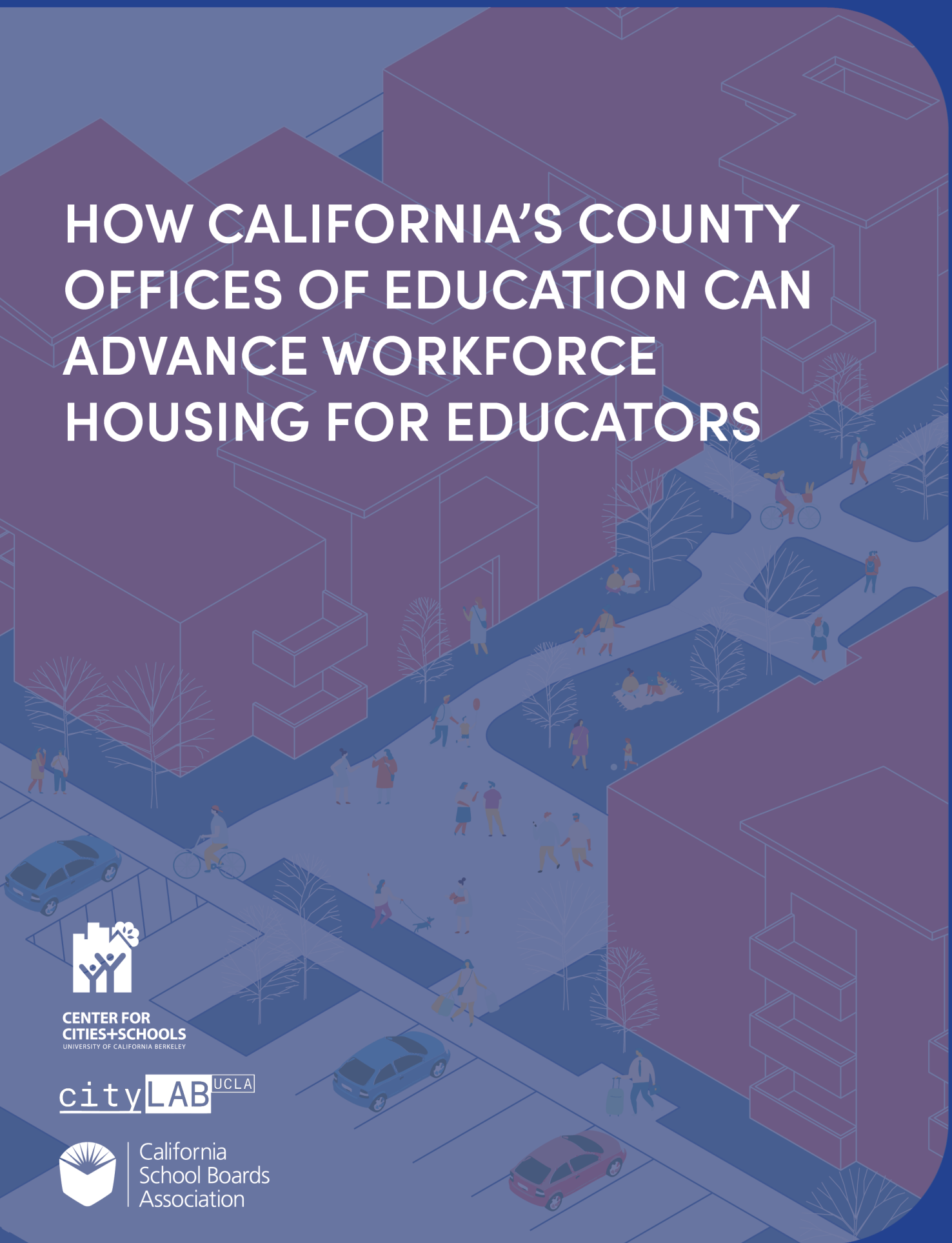
HOW CALIFORNIA'S COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION CAN ADVANCE WORKFORCE HOUSING FOR EDUCATORS



CENTER FOR CITIES+SCHOOLS
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SEPTEMBER 2025

