

Section 1: Consortium Information

The River Consortium

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Section 2: Comprehensive Regional Three-Year Plan

2.1 Executive Summary

The executive summary of the River Consortium Three-Year Plan (2019-20 through 2021-22) is the narrative that describes where the Consortium is, how it got there and where it wants to go for at least the next three years – and in many cases beyond the three years. Additionally, the narrative outlines both qualitative and quantitative sources of information that inform the strategies that create and implement the plan, identify state and leveraged resources that will fund the plan and provide tools that will both track progress and assess projected plan outcomes. Details and data that support this summary are in the body of the plan and can be located through the table of contents.

Per the guidance framework, our three-year plan reflects pre-planning assessment and insights; regional needs; goals, strategies and programs; and proposed programs and pilots going forward.

Our Mission:

The River Consortium members and partners are committed to developing workforce programs that will both expand and improve regional and global career opportunities.

Guiding Principles:

- Programs will be designed to lead to employment or better employment (increased wages)
- Pilots will be scalable
- Civics education will inform all curricula
- Students (including ESL) will select a career pathway through Career Cruising, an electronic career portfolio/pathway
- Students will be tracked for progress leading to employment and/or improved employment outcomes
- Automation challenges/opportunities will be addressed, initially with health, agricultural and cannabis careers
- Parenting classes for improved K-12 student performance will be accessible and/or imbedded in existing/evolving programs
- Leveraged resources will be identified, implemented, tracked and updated

Setting:

One of our wise stakeholders recently described The River Consortium region that extends from Blythe to Needles as being in “two hours from everywhere.” While this description is somewhat of an exaggeration, it provides a frame of reference for the uniqueness of the location, topography, climate and geographic isolation.

The entire River Consortium is situated within the Mojave Desert – with typical desert warm periods exceeding 100 degrees for half the year and 60 to 80 degrees the other half.

The River Consortium exists on the southeastern border of California and is bookended on the north by Needles and on the south by Blythe. Note that there are 100 barren miles between Blythe and Needles. Many east/west travelers are familiar with Blythe and Needles as California's first welcoming cities.

Woven into the desert and the desert cities, however, is the Colorado River that provides both beauty and function to its north/south 5,100 square miles and counters the constraints of the desert. When the heat wanes, the sky is deep blue and the river is deep blue with tints of green. The river irrigates the farms and ranches in the valley and lures water sports enthusiasts to recreational sites along its banks. It is the Colorado River that keeps the valley flowing and hopefully growing. This is why we have chosen, The River Consortium as the name for our workforce project.

The Beginnings of Needles and Blythe:

The Indian tribes along the Colorado River are a collection of Indian nations that have distinct complete economies and cultures around the river. Two of these river tribes (nations) are partners of this consortium: the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe and the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe.

Needles was founded in May 1883 as a result of the construction of the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe Railway. The city developed as a station for meeting the service needs of the railway. Later, the city was noted as one of the "heart" cities of the famous Route 66. Needles has grown recently and its population is now 5,100, and there are now indications that Needles is hosting a renaissance that could restore its enthusiasm and opportunities (see cannabis careers).

Blythe was formed around water rights to the Colorado River. Around the turn of the century, the Blythe intake canal brought water to the Blythe community and apparent wealth to Thomas Blythe, a financier from San Francisco. As a result of the canal, farms and ranches developed, thrived and continue to thrive. But beyond agriculture, Blythe struggles with other sector development and continues to see the loss of retail outlets. Employment opportunities are limited to agriculture, state prisons and civil service. The city's population is approximately 19,500.

A Consortium for Delivering Adult Education in California:

Public education in Blythe and Needles has been the responsibility of the Palo Verde Community College District, the Palo Verde Unified School District and the Needles Unified School District. These three districts have fulfilled their defined K-12 and community college responsibilities. Each district has its own elected governing board and operating budget. Regarding adult education, Palo Verde College has been the sole provider in this consortium.

In 2009, because of the economic recession and a severe shortfall in state revenues, the then-governor and state legislature authorized school districts to use restricted (categorical) funds to meet local demands. During this period, about 50% of the state's K-12 adult education program was cut to allow districts budgetary flexibility in order to meet local budgetary constraints.

Coming out of the recession, California revenues began to rebound, and the newly elected Governor Jerry Brown and the state legislature began to consider how to best deliver adult education – primarily with a focus on immigrants and job skills.

The governor and legislature responded by enacting two state budget companion bills, AB 86 (2013) and AB 104 (2015). AB 86 provided \$25 million statewide for the creation of 72 consortia consisting of community college districts and the K-12 districts that feed into them, to develop local plans for adult education. Palo Verde College, Palo Verde Unified and Needles Unified School Districts were identified as the prospective members of what is now The River Consortium.

