



Office of Tribal Affairs

Annual Report



Oregon Department of
Early Learning and Care

Annual Report to the Governor and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services

Department of Early Learning and Care

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Acknowledgments

The Office of Tribal Affairs extends its heartfelt appreciation to the nine Tribes of Oregon, the Tribal Advisory Committee, and our state agency partners, including the Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Department of Education, and Oregon Health Authority, for their invaluable collaboration and support. We especially recognize their contributions to the development of DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy.

We also express our gratitude to DELC leadership and programs for their unwavering commitment to serving Tribal Nations, children, and families. Your dedication to fostering partnerships and advancing equitable, culturally responsive programs has made a profound impact on the well-being and success of Tribal communities across Oregon. Thank you for your continued collaboration and shared vision.



Paulina Whitehat, Tribal Affairs Director

Executive Summary

The Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) within the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) is committed to fostering meaningful government-to-government relationships with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. This report outlines the OTA's initiatives and accomplishments during the 2024 reporting period, emphasizing efforts to uphold Tribal sovereignty, enhance early learning access, and promote culturally responsive programming.

Key Highlights:

Tribal Consultation Policy:

- A comprehensive policy was drafted to guide respectful and collaborative engagement with Tribal governments, incorporating feedback from Tribal leaders.

Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund:

- Proposed a legislative initiative (LC 412) for a dedicated funding stream for Tribal early learning programs, emphasizing language preservation and revitalization, culturally responsive education, and professional development.
- Replaces the previously envisioned Tribal Early Learning Hub, ensuring alignment with Tribal sovereignty and direct government-to-government relationships.

Enhanced Communication and Collaboration:

- Established formal consultation processes and hosted six consultation meetings addressing key initiatives.
- Actively participated in state-level meetings, including the Governor's Annual Tribal-State Summit.

Capacity Building:

- Launched the "Foundation of Tribal Affairs" training for all DELC staff, with 19% completion.
- Distributed a monthly newsletter and introduced office hours to maintain transparent and accessible communication.

Program Investments:

- Invested a total of more than \$3.1 million across five early learning initiatives, marking a nearly 100% funding increase for Tribes compared to previous years.
- Key programs include Birth Through Five Literacy, Early Childhood Equity Fund, and Preschool Promise.

Legislative and Strategic Planning Contributions:

- Influenced state strategic initiatives, such as DELC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan and the "Growing Oregon Together" strategic framework.

Challenges and Future Goals:

While significant progress has been made, challenges remain in data collection, equitable resource distribution, and Tribal outreach. Moving forward, DELC aims to:

- Finalize and implement the Tribal Consultation Policy.
- Expand participation in DELC programs.
- Secure legislative approval for the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. Build robust frameworks for equitable and culturally responsive early learning systems.

This report reaffirms DELC's commitment to supporting Oregon's Tribal communities by prioritizing sovereignty, inclusion, and the holistic development of Tribal children and families.

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I. Overview

This report outlines the activities and initiatives undertaken by the Department of Early Learning and Care in compliance with ORS 182.162 to 182.168. It reflects the agency's commitment to fostering meaningful government-to-government relations with the nine federally recognized Tribes within Oregon's borders.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive update on the Department of Early Learning and Care's engagement with Tribal nations in Oregon. This report outlines our efforts to honor Tribal sovereignty, promote equitable access to early learning opportunities, and support culturally relevant programming. It highlights progress, challenges, and collaborative initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for Native children and families while strengthening partnerships between DELC and the Tribes. This report serves to ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with the state's commitment to Tribal-State government-to-government relations.

Introduction

The Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) Office of Tribal Affairs is dedicated to fostering meaningful partnerships with the nine federally recognized Tribal nations in Oregon. Its mission and objectives include:

Mission:

To cultivate coordinated, culturally appropriate, and family-centered services that honor the strengths and needs of all children, families, and early learning and care professionals, with a particular focus on Tribal communities.

Objectives:

- Uphold Tribal Sovereignty: Ensure that early learning initiatives respect and reinforce the self-determination and cultural heritage of Tribal nations.
- Facilitate Authentic Consultation: Engage in genuine government-to-government dialogues with Tribal leaders to co-create policies and programs.
- Promote Cultural Preservation: Support the integration and revitalization of Tribal languages and traditions within early learning programs.
- Enhance Access to Services: Work to eliminate barriers, providing equitable access to high-quality, culturally responsive early care and education for Tribal children and families.
- Collaborate with Tribal Entities: Partner with the Tribal Advisory Committee and other Tribal organizations to align efforts and resources effectively.

