

# Birth Through Five Literacy



Oregon Department of  
**Early Learning  
and Care**

## Annual Legislative Report

December 2025



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
Purpose	4
2025 Implementation Milestones	4
2024-25 One-Time Funds	5
Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities	5
Conclusion	5
<b>Section 1: Update on Strategy Implementation Progress</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Birth Through Five Literacy Plan Overview</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Birth Through Five Literacy Plan Submission and Implementation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2025-27 Investments</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Birth Through Five Literacy Logic Model</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Milestones Reached - Goal 1</b>	<b>10</b>
Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines Revision	10
Enhancing the Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEP)	10
<b>Milestones Reached - Goal 2</b>	<b>11</b>
Strengthen Connections with the Library System	11
Strengthening Book Distribution	12
Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)	12
Reach Out and Read	12
Increase Access to Family Education	13
Enhance Home Visiting	13
<b>Milestones Reached – Goal 3</b>	<b>15</b>
Fund and Consult with Tribal Nations	15
ODE Collaboration with Tribal Affairs	16
<b>Structures and Partnerships</b>	<b>17</b>
ODE Collaboration	17
Rulemaking	17
<b>Section 2: Outputs and Reach</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>One-Time Funds</b>	<b>21</b>
Early Childhood Equity Fund	23
Regional Early Learning Hubs	23
<b>Early Learning Hub Stories from the Field</b>	<b>24</b>
Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub	24
Washington County Early Learning Hub	25
Tribal Language Revitalization	26

**Section 3: Progress Toward Outcomes .....27**

**Impact of One-Time Funds .....28**

Accessible Early Literacy Professional Development .....28

Increased Promotion of Culturally Specific Literacy .....28

Increased Access to Culturally Specific, Developmentally Appropriate Programming .....29

Family Engagement in Early Literacy .....30

**Plans for Impact Evaluation .....30**

**Section 4: Strengths and Challenges .....31**

**Strengths .....32**

Equity-Driven and Culturally Specific Investments .....32

Informative Tribal Consultation .....32

New and Developing Partnerships .....32

Improved Coordination to Support Grantees .....32

**Challenges and Opportunities .....32**

Funding Limitations .....32

Data and Evaluation Complexity .....33

Tribal Funding Gaps .....33

**Conclusion .....33**

# Executive Summary

## Purpose

ORS 327.839 requires the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) to submit annually to the legislature a progress report on the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan established under the Governor's Early Literacy Success Initiative, House Bill 3198 (2023). This report satisfies that requirement.

In 2025, DELIC made significant progress in implementing the [Birth Through Five Literacy Plan](#) DELIC submitted to the legislature on December 31, 2024. The plan has three goals informed by community input:

**Goal 1:** Expand Culturally Specific Early Literacy Programs

**Goal 2:** Promote the Capacity of Programs that Engage Families in Early Literacy

**Goal 3:** Support Language Revitalization Efforts for Tribal Nations

DELIC's legislatively approved budget includes roughly \$10 million for the implementation of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan in the 2025-27 biennium. Funds have been allocated to initiatives and strategies under each of these three goals.

## 2025 Implementation Milestones

### Goal 1: Expand Culturally Specific Early Literacy Programs

**Update the Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines (ELKG):** In 2025, DELIC and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) entered into an Interagency Agreement to update the ELKG. DELIC released a Request for Proposals on November 20, 2025, for a consultant to lead the revision process. The selection and notice of intent to award will be completed in January 2026.

**Strengthen culturally specific organizations:** DELIC is enhancing culturally specific early literacy programming through non-competitive funding to Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEP) grantees. Grant agreements have been distributed to 20 organizations currently funded by ECEP.

### Goal 2: Promote the Capacity of Programs that Engage Families in Early Literacy

**Strengthen connections between DELIC and the library system:** DELIC is preparing to allocate funds to the Oregon State Library in the 2025-27 biennium to increase funding for the Ready to Read program.

**Strengthen book distribution:** In 2025, the Dolly Parton Imagination Library (DPIL) celebrated statewide coverage in Oregon with enrollment available in all 36 counties. DELIC funding for DPIL increased to \$3.7 million for the 2025-27 biennium to support the program in reaching their goal of 65% enrollment of eligible children.

DELIC is working with ODE to support the administration of the Reach Out and Read program and will increase the investment to \$100,000 for 2025-27, to support work with pediatric clinics leveraging well-child visits to support early literacy.

**Increase access to culturally responsive family education and support opportunities:** DELIC administered funds to Oregon's 16 Early Learning Hubs in the 2025-27 biennium to support early literacy.

**Enhance home visiting:** DELIC distributed non-competitive grants for the 2025-27 biennium to Healthy Families Oregon, Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten, Relief Nurseries grantees to strengthen the early literacy support they provide through home visiting.

### **Goal 3: Support Language Revitalization Efforts for Tribal Nations**

**Fund and consult with Tribal Nations:** To allocate funding in a way that respects the sovereignty of Tribal Nations and honors their government-to government relationship with the state, Tribes were offered non-competitive, direct funding for the 2025–27 biennium, with participation by all nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

#### **2024–25 One-Time Funds**

In 2023, the legislature approved a \$9.4 million General Fund limitation increase for Birth Through Five Literacy. DELC allocated \$4.7 million to Early Learning Hubs and issued a simplified application for the remaining \$4.7 million through the Early Childhood Equity Fund.

As a result, in 2024–25, over 243,000 early literacy resources were distributed to families, and more than 400 literacy trainings reached over 4,000 educators. While this funding preceded the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, grantees reported meaningful progress toward plan outcomes benefiting children, families, and staff.

#### **Strengths, Challenges and Opportunities**

DELC made great progress towards plan goals in 2025, and some key strengths include a focus on culturally specific investments, impactful Tribal Consultation, new and deepening partnerships, and improved coordination to support grantees. DELC has identified key lessons learned and is exploring strategies to address barriers such as funding gaps and the complexity of measuring impact and outcomes.

To track progress towards outcomes, DELC is developing an evaluation proposal for the 2025–27 biennium. DELC plans to hire an external contractor to conduct surveys and interviews focused on family early literacy engagement.

#### **Conclusion**

In 2025, DELC made significant progress towards ensuring that every Oregon child has access to early literacy support, starting at birth. While challenges remain, the ground gained this year reflects a shared commitment to improving early literacy outcomes for Oregon's youngest children.

# **Section 1**

## **Update on Strategy Implementation Progress**

## Birth Through Five Literacy Plan Overview

Pursuant to ORS 327.839, on December 31, 2024, the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) submitted a report to inform the legislature on the [Birth Through Five Literacy Plan](#). DELIC developed the plan as a comprehensive framework aimed at improving early literacy outcomes for children from birth through age five. Grounded in the goals of the Early Literacy Success Initiative (2023 HB 3198), the plan emphasizes equity, cultural responsiveness, inclusivity, and addresses disparities in access to quality literacy programs and services.

DELIC's Birth Through Five Literacy Plan has three goals informed by community input:

- **Goal 1:** Expand Culturally Specific Early Literacy Programs
- **Goal 2:** Promote the Capacity of Programs that Engage Families in Early Literacy
- **Goal 3:** Support Language Revitalization Efforts for Tribal Nations

To shape the goals, strategies, and outcomes of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, DELIC relied on research and community input. DELIC conducted an in-depth review of evidence-based practices and research from high-quality early literacy strategies, with a focus on strategies proven to strengthen early literacy skills in young children, ensuring alignment with the plan's objectives.

