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Building Strong Residency Partnerships: Challenges and Opportunities in the CA Teacher Residency Grant

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Overview

California has made a major investment in teacher residencies, allocating over $500 million through the California Teacher Residency Grant Program to launch and expand teacher residencies throughout the state. The grant program is intended to alleviate the state's chronic teacher shortage and ensure that California's students—especially students of color and those experiencing poverty—have access to well-prepared teachers.

The long-term success and sustainability of teacher residencies relies on coordinated, sustainable partnerships across residency programming, host local education agencies (LEAs), and partner institutions of higher education (IHEs). This evaluation brief highlights the early challenges and successes of grant-funded residencies in their efforts to build these partnerships. The findings outlined in the brief suggest there is a crucial need for grant-funded residency programs to develop and deepen authentic LEA and IHE partnerships and that a supportive policy ecosystem that helps grant recipients strengthen these partnerships will play a critical role in realizing the promise of California's new teacher residencies.

Introduction

Across the nation, policymakers and educational leaders are increasingly leveraging teacher residencies and similar measures as pathways for solving teacher shortages, diversifying the teacher profession, and preparing new teachers for success in the classroom. Several states, including California, Texas, Delaware, and Louisiana, have made large investments in teacher residencies through state funding opportunities and competitive grant programs. Similar models of teacher apprenticeships and "grow your own" programs—models that recruit teachers who have a desire to work in their own communities—are emerging across the national landscape.

The state of California has made a major investment in teacher residencies, allocating over $500 million through the California Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP) to launch and expand teacher residencies. TRGP funding is designated to support local education agencies (LEAs, such as districts and county offices of education) in developing or expanding a teacher residency pathway with a partner institution of higher education (IHE) that has a state-approved teacher preparation program. (For more information, see the box "The California Teacher Residency Grant Program.")

This investment comes at a critical point for California's students. California faces an ever-growing urgency to address a chronic teacher shortage that has resulted in an increased reliance on under-prepared teachers.[1] These teachers are more likely to teach in schools that serve a high proportion of students of color and students from families with low income.[2] Moreover, there continues to be a significant gap between the races and ethnicities of California's teachers and those of the students they

teach.[3] Teachers of color in California are more likely to enter the profession through less-supportive, substandard pathways, and recent studies have shown that underprepared teachers are less likely to stay in the teaching profession.[4]

Research suggests that teacher residencies, when implemented well, can result in positive outcomes, including better prepared teachers, increased teacher retention rates, and a ready hiring supply of teachers who are responsive to the hiring needs and contexts of partner LEAs.[5] Critically, residencies can also provide financially feasible pathways for teachers of color and teachers from low-income backgrounds to enter the profession through a supportive, rigorous pathway.[6] However, for teacher residencies to have their intended impact at scale, they need to be sustainable beyond one-time grant funding, affordable for residents, and integrated into the workforce strategy of host LEAs. This work requires deep partnership with, alignment with, and collaboration between residency programming, host LEAs, and IHE partners.

This evaluation brief highlights the early challenges and successes of TRGP-funded residencies in their efforts to build coordinated, sustainable residency partnerships. Evaluation findings suggest there is a crucial need for TRGP-funded residencies to develop and deepen these partnerships in order to ensure residency viability and sustainability. A supportive policy ecosystem that helps residencies strengthen collaboration and leadership engagement across IHE and K–12 systems will play a critical role in realizing the promise of California's new teacher residencies. The brief ends with recommendations for state agencies and leadership, LEA and IHE leadership, and program practitioners as they work to support robust residency partnerships. Given the new and significant infusions of state funding toward the TRGP and the one-time nature of this funding, there is a new urgency to ensure that funding can be used effectively and that support for implementation matches the level of state investment.

The California Teacher Residency Grant Program

In an effort to develop long-term solutions to meet the need for diverse, well-prepared educators in high-need credential areas, the state of California has dedicated over $500 million to teacher residencies through the California Teacher Residency Grant Program (TRGP), administered by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC). TRGP funding is designated to support LEAs in developing or expanding a teacher residency pathway with a partner IHE that has a teacher preparation program approved by the CTC. Funds may be used for teacher preparation costs, stipends for mentor teachers or teacher candidates, mentoring, and beginning teacher induction, among other allowable uses. The recipient LEAs must match 80 percent of the grant amount (in-kind matches accepted). TRGP funding is available for encumbrance through June 2026.

