



**Community Engagement Initiative  
Request for Applications  
Cohort V**

**Community Engagement Initiative (CEI) - REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS**

**Introduction**

The California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE), the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE), the University of San Diego (USD), and Eskolta School Research and Design is excited to announce the recruitment of the next cohort for the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI). The initiative was established in 2019 as part of the California Statewide System of Support (SSOS) with the goal of building the capacity of communities and school districts to authentically engage each other for the purpose of improving outcomes for all students, particularly English Learners, low-income students, Foster Youth, and students from other underserved student groups.

**Who Should Apply**

The CEI is looking for a full range of school districts/LEAs (districts/LEAs looking to develop quality engagement programs, and districts with established systems and processes) to:

- 1) Expand the resources around best practices for improving community engagement identified across various communities around the state.
- 2) Commit to self-reflection and growth to support transforming current practices within/across their district.
- 3) Assist the continued development of building capacity within local educational agencies and local communities for conducting meaningful and sustainable engagement.

**Background of the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI)**

The CEI was established to strengthen the California State System of Support by building the capacity of school districts and communities to authentically engage each other to build capacity in communities and districts to have difficult conversations with each other and build trust, with a focus on improving outcomes for students through a series of Peer Leading & Learning Networks.

The CEI offers a remarkable opportunity for school districts/LEAs to revolutionize their community engagement practices by participating in the Peer Leading and Learning Network (PLLN). The PLLN model, conducted through a combination of eight virtual and in-person meetings, guides participating teams in an improvement science based curriculum to identify their specific community needs as it relates to the districts/LEAs current community engagement practices. The meetings, statewide and regionally, allow participants to identify strengths-based approaches to improvement, exchange strategies with peers, and network with other role-alike participants and districts/LEAs. A key feature of the initiative is the chance to engage and partner with districts/LEAs from every region of California. Teams openly share their experiences (both successful strategies and obstacles encountered) in achieving authentic community engagement for shared decision-making. The CEI's comprehensive approach

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facilitates transformative change within participating communities, promoting effective and authentic community engagement practices, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement in education.

### Benefits of Participating in the CEI PLLN

- Be a part of systemic change for community engagement in the California State System of Support.
- Learn effective practices for community engagement from districts across the state.
- Engage in an open dialogue on issues related to improving local pupil outcomes.
- Partner with other communities and school districts in support of improving your community engagement practices, policies, systems, structures, and procedures.
- Receive an annual district stipend to be used in support of district/LEA's community engagement efforts, and team members' participation in the CEI (including internal staff, parents, community members, etc).

### Commitments of District/LEA Teams

If selected, each District/LEA Team will commit to contribute to the statewide effort to build capacity for authentic community engagement through the CEI and be willing to:

1. Participate in the professional learning network for no less than two years.
  - *Includes eight Peer Leading and Learning Network convenings per year, consisting of a combination of virtual, hybrid, and in-person sessions.*
  - *Travel and overnight stay will be required (accommodations and air transportation covered by the CEI).*
  - *Additional time for collaboration and coaching may be required between convenings.*
2. Engage in open dialogue on issues related to improving local pupil outcomes.
3. Identify a specific school site that would be represented by staff/families/students on the District/LEA Team and where your community engagement improvement efforts will be initially focused.
4. Collaborate with other communities and school districts with the aim of improving community engagement. This collaboration should include offering financial support to the partnering organizations to support their capacity for meaningful collaboration with the District/LEA team at the local level to practice and implement learnings from the CEI.
5. Select a CEI Team Lead and Backup Lead who is responsible for direct communication with the CEI Lead Agencies and facilitators. They will oversee and guide the team on their community engagement journey.
6. Replace any team member who leaves, keeping within the requirements for participants set forth below, and notify the CEI designee of changes.
7. Ability to provide space that is video-conference equipped at specified school/district site for hybrid Network convenings.

The CEI Team Lead will create a team comprised of the following roles (*teams will be solidified after notification of acceptance*):

- **District staff/leadership:** Leadership that includes a cabinet-level district administrator (e.g., Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, or Board Member) who oversees community engagement for

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the district and (if different) a district staff member who leads community engagement implementation for the district

- **School site staff/leadership:** Leadership that includes the principal, assistant/vice principal, dean, or leadership team members who oversees community engagement at the school. School site staff that include school counselors, teachers, and classified personnel.
- **Student/Family:** Upper elementary/middle/high school students and family members of elementary, middle, and high school students enrolled at the selected school site.
- **County Office of Education:** A representative who oversees or provides support for community engagement to school districts in the county.
- **Community Partner:** A representative of a community-based organization that works with the district or specified school.

Teams should be no more than 15 members total and no less than 6 members.

### Application Process & Timeline Summary

Any interested District/LEA will need to complete the [Request for Application Form](#) by 5:00 p.m. PST, Friday, March 15, 2024, which includes a Letter of Interest (details below) of **no more than one page in length** and signed by the District Superintendent.

The 1-page Letter of Interest must include the following:

*District/LEA Information:*

- A description of the district, its community, and its student body
- Why the district is interested in participating in the community engagement Initiative
- How the district hopes to improve community engagement with its community (students, families, community partners) in district-level decision making
- Examples of efforts that have been made and/or barriers to:
  - build capacity to have difficult conversations with their school community and build trust, with a focus on improving outcomes for all students
  - engage communities that have not historically been engaged
- Superintendent signature

*Point of contact:*

The letter must include the name and contact information (phone and email) for the district employee who will serve as the District Team Lead.

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Timeline Activity	Date
Request for Applications posted	January 18, 2024
Request for Applications form <b>final submission date</b>	March 15, 2024 - 5:00 p.m. PST
The CEI will review form submissions and applicants will receive information about the subsequent steps throughout the RFA process.	

**Example Cohort V Calendar of Meetings for 2024-25**

- September 2024 --- Virtual
- November 2024 --- Virtual
- December 2024 --- 1-day In-person
- February 2025 --- 2-day In-person
- March 2025 --- Virtual
- April 2025 --- 2-day In-person

Anyone with questions is encouraged to contact the Community Engagement Initiative at [info@californiaengage.org](mailto:info@californiaengage.org)