AB 104 funded adult education at \$500 million and provided the statutory provisions that governs delivery of the program. To be eligible for a number of state and federal grants related to adult education and workforce training, community colleges and K-12 districts were required to join a consortium. Membership has recently been extended to include ROPs (Regional Occupational Programs) and County Offices of Education. This funding has continued since 2015 with the amount now having risen to the proposed \$545 million for the 2019-20 fiscal year.

River Consortium Demographics:

Regional workforce/employment data must be viewed through a cautionary lens. A recent UC Riverside study on Inland Empire economics and wages reported that despite economic expansion, many inland families are not earning enough to make ends meet. Jobs are not paying living (sustainable) wages and not offering sufficient sustainable hours for employment. Also, projecting future job requirements, the Brookings Institute released a report citing the need for highly educated technical workers that will fill jobs as automation continues to displace workers. The study further states that workers in inland areas, such as those in the Inland Empire, will be displaced to a greater degree than other areas with higher education populations.

This cautionary frame of reference indicates and exemplifies the need for adult education and workforce training to increase wages above poverty levels and to provide technical skills that address automation barriers and opportunities.

Data on The River Consortium show that one-third of the population is categorized as living in poverty. Two-thirds lack a high school diploma or are identified as English learners. Addressing these factors is consistent with the Governor's 2015 state budget message positioning adult education as part of a state strategy focused on improving California's workforce and in turn addressing ongoing issues of income inequities.

Although referred to as being within the Inland Empire, a reality is that Blythe and Needles are isolated from the center of these counties – San Bernardino and Riverside.

The distance from Blythe to San Bernardino is 178 miles, Needles to Barstow is 140 miles and Needles to San Bernardino is 212 miles.

These distances present a great challenge in identifying employment opportunities. Regardless of isolation, the education and job training gaps in the region need to be addressed. Presently the largest employment sectors are Agriculture, Hospitality, Health Care, Cannabis, Construction, Education and Civil Service. However, even more important than workforce needs are workforce opportunities.

Until recently, both Blythe and Needles were in rapid decline with industry and worker declining driving forces. There were no new investments and re-development resources ran dry. However, within the last few years, the economic outlook has significantly improved through strategic and tactical business plans that brought cannabis

industry investors to the area. Initial indications suggest a renaissance of investment that will provide operating revenues, new and restored services, and increased employment opportunities.

Workforce Needs:

Cannabis Careers – The Great Green Hope: Currently the cannabis industry continues to develop as both a medical and recreational product. Estimates of national cannabis revenues hover around \$35 billion and continue to grow as laws evolve. Careers in the cannabis industry include the various aspects of cultivation, testing, distribution, marketing, culinary, security and retail. It is probably safe to assume that retail distribution will shortly involve services like Amazon and Uber. The City of Needles has approached the River Consortium to see how cannabis investors can leverage their resources with consortium resources to develop education and training for the variety of cannabis careers associated with their operations. The City of Blythe, although not quite as advanced as Needles, is also exploring investment and licensing as a tax revenue/employment strategy.

Agriculture: Employment in the agricultural sector is an ongoing need. The River Consortium is in the process of evaluating quantitative and qualitative agricultural workforce needs that will help inform and further develop evolving agricultural pathways. It's noteworthy that a major Saudi international agricultural company has invested in Blythe land in order to grow hay that will be shipped back to Saudi Arabia to feed their livestock. Whether this type of investment and related workforce need is a trend is yet to be determined. The agricultural sector workforce needs are quite dynamic considering the ever-increasing switch to automation – which of course provides both challenge and opportunity as a workforce need.

Hospitality and Recreation: The Colorado River serves as a magnet for resorts that feature water sports. Bordering the north end is Laughlin, Nevada with a number of large casino/resorts. Bordering the northeast is Lake Havasu, Arizona with a number of hotels also focused on water recreation. Hospitality and recreation needs run the gamut of job skills that cover the hospitality waterfront.

Health Care: 34,000 inhabitants of the region need medical services. Currently, basic medical needs are provided locally – through health district hospitals, clinics, and some private practices. Some specialties are available on a visiting/rotating basis, but most specialty services are provided outside of the consortium area. Medicine, prevention and treatment, are automating at a rapid pace with Kaiser and Mayo taking the lead in health informatics systems that serve patients, physicians, hospitals and pharmacies. This consortium is exploring developing health informatics systems pathways.

Construction: Although construction employment opportunities are somewhat limited within the consortium boundaries, economic and employment reports for the larger region known as the Inland Empire indicate that it is the state's fastest growing area in both population and economic development. Cities such as San Bernardino, Ontario and Palm Springs, because of land availability and affordable housing, provide construction employment; these cities, however, are not included in the typical commute pattern of the consortium region and probably provide good jobs with relocation as a proviso.

Adults with Disabilities: Given both limited resources and limited/unknown employment opportunities, the River Consortium is exploring a regional roadmap that will lead to either subsidized or unsubsidized employment for adults with disabilities. Additionally, the consortium is exploring leveraged resources that are probably available through the Department of Rehabilitation, Employment Development Department and Palo Verde College.

