

# Discussion Draft for October ELC Meeting

## Early Learning Council Strategic Plan

### SYSTEM GOAL 1: CHILDREN ARRIVE READY FOR KINDERGARTEN

#### Objective 1: Families are supported and engaged as their child's first teachers.

Young children develop critical learning and behavior skills within an environment of relationships, none more significant than their families. Early learning programs that actively and intensively partner with families to provide interactions and experiences targeted to the child's developmental period are more likely to generate greater cognitive and social outcomes for young children than those that do not. Yet, early care and education programs do not always have the resources or guidance to engage families meaningfully, nor is there an adequate supply of parenting education and culturally-responsive services to reach all families that could benefit. In Oregon, parenting education programs focused on families with young children only reach 3% of families, and culturally-specific organizations that have some of the strongest and most trusting relationships with families often lack access to available public resources needed to serve their communities.

#### Strategy 1. Develop coordinated enrollment at the community-level to families in choosing and enrolling in early care and education programs that meet their needs.

- Develop appropriate information and resources, in multiple languages and using multiple media to inform families about the availability and types of ECE programs, including child care assistance programs.
- Early Learning Hubs convene partners to identify infrastructure and resources needed to support a coordinated enrollment process for publicly-funded early care and education programs.

#### Strategy 2. Create a universal connection point for families with newborns.

- Build, in partnership with local communities, Early Learning Hubs, CCO's and public health agencies, a system to deliver home visits for all families with newborn children that provides parenting information and that helps families with deeper needs connect to additional services. ☺

#### Strategy 3. Scale culturally-responsive home visiting.

- Expand access to Oregon's current array of evidenced-based and evidence-informed targeted home visiting programs so that more families have access to these supports. ☺
- Expand access to professional learning opportunities and address compensation for home visitors in order to build a strong, culturally diverse workforce and increase retention.

#### Strategy 4. Provide paid family leave for families.

- Provide Paid Family Leave to all families with a new born or newly adopted child to support the development of bonding and attachment during this critical window. ☺

## Objective 2: Families have access to inclusive, affordable, high-quality, culturally-responsive early care and education that meets their needs.

Children who attend high-quality early care and education (ECE) are more likely to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and to thrive through their school career and into adulthood. Yet, there are significant barriers to accessing ECE for families who are economically disadvantaged – including finding programs that are affordable and meet their scheduling needs – and for families of color – including culturally-responsive or specific care or care that supports the home language. Achieving a supply of accessible, high-quality ECE takes sound policy, resources, and the engagement of families. Oregon has made a number of improvements and investments to increase families' access to high-quality ECE; however, we must do more work to ensure that the early care and education sector is built on a strong foundation (i.e., child care licensing), supports and finances programs to progress toward higher quality practices, and ensures communities have resources to scale in a way that supports the different needs of families and children.

**Strategy 1. Expand access to, and build the supply of, high-quality (culturally-responsive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate) affordable infant toddler early care and education that meets the needs of families.**

- Create, scale and sustain a state-wide high-quality infant and toddler child care program with a focus on children who are historically underserved. ☺
- Create shared service networks within rural and urban communities to better scale infant and toddler care. ☺
- Increase state investments in Early Head Start by expanding Oregon Prekindergarten as a prenatal to five program.

**Strategy 2. Expand access to, and build the supply of, high-quality (culturally-responsive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate) affordable preschool that meets the needs of families.**

- Expand preschool programs (i.e., Oregon Prekindergarten, Preschool Promise, Early Childhood Special Education) to serve more children, especially those who are historically underserved.
- Align policies across Oregon's three state preschool programs (Early Childhood Special Education, Oregon Pre-K, Preschool Promise), to facilitate blended funding models.
- Expand use of child care assistance contracts for wraparound care for pre-k programs so they meet the needs of working families.

**Strategy 3. Improve the essential infrastructure for high quality ECE.**

- Conduct a statewide facilities needs assessment to identify communities with a dearth of ECE facilities and invest accordingly.
- Facilitate the opening of high-quality family child care and child care centers within affordable housing units and housing developments.
- Create a regional plan for expanding access and supply of high-quality infant, toddler and preschool early care and education, available at times that meet the needs of families,

especially to historically underserved infants, toddlers and preschoolers, under the leadership of the Early Learning Hubs.