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Center for Cities + Schools (CC+S), founded in 2004, is a national leader in policy research on school facility issues. CC+S, housed in the College of Environmental Design at UC Berkeley, is an applied policy center with 15+ years experience helping local, state, and federal policymakers advance solutions that close the opportunity gap and create trajectories of opportunity for young people, no matter where they live. CC+S has a specific focus on school facility infrastructure policy and finance.

https://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Since 2020, the Center for Cities + Schools at UC Berkeley and cityLAB at UCLA have worked in partnership with the California School Boards Association (CSBA) to train and advise local educational agencies (LEAs) on the workforce housing development process. In 2022 our team released *Education Workforce Housing in California: Developing the 21st Century Campus* and began a series of academies to help LEAs interested in building education workforce housing (EWH) achieve their development goals. In 2025 we released *Housing California Educators: Insights from Nine Education Workforce Housing Developments.*

Suggested Citation: Hinkley, S. (2025). *How California's County Offices of Education Can Advance Workforce Housing for Educators*. Center for Cities + Schools.

The report can be found at https://www.csba.org/GovernanceAndPolicyResources/Education-Workforce-Housing/ResearchandMedia. Additional resources on education workforce housing can be found at https://www.csba.org/workforcehousing.

COMMUNITY PARTNER

This project would not have been possible without our community partner: the California School Boards Association (CSBA), which represents the elected officials who govern public school districts and county offices of education, nearly 1,000 educational agencies statewide.

FUNDING SUPPORT

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative has generously supported this work as part of their efforts to increase access for California's workforce to high quality and affordable housing.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

California's high housing costs are straining the ability of local educational agencies (LEAs) to recruit and retain teachers and staff. Many have begun exploring or building education workforce housing (EWH) to address staff turnover, but most have limited capacity and expertise to navigate the complex financing and development processes necessary for making EWH a reality.

County offices of education (COEs) are uniquely positioned to support school districts in this endeavor. With their regional reach, convening power, and technical expertise, COEs can play a critical role in advancing EWH—both for their own staff and by supporting their constituent districts.

This white paper outlines the role COEs can play in making EWH feasible for more districts, benefiting California's students. It focuses on three categories of support:

- Building knowledge and capacity—Convening districts, providing technical assistance, and sharing tools for early planning and predevelopment.
- Supporting regional and external partnerships—Connecting districts with city, county, housing authority, and higher education partners to align efforts, pool resources, and overcome development hurdles.
- Directly engaging in housing development—Exploring COE-led projects, joint development opportunities, and joint powers authorities (JPAs) to expand funding and scale.

By leveraging their role as regional conveners and experts, COEs can help districts overcome barriers that might otherwise prevent projects from moving forward, ensuring that more educators can live in the communities where they work.

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1 INTRODUCTION

WHY HOUSING FOR EDUCATORS MATTERS

California's high housing costs are undermining schools' ability to recruit and retain teachers and staff, with direct consequences for student learning. Educators across the state report struggling to find housing within their budget near their workplaces, leading to long commutes, financial strain, and in many cases, leaving the profession altogether.

A key driver of this crisis is the limited supply of housing, particularly multifamily units affordable to middle-income households. In response, a growing number of LEAs in California have begun developing education workforce housing (EWH)—multifamily rental housing on LEA-owned land, leased at below-market rates to staff. Several projects are now complete, with more underway. These developments demonstrate that EWH can help stabilize the education workforce, but they also reveal how challenging such projects can be, especially for smaller or rural districts with limited resources. In our 2025 report *Housing California Educators: Insights from Nine Education Workforce Housing Developments*, we describe nine of the EWH developments that have been completed or are near completion in California.[1]

Most LEAs lack the financial capacity, technical expertise, and political leverage to take on housing development alone. COEs, however, are uniquely positioned to help. As regional intermediaries, COEs can convene districts, share expertise, and forge partnerships that make EWH projects more feasible.

This white paper explores how COEs can advance EWH—through training and advising, leveraging financial tools like joint powers authorities (JPAs), and fostering collaborations with school districts, cities, counties, institutes of higher education, and other public agencies. Our goal is to identify strategies that can enable more LEAs to pursue housing solutions that might otherwise remain out of reach.

