

Tribal Early Learning Pathways

A Relational Framework for Navigating Oregon's Early Learning System

A resource for Tribal administrators, leaders, early learning directors, education departments, and governments.



MANY PATHWAYS, ONE GOAL.

Tribal Nations may engage in one pathway or many at the same time.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Tribal sovereignty is foundational

Tribal Nations determine what success looks like for their children, families, languages, and communities.

Relationships are infrastructure

Trust, consistency, and long-term partnership are essential components of successful early learning systems.

Culture is quality

Language, identity, belonging, family engagement, and cultural continuity are indicators of high-quality early learning.

Systems should adapt to communities

This guide supports Tribal leaders in navigating state systems, identifying pathways for support, and advancing solutions that reflect the priorities of Tribal children, families, and communities. It centers Tribal sovereignty and self-determination by supporting approaches that adapt systems to Tribal Nations—not requiring Tribal Nations to fit within state systems.

CONNECT



- SPARK
- Early Childhood Equity Fund
- Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)
- Birth through Five Early Literacy Plan
- Child Care Licensing Division (CCLD)

HOW TRIBES MAY ENGAGE

- Build relationships
- Share priorities
- Explore services
- Co-design solutions
- Connect families to supports

ACCESS



- SPARK
- Employment Related Daycare
- Preschool Promise
- Baby Promise
- Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten
- Birth through Five Early Literacy Plan

HOW TRIBES MAY ENGAGE

- Expand access for families
- Reduce financial barriers
- Increase child care & preschool options
- Invest in culture and language

STRENGTHEN



- SPARK
- ECE Workforce
- Childcare Substitutes of Oregon
- Employment Related Daycare
- Baby Promise
- Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)
- Birth through Five Early Literacy Plan

HOW TRIBES MAY ENGAGE

- Develop workforce
- Strengthen infrastructure
- Access training & TA
- Plan for long-term sustainability

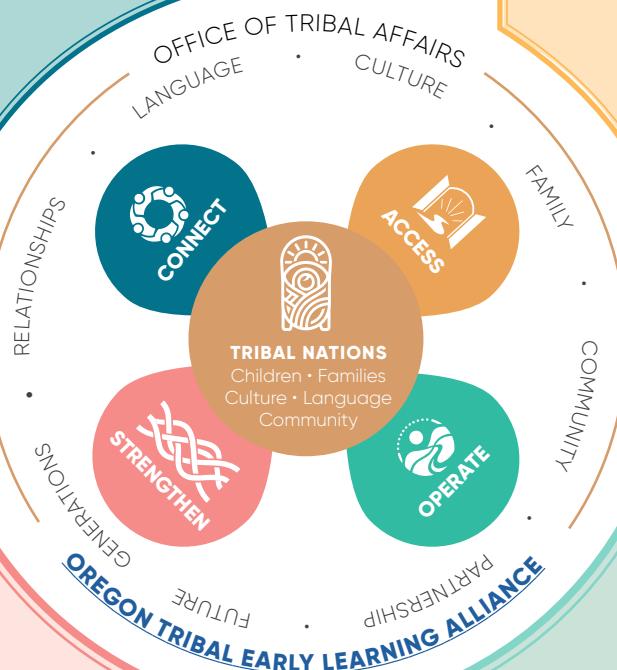
OPERATE



- Preschool Promise
- Baby Promise
- Early Childhood Equity Fund
- Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)
- Birth through Five Early Literacy Plan

HOW TRIBES MAY ENGAGE

- Deliver services that reflect community priorities
- Support staff and programs
- Focus on quality and culture



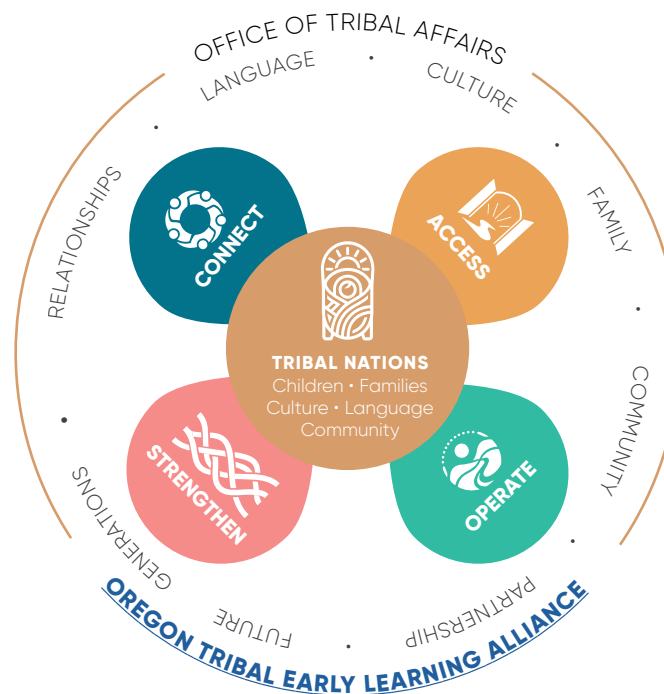
Tribal Early Learning Pathways Executive Summary

Tribal Nations have always been the leaders, caretakers, and decision-makers for the wellbeing of their children, families, cultures, and communities. The Tribal Early Learning Pathways framework was developed to help Tribal Nations navigate Oregon's early learning system through a lens grounded in Tribal sovereignty, government-to-government relationships, and community-defined priorities. Rather than organizing information by agency division or individual program, the framework centers Tribal Nations and shows how the Department of Early Learning and Care's (DELC) programs, initiatives, and partnerships can support strong, culturally grounded early learning systems.

