



Los Angeles County
Office of Education

HEAD START AND EARLY LEARNING DIVISION



STRATEGIC PLAN

2024 - 2029



**Los Angeles County
Office of Education**

9300 Imperial Highway
Downey, CA 90242
www.lacoe.edu

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Message from the Executive Director



Our strategic plan is the culmination of a process begun in spring 2023. After months of open, honest conversations and thought-provoking work sessions based on assessment of current initiatives and previous goals, we completed the strategic plan in the fall with a new mission and vision for our work in service to children, families, and staff.

I want to express my appreciation and gratitude to everyone who was part of our strategic planning process. The participation of delegate agency directors and staff, as well as our early care and education partners throughout Los Angeles County, resulted in invaluable feedback that helped shape exciting visionary anchors for the work we will undertake over the next five years, as well as goals that align to the needs of our communities and embrace the opportunities before us.

Our work over the next five years will be centered on the following expectations: that we be *human-centered*, *innovative-minded*, and *learning-focused*. Our work is rooted in relationships—relationships between children and families, between families and staff, between staff and supervisors, and between agencies and LACOE. We will strive to place people at the center of our work, to focus on solving the right problems, and to recognize the interconnectedness of our efforts.

Similarly, as we navigate the challenges and opportunities before us, it is imperative that we develop a mindset that is open to change, empower staff to think about tough problems, and recognize and

reward out-of-the-box thinking. This innovative-mindedness will be necessary to ensure our long-term success. And lastly, in order to transform ourselves into learning organizations, we must embrace systems thinking, develop personal mastery, and support team learning and a shared vision.

If we continue to uphold these expectations as the driving principles for our efforts, they will foster unity in meeting our mission, vision, and the six primary goals identified in this strategic plan. Our goals focus on ensuring thriving partnerships, eradicating duplications while fostering collaborative communication, promoting early childhood education as an attractive career path, creating 21st-century learning environments, redefining the education system as a learning continuum that starts at birth, and supporting the school readiness needs of African American boys and their families. These are lofty goals, and together we will accomplish them. All of the above is achievable if we focus on *Cultivating Relationships to Foster Communities of Excellence*, our new vision for the next five years.

I look forward to our new five-year project journey, and I am thankful that we get to experience it together. Thank you again to everyone who took part in this process to help shape this dynamic guide for the future. I welcome your continuing participation.

Luis Bautista

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About LACOE Head Start and Early Learning Division



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LACOE, the nation's largest regional education agency, is a state-funded public agency that promotes the academic and financial stability of the county's 80 TK-12 public school districts.

LACOE operates under the authority of the County Superintendent of Schools and a seven-member County Board of Education appointed by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

LACOE's mission is to
"Improve the lives of students and our educational community through service, leadership, and advocacy."

About LACOE's Head Start and Early Learning Division

LACOE, through its Head Start and Early Learning (HSEL) division, operates various programs and implements multiple funding streams to support LACOE's birth-to-five early learning vision for the children of Los Angeles County. These programs include federally funded Head Start (HS), Early Head Start (EHS), as well as several state-funded programs (California State Preschool Program, General Child Care and Development, Quality Start Los Angeles, Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program, California Preschool Instructional Network, Universal PreKindergarten planning and capacity building, and the Career Development Initiative).

Through these programs, LACOE serves more than 7,500 infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and pregnant women each year and supports more than 1,000 providers through technical assistance and capacity building. LACOE subcontracts all services delivered to children and families to sixteen agencies: nine nonprofits and seven school districts.

