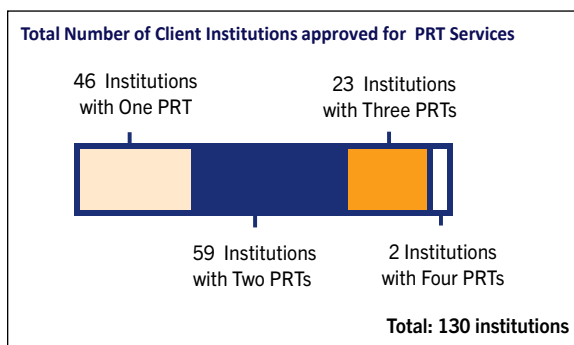
The report is organized as follows: an overview of the application and breadth of the PRT process, a report and analysis of survey results for both Client Institution representatives and PRT Members, a summary of the interview findings, followed by overarching themes, conclusions, and recommendations for strengthening the PRT process moving forward.

APPLICATION AND BREADTH OF THE PROCESS

CLIENT INSTITUTION PARTICIPATION

Colleges and districts are encouraged – through varied communications – to submit Letters of Interest (LOIs) when they determine that technical assistance would support progress in their AOFs. LOIs are reviewed and approved on a cyclical basis, with two cycles of assistance offered each year.

As of this report, 130 distinct Client Institutions – including colleges, districts, centers, and the system office – have participated in or have been approved to participate in the PRT process. IEPI has successfully completed 241 PRT processes for these institutions.



As of the date of this report 46 institutions have received support from one PRT, 59 from two successive PRTs, 23 from three, and two institutions have now participated in four PRTs. Altogether, this represents 241 PRT processes conducted over 21 cycles.

The primary goals of the PRT process are to strengthen institutional effectiveness, improve operations, and expand organizational capacity. The accompanying chart illustrates CI participation throughout the life of the initiative.

Of the 241 total PRT processes conducted to date, an average of 23 colleges and districts receive technical assistance each year, with each team consisting of approximately 6 members.



Average PRT Size: **6.3** Members

PRT MEMBER PARTICIPATION

PRT Members are recruited and assigned through an application process that aligns each individual member's skills, expertise, and experience with the specific needs of participating institutions. Over the 11-year span of IEPI, 660 California community college administrators, faculty, and staff have served on at least one PRT, with 1,525 separate assignments completed. Nearly 380 members have participated in two or more PRTs.

Nearly 90 current or former chief executive officers have served as PRT Leads, 66 of whom have served on multiple teams. Additionally, 42 non-CEOs have taken on the role of PRT Lead.

Service on Partnership Resource Teams, Cycles 1-11B

1,525

Separate PRT
assignments

660

Volunteers have
served on a PRT

88

Current or
Former CEOs
served as PRT
Leads

For PRT Members, the goals extend beyond supporting the Client Institution – they include opportunities for professional and leadership development, cross-institutional learning, and systemwide networking. Members often return to their home institutions with new ideas, strategies, and practices inspired by both the Client Institution and fellow team members.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFESSIONALS AS PRT MEMBERS OR LEADS	
PARTICIPATION	MEMBERS
Volunteers serving on one PRT	281
Volunteers serving on two PRTs	148
Volunteers serving on three PRTs	91
Volunteers serving on four or more PRTs	140
Total	660

CLIENT INSTITUTION AREAS OF FOCUS

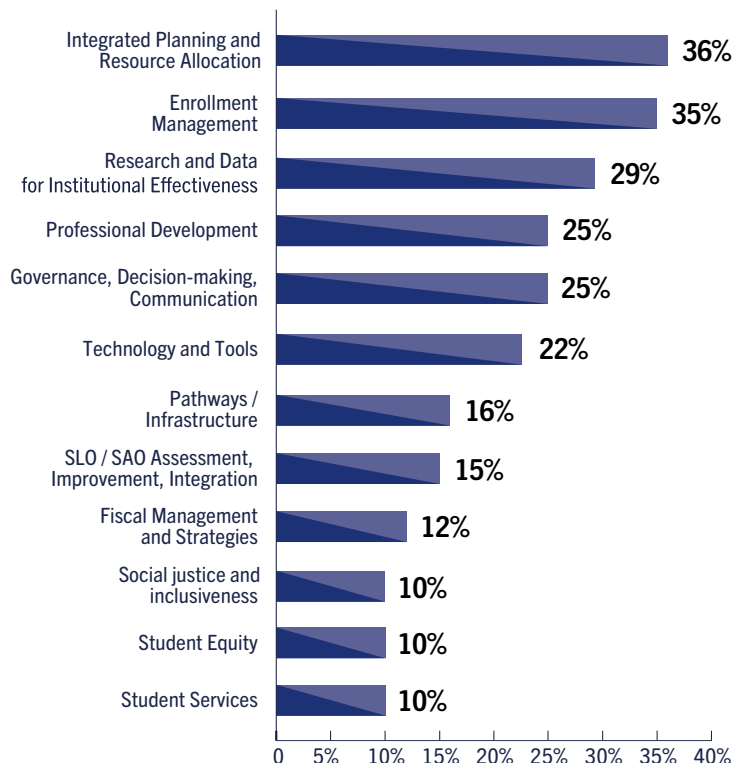
Client Institution CEOs identify and prioritize areas of focus and develop Letters of Interest based on their college or district's unique needs and culture. A review of AOFs during the evaluation period reveals common themes across the system. The most frequently identified AOFs include integrated planning and resource allocation, enrollment management, research and data for institutional effectiveness, professional development, governance and decision-making, and technology and tools.

While the core categories of AOFs have remained relatively consistent over the history of IEPI, the variety of framing of AOFs has evolved. In the early years, I&EP strategies often focused on addressing accreditation compliance and fiscal stability – aligned with the initiative's original goals. At that time, many colleges and districts used the PRT process to address accreditation-related challenges, such as avoiding or responding to accreditation sanctions or preparing for institutional self-evaluation reports. Although accreditation reaffirmation remains a factor, the use of PRTs has shifted to a more proactive approach supporting broader institutional improvements.

Over the past eleven years of IEPI, confidence in the PRT process has grown steadily. An increasing number of institutions have returned for additional PRT cycles, viewing the colleagues-helping-colleagues model as a regular and valuable resource in advancing institutional effectiveness.

The chart below lists the top 12 AOFs ranked by the percentage of full PRT processes that include each Area of Focus.

Twelve Most Common PRT Areas of Focus, Cycles 1-11B*



* Percent of 241 full-PRT processes approved through date of report.

CLIENT INSTITUTION SURVEY RESULTS

The PRT process encourages colleges and districts to reflect on effective ways to use their time, funding, and resources to strengthen institutional effectiveness. Implementing such changes requires time and is influenced by factors such as the complexity of the AOF, institutional culture, governance systems, history, and scheduling differences across institutions.

To account for this, the report focuses on a four-year period and includes only those institutions that have had sufficient time to make meaningful progress on their AOFs. This approach allowed colleges and districts latitude to address their AOFs in the way that aligned best with their local context.