- Utilize the state’s licensing and Spark programs to recruit and support providers, especially in rural communities and communities of color, to become licensed and implement health and safety practices.
- Implement enhanced child care licensing standards to ensure children are health and safe in care.
- Expand resources for Spark to reach additional ECE providers, including family, friend and neighbor caregivers to receive supports and incentives to implement best practices in ECE.

#### Strategy 4. Strengthen Child Care Assistance programs.

- Unify policies across all child care assistance programs (i.e., ERDC, TANF child care and contracted child care assistance).
- Increase resources for child care assistance programs to align to the cost of delivering quality care across all types of care and ages, and to guarantee participating families pay no more than 7% of their income on care.
- Ensure subsidy policy results in continuity of care, particularly for infants and toddlers. ⚠
- Ensure subsidy policy reflects the scheduling needs of families.

#### Strategy 5. Increase the ability of the business community to promote and support ECE.

- Educators (HD)
- Support child care as a business (HD)

### Objective 3: Increase physical and social-emotional health promotion and prevention in early childhood.

Children rapidly grow in the first five years of life. Their development is a dynamic process that is fostered within nurturing relationships and interactions with parents and caregivers. The important skills gained during this period become the foundation for all development that follows, including physical, perceptual and motor development, social-emotional well-being, approaches to learning, and cognitive, language, and literacy development. Oregon is a leader in providing health care coverage for children; however, it is estimated that 40% of Oregon’s children, birth through kindergarten entry, will face socioeconomic, physical, or relational risk factors that could compromise their healthy development, school readiness, and future academic success. In addition, 52% of children ages 6-9 in Oregon have tooth decay; one of the most prevalent chronic conditions of childhood and can lead to having problems with eating, speaking, playing, and learning. The infant mortality rate, while slightly lower than the national average and decreasing in recent years, still indicates significant racial disparities with Native Americans and African Americans being nearly twice as likely to die before their first birthday than other children. The focus of the work for the next five years will be on improving the quality of early childhood health care, increasing access to oral health, and expanding the capacity to support young children’s health and development overall.

*Strategy 1. Ensure prenatal to age five health care services are comprehensive, accessible, high-quality and culturally and linguistically responsive.*

- Improve access to patient-centered primary care homes for all young children.
- Strengthen the early childhood focus of Coordinating Care Organizations (CCO) by adding Early Learning Hub representation on CCO's governing board or using other tools to improve relationships and coordination.
- Increase the integration of physical, behavioral and oral health for young children.
- Incentivize high quality, evidence-based pediatric care, including rural communities.

*Strategy 2. Increase the capacity to provide culturally-responsive social-emotional supports for young children and their families.*

- Increase access to culturally-responsive mental health services, including by ensuring there are diverse providers with expertise in children birth through age 5.
- Train home visitors, mental health professionals and early care and education providers in a relationship-based infant mental health and equity approach. ☺
- Assess capacity of behavioral health services for young children and families.
- Ensure a focus on children whose families are affected by substance abuse and family separation, including by ensuring access to community health workers.

*Strategy 3. Increase and improve equitable access to early childhood oral health.*

- Increase access and address disparities in prevention and treatment dental services for young children.
- Advance provider trainings such as First Tooth and Maternity Teeth for Two. ☺
- Continued integration of oral health services in early care and education settings.

*Strategy 4. Strengthen coordination among ECE, health and housing to promote health and safety for young children.*

- Provide health consultation across ECE settings.
- Collaborate to support families and ECE providers in implementing safe sleep practices. ☺
- Identify areas of shared accountability across housing, health and ECE, and expand joint activities that promote environmental health, injury prevention and safety, physical activity and healthy foods.

