

Developing a Quality Local Control and Accountability Plan: Resources

On January 16, 2014, the California State Board of Education approved spending regulations and a template for the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that support local implementation of the Local Control Funding Formula. All local educational agencies (LEAs) must develop their first LCAPs and submit them with an approved budget by June 30, 2014.

Type of LEA	Who Adopts	Who Reviews and Approves
Districts	Governing Board	County Superintendent
Charter Schools*	Governing Board	Charter Authorizer (review only)
County Office of Education	Governing Board	Superintendent of Public Instruction

* All charter schools (independent and dependent) must develop an LCAP that aligns to the goals specified in the school's charter.

The LCAP serves as the spending plan that accompanies each LEA's budget. The LCAP is a three-year plan that describes the goals, actions, services, and expenditures to support positive student outcomes that address state and local priorities.

The LCAP is organized into three sections:

- (1) Stakeholder Engagement
- (2) Goals and Progress Indicators
- (3) Actions, Services, and Expenditures

All LEAs must address the specific instructions in the State Board of Education-adopted LCAP and provide information for the three sections within the LCAP. LEAs are permitted to resize pages and/or attach additional pages to facilitate completion of the LCAP. The LCAP includes optional guiding questions that may be helpful to consider when preparing it.

[SBE-adopted LCAP editable template English](#)

[SBE-adopted LCAP editable template Spanish](#)

LEAs may find the following tips and resources useful as they develop their LCAPs. The information does not represent requirements or directions endorsed by the California Department of Education (CDE) or California State Board of Education (SBE). The provided information reflect emerging practices that can be considered, but are not intended to be interpreted as providing instructions or guidance from CDE or SBE.

Making a Plan to Develop the LCAP

The LCAP provides an opportunity for LEAs to share their stories of how, what, and why programs and services are selected and provided to support positive student outcomes across a broad spectrum of areas. The LCAP is intended to capture the level and type of information that comprises a good strategic plan. It does not ask for details about specific actions or tasks; rather it focuses on strategic goals, progression of outcomes, and services and related expenditures based on local need. The key determinant of what makes a good LCAP is what happens after it is written. Ideally, the process for assessing needs, developing goals, identifying services, and creating a spending plan generates a sense of focus, purpose, and motivation to support the plan's implementation.

Tips for Planning

1. **Understand the Key Requirements.** All LEAs must use the SBE-adopted LCAP template. For districts and county offices of education, the LCAP must consider student needs in identified state-priority areas. Education Code Sections [52060](#) and [52066](#) specify that the LCAP must describe the **annual** goals to be achieved for each student group **for each state priority**. Goals must address each of the state priorities and any additional local priorities; however, one goal may address multiple priorities. An LEA may identify which school sites and subgroups have the same goals, and group and describe those goals together. If a single goal requires longer than one year to implement fully, the LCAP should reflect the annual incremental actions, services, and expenditures, as well as the annual anticipated progress that the district expects to achieve for each student group. These annual benchmarks will assist LEAs and the community to monitor the plan's progress.

The LCAP also requires that all LEAs describe how they are meeting “**proportionality**” requirements, which are related to demonstrating “increased or improved services” for students in need. Finally, the process for developing the LCAP must include input from stakeholders.

2. **Plan Ahead for LCAP Meetings.** Education Code Sections [52062](#), [52069](#), and [47606.5](#) require that LEAs provide opportunities for consultation and comment when developing and updating their LCAPs. All LEAs must have their LCAPs prepared or updated, approved by their governing boards, and submitted with their annually required budgets, as necessary. For practical purposes this means that local governing boards must approve their LCAPs by June 30 of each year.