- Initial TRGP funding in 2018 made $75 million in funds available to programs that prepared residents in the designated shortage areas of special education, bilingual education, and science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).[7]

- The 2021/22 state budget made an additional $350 million in one-time funds available to residency programs, and it expanded eligibility to include residency programs focused on school counseling, early childhood education, and transitional kindergarten or that enhanced the diversity of the teacher workforce. The 2021/22 state budget also increased per resident funding from $20,000 to $25,000, offered more flexibility for funds to be used for program costs, and provided new funds for capacity-building grants.[8]
- The 2022/23 state budget further augmented the grant with an additional $184 million toward teacher and school counselor residency programs and $20 million toward a statewide technical assistance center to support teacher residency programs.[9]

What are teacher residencies?

Developed and operated by a partnership between an LEA and a university or college that has a state-approved teacher preparation program, residencies serve as a pathway for meeting an LEA's specific teacher workforce needs, typically defined by subject or student focus (e.g., a need for more special education teachers). Teacher residencies provide intensive pathways into the teaching profession that focus on rigorous "clinical preparation" whereby a resident's credentialing coursework is integrated with a yearlong placement in the classroom of an expert mentor teacher (i.e., an accomplished teacher who provides mentorship, teaches alongside the resident, and supports the resident in gradually assuming increased responsibility in the classroom). As residents learn to teach during their residency year, they typically receive financial support in exchange for a several-year teaching commitment in the host LEA upon completing the residency program.

Strong partnerships are the foundation for successful teacher residencies

Successful teacher residencies are distinguished from other teacher preparation pathways by their responsiveness to LEA workforce needs, rigorous clinical placements alongside a mentor teacher that span a full academic year, thoughtful integration of IHE coursework with clinical practice, and the financial support residents receive during their residency year.[10] The elements that make the teacher residency model unique and impactful hinge on a foundation of strong partnerships between and across the residency program and IHEs and K–12 systems.[11]

Specifically, strong partnerships across LEAs and IHEs provide a critical anchor for navigating the financial complexity of teacher residency models. Financial supports enable residents to engage in intensive, yearlong preparation and ensure that residencies are a viable preservice option for individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Strong partnerships are able to convene interested parties from across the partnership to leverage LEA- and IHE-side funding sources, reduce program costs, and allocate the necessary staff and resources to support the residency.[12] When

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both the LEA and IHE partners are fully invested in a residency partnership, cost sharing among partners is feasible and, ultimately, residencies can lower LEA costs overall by retaining well-prepared teachers in high-need credential areas.[13] Partnerships also allow residency interest holders to codesign aligned coursework and clinical experiences tailored to the needs and contexts of the partner LEA and enable the selection, training, and ongoing support of effective mentor teachers.[14] Data sharing and ongoing communication allow residencies to develop data-informed recruitment and hiring goals that respond to LEA workforce needs.[15]

These partnerships are possible when residency partnerships are characterized by a shared vision and jointly held mutually beneficial goals, the active support of committed leadership, dedicated staff across the LEA and IHE, shared data and measurement to drive decision-making, and intentional collaboration and communication structures to support this work.[16]

The motivation for this partnership study

WestEd's formative evaluation efforts to date have focused on the 37 programs[17] that received grants to launch or expand residencies through the initial round of TRGP funding released in March 2019. Participants in these programs receive a full academic year of mentoring and clinical practice, and both residents and their mentors speak highly of their programs. Crucially, these grant programs are attracting a more diverse teaching workforce that better reflects California's students.[18]

Alongside these successes, evaluation data at the midpoint of the initial round of funding suggest that many programs may need additional support to be on track for long-term sustainability, affordability, and scale. First, previous evaluation data have suggested that nearly all programs are facing sustainability and affordability challenges at some level. Most programs do not have plans in place to access nongrant funding sources after the TRGP concludes, and despite the $20,000 of grant dollars allocated per resident, a majority of residents reported experiencing financial hardships during their residency year.[19] These financial hardships disproportionately impacted residents of color. There is also significant variation across programs in the financial assistance residents receive, which includes stipends, subsidized tuition, LEA-based employment opportunities, and other forms of support.[20] Second, past evaluation data have indicated that programs are struggling to build the administrative and staffing capacity necessary for long-term planning and scale.[21] Finally, there is variation across programs in key leading outcome indicators. Most programs enrolled fewer residents than projected, and a third of programs hired fewer than 90 percent of the residents they prepared.

