

BUDGET NARRATIVE

2025-27 Agency Initiatives

The Department of Early Learning and Care has identified the following initiatives and policy option packages (POPs) for the 2025-27 biennium. These initiatives reflect the following priorities of the Agency:

1. The Department of Early Learning and Care has the operational capacity to support the necessary work of the agency.
2. Families and early childhood educators have the resources they need to promote early literacy from birth through age five.
3. Child Care Licensing has the presence needed to continue to meet federal timelines, monitor for child health and safety in a timely manner, and provide a high level of customer service meeting the compliance needs of licensed child care providers in Oregon.

POP 101 Operational Support - \$5,737,976 General Fund, 15 positions (12.81 FTE)

The purpose of this package is to address workload capacity needs as well as ongoing operating expenses. As DELC continues to stand up its operations there are areas of agency operations where workload and professional services are at capacity and additional resources are needed to continue to support DELC's programs and maintain a high-level of customer service.

POP 105 CCLD Staffing - \$3,117,635 Federal Funds, 13 positions (12.06 FTE)

The purpose of this POP is to align Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) licensing caseloads within national best practice recommendations and allow the Department to better meet the customer service, language, and compliance needs of licensed child care providers in Oregon.

POP 580 Birth Through Five Literacy - \$24,841,500 General Fund

The Birth Through Five Literacy Plan is intended to increase access to culturally-specific early literacy programs for children from birth to age five, to provide training and coaching for direct service staff in early literacy, and to develop and expand language revitalization efforts by federal recognized Indian Tribes in Oregon.

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Department of Early Learning and Care

Policy Option Package (POP): 101

POP Title: Operational Support

Total Request: \$ 5,737,976

Purpose: This policy package addresses workload capacity needs, ongoing support of maintenance and operations of operational databases, and increases professional services to support contracts and services in place when DELC was part of Oregon Department of Education as ELD.

Background: As DELC continues to stand up operationally it has become evident more support is needed in a multiple areas of agency operations, particularly since DELC cannot rely on accrued savings like more established agencies. As programs have been fully stood up and in some cases expanded during the 2024 short session, the DELC Operations division needs additional staffing to support Program staff and grant payments. The package also requests additional funding to support ongoing maintenance and operations of operational databases. These additional professional services would support contracts/services in place when DELC was part of ELD. It also become evident that as Programs were scaled up statewide due the student success act investments in 2019, capacity for quality assurance has not kept up with program monitoring.

How Achieved: There are two parts to this request. First, DELC is requesting 15 positions (12.81 FTE) and associated service and supply position related costs across its Operations and Program divisions. The second part of this requests addresses an increased on-going need in Professional Services.

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The details of the positions are as follows:

Operations Office

Financial Services:

- **Accountant 2 Limited Duration** – This position is being requested as Limited Duration with a proposed start date of January 1, 2026 to align with the implementation of the Provider Management Platform (PMP) system coming online. This position would coordinate PMP invoicing and accounting data migration.
- **Accountant 1** – This position will be a dedicated Accounts Receivable (A/R) position needed to address ongoing workload. DELC has over 195 A/R accounts and processes upwards of 25 plus invoices per month. There is a lot of reconciliation that must take place month to month to process these invoices. Under DELC's current structure there is no dedicated A/R accountant.
- **Accounting Technician** – This is one of three Accounting Technician positions being requested. Two of the Accounting Technician positions were requested in the 2023 – 2025 Agency Request Budget, but were not part of the Legislatively Adopted Budget. This position would be one of two Accounting Technicians to handle the large volume of Accounts Payable (A/P) invoices. The focus of this position would be to process travel claims. With a large workforce conducting field work and site visits DELC had over 120 travel claims within the first six months of the 2023-25 biennium.
- **Accounting Technician** – This is the second Accounting Technician position to address A/P invoice workload needs. The focus of this position would be to serve as the SPOTS claims coordinator, DELC has 25 SPOTS cards across the agency and each card requires monthly reconciliation. In addition to the travel claim and SPOTS card transactions, DELC processes over 80 background check invoices per month. During the first six months of the 2023-25 biennium, all other invoices not mentioned totaled 930.
- **Accounting Technician** – The third Accounting Technician position has a delayed start date of January 1, 2026 to align with the implementation of PMP. This position will work closely with the LD Accountant 2 and will be the ongoing invoicing specialist when the LD position expires. The position will also be responsible for continued data migration and data archiving within the PMP system.

