

2025



# Oregon ECE Business Collaborative

## 2025 Action Plan

### Cross – Sector Strategies for Child Care Business Sustainability



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# Executive Summary

The availability of high-quality child care is crucial for Oregon's families, economy, and early childhood development. Despite recent state investments, the child care sector continues to face significant challenges, particularly regarding the long-term business sustainability of its providers. To address this, the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) partnered with First Children's Finance (FCF), leading to the formation of the Oregon ECE Business Collaborative, a diverse team of child care leaders and partners.

The Collaborative thoroughly mapped Oregon's child care business ecosystem, identified key strengths and challenges, and, using FCF's child care business ecosystem framework, co-developed a comprehensive plan for statewide system change. This

## Training and Education


- To improve access to business training, the Collaborative is codesigning a Comprehensive Child Care Business Training Resource Webpage. This user-friendly, centralized online hub will include consolidated training opportunities from various organizations across the state, helping providers easily identify sessions available at convenient times (evenings and weekends), as well as those offered in multiple languages.

## Workforce

- Recognizing low wages and high turnover as critical issues, the Collaborative, with the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership (OCCRP) taking a lead role, will deepen understanding of compensation inequities through data collection and wage gap analysis. The aim is to empower child care businesses with tools and guidance to test innovative compensation strategies and inform future policy changes.

## Facilities Planning

- To simplify the complex process of developing child care facilities, the Collaborative will support the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to inform the creation of a statewide resource navigation tool, addressing challenges like conflicting rules and high costs, and ensuring that specific needs, especially those of Tribal Nations, are met.



plan focuses on enhancing child care supply and provider sustainability across three key priority areas:

Successful implementation requires coordinated effort. Key recommendations for DELC include maintaining a dedicated Collaborative lead, integrating the Collaborative's strategies into DELC's strategic plan, championing policy alignment, diversifying funding streams, and acknowledging partner contributions. The work of the Collaborative also centers meaningful Tribal consultation and planning dedicating resources for Tribal programs.

This plan represents a unified commitment to fostering a robust, equitable, and sustainable child care ecosystem in Oregon. Sustaining the Collaborative as an advisory body, transforming its Ecosystem Map into an accessible online resource guide, and embedding principles of data-driven decision-making, continuous improvement, and equitable outreach are crucial for long-term success.

To learn more about the work of the Collaborative, and how to contribute to its vision for Oregon's child care sector, please contact:

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# Introduction

The availability of high-quality child care is a cornerstone of a thriving society – supporting working families, fostering early childhood development, and bolstering economic stability. Although there has been significant investment in Oregon's child care system over the past few years, the sector still faces considerable challenges, particularly concerning the business sustainability of child care providers.

Recognizing these complexities, the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) partnered with First Children's Finance (FCF), a national non-profit organization with extensive expertise in supporting the financial health and sustainability of early childhood education programs. This partnership initiated an effort to bring together a diverse and representative cross-sector team of dedicated child care leaders and intermediaries. This team's effort was named the Oregon ECE Business Collaborative. The Collaborative team was responsible for meticulously mapping the state's complex child care business ecosystem and analyzing it to identify both the existing strengths within the system and the critical areas that may require strategic improvement and innovation.

This report outlines the journey undertaken by the Oregon ECE Business Collaborative team. It details the process of mapping the essential elements that constitute the state's child care business ecosystem, the rigorous analysis conducted to pinpoint gaps and opportunities for enhancement, and the resulting action plan to support statewide system change. This plan explicitly aims to strengthen both the supply of new child care options across Oregon and the long-term business sustainability of child care entrepreneurs already serving the state's children and families.

This plan has been collectively created through the shared expertise and dedication of the Collaborative's members. It will be implemented through the coordinated efforts of the members and the inclusion of other statewide strategic partners, signifying a unified and steadfast commitment to fostering a robust, equitable, and ultimately sustainable child care business ecosystem.

# Methodology

The approach of the Oregon ECE Business Collaborative was grounded in the Child Care Business Ecosystem framework created by First Children's Finance (FCF). This framework identifies the 11 essential elements of a strong, sufficient, and sustainable system of high-quality child care, including Workforce, Training and Education, Facilities Planning, Business Efficiency, and System Reform. The Ecosystem serves as both an assessment tool and planning tool, offering a comprehensive structure to understand the policy and programmatic levers available to systems leaders that can enhance the sustainability of child care businesses.

