

More Than Supply & Demand

The State of Technical Assistance for Expanded Learning Programs in California

After-school and summer learning programs—also known as expanded learning programs—can be powerful interventions for closing the achievement gap, stemming summer learning loss and building nurturing communities. As awareness increases about the importance of how children spend their time outside of the traditional school day, the California Department of Education (CDE), and in particular its After School Division (ASD), have directed funding and attention to improving the quality of publicly-supported after-school and summer learning programs hosted by school districts and located on school sites. In addition, the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors have expanded their scope of support for expanded learning programs.

Expanded learning programs can foster academic and social growth, but need support to improve and sustain program quality and fully actualize their potential. This is where technical assistance (TA) providers step in to support the expanded learning field through training, coaching and guidance to individual programs. All of these groups (program providers, TA providers, state agencies, the nonprofit sector, and the philanthropic sector) connect and interact—some more systematically and others more organically—in complex ways in what this brief will describe as California’s TA ecosystem.

The impetus for this brief was a question: What might be done to improve the way expanded learning programs connect with and benefit from TA providers’ support and expertise, particularly in a large state with a vast number of programs and a diverse set of TA providers?

To endeavor to answer the above question, this brief serves as a snapshot of the TA ecosystem in California at a certain time and place—Spring 2016—and describes the changes that have happened since increased state funding in the form of the After-School Education and Safety (ASES) program created an influx of expanded learning programs.¹ This snapshot clarifies who is involved in the ecosystem and how they relate to others:

- For **TA and program providers** and any others working in the expanded learning field, this brief describes the different sources of TA available across California.
- For **field leaders**, this brief sheds light on real strengths of the ecosystem and the structures within it and places where there is opportunity for change moving forward.
- For those **implementing other large-scale systems of TA**, especially TA for statewide programmatic efforts (e.g., migrant education, early childhood education), this brief highlights the way public and private entities can work together to support their programs.
- For **funders**, this brief offers insights about points where philanthropic investment can most effectively leverage change or develop other ecosystems.

¹ The ASES Program is the result of the 2002 California voter-approved initiative, Proposition 49. The ASES Program funds local after school education and enrichment programs created through partnerships between schools and communities to provide literacy support, academic enrichment, and safe, constructive alternatives for students in kindergarten through grade nine (K–9).

For all constituents, this brief tells the story of a system that has taken shape over the last several years and is still evolving as it responds to internal and external needs to better support programs across California.

California has a variety of TA opportunities. Some program providers are fully utilizing them while others are not. Where program providers are located in the TA ecosystem determines the availability and quality of TA they can access. To keep the TA ecosystem flowing and healthy, those involved must know who the others are, what they do, and how to reach them. At this critical juncture in California’s TA ecosystem’s development, this brief explores what opens or chokes channels between TA and programs, in the context of system-wide constraints that have an effect on nearly every aspect of TA delivery.

Growth of the Expanded Learning Field in California

In 2006 the number and variety of expanded learning programs in California exploded with an influx of new funding from the ASES program alongside sustained federal funding from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program.² Field leaders scrambled to provide oversight and TA to fledgling programs. The large network of publicly funded after-school programs was in dire need of TA for program delivery and grants management and had inadequate resources available to help.

Since that time, programs have stabilized and their TA providers have acquired expertise and insight about quality programming. The expanded learning field has worked to solidify its footing, define itself, develop shared language, and build support among stakeholders. Over the years, the dynamic relationships among stakeholders in the expanded learning field have created local and statewide networks, which interconnect to varying degrees. Enough time has passed for TA providers and field leaders to grow in expertise, agreement on program quality standards, and insight about expanded learning needs in different regions of California. The cadre of TA providers now includes many individuals who not only understand program quality but who also are sensitive to the context in which program providers are working.

These signs, and others, indicate that expanded learning, especially in California, is evolving into its own field. Rather than seeing expanded learning as an “add-on” to the school day, many more school principals and teachers see the expanded learning program on their campus as an education partner with its own set of strategies and professional skills. Teachers, principals, and others in the education sector are recognizing expanded learning as a way to keep supporting children beyond their classrooms.

How Does the TA Ecosystem Function?

The TA Ecosystem

An ecosystem is a dynamic web of interdependent entities. Ecosystems can describe the natural world, but they can also describe other systems, like a business landscape or community efforts. To understand a community ecosystem requires identifying the entities within the system (e.g., institutions, organizations, individuals), the inputs (e.g., time, money, expertise), the outputs (e.g., services, programs, community supports), and the inter-relationships that make the system dynamic. It is also critical to understand which inputs are essential for the ecosystem’s health and sustainability. To paraphrase a study of nonprofit ecosystems by *Philanthropy Northwest*, just as a pond requires essential elements like air, water, and nutrients to keep its ecosystem healthy, a local nonprofit ecosystem requires knowledge and expertise, capacity building institutions, delivery methods, and

² 21st CCLC grants establish or expand before-and after-school programs that provide academic enrichment opportunities and supportive services to disadvantaged students in grades K-12. The programs are created through partnerships between schools and local community resources. The CA Department of Education administers this federally funded program.

funding.³ So too does the expanded learning TA ecosystem depend on essential elements—its inputs—to survive and thrive.

This brief identifies the **entities** of the TA ecosystem and the required **conditions** for a healthy flow of inputs and outputs between TA providers and program providers. It recognizes six **influencers**, which serve as catalysts for increasing or hindering the flow of knowledge and improved practice. The changes in the ecosystem over time reveal some **essential elements** that have contributed to its positive development—leadership, collaboration, and a shared definition of quality.

