



Oregon Department of
Early Learning and Care

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan

2023 -2026





Contents

Letter from the Director	3
Introduction.....	4
DELC's Core Programs and Foundational Services.	5
Mission, Vision, and Values.....	9
DELC's Equity Statement	10
Roadmap: Path to Implementing the DEI Action Plan	11
Strategy 1: Develop DELC Agency-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan	12
Strategy 2: Build Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Infrastructure.....	12
Strategy 3: Foster Accessible and Inclusive Communications.....	13
Strategy 4: Create meaningful Tribal consultation and government-to- government partnership.....	13
Strategy 5: Strengthen Engagement, Empowerment, & Partnership in the Community.....	14
Strategy 6: Leverage Disaggregated Data as a Lever for Change	15
Strategy 7: Develop Equitable Budget, Inclusive Budget Process, and Investing.....	15
Strategy 8: Advance Contract Equity and Improving DELC Procurement Process.....	16
Strategy 9: Build a More Diverse and Inclusive Workplace Free from Discrimination.....	16
Acknowledgments	17

Letter from the Director

Dear Oregonians:

As Director of the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC), I am delighted to share the 2023-2026 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan. As a new agency, DELIC's first DEI Action Plan outlines the internal and external structures, policies, and processes we are putting in place to promote our values. The plan lends concrete supports towards advancing our vision that all children, families, early care and education professionals, and communities are supported and empowered to thrive.



This work, led by the Social Equity Office, takes all of us to move forward and represents intentional engagement with staff. We know that in order to achieve the longstanding structural change necessary to advance equity and racial justice, we need strong champions inside government embodying and operationalizing this work as we transform commitments into outcomes.

While equity has always been a core value of the programs administered by DELIC, the DEI Action Plan allows us to clearly define our goals and metrics for this work. The plan builds off of previous community engagement and feedback in the creation of DELIC's strategic plan and aims to be ambitious, yet achievable – simultaneously building structure as a new state agency, while articulating the external goals DELIC must continue working towards and being accountable for.

The Social Equity Office, together with leadership, and staff, will continue to build capacity and develop tools and resources to boldly advance this work while ensuring DELIC is following through on our commitments. This work is not static and will evolve as community needs change and grow and we are committed to continual learning.

As we work to strengthen relationships and increase supports, this plan will guide our actions as we foster coordinated, culturally appropriate and family-centered services that recognize and respect the needs of all children, families and early learning and care professionals. At every step, we will continue to advance this work in partnership with the communities we serve to create a more equitable Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alyssa Chatterjee', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alyssa Chatterjee, Director

Introduction

Becoming the Department of Early Learning and Care

Oregon has long been a leader in early learning and child care. In 2011, the Early Learning Council was created to oversee a comprehensive early learning system, with a small staff housed in the Governor's Office. In 2013, the Early Learning Division (ELD) was created within the Oregon Department of Education, bringing together state-funded Head Start programming - Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten - child care licensing and compliance, and early learning services. ELD's mission was to support all of Oregon's young children and families in learning, setting a north star that race, income, and zip code should not be predictors of child success.

In 2019, the Legislature passed the Student Success Act, incorporating the Early Learning Account in response to the overwhelming community input that early learning should be included in an education funding proposal. This led to the single largest investment in early learning in the State of Oregon.

Building off of the recognition of the importance of early learning, legislation was introduced in 2021 to establish a standalone early learning agency: the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC). For the next two years, ELD listened to families, child care providers, community partners, and agency staff to design this new agency. On July 1, 2023, the Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care became a reality and a new state agency.

DELIC provides core programming for infant and toddler care, preschool, and child care assistance and a number of foundational services, including child care licensing and compliance and professional learning supports for the early childhood workforce. Inclusivity and equity were core values for ELD and continue to be for DELIC, promoting culturally-relevant practices in early care and education settings. As DELIC, we have an opportunity to take this work even further by infusing equity into the policies, processes, and procedures being developed as a new agency.



DELC's Core Programs and Foundational Services

DELC provides funding, policy, and other resources with the aim of having all children in Oregon thriving in early childhood and beyond, eliminating systemic inequalities in access and opportunity in all of Oregon's communities, and having a strong, family and provider responsive early learning and care system. We do this work in a complex ecosystem that involves scores of partners whose critical effort, creativity, and commitment to positive outcomes for those engaged in early learning and care cannot be understated. DELC depends on, and embraces, many vibrant, caring partners, such as after-school programs, child care centers, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, culturally specific service organizations, Early Learning Hubs, family child care homes, home visiting programs, infant and early childhood mental health consultants, preschool programs, relief nurseries, trainers, and others who work in communities throughout the state. These partners reflect the rich diversity of the early childhood workforce and Oregon's families, and they are grounded in Oregon's communities, rural or urban.

Table 1 provides an overview of DELC's core programs and Table 2 provides an overview of DELC's foundational services. [Growing Oregon Together's](#) objectives and strategies refer to core programs, which are the initiatives that directly provide services to children and families. These core programs are designed to support family access to early learning and care providers to ensure that children, and their families participate in culturally appropriate, and family-centered services that recognize and respect the strengths and needs of all children, families, and early learning and care professionals. Foundational services provide critical backbone and infrastructure support. These include the child care licensing program, systems-building initiatives that center community needs and priorities, workforce supports, and DELC agency functions such as finance, budget and provider payments. As with core programs, foundational services are essential to ensuring that the early learning and care system is culturally appropriate, family-centered, and recognizes and respects the strengths and needs of all children, families, and the early learning and care workforce.



