



# **Increasing LCAP Transparency and Reaffirming California's Commitment to Local Control**

Experiences of District and County Leaders

LCAP Year 3 Analysis

Research and Report by Kelsey Krausen, Ph.D. | June 2016



## Introduction

In July 2013, Governor Jerry Brown signed the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) into law. The new law dramatically reshapes how California schools are funded, how school districts and county offices of education (local education agencies or LEAs) must lay out their plans to address student needs and how they are held accountable for improvement.

One of the guiding principles of LCFF is subsidiarity, the view that individual school districts—those most familiar with the specific needs of their community and their students—should have local control over their education spending decisions. A second guiding principle of LCFF is equity, the idea that districts' spending decisions should center on efforts to increase academic achievement for all students—but with a particular focus of resources and efforts on low-income students, English learners and foster youth—and that districts should regularly measure whether they are meeting their goals for improving student achievement. To this end, a key component of LCFF is the requirement that each LEA create a Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that details how they will use funds to improve educational outcomes for students.

Now, nearly three years after the passage of the LCFF legislation, there continues to be wide-ranging support for LCFF and the LCAP. However, there have also been numerous calls for improvements to the LCAP. This report contributes to the current discussion on strategies to improve the LCAP by describing the experiences of a collaborative of school board members, superintendents and LCAP administrators, and presenting their recommendations for increasing transparency in district LCAPs, and increasing their relevance to improvement efforts for districts, for the community and for students. In addition, this report details some of the successes and challenges reported by district and county leaders in LCAP development and implementation.

## Study Overview

The findings and recommendations in this report are based on interviews conducted in the spring of 2016 by a consulting researcher with members of the California School Boards Association's (CSBA) Collaborative Working Group (CWG). As part of its commitment to provide opportunities for district and county leaders to have a voice in the policy process, CSBA formed the LCFF Collaborative Working Group in October 2014. CSBA partnered with California Forward in this effort and received supplemental support for the CWG from the Stuart Foundation and The California Endowment. The purpose of the CWG is to identify and promote promising LCFF and LCAP implementation strategies, solutions and effective practices. Members of the CWG meet quarterly for facilitated sessions focused on improving LCFF and the LCAP, and to share challenges and promising practices.

This interview study builds on a 2014 CSBA review of CWG members' first-year LCAPs. The purpose of the 2014 review was to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of members' initial LCAPs in order to inform CSBA's efforts to support county and district governing boards with LCAP development and implementation. As a follow-up to the year one analysis, in March 2016 CSBA conducted interviews with 23 members of the CWG, including board members, superintendents and district LCAP administrators. Those interviewed represented 13 geographically and demographically diverse California school districts and three counties.

The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about the changes districts and counties have made to their LCAPs since year one, the process they use for developing their LCAPs and the opportunities and challenges presented by this work. County leaders were asked about their oversight role, as well as the development of their LCAPs for county-run schools. Findings from the interviews were shared with CWG members at the April 2016 meeting where they had the opportunity to provide additional clarification of the results and recommendations compiled from the interviews.



In their interviews, district and county leaders reported almost universal support for LCFF and the LCAP. They also reported improvements they had made in their processes for LCAP development and in the quality of their LCAPs. Nevertheless, according to district and county leaders many challenges remain. This report provides details of the improvements described by district and county leaders, as well as the challenges. The report also includes the recommendations that district and county leaders offered for addressing the challenges they identified.

## Results of Review of Year Three LCAPs

### *Progress Has Been Made since Year One of LCAP Implementation*

As mentioned previously, in 2014 CSBA staff reviewed the year one LCAPs of the LEAs that are members of the Collaborative Working Group. In addition to identifying some promising practices, the first year review identified several areas for improvement. Specifically, the review identified that: some LEAs did not address all of the state priority areas; many LEAs included little or no mention of the state identified subgroups, focusing solely on all students; some LEAs did not include baseline data with their goals; and some LEAs provided ambiguous goals without specific measurements or targets.

