REGIONAL K-16 EDUCATION
COLLABORATIVES GRANT PROGRAM

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Spring 2026 Site Visit Summary

The Office of Public School Construction requested that the Foundation for California Community Colleges produce a midterm program review. The following areas were identified through review and analysis of narrative and data reports and findings from virtual and in-person site visits.

Promising Patterns

The following strategies are emerging as having a positive impact on collaboratives' regional work and are worthy of further study as the program proceeds.

Building on Existing Frameworks

- Prior career pathway work (California Career Pathways Trust, Linked Learning) developed sequencing frameworks for work-based learning throughout high school that remain relevant and underutilized.
- These and similar successful existing frameworks should be considered alongside current grant programs when designing future initiatives.

Evolution of Partnerships

- Cross-sector relationships are seen as a core, durable outcome of the grant.
- Convening sectors that wouldn't otherwise collaborate is itself considered a major achievement.
- In some regions, employers are actively funding internships and work-based learning.

Pathway Expansion

- Collaboratives should explore connections with graduate schools at partner institutions to expand work-based learning opportunities for students.
- Expanding CalBright offerings to increase college access in highly isolated rural areas with limited on-site options could be helpful to increase pathway options.

Sustainability

- Creation of a Joint Powers Authority in one region as a way to ensure sustainability is a unique approach.
- Use of varied communication methods, like social media and outreach videos, increased parental and student engagement in middle and elementary school settings.

Funding Priorities

- Financial support for work-based learning initiatives at all levels of the pathway.
- Technology infrastructure support for smaller and geographically isolated districts.
- Braided funding across complementary programs (Department of Rehabilitation, Workability, and concurrent grants), noting that regional boundary differences between programs require larger programmatic alignment to work efficiently.

Improvement Areas

Below is a set of observations about current struggles across many regions. Most of these observations reflect a moment in time, and collaboratives may already be addressing some of these areas.

Initiative Alignment

- Minor misalignment exists between concurrent grant programs in geographic boundaries and sector priorities. Flexibility in either area, short of full realignment, would improve resource effectiveness.
- Workforce development boards were largely absent or played a limited role in most regions, representing a missed opportunity to connect collaboratives with workforce planning resources, employer networks, and complementary funding streams.

Pathway Development

- Continuous K–12 → California Community Colleges → California State University/University of California pathways are rare, as only a few regions have a throughline that is clear to students, though other pathway elements are still being developed.
- Employment off-ramps for high school graduates are limited across most regions.
- Two-year colleges have strong relationships with industry that could lead to employment, and four-year colleges have focused more on enrolling students than on graduating students and connecting them to career opportunities.

Sustainability

- Improved student tracking from the education sectors into the workforce would be an effective strategy to demonstrate pathway success and reinforce partner commitments to sustaining efforts beyond the grant program.
- In some regions, collaborative partners have only one individual supporting K–16 pathway work, which means that pathway success is dependent on a partner, has not been systemically integrated, and could be lost if that individual transitions out of their role.

Geography

- State-defined regional boundaries frequently do not align with local practices and community mental models. Urban areas naturally operate as multiple subregions, ranging from four to six

distinct areas based on geography, community identity, or existing institutional relationships, making it difficult for collaboratives to reconcile local structures with the state's regional definitions.

- In rural and sparsely populated areas, physical distance and natural geographic barriers isolate education segments from one another, posing an equally significant barrier to productive intersegmental partnerships.

Student Navigation

- In most regions, students are part of a pre-existing cohort or academy and have little awareness of a formal pathway. To the extent that pathways are meant to encourage disengaged students onto the path to high-wage jobs, current recruitment efforts are still mostly limited to reaching high-achieving self-starters.
- In some regions, students were recruited by happenstance. For example, one student described how they were working at a carwash when a customer shared information about an internship and career exposure program.
- Though dual enrollment opportunities have been expanded, additional elements and an educational sector throughline are still needed in most regions to complete a full K–16 pathway.