School districts and county offices of education must address the following key activities:

- Teachers, principals, administrators, other school staff, local bargaining units, parents, and students must be **consulted** to inform the LCAP's development. The consultation could occur as part of the stakeholder engagement process.
- A **parent advisory committee** and an **English learning parent advisory committee** (if the LEA has 50 or more English learners, or if they comprise 15 percent or more of the student enrollment) must be formed to provide advice about the LCAP. These advisory committees can be newly formed or draw from existing parent advisory groups, but they

must include representation of students in need (e.g., low income, English learners, and foster youth). The designated advisory groups may provide written comments to the superintendent, and the superintendent must respond to these comments in writing.

- There are at least **two public meetings where the LCAP is shared, along with the formal LEA budget**. The first meeting is a public hearing that allows for recommendations and comments from the public about the LCAP and budget. The second meeting is when the LCAP and budget are adopted. While it is possible to call a special meeting for the LCAP and budget, in the interest of public transparency and support of stakeholder engagement, using meetings that follow the regularly scheduled cycle can be helpful. Governing boards that meet monthly may find it necessary to hold their first meeting in May.

Charter schools are expected to complete the LCAP and consult with teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, parents, and students in developing their LCAPs. Although charter schools are not subject to the public hearing requirements that districts and county offices of education must comply with, they are subject to the hearings and reviews that must occur to approve and reauthorize a charter school petition.

[LEA Planning Cycle](#)

[LCAP Plan Preparation](#)

3. **Develop a Process with the LCFF Design Principles in Mind.** Good plans are well written and identify a meaningful direction to improve. Great plans do this plus reflect a process that generates stakeholder interest and leads to the plan's implementation. The LCFF's design principles provide a helpful framework to create a great LCAP.
 - **Simplicity and Transparency.** The LCFF changes California from having the most complicated funding formulas to one of the simplest. Simplicity is helpful to support transparency. The LCAP is meant to be a document that reflects a simple, yet complete story of needs, goals, services, and investments that will yield positive outcomes for students. The LCAP should contain the big picture, include important facts, support further inquiry, and provide a logical reflection of how resources are used to support positive student outcomes.
 - **Equity.** The LCFF has also changed California's funding formula to provide funding based on current students and their needs. The LCAP requires an analysis of data, goals, services, and expenditures that reflect the needs of all students, especially those with additional needs. The LCAP requests that there is a clear understanding of what is provided to *all* students. In addition, information about what is provided for students with additional needs, based on income, language ability, family circumstance, and other factors, is expected to be clear and reflected in services and expenditures.
 - **Performance.** The LCFF and the LCAP are about performance based on local decision-making. The state has identified priority areas, which it expects will guide local analysis and decisions about how to address needs and demonstrate improvement. Improving student performance is central to the LCFF and emphasized throughout the LCAP.
 - **Flexibility to Support Effective Decision-Making.** Flexibility is an essential element of the LCFF. Flexibility allows for resource allocation choices that align to local needs.

Flexibility is not the permission to do anything; it is the vehicle to pursue what is needed, based on locally determined priorities and needs.

4. **Create a Productive Engagement Process.** As noted above, there are required parent advisory groups and groups that should be consulted to inform the LCAP, and hopefully, these groups are productive. Leaders of LEAs set a tone for how these groups are involved, and the types of questions and expectations asked of the groups will inform how valuable they are to the process. The LCAP is an opportunity to shift from superficial involvement of stakeholders to meaningful engagement. (See Stakeholder Engagement Tips for more details.)

Make the LCAP Parent-Ready. When preparing the LCAP, the expectation should be that it will be read, understood, and liked. Parents and community members are a critical audience. With this in mind, the information in the LCAP should provide a simple, brief, coherent story of the goals for the educational agency, what will be different/improved for students when these goals are achieved, and what services and investments will be critical to support this outcome for students. The writing of the LCAP should resemble the kind of language and approach taken to prepare LEA strategic plans, which are generally brief with limited jargon, and every word reflects what the LEA needs, who it is, and what it will do that matters.