DELC's Core Programs and Foundational Services

Table 1. DELC Core Programs

Core Program	Description	Reach
Baby Promise	Provides families with free, full day, year-round, high-quality infant and toddler care (six weeks to three years of age) in child care centers and home-based child care.	250 infants and toddlers 7 counties
Early Childhood Equity Fund	Supports culturally-specific kindergarten readiness and family support programming, including parenting education, parent-child interaction, kindergarten transition, and Tribal language preservation and revitalization.	7,000 children and their families 17 counties
Employment Related Day Care (ERDC)	Helps families with children up to age 13 (or who have special needs) who are working, in school, or receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) pay for child care.	16,446 children 4,407 providers accept payment All counties but one
Healthy Families Oregon (HFO)	Provides free, voluntary home visiting program that offers support and education to families who are expecting or parenting newborns for a minimum of three years.	1,800 families Statewide
Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten (OPK)	Provides free, high-quality, culturally responsive preschool, infant/toddler and family support services to families who are living at or below 100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level or who are categorically eligible.	7,330 preschool children 1,398 prenatal to three children and families Statewide
Preschool Promise	Offers free, high-quality preschool in child care centers, home-based child care, and public schools to children ages three and four living at or below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.	5,344 children Statewide
Relief Nurseries	Offers comprehensive and integrated early childhood therapeutic and family support services to children from birth to five years old.	2,257 children 20 counties

All reach data FY 22-23 except ERDC which is March 2024 data.

DELC's Core Programs and Foundational Services

Table 2. DELC Foundational Services

Foundational Service	Description	Reach
Child Care Licensing	Develops, implements, monitors, and provides technical assistance for child care licensing for Registered Family (RF), Certified Family (CF), Certified Center (CC) and School-age Center (SC) with a focus on foundational health, safety and well-being of children and their child care environments.	3,643 facilities licensed 1,382 centers 1,062 certified family 1,199 registered family child care Total child capacity of 109,214 children Statewide
Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)	Builds the supply of high-quality, developmentally appropriate child care services across Oregon by recruiting, supporting and retaining early child care educators and business owners.	15 regionally based organizations 5,567 unique licensed or license exempt early learning and care providers Statewide
Child Care Substitutes of Oregon	Connects early care and education programs with substitutes who are trained and ready to work with children when the program needs additional staff.	45 substitutes recruited Statewide
DELC Operations	Provides fundamental administrative services that includes: data and analytics, finance and budget, grants management, human resources, information and technology, procurement, project management and organizational development, and provider payments to enable the successful delivery of all DELC programs and services.	450 annual contracts 500 payments monthly ERDC payments of \$187 million annually Grant in aid of \$700 million per biennium
Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Program	Offers early educators and providers training, coaching, consultation, and supports needed to provide every child with relationship-based care and education, and reduce the use of suspension, expulsion, and other forms of exclusionary discipline —including the provision of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC).	12 regional service providers serving 26 counties 4 regional service providers serving remaining 10 counties expected by end of 2024

DELC's Core Programs and Foundational Services

Table 2. DELC Foundational Services (continued)

Foundational Service	Description	Reach
Early Learning Hubs	Works to create easier systems for families to navigate that increase access to high-quality early care and education opportunities.	16 Hubs Statewide
Inclusive Partners	Provides technical assistance, training, and support to child care providers so families of children with higher needs can play, work, learn, and succeed together.	244 children 286 early learning and care providers Statewide
Oregon Registry	Helps early educators and providers to track professional development achievement and plan for future early learning career opportunities and builds a qualified system of trainers and approves their training offerings that are provided throughout the state.	1,141 Trainers 28,015 early learning and care providers Statewide
Spark (Quality Recognition and Improvement System)	Helps new and existing programs to improve, communicate, and offer the best care and education services possible to children and families in Oregon.	2,949 child care facilities

Child care licensing data, January 2024; CCR&R data, April 2023 - April 2024; Child Care Substitutes, October 2023 – March 2024; DELC Operations, July 2023–April 2024, except ERDC which is calendar year 2023; Early Childhood Suspension and Expulsion Prevention Program, 2024; Inclusive Partners, April 2023–March 2024; Oregon Registry, March 2024; Spark, 2024.



Mission, Vision, and Values

MISSION

The Department of Early Learning and Care fosters coordinated culturally appropriate, and family-centered services that recognize and respect the strengths and needs of all children, families, and early learning and care professionals.

VISION

All children, families, early care and education professionals, and communities are supported and empowered to thrive.

VALUES

EQUITY: We are committed to dismantling the systems of oppression that harm and create disparities for communities who are historically and institutionally excluded. We are adopting anti-racist principles, expanding access to services, and ensuring community representation and shared power in agency efforts. We are fostering a culturally responsive environment in which all individuals can experience a sense of belonging as they access programs, services, and resources.

RESPECT: We believe that family is a child's first teacher. We are committed to nurturing family partnerships built on mutual respect. We recognize and value the knowledge and experiences of families, early care and education professionals, and community partners

TRUST: We value the public's trust through honesty, transparency, and keeping our commitments.

RELATIONSHIPS: We acknowledge the importance of nurturing relationships in the field and with community. We listen to, support, collaborate with, and celebrate the professionals, families, and children in our communities.

SAFETