



Geographic Lead Agencies

Year 2 Evaluation Report

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Overview



As part of its evaluation of the System of Support, RTI International surveys County Office of Education (COE) staff to understand the effectiveness and impact of the Geographic Lead Agency (Geo Lead) work. The Year 1 survey was conducted in March 2020 and the Year 2 survey was conducted in March 2021. Reporting of the Year 2 results and a comparison with the Year 1 results show that the Geo Leads continue to provide effective assistance to COEs and have improved in almost all areas. The Year 2 survey also included specific questions about the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This report highlights major survey findings, focusing on areas of success and a few areas that offer opportunity for growth.

The Year 2 survey had 160 COE respondents across 47 counties and a response rate of 64%. The Year 1 survey had 129 respondents across 48 counties and a 51% response rate.

High-Quality Professional Learning



Survey results indicate that Geo Leads are providing professional development opportunities that COEs find useful, and results show increased satisfaction compared with Year 1.

- **90%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead has provided access to high-quality professional learning opportunities, an increase of **16 percentage points** compared with Year 1
- Approximately **90%** of COEs who reported receiving support in the following areas indicated that the support was effective:
 - Examining systems as a whole rather than looking at problems in isolation (**93%** compared with **88%** in Year 1)
 - How to conduct a meaningful needs assessment with Local Education Agencies (LEAs) (**92%** compared with **77%** in Year 1)
 - Data inquiry practices to identify areas for improvement (**91%** compared with **85%** in Year 1)
 - Use of improvement science to inform implementation (**90%** compared with **89%** in Year 1)
 - Data inquiry practices to identify best practices to share with other COEs (**87%** compared with **78%** in Year 1)

Opportunities for growth might be in professional development support for two tasks for which COEs indicated that they were not receiving support but could use it:

- After Action Reviews to reflect on practice with their own COE or with their LEAs
 - **38%** of COEs in both Year 1 and Year 2 indicated that they were not receiving this support but could use it
- How to establish high-functioning improvement teams that can collectively address specific county challenges
 - **38%** of COEs in Year 2 indicated they were not receiving this support but could use it, an increase of **8 percentage points** compared with Year 1

“Our COE has received tremendous support from our Geo Lead in the area of analyzing data with an equity lens and leading difficult equity conversations. The professional learning offered has been extremely high quality and helpful.”

Support for County Offices of Education Working with Local Education Agencies



COEs report that Geo Leads have been helpful in building their capacity to work effectively with their LEAs and provide Level 1 and Level 2 supports.

- **77%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead has been helpful in building their capacity to work more effectively with their LEAs, an increase of **10 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **70%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that through their work with their Geo Lead, they have collaboratively built their organization's capacity to provide universal support (i.e., Level 1) to LEAs in their county, an increase of **6 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **69%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that through their work with their Geo Lead, they have collaboratively built their organization's capacity to provide differentiated assistance (i.e., Level 2 support) to LEAs in their county, which is the same percentage as in Year 1.
- **73%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of working with their Geo Lead, they are now more familiar with how other COEs are providing Level 1 and 2 supports, a decline of **3 percentage points** from Year 1.

Survey results indicate that supporting COEs in changing their practices related to Level 1 and Level 2 supports based on support from their Geo Leads represents one potential area of continued growth for Geo Leads.

- In Year 2, just over half (**58%**) of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had changed practices related to Level 1 and 2 supports based upon the support received from their Geo Lead. Although this represents an increase of **9 percentage points** compared with Year 1, Geo Leads may be able to help more COEs follow through in changing practices based on what they have learned.

"One promising gift from our Geo Lead has been the ability to still learn and grow from other County Offices in this continuous improvement area of the work I lead (DA). Because of COVID, we have been on a travel ban and what would be 'normal' professional learning opportunities have come to a halt. I learn so much when I attend our Geo Lead gatherings. Our GL director is always crafting together great tools that I can take back to my DA work and every single time we convene, I pick up a new idea from the COEs participating. County office work is truly unique and by allowing us to caucus, we can grow stronger together."

Strong Relationships with County Offices of Education and Effective Support in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic



Survey results indicate that Geo Leads continue to build and facilitate trusting relationships with their COEs and among COEs in their regions. In addition, results indicate that these relationships have improved over time. Continuing to nurture and grow these relationships is an opportunity area for the Geo Leads.

- **83%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead has helped facilitate trusting relationships between COEs in their geographic area, an increase of **9 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **78%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead understands their COE's needs, an increase of **5 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **78%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt safe or comfortable going to their Geo Lead for assistance and brainstorming regarding difficult challenges, an increase of **4 percentage points** compared with Year 1.

In general, about half of COE respondents reported that they had not asked their Geo Lead for assistance with issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as transition to online instruction, best practices for online curriculum instruction, and grading practices during distance learning.

The most widely requested assistance during the pandemic was for supporting students' social and emotional well-being.

- **67%** of COEs reported that they asked their Geo Lead for support in social and emotional well-being; of those that received support, **80%** reported the support was good or excellent.
- Support in transition to online instruction or distance learning was also rated highly by COE respondents who requested and received that support, with **82%** rating the support they received as good or excellent.

"The most effective COVID support was the opportunity our Geo Lead gave us to collaborate with other COEs on best practices and supports during distance learning. This provided key information that was relevant to the needs of our county."

Ongoing and Effective Support for Continuous Improvement and Spread of Work to County Office of Education Staff



COEs continued to report high levels of satisfaction with Geo Lead support in Continuous Improvement in Year 2.

- **86%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead had modeled continuous improvement in its own work, an increase of **4 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **89%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organization had incorporated a continuous improvement mindset into its own work, an increase of **3 percentage points** compared with Year 1.
- **87%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt equipped to train others in how to use a continuous improvement framework for their work, an increase of **8 percentage points** compared with Year 1.

“Our Equity group has changed our team for the better and helped us use continuous improvement processes to deepen our work. We know our own stories so much better, which in turn helps us to lead work that asked others to examine their own cultural story. We are more aware of injustices and more astute to identify those injustices in our schools. We can use data and continuous improvement principles to keep growing. Thank you for this amazing, safe, professional, and empowering space to work!”

Virtually all COE respondents (**94%**) reported that they talked with others in their COE about their work with their Geo Lead, an increase of **6 percentage points** compared with Year 1.

- The three departments most likely to be part of Geo Lead work discussions were as follows:
 - Curriculum and Instruction (**71%**)
 - Professional Learning and Support (**53%**)
 - Data, Research, and Evaluation (**48%**)

“Our Geographic Lead Agency has been instrumental in our work. They are supportive, kind, and generous with their time. We have brought back many ideas from our Geo Lead convenings to numerous different divisions in our County Office.”