



OREGON

To: Sue Miller, Chair
Early Learning Council
700 Summer Street NE #350
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Reach Out and Read Oregon 2021-2023 program expansion strategy

Date: December 11, 2020

Dear Chair Miller and Members of the Council,

Reach Out and Read Oregon (ROR Oregon) is transforming the pediatric primary care medical setting by embedding reading and other language-rich activities into the standard of care. ROR Oregon provides support for pediatric teams, advises families about the importance of reading with their children, and shares books that serve as a catalyst for healthy childhood development.

As an organization, ROR Oregon is helping families thrive through COVID-19. From the outset of the pandemic, many of our partner clinics were forced to change their well-child visit practices and moved to telehealth for those appointments that did not require vaccinations, greatly decreasing in-person visits. From a program perspective, this left our volunteer providers without the “tool” or book that generally helps to focus the visit’s conversation on not only reading, but even more importantly, on discussions of routines, resilience, hugs, snuggles, and stories. ***The continuity provided by daily reading together with caring and responsive adults helps children and families not just survive the pandemic but continue to thrive as a family.***

With the shift in frequency and mode of visits, ROR Oregon developed new strategies to provide not only books but also the transformative messaging that positive family interactions can help mitigate adverse childhood stress and trauma. ROR Oregon has focused on innovative solutions and has been flexible and responsive to the needs of our providers, clinic network, and families during COVID-19. As a result, ROR Oregon has continued to have unparalleled access to nearly 90,000 children, ages 0-5, throughout the pandemic.

Despite the changes to the pediatric and family medicine clinical environment due to COVID-19, the reality is that ***our volunteer providers are still the only adults that many children are seeing during this time*** due to daycare, preschool, and library closures. Children will continue to access their primary care providers throughout this pandemic and ROR Oregon is the only early literacy organization already in place within these clinics, ready and able to provide services and support. More than ever, routines and normalcy are critical for the children and caregivers that the program serves.

During the upcoming 2021 legislative session, ROR Oregon will advocate for \$75,000 in state funding that will allow our program to expand and reach targeted populations in underserved communities across the great state of Oregon.

Targeted Expansion Program Support

Although Reach Out and Read Oregon has adjusted its expansion plans due to the impact of COVID-19, the current national landscape has driven us to become even more dedicated than ever to providing our



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program to the most marginalized children and families across the state. With the gaps in healthcare, early literacy and education services and resources that rural, low-income and BIPOC families experience, we have prioritized our expansion plans to include clinics who serve these specific communities:

Medicaid Population

Working in partnership with the Oregon Primary Care Association, Reach Out and Read Oregon will focus on delivering services to patients of Federally Qualified Health Care Centers that serve majority Medicaid populations.

Tribal Clinics

Through a partnership and grant from Indian Health Services, ROR Oregon is currently in contact with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz to identify clinics within their territory that serve children ages 0-5 and would benefit from a partnership with our organization. We anticipate that our partnership with IHS will not end there, however, and we have prioritized Tribal Clinics as another targeted population within our expansion strategy.

Rural Oregon Communities

ROR Oregon has also partnered with the Oregon Academy of Family Physicians (OAFP) to increase awareness of the program among providers in rural communities. Many of the families in these areas lack access to pediatric providers and rely upon family medicine physicians when it comes to the care of their children. Discussions have also begun regarding a Reach Out and Read residency training program through OAFP, fostering a future generation of champions of the program and its proven positive impacts on the families that it serves.

Grant Administration Support

We will work tirelessly during the 2021 legislative session to secure the necessary funding to support our expansion strategy. If and when we are successful in securing state funding for the 2021-2023 biennium, it is our desire to have the grant administered by the Early Learning Division. In the previous funding cycle, Reach Out and Read Oregon was grouped within school-based programming, which was an incorrect categorization because our unique program is housed entirely within medical clinics. Going forward maintaining that distinction would be best achieved by placing our program under the structure and guidance of the Early Learning Division.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our program and plans for expansion. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time. We look forward to working together to continue to provide early literacy and relational health programming to our youngest Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Samira Godil
Executive Director, Reach Out and Read Oregon