Technical Assistance for Minority Serving Community Colleges

Interim Technical Assistance Plan

Contents

The MSI CoP Needs Assessment

To solicit feedback from the Minority Serving Community College Communities of Practice (CoPs) on their technical assistance interests and needs, the Technical Assistance for Minority Serving Community Colleges (MSIs) team (the three CoP coaches and the RTI project lead) launched a needs assessment on August 10. To avoid OMB clearance requirements, the team limited data collection to one representative from each CoP. To guide the assessment, the coaches sent a brief survey (included at the end of this report) to each CoP representative. The survey asked respondents to rate their CoP's level of interest in 21 technical assistance (TA) topics related to career and technical education (CTE) and education programming, and ten topics related to CoP development and activities. Respondents were asked to rate each using a one to five scale, with 1 indicating no interest and 5 indicating a top priority.

Following the ratings, the survey included a list of follow up questions on CoP activities to date, additional information on the CoP's top priority TA topics, and expectations and interests for the 2016 convening. The CoP representatives were asked to review these questions and to schedule a 30-minute to one-hour telephone interview with their coach to provide their responses. The coaches conducted interviews with all six of the CoP representatives from August 12 to 19. This report summarizes the information collected through the needs assessment overall and by CoP and outlines an initial technical assistance plan for the project.

Summary of Needs Assessment Results

Among the 21 CTE and programmatic topics included in the needs assessment, 15 were rated as top priorities by the CoP representatives, and seven of the 15 received this rating from two or more CoPs. During the phone interviews, the coaches asked the CoP representatives whether they had any additional topics of interest. Only two of the CoP representatives offered additional topics, but all provided details on the aspects of the needs assessment topics that they felt would be of greatest interest to their group.

Table 1: CTE and programmatic topics selected by CoP

	AANAPISI	HSI	HBCU	NTNASI	PBI	TCU
Career pathways	✓		✓	✓		✓
Innovations in supporting low-income and at-risk students	✓	✓			✓	✓
Equity in CTE and higher education	✓	✓		✓		
Data collection and analysis	✓			✓		
Employability and soft skills	✓		✓			
Employer engagement			✓			✓
Stackable credentials			✓			✓
Student services for CTE students		✓				
Best practices in developmental education						✓
Career navigators						✓
Competency-based education						✓
Credentialing			✓			
Credit for prior learning						✓
STEM-related CTE education				✓		

The two most popular topics, *Career pathways* and *Innovations in supporting low-income and at risk students*, were each selected by four CoPs. Respondents suggested three additional CTE and programmatic topics: strategies for promoting student engagement among community college students; career advising and counseling; and using workforce data for program planning. The coaches will include these topics among those considered at the 2016 convening.

A number of the topics presented are related. For example, career pathways can encompass employability and soft skills, employer engagement, stackable credentials, student services, career navigators, competency-based education, credentialing, and credit for prior learning. The coaches asked the CoP representatives that selected career pathways which aspects of career pathways were of greatest interest. Their responses suggest that many of the CoP institutions are at the early stages of career pathway development, an issue that the coaches will explore with the CoPs during the convening. For example, the CoP representatives indicated that their institutions need assistance with establishing career pathways programs that bridge education levels with the potential to enhance student engagement and connect with students early — in some cases prior to college or high school.

Each of the ten CoP development and activity TA topics were rated as a top priority by at least one of the CoP representatives, and seven were selected by more than one. The most popular choice was *Accessing federal and financial resources* followed by guidance on *CoP leadership*. Several CoP representatives felt that their group did not have a leader, and leadership turnover was also mentioned as a concern.

Table 2: CoP development and activity topics selected by CoP

	AANAPISI	HSI	HBCU	NTNASI	PBI	TCU
Accessing federal and financial resources	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
CoP leadership	✓	✓	✓			✓
Discussion facilitation	✓	✓	✓			
Distance networking		✓	✓			✓
Growing CoP membership			✓		✓	✓
Planning activities			✓		✓	✓
Sharing promising practices	✓	✓				✓
Communication and outreach strategies		✓				
Formalizing CoP commitments						✓
Program and activity evaluation				✓		

For CoP development and activities, two respondents also indicated a need for guidance on using LINCS to engage members.