Before diving into the precise interactions between the many players in California’s expanded learning TA ecosystem, we must consider two slow-to-change **system-wide constraints**:

1. **A climate of scarcity** – Publicly funded after-school and summer learning programs are consistently under-resourced at both the TA provider level and the program provider level. California’s ASES-funded programs receive \$7.50 per student per day, a rate that has remained stagnant since 2006 despite rising program costs associated with increases in the minimum wage and the cost of living. Whether funded with public dollars from the state or a school district, fees from families, donations raised by nonprofits, or a combination, these programs focus on serving as many students as their dollars will reach—a worthy priority but one that often comes at the expense of improving quality. Similarly, TA providers are tasked with serving as many programs as possible with limited funding, which means less one-on-one coaching and ongoing follow-up. In this climate of scarcity, for the programs themselves and the TA providers supporting them, expanding reach often precludes improving quality.
2. **Geography** – California is geographically vast, hosting a thousand school districts and close to 5,000 state- and federally-funded expanded learning programs within those districts. California’s communities are diverse, with a spectrum of dense urban, sprawling suburban, and scattered rural communities. Its vastness and diversity, thus, require many different players to work together and transcend boundaries between public and private entities.

Resources for TA in the form of individual TA providers, program materials, and funds exist. But the existence of these resources is not what makes an ecosystem function. A lively TA ecosystem functions when resources connect to the individuals needing them—in other words, when supply and demand meet.

³ *An Assessment of Capacity Building in Washington State: The Nonprofit Ecosystem Framework* (Rep.). (2012). The Giving Practice of Philanthropy Northwest. https://philanthropynw.org/sites/default/files/resources/Listening&Learning_Ecosystem_Summ_FNL.PDF

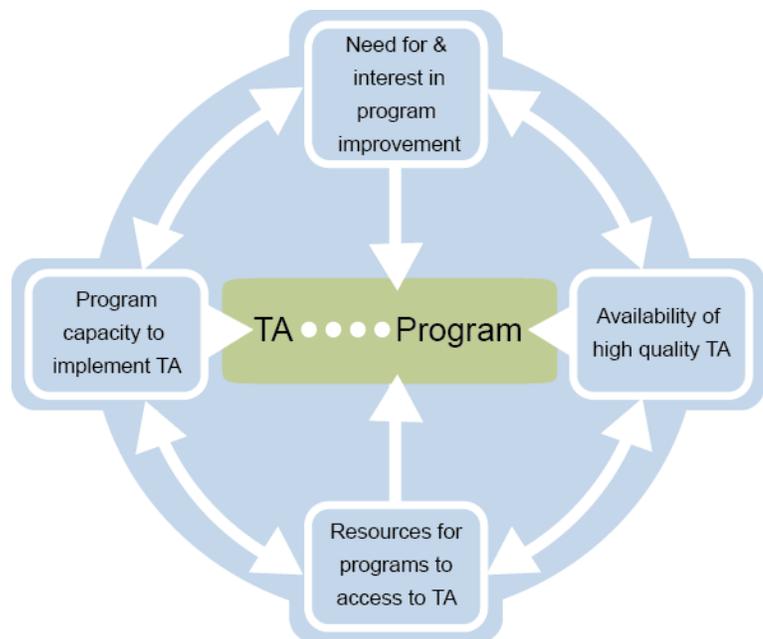
The degree to which a TA ecosystem can be high functioning and operate across the full breadth of its territory depends on four **conditions** (Exhibit 1):

1. **Need for and interest in program improvement** – i.e., desire for and recognition that programs must improve their quality, enrollment, or administration
2. **Availability of high quality TA** – i.e., existence of TA that is relevant to program providers’ quality improvement needs
3. **Resources for programs to access TA** – i.e., ability to cover costs for TA, including staff time for the coaching, consulting or training, and any required travel, as well as funds to pay overtime or a substitute to cover programs; awareness of what TA is available and how to access it (e.g., knowledge that a training is happening, who to contact, when and how to enroll)
4. **Program capacity to implement TA** – i.e., time and resources to share learnings with front-line staff and implement resulting programmatic changes

These conditions vary throughout the ecosystem, and they mutually reinforce one another. For example, if a program discovers it needs to improve quality, it is much more likely to seek the necessary funding and carve out the staff time to receive TA. Whether programs connect with, receive, and use TA depends on which conditions are present at any given time and place. The extent to which these conditions dovetail with one another paves the way for program improvement.

Program-level leadership plays a role in improving conditions for TA uptake in programs. Program directors’ leadership skills affect how they address and improve the conditions in their programs, for example securing resources for staff professional development or negotiating with principals and superintendents. Regardless of their leadership abilities when they started their jobs, program directors say they needed to spend some time within the TA ecosystem to understand it and make the connections appropriate for their programs.

