

Geographic Lead Agencies

Geographic Lead Agencies play a vital role within the California Statewide System of Support. Assembly Bill 1808 (Statutes of 2018) funded the establishment of the California Geographic Lead Agencies (Geo Leads) to build the capacity of county offices of education (COEs) to support local educational agencies (LEAs) and meet the needs of students in California. There are seven Geo Leads housed within nine COEs: Kern County Superintendent of Schools; Placer and Sacramento COEs; Santa Clara COE; Riverside and San Diego COEs; Shasta COE, Sonoma COE, and Tulare COE.



California's Statewide System of Support



RTI International is the external evaluator of the Geo Lead initiative. In this brief we draw on data from surveys and interviews with County of Office Education staff to highlight the impact of the Geo Lead work in four strategic areas: Facilitating Partnerships, Building Capacity, Engaging in Continuous Improvement, and Providing Universal and Targeted Support.



Facilitating Partnerships

Building a culture of trust and strong relationships with their partner COEs and LEAs is a key aspect of the Geo Lead work. These relationships enable Geo Leads to effectively identify and provide necessary supports. In addition, Geo Leads create structures (e.g., working groups) and processes (e.g., advisory committees) that increase coordination, collaboration, and integration across initiatives within the Statewide System of Support.

- **95%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their geographic lead agency has helped **facilitate trusting relationships among** COEs in their geographic area.
- **84%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their geographic lead agency is **available for consultations** that enable their COE to effectively support their LEAs, schools, and students.

*"I appreciate the constant availability of our Geo Lead as well as the willingness to always **enter conversations with genuine inquiry and professional respect.**"*

*"I highly appreciate the support of our Geo Lead and **how, across the state, we have created structures to better support each other.** We now know how many resources are available throughout the System and experts we can tap into both within and outside our region."*

Providing Universal and Targeted Support

The California Statewide System of Support is designed to provide varying levels of assistance to meet the unique needs of school districts, charter schools, and County Offices of Education (COEs). Geo Leads are key providers of both universal and targeted support for LEAs. Universal support is a foundational level of support available to all districts, charters, and COEs. Targeted support is offered to districts, charters, and COEs that meet specific criteria based on data from the California Dashboard.

- **73%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that they have collaboratively built their organization's capacity to **provide targeted/supplemental assistance** (inclusive of Differentiated Assistance) through their work with their geographic lead agency up from 64% in 2023.
- **80%** of COE respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their geographic lead agency has provided resources or training to **support their COE's work with LEAs in using data to identify gaps** in the performance of students in different demographic groups, up from 63% in 2023.

*"We evaluated the approach we use when beginning the **differentiated assistance process** with LEAs and we're able to improve our strategies using the resources and planning provided by the Geo Lead."*

*"I oversee my **differentiated assistance team and we interact frequently with our Geo Lead.** Our Geo Lead has been wonderful in keeping me informed of the differentiated assistance work that is happening and helps me support my team as needed."*

Building Capacity

One of the central roles of the Geo Leads is to build the capacity of COEs within their region to provide effective assistance and support to districts and schools and align these efforts with state priorities. In this role, Geo Leads have provided their COEs with a wide range of professional learning opportunities including targeted technical assistance and access to tools and resources.

- **81%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead **understands their needs.**
- **82%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead provides access to **high-quality professional learning opportunities** that enable them to effectively support their LEAs.

*"We have implemented coaching for teachers and have **increased our professional development opportunities** as a direct result of the work we have been involved with our Geo lead."*

*"Our Geo Lead Agency have been extremely helpful in building our capacity. **We've seen huge growth and impact with our district partners** because of our Geo Lead and the expertise they provide."*

Engaging in Continuous Improvement

State agencies and leaders in the System of Support engage in and model continuous improvement focused on educational excellence. These agencies understand and emphasize the importance and value of a continuous improvement mindset to drive improvement throughout the system and ensure student and educator success and well-being. Geo Leads are tasked with conducting an annual needs-based assessment of their regions to determine goals for the year. Geo Leads use these needs assessments and engage in continuous improvement to ensure that their services are consistently and continuously improving and responding effectively to California's evolving educational environment.

- **84%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their Geo Lead has **modeled continuous improvement in its own work.**
- **90%** of COE respondents in 2024 agreed or strongly agreed that their organization **has incorporated a continuous improvement approach** into its own work.

*"Because of the meetings and conversations with my Geo Leads I am able to more effectively support my county LEAs and work on their mindset shift **from a compliance checklist to a real continuous improvement process and document.**"*

*"I appreciate our Geo Lead's willingness and openness of looking at our structures, seeking feedback and being **willing to constantly evolve and improve.**"*