For this study of the third year of LCAP implementation, board members, superintendents and LCAP administrators were asked to describe the changes they have made to their LCAPs and to their development process since year one. They were also asked to look back at the areas for improvement identified in the year one analysis to assess how well their district or county has done on each component, and to identify any remaining challenges. The following section reports the progress and remaining challenges from year one to year three among 16 district and county members of the CSBA LCFF Collaborative Working Group.

### *LEAs Have Made LCAP Content Refinements Rather than Major Changes since Year One*

Findings from the interviews suggest most districts and counties have focused on refinements rather than major changes to the content of their LCAP since year one. In fact, 86 percent of the LEAs (12 out of 14) had focused on improving and fine-tuning programs, rather than large new investments or reductions in programs. District and county leaders reported several reasons for why the changes to the content of their LCAPs were made. These reasons include: because “it was the right thing to do,” because research and data supported the changes and because the changes matched the needs of the community.

### *LCAP Process Changes*

More than half, fifty-three percent of these district and county leaders (8 out of 15) reported substantial changes to the process for developing their LCAP since year one. The most commonly reported change to the LCAP development process was starting earlier and integrating the work year-round.

Among the most prevalent changes in their LCAP process were those involving community engagement, including the earlier start mentioned above. According to district and county leaders, starting their LCAP engagement process earlier has allowed them more time to engage with the community in a meaningful way and more time to incorporate public input into their LCAP.

Nine district and county leaders reported that they have intensified their engagement with the community. At the same time, four districts reported streamlining their public engagement. Those who reported such streamlining said they made the changes either because of the resource-intensive nature of the engagement process or because the community concerns that they were already working to address did not change significantly from year to year.



Overall, the interview study findings suggest that districts and counties have not made large shifts in their priorities, goals and programs. Rather, they have continued to refine both their processes for engaging with the public and their investments in programs to improve educational outcomes.

### ***Addressing the State Priorities***

Eight-five percent of district and county leaders (17 out of 20) responded that their LCAP effectively addresses the state priorities. How they included these in their LCAP varied according to how they interpreted directions from the state. For example, some districts reported that they addressed each of the eight priorities individually, while others incorporated the priorities into a smaller number of district-determined goals.

The question of how the SBE intended the priorities to be addressed (i.e., all at once or not) was raised often by district and county leaders. One comment that highlights this issue came from a district leader who reported that the guidelines from the county on how to address the state priorities (e.g. whether or not they have to explicitly address all of them or whether they have to order the priorities in their LCAP the way the state orders them) are unclear, and at times, different from one county to the next.

District and county leaders reported additional challenges associated with addressing the state priorities. These challenges include the length of the LCAP if they do address all of the priorities and a reduction in the relevance of the LCAP to local districts if they must address priorities that are not directly aligned with the needs and goals of the district. This challenge was illustrated by the comments of one district leader who said, “Some of the state priorities don’t make sense for us. We’ve put words in every box because you have to, but we’ve tried to pick the things that matter for our district.”

### ***Providing Baseline Data***

Almost half of the district and county leaders interviewed reported that providing baseline data remains a challenge or a work in progress. First, districts and counties had limited access to baseline data on academic achievement for the first two years of their LCAP due to the switch from the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) program to the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP). Some districts also reported that they are still working on finding adequate metrics to measure social-emotional goals and school climate. Other challenges include the delayed provision of CAASPP data from the state, and concern that the 23 metrics the state has asked districts to address are too many.

### ***Providing Clear and Measurable Goals and Addressing All State Identified Subgroups***

More than 90 percent of district and county leaders interviewed reported that their LCAP includes clear and measurable goals. However, some districts reported the difficulty of measuring progress for some goals. For example, one district leader said their district LCAP is, “Pretty good on ‘clear,’ and not so good on ‘measurable.’ That’s true for everybody as you expand the kind of things you try to assess and the data you try to collect...School climate for example, is hard to measure.” More than 90 percent of the district and county leaders interviewed (14 out of 15) also reported that they are addressing all of the state identified subgroups in their LCAP.

