

Early Insights from the Golden State Pathways Program

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Background and policy context

- Annually, over 650,000 California high schoolers enroll in career technical education (CTE)
- CTE is supported by a range of policies, programs, and funding, but implementation varies
- Most careers will require some college, yet among California's public high school students:
 - 45% complete A–G requirements
 - 40% participate in CTE courses
 - About 10% take one CTE dual enrollment course

Overview of the Golden State Pathways Program (GSPP)

- **\$500M investment** established to enhance college and career readiness efforts
- Key priorities include
 - Aligning education with workforce needs
 - Ensuring college readiness
 - Providing opportunities to earn 12 units of college credit
 - Considering "equity" in access to pathways

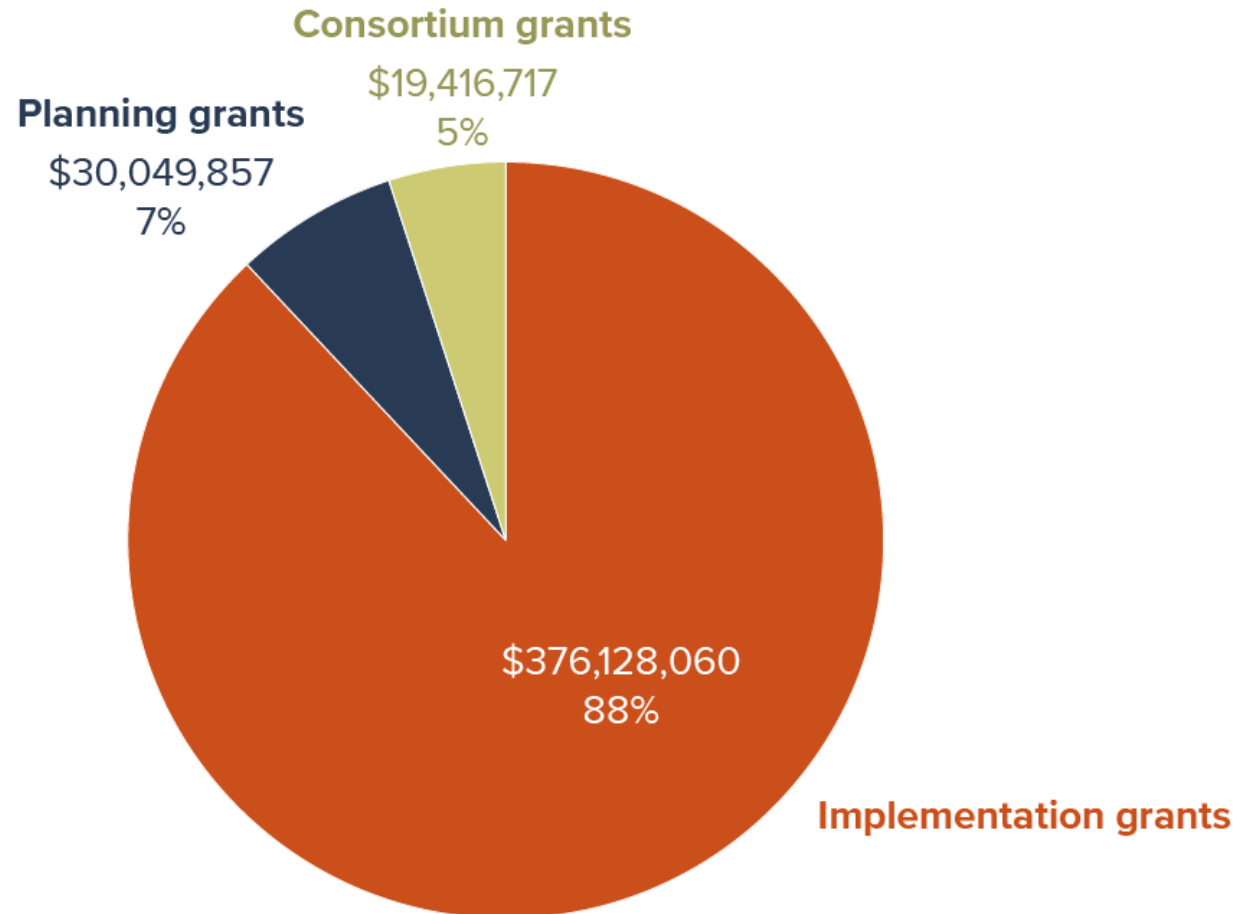
Research questions

- How were GSPP grants allocated statewide?
- Among GSPP implementation grantees,
 - How are grantees planning to implement GSPP?
 - How are grantees conceptualizing the integration of college and career?
 - What do grantees expect to be the biggest implementation opportunities and challenges?

