



C-PALS

CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP FOR ADULT LEARNER SUCCESS



ABOUT C-PALS

The California Partnership for Adult Learner Success is a coordinated effort among postsecondary institutions and nonprofit organizations focused on supporting adults in achieving their educational goals.

By conducting research, implementing evidence-based reforms, and engaging in collective action and advocacy, C-PALS seeks to advance systems change that will propel adult learners, particularly those with some college but no credential, to completion.

This collective work is guided by [California Competes: Higher Education for a Strong Economy](#), [Sacramento State](#), and [The Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint Community College District](#).

THE VISION

A postsecondary system that ensures adult learners are recognized, supported, and have clear pathways to college and career success. This system:

- Provides clear, flexible, and accessible credentials
- Aligns to local, regional, and statewide economic opportunities
- Propels generations of California's diverse communities forward

THE CHALLENGE

California needs millions more residents with college degrees and credentials to meet workforce demands and maintain its economic competitiveness. Yet over 6 million working-age adults (ages 25-54) in California have a high school diploma but no postsecondary degree, including nearly half who have some college experience but did not complete.

The state's higher education system is not structured to effectively meet the needs of this population, and given how understudied they are, there is limited evidence on how to improve their attainment outcomes.

THE APPROACH

To address this critical challenge and meet the state's needs, C-PALS leverages five main strategies.



Spotlighting the Opportunity

Illuminate engaging adult learners as a solution to closing equity gaps and meeting workforce needs.



Fostering Collaboration

Convene and facilitate engagement, learning, and innovation to achieve shared goals.



Building the Evidence Base

Conduct research to identify barriers and promising practices that improve outcomes for this population.



Curating Resources

Serve as a clearinghouse to equip leaders with actionable information to support adult learner success.



Advancing Systems Change

Advocate for reform that expands access and completion for adults.

THE NEXT STEPS

Partner with C-PALS by:

- Investing in our mission to help transform systems for adult learner success.
- Sharing your perspective, expertise, and initiatives for amplification.
- Raising your voice to collectively advance change.
- Serving as a co-researcher to build the evidence base.

To learn more, visit
californiacompetes.org/C-PALS

Our Framework for Advancing Systems Change

Goal

To advance equitable college access and success for adults, especially those with some college but no credential, by identifying evidence-based practices and driving state and institutional reforms that empower them to complete their postsecondary programs.



IF...

Promising equity-centered practices, recruitment strategies, and re-enrollment pathways are identified

Barriers and needed systemic changes are better understood and addressed

A comprehensive statewide strategy to better address needs and inequities is established with clearly articulated definitions, approaches, outcomes, and benefits

A proactive plan that breaks down silos is created, ensuring efforts across postsecondary, economic development, and workforce development sectors coordinate and align to local, regional, and statewide priorities

THEN...

Partners can advocate for effective, equity-focused policy and practice changes at the institutional, system, state, and national level

Institutions can adopt adult-tailored programs, policies, and supports that are structured for inclusive reengagement

Partnerships made up of committed and diverse cross-sector stakeholders can be fostered and expanded

Sustainable funding to support capacity building for systems change can be obtained

Vision

We envision adult learners improving their life and societal outcomes:



Health



Education



Social and
Economic Status



Civic
Engagement

through a postsecondary system that:



Provides clear, flexible, and
accessible credentials



Is aligned to local, regional, and
statewide economic opportunities



Propels generations of California's
diverse communities forward

SO THAT...

An increased proportion of adults have equitable access, enroll, and complete their postsecondary programs, reducing racial and socioeconomic opportunity gaps

There is awareness, understanding, and inclusion of adult learners in policy and practice decisions at the institutional, system, state, and national level

More institutions evolve to be inclusive of adult learner needs and priorities

Disparities between adult learners, traditional-age, and first-time students are addressed, with a focus on students facing the greatest barriers

To learn more, visit californiacompetes.org/C-PALS