**Objective 4: Young children with behavioral, development and healthcare needs are identified early and supported to reach their full potential.**

All children deserve the opportunity to develop to their full potential. For children with special needs, this means assuring accessibility, providing additional targeted supports and access to the same full range of early care and education settings as their typically developing peers. Because programs and providers often lack the training and resources to support children with special needs or who do or are perceived to have behavioral challenges, children can be excluded from early care and education settings. Research also demonstrates that earlier developmental delays are detected, the more readily they can be remediated. Building local community-based systems that ensure early learning detection and a family-friendly process of referral to the supports that best address the needs of the individual

child and family is essential to achieving that end. Once children are identified, there also need to be a broad range of services to be available in a community to adequately address those needs. Low levels of funding and narrow eligibility requirements mean that children either receive too little supports or are not able to access early intervention/early childhood special education services at all.

### Strategy 1. Ensure adequate funding of and access to a range of regional and community-based services, including Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education services.

- Increase funding so that that Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education services are at an adequate level to support the positive development of children with special needs as defined by the 2010 report to the Oregon Legislature.
- Review the criteria used to determine whether a child is eligible for EI/ECSE services and make and implement recommendations around the appropriate eligibility thresholds to ensure that all children needing these services are able to access them.
- Provide resources for communities to expand the array of services available to infants and toddler and their families that need additional supports. ❖

### Strategy 2. Continue to prioritize screening through the health system and build pathways from screening to a range of community-based services and supports for children and families.

- Improve screening
- Scale successful approaches to build community-based referral systems from screening to services that meet the diverse needs of young children and families.

### Strategy 3. Strengthen state policies and provide guidance and technical assistance to ECE programs to prevent expulsion and suspension.

- Align policies across ECE programs and K-12 regarding suspension and expulsion.
- Improve data systems to track suspension and expulsion across the birth to five early learning system and early grades, disaggregated by race and ability.
- Provide culturally-responsive mental health consultation to ECE providers.
- Increase access to anti-bias early childhood education training for ECE providers.

## Objective 5: Build and retain a high-quality, culturally-responsive and diverse early care and education workforce.

Responsive caregiver-child relationships serve as the foundation for brain development in the earliest years of life. The early care and education (ECE) workforce serve this critical role for children in child care and preschool programs, and are the single most important ingredient toward high-quality care. Yet, Oregon's early childhood educators typically make between \$25,000 and \$35,000 annually. The state has made some progress by requiring compensation parity for educators in its Preschool Promise program, but this is the only program with compensation standards for educators. In addition, we know that professional compensation is a necessary but insufficient condition: educators also need ongoing professional learning supports and positive, supportive work environments in order to implement best practice. As we seek to improve the conditions for the ECE workforce, we must ensure that we maintain and build upon the racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity of the current field and honor the often decades of work that our current educators have contributed toward making the lives of Oregon's youngest children better

### Strategy 1. Improve professional learning opportunities for the full diversity of the ECE workforce.

- Implement a competency-based professional learning system that is culturally and linguistically relevant for educators, educational leaders, professional development and training personnel.
- Tailor and scale supports for Family, Friend and Neighbor caregivers, especially for those receiving child care assistance.
- Create competencies and professional learning opportunities that speak to the unique role of infant and toddler educators. 🧒
- Ensure communities have data needed to design and evaluate effectiveness of professional learning for the diversity of the workforce – including across different settings.
- Increase the relevance and effectiveness of professional learning through job-embedded supports.
- Culturally-responsive pedagogy

### Strategy 2. Build pathways to credentials and degrees that recruit and retain a diverse ECE workforce.

- Partner with higher education institutions to ensure degree programs reduce barriers to higher education and meet the needs of the current workforce, equitably addressing cultural, language, learning, and access needs, and curriculum addressing the prenatal-to-5 continuum.
- Fully implement all steps in the career pathway.
- Build upon existing scholarship programs to support more educators to enter the field and existing educators to attain AA and BA degrees in early childhood.
- Increase the number of educators entering the field by expanding opportunities for ECE preparation in high school that can be leveraged in higher education.

