

Summary of Previous Research



A Research and Policy Agenda Companion Document

The 2025-2029 Research and Policy Agenda exists to set a vision for the research and policy priorities we know matter deeply in early childhood, but it didn't emerge out of nowhere. The Research and Policy Agenda builds off decades of previous research and evaluation on the early learning and care system. While it would be impossible to summarize decades of important research on early childhood education, best practices in early childhood policy, and evaluations of early learning and care programs, the authors of the Research and Policy Agenda have gathered prominent research and evaluation reports from the past 6 years that were funded by or supported by DELC.

Many of the reports listed below connect to multiple of the 5 core priorities listed in the agenda. However, the authors have chosen to summarize each report in the context of priority they are most connected to. Interconnected priorities only help us further move towards achieving our research and evaluation goals as an agency.

Please use this document to direct you towards previous research that exists and supports our research agenda. One doesn't need to be a formally trained researcher or data analyst to have a curious mind or have research be applicable to their work. We encourage you to peruse and explore this research with curiosity, hoping it will lead you to ask even more questions and consider creative alternatives to continuously improve our early learning and care system.

-The Research, Analysis, and Data Office, 2025

Priority 1 – Understanding and Improving How Oregon’s Early Learning and Care System Meets Family and Community Needs

Market Price and Supply Study (*recurring*) [Link to 2024 reports](#)

Since the 1990s, Oregon has conducted Market Price and Supply Studies (MPSS) to systematically assess the price and availability of child care for families in Oregon. The research questions and methods of the MPSS have evolved over the years to respond to state-level research and policy needs, like creating Oregon’s Child Care Deserts report which identifies areas of the state with inadequate supply of child care. Maintaining this body of work is critical for DELC’s continued understanding of the price and availability of child care and gaps that exist with affordability and supply and aligns with Priority 1.

DELC’s Market Price and Supply Study allows DELC to systematically assess the price of child care that families face when looking for child care and the availability of child care in Oregon. This study takes place every 2 years and requires a concerted partnership with regional Child Care Resource and Referrals and the Research Institute at Western Oregon University to collect current price and supply data from Oregon’s child care programs. The Oregon Child Care Research Partnership (OCCRP) at Oregon State University analyses the collected data to help DELC understand current prices and supply of child care as a state, across regions, by type of child care program, and over time. These analyses are published in multiple reports (including the Market Price Study Report, the Child Care Desert Report, and State and County Profiles) for multiple audiences (e.g., DELC, regional Hubs and CCR&Rs, the public). These reports help DELC understand the shifting landscape of child care in Oregon and inform DELC’s policy and program decisions (e.g., informs rate-setting for Employment Related Day Care).

Preschool Development Grant Strength and Needs Assessment (2019-2023) [Link to 2020 report](#)

From 2019-2023, DELC (and its predecessor, the Early Learning Division) conducted a comprehensive strength and needs assessment of Oregon’s Early learning and care system as part of its federally-funded Preschool Development Grant (PDG). This funding opportunity allowed DELC to create and implement foundational tools to understand the needs of families with young children and the early care and education workforce. These tools include the Statewide Household and Provider Surveys which track experiences with Oregon’s early learning and care system over time. Continuing the use of these tools is critical for DELC’s ongoing understanding of the experiences and needs

of families with young children and the early learning and care workforce. Furthermore, the continuation of the Statewide Household and Provider Surveys is explicitly included in DELC's strategic plan Growing Oregon Together (Activity 6.5.b). The PDG Research Partners included Portland State University and OSLC Developments, Inc., with support from AB Cultural Drivers, OCCRP, and many community and regional partners.

Statewide Household Survey (recurring) [Link to 2022 report](#)

The Statewide Household Survey was originally funded as part of the PDG work. The survey was first conducted in 2019 as part of DELC's PDG Strength and Needs Assessment to understand the experiences of families with young children in accessing early learning and care services. The Statewide Household Survey has been used to understand families' experiences over time, such as how early childhood education services and supports changed between 2019 – 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings from the Household Surveys allow DELC, policy makers, leaders, and early child care practitioners to understand the needs and experiences of families with young children. The surveys are conducted in partnership with OSLC Developments, Inc. and Portland State University.

Statewide Provider Survey (recurring) [Link to 2023 report](#)

Also originally funded through the PDG, the Provider Survey dives deep into the experiences of the early learning and care workforce relating to retention and recruitment, business operations, professional development, mentorship and training, and well-being. Findings from the Provider DELC, policy makers, leaders, and early child care practitioners to understand the needs and experiences of early learning and care professionals. A recent Provider Survey was conducted 2025, and reports will be available in early 2026. The surveys are conducted in partnership with OSLC Developments, Inc. and Portland State University.

Oregon Early Education State Profiles (recurring) [Link to 2024 report](#)

These state and county level profiles provide overview statistics and policy-relevant information related to Oregon's children and families and the early care and education system; summaries are offered at both state-wide and at the county level. They are authored by OCCRP.