Potential Themes and Guidance for the 2016 Convening

In terms of convening themes, the needs assessment revealed an interest among the CoPs in developing career pathways to support student success in college and connect students with further education and employment opportunities. Several of the respondents felt that career pathways have the potential to support at-risk students and promote equity, but felt that the colleges need assistance in developing effective programs that could meet these goals.

The CoP representatives spoke favorably about the 2015 convening, and expressed appreciation for the opportunities to meet with representatives from other MSIs, government agency representatives, and to engage in a discussion with members of their own CoP. They hoped that the 2016 convening would include these activities. Four of the CoP representatives appreciated the opportunity to meet with federal agency and funder representatives during the speed dating session, but felt that the activity needed more time. Two representatives also noted that holding the session in a larger physical space would have been useful. Specific suggestions for topics to include in this year's convening are included in the individual CoP summaries below.

Technical Assistance Next Steps

The needs assessment is a first step in developing a technical assistance plan for the MSI CoPs. The 2016 convening will allow the coaches to expand on the findings of this assessment with a broader group of CoP members. The coaches will also share the needs assessment results with the CoP members for their comments and input. Using the needs assessment responses as a guide, the coaches will facilitate a discussion with members of each CoP to further explore TA priorities, the goals and outcomes of TA activities, preferred

formats for TA activities, and next steps. The session agendas are still in development, but will include the following discussion areas:

1. **Review of technical assistance topics**: To guide discussions, the coaches will develop customized agendas for each CoP that will include a review of TA topics identified as the highest priorities overall and for each CoP. The coaches will ask the CoP members to describe the aspects of these topics that would be of greatest value, examples or promising practices that they would like the TA to cover, and whether there are any promising practices in their own institutions that they would be interested in sharing with the CoP community. The discussion will also address ways to vary TA activities through webinars, LINCS discussions, conference calls, and other formats.

2. **Guidance on CoP participation and leadership**: In advance of the convening, the coaches will develop written descriptions of activities and responsibilities for CoP members and leaders. These materials will be developed in consultation with the most active and organized CoPs to date (AANAPISI and PBI) and shared with the CoPs during the convening for comment and discussion.

3. **Review strategies for building CoP momentum**: The CoP leads confirmed OCTAE's assessment (shared during the kick off meeting) that CoP development levels vary, but are in general low. Only the AANAPISI and PBI CoPs reported any activities conducted independent of webinars conducted by OCTAE staff, and these CoPs are also the only two with a leadership structure in place. The coaches will review the current status of each CoP with the members, and identify priorities and next steps for moving forward. The CoPs will also be asked to identify their groups' leadership and technical assistance liaison and key institutional participants, and note members whose participation may require additional support or encouragement.

Following the convening, the coaches will use the feedback provided during the convening to develop a detailed technical assistance plan and schedule for the project, including webinar topics, as well as activities and follow up for each CoP.

In early December 2016, the technical assistance team will offer the first of six webinars to launch TA activities and review and finalize the plans developed during and after the convening. The webinar will be facilitated by Brittany Cunningham, the HBCU and PBI coach from Insight Policy Research, with portions led by the CoP leads as well as the other two coaches, Laura Rasmussen Foster and Jeanne Snodgrass. The webinar will provide an opportunity for CoPs to share their plans for the year and next steps, and share the topics of cross-CoP interest that will be covered by other webinars. The technical assistance team will work

with the CoP leads to ensure that representatives from at least four of each CoP's member institutions attend.

Following the webinar, the coaches will meet individually with each CoP via webinar to determine the details (actions necessary and responsibilities) to implement the overall and individual CoP plans.