In 2023, FCF developed the first version of the [Oregon Child Care Business Ecosystem Map](#), which provided an inventory and analysis of strategies across the state that impact child care business sustainability. This map cataloged the programs, funding streams, and initiatives influencing child care business development and served as a foundational resource for the Collaborative's work. The Ecosystem Map provided a comprehensive snapshot of Oregon's landscape at that time, helping Collaborative participants identify existing resources, critical gaps, and opportunities for alignment.

Building on this foundation, the Collaborative engaged in a series of facilitated discussions, strategic planning sessions, and resource analyses using the Ecosystem framework and Oregon-specific data to prioritize areas for action. Strategies were designed to align with the best practice goals outlined in the Ecosystem while being tailored to address the unique barriers and opportunities present in Oregon's child care sector. Emphasis was placed on cross-sector coordination, centering on the perspectives of Tribal Nations, and supporting the full diversity of child care business models across the state.

This methodology ensured that the Collaborative's strategy development process was rooted in an evidence-informed framework that is responsive to Oregon's distinct needs, and aligned with broader efforts to build a sustainable, equitable child care system.



## Oregon ECE Business Collaborative Team

Name	Title	Organizational Affiliation
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# Mapping

FCF's Child Care Business Ecosystem framework provides system leaders with a strategic lens to assess initiatives within the broader context of policy and programs that impact the sustainability of child care businesses. While no single solution ensures a diverse, sustainable child care system, addressing all 11 elements is crucial to building a holistic ecosystem that meets Oregon's child care needs.

## Child Care Business Ecosystem Map's Function And 2025 Findings

In 2023, FCF created the initial Oregon Child Care Business Ecosystem Map to inventory and analyze state-wide strategies supporting child care business sustainability. Through more than 45 interviews with representatives from state agencies – including DELC (then the Early Learning Division) and Business Oregon, CCR&R organizations, advocacy groups, and child care providers – FCF gathered real-time insights into state and local policies, programs, and innovative approaches.

Building on this foundation, the Collaborative team began updating the map in fall 2024 to reflect rapid changes in the child care landscape. In summer 2024, FCF hosted three mapping sessions to revisit and enhance the ecosystem map. These sessions provided a structured forum for stakeholders to explore how existing programs, supports, and policies interact within the broader child care system. Participants engaged in interactive discussions and brainstorming activities, sharing insights from their real-world experience. They reassessed program statuses, revised initiatives affected by funding changes, and added new strategies. A significant enhancement was the addition of the Oregon Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF). Established through House Bill 3005 in 2023, the CCIF supports the establishment, expansion, and improvement of child care facilities through grants and loans—a development that both highlighted progress and exposed outstanding needs.

Overall, the mapping process identified more than 100 strategies to support the sustainability of child care businesses, with a strong emphasis on workforce development. It also provided the Collaborative team with valuable insights into the state's child care business ecosystem. Many found it revealed uncoordinated efforts

and a need for greater alignment among existing supports, with one participant stating, "There are supports available that I know nothing about, and I have been [in this field] for 10 years." Another key revelation concerned the accessibility of initiatives for Tribal Nations and culturally responsive programs. Collaborative team members expressed that this comprehensive effort deepened their understanding and reaffirmed the need for a more cohesive, accessible, and well-coordinated child care business ecosystem in Oregon.

The sessions concluded with a clear set of next steps, including further analysis and ongoing collaboration to refine the ecosystem map and strengthen Oregon's child care business infrastructure. The Collaborative's work has resulted in a thorough and actionable picture of Oregon's child care business ecosystem, culminating in a shared vision for its future. Designed as a living tool, the Oregon Child Care Business Ecosystem Map will be updated every two years to reflect new legislation, funding opportunities, and emerging best practices. Moving forward, continuous stakeholder collaboration and ongoing monitoring of policy changes will be essential to strengthening Oregon's child care business infrastructure, especially in underserved regions and among marginalized providers.