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Agencies and Partners

NONPROFITS

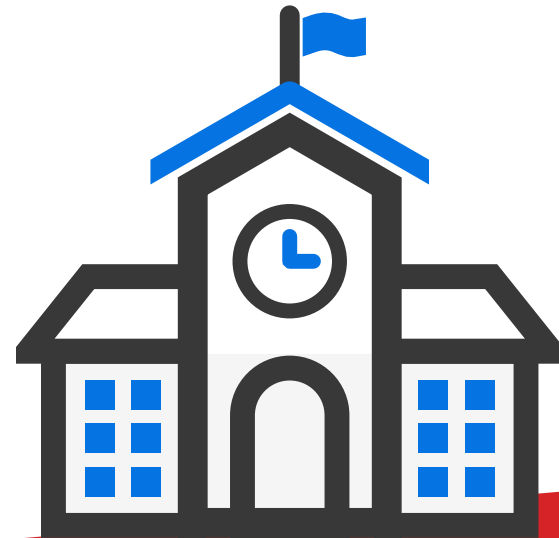
- Blind Children's Center
- Children's Institute, Inc.
- Foundation for Early Childhood Education, Inc.
- Mexican American Opportunity Foundation
- Pacific Asian Consortium in Employment
- Para Los Niños
- Plaza de la Raza Child Development Services, Inc.
- St. Anne's Family Services
- Volunteers of America

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- ABC Unified School District
- Bassett Unified School District
- El Monte City School District
- Garvey School District
- Mountain View School District
- Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District
- Pomona Unified School District

PARTNERS

- Child Care Alliance of Los Angeles
- First 5 Los Angeles
- Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education
- Partnerships for Education, Articulation, and Coordination through Higher Education



Strategic Plan Framework and Design Phases

Through a six-month process, LACOE and its partners created **SIX VISIONARY ANCHORS** that answer the question, **“What is possible?”**

SIX PROGRAM GOALS that respond to the question, **“Where are we heading?”**

and **CORRESPONDING OBJECTIVES** crafted from a lens of equity and inclusion that answer the question, **“How are we going to get there?”**

The answers to these questions were guided by the following focus question,

Over the next five years, how will LACOE and delegates improve children’s outcomes, champion individual and collective care and well-being, strengthen community with children at the center, communicate effectively, and model organizational excellence and innovation?

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Strategic Plan Framework and Design Phases

Design and Preparation



Asks the question:

What is the context?

This phase included determining key participants and creating the focus question that ultimately drove the development of program goals. It also included a detailed analysis of data to bring insights about competencies, challenges, and choices. It identified central and critical issues to frame the five-year strategic plan.

Five-Year Vision



Asks the question:

What is possible?

The team created five-year visionary anchors in the context of the strategic plan efforts to codify the hopes and aspirations for the organization's future. The visionary anchors provided the foundation for the long-term outcomes of the strategic plan.

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Strategic Plan Framework and Design Phases

Roadblocks and Barriers



Asks the question:

What gets in our way?

The team identified barriers and roadblocks in the way of moving toward the visionary anchors. The emerging barriers acted as windows of opportunity to reveal solutions for the future.

Program Goals



Asks the question:

Where are we heading?

The team focused on overarching, catalytic changes to set the organization's direction and set the stage to overcome impeding perceptions, assumptions, habits, or outmoded patterns. Long-term program goals emerged through strategic approaches to support the visionary anchors. This stage also included the development of macro-level objectives that would drive LACOE's work for the 2024-25 program year. The objectives were developed through a lens of justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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Strategic Plan Framework and Design Phases

Focused Implementation



Asks the question:

How are we going to get there?

This stage will include the approval, communication, and development of activities and actions that reflect the commitment of those who designed them.

Reflect and Learn



Asks the question:

How are we doing? Are we there yet?

The ongoing monitoring of the strategic plan's visionary anchors, goals, and objectives will be initiated in July 2024.

Stakeholder Involvement

LACOE embraced a collaborative planning process to conduct its strategic plan. Stakeholders were identified and played a role in developing and supporting the plan.

CORE TEAM

coordinated the process to develop the plan.

