



SELPA Lead Agencies Evaluation Findings

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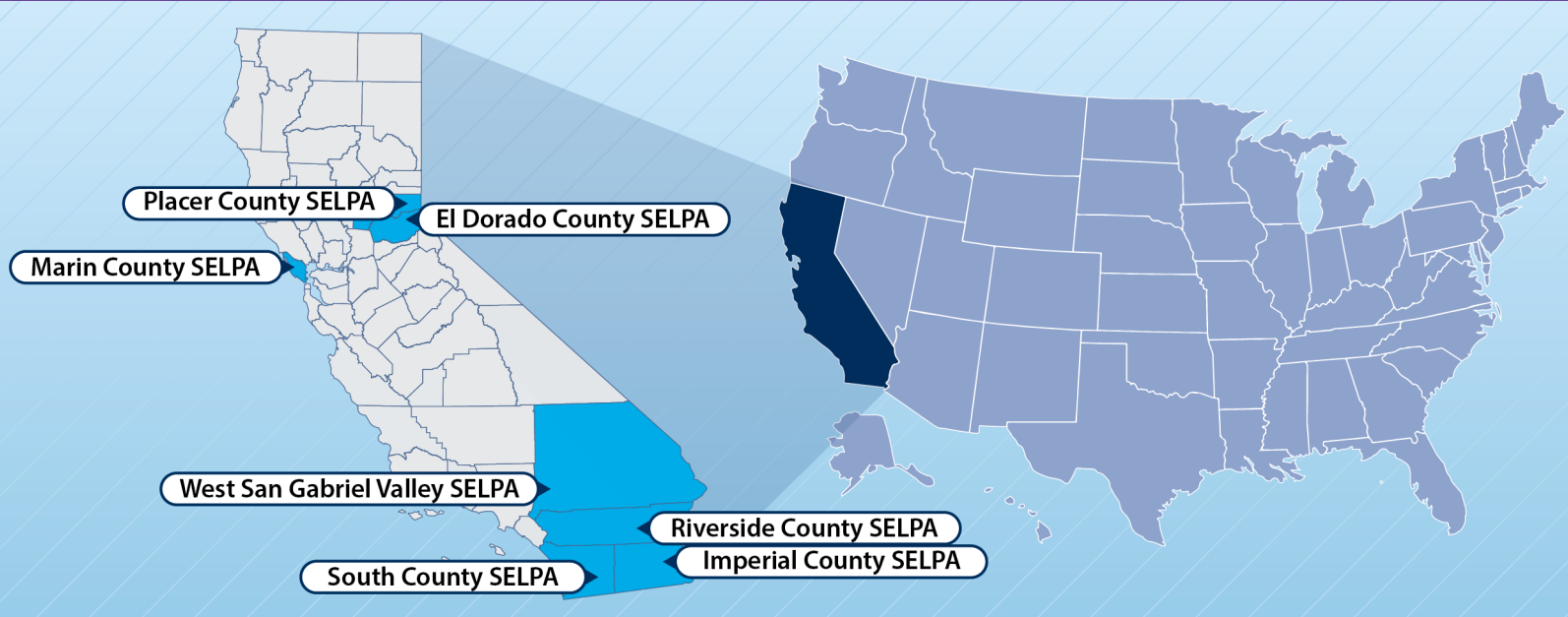
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INTRODUCTION

Within the California Statewide System of Support (SOS) are five Special Education Local Plan Area Lead Agencies (SELPA Leads) (four content and one system improvement): Imperial County, focused on English learners with disabilities; Marin County, focused on autism and evidence-based practices; Placer County, focused on access; South County, focused on disproportionality and equity; and System Improvement, coordinated among El Dorado County, Riverside County, and West San Gabriel Valley.

The purpose of the SELPA Leads is to build the capacity of SELPA partners in supporting local education agencies (LEAs) to meet the needs of students with disabilities and improve their outcomes, connect with other partners, align priorities, integrate special education and general education, and facilitate resources and relationships.