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Budget Services:

- **Fiscal Analyst 2** – This position will focus on position management and will provide monitoring and oversight ensuring positions budgeted to CCDF continue to do CCDF related work. As each grant closes out there is a large volume of manual data entry that must take place moving each position off of one grant type to another. This occurs anywhere from monthly to quarterly depending on grant closeout dates. There is not a Workday solution for the manual entry. With statewide initiatives such as Pay Equity there continues to be a steady workload evaluating the budgetary impacts of these initiatives. With a current team of five budget staff this workload becomes a challenge to absorb. As Human Resources continues its classification work, the Budget team continues to see an increase in its budgetary position management duties.

Communications:

- **Public Affairs Specialist 3** – The public information officer will ensure media inquiries are handled swiftly and in a professional manner to increase transparency and build awareness while centering equity. This position will provide crisis communications strategies and will increase access to information. DELC currently contracts for some of this work which is not as cost effective as a permanent position. In addition to serving as the agency spokesperson and building a speaker training, this position will develop and lead both earned and owned media best practices and manage reporter relationships.

Data Analytics:

- **Operations and Policy Analyst 4** – Per DAS EIS's data governance and transparency policy, this position will serve as DELC's lead data steward and facilitate and provide leadership to DELC's unit level data stewards in the accomplishment of their duties to manage data within their discrete business units and data domains. This position will also liaise directly with the State Chief Data Officer on data governance within the agency and at the state enterprise level.

Human Resources:

- **Human Resource Specialist 3** - This position will focus on classification work. DELC currently contracts for some of this which has exceeded our budget and is not as cost effective as a permanent position. This work is ongoing as most of our positions need a class comp review since transitioning from ELD to DELC. As new positions are created those too need classification review. Noting here this position was also requested in the 2023-25 Agency Request Budget.

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- **Human Resource Specialist 2** - This request is a reclassification of an existing full-time permanent Human Resource Assistant upward. It has been difficult to fill the position at the current classification level. Human Resource leadership evaluated the duties and found the workload supports a higher classification.
- **Operations & Policy Analyst 3** - This position will focus on policy work. This position will be responsible for ensuring the development of all DELC internal policies as well as tracking, coordinating, updating and ensuring alignment across all these agency policies as well as with enterprise policies.

Information Technology:

- **Information Services Specialist 5** - This position will be the primary coordinator for the Provider Management Platform and interface with the ERDC and licensing teams as well as the vendor to ensure the tool is designed and operating effectively. This position will also assume all the contract administration, project management, testing and updating of the tool once it is fully operational and as the platform nears full implementation. The proposed start date of this position is January 1, 2026 to align with PMP implementation.

Project Management Office:

- **Project Manager 3** - This position will focus on critical and ongoing agency-wide Organizational Change Management (OCM) work, including developing, coordinating and continually updating change management strategies, tools, and data related to change management. This position will coordinate and lead existing agency Lean Leaders and Project Managers towards system efficiencies, develop implementation plans for OCM strategies, verify quality of OCM specific deliverables in strategic planning efforts, and coach and train DELC staff on OCM concepts. Noting here this position was requested in the 2023-25 Agency Request Budget.
- **Project Manager 2** - This position will provide ongoing project management support across the agency for strategic projects as well as assist in training DELC staff on project management tools and principles. Additionally, this position will support that agency's numerous existing and planned project teams develop and align change management strategies and approaches critical to the successful implementation and adoption of the agency projects associated with the DELC strategic plan and remaining projects associated with fully establishing the foundations of the agency.

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DELIC Programs

Program Design:

- **Program Analyst 3** – This position will be the Healthy Families Oregon (HFO) Quality Assurance program specialist and will provide support for technical assistance and monitoring of the HFO program in alignment with national monitoring requirements. Based on ongoing workload the Program team has determined additional capacity is required to meet national accreditation requirements for monitoring compliance and quality assurance.
- **Program Analyst 3** – This position will focus primarily on quality monitoring for the Preschool Promise (PSP) program, particularly as a liaison with Child Care Resource and Referral entities and Early Learning Hubs in support of coordinated enrollment for the program. The PSP program expanded in 21/23 with no additional FTE to support the over 300 program sites and a current service level budget of \$199,211,092. This position will provide monitoring, technical assistance, grantee communication and coordinated enrollment support.

