

Regional Educational Consortium

Pooling Resources for Staff Training

In 2003 the Superior Courts of Monterey, San Benito, Santa Clara, and Santa Cruz Counties collaborated to create a Regional Educational Consortium for staff training. The consortium had a twofold purpose: to offer employee development and training consistent with Judicial Council and individual court goals; and to make the most courses available to the largest number of employees at the lowest cost while avoiding duplication of effort.

The Santa Clara court already had a development and training unit, which the smaller courts could use to get started. Among them, the courts brought together

- Trainers and facilitators
- Workshop and course materials
- Supplies
- Facilities
- Funds to buy materials
- Clerical staff to compile and distribute materials

The four courts now can offer continuous orientation, training, and development to employees through the use of courses and modules

- Developed by the participating courts
- Offered by the Administrative Office of the Courts
- From the Association of Court Trainers
- From outside vendors

Courses and modules are tailored to the participating courts' needs and are offered in convenient locations. Whenever a court develops a course, it is shared; when a court needs a course created, the work is shared. Most courses are free, because they use materials available within the judiciary; otherwise, courts pay for materials only when staff members attend the course.

To measure the effectiveness and value of each course, all attendees are asked to complete evaluation questionnaires, and the results are analyzed. Consortium members address deficiencies immediately. Workshop facilitators ask peers to evaluate their new courses.

An annual training day is held each February, open to all employees of the consortium courts. Ride-sharing and other cost-saving measures help make the event accessible.

Employee Cohesion

A side effect of the program is that employees of the various courts have chances to network at classes and develop a sense of community. They also gain a broader view of the role of the courts and their own jobs by talking with their counterparts from other courts.

Deep Collaboration

The Regional Educational Consortium went further than other shared resources programs among courts in two ways:

1. Member courts collaborated in creating a strategic plan and common goals for education.
2. Member courts share educational personnel, materials, time, and money as if they were one court.

Impacts

- Employees are enthusiastic about the program. More than 1,000 court employees have been offered previously unavailable educational opportunities in local facilities, reducing travel costs and time away from the office.
- Employees have been trained to deal with the public, so that they can provide better service under a variety of circumstances.
- Diversity courses have enabled employees to understand how to accommodate the needs of disabled people and members of various ethnic groups.
- Ethics education has helped employees understand and respect the high standards set forth in the code of ethics.
- Ergonomics and safety courses have helped protect employees from injuries.
- Judges can depend on trained professional employees to assist them in their judicial duties.
- Judges can be confident that staff members have served litigants competently and fairly in compliance with constitutional, statutory, and [California Rules of Court](#) mandates.



The collaborative Regional Educational Consortium brings together facilitators and students from four different courts, to pool resources, share ideas, and generate communication.

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