These findings are backdropped by two important contextual challenges. The release of grant funding in spring 2019 provided a narrow window for recipients to both design their programs and recruit their first resident and mentor teacher cohorts in time for the start of the 2019/20 school year. Less than a year later, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic upended K–12 systems and posed major disruptions to residency programs.[22]

Many of these findings point to the challenges of coordination and collaboration across LEA and IHE systems. Because the field understands strong partnerships between the LEA and IHE—and within the LEA—to be foundational to long-term residency sustainability and scale, in spring 2022 WestEd set out to understand (a) the extent to which residencies are building the foundations for these partnerships and (b) what factors are contributing to or detracting from partnership development. The expansion of the grant program beyond the initial funding brings a new urgency to the need to address these issues for both existing and new grantees.

The approach of this partnership study

The findings in this brief are rooted in 1-hour interviews with 12 LEA residency program leads in spring 2022. (For more information on who program leads are, see the box "Program leads.") All interviewees are from the 37 programs that received grants to launch or expand residencies through the initial round of TRGP funding released in March 2019. The interview sample was selected for variation in three possible indicators of partnership strength: program size, year-over-year growth in number of residents, and the rate at which residents who completed the program were hired within the host LEA. WestEd's interest in ensuring representation from programs that had experienced challenges in hiring residency completers within the LEA means that the sample is overrepresented in this category.

Interviews were semistructured and attended to key residency partnership constructs drawn from existing research-supported standards and indicators for strong residency partnerships.[23] Focal areas included residency origins and launch activities, partnership team structures and day-to-day management, LEA and IHE leadership engagement, capacity and plans to scale, technical assistance experience, and advice to the state/policy community. The evaluation team analyzed interview transcripts by coding for responses related to each partnership construct, stepping back regularly to capture emerging themes and trends.

Findings from these interviews reflect the program lead experience and do not include other key partnership perspectives (e.g., from the IHE side of the partnership or from across LEA and IHE leadership). In future evaluation efforts, the experiences of these additional partners could provide an important perspective to understand.

Program leads

Program leads interviewed for this study are individuals from the LEA who are responsible for the day-to-day running of the residency program, typically the person identified as responsible for the overall management of the TRGP identified on the grant application. Within the interview sample, about half of the leads are at an assistant superintendent/director level and about half are residency coordinators or residency program administrators. All leads interviewed are from residency programs that received a California Teacher Residency Grant through the initial round of grant funding released in March 2019.

Findings: The development of more robust partnerships is a key opportunity for residency programs

The sample indicated that most programs have a need to strengthen the fundamental intra-LEA coordination and leadership engagement necessary for residency sustainability and scale. Structures to facilitate coordination with LEA and IHE partners are not yet developed in many partnerships. This is particularly the case for programs that are small with limited growth and weak hiring, but even programs with strong early outcome indicators also have room to strengthen partnerships.

Finding 1: Most leads expressed a desire for more intensive LEA leadership awareness and engagement with the residency program

Residency programs cannot become a core component of an LEA's workforce strategy without the active support of committed LEA leadership. LEA leadership plays a crucial role in articulating the residency's alignment with the LEA's workforce strategy, allocating necessary staffing and resources, facilitating data sharing to inform the strategic recruitment of resident candidates, and convening interested parties from across the partnership to design an affordable and sustainable financial model.

A majority of leads (8 of 12) expressed a sense that the residency is not yet perceived as a district priority and that the value-add of the residency has not always been clear to LEA leadership. This pattern held across programs of varying size, growth, and within-LEA hiring rates, but it was especially pronounced for programs struggling to hire residency completers within the LEA.

One lead spoke to the untapped potential of the residency, reflecting that "we still have work to do helping everyone within our district leadership to see the value of the residency. . . . I know that for myself and our coordinator, we really believe that this is the most effective means of teacher prepara-tion to help those new teachers be as well prepared as they can. But for some [leaders]

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>
> *—Program lead*

who just haven't had as much involvement, it just isn't clear." Another lead stated plainly, "I don't think there's enough leadership—either presence or buy-in or understanding—from the district level."

Another lead shared that although district leadership was "curious" and "excited" about the residency work, "partners don't all have that same urgency and drive to get the residency program going in their districts. . . . [T]hey're not getting the right people in their system in place to engage in more recruitment efforts, gather more mentors, allocate financial resources."

Finally, leads expressed a need for LEA leadership to step back and consider how the myriad of preparation pathways in their LEA feeds into a larger workforce strategy. "I don't think there's a coordinated effort to bring people in and say, 'Huh, who are these [future teachers], and what are their different needs, and what do we think the best route for them is?' and then align them with the right supports. It's just like a free-for-all. . . . I think there's some gaps, at times, in understanding the different models and different pathways."