Members, Partners and Alliances:

Palo Verde College District, Palo Verde Unified School District and Needles Unified School District are the three members* comprising The River Consortium.

Additionally, the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe and the Chemehuevi Indian Tribe are active partners* of the consortium. Although these tribes have sovereign autonomy, in most cases their students access education and job training provided by consortium members.

*Members and Partners are specifically defined in California Ed Code.

A number of businesses and organizations are partners of The River Consortium:

- City of Needles (San Bernardino County)
- Needles Chamber of Commerce
- City of Blythe (Riverside County)
- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe
- Chemehuevi Indian Tribe
- Palo Verde District Hospital
- San Bernardino and Riverside Regional Workforce Boards
- Progressive Farmers Association
- Employment Development Department

River Consortium Projects – Existing and Evolving:

The provisions of AB 86 (2013) and AB 104 (2015) brought forth the establishment of consortia statewide to plan and deliver adult education. The underlying benefits of this new approach are numerous at the local level, but at least two stand out: joint planning and the leveraging of resources to provide optimal resources to a consortium's adult population. However, it needs to be recognized that writing and implementing new laws is easier than asking people to get together to formulate plans, leverage resources and provide capacity for implementation. This transition to a new model for maximizing resources to address adult education takes time and needs to be accomplished in a deliberate way.

Begun in 2015, the following ongoing projects are the direct result of the state's new Adult Education Program:

- Installing Career Cruising counseling in English and Spanish
- Expanding Basic Skills and Citizenship classes
- Expanding ESL (English as a Second Language) courses
- Implementing GED preparation and testing in English and Spanish
- Facilitating the introduction of career technical programs at Needles High School to serve adults
- Facilitating the offering of parent education to enhance K-12 achievement in PVUSD
- Participation in the state's federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) program

Presently, the following pilot projects are in the planning stage, at varied levels, with implementation pending:

- Expanding parent education in Needles to support K-12 achievement
- Health Career Pathways, including informatics and nursing
- Agricultural Pathways including plant and veterinary
- Culinary Pathways
- ESL branch location classes at Palo Verde Unified elementary schools
- Cannabis industry career education and training
- Adults with Disabilities employment project
- Career Pathways in the Railroad Industry.

Challenges Facing the River Consortium:

The challenges facing The River Consortium extend beyond adult education and job training, and require planning, capacity, resources, and tools partially funded by the California Adult Education Program and partially funded by strategic use of leveraged resources:

- Economic development and related employment opportunities
- Marketing and Communications
- Tracking, Assessment, and Analytics
- Leveraging resources – identifying strategic alliances and consortium partners
- Resident retention
- On-the-job training – business relationships, internships, and apprenticeships

We believe that we have developed a plan that will “expand and improve regional and global career opportunities.” We also believe that our plan meets the needs of the region, falls within our capacity to implement, is scalable, and most important – measurable.

2.2 Pre-Planning Assessment

A Description of Consortium Members:

The River Consortium is composed of three members, Palo Verde College and the Palo Verde and Needles Unified School Districts. Upon creation of the River Consortium in 2013 pursuant to AB 86, Palo Verde College was and remains the sole provider of adult education in the newly-defined adult education region.

Palo Verde College's main campus is located in Blythe with a satellite campus in Needles. Blythe is surrounded by desert-setting, irrigated farmland. Blythe's access to Colorado River water allows for the area's agriculture in the middle of a large desert region. Interstate 10, the major corridor between Southern California and Phoenix and other locations east, bisects Blythe.

Palo Verde College has a student population of 3,446 students with 537 being full-time and 2,909 part-time. It has a diverse student body with 72% minority with the following breakdown of individual groups: 44% Hispanic, 31% white, 18% African-American, 5% Asian, and 2% American Indian. Palo Verde College operates on a total budget of approximately \$28,480,000.

The Palo Verde College, Needles Center, serves the city of Needles. Needles, like Blythe, sits in the middle of a desert and, fortunately, alongside the Colorado River. It is in a location where California, Nevada, and Arizona converge. The city is also next to the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe reservation, and close to the Chemehuevi Tribe reservation.

Needles Unified School District serves the city of Needles and the surrounding desert region. Its student enrollment totals about 1,000 students with a diverse population comprised of approximately 45% White, 30% Hispanic, 15% Native American, and 2% African-American. Three-fourths of its student population qualify for free or reduced-price lunches. The district has a total operating budget of approximately \$16,000,000. The city and school district lie alongside the Colorado River which defines the nearby recreation and gambling center in Laughlin, Nevada.

The Palo Verde Unified School District enrollment is approximately 3,000, with 2,200, or three-fourths, being eligible for free or reduced-price lunches. English Learners number about 300. Its student enrollment is primarily Hispanic comprising 70%, with the remainder being 22% white, 7% African American, and 1% Asian. The district's operating budget is approximately \$35,500,000.