KEY TERMS

Most of our reports use the term local educational agency (LEA) to denote both school districts and county offices of education. In this report LEA refers to both school districts and COEs. The terms school district and COE are used if the distinction is important.

Affordable housing: Generally, housing that is leased to residents at less than the prevailing market rate. A common benchmark of affordability is housing that costs 30% or less of a household's gross monthly income. Federal and state housing programs typically define affordability in reference to ranges of household incomes, with a share of available units designated for lease to households within each range.

Workforce housing: This term can refer to moderate-income housing generally, or housing that is reserved for a specific employer's workforce. Workforce housing fills the gap between market-rate and low-income housing and may especially benefit public workers who earn incomes high enough to make them ineligible for government housing assistance programs, but who nonetheless struggle to afford market-rate rents.

Education workforce housing (EWH): EWH refers to housing developments where units are leased exclusively or primarily to LEA staff. These are typically managed by a body governed by a local educational agency or a partnership of which an LEA is a key partner.

2 CHALLENGES TO BUILDING EDUCATION WORKFORCE HOUSING

Before identifying the potential roles of COEs, it is important to understand the common challenges that LEAs face in pursuing education workforce housing on their own. These challenges fall into several categories:

- **Knowledge and internal capacity:** LEA leaders, staff, and board members often lack the technical expertise to evaluate whether housing is feasible, or to champion it through the long development process. Building shared understanding and cultivating internal champions is a critical early step.
- **Predevelopment funding:** LEAs face difficulty covering early expenses—such as site assessments, staff surveys, and financial modeling—that must be incurred before a project is certain to move forward. These "at-risk" costs can deter exploration, particularly for smaller or fiscally constrained districts.
- **Consultant expertise:** While housing projects rely heavily on consultants for feasibility studies, design, financial structuring, and property management, most districts are unfamiliar with this specialized market. Finding the right partners and managing public procurement processes can be daunting.
- **Financing:** To deliver below-market rents, LEAs must assemble complex packages of debt financing, public subsidies, and possibly voter-approved bonds. Few have the financial capacity or experience to structure these deals, and viable models are especially challenging in high-cost or rural markets.
- **Community and political support:** Projects require buy-in not only from LEA staff but also from voters, neighbors, and local elected officials. Without careful engagement, opposition can stall or block developments.
- **Land use and approvals:** Districts do not control zoning, entitlements, or permitting; those decisions rest with city and county governments. Navigating these processes adds cost, uncertainty, and reliance on external actors.

In addition, there are two specific hurdles for COEs seeking to develop their own housing:

- **Dispersed staff:** COE employees are often spread across large geographic areas, making it harder to concentrate demand for a single development.
- **Financing limits:** Unlike school districts, COEs cannot issue general obligation bonds, a tool that has been instrumental in several educator housing projects.

Together, these challenges illustrate why LEAs may hesitate to pursue housing development on their own—and why additional support structures are needed. COEs, with their countywide scope, technical expertise, and established role as intermediaries, are uniquely positioned to help districts overcome these barriers.

CALIFORNIA'S COUNTY OFFICES OF EDUCATION

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Each of California's 58 counties has a COE, covering a vast diversity of areas from dense urban to remote rural, and serving districts ranging in size from a few hundred students to hundreds of thousands. COEs are governed by an elected board and an elected superintendent (five COEs have appointed superintendents). Seven COEs are contiguous with a school district and share a board. Most COE board members represent a specific geographic area, often coinciding with a county supervisorial district.

COEs in California have two core missions:

1. Providing direct instruction to students in juvenile court and county community schools, and
2. Providing oversight and support to school districts in their county.

In service of those missions, COEs convene their member school districts, provide training and expertise, connect districts with resources, and serve as a liaison between the state and districts. Many COEs provide additional services to local districts, including support for educational programs and expanded administration, legal and business services.[2] As operators of schools, COEs employ educational staff in addition to administrative and operational staff.