How were implementation grants distributed?



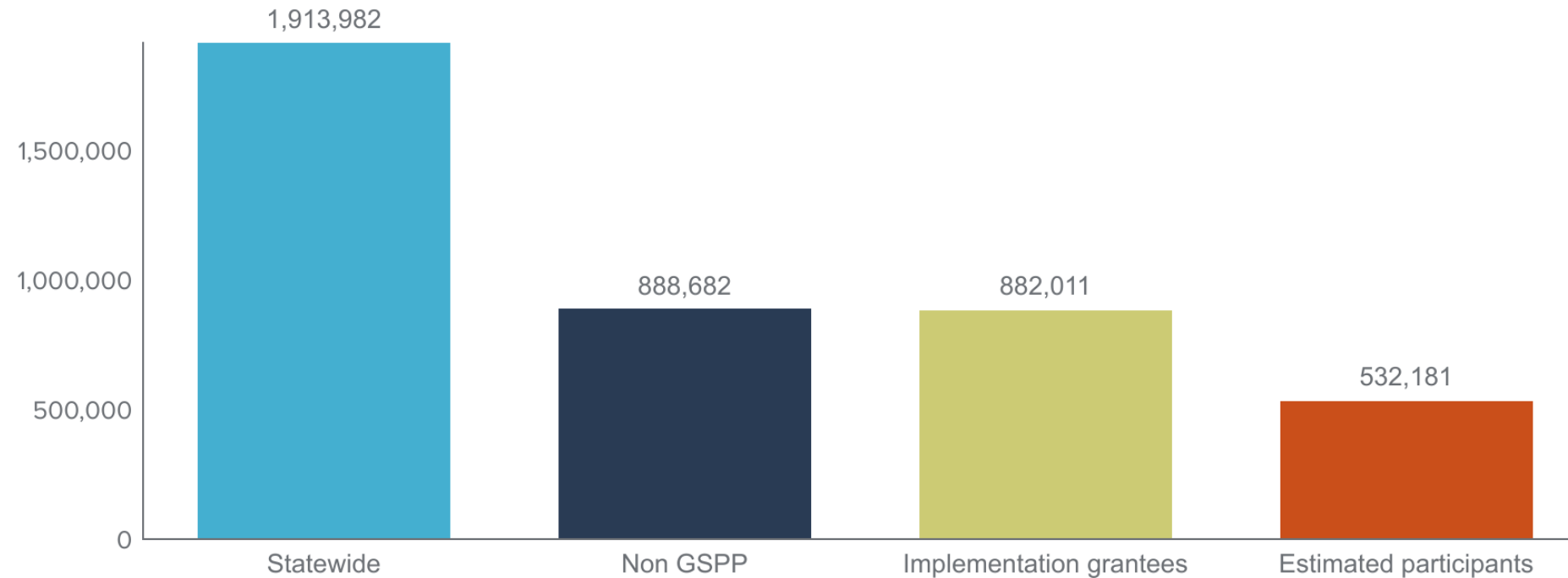
Implementation grants comprise nearly 90% of grant funding awarded under GSPP