The survey was distributed to representatives of Client Institutions that received PRT services during the relevant period. Respondents included CEOs, substantive and logistical point people, and other key participants who were positioned to provide informed and actionable feedback.

The survey included a mix of open- and closed-ended questions regarding each institution's AOFs. Respondents were asked to rate progress on their top two AOFs (where applicable) and to identify factors that either supported or hindered their efforts to achieve the objectives of their Innovation and Effectiveness Plans (I&EPs).

Additionally, the survey asked whether and to what extent institutions believed they would have made similar progress without PRT assistance, and it gathered feedback on the PRT methods and approaches that were most effective. The survey concluded with an open prompt inviting respondents to share suggestions for improving the PRT process.

THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF FOCUS

Survey respondents were shown the actual language used in their AOFs. Institutional representatives determined which AOFs they considered most important. Although the specific verbiage of AOFs varied among institutions, the general categories remained consistent. The responses were then coded and categorized by the evaluator using the same classification system employed by the Project Director and staff for internal tracking. Ratings of the AOFs as most important rested with the institutional representatives.

The following table provides a detailed list of the most important AOFs identified by CI representatives.

MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF FOCUS OF RESPONDING CLIENT INSTITUTIONS	
AREA OF FOCUS	COUNT OF INSTITUTIONS
Integrated Planning and Resource Allocation	6
Enrollment Management	6
Governance, Decision-making, and Communication	5
Professional Development	5
Research and Data for Institutional Effectiveness	4
Student Equity (including DEIA and Anti-Racism)	4
Technology and Tools	3

The distribution of AOF topics during this reporting period was more even than in previous cycles. Many colleges and districts identified hybrid AOFs – those that spanned multiple topic areas – making classification less discrete. Nonetheless, the categorization used in this report matched with the internal system developed by the Project Director.

This categorization yields more consistent findings aligned with the purpose of IEPI to enhance institutional effectiveness. Institutions, in turn, take a broader view of their work and, as noted below, the more successful PRT experiences are those that map the AOFs to larger planning efforts at the institutions. While the lead AOFs remained the same for the most recent reporting period, the number of institutions identifying professional development as a focus area has steadily increased.

Additionally, student equity initiatives are often embedded within broader student success strategies. Integrated Planning and Resource Allocation and Enrollment Management remain the top AOFs for institutions seeking PRT assistance.

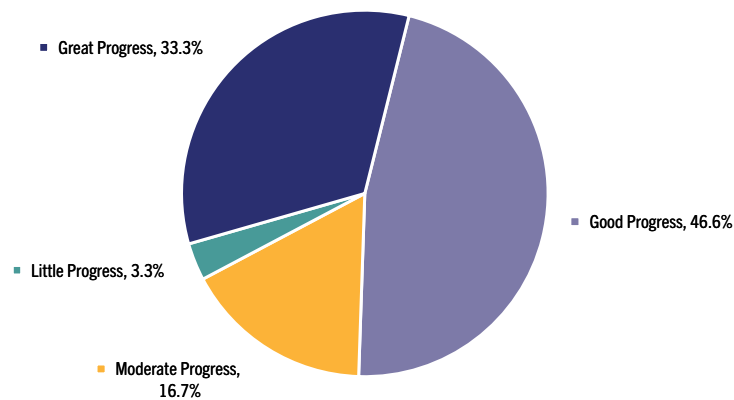
OVERALL PROGRESS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT AOFs

Representatives from 30 institutions that received PRT services during the reporting period responded to this item. Of these (80.0%; N=24) reported making either *Good* or *Great Progress* on their most important AOF. Another (16.7%; N=5) reported making *Moderate Progress*. Only one institution (3.3%; N=1) reported making *Little Progress*. No respondents reported making *No Progress at All* or *Do Not Know*.

In summary, nearly all institutions (96.7%; N=29) reported at least Moderate Progress on their most important AOF.

The following chart provides a more detailed illustration of the reported progress levels.

Overall Progress on MOST Important Area of Focus



Overall, institutions receiving services during this reporting period demonstrated strong progress on their AOFs. An increasing number of institutions are returning for additional PRT support, and the PRT process is now more widely understood. This growing familiarity has contributed to more effective use of technical assistance and strengthened commitment to improving institutional effectiveness.

FACTORS SUPPORTING OR IMPEDING PROGRESS ON AOFs

To better understand what contributes to institutional progress on AOFs, respondents were asked to identify key factors supporting their efforts through open-ended questions. The evaluator coded and categorized them for emerging themes. Three principal themes surfaced, as shown in the following table.

MAIN FACTORS HELPING SUSTAIN PROGRESS ON THE MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF FOCUS

- ▶ Finding an Institutional Champion to Shepherd Efforts During and After the Three-Visit Process (4)
- ▶ Communicating the AOFs with the Entire Institution After the Three-Visit Process (4)
- ▶ Incorporating the AOFs into College and District Processes (3)

Across the last eight reporting cycles, college and district representatives consistently emphasized the importance of having an institutional “champion” – a dedicated leader who drives and sustains momentum. Institutions lacking such a figure often struggle, especially when facing resistance to change or turnover in key leadership roles.

Another commonly cited factor was clear and consistent communication of AOF-related work across the institution. Keeping the campus community informed and engaged supports alignment and shared ownership of the goals.

Lastly, formally integrating the AOFs into institutional planning and decision-making processes has proven essential. Embedding the work into broader college and district systems – particularly in alignment with system-wide expectations – helps sustain progress over time. plays as a critical success factor in sustaining progress on AOFs.

Respondents also identified key barriers to progress. After coding and analysis, two main themes emerged, summarized in the table below.

MAIN FACTORS LIMITING PROGRESS ON MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF FOCUS

- ▶ Competing and Conflicting Institutional Demands (5)
- ▶ Changes in Leadership and thus Changes in Priorities (4)

These limiting factors often reflect the absence of conditions that support success. Competing demands and lack of alignment with broader institutional goals can divert focus from AOF implementation. In addition, leadership changes – whether planned or unplanned – frequently disrupt momentum, leading to shifting priorities and a loss of direction in the work initiated through the PRT.