[Early Learning Map of Oregon \(ELMO\) and Raise Up Oregon \(RUO\) Data Dashboard](#) (ongoing)

Established as part of the PDG research and evaluation work (2019-2023), these tools visualize data related to Oregon's early learning and care system and broader early

childhood system. ELMO explores geographic trends, while the RUO data dashboard explores state-level data over time.

Priority 2 – Evaluating Access, Implementation, and Effectiveness of DELC Programming

Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEF) Evaluation (*recurring*) [Link to 2025 report](#)

The ECEF evaluation is grounded in collaborative planning and design with grantees and centers the experiences of children families that are served by ECEF, specifically families from non-dominant cultural backgrounds. The evaluation builds capacity for grantees to participate in evaluation efforts, including data collection capacity building and was driven by an Evaluation Leadership Group, consisting of ECEF grantees, who lead evaluation efforts and co-interpret findings with research partners. The ECEF evaluation is an example of how DELC's evaluation efforts can be grounded in the principles of equitable research and evaluation and future evaluation efforts can build from this groundwork. The evaluation is conducted by Portland State University.

Healthy Families Oregon Evaluation (*recurring*) [Link to 2023 Report](#)

The HFO evaluation is an external evaluation that has been conducted by NPC Research since 2001 to study the effectiveness of a statewide home visiting program for at-risk families.

Kindergarten Readiness and Partnership Innovation Fund (KPI) Evaluation (2010 – 2025) [Link to 2024 report](#)

This KPI evaluation was created to support the innovative and community-driven work that focuses on improving children's readiness for school and improve outcomes of children through a prenatal to grade 3 (P3) approach. The evaluation was conducted by Portland State University.

Preschool Promise Impact Study (*one time - 2025*) [Link to report](#)

Conducted by Pacific Research and Evaluation, this report studies the experiences of providers who administer and families who are enrolled in the Preschool Promise program.

Priority 3 – Quality Care for Oregon’s Early Childhood Education System and Publicly Funded Programs

Reconceptualizing Quality - Centering Community Wisdom and Power & Putting the Early Childhood Education Technocracy to Bed (one time - 2024)
[Link to report](#)

This report challenges how the early childhood education space has defined “quality”, providing a guiding framework for how to rethink how quality is defined and measured. It also emphasizes the importance of incorporating community voice and provider expertise when defining quality. The report was authored by Portland State University.

Oregon’s Reconceptualizing Quality report and the nationally focused Equity is quality, Quality is Equity report (described below) are responses to tension experienced by ECE providers and minoritized communities, who recognized that there are limitations to the generally accepted definitions of quality in ECE settings. For DELC, they are invitations to revisit how quality is defined, discussed, and measured in DELC programs. The lessons learned in these reports should carry forward into DELC’s approach to Priority 3. This means using a critical, innovative, and equitable lens in our approach to quality that acknowledges the experiences of minoritized communities. Doing so will allow DELC to embody its stated values (e.g., equity, relationships, continuous improvement).

Accessing Child Care for Infants and Toddlers: Family Perspectives and Challenges in Receiving Quality Care (one time - 2022) [Link to report](#)

This report was conducted as part of the Oregon PDG and includes information from family focus groups aimed at understanding the experiences of Oregon families accessing and using affordable quality care for their infants and toddlers. The report presents findings on what factors are important to families when identifying quality care for their children. The report was authored by Portland State University, OSLC Developments, Inc., and AB Cultural Drivers.

Families’ Experiences with Early Childhood Education and Child Care: Lessons for Creating Quality Care for Oregon’s LGBTQIA+ Families (one time - 2022) [Link to report](#)

In an effort to create an equitable early learning and care system that meets the needs of all Oregonians, and through using funds from the PDG, a report was conducted to gather information from LGBTQIA+ families about their experiences finding and using child care. Findings are presented about how LGBTQIA+ families identify and find quality

child care and what components of child care are important for their children. The report was authored by Portland State University and AB Cultural Drivers.

Families' experiences of early childhood suspension and expulsion: Messages for Building More Inclusive Environments (*one time* - 2022) [Link to report](#)

Funded by PDG, this report aimed to describe parents' experiences of having their child suspended or expelled from child care settings. This was identified in the 2019 PDG Strengths and Needs Assessment that identified this as a relatively common practice, with 44% of facilities reporting having suspended or expelled at least one child in the past year. Findings from this report suggest the importance of inclusive environments in DELC's understanding of quality. The report was authored by Portland State University.

DELC State-funded Preschool Classroom Observation Initiative (*ongoing*)

Classroom observation is a method of understanding the quality of care occurring in early learning and care settings. Classroom observations are both tools to support continuous improvement for early learning and care programs and ways to describe high-level patterns of quality across large groups of early learning and care programs. From 2020-2023, DELC partnered with Mathematica to design a rigorous method of gathering classroom observation data for DELC's primary state-funded preschool programs, Preschool Promise and Oregon Pre-Kindergarten. The goal of this initiative is to allow DELC, at a global program level, to describe the quality of care in these two programs. DELC partners with The Research Institute to conduct these classroom observations each year. Data are used to support local training and technical assistance and DELC's research and reporting needs on program quality.