[LCFF Planning terms crosswalk to strategic plan](#)

Additional Resources

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American Civil Liberties Union – Southern California: [LCFF Planning Resources](#)

California Alliance for Arts Education: [LCFF Toolkit](#)

California Foster Youth Education Task Force: [LCFF Fact Sheet](#)

California Foster Youth Education Task Force: [LCAP Planning Advice](#)

California School Boards Association: [LCFF Toolkit](#)

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement is the LCAP’s first section. Putting it first reflects the significant role that engagement of parents, students, educators, administrators, and the community plays to support student performance. The type of stakeholder engagement promoted by the LCFF and the LCAP is not the “check the box” or “sign in list” variety. Rather, there is an expectation of authentic engagement that leads to a multi-faceted and communitywide effort to support a productive, student-oriented learning community.

Tips for Stakeholder Engagement

1. **Plan for Authentic Engagement.** Authentic engagement can take many forms, but all forms focus on the **contributions** that stakeholders can make to develop a plan that is responsive to student needs. The engagement process should consider carefully what type of input is needed and how this will contribute to developing, implementing, and monitoring an LCAP that supports student performance. This process will help identify “who” should be engaged and “what” to ask that will solicit the contributions that further the process of planning for performance. A good rule to follow is, **“Don’t ask stakeholders for input that you don’t have a plan for using.”**
2. **Educate Stakeholders.** Stakeholders should receive useful background and current information that supports their engagement and understanding of the LCFF and the LCAP, as well as what it means to support a performance-oriented process. Topics that stakeholders may find helpful include a general explanation of the LCFF funding formula, the purpose of the LCAP, a refresher about current strategic plans and/or programs, and budgeting basics.
3. **Keep the Focus on Students.** The LCAP pivots around identifying goals and outcomes that describe “what’s different and/or improved for students.” Keeping the needs and outcomes of students at the forefront may sound like an obvious tip, but it is easy to lose sight of this when topics such as staffing, budget, and data enter the discussion. All stakeholders come to the process with a connection and interest in students. Reflecting on the question of “How will this help us improve outcomes for students?” will keep the conversation grounded.
4. **Set the Right Expectations.** The LCAP’s first year will be a learning year for everyone. A good goal, and one that can be helpful to share with stakeholders, is to develop an LCAP that captures accurately what is currently being done for students, along with a commitment by stakeholders to stay engaged to improve on the quality of the LCAP’s process and content over time.

Consider Student Voice. Stakeholders include adults, but the adult voice is often a proxy for students. Students care and understand a great deal about their education. Asking students to contribute to the process of planning, implementation, and development engages a critical voice and energy into the process of supporting a culture of performance.

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California State Parent Teacher Association: [LCFF Planning Guide](#)

Families In Schools: [Parent Engagement Diagram](#)

Families In Schools: [Reimagining Parent Engagement](#)

Riverside Unified School District/PICO California: SBE May 8th, 2014 Meeting Presentation – *Building Partnerships for Student Success* ([English](#)/[Spanish](#))

Goals and Progress Indicators

The LCAP's second section contains information about goals and progress indicators that address state and locally identified priorities. This section captures each LEA's story regarding the focus and expected outcomes for students.