COEs have several strengths relevant to addressing the challenges of EWH:

- **Convening power:** COEs regularly bring their local districts together to share information, best practices, and offer trainings. They can consolidate and disseminate specialized knowledge in areas like housing finance, land use law, and development project management, making it accessible to all member districts.
- **Facilitating collaboration:** COEs are neutral conveners, bringing together districts, local government agencies, and housing developers to forge effective partnerships. COEs can facilitate multi-district initiatives, allowing for larger, more impactful projects and leveraging greater purchasing power.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA'S COEs

COEs share a common mission, but they serve vastly different communities:

- The number of schools operated by COEs ranges from 2 to 32: only 5 counties have 15 or more COE-operated schools; most have 10 or fewer.
- Three COEs directly educate more than 10,000 students—Santa Clara, Orange, and Riverside—but the median is less than 700. Total student enrollment in a county ranges from 67 to 1.3 million.
- Three COEs employ more than 1,000 certificated staff—Los Angeles, Orange, and Riverside—but the median is just over 100.
- San Bernardino has the most land area of any county: 20,057 square miles, nearly double the second-largest, Inyo County, and 13 times as large as the median.
- San Francisco has more than 1,200 students per square mile, 2.5 times as dense as the second densest, Orange. Nine rural counties have fewer than one student per square mile.

- **Regional perspective and planning:** COEs overlap with the county geographies, have relationships with multiple cities, and are often familiar with regional dynamics. They can identify opportunities for housing development that serve multiple districts or address regional housing needs more broadly.
- **Political capital:** COEs often have stronger relationships with county- and state-level government officials, which can be crucial for navigating policy, securing funding, and gaining community support. COEs are also seen as neutral and capable conveners.
- **Internal expertise:** COEs often have staff with relevant expertise in fiscal services, project management, grant writing, and navigating state regulations—all critical components of housing development.

COEs often leverage expertise and relationships in support of districts. For example:

- **Public health response during COVID-19:** County superintendents organized countywide trainings and convenings for district leadership in partnership with county public health staff. COEs disseminated critical guidance from state and county agencies to district administrators, facilitated Q&A sessions, and helped districts interpret rapidly changing requirements. This demonstrated the unique ability of COEs to coordinate across multiple government entities and adapt information for local needs.
- **Arts education:** COEs have played a leading role in advancing equitable access to arts education across the state. Through the California County Superintendents (formerly known as the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, CCESA) Arts Initiative, COEs have partnered with the California Department of Education, Create CA, the California Arts Project, and other statewide organizations to provide technical assistance, professional development, and curriculum resources for districts. Many COEs have used this infrastructure to build county-level arts strategic plans, deliver teacher training, and connect districts with community arts organizations. These efforts illustrate how COEs can leverage statewide networks and local partnerships to expand program quality and ensure that smaller or under-resourced districts have access to expertise and resources they could not secure on their own.[3]
- **Priority School District (PSD) Program:** The California Department of Education (CDE) relies on COEs as the primary delivery vehicle for PSD technical assistance, providing districts with targeted support funded through both state and federal sources. COEs coordinate program delivery, monitor progress, and connect districts with specialized expertise.
- **Climate resilience and education:** In partnership with UndauntedK12, COEs have piloted initiatives to help districts pursue climate resilience strategies, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and integrate climate education into curricula. These projects demonstrate COEs' ability to align district priorities with broader state policy goals.
- **Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) oversight:** Changes to the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) in 2019 increased the scope of COEs' direct support to districts, particularly in helping improve student outcomes for historically underserved groups. This shift prompted multiple studies examining the expanded role of COEs, including their strategies for differentiated assistance, professional learning, and capacity-building across districts. "The shift from categorical funding to local control, implemented through the Local Control Funding Formula in 2013, reframed the COE-district relationship to one of thought partner and technical assistance provider."[4]

The relationships and systems that have been developed and utilized as part of these initiatives demonstrate the potential of COEs to support EWH. The next section explores the specific roles COEs can play in advancing education workforce housing.

KEY STRATEGIES FOR COEs TO SUPPORT EWH

This section outlines strategies COEs can use to build district capacity, foster cross-sector partnerships, and, in some cases, directly advance housing development.

4 BUILD KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY

COEs can strengthen districts' ability to pursue EWH by consolidating expertise, offering targeted technical assistance, and providing shared trainings. These activities are often the most immediate and practical way COEs can add value, especially for districts with limited staff capacity and expertise in housing development.