External Consultant (Breakwater Associates); LACOE: Executive Director; Assistant Directors; Communications Consultant and Program Coordinator; Program Managers for Data Analysis & Evaluation and Program Development Services

DESIGN TEAM

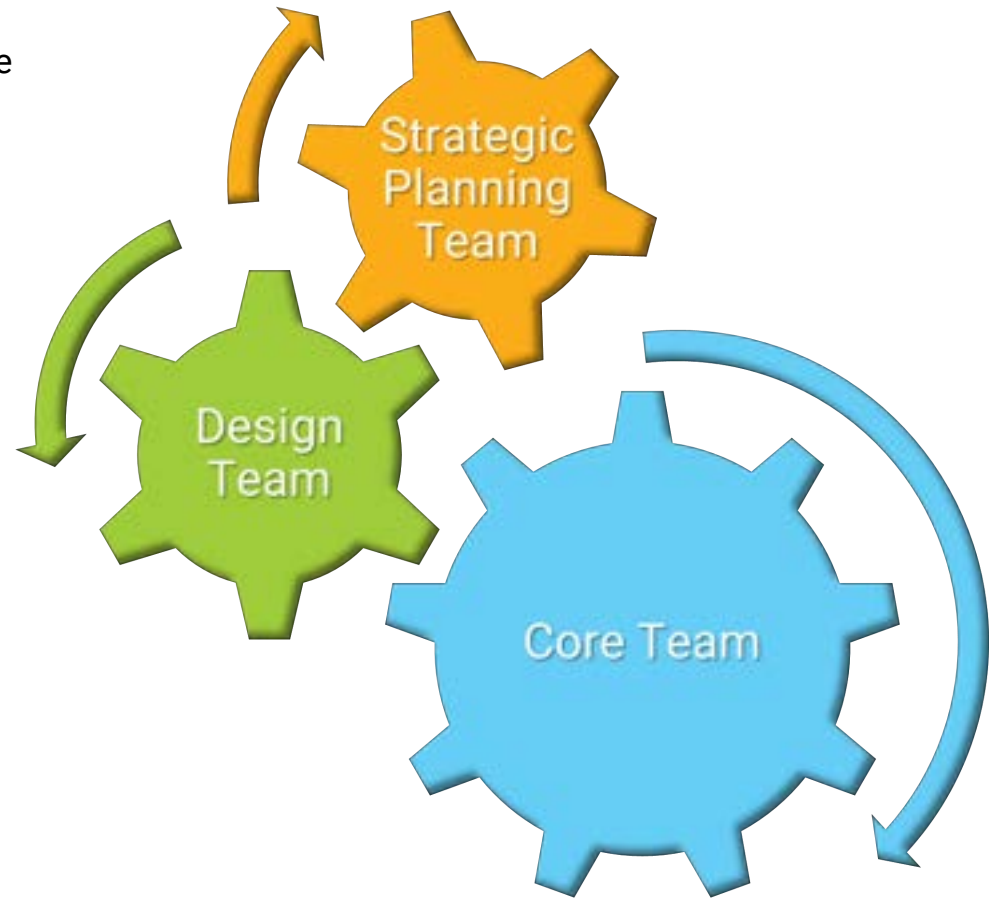
provided guidance and input and orchestrated participation to implement the plan.

Core Team; LACOE Funding Application Committee; Delegate Agency Representatives; Strategic Leadership Team

STRATEGIC PLANNING TEAM

provided input and shaped aspects of the plan.