DELIC also gathered in depth community feedback. In the spring of 2024, DELIC engaged directly with DELIC-funded programs and a wide range of child care providers. In the fall of 2024, DELIC partnered with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT) to conduct a statewide outreach effort. The goal was to understand what supports are most helpful for those working with families of children from birth to age five in developing foundational literacy skills—such as language, early writing, and listening. OKT's multicultural, multilingual team facilitated inclusive engagement through surveys for caregivers, providers, and families and community conversations with families, including Spanish-speaking families, Native and Indigenous families, and parent leadership groups. Six statewide organizations helped host and promote these conversations, including public libraries, Healthy Families Oregon, the Oregon Head Start Association, and Early Learning Hubs. In total, over 400 individuals participated. Their input was analyzed and distilled into key takeaways that informed the final plan.

Key takeaways from community engagement:

- Providers want more professional development in early literacy, and it should be integrated into social emotional learning, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), inclusion, and multilingual learning.
- Providers want to connect with families and provide better literacy support in their home languages.
- Providers need culturally relevant resources and flexible funding for literacy spaces and community needs.
- Challenges with staff capacity, turnover, and geographic access is impacting programs' ability to promote early literacy with families and participate in early literacy trainings.
- There is a desire for deeper understanding of early literacy milestones for children birth through five.
- Book distribution programs are successful but limited, especially for bilingual and multilingual books.
- Partnerships, especially with public libraries, are crucial for early literacy support.

- There is a desire to learn how to incorporate easy to implement early literacy strategies as part of families' daily routine

This community input informed DELC's Birth Through Five Literacy Plan's goals for enhancing culturally specific programs, strengthening family engagement, and supporting Tribal language revitalization and preservation. As outlined in the plan, Birth Through Five implementation strategies prioritize supporting, enhancing, and expanding current programs, minimizing burdens on grantees and partners, and developing foundational resources.

## Birth Through Five Literacy Plan Submission and Implementation

DELC submitted the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan to the legislature at the end of 2024. After this submission, DELC conducted outreach and engagement with the plan through a series of presentations with partners, programs, and advocates. Some key engagements include a presentation at the Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development conference and a presentation to Early Learning Advocates in January 2025.

The Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) released in December 2024 included significant investments for implementing DELC's Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, however the legislature was not able to fund these investments at GRB levels during the 2025 legislative session. DELC therefore had to prioritize and streamline strategies for implementation in the 25-27 biennium. Those funding priorities include:

### Goal 1

- **Strengthen Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEP):** equip culturally specific organizations to address unique early literacy needs in their communities
- **Update Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines:** review guidelines, conduct community engagement, update guidelines to include children ages birth to three.

### Goal 2

- **Partner with State Library of Oregon:** support Oregon's library system in engaging families, leveraging the Ready to Read Grants Program
- **Expand Dolly Parton Imagination Library:** increase book access for families
- **Strengthen Reach Out and Read:** promote access to books through partnerships with pediatric clinics
- **Support Early Learning Hubs:** increase access to culturally responsive family education and support opportunities
- **Enhance Home Visiting Programs:** provide resources to literacy-focused home visiting programs Healthy Families Oregon, Relief Nurseries, and Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten

### Goal 3

- **Tribal Nations:** prioritize non-competitive funding for Tribal Nations to support early literacy and language revitalization

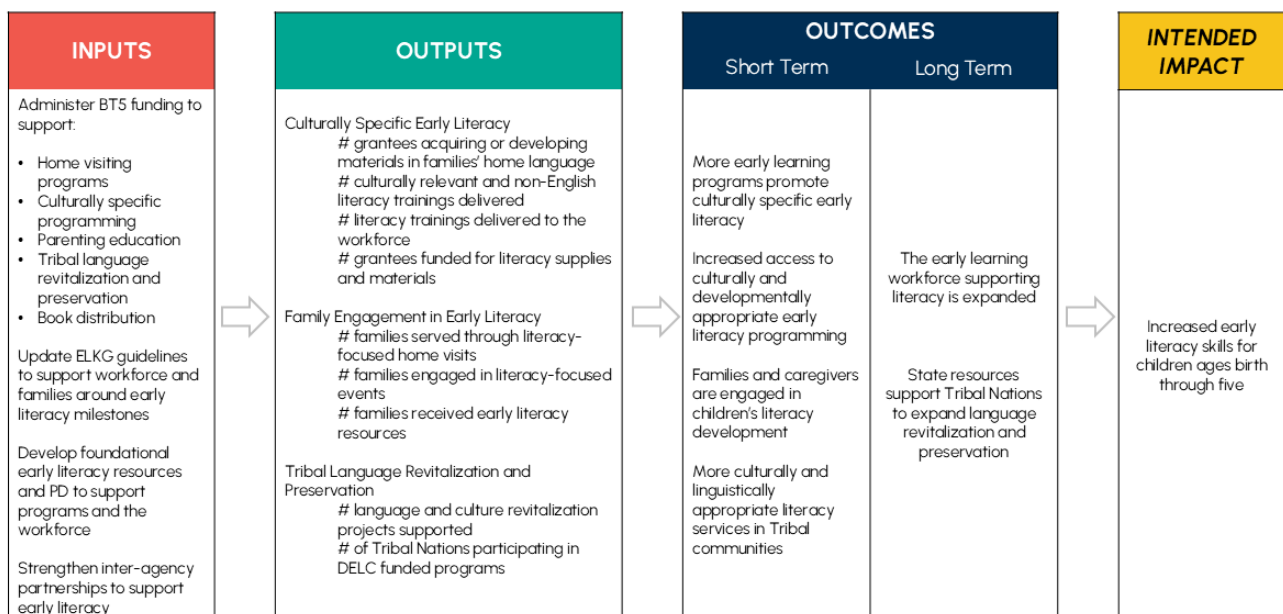
# 2025-27 Investments

DELDC's legislatively approved budget includes roughly \$10 million for the implementation of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan in the 2025-27 biennium. Funds have been allocated to the initiatives and strategies mentioned above. Amounts are illustrated in the graphic below.



## Birth Through Five Literacy Logic Model

DELDC has developed a logic model as a roadmap for implementation, clarifying how program inputs will lead to outcomes for families stated in the Birth Through Five Plan. .



## Milestones Reached - Goal 1

As highlighted in community feedback informing the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, early childhood providers emphasized the need for resources to better support early literacy, including professional development, culturally responsive classroom tools and curricula, and multilingual materials. They also requested age-appropriate literacy resources such as books, art supplies, learning games, and musical instruments, along with more flexible funding for literacy-related supplies. DELC's assessment also determined that educators working with children birth through age five require more support at the state policy level and is beginning work to revise Oregon's outdated Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines to better align with current literacy standards and include strategies for children from birth to age three.

### Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines Revision

The Department of Early Learning and Care and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) have entered into an Interagency Agreement to update and revise the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines. This collaboration ensures the guidelines reflect current research, promote equity and inclusion, and meet the needs of Oregon's diverse children, families, and communities.

This revision will align the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines with [Raise Up Oregon 2.0](#) and the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, ensuring coherence across Oregon's Early Literacy Framework, Kindergarten and English Language Arts Standards, the Transformative Social-Emotional Learning Framework, the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Educators. The revision will integrate Tribal history, language, and cultural perspectives; expand coverage to include children from birth through age three; and advance inclusion for children with disabilities. Additionally, the revision will develop equitable and accessible literacy resources and include content that promotes positive racial identity development while aligning with Oregon's Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Program, Every Child Belongs, to strengthen equitable and inclusive early learning practices.

DELC released a request for proposal on November 20, 2025 to hire a consultant who will lead the revision process. The consultant will work closely with both agencies, educators, families, Tribal partners, and other groups to ensure the updated guidelines are practical, culturally responsive, and aligned across the early learning and K–3 continuum. Opportunities for community input will be shared as the project progresses. This initiative demonstrates the state's commitment to providing high-quality early learning guidance that supports educators, families, and communities in fostering the success and development of all Oregon children.