Through these efforts, the Office of Tribal Affairs aims to empower Tribal communities, ensuring that Oregon's early learning and care system is inclusive, equitable, and reflective of the state's rich cultural diversity.

II. Adopted Policy Regarding Relationships with Tribes

Department of Early Learning and Care is in the process of adopting a comprehensive Tribal Consultation Policy to guide interactions with Tribal nations pursuant to ORS 182.164. The draft policy is being reviewed internally and has been shared with Tribal leaders for their input through government-to-government consultation. The policy aims to ensure respect for Tribal sovereignty, promotes culturally informed practices, and emphasizes collaboration to achieve shared goals.

Key Principles:

- Recognition of Tribal sovereignty.
- Commitment to consultation and partnership.
- Support for programs that honor Tribal history, culture, and language.
- Promotion of equity and inclusion in service delivery.

III. Key Individuals Responsible for Programs that Affect Tribes

The DELC executive leadership team is responsible for communicating and implementing the agency's priorities, policies, and programming that serve children and families. Each executive leader is committed to engaging and partnering with the nine Tribes in Oregon to uphold Tribal sovereignty, elevate Tribal voice, and uplift Tribal culture while promoting and improving government-to-government relations.

Alyssa Chatterjee, Early Learning System Director

Alicia Gardiner, Child Care Licensing Division Director

Cooper Brown, Deputy Director of Operations

Heather Thomas, Human Resources Director

Joel Metlen, Deputy Director of Programs

Kate Gonsalves, Communications Director

Koffi Dessou, Social Equity Director

Paulina Whitehat, Tribal Affairs Director

The Tribal Affairs Office works with all DELC programs to create and provide Tribally appropriate programming, services, policies and support. Through Tribal consultation with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, DELC ensures programming, services and policies meet the needs of Oregon Tribal communities.

These individuals serve as the primary contacts for Tribal engagement and program development:

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Processes for Identifying Tribal Impacted Programs

The Department of Early Learning and Care employs the following processes to identify programs impacting Tribal communities, in accordance with the agency's draft Tribal Consultation policy:

- **Program Review:** Conducting regular assessments of agency initiatives to evaluate their relevance to Tribal interests.
- **Tribal Input:** Soliciting feedback through consultation and advisory committee meetings.
- **Impact Analysis:** Reviewing proposed policies or changes to identify potential implications for Tribal nations.

Accomplishments

The DELC Office of Tribal Affairs has achieved significant milestones in advancing equity and collaboration with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. This year, the office became fully staffed, providing the capacity to strengthen partnerships and deliver impactful outcomes.

A key highlight includes working closely with the Tribal Advisory Committee to draft a legislative concept for the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. This initiative aims to provide a flexible funding stream to support culturally responsive education and care, language preservation and revitalization, professional development, and equitable access to early learning and child care resources for Native American children and families.

Additionally, the office developed a comprehensive Tribal Consultation Policy draft, ensuring meaningful engagement and respect for Tribal sovereignty in agency decision-making processes. While the draft policy has not yet been adopted, the Office has utilized a process similar to that of ODHS/OHA and ODE to conduct Tribal consultation throughout this year. Consultation requests have been made for several major DELC actions, which have resulted in meaningful Tribal feedback that informs future policy and funding decisions.

Furthermore, the Office created and released the new Foundation of Tribal Affairs training, now a requirement for all DELC staff. The Office now has a monthly newsletter, office hours, and is continuously improving to ensure Tribes are informed and involved in decision making.

The Office has contributed to several foundational initiatives that impact Tribal communities, including early learning programs and the strategic alignment of procurement and grant management practices to enhance equitable Tribal participation in DELC programming. This has included concerted efforts in removing common barriers to Tribal participation in DELC grants and programs. For instance, the Office worked to amend DELC's administrative cost rate policy to allow for the Tribes' federally negotiated indirect rates to be honored, and piloted non-competitive mechanisms for Tribes to access funds for Preschool Promise and the Birth Through Five Literacy Initiative.

Notable contributions were also made to the DELC strategic plan Growing Oregon Together, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan, language policy, and data governance policies and practices, ensuring culturally informed approaches across the department's operations.