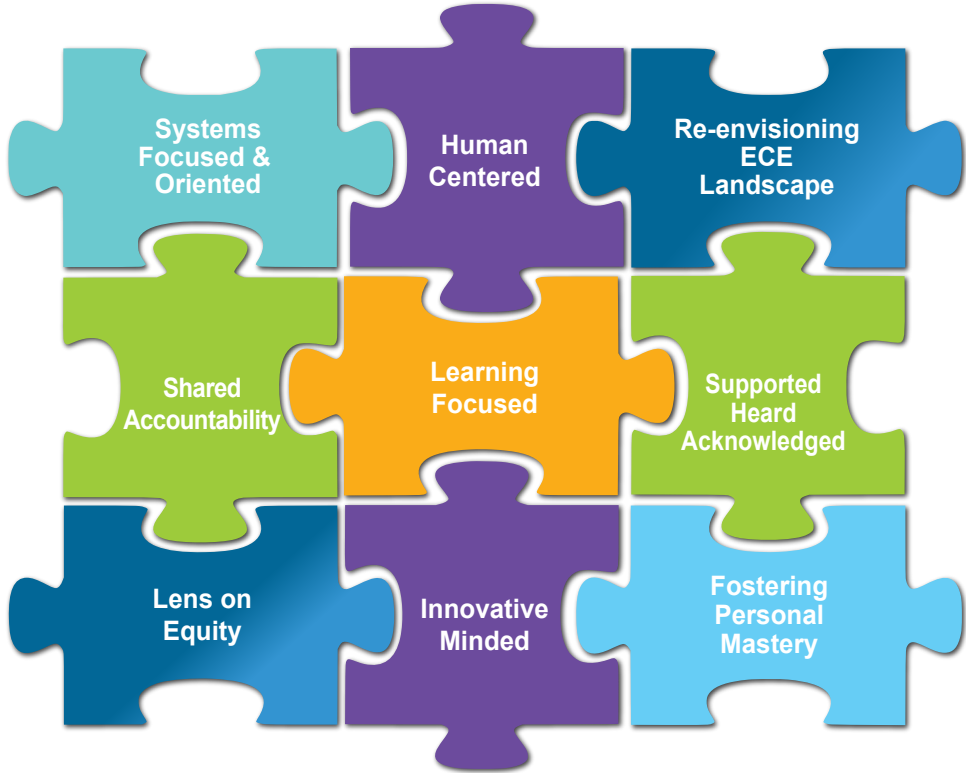
Core Team; Design Team; Delegate Agency Directors; Board Liaison; Community Representatives; Policy Council Parent Representatives; LACOE Staff



Our Commitment

Essential to the strategic planning process was envisioning a future rooted in the excitement, hopes, and dreams of those tasked with implementing the action steps to achieve the outcomes. The Head Start and Early Learning (HSEL) division embraces and supports LACOE’s vision and responsibilities to millions of children throughout Los Angeles County: “A culture of excellence in ALL we do.” Recognizing the central role of relationships at the core of early education work, the executive director envisioned a human-centered, relationship-based approach that builds on LACOE’s vision for the division. The executive directors vision is,

Cultivating Relationships to Foster Communities of Excellence



Visionary Anchors



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VISIONARY ANCHORS

By 2029, LACOE and delegates will have ...



Strengthened Communities through a Human-Centered Approach with Children and Families at the Center



Integrated Operational Efficiencies in Systems and Work Processes



Attracted, Built, and Retained a Highly Qualified and Engaged Workforce



Developed Innovative Approaches to Support Unique Populations



Provided Safe, Rich, Nurturing, and Culturally Responsive Learning Environments



Transformed a Belief System and Structure That Embraces and Values Early Childhood Education(ECE)



Strengthen Communities through a Human-Centered Approach with Children and Families at the Center

By 2029...

Through strategic partnerships, LACOE and delegates will have fostered relationships and leveraged resources that reflect the county's demographics and supported children and families across its communities.



Why It Matters

Supporting children and families across diverse communities requires innovative approaches and collaborative partnerships with local organizations that are uniquely positioned to address community needs. Data suggest that the needs of families are changing, prompting a shift in how LACOE approaches programming. For example, LACOE only serves a small percentage of the county's sizeable homeless population—a community that can be hard to reach by conventional means, especially as individuals move frequently and settle in areas where facilities that meet standards can be difficult to locate.

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Integrate Operational Efficiencies in Systems and Work Processes

By 2029...

LACOE and delegates will have co-designed and implemented efficient, innovative, and human-centered systems that incorporate reciprocal communication, dual accountability, and realistic approaches to work process implementation.



Why It Matters

The school readiness success of children and positive family outcomes derive from LACOE's ability to efficiently and effectively carry out its program. Focusing on promoting collaborative relationships that are guided by a shared vision and grounded in communication built on trust and respect is key. Additionally, developing integrated operational systems, building automated processes, and using data more effectively are essential to reducing the time required to perform job functions, eliminating redundancies and assisting staff in reaching targeted outcomes.