### ***Significant Progress since Year One***

Although findings from the year one analysis of LCAPs by CSBA staff suggested wide variation in the clarity and comprehensiveness of the LCAPs reviewed, findings from our year three analysis indicate that these LEAs have made significant progress since year one. These improvements in the year three LCAPs also suggest that districts and counties need time in order to develop and refine their LCAPs.



## Positive Outcomes of District LCAPs

Members of the CWG reported wide-ranging positive outcomes from their LCAP. For example, several districts reported expanded and more meaningful community engagement as a positive outcome including increased engagement from students, parents and teachers. District leaders also reported greater use of data, regular reviews of the district's progress toward goals/targets, more transparency both within the district and in the community and being more intentional in programmatic decisions. In addition, districts reported a greater focus of attention on the students with the highest needs, particularly foster youth. Some participants also mentioned specific programs that have had a positive impact in their district.

Other practices related to LCAP development that districts have found effective include:

- Having a high-level director in charge of the LCAP process/hiring a person to hold all of the work year-round;
- Analyzing the budget to ensure supplemental and concentration funds are being used as intended;
- Setting up budget codes so they correspond with LCAP programmatic goals;
- Regularly reviewing the data (e.g. reviewing data/metrics in weekly cabinet meetings);
- Using goals/targets in the LCAP as goals for staff (e.g. counselors have to report regularly on progress towards reducing the number of students receiving D's and F's);
- Creating an infographic of the LCAP;
- Student facilitation of the student engagement process;
- Having staff connect all board presentations to the LCAP goals;
- Sending out monthly/quarterly "LCAP Updates";
- Assigning a specific person who is responsible for each sub-goal in the LCAP;
- Having parents lead community meetings;

## *Continued Challenges*

Despite general support for LCFF and LCAPs and the positive impact it has made in most of their districts, these district and county leaders reported numerous additional challenges with the LCAP development process. Challenges include the structure of the LCAP template, the timing of the LCAP, insufficient clarity and support from COEs and the State Board of Education, difficulty engaging the public, questions regarding LCFF and labor negotiations and inadequate funding.

## *The LCAP Template is Cumbersome*

One of the primary challenges reported by district and county leaders is that the template is too "cumbersome" and does not allow for enough flexibility or local autonomy in describing their plans. In fact, nearly 80 percent of the district and county leaders interviewed mentioned that the requirements of the LCAP template were too cumbersome, which they described as being too long, too repetitive and with too many different parts. In addition, district leaders reported their perception that the county and the state are focused on compliance and conformity



to the format of the LCAP template, which takes the focus away from using the template as a tool to increase student achievement. One district leader expressed this view by noting that a focus on compliance in the past did not result in the intended improvements in student outcomes. “It’s the state that has largely driven this idea that the job of school district administrators is to worry about compliance and compliance documents to the detriment of their focusing most of their time, talent and energy on actually doing the work of improving student outcomes.”

### ***The LCAP Template is Inaccessible to the Public***

Another challenge district and county leaders reported was that the LCAP template, in its current format, is inaccessible to the public due to its length and the way information is organized and presented. The comment of one district leader that the template was cumbersome and not “friendly” or understandable to the community, illustrate this concern. Clearly, district leaders feel a tension between the structure of the template that the State Board of Education has asked them to use and what they believe is the best approach to detailing their district priorities and their plans for improving student achievement.

### ***Timing***

Many district and county leaders also reported difficulty with the timing of the LCAP including the late release of test scores and other data from the state. For example, CAASPP scores for 2014-2015 were not released until September 2015, two months after the July approval date for districts’ 2015-2016 LCAP in which districts were required to report on progress toward their goals for student achievement. In addition, districts reported that the timing of the state budget is a significant challenge: they have already submitted their LCAP spending plan for local board approval by the time the state finalizes the education budget in June.

