

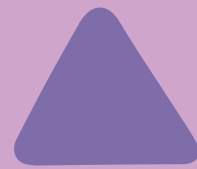


Oregon Department of
**Early Learning
and Care**

Office of Tribal Affairs Annual Report

Annual Report to the Governor and the Legislative Commission on
Indian Services Department of Early Learning and Care

December 15, 2025



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Executive Summary

In its second year as a state agency, the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) has made significant progress in advancing Tribal sovereignty and strengthening government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon. Guided by the principles of respect, collaboration, and self-determination, DELC, through its Office of Tribal Affairs, has implemented foundational policies, expanded culturally responsive programs, and deepened engagement with Tribal partners across the state.

Key milestones in 2025 include the passage of House Bill 2815, which established the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund, and the formal adoption of DELC's first Tribal Consultation Policy. All nine Tribes received non-competitive funding through the Birth Through Five Literacy initiative, and Tribal input directly shaped agency rulemaking, funding models, and workforce development strategies. As DELC prepares for a leadership transition in the Office of Tribal Affairs and the full implementation of HB 2815 in 2026, the agency remains committed to honoring Tribal sovereignty, expanding access to culturally affirming early learning services, and building inclusive systems that reflect the strengths and priorities of Tribal communities.

Acknowledgements

The Office of Tribal Affairs extends its gratitude to the Nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations of Oregon for their enduring partnership, guidance, and trust. Your leadership continues to shape and strengthen our shared efforts to build a more equitable and culturally grounded early learning system.

We also thank the Tribal Advisory Committee for its steadfast commitment and invaluable contributions to the development and successful passage of the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund, and to the advancement of DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy. Your voices have been instrumental in ensuring that our work reflects the priorities, sovereignty, and cultural values of Tribal communities.

To our state agency partners, including the Oregon Department of Human Services, Oregon Department of Education, and Oregon Health Authority, thank you for your continued collaboration and alignment in support of Tribal children and families.

We are especially grateful to DELC leadership and program teams for their unwavering dedication to honoring Tribal sovereignty and fostering meaningful government-to-government relationships. Your commitment to culturally responsive, inclusive, and community-driven approaches has made a lasting impact across the state.

Together, we are building a future where every Tribal child and family is seen, supported, and celebrated.

Office of Tribal Affairs

Office of Tribal Affairs

The Office of Tribal Affairs at the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) serves as the agency's central hub for fostering and sustaining government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. Grounded in ORS 182.162–182.168 and Executive Order 96-30, the Office ensures that Tribal sovereignty is respected and that Tribal voices meaningfully inform early learning policies, programs, and funding decisions.

Mission

To honor and uphold Tribal sovereignty by embedding culturally responsive, community-driven practices into DELIC's early learning and care systems, ensuring that Native children and families are seen, supported, and celebrated.

Core Responsibilities

- Lead government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations on agency actions that may impact Tribal communities.
- Coordinate implementation of the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund established by House Bill 2815, including support for the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA).
- Support Tribal early learning programs and priorities, including language revitalization, culturally grounded curriculum, and professional development.
- Provide training and guidance to DELIC staff on Tribal sovereignty, consultation procedures, and respectful engagement.
- Ensure agency-wide compliance with DELIC's Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures, including annual reporting and staff training.
- Embed Tribal perspectives into policy development, program design, and rulemaking processes.

Goals

- Strengthen and institutionalize government-to-government consultation across all DELIC divisions.
- Expand access to culturally affirming early learning services for Tribal children and families.
- Promote equity and self-determination through direct, flexible funding and collaborative program design.
- Build staff capacity to engage respectfully and effectively with Tribal partners.
- Ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in Tribal engagement.

Key Staff

Paulina Whitehat, Dinè – Interim Tribal Affairs Director

Email: Paulina.Whitehat@delc.oregon.gov

Leads the Office of Tribal Affairs and oversees implementation of the Tribal Consultation Policy, coordination of OTELA, and strategic Tribal engagement.

Dana Castano, Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa – Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) Liaison

Email: Dana.Castano@delc.oregon.gov

Serves as the primary point of contact for OTELA and supports Tribal partners in accessing funding and shaping statewide early learning initiatives.

Dorianne (Dori) Houser – Tribal Affairs Coordinator

Email: Dorianne.Houser@delc.oregon.gov

Coordinates consultation logistics, maintains Tribal contact lists, and supports staff training and communication efforts.

Key Highlights

Passage of House Bill 2815 – Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund

In a historic milestone for Tribal early learning in Oregon, the Legislature passed House Bill 2815 in June 2025, establishing the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. Co-created through years of consultation and collaboration with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon, this legislation replaces the previously envisioned Tribal Early Learning Hub with a sovereign-centered model that honors direct government-to-government relationships.

Key features of the Plan and Fund include:

- Direct, flexible funding to each Tribe to support locally designed early learning systems.
- Investment in language revitalization, culturally grounded education, and professional development for Tribal educators.
- A framework modeled after the successful American Indian/Alaska Native Student Success Plan.
- Creation of the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA), a Tribal-led advisory body guiding DELC's implementation and ensuring Tribal leadership remains central.

The passage of HB 2815 reflects DELC's and the State of Oregon's deep commitment to Tribal sovereignty, equity, and removing systemic barriers to support Native children and families. More information is available on the DELC Tribal Early Learning webpage.

Policy Development: DELC developed and adopted its first Tribal Consultation Policy, laying the foundation for consistent, respectful, and accountable government-to-government engagement with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon.

Sustained Funding Access: All nine Tribes received continuous, non-competitive funding through the Birth Through Five Literacy initiative via intergovernmental grant agreements, supporting language revitalization and early literacy efforts.

Staff Capacity Building: Nearly 100% of DELC staff completed Tribal Affairs training in 2025, strengthening internal understanding of Tribal sovereignty and consultation responsibilities.

Strategic Partnerships: DELC partnered with the Northwest Native Chamber to connect Tribes with technical assistance for accessing child care infrastructure funding, contributing to a report that highlighted Tribal Nations' needs.

Consultation Impact: Formal Tribal consultation influenced key agency actions, including rulemaking for Birth Through Five Literacy, workforce registry development, and Tribal funding distribution models.

Progress Toward Strategic Goals: Significant strides were made toward DELC's Strategic Plan Goal 2: Tribal Sovereignty, including improvements in data practices, contractual processes, external guidance, and dedicated Tribal funding.

Celebration of Partnership: DELC and Tribal partners celebrated the passage of HB 2815 with a ceremonial signing by Governor Kotek at the Annual Government-to-Government Tribal-State Summit, honoring shared commitment to Tribal sovereignty and early learning equity.



Left: Governor Kotek signs HB 2815. Pictured above from left to right, front row: Representative Tawna Sanchez (Shoshone-Bannock, Ute), Dana Castano, DELC (Turtle Mountain Chippewa), Marsha Frost (Coquille Indian Tribe), Becky Cantrell (Coquille Indian Tribe); back row; Senate President Rob Wagner, Cooper Brown, DELC, Tribal Council Secretary-Treasurer Jackie Chambers (Coquille Indian Tribe)

Below, left to right: Following the ceremonial signing of HB 2815 and SB 841, Tribal representatives, state lawmakers, and staff pose with Governor Kotek at the Annual Government-to-Government Tribal-State Summit held at the KoKwel Casino Resort in Coos Bay, Oregon in October 2025.

Julie Siestroom speaks to attendees of the Annual Government-to-Government Tribal-State Summit about the importance of House Bill 2815, prior to Governor Kotek's ceremonial bill signing, in October 2025.



Agency Overview

Purpose: The Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) launched as a state agency on July 1, 2023, pursuant to ORS 326.430, to ensure that every child in this state is given the best opportunity to succeed in school, work and life. DELC has three primary responsibilities:

1. Oversee a range of programs that support child development, promote early learning, and strengthen family supports. The agency focuses on a child's earliest years, from prenatal to kindergarten and also serves school-aged children in child care settings.
2. Support the early care and education workforce by offering professional learning and technical assistance.
3. Provide child care licensing and health and safety monitoring.

Mission and Vision: Our mission is to foster coordinated, culturally appropriate, and family-centered services that recognize and respect the strengths and needs of all children, families, and early learning and care professionals in order to make progress toward our vision:

All children, families, early care and education professionals, and communities are supported and empowered to thrive.

Goals and Objectives

We have six goals guiding our work:

1. **Access:** All families have access to high-quality (culturally responsive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate) and affordable early learning and care that meets their needs.
2. **Tribal Sovereignty:** DELC honors and recognizes the sovereignty of the Nine Federally Recognized Tribal Nations within Oregon and ensures strong government-to-government relationships to benefit Tribal communities
3. **Infants and Toddlers:** All families with infants and toddlers are supported through early learning and care programs that recognize and meet their unique needs.
4. **Workforce:** The early learning and child care workforce is diverse, culturally responsive, highly qualified, and well compensated.
5. **Relationships:** DELC deepens community engagement and empowerment, sustains partnerships, and communicates effectively.
6. **Foundations:** DELC develops and improves operational foundations to efficiently serve Oregonians.

Looking Ahead

This past year DELC focused on supporting the Tribes in the development of the concept for the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund while also developing a Tribal Consultation policy for the agency, to help set a good foundation for strong relationships with the Tribes and supporting Tribal Sovereignty. This work culminated in the formal adoption of DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy in October 2025, which established clear expectations for respectful, government-to-government engagement. For full detail, the adopted policy is included as an appendix to this report.