## Analysis

Building on the Oregon Child Care Business Ecosystem Map through a series of surveys and facilitated analysis sessions, the team worked to define key areas for improvement within the ecosystem. These sessions were instrumental in helping the Collaborative team identify barriers, prioritize crucial elements, and begin brainstorming actionable solutions.

### Initial Assessment and Deep Dive

The process began with the Collaborative team completing an analysis survey. While not a formal evaluation, this survey was a vital tool for initiating conversation, designed to uncover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges within the child care business landscape. This initial step effectively focused attention on key issues requiring deeper exploration. The survey asked the teams to rate the active strategies of each ecosystem element against several factors such as accessibility,

cost efficiency, transparency, and equity. Additionally, the Collaborative team evaluated how well the state was fulfilling FCF's best practice statements for each ecosystem element.

Following the survey, the team participated in three facilitated analysis sessions led by FCF. These sessions aimed to build consensus on the highest-priority needs within each element while simultaneously creating space for open dialogue and the inclusion of diverse perspectives. By deeply focusing on each ecosystem component, the process ensured that efforts and resources could be strategically aligned to address the most pressing challenges across the broader system.

#### **Coordination and Collaboration**

A consistent need for better alignment and integration of services across the ecosystem.

#### **Strategic Planning**

The necessity for clear strategic approaches, encompassing planning around resource allocation, program updates, and long-term sustainability.

#### **Funding Challenges**

The critical need for increased or more-coordinated funding strategies.

#### **Disparities in Access**

The importance of addressing inequalities in access to support for all providers and families, including Tribal providers and providers in rural areas of the state.

## Identifying Gaps and Core Themes

Some of the key questions that guided the discussion were:

- What are our strengths, and what are our opportunities for improvement?
- What do we need to learn more about?
- Where is the Collaborative uniquely positioned to address the gaps in our ecosystem?

Based on the information collected through both the surveys and facilitated sessions, FCF identified several recurring themes for each element. Some of the most prominent themes included:

- **Coordination and Collaboration:** A consistent need for better alignment and integration of services across the ecosystem.
- **Strategic Planning:** The necessity for clear strategic approaches, encompassing planning around resource allocation, program updates, and long-term sustainability.
- **Funding Challenges:** The critical need for increased or more-coordinated funding strategies.
- **Disparities in Access:** The importance of addressing inequalities in access to support for all providers and families, including Tribal providers and providers in rural areas of the state.

## Prioritizing Key Ecosystem Elements for Intervention

Through a structured consensus-building process, the Collaborative team successfully narrowed their focus to three of the eleven essential areas for immediate action and strategic intervention: **Training & Education, Facilities Planning, and Workforce**. These focus areas encompassed the most pressing concerns raised in discussion among Collaborative team members, and in their individual survey assessments these areas received the lowest ratings, signaling an urgent need for improvement.

The team identified **Training & Education** as a focus area where Collaborative members have significant influence and could take immediate action, resulting in near-term impact on a broad spectrum of providers and services. Strategies such as developing centralized training calendars and offering essential business coaching support were proposed to directly address identified deficiencies and empower child care professionals.

**Facilities Planning** emerged as a critical priority due to systemic barriers that disproportionately affected certain communities. The misalignment among zoning, licensing, and permitting regulations presented significant hurdles for child care business owners, particularly those in rural and Tribal areas. The team identified that these challenges underscored a crucial need for targeted, culturally responsive solutions to ensure equitable access to adequate child care infrastructure and its intervention was vital for ensuring equitable access and sustainable growth.