### Enhancing the Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEP)

Informed by community engagement, DELC is working to strengthen and enhance culturally specific early literacy programming by awarding non-competitive funding to ECEP grantees. This funding will allow these culturally specific programs to develop and / or deliver culturally relevant early literacy resources, materials and activities to the families they are serving, and deliver culturally relevant early literacy professional development for their staff.

Grant agreements have been distributed to 20 culturally specific organizations across Oregon currently funded by ECEF. Programs will report to DELC on their progress quarterly, and data will be used to measure outcomes for families and staff.

25-27 Planned Activity	ECEF Grantees
Develop / deliver early literacy resources for families	16
Develop / deliver early literacy professional development for staff	15

Some examples of the projects planned by grantees for 2025-27 include:

- Purchasing culturally representative books and learning materials that affirm the experiences of Black children and families
- Conducting literacy workshops and small group “Family Read Circles” to strengthen parents’ confidence in fostering literacy at home
- Providing training and inspiration for Indigenous language leaders, teachers, and advocates on how to develop a successful fluency transfer system that can power successful Indigenous immersion programming and schooling
- Distributing transition backpacks filled with literacy and readiness materials to families of preschoolers
- Purchasing literacy materials—specifically Native books on cultural traditions—and using them in family and classroom literacy activities.

## Milestones Reached - Goal 2

DELC’s Birth Through Five Literacy Plan centers families as their children’s first teachers. Families play an integral role in early literacy development by talking with their children, sharing books, and creating supportive, language-rich interactions in everyday life. In order to support parents and families, DELC is working to:

- Support the State Library of Oregon in providing funds for early literacy programming.
- Strengthen book distribution by expanding the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program and Reach Out and Read’s work with pediatric clinicians.
- Build on the work Oregon’s Early Learning Hubs are doing to support and engage families in early literacy.
- Enhance DELC’s home visiting programs with more resources for early literacy.

## Strengthen Connections with the Library System

The State Library of Oregon works to improve library service for all Oregonians, including through their local public libraries. The State Library operates the Ready to Read grant program offering non-competitive grants to all established public libraries to address a meaningful early literacy community need. DELC will allocate funds to the State Library in the 2025-27 biennium to increase funding allocations annually to public libraries in Oregon using the Ready to Read program’s funding formula. Libraries will work towards outcomes focused on early literacy, including:

- Helping young children develop the six early literacy skills by the time they start kindergarten.
- Ensuring that adults can enjoy reading, singing, talking, writing, and playing with their young children regularly to help them develop early literacy skills.

This interagency agreement will strengthen the relationship between DELC and the State Library, bolstering early literacy efforts for families and communities.

## Strengthening Book Distribution

The Birth Through Five Literacy Plan centers families as children's first teachers. During DELC's community engagement that informed the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, both providers and family members reported needs for access to resources and culturally relevant materials to support home language and early literacy development. As a result, DELC is prioritizing strengthening book distribution through two community programs with track records of success in supporting families: the Dolly Parton Imagination Library and Reach Out and Read.

### Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL)

In May 2024, Governor Kotek announced a statewide expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Oregon (DPIL). The launch was made possible by Senate Bill 5506, which allocated \$1.7 million in 2023 to help administer and expand the program. In April 2025, DPIL celebrated statewide coverage with enrollment available to every eligible child in all of Oregon's 36 counties. At the end of the 2023–2025 biennium, DPIL had enrolled 30% percent of eligible children in Oregon.

In 2025, DPIL built on its evidence base with a new study conducted by the University of Denver. Findings of this study showed that participation in DPIL of Colorado increased kindergarteners' scores by 0.13 standard deviations on a standardized measure of literacy skills, the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) assessment. DPIL participation also decreased the likelihood that a child would score "well below benchmark" on the DIBELS, an indicator of a potential significant reading deficiency, by between 16% and 24%. Both outcomes were statistically significant.<sup>1</sup>

Also in 2025, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library in Oregon added the option for families to receive a fully bilingual, English/Spanish collection of books. The new bilingual collection enables DPIL to connect with more children across the state in a culturally responsive way, expanding the program's impact for young Oregonians by helping more children build personal libraries than ever before.

Identified as a key strategy under DELC's Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, funding for DPIL has increased to 3.7 million for the 25–27 biennium to support the program in reaching their goal of 65% of eligible Oregon children enrolled.

### Reach Out and Read

Reach Out and Read is a national non-profit that partners with pediatric clinicians to foster early literacy and healthy parent-child relationships through shared reading. During well-child checkups for children ages birth through five, Reach Out and Read-trained clinicians give children new books to keep. How each child and family interact with the books and each other helps the clinician assess child development in real-time. Clinicians share how daily reading, singing, talking and playing together promotes brain development and strengthens family bonding. Clinicians coach families on what to expect for the next developmental stage,

<sup>1</sup> Wegner, A. K., Klopfenstein, K., & Pendergast, P. Imagination Library of Colorado: Effects on Kindergarten Readiness and Skills.

and model age-appropriate book engagement. Over 20 independent, peer-reviewed studies support Reach Out and Read's impact with families to:

- Increase shared reading by up to 2.5 more times
- Accelerate child language development by three to six months
- Improve receptive and expressive language ability
- Help build safe, stable, and nurturing relationships
- Facilitate positive interaction and attention from caring adults
- Address social drivers of health and support health equity
- Improve healthcare quality and relationships between medical providers and families

Reach Out and Read Northwest, an Affiliate of Reach Out and Read National, directly supports quality implementation for 1,300 doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants in 160 clinics across 29 Oregon counties. In the past fiscal year, 85,000 children received over 176,000 well-child visits integrating the Reach Out and Read model. Twenty percent of these families have a home language other than English. Reach Out and Read has also recently curated a book collection embracing inclusive stories about families, cultures and communities.

These funds helped support the costs of providing technical assistance and quality monitoring to participating clinics, including clinician and staff model training, book selection and ordering processes, and data reporting. To align with the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan implementation and goals, DELC is working with ODE in the administration of the program and increased the investment to \$100,000 for the 2025-27 biennium.

## **Increase Access to Family Education**

In order to increase access to culturally responsive family education and support opportunities that support early literacy, DELC is administering funds to Oregon's 16 Early Learning Hubs for the 2025-27 biennium. The funds can be used by Hubs to expand early literacy professional development focused on early literacy for partners and educators, offering family engagement activities, distributing books and other literacy materials, and establishing partnerships to increase literacy access. As conveners, connectors and capacity builders, Hubs have the ability to respond to community needs and develop and enhance innovative strategies to fill gaps in early literacy supports locally.

## **Enhance Home Visiting**

Home visiting programs play an important role in helping parents learn about child development and promote nurturing, responsive parenting behaviors, including reading to children. Research has shown that home visiting programs can increase children's school readiness as well as parents' abilities to support their child's development.<sup>2</sup> DELC administers several grant programs with home visiting components: Healthy Families Oregon (HFO), Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK) and the Relief Nursery (RN) Program. In order to enhance and expand these critical programs in support of the work they already do for families, DELC distributed Birth Through Five grant agreements for the 2025-27 biennium to these programs to

---

2 Gombay, D. S. (2005). Home visitation in 2005: Outcomes for children and parents (Vol. 7). Invest in kids working paper.

strengthen the early literacy support they provide. The allowable activities for this funding, as well as the number of grantees planning to conduct those activities in 2025–27 is detailed in the table below.

Programs will report to DELC on their progress quarterly, and data will be used to measure outcomes for families and staff.