Attract, Build, and Retain a Highly Qualified and Engaged Workforce

By 2029...

LACOE and delegates will have fostered organizational cultures that attract, retain, and build the capacity of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) workforce and leveraged financial and other resources to eliminate inequities and disparities in compensation and benefits.



Why It Matters

Early educators provide a foundation for children to learn and develop through fostering strong, stable relationships. Research indicates that well-compensated teachers and staff have lower turnover rates and provide higher quality services. Additionally, engaged employees feel a greater sense of belonging, have more positive experiences, and are more likely to stay. Focusing on bridging the compensation gap, promoting a positive work culture that inspires workers to continue growing in the field, and drawing more individuals, like Head Start parents, into the ECE field will stabilize and grow the workforce.



Develop Innovative Approaches to Support Unique Populations

By 2029...

LACOE and delegates will have created innovative program design options and services ready to receive and serve unique populations (e.g., families experiencing homelessness, children in foster care, pregnant women, expectant families, individuals with autism) reflective of the diverse community needs and funding opportunities.



Why It Matters

Programs such as Head Start were founded on the principle that all children, families, staff, and communities—including those adversely affected by persistent poverty, racism, and bias—should have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. The key is to sufficiently leverage and support innovative solutions, locally designed options, and braided-funding models that address the diverse communities of LA County.



Provide Safe, Rich, Nurturing, and Culturally Responsive Learning Environments

By 2029...

LACOE and delegates will have built a solid foundation of proven developmentally appropriate teaching practices using a strength-based and culturally responsive approach to support positive outcomes that allow children to thrive.



Why It Matters

Preparing children with a strong early learning foundation ensures future educational success and is proven to reduce the achievement gap for children of color. Providing services that promote healthy development, maintain safe environments conducive to learning, and prepare children to meet kindergarten readiness outcomes is key to achieving that success. Measuring the effectiveness of these services through setting specific goals in early learning developmental domains and using data more strategically will help to support decisions made around designing competency models to enhance teaching, coaching, and leadership.

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Transform a Belief System and Structure That Embraces and Values ECE

By 2029...

LACOE and delegates will have championed the inherent right to an equitable and accessible early childhood educational system that values and invests in ECE as essential to all children and families' human, social, and economic success.



Why It Matters

LACOE and delegates are uniquely positioned to effect systemic change across the ECE landscape. Educating decision-makers on issues such as income eligibility, the measure of poverty, and salary disparities is key to promoting an equitable and accessible early childhood educational system. Additionally, systemic values and philosophies must evolve to embrace equity, inclusion, and diversity in the different populations served. ECE systems must become more child- and family-centered, ensure parity between nonprofits and school districts, and prioritize understanding the needs of the new ECE workforce.

FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM GOALS

To accomplish our Visionary Anchors, LACOE and delegates will meet the following goals ...

1

Connect every community with thriving partnerships that leverage resources to support families and their children to achieve success throughout school and life.

2

Implement an all-inclusive approach that eradicates duplication, fosters collaborative communication, and propels our continuous evolution as trailblazers in the field.

3

Promote ECE as an attractive career path where staff are valued, compensated equitably, and supported to achieve mastery of their profession.

4

Embrace and create 21st-century learning environments and experiences that prepare children and families to navigate the modern world.

5

Redefine the educational system as a learning continuum that starts at birth and confers lifelong benefits.

6

Support the school readiness needs of African American boys and their families by increasing the number of enrolled African American boys and serving them through culturally responsive, strength-based programming.

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CREATING A FUTURE TOGETHER

This strategic plan will serve as the foundation that will keep LACOE at the forefront of providing high-quality early childhood education services throughout the county. It will serve as the basis for innovative practices that produce positive outcomes for children, families, staff, and communities over the next five-year period.



LACOE Head Start and
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