CONVENING DISTRICTS FOR TRAINING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

One of the most effective ways COEs can support EWH is by connecting district leadership with the knowledge, skills, and strategic guidance necessary to navigate the early stages of EWH. COEs can:

- Convene district superintendents and board members to discuss opportunities and challenges, using existing structures for regular countywide meetings. In this way, COEs can create natural learning cohorts for EWH, allowing district leaders to share ideas and learn from each other.
- Host workshops and trainings with subject-matter experts, share best practices from across the state, and disseminate model documents such as procurement and contract templates and staff survey instruments. COEs could partner with groups like CSBA who have experience providing training with a research-driven curriculum.
- Provide general advice on financial modeling, risk assessment, and long-term property management, leveraging the COE's internal expertise or bringing in trusted experts.

PROVIDING GUIDANCE ON CONSULTANTS

Consultants play a central role in education workforce housing development. LEAs typically contract with outside experts to conduct land

SANTA BARBARA COE: COUNTYWIDE WEBINAR

In 2024, the Santa Barbara COE hosted a webinar for all districts in the county in partnership with the housing authorities of the City and County of Santa Barbara and the CC+S / cityLAB team. The agenda covered development processes and timelines, funding mechanisms, and common challenges. District leaders also heard from peers at Lompoc Unified and Santa Barbara Unified, who are pursuing workforce housing projects, and received resources for continued learning. The convening created a shared baseline of knowledge and an opportunity for discussion and support.[9] In 2025, the County Board of Supervisors approved a $1 million loan to support a Santa Barbara Unified School District EWH project, showing how COE-led convenings can build regional support for EWH efforts.[10]

feasibility analyses, survey staff or voters, assess real estate portfolios, develop financing strategies, and provide design, construction, and property management services. While a growing number of firms understand the dynamics of EWH, district staff are often unfamiliar with these consultants and may need support to ensure that contracting processes align with their goals and capacities. COEs can support districts by:

- Training staff on procurement requirements and best practices for structuring requests for qualifications or proposals (RFQs/RFPs).
- Sharing lessons learned from other LEAs' contracting experiences.
- Leveraging fiscal oversight expertise to advise districts on how to identify risks, ensure contract compliance, and align contract scopes with project goals.
- Hosting forums where district leadership can hear from potential consultants outside of formal board settings.

SUPPORTING NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

A critical first step in pursuing EWH is assessing both staff housing needs and district land assets. COEs can help districts by providing model survey instruments, guidance on data analysis, and examples from other counties.

Staff housing needs are typically assessed through district staff surveys, which should focus on two goals:

- Identifying staff groups interested in EWH, including household sizes, commute patterns, and affordability thresholds.
- Documenting the extent of housing burden (such as the percentage of income spent on housing) and likelihood of remaining in the district.

Data from these surveys strengthens the case for EWH both internally (among board members and staff) and externally (among financial partners, elected officials, and community partners). COEs could lead county-wide surveys of education staff, particularly in areas where districts may be too small to support a housing development.

Land asset inventories should evaluate active and surplus properties based on:

- Current use and occupancy (ideally in the context of a long-term facilities master plan)
- Site size, topography, utilities access, and proximity to amenities such as schools and transit
- Zoning and land-use restrictions
- Potential for sale, lease, or land swaps to secure better-suited parcels

LEAs may have information about surplus or underutilized properties as part of their capital or facilities planning, but typically an LEA will contract with a consultant to conduct a preliminary assessment of potentially developable properties. One starting point for COEs seeking to understand the potential for EWH in their districts is the interactive property look up tool available from the CSBA workforce housing resource library.

FACILITATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Building and sustaining support for educator housing requires meaningful engagement with staff, parents, neighbors, and local government officials. COEs can act as neutral conveners for early-stage planning and consensus building, including:

- **Internal engagement with staff:** Training districts to conduct effective surveys and focus groups, and to use power mapping to identify key influencers.
- **External engagement with the broader community:** Supporting districts in designing outreach strategies, facilitating public forums, and framing educator housing as a community-wide benefit.
- **Ongoing stakeholder coordination:** Helping districts manage relationships with staff unions, neighborhood groups, and elected officials, and providing tools for consistent messaging across diverse audiences.