For the second part of this policy package, DELC requests additional Services and Supply funding to support the ongoing maintenance needs of DELC systems (Awards Management System, Healthy Families Oregon, and PMP). DELC is also requesting additional Services and Supplies funding for Professional Services needs within our Human Resources and IT units.

Professional Services:

The package also requests additional funding to support ongoing maintenance and operations of operational databases as well as some Human Resource and IT professional service contracts some of which were previously covered when DELC was part of ODE. The details are as follows:

- Provider Management Platform - \$1,300,000 ongoing maintenance and operation.
- Awards Management System - \$375,000 ongoing maintenance and operation.
- Healthy Families Oregon database - \$350,000 ongoing maintenance and operation.
- HR & IT professional services - \$155,000 contract renewals (Info Tech, SHRM, LinkedIn).

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Staffing Impact:

Establishes 14 permanent positions, one Limited Duration position, and reclassifies one permanent position upward (12.81 FTE).

Quantifying Results:

DELC will monitor the short-term and long-term success of the program in line with the following metrics:

- Increased processing times of both Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable invoices.
- Implementation of the Provider Management Platform.
- Support of ongoing systems maintenance.
- Capacity to continue current professional services contracts.

Revenue Source:

POP 101 requests \$5,737,976 General Fund.

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Department of Early Learning and Care

Policy Option Package: 105

POP Title: Child Care Licensing Division Staffing Total Request: \$3,117,636 Federal Funds

Purpose: POP 105 will align Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) licensing caseloads with national best practice recommendations and allow the Department to better meet the customer service, language, and compliance needs of licensed child care providers in Oregon.

Background:

Licensing Staffing Needs:

- **Compliance Specialist 2 (10)** – The 10 Compliance Specialist 2 positions requested are primarily intended for bilingual-specific FTE to address the risk of inequity in this regard. In addition, a portion of these staffing requests will also be used to monitor Preschool Promise grantee sites for federally-required quality metrics.

There are multiple issues that have led to concern regarding the sustainability of licensing staff workload, and the ability of Child Care Licensing Division (CCLD) to adequately meet the needs of child care providers.

First, DELIC now has the ability to analyze the workload impacts of Regulated Subsidy inspections (facilities exempt from licensing receiving Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) subsidy payments). Timely completion of these inspections is considered high priority, as providers are unable to receive ERDC payments until they have passed an inspection. These inspections are federally mandated through CCDF, and when originally implemented, there was insufficient data to determine the workload capacity that would be required. Recent improvements made to data analytics has uncovered a significant impact to workload unseen previously, placing an average caseload considerably higher than what is nationally recommended (through guidance used to determine the sufficient ratio of inspectors to providers needed for timely inspection, as is required by CCDF). The National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) recommends that an average caseload not exceed 50 to 60 child care programs per licenser (Payne, 2011). Current average caseloads exceed 68. Caseloads of specifically bilingual Spanish licensing staff (our highest statewide) are consistently between 70-75. In the most diverse areas of the state, bilingual staff caseloads are approximately 18% higher than the statewide average non-bilingual caseloads.

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Second, CCDF federal requirements have recently required significant changes to unannounced monitoring visits for all licensed providers. Prior to these changes, a typical monitoring visit with no compliance issues took approximately 30 minutes per visit. These changes to inspection requirements have significantly increased inspection time; on average two-hours per routine visit with no regulatory violations, and up to four hours for large centers or facilities that struggle with compliance. As federal requirements for unannounced monitoring visits have increased, it is an operations concern that staff will be required to reduce the comprehensiveness of announced licensing visits, technical assistance and consultation in order to limit time spent in field where possible, and still meet federal inspection visit requirements. Licensors' ability to provide quality customer service and support for providers to maintain compliance will be at risk.