ESTIMATED PROGRESS WITHOUT PRT SERVICES ON THE MOST IMPORTANT AOF

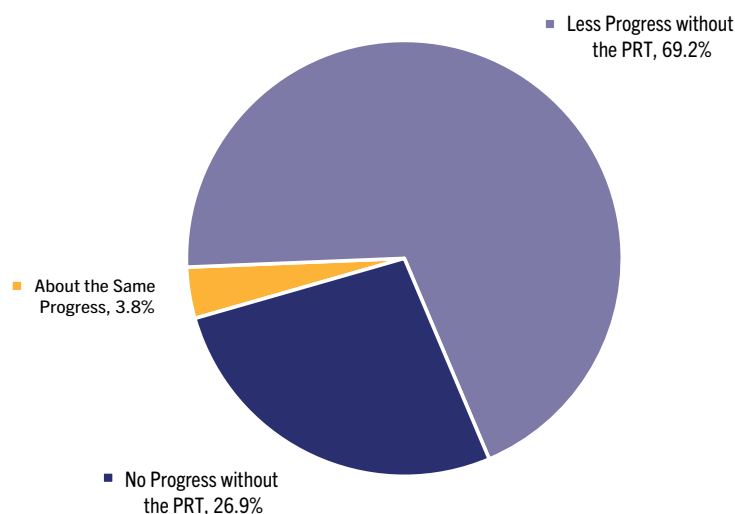
More than 90% of respondents (96.2%; N=25) indicated that their institution would have made *Less Progress* or *No Progress* on their most important AOF without PRT support. One institution (3.8%; N=1) reported that it would have made *About the Same Progress*. No institution reported making *No Progress at all* or *Don't Know*.

The following chart provides a detailed illustration of the estimated overall progress that Client Institutions would have achieved without PRT assistance.

Institutional respondents frequently report that they were already aware of their AOFs prior to soliciting PRT assistance. While they believe they would eventually address these areas independently, the PRT added value by helping frame the work, introducing accountability structures, and offering an external, system-wide perspective that challenged their thinking.

The PRT model offers a strong structural foundation for institutional improvement. In addition, accompanying seed grants provide essential funding for implementation – allowing colleges and districts to pursue meaningful change without further straining already limited budgets.

Estimated Progress Had Institution NOT Received PRT Services
for MOST Important Area of Focus



THE SECOND-MOST IMPORTANT AREA OF FOCUS

Where relevant, institutions also identified a second-most important AOF. As with the primary AOFs, survey respondents were shown the original language used by their institution. These responses were then coded and categorized to align with the internal classification system used by the Project Director and staff for tracking purposes. The designation of the second-most important AOF was determined by institutional representatives.

The following table provides a detailed list of the second-most important AOFs identified by institutional representatives.

SECOND-MOST IMPORTANT AREAS OF FOCUS OF RESPONDING CLIENT INSTITUTIONS	
AREA OF FOCUS	COUNT OF INSTITUTIONS
Enrollment Management	4
Integrated Planning and Resource Allocation	3
Governance, Decision-making, and Communication	3
Professional Development	3
Research and Data for Institutional Effectiveness	3
Student Equity (including DEIA and Anti-Racism)	3
Technology and Tools	3

The distribution of AOF topics was relatively even, and in many cases, the second-most important AOFs closely aligned with the institution's primary AOF. These were often extensions of the same overarching focus rather than entirely separate or distinct AOFs.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PRT PROCESS

In the final section of the survey, institutional representatives were invited to share suggestions for improving the PRT process. The following table provides a detailed list of the suggested improvements to the PRT process. The most common response was "None." While institutions value the structure of the PRT process to provide impetus to change and to hold institutions accountable for their work, many institutional representatives also value the flexibility afforded to the colleges and districts to adapt the PRT work to their home schedules, culture and history.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS TO THE PRT PROCESS (CLIENT INSTITUTION REPRESENTATIVES)

- ▶ None (10)
- ▶ Greater flexibility in completing the PRT Process (depending on institutional need, scheduling, and progress) (5)

PRT MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND CONNECTION

In addition to the measured effect on institutional effectiveness at colleges and districts, IEPI also evaluates the impact of the PRT process on participating team members themselves.

To capture these effects, surveys were administered to PRT participants during the reporting period. Respondents represented a range of roles, including administrative, faculty, and support roles across instructional, student services, administrative services, and other areas.

The survey included both open- and closed-ended questions focused on four key areas:

- Professional growth and leadership development
- Skill development (collaboration, facilitation, and systems thinking)
- Application of insights and practices at home institutions
- Creation and maintenance of professional networks and collaboration

A particular area of interest was the impact of the PRT process on faculty, mid-level administrators, and classified professionals. PRT Leads and Members come from across all functional areas of institutions and are selected for their expertise relevant to the Client Institution's AOFs.

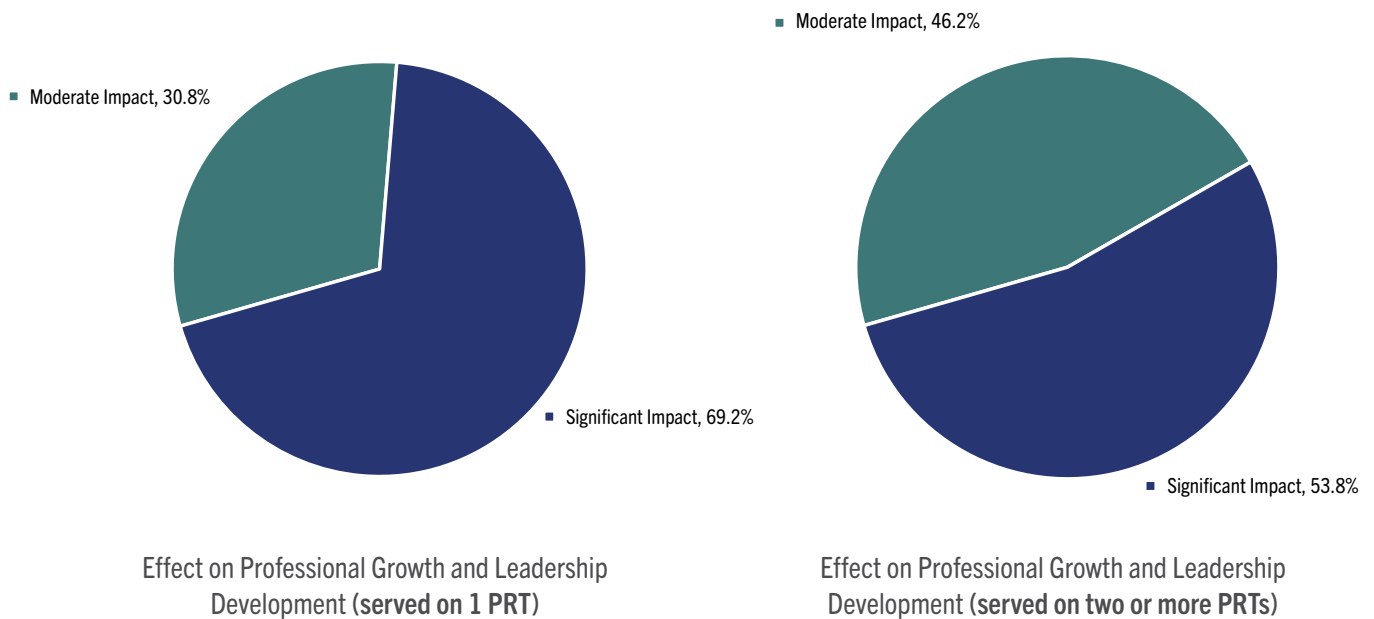
PRT MEMBERS (EXCLUDING LEADS)

PRT Members (excluding Leads) were asked to rate the impact of their participation on professional growth and leadership development using a scale of 0 to 4 (*No Impact*, *Minimal Impact*, *Moderate Impact*, *Significant Impact*). An additional response category was included: *Not Sure*.