Looking ahead, DELC will be focused on fulfilling its commitments to Tribes and continuing to support them in filling the early learning and care needs of their communities and people. As part of this work, DELC maintains an annually updated list of key individuals responsible for programs that affect Tribes, ensuring that designated staff across divisions are equipped to engage in meaningful consultation and uphold Tribal sovereignty. For more information, refer to the table in the appendix of this report. In particular, DELC is looking forward to working with the tribes with the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance in developing the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund, as well as supporting the work of the Tribes through noncompetitive funding related to Birth to Five Literacy, Preschool Promise, and Oregon Prekindergarten. DELC will also be focused on completing the implementation of its Tribal Consultation Policy, to ensure meaningful consultation with the Tribes about any matters that may impact them.

The DELC Executive Team includes:

Name	Role	Email
Alyssa Chatterjee	Director of Early Learning Systems	Alyssa.Chatterjee@delc.oregon.gov
Carey McCann	Interim Director of Early Learning System until January 2026, and the Early Childhood Policy & Strategy Director	Carey.McCann@delc.oregon.gov
Cooper Brown	Deputy Director of Operations	Cooper.Brown@delc.oregon.gov
Joel Metlen	Deputy Director of Programs	Joel.Metlen@delc.oregon.gov
Alicia Gardiner	Child Care Licensing Director	Alicia.Gardiner@delc.oregon.gov
Emily Fiocco	Operations Director/Chief Auditor	Emily.Fiocco@delc.oregon.gov
Heather Thomas	Human Resources Director	Heather.Thomas@delc.oregon.gov
Kate Gonsalves	Communications Director	Kate.Gonsalves@delc.oregon.gov
Koffi Dessou	Social Equity Director	Koffi.Dessou@delc.oregon.gov
Paulina Whitehat	Tribal Affairs Director	Paulina.Whitehat@delc.oregon.gov

Adoption of the Tribal Consultation Policy

In October 2025, the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) reached a significant milestone with the formal adoption of its Tribal Consultation Policy (Policy #58800-100-106-101). This policy establishes clear expectations for engaging in meaningful, government-to-government consultation with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. It reflects DELC's commitment to honoring Tribal sovereignty and strengthening collaborative relationships rooted in trust, respect, and mutual understanding.

The Tribal Consultation Policy is grounded in the principles of government-to-government engagement, Tribal sovereignty, and culturally responsive collaboration. It affirms DELC's legal and ethical responsibility to consult with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon on agency actions that may affect Tribal communities. Grounded in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS 182.162–182.168) and Executive Order 96-30, the policy provides a comprehensive framework for identifying Tribal-impacted programs, coordinating timely and respectful consultation, and ensuring agency-wide compliance with state law. The policy emphasizes early, informed, and respectful engagement; recognizes Tribal appointed officials as decision-makers; and promotes mutual understanding through transparent communication. DELC commits to maintaining a list of responsible staff, providing ongoing training, and integrating Tribal perspectives into policy and program development. Its adoption marks a new chapter in DELC's efforts to institutionalize culturally responsive practices and uphold the principles of Tribal self-determination across all programs and services.

The development of the policy was guided by a collaborative process that included:

- Extensive input from all nine Tribes of Oregon through consultation meetings, written feedback, and cluster convenings.
- Engagement with DELC leadership and program staff via multiple information sessions and feedback opportunities.
- Alignment with best practices from peer agencies, including the Oregon Health Authority, Department of Human Services, and Department of Education.

Following adoption, DELC launched the implementation phase, which includes:

- Finalizing the Tribal Consultation Procedures document, incorporating final staff feedback by end of November 2025.
- Distributing the finalized policy and procedures to all nine Tribes of Oregon by the end of December 2025.
- Initiating comprehensive staff training to ensure all DELC employees understand:
 - The purpose and process of Tribal consultation.
 - How to initiate and participate in consultation.
 - The foundational principles of Tribal sovereignty.

Training is delivered through live virtual sessions that foster dialogue and engagement, as well as recorded modules for ongoing access. Additionally, the Foundations of Tribal Affairs training is being updated to align with the new consultation procedures and definitions.

This work reflects DELC's commitment to embedding respectful, consistent, and culturally informed consultation practices across all divisions. The Office of Tribal Affairs will continue to lead and support

implementation through tools, resources, and ongoing evaluation to ensure the policy is fully integrated into agency operations.

Key Individuals Responsible for Programs that Affect Tribes

The Department of Early Learning and Care maintains an annually updated list of staff responsible for developing and implementing programs that affect the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. This list includes representatives from each division whose work intersects with Tribal communities, programs, or priorities.

The Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) is responsible for coordinating and maintaining this list. OTA works closely with DELC managers and directors to identify agency actions that may impact Tribes and to ensure that designated staff are equipped to engage in meaningful consultation. These individuals are required to participate in specialized training on Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures and serve as key points of contact for Tribal engagement within their respective divisions.

As outlined in DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures:

- DELC managers and directors are responsible for reviewing and approving Tribal Consultation recommendations and annual survey responses.
- All staff are expected to coordinate with OTA when initiating or contributing to agency actions that may affect Tribes.
- The Early Learning System Director (or designee) leads government-to-government consultation efforts and ensures that Tribal input is meaningfully considered in decision-making.

This coordinated approach ensures that Tribal perspectives are integrated into DELC's program development and implementation, and that agency actions reflect the values of respect, collaboration, and Tribal sovereignty.

DELC Programs Supporting Tribal Early Learning and Care

Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund (TELPF)

Empowering Tribes to lead culturally grounded early learning systems.

Purpose: Established through HB 2815, TELPF replaces the Tribal Early Learning Hub with a sovereign-centered model that provides direct, flexible funding to Tribes. It supports language revitalization, early learning, and professional development.

Program Role: TELPF provides Tribes with autonomy to design and implement early learning services tailored to their communities. It strengthens Tribal-State partnerships and ensures that Tribal priorities guide statewide early learning strategies.

Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA)

Tribal-led advisory body shaping early learning policy and funding.

Purpose: OTELA is a formal advisory committee created by HB 2815 to guide DELC's implementation of the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. It includes up to two representatives from each Tribe.

Program Role: OTELA ensures Tribal leadership informs decisions on funding distribution, program design, and culturally responsive service delivery. It elevates Tribal voices in statewide early learning governance.

Birth Through Five Literacy Program

Supporting Tribal language revitalization and early literacy.

Purpose: This program provides funding to Tribes for culturally specific early literacy initiatives, including language immersion, curriculum development, and professional development.

Program Role: All nine Tribes participate through intergovernmental agreements. The program supports Tribal sovereignty by funding language preservation and literacy efforts rooted in Tribal culture and community needs.

Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)

Comprehensive early care and education for Tribal families.

Purpose: OPK offers high-quality, culturally responsive services from prenatal to age five, aligned with Head Start standards. A Tribal set-aside is included in the upcoming funding cycle.

Program Role: OPK supports Tribal families through direct contracts or partnerships, expanding access to early learning and family support services. It includes flexibilities for Tribes and aims to increase Tribal OPK grantees.

Preschool Promise (PSP)

No cost, high-quality preschool for eligible Tribal children.

Purpose: PSP is a publicly funded preschool program serving children ages 3–5. DELC has awarded intergovernmental grants to three Tribes and is working to preserve Tribal-specific slots.

Program Role: PSP expands access to early education in Tribal communities, supporting school readiness and culturally relevant learning environments.

Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEF)

Investing in culturally specific early learning and family support.

Purpose: ECEF provides grants to support Tribal language preservation, parenting education, and kindergarten transition programs.

Program Role: Three Tribes currently participate. The fund helps close opportunity gaps and supports early learning rooted in Tribal culture and language.

Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF)

Building Tribal early learning facilities and capacity.

Purpose: CCIF provides capital funding for child care infrastructure projects. DELC partners with the Northwest Native Chamber to support Tribal applicants.

Program Role: CCIF helps Tribes expand physical capacity for child care services, supporting long-term sustainability and culturally appropriate environments.

Child Care Substitutes of Oregon (CCSO)

Strengthening Tribal early learning workforce capacity.

Purpose: CCSO recruits and trains substitute child care providers. DELC is exploring ways to include Tribal programs and representatives.

Program Role: CCSO aims to support Tribal early learning programs by providing trained substitutes and culturally responsive staffing solutions.

Every Child Belongs (ECB)

Preventing suspension and expulsion in early learning settings.

Purpose: ECB provides mental health consultation, technical assistance, and data support to reduce disparities in early learning discipline practices.

Program Role: ECB supports Tribal programs by promoting inclusive, trauma-informed practices and reducing barriers to equitable early learning experiences.

By the Numbers

9 Tribes participating in the **Birth Through Five Literacy Program**

(All Nine Federally Recognized Tribes received direct, non-competitive funding through intergovernmental agreements.)

\$72,522 allocated per Tribe for the **Tribal Early Learning Fund (TELF)** in the **2025–2027 biennium**

(With amendments planned for 2027 to add funding for the second half of the grant period.)

3 Tribes currently receiving **Preschool Promise** intergovernmental grants

(Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and The Klamath Tribes.)

3 Tribes participating in the **Early Childhood Equity Fund (ECEF)**

(Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians.)

2 Tribes participated in formal consultation on the **Birth Through Five Literacy Ruleset**

(Burns Paiute Tribe and Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.)

22 FTE Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) consultants hired statewide

(Supporting Every Child Belongs initiative.)

88 support requests submitted through **ECB Connect** during its initial testing phase

(Across three Early Access regions between July 31 and November 30, 2025.)

6 additional regions added to ECB Connect in November 2025

(Expanding access to technical assistance and mental health consultation.)

\$3 million in OPK Tribal set-aside funding available in the upcoming 2026 Request for Applications

(Out of a total \$19 million OPK funding pool.)

50 Preschool Promise slots preserved for Tribal communities

(Pending formal consultation and access process development.)

5 Tribes awarded Child Care Infrastructure Funds during the highly competitive first two rounds administered by Business Oregon in coordination with DELC. All nine (9) Tribes received Technical Assistance from the Northwest Native Chamber, contracted by DELC to provide tailored support to Tribal Governments and providers. A third funding round was launched in fall 2025, with awards anticipated in early 2026.

