
Strategic and Economic Analysis of English Learner Programs in California

Executive Summary

Welcome

This slide deck is part of a series of slide decks summarizing the Strategic and Economic Analysis of English Learner Programs in California project.

There are five slide decks available, listed to the right. You are currently reviewing the [Executive Summary](#).

This slide deck provides a high-level overview of the project, its goals and activities, and final recommendations.

- I. [Executive Summary](#)
- II. Project Context, Goals, and Methods
- III. Recommendations: Improve the Design of English Learner Programs
- IV. Recommendations: Expand Access to Integrated Care
- V. Recommendations: Transition to a Multilingual Workforce

Project Overview

In 2024, WestEd partnered with Sobrato Philanthropies to conduct a strategic and economic analysis of English Learner programs in the state of California.

The study sought to define the scale of economic challenges and explore underlying conditions impacting the costs of implementing English Learner programs in California in alignment with best practice.

Based on the study's conclusions, WestEd identified recommendations related to the following three overarching areas of focus, grounded in the long-term goal of bringing multilingual programs for English Learners to scale in California:

- A. improve the design of English Learner programs,**
- B. expand access to integrated care, and**
- C. transition to a multilingual workforce.**

Project Overview

What are the key topics covered in this slide deck?



What is the context for this project in California?



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In recent years, momentum has been growing around the goal of expanding multilingual instructional programs for English Learners in California, including the following activities:

- The state committed to expanding these programs in its **Global California 2030** goals.
- A recent **Civil Rights Project /Proyecto Derechos Civiles** report made recommendations on achieving universal access to these programs in California.
- An ongoing partnership of philanthropic foundations, called the **Emerging Bilingual Collaborative**, is now focusing on this goal.
- **Media attention** focused on the disparities in access to these programs in California compared to states with large English Learner populations such as Texas.

What is the context for this project in California?

Complementing these other activities, this project uses an economic lens to assess the design, implementation, and improvement of English Learner programs.

This project also identifies strategic opportunities to advance the long-term goal of bringing multilingual programs for English Learners to scale in California.