Finding 2: There is an opportunity to strengthen connections between the residency program and key LEA functions, particularly human resources and business/finance

In addition to reflecting on the importance of LEA leadership engagement more broadly, leads also pointed to the need to connect with specific LEA functions and offices in order to support the growth and scale of their residency programs. Alignment between a residency program and the host LEA's human resources (HR) and business functions is crucial. Collaboration with HR allows a residency to design recruitment efforts that are responsive to LEA workforce needs and that facilitate strategic

residency hiring. A strong working relationship with the LEA's business office helps residency programs identify opportunities to share costs and identify funding streams to allow for program sustainability and adequate resident financial supports.

About half of the leads articulated a desire for greater alignment with the LEA's HR department in order to project hiring needs and coordinate the hiring of residents. All are from programs that had faced challenges placing residents in LEA jobs upon completion of the program. "I would like HR to be at the table. I think that would be really helpful," one lead shared. Another lead reflected on the critical need to bring their HR leadership into the fold of the residency work. "Human resources [is] not really understanding the intent behind [the residency program], and [understanding the intent] should be a goal. [Residency staff] need to set up regular meetings with the HR assistant superintendent and sit down and talk to them regularly about what's going on with the residency—include them at the beginning of the year and kickoff activities—just helping HR to see the importance of what we're doing and the work we're doing before [residents] become employees."

Comments from a majority of leads also indicated a need to engage more deeply with the LEA's finance or business office to secure longer term financial support for the residency. "We've had those conversations [on sustaining the residency program] a little bit, but we haven't gone there yet because we've had grants to support the residency," noted one lead.

Another shared the challenges of engaging the LEA's business office in sustainability conversations when district-level leadership's time, resources, and attention are stretched thin recovering from and adapting

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to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic: "It's just really tough to use this year as a baseline for things, for people to make fiscal commitment or anticipate what they want to put funding and resources [toward]. . . . [P]eople, I think, believe in residencies, but I think people are not able to put their money where their mouth is in some ways."

Finding 3: Basic partnership team structures could be bolstered across most programs

Structures to support cross-institutional collaboration, communication, and alignment are critical to residency partnerships. These structures include a shared mission and vision, a governance board or advisory structure to engage leadership and decision-makers, regular meetings to facilitate shared ownership and decision-making, and data-sharing agreements and processes to inform recruitment and continuous improvement. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) or partnership agreement that delineates these roles and responsibilities can anchor this work.

The robustness and stage of development of these partnership structures vary across the programs interviewed. For example, only one program reported having an established advisory structure that

include leadership representatives from the IHE and LEA partners. A quarter of the leads were able to speak to mission statements that they consider important to their current work, and about half of the leads were aware of an MoU between the LEA and IHE for this grant.

Only half of the programs have a structure that meets a basic threshold for a partnership team: a team that includes at least one representative from the LEA and IHE and that meets on at least a monthly basis.[24] Generally, partnership meetings are devoted to critical, but immediate, needs rather than to the long-term planning activities that a more robust partnership might engage in. The focus of the meetings include supporting and monitoring residents, arranging resident placements, communicating with mentor teachers, and processing resident stipends.

Significantly, only one program—an established program with a partnership that preexisted the TRGP—has the type of multilayered, role-diverse partnership team structure that the field suggests is important for the residency model. "We have layers of communication, and we have structures in place to support the work of residency," the lead from this program explained. "It really starts at the top. . . . [L]eadership is looking at the entire system as a whole, from a view that we don't have and we don't get." The aim of this tiered partnership structure, the lead stressed, "is to make sure that there's alignment across the program from the bottom to the top, top to the bottom, and that we're speaking the same language and we're supporting residents in the same way."

Finding 4: Most programs have not yet landed on a sufficient and sustainable staffing structure

Residency staffing structures can vary depending on the size of the residency and how the work of managing a residency is distributed across key roles. However, the vast majority of leads interviewed felt they do not have sufficient staffing to manage the day-to-day implementation of the program currently, and virtually all felt they would need a more robust staffing structure to expand the residency in the future. This desire for more robust staffing was consistent across program sizes.

Leads, stretched thin, indicated a desire for more bandwidth to liaise with school sites and principals, support residents and mentor teachers, keep abreast of clerical work, and facilitate broader partnership engagement. These needs echo those reported in a related study in which leads stressed the need for residency staff who could manage coordination and communication across organizations.[25]

Five of the leads interviewed suggested that the residency would benefit from a staff member whose job was wholly dedicated to the residency work. "It's not my main role. I would say it's a small part of the work I do," explained one lead who also holds other district-level responsibilities. Another lead with a quarter of their time devoted to the residency shared, "A half of me [i.e., 50 percent of my time] would work, but . . . that's not going to be a great program. I mean, I feel like it could be so much better." However, even the three leads who have almost full-time roles devoted to managing the residency stressed that a single person running the program without support felt unsustainable.