Looking Ahead

As DELC continues to implement and refine its programs, each division is actively examining where and how the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon can be meaningfully included. This work is not one-size-fits-all; each program has unique opportunities to engage with Tribes based on its purpose, scope, and community impact. By maintaining a coordinated approach and centering Tribal sovereignty, DELC is committed to expanding access, strengthening partnerships, and ensuring that Tribal children and families are supported through culturally responsive and community-driven early learning systems.

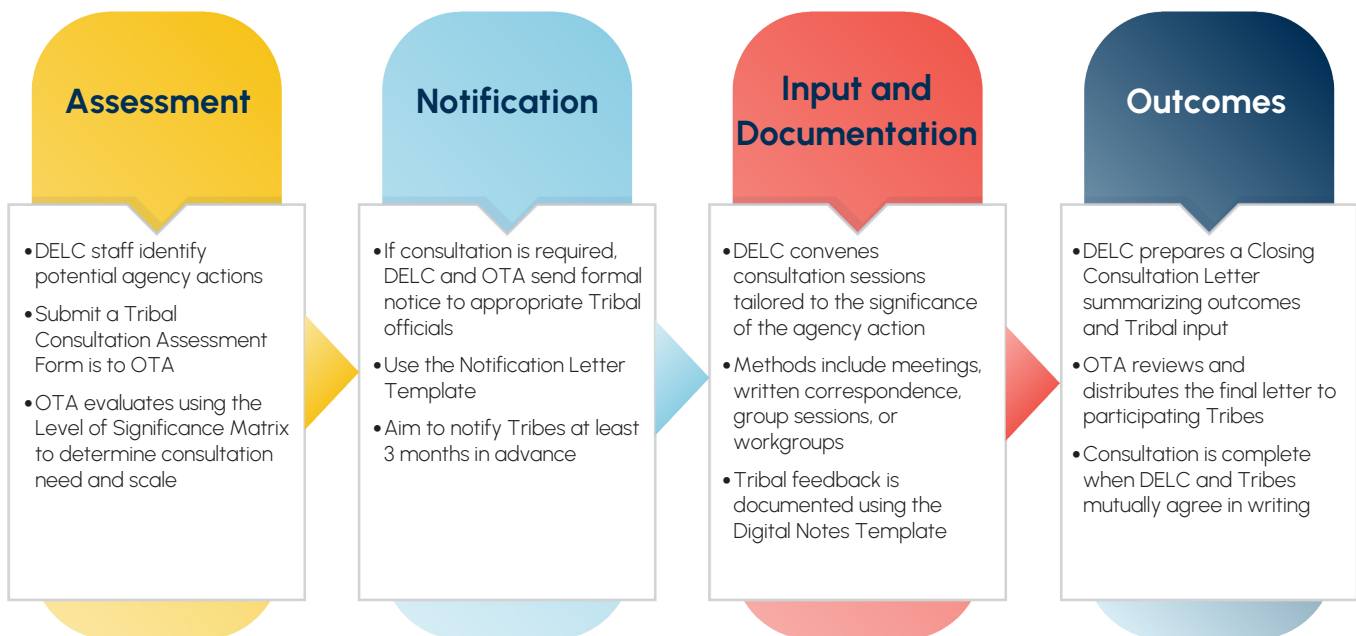
Process for Identifying Tribal Impacted Programs

The Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) has established a structured and proactive process for identifying agency actions and programs that may impact the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. This process is designed to ensure that consultation is initiated early, conducted respectfully, and scaled appropriately to the significance of the proposed action.

To determine whether an agency action may affect Tribes, DELC staff complete a Tribal Consultation Assessment Form, which is reviewed by the Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA). The OTA uses a Level of Significance Matrix to evaluate the potential impact and determine the appropriate consultation method.

Overview of the Tribal Consultation Process

DELC's Tribal Consultation Process is structured into four distinct phases to ensure meaningful engagement with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon. It begins with an internal assessment to determine if an agency action may impact Tribes, followed by formal notification at least 90 days in advance. Consultation meetings are then convened to gather and consider Tribal input, and the process concludes with a Closing Consultation Letter that documents outcomes and affirms mutual agreement.



Phase 1: Assessment

DELC staff identify potential agency actions that may impact the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon. A Tribal Consultation Assessment Form is submitted to the OTA, which evaluated the significance of the action using the Level of Significance Matrix. This step ensures that consultation is initiated early and appropriately scaled.

Phase 2: Notification

If consultation is warranted, DELC staff, in coordinating with OTA, prepare and send a formal Notification Letter to Tribal officials. This letter is ideally sent at least 90 days in advance of the proposed action and includes a 30-day response window to schedule consultation meetings.

Phase 3: Input & Documentation

Consultation meetings are convened using methods tailored to the significance of the Agency Action. DELC staff document Tribal input using standardized tools such as the Digital Notes Template, ensuring that feedback is accurately captured and considered in agency decision-making.

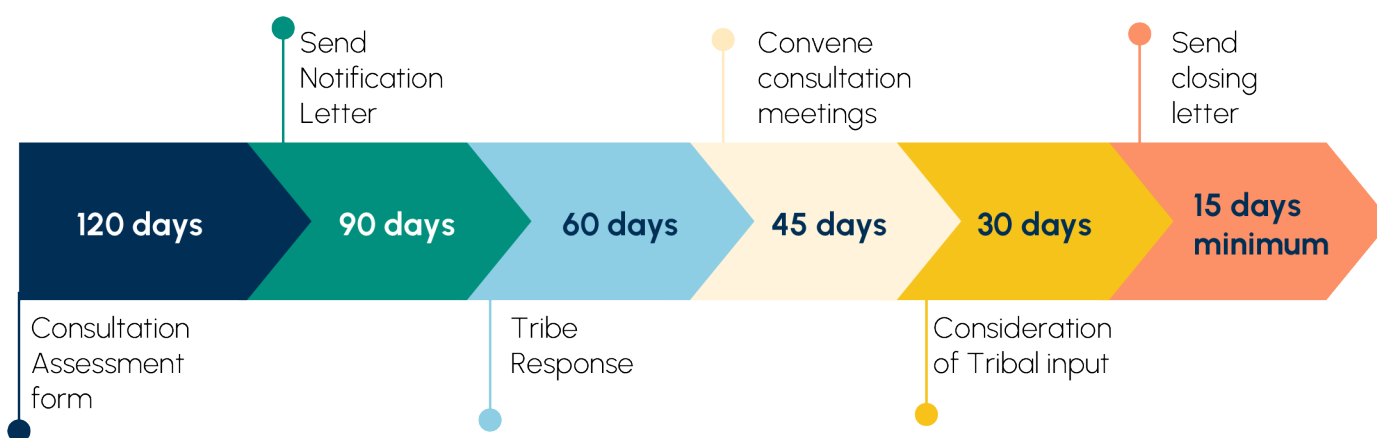
Phase 4: Outcomes

Following consultation, DELC prepares a Closing Consultation Letter summarizing the outcomes and how Tribal input influenced the agency's decisions. The process is considered complete only when both DELC and the participating Tribes mutually agree in writing that consultation has concluded.

Consultation Timeline Overview

To uphold DELC's commitment to early and respectful engagement with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon, the Tribal Consultation Policy outlines a proactive, structured timeline for consultation. This timeline ensures that Tribal governments have adequate time to review, respond to, and influence agency actions that may impact their communities.

Tribal Consultation Timeline: Minimum Timeframes for Agency Action



The consultation process begins with the identification of an agency action and the submission of a Consultation Assessment Form to the OTA at least 120 days before the proposed action is finalized. Following OTA's evaluation, a Notification Letter is sent to the affected Tribes, ideally 90 days in advance, requesting a response within 30 days to initiate consultation meetings.

Consultation meetings should be convened no later than 45 days prior to implementation, allowing DELC staff to document Tribal input and consider recommendations. At least 15 days before the agency action is

finalized, DELC sends a Closing Consultation Letter summarizing outcomes and confirming the conclusion of the consultation process.

This timeline reflects DELC's shift from reactive to proactive consultation, reinforcing its dedication to meaningful government-to-government relationships and honoring Tribal sovereignty.

This process ensures that DELC's programs and policies are developed in partnership with Tribal governments, in alignment with the principles of government-to-government relations and Tribal sovereignty. It also supports transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in how DELC engages with Tribal partners.

Training Provided

Training on Tribal Consultation and Government-to-Government Relations

In alignment with ORS 182.166(e), the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) has implemented a comprehensive training framework to ensure all staff understand and uphold the principles of Tribal sovereignty and government-to-government consultation.

All DELC employees are required to complete the Foundations of Tribal Affairs training:

- New Employees: Must complete the training within 90 days of hire.
- All Employees: Must complete the training annually.
- Designated Staff (e.g., those in policy, legal, fiscal, grant management, procurement, and program leadership roles): Must complete additional training on the Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures, as determined by program managers and directors.

As part of the onboarding process, the Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) provides a live overview presentation that introduces new staff to:

- The role and responsibilities of the Office of Tribal Affairs and the Tribal Affairs Director.
- The Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures, including DELC's legal obligations under ORS 182.162–182.168 and Executive Order 96-30.
- The importance of Tribal sovereignty, respectful engagement, and the impact of DELC programs on Tribal communities.
- The Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund (HB 2815) and DELC's role in its implementation.

Training Delivery Methods Include:

- On-demand modules are available through DELC's internal learning system.
- Live virtual Q&A sessions facilitated by OTA to encourage dialogue and deepen understanding.
- Monthly OTA Office Hours and OTA Newsletters to support ongoing learning and engagement.

Integration into Onboarding:

- The Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures are embedded into DELC's onboarding process.
- Supervisors ensure new staff receive timely access to required training and materials.
- OTA's presentation is a key component of onboarding, helping staff understand how their roles intersect with Tribal engagement.