Exhibit 1
**Conditions for a Healthy
Technical Assistance (TA) Ecosystem**

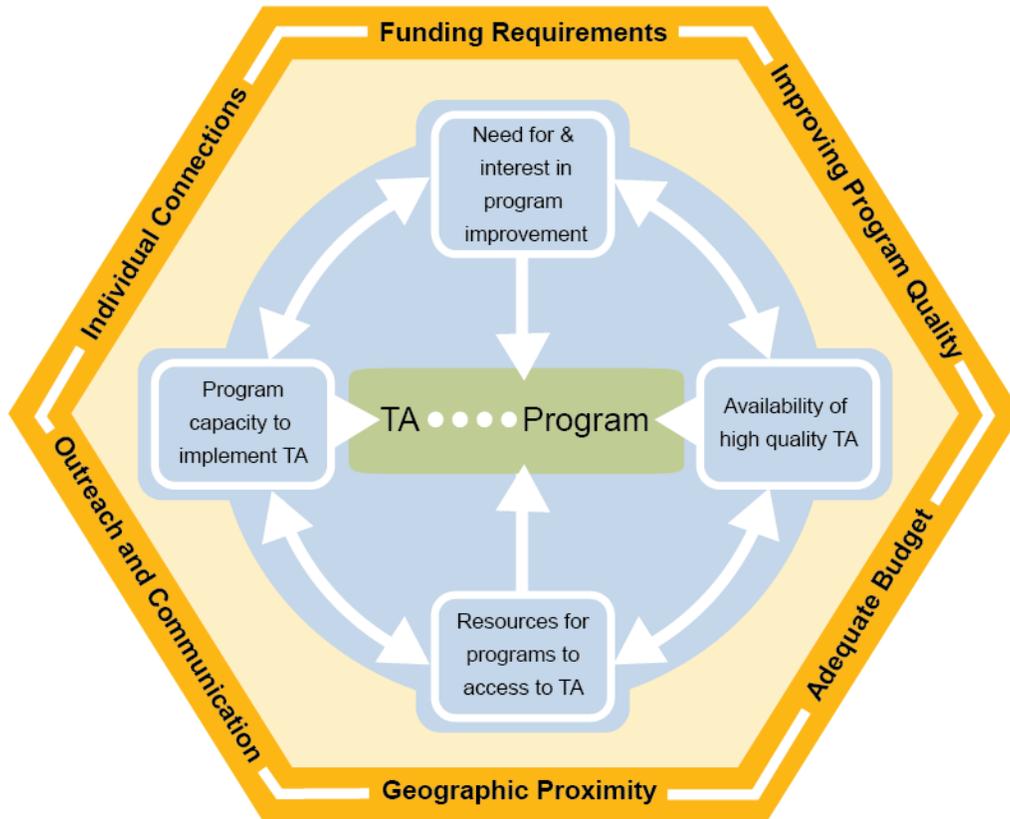


“It’s not about having TA available; it’s about organizations being in a position to actually take advantage of the opportunities.”

– Program Provider

A set of six influencing forces—**influencers**—shape these four conditions (Exhibit 2). When the influencers are turned off or down, they minimize and sometimes even erase the conditions necessary to connect TA to programs. In contrast, when all of these influencers are operating at full force, a thriving TA ecosystem can support program quality improvements that benefit students most in need of high quality expanded learning.

Exhibit 2
Influencers of the Technical Assistance (TA) Ecosystem



1. **Funding requirements** – To receive state funding administered by CDE’s ASD, program providers must meet their promised enrollment counts and show evidence that they are working toward improving their program’s quality. Program providers seek TA that identifies gaps and helps them make improvements to ensure that students continue to enroll and that their programs remain funded. In response to the demand, TA providers offer a regular menu of services in these areas.
2. **Improving program quality** – With increasing recognition of summer and after-school programs’ impact on children, program providers’ professional interest or a desire to maximize program quality can drive a search for TA beyond funding requirements. Sometimes, improving program quality opens up potential new funding, but ultimately, many program providers seek TA because they want to deliver better programs to their students.
3. **Adequate budget** – Having adequate funding influences nearly every condition—namely access, TA availability, and capacity to implement. With enough resources, TA providers can reach program providers with TA that is relevant to programs’ specific needs. Similarly, with sufficient funding, program providers can cover any fees for the TA, travel costs, as well as overtime and substitute costs to cover their programs, in addition to implementing changes as a result of TA.

4. **Geographic proximity** – Program providers will seek TA when it is physically close to their programs. Not only does proximity reduce the burden of cost—less time to travel to and from site visits, consultations, and trainings—geographic proximity of TA can also engender a locally-specific network of program providers and TA providers, paving the way for more TA opportunities, ongoing relationships, and follow-up.
5. **Outreach and communication** – Access to the latest news and resources for expanded learning gives TA providers the most up-to-date findings on what works and what doesn't. For program providers, without outreach and ongoing communication they may not know what kind of TA is available, let alone what their TA needs may be. Outreach and communication also serve to inform state leaders and lawmakers about the importance of improving expanded learning programs.
6. **Individual connections** – When seeking TA, program providers go to people they know, very often referring to their own unique list of consultants, trainers, content specialists, mentors and peers within their local area, including internal school district resources. Without these near and personal networks, program providers are less likely to find the TA that will match their needs and resources.

Whether or not TA and the improvements it sets in motion impact children in after-school and summer learning programs depends on each of the above influencers driving the TA ecosystem toward better awareness of, access to, availability of and capacity to implement TA. Leadership plays a role in maximizing influencers for a stronger and more widely used system of support. Field leaders' potential to change the ecosystem, for good or for bad, lies in their relationships to the influencers and manifests throughout the system (e.g., policy changes, large convenings, new resources). For example, field leaders and CDE's ASD staff were responsible for recent policy developments that are increasing the uptake of TA across the state.

TA Demand: Program Providers' Experiences

The varying strengths of the above conditions and influencers have brought the TA ecosystem to its current state, one that has **96% of after-school programs and 79% of summer learning programs reporting that they received some form of TA between 2013 and 2015** (source: Informing Change 2015 survey of California expanded learning program providers). When reflecting on the overall TA ecosystem in California, program providers express general satisfaction in terms of the quality and availability of TA, yet this zoomed-out perspective of TA in California blurs the many successes and the considerable struggles of bringing needed TA to all programs, due to the very powerful pushes and pulls of the influencers described above. Nonetheless, the general trends, as described below, can begin to shed light on what TA looks like as a collective product of the ecosystem's current set of conditions.

Within Programs, Who Receives TA?

TA is most effective for those who directly receive it; unfortunately, in many cases the people directly receiving it are not the audience who would benefit the most from it. In many programs, it is the program director who receives TA directly due to constraints on resources. The program director is then responsible for ensuring the information cascades throughout the program, flowing to site coordinators and to all front-line staff. Directors admit they often do not have the time to share information or coach their line staff as they had hoped to do right after receiving TA.

