

Abstract: Oregon Preschool Development Grant – Expansion Grant

Overview

Since 1988, the State's Preschool Program in collaboration with the federal Head Start program, has been providing high-quality preschool and comprehensive services to children in poverty. Currently, over 7,000 three- and four-year-olds living in poverty have access to preschool as a result of the state's investment in this program. Oregon now has the opportunity to build on key values and components of this program: high-quality early education, strong professional development, comprehensive services and parent involvement delivered in mixed settings, and construct a new model that will enable Oregon to reach more children and yield even stronger outcomes.

Under the leadership of Governor John Kitzhaber, Oregon has transformed its early learning system, creating new institutions and structures that make this the ideal time to creatively scale High-Quality Preschool Programs in this state. Since 2010, Oregon has had in place the Early Learning Council charged with coordinating early learning and created a new Early Learning Division, tasked with implementing the Early Learning Council visions and bringing together for the first time the administration of core early learning programs under one roof.

Project Objectives and Activities

With the early learning reforms, there is a commitment to transforming how communities work with children and families to deliver early learning services. To accomplish this goal, the Early Learning Council and the Oregon Legislature have authorized sixteen regional Early Learning Hubs with the following responsibilities:

1. Identify children at risk of arriving at kindergarten unprepared for school;
2. Work with families to identify specific needs;
3. Connect families to comprehensive supports or services that most meet their needs;
4. Work across traditional silos; and
5. Account for outcomes collectively and cost effectively.

For this grant, Oregon has identified four community partners, Early Learning Hubs, with demonstrated strong capacity, serving high needs communities and working with diverse racial, ethnic and tribal populations: Blue Mountain Early Learning Hub, Lane Early Learning Alliance, Early Learning Multnomah and Southern Oregon Early Learning Services.

Oregon recognizes this grant as a 'pre-scaling' opportunity to begin in four communities that can build out across the state and eventually reach all four-year-olds living in low-income households (earning less than 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level).

Proposed Project Outcomes

The primary focus of Oregon's grant application is to create new preschool slots in a broad mix of High-Quality Preschool Programs and there may be some limited opportunities to help existing State Preschool Programs meet the program standards identified in the grant. This mixed delivery model will be complemented with support from Oregon's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant. All preschool programs will be required to be TQRIS Star Rated. The TQRIS will also support key components of the monitoring and Comprehensive Services Early Learning Assessment System.

Funding from this grant will enable Oregon to extend access to High-Quality Preschool Programs to 1,365 children with high needs and from low-income families. More importantly, this grant, by providing a scalable pathway, will build the case for increased state investments in preschool.

Names of Other Collaborative Organizations (Including Subgrantees)

Collaborative organizations include: Four Early Learning Hubs identified above; United Way of Oregon; local Head Starts; local State Preschool Programs; local relief nurseries; 11 school districts; Umatilla Tribe; family child care providers; community colleges; community action agencies; and, other community based organizations.