Over 500,000 high school students are expected to participate in GSPP

Count of 9th to 12th graders

■ Statewide ■ Implementation grantees ■ Non GSPP ■ Estimated participants

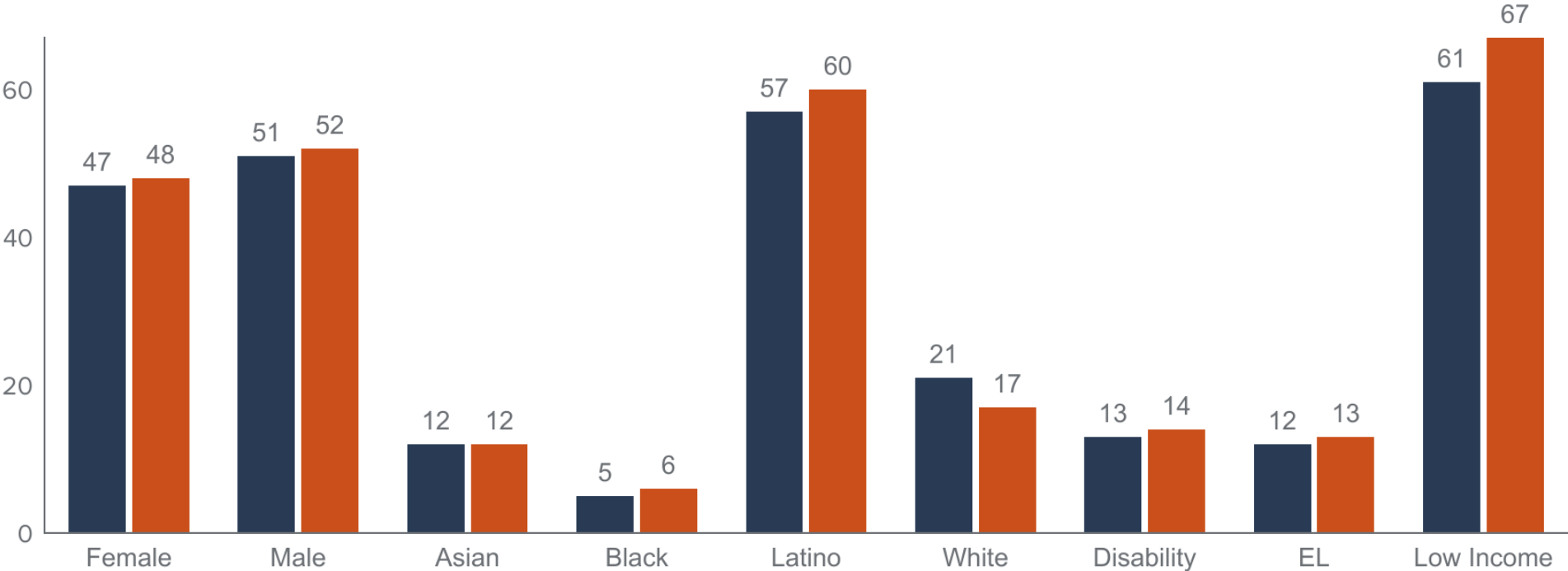


Source: Authors' calculation using California Department of Education, GSPP Implementation Application Materials and 2023 Enrollment Data.