This is RTI International's third annual evaluation of the SELPA Leads during the SELPA Lead 2019–2023 grant cycle. During the Year 1 evaluation (2019–2020), evaluation findings were presented in the seven categories of practices for effective education networks that lead to systems change and improved student outcomes. These categories were evidence-based practices, continuous improvement, collaboration, trust and accountability, leadership, resources, and equity. During the Year 2 evaluation (2020–2021), findings uncovered changes, successes, and challenges in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened awareness of racism and the need for equity and social justice.

The Year 3 evaluation (2021–2022) sought to uncover the successes beginning to stabilize, impact of those successes, challenges, and collaboration among SELPA Leads and other agencies within the SOS. The questions guiding this evaluation were as follows:

1. What is the impact of the SELPA Leads?
2. What are SELPA Lead successes related to SELPA capacity building?
3. How do SELPA Leads collaborate within the SOS?

The evaluation team collected data from focus groups and interviews with SELPA Leads ($N = 17$) and SELPA partners ($N = 7$) as well as a survey completed by SELPA partners ($N = 150$). Findings are described on the following pages.

SELPA Lead Impact

The impact of SELPA Lead capacity building was observed within each system level: SELPAs, LEAs, and the ultimate beneficiary—students.



1. SELPA Leads influenced SELPAs in their work in areas like data use, continuous improvement, and collaboration across SELPAs.

A leading impact was SELPAs' **use of data**. One SELPA Lead team member commented, "There's been an emphasis on that data use and governance piece about making [data] more accessible so you can have more common language around ... data, that it's not just the director or just a group of administrators doing it," emphasizing that SELPAs ask SELPA Leads to help with data analysis and use the data to inform improvements in their practices. All SELPA Leads indicated that SELPAs used **data tools** that the former created for collecting and analyzing SELPA data, including for analyzing historical trends of their special education and performance indicators.

Eighty-eight percent of SELPA partners¹ agreed² that SELPA Lead capacity building activities directly helped them **use data to further inform and identify problems of practice**. Ninety-one percent agreed that they could select evidence-based practices for academics, and 84% for improving social, emotional, or behavioral outcomes. One SELPA administrator described **using data to ask questions** to create a problem of practice and instead of "checking boxes" on a compliance report from the California Department of Education (CDE), looking at the data and asking, "What does the data [output] mean? What does it mean for our students and how can we improve so, ultimately, their outcomes and lives are improved?"

Eighty-six percent of SELPA partners agreed that SELPA Lead capacity building activities helped them **practice continuous**

improvement. One partner shared how a tool used in SELPA Lead trainings helped continue improvement work after turnover within the SELPA: "These departing employees held important institutional knowledge that was necessary to be preserved in order for the SELPA to continue to execute its activities smoothly." The partner built on the process of supporting districts despite departures of some employees.

SELPA Lead on SELPA partner networking: "There's a lot of value in connecting people and really having them build their own networks professionally so that they're not so siloed so that they have a broader perspective."

Another direct impact of the SELPA Lead work was **networking across SELPAs**. One SELPA Lead team member described the impact as breaking down silos because SELPAs are solving similar problems: "That they now have colleagues across the state who they can phone a friend and ask about something, who they never would've met otherwise... It's not just about their local problem, [and they can] connect to one another as they work through these challenges." Another SELPA Lead team member, in describing the ability to **scale the growth of this professional learning network**, shared that the SELPA Lead extended its reach across the

¹ Percentages only reflect responses of those who reported medium to high levels of involvement with their SELPA Lead (120 of 150 total survey respondents). Those who reported low involvement with their SELPA Lead (30 survey respondents) were not included.

² All mentions of "agreed" represent responses of "agreed" or "strongly agreed" on surveys.

state, which helped most SELPAs connect, along with many of their respective county offices of education (COEs) and LEAs, reflecting how the work grew over the course of 3 years. SELPAs concurred with the networking effects, saying that they aligned work with other SELPAs, worked with teams that they would not have otherwise worked with, and learned from other SELPAs when focused on similar problems of practice in different geographic locations.