Among respondents who participated in one PRT all (N=39) reported either a *Significant* or *Moderate Impact* on professional growth and leadership development. More than two-thirds (69.2%; N=27) indicated a *Significant Impact*. No respondents reported *Minimal* or *No Impact*, and none selected *Not Sure*.

Similarly, all respondents who had participated in two or more PRTs, all (N=26) also reported a *Significant* or *Moderate Impact* on professional growth and leadership development. More than half (53.8%; N=14) reported a *Significant Impact*. Again, no respondent reported *Minimal* or *No Impact*, and none selected *Not Sure*.

Effect of Participation in PRT Process on Professional Growth and Leadership Development (PRT Members Excluding Leads)



To gain deeper insight into how participation of non-Lead PRT Members supported their professional growth and leadership development, respondents were asked to elaborate through open-ended prompts. Responses were analyzed for recurring themes. The three most commonly cited themes are listed in the following table.

WAYS SERVING ON PRT CONTRIBUTED TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP (NON-LEAD PRT MEMBERS, ONE PRT PROCESS)

- ▶ Exposure to Ways other Colleges and Districts Address Commonly Faced Challenges (7)
- ▶ Working in a Professional Team Setting with a Common Goal (6)
- ▶ Learning Information-Processing Techniques (Active Listening and Appreciative Inquiry) (5)

Non-Lead Members with experience in two-or-more PRTs were asked to describe how serving on a PRT contributed to their professional growth and leadership. The responses were identified, coded and categorized; two themes emerged, as shown in the following table.

WAYS SERVING ON PRT CONTRIBUTED TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP (NON-LEAD PRT MEMBERS, TWO-OR-MORE PRT PROCESSES)

- ▶ Working with PRT Leads Focused on Institutional Improvement (5)
- ▶ Working in a Professional Team Setting with a Common Goal (4)

PRT Lead modeling of the PRT approach and working with other PRT Members have been consistent reasons identified as contributing to personal professional growth and leadership development.

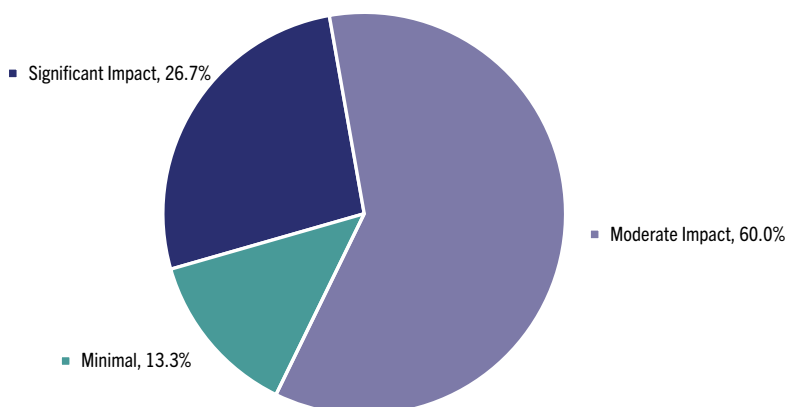
PRT LEADS

Most PRT Leads are chief executive officers at their colleges and districts; however, recent years have seen the greater use of leaders from other operational areas such as instruction, student services, administrative services, and other areas.

PRT Leads rated the impact of their participation on their professional growth and leadership development using the same 0 to 4 scale used for non-Lead PRT Members.

Of the respondents, 86.7% (N=13) reported a *Significant* or *Moderate Impact* on professional growth and leadership development, with approximately one-fourth (26.7%; N=4) reporting a *Significant Impact*. Two respondents (13.3%; N=2) reported *Minimal Impact* on professional growth and leadership development. No respondent reported *No Impact*. Likewise, no respondent indicated that they were *Not Sure*.

Effect of Participation in PRT Process on Professional Growth and Leadership Development (PRT Leads)



The evaluator identified, coded, categorized, and analyzed emerging themes in the same method as for PRT Members, using the same approach. Two primary themes were identified, as shown in the following table.

WAYS SERVING ON PRT CONTRIBUTED TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND LEADERSHIP (PRT LEADS)

- ▶ Connecting with CEOs at Colleges and Districts (4)
- ▶ Outreaching to other CEOs after the PRT Process in other Areas (3)

The aspects of connection and outreach are likely significant for the PRT Leads in particular because of the existing networking opportunities that exist for upper and executive management in California Community Colleges.

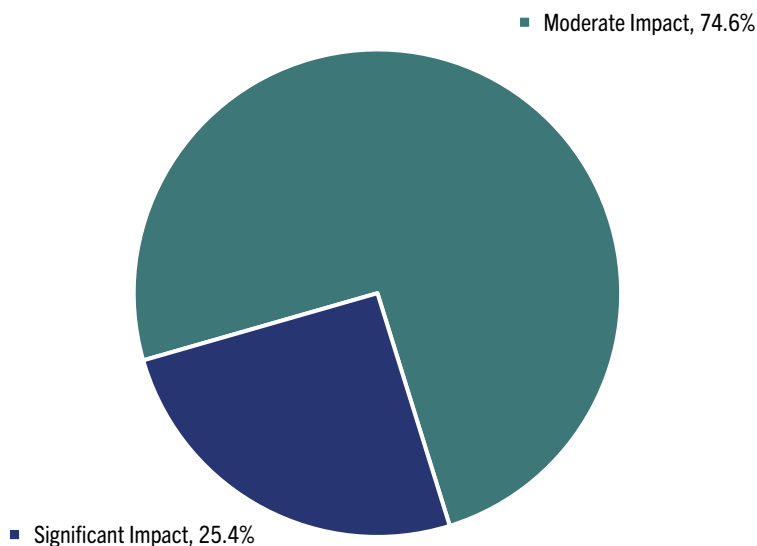
SKILL DEVELOPMENT

PRT Members rated the impact of PRT participation on their skill development (collaboration, facilitation and systems thinking).

PRT Members (excluding Leads) rated the impact of their participation on their skill development using a scale of 0 to 4 (*No Impact*, *Minimal Impact*, *Moderate Impact*, *Significant Impact*). An additional response category was included: *Not Sure*.

Among respondents who have participated in one PRT, almost three-fourths (74.6%; N=71) reported a *Significant Impact* on skill development, with approximately one-fourth (25.4%; N=18) reporting a *Moderate Impact*. No respondent reported *Minimal* or *No Impact*. Likewise, no respondent indicated that they were *Not Sure*.

Effect of Participation in PRT Process on
Skill Development (PRT Members Excluding Leads)



Impact on Skill Development (Served on 1 PRT)

The survey asked respondents through open-ended prompts to share the ways PRT contributed to skill development.