Implementation grantees serve higher shares of Latino and low-income students

Share of 9th to 12th graders

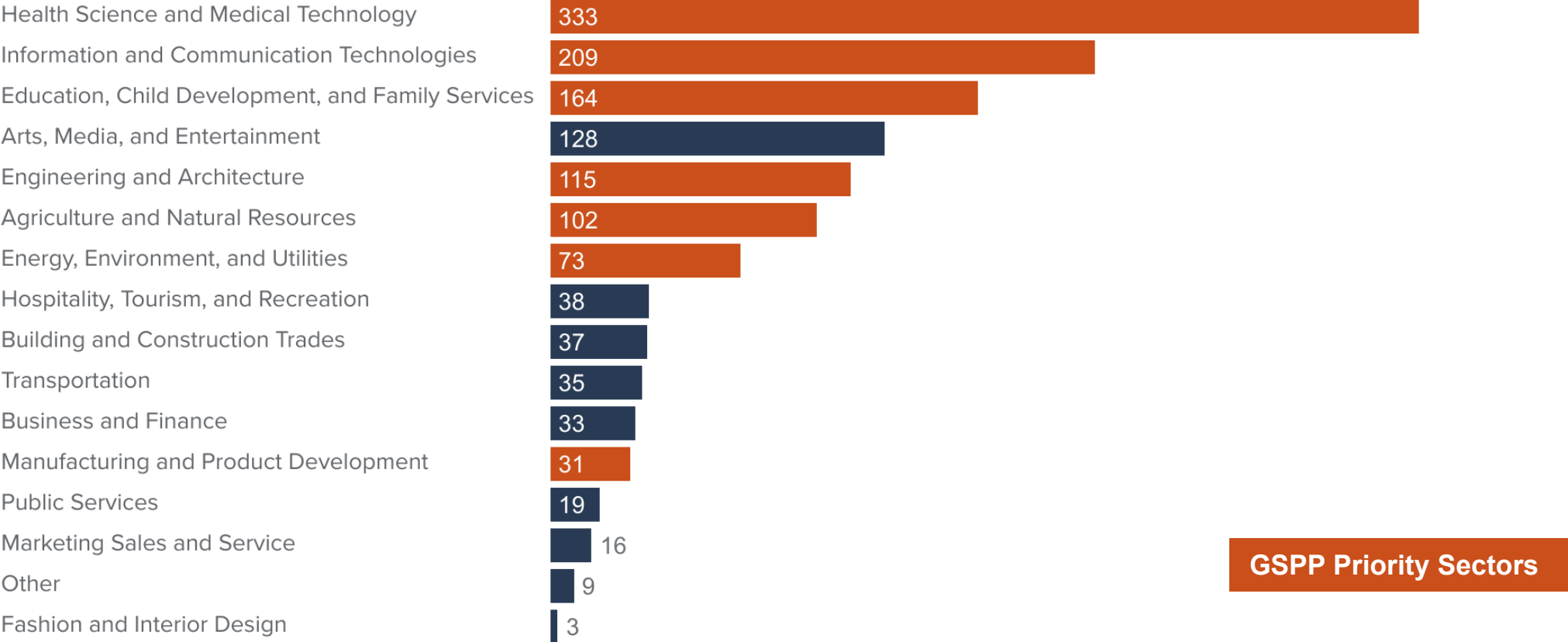
Statewide Implementation grantees



Source: Authors' calculation using California Department of Education, GSP Allocation data, February 2025 and enrollment data, 2024

Health-related pathways are the most popular

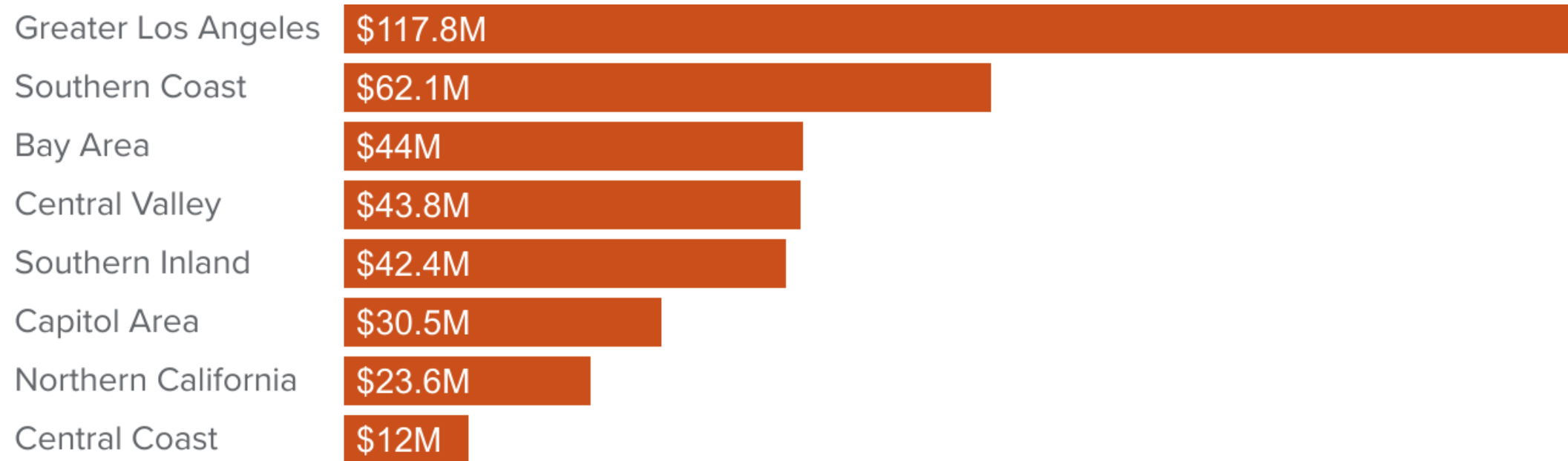
Count of GSPP pathways



Source: Authors' calculation using California Department of Education, GSPP Allocation data, February 2025.

Greater Los Angeles received the largest amount of GSPP implementation grant funding