### Strategy 3. Compensate and recognize early childhood educators as professionals.

- Create educator compensation requirements that align with kindergarten educator compensation across publicly-funded ECE programs (e.g. Oregon Prekindergarten, Preschool Promise, contracted slots) and increase public investment to implement those requirements.
- Create financial incentives for ERDC and TANF child care providers to support compensation that is aligned with kindergarten educators.
- Develop educator compensation strategies for the broader ECE workforce.
- In collaboration with Early Learning Hubs and other partners, create understanding of the role and impact of early childhood educators among policymakers and the public.

### Strategy 4. Improve state policy to ensure ECE work environments guarantee professional supports.

- Create competencies and professional learning supports for program leadership.
- Ensure ECE program standards address program structures associated with better retention and quality of a culturally and linguistically diverse workforce.
- Collect and use data to improve professional supports (e.g., paid planning time, paid professional development time, compensation, wellness and health benefits).

## Objective 6: Children and families experience supportive transitions and continuity of services across ECE and K-12 settings.

Supporting successful transitions from early care and education (ECE) into K-12 systems is critical for ensuring that all children, particularly children furthest from opportunity, are able to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and experience a strong start in school. Oregon has made meaningful strides to support kindergarten transitions over last several years, particularly in relation to the implementation of summertime transition camps and parenting education programs. However, there remains significant work to be done to strengthen and align local practices related to culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate practices in settings in which child learn and grow. The Oregon Kindergarten Assessment continues to be an under-utilized resource for helping policymakers and local early learning and K-12 practitioners gain a deeper understanding of the types of experiences that children have before they arrive at school. Kindergarten transitions, which related to both specific programs and the prenatal-grade 3 systems as a whole, continue to be treated as discrete programs, rather than a holistic set of practices that support seamless alignment between early learning and K-3 for children, families, and professionals. Furthermore, when Oregon rolled out funding for full day kindergarten in 2015, the State provided limited guidance or support to school districts on how to effectively scale up effective practices for full day kindergarten classrooms.

### Strategy 1. Establish shared professional culture and practice between ECE and K-3 that supports all domains, including social-emotional learning.

- Implement Prenatal to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Professional Learning Teams (PLT's), consisting of both early learning and K-3 educators, with participation in shared statewide and regional professional development activities on the part of both early learning and K-3 educators, including elementary school principals and ECE directors.
- Support school districts to align attendance, curriculum, instructional and assessment practices across the Prenatal to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade continuum with a focus on high-quality (culturally-responsive, inclusive, developmentally appropriate).
- Scale and expand the work of Early Learning Hubs and local communities through the Early Learning Kindergarten Readiness Partnership & Innovation program (KPI) and local funding sources, to support social-emotional learning across the P-3 continuum.

### Strategy 2. Improve the Oregon Kindergarten Assessment (KA) to better support decision-making between early learning and K-12 stakeholders.

- Enhance the KA process, including culturally appropriate and language/literacy measures, for children whose home language is not English and who are dual language learners, starting with Spanish.
- Through ODE's Assessment Unit, provide sufficient support to school districts to ensure that the assessment is administered properly and in ways that are developmentally appropriate.
- Improve the communications and data analysis/interpretation tools for the KA so that that policymakers, Early Learning Hubs, providers of early learning services, school districts, and elementary schools have access to timely, accessible, and actionable data that supports regional and local decision-making.
- Develop a Kindergarten Entry Family Survey that enables families to provide information about their children's experiences and provides a more holistic picture of children's development.