Given that 70% and above receive free or reduced-price lunches (determined by family income), it's safe to assume that both school districts qualify as districts with significant numbers of poor students.

Capacity for Adult Education:

To date consortium capacity has improved as programs have been proposed. Clearly adult education is needed as verified by the statistics cited in the Section 2.3, but it requires a combination of developing, improving, and expanding adult programs that are funded by CAEP targeted funds. Our goal is to develop programs that will assist adults in securing employment or better employment:

- Determine how these programs allow students to transition into the workforce or advanced training – or both

- Determine the feasibility of putting together the elements for offering a program
- Determine the credentialing need and approval process for proposed instructional staff
- Formulate a budget that includes existing and potential leveraged resources
- Establish a timeline for getting the proper official reviews and approval
- Establish a tracking and assessment system and tool/s

To date the following approved programs are being offered within the consortium. These programs address local needs and are responsive to the categories of offering authorized within the CAEP.

- English as a Second Language (ESL): These offerings are being offered in Blythe; Latino population exceeds 50%
- Citizenship education: These programs are aimed at residents, again mostly in Blythe, who are seeking citizenship.
- Adult Basic Education: This program is aimed at providing the Basic English and Basic Math skills that will lead to individuals being able to study for the GED.
- GED preparation in English and Spanish: Preparation for passage of this exam that is viewed as a high school diploma equivalent.
- Career Technical Education in Automotive, Construction, and Welding: These career technical offerings represent an actual leveraging of resources between the River Consortium and the Needles School District.
- Parent Education: This program was designed to enhance academic success of K-12 students. This program was leveraged with the Palo Verde School District. Presently, the feasibility for instituting a similar program in the Needles School District is being studied.

Counseling and guidance services are available to all adult education students, with the introduction of the Career Cruising program. This on-line program allows students to perform a skills assessment, identify interests, and create career pathways. The program allows for electronic career pathway tracking, intervention and measurement of outcomes. Career Cruising is unique in providing its services in English and Spanish, which allows all entering students to develop a career pathway at intake.

Key Partners:

A number of key partners are engaged with the consortium to enhance education and employment opportunities, and these include the following:

- Fort Mojave Indian Tribe (FMIT): This tribe numbers 1,434 members on 42,000 acres with the majority of acreage in Arizona and lesser amounts in California and Nevada. The tribe owns and manages the AVI Resort and Casino located on the Colorado River. Working with the consortium, the tribe is planning to implement a culinary arts training program at their AVI resort that would be aligned with culinary and hospitality programs offered by the River Consortium.
- Blythe Progressive Farmers: This Blythe group of farmers is working with the River Consortium to examine approaches to enhance education and training opportunities for employees involved in various aspects of farming and ranching. The local coordinator/adviser is a representative from the University of California Department of Agricultural and Natural Resources.

- Employment Development Department (EDD): EDD located on the Palo Verde College campus, will expand and improve opportunities for consortium students to seek employment and get information about employment in the region – or beyond.
- Strong Workforce Project at Palo Verde College: This program funded by the California Community College Chancellor’s Office will expand to provide solar installation training opportunities to consortium students.
- Cities of Blythe and Needles: The River Consortium is examining its potential role in providing education and training for the projected workforce needed to support cannabis industry development.
- Palo Verde College Student Support Programs: Addressing student equity and equal opportunities, these leveraged programs are providing support with transportation and materials. Similar leveraged programs are serving adults with disabilities.
- WIOA II: The Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act Title II provides the opportunity for our consortium to leverage state CAEP funds with these federal funds. Authorized WIOA II adult education courses reinforce ESL, basic education, and GED instruction.

Alignment with Regional Plans and Services:

The geographic constraints of the River Consortium requires that alignment, leveraging, and coordination of programs be cohesive and coordinated. The localizing of efforts is necessary especially due to the geographic isolation of Blythe and Needles, as noted earlier.

WIOA Titles 1 and 2 are notable as programs that align with the goals and objectives set forth by the CAEP. From a regional perspective, Titles 1 and 2 have morphed to align with Assembly Bill 104 programs and assessments. Student education gains reported through WIOA II reflect student success in literacy, academics and certifications that align with job training, placement, and measurement efforts in Title 1. This alignment theory has consortium potential but is currently aligned through MOUs at the regional level. It should be noted that this consortium has plans to further create 0-to-employment pathways.

Carl Perkins funds received by the Needles and Palo Verde School Districts and Palo Verde College provide the opportunity for initiating and setting forth the career pathways that lead from high schools/adult schools to the college. Improving and expanding consortium career pathways through Career Cruising is a prioritized professional development activity for this three-year plan. From the student perspective, Career Cruising assists them as they navigate through the steps that will result in certifications, subsequent employment, better employment, and apprenticeships or degrees.