GSPP allocation by region

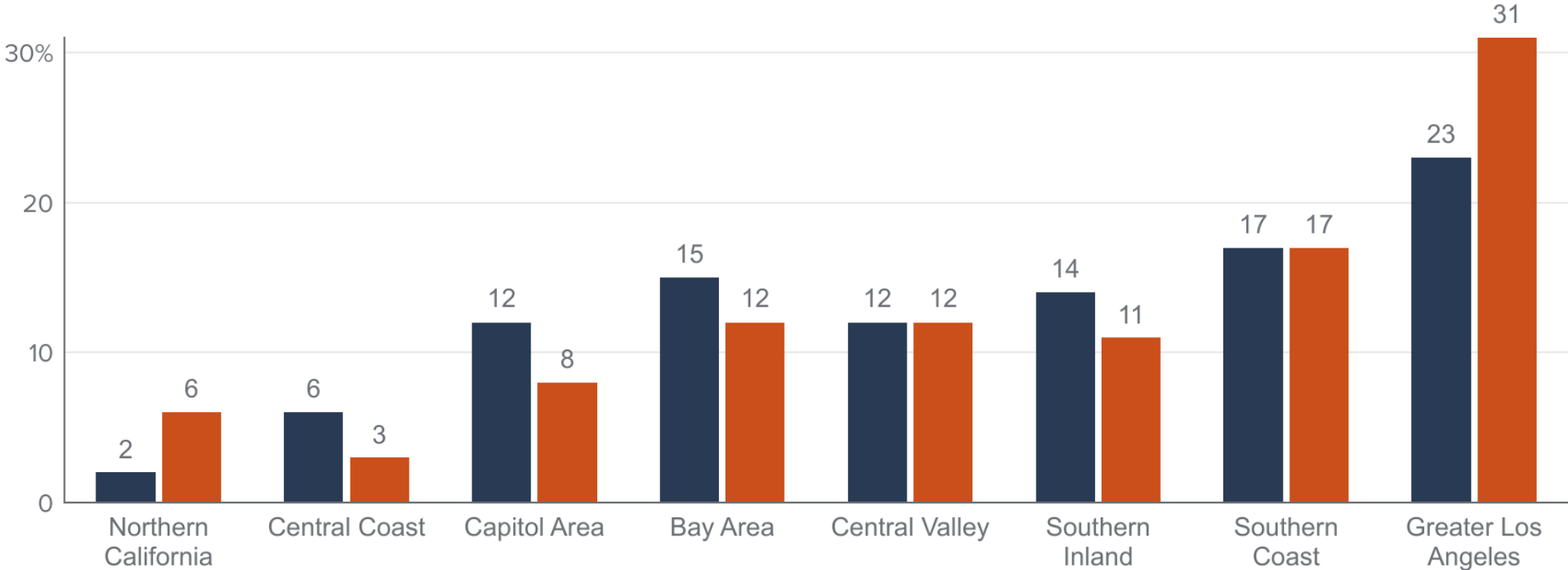


Source: Authors' calculation using California Department of Education – GSPP Allocation data, February 2025

Greater Los Angeles and Northern California received an outsized share of grant funding

Share of statewide enrollment and GSPP allocation

■ Share of statewide enrollment ■ Share of funding allocation



Source: Authors' calculation using California Department of Education, GSPP Allocation data, February 2025 and Enrollment data, 2024.

What are grantees' plans for implementing GSPP?



Approach to interviews and application analysis

- Selected local education agencies (LEAs) for interviews using specific criteria, including
 - Implemented pathways with high-quality standards (e.g., Linked Learning)
 - Share of minority and socioeconomically disadvantaged students
 - A–G completion and college-going rates
- Analyzed themes based on implementation plans, expected benefits, and challenges

LEAs identified GSPP pathways based on local programmatic and economic needs

- Grantees selected CTE courses/pathways where collaboration exists, but program elements are not yet aligned with GSPP

“What were some of the gaps aligned with the goals of GSPP? And then how could we utilize that funding to actually move the work?”

– College and career administrator

LEAs are grappling with “college or career” versus “college and career for all”

- LEAs are integrating A–G into CTE courses and pathways, often to provide universal college and career readiness
- However, some interviewees described reasons against making A–G universal:

“We start everyone on an A–G pathway... and two dual enrollment courses... but students fall off...”

– Assistant principal

LEAs are universally committed to college acceleration through dual enrollment

- Multiple LEAs described plans to shift at least some “articulated” courses to dual enrollment courses
- Almost all LEAs plan to establish, expand, or maintain dual enrollment

“[Completion of 12 units] will not be a requirement, because I would probably have to make board policy... However, it could be highly encouraged.”

– Program administrator

LEAs plan to expand work-based learning despite concerns about sustainability

- 81% of grantees already have work-based learning activities and 26% have summer programs
- GSPP is helping LEAs shift from “random acts” of work-based learning to more comprehensive CTE programming

“In rural communities ... we are 99% private businesses ... They’re usually family operated, they have one to two individuals in the business, so supervision and mentorship ... is very challenging.”

– Superintendent

How can California ensure that the promise of GSPP is realized for all students?

- Align relevant high school, postsecondary, and workforce policies to ensure successful transitions
- Prioritize dual enrollment courses that help maximize college and career readiness
- Monitor data on expected and actual student outcomes
- Assess fiscal impact of college and career readiness models

Note on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.