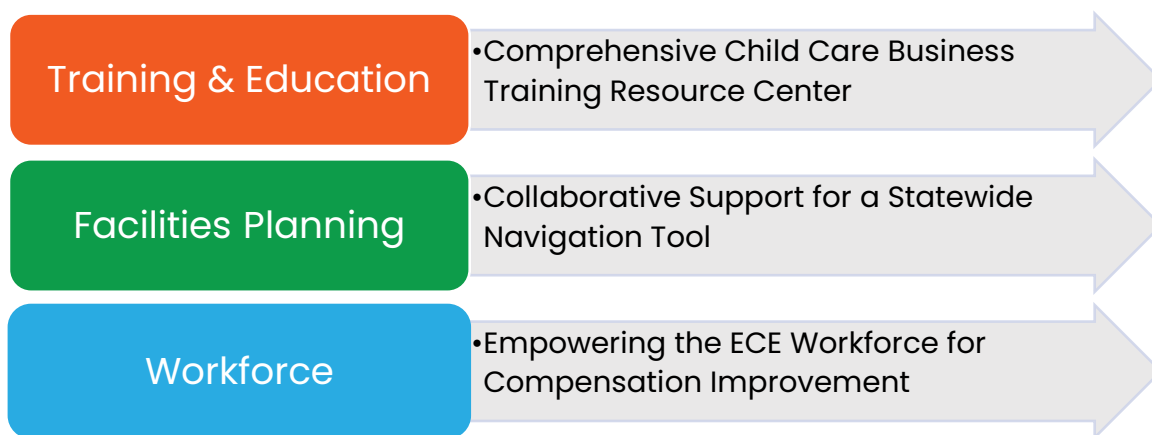
Finally, addressing the **Workforce** crisis was deemed mission-critical for the long-term sustainability of child care businesses in Oregon. The ongoing compensation challenges and fragmented support systems for child care workers demanded immediate attention. While this area requires more long-term, systemic interventions, the team brainstormed many strategies recognizing that bolstering the workforce would have the highest overall impact on the system. Workforce shortages directly impacted multiple other areas, including the overall capacity of child care facilities, creating a ripple effect across the entire ecosystem.

By carefully balancing the immediate impact of interventions with their long-term feasibility and considering the state's current performance against best practices, the Collaborative forged a clear path forward, focusing their efforts on the areas where intervention was most critically needed.

# Planning

Guided by the comprehensive analysis of Oregon's ECE Business Ecosystem map, the Collaborative embarked on a series of FCF-facilitated strategy planning sessions. This multiphase process began with extensive group brainstorming to generate a thorough list of strategies for the three key elements: Training and Education, Facilities Planning, and Workforce. FCF guided the team through a prioritization framework to identify the most feasible and impactful solutions. Team members applied their deep understanding of their ecosystem's strengths and weaknesses to identify strategies that were both practical and achievable within the next one to three years. Through this rigorous process, three key strategies emerged as top priorities to address critical needs within the Training and Education, Facilities Planning, and Workforce ecosystem elements. These selected strategies represent significant opportunities for all collaborative partners to enhance cooperation and strengthen existing partnerships, ultimately leading to a more robust and responsive child care system in Oregon.

Collaborative team members joined dedicated action teams based on their expertise, sphere of influence, or personal interest. In these teams, the Collaborative moved into focused discussions for refinement, prioritization, and ultimately, the full development of actionable plans.



## Training and Education: Comprehensive Child Care Business Training Resource Webpage

As part of the effort to strengthen Oregon's child care business ecosystem, the cross-organizational Education and Training action team—comprising TA partners and intermediaries collaborating with the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC)—developed a strategy to improve access to training and education for child care providers.

This strategy focuses on building a Comprehensive Child Care Business Training Resource Center. The Resource Center will be built around an easy-to-use, centralized online calendar that lists all business training opportunities from various organizations across the state in one place. It is designed to be a "one-stop-shop" where providers can find sessions offered at times that work for them (like evenings and weekends), in different languages, and from a wider range of trainers and materials that reflect Oregon's diverse child care community.

The Collaborative's reflections through analysis revealed that, while there are many good training efforts already underway, such as steps for obtaining a license or special courses for child care directors, information about these trainings is scattered. Child care business owners and program leaders often must visit multiple websites to find what they need, which can be time-consuming and confusing. This makes it hard to access the training they need, especially for those who are busy or new to the field.

To address this, the team suggested placing the business-focused training schedule on the DELIC website. The calendar will bring together training opportunities from groups like the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), First Children's Finance (FCF), Northwest Native Chamber (NWNC), Oregon Child Care Alliance (OCCA), and others focusing on child care business acumen. DELIC will make sure the listed trainings are useful and meet professional development guidelines. DELIC and its partners will update the calendar regularly, including details such as how to sign up, dates, times, languages, and the target audience (e.g., new businesses or those looking to grow). The webpage will also guide providers to other training platforms and statewide schedules.