Additionally, several statewide and regional-level initiatives related to increasing supply of child care have placed a strain on the licensing system. Preschool For All, for example, has begun to create an increase in caseloads in the Portland/Metro field offices, and with the June 30, 2024 allocation deadline for \$17 million, further increases are expected shortly. Additional capacity increase initiatives include but are not limited to: Business Oregon Child Care Infrastructure Program with \$50 million, The Research Institute statewide expansion grant of \$3.6 million, \$10 million statewide Care Fund startup grants for housing with child care facilities, statewide Business Accelerator cohorts for child care startups, and Ford Family Foundation capacity grants in Southern Oregon. Supports begin prior to licensure, and prior to programs showing up on a caseload. As providers seek to expand or begin operations, requests for expansion consultations and pre-certification visits must be prioritized by licensing staff in order to support business startups and grant eligibility. For example, requests for certified family child care facility pre-certification visits have more than tripled in the Portland Metro area as of June 2024, as compared to the entire year of 2023. As expansion initiatives are successful in creating more child care capacity statewide, licensors' caseloads will continue to rise.

An additional concern regarding the ability to provide equitable licensing services, is CCLD's bilingual staff capacity. As populations of child care providers become increasingly diverse, the capacity of bilingual licensing staff has stretched considerably. As referenced above, caseloads of our bilingual staff are disproportionately those highest statewide. If unable to respond to these increases in caseloads of our current bilingual staff, CCLD anticipates negative impacts to the equity of our services. In order to provide licensing services to language-diverse provider populations, regional field offices frequently resort to covering caseloads between offices, or non-bilingual staff using the language line to conduct licensing visits or respond to providers' needs, which could be critically problematic in misinterpretation of the nuances of regulatory compliance that is required to keep children safe and keep providers operating.

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Criminal Background, Compliance and Investigations Staffing Need:

- **Compliance Specialist 1** – in CCLD’s Compliance Unit Compliance Specialists primarily handle complaint intake and assignment, historical compliance records on facilities involved in allegations of child abuse or neglect, drafting and issuing of facility legal notices, and facilitating compliance review.

Listed below is an approximate number of total complaints assigned by the Compliance Unit over the past few years, demonstrating a continual increase. What is especially notable is a marked increase since the inception of DELC and implementation of background checks for ERDC-listed providers. With the transition of ERDC under DELC, there has also been an increase in incoming complaint allegations on these subsidized facilities, and it is anticipated that there will need to be operations changes made to how these are processed. Total Complaints:

7/1/2020 - 6/30/2021	382
7/1/2021 - 6/30/2022	613
7/1/2022 - 6/30/2023	852
7/1/2023 - 6/11/2024*	948

*time of narrative preparation.

- **Compliance Specialist 3** – to process and investigate Regulated Subsidy complaints.

Within the Investigations Unit there are 13 Compliance Specialist 2 positions which conduct approximately 80 new investigations on complaints received every month. Each investigator has an ongoing caseload of approximately 15-18 active investigations at any given moment. One of these 13 positions is currently filling a Compliance Specialist 3 work-out-of-class role since October 2023. Prior to when this position was created, the Investigations Unit did not have a role to develop standards and procedures that guide investigations actions, training of investigations staff to ensure that policies, rules and standards are applied consistently in a wide variety of situations, or conduct preliminary reviews of licensing actions and make determinations that affect child care programs. Additional to the processing of incoming complaint allegations on subsidized programs, DELC requires capacity to investigate these complaints-- which is federally mandated. CCLD currently does not investigate all Regulated Subsidy complaints. CCLD anticipates about 15-20 additional complaints per month.

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Policy Staffing Needs:

- **Operations and Policy Analyst 2** – Currently DELC has no policy position assigned to the ongoing work of background checks. Because the background check system is so complex with impacts related to legislative changes in other agencies, the policies of other state and Tribal governments, federal requirements, as well as an ongoing need for ensuring quality and equitable processes and rules, a full-time permanent OPA2 position is needed to sustain these efforts with quality and compliant service delivery.

Continuing federal changes have created an increase in reviewing crimes for the 70,000 individuals enrolled in the Central Background Registry (CBR) and updating rules to remain in compliance with federal requirements.