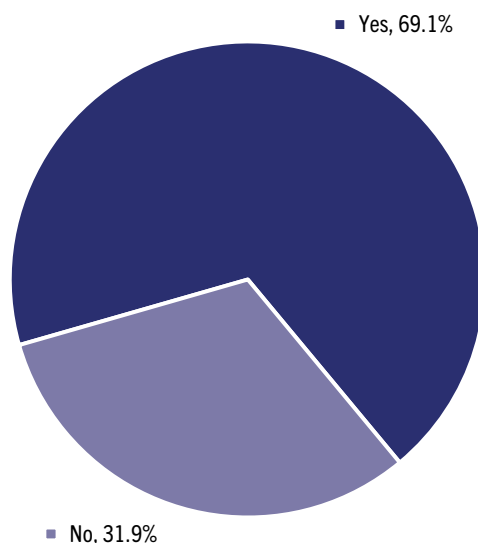
WAYS SERVING ON PRT CONTRIBUTED TO SKILL DEVELOPMENT (ALL PRT MEMBERS)

- ▶ Applying Appreciative Inquiry (11)
- ▶ Practicing Active Listening (8)
- ▶ Learning from Other PRT Members and Leads (5)

APPLICATION OF INSIGHTS AND PRACTICES AT HOME INSTITUTIONS

Next, the survey asked PRT Members whether they applied any insights or practices at their home college or district. Respondents answered either “yes” or “no.” Approximately two-thirds (69.1%; N=47) reported applying techniques, strategies, or ideas to their home institutions. Approximately one third (31.9%; N=19) of the respondents that said they didn’t apply any insights or practices at their home institution.

Applied Any Insights and Practices Learned through
Participation in the PRT Process



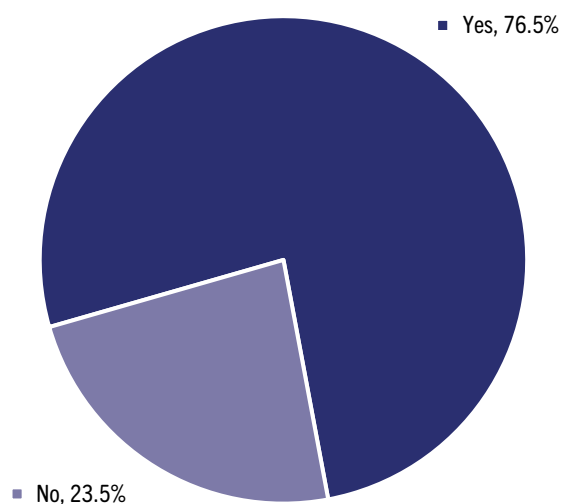
“I am interested in understanding what took place at the other colleges and districts with the other PRTs. I would appreciate learning what worked and didn’t at the other colleges. Having an accessible space to house all this wealth of information would be fantastic to access after the visits are over.”

— PRT Lead

CREATION AND MAINTENANCE OF CONNECTIONS AND COLLABORATION

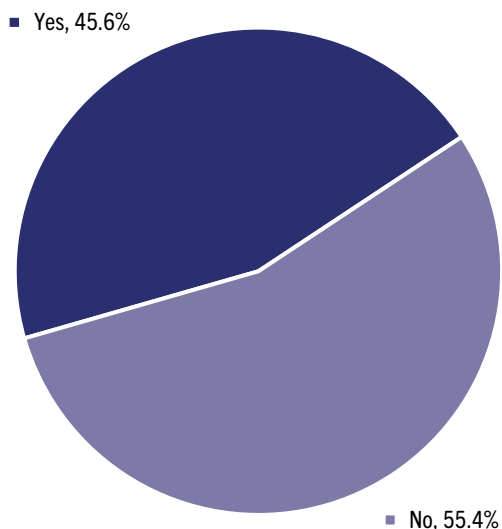
PRT Members reported on the impact of PRT participation on their creation and maintenance of professional connections and collaboration with other participants in the process. Respondents answered either “yes” or “no.” Over three-fourths of the respondents (76.5%; N=52) reported serving on a PRT influenced their professional network within the California Community College system.

Participation in the PRT Process Influenced their Professional Network



PRT Members reported whether they maintained contact or collaboration with individuals met through the PRT experience. Respondents answered either “yes” or “no.” Almost half of the respondents (45.6%; N=31) reported maintaining contact and collaboration with professionals met through the PRT experience.

Maintained Contact with Individuals Met Through PRT



EMERGENT THEMES FROM THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

This year's interviews and focus groups built upon the methodological insights gathered from previous years' qualitative interviews.

The development of the evaluation protocol for each interview or focus group started with a collaborative dialogue between the project director and the evaluator about the questions of interest for the initiative, using an iterative process to formulate, refine, and ultimately agree on evaluation items that would help answer the larger, broad-based areas of inquiry for the PRT process.

Practical technical assistance is a collaborative, two-way effort to facilitate improvement in institutional effectiveness by enhancing systems, building greater capacity and institutional bandwidth, and improving policies, procedures, and practices at the colleges and districts.

Specifically, effective technical assistance is a method of mutual learning through actions and knowledge acquisition that promotes new mindsets, beliefs, and behaviors. The goal of the interviews was to learn from the participants themselves the catalysts for change and improvement.

For the 2025 Process Impact Report interviewees are grouped into the following categories:

- Client Institution representatives, interviewed individually or in groups, including CEOs, substantive and logistical point persons, and other relevant institutional representatives who participated in the process and who could provide actionable evidence
- Client Institution CEOs and representatives alongside their PRT Lead for the specific process

- Client Institution CEOs and representatives alongside their PRT Lead and Members for the specific process
- PRT Leads and Members in focus groups or individually
- PRT Members categorized by role and function in focus groups.

Individual interviews were added to complement the group interviews and offer an alternative space for participants to share. While individual interviews were not the primary focus of the qualitative component of the evaluation, the evaluation team made every effort to hear from all participants who volunteered and who showed a sincere interest in sharing their insights.

Group interviews prove effective in fostering dynamic conversations that highlight experiences and perspectives that do not emerge in the one-on-one setting. The group format enabled participants to respond to open-ended prompts, engage with each other's input, and contribute freely to the conversation. Interviewees built upon and refined the responses of other participants, and alternative viewpoints were welcomed and shared without the interviewer's interference.

Scheduling conflicts are a fact of life, given the busy calendars of college and district leaders, and summer breaks vary among institutions that use semester and quarter systems. Nevertheless, focus groups remained the primary method for gathering information through dialogue and exchange. When focus groups proved infeasible or impossible to schedule, the evaluator conducted individual interviews to balance the desire to gather meaningful input from participants with the individuals' willingness to participate in the evaluation process.

CLIENT INSTITUTION CEOS, POINT PERSONS, AND REPRESENTATIVES

(Group and Individual)

The following themes emerged from the group interviews with CI teams consisting of CEOs, substantive and logistical point persons, and other relevant institutional representatives:

- ✓ The PRT Lead and Members provide timely and relevant information to the Client Institution.
- ✓ The PRT came to the visit with techniques for overcoming challenges in change implementation.
- ✓ Client Institutions note that while learning new techniques remains essential, the main challenge is fostering motivation and improving current organizational, cultural, and historical structures.