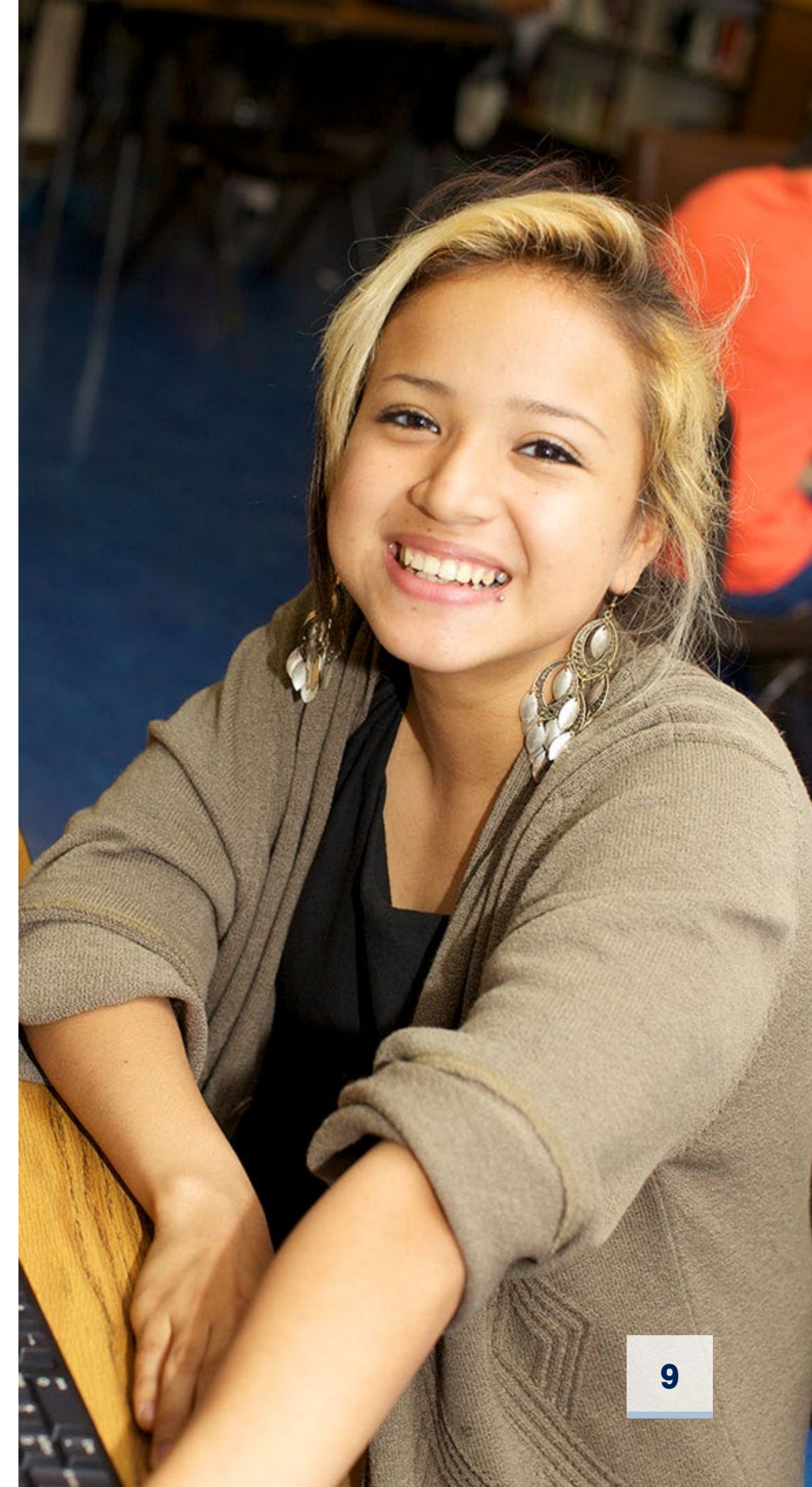


What are the project's goals and methods?

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The goals of this project, commissioned by Sobrato Philanthropies, are to

- define the scale of economic challenges and explore underlying conditions impacting the costs of implementing English Learner programs in California in alignment with best practice, and
- identify opportunities for education leaders over the next 5–10 years to improve programs for English Learners in California.



What are the project's goals and key activities?

To address the first goal, the study team analyzed two key sources of data:

- **Public data sources, including information about English Learners, the staff and programs serving them, and their communities.**
- **New data collected as part of the study through interviews with:**
 - English Learner program staff from a county office of education and six local education agencies from across the state of California,
 - English Learner Advisory Committee representatives in the case study communities, and
 - WestEd experts in English Learner program implementation and improvement.

What are the project's goals and key activities?

To analyze these data, the project team focused on exploring economic factors in the costs of English Learner programs. The project team applied a range of research techniques, including economic evaluation, cluster analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and logistic regression analysis.

The project's activities led to a deeper understanding of current investments in English Learner programs, the costs associated with improving these programs, and how these costs differ depending on the population of students served and the context of program implementation.

To address the second goal, the project team identified recommendations **grounded in the long-term goal of bringing multilingual programs for English Learners to scale in California.**

What are the project's goals and key activities?

Throughout the project timeline the study team engaged with an **Advisory Committee** made up of (1) state education leaders, (2) practitioners, (3) technical assistance/service providers, and (4) community leaders.

Advisors involved in the process were asked to:

- Provide input** on key decision points arising around project milestones throughout the timeline.
- Provide feedback** on project materials including, for example, analysis planning and procedures, data collection materials, and analysis results.
- Support dissemination** of project activities and outcomes to interest group members.

How did we identify recommendations?

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Project recommendations were guided by three broad considerations:

- ❑ **Strategic – Adding Value Today:** Strategic actions in the near term should add immediate value.
- ❑ **Aspirational – Preparing for Tomorrow:** While daunting, multilingual instruction at scale is a goal worthy of practical and strategic planning. Thus, recommendations should support a long-term transition to multilingual instruction at scale.
- ❑ **Feasible – Practical in Today’s System:** Actions in the near term should be feasible in the current system or represent a feasible step toward transitioning the system.

How did we identify recommendations?