Because of the potential of this cascading effect to more widely disperse best practices and innovations, field leaders are eyeing on-site program directors and site coordinators as pivotal distribution points for the delivery of TA to the line staff interacting with students. Approximately 75% of program providers report that site coordinators in their programs are providing at least some level of TA within and outside of their program

(source: Informing Change 2015 survey of California expanded learning program providers). Program directors look for opportunities for their site coordinators and front line staff to directly receive the TA to benefit their programs as well as to encourage these staff to stay in their positions and remain committed to the expanded learning field as a career.

How Is TA Being Delivered?

In 2009, under the leadership of ASAPconnect, after-school TA providers collaboratively developed and endorsed a framework for delivering high quality TA. The framework lists six key TA strategies:

1. **Brokering of Resources** – Providing research and policy information updates and creating intentional approaches to managing TA services for programs
2. **Coaching** – Working in collaboration with an individual or small group to develop specific skills that improve work performance
3. **Consulting** – Working in collaboration with a program, focusing on organizational and programmatic issues or needs
4. **Facilitation** – Working in parallel to engage a program or a group of people into a common understanding or purpose and collaborative knowledge
5. **Mentoring** – Providing guidance and advice for personal and professional growth through a mentor’s intentional and formal relationship
6. **Training** – Teaching and providing learning opportunities to build skills and knowledge based on specific, well-defined objectives

All six strategies can be useful, especially when used together to complement one another. In practice however, more TA providers and program providers use training for TA delivery, particularly when compared to facilitation, mentoring and brokering of resources.

This trend is heavily driven by a climate of scarcity. One TA provider can reach exponentially more program providers in a group training. In contrast, one-on-one coaching and mentoring are costly not only in their limited reach, but also in the ongoing follow-up that is necessary for them to be effective. Coaching and mentoring are often sidelined in favor of group trainings because, similar to program providers, TA providers are limited in their resources and are intent on reaching as many programs as possible.

However, TA providers and field leaders recognize the benefits of the other strategies and the importance of making them more available to programs. They feel that the more intensive TA received through mentoring and coaching would have a two-fold benefit for program providers. These TA strategies would not only grow lasting program capacity but they would also expand the recipients’ own personal and professional skills for success and longevity in the expanded learning field.

“Most of all, the key to TA is coaching. You can do all the training in the world but if you’re not going behind that and actually coaching people, you lose a lot of traction.”

– Statewide TA Provider

How Do Programs Pay For TA?

Almost half (44%) of program providers received only free TA, and another quarter (28%) received free TA along with TA that they paid for (source: Informing Change 2015 survey of California expanded learning program providers). Program budgets are very tight, leaving little to no money available to pay fees or costs for TA. When given the choice between spending money to allow more students to enroll or for the program to receive TA, program providers prioritize making the programs available to more students. They understand how essential participating in expanded learning programs is to children’s academic success and want to serve as many students as possible—often at the cost of not having money left to pay for TA.

In addition to the direct costs of TA, **there are typically indirect or hidden costs, primarily around staff time and travel.** Even if the TA is free, programs still need to cover the staff time to participate in it, including any overtime costs and substitute staff time.

TA Supply: TA Providers’ Experiences

Program providers’ reliance on low- and no-cost TA relates to their choice of TA sources. As built-in, free resources, Regional Leads (see green box on next page) are the most commonly cited sources for TA, but they are one group among many players who facilitate, provide, and fund TA in this ecosystem (Exhibit 3). Understanding the different groups of TA providers and how each group is affected by the six influencers described earlier is an important step to finding effective leverage points for improving the TA ecosystem.

Exhibit 3

Technical Assistance (TA) Providers in California’s TA Ecosystem



“TA ecosystem’s strength is in the different layers of support. There is the regional lead capacity, then there’s the state and local providers... and then there’s more with the local people. It’s almost a farmer’s market or a bazaar... The fact that there’s that much support in the expanded learning space is really exciting.”

– TA Provider & Member of a Regional Network

An Entry Point into the TA Ecosystem: the State Structure



Regional Leads, together with analysts and consultants from the CDE's ASD, are the central links of the state structure to support TA in California. Regional Leads are responsible for making contact with each expanded learning program

receiving an ASES grant or a federal 21st CCLC grant. Along with a Consultant and Analyst from CDE, they walk program providers through details on their grant requirements and quality improvement measures. **In the case of Regional Leads, it's not surprising that program providers overwhelmingly connect more with them than with other TA providers: nearly every influencer drives them to do so.**

INFLUENCERS CONNECTED TO THE STATE STRUCTURE

- Funding requirements
- Improving program quality
- Outreach and communication
- Adequate budget
- Geographic proximity

A Regional Lead for Expanded Learning provides field-based technical assistance and support within a designated region of the state to programs receiving a state or federal grant through CDE's ASD.

Historically, there have been 11 Regional Leads across the state, either working as an individual or with a small staff team and based in a County Office of Education. Starting in 2016, ASD expanded the number of Regional Leads, with multiple Regional Leads in some regions, for a total of 16.

Regional Leads, along with CDE Analysts and Consultants, provide some direct TA and also help program providers find other resources to help them build out their program's quality and comply with the requirements in their grant agreements. The depth and frequency of interactions between a Regional Lead and program provider vary; some program providers are in close, consistent contact with their Regional Lead or office, while others have a more distant or ad hoc relationship.

