OREGON OFFICE OF INDIAN EDUCATION

2025-27 Tribal Early Literacy Grant

Supporting Tribal-Led Literacy Through Language, Culture, and Community

Honoring Tribal Sovereignty and Self-Determination

A defining feature of the Oregon Department of Education's Tribal Early Literacy (TEL) Grant is its recognition that Tribes are best positioned to determine how literacy efforts can best serve their communities. The TEL Grant provides direct funding to participating Tribal Nations to design and lead literacy initiatives that reflect their distinct languages, cultures, values, and educational priorities.

Year One Highlights (2025-26)

During the first half of the grant cycle, participating Tribes established and expanded opportunities that connected literacy learning with Tribal language, cultural knowledge, family engagement, and community wellbeing. Across communities, Tribal leaders, Elders, educators, families, and youth worked together to create meaningful literacy experiences that honor Tribal identities while supporting learners of all ages.

Creating and Sustaining Tribal Early Literacy Ecosystems

Rather than adopting a single statewide model, each participating Tribe utilized grant funding to support literacy in ways that aligned with its own vision for language preservation, educational success, family and community engagement, and cultural continuity. This approach allowed communities to build upon existing strengths while creating new opportunities for learning and growth.

Across participating Tribes, grant funding supported the development of literacy ecosystems that extend beyond traditional instructional settings. Literacy opportunities were embedded within homes, community gatherings, cultural events, language programs, extended learning programs, and intergenerational activities.

Mid-cycle reports highlight the strengths, innovation, and leadership of Tribal Nations across Oregon as they design and implement literacy ecosystems rooted in language, culture, family engagement, and community-defined measures of success.

Reported Investments

- Family literacy events and community engagement activities
- Tribal language instruction and immersion opportunities
- Early learning, preschool, and after-school programming
- Books, literacy materials, and educational technology
- Youth enrichment and STEM learning opportunities
- Professional learning and educator development
- Community-based literacy outreach and resource distribution

Together, these efforts created meaningful opportunities for children and families to engage with literacy in ways that reflect local Tribal priorities, languages, and strengths.

Strengthening Literacy Systems Through Language and Culture

Throughout year one, Tribes consistently demonstrated the important relationship between language, culture, identity, and literacy development by incorporating Tribal languages, storytelling traditions, cultural teachings, and opportunities for learners to connect with their heritage through literacy-rich

> "Strengthened language learning opportunities support the long-term revitalization of the Tribe's traditional languages."

experiences. Grant-supported activities demonstrated how literacy development can be strengthened through culturally-grounded approaches that honor Tribal languages, histories, and traditions while creating engaging learning experiences for children and families.

Participating Tribes invested in language instruction, language-learning resources, culturally relevant materials, and opportunities for intergenerational knowledge sharing. These efforts reinforced the understanding that literacy development can be strengthened when learning is connected to community, identity, language, and culture.

By supporting both literacy and language revitalization efforts, Tribes are helping ensure that future generations have opportunities to engage with and carry forward important cultural knowledge.

Connecting Literacy Development to Intergenerational Learning

Year one activities demonstrated the important role that families, caregivers, Elders, and community members play in supporting literacy development. Participating Tribes created opportunities for all ages to learn together through family literacy events, cultural gatherings, youth programs, community activities, and educational outreach efforts. Additionally, Tribes engaged and honored Elders as knowledge-holders and invaluable teachers. By engaging families, communities, and cultural knowledge holders as partners in learning, Tribes helped create meaningful opportunities for communication, storytelling, cultural engagement, and shared learning experiences.

These activities reflected an understanding that literacy is developed across multiple environments and relationships, not solely within formal educational settings. Collectively, these efforts strengthened literacy development while reinforcing the social, cultural, and intergenerational connections that support lifelong learning.

Building Opportunities for Learning

Grant funding expanded access to a variety of literacy and enrichment opportunities across Tribal communities. Participating Tribes invested in books, educational materials, educational technology, youth extended learning programming, early learning supports, literacy resources in Tribal languages, and community-based learning opportunities. Many communities also focused on strengthening the conditions that support literacy success, including educator professional development, instructional resource creation, literacy program expansion, and early learning partnerships that increase access to literacy opportunities.

> "One of the most meaningful observations has been the excitement shown by children and families when literacy activities are connected to culture, hands-on learning, and community involvement."

These investments helped design learning environments where Tribal communities could engage with literacy in ways that were relevant, engaging, and reflective of their languages and cultures.

Investing in Sustainable Tribal Literacy Systems

In addition to supporting immediate literacy activities, participating Tribes made investments that will continue to benefit their communities beyond the first year of the grant cycle. Efforts to develop language

resources, strengthen educational programs, expand literacy materials, and build local capacity contribute to long-term sustainability and future growth.

The work completed during the 2025-26 fiscal year established a strong foundation for continued implementation and innovation. As programs evolve and expand, participating Tribes are well-positioned to deepen literacy opportunities while advancing community-defined goals for education, language preservation, and cultural continuity.

Looking Ahead

The first year of the Tribal Early Literacy Grant Program demonstrates the value of Tribal-led approaches to literacy development. Participating Tribes are creating learning opportunities that connect literacy with language revitalization, cultural knowledge, family engagement, and community wellbeing.

As implementation continues, Tribal communities will be positioned to deepen and expand these efforts, building on strong foundations established during Year One. The program reflects the importance of investing in community-defined educational systems that honor Tribal sovereignty, support cultural continuity, and strengthen outcomes for future generations.

Contact Information

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