2025-27 Planned Activity	HFO Grantees	OPK Grantees	RN Grantees
Acquire culturally relevant literacy screening tools and training	5	9	5
Distribute books and literacy materials, promote early literacy activities	15	25	14
Develop or expand home visiting literacy curriculum and related training	11	13	9
Host family events focused on early literacy	14	23	14
Train home visitors on early literacy and caregiver engagement	15	17	11
Share materials on literacy milestones, daily routines and culturally relevant literacy	15	24	12
Provide referrals for additional early literacy resources and support	9	12	6
Support parent advisory groups focused on early literacy	1	9	3

### Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten

Grant agreements have been distributed to 29 home visiting programs across Oregon currently funded by DELC’s OPK program. Some examples of projects planned for 2025–27 include:

- Purchase and train home visitors in the use of the LENA (Language Environment Analysis) system, supporting early language development by capturing and analyzing the language environment of young children
- Purchase the STAR Assessment Tool to gather meaningful literacy data that will inform curriculum planning, home visiting, staff training, and overall program development.
- Offer in-home, individualized cooking experiences with families. Children’s books, finger plays, songs, child-appropriate recipe cards, vocabulary development, and/ or other age-appropriate literacy activities for the families’ children will be shared during the visit

### Relief Nurseries

Grant agreements have been distributed to 15 home visiting programs across Oregon currently funded by DELC’s Relief Nursery program. Some examples of projects planned for 25–27 include:

- Create and distribute age/stage-based literacy handouts to help families learn simple ways to encourage early literacy development with their children, understand milestones in literacy development, and know about other local resources that support literacy.

- Involve families in on site early literacy activities such as play groups, incorporating books, songs, fingerplay or storytelling, offered in both English and in Spanish.

## Healthy Families Oregon

Grant agreements have been distributed to 15 home visiting programs across Oregon currently funded by DELC's HFO program. Some examples of projects planned for 2025-27 include:

- Distribute early literacy toys to support families in fostering literacy-rich home environments by assessing current toy inventory and identifying age-appropriate literacy materials such as interactive books, letter and word recognition games, storytelling puppets, and activity sets.
- Incorporate culturally responsive early literacy materials including multilingual books that reflect the diverse cultures and traditions of the families served, wordless books that encourage the use of Indigenous languages and strengthen parents' confidence in literacy, and bilingual books that promote cross-cultural and language learning into home visits with families.

## Milestones Reached – Goal 3

### Fund and Consult with Tribal Nations

Tribal language programs are a testament to the strength of the culture and spirit of Native people. Decades of harmful colonial state and federal policies decimated traditional languages, to the point that for some Native languages, few speakers, if any, remain today. However, American Indian and Alaska Native communities are actively dismantling historical barriers by infusing culture and Tribal language into education. All nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon are actively leading efforts to restore, preserve, revitalize, and document their languages—ensuring the protection of their cultural and linguistic heritage, and strengthening Tribal sovereignty for generations to come.

In Native American and Alaska Native communities, Tribal language programs are changing lives. Native language revitalization and preservation programs promote indigenous survivance, fosters community connection, and build positive identity, which supports health, wellbeing, and increased academic competencies.<sup>3</sup> Evidence shows positive outcomes associated with learning one's heritage language, including improved self-esteem and higher educational attainment.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, research demonstrates that early childhood language acquisition is directly correlated to cultural identity formation and positive cognitive development particularly for Tribal communities.<sup>5</sup> The benefits of Tribal language revitalization are multifaceted: as a reversal from harmful past policies, Natives communities may find healing from historical and intergenerational trauma, while early childhood language learning promotes literacy skills, language development, and most significantly, positive self-identity which sets an upward trajectory for life.

For the 2025-27 biennium, DELC's Office of Tribal Affairs, Grants Management Office, and Birth Through Five Team worked with the DELC Procurement Office to release the Tribal Birth Through Five Literacy

3 Whitbeck, L. B., Hoyt, D. R., Stubben, J. D., & LaFromboise, T. (2001). Traditional culture and academic success among American Indian children in the upper Midwest. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 40(2), 48-60

4 Jones, B. & Sandoval, N. 2022, Aug. 23. On the Importance of Indigenous Language Education: Reflecting on Past and Current U.S. Policy. Center for Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

5 Grunewald, R. 2016, Aug. 19. Early childhood Native language immersion develops minds, revitalizes culture. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis

grants. As part of the implementation of the 2025-27 Birth Through Five Literacy funding, DELC engaged in consultation with the nine federally recognized Tribes within Oregon's borders. To allocate funding in a way that respects the sovereignty of Tribal Nations and honors the government-to government relationship between state agencies and Tribal Nations through formal tribal consultation, Tribes were offered non-competitive, direct funding during the 2024-25 grant period. This methodology continued successfully for the 2025-27 biennium, with participation in Birth Through Five Literacy increasing from eight Tribes to all nine Tribes.

Birth Through Five funds will support the development and expansion of language revitalization and preservation efforts by federally recognized Tribes in Oregon in addition to supporting early literacy goals in Tribal communities. Intergovernmental grant agreements have been distributed to all nine of the federally recognized Tribes in Oregon borders. Some examples of projects planned by Tribes for 2025-27 include Tribal language revitalization and preservation efforts such as Tribal language immersion programming, professional development, and curriculum development. Tribes will report to DELC on their progress annually.

Every Tribal Nation in Oregon experienced language loss at the hands of harmful state and federal government policies, including forced removal, the Indian Boarding School system, termination, and relocation, among others. Language revitalization and preservation work happens in various ways as each Tribe is at a different place in their journey to reclaim and reinvigorate their languages in their communities. Some are developing board books, flashcards, and other materials for home or classroom use, while others are holding language classes with parents and children, both in person as well as virtually. There are several Tribes that are developing or refining Tribal language curricula for young learners. Many of these efforts converge with investments in staff and professional development.

Multiple Tribes have hired language and/or literacy specialists who will support the birth through five age range. Tribes operating immersion preschools plan to utilize a portion of the Birth Through Five funds to cover language teacher staffing. Additionally, one Tribe hired a literacy specialist whose work has already had a profound impact. The specialist identified that during literacy testing, bilingual Tribal language-English preschoolers were code switching, resulting in lower test scores. Due to the literacy specialist's familiarity with the Tribal language, they were able to work with children during the testing to ensure they were answering in the correct language, and test scores increased.

Although there are nine federally recognized Tribes within Oregon's borders, members of the Tribes live across the country and throughout the world. Expanding language revitalization efforts to include Tribal membership that do not live within the boundaries of the Tribes' services areas is also a focus. Tribal culture and language kits including cultural materials along with books and even audio recordings in the Native languages are a way to connect Tribal members with their heritage and strengthen the next generation of Tribal language speakers, regardless of geographical barriers.

## **ODE Collaboration with Tribal Affairs**

DELC, through its Office of Tribal Affairs, continues to collaborate closely with ODE's Office of Indian Education (ODE-OIE) to strengthen Tribal early literacy initiatives. This partnership centers on aligning state-level support with Tribal-led approaches that are culturally grounded and community-defined. With both agencies granting early literacy funds to the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, the opportunity to provide clarity around each agency's grant administration became an apparent need. To better

support the Tribes, the agencies are developing a document that outlines both fiscal and programmatic differences between DELC and ODE Tribal early literacy grants, providing clear guidance for Tribes and promoting alignment in grant implementation and collaboration.

In addition, DELC is collecting data on Tribal early learning curricula and assessments to support both agencies in understanding program impacts, refining reporting structures, and ensuring culturally responsive early literacy strategies. These efforts contribute to the broader Early Literacy Initiative by integrating Tribal-led practices into statewide early literacy planning, strengthening interagency coordination, and ensuring that culturally grounded approaches inform policy, professional learning, and resource allocation across Oregon.