Recordkeeping and Continuous Improvement:

- OTA maintains training records and monitors completion rates.
- Feedback from participants and Tribal partners is regularly collected and used to improve training content and delivery.
- Training materials are updated to reflect changes in policy, procedures, and Tribal priorities.

Training Participation Data

Since the launch of the Tribal Affairs Foundations training on November 1, 2024, a total of 433 DELC staff members have completed the course. Of those, 206 out of 358 staff members (approximately 58%) completed the training between January 1 and December 5, 2025. This strong participation rate reflects DELC's commitment to institutionalizing culturally responsive practices and ensuring staff are equipped to uphold government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. The training serves as a foundational component of DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy implementation and supports agency-wide alignment with Tribal engagement principles.

This training infrastructure supports DELC's commitment to institutionalizing respectful, informed, and culturally responsive engagement with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon.

Staff Notification of ORS Provisions and Tribal Consultation Policy

In accordance with ORS 182.166(f), the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) ensures that all employees are informed of the provisions of ORS 182.162–182.168 and the agency's Tribal Consultation Policy through a multi-channel communication strategy coordinated by the Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA).

Notification Channels Include:

- All-staff email announcements regarding policy updates and training requirements.
- Internal newsletters, including the OTA Newsletter, which highlights key developments, resources, and upcoming engagement opportunities.
- Supervisor briefings to ensure team-level awareness and accountability.
- A dedicated intranet page (DELC SharePoint: Office of Tribal Affairs) that houses the Tribal Consultation Policy, procedures, training materials, and resource links.

Frequency and Content of Updates:

- Policy and procedure updates are communicated as needed, with major revisions shared broadly across the agency.
- Monthly OTA Office Hours (2nd Wednesday, 10–11 AM) provide a regular forum for staff to ask questions and receive updates.
- New staff onboarding presentations include an overview of OTA's role, the Tribal Affairs Director's responsibilities, and DELC's legal obligations under ORS 182.162–182.168 and Executive Order 96–30.

Access to Policy Documents and Training Materials:

- All materials, including the Foundations of Tribal Affairs training, consultation templates, and guidance documents, are available via DELC's internal learning system and OTA's SharePoint site.
- Staff are encouraged to explore additional resources such as the Essential Understandings of Native

Americans in Oregon, SB 13 Tribal History/Shared History curriculum, and Executive Order 96-30 to deepen their understanding of Tribal sovereignty and history.

This comprehensive notification strategy ensures that DELC staff are equipped with the knowledge and tools necessary to engage respectfully and effectively with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon.

DELC Engagement

The Department of Early Learning and Care continues to prioritize meaningful government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon. Through formal consultation, collaborative planning, and culturally responsive program design, DELC has worked alongside Tribal partners to co-create policies, distribute flexible funding, and elevate Tribal leadership in statewide early learning systems. These efforts reflect DELC's commitment to honoring Tribal sovereignty, integrating Tribal perspectives into decision-making, and supporting Native children and families through equitable, community-driven approaches.

Tribal Consultation Policy Adoption and Implementation

This policy formalizes DELC's commitment to early, respectful, and structured consultation with Tribes, ensuring Tribal voices are meaningfully included in decisions that affect their communities. The policy was developed through extensive input from all Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon and incorporates best practices from other state agencies to reduce administrative burden and promote consistency.



Above: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in October 2025. OTELA Liaison, members of the Northwest Native Chamber Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance team, and the CTWS Education branch gather in front of the future site for a language immersion early childhood and multipurpose center. The future site is located atop a bluff, with views of the valleys and neighboring hillsides, adjacent to the Warm Springs K-8 Academy in Warm Springs, Oregon

Launch of the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA)

OTELA creates a formal, ongoing advisory body where Tribal representatives can guide DELC's early learning policies and funding decisions, ensuring Tribal priorities are centered. DELC invited each Tribe to appoint two representatives to OTELA, with the option to also designate them as Tribal consultation representatives. Several Tribes have already submitted appointments.

Tribal Early Learning Fund Grants

These grants provide direct, flexible funding to Tribes to design and implement culturally grounded early learning programs tailored to their communities. Each Tribe received \$72,522 through intergovernmental agreements. Tribes can use their federally negotiated indirect rate and are required to report annually on progress.

Birth Through Five Literacy Program Expansion

The program supports Tribal language revitalization and early literacy, helping preserve cultural heritage and improve educational outcomes for Tribal children. All Nine Tribes received non-competitive grants. DELC conducted formal consultation with two Tribes on the proposed ruleset, incorporating feedback to expand eligibility and support culturally relevant programming.

Tribal Participation in Rulemaking

Including Tribal perspectives in rulemaking ensures that policies are equitable, culturally responsive, and reflective of Tribal expertise. The Klamath Tribes and others provided input on the Workforce Registry ruleset, advocating for recognition of Tribal work experience and authority to assess competencies. Their feedback was integrated into the final rule language.

Caring Communities Tour – CTUIR Site Visit

Site visits build trust and deepen understanding of Tribal early learning environments, showcasing successful models and informing DELC's statewide strategies. DELC toured the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's early learning center and Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center, witnessing language immersion, cultural curriculum, and community-led wellness practices.



Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) Tribal Engagement

CCIF helps Tribes expand physical capacity for child care services, supporting long-term sustainability and culturally appropriate environments. DELC partnered with the Northwest Native Chamber to provide technical assistance and conducted outreach with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Burns Paiute Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.

Tribal-Specific Program Opportunities

These initiatives increase access to high-quality early learning for Tribal families and ensure Tribal programs are adequately funded and supported. DELC is preparing to release a \$3 million OPK Tribal set-aside and preserve 50 Preschool Promise slots for Tribes. Three Tribes currently participate in the Early Childhood Equity Fund, which supports Tribal language preservation and family engagement.

Looking Ahead

Engagement with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon is a vital component of DELC's work to build trust, foster collaboration, and ensure that Tribal voices shape the future of early learning. By listening deeply to Tribal priorities, witnessing community-led successes, and understanding the unique challenges faced by Tribal families, DELC is better positioned to align resources, policies, and programs that support Native children in thriving. These ongoing relationships guide DELC's efforts to create equitable, culturally grounded systems that reflect and respond to the strengths and needs of Tribal communities.

Tribal Consultations

Efforts to Promote Communication and Government-to-Government Relations

In alignment with ORS 182.166(d), the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) actively promotes government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon through formal consultation processes, collaborative planning, and ongoing communication.

DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures establish a structured framework for engagement, ensuring that Tribal governments are meaningfully involved in decisions that may affect their communities. In 2025, DELC conducted consultations on six (6) agency actions, including policy development, funding allocations, and program design.

Key Engagement Strategies Include:

- **Formal Consultations:** Conducted through meetings, written correspondence, group sessions, and workgroups, tailored to the significance of each Agency Action.
- **Advance Notification:** Tribes are notified of potential agency actions ideally three months in advance,



Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the Tribe's beautiful Plank House

using standardized templates and communication protocols.

- **Follow-Up Outreach:** If no response is received, DELC coordinates with the Office of Tribal Affairs to conduct respectful follow-up, honoring Tribal communication preferences.
- **Documentation and Transparency:** Tribal input is captured using digital notes and summarized in a Closing Consultation Letter, which outlines how feedback influenced agency decisions.

Role of the Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA): The Office of Tribal Affairs plays a central role in facilitating and coordinating all Tribal engagement efforts. OTA:

- Reviews consultation assessments and determines the level of significance.
- Supports staff in preparing for and conducting consultations.
- Maintains communication standards and Tribal contact lists.
- Oversees documentation and ensures that consultation outcomes are shared with Tribes.
- Leads the development of the annual report summarizing consultation activities, Tribal feedback, and agency responses.

These efforts reflect DELC's commitment to building and sustaining respectful, reciprocal relationships with Tribal governments and ensuring that Tribal voices shape the policies and programs that impact their communities.

Official Notification Letters Solicited

DELC Tribal Consultation Policy Follow-Up

March 11, 2025

In November 2024, DELC issued a formal Dear Tribal Leader Letter inviting government-to-government consultation with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon regarding the draft Tribal Consultation Policy and the Foundations of Tribal Affairs staff training initiative. In March 2025, DELC followed up on this request, specifically seeking Tribal feedback on rulemaking processes and Tribal data sovereignty. This follow-up was informed by input received during the January 2025 SB 770 Health and Human Services Cluster convening, as well as the March 2025 SB 770 Education Cluster convening. DELC's outreach aimed to ensure that Tribal perspectives were meaningfully incorporated into agency rulemaking and data governance practices, in alignment with the principles of Tribal sovereignty and government-to-government engagement.

Outcome: Input from the Tribes, such as priorities around administrative rules and noncompetitive funding were incorporated into DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures. These contributions helped shape a framework that reflects Tribal values and ensures consistent, respectful, and accountable engagement across all agency actions.

Tribal Early Learning Plan Funding Proposal

April 11, 2025

DELC issued a Dear Tribal Leader Letter requesting formal consultation regarding the proposed funding distribution method for the Tribal Early Learning Fund (TELF) for the 2025–2029 grant period. The letter outlined the Tribal Advisory Committee's recommendation to adopt a needs-based funding model and provided background on House Bill 2815, which would establish the TELF and the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) as the advisory body. DELC shared funding estimates, legislative updates, and distribution options, noting that seven Tribes preferred the needs-based model while two favored equal distribution. The letter emphasized the importance of Tribal input in shaping equitable funding mechanisms and invited Tribal leaders to participate in consultation by May 12, 2025.