SUPPORT REGIONAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS

Because housing challenges cross district boundaries, regional solutions are critical. COEs—operating at a countywide scale—are natural leaders in brokering collaborations and aligning district efforts with regional housing initiatives. Following are some of the ways COEs can help districts build support for EWH with regional partners.

REGIONAL HOUSING FINANCE AGENCIES (RHFAS)

New regional financing structures offer promising opportunities for EWH. For example:

The Bay Area Housing Finance Authority (BAHFA) and Los Angeles County Affordable Housing Solutions Agency (LACAHSA), both created by the state legislature, can raise, administer, and allocate funding across their member counties, place revenue or bond measures on the ballot, apply for grants, and impose a commercial linkage fee.

The Regional Housing Finance Act (SB 440, 2024) now allows local governments (defined as "a city, county, or special district, including a school district or community college district") to form an RHFA without special legislation.[5] In March 2025, the first RHFA was formed under this law by San Diego Unified School District and the San Diego Community College District.

While it is not yet clear whether COEs qualify as "local governments" under this statute, they can:

- Help districts participate in RHFAs.
- Advocate for educator housing as a regional funding priority.
- Facilitate alignment with county and city governments.

REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

By pooling resources, land, and demand across agencies, projects can achieve scale and financial viability that would be unattainable individually. COEs can initiate and coordinate these collaborations. For example:

Marin COE partnered with the College of Marin and Novato Unified School District to form the Marin County Housing Coalition in 2024.[6]

Although not a COE, Santa Clara County is leading a partnership of three districts and a community college on a 110-unit EWH development built on county property, an example of how county-wide collaborations can house the staff of multiple districts to make projects feasible.[7]

CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

Cities and counties control zoning, permitting, and land use approvals—factors that can make or break EWH projects. While recent state laws aim to streamline approvals, local support remains critical. COEs can help districts by:

- Convening districts and local planning departments to clarify zoning, land use restric-

REGIONAL HOUSING NEEDS ALLOCATION (RHNA)

California's Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) projects the number of homes needed in each region based on population and job growth, overcrowding, and vacancy rates. Councils of governments (COGs) or county governments then allocate this "fair share" to cities and counties, which must adopt housing elements showing how they will accommodate the required units. Jurisdictions that fall behind face penalties, and in jurisdictions that fail to meet their goals, developers may access streamlining requirements in SB 35 that make it easier for certain housing developments to be approved. COEs can help ensure EWH projects are recognized as part of meeting local housing needs.

tions, and building code requirements.

- Providing training on key state statutes that shape feasibility, such as CEQA and housing streamlining statues such as SB 35 / SB 423.
- Helping districts evaluate options such as density bonuses, inclusionary zoning, parking exemptions, or other tools that can improve project viability.
- Elevating educator housing as part of countywide housing, transportation, and economic strategies, and supporting infrastructure coordination.
- Brokering relationships with city councils, county supervisors, and planning staff whose approval can shape project success.

Two recent projects highlight how strong city partnerships can make ambitious EWH projects feasible:

- **San Francisco:** San Francisco Unified School District's Shirley Chisholm Village project succeeded in partnership with the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development, which provided financing, expedited zoning, and logistical support (including managing the tenant application process).
- **Berkeley:** Berkeley Unified partnered with the City of Berkeley to access city bond financing, expedited zoning approvals, and adjustments to the income requirements for city-funded housing developments.

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Community colleges, CSUs, and UCs all have decades of experience with student and staff housing. COEs often have existing partnerships with these institutions through dual enrollment, career technical education (CTE), and teacher pipeline programs. They can leverage these relationships to:

- Convene K-12 and higher education partners to explore joint housing opportunities.
- Share expertise in planning, financing, and managing housing.
- Replicate collaborations such as Ventura COE's housing symposium with CSU Channel Islands, or Marin COE's coalition with the College of Marin.