### ***Support from COEs and the State Board of Education***

While many districts reported positive, supportive relationships with their county office of education, some district leaders cited inconsistent support and direction from the county including unclear expectations from county offices (and the State Board of Education) about what must be included in the LCAP. For example, do districts need to address all eight priorities explicitly? In order? Do they need to include all district dollars in their LCAP or only some of their funds? One district leader noted a “lack of consistency between counties,” with regard to both of these issues. Additionally, one district leader expressed concern that the focus on compliance was a holdover from how counties were required to act in the past. In the words of one leader, “It’s not what the LCAP is intended to be. The compliance mindset pushes things sideways.”

### ***Additional Challenges***

Another challenge reported by district and county leaders is difficulty engaging the public year after year to provide input into the LCAP. While some districts and counties (five) reported their engagement with the public as one of the most positive outcomes of their LCAPs, other district and county leaders (seven) cited difficulty getting community input. Several district leaders also noted that although the LCAP is intended to be a three-year plan, they are required to recreate it each year. As one remarked, “It’s a three-year LCAP, but because of the way we are required to update it, it is a one-year LCAP.” An additional concern of this leader was that the requirement for public engagement every year can lead to pressure to make changes in a district’s approach to improving student outcomes before the approach has had enough time to take effect. “We have to do a complete review each year and public engagement. Things take a while to develop.”

Another difficulty reported by district and county leaders (three) that is associated with public engagement, had to do with labor negotiations. Specifically, two district leaders reported a lack of clarity about how supplemental and concentration funds could be spent and whether a portion of the funds could be used to increase teacher salaries. According to one district leader, “A lot of districts are having this struggle...on how to approach negotia-



tions...Everybody wants to do the right thing in order for us to continue to have this local flexibility and not have it be categorical again. At the same time, not everyone receives the same level of support...At some point, we need to give clear guidance to districts of how they can approach negotiations, but it needs to be in collaboration with [the unions]...”

Finally, inadequate resources is an ongoing concern. Six districts reported that the inadequacy of funding remains a significant challenge.

## Recommendations for the State Board of Education

District and county leaders were asked for their recommendations for the State Board of Education on how to improve the LCAP. Mirroring the challenges they reported, described above, recommendations from district and county leaders primarily focused on improving the LCAP template, increasing clarity and guidance around county and state expectations on the LCAP, improving the timing of the LCAP, and ensuring an accountability system that allows for local flexibility and autonomy.

### *Improving LCAP Accessibility and Transparency*

Stakeholder groups and district and county leaders have indicated the need for improvements to the LCAP template to make it more accessible and transparent to the public. This is a difficult task given the reporting requirements in the LCAP, which several of these leaders indicated make the LCAP too long and detailed to be accessible. However, many district and county leaders have already begun this important work. For example, one district leader mentioned his belief that the most important role for a superintendent is to,

*Communicate the importance of, and model the importance of transparency...we do the public's work. So, organizing your document, organizing your entire organization in a way so that the work is transparent, that's an important message and modeling that needs to come from the superintendent. And if that happens, I think that resonates through the entire organization and your documents become vehicles for carrying your message versus they end up being just another area of distrust between the district and stakeholders.*

To this end, district and county leaders had a range of recommendations to increase transparency in district LCAPs by streamlining or simplifying the LCAP template. These recommendations primarily focus on technical adjustments to the template. These changes would not only increase the usability of the template for district leaders, but would also help to increase transparency in the allocation of funds and would allow districts greater flexibility in how they present their plan.