In 2022, DELC experienced a significant backlog with Central Background Registry applications. While the backlog has been resolved due to budgetary investments, an ongoing need was identified that a dedicated policy position is needed to function in the Background Check Unit. Current identified needs for this position would include rulemaking and policymaking to CBR regulations and operations, tracking federal compliance issues and implementing corrective action, tracking decisions on crime equations from other states, monitoring Key Performance Measures related to CBR processing timelines, tracking subtlety determinations, and monitoring communication issues between teams regarding CBR to ensure clarity.

- **Operations and Policy Analyst 3** – A permanent OPA3 position is needed to sustain and support ongoing policy needs and capacity for CCLD.

DELC was given one additional Limited Duration OPA3 during the 2023 legislative session from SB 1040 – the Micro-centers bill. Due to the unprecedented amount of legislation, this position has had to take on a significant workload beyond running micro-centers, including Outdoor Nature-Based program development and engagement pursuant to HB 2727 (2023), as well as other rule revision engagement.

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In general, CCLD lacks capacity to support ongoing initiatives in the policy space. Federal policy change efforts, continuous improvement efforts, as well as ongoing support of state legislative changes are all identified ongoing needs for which a position is needed to support. CCLD currently has one permanent OPA3 to support policy across field operations, legal actions and hearings, background checks, maintenance of all rulesets, completing federal reports, maintaining federal compliance, conducting public engagement including rule advisory committees and work groups, supporting connections between ERDC and CCLD, supporting coordination between publicly funded programs and licensing, supporting quality improvement initiatives, suspension and expulsion prevention in licensing, as well as other initiatives.

How Achieved:

Adds 13 positions, makes permanent one limited duration permanent, and makes one part-time position full-time.

- Operations and Policy Analyst 3 – makes an existing limited duration position permanent – 1 position (1.0 FTE)
- Operations and Policy Analyst 2 – 1 position (0.88 FTE)
- Compliance Specialist 1 – changes one existing part-time position to full-time. (0.50 FTE)
- Compliance Specialist 2 – 10 positions (8.80 FTE)
- Compliance Specialist 3 – 1 position (0.88 FTE)

Quantifying Results:

DELC will monitor the short-term and long-term success of the program in line with the following metrics:

- Caseload numbers data tracking
- Over time requests
- Staff satisfaction surveys
- Success with federal reporting timelines
- Compliant federal monitoring visits
- Background check processing tracking
- Complaint processing tracking

Revenue Source:

POP 105 requests \$3,117,636 in increased Federal Funds and 13 positions (12.06 FTE)

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Department of Early Learning and Care

Policy Option Package 580

POP Title: Birth to Five Literacy Expansion

Total Request: \$24,841,500 in General Fund appropriation

Purpose

POP 580 will allow the Department of Early Learning and Care to implement the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan to expand grants to additional service provider types, Tribes, and support the Early Learning Professional Development System.

Background

During the 2023 legislative session, the legislature passed HB 3198, creating the Early Literacy Success Initiative, Early Literacy Success Community Grant Program and the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan. The Birth Through Five (BTF) Literacy Plan is administered by the Department of Early Learning and Care.

The BTF Literacy Plan is intended to expand culturally-specific early literacy programs for children from birth through age five, to provide training and coaching for direct service staff in early literacy, and to develop and expand language revitalization efforts by federally recognized Indian Tribes in Oregon. Under the plan, DELC must distribute grants through a newly established Birth Through Five Literacy Fund “that align to the outcomes and indicators that exist across kindergarten readiness and culturally-specific parent and child support programs.” HB 3198, Section 9(3).

The BTF Literacy Plan will include community-informed recommendations for early literacy investments in early learning. While many programs administered by DELC include early literacy strategies, DELC is contracting with a third party to conduct additional, more robust engagement activities to yield additional recommendations for future investment, aligned with the Governor's Early Literacy Success Initiative.

Implementing the BTF Literacy Plan will expand grants to additional service provider types, Tribes, and support the Early Learning Professional Development System. The Early Learning Kindergarten Guidelines 2.0 will be disseminated with associated technical assistance and ongoing community engagement alongside ODE.