Workforce regional planning processes initiated at the Riverside and San Bernardino county levels remain removed because of the distances noted in the summary. As programs continue to be established and evaluated, methods will need to be identified that provide for an increased level of coordination and leveraging of resources for consortium programs. While the consortium has funds for education and training, only the Regional Workforce Center has funds for job creation and job placement. These resources should be leveraged to expand these services to our member districts.

Table 1. Regional Service Providers

Provider Name	Provider Type	Address or location(s) where AE services are provided	Program Areas								If other, provide a brief description of services provided
			ABE	ASE	ESL	CTE	AWD	WR	PA	ACS	
XYZ Agency	Business / Industry	555 Adult Education Lane, Los Angeles, CA 90001	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	XYZ agency provides opportunities for students in Manufacturing Bridge Courses to Job Shadow.
Palo Verde College Main Campus	Education	725 W. Broadway Needles, Ca 92363	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Palo Verde College Needles Center	Education	One College Dr. Blythe, Ca 92225	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Palo Verde Unified School District	Education	295 N. 1 st st. Blythe, Ca 92225	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
Needles Unified School District	Education	1900 Erin Dr. Needles, Ca 92225	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Employment Development Department	Job Placement	One College Dr. Blythe, Ca 9225	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Fort Mojave Indian Tribe	Tribal	500 Merriman Avenue Needles, Ca 92363	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Chemehuevi Indian Tribe	Tribal	1990 Paloverde Dr Havasu Lake, Ca 92363	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Farmers Progressive	Industry Base Training	290 N. Broadway Blythe, CA 92225	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Vocational Rehabilitation	Training	One College Dr. Suite PE Blythe, Ca 92225	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>						

Table 2. Funding for Adult Education Programs and Services

Source and Type of Funds	Funding Estimates FY2019-20	Funding Estimates FY2020-21	Funding Estimates FY2021-22
State / Federal Funding			
AEP	\$834,250	\$859,277	\$885,055
CalWORKs	\$0	\$0	\$0
CCD Apportionment	\$0	\$0	\$0
Corrections	\$0	\$0	\$0
LCFF / District Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0
Perkins V	\$0	\$0	\$0
WIOA II	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$834,250	\$859,277	\$885,848

2.3 Community Need and Customers

REGIONAL NEED FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE SERVICES

Economies and Workforce:

The River Consortium serves the residents of Blythe and Needles, California as well as members of the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe, Chemehuevi Indian Tribe, and the Colorado River Indian Tribes. Tribes exist along the Colorado River and are typically included in regional economic overviews and demographics. Both cities share some common challenges and opportunities, but each city has some distinctly different challenges and opportunities as well. Blythe's economy and culture are primarily agricultural with additional employment opportunities in education and local state prisons. Needles' economy and culture include agriculture but also recreation and hospitality. Both cities have health care needs that are serviced primarily by allied health providers. Residential physician support is limited, often provided by visiting physicians or out-of-city hospitals, specialists and clinics.

Demographic/Economic Overview:

Blythe's population is approximately 19,500 while Needles population is approximately 5,000. Blythe is 50% Latino while Needles is 6% Latino. Both cities have inordinately low median household incomes and inordinately high number of residents living below the poverty line. The median household income in Needles is \$34,673; in Blythe it is \$39,840; while the median household income for California is \$67,169. In Needles, 26.6% live below poverty line, and in Blythe, 24% live below poverty line. These numbers are dramatically higher than California's below poverty line average of 15.1%. While the number of years of education, and the number and quality of degrees track directly with employment and income data, the number of high school graduates are below state averages as are the number of students attending and completing college leading to below average wage compensation. Until recently, the workforce opportunities at best have been limited with compensation levels below sustainable living wage standards.

Economic Development – Cannabis Industries:

Without new development and better workforce options, the regional economies at best will remain static and at worst will slowly decline in spite of effective consortium education and training. That's the bad news. The good news is that both Blythe and Needles are in the beginning stages of new development and new cannabis investment, indicating dramatic increases in workforce needs, evolving directly from new investment and indirectly from economic growth spinoff – hotels, restaurants, construction, health care and more. This new development is part of an international industry in its formative stages, yet yielding approximate current revenue levels at \$35 billion.

Current and Unique Customers:

Most current customers are residents of Blythe and Needles, most of whom are, want to be or will be employees. Other customers are mostly residents of Blythe and Needles and are managers/owners of farms, retail businesses and/or government agencies. These are the people who do the hiring as well as workforce needs projections – both qualitative and quantitative. Both groups are considered consortium customers – some unique and some typical. Our unique customers, at this point are primarily employers/investors who have begun partnerships with the consortium in the interest of tailored workforce training, automation opportunities and solar energy careers.

The Future – Alignment/ Needs and Services:

For the past three years, The River Consortium has addressed basic skills and credential gaps as briefly outlined in the overview. In Blythe, where over 50% of residents could benefit from improved literacy, basic skills, citizenship, secondary diplomas, workforce credentials and parent education, the consortium has identified and recruited residents who could benefit from education and training designed to improve workforce opportunities – employment and/or better employment.