As the conversation-starter on improving program quality, Regional Leads can guide program providers on what types

of TA they need and where in their region to get it—especially low- and no-cost TA. The individual Regional Lead and her or his staff team play an important communications role, linking program providers with information and activities from the statewide structure. They can refer program providers to the CDE-funded [California After School Resource Center \(CASRC\)](#), which offers programs a resource library, training tools, and technical assistance. For some program providers where few sources of TA are either available or easy to get, the only part of the TA ecosystem that they connect with is their Regional Lead and CDE Analyst and Consultant. Given their role of raising every program's awareness about TA and linking them to relevant resources, Regional Leads are the central entry point into the ecosystem for program providers.

However, most Regional Leads have limited capacity to provide direct TA to all of the programs in their regions. Thus, very few program providers get their TA from their Regional Lead alone, and some report not receiving any TA from their Regional Leads. The ASD is keenly aware of its limited capacity to directly deliver TA, as evidenced by its interest in exploring having multiple Regional Leads in some regions and inviting field input and suggestions around this issue during its [2014–16 Strategic Planning](#) process. But program providers are not waiting for ASD and the Regional Leads to answer all their TA needs. They are drawing on different parts of the broader TA ecosystem—namely state-level TA partners and local networks—to address their unique TA needs.

A Partner & a Supplement: State-Level TA Partners



To further grow the quality and availability of TA for expanded learning programs, **CDE's ASD office works in partnership with other state-level TA organizations dedicated to expanded learning.** Regional Leads frequently facilitate connections between program providers and state-level TA partners, as well as with other program providers doing similar work. State-level partners support programs throughout the state through advocacy, convening, training-of-trainers, indirect support of program providers, and raising and sub-granting additional program funds for out-of-school-time initiatives. The roles of these partners complement, rather than conflict with, one another:

INFLUENCERS CONNECTED TO STATE-LEVEL TA PARTNER STRUCTURE

- Outreach and communication
- Adequate budget
- Improving program quality

- [ASAPconnect](#) – Organizes professional development for TA providers. Leads cross-organizational efforts to define high quality TA and raise TA provider skill level. Helps connect TA providers and programs; provides online resources for programs and TA providers.
- [California After School Network \(CAN\)](#) – Provides online information, email newsletter, training resources and webinars about statewide and national issues affecting expanded learning. Serves as an advocate on behalf of expanded learning programs to local and state leaders.
- [California School-Age Consortium \(CalSAC\)](#) – Connects expanded learning professionals and organizations with one another, working through local and regional chapters across the state. Develops resources and conducts training for TA providers. Provides online information, resources and training webinars for program providers.
- [Partnership for Children and Youth \(PCY\)](#) – Leads the Summer Matters Campaign, a statewide network of educators, education leaders, funders, state and local government, nonprofits, and parents working collaboratively to ensure high quality summer learning opportunities for California students. Advocates on behalf of expanded learning programs to local and state leaders. Provides direct TA to expanded learning programs focused on financing, improving, and sustaining after-school and summer programs. Participates in cross-organizational efforts to improve the quality and availability of expanded learning TA.

Beyond the definition of a state-level TA partner, the [National Summer Learning Association \(NSLA\)](#) is a nationwide nonprofit that serves as resource for summer learning programs. Working closely with some programs in California as well as other states, NSLA has codified quality indicators for summer learning programs in its Comprehensive Assessment of Summer Programs (CASP) process, which guides program leaders to utilize the unique opportunities of summer programming rather than additional doses of the regular classroom based instruction or “summer school.”

These partners are prominent players in driving outreach and funding for TA, two influencers critical to creating contextual conditions for a thriving TA ecosystem. They provide platforms for thought leaders—TA providers, veteran program providers—to share what they’ve learned through publications and conferences. Their outreach and large convenings, like Southern California’s annual [BOOST Conference](#) (Best Out of School Time Conference), disseminate new practices and inculcate the field with a common, shared language for expanded learning. Furthermore, many of these partners also advocate for quality expanded learning with state leaders and lawmakers.

The Big Variable: Local Structures



While locally-based networks are much less centralized or apparent, they play a crucial role in filling the TA gaps when efforts from the state level—either from the CDE’s ASD or statewide nonprofits—do not fully filter down to

program providers. Like the state-level TA partners, these local structures provide critical support to programs, since most Regional offices do not have capacity to provide direct-service TA to all programs that request help. In fact, program providers cite using the TA that is available within their district or organization as much as they do their Regional Lead (source: Informing Change 2015 survey of California expanded learning program providers).

INFLUENCERS CONNECTED TO LOCAL STRUCTURE

- Geographic proximity
- Individual connections

In some areas of the state, local networks have been present for many years (e.g., Los Angeles County) but not necessarily named as such. In other areas there are intentional efforts afoot to build or expand a network (e.g., Central Valley). There are also areas of the state where the desire for such a network runs up against the ever-present challenge of geography, leaving program leaders and TA providers so far flung that connections are difficult to build.

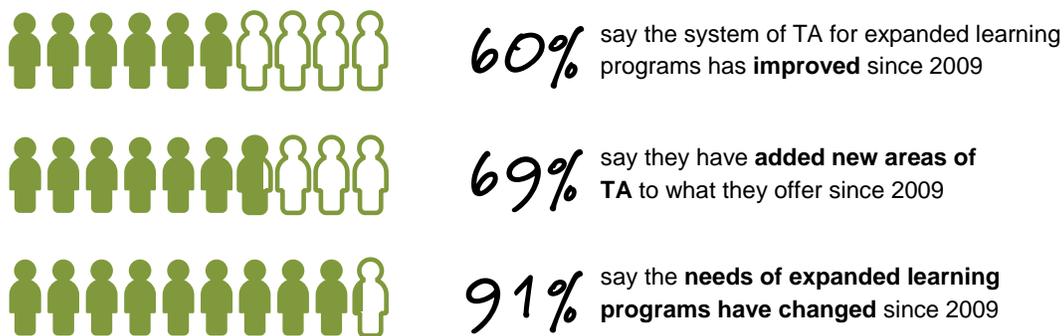
Program providers’ local networks, each one a unique set of expertise and experience, provide important guidance to program directors and their staff. Individual trainers and consultants in these networks may or may not be aware of any quality standards for expanded learning programs, or of the assessment tools for expanded learning programs that are recommended by CDE’s ASD.