OTHER PARTNERS

- Housing authorities have extensive experience in developing, financing, and managing affordable housing projects, often utilizing complex federal and state programs. COEs can partner with them to leverage their expertise in project planning, financing (e.g., LIHTC), and property management.
- State agencies: COEs are well established as a structure for connecting the state to local districts. For example, the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) offers funding opportunities, technical assistance, and policy guidance. The state may also contribute resources: Marin COE's project (described below) is being built on state land.
- Community land trusts: Many COEs in rural areas are interested in exploring development models that include staff homeowner-

VENTURA COE: REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

In February 2024, Ventura COE co-hosted a symposium on EWH with the County of Ventura, CSU Channel Islands, Ventura County P-20 Council, and Housing Trust Fund Ventura County.[11] By bringing together K–12 districts, higher education, county government, and nonprofit housing partners, the symposium highlighted a regional approach to workforce housing and created opportunities for multi-agency collaboration. This illustrates how COEs can expand conversations beyond K–12 to align with broader community housing goals.

ship; community land trusts are a potential vehicle for achieving this goal.

DIRECTLY ENGAGE IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

While many COEs will focus on convening and coordination, some may play a more direct role in developing housing. This can include leading a housing development for their own staff, entering into development agreements with other public entities, or helping establish joint powers authorities (JPAs) to develop housing.

COE-DEVELOPED HOUSING

Although COEs cannot issue general obligation bonds and typically have more dispersed staff than school districts, some COEs are beginning to explore EWH for their own employees. In these cases, the traditional model of LEA-developed housing—where the public agency owns the land, initiates the development, and oversees long-term operations—can still apply. For example, Tulare COE and Marin COE have both participated in CSBA's housing training cohorts. COEs can draw on guidance already developed for LEAs, including sample staff surveys, RFPs, feasibility checklists, eligibility policies, and property management models.

COLLABORATIONS WITH OTHER AGENCIES

COEs can also pursue EWH in collaboration with other public agencies. EWH partnerships allow partners to access additional funding and land resources, share risk and responsibility for project delivery, leverage specialized expertise from other agencies, and expand the potential tenant pool to make projects more viable.

JOINT POWERS AUTHORITIES (JPAs)

One of the most powerful mechanisms for COEs to collaborate on EWH is by establishing and leading JPAs. These are public entities formed by two or more public agencies to undertake joint projects and share resources, allowing them to achieve economies of scale and access financing tools unavailable to individual entities. Under California law, all public agencies—including school districts and COEs—have the authority to form JPAs.[8] A COE-led JPA can:

- **Pool resources and land:** JPAs can aggregate financial resources (including reserves and the ability to issue debt) and crucially, can pool suitable land parcels owned by participating districts. This aggregation can create more viable sites for housing development than any single LEA could pursue.
- **Achieve economies of scale:** By undertaking projects on behalf of multiple districts, JPAs may be able to reduce per-unit costs through bulk purchasing, streamlined development processes, and greater leverage with developers and lenders.
- **Access financing tools:** JPAs can issue tax-exempt bonds such as lease revenue bonds, as well as certificates of participation (COPs), backed by the income from the project.

SAN LUIS OBISPO & SONOMA COEs: DIRECT HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

- Sonoma COE purchased land in Santa Rosa in 2022 adjacent to a community school and has done several public presentations, including a feasibility study completed in 2023 with initial plans for 60 housing units for staff. The COE has adopted a 2025-26 budget of $5 million for workforce housing.[12]
- The San Luis Obispo COE is planning six modular housing units for staff on a parcel it owns in unincorporated San Luis Obispo County. A model unit is already built and lived in by a staff member.[13] The County—at the request of the COE—recently amended its ordinance to allow housing to be built on land designated for public facilities.[14]

- **Streamline procurement:** JPAs can adopt their own procurement rules, expediting the selection of developers and other consultants.
- **Centralize expertise:** JPAs can hire or contract for specialized staff or consultants with expertise in housing finance, development, and management, serving the needs of all member agencies.
- **Share risks:** Financial and operational risks are spread across member agencies, reducing exposure for any one district.
- **Increase competitiveness for funding:** Some state and federal housing programs give preference to regional or multi-agency applicants.