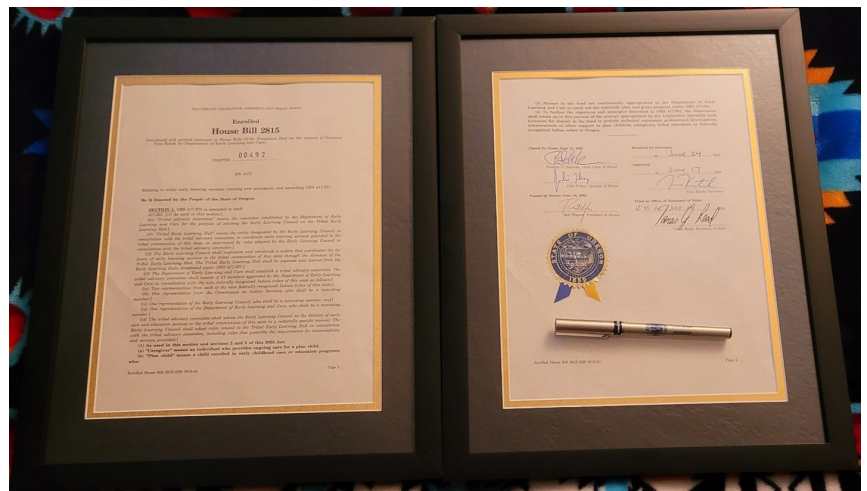
Outcome: DELC initiated formal consultation with Tribal leaders to gather input on a proposed funding distribution model for the Tribal Early Learning Fund (TELF), as recommended by the Tribal Advisory Committee. While most Tribes supported a Needs-Based approach, some expressed concerns about potential delays in funding access and preferred Equal Distribution if legislative allocations were limited. This feedback informed DELC's decision-making and highlighted the importance of aligning funding strategies with Tribal capacity and timelines.

OTELA Representative Appointments

July 8, 2025

DELC issued a Dear Tribal Leader Letter inviting each of the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon to appoint up to two representatives to serve on the newly established Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA). Created through House Bill 2815, OTELA is the formal advisory body charged with guiding the development and implementation of the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund (TELP/F). Appointees are expected to have expertise in early childhood education, Tribal language and culture, family engagement, and related areas. OTELA will advise DELC on culturally responsive service delivery, funding distribution, and program development for Native children ages birth to eight (8). Tribes were asked to submit appointment forms indicating whether their representatives are authorized to serve solely in an advisory capacity or also to engage in Tribal consultation on behalf of the Tribe.

Outcome: Tribal feedback, including requests for clarity on the role and appointment process for the OTELA, led DELC to develop and distribute a side-by-side comparison of OTELA and the former Tribal Advisory Committee, along with updated appointment materials. As a result of ongoing consultation six of the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes have formally appointed representatives to OTELA, with others actively engaged in internal processes to finalize appointments. DELC continues to follow up with Tribes to



Above: A signed and framed copy of House Bill 2815 (2025), the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund displayed on a Tribal blanket, along with the pen Governor Tina Kotek used to sign the bill.

support formal appointments and ensure that Tribal representatives are meaningfully included in shaping the advisory body's structure and meeting schedule.

Oregon Early Childhood Professional Registry and New Rulemaking

July 30, 2025

DELC issued a Dear Tribal Leader Letter requesting formal consultation regarding proposed revisions to the Oregon Early Childhood Professional Registry and new rulemaking required by House Bill 2991 (2023). In partnership with the Oregon Center for Career Development (OCCD), DELC is redesigning the Registry to better recognize diverse pathways to professional competency, including Tribal knowledge and experience. The agency also plans to adopt administrative rules by December 31, 2025, to reduce barriers to workforce entry and improve credentialing processes. DELC invited Tribal leaders to provide feedback or request consultation by August 30, 2025, to ensure Indigenous perspectives are meaningfully incorporated into the Registry framework and rulemaking efforts.

Outcome: Tribal feedback received through written responses and participation in the Rules Advisory Committee (RAC) directly influenced revisions to the Workforce Ruleset, including the incorporation of Tribal authority to approve Tribal knowledge applications. DELC has adopted these changes, and additional Tribal input is being integrated into implementation planning, with vote recordings and meeting materials now available on the agency's rulemaking webpage.

1. The recording of the Early Learning Council's December 10, 2025 meeting is available to for public viewing on [DELC's YouTube Channel](#).
2. [Vote Recordings](#) for all recently adopted rules are now available on DELC's Rulemaking Page, where the updated rules have been moved to the "Recently Adopted" section for easy access.

Tribal Early Learning Plan Funding Proposal - Updates

August 7, 2025

DELC provided an important update to Tribal leaders regarding the implementation of House Bill 2815, which formally establishes the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund (TELPF) and the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA). The bill was signed into law by Governor Kotek on July 17, 2025, and will take effect on January 1, 2026. DELC clarified that the absence of an emergency clause delays the law's implementation but confirmed that funding for the 2025–2027 Tribal early learning grants has been allocated and will be released as planned. Tribes were encouraged to continue appointing representatives to OTELA and were invited to reconvene the Tribal Advisory Committee (TAC) for a final meeting in fall 2025. DELC reaffirmed its commitment to transparency and partnership, acknowledging the oversight and pledging to improve internal legislative processes moving forward.

Outcome: Following the passage of House Bill 2815, DELC updated Tribal leaders on the implementation timeline and confirmed that TELF funding for the 2025–2027 biennium would be released as planned, despite the absence of an emergency clause. In response to Tribal concerns about delays and equitable access, DELC moved forward with an Equal Distribution model for the current funding cycle and committed to revisiting Needs-Based allocation once the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) is formally established. These updates reflect DELC's ongoing commitment to transparency, partnership, and responsive planning with Tribal Nations.

Birth Through Five Rulemaking

September 18, 2025

DELC issued a Dear Tribal Leader Letter inviting formal consultation regarding proposed Oregon Administrative Rules for the Birth Through Five Literacy Program. The ruleset, developed under House Bill 3198, includes a statutory mandate to support Tribal language revitalization efforts and outlines funding administration, eligibility criteria, and program definitions. DELC emphasized the importance of Tribal input in shaping the rulemaking process and provided multiple opportunities for engagement, including a Rules Advisory Committee meeting, public hearing, and comment period. Tribes were asked to confirm interest in consultation by October 19, 2025.

Outcome: Tribal input during consultation led DELC to revise the proposed Birth Through Five Literacy ruleset to ensure that Tribal Members residing out of state are eligible for program funding. DELC continues to engage with tribal partners to incorporate culturally relevant resources and uphold equitable access in early literacy programming.



Above: At the two-day planning session, Tribal representatives, NICWA, state agency and NAYA staff are hosted by the Oregon Department of Human Services to gather Tribal input and preferences to integrate into the state's Title IV-E Prevention Plan Amendment. Title IV-E is a federal funding stream which focuses on keeping children out of foster care by utilizing family preservation and prevention practices. ODHS passes through a small portion of Title IV-E dollars to DELC for use in early childhood home visiting efforts.

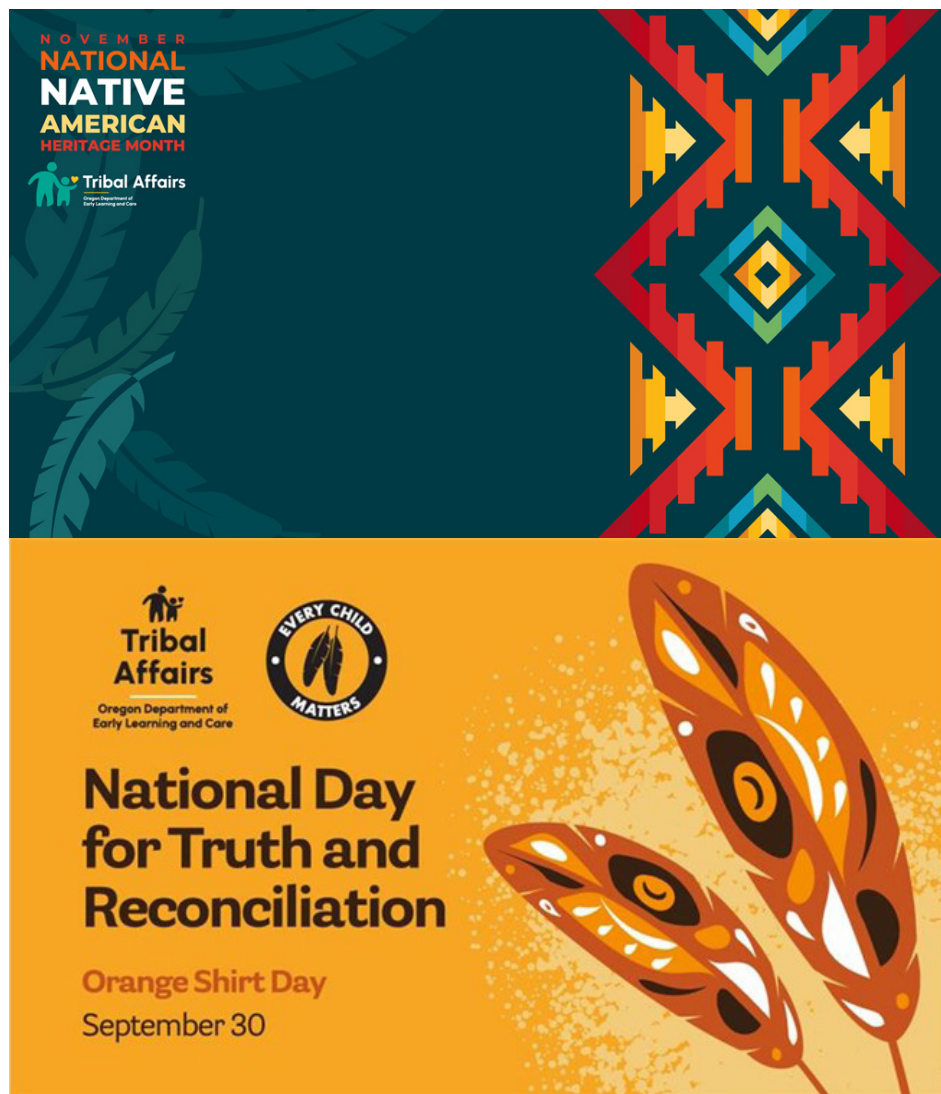
Below: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's new Early Childhood Education Center featuring part of the playground area. The Child Care Infrastructure Fund awarded \$2 million to the project.