One lead, despite having 90 percent of their time allocated to the residency, explained how the responsibilities of running a complex program quickly pile up: "I'm kind of like the main supervisor of all of these residents, and I'm not doing that well because of the amount of other things that are going on with the job," they explained. "I do everything. . . . I work with our marketing person to organize recruiting efforts, then get the applications in through the whole process, interviewing, convening our [partnership team]. Overseeing coursework, instructors, supervision. I feel like I'm a counselor half

the time." At another program, the lead's role as the sole linchpin holding the residency together makes for a challenging role without "camaraderie or thought partnership."

In two programs, leads had come into the responsibility of keeping the residency afloat after staff turnover and LEA turmoil during the pandemic stymied initial staffing plans. "We've been able to keep things moving, but I think it's more—I don't want to say triage; I think *triage* is negatively connotative— but it's more patchwork maybe. I don't think it's fully fleshed out in terms of having a presence and people who develop it as a stand-alone program," one explained.

Only one lead was satisfied that their program has landed on a workable and sustainable staffing model. In this lead's experience, the key is to have a full-time coordinator devoted to managing the residency while also distributing residency responsibilities across other LEA and IHE functions with a stake in the program: "There are layers of support for residency. It's not just one coordinator, really. It's multiple people who are supporting the work of residency." The lead went on to posit that one coordinator could support a large number of residents "as long as there are internal partnerships to support the work. If you have internal partnerships, like with human resources and instruction and [the department of special education], then this work is very manageable."

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Finding 5: Contextual challenges—such as COVID-19 stressors, leadership and staff turnover, and budget deficits—can pose significant challenges for partnership development

A majority of leads indicated that the COVID-19 crisis had deprioritized the residency or had made it hard to establish consistent communication and partnership structures to support residency growth and development. "Districts want to be more engaged, [but] they haven't had either the time or personnel. Or it sat five, six, seven down on their list of things to do after all of the craziness of the last two years," one lead shared. Another lead added, "The system has been so taxed. It's just really being able to show up on a very basic day-to-day basis that has been sapping people's bandwidth and energy."

Half of the leads noted that turnover among LEA and IHE leadership and other staff has made it difficult for partnership growth to gain momentum. In fact, over half the interviewed leads were themselves new to the role since the launch of the grant in 2019. This leadership turnover, when combined with what has felt like a constant state of crisis caused by the pandemic, has created an environment in which residencies have struggled to remain on LEA leadership's radar. The superintendent has "so many other immediate priorities [they're] trying to deal with," explained one lead. "[They] didn't wade into [considering the residency] yet."

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>
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And finally, several programs that experienced declining enrollment or budget deficits shared that it was difficult to prioritize and plan for the residency when hiring projections, budget allocations, and the job security of new teachers were all in flux.

One lead summarized the significant challenge of attending to the long-term growth and vision of the residency in an LEA context characterized by turnover and constant uncertainty due to the pandemic: "This would be a great thing for the district. It's a great way to fill those hard-to-fill positions. It's a great thing to build that teacher pipeline. . . . [B]ut because of being in such a constant state of change, it was [only] the weedy part of the work that we were able to do and [we were] not necessarily [able to] implement the bigger pieces."

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Finding 6: Competition with intern or other pathways make it difficult for residency partnerships to gain traction within LEAs

A majority of the leads interviewed referenced competition with intern and other pathways.[26] The stipends offered by grantee residency programs fall far short of an intern teacher's salary, and several leads spoke to the challenge of attracting candidates to a more expensive residency option when there are other pathways that make more financial sense.[27] "If they're in a position where they can apply for an internship credential, people would a hundred percent rather do [the internship over the residency] because they can get paid," emphasized one lead, citing the high cost of living in their LEA. Another emphasized, "If you need a job, you need a full-time job—not a $14,000 resident stipend."