## Structures and Partnerships

### ODE Collaboration

DELC has continued to work closely with ODE during the development and implementation of the Early Literacy Success Initiative to support alignment in the following ways:

- DELC staff provided guidance in the selection of high-quality preschool curriculum and coaching qualifications specifically for early learning educators for the Early Literacy Success School District grants.
- In partnership, DELC and ODE selected an oral language development assessment tool for four-year-olds, as required by the Comprehensive Literacy State Development Grant. They also provided direction on identifying eligible early learning partners to meet the 16 percent funding requirement for children ages birth through five.
- DELC and ODE are jointly developing the Early Learning Transition Check-in, the redesign of the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment, which will provide information that is vital to those in local, regional, and state systems who need to evaluate program successes as well as identify opportunities for investments in programs and services that support young children.
- The two agencies are also collaborating to update the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines, leveraging the expertise of professionals from both organizations to ensure alignment and promote best practices for young children.
- The DELC Tribal Affairs and ODE Office of Indian Education meet regularly to develop resources, guidance, and tools for Tribal partners to support implementation of the Early Literacy Success Tribal Grants and Literacy funds through the DELC Tribal Early Learning Fund.
- DELC and ODE literacy teams maintain ongoing coordination to support alignment, collaboration, and development of resources for the implementation of the Early Literacy Success Initiative across both agencies.

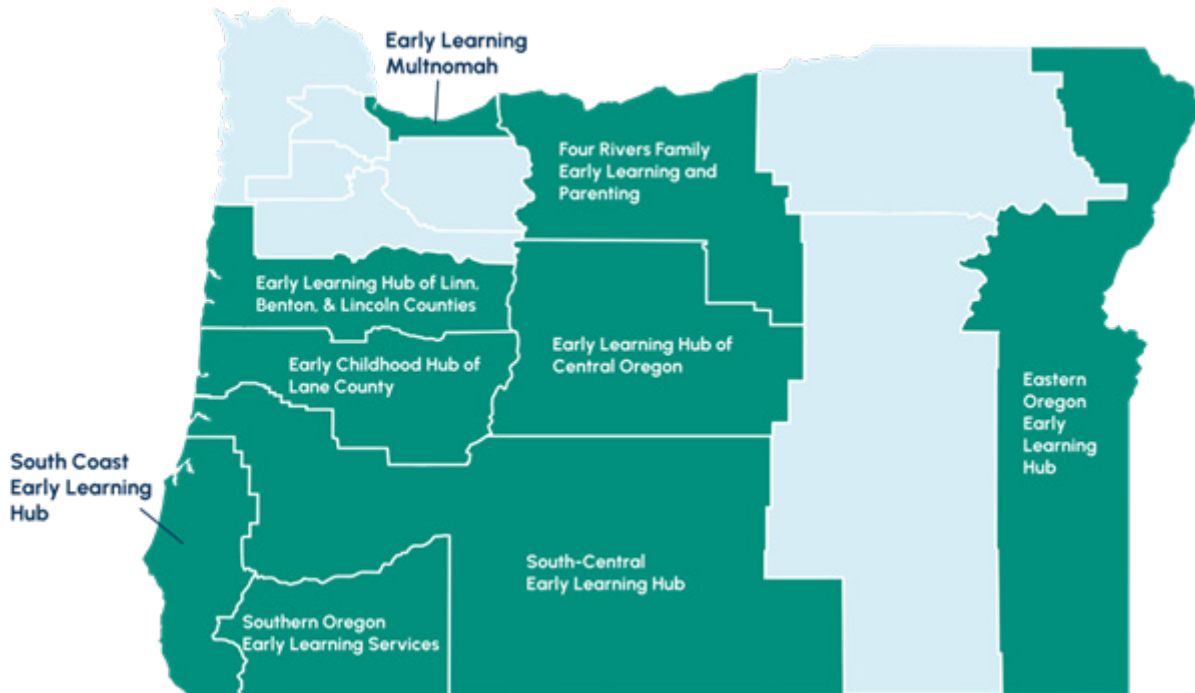
### Rulemaking

House Bill 3198 included specific language requiring the Early Learning Council to adopt necessary rules for the distribution of money. In order to meet this requirement, as well as to establish a single, comprehensive ruleset to clarify the purpose of the literacy plan and outline how funding will be administered across grants, DELC engaged in a rulemaking process for Birth Through Five Literacy. Effective January 1, 2026, these rules will streamline guidance across programs. The ruleset includes the following sections:

- **Purpose:** establishes a process for administering grant funds from the Birth Through Five Literacy Fund
- **Definitions:** defines terms of the purposes of program implementation
- **Eligibility Criteria:** lists the organizational criteria to be considered for funding
- **Evaluation:** provides an update to the Legislature as directed by statute

DELC began the rulemaking process in June of 2025 and engaged internal teams, the Department of Justice, and the Early Learning Council in the development of the rules.

### Rule Advisory Committee (RAC)



In order to engage members of the public to provide input and advice to the agency on the proposed rules, DELC put out a request for applications for a Rules Advisory Committee. There was strong response, and 15 members were selected representing parents of young children, DELC funded programs focused on early literacy, community organizations, and Tribal Nations.

The RAC provided input and feedback on the proposed rules, including a need to clarify definitions and eligibility criteria. DELC’s Program and Policy teams worked together to respond to this feedback, resulting in a distilled, clarified draft as well as new insights into how grant contracts and program guidance can be improved.

### Tribal Consultation

In an ongoing commitment to meaningful government-to-government consultation with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes within Oregon’s borders per ORS 182.162-.168, DELC sought the input of Tribal Nations on the proposed Birth to Five Literacy Ruleset. The proposed ruleset was identified as a significant agency action that could impact Tribes and their members. Tribes were invited to engage in formal consultation with the Agency under a new policy and process established by DELC’s Office of Tribal Affairs. As a result,

DELC received consultation from two Tribal Nations, resulting in valuable input and collaboration.

Key takeaways from these consultation sessions were the importance of codifying in the ruleset that Tribal Members residing out of state can be served through Birth Through Five funds, as well as an identified need for resources and support in developing funding plans, such ideas for culturally relevant curriculum, training, and early literacy family engagement activities.

### **Public Engagement**

DELC also facilitated a public comment period and held a public hearing to solicit feedback on the proposed ruleset. One written comment and one testimony were received, both of which highlighted the importance of clarifying the eligibility section of the ruleset to ensure it is not limiting to programs and the development of well-coordinated early literacy system.



# **Section 2**

## **Outputs and Reach**

## One-Time Funds

In 2023, the legislature approved a \$9.4 million limitation increase for Birth Through Five Literacy, of which DELC distributed \$4.7 million to the 16 regional Early Learning Hubs to enhance or expand their Kindergarten Readiness Partnership and Innovation program early literacy activities.

The agency also released a simplified Request for Applications for existing Early Childhood Equity Fund grantees, as well as prospective applicants that met ECEF criteria, for the remaining \$4.7 million. Forty-one organizations applied, and 27 were awarded funding. As a part of this funding distribution, DELC implemented Tribal consultation via a "Dear Tribal Leader Letter" process with Tribes to access funding through a non-competitive method.