The Department of Early Learning and Care's strategic plan, Growing Oregon Together, emphasizes Goal 2: Tribal Sovereignty. This goal reflects the department's commitment to honoring the sovereignty of the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations. DELC fosters strong government-to-government relationships to support Tribal communities through three key objectives:

- Staff have the information and tools they need to support authentic Tribal consultation.
- Historical harm is acknowledged, current harm caused by the State of Oregon is reduced, and trust is built by establishing positive relationships.
- Implement funding models and programs that are designed to ensure equitable resources to support and enhance the capacity of Tribal early learning and child care programs.

This goal underscores DELC's dedication to meaningful collaboration and supporting the well-being of Tribal children and families.

DELC's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan emphasizes Strategy 4: Cultivate Meaningful Tribal Consultation and Government-to-Government Partnership. This strategy affirms DELC's commitment to a formal, two-way consultation process that honors Tribal sovereignty and ensures American Indian and Alaska Native children and child care providers are meaningfully included in program planning through three key actions:

- Co-develop the DELC Tribal Consultation and Communication Policy, in partnership with Tribes, to provide clear guidance, tools, and expectations for staff to understand Tribal government and communities.
- Implement the Tribal Consultation and Communication Policy to provide guidance, tools, and expectations for staff to engage in consultation and communication with Tribal leaders and representatives.
- Establish in-person and virtual communications and connections between DELC and Tribal leaders that foster and elevate ways to honor and respect Tribal and Native community strengths, needs, and government structure.

This strategy reflects DELC's responsibility to uphold Tribal sovereignty, build trust, and support Tribal self-determination.

V. Efforts to Enhance Communication and Government-to-Government Relations

The Office of Tribal Affairs is proud to report on the establishment of a formalized process for authentic Tribal consultation. This process was developed in collaboration with Tribal leaders and representatives and other agencies to ensure meaningful engagement, uphold Tribal sovereignty, and respect the government-to-government relationship. By creating a structured framework, the Office has laid the foundation for transparent, culturally respectful, and mutually beneficial dialogue on policies and initiatives impacting Tribal communities. This milestone reflects our commitment to fostering stronger partnerships and advancing equitable outcomes for Tribal nations.

- Created a Tribal Consultation Policy informed by the policies at ODE, OHA, and ODHS with input from Tribal leaders and representatives. Both the Education and SB770 Clusters recommended that DELC refer to the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority/Department of Human Services Tribal Consultation Policies as models when drafting DELC's Tribal Consultation and Communication Policy. This guidance will ensure alignment with established best practices and respect for Tribal sovereignty while fostering meaningful and collaborative government-to-government relationships.
- Created an internal process for Tribal consultation, from planning to follow up, to guide DELC personnel.
- Will create training to guide staff with conducting meaningful Tribal consultation.
- Nine consultation requests were made to each of the Tribes, along with follow-up messaging.
- Consultation Meetings: Hosted six meetings with Tribal representatives to discuss key initiatives and gather feedback, including the Spark redesign, Preschool Promise, the agency strategic plan and DEI action plan, budget, and the Tribal Early Learning Plan, ensuring alignment with Tribal priorities and needs.
- Tribal Advisory Committee: Established a committee comprising representatives from each of the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon to ensure continuous collaboration.
- Government-to-Government Cluster Meeting: Participated in quarterly meetings hosted by the Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Human Services, and Oregon Department of Education, fostering collaboration and alignment on initiatives impacting Tribal communities.
- Annual Tribal Summit: Participated in the Governor's Annual Tribal-State Summit to discuss shared objectives and build stronger relationships.

VI. Training Provided

Department of Early Learning Care provided the following training to agency staff to fulfill the requirements of ORS 182.166:

- **Foundation of Tribal Affairs Training:** Conducted in collaboration with Human Resources, focusing on Tribal sovereignty, history, and cultural competency, for all current DELC staff to complete by June 30, 2025. This is now included in DELC's new employee orientation as of 11/01/2024. The training has been completed by 65 employees, which represents 19% of DELC staff, as of 12/11/24

VII. Methods for Informing Employees About ORS 182.162 to 182.168

To ensure staff awareness and compliance with ORS 182.162 to 182.168, the Department of Early Learning Care implemented the following methods:

- **Employee Orientation:** Included a module on ORS 182.162 to 182.168 entitled Foundation of Tribal Affairs training in new employee on-boarding via Workday. Tribal Consultation Policy training will be included in the future after formal adoption of the policy.
- **Internal Communication:** Distributed updates via email and department meetings highlighting best practices for engaging with Tribes.
- **Annual Training Requirement:** Mandated attendance at Tribal relations training for all relevant staff. Tribal Consultation Policy training will be included in the future after formal adoption of the policy.