Leads also reported that a lack of coherence in their LEA and IHE teacher workforce strategies—or a lack of strategy altogether—make it difficult to position or prioritize residencies strategically. Speaking to the intern pathway specifically, one lead reflected, "It's almost like competing interest—like the state's investing all of this money in residencies, but they're not phasing out the intern pathway or they're not disincentivizing the intern pathway." Another lead emphasized the challenges of launching a residency program in the shadow of an established, LEA-wide intern program: "I know [the LEA] is excited about the residency model, and I feel like everyone sees the value in it. But the intern program has been such a big program for years." A third lead described the "squeaky wheel" approach they needed to take to keep their fledgling residency program on their IHE partner's radar, especially when trying to meet their recruitment targets: "I had to professionally, but sternly, say, 'Look, we started this residency program together and you need to give us at least our [agreed upon number of] qualified candidates.' But, we're talking about [a competing preparation pathway at the IHE] that [prepares] over 100 candidates. And so I'm constantly saying, 'Hey, don't forget about us.'"

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Programs with strong LEA partnerships cited leadership engagement, collaboration with the LEA's human resources and business offices, and alignment with the LEA's workforce strategy

All the leads interviewed were grappling with partnership challenges on some level. However, a cluster of programs are differentiated by the extent to which they indicated that LEA leadership engagement was critical to their success so far. All four of these programs have intra-LEA hiring rates of at least 95 percent of their residents in the host LEA upon program completion, and three of the four are in the top quartile for year-to-year growth in the number of residents enrolled in their programs. Whereas one of these programs has a residency program that pre-existed the TRGP, the other three launched their residencies through the TRGP.

Leads in these programs spoke about the LEA leadership engagement that started with the decision to apply for the residency grant. "There was a conversation [to apply for the grant] at the cabinet level," one lead shared. "Our superintendent was involved. . . . Human resources was involved, [the] special ed [department] was involved, [the] fiscal services [team] was involved. I know absolutely that my superintendent is aware of the grant. I know that the cabinet is aware of the grant. So all those shareholders were involved."

These programs also described collaboration with their LEA's HR departments to develop resident recruitment strategies aligned to LEA need. "We work with human resources yearly on retirement projections and three-year data trends of what we've hired in," described one lead, a process that necessitates "looking at data to drive the decision-making of where we needed to focus."

Another lead described collaborating with HR to prioritize resident hiring. Jointly, residency program staff and HR would ask, "Okay. Where are our vacancies? Where is the best match for this resident?" The lead described, "We do that first before we even think about the other student teachers. These people are our people. We made a commitment. We've invested in them."

Compared with most of the programs interviewed, several of these residencies are further along in their efforts to leverage LEA financial resources in order to support the residency, something the leads attributed to the LEA leadership's awareness of the residency's value to the LEA. While these programs had not solidified long-term financing plans, conversations about the need for sustainability planning were taking place. "[The superintendent] knows why this is so important and valuable to us; the board knows," described one lead, emphasizing a widespread awareness of the residency among LEA leadership. "We can defend [financial allocations] easily, saying, 'Here's why we do it—why we train our own people to become our teachers. And every year we need [to hire] 60, 70 teachers. Let's get a pipeline from our own people.'"

Perhaps most noteworthy, the leads in the programs that have strong LEA relationships were able to speak to how their residency programs are beginning to gain traction as a solution to their LEA's most pressing teacher workforce challenges. One lead, from a program that has now been operating for close to 10 years, spoke about the system-level impact their LEA is beginning to see as a result of the residency: "We get rave reviews around those residents that are placed as new teachers. They don't want to lose their residents; they want to support them. We know that we're doing the right work in preparing teachers for [the LEA], and now they're moving into leadership positions, which is really exciting. . . . They're moving up; they're impacting in the system."

Finding 7: Residency program participation in technical assistance to support residencies has been uneven

Given the complexity of building strong and sustainable residency partnerships, it is likely many programs need additional support as they work to form these partnerships. In spring 2022, WestEd conducted a landscape assessment to understand what technical assistance (TA) providers were offering services to grantees and what the level of uptake was among grantees. Findings suggest that access to TA has been uneven and that some programs face barriers accessing TA.[28]

Around three quarters of programs (27 of 37) have received some TA since the start of the grant, and just over half of programs (21) have participated in TA for at least 2 consecutive years. Given the challenges residencies appear to have with foundational program design and partnership development, it is worth noting that just over half of programs (19) have had *some* TA focused specifically on partnership development; a minority of programs (8) have had consecutive years of TA focused specifically on partnership development. Ideally, partnership-focused TA would engage participants from both the LEA and IHE sides of the residency partnership. Because this analysis does not include attendance data, the extent of joint LEA–IHE participation in TA is not clear.

A brief portion of the spring 2022 partnership interviews was devoted to partnership leads' experiences of the TA landscape.[29] Leads shared the following barriers to TA participation:

- **Most leads had a hard time identifying their specific TA needs.** The term "technical assistance" was often unfamiliar. When asked in what areas they needed support, only 4 of 12 program leads were able to speak to specific needs. Furthermore, "building authentic institutional partnerships" was the lowest-ranked TA need by Residency Lab participants in the first year of the grant, suggesting that partnership team members newer to the work may not always recognize the complexity or importance of building these partnerships.