Looking Ahead

As DELC continues to implement its Tribal Consultation Policy, the agency is committed to strengthening government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes. In 2026, DELC will focus on refining consultation practices to ensure they are timely, respectful, and rooted in Tribal sovereignty. This includes expanding staff training, improving internal coordination, and enhancing tools that support meaningful engagement. The launch of the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) and the implementation of House Bill 2815 mark a new chapter in DELC's partnership with Tribes, offering a formal structure for Tribal leadership to guide statewide early learning priorities.

While challenges remain, such as navigating complex agency actions, ensuring consistent staff readiness, and honoring diverse Tribal consultation preferences, DELC views these as opportunities for growth. As a young agency still building its internal capacity, DELC is learning how to embed culturally affirming practices across all divisions. By listening deeply to Tribal priorities and maintaining transparent, reciprocal communication, DELC aims to co-create early learning systems that reflect Tribal values, promote equity, and support Native children and families in thriving.



Above: DELC highlighted November as National Native American and Alaska Native Heritage Month. Throughout November, DELC promoted resources and opportunities to learn more about Native American history and the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon

Challenges & Future Goals

As a newly established agency, the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) continues to grow and evolve in its mission to support Oregon's children and families. In its second full year of operation, DELIC has made significant strides in building foundational systems and relationships, particularly with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon. However, as with any emerging agency, challenges remain.

One of the key challenges ahead is ensuring that all DELIC staff are equipped with the knowledge, tools, and cultural humility necessary to engage in meaningful, government-to-government relationships with Tribal Nations. While nearly 100% of staff have completed foundational Tribal Affairs training, DELIC recognizes the need for deeper learning and ongoing capacity building.

In 2026, DELIC will welcome a new Tribal Affairs Director, marking a significant leadership transition for the Office of Tribal Affairs. This change presents an opportunity to build upon the strong foundation established in prior years and to further advance DELIC's commitment to Tribal sovereignty, culturally responsive engagement, and collaborative early learning systems. The agency is dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition that maintains continuity, honors existing partnerships, and supports the evolving needs of Tribal communities across Oregon.

Looking ahead, DELIC will focus on the full implementation of House Bill 2815, which established the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund. This includes coordinating with the newly formed Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) to guide the development of a statewide plan that centers Tribal leadership, supports language revitalization, and provides direct, flexible funding to Tribes.

As DELIC continues to refine its Tribal Consultation Policy and Procedures, the agency remains dedicated to embedding respectful, consistent, and culturally responsive practices across all divisions. These efforts reflect DELIC's long-term commitment to upholding Tribal sovereignty, removing systemic barriers, and co-creating early learning systems where every Tribal child and family is supported and celebrated.



Above: The Celebrating Resilience and Wellness Event, co-hosted by the Oregon Health Authority and Governor's Office, held at the KoKwel Casino Resort, in October 2025 brought together Tribal representatives and state staff to learn and create. Activities included painting (as shown above), making traditional teas, smudge sprays, necklaces, learning about emergency management, traditional foods and emergency preparedness, as well as medicine bags, resiliency assessments, and more.

Conclusion

As DELC enters its third year as a state agency, the Office of Tribal Affairs remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening government-to-government relationships with the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon. In the coming year, DELC will focus on implementing the Tribal Early Learning Plan and Fund established by House Bill 2815, coordinating closely with the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) to ensure Tribal leadership guides statewide early learning priorities. The agency will also continue to expand culturally affirming early learning opportunities through sustained funding, strategic partnerships, and responsive program design.

Key priorities for 2026 include launching a comprehensive staff training plan to deepen understanding of Tribal sovereignty, consultation practices, and culturally grounded engagement. DELC will also support the leadership transition within the Office of Tribal Affairs, welcoming a new Tribal Affairs Director and ensuring continuity in Tribal partnerships. Through these efforts, DELC reaffirms its dedication to building equitable, inclusive systems that honor Tribal self-determination and uplift Native children, families, and communities across Oregon.

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Above, Julie Siestreem speaks to attendees of the Annual Government-to-Government Tribal-State Summit about the importance of House Bill 2815, prior to Governor Kotek's ceremonial bill signing, in October 2025.



Above, At the Annual Government-to-Government Tribal-State Summit, Shana McConville-Radford, Tribal Affairs Director for Governor Tina Kotek, facilitates a Tribal Leaders Roundtable discussion with elected leaders from federally recognized Tribes in Oregon who attended the event.

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Above, Left to Right: Following a site visit for the Child Care Infrastructure Fund, the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians Tribal Council member, DELC Tribal Advisory Committee Co-Chair, and Legislative Commission on Indian Services representative Julie Siestreem and DELC OTELA Liaison, Dana Castano in North Bend, Oregon

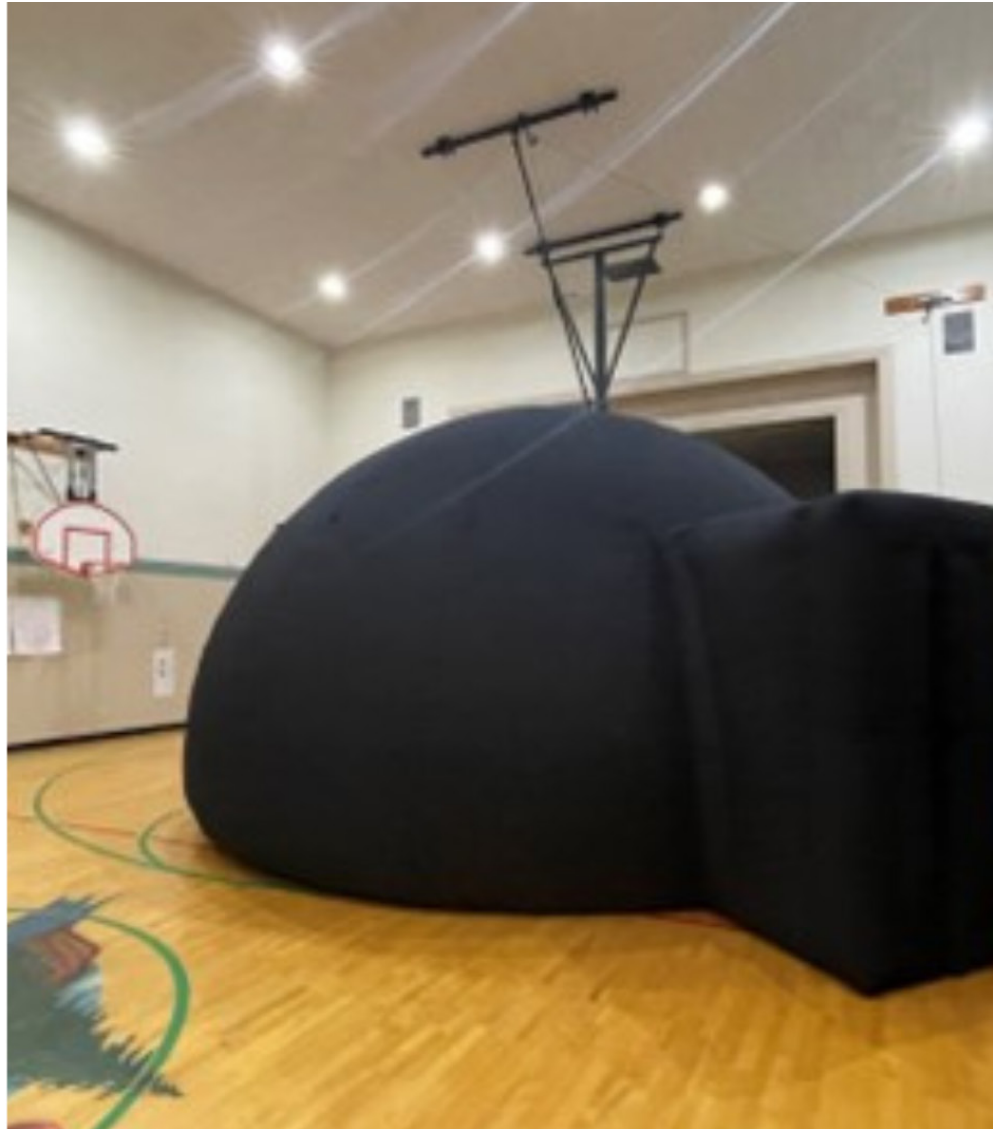
Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the Tribe's Plank House.

Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Klamath Tribes, May 2025.



Above: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians in February 2025. A display features traditional skirts, firs, and other materials showcased inside the Tribal Government Office.

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Above, Left to Right: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the Tribe's Plank House.

Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the Tribe's Learning Center and Head Start Program gym. Shown above, an inflatable planetarium is set up for an interactive learning experience for the Head Start children.

Below: Tribal representatives, National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) consultants, state agency and Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) staff gather at NAYA in Northeast Portland. DELC's OTELA Liaison attended the two-day strategic planning session hosted by the Oregon Department of Human Services.