A framework for a JPA led by a COE might look as follows:

1. **Partnership agreement:** The COE, in conjunction with interested school districts, would draft a Joint Exercise of Powers Agreement outlining the JPA's purpose, governance structure, membership, financial contributions, powers, and responsibilities.
2. **Governance structure:** A JPA must establish a governing board composed of representatives from the participating agencies. The board oversees the JPA's operations, planning, decision-making, and financial management.
3. **Financing:** Participating agencies would contribute to the JPA's operational budget, through membership fees or a share based on their share of units. The JPA can also issue revenue bonds and pursue grants.
4. **Project initiation:** The JPA board would decide on the specific housing projects to undertake, drawing from the suitable land and identified needs of its member agencies.
5. **Hiring a developer team:** The JPA would manage the procurement of developers, architects, and contractors, oversee the construction or rehabilitation process, and manage financing.
6. **Property management:** The JPA could directly manage the housing properties, but most likely would contract with a property management company, as LEAs have done in existing EWH developments.
7. **Ongoing oversight:** Like the governing board of a typical LEA-owned development, the JPA would manage the long-term governance of the housing, including setting rents, overseeing maintenance, revisiting eligibility policies, and ensuring compliance with any funding source requirements.

By facilitating or initiating JPAs, COEs can transform educator housing from an isolated district challenge into a collaborative, regional initiative with robust financing and governance.

MARIN COE: JOINT POWERS AUTHORITY

In 2023, Marin COE and the County of Marin created the Marin County Public Financing Authority, a JPA designed to issue bonds and develop housing for educators. Its first project, Oak Hill Apartments, is being developed on state-owned land near San Quentin and will serve staff from Marin's school districts, the College of Marin, and county employees.

The JPA is also piloting the Affordable Housing Guarantor Financing Program, in which participants serve as guarantors for their portion of projected rental revenue based on the number of units dedicated to each agency. This model is designed to reduce borrowing costs and ensure long-term affordability. Marin COE, Marin County, Novato Unified, San Rafael City Schools, and the College of Marin are among the first entities to consider joining this program.

CONCLUSION

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COEs in California are essential vehicles of expertise and guidance for local districts and have acted as leaders and support hubs on many educational issues. Their operations and relationships are designed to foster collaboration, provide specialized services, and ensure a degree of regional oversight, making them key players in addressing regional and complex challenges like education workforce housing. The examples and strategies outlined in this paper suggest that COEs can play a catalytic role by leveraging their core strengths: convening, coordination, technical expertise, and regional engagement. COEs can engage in any or all of these three areas:

1. **Building knowledge and capacity**—Convening districts, providing technical assistance, and sharing tools for early planning and predevelopment.
2. **Supporting regional and external partnerships**—Connecting districts with city, county, housing authority, and higher education partners to align efforts, pool resources, and overcome development hurdles.
3. **Directly engaging in housing development**—Exploring COE-led projects, joint development opportunities, and joint powers authorities (JPAs) to expand funding and scale.

COEs already play these roles in other areas of education policy, from arts access to climate resilience to public health. Applying the same capacities to educator housing would allow more districts to pursue projects they could not manage alone, while also embedding educator housing within broader regional solutions. With housing costs continuing to undermine recruitment and retention, the question is no longer whether educator housing is needed—it is how to build the partnerships and systems to make it possible. COEs are well positioned to help lead that work.

THE ROLE OF COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS

Our other publications highlight the important role that LEA board members play as champions for EWH, especially in the early stages of exploration. Board members can take several steps as individuals or in formal action, such as:

- Attend regional or statewide workshops on EWH to learn about the development process and the role of board members.
- Adopt a board resolution in support of advancing EWH.
- Request an inventory of potentially developable sites owned by the COE.
- Propose that staff conduct a survey of COE staff about housing challenges and needs.
- Work with the superintendent to invite districts and other stakeholder agencies to a training or convening to understand potential opportunities in the county.
- Reach out to elected counterparts in other local agencies to identify key allies for EWH.
- Form a COE committee to explore EWH, with representation from the Board, educational staff, and the community.

CSBA's education workforce housing library provides examples of such actions, in particular the companion handbook for board members.

SOURCES

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