### *Technical Improvements*

- **Recommendation one: Create an electronic LCAP template with new features to increase transparency and amend aspects of the template that district leaders find overly constraining.**

First, district and county leaders recommended that the state develop an electronic template that districts could use for their LCAP. Furthermore, district and county leaders recommended that the template should have the capability to be auto-filled with the data that districts are already required to submit to the state. This corresponds with the recommendation by another district leader to consolidate all of the reporting requirements for LEAs (e.g., those for school site plans, remaining categorical programs and federal funding, among others).



In addition, district and county leaders suggested that they should be able to easily transfer content from the previous years' LCAP to the current year when programs and expenditures remained the same, rather than having to cut and paste this information into a new template. District and county leaders also recommended that the electronic template allow them to hyperlink to additional information (e.g., a calendar of public engagement meetings or their full budget) and should allow them to hide sections that do not apply to their district. For example, if a district decided to focus on three of the state priorities, rather than all eight, they could hide the other template sections. According to district and county leaders, allowing districts the flexibility to determine on which priorities to focus will make it easier to see what districts are prioritizing and how they are spending their money to achieve their goals. Finally, district and county leaders suggested that the electronic template should allow users to click on specific subgroups (e.g., foster youth) to find aggregated information on student performance, goals, expenditures and programs specifically designed to serve that population of students.

All of the technical adjustments to the LCAP template recommended by CWG members have the potential to reduce the length of the LCAP and to make it more accessible and transparent to the public. These changes also have the potential to reduce the "cumbersome" nature of the template for district leaders. Moreover the changes give district leaders the flexibility to create a plan that is meaningful to them and to their community.

### *Simplify the LCAP template*

- **Recommendation two: Reduce the number of priorities/allow for local flexibility in addressing the priorities.**

District and county leaders made several additional recommendations for strategies to simplify and streamline the LCAP template. First, district leaders suggested that the State Board of Education could reduce the number of priorities that districts are required to address. Alternatively, the State Board of Education could allow districts to pick which priorities to address based on the specific needs of their community. In other words, the Board could allow for greater flexibility in how districts address the state priorities. One district leader also suggested that the state could reduce the number of metrics that districts must address in their LCAP (currently, districts are required to use 23 metrics) and another suggested that the SBE hold districts accountable to five specific datasets to streamline the reporting requirements. Finally, one asked that the state align their accountability system with federal requirements (e.g., ESSA). These changes have the potential to both reduce the length of the LCAP and to allow districts to present a plan that more closely reflects the needs and goals of their community. In the words of one district leader indicating why the district would like more control over its plan, "We want our plan [to have] the language of our community in it."

### *Increasing Clarity and Guidance*

- **Recommendation three: Increase clarity of expectations and support from the state and from county offices of education.**

#### *Clarification and Support from the State Board of Education*

Along with a call for greater flexibility in the LCAP, district and county leaders called for greater clarity from the State Board of Education on exactly what must be in their LCAPs, including what level of specificity is necessary and whether or not they need to address all of the state priorities. To this end, one leader suggested the need for, "A greater degree of communication from the State Board of Education as to what is critical for the report. There's been some confusion as to the specificity...and districts are really knocking themselves out to make sure they fully address everything"





Clarification from the state as to whether or not districts need to address all of the state priorities in their plan, and what level of specificity is needed in describing their plans, also has the potential to increase the document's transparency. If districts develop a better understanding of what should be in the LCAP, and what can be left out, it can help them to streamline their LCAP and make it more accessible to the public.

District leaders also asked for greater clarification from the state on how funds can be spent. For example, clear guidance from the state on whether or not funds can be used for teacher salaries.

District and county leaders also expressed the need for greater clarity to help community members understand the LCAP. Two district leaders mentioned a lack of understanding about LCFF and the LCAP in their community, in particular, about how funds can be spent. One district leader recommended the State Board of Education create a campaign to educate the public about LCFF and the LCAP. This district leader believed this would help the community understand why some districts are provided with more funds than others and how those funds can be used, and that it would also result in greater understanding of the important role that the community plays in contributing input into the district's plan.