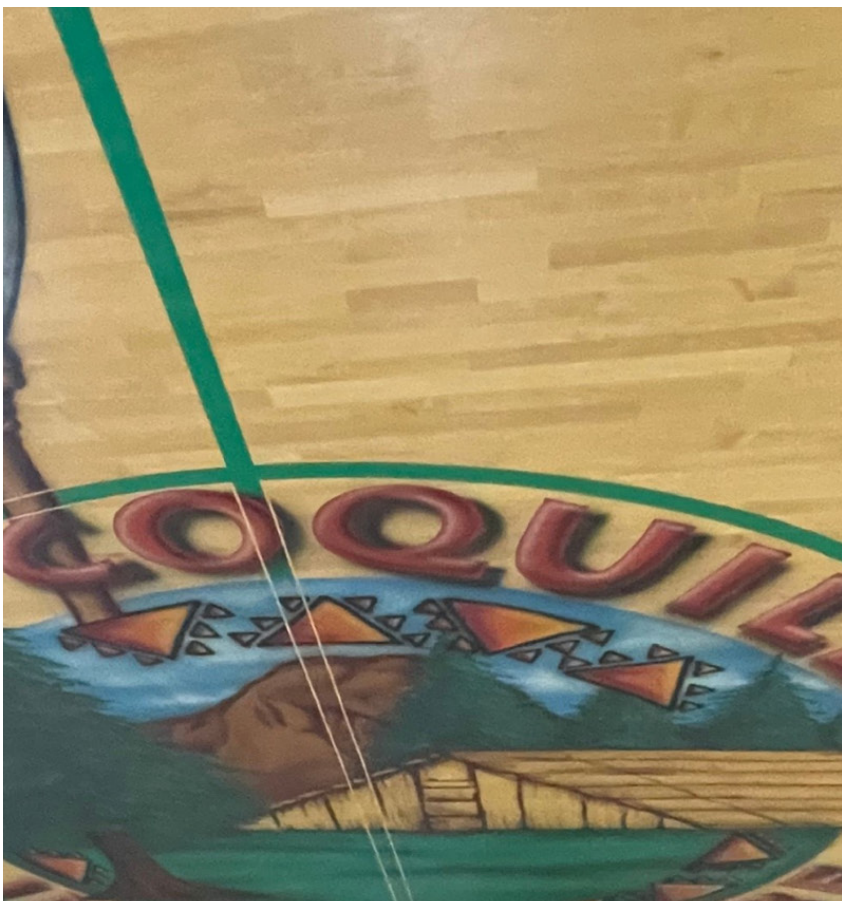
Appendix A



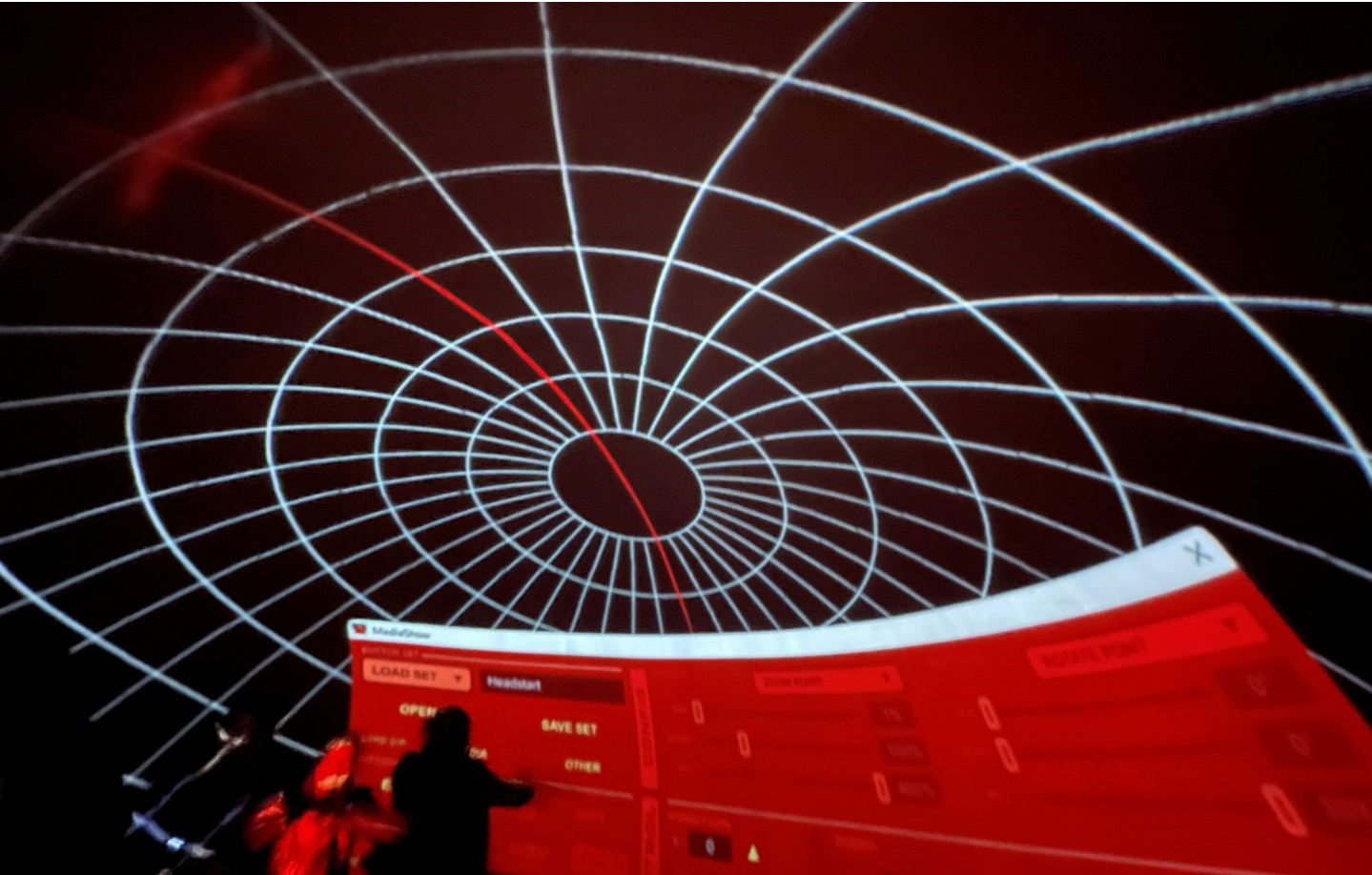
Above, Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, featuring the exterior of the Plank House.

Below, Left to Right: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the Tribe's Learning Center and Head Start Program gym.

Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's new Early Childhood Education Center classroom featured above. The Child Care Infrastructure Fund awarded \$2 million to the project.



Appendix A



Above: Child Care Infrastructure Fund Site Visit to the Coquille Indian Tribe in March 2025, inside the inflatable planetarium at the Tribe's Learning Center and Head Start Program.

Appendix B

 Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care		
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND CARE (DELIC) POLICY		
POLICY TITLE Tribal Consultation Policy	POLICY #: 58800-100-106-101	
VERSION: 1.0	DOCUMENT OWNER: Paulina Whitehat, Office of Tribal Affairs	DIVISION: Program
APPROVED BY: Carey McCann	APPROVAL DATE: 10/15/2025	SIGNATURE ON FILE: 
REFERENCES: ORS 182.162-168, Relationship of State Agencies with Indian Tribes; ORS 172.100-14, Commission on Indian Services; Executive Order 96-30: State of Oregon Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribal Governments	SUPERSEDES: <Insert>	EFFECTIVE DATE: <Insert>
DELIC INTEROPERABILITY:		
EXTERNAL PARTNER INTERDEPENDENCIES:		

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear operational expectations to all Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) employees on the Tribal consultation process. The State of Oregon and DELIC share the goal to establish clear policies for Tribal consultation and communication requirements to further the government-to-government relationship between the State and the nine federally recognized Tribes within Oregon's borders. This includes the Burns Paiute Tribe; the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation; the Coquille Indian Tribe; the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians; and the Klamath Tribes.

The statutory and regulatory relationship between the Tribes and federal and state governments will be respected in all dealings with the Tribes and DELIC. As required by Oregon State law this policy identifies agency staff responsible for programs affecting Tribes, establishes processes to determine which programs affect Tribes, outlines annual reporting requirements, and requires regular training for all staff on both state law and this policy. This policy reflects and implements the commitments established in Executive Order 96-30 and Oregon Revised Statutes ORS 182.162-182.168 and ORS 172.100-172.140, ensuring that DELIC's consultation practices align with the State of Oregon's long-standing government-to-government relationship with Tribes.

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Authority

This policy is issued under the authority of:

- ORS 182.162 to 182.168 (1999), establishes the requirements for state agencies to develop and implement policies for positive government-to-government consultation with the nine federally recognized Tribal governments in Oregon.
- Executive Order 96-30 (1996), affirms the State of Oregon's government-to-government relationship with Tribes and directs state agencies to promote trust and mutual respect through communication, coordination, and collaboration; and
- ORS 172.100 to 172.140 (1975), establishes the Legislative Commission on Indian Services (LCIS) and defines its role in facilitating communication between Tribes and the legislative branch, and requires annual reports from state agencies.

Together, these authorities form the legal and policy framework for DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy and Guidelines.

Scope

This policy applies to all DELC divisions, programs, services, projects, activities, and employees.

Definition

Definition 1: Agency Action refers to the identification of DELC programs that affect Tribes; including any decision, plan, policy, rule, or project undertaken by DELC that may have an impact on DELC programs that affect Tribes.

Definition 2: Consultation is a formal, government-to-government process that reflects the agency's legal responsibility to cooperate and communicate with Tribes regarding actions that may impact them. It is characterized by early, respectful involvement, prior to decisions or programmatic and policy actions, and includes direct, timely, and interactive dialogue aimed at exchanging information, building mutual understanding, and obtaining Tribal input on proposed Agency Actions. Consultation involves Tribal appointed officials (or their designated representatives), the Early Learning System Director (or their designee), and the Office of Tribal Affairs Director, and is intended to inform and influence Agency Action, culminating in the development of a decision. Consultation is not a single event, but an ongoing government-to-government relationship rooted in trust, mutual respect, and collaborative governance. It affirms Tribal sovereignty and demonstrates a shared commitment to honoring Tribal cultural, educational, and community values for current and future generations.