For this upcoming three-year plan, the consortium will continue as well as expand these existing traditional adult programs that range from basic literacy to career certifications.

The consortium, however, will begin to provide unique services in cannabis careers, agricultural vocational ESL, drone technology training, solar panel installations, health informatics and culinary professional experiences and certifications. In all likelihood, based on feasibility recommendations, we will invest consortium resources in improving employment opportunities for Adults with Disabilities.

2.4 Identifying Goals and Strategies

(Complemented by “logic model” and “progress indicators”)

Activities and Measurable Goals:

Community needs in both Blythe and Needles are dramatic in view of static and/or declining economies. Economists and local and regional elected officials identify the Palo Verde economies as critical and in immediate need of development and investment projects. To that end, cannabis industry investments in both Blythe and Needles have the potential to, at least stabilize and, at best, reverse negative trends. Thus, the critical need is development and redevelopment. As for education and training needs, typically improved literacy and math skills, secondary diplomas, and career certifications address the apparent demographic dictates; tailored skills and certifications are determining programs focused on addressing automation as well as career opportunities associated with cannabis industries.

Overall goals and associated strategies focus on continuing, improving and expanding programs that were developed and piloted as part of the current operating three-year plan. Additionally, we want to address underserved key regional workforce sectors and evolving workforce sectors through development of partnerships and pilot programs. And finally, we want to identify and address automation opportunities/challenges that fall within the consortium’s capacity to pilot and measure.

Activities that are designed to improve and expand existing programs and developing pilots are as follows: marketing strategies that are focused on increasing access, enrollments and awareness; identifying and activating satellite facilities; training and re-training staff through tactical professional development; budget management; leveraging resources; and creating counseling tools that create measurable career pathways that are guided by appropriate placement and the ability to benefit. Given the constraints and limitations of funds, mapping strategies will identify duplications and redundancies of programs and thus will create more effective use of resources.

Although student outcomes are both tracked and measured, the following ultimate outcomes are quantified and analyzed: increased employment, increased wages, regional economic improvement and regional workforce retention.

Student Pathway:

We believe that as a guiding tactic, a student should know where he/she is; where he/she’s going; and how he/she’s going to get there. Thus, creating achievable career pathways/roadmaps is key to achieving any of our overall goals.

Manager’s Pathway:

We also believe that as a guiding tactic, program managers should understand each student’s pathway as well as have tools to track and intervene when necessary and measure ultimate goals – for both individual and collective outcomes.

Strategies for Integration of Services:

Integrating services involves, first and foremost, identifying the services. As stated throughout the plan, this consortium believes in student career pathways/roadmaps that identify the steps, skills, programs, costs, timelines and credentials required for achieving a career goal. For both individual and group planning of immediate and projected services, having a complete roadmap picture for each student and each student cohort, services can then be identified. Integrating these services requires management choreography/coordination. Thus, professional development for case managers and counselors is a critical piece for integrating existing and projected services. Appropriate placement and the ability to benefit are key principles for student intake and counseling. Having the right staff, realistic standards, and effective tools informs the placement strategies. The River Consortium places ESL/Citizenship students using the CELSA test supplemented by two interviews – counselor and teacher. Basic Skills/GED students are placed based on GED pretest/placement tests and two interviews – counselor and teacher. CTE students are placed using a variety of techniques that include experience, skills, transcripts, credentials and attitude.

Alignment of curriculum and standards is determined by industry and apprenticeship standards, government certification requirements, post-secondary pre-requisites, assessments and incentive guidelines.

Strategies to Improve Transitions:

As described earlier, identifying and integrating services driven by achievable career pathways implies improved transitions to post-secondary education, the workplace or both. Transitions are an element of an effective pathway, and student case management combined with recruited receptive employers and college counselors complement and complete the pathway's transition phase. Without achievable employment and post-secondary education opportunities, this effort is moot.

Figure 1. Logic Model

Goal Statement: To reverse declining worker retention trend by embracing sector opportunities associated with cannabis careers and automation opportunities.

Our overall direction and focus for the program cycle relative to the target populations and problems we seek to address

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Immediate (Short-Term) Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes / Impact
<i>In order to accomplish our set of activities we will need the following:</i>	<i>In order to address our problem or asset we will accomplish the following activities:</i>	<i>We expect that once accomplished, these activities will produce the following evidence or service delivery:</i>	<i>We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in the next year</i>	<i>We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in 1-3 years</i>	<i>We expect that if accomplished these activities will lead to the following changes in 3-5 years</i>
Counselors, Teachers Coordinators Students Measurement Tools Equipment Resources Planning Tools	Economic Development Recruiting Professional Development Marketing Tracking Leveraging Resources Aligning Programs Identify Locations Budget/Purchase Equipment Required Approvals Appropriate Placement	Improve Workforce Opportunities Improve Attendance Improve Placement Improve Retention Improve Completion Improve WIOA Pay Points Improve Employment Improve Wages Improve Certification & GED	Improve Wages More Students More Programs Improve Attendance Increase Awareness Expand Capacity	Expand Opportunities Cutting Edge Careers Improve Wages Improve Workforce skills Improve Certificaitons Increase Global Employability	Increase Employment Increase Wages Regional Economic Improvement Regional Workforce Retention
Assumptions			External Factors		
Continue State Funding and Expansion, Student/ Stakeholder awareness, Economic stability and growth, Continuation of adult education consortium model			Federal, State and County government support, Availability of leveraged resources, Evolving Needs, Automation, Infrastructure, Immigration Policy		