Across Oregon, Tribal Nations continue to lead innovative approaches that reflect their unique cultures, languages, values, and visions for future generations. At the same time, navigating state programs, funding, technical assistance, and partnerships can be complex. Tribal Early Learning Pathways brings these opportunities together in one relationship-centered framework, helping Tribal governments identify resources, align investments, and make decisions that reflect community priorities.

At the center of the framework are Tribal Nations, their children, families, languages, cultures, and sovereign authority to define success for their own communities. Four interconnected pathways surround this center, representing key areas of Tribal early learning system development. Nations may enter the framework at any point, depending on community priorities, existing programs, or future goals, making it a flexible tool for planning and partnership.

The Office of Tribal Affairs serves as DELC's central hub for government-to-government relationships with the nine Federally Recognized Tribes in Oregon, coordinating engagement and ensuring programs honor Tribal sovereignty.



CONNECT builds relationships, partnerships, and awareness of resources that support children, families, and communities.



ACCESS helps Tribal Nations identify and utilize funding opportunities, programs, and services that expand equitable access to high-quality early learning.



STRENGTHEN focuses on developing long-term organizational capacity through workforce development, technical assistance, quality improvement, and sustainable systems.



OPERATE supports the implementation, administration, and ongoing delivery of culturally grounded early learning services that meet the needs of Tribal children and families.

PATHWAYS FOR CONNECTION

Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&Rs)

Builds Oregon's child care supply by recruiting, supporting, and retaining educators and owners.

Every Child Belongs

Offers training, coaching, and support to reduce suspension, expulsion, and exclusionary discipline.

Technical Assistance Partners [NWN](#) | [FCF OR](#)

Provides planning, support, and capacity-building to strengthen and sustain early learning programs.

Early Learning Hubs

Bring together cross-sector partners to align services and resources for Oregon's young children and families.

Inclusive Partners

Provides training and support so families of children with higher needs can thrive together.

Programs at a Glance:

Program	Summary	How Tribes May Engage
<u>Baby Promise</u>	Provides free, high-quality infant and toddler care for eligible families, ages six weeks to three. <i>Note: Baby Promise is currently available in Multnomah, Crook, Jefferson, Deschutes, Coos, Curry, and Douglas counties.</i>	Expands infant and toddler care access for Tribal families and strengthens community early learning.
<u>Birth Through Five Early Literacy Plan</u>	Guides Oregon's early literacy efforts through family engagement, educator support, and equity.	Strengthens Tribal early literacy through language revitalization, family engagement, and partnerships.
<u>Child Care Licensing Division (CCLD)</u>	Ensures health and safety of children within child care settings. CCLD approaches compliance with health and safety standards through education, technical assistance, and providing resources and maintains a strong customer service lens to ensure license holders have all the information they need to be successful.	Supports Tribes in exploring options to create healthy and safe spaces for children. Provides consultation and guidance on best practices
<u>Child Care Substitutes of Oregon (CCSO)</u>	Connects licensed child care providers with qualified substitutes to maintain uninterrupted care.	Maintains consistent child care by connecting programs with substitutes during absences or training.
<u>Early Childhood Equity Fund</u>	Funds culturally specific and responsive programs supporting young children, families, and communities.	Strengthens Tribal-grounded early learning and prioritizes Native American language revitalization and preservation.
<u>ECE Workforce</u>	Supports Oregon's early childhood workforce through recruitment, training, and retention efforts.	Builds a strong early childhood workforce through development, support, and retention strategies.
<u>Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)</u>	Helps eligible families afford child care while working, attending school, or in approved activities.	Helps eligible Tribal families access affordable child care while supporting employment and stability.
<u>Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)</u>	Provides early learning, health, nutrition, and family support from pregnancy through kindergarten.	Supports Tribes in designing and delivering culturally grounded prenatal-to-kindergarten services.
<u>Preschool Promise</u>	Provides free, high-quality preschool for eligible three- and four-year-olds statewide, including children and families who are members of a federally recognized Tribe.	Expands access to preschool and school readiness through culturally responsive learning.
<u>SPARK</u>	Oregon's system helping early learning providers strengthen quality through continuous improvement.	Strengthens programs using coaching and supports that honor Tribal-defined goals and quality measures.

**Note: Eligibility and funding requirements differ across DELC programs. Some programs include Tribal-specific eligibility considerations or income exclusions that may benefit Tribal families. Because these provisions vary by program, Tribal Nations are encouraged to consult with DELC and the Office of Tribal Affairs when exploring available opportunities.*

For More Information and Continued Engagement:

The Department of Early Learning and Care's (DELC) Office of Tribal Affairs serves as the primary connection point for Tribal Nations engaging with DELC. The Office supports government-to-government relationships with Oregon's Nine Federally Recognized Tribes by strengthening partnerships, supporting consultation, and helping ensure DELC resources and programs reflect Tribal sovereignty and community priorities.

The Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) provides an additional space for Tribal voice and guidance, supporting Tribal leadership and self-determination in shaping Oregon's Tribal early learning priorities, policies, and investments.

For questions, partnership opportunities, or support navigating DELC resources:

[Office of Tribal Affairs](#)

Department of Early Learning and Care

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