In addition to the access that geographical proximity allows, the presence of a lively local network of TA support can be the difference between whether quality TA is available to program providers or not. Urban communities are more likely to host a strong network with rich, diverse sets of TA resources, while program providers in rural communities must travel further distances, only to make fewer TA touchpoints. The strength and vigor of the local networks vary, depending once again on regional geography, but also on the number or amount of region-specific nonprofits, peer support, local TA resources, and the capacity of program providers to commit the time and energy needed for communications and convenings.

An Evolving Ecosystem

The expanded learning TA ecosystem, like all dynamic ecosystems, has experienced change over time (Exhibit 4). Most noticeably, the availability and types of TA, as well as demand for TA, have increased since 2009.⁴ Reflecting on these changes, veteran TA providers refer most frequently to increased need and demand for TA around quality standards and program assessments. The TA they are providing for STEM, summer learning, and social-emotional learning are also a big change, compared to 2009. Perhaps more importantly, **there is wide agreement that an improved, coordinated system for providing TA and other support is forming.** In interviews, program providers, TA providers, and field leaders attribute the positive changes to more collaboration, greater clarity about program quality, and stronger leadership.

Exhibit 4
**Veteran Technical Assistance (TA) Provider Reflections on
TA Ecosystem Changes Since 2009⁵**



Collaboration – Current approaches to TA delivery and design are more collaborative than in past years.

- Regional Leads, CDE Consultants, and CDE Analysts are working in “triads,” providing each ASES and 21st CCLC grantee with a three-person TA team that collaborates on a shared workplan designed around the grantee’s unique needs.
- State-level TA partners that provide and broker TA are communicating better with one another and working cooperatively to make best use of TA funding from public and private sources.
- TA providers say they are more frequently creating or brokering TA partnerships to meet a program’s needs. It is easier to form these partnerships, they say, now that TA providers and recipients use common terms and concepts as presented in the TA Framework that was developed by ASAPconnect in 2009.
- Collaboration with philanthropy has stimulated TA usage and development. The David and Lucile Packard Foundation’s After-school and Summer Enrichment Subprogram invested over \$43.4 million in after-school and summer learning programs in California between 2006 and 2016. The Foundation’s funding prompted expanded learning program providers and TA providers to work collaboratively on creating quality improvement tools. The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation drew on the same summer learning TA network to support expanded learning programs that focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics).

⁴ While the expanded learning field in California has experienced great change since 2006, 2009 is the first year Informing Change collected data on after-school and summer learning. Thus, specific data comparisons over time measure differences between 2009 and 2015.

⁵ Source: Informing Change 2015 survey of California TA providers

Clarity about Program Quality – Field leaders identified the key indicators of a quality program, which has stimulated greater interest in TA related to quality improvement.

- In September 2014 CDE’s ASD published a new set of quality standards for expanded learning programs. With these standards, ASD and field leaders are better able to articulate expectations for programs, which in turn is prompting interest in TA.
- The passage of California Senate Bill SB 1221 mandates recipients of ASES and 21st CCLC funding to conduct program assessments, follow a cycle of program improvement, and design programs to be available year-round.
- Veteran program providers, when comparing TA over the last six years, are happy to report a shift from a TA approach focused on grant compliance to the current attention on improving program quality. Rather than seeing TA as way to correct errors, more TA providers are asking, “How can we help you become a better program?”

“Having quality improvement now required by law [as part of grant agreements] has been a game changer.”

– TA Provider

Leadership – Strong leadership in state agencies opened the way to policy changes and broadened the base of supporters for expanded learning in general. These developments, along with a renewed vision of a vibrant expanded learning field, have provided some strengthening of the TA structure and helped boost program providers’ interest in TA.

- In 2011, new leadership arrived in key state offices and helped to elevate expanded learning as a statewide strategy for addressing the achievement gap. Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson, a former teacher and advocate of expanded learning, encouraged school district superintendents to seek out and support programs to actively engage students in a year-round cycle of learning, including after-school, intersession, and summer programs.
- In the same year, long-time field leader Michael Funk was appointed to head the ASD at CDE, bringing with him an acute sensibility to the challenges faced by program providers.
- A strong cohort of nonprofit and local education advocates worked with the new ASD to create a shared vision for the field along with the muscle to start implementing the types of funding and administrative changes necessary to achieve this vision.

Recommendations for Maximizing the TA Ecosystem

Despite the challenges in California’s expanded learning TA ecosystem, the state’s expanded learning programs, infrastructure, and range of supports are much more advanced than those in other states. California is a model that other states can learn from. Nevertheless, given the breadth and diversity of programs in the state, California’s TA ecosystem has considerable room for improvement and growth before it can adequately serve the needs of all programs in the state.

Three scenarios could strengthen the vitality and reach of this ecosystem. One is an increase of funding throughout the system to stimulate and sustain change; however, such an influx is not likely. A second is the strategic application of term-limited funding to build out selected parts of the ecosystem, as shown by recent improvements in the quality and availability of summer learning TA due to funding and resources provided by the

David and Lucile Packard Foundation. A third scenario is to examine the influencers described in this brief to find places where relatively small adjustments can trigger changes, such as improving the flow of information through existing communication tools. The last two scenarios are growing possibilities as educators, parents, policymakers, and community leaders become more aware of the benefits that expanded learning programs provide to students.