The work these grantees conducted during the 24-25 program year using Birth Through Five funds was foundational to the broader implementation of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, published at the end of 2024. The insights and data gathered from grantees as they developed new strategies and carried out activities are invaluable to the ongoing success of the initiative as a whole. High-level outputs from program year 2024-25 are shown in the charts below:

Grantee Type	Number of early literacy resources distributed	Reporting Time Period
ECEF BT5	9,451	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025
Hubs BT5	234,272	Jul 2024 – Jun 2025

Grantee Type	Number of early literacy trainings offered	Reporting Time Period
ECEF BT5	197	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025
Hubs BT5	189	Jul 2024 – June 2025

Grantee Type	Number of staff who received early literacy training	Reporting Time Period
ECEF BT5	1,528	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025
Hubs BT5	2,629	Jul 2024 – Jun 2025

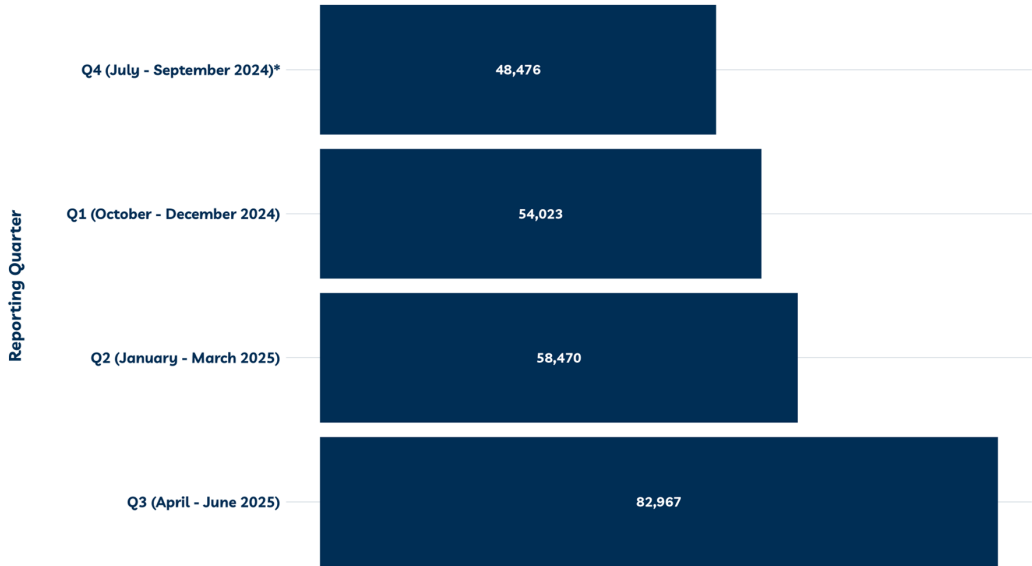
When considering data from Tribes related to Birth Through Five activities, delays in grant execution may have shortened the timeframe for spending funds, which can affect quarterly reporting. Tribes continue to advocate for the need for Tribal-specific templates which reflect the language each sovereign prefers as well as longer term agreements which would allow Tribes to more intentionally and purposefully spend grant funds. In 2024-25, eight of nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon accepted Birth Through Five funds and six Tribes participated in quarterly reporting. The total resources distributed, trainings offered, and staff trained are therefore likely underestimated.

Grantee Type	Number of early literacy resources distributed	Reporting Time Period
Tribes BT5	213	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025

Grantee Type	Number of early literacy trainings offered	Reporting Time Period
Tribes BT5	22	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025

Grantee Type	Number of staff who received early literacy training	Reporting Time Period
Tribes BT5	72	Oct 2024 – Jun 2025

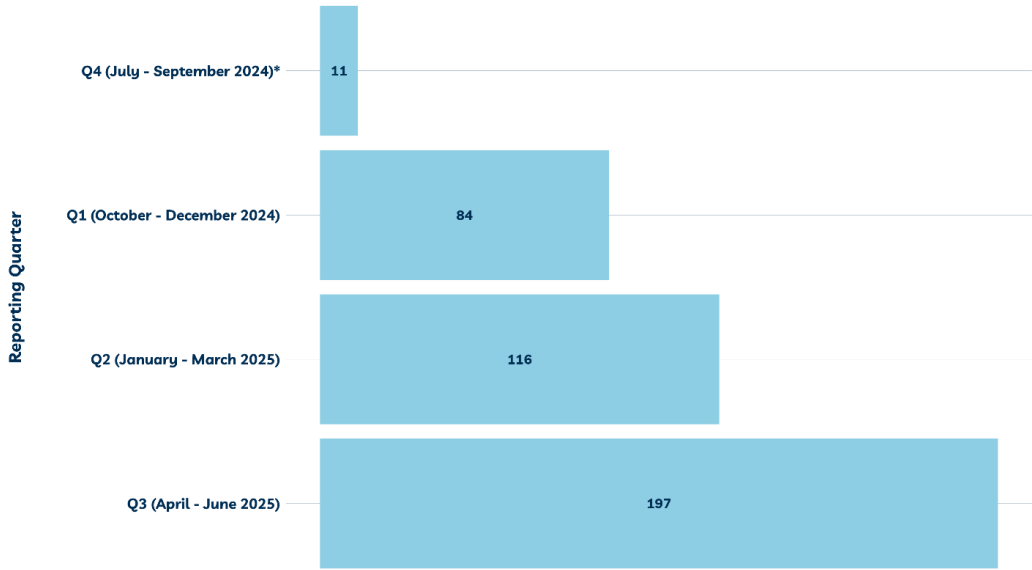
Number of Early Literacy Resources Distributed (July 2024 - June 2025)



\*Q4 only includes Hub data

Number of Resources

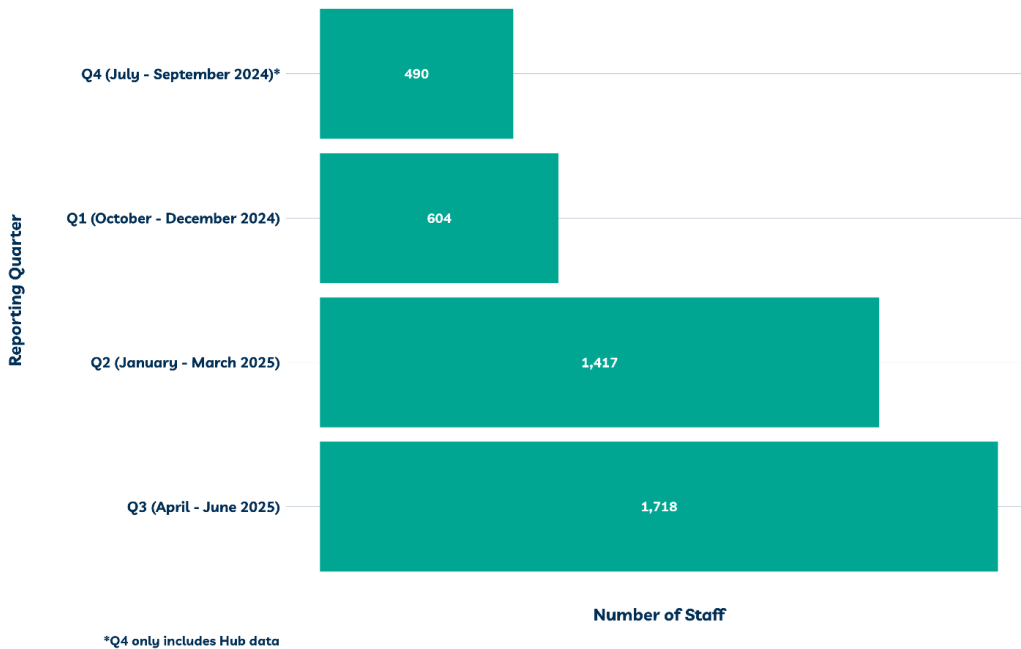
Number of Early Literacy Trainings Offered (July 2024 - June 2025)



\*Q4 only includes Hub data

Number of Trainings

**Number of Staff Who Received Early Literacy Training (July 2024 - June 2025)**



## Early Childhood Equity Fund

In the 2024-25 program year, ECEF grantees engaged up to 8,571 families through early literacy resources and activities. ECEF grantees distributed 9,451 total early literacy resources, including culturally relevant books in multiple languages, caregiver support guides, and literacy activity kits. Through the work of these grantees, 197 early literacy trainings were offered and up to 1,528 staff participated. Training topics included family engagement, play based literacy learning, literacy development in special populations and the Science of Reading.