This strategy is already under way. DELC has been collaborating with its communications team on the technical aspects of the website. They are also reaching out to partners to collect training details and web links. While the Collaborative team initially hoped for an interactive calendar, they are starting with a list of trainings updated monthly due to current technical limits. Once launched, the calendar will be found on the [Department of Early Learning and Care: Starting & Expanding Your Business](#) website. DELC and its partners will promote the calendar widely.

To evaluate the success of the business resource webpage, DELC and its partners will monitor factors such as the number of partners providing training, the total number of trainings listed, and the volume of visitors to the website. They will also tally the availability of evening, weekend, and non-English options. This will assist them in assessing how much coordination and access have improved.

## *Future Directions*

As the business resource webpage launches, the Collaborative will continue to play a key role in ensuring its ongoing usability and impact. The Collaborative can continue to explore new ways to make the website more interactive, incorporating features such as filters or color-coding.

The Collaborative can also engage new partners to expand the business resource webpage's content and offerings, incorporating diverse training sessions and webinars, while also exploring other types of support that could be added. Prioritizing partners offering options in languages other than English or at convenient times will ensure the business resource webpage's comprehensiveness.


Finally, the Collaborative can play a role in periodically collecting and analyzing feedback from users. This should include documenting qualitative feedback and stories of outcomes and impact in addition to quantitative metrics (e.g. number of page views). This approach will help demonstrate the value of the Resource Center and the collaborative efforts behind it and facilitate the integration of this resource with other important components of the child care support system. For instance, it can build understanding of how increased access to training can result in increased access to funding or facilitate facilities improvement, affecting multiple areas of the child care ecosystem.

## Facilities Planning: Collaborative Support for a Statewide Navigation Tool

The Collaborative's strategy for facilities planning involves supporting the Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) in their work to create a statewide resource navigation tool for child care businesses. The Collaborative will provide its child care business expertise through foundational research and expert consultation. This tool aims to make it easier for child care business owners to understand facility development processes, clarify confusing rules, and improve coordination between different state agencies.

During the analysis phase, the Collaborative team expressed significant concerns about the challenges child care businesses face in obtaining clear and consistent support for developing or improving their facilities. They encountered issues such as conflicting rules from various agencies, inconsistent zoning policies, high fees, limited access to assistance, and a severe lack of funding for construction or renovation. The high cost of land and buildings across Oregon further hampers the profitability of child care businesses, particularly for home-based providers. The Collaborative's analysis of current facilities initiatives revealed that many were still evolving, or their full potential had yet to be realized, presenting opportunities to expand their reach and more fully integrate principles of coordination, transparency, and equity to achieve best practice goals. Multiple participants also voiced that facility-related initiatives could be improved by increasing evaluation, reach, and professional development supports for business owners and staff.

In response, the Collaborative chose to concentrate on promoting a unified approach to developing child care facilities and mapping resources by exploring working with the DLCD. The Collaborative's plan includes conducting a landscape analysis to document and assess existing resources in Oregon as well as from other states. It also calls for utilizing a statewide child care needs assessment map to display where new facilities are most needed, and organizing and centralizing current facility-related guidance, technical assistance, and regulations to make information easier for providers to find and usable by the DLCD.



A crucial part of this strategy is centering the perspectives of the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon in facility development planning. Tribal communities often face unique challenges because existing systems rarely consider their sovereignty, federal land status, or specific cultural and funding needs. This strategy includes directly engaging with the state's nine federally recognized Tribal Nations, as well as urban Native organizations, to the navigation tool truly reflects the realities of child care facility development in Tribal communities, honoring their sovereignty and decision-making.

The strategy also emphasizes engagement with providers, intermediaries, facility experts, and local planning staff. Their insights will help ensure that the resource navigation tool and the support the Collaborative provides in its creation address real-world challenges and offer practical solutions. Additionally, the Collaborative will explore resources that support shared-use developments, where child care facilities are part of larger buildings. This effort seeks to provide the necessary research and input to create tools that make facility development less confusing and more supportive for child care businesses at every step. This strategy also aligns with ongoing legislative efforts such as House Bill 2727, House Bill 3496, and House Bill 3560 to ensure that research and resource development support existing work.