Further, the study team considered the following key audiences who can take action to support these recommendations:

State and Local Policymakers

Regional and Local Practitioners

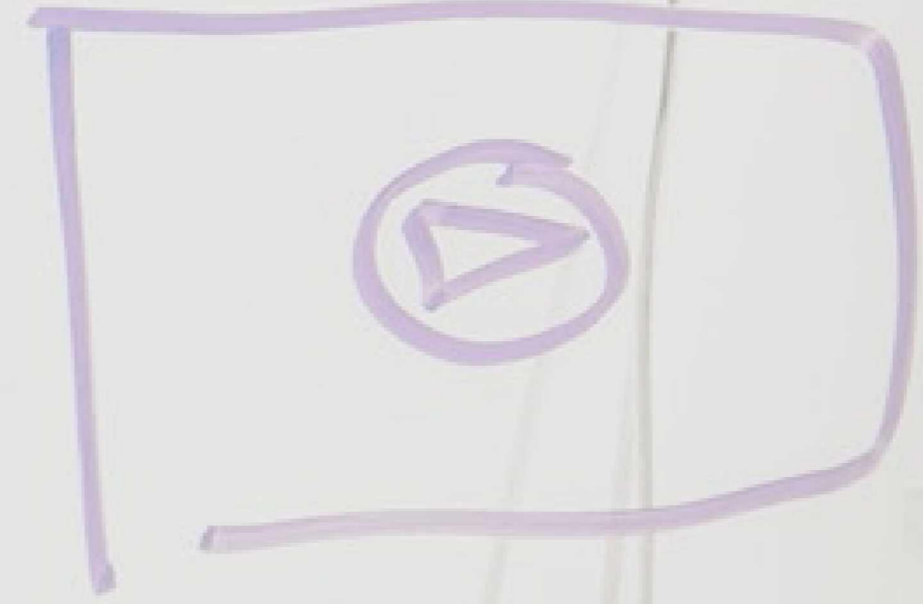
Statewide and Community Organizations

Philanthropy

What are we recommending?

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2. wavy line
3. wavy line
4. wavy line
5. wavy line
6. wavy line

TV
Days



Video module

Handwritten notes on a sticky note, including a small sketch.

Menu
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What are we recommending?

Informed by this analysis, and determined through formative strategic conversations with policy advisors, the project team identified recommendations in the following three areas of focus:

A. IMPROVE the DESIGN of ENGLISH LEARNER PROGRAMS

B. EXPAND ACCESS to INTEGRATED CARE

C. TRANSITION to a MULTILINGUAL WORKFORCE

A. Improve the Design of English Learner Programs

A1

Invest locally and regionally in hiring additional English Learner **program coordination staff** and **instructional coaching staff** where needed to improve the integration of English language development and academic subjects.

A2

Expand investment in bilingual paraprofessionals to (a) ensure sufficient student support in the short term, and (b) support a more robust workforce for bilingual instructors in the long term.

A3

Ensure that statewide support systems facilitate collaboration and peer support between districts that have similar English Learner program settings—including the characteristics of English Learners served, size of the English Learner population, and program staff—regardless of their geographic location.

Improve the Design of English Learner Programs

Strategic – Adding Value Today	Aspirational – Preparing for Tomorrow	Feasible – Practical in Today’s System
<p>There is an immediate need to improve the integration of English language development with academic subjects and strengthen the bilingual paraprofessional workforce.</p> <p>Further, facilitating collaboration between districts with similar program settings in different geographic regions can accelerate immediate improvements to English Learner programs.</p>	<p>Multilingual programs inherently integrate language with academic content and require the expansion of bilingual staff. Investment in these areas establishes a foundation for multilingual programs.</p> <p>Further, districts will more effectively transition to multilingual programs if they share strategies specific to their setting, regardless of their geographic location.</p>	<p>The recommended areas of investment are well within the scope of existing English Learner program improvement efforts and represent a call for a strategic focus as opposed to widespread, and less feasible, system change.</p> <p>Likewise, existing statewide support systems can facilitate collaboration between districts with similar program settings, regardless of geographic location.</p>

Improve the Design of English Learner Programs

How can the key audiences contribute to achieving the recommended actions?

Audience	Action
State Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate local program setting into the organization of statewide supports to improve their overall coherence.
Local Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make strategic investments to hire additional English Learner program coordination staff and instructional coaching staff and support the career growth of bilingual paraprofessional staff.
Regional Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead collaboration of cross-agency teams to support the more effective and coherent organization of services for students and families.
State and Community Orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobilize for the recommended investments and facilitate collaboration between cross-agency teams through existing networks of engagement and advocacy.
Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Invest in collaboration between state and regional entities to support regional practitioners to lead cross-system coordination.