- **Some leads felt they lacked the time and capacity to participate in the TA opportunities** given their immediate responsibilities, already understaffed programs, and a lack of dedicated time carved out for TA participation.

- Several more leads shared that they have been **too overwhelmed orienting themselves to the residency work to consider TA or stay abreast of options. Some leads found the number and range of TA options unclear or overwhelming**, or they were not sure how the TA offerings fit their needs. Some leads are feeling more receptive to exploring TA options now that they have a better handle on their work.

Recommendations to support the development of robust residency partnerships

Robust collaboration, communication, and coordination within and across involved agencies are essential components of successful teacher residencies. Conversely, a lack of these components can be a significant barrier to program success. In many of the programs interviewed for this study, key leaders were not actively engaged with residency programs. This led to missed opportunities for integration into existing systems. Without leadership awareness and support, residencies cannot be part of an LEA's workforce strategy. On the other hand, residencies with more robust LEA partnerships were highly embedded in their district systems and were an explicit part of LEA workforce development strategy.

Partnerships are perhaps the most salient and the most challenging element of building a successful residency. Many teams do not have experience with residencies and are struggling to envision what a strong partnership means in the context in which they are working. While some residency programs in the state are building strong partnership foundations, others are working in isolation without robust TA support, resources, or opportunities to learn from others.

The state's allocation of $20 million toward a statewide TA center presents an exciting opportunity to support residencies in working through these challenges. Previously, barriers to full participation in TA created missed opportunities for residency programs across the state. The many available options and the open-ended nature of TA options for grantees may have made these resources *more* difficult for busy leads to access. The understaffing of residency programs exacerbated this issue; without dedicated focus time for residency work, some leads struggled to navigate the TA landscape. A significant proportion of programs did not engage in sustained TA despite facing many challenges, which suggests that the TA offered may not have been sufficiently tailored to their needs and contexts.

What follows are WestEd's recommendations for state-level leadership and agencies, LEA and IHE leadership, and residency program practitioners.

State-level leadership and agencies should foster a policy ecosystem that is conducive to the formation of strong residency partnerships and LEA leadership engagement

- **Situate residencies within a statewide vision for teacher workforce development. Consider communications strategies that help LEA leadership understand how teacher residencies align with this statewide vision and their LEA's priorities.** Full LEA leadership engagement in residency partnerships (including resource allocation) likely requires leadership's perception that residencies are a strategic priority. LEA leadership needs to know how residencies can support the LEA's immediate and long-term workforce, instructional, and equity goals. Also consider resources that push LEA leadership to think about the efficacy of their teacher pathway strategy, and allow LEA leadership to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of California's suite of teacher preparation pathways for their LEA context. For example, providing data that show hiring and retention rates across different pathways over time could help LEA leadership make data-informed decisions about which preparation pathways to prioritize. (See findings 6, 4.)

- **Clarify and communicate both (a) the resources needed to build effective and sustainable residency programs and (b) the funding sources and strategies that make this resource allocation possible.** Residencies are resource intensive, but they can lower LEA costs overall by recruiting, training, onboarding, and retaining well-prepared teachers in high-need credential areas. However, to identify and take advantage of long-term funding sources, LEA and IHE partners must engage in intensive collaboration. The policy community can facilitate this collaboration by providing clear guidance on the local and nongrant funding sources available to residencies, financial assistance that can support residents, and strategies for braiding these resources to promote long-term residency sustainability. (See finding 4.)

- **Consider policy levers that will reduce residency participation barriers, particularly for prospective teachers of color.** For LEA leadership to invest in a teacher residency model as a teacher workforce strategy, and in particular to see residencies as a way to diversify their teaching workforce, teacher residencies need to show they can attract prospective teachers at a scale that can make an impact on workforce needs. Consider the barriers that limit residency participation, especially for residents of color. These barriers include financial burden, bureaucratic complexity (e.g., navigating testing requirements), and a lack of awareness of pathway options. (See finding 6.)

- **Leverage capacity grants to support programs in order to build residency partnership foundations.** Foundational partnership structures and cross-institutional relationships are critical to the long-term impact of residencies. Consider requiring applicants to take advantage of capacity grants in order to build these foundations if they are not yet in place before a residency program is launched. For example, soon-to-launch programs can use capacity grants to engage leadership, build relationships across the LEAs and IHEs, develop a shared mission and vision, and fund dedicated staff time to engage in this work. Programs that are more established should also take advantage of capacity grant funding to bolster these partnership structures retroactively if needed. (See findings 3, 4.)