To measure the effectiveness of this strategy, the Collaborative plans to track indicators such as the number of new or preserved child care slots, the types of programs supported (like home-based or center-based), and where these facilities are located. Progress will also be evident in the creation of tailored resource materials for various areas and the regular updating of navigation tools as rules or systems evolve.

### *Future Directions*

Ongoing engagement with providers, local planning offices, and Tribal communities is vital to keep resource tools relevant and responsive to changing needs. Consistent collaboration between different agencies is also critical to avoid conflicting advice and to ensure unified support. It is essential the Collaborative support the DLCD in designing a navigation tool that is accessible and relevant to all types of providers, including smaller, home-based, and culturally specific programs. The Collaborative will articulate a clear process for consistently providing support and consultation to DLCD on updating the navigation tools, maps, and guides to help the materials stay relevant as policies and funding change.

## Workforce: Empowering the ECE Workforce for Compensation Improvement

Members of Oregon’s ECE Business Collaborative identified workforce compensation and benefits as a critical area for intervention to stabilize the child care ecosystem. Low wages, limited benefits, and staff turnover are persistent challenges that directly affect business sustainability, enrollment capacity, and program quality. These issues are especially acute for small providers, who often cannot compete with other sectors for qualified talent. The Collaborative emphasized the need for innovative, sustainable solutions to improve workforce conditions while recognizing that child care businesses must be supported in developing strategies that work for their specific operational realities.

To guide this work, the Collaborative’s strategy builds on research, technical assistance, and policy alignment, with each component informing the next. In the short term, the Collaborative will focus on deepening its understanding of compensation inequities by drawing from existing workforce data and research. This includes leveraging the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care’s (DELIC) Provider Survey and workforce studies conducted by the Oregon Child Care Research Partnership (OCCRP) at Oregon State University. These resources will help the Collaborative establish a baseline understanding of current compensation and benefits structures across the sector. The analysis will prioritize disaggregation by race, ethnicity, geography, program type, and other key characteristics to uncover wage disparities and highlight the distinct challenges facing different segments of the workforce. Additionally, the Collaborative will examine compensation models from other states to gain a deeper understanding of how various funding strategies and policy frameworks have supported workforce stability and retention, providing insights that can inform Oregon-specific approaches.

Building on this foundation, mid-term efforts will center on translating findings into action by equipping providers with tools, guidance, and technical assistance to test innovative compensation strategies. This includes developing tailored supports that help businesses explore and implement alternative models—such as shared services, staffing cooperatives, or tiered compensation—while ensuring these approaches

remain financially viable. Through this work, child care business owners will be empowered to better understand their financial outlook and identify practical steps they can take to improve compensation and benefits for their staff. This may include examining their revenue structure, identifying opportunities to adjust tuition or staffing models, or leveraging available funding in new ways. Coordination among technical assistance providers and business support organizations will be essential to ensure consistent, high-quality support across the state. This effort is designed to align with and complement House Bill 2991, which focuses on ECE workforce compensation and professional learning. Rather than duplicate those efforts, the Collaborative's strategy aims to generate practical tools and applied learning that can strengthen HB 2991's long-term impact. The Collaborative would also like to explore how this research can inform additional partnerships, potentially leading to the launch of pilot initiatives and the identification of funding to support implementation. These pilots would not only test the effectiveness of innovative models but also provide valuable insights into the conditions and supports needed to make successful improvements for the ECE workforce.

In the long term, the research findings and the Collaborative's work to empower child care businesses to pilot innovative compensation and benefits models could help lay the groundwork for future policy change. By tracking the outcomes of these pilots and aligning them with Oregon's cost modeling tools, the Collaborative will generate real-world evidence about what works in improving workforce compensation. This evidence can help state leaders, funders, and advocates better understand the structural supports needed to sustain and scale effective practices. Equally important will be the development of a compelling narrative that connects improved compensation with broader benefits, including increased program quality, reduced staff turnover, and greater economic stability for families and communities. This narrative can help demonstrate the broader value of investing in the ECE workforce and may contribute to long-term shifts in how the sector is supported through public and private funding.