“Appreciative Inquiry helped us focus on our strengths to find positive solutions, rather than highlighting our weaknesses.”

— Client Institution Point Person

- ✓ The main challenges to institutional improvement are related to motivation and change management. PRTs help institutions address these challenges.
- ✓ A shared mindset gained at the beginning of the PRT technical assistance process is key to lasting culture change.
- ✓ Community colleges and districts are complex, so establishing a clear vision and direction for PRT participation early helps align personnel and supports lasting change.

“As a CEO with many responsibilities, finding an individual who supported the process, motivated others to complete tasks, ensured follow-through, and provided regular updates proved invaluable. It was a little risky at first to delegate this away, but staff came back positive about their work.”

— Client Institution CEO

- ✓ Client Institutions reported that PRT Members supported the Areas of Focus by building strong relationships with leaders, collaborating as peers, and constructively addressing institutional challenges.

“Our areas of focus were conducted at the institution level and we needed time and flexibility between visits to get the work done.”

— Client Institution CEO

CLIENT INSTITUTION CEOS, POINT PERSONS, AND REPRESENTATIVES

(continued)

- ✓ Client Institutions found progress in Areas of Focus when the PRT allowed the college or district to tackle key self-identified issues.

“The seed grant funding was critical to our success, I admit it. We addressed key challenges without reallocating previously assigned resources in high needs areas.”

— Client Institution CEO

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- ✓ Some Client Institutions saw higher-than-expected participation and responsiveness from key groups and administrators in the PRT process.

- ✓ The three-visit structure for addressing Areas of Focus enables Client Institutions to explore different options, develop, and test solutions. Abbreviated visit cycles would be more effective for targeting specific, limited areas of improvement.
- ✓ Institutions seeking PRT assistance should collaboratively identify the Areas of Focus before requesting services.

“We addressed some accreditation recommendations by integrating our areas of focus into our already-in-progress work and noted the PRT in our reports to the commission.”

— Client Institution Point Person

CLIENT INSTITUTION TEAMS AND PRT LEADS AND MEMBERS

The following themes emerged from the group interviews with Client Institution CEOs, substantive and logistical point persons, and relevant institutional representatives, along with PRT Leads assigned to the institution:

- ✓ Client representatives found the PRT process to be flexible and responsive.
- ✓ Client institutions that have participated in more than one PRT report have reported that the process is more fluid and progress is made more quickly due to familiarity with the PRT process.

“Do the work, it is as simple as that. It is why you asked for assistance in the first place. Be accountable to yourself and to the other people doing the work. Set an example for to the other professionals at your college.”

— Client Institution CEO

CLIENT INSTITUTION TEAMS AND PRT LEADS AND MEMBERS

(continued)

- ✓ The PRTs provide assistance and feedback on the client's use of new information, practices, and resources related to their areas of focus.

“Importantly, admit mistakes, but then share what you learned. Model what you want others to do in the PRT Process.”

— Client Institution CEO

- ✓ Most barriers to success in AOFs for Client Institutions stem from issues with motivation and change management, not insufficient knowledge of what needs to be done.

“I am interested in understanding what took place at the other colleges and districts with the other PRTs. I would appreciate learning what worked and didn't at the other colleges. Having an accessible space to house all this wealth of information would be fantastic to access after the visits are over.”

— PRT Lead

- ✓ Effectively structuring conversations during the initial and second visits supports positive results for Client Institutions in the PRT process.

- ✓ The PRT provided subject-matter expertise, relevant resources, and continuous guidance and assistance to support the change initiatives at the college or district.

“We became aware of another college in our region facing a similar challenge and we parlayed their expertise into the PRT Process. They were very willing to share their experiences and stay in contact to this day.”

— Client Institution Point Person

- ✓ Maintaining consistent communication about PRT efforts supports awareness of and openness to the technical assistance at the institution over time.
- ✓ The PRTs help explore data with the institution to identify strengths and resources, as well as ideas or challenges that impact the way the Client Institution currently operates.
- ✓ Upcoming accreditation visits or recommendations sometimes prompt PRT participation.

CLIENT INSTITUTION TEAMS AND PRT LEADS AND MEMBERS

(continued)

- ✓ The representatives reported that the PRT supported the Client Institution in implementing strategies that promote active participation and foster consensus among institutional stakeholders.

“Involve college leadership early and often, stay flexible and open, pace yourself to maintain energy. That is the key for a successful PRT process.”

— Client Institution Point Person

- ✓ The PRT facilitated the development of action plans, including the identification of possible areas of consideration.

“Our college culture and way of doing things shaped how we partnered with the PRT and we were provided the flexibility to tackle our challenges, our way.”

— Client Institution Point Person

- ✓ The PRT process demonstrates the PRT’s understanding of how change efforts fit within existing institutional timelines and demands.
- ✓ Client Institution representatives value regular check-ins as a measure of progress, not as a compliance requirement, so that progress can be monitored and modifications, if necessary, can be implemented.
- ✓ PRT Members and Client Institution representatives gain professional growth by learning from other colleges, adopting new practices, and collaborating on shared challenges.

“To be successful, work collaboratively with the PRT, and allocate and dedicate the time necessary [to get the work done]. The PRT is part of the team to address the challenge.”

— Client Institution CEO

- ✓ Community colleges are sometimes preoccupied with tasks that lack a clear purpose, leaving confusion about how best to innovate and problem-solve.

PRT LEADS AND MEMBERS

The following themes emerged from the group interviews with PRT Leads and Members:

- ✓ PRT Members enhanced their listening and facilitation abilities by actively engaging with others and using Appreciative Inquiry in challenging discussions.

“The PRT does not exist to provide answers to problems. Its purpose is to assist colleges and districts in defining and framing problems, then collaboratively considering potential solutions, rather than presenting a single solution as some consultants are prone to do.”

— PRT Lead

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- ✓ Working with other PRT Members and Client Institutions broadened the perspectives of PRT Members on community college challenges that are common throughout the system, but are addressed uniquely, given each institution’s culture, governance, and history.
 - ✓ PRT Members noted forming lasting relationships with teammates, often seeking their counsel after visits — connections they attribute to the PRT process.
 - ✓ PRT Members appreciated learning from colleagues with diverse skills, leadership levels, and fields of study, both in terms of content and peer assistance facilitation.

“This was really a ‘team’ effort by the PRT; they came ready and sincerely wanted to support the [institution’s] efforts. They were very unselfish with their time and with helping serve the institution well.”

— PRT Member

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- ✓ PRT Members appreciated learning about other institutions’ approaches and used comparisons between their home institutions and the Client Institution to reflect and improve their practices.
 - ✓ PRT Members stated that participating in the process enhanced their connections with both fellow PRT Members and Client Institution representatives.