Definition 3: Tribal Appointed Official is an individual who has been appointed by the Tribe to speak and make decisions on behalf of the Tribal government.

Definition 4: Tribe, Tribally, Tribal Government, or Tribal Nation (used interchangeably) means one of the nine federally recognized Tribal governments within Oregon's borders.

Policy

The Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) must engage Tribal officials and appointed representatives in preemptive government-to-government consultation, collaboration, and communication on Agency Actions which may affect Tribes. DELC will conduct meaningful consultation between Tribal officials and the Early Learning System Director (or their designees) through timely, ongoing communications and information exchange to achieve mutual understanding and informed decision-making.

Tribal consultation will aim to strengthen DELC's relationships with Oregon Tribal governments, maintain partnerships, and facilitate collaborative implementation of mutually developed strategies.

The DELC Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) will coordinate and facilitate consultation to ensure communications are grounded in trust, mutual respect, and compliance with applicable law. Tribal consultation may occur in the development of Tribally administered agreements for early learning and child care services, including Tribal data sharing agreements, memorandums of understanding, intergovernmental agreements, or grants and/or contracts for Tribally administered programs.

DELC's Tribal Consultation Policy must:

1. **Identify agency staff responsible for programs affecting Tribes** – DELC will maintain and annually update a list of individuals in each division who are responsible for developing and implementing programs that affect Tribes. The Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA) will coordinate this process.
2. **Establish a process to determine which programs affect Tribes** – DELC will use the *Tribal Consultation Assessment form* to evaluate whether an Agency Action may affect Tribes.
3. **Inform and train staff on state law and this policy** – DELC will ensure all employees are informed through:
 - Training on Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relations, and the DELC Tribal Consultation Policy;
 - Regular internal communications; and
 - Integration into new employee onboarding.
4. **Report annually on consultation and communication efforts** – DELC will prepare and submit an annual report no later than December 15 to the Governor and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services summarizing communication and consultation activities, Tribal feedback, recommendations, and steps taken to strengthen government-to-government relations.

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Responsibilities

Early Learning System Director (Or Designee): Lead DELC's government-to-government consultation with Tribal appointed officials on Agency Actions that may affect Tribes. This includes ensuring that consultation is initiated in a timely manner, conducted in accordance with this policy and procedures, and documented accurately. The Director (or designee) must review and approve Tribal input in decision-making, ensure outcomes are communicated to Tribes through the Closing Consultation Letter, and coordinate with the Office of Tribal Affairs to align consultation activities with statutory requirements, best practices, and commitments under this policy.

Office of Tribal Affairs (OTA): Coordinate and facilitate consultation, maintain staff responsibility list, maintain Tribal contact list, oversee training and reporting, and serve as primary liaison with Tribal governments.

DELC Managers and Directors: Identify Agency Actions affecting Tribes, review and approve Tribal Consultation recommendations, review and approve Tribal Consultation annual survey, and ensure compliance of their staff.

All Staff: Participate in required training, follow consultation procedures when initiating or contributing to Agency Actions that may affect Tribes, and coordinate with the Office of Tribal Affairs.

Procedural Summary

Detailed procedures are contained in *Attachment A: Tribal Consultation Procedures*. The process includes:

1. Consultation Assessment – Determine if the Agency Action may affect Tribes.
2. Notification – Provide written notice to affected or potentially affected Tribes (ideally three months in advance).
3. Consultation – Engage in dialogue with the impacted Tribes using appropriate methods scaled to the significance of the action.
4. Follow-Up – If no response is received, conduct follow-up outreach in coordination with the Office of Tribal Affairs, honoring Tribal communication preferences.
5. Decision and Documentation – Incorporate Tribal input into decision-making and document outcomes in the *Closing Consultation Letter*.
6. Annual Report – Assigned DELC staff and the appropriate DELC managers and Directors will submit an annual survey each year for each program that affects Tribes.

Commitments Beyond Statutory Requirements

In addition to meeting statutory requirements, DELC commits to:

- Addressing early learning and care disparities of Tribal citizens;
- Ensuring that access to critical early learning and child care services is maximized;
- Advancing and enhancing the social, physical, behavioral and educational development of Tribal citizens in alignment with Tribal goals;
- Providing Tribal-specific funding to Tribes whenever possible or appropriate;
- Creating opportunities for Tribes to initiate consultation or raise topics;

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- Supporting Tribal self-determination through technical assistance and access to DELC programs and resources;
- Inviting Tribal participation on advisory committees and task forces when relevant; and
- Making accommodations in State programs, when possible, to account for the unique nature of Tribal early learning and child care programs.

Compliance

All DELC staff are required to comply with this policy and associated procedures. Violations can lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from state service.

Review and Revision

This policy and its associated procedures will be reviewed annually by the Office of Tribal Affairs in coordination with the Executive Leadership Team and updated as necessary to remain effective, incorporate Tribal participation to the greatest extent allowable under federal and state law, and align with state law, Tribal feedback, and best practices in consultation.

Document Resources or Other Attachments:

#	Document Title	Hyperlink	Notes
1	DELC Tribal Consultation Guidelines	[add link when the procedure document is completed]	
2	ORS 182.162 to 182.168, Relationship of State Agencies with Indian Tribes	https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/295523x	
3	Executive Order 96-30: State of Oregon Government-to-Government Relations with Indian Tribal Governments	https://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Documents/AboutODF/Executive_Order_96_30_Gov2Gov.pdf	
4	ORS 172.100-14: Legislative Commission on Indian Services	https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ORS_Archives/1975-Chapter-172.pdf	

Appendix C

Key Individuals Responsible for Programs that Affect Tribes

Below are the names and contact information of DELC staff responsible for developing and implementing programs that affect the Nine Federally Recognized Tribes of Oregon.

Program Name	Staff Name	Title	Division	Department	Reports to	Email
Tribal Early Learning Plan & Fund, Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance	Paulina Whitehat	Tribal Affairs Director	Programs Division	Office of Tribal Affairs	Deputy Director of Programs	paulina.whitehat@delc.oregon.gov
Tribal Early Learning Plan & Fund, Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance	Dana Castano	Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance Liaison	Programs Division	Office of Tribal Affairs	Tribal Affairs Director	dana.castano@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Licensing	Alicia Gardiner	Child Care Licensing Director	Programs Division	Child Care Licensing	Deputy Director of Programs	alicia.gardiner@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care and Development Fund	Jordan Pargeter	Child Care and Development Fund Administrator	Policy & Strategy	Early Childhood Policy & Strategy	Policy and Strategy Director	jordan.pargeter@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care and Development Fund	Elizabeth Wavra	Child Care and Development Fund Policy Analyst	Policy & Strategy	Early Childhood Policy & Strategy	Policy and Strategy Director	elizabeth.wavra@delc.oregon.gov
Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)	Lindsay Pearson	Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten Program Manager	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	lindsay.pearson@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Assistance (Employment Related Day Care)	Kelsey Culbertson	Early Learning and Childcare Administration Manager	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	kelsey.culbertson@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Assistance (Employment Related Day Care)	Jennifer Heras	Lead Child Care Assistance Policy Analyst	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	jennifer.j.heras@delc.oregon.gov
Preschool Promise	Dayna Jung	Preschool Promise Program Manager	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	dayna.jung@delc.oregon.gov
Birth Through Five Literacy	Elizabeth Hauck	Early Literacy Policy Analyst	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	elizabeth.hauck@delc.oregon.gov
Birth Through Five Literacy	Luciana Ribeiro	Early Literacy Program Analyst	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	luciana.ribeiro@delc.oregon.gov

Appendix C

Program Name	Staff Name	Title	Division	Department	Reports to	Email
Early Childhood Equity Fund	Emma Mauermann	Early Childhood Equity Fund Program Manager	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	emma.mauermann@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance	Danaye Gonzalez	Business Systems Implementation Specialist	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	danaye.gonzalez@delc.oregon.gov
Birth Through Five Literacy	Elizabeth Hauck	Early Literacy Policy Analyst	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	elizabeth.hauck@delc.oregon.gov
Birth Through Five Literacy	Luciana Ribeiro	Early Literacy Program Analyst	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	luciana.ribeiro@delc.oregon.gov
Early Childhood Equity Fund	Emma Mauermann	Early Childhood Equity Fund Program Manager	Programs Division	Early Learning Programs	Early Learning Program Director	emma.mauermann@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Infrastructure Fund Technical Assistance	Danaye Gonzalez	Business Systems Implementation Specialist	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	danaye.gonzalez@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Substitutes of Oregon	Andi Bales Molnar	Professional Learning System Specialist	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	andi.bales.molnar@delc.oregon.gov
Child Care Substitutes of Oregon	April Westermann	Workforce System Specialist	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	april.westermann@delc.oregon.gov
Every Child Belongs	Lindsay Baltus	Every Child Belongs Manager	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	lindsay.baltus@delc.oregon.gov
Every Child Belongs	Katrina Miller	Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Specialist	Programs Division	Professional Learning System	Professional Learning System Director	katrina.miller@delc.oregon.gov
Early Learning Hubs	Maria Mendoza	Early Learning Hub System Analyst	Programs Division	Community Systems	Community Systems Director	maria.mendoza@delc.oregon.gov
Early Learning Hubs	Nancy Hauth	Early Learning Hub System Analyst	Programs Division	Community Systems	Community Systems Director	nancy.hauth@delc.oregon.gov

Appendix C

Supervisory List*

*includes leadership not already listed in the Agency Overview section

Title	Name	Email	Phone
Early Learning Program Director	Dorothy Spence	dorothy.spence@delc.oregon.gov	971-388-3724
Professional Learning System Director	Jon Reeves	jon.reeves@delc.oregon.gov	503-910-2484
Community Systems Director	Becky Griffin	becky.griffin@delc.oregon.gov	971-374-3553