### *Future Directions*

As this strategy is implemented, the Collaborative should play a key role in ensuring the work is effective, equitable, and responsive to the needs of Oregon's diverse child care landscape. The Collaborative will ensure equity is centered throughout all aspects of data collection, analysis, and implementation. Disaggregating data by



race, ethnicity, language, geography, program type, and other relevant factors will be essential to understanding the unique challenges faced by different providers and segments of the workforce. Second, the Collaborative will actively engage with a wide range of stakeholders, including culturally specific organizations, Tribal partners, labor advocates, and higher education institutions, to ensure that strategies are informed by lived experience and connected to the broader workforce development ecosystem. Third, the Collaborative will help ensure that proposed policies and programs are actionable and feasible for child care businesses, especially smaller, community-based programs. Business owners may need support not only to access new models and funding opportunities but also to integrate them into their existing business practices. Finally, the Collaborative will work to establish clear feedback loops to capture learning from pilot initiatives in real-time, make necessary adjustments, and share lessons with the provider community and state partners. These considerations will help ensure that the workforce strategy remains grounded, adaptable, and impactful as it evolves.

Throughout all stages of this work, the Collaborative is committed to centering equity, fostering cross-sector partnerships, and ensuring that strategies respond to the realities of Oregon's diverse provider community. By taking a phased, interconnected approach — rooted in research, empowered through innovation, and designed to influence long-term systems change, the Collaborative aims to build a stronger, more resilient child care workforce across Oregon.



# Recommendations for Implementation & Ongoing Support

As the Collaborative transitions from Ecosystem strategy planning to implementation, this section outlines key recommendations and considerations to guide coordination and investment, particularly for the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC). These recommendations aim to support the effective rollout of strategies in the key priority areas identified by the Collaborative: Training and Education, Workforce Development, and Facilities Planning. Additionally, this section provides recommendations for continued coordination, sustainable funding mechanisms, ensuring partner accountability, and fostering approaches to sustain the ongoing work of the Collaborative as a vital body that addresses continuous learning, system alignment, and feedback.

## The Role of DELIC in Implementation

DELIC is uniquely positioned to champion and facilitate the implementation of these strategies. We recommend DELIC:

- **Maintain a Dedicated Collaborative Lead:** Continue the role of the established DELIC staff lead who guides and supports the Collaborative team. This lead is crucial for ensuring alignment with state strategic priorities, facilitating cross-departmental coordination, and acting as a central contact for Collaborative partners. Ongoing support for this role is essential for maintaining momentum and ensuring continuity. The lead should continue to provide regular progress updates and report evaluation metrics to DELIC leadership.
- **Integrate Strategies into DELIC's Strategic Plan:** Embed the Collaborative's priority strategies into DELIC's overarching strategic goals and annual work plans. This ensures that the strategies receive consistent attention, resources, and prioritization within the department.

- **Champion Policy Alignment:** Actively review existing DELC policies and identify new policy opportunities that align with and support the Collaborative's recommended strategies. This includes advocating for legislative changes where necessary to remove barriers and create incentives for business sustainability.
- **Diversify Funding Streams:** Oregon has demonstrated a capacity for innovative revenue generation for ECE such as tapping into corporate activities taxes and lottery bonds. Oregon will need to continue to push the envelope to generate additional state revenue to fully fund its child care system. In addition, DELC should pursue philanthropic partnerships, private foundation support, and creative public-private funding models to enhance the long-term sustainability of child care businesses beyond traditional general fund appropriations.
- **Align and Tailor Existing Resources:** DELC should review the Collaborative's priority strategies and explore opportunities to tailor already allocated resources to support these efforts. This includes assessing how current investments in training and education, workforce development, and facility improvements can be leveraged to advance the work of Collaborative partners. Where appropriate, DELC should consider adapting the use of existing funds to support staffing, technical assistance, data collection, and emerging initiatives aligned with the Collaborative's goals.
- **Acknowledge and Elevate Partner Contributions:** Regularly acknowledge and publicly celebrate the unique expertise, insights, and contributions of the Collaborative. Highlighting the Collaborative's impact reinforces its value and demonstrates DELC's commitment to increased collaboration, alignment, and impact across the Oregon child care ecosystem.