Below are some examples of changes to the ecosystem's influencers that would strengthen or expand the reach of the current ecosystem:



Create regional information hubs – Program providers are interested in having a central location for finding TA, such as a web portal that can help them identify regional providers, as well as state sources. While a comprehensive depository of everything in the state might be too cumbersome, regional sources may be more feasible and useful. This could also help TA providers understand who else is in the field locally, which could lead to more connected, cohesive TA networks with shared goals and frameworks. As TA has expanded, more people are engaging in different approaches, and regional information hubs may help foster cohesion. A hub could be in the form of a web-based directory, a social media network, or a regular calendar of informational meetings beyond grantee meetings convened by Regional Leads. Some Regional Leads are already fostering self-organized activities by grantees and other TA providers. CDE's ASD and state-level TA partners can support this development by including emerging regional hubs in their communication plans.



Lower the barriers to entry of TA – Players in the TA ecosystem should continue to expand the types and locations of free TA that targets program providers' most pressing needs. Most programs are not taking advantage of quality TA where fees and travel costs (including staff travel time) are required. TA providers should explore new ways to use online resources, electronic communications, and smartphone apps to expand program providers' access to free and convenient TA. They should also experiment to find cost-effective ways to provide coaching, post-training follow-up calls, and other types of multi-dose extended TA such as learning communities and peer coaching. Experimenting with a different structure can also help address the geographic constraints that rural programs have to access TA.



Disseminate best practices regionally – In order for lessons learned to better permeate throughout the state, state-level TA partners should try to secure grants to disseminate best practices to programs through experimental, less structured channels (e.g., local learning communities, peer coaching, site lead gatherings, online courses, demonstration sites).



Prioritize discussion on the need for TA in times of scarce resources – Programs strive to serve as many students as they can, but this frequently results in reducing or completely eliminating budget lines for training, conferences, and consultants. Organizations that convene program providers can help them think through this dilemma by providing forums for sharing and discussing their experiences with balancing quantity and quality. Hearing other program providers' experiences with investing in improving quality for the long-term could support program providers who are faced with some tough decisions.



Link communications – TA accessibility is often less about how much TA is available, and more about how to maximize the TA that currently exists. Getting the right TA to program providers requires an intentional chain of communications, rather than single-source announcements. For example, Regional Leads can make announcements that reach at least a few key people in all programs, while state-level TA partners may have email lists of multiple staff within programs, but not all programs. By reviewing current communication tools and channels and assessing how each one promotes TA, field leaders may see new ways to encourage program providers to access and apply TA. With intentional planning, CDE and its state-level TA partners could leverage their existing communication efforts for TA purposes.



Diffuse field leadership – Creating a multi-tiered, networked set of emerging expanded learning leaders (i.e., skilled and experienced program directors and site directors) can lead to increased TA access throughout the state. CDE, CAN, CalSAC, and other organizations could incorporate TA skill development into program and site directors’ preparation for larger, regional leadership roles and encourage these leaders to provide hands-on TA to other programs. Expanded learning leaders are in a unique position to channel messages about quality practice to peers in their local area, which not only increases access to TA, but also helps the leaders build their own knowledge, skills, and networks. A small investment of resources in targeted areas for leadership development and TA skill building could strengthen links in weaker areas of the existing TA ecosystem. Engaging program and site directors for this development can fill gaps in the ecosystem without placing additional burden on the Regional Leads. This strategy may also help to increase peer support for rural areas.

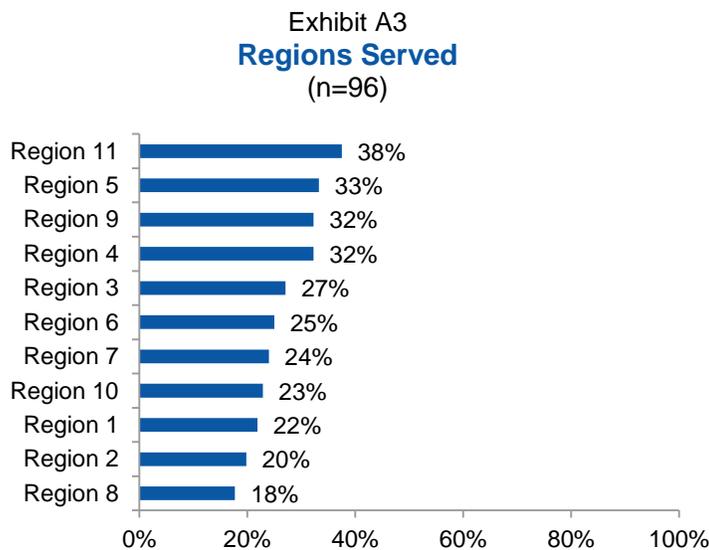
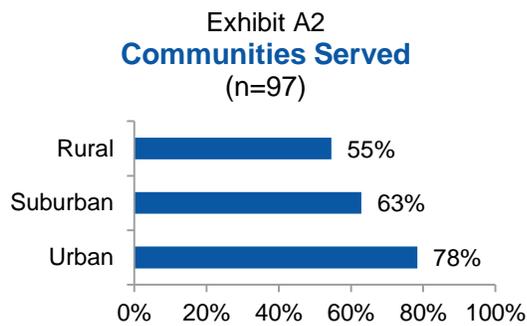
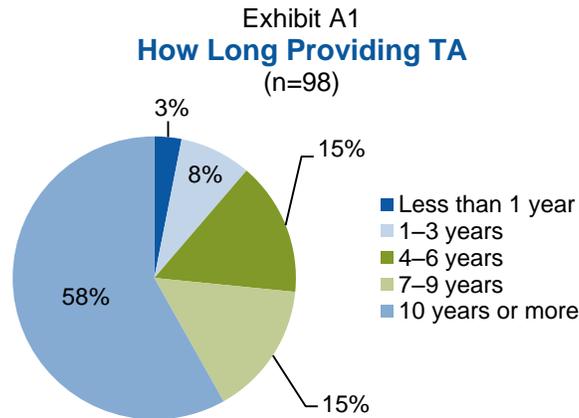
California has a rich and diverse array of TA resources available for its expanded learning programs, but awareness of and access to these resources is often blocked. To grow and maintain a healthy expanded learning TA ecosystem for California will require attention to all the influencers connecting those who give and those who receive the TA, those who build and support the underlying systems for TA, and those with a vision of a year-round cycle of high quality learning opportunities for all of California’s students.