Individual CoP Needs Assessment Responses

The following sections summarize the responses received from the CoP representatives who responded to the needs assessment. Most noted that they felt their answers to be preliminary and looked forward to consulting with other members of their group at the 2016 convening.

Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Community Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with May Lukens, Project Director, Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI) Program, South Seattle College, on August 17, 2016 to assess the TA needs of the AANAPISI CoP. The group is developing a series of webinars on cultural responsiveness that will focus on a different sub-population of the CoP each quarter. The first webinar is scheduled for 90 minutes on October 19th. The CoP leadership group has 3 members that meet by conference call monthly.

In terms of CTE and programmatic interests, Lukens selected *Equity in CTE and higher education* to be the group's top priority. She said a key question for institutions is how to engage students across cultures without making them into one culture. She noted that institutions with high percentages of Asians often have high percentages of Hispanics, and that institutions are looking for effective ways to serve each of these populations. She further observed that when pursuing external funding, institutions typically have to choose between grants directed as serving Asian or Hispanic students, since colleges are typically not permitted to pursue separate grants from one program for both.

Lukens also identified the following four topics as high interest, and provided additional information on three of them:

- *Innovations in supporting low-income and at-risk students;*
- *Career pathways*: Lukens felt that community colleges are not currently effective at educating students about career pathway options. The colleges need to know about pathway options and have access to materials to inform student choices;
- *Data collection and analysis*: Lukens shared that community colleges do not typically emphasize collecting data to make informed decisions, and need help in engaging in this process, including what types of data to collect and how;
- *Employability and soft skills*: Lukens related that colleges need information from industry on the soft skills that workers lack so that they can integrate the teaching of these skills in their programs.

In addition to the topics listed, Lukens mentioned the sharing of cultural competency strategies and examples of their application in the community college setting. In terms of topics related to CoP development and activities, Lukens selected the following four topics as top priorities, and the remaining topics in this section to be of high interest:

- *Sharing promising practices*: Lukens indicated that the AANAPISI CoP is interested in connecting with other CoPs to review best practices and hear their success stories;
- *Accessing federal and financial resources*: AANAPISI CoP members are in need of points of contact for accessing these resources at the federal and regional levels;
- *Discussion facilitation;*
- *CoP leadership*: Specifically, the AANAPISI CoP could use strategies for managing leadership change and turnover.

Format of CoP Support

Lukens noted that the AANAPISI CoP is planning webinars and has also offered them in the past, but felt the utility of the format to be somewhat limited because people could not talk or discuss. For the AANAPISI webinar series, Lukens felt that the group could use support in identifying supplementary resources for the planned webinar topics and guidance on how to structure and organize the webinar content. She also noted that the CoP could use support on being inclusive of members across time zones, such as the Pacific Islands.

2016 Convening

Lukens found the following topics and presentations to be of greatest value during the 2015 convening, and indicated that she would welcome a reprise of these topics or sessions during the 2016 convening:

- Engagement with federal agencies: Lukens felt that there was not enough time for the speed dating activity during the last convening. The AANAPISI CoP found the activity valuable for making connections, but too rushed and overwhelming.
  - She suggested that the speed dating session could be followed by longer sessions that would allow attendees more time with specific agencies.
  - She also felt that a guide on what the agencies provide, such as paid internships, grants, summer programs, scholarships would help attendees target the agency programs most useful to them.
- Research data panel and break out.
- Philanthropic panel.

Hispanic Serving Community Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with Jill Dingman, Title V Director, Central Arizona College, on August 15, 2016 for feedback from the Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) CoP. Dingman explained that the HSI group is large and has lacked leadership. In the year following the 2015 convening, the CoP relied on an OCTAE staff member to steer activities. She noted that OCTAE conducted a few webinars following the convening, but felt that HSI participation in those events was low.