## Tribal-Specific Considerations

Recognizing the sovereign status of Tribal Nations and the unique needs, strengths, and priorities of Tribal child care programs, we recommend that the Collaborative, in partnership with DELC:

- **Ensure Meaningful Tribal Consultation:** Continue and deepen meaningful government-to-government consultation with the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon on all aspects of strategy implementation, respecting Tribal sovereignty and self-determination in the design, funding, and execution of child care supports.
- **Allocate Dedicated Resources for Tribal Programs:** Prioritize and dedicate specific funding and technical assistance resources to support the business sustainability of Tribal child care programs, acknowledging their distinct cultural and operational contexts.
- **Integrate Traditional Knowledge:** Seek opportunities to integrate traditional knowledge and culturally responsive practices into the implementation of strategies, particularly in workforce development and training.
- **Develop a Tribal Child Care Business Sustainability Map:** Work with Tribal Nations and other involved partners to co-create a Tribal-specific business sustainability map that outlines the current assets, challenges, and opportunities for strengthening Tribal child care businesses. This map can serve as a foundational tool for identifying resource gaps, informing technical assistance, and guiding investment priorities.
- **Explore a Collaborative Process Specific to Tribes:** Work alongside Tribal leaders, including the Oregon Tribal Early Learning Alliance (OTELA) and other partners who support early child care for Tribal Nations to determine what a collaborative process tailored to Tribal needs might involve. This could include establishing the appropriate structure, ensuring participation, and setting priorities that align with Tribal child care goals, as well as creating a dedicated space for collaboration among Tribal programs and with state partners.

## Future of the Collaborative

The Oregon ECE Business Collaborative has proven to be an invaluable mechanism for fostering systemic change. We recommend DELC:

- **Sustain the Collaborative as an Advisory Body:** Continue to convene the Collaborative on a regular basis, transitioning its role to an ongoing advisory body that monitors implementation progress, provides feedback on emerging needs, and identifies new opportunities for system alignment.
- **Seek Feedback from the Collaborative:** Establish formal mechanisms for the Collaborative to provide regular feedback and recommendations directly to DELC leadership, ensuring that partner insights continuously inform state policy and practice.
- **Continued Funding of the OR ECE Business Collaborative:** Recognizing the value the Oregon ECE Business Collaborative brings to the state's efforts, DELC should make a strong commitment to continuing to fund the Collaborative as an ongoing entity. With the assurance of sustained support, the Collaborative can engage in strategic, long-term initiatives; deepen cross-organizational relationships, and embed coordination and continuous improvement as a foundational way of working across the Oregon ECE system.

Ultimately, these recommendations are designed to guide the effective implementation of the Collaborative's strategies and ensure sustained progress in strengthening Oregon's child care businesses. By championing these efforts, fostering deep partnerships, prioritizing data-driven decision-making, cultivating a culture of continuous improvement, and ensuring equitable reach and impact across all initiatives, DELC and all partners can together build a resilient, accessible, and high-quality child care system that serves every family and child across the state for years to come.

# Conclusion

The Oregon ECE Business Collaborative's journey marks a significant step towards transforming Oregon's child care business landscape. Through a highly participatory process of mapping, analysis, and collaborative planning, this initiative has not only clarified the complexities of the child care system but also laid out a clear, actionable path forward. The comprehensive plan, strategically focused on Training and Education, Workforce, and Facilities Planning, offers innovative solutions designed to enhance the supply, quality, and long-term business sustainability of child care providers across the state.

The success of this ambitious plan hinges on a sustained, coordinated, and deeply collaborative effort. The recommendations detailed in this report underscore the indispensable leadership role of the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) in driving implementation, securing diversified and dedicated funding, and ensuring policy alignment. The vital role of all non-DELIC Collaborative partners, whose diverse expertise and on-the-ground insights are essential for effective rollout, is equally crucial. Furthermore, the commitment to ongoing, meaningful government-to-government consultation with the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon is paramount, ensuring that solutions are culturally responsive and uphold the sovereignty of Tribal Nations.

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