Equity is Quality, Quality is Equity: Operationalizing Equity in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (2021) [Link to report](#)

This report was written by the Children's Equity Project at Arizona State University. It was not commissioned by DELC, but it is a relevant resource for Priority 3 of DELC's Research and Policy Agenda. The report identifies important equity and quality indicators that states can use to redesign their Quality Rating/Recognition and Improvement Systems (QRIS) in a way that advances equity and improves transparency for families.

Measuring the Quality of Early Learning Environments (2022) [Link to report](#)

This report was written by the Trust for Learning. It was not commissioned by DELC, but it is a relevant resource for Priority 3 of DELC's Research and Policy Agenda. This report

provides information on the purposes, uses, and implications of quality measurement while highlighting important equity issues to consider when analyzing quality in the early childhood education space. It also provides an appendix of numerous measures that states can use to capture global measures of quality using measures at the program, classroom, and system level.

Priority 4 – Effectiveness of Workforce Investments

A Path Forward: Examining and Overcoming Barriers for Oregon's Early Childhood Workforce (*one time - 2024*) [Link to report](#)

This study was conducted by AB Cultural Drivers, Leonard Research & Evaluation, and Fifth Element Community Research & Consulting and was mandated by 2023 House Bill 2991 to understand the barriers faced for early childhood workforce, including things like compensation, recognition, training and technical assistance, and provides recommendations from the workforce in collaboration with key workgroups that include DELC and the Early Childhood Equity Collaborative.

Navigating the Early Years: Recommendations to Support Oregon Child Care Businesses in the Critical Years After Launch (*one time - 2025*) [Link to report](#)

This report examines what child care business owners need as they transition out of start-up, generally defined as the first two years of operation, and establish strong, sustainable programs. The findings are based on interviews with grant administrators, focus groups and interviews with child care business owners, as well as a secondary analysis of First Children's Finance's 2024 Child Care Business Sustainability Survey. The recommendations in this report were developed by synthesizing provider insights, grant administrator perspectives, data trends, and promising models of child care funding and technical assistance.

2025 Capital Landscape Analysis (*one time - 2025*) [Link to report](#)

First Children's Finance partnered with DELC to conduct a comprehensive landscape analysis of capital resources available to licensed child care businesses in Oregon from 2019-2024. The analysis examined diverse funding streams including:

- DELC's Publicly Funded Early Learning and Care Programs: Employment Related Day Care (ERDC), Preschool Promise, Baby Promise, and Oregon Pre-natal to Kindergarten (OPK)
- Small Business Administration Lending: 7(a) and 504 loan programs

- COVID-19 Relief Capital: Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Child Care Stabilization Grants (CCSG)

The study analyzed participation patterns across business demographics including license type, language preferences, and the provision of infant care. Access to capital for child care entrepreneurs is vital to ensure the supply, sustainability, and quality of services.

[Oregon Child Care Business Sustainability Survey Report \(recurring\) Link to 2025 report](#)

First Children's Finance's Oregon Child Care Business Sustainability Survey captures child care business owners' perspectives on financial and operational health. First administered in 2024, the survey identifies core challenges that face child care businesses—staffing shortages, rising costs, facility maintenance needs, under-enrollment, and financial strain. The findings help DELC better understand child care business owner experiences and guide targeted interventions.

[Centering Racial Equity Design Considerations for Oregon's Statewide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation \(IECMHC\) Program \(one time – 2022\) Link to report](#)

The Early Learning Division, DELC's predecessor, partnered with Portland State University to develop a foundational document that would guide development and implementation of a model for providing statewide Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC). Through in-depth review of literature, connection with national experts, and engagement with Oregon Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants and early learning and care providers, the authors developed key design considerations for Oregon's statewide IECMHC approach. This report contributed to the design of DELC's Every Child Belongs Initiative.

[Oregon Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Research Study \(one time – 2025\) Link to report](#)

The report, prepared by The Research Justice Institute at the Coalitions of Communities of Color, was commissioned to understand suspension and expulsion in Oregon's early Learning and care environments with focus on ways of reducing use of those practices. Data were collected through both a resource mapping survey on early childhood educators' reactions to ECE resources and qualitative findings on educators' experiences and desires about what will help them prevent suspension and expulsion. The researchers summarized the current use of suspension and expulsion across the state, summarized current use of available ECE resources, identified desired supports to

prevent suspension & expulsion, and generated key recommendations from providers on resources necessary to support the workforce.

Preschool Development Grant Research Recommendations (2019 – 2023)

While many of the reports commissioned under the Preschool Development Grant were developed for purposes other than evaluating or reviewing current workforce investments, many of the reports generated findings applicable to improving investments and infrastructure available to the early learning and care workforce.

Priority 5 – Identify DELC’s Critical Operational Success Factors

Priority 5 in the Research and Policy Agenda is aligned with DELC’s Growing Oregon Together strategic plan Goal 6: Foundations – DELC develops and improves operational foundations to efficiently serve Oregonians. This goal represents a clearer focus on measuring DELC’s operational capacity and efficiency. While there is not previous research that aligns most closely with Priority 5, there are lessons to be learned from the reports referenced above related to DELC’s operational foundations.