In terms of CTE and programmatic interests, Dingman selected the following as top priorities for the HSI CoP:

- *Innovations in supporting low-income and at risk students* and *student services for CTE students*: Dingman shared that HSI institutions are interested in best practices and research providing student services to low income students from diverse backgrounds, especially when the majority of HSI faculty is older and white.

- *Equity in CTE and higher education*: Dingman explained that CoP members struggle with how to most effectively use their limited resources to ensure that all students get the same education while maintaining educational access for low-income and underprepared students.

In terms of topics related to CoP development and activities, Dingman selected the following topics as top priorities:

- *Distance networking*;
- *Sharing promising practices:* Dingman hoped that the CoP might develop into a community of best practices, which would allow members to learn about research findings and share experiences;
- *Accessing federal and other financial resources*;
- *Discussion facilitation*;

- *Communication and outreach strategies*: Dingman noted HSI CoP activity on LINCS had ceased. She suggested that LINCS be used to host moderated online discussion groups that would allow CoP participants to post and participate. She also noted that LINCS was difficult to access, and that the platform took up to two weeks to join.
- *CoP leadership.*

Dingman rated the other topics in the list of CoP support options as high interest.

2016 Convening

Dingman spoke positively about the 2015 convening, and found the sessions addressing STEM programs, equity, career development, research, and the CoP breakout sessions particularly valuable. She also appreciated access to program officers to answer questions, and the speed dating session for meeting with federal agency and funder representatives, although she noted that more time for both of these activities would have been helpful. Dingman also suggested allowing more time for the CoP breakout sessions, which in 2015 were limited to one hour near the end of the convening when some participants had already left.

Historically Black Community Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with Stephanie Graham, Director of Sponsored Programs and HBCU CoP Lead, Southern University at Shreveport, on August 16, 2016 for feedback from the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) CoP. Graham reported that the HBCU CoP has not been active since the 2015 convening, and noted that the one LINCS Virtual Webinar that she attended in 2016 did not seem to have staff from the other HBCU CoP members in attendance.

In terms of CTE and programmatic interests, Graham selected the following as top priorities for the CoP, in the order of priority shown:

4. *Employability and soft skills*: Graham related that community college students need to know more than just technical skills and that soft skills, such as communication, working in teams, and leadership, need to be integrated into technical classes.
5. *Employer engagement*: Graham indicated that the CoP could use guidance on how to keep business and industry engaged in college programs and activities.
6. *Career pathways*: In the past few years, a number of grants have been focused on career pathways and establishing linkages from 2- to 4-year colleges. To be competitive for these funding sources, community colleges need to know more about developing career pathways and how to effectively establish and sustain relationships with 4-year colleges.

7. *Stackable credentials*;
8. *Credentialing.*

Among the topics related to CoP development and activities, Graham selected the following as top priorities for the CoP, in the order of priority shown:

9. *Growing CoP membership*: Graham reported that the HBCU CoP LINCS page has only two members and that other potential members had been discouraged by the complexity of the LINCS sign-up process. If more guidance and facilitation support was provided to CoP leads, she believes the HBCU CoP might be more active;
10. *CoP leadership*: Graham felt that additional direction, guidance, and facilitation support would be helpful, such as TA on the role of the CoP Lead and guidance on member engagement;
11. *Planning activities*;
12. *Distance networking;*
13. *Discussion facilitation.*

2016 Convening

Graham suggested that the entire concept of an HBCU CoP should to be reintroduced at this year's convening, and stressed the need for more guidance and support on CoP leadership, member engagement, and motivation. In terms of topics to cover, she felt that all five of the CTE and programmatic topics that she selected as priorities for her CoP would be important to include in this year's convening.

Graham valued the round table sessions with federal agencies representatives on grant funding opportunities at the 2015 event, and felt that similar opportunities would be useful during this year's convening.

Nontribal Native American Serving Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with David Eppich, Vice President of Student Services, San Juan College, on August 16, 2016 for feedback from the Non Tribal Native American Serving Institutions (NTNASI) CoP. Eppich noted that institutions in his group have a lot of native graduates, but as nontribal institutions sometimes have to compete for resources with tribal institutions, a situation that he feels does not serve either group well. His CoP formed after the 2015 convening and has not yet been active.