Table 3. Progress Indicators

Provide three to five SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound) objectives by which your consortium will assess progress and impact during the next three-year cycle. These objectives should map directly to your Logic Model activities, outputs, and / or outcomes, as these will be a driving factor for annual plans throughout the funding period.

Example: By May 2019, increase the number of agencies that have aligned CTE pathways and developed comprehensive program maps from 2 to 10.

1. By November 2019, consortium coordinator will be trained as a trainer/manager of existing electronic career portfolio, Career Cruising, and recently added and upgraded, Xello.
2. By January, 2020, consortium will expand number of students by 25% through branch satellite locations in both Blythe and Needles.
3. By January 2020, consortium will have recommendation framework for Electronic Health Records (Health Informatics) career pathway.
4. By June 2021, consortium region will retain its workforce at statewide rates as defined in the Selected Social Characteristics of California's Adult Population.
5. By January 2020, consortium will have completed an Adults with Disabilities feasibility study to determine how consortium can best contribute to workforce needs of the some/all of the adult disabled population.

2.5 Piloting and Implementation

The River Consortium has developed and tested a prototype process for developing, implementing and evaluating (formative and summative) scalable pilots. In addition to expanding existing pilots, new strategies and targets for this three-year plan involve identifying career opportunities that address regional/global needs as well as evolving automation opportunities.

Following is the process used to develop, implement and measure consortium pilots:

The Idea:

Driven by demographic/community needs, legislation-required assessments and visions of our three-year plan, pilot projects are presented to our executive committee and stakeholders for development consideration. Informal consideration discussions involve alignment with plan; guiding principles; need; cost/benefit; risk/benefit; capacity; resources; timeline and measurement. Following an informal discussion, an informal vote is taken by the committee of the whole and with approval, the project moves forward guided by a series of steps/activities.

Feasibility:

Determining the feasibility of a proposed pilot involves deeper and measurable dives into both qualitative and quantitative input that engages fiscal managers, industry surveys, industry advisories, focused discussions, interviews, best practice surveys, and district management.

Development:

Given consensus on the feasibility of the proposed pilot, a template/punch list was created to guide and track from the development of the project to implementation, and formative and summative assessments.

Elements of the template/punch list are as follows:

- Name of project
- Description of project
- Benefits
- Pilot or scaled
- Required staff – leader, management, counseling, teaching, support
- Hours for required staff – full time/half-time/other
- Roles/responsibilities for staff
- Marketing and Communications
- Budget with line items/detail
- Approvals needed – contract considerations
- Funding sources
- Timelines and tracking
- Outcome measurements/analytics

Concurrent with the punch list exercise, a steering committee is formed and a project leader (point person) is selected to move the project forward. Required staff/positions for both development and implementation are

identified, and where available and appropriate, staff is contracted. Where not apparent, recruiting strategies, point person and timelines are identified.

The above process, including the sample template/punch list was used to develop a consortium Parent Project in partnership with Palo Verde Unified. Considering that this project began as a germ of an idea and within five months was implemented and evaluated, this process has a prototype development model and a successful track record (other examples are in process).

The Parent Project – An Example:

In May, 2018, The River Consortium organized a retreat that was designed to evaluate status of projects, revisit mission/vision concepts for the three-year plan, develop guiding principles for the three-year plan and, through breakout teams, develop or further develop new concepts and evolving concepts.

One such concept that had reached consensus and buy-in was a Parent Education class/series that was designed for any/all Palo Verde USD parents to improve performance outcomes of their respective PVUSD children/students. In a two-hour breakout session, a group consisting of members, staff, and consultants discussed the concept and narrowed the vision to a ten-session series of presentations that included the following topics:

- Computer skills/Chrome Books
- Time Management
- Study Skills
- Money Management
- State Standards
- Attendance
- Engaging school staff
- Behavior reinforcement
- Expectations
- Resources

The group decided that the series would be presented bi-monthly, in two hour sessions that included a catered meal. Child care was provided as a support service. It was also decided that, in addition to each topic, each session would have a Chrome Book activity (PVUSD supplements all classes with Chrome Books). It was also decided that each session would conclude with a short, friendly quiz that was designed to measure knowledge gained from the session.