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How Achieved

BTF Literacy Grants: \$21,841,500

During the 2023-2025 biennium DELC distributed \$9.4 million approved by the legislature as part of the Early Literacy Success Initiative into two DELC programs, the Early Childhood Equity Fund and the Kindergarten Partnership and Innovation Fund. To continue to expand access to literacy and meet the objectives outlined in POP 580 of the total request \$21,841,500 will be allocated to support the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan by providing funding to community-based organizations, culturally specific programs, and early learning providers to promote early literacy development for student groups that have historically experienced academic disparities. Funds will be invested in the Early Learning Professional Development system to promote early literacy development through culturally specific child and caregiver programming and professional learning for the early educator workforce; promote best practices in literacy instruction through ongoing coaching support to direct service providers; and develop training modules to provide an “early childhood literacy endorsement” for early learning educators.

Outside of school, children spend most of their lives at home or in the community. Parents and caregivers have a role to play in reinforcing the learning that happens at school as much as possible at home, and they must be supported as full partners in their children’s literacy development. BTF Literacy grants will be used to; increase support to parents and guardians to empower them to be partners in the development of their children’s literacy skill and knowledge development; and increase access to early literacy supports that are research-aligned, culturally responsive, and child and family centered. Children’s literacy learning is deepened through their lived experiences, where their unique languages, cultures, and identities are affirmed by families and caregivers who serve as important first teachers.

The BTF Grants will include Tribal grants to develop and expand language revitalization and preservation efforts by federally recognized Indian Tribes in Oregon. The Tribal grants align with DELC’s strategic plan *Growing Oregon Together* by honoring and recognizing the sovereignty of the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations within Oregon and ensures strong government-to-government relationships to benefit Tribal communities through funding and programs that are designed to meet Tribal early learning needs and goals.

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BTF Early Literacy Framework Development and Evaluation: \$800,000

POP 580 requests \$800,00 to consult with literacy experts and community partners to revise and align the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines. The Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines were developed in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and published in 2016. Funding will be used to update and align the guidelines with current kindergarten standards including the [Oregon Transformative Social and Emotional \(TSEL\), Framework and Standards](#) that represent K-12 social and emotional learning expectations for students, adopted in 2023. As well as to extend to infants and toddlers and include developmentally appropriate early literacy practices for early educators to utilize in their classrooms and for other adults that engage with children birth through age five.

Funds will also be used to provide engagement and training sessions throughout the state to build capacity within regions to support ongoing professional development focused on the implementation of the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines and the BTF Literacy Plan. Targeted community engagement will be focused on families from communities that have been historically underserved and partnering with the Tribal Nations to identify additional early literacy needs and goals that will promote and celebrate culture and (where applicable) bi/multilingual literacy development. Community engagements will also inform the revisions to the Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines, the learning agenda for research and evaluation, and alignment with ODE initiatives related to early learning and the transition to kindergarten

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library: \$2,200,000

POP 580 requests \$2.2 million to sustain the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program in Oregon. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is dedicated to inspiring a love of reading through book gifting for early learners. The program mails free, high-quality books to the homes of children from birth to age five, no matter the income level of the family, and develops engagement and skills that form the basis of literacy and educational success.

During the 2023 session, the legislature approved \$1.7 million in General Funds for the Imagination Library program in the current biennium, and DELC worked with the Dollywood Foundation to establish a contract to operate the Imagination Library of Oregon Program, beginning in the current biennium. The \$1.7 million was based on a 15-month program period, with an understanding that it would take time for DELC to contract and set up the program, which launched in May 2024.

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Because the goal of the program is expanding access to free books statewide, the cost of the program for 2025-2027 is greater than the \$1.7 million originally allocated for the Imagination Library. The agency estimates that a statewide program would cost \$3.9 million in total for the 2025-2027 biennium. The \$2.2 million increase in price includes the cost of a full two years (scaling from 15 months to 24 months) and an increase in access from 25 percent of eligible children in Oregon registered to 65 percent of eligible children registered for the program. The 65 percent registration target is established by the Dollywood Foundation, which operates the Imagination Library Program.

Staffing Impact

No state positions/FTE are requested in this policy option package.

Quantifying Results

DELC will monitor the short-term and long-term success based on metrics identified in of the Birth Through Five Literacy Plan.

Revenue Source

POP 580 requests \$24,841,500 in general fund appropriation.