In terms of CTE and programmatic interests, Eppich selected the following as top priorities for the CoP:

- *Equity in CTE and higher education* and *Career pathways:* Eppich related these two topics to the colleges' challenge to provide access to career pathways for students in reservation schools. The colleges need guidance on how to provide effective career guidance for native as well as Hispanic students. Eppich suggested that effective outreach may require colleges to connect with students as early as elementary or middle school.

- *STEM-related CTE education*: Eppich felt that the CoP's needs in relation to this topic were similar to those he mentioned in connection with equity, but specifically for STEM-H fields. He noted that students and their support networks tend not to understand the opportunities available through STEM-H careers. He also identified mathematics as a major barrier for many students, and stated that colleges could use more guidance on helping students to surmount this barrier.

- *Data collection and analysis*. Eppich noted that all of the colleges collect a lot of data, but a have poor understanding of how the use and analyze it. He noted a need for data to help colleges identify academic problems in CTE students early on.

In terms of topics related to CoP development and activities, Eppich identified the following topics as priorities for the group:

- *Accessing federal and other financial resources*: Eppich noted that CoP members struggle with how to access resources and utilize them well. The colleges could use advice on aligning their programs with federal requirements and available resources;

- *Program and activity evaluation*: Eppich said that the CoP could use assistance on how to measure progress, and to document that resources are being used efficiently.

2016 Convening

Eppich attended the 2015 convening and felt that the facilitated discussions worked really well because participants had a chance to contribute. He also appreciated the separation of tribal and non-tribal colleges, since this made each group feel that they did not have to compete. For the 2016 convening, Eppich hopes that the CoP can determine some next steps and actions to follow up with after the meeting.

Predominantly Black Community Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with Leah Jones, Grant Coordinator, Orangeburg-Calhoun Technical College, on August 19, 2016 for feedback from the Predominantly Black Institutions (PBI) CoP. Jones is helping to coordinate PBI CoP activities in collaboration with the CoP's steering committee of five college presidents. Currently, she is encouraging

CoP members to register for the group's LINCS page. The group is planning an introductory webinar for September or October to plan for the November meeting and discuss the CoP's mission and goals.

In terms of CTE and programmatic interests, Jones indicated *Innovations in supporting low-income and at-risk students* as their top priority. They would also be interested in learning about CoP members' strategies for promoting student engagement, which is a big challenge for community colleges. She said that the group would not be ready to weigh in on additional topics until they have time to meet.

In terms of topics related to CoP development and activities, the group is particularly interested in information about *Accessing federal and other financial resources*, and indicated that a list of websites and webinars on these resources would be helpful for the group. She also was interested in information on *Growing CoPs members* and *Planning activities,* and mentioned that a session on technology tools for engaging the colleges would be helpful. She was also interested in information on using LINCs effectively, including how to organize materials on the platform for sharing. She would also like to see examples of how other CoPs work with their groups.

2016 Convening

Jones shared that she found the stories from students regarding what helped them most to get through college to be one of the most compelling sessions of the 2015 convening. She also appreciated the best practices shared by other colleges. She noted that the speed dating session needed more physical space and additional time to be effective.

Tribal Colleges

The technical assistance team spoke with Carry Billy, President and CEO of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), on August 12, 2016 for feedback from the Tribal College and University (TCU) CoP.

Among the CTE and programmatic topics, Billy selected the following as top priorities:

- *Innovations in supporting low-income and at-risk students*;
- *Best practices in developmental education*;
- *Career pathways*;
- *Employer engagement*;
- *Competency-based education*;
- *Credit for prior learning*;
- *Stackable credentials*;
- *Career navigators*.