“Meeting as a team before the visit, especially the working dinner the night before, was very helpful.”

— PRT Member

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- ✓ Adequate preparation and facilitation by the PRT Lead are vital for a successful visit for both the institution and the PRT.

PRT LEADS AND MEMBERS *(continued)*

- ✓ Holding team meetings before the visit, especially over a meal, allows PRT Members to discuss potential challenges and ideas for the institution, facilitating teamwork.

“You have to prepare and do your homework, but it is so rewarding to work together to address challenges that often we face at our home institutions.”

— PRT Member

- ✓ Appreciative inquiry helps the team frame college and district challenges and move beyond the deficit model when pursuing improvement.
- ✓ PRT Members value the sharing of experiences and networking as key benefits of participating in the PRT process.

“I was impressed with work of the other PRT Members. They came prepared and gave [the institution] the space it needed to frame its solutions.”

— PRT Lead

PRT MEMBERS BY FUNCTION

The following themes emerged from the group interviews with PRT Members by role or function at their college or district:

- ✓ PRT success relies on the PRT Lead’s professional facilitation skills and their connection with the team, as well as the supportive mindset of the other members.
- ✓ PRT Members returning for additional cycles tend to let the process work instead of quickly proposing solutions.
- ✓ Faculty and classified professionals specifically emphasized the importance of participating as Members in the PRT process and highlighted the benefits gained from collaborative engagement within the PRT, as well as with college and district personnel.

“Real change emerges from ongoing conversations about the data about things that matter to the college.”

— PRT Member (Research)

- ✓ PRT Members say that early access to Client Institution representatives and documents would better help them prepare more effectively for the PRT Process.

PRT MEMBERS BY FUNCTION *(continued)*

“Dialogue about the data is important, but the college must have the structures in place to support difficult, but important decisions.”

— PRT Member (Research)

- ✓ PRT Members view participation in the process as a means to advance their professional careers.

“Faculty must be given time to meet regularly with faculty & staff from other departments to share ideas.”

— PRT Member (Faculty)

- ✓ PRT Members implement techniques acquired during the PRT Process, such as active listening and Appreciative Inquiry, within their home institutions and with peers.

“Scorecards & dashboards are important tools, but professionals need to be able to see a connection linking the data and the work that they do day-to-day.”

— PRT Member (Research)

- ✓ Progress on the Areas of Focus depended on leadership’s support for, and belief in, the PRT process.
- ✓ PRT processes can encourage a mindset that contributes to improvements in performance, collaboration, and well-being for individuals, teams, and programs.
- ✓ Participating institutions and the system would benefit from increased access to PRT lessons learned, promising practices, and insights from unsuccessful challenge resolutions.
- ✓ Community colleges often face initiative fatigue and struggle to meet new system expectations while addressing other local areas of need and improvement.

“Professional development provides opportunities to share with others what has been learned.”

— PRT Member (Faculty)

- ✓ Future training and development that is skills-based, rather than merely knowledge acquisition, is expected to play a key role in future institutional progress, involving the use of exemplars, shared experiences across institutions, and consultation with experts in systems change and Appreciative Inquiry methods.
- ✓ Colleges and districts must allocate space within their structures and processes for constituents to discuss and interpret I&EP findings together.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the review and analysis of findings from the group and individual interviews, survey responses, and relevant documents:

FLEXIBILITY AND COLLABORATION

- ✓ Client Institutions value flexibility in defining their challenges and creating effective solutions. A collaborative approach, particularly when addressing complex issues, is seen as highly effective. Institutions find value in learning from peers, adopting proven practices, and exploring innovative methods to address shared challenges.
- ✓ Community college leaders believe that collaborative, human-centered solutions are most effective for solving complex problems and improving student experience. Changing conditions have led to ongoing uncertainty and concern about the status of postsecondary education.
- ✓ The PRT process has facilitated collaboration among peers, resources, and Client Institutions seeking support in specific areas to enhance institutional effectiveness.
- ✓ The PRT process has achieved results through open communication between the Client Institution and the PRT during visits, as well as among PRT Members. Methods such as Appreciative Inquiry and active listening have played a significant role for various Client Institutions. PRT Members create an environment that allows colleges and districts to address complex issues. Seeking assistance often requires initiative, and PRTs support this process by reframing challenges as opportunities for improvement.
- ✓ Institutions seek robust partnerships to inform best practices by providing data, technical assistance, and collective thinking to address the equity, diversity, inclusion, and access goals. Limited capacity, especially time for meaningful dialogue, remains a major hurdle. The PRT environment helps institutional thought leaders reflect on equity-related challenges and advance Areas of Focus through open discussion and creativity.

INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY

- ✓ College and district capacity pose a significant hurdle in addressing issues of equity and diversity, particularly in the time allocated for dialogue on potential solutions. The PRT has proven to be one key tool for the institutional thought leaders to reflect on the issues currently faced.
- ✓ Creating space for experimentation and positive failure remains difficult in current community college structures. Frequent, small-scale trials, “little bets,” are seen as valuable, yet institutions often revert to outdated methods despite their limitations.
- ✓ Progress on AOFs is often hindered by leadership turnover, interim appointments, loss of PRT champions and budget constraints. Emerging leaders prefer bottom-up models of leadership that incorporate collaboration and a shared responsibility for decision outcomes.
- ✓ Recruiting and retaining PRT Members is essential. Participation deepens members’ understanding of the technical assistance and increases their value to the process, but impending retirements and turnover among experienced participants may create shortages.

CONCLUSIONS *(continued)*

- ✓ The system office's initiatives, while valued by colleges and districts, pose challenges to institutions, particularly those with limited institutional bandwidth, high staff turnover, and leadership hiring issues.

COLLEGIALITY AND COMMON EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Institutions align their Areas of Focus with the Vision for Success and Vision 2030, using the PRTs to build support for related actions.
- ✓ Client Institutions and PRT Members have found that many challenges are common across institutions in the state, which has been a source of discovery. As a result, participants are interested in exploring and adopting methods used by others to solve shared issues and to learn from other institutions.
- ✓ The PRT process has been executed effectively, with client representatives and PRT Leads consistently praising the Project Director and staff for their strong communication and support. Their focus on removing obstacles for successful PRT experiences is widely valued and considered essential throughout each cycle.

EMERGING TRENDS

- ✓ Leaders must ensure that data is accurate and valuable to institutional representatives in decision-making, or efforts to move to action based on evidence will be futile. Data dashboards are a means to consume data, not an end in themselves.
- ✓ Technological change, shifting demographics, cultural changes, and evolving learner preferences require real-time adjustments to teaching and learning. Institutions must ensure data is accurate, relevant and actionable.
- ✓ Colleges and districts view the PRT as an ongoing partner in improving effectiveness, not just a one-time intervention. Open communication between institutions and PRT Members, using approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry, has been key to reframing challenges as opportunities.
- ✓ All colleges and districts face challenges in transitioning from an evidence-based culture to one of inquiry, and ultimately, innovation. Addressing these issues requires non-threatening environments and skilled facilitation by experienced peers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the review of themes, conclusions, and current policies, procedures, and practices for the PRT process:

BROADEN AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION

- Broaden awareness of the advantages, opportunities, and benefits of serving on and leading Partnership Resource Teams.
- Leverage technology, media, and conference presentations to highlight the PRT efforts in supporting participating colleges and districts.
- Promote the sharing of practical tools and proven practices to encourage broader adoption of technical assistance across the system.
- Build and strengthen connections with statewide programs or organizations to expand knowledge, share resources, and provide better support to colleges and districts.