B. Expand Access to Integrated Care

B1

Invest in formal family care navigators to help English Learner families navigate existing education and community supports and ensure families/caregivers can effectively advocate for their child(ren). Hire navigators who are peers who have lived in the community and speak the languages of the community.

B2

Design, build, and activate coordinated care systems that link education, health, social, and neighborhood domains at the county level to support, for example, access to health care and immigration services.

B3

Design a pilot block grant program that combines funding resources from several state funding programs that can be directed to a community's greatest needs outside of school.

Expand Access to Integrated Care

Strategic – Adding Value Today	Aspirational – Preparing for Tomorrow	Feasible – Practical in Today’s System
<p>Communities across the state of California can benefit immediately from direct support with navigating and accessing noneducational public services.</p> <p>Improving the systemwide coordination of these services will also immediately benefit communities.</p>	<p>By expanding engagement with English Learner families and communities, family care navigators can foster greater trust and partnership.</p> <p>This sort of collaboration with families and communities is a necessary first step toward a successful transition to multilingual instructional programs.</p>	<p>Ongoing initiatives—such as community schools, the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, and the Expanded Learning Opportunities Program—are already focused on improving coordination between the education sector and a range of other service sectors.</p> <p>This project’s recommendations are a call to strategically build on those efforts to improve access for English Learner families and communities.</p>

Expand Access to Integrated Care

How can the key audiences contribute to achieving the recommended actions?

Audience	Action
State Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support through existing funding efforts in this area.• Adjust future policy to allow for and incentivize child- and youth-focused agencies to support family care navigators.
Local Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make strategic investments in family care navigators.
Regional Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lead coordination of cross-agency teams, supporting more effective and coherent organization of services for students and families.
State and Community Orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobilize to support family care navigators. Encourage connecting multilingual families to these services through the public education school system.
Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaborate across sectors with an aim to facilitate system coherence and increase the integration of educational and noneducational services.

C. Transition to a Multilingual Workforce

C1

Expand available program and workforce data by (a) collecting more comprehensive program data and (b) making existing workforce data publicly accessible.

C2

Convene and facilitate state and regional **cross-system strategic workforce planning initiatives** focused on launching and/or expanding (a) support for English Learners in their primary language other than English and (b) multilingual instructional programs.

C3

Make strategic state investments in programs that incentivize expanding the supply of staff prepared to support multilingual instructional programs.

Transition to a Multilingual Workforce

Strategic – Adding Value Today	Aspirational – Preparing for Tomorrow	Feasible – Practical in Today’s System
<p>The challenges with staff shortages in education, especially instructors of English Learners, is well-documented.</p> <p>The expansion of data-based strategic planning can support immediate efforts to address this issue.</p>	<p>Bringing multilingual instruction for English Learners to scale in California will not be possible without a strategic and significant expansion of multilingualism in the workforce.</p> <p>Investing in strategic planning initiatives sets the state on the path toward making this expansion a reality.</p>	<p>The state already invests in initiatives focused on increasing the supply and recruitment of new multilingual instructors to the workforce.</p> <p>Cross-system coordination around this goal and the development of shared regional strategic plans is a feasible extension and expansion of these ongoing activities.</p>

Transition to a Multilingual Workforce

How can the key audiences contribute to achieving the recommended actions?

Audience	Action
State Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Leverage ongoing efforts to improve access to/use of up-to-date workforce data and facilitate strategic expansion of multilingual instructors across the state.
Local Policymakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Integrate regional workforce planning into local educational strategic plans and leverage existing funds to expand the supply of multilingual instructors.
Regional and Local Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Document information about English Learner program staffing and leverage local data in strategic workforce planning.
State and Community Orgs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report on what workforce data are not currently available and encourage English Learner programs to be incorporated into ongoing state initiatives.
Philanthropy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot the development of workforce improvement processes that can be replicated and sustained; disseminate workforce planning tools and resources through existing networks.

Keep digging!

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Acknowledgements

This project was made possible by the generosity of **Sobrato Philanthropies**, and the WestEd team would like to thank them for their financial support and thought partnership on this project.

The authors would also like to acknowledge the partnership and advice provided by a wide range of **experts in the improvement of English Learner programs in California**.

We are grateful for the donation of their time and the thoughtful input and feedback they provided on the project work throughout the process.

That said, the work of this project is entirely that of the **WestEd team**. All errors are our own.