Program Highlights

The Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) has implemented several significant initiatives to support Tribal communities and nations, focusing on culturally responsive early learning and Tribal language preservation and revitalization.

Initiatives for early learning and child care

Birth through Five Literacy Plan

Overview: Mandated by House Bill 3198 (2023), DELC developed a comprehensive plan to expand culturally specific early literacy programs for children from birth to age five. The plan includes training for direct service staff and initiatives to develop and expand language revitalization and preservation efforts by federally recognized Tribes in Oregon.

Objectives:

- Provide culturally specific literacy programs.
- Offer training and coaching for early literacy educators.
- Support Tribal language revitalization and preservation initiatives.

Outcomes: The plan aims to enhance early literacy development among Tribal children, ensuring that programs are culturally relevant and supportive of Tribal language revitalization and preservation.

Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC)

Overview: The TAC is comprised of two representatives appointed by each of the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon. Non-voting membership includes one member from the Early Learning Council, the Department of Early Learning and Care, and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services. The committee addresses the needs of American Indian/Alaskan Native children birth through age eight and their families, ensuring that early learning policies and programs across the state are inclusive, effective, and supportive of Tribal language and culture.

Objectives:

Facilitate government-to-government consultation with Tribal nations in designing Tribal early learning approaches for the state.

- Ensure early learning initiatives respect Tribal sovereignty and cultural heritage.
- Promote culturally responsive and inclusive early care and education opportunities.

Outcomes: The TAC has been instrumental in guiding DELC's policies to be more inclusive of Tribal perspectives, leading to programs that better serve Tribal communities and uphold their cultural values.

Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund (Proposed under Legislative Concept 412)

Overview: The plan aims to create a culturally responsive and equitable early learning system for Native American and Alaska Native children in Oregon. Administered by DELC, the plan focuses on children eight years of age or younger who are enrolled in early childhood care or education programs. By fostering collaboration with the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, the initiative prioritizes culturally appropriate curricula, professional development for Tribal educators, and the preservations of Tribal languages and traditions.

Objectives:

Support and implement culturally appropriate early learning programs that reflect Native American history, sovereignty, languages, cultural practices, and current experiences in Oregon.

- Increase equitable access to early learning and care resources for Native American and Alaska Native children, addressing historical disparities in education and care.
- Support the preservation and revitalization of Native American languages and culture through experiential curricula and community engagement.
- Provide training and educational opportunities for Tribal educators and caregivers, equipping them with the skills needed to deliver culturally responsive education.

- Foster active engagement and participation of families and communities in the educational development of Native American children.
- Promote literacy, numeracy, kindergarten readiness, and holistic early childhood development tailored to the needs of Tribal communities.

Outcomes:

Enhanced Early Learning Programs: Establish culturally and linguistically responsive programs that improve educational outcomes for Native American children.

- Stronger Tribal Educator Workforce: Increase the number of trained and supported Tribal educators and caregivers, strengthening the capacity to deliver high-quality early learning services.
- Preservation of Indigenous Languages: Expand opportunities for children to learn and use their Native languages, ensuring the survival and revitalization of linguistic heritage.
- Improved Access and Equity: Reduce barriers to early learning resources for Native American and Alaska Native children, closing gaps in care and education.
- Family-Centered Education: Increase parental and familial involvement, fostering stronger community ties and holistic child development.
- Sustainable Funding and Support: Establish the Tribal Early Learning Fund to provide continuous financial resources for technical assistance, professional development, infrastructure, and other critical initiatives.
- Collaborative Governance: Empower the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance advisory committee to guide the implementation of the plan, ensuring alignment with Tribal priorities and sovereignty.
- Positive Developmental Outcomes: Improve literacy, numeracy, and kindergarten readiness rates for Native American children, setting the foundation for lifelong success in education and beyond.

Through these initiatives, DELC demonstrates a commitment to partnering with Tribal communities to provide equitable, culturally responsive early learning opportunities that honor and preserve Tribal languages and culture.

Program Participation

Summary of Tribal Participation in DELC Programs

The Department of Early Learning and Care administers various early learning programs, professional learning, and other system support throughout the State.

Tribes have access to direct DELC funding for various early learning programs. At least one Tribe receives DELC funding for the following five early childhood funding streams: Early Childhood Equity Fund, Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten, Preschool Promise, Birth Through Five Early Literacy, and the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (also known as OTELA or Tribal Hub).