STRENGTHEN SUPPORT

- Facilitate peer-to-peer discussions among leaders to share the value of PRTs and strengthen leadership confidence.
- Encourage structured opportunities for PRT Members and Client Institution representatives to connect during and after assignments.
- Engage CEOs, administrators, faculty, and classified professionals in the process to ensure broad institutional involvement.
- Leverage the peer assistance model to support institutions in meeting reporting requirements within a collaborative, supportive environment.

ENHANCE PRT NETWORK

- Develop and expand a communications and collaborations network among PRT Members and institutions, through regional meetings, events, and webinars.
- Capture and share key takeaways from member interactions at these gatherings to strengthen collective learning.
- Encourage members to actively recruit new participants to maintain a strong and diverse pool for future PRT assignments.
- Promote sharing of practical tools and effective practices from Client Institutions at conferences and online to support broader adoption.

MAINTAIN FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENTS WHILE BEING FLEXIBLE

- Maintain the Three-Visit PRT process while providing institutions with flexibility to address their specific Areas of Focus.
- Expand the use of Mini-PRTs to address targeted challenges and specific opportunities.

ADVANCE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

- Improve alignment in system priorities, Vision 2030 and DEIA initiatives, for institutions that are seeking technical assistance. Vision 2030 and DEIA initiatives throughout the PRT process.
- Engage with the Chancellor's Office staff to identify and report work in specified areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS *(continued)*

LEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY

- Upgrade tools for communication, file sharing, and collaboration, especially for resources, team documents.
- Provide technology solutions that enhance role effectiveness, improve record management, and streamline collaboration.

STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP

- Create venues for PRT Members and Leads to demonstrate Appreciative Inquiry and active listening as models for emerging institutional leaders.
- Develop strategies to maintain engagement across all phases of PRT Member involvement in technical assistance activities. While peer relationships may form organically, establishing more structured opportunities for interaction can facilitate learning among participants.

INCREASE ACCESS FOR RESOURCE-LIMITED INSTITUTIONS

- Develop outreach strategies to support colleges and districts that struggle to submit an LOI due to staffing or resource issues limitations.
- Provide tailored support for institutions experiencing organizational instability or infrastructure challenges that hinder their ability to seek help despite demonstrated needs.

METHODOLOGY

This evaluation was guided by a collaboratively developed mixed-methods plan created by the External Evaluator and Project Director. This approach was designed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the PRT process on both the Client Institutions and the PRT Members.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION:

A total of six complementary evaluation methods were utilized to collect both quantitative and qualitative data:

- 1. Survey of Client Institution Representatives:** A survey was distributed to Client Institution representatives engaged in the PRT process between September 2020 and July 2024. Participants included CEOs, substantive and logistical point people, and other key representatives. The survey consisted of open- and closed-ended questions centered on the college or district's areas of focus. Respondents rated progress on their two highest-priority AOFs, identified supporting and hindering factors in advancing their objectives identified in their I&EP, and reflected on the role of PRT support. Additionally, respondents assessed the likelihood of making comparable progress, absent PRT assistance, and provided feedback on the most and least effective aspects of the process. The survey concluded by soliciting suggestions for PRT process improvements.
- 2. Survey of PRT Members and Leads:** Another survey was administered to PRT Members and Leads, representing a broad range of roles, including administrative, faculty, and support functions across instructional, student services, administrative services, and other areas. This survey explored professional growth, leadership development, skill acquisition, such as collaboration, facilitation, and systems thinking, application of PRT practices at home institutions, and the development of professional networks. Both open- and closed-ended questions were utilized to capture a range of experiences and outcomes.
- 3. Semi-structured Group Interviews with Client Institution Representatives:** Group interviews were conducted with representatives from Client Institutions, including CEOs and key implementation leaders, to provide in-depth context for survey findings. Discussions focused on progress toward AOFs, challenges encountered, and outcomes directly attributable to the PRT process.
- 4. Joint Interviews with Client Institution Teams and PRT Leads and Members:** Targeted group interviews brought together Client Institution representatives and the PRT Members, focusing on the dynamics between institution leaders and PRT Members and how those relationships affected the process and outcomes. Structured individual interviews were needed due to scheduling and other logistical limitations, with additional PRT Leads and Members who participated in PRT processes during the period.
- 5. Structured Individual Interviews with Client Institution Representatives:** Similarly, individual interviews with selected Client Institution representatives were conducted to ensure a diversity of perspectives, especially when key individuals could not participate in group interviews.
- 6. Focus Groups by Function:** Individual interviews with selected PRT Members based on function (e.g., chief executive officer, research professionals, and faculty members) were conducted to gain the perspective on participation in the PRT by college or district role.

METHODOLOGY *(continued)*

PARTICIPATION AND DATA ANALYSIS

In total, 30 (of 52) Client Institution representatives and 71 (of 178) PRT Members responded to the surveys. These respondents reflected on their personal and institutional experiences, as well as the transfer and application of PRT insights to their home campuses. PRT Members who have participated in multiple assignments further discussed cumulative and longitudinal effects. Representatives from Client Institution and PRTs offered recommendations for refining the PRT process.

Eight group interviews were conducted with Client Institution teams, some including their PRT Leads and Members, and eight individual interviews were conducted with CEOs, lead point people, key institutional representatives, PRT Leads, and Members. All interviews were conducted virtually (via Zoom), each lasting approximately one hour, over eight weeks in spring and early summer 2025.

Survey responses served as the foundation for quantitative analysis of AOF progress and identification of factors. Interview data complemented this by providing in-depth narratives, uncovering contextual factors, and allowing exploration of issues not fully captured by the surveys.

The interviews explored the direct and indirect impacts of the PRT process; how it might help institutions navigate recent, significant changes in California community colleges; obstacles to sustained institutional progress; and whether the process influenced other institutional structures, systems, and practices.

As in previous PRT Process Impact Reports, surveys remained the primary tool for assessing progress on the AOFs and identifying supporting factors that hinder progress. The interviews provided deeper insight into narratives behind the survey responses and examined additional areas of interest not included in the surveys for all institutions.

Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent for interviews and offering optional participation for the Project Director, whose involvement in selected sessions provided additional insight into process involvement efforts. No interviewee objected to the Project Director's presence.

Interviews followed suggested protocols based on participants' roles but allowed for open discussion of related or divergent topics.

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