2. SELPA Lead capacity building affected how SELPA partners worked with LEAs, from facilitating data use and continuous improvement of evidence-based practices to providing coaching and tailored trainings.

Ninety-three percent of SELPA partners agreed **the SELPA Lead they worked with built their capacity to work effectively with LEAs**. Eighty-nine percent of SELPA partners agreed that they guided LEAs to use **helpful online tools and resources** obtained from SELPA Leads, with 89% helping LEAs with evidence-based strategies for academics and 85% helping LEAs with **evidence-based strategies** for social-emotional learning.

All five SELPA Leads pointed to SELPAs' **data use** as a primary area of capacity building that SELPAs facilitated with their LEAs. One SELPA Lead team member shared how a SELPA worked with an LEA to determine which data was important to collect based on what they were looking to analyze and improve. For example, to improve supports for students, the SELPA showed the LEA how to access information about educator caseloads and IEP services.

One partner from an LEA involved with SELPA Lead trainings mentioned learning to "let the data do the talking, take away the emotion from it.... Be very objective." The partner shared the process with the team: "We even developed a rubric to what we were looking for... We came across the fact that a lot of our speech and language assessments might not be necessarily normed in our student population." The result led to creating a problem of practice to decrease "classifying someone with a disability when they're actually not disabled."

Another SELPA partner used **data tools** to help an LEA with a compliance issue. Through the process, the partner found that the compliance issue "was not because they did anything wrong,... it was just the data was input wrong... I think it did feel empowering [to help them with] a different process,... [They] changed the way that they were inputting data, and so it was more simplified." Partners shared that many tools that they used to help LEAs were for purposes like data mining and review (e.g., data presentations, data

toolkit, specific assessments), data-based decision making, and improvement and implementation science approaches for continuous improvement.

Eighty-eight percent of SELPA partners agreed that SELPA Lead capacity building activities directly helped them **facilitate LEAs' data use to further inform or identify problems of practice** in their work of improving outcomes for students with disabilities. Working with an LEA, one partner shared that students with disabilities who received their special education services in "resource" classrooms were still three years behind their peers in reading. The LEA used data-based decision-making to determine the specific issues related to current reading interventions provided to these students and found that these interventions were "pieces of different programs and not aligned to the reading curriculum provided to grade-level peers in the general education program." Because of the examination of data as modeled by SELPA Leads, the LEA chose to align all supplemental and intervention reading curricula with the core program.

SELPA Leads described how SELPAs' **communication with LEAs improved**. Multiple SELPA Leads brought up the use of empathy interviews. One SELPA Lead team member described, "[SELPAs] actually engage with empathy and really are there to support our LEAs as true coaches. And that was intentional, that wasn't just happenstance." A SELPA partner shared that they conduct empathy interviews with teachers when they are investigating least restrictive environment (LRE) and want to find out how to improve LRE numbers. Another partner said communication about data with LEAs improved, saying that discussions could be "judgmental" and "critical" and, instead, they learned from the "safe space" that SELPA Leads provided. This method of discussing data was valuable to move from data discussions sounding like a punitive lever for not meeting standards of compliance to using data for improvement.

SELPA Lead on SELPAs tailoring trainings for LEAs: "We hear from other SELPAs or county offices saying, 'I have an LEA. I have a district that wants to do this work. Can we tailor make a series for them?' And we say, 'Sure, let's schedule it on the calendar. Let's have some conversations.'"

Some SELPA Leads shared that SELPAs **tailored their trainings for LEAs**. For example, a SELPA Lead team member noted an increase in SELPAs asking their SELPA Lead to help tailor work with LEAs. One SELPA partner described tailoring a training: "I was recently in a meeting



with one of our districts who's identified in significant disproportionality. One of their activities is to really build up their MTSS [multi-tiered system of supports] and their prereferral interventions. The special ed director mentioned the evidence-based practices from [the SELPA Lead] as part of those prereferral interventions," starting the discussion on how the SELPA could tailor work to support the district.