The investment amounts to a total agency investment of \$3,178,295.39 which reaches all nine Tribes in Oregon. In terms of funding allocations by program, for funding streams open to entities other than Tribal Nations, Tribes receive between less than a fifth of a percentage to upwards of 30% of the program budget. This investment represents an overall percentage of 1.1% of the five grants.

However, 2024 represented nearly a 100% increase in funding for Tribes, thanks to the new Birth Through Five Early Literacy Initiative. DELC took a new approach to funding Tribal Nations through offering direct, non-competitive funding from a dedicated pool of Tribal funds within the overall program budget. This proved successful, with eight of nine Tribes accepting the funds, equating to 30% of Early Literacy Funds. DELC is utilizing a similar approach to expand Tribes' access to Preschool Promise funding. While no new funding is currently available, the agency anticipates more Tribes will participate in the Preschool Promise program in 2025 through current investments, thus increasing the overall investment.

Summary of Tribal Participation in DELC Professional Learning and Community Systems

DELC provides funding and supports a variety of professional learning supports and community systems which benefit early childhood educators, child care providers, children and families. Regional Early Learning Hubs, Child Care Resource and Referrals (CCR&Rs), Inclusive Partners, and the Early Learning System Initiative are some of the supports accessible across the state. While these funds are not provided directly to Tribes, many of them provide services accessible to Tribes and Native Americans across the state. Data collection methods are currently under review, which will provide more clarity to the reach of funds and their impact in the future.

Tribes may receive training and professional development opportunities from regional CCR&Rs, work with their local Early Learning Hub for areas like Preschool Promise enrollment, or access Inclusive Partners to support inclusive practices in child care settings. Some support, such as coaching through the Early Learning System Initiative, is only available for DELC-funded programs including Preschool Promise and Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten, which some Tribes receive. The Higher Education Consortia, awarded directly to higher education institutions, is not available statewide but 30% of recipients report working with Tribes or providing services to Native Americans. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library recently launched, which covers nearly all zip codes in Oregon and is open for Tribes to become partners. DELC is also in the process of establishing an early childhood suspension and expulsion prevention program, to deliver coordinated support to providers considering removing a child from their program. However, it is unclear if or how Tribes may receive funding for this new program as it is still under development.

DELC's Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance (CCIF TA) has directly benefited Tribes through a contract with Northwest Native Chamber (NUNC). The Chamber provides technical assistance for Tribes applying for the fund and gives ongoing support once awarded. The first round of funding resulted in 4 Tribes receiving Child Care Infrastructure Funds amounting to roughly 20% of the total awarded. CCIF is administered through Business Oregon, Oregon's Business Development Department.

Financial Overview

The Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) took the Tribal Advisory Committee and DELC recommendations to allocate \$4,725,000 to a new Tribal Early Learning Fund. If approved by the legislature in the 2025 session, this would allow for \$500,000 to be directly allocated by DELC to each Tribe, and 5% technical assistance funding for the DELC Office of Tribal Affairs, which equates to another \$250,000. In addition, current service level funding for the Tribal Hub in the amount of \$665,000, or \$73,000, per Tribe will add to the Tribal Early Learning Plan funding in '25-'27. The Tribal Advisory Committee is currently reviewing potential funding distribution methods.

Program Funding and Tribal Participation

Three Tribes participate in the Early Childhood Equity Fund, which was created as part of the Student Success Act which passed in 2019. The Early Childhood Equity Fund supports culturally specific early learning and family programming including activities such as kindergarten readiness, parent education, parent-child interaction, and Tribal language revitalization and preservation.



Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK) is the state Head Start model. OPK provides funding for roughly 60% of Head Start slots in Oregon and features 25 dually funded federal Head Start grantees and six programs receiving only OPK funds. While five Tribes in Oregon receive Tribal Head Start funding, this is administered by the federal Office of Head Start. Currently, only one Tribe receives both state OPK and federal Head Start funding.



Preschool Promise (PSP) is a free, high-quality preschool program available to Oregon families living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. The program serves children ages 3-4 in a "mixed-delivery model," meaning that the program is operated in a variety of settings, and with a variety of sponsor organizations. Three Tribes currently participate in the program, and a fourth Tribe is in the process of executing their grant agreement to begin programming.

Birth Through Five Early Literacy is a new funding source (HB 3198 2023). This initiative provides funding for literacy support for children and families and Tribal language preservation and revitalization. Early literacy funds support a variety of activities including language revitalization and preservation, professional development, early literacy resource creation and distribution, community engagement, and development of community-specific early literacy plans. Eight Tribes have accepted between \$100,000 to \$200,000 for the 2024 fiscal year, with up to \$200,000 available to each Tribe.

The Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance, also known as OTELA or the Tribal Hub, is a funding source directly obligated and distributed equally amongst the Nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations. HB 2055 (2021) directed DELC to form a Tribal Advisory Committee to make recommendations on the implementation and development of a Tribal Early Learning Hub or similar entity to deliver early learning services to Tribal communities in the state. The Tribal Advisory Committee has been convening since 2021 and has provided recommendations to the agency that a Tribal Hub is no longer desired, and a Tribal Early Learning Plan with a dedicated, flexible funding source would be preferred. Pending legislation, the Tribal Hub funding will become Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund which will provide funding for Tribes to support a variety of early learning and child care initiatives and objectives including but not limited to Tribal language revitalization and preservation, early childhood programming, professional development, and staff compensation.

DELC Program Inventory

Program or Grant	Purpose	Access Consideration	Tribal Access	Funding Allocations		
				Annual Funding for Tribal Grantees	Annual Funding Amount for Programs	% of program funding allocated to Tribes
Early Childhood Equity Fund	Kindergarten readiness, family support, Tribal language preservation/revitalization	Not statewide - 18 counties	Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	\$136,977.54	\$13,281,060.00	5%
			Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	\$360,467.21		
			Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	\$121,826.59		
			Total Tribal funding:	\$612,271.34		
Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten	State Head Start Model (PN-5)	30 grantees (statewide)	Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs	\$301,360.90	\$182,686,565.50	0.16%
Preschool Promise	High quality preschool (3-5)	218 (219)	Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians	\$203,450.00	\$84,510,091.00	0.91%
			Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde	\$335,000.00		
			Klamath Tribes	\$156,500.00		
			Burns Paiute Tribe (pending execution)	\$70,600.00		
			Total Tribal Funding:	\$765,550.00		
Birth Through Five Early Literacy	Literacy supports children and families, Tribal language preservation/revitalization	Offered to all Tribes in FY24-25 along with a statewide competitive RFA (one time funding)	8/9 Tribes	\$1,422,513.38	\$4,700,000.00	30%
			Total Tribal Funding:	\$1,422,513.38		
Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA, Tribal hub)	Form a Tribal Advisory Committee, make recommendations on a Tribal Early Learning Hub or similar (will become Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund pending legislation)	Tribal Nations only receive this funding; Tribes split funding 9 ways	All 9 Tribes	\$69,599.77	\$626,397.93	100%
Overall Totals				\$3,178,295.39	\$285,804,114.43	1.1%

Professional Learning and Community Systems Program Funding and Tribal Participation

HB 3005 (2023) created the Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) which provided \$50 million in Lottery Bonds allocated to Business Oregon to fund child care facility projects and \$5 million allocated to Department of Early Learning and Care to contract for technical assistance (TA) to support providers to access the fund. DELC has contracted with Northwest Native Chamber (NWNK) who provide business acumen support to all communities but specifically to Tribal Nations, and other native peoples with small business endeavors.

In 2024, four Tribes will receive CCIF funding totaling \$2,195,000 for planning projects, construction, and property acquisition from Business Oregon. NWNK will provide ongoing TA to Tribes who are awarded CCIF, as well as Tribes who wish to apply for funding in future application rounds. NWNK will also complete a needs assessment with Tribes to understand their plans and funding needs for early learning and child care expansion and will complete an assessment of the impact of CCIF Technical Assistance, including data on CCIF spending and capacity building. This data will be included in a final report on the overall analysis of Native and Tribal care providers accessing the CCIF. The total amount allocated to NWNK in the 23-25 biennium is \$1M.

Child Care Resource and Referrals (CCR&Rs) are regional programs funded to recruit and support early learning and care programs, both home- and center-based and to help expand high-quality early learning and care across Oregon by empowering programs with resources and technical assistance. CCR&Rs also operate Focused Child Care Networks (FCCN); support QRIS (Spark) and coordinate Baby Promise. There is statewide access through the local CCR&R but Tribes are not direct recipients of the funds. CCDF funding would prevent a Tribal set-aside, though several CCR&Rs work closely with Tribes in their region. The Research Institute (TRI) coordinates the CCR&Rs, central training, Spark/QRIS, and more. Tribes can receive training and information through CCR&Rs across the state.