This brief is funded through a grant from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation to Informing Change as part of ongoing work to assess the impact of the Foundation’s investments in the after-school and summer learning field since 2009. It is informed by data collected by Informing Change in late 2015 and early 2016, including surveys of California-based expanded learning program providers (n=258) and TA providers (n=98); interviews (n=68) with expanded learning program providers, TA providers, field leaders and funders; and our review, observation, and analysis of materials and gatherings from the field and the Packard Foundation. Additional information on data collection is available in Appendix A.

Appendix A: Data Collection Overview

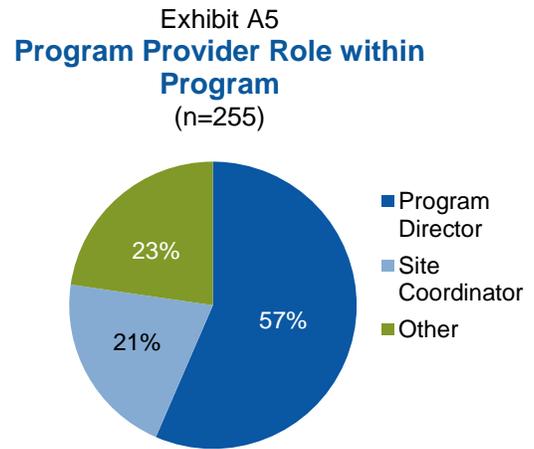
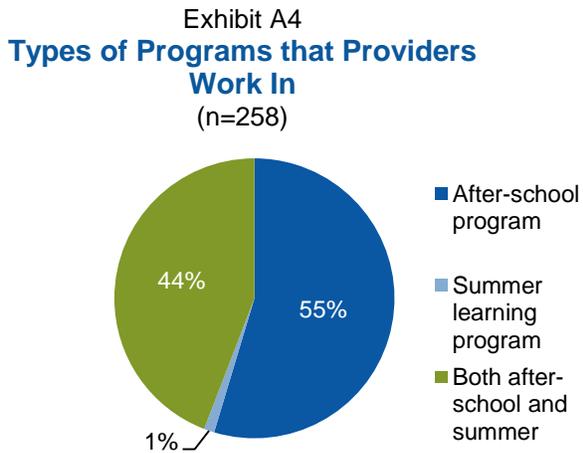
TA PROVIDER PROFILE

A descriptive look at the TA providers who responded to Informing Change’s 2015 survey of California expanded learning TA providers (n=98).



PROGRAM PROVIDER PROFILE

A descriptive look at the program providers who responded to Informing Change's 2015 survey of California expanded learning program providers (n=258).



INTERVIEW INFORMANTS

Informing Change interviewed 68 individuals for this brief. Informants represent organizations across the state of California and fall into the following categories:

- David and Lucile Packard Foundation Staff (n=1)
- Field Leaders (n=11)
 - California Department of Education
 - Campaign for Grade Level Reading
 - California Afterschool Network
 - California After School Resource Center
 - Mott Foundation
 - Noyce Foundation
 - Region 11
 - Visalia Unified School District
 - Wallace Foundation
- TA Grantees of the Packard Foundation (n=6)
 - ASAPConnect
 - California School-Age Consortium
 - National Summer Learning Association
 - Partnership for Children and Youth
 - Region 2
 - Region 3

- TA Providers (n=15)
 - Boys & Girls Clubs of Stanislaus County
 - CalSAC TA Network TA Providers
 - Center for Collaborative Solutions
 - Central Valley Afterschool Foundation
 - Children’s Initiative
 - Impact People
 - Imperial County Office of Education
 - Outdoor Education for All
 - Region 1
 - Region 6
 - Temescal Associates

- Program Providers (n=35)
 - Alhambra Unified School District
 - Apple Academy Charters Public Schools
 - Campbell Union School District
 - Carpinteria Unified School District
 - Catholic Charities
 - Chino Valley Unified School District
 - City of South San Francisco
 - Collective Impact
 - Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District
 - El Sol Science and Arts Academy
 - Elk Grove Unified School District
 - Extera Public Schools
 - Fullerton Elementary School District
 - Greenfield Union Elementary
 - Hawthorne School District
 - Humboldt County Office of Education
 - Kernville Union Elementary
 - Lake County Office of Education
 - LA’s BEST
 - Los Angeles Unified School District
 - Marysville Joint Unified School District
 - Paso Robles Joint Unified School District
 - Pomona Unified School District
 - Sacramento City Unified School District
 - San Francisco Unified School District
 - San Jacinto Unified School District
 - San Joaquin County Office of Education
 - San Rafael City Elementary School District
 - Santa Clara County Office of Education
 - Santa Clara Unified School District
 - South Bay Union Elementary
 - YMCA of Silicon Valley

INFORMING 
CHANGE

2040 Bancroft Way, Suite 400
Berkeley, CA 94704
tel 510.665.6100
fax 510.665.6129

informingchange.com