3. SELPA Leads impacted both LEA processes and student access to supports.

A primary impact on LEAs was the integration of special education and general education through teaming. Eighty-five percent of SELPA partners agreed that SELPA Lead capacity building activities directly helped them **model or guide effective team roles and processes**. Many SELPA Leads talked about LEA teams being more "representative" of different offices and departments and representing both **special education and general education staff**. One partner reported that collaborations led to embedding supports for students with disabilities into strategic plans. Another partner referenced students getting increased general education assistance due to the improved relationship between general and special education staff: "Now I have access to the general education teachers [who help with general education resource accessibility]... We've made them part of our team... Before, [students had less] access to the general education curriculum."

SELPA Leads mentioned LEAs made changes in **eligibility processes and IEPs**. One SELPA Lead team member shared how an LEA revamped the "language that they're using in their psychoeducational evaluations, their use of tools and materials, the use of interpreters and translators as

they refocus their lens on culturally and linguistically appropriate assessments as to not over- or underidentify." For example, one LEA implemented changes in the eligibility determination process for Spanish-speaking students. By examining data, it discovered that a disproportionate number of Spanish-speaking students were classified as having a speech-language impairment.

SELPA Partner, about improving eligibility processes in an LEA: "We were able to dig in and basically we are overly identifying our Spanish-speaking students with a disability when they don't really have a disability. It's more like they've never been exposed to the language."

In another example of a problem of overidentification, one SELPA partner engaged an LEA in a **root cause analysis** to determine the underlying cause of an overidentification issue in preschoolers with disabilities. After using tools from the SELPA Lead, the partner helped the LEA adjust the identification process by creating an "MTSS lite" model so that students received intervention rather than going "straight to assessment."

SELPA Leads discussed improvements in **resources that students receive**, from assistive technology, augmented communication, and universal design for learning to evidence-based practices for autism and English learner supports. Other SELPA Leads shared that LEAs received assistance with how to plan for differentiated assistance work and special education monitoring work as well as common problems of practice like improving the quality of IEPs: "They're **testing ideas in their local context**. They're sharing data and coming together."

SELPA Lead Successes Related to Capacity Building

SELPA Leads had several capacity building successes, especially coaching, providing time and opportunities for learning, teaming that integrated special education and general education, positive relationships, and structures for sustainability.



1. SELPA Lead activities were successful, especially coaching

SELPA partners used website resources and participated in webinars, collaboration meetings, face-to-face workshops or presentations, networking, collaboration to support an LEA, coaching and mentorship, and state-level and regional conferences. Ninety-seven to 100% of partners who participated in these activities rated them as helpful.³

Most SELPA Leads described **coaching** as one of the most successful training activities. They defined coaching or mentoring as ongoing, for both individuals and teams, and for SELPAs' implementation of continuous improvement processes for their own organizations and for helping LEAs. For example, one SELPA Lead team member explained, "The coaching has really ramped up... We're not one and done. So, we are able to walk people through... before that training, after that training series and partnership. It's more of a partnership than a sit and get kind of thing." Similarly, another SELPA Lead team member described how coaching was successful in ongoing support: "I think [a] critical piece has been our implementation coaching ... particularly as [the teams are] new and learning how to do this... I don't think that we could have done the training and just said, 'Okay, now go do it.'"

SELPA partners also cited coaching as the most effective support they received from SELPA Leads. They called it individualized, direct, and one on one. One partner described the **coaching relationship** as a needed guidance:

"Where there was a lot of discussing and a lot of guiding from their part as to what my answer should be, or like, 'you already know the answer, but I'm going to guide you.' ... So it was a lot of that, which I think I'm grateful for, because again, it just gives me another skill level. That maybe I just need someone to talk to, and then actually I'll get to my answer, and I just need that feedback, and even getting their additional support."