Tips for Goals and Progress Indicators

1. **Tell the Story.** When identifying needs, goals, and related outcomes, it is important to think about “what matters and why.” In other words, the LCAP tells the story of what students in the LEA need, how the LEA can focus on a few essential goals, and what will be different and/or improved for students over time when significant progress is made to meet these goals. Good stories have clear plot points (e.g., goals), including compelling characters (e.g., students and the adults who support them), and have a clear beginning, middle, and end (e.g., progression of outcomes for students using clearly identified metrics).
2. **Make Them Your Goals.** The goals that are included in the LCAP should be the goals based on students and their needs. The state priorities identified for districts and county offices of education are not meant to drive needs assessment and goal setting, but they should be used as a reference point when planning locally determined goals. Districts and county offices of education should consider the metrics associated with the state priorities when assessing needs and based on these identified needs, formulate locally meaningful goals.
3. **Draw from Existing Strategic Plans.** LEAs with a strategic plan that is well understood and provides direction that aligns to current student needs should consider how this plan's goals might become the LCAP's goals. The LCAP was developed based on research and practical evidence about what makes meaningful and productive strategic plans. A good existing plan is probably a great place to start from and can help with the alignment among plans, programs, and resources.
4. **Goals Set a Mindset.** The LCAP's wording to describe goals is important, because goals can be powerful in creating a mindset for change, growth, and expectations. Goals signal what matters and potentially establish a set of beliefs or a way of thinking that determines behavior, outlook, and mental attitude.
5. **Outcomes over Time.** The LCAP does not ask for specific dates. It emphasizes the progression of impact rather than the duration or point in time. In other words, it looks at what will be different in the first year that supports further growth in the second year and following years.

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California Afterschool Advocacy Alliance: [LCFF Factsheet](#)

California School-Based Health Alliance: [School Climate LCFF Factsheet](#)

California School-Based Health Alliance: [Student Engagement LCFF Factsheet](#)

Children Now: [Early Learning and Development LCFF Primer](#)

Partnership for Children and Youth: [Summer Learning LCFF Policy Brief](#)

Public Counsel: [Fix School Discipline LCFF Toolkit](#)

WestEd – California Healthy Kids Survey: [Helpful Resources for Local Control and Accountability Plans & School Safety Plans](#)

Actions, Services, and Expenditures

The LCAP’s final section captures actions, services, and expenditures. Collectively, this information provides a sense of “how” goals and outcomes will be met. It also importantly asks for details about how the needs of *all* students will be met, plus details about specific subgroups of students who need additional services. The advice for the previous sections of the LCAP apply here as well –make the story something people can and want to read.

Tips for Actions, Services, and Expenditures

1. **Advertise, Do Not Rationalize.** The LCAP’s purpose should be to advertise what the LEA does to support students to achieve outcomes. In this regard, the LCAP is not a plan for performance and not a document to support compliance. Some prior experience with LEA planning has encouraged a “dare you to find it” attitude where unnecessary details are included. The LCAP should be true to the story of what the LEA does to support students to achieve outcomes. It should avoid lengthy explanations, which usually signal a shift to rationalization rather than explanation.
2. **Avoid Jargon.** Education is full of specialized terms and references that are often unnecessary and get in the way of making plans accessible. The LCAP is of local importance for a local audience. Use language that parents, students, and community members will find accessible.
3. **Describe Services That Focus on Students.** The LCAP asks the LEA to describe actions and services that address goals. The request for a description of services is different than what is required in other plans. Notably, the LCAP focuses the description on services, which can include a grouping or aggregation of activities and expenses that support students. In this regard, the LCAP is not asking for a listing of things or expenses, but services that address goals.
4. **Relevant Expenditures Relate to Services.** The LCAP must numerically list and describe all expenditures implementing the specific actions being taken to achieve its goals. The state priorities broadly cover what an LEA does to support its students and achieve outcomes; therefore, almost all LEA expenditures will likely be listed and described as a consequence of being tied to the actions that support LEA goals around the state priorities. Also, considering that an important objective of the LCFF is to support increased budget transparency, LEAs should carefully consider how to reflect the services and related expenses for their basic instructional program in relationship to the state priorities. Some types of LCFF expenditures may not apply to the state priorities (e.g., debt service, general

administration, post-employment benefits); these expenditures do not need to be included in the LCAP.

6. **Trust Transparency.** The LCAP is an opportunity to share, promote, and engage stakeholders in a new kind of dialogue around the way in which resources affect student performance. The LCAP should be a document that shows the LEA's character and content. Transparency can build enthusiasm and support; therefore, LCAPs should be clear about what matters and demonstrate good choices made by LEAs on behalf of students.

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