## Regional Early Learning Hubs

Through the early literacy work conducted by Early Learning Hubs in the 2024-25 program year, up to 97,152 families received early literacy resources and materials such as books, literacy games, storytelling boards or music materials. One strategy Hubs utilized was to extend the reach of book distribution by installing Little Libraries in strategic locations like city parks and Oregon Department of Human Services offices. Overall, 234,272 early literacy resources were distributed. Up to 27,223 families participated in early literacy events or activities. Some examples included: kindergarten readiness events, family literacy nights and bilingual story time events. 189 early literacy trainings were offered by Hubs, and 2,629 early childhood educators participated in early literacy trainings.

## Early Learning Hub Stories from the Field

### Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub: Using Birth Through Five funds to partner with home visitors and families



*Through home visiting network meetings in each of our 3 counties (Baker, Malheur and Wallowa), home visitors identified the need for books in the homes that they were serving. So when the Birth Through Five funds were released to the hubs, our governance council approved spending some of those funds to purchase books for home visiting programs.*

*With the \$10,000 allotment approved by our governance council, we were able to purchase 2800 children's books (100 of 28 different titles). These books ranged from touch and feel books for infants, board books for toddlers and hard back developmentally appropriate books for preschool age children (12 of the titles were bilingual English/Spanish). Through home visiting network meetings, all agencies agreed that these books would only be given out after sitting with the child and parent, then modeling reading to the child. These books came in bulk. Our Home Visiting Systems Coordinator and the Hub Director unboxed and reboxed all of these books to 13 different Home Visiting programs. They were distributed based on caseloads of the agencies. The project went over great and we received nothing but positive feedback from agencies and families.*

- Rod Belknap, Director of the Eastern Oregon Early Learning Hub



## Washington County Early Learning Hub: Ukrainian bilingual collections of children's books for community partners!



*Integration and innovation is a big part of the work that Early Learning Washington County hub (ELWC) does! With the significant influx of Ukrainian families moving to Washington County, the need to support early literacy and language development and a connection to their cultural heritage as well as a sense of belonging in their new environment is a key to success. The collaboration with various community partners like ODHS, Tigard-Tualatin School District, and Community Pulse shows how essential it is to align resources and services for greater impact.*

*With Community Pulse, combining early literacy materials with evidenced based parenting series, in a partnership with Parenting Together Washington County hub, to align programming as well as funding resources is a no brainer, and it is helping the organization to expand its capacity and reach with families.*

*It's heartwarming to see the positive feedback from... a Community Pulse leader, and how well-received the books are within the community. "I would also like to take a moment to express our gratitude for the Ukrainian books you provided. Our facilitator... has been distributing them to children from Ukrainian-speaking families, and they have been well received."*

*The fact that these books are also being integrated into early childhood programs like Preschool Promise and offered in locations like the ODHS branches is a fantastic approach to fostering both educational growth and a sense of belonging.*

*With ODHS, the bilingual Ukrainian books will be displayed in the lobby of the 3 branches in Washington County, together with additional 1,000 multilingual books that were also purchased recently to provide resources to children and families when they visit the self-sufficiency and child welfare offices. Tigard-Tualatin School district has also enrolled a significant number of children in the district and also in Preschool Promise. to support their efforts, the bilingual books have been curated for the Kalapuya Early Learning Center.*

- Begoña Rodriguez Liern, Former Co-Director Early Learning Washington County



## Tribal Language Revitalization

During the 2024-25 program year, Tribal Nations in Oregon conducted activities focused on early literacy as well as language revitalization and preservation using Birth Through Five funds. Through this work, at least 246 families participated in language revitalization and preservation efforts and more than 324 families received culturally relevant literacy materials. Some of these projects included monthly community gatherings, enhancing childcare centers with translation labels and sheets, and distributing audio books and board books in Native Languages to families.

Tribes who received Birth Through Five funds in 2024-25 also developed and delivered more than 22 trainings and at least 72 educators and staff participated. These offerings included mentorship programs and early literacy trainings. One Tribal Nation emphasized the impact that their literacy specialist had on integrating direct instruction approaches with Indigenous education practices to support culturally responsive and effective literacy instruction across early learning environments.



# **Section 3**

## **Progress Toward Outcomes**

## Impact of One-Time Funds

### Accessible Early Literacy Professional Development

A stated outcome in the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan is that multiple accessible pathways exist to grow the full diversity of the early learning and care workforce supporting early literacy development. Although the one-time funding opportunity pre-dates the Birth Through Five Plan, programs receiving those one-time funds have made progress towards this outcome as detailed in their reporting.

### ECEF End-of-Year Report on Training

Of DELC's ECEF grantees who received Birth Through Five Literacy funds in the 2024-25 program year to provide culturally responsive, early literacy focused professional development, all of those who responded during the end of year report process reported that their staff had gained new skills as a result. Trainings developed and / or delivered focused on multiple aspects of early literacy, including supporting dual language learners, family engagement, dyslexia and reading challenges, representation and storytelling, the science of reading, and play-based teaching methods.

As mentioned above, Early Learning Hubs also focused on training and professional development during the 2024-25 program year. Some of their efforts included the Science of Reading trainings for providers, Early Childhood STEM Camp, PreK Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) trainings, Teaching Through Music, and story time facilitation trainings.

### Training Impact Stories

During the end of year reporting process, one program wrote about their staff gaining new skills in supporting children with reading challenges, saying:

"Our staff gained valuable new skills as a result of the culturally relevant, literacy-focused professional development supported by BTF funds. Much of this training was provided through Decoding Dyslexia Oregon, which offers resources and advocacy centered on improving literacy outcomes for all students, especially those with dyslexia and other reading challenges. Staff participated in sessions that emphasized structured literacy approaches grounded in the science of reading, while also addressing how to apply these methods in culturally responsive ways."

Another program shared how staff gained confidence in supporting dual-language learners, as a result of professional development:

"Educators became more confident in selecting books that reflect the lived experiences of the children and families we serve and developed new strategies for engaging families in literacy activities at home. Staff also learned how to create language-rich environments that support dual language learners and promote early vocabulary and comprehension. This professional development not only enhanced their instructional practices but also strengthened their cultural awareness and ability to build meaningful, affirming relationships with children and families from all backgrounds."

### Increased Promotion of Culturally Specific Literacy

The Birth Through Five Literacy Plan proposed two outcomes focused on culturally specific literacy: (1) more early learning programs promote culturally specific literacy with the children and families they serve; and (2) access to culturally specific, developmentally appropriate early literacy programming will increase for children and families.

## **ECEF End-of-Year Report on New Strategies**

ECEF grantees from the 2024-25 program year reported promoting early literacy in new ways as a result of Birth Through Five Literacy funds. These included distributing bilingual books and materials, hosting new family story time events, offering interactive literacy workshops, forming staff early literacy cohorts, and growing partnerships with local libraries.

### **Culturally Specific Impact Stories**

One grantee shared about a new story time offering:

"Thanks to the Birth Through Five Literacy Grant, we are proud to launch a monthly, culturally specific story time and active play experience for families at our new community hub... each session is designed to deepen parents' understanding of early childhood development and equip them with practical tools to nurture strong, confident early readers. Alongside literacy-focused tips and trainings, we offer light snacks, a welcoming space, and meaningful support for young Black parents as they build strong foundations for their children's futures."

Another grantee shared about educational family events:

"The BTF literacy funds definitely helped us promote culturally specific literacy in new ways this year. With the support, we were able to do things we haven't done in years, like taking families on fun, educational field trips. One of the highlights was a visit to... a bilingual library. For many of our families, it was their first time in a space where they could find their favorite children's books in their home language. It was a meaningful and exciting experience for both the kids and adults, especially since they got to pick out their own books."