Inclusive Partners is a statewide program that works to empower Oregon's child care providers to create environments that encourage full participation for all children. Regardless of provider type or funding stream, Inclusive Partners provides technical assistance, consultation, and support so all children can play, learn and grow together. The CCR&R that serves Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson counties has facilitated 44 contacts with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. These included consultation, training and technical assistance to support inclusive practices.

Early Learning System Initiative (ELSI) works alongside partners to support, strengthen, and expand upon existing professional learning opportunities to meet the diverse needs and assets of Oregon's early education workforce. ELSI focuses on support for instructional coaches, instructional leadership, workforce wellness, ambitious instruction and more in DELC-funded early learning programs, such as Preschool Promise and Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten, in which three Tribes currently participate. ELSI also develops resources and activities for the early learning workforce as a whole, such as the foundations in coaching courses, though the emphasis is on DELC funded programs.

Early Learning Hubs bring together cross-sector partners to align services and resources for Oregon's young children and families. There are 16 regional hubs with statewide access, although Tribes are not direct recipients of the funds. Hubs also administer Kindergarten Partnership & Innovation Program (KPI), which invests in promising models for connecting early learning and kindergarten through 3rd grade education across the state. KPI promotes partnerships that result in measurable increases in children's readiness for kindergarten. Again, there is statewide access through the local Early Learning Hubs but Tribes are not direct recipients of the funds. Hubs are directed to "support, honor and recognize the sovereignty of Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, by ensuring community-driven partnerships that benefit Tribal communities." The administrators are currently in the process of revamping the data collection methods utilized by the Hubs. As part of this effort, there will be an upcoming workgroup to explore ways to incorporate measurable impacts for priority populations including Tribes.

The Higher Education Consortium works to reduce barriers to ECE higher education degrees, certificates, and coursework. The consortium does not operate statewide, and the funding goes directly to colleges. This type of funding has been used in Central and Southern Oregon in the past by bringing college courses to the reservation (pre-COVID). 3 of the 9 consortia noted direct work in some way, with Tribes including the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Coquille Indian Tribe. Such work included collaboration with Tribal Head Starts or Tribal culture or wisdom workshops and Tribal students who receive services.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is a book-gifting program that mails free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five directly to children's homes, regardless of family income. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library of Oregon recently launched which covers all zip codes of 35 counties and most zip codes in Douglas County. DELC's goal is to make it accessible to all Oregonian children birth to five, and thus far, it appears that the Early Learning Hub of Central Oregon/Better Together will be partnering with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. To participate in the program, Tribes can become program partners or direct families to sign up through the existing program partners.

House Bill 2166 and Senate Bill 236 (2021) address the suspension and expulsion of young children in early care and education programs. While Early Childhood Suspension & Expulsion Prevention Program (ECSEPP) is still in development, it will provide technical assistance to reduce expulsion or suspension in programs serving children from birth through age five and address disparities in the rates of suspension and expulsion. Effective July 1, 2026, any early care and education program that is either licensed or receiving public funds will be prohibited from suspending or expelling any child. While there are not enough funds to go to all Tribes, it was discussed at a previous education cluster meeting regarding how funding could work to support a Tribal specific mental health consultant. The work is ongoing and 2025 should yield more insight as to how Tribes will be supported in the work.

Brief History:

The Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) and its predecessor, the Early Learning Division (ELD), have a longstanding commitment to strengthening partnership with Tribal nations in Oregon. The Office of Tribal Affairs was established under DELC to ensure equitable access to early learning opportunities and to uphold Tribal sovereignty by fostering collaboration and culturally responsive practices.

2013 – Formation of the Early Learning Division (ELD) – Established under the Oregon Department of Education to coordinate early childhood education and care and licensed child care programs across the state, including Tribal communities.

2015 – Creation of the Tribal Advisory Group (TAG) – An informal group of Tribal representatives was convened to advise ELD on Tribal-specific early learning priorities, leading to the developing of a legislative concept to create a Tribal Early Learning Hub.

2021 - Formalizing of the Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) – The group was officially established by House Bill 2055 to advise DELC's governing body, the Early Learning Council, on the delivery of early care and education services to Tribal communities of the state in a culturally specific manner, through guidance on policy and program decisions impacting Tribal early learning.

2021 – Establishment of the Office of Tribal Affairs – With the creation of DELC in statute, the Office of Tribal Affairs was launched to strengthen collaboration with Tribal governments, expand access to early learning resources, and ensure that Tribal voices are central to decision-making.