2. SELPA Lead capacity building was tailored and responsive to SELPA partners' needs.

Most SELPA Leads described successes in **tailoring their training** to meet the needs of SELPA partners. One SELPA Lead team member spoke about individualizing support relative to the partner's foundational knowledge: "We set up individual meetings where we met people, from 'what do I do from MTSS process that's ineffective?' to 'why are you supporting MTSS?' to provide an audience to address their questions." Another SELPA Lead team member described tailoring training resources: "We've taken [implementation tools] and modified and adapted and revised and made them really specific to our work here in California" so that SELPAs can understand and use the tools "to determine which evidence-based practices they're going to train and coach on for that program that they're trying to improve."

³ All mentions of "helpful" represent responses of "somewhat helpful" to "very helpful" on surveys.

A different SELPA Lead team member spoke about successes in tailoring training based upon participant feedback: “We are responsive to what folks say that they need after they participate in a professional development series, or they come across a certain element of the [resource] that they need some additional support... Now we’ve gotten to the point where we’re developing a day-long series based on interest.”

SELPA partner, about SELPA Lead trainings: “[The SELPA Lead] met us where we were at, and they didn’t just focus on ‘you’re in compliance, you have to do this.’ They really were [saying] ‘this region wants to have a culture of improvement, so how can we help them?’”

Tailoring extended to the **responsiveness of SELPA Leads** to individual questions. A SELPA partner, in describing the availability of SELPA Leads stated, “Anytime you had a question, they would have drop-in hours... Even today, if I had a question, I know I could email somebody ... or just pop in a question onto the website, or if you know who directly to reach out to, then they always get back to you.” Another partner related that SELPA Leads encouraged asking questions and sending texts that they would answer or help find the answer, saying that the responsiveness “[made] me feel like I’m not alone.”

3. SELPA Leads’ capacity building structure provided time and opportunities for learning.

Ninety-seven percent of SELPA partners agreed that SELPA Leads **provided access to high-quality professional learning opportunities**. All SELPA Leads described the opportunities as being of **sufficient duration**, with courses, sessions, or coaching lasting from a few months to 1 year. One SELPA Lead team member explained, “Our focus is on capacity building and really knowing these are not one and done trainings. These are not drop in and just learn something kinds of trainings. These are definitely you as a Lead or as a district or as a county office or whomever are selecting [LEAs]... so they could be part of your system of support in these areas, and then you have the materials and resources you need to really take people through that process and be able to do it with fidelity.”

Two SELPA Leads discussed using a **“chunked” approach** to capacity building. One SELPA Lead team member described two benefits to chunking: “The first is, we can keep people’s attention longer, so for example, our data trainings are 3 hours, but they’re only an hour at a time, and they go at a

pretty fast pace, super practical,... and [second], the content is more portable; the smaller it is, the easier it is for [SELPAs] to deliver it [to LEAs].” Similarly, another SELPA Lead team member mentioned using the chunking approach to deliver the content within preexisting structures to avoid meeting saturation: “So, sometimes... around the data tools specifically, [we take] 15, 20 minutes at... one of their director’s meetings or council meetings” to give a snippet, then another piece the following month.

Some SELPA Leads and partners described the learning as **interactive** and **providing practice**, like when SELPA staff members engage in a problem of practice within their own organization and with LEAs. One partner said, “A lot of times data can be boring when you’re reviewing it. And the way that it was presented, it was more interactive” so that “anybody could be able to understand it.” A SELPA Lead team member shared a **gradual release approach** within three tiers of certification: first with a course for teachers and paraprofessionals, second for special service providers, and third “to make sure that they truly are functioning ... specialists and know everything they need to know to drive the whole system when it’s done.”

4. SELPA Leads’ capacity building supported a teaming approach.

All SELPA Leads focused on the value of building the capacity of **multidisciplinary teams**, from SELPA-only teams to SELPA teams that included COE and LEA staff. One SELPA Lead team member shared receiving positive feedback about partners attending capacity building sessions as a team, with representation from general education, special education, and English learner staff and administrators. Another SELPA Lead team member pointed to the teaming approach as successful in helping SELPAs recognize their importance in supporting districts: “We’re seeing an increase in that where an LEA will come with their SELPA colleagues or their county office colleagues, SELPAs will come with county offices... I think it’s been successful in helping county office and SELPA teams realize that their role is really to support the district.”

