



Geo Leads 2022–2023 Evaluation Report

Within the System of Support are seven Geographic Lead Agencies (Geo Leads) housed within nine county offices of education (COEs): Alameda COE, Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Placer and Sacramento COEs, Riverside and San Diego COEs, Shasta COE, Sonoma COE, and Tulare COE.

We spotlight three aspects of the evaluation that provide insight into Geo Lead roles and impact areas. We provide survey findings, highlight key Geo Lead activities, and share illustrative quotes from COEs about their experiences with Geo Leads. We organize the findings by the three central Geo Lead roles stipulated by Statute¹ to:

1. build the capacity of COEs in their geographic areas,
2. identify existing resources and develop new resources in response to their local area needs, and
3. coordinate and calibrate Differentiated Assistance across their geographic areas.

¹See Appendix for a description of the Statute. RTI International administered surveys and conducted interviews to gather data needed for reporting on the work of Geo Leads.

BUILD CAPACITY



SURVEY FINDINGS

Geo Leads build the capacity of COEs in their areas in many ways, through building a culture of trust and strong relationships that allow them to identify and provide necessary supports. Examples of Geo Lead activities include the following:

- Creating an advisory committee to provide input into the development, implementation, and assessment of the Geo Lead work and partnering with several other System of Support Lead Agencies to provide professional learning for COEs in their region.
- Identifying and sharing strategies to reduce chronic absenteeism for students experiencing homelessness.
- Providing professional learning and support for locally identified areas of need, including data inquiry, principles of continuous improvement, leadership, equitable practices, and promoting student agency and voice.
- Developing an environment of trust that has enabled COEs in the geographic area to share data and have open dialogues about student-focused areas for improvement.

85% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead **understands their needs**, compared with **77%** in 2020. (*Statute A*)

82% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead provides access to **high-quality professional learning opportunities** that enable them to effectively support local education agencies (*LEAs*), compared with **80%** in 2020. (*Statute A, D*)

94% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead provides **effective training in data inquiry practices** to identify areas for improvement, use of improvement science to inform implementation, and ways to establish high-functioning improvement teams that can collectively address specific county challenges, compared with **85%** in 2020. (*Statute A, D*)

BUILD CAPACITY

COE QUOTES

“The most important capacity-building activities have been the trainings we have collectively determined we needed around compassionate systems and improvement and implementation science. When we share, we become even more intentional about our why. As all our counties share their triumphs, challenges, and reflection, we all learn more.”

“Overall, I think our work together in our geo area has been productive and beneficial. As I was completing this survey, I was thinking about how much our Geo Lead’s attention to our needs has improved. I realize that it must be difficult to meet the needs of COEs of such varying sizes and needs. Our planning meetings are collaborative and positive as we work together to share information and provide and receive support on so many pressing issues.”

“Our Geo Lead has created conditions where I feel comfortable with and frequently collaborate with all the COEs in my region. In addition, our Geo Lead has provided high-quality professional development in Improvement Science, Implementation Science, Compassionate Systems, the National Equity Project, and CAST UDL (*Universal Design for Learning*) implementation. My team and I use strategies and tools from these professional development experiences on a regular basis.”

“Our work with our Geo Lead has allowed all our team members to receive training and practice with Improvement Science which has helped us work with LEAs to better identify and address root causes. We are now able to help LEAs narrow their focus so that they can complete short PDSA (*Plan-Do-Study-Act*) cycles that can truly tell whether the change is helping students sooner and more effectively.”

DEVELOP & CURATE RESOURCES



SURVEY FINDINGS

Geo Leads develop and share multiple resources. Examples include the following:

- Connecting the collective knowledge, resources, successes, and lessons learned from all their geographic area partners as well as the Statewide System of Support and using collective inquiry in their region to contextualize these resources for their own area needs.
- Using a work group structure within their geographic area to provide an opportunity for all member COEs to share and develop resources specifically focused on regional areas of need resulting in increased support for their LEAs and the families they serve.
- Identifying and facilitating the internal expertise of each COE in the geographic area to elevate and share resources focused on supporting the needs of local area districts.

82% of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead provides access to **high-quality tools or resources** that enable them to effectively support LEAs. (*Statute A, D*)

90% of COE respondents reported that their Geo Lead connected them to at least one other agency in the **System of Support for specialized assistance**, including Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)/Scale-Up MTSS (**54%**), 21st Century California School Leadership Academy (**70%**), California Community Schools Partnership Program (**44%**), and Special Education Local Plan Area (**43%**). (*Statute B*)

DEVELOP & CURATE RESOURCES

COE QUOTES

I appreciate the one-on-one time that our Geo Lead has given us. Time and time again we may have a specific question or need a specific resource and may not be able to find it quickly, and our Geo Lead team always is able to point us in the right direction.

The work around improving data practices has been extremely useful and stands out because it supports the work we do in all areas. From UPK (*Universal Prekindergarten*) to Expanded Learning, using data to identify areas of need and monitor and guide implementation is critical. The Data Use Self-Assessment (*DUSA*) resource is a great foundation to start the work.

Our Geo Lead has provided us with a range of resources for our work including Liberatory Design Training, a Consultancy Model for breakout work, a Data Tool Dashboard and data analysis training, review of short-, medium-, and long-term goals per COE, CAASPP (*California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress*) Overview, and Bias Incident Response Training.

I am new to my position, and our Geo Lead has connected me to a mentor who is leading me through aspects of my job. Resources shared by our COE include in-depth data analysis through work with Inform2Inspire, which has provided our COE with access to data that tells us when other counties have been successful in an area in which we are struggling, thus helping us to find resources and ideas that we need to be successful ourselves.

COORDINATE & CALIBRATE SUPPORT



SURVEY FINDINGS

Geo Leads build COE capacity to work with LEAs on Differentiated Assistance and other areas of LEA need. Examples include the following:

- Conducting and facilitating a Differentiated Assistance self-study with each identified LEA in the geographic area to drive delivery of targeted support services.
- Developing data sharing agreements with each LEA identified for Differentiated Assistance support to enable access to the data needed to develop targeted support strategies for each eligible LEA.
- Drawing on strong working relationships with other Lead Agencies in the System of Support to increase collaboration and access a variety of resources customized for LEAs identified for Differentiated Assistance, a critical need given the increase in the number of LEAs eligible for support.

77% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead provides access to **technical assistance** that enables them to effectively support LEAs, compared with **70%** in 2020. (Statute A, D)

79% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed that the work they have been doing with their Geo Lead has been helpful in **building their capacity to provide universal support** to their LEAs, compared with **69%** in 2020. (Statute A, D)

65% of COE respondents in 2023 agreed that the work they have been doing with their Geo Lead has been **helpful in building their capacity** to provide targeted support to their LEAs, compared with **72%** in 2020. (Statute A, D)

COORDINATE & CALIBRATE SUPPORT

COE QUOTES

“ Our COE did not have an established DA (*Differentiated Assistance*) team. It used to be me (*one person*), and thanks to the Geo Lead support, I put together an official DA team. ”

“ We use the data protocol introduced by our Geo Lead with all our Differentiated Assistance LEAs and CSI (*comprehensive support and improvement*) schools. Based on the National Equity Project training provided by our Geo Lead, we added an Equity pause to the protocol. Our partners have commented on the power of its use. ”

“ Through our work with our Geo Lead, we redesigned our approach to Differentiated Assistance and increased our use of Improvement Science strategies. ”

“ The recent connection to Special Education Local Plan Area (*SELPA*) Lead Agencies has provided me with a pathway to provide technical support to districts in DA focused on students with disabilities. Providing a way to integrate the CIM (*Compliance and Improvement Monitoring*) plan with Differentiated Assistance plans is very helpful and has been a need for a long while. ”

APPENDIX

ED Code 52073 subdivision B



(b) (1) A geographic lead agency shall have all of the following responsibilities:

(A) Assist in building the capacity of county offices of education within the geographic lead agency's defined geographic area to provide effective assistance and support to school districts under the state priorities identified in subdivision (d) of Section 52060 and federal programs.

(B) Coordinate and calibrate assistance and support provided to local educational agencies within its defined geographic area and with other geographic lead agencies, expert lead agencies identified pursuant to Section 52073.1, special education resource leads identified pursuant to Section 52073.2, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, and the department.

(C) Provide assistance and support if another county office of education within the geographic lead agency's defined geographic area is unable to provide appropriate assistance and support to one or more school districts in that county office of education's boundaries, or at the request of a school district or county superintendent of schools pursuant to subdivision (d) of Section 52071.

(D) Identify existing resources, professional development activities, and other efforts currently available within its designated geographic area to assist school districts and county offices of education to improve outcomes under the state priorities identified in subdivision (d) of Section 52060 and subdivision (d) of Section 52066, and upon request, share information about these existing resources.

(E) Upon request by the department and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence, develop new resources and activities, designed to build capacity within school districts and county offices of education across the state under the state priorities identified in subdivision (d) of Section 52060 and subdivision (d) of Section 52066 or other areas of identified need.

(F) Other duties as specified by the department and the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence as part of the process to select geographic lead agencies.