2023 – Transition to DELC – The Early Learning Division was removed from the Oregon Department of Education and became the Department of Early Learning and Care, a standalone agency with a renewed focus on equity and inclusion for under served communities, including Tribal nations.

Oregon Tribal Early Learning Hub – House Bill 2055

In 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed this bill to coordinate early learning services tailored to the nine federally recognized Tribes in the state. This initiative aimed to honor Tribal sovereignty and ensure that early childhood education programs were culturally relevant and accessible to Tribal communities. This bill mandated the creation of the Tribal Early Learning Hub and established the Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC). This was in response to the Early Learning Division's historical approaches to limiting some funding opportunities to regional Early Learning Hubs. The TAC was responsible for designing the Tribal Early Learning Hub and is comprised of representatives from each of the nine Tribes and was tasked with advising on the hub's design and implementation.

\$601,000 in General Fund investments was allocated to support the design of the Tribal Early Learning Hub, and DELC leveraged one-time federal funding through the Preschool Development Grant of \$650,000 to enhance these investments in the 21-23 biennium for a total investment of \$1.25M. \$139,000 was allocated to each of the nine Tribes to support the design work and promote access to early learning services. In the 23-25 biennium, \$626,000 in General Funds were allocated, or \$69,000 per Tribe, to continue the work in designing the Tribal Early Learning Hub.

Through the design work of the TAC, significant challenges with implementation of the initiative were identified. The nature of the Hub model would require DELC to contract with a third party such as a non-profit entity or independent organization, thereby infringing on Tribal sovereignty and removing the government-to-government relationship between Tribes and DELC.

In October 2023 the TAC halted the effort and worked with DELC to amend the statute to replace a Tribal Early Learning Hub with a Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund in honor of Tribal sovereignty and in order to maintain the government-to-government relationship with DELC. The dissolution of the Tribal Early Learning Hub underscores the complexities involved in creating systems that effectively serve Tribal communities while respecting their sovereignty and unique cultural needs.

Tribal Advisory Committee Highlights:

The Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) was established to provide a formal platform for the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon to collaborate with the Early Learning Division (ELD) and later, the Department of Early Learning (DELC) on the design of a Tribal Early Learning Hub. Through this design process, the TAC identified the need to establish a dedicated body to advise DELC and ensure that Tribal perspectives are included in policy development, funding decisions, and program implementation to support equitable and culturally responsive early learning opportunities for Tribal children and families. Pending the passage of LC 412, the TAC will have a modified membership to become the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance.

The Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) has been instrumental in initiatives such as:

- Increasing funding for Tribal early learning and care programs
- Supporting culturally responsive programming and language revitalization efforts.
- Advocating for equitable representation of Tribal children in state programs
- Strengthening Tribal-state partnerships through consultation policies and agreements.
- Creating a legislative concept for the Tribal early Learning Plan/Fund to replace the Tribal Early Learning Hub
- Providing feedback and direction in the creation of Raise Up Oregon 2.0, a statewide early childhood system plan; DELC's Strategic Plan, Growing Oregon Together; and DELC's DEI Action Plan to center Tribal sovereignty and ensure Tribal voice is included in addressing needs and barriers.

Challenges/Barriers:

While significant progress has been made, areas for continued improvement include refining data collection processes to better reflect Tribal needs and strengthening outreach to Tribal families and educators, which includes ensuring DELC systems and supports are accessible, culturally responsive, and inclusive of Tribal communities. The Office of Tribal Affairs remains committed to fostering government-to-government collaboration, honoring Tribal sovereignty, and delivering equitable early learning opportunities for Tribal Nations within Oregon's borders.

Future Goals and Direction:

The DELC Office of Tribal Affairs continues to build on this foundation, prioritizing Tribal sovereignty, cultural preservation, and equitable early learning opportunities for Tribal children and families. Ongoing collaboration with Tribes ensures that early learning funding is distributed equitably, barriers to Tribal participation are addressed and removed, and that future initiatives reflect the needs and aspirations of Tribal communities.

The Office of Tribal Affairs will continue to work with the TAC and through government-to-government consultation to design the implementation of the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund, pending legislation. DELC is committed to supporting the vision of early learning identified by the Tribal nations of this state.

VIII. Conclusion

The Department of Early Learning and Care remains dedicated to building and maintaining strong relationships with Tribal nations in Oregon. This report highlights our efforts to uphold Tribal sovereignty, promote collaboration, and integrate culturally informed practices into our operations. We look forward to continuing this critical work in partnership with Oregon Tribes.