Once the group agreed on the framework and general pedagogy, a steering committee and project manager were selected, and two positions were designated for recruitment.

At that point, a rough timeline was outlined, and the project was now in the hands of the steering committee and project manager. We targeted October, 2018 as an opening date, and from that point, the template/punch list guided the project. Between, May 2018 and October 2018, the at-large group met for status updates and possible correction discussions. We met the target, and the series began and recently concluded.

An overall evaluation with recommendations for a second series was drafted by the consortium coordinator; a second project is targeted for October 2019. At this year's retreat, we will review the outcomes as an at-large

group, and use the pilot, with recommendations, to improve the second iteration as well as scale to our other member school district, Needles USD.

Evaluations – Formative/Summative:

In each of the pilots, tracking and related interventions drive the formative evaluations. In some cases, electronic tracking is built into the software – often with guided interventions. In other more traditional models, formative evaluations are designed by instructors with data manager oversight. Non-threatening formative evaluations are usually paper and pencil testing of knowledge.

Summative evaluations are driven by pre-determined criteria – mostly driven by the mandate of the legislation and sometimes driven by unique goals established by the respective steering committees. Most summative evaluations are quantitative exercises that measure literacy gains, certifications, employment and/or salary increases. In the case of parent programs, K-12 students (children of enrolled parents) performance outcomes – attendance and academic skills – are measured and compared to outcomes of students whose parents were not enrolled. While this correlative approach provides insights into the potential of parent programs, we are aware that more complicated and costly causal studies would provide stronger evidence of program value. Often, but not always, qualitative summative evaluations are conducted through informal focus groups and exit interviews.

Pilots in Development:

Following are pilot programs that are in various stages of development and consideration as we move forward into the next three-year phase. Each of these projects is following the strategic development plan. Formative evaluations for development projects are primarily qualitative with regularly scheduled status reports, adjustments and discussions. Once the pilot moves to actual development, the earlier-described development plan serves as the development model/roadmap. Summative quantitative evaluations primarily are driven by the legislation and involve evaluating knowledge gains, certifications, employment and salary increases.

- Culinary Program – The River Consortium and the Fort Mojave Indian Tribe are going through the approval process to explore a culinary training partnership that features culinary theory and regulations delivered by Palo Verde College and a rotation of hands-on culinary experiences at the AVI Resort and Casino. The development team involves Palo Verde College teaching staff, Needles USD teaching staff, and AVI Food and Beverage staff. Program is in the process of being approved by the Tribal Council, and plans are to further develop the program during the term of this three-year plan.
- Parent Programs – Two parent pilot programs have been completed in the Blythe area. The first program was piloted as a partnership with a Montessori pre-school. A semester class was developed for Montessori parents to help parents help their kids perform better in school. This program, although moderately successful, had limited scalability. A second program was developed as a partnership with Palo Verde USD. A ten-discussion series was developed using a better-tuned development model, and this program will replicate in the fall and scale to Needles USD in the fall as well. Focus of the program is to help parents help their kids perform better in school.
- Electronic Medical Records (EMR) (Health Informatics) – In addressing automation opportunities/challenges, the consortium has agreed to explore going forward with a blended virtual curriculum that will create a Health Informatics pathway. It is known that most hospitals and many out-patient clinics and pharmacies have implemented sophisticated EMR systems that have become standard procedure in medicine and often mandated

by insurance providers as a condition for reimbursement. Partnerships with local providers and/or national providers are being explored. This program is in very early stages.

- Agriculture Workforce Training – Considering that both Blythe and Needles are agricultural regions, a partnership is developing with the city of Blythe, the Progressive Farm Association, Palo Verde College and the River Consortium. A survey of farm owners and managers will be distributed in mid-April and qualitative discussions will follow with a focus on improving basic and vocational skills of farm workers as well as primer-training in Agricultural Drones (another effort at addressing the opportunities/challenges of automation). Although in the early stages now, an agricultural pilot or pilots could begin in fall 2019.
- Cannabis Careers – Both the cities of Blythe and Needles have invested resources in attracting cannabis industries to their respective areas. The focus initially was exclusively on medical use, but since California has expanded cannabis opportunities, both cities are involved in an assortment of projects related to cannabis. The consortium and Palo Verde College have had discussions that include educating and training the cannabis workforce as well as certifying cannabis workers as a condition of employment within the industry. These projects, in all likelihood, will lead to pilots, but development/partnerships are moving both deliberately and slowly. Capacity is a significant barrier.
- Satellite classes – In keeping with the overall goal, “expand and improve,” the consortium is committed to opening an ESL satellite class, preferably at a local Palo Verde elementary school. In the Needles area, a similar satellite for parents education was discussed at the recent May retreat, and a class is scheduled to open in October 2019.
- Adults with Disabilities – The Consortium is interested in exploring how to better serve Adults with Disabilities. To that end, a consultant will be retained to conduct a feasibility study that will examine existing community and adult school programs, potential resources and best practices.