## **Increased Access to Culturally Specific, Developmentally Appropriate Programming**

### **ECEF End-of-Year Report on New Families Reached**

Most of DELC's ECEF grantees who participated in the end of year report said that they were able to reach new children or families as a result of Birth Through Five funds. Programs reported reaching migrant families through resource fairs, disseminating culturally specific early literacy resources through community spaces, attracting new families to literacy events, connecting new families to bilingual programming, and developing new community partnerships.

Early Learning Hubs also explored new family engagement strategies using Birth Through Five Literacy funds in the 2024-25 program year. Family engagement activities included Play and Learn groups, Kindergarten Readiness workshops, literacy nights, and educational family field trips.

### **Impact Stories on New Partnerships / Programs**

One grantee shared:

"Thanks to BTF funding, we are able to print and disseminate [parenting] guides throughout community spaces, early learning centers, health clinics, and at family-centered events. Because of this we are able to reach hundreds of new families this year, many of whom may not have participated in formal programming but are now accessing high-quality early literacy resources in a format that speaks directly to their lived experience. This has not only broadened our reach but deepened trust and connection within the community."

Another grantee wrote:

"We added new programs with these funds, including four new playgroups... serving 40 new families, a new sensory play group..., and mid-year expansion of Brain Box Club to serve more children and parents. We also partnered with the... Library to host a Family STEM Literacy Night, where we distributed Making and Tinkering kits with books—promoting literacy, positive parent-child interactions, and critical thinking skills."

## Family Engagement in Early Literacy

### ECEF End-of-Year Report on Family Impact

ECEF grantees who participated in the end-of-year report and had used Birth Through Five funds to support family engagement said that the families they served gained new skills in early literacy promotion as a result of their efforts. Grantees shared that families gained new skills like shared reading strategies, posing open-ended questions, connecting literacy to daily routines, and a deeper understanding of child development.

### Impact Stories on Family Impacts

One grantee shared the impact that their literacy programming had on a parent. The parent wrote:

"These workshops were phenomenal, I have learned so much over the course of these weeks and have been able to apply it with my own child, reading to him daily and spending more time giving him the creative and attentive space he needs to grow from literacy... I didn't know how to read growing up myself and I struggled with it. So, to be able to pass this to my child... is amazing."

## Plans for Impact Evaluation

To track progress towards outcomes stated in the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan, DELC is developing an evaluation plan for the 2025-27 biennium. Based on the available budget, DELC plans to hire an external contractor to conduct surveys and interviews focused on family early literacy engagement and skill development. The evaluation will be guided by questions such as:

- What is the impact of Birth Through Five-funded programs on families' confidence and capacity to support their child's literacy development at home?
- How have families' literacy behaviors (e.g., reading, storytelling, singing) changed because of participation in Birth Through Five programs or activities?

An approximate timeline of evaluation activities could include:

**Late Fall 2026 / Winter 2027:** Define evaluation goals and key questions; issue request for proposal. Evaluate proposals and award contractor, onboard contractor.

**Spring 2027:** Develop and finalize survey and interview tools, conduct surveys and interviews; monitor participation and follow up.

**Summer 2027:** Analyze data and identify key findings. Draft evaluation report; share preliminary findings with interest holders.

**Fall 2027:** Finalize report; incorporate feedback; prepare visuals and summary materials. Submit and disseminate final evaluation report.

Findings from this evaluation project will be incorporated into DELC's Birth Through Five legislative report due December 31st, 2027.



# **Section 4**

## **Strengths and Challenges**

## Strengths

Implementation of Oregon's Birth Through Five Literacy Plan reflects strong momentum, clear alignment across state systems, and a deep commitment to equity and family-centered outcomes. DELC made great progress towards the plan goals in 2025, and some key strengths are detailed below.

### Equity-Driven and Culturally Specific Investments

Through ECEF and direct Tribal partnerships, DELC has prioritized funding for organizations best positioned to deliver linguistically and culturally responsive literacy supports. Tribal Nations are leading innovative language revitalization and early literacy projects, strengthening connections to culture and community across Oregon.

### Informative Tribal Consultation

Formal consultation with federally recognized Tribes in Oregon supported consistency, transparency, and respect for Tribal sovereignty. DELC engaged Tribes early and throughout program design, and implementation to ensure that early literacy strategies reflect Tribal priorities, languages, and cultural knowledge. This ongoing, government-to-government partnership supports culturally grounded approaches, and advances equitable outcomes for Tribal children and families.

### New and Developing Partnerships

The Birth Through Five Literacy funds allowed DELC to connect more strongly with the State Library of Oregon. Through planning efforts collaboration has occurred to learn more about connecting early learning partners with their local libraries as well as the opportunity to support the Ready to Read program. During community engagement connection to libraries was consistently noted as a resource for families furthest from opportunity and as an initial resource for many who are not yet connected to other state programs.

### Improved Coordination to Support Grantees

Implementation work over the past year has centered on a core value of reducing burden on grantees through non-competitive and streamlined processes for accessing early literacy funds. Internal teams at DELC have worked closely to align the goals and requirements of Birth Through Five grants with existing DELC programs. Communication has been coordinated through both new and established channels, resulting in a strong response to funding offers and requests for feedback and information.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Despite strong progress, several barriers influence the scale, equity, and sustainability of implementation. DELC has documented lessons learned and is considering strategies to mitigate these barriers going forward.

### Funding Limitations

Due to funding limitations, DELC was unable to allocate funds to workforce support strategies in the 2025-27 biennium, such as developing new early literacy training or expanding access to professional development, despite this being a need identified through the community engagement process. While DELC could not fund development of specific trainings, peer learning opportunities for grantees to connect, share strategies and explore training opportunities will be offered.

## Data and Evaluation Complexity

Managing multiple grants and diverse program models creates complexity in data collection, evaluation, and reporting. Developing shared metrics that respect cultural definitions of successes, especially for Tribal and culturally specific partners, remains an area for growth. DELC's program and data teams are coordinating now to align reporting processes, ensure purposeful metrics and facilitate accurate monitoring of program deliverables and outcomes.

## Tribal Funding Gaps

For supplementary funding like Birth Through Five to have the greatest positive impact, foundations must first be established. However, Tribes have historically faced systemic barriers in accessing state funding due to the misalignment between public funding structures and sovereign governance, which have contributed to the inequitable early childhood landscape Tribal communities experience today. Tribes continue to face infrastructure and facility constraints, access and affordability gaps, and serious challenges to workforce development. [Tribal Needs Assessment conducted by Northwest Native Chamber](#) is a valuable resource to learn about Tribal these challenges. Until recently, the state has done little to course correct.

As a program enhancement, the Birth Through Five literacy funds require that the programs themselves are fully funded. Yet, in 2025 the Oregon Legislature was unable to approve the Governor's request for approximately \$5 million in Tribal early learning and child care funding for the 2025-2027 biennium. The Tribes reported early childhood non-capital financial needs of about \$5.4 million in the Spring of 2025. Although the new Tribal Early Learning Plan established by House Bill 2815 (2025) created a dedicated Tribal Early Learning Fund, only a continuing service level of \$0.7M was deposited into the Fund for 2025-2027. Of the over \$5 million in reported Tribal operational funding needs, the largest area of need was salaries. Other areas include classroom supplies and professional development.

While results discussed in the previous sections are encouraging, the impact of early literacy funding only extends as far as the stability of the programs they support. For Tribes to truly advance their priorities, additional flexible early childhood funding is required to support Tribal language revitalization and other early literacy efforts.

## Conclusion

In 2025, the implementation of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan showed significant progress towards building a foundation that ensures every Oregon child has access to consistent, culturally responsive, and research-aligned literacy supports, beginning at birth. Through collaborative partnerships, developing foundational resources and processes, and intentional alignment with community needs, DELC achieved key milestones for each of the three goals stated in the plan. While challenges remain, the ground gained this year reflect a shared commitment to improving early literacy outcomes for Oregon's youngest child