One partner described **building a SELPA team**: “So for us, if we are going to be supporting [LEAs] in anything and we want this improvement lens, that’s how I built my team... we all need to have this knowledge about improvement science, implementation science, and we need to all be speaking the same language,... that vernacular, that culture of improvement.” Another partner described intentionally inviting a multidisciplinary SELPA team to SELPA Lead sessions for the purpose of increasing capacity building: “During our last root cause analysis... two of our teams

had general education teachers and admin with them. And we had our county office LCAP [Local Control and Accountability Plan] director, who really doesn't do much at all with special ed, joined us as well.... This is what a full team looks like... we were super excited about that."

5. SELPA Lead capacity building focused on positive relationships.

Many SELPA Leads emphasized relationships. Two SELPA Leads discussed **the importance of having empathy** for demands with which SELPAs and districts contended and how it manifested in SELPA Leads' support. For example, one SELPA Lead team member explained, "So I think we enter with great humility of these challenges that LEAs are encountering... Things are hard, and if it was easy to fix, they would've already done that. So, we are happy to walk alongside them and help them work through those problems." Similarly, another SELPA Lead team member pointed to relationship building as successful for supporting districts: "So much of what we find is, it's that trust and that relationship, no matter what... They want someone to lean on, and we want to let them know that we care enough to give them what they need to the best of our ability."

SELPA partners used words like **caring, trusting, and supportive** in responses that emphasized SELPA Leads' relationship building with them. One partner described that relationship: "What I liked about working with them is one, they didn't take over. They trusted me, they trusted my leadership." Another partner added a feeling of empowerment and not having to "wait months... There was someone, a human being I could talk to... It was very much relational."

6. SELPA Leads set up structures for sustainability.

SELPA Leads discussed professional learning structures and resources they developed to sustain capacity building beyond the grant's end. They shared they were intentional in creating resources, and 98% of SELPA partners found the resources helpful, including data tools, databases for using data for improvement, tools for continuous improvement, processes for equitable special education eligibility, and services for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. One SELPA Lead team member said, "That's where the work has been from day one, is on building that capacity for our regional teams to support capacity building within their districts and their school sites and across their systems... to make sure that when we wrap up here next year, these teams [are] ready and positioned to continue on."

Another SELPA Lead team member defined the focus on building **"hubs of expertise"**: "When we're looking at capacity building [we gave] them the ability to continue teaching and continue to build the expertise of their people in their region and area. So not just their SELPA... Our expectation is that you're going to not just train your little area, but you're going to be the hub for this region and continue to build the expertise ... and grow this program." Another SELPA Lead "launched a network improvement community" to empower units working individually to approach improvement in a teamed environment.

Other SELPA Leads described a **set of tools** they built to provide reflection for overidentification and underidentification in special education, infographics and use of online tools for behavior change, and "everything a [SELPA] would need to go in and work with a school site... from capacity building resources, to training resources, to coaching resources, to modules for teachers to use, everything they would need to do to have including training resources for the administrators... [for] a school site team to make decisions for students, all students, not even just special ed students."

SELPA Partner about the SELPA Leads: "All of the things that they've created for us to be able to go in and get our data in real time, I mean, I quite honestly, I never thought I would see this in my lifetime as a special educator. I was like, no one's ever going to figure this out. They have figured it out. So it also makes, it just makes your job easier."

SELPA Leads created **content and resources** that partners said were helpful and that they would continue to use. Some examples were data visualization, data sheet examples, root cause analysis guide, data quality toolkit, improvement data center, English Learner Roadmap and Practitioner's Guide, effective communication, process map, resources specific to English learners, universal design for learning and assistive technologies guides, disproportionality resources, and assessments for students with autism.