### *Clarification and Support from COEs*

Of the 16 participants who discussed their relationship with their county office of education during the interviews, eight reported that they have a positive relationship. Nevertheless, several district and county leaders made recommendations regarding ways that the county could better support them through the LCAP development and authorization process. First, as one district leader suggested, county offices of education are well-positioned to share effective practices between districts. This might come in the form of web resources, individual coaching, or voluntary workshops that districts could choose to attend. In addition, one district leader recommended that the county offices of education could provide interim feedback to districts on their LCAP, saying:

*Our county office provides us with technical assistance and I understand that to be somewhat of a rarity... We send them a draft and they have people who we know and respect and who know our district, analyze it and then call us and say 'you know, we are not sure what you mean here. Help us understand that.' ...they engage us in a conversation and it is such a helpful process. So before it is finalized we have this opportunity to get this feedback with people who not only know about LCAP but also know the process. It helps us to refine it even further.*

Other district leaders called for greater consistency of support between counties. As noted above, many districts reported very positive relationships with their counties, but other district leaders reported that support from their county was lacking. In addition, some district leaders reported inconsistency in how much discretion counties allowed districts with regard to the organization of their LCAP. For example, one district reported that they were asked to reorder the content of their LCAP so that it matched the order of the priorities outlined by the state, while other districts were able to decide how to order the information in their LCAP.

Finally, one county leader suggested the need for more county staff during the busiest times of LCAP authorization. Additional staff would allow the county to provide greater support to districts in the development of their LCAPs.

### *Adjust Timing*

- Recommendation four: Return CAASPP test score data to districts earlier.
- Recommendation five: Align the timing of the LCAP with the availability of data and with other reporting requirements.



- **Recommendation six: Make the LCAP a three-year plan only: reduce the requirements for stakeholder engagement to every three years.**

As mentioned previously, district and county leaders reported several issues with the timing of the LCAP. The most commonly reported challenge was the late provision of CAASPP data from the state to districts. According to district leaders, test score data were returned to them after approval of their LCAP so they were unable to use the data to determine the efficacy of their investments and whether or not to continue to invest in the same way. They were also unable to use the data to set their growth targets for the following year. Therefore, district leaders recommend that the state return test score data to them earlier, so that they can incorporate this critical source of data into their LCAP.

District leaders made several other suggestions related to the timing of the LCAP. These recommendations include making the LCAP a three-year plan only, and reducing the requirements for stakeholder engagement in the update years.

An additional suggestion related to timing was the recommendation from one district leader that LCAPs be submitted in the fall when districts have the necessary data and budget information to complete their plans.

### *Ensure Supportive Assistance*

- **Recommendation seven: Ensure the rubric is non-punitive and deals with districts in a positive manner. Understand districts are at different levels.**

The State Board of Education will soon release the evaluation rubrics and five district and county leaders made recommendations regarding the state's rubrics. One county leader simply recommended the State Board of Education, "hurry up and get the rubric to districts so that they can stop guessing." Another district leader asked the State Board of Education to "ensure the rubric is non-punitive and deals with districts in a positive manner." Similarly, one district leader asked that the State Board of Education "be thoughtful about accountability" and "allow district priorities to shine through." These suggestions once again focus on the need for local autonomy so that districts can build internal accountability in addition to any external measures that the state develops.

### *Funding and Time for Refinement*

- **Recommendation eight: Ensure adequate funding for all school districts.**
- **Recommendation nine: Allow districts time to develop and refine their LCAPs.**

Although most of the recommendations suggested by CWG members related directly to changes to the LCAP, six district leaders noted the need for adequate funding for schools in order to achieve their goals for improving student achievement. In fact, two district leaders mentioned that they were being forced to make cuts to programs due to a decrease in funding. One of these two districts receives very minimal supplemental dollars and no concentration funds, while the other had lost funds due to declining enrollment. The issue of funding adequacy continues to be a challenge for many school districts as they work to improve outcomes for all students.