Billy related that the CoP's interest in the topics of competency-based education, credit for prior learning, and stackable credentials has two sources. First, the colleges are exploring these areas as strategies for student engagement and credential attainment. Second, tribal colleges have received funds through an initiative supporting competency-based education and credit for prior learning from the Lumina Foundation and need assistance with instituting these strategies on their campuses. Billy also identified support for employer engagement and industry partnerships as a keen need among the tribal colleges, and in particular strategies to connect with employers in rural areas and bridge cultural and racial differences. Career navigators (and career counseling in general) are weak or lacking at many tribal colleges, as are connections with workforce service agencies. Billy shared that the tribal colleges also need information on accessing and using workforce data for program planning.

Among the CoP development and activity topics, Billy selected the following as top priorities for her CoP:

- *Accessing federal and other financial resources*
- *Formalizing CoP commitments*
- *Distancing networking*
- *Sharing promising practices*
- *Planning activities*

2016 Convening

Billy suggested sessions on identifying evidence-based practices for grant applications for the 2016 convening. These sessions might build upon the presentations on this topic that were offered during the 2015 convening. She related that members of her CoP had attempted to apply what they learned from this session during the 2015 convening, but need additional guidance. She also noted that TCU CoP members found the speed dating with federal agencies overwhelming and rushed and were not able to benefit from this activity.

Appendix: Needs Assessment Template

Technical Assistance for Minority Serving Institutions
Community of Practice Needs Assessment

OCTAE's Technical Assistance for Minority Serving Institutions initiative will focus on career and technical education (CTE) and building community of practice (CoP) capacity. To plan the November convening and develop a draft technical assistance plan, we are asking for feedback on your CoP's resources, needs, and interests. Please review the following questions with representatives from your CoP (including any other lead colleges) and provide ratings for the topic lists below. In addition, we would like to schedule a call with you during the next week to review your responses and discuss plans for the coming year.

1. **In which topic areas related to CTE does your CoP need support?** Please rate your community of practice's interest level in technical assistance on the following topics related to CTE from 1 (no interest) to 5 (top priority):

Topic	No interest	A little interest	Some interest	High interest	Top priority
Equity in CTE and higher education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Innovations in supporting low-income and at-risk students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Best practices in developmental education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
STEM-related CTE education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Programs of study	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career pathways	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Credentialing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employer engagement	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Work-based learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Data collection and analysis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Perkins and Perkins reauthorization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Competency-based education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Credit for prior learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Stackable credentials	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Collaboration with workforce services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student services for CTE students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Career navigators	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integrating academic and technical content	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employability and soft skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. In which topic areas related to CoP development and activities does your CoP need support? Please rate your CoP's interest level in support addressing the following topics related to CoP development and activities from 1 (not interested) to 5 (top priority):

Topic	No interest	A little interest	Some interest	High interest	Top priority
Growing CoP membership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Formalizing CoP commitments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Distance networking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sharing promising practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Planning activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Accessing federal and other financial resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Discussion facilitation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Program and activity evaluation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication and outreach strategies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
CoP leadership	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

The following questions will be covered during the phone interview. There is no need to provide written responses to these questions, but please review them in advance and collect feedback from CoP members as needed.

3. Please describe your top three choices from each of the lists above.

    a. What aspects of these topics are of greatest interest?

    b. What kinds of support are needed?

    c. Are there any topics not included on the lists above that are priorities for your CoP?

4. Existing capacity:

    a. What activities has your CoP engaged in since the fall 2015 convening?

    b. What worked well about these activities? What could be improved? How engaged was your CoP membership in these activities?

5. What resources, if any, are currently available to support the CoP in these areas?

6. What are your CoP's expectations for the November convening?

    a. What do you think the meeting's priorities should be?

    b. What topics or issues do you feel that it will be most important to address (please refer to the lists above)?

    c. What worked well during the 2015 meeting?

        i. What should be repeated or continued this year?

        ii. What needed improvement?

7. What types of technical assistance activities would be of greatest interest? Examples include conference calls; webinars; moderated discussions.