SELPA Lead Collaboration Within California Statewide System of Support

Many SELPA partners are aware of the SOS, but it is primarily the realm of SELPA Leads. SELPA Leads collaborated within and outside of the SOS. They reported on SOS challenges of collaborating within the SOS and suggestions for mitigating those challenges.



1. SELPA Leads collaborated with other SELPA Leads and organizations within and outside of the SOS.

Most SELPA Leads discussed **collaborations with other SELPA Leads**. Two SELPA Leads spoke of multiple partnerships across the state. One SELPA Lead team member explained, “I feel like we work with our SELPA Lead colleagues regularly. I don’t even think of that as the collaboration anymore because we are familiar partners to one another at this point.” SELPA Leads also pointed to leveraging collaborations with other SELPA Leads to support their work. One SELPA Lead team member shared having “collaborated with [another] SELPA Lead... to support our work in collecting data from all the CDE data about students [in a disability category].” Similarly, another SELPA Lead explained collaborating with two other SELPA Leads on grant activities to finalize resources for SELPA partners to access on their website.

Three SELPA Leads described **multiple collaborations across the SOS**, including Geographic Lead Agencies (Geo Leads), COEs, and other SOS agencies. One SELPA Lead team member described a collaboration with the CDE: “I think we’re really rising to the challenge” of working with CDE to bring together “different cultures of work around [the topic] and figure out a way to design” technical assistance resources. Two SELPA Leads described how they collaborated with both Geo Leads and COEs to provide content area support.

Increasingly we are getting requests from various Geo Leads and county offices around the supports that we bring that might be used for differentiated assistance. So... [we are] helping folks really select high-leverage changes once they get to that point.” *SELPA Lead about SOS collaborations*

SELPA Leads discussed viewing the **SOS as becoming integrated**. One SELPA Lead team member described the integration as “blended,” saying that multiple SOS agencies like Geo Leads and COEs have begun collaborating over time: “[One COE] is a partner with [another COE] in Geo Lead work, and they’re constantly promoting [the SELPA Lead work] specific to data and continuous improvement... So, it becomes less about, oh, it’s this partnership with so and so, and we’re marching forward in a partnership, but now you’re seeing folks at the same tables leaning into similar work.” Similarly, another SELPA Lead team member described how the integrated system allowed for collaborations across multiple agencies: “To have our work as part of [an Educator Workforce Investment Grant’s (EWIG’s)] catalog of options for county offices that have become their partners in the [EWIG] work in the system of support as they’re working through [student] needs.”

Most SELPA Leads talked about leveraging connections made with **agencies outside of the SOS** to support their work. Two SELPA Leads described the connections for **information and resource sharing**. One SELPA Lead team

member explained, “We’ve connected with [agency] about their work because they’ve been throughout California using implementation science on behalf of the CDE grant.” The same team member described another agency that acted as a “support group for... various entities on the statewide system of support.” Similarly, another SELPA Lead team member described an outside agency as an informal coalition to “talk about how we implement [our topic] across the state or what the systems look like.”

Two SELPA Leads said that outside agencies **helped increase their outreach**. One SELPA Lead team member described their collaboration as part of “multidisciplinary teams doing this work together... [The] relationship with the [content] experts in California has helped us further our reach and that... collective commitment is necessary” to improve student outcomes. Similarly, another team member explained that an agency reached out “after identifying that a student group has particular needs and where our resources and our supports could really fill a specific need within those LEAs.”

2. SELPA partners reported SELPA Lead resources helped them successfully access the SOS.

“I could not do my job without the Statewide System of Support. The resources they provide me as a SELPA administrator—both content and SIL—are invaluable.”
(SELPA Partner, about the SELPA Leads)

Sixty-seven percent of SELPA partners agreed that **they knew how to navigate the SOS to get the support they needed**. The percentage excluded those who reported not having tried to access support yet. When asked about how they navigated the SOS, however, many partners said they did not know what the SOS was, “have not accessed this resource,” or referenced only SELPA Leads; some referred to Geo Leads. Partners most often pointed **to SELPA Lead resources as helping them successfully access the SOS**. Other successes included resources in multiple languages, collaboration and networking, ongoing updates, timely and helpful responses from SELPA Leads, expertise of SELPA Leads, and having direct communication with SELPA Leads for specific help, training, and coaching. One partner described having a collaborative where the SELPA met monthly with the Geo Lead, and the COE had a differentiated assistance program to support LEAs: “If they’re in trouble for students with disabilities, we’ll send a rep for those meetings. We interact with those systems and support a lot.”