## SYSTEM GOAL 2: CHILDREN ARE RAISED IN HEALTHY, STABLE AND ATTACHED FAMILIES

### Objective 1: Reduce disparities in the physical and social-emotional health of parents and caregivers.

Children's healthy development depends to a large extent on the health and well-being of their parents and caregivers. Oregon has had recent successes in improving access to preconception, reproductive and timely prenatal care services that support healthier birth outcomes, but disparities in access persist. In addition, one in seven women suffer from postpartum depression, and adoptive parents have similar rates as birth parents. Optimizing parental mental health can break the transgenerational impact of maternal depression, and can help to improve children's social emotional development, secure attachments, and kindergarten readiness. There is also an increasing concern about the impacts of adverse childhood experiences (ACES). 46% of Oregon adults have experienced two or more such experiences, and 22% have experienced four or more. ACES are often a root cause of many social, emotional, physical and cognitive impairments in childhood, and persist into adulthood with increased rates of chronic diseases, mental illness, disability, and premature mortality. In addition to ACES, societal and systemic racism is a form of trauma that can create a kind of physiological stress that contribute to the disparities being seen in health outcomes. Supporting parents' health and mental health means they are able to provide nurturing relationships and the important parent-child interactions needed for children's health, growth and development, which could lead to improved outcomes, reduced health costs over time, and improved health equity. In addition, covering parents' health care helps create financial stability for the family and increases children's participation in preventative health care.

#### Strategy 1. Increase equitable access to reproductive, maternal, and prenatal health services.

- Increase access to traditional health workers (e.g., doulas) and home visiting services.
- Address the needs of women impacted by substance use disorder, such as through integrated prenatal care and SUD treatment, as well as infants affected by neonatal abstinence syndrome.

#### Strategy 2. Improve access to culturally and linguistically responsive multi-generational approaches to physical and social-emotional health.

- Reduce families' financial burden of healthcare costs.
- Expand accessible and culturally responsive systems that support family unity while addressing parent co-occurring health, mental health, addiction, and/or parenting strategies. 🌱
- Improve access to health care for families who are pregnant or with young children. 🌱
- Ensure a continuum of services for children and their caregivers when families are affected by mental health conditions and substance use disorders.
- Address the cross-generational transmission of trauma by identifying and addressing adverse childhood experiences.
- Increase partnerships between CCOs and community health workers to enable access.

## Objective 2: Families with young children who are experiencing adversity have access to coordinated and comprehensive services.

Housing, food, and employment instability often creates an environment of desperation and household turmoil that adversely affects the life trajectory of our youngest children. In 2017, Oregon had the second highest rate of homelessness among people in households with children in the United States. 31% of all renter household families with children under age five spend more than half of their incomes on rent and are considered severely housing cost-burdened. These factors coupled with the high cost of child care are placing families in a complex, insurmountable situation that they are unable to traverse alone. The stresses placed on families with young children contribute to their high rates of involvement with the child welfare system: over 40% of the children in foster care are age five and under. Working with families to increase individualized, relational strategies, Oregon has the opportunity to address what has been increasingly compounded for families over time and put an end to this cycle of inequity.

### Strategy 1. Expand and focus access to housing assistance and supports for families with young children.

- Expand and focus housing subsidy for families with young children, starting with families with children prenatally to 12 months of age that are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. ☸
- Expand the supply of affordable housing and rental assistance for families with children by exploring new programs and working with providers to establish priorities for assisting families with young children.
- Strengthen relationships between Hubs, Community Action agencies and local housing authorities to focus on families with infants and toddlers. ☸

### Strategy 2. Provide preventive parenting support services to reduce family engagement in the child welfare system.

- Increase access to evidence-based early learning programs (e.g. Relief Nurseries, parenting education, home visiting programs) s proven to reduce abuse and neglect for families at imminent risk of entering into the child welfare system.
- Strengthen collaboration between Early Learning Hubs and DHS field offices to increase access to community supports for families at risk for entering into the child welfare system and to develop community-based child abuse and maltreatment prevention strategies.
- Expand access to family coaches for local community-based parenting organizations.

### Strategy 3. Improve nutritional status of young children, particularly infants and toddlers.

- Breastfeeding promotion ☸
- Improve connections between WIC and primary care homes.

### Strategy 4. Link high-quality ECE programs such as Early Head Start, Head Start, Preschool Promise and Spark rated programs, with other publicly-funded programs such as self-sufficiency and housing assistance.

- Strengthen partnership, and align priorities to include strategies such as waitlist prioritizations and incentives to enable better linkage between high-quality early care and education programs and families served in self-sufficiency and housing assistance programs.

- Develop innovative child care networks, connected to affordable housing complexes, focused on equipping early learning providers to deliver relational, trauma informed care so children and their families can leave shelters, exit homelessness, and enter safe and healthy homes, with quality enriched early learning opportunities as their foundation.

## SYSTEM GOAL 3: THE EARLY LEARNING SYSTEM IS ALIGNED, COORDINATED, AND FAMILY-CENTERED

Objective 1: Increase capacity to collect, integrate, disaggregate, analyze and disseminate data to improve systems, services and outcomes for young children and their families, particularly from communities historically excluded from opportunity.

Oregon is committed to using data-based decision-making to drive positive outcomes for children pre-natal to five and their families. This commitment to data-based decision-making is also a strong part of its commitment to equity as Oregon uses disaggregated data to assess impacts of policies and investments on children who are historically underserved. In order to live up to this commitment, Oregon needs to increase its capacity to collect, integrate, analyze and disseminate data across the early learning system and at the state, local and programmatic levels. The state needs to increase its capacity to collect accurate and meaningful data from early care and education programs and share the data back with programs in ways that support on-going quality improvement. As the state's ability to collect solid data from early care and education programs improves, data from these programs needs to be integrated into longitudinal data systems and with data from other systems, so that the impacts of investment and strategies can be accurately assessed. The state also needs to increase the Early Learning Hubs access to data from across all sectors and invest in their capacity to use this data, so that local communities are empowered to make the most effective decisions about how to direct local resources. In addition to better tracking how children and families that have connected with programs and services are doing, Oregon also need to be able to track the well-being of children and families as a whole, information that is best provide through a population level survey.

### Strategy 1. Strengthen data-driven community planning.

- Increase access to state and local data, as well as resources, to improve Hub capacity to use data in its planning to ensure the highest needs are met and that the greatest impact for children and families is achieved.
- Address data sharing and data governance barriers, while protecting family privacy, that limit community access to data need for decision-making.
- Specifically incorporate data on children of color and children from families historically farthest from opportunity.
- Bring state and community leaders together to better understand data in order to track the well-being of children and families in communities, guide a process of continuous quality improvement, and facilitate collaboration across sectors and partners.

### Strategy 2. Integrate early learning data into the Statewide Longitudinal Data System.

- Build state and program capacity to collect, monitor and analyze data from early care and education programs to support quality improvements in the delivery of early care and education services and programs for children pre-natal to five and their families.
- Use integrated data from State Longitudinal Data System to determine impacts of early childhood investment and identify the most effective strategies for supporting positive outcomes for children and their families.
- Specifically incorporate data on children of color and children from families historically underserved communities.

### Strategy 3. Develop and implement a population survey to track the well-being of children and families across

- State agencies collaborate to finance, develop and implement a population survey of Oregon families with young children that provides holistic information on their well-being.
- Ensure that the survey is developed and implemented so as to provide accurate and holistic information on the well-being of families from historically underserved populations.

### Strategy 4. Create and use an early learning system dashboard to create shared cross-sector accountability for outcomes for young children and their families.

- Create and regularly monitor an Early Learning System Dashboard that fosters collective impact and shared cross-sector, cross-agency accountability for population level outcomes for children prenatal to five and their families.
- Specifically incorporate data on children of color and children from families historically farthest from opportunity.

## Objective 2: Improve the alignment and capacity of the cross-sector early learning workforce to support young children and their families across the system.

Despite working in different settings, the early learning (EL) workforce – consisting of health, human services, K-12, and the early care and education sector – serves young children and their families largely toward the same end: ensuring children’s health and development is on track. This also requires some common knowledge and skills, as well as partnerships with one another. In order to support families and children in a consistent way, key areas of shared knowledge and competency must be identified and supported in a way that is shared across the entire system.

### Strategy 1. Support consistent, high-quality practice among all professionals in the family- and child-serving early learning workforce.

- Analyze existing core knowledge and competency frameworks or standards across disciplines for the family- and child-serving workforce to identify commonalities and gaps across sectors.
- Create and implement opportunities for shared professional learning across sectors in established areas of need (e.g., trauma-informed practices and family-centered referral pathways).

- Collaborate with the Higher Education Coordinating Commission and professional learning partners to incorporate identified areas of shared knowledge into curriculum.