Importantly, district leaders also asked the State Board of Education to give them more time before making additional changes to the template and the reporting requirements. District leaders mentioned the challenge created by the change to the template between year one and year two. In fact, one district leader reported spending many hours cutting and pasting sections of their LCAP template into the new format. Based on the improvements that districts and counties have already reported to their LCAP since year one, allowing districts additional time to refine their LCAPs seems to hold considerable promise. At the same



time, giving districts time to develop their LCAPs and their programs must be balanced by the necessity of addressing student needs in a timely manner and providing the resources necessary for them to be successful. This tension is one that must be addressed by districts, by counties, and by advocacy groups as they continue to work on behalf of students.

## Conclusion

Now in the third year of LCAP development, this is a critical moment for districts, for counties, and for the state to reflect on the successes of the LCAP and to continue to refine it to ensure the best possible outcomes for students. Despite district and county reports of tremendous gains since the first year of LCAP development, much work remains to be done.

Information collected from CWG members on their experiences with LCAP development and implementation indicates considerable variation across the network — from the funding available for new programs to the relationships districts have with their county offices of education. These differences help to shape each district's experience with LCAP development and implementation including their processes for engaging with the public and the way funds are allocated to support student needs. Nevertheless, district and county leaders reported many of the same challenges and concerns with the LCAP. Consequently, there was also considerable alignment in their recommendations for the State Board of Education.

Notably, districts report local control is being jeopardized in the system that was set up to give them more decision-making power and local control. Specifically, districts reported considerable concern over their ability to maintain autonomy given a perceived focus on compliance with the LCAP template from the state and from counties. District leaders also acknowledged the need for transparency and expressed concerns that the level of detailed information required in the LCAP template has had the counter effect of making their LCAPs too lengthy and therefore inaccessible to their communities. All of these findings suggest that important steps could be taken to both increase transparency and to reaffirm the state's commitment to local control.

Based on interviews with district leaders, it appears that additional flexibility has the potential to make the LCAP more meaningful to districts. Thus, an important first step in the work to refine the LCAP is to allow districts greater control over how they present their district plan. In addition, greater clarity is needed from the State Board of Education on their expectations for the LCAP, including how districts should address the state priorities.

District leaders have also called for a stronger system of support from county offices of education to provide critical assistance to districts to strengthen their LCAPs. Finally, both district and county leaders recommended a series of technical improvements to the LCAP template that have the potential to improve districts' ability to customize their plans, increase transparency and allow them to focus more time on innovations to improve student achievement.

But responsibility for improving the LCAP does not fall on districts, counties and the State Board of Education alone. As part of the new accountability system, statewide education organizations including CSBA will need to continue to work with their constituents to identify specific training and support for districts and counties. The newly formed California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) also has great potential, and needs to be prepared to support districts and counties to achieve their goals for student improvement outlined in their LCAPs.

Critical to this work is a strong commitment from all groups to provide supportive assistance to districts rather than focusing on punitive compliance. This distinction is essential to ensuring continued support for LCFF and the LCAP, and to encouraging the development of districts' internal accountability systems for the plans they outline



in their LCAPs. In addition, for the new accountability system to be effective, the State Board of Education, CCEE and others must find ways to incentivize districts to seek support and assistance.

The comments of district and county leaders shared in this report indicate that the State Board of Education must continue to strive to support a meaningful and effective LCAP process—striking a balance between accountability and support for districts, and between district requests for additional time to develop their plans and implement programs, and the pressing needs of California’s students for increased opportunities for academic success. The interviews conducted for this report are intended to contribute to this discussion and to the development of approaches that will support districts’ and counties’ work to improve student outcomes through their LCAPs.

*Kelsey Krausen, Ph.D. is a post-doctoral fellow in education policy in the UC Davis Graduate School of Education.*