3. SELPA Leads and partners shared collaboration challenges related to the size of the SOS and need for cohesion.

Most SELPA Leads discussed **challenges with collaborating within the SOS**. One SELPA Lead team member mentioned challenges in making connections due to the size of the SOS and format of SOS Lead Agency meetings, noting that “meetings are large, and they’re virtual, and so it’s really challenging to try to connect with folks [and] to establish some of those relationships in the way that we might want to or have been able to in the past.” Another two SELPA Leads spoke about the “grassroots approach” SELPAs were taking to establish collaborations in the SOS rather than them being integrated in a systematic way. For example, one team member spoke about trying to locate and connect with potential collaborators with varying levels of success because there was no statewide effort “being coordinated for [SOS units] to collaborate, connect, and interact, and partner on different aspects.”

When asked what they found **challenging** about the SOS, SELPA partners answered a lack of time to access the SOS and lack of cohesion within the SOS. Some had interest in how to access SELPA Leads across the SOS, how the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence and Geo Leads support the field, how work across SELPA Leads could be put in one hub, how having more staff in SELPA Leads could help with responsiveness to individual questions, and how improvement science and implementation science could be brought together across SELPA Leads. One partner summed up the challenges: “It is difficult to access if you don’t know how... The system is loosely connected, but imagine how incredible it would be if it was cohesive and connected to each other and to LEAs across the state.”

“It is hard to keep track of all the great work. If there was ONE spot [to access] that would be magic!” (SELPA Partner, about the SELPA Leads)





4. SELPA Leads and partners offered suggestions for sharing expertise across SELPA Leads, awareness of SOS agencies, and a cohesive alignment across the SOS.

Most SELPA Leads expressed a desire for **more State Agency guidance for collaboration**. One SELPA Lead team member believed “it would’ve been great to have more opportunities” to ideate with other SELPA Leads. Two SELPA Leads had interest in state support for collaborations that would reduce the effort made to establish their own connections within and outside the SOS. For example, one SELPA Lead team member spoke about “spend[ing] a lot of time trying to invite ourselves to conferences, to offer to provide a meeting” to collaborate and connect across the SOS.

Some partners wanted more **sharing of expertise across SELPA Leads** so that practitioners would have access to a variety of high-quality professional development regardless of which SELPA Lead was responsible for their region. One SELPA staff member explained, “If we’re in a coaching session with the [one SELPA Lead] they can say, ‘our [other SELPA Lead] are really great experts at X, Y, Z. Let’s get them involved’” to work together and “spread the resources.” Other partners believed that improvements could be made in their **awareness of what SOS agencies could provide** as well as in the agencies’ responsiveness and support of the needs of the SELPA. For example, one SELPA staff member shared, “I don’t know how any of us could do our job without [SELPA Leads].”

Some SELPA partners pointed toward a need for **SOS cohesiveness** so that they know how to access the SOS. One partner shared a suggestion for improvement: “After accessing many of the Leads, even some of the Geo Leads, I feel like the improvement could be if they all gelled more together ... so we’re all speaking the same language because we are constantly siloing ourselves in our field and we don’t need to continue doing that. How can we coalesce all the Leads together a little better?” Another partner spoke of gathering expertise, perspectives, and support for SELPAs or LEAs in solving problems of practice: “There’s got to be an equal and equitable alignment... The SELPA comes from a very specific background... and the Geo Leads, they’re working on specific projects in certain areas, so they’re coming from a different background.” Overall, many SELPA partners expressed a desire for increased collaboration among leads.