### Strategy 2. Improve cross-sector recruitment and retention.

- Through the Children’s Cabinet, require state agencies to report on the diversity of race/ethnicity, language, compensation and working conditions of front-line staff within each sector.
- Analyze data across the early learning workforce to determine common strengths and shared challenges regarding diversity, compensation, turnover, qualifications and professional learning pathways in each sector.
- Use data analysis to create and implement a plan based on the common strengths and shared challenges.

### Objective 3: Prioritize investments to achieve equitable outcomes for families and their young children.

Oregon has demonstrated a commitment to establishing equitable outcomes for children and their families in the state. This means taking action to address the avoidable conditions that impact those who have experienced socioeconomic disadvantage or historical injustices and that children’s outcomes are no longer predicted by race, where they live, or economic status. With the adoption of the Oregon Equity Lens in 2011, Oregon identified the need to improve its collection mechanisms for identifying and collecting data for children and families that are the most vulnerable and underserved in the state and directed more funding to meeting the needs of these families. This work highlighted the need to ensure that families are provided with access to high-quality education, health, housing, and the social services needed to ensure that they could reap the full benefits of an aligned and coordinated system of support. This includes increasing opportunities for continuous feedback between state systems and families. However, the disparate access to these combined services for families of color, dual language learners’ families, low-income families, and other families who are historically underserved highlights systemic gaps of services that must be interrupted so that Oregon can service all families.

### Strategy 1. Ensure resources are used to reduce disparities in access and outcomes.

- Collect, analyze and consolidate data across agencies on disparities in access and outcomes for the goals in this plan.
- Share the results and recommendations for further improvement, including cross-sector funding opportunities.

### Strategy 2. Align and expand funding opportunities for culturally specific organizations.

- Develop a coordinated state approach to increasing the capacity of culturally specific organizations to scale and seed promising culturally-responsive practices and programs in early childhood.
- Expand funding of culturally specific organizations to implement early childhood programming and build partnerships with other co programs.

### Objective 4: Strengthen state-community connections to create streamlined local systems that are aligned, coordinated, and family-centered.

Oregon has programs and resources addressing the different needs of families across the state. However, many do not work together. Vulnerable families who have been historically underserved may become overwhelmed in understanding what they qualify for and accessing those supports successfully. Early Learning Hubs' unique role, in partnership with the other sectors, is to build coherent local systems where families can easily connect with needed supports and services. Each sector has local structures to support the delivery of specific services and programs. However, the Early Learning Hubs are a significant vehicle for how the sectors can come together and have shared impact in improving outcomes for children, families and communities. Over the next five years, the focus of this work is to advance the three system goals at the local level and ensure a shared vision and expectation for improving the outcomes of young children and their families through developing, strengthening and streamlining local systems and developing feedback loops between the state and communities to improve service delivery, address gaps, and tailor resources to the different needs of communities across Oregon.

#### Strategy 1. Further develop the local Early Learning Hub system.

- Incentivize active participation across sectors on the Early Learning Hub Governance Boards to ensure shared goals, policy and programming are invested in and implementation is coordinated across a region.
- Strengthen the Early Learning Hub role in informing community needs assessments that meet the requirements of each sector, and supporting coordinated and aligned community planning and shared problem solving.
- Create ongoing feedback loops between the state sectors and communities to improve communication, policy implementation, collaboration, and addressing barriers in order to make progress toward the three systems goals.

#### Strategy 2. Ensure family voice in system design and implementation.

- Increase authentic input of family voice in the design and implementation of state policy and programming that welcomes all families.
- Establish a mechanism in collaboration with Early Learning Hubs for authentic leadership in parent voice to inform Early Learning Council system building work.
- Work with Early Learning Hubs and their partners in developing local capacity to facilitate culturally responsive family engagement activities across their communities, prioritizing communities that have not yet been engaged.

#### Strategy 3. Ensure family friendly referrals.

- Develop centralized systems locally to coordinate eligibility of services across sectors, demonstrating first in early care and education.
- Develop shared principles for building community level, family friendly, respectful and easy to navigate referral system so that families can easily access services and supports.