- **Harness the state's $20 million investment in a new residency TA center to realize the state's vision for sustainable, affordable, and effective residency programs.** TA should develop the capacity of grantees to initiate, manage, and maintain the system-level changes within LEAs and IHEs needed to develop and sustain effective residencies. To accomplish this, TA must meet standards for quality and participation associated with desired programmatic outcomes. For example, because alignment across systems is critical for residencies, providers should consider participation requirements that include partnership team representatives from across institutions and functions and that engage LEA and IHE leadership where appropriate. Relatedly, if the state's goal is to establish programs with long-term sustainability, the state should consider to what extent partnership- and sustainability-focused TA should be required for new residencies funded through the TRGP and under what circumstances. Finally, since overwork and feeling overwhelmed are common in LEAs and among program leads, TA should meet programs where they are by tailoring options to known challenges and supporting programs in selecting TA that is appropriate to their stage of residency development. (See finding 7.)

LEA and IHE leadership **in LEAs that are considering or have already invested in a residency program should support residencies with the leadership engagement and resources to realize and sustain the long-term benefits of teacher residencies in their LEAs**

- **Develop an intentional teacher workforce strategy that starts with a clear and shared understanding of workforce needs in the district.** Delineate how teacher residencies and other preparation pathways fit into this strategy. The strategy should be informed by data and designed to meet specific LEA goals regarding hiring and retention, instruction, and equity. (See findings 4, 2.)

- **Allocate sufficient resources to support residencies.** IHE and LEA leadership needs to mobilize the resources, staffing allocations, and cross-institutional connections that allow for the development of sustainable and high-quality residency programs that are affordable for preservice teachers. This early leadership support can play a crucial role in setting residencies up for long-term impact. (See findings 4, 1.)

- **Provide residency programs with access to LEA leadership and decision-makers.** Broker the connections that will ensure that representatives from key LEA functions—such as human resources, business, and instruction—have regular touchpoints and lines of communication with the residency program. (See findings 1, 2.)

Residency program practitioners **(those who are involved in the daily work of managing residency programs) should prioritize the development of strong partnership structures as an essential component of their work**

- **Make sure essential structures are in place to support collaboration and communication across partners.** For example, structures could include a governance board or advisory structure to engage leadership and decision-makers, regular meetings to facilitate shared ownership and decision-making, a shared mission and vision, and an MoU or partnership agreement that delineates roles and responsibilities. In particular, practitioners should work to build connections between the residency program and the LEA's human resources and business functions. (See finding 2.)

- **Build resilience against turnover and challenging LEA and IHE contexts.** Plan for turnover among key leaders and residency staff by developing and documenting roles, protocols, and processes. (See findings 3, 5.)

- **Develop a communications strategy, rooted in data, to communicate the value of the residency and alignment of the residency with LEA needs.** This communications strategy should articulate how the residency will support a diverse teacher pathway and quality instruction both in the short term and in the long term as residency programs scale. (See finding 1.)

Endnotes

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23 The frameworks that informed protocol development and analysis included the National Center for Teacher Residencies characteristics of effective partnerships, the California Teacher Residency Lab characteristics, the University-School Partnerships for the Renewal of Educator Preparation National Center residency developmental framework, and the New Generation of Educators Initiative levers for partnerships to improve clinically oriented teacher preparation.

24 Of the six programs that did not hold regular partnership team meetings, three leads reported they had regular informal/ad hoc communication with other LEA/IHE staff involved with the residency. Each of the remaining three leads was the primary point person for running the day-to-day residency and did not have other "residency colleagues" from either the LEA or IHE with whom they were regularly in touch.

25 Diaz et al. (forthcoming).

26 The intern credential route allows a teacher candidate to be employed and paid as a teacher of record while they are working on requirements for the preliminary credential.

27 Diaz et al. (forthcoming).

28 The term *technical assistance* (TA) in this brief is used in reference to TA that meets the following parameters: offerings that take place over at least several months, have regular attendance expectations, have a scope and sequence, and provide customized attention intended to meet individual program learning needs. This analysis does not include lighter touch "ad-hoc" offerings (e.g., drop-in coaching, a one-off webinar, a short series with a narrowly defined learning objective).

29 Within our interview sample, six programs had not experienced any TA, four programs had participated in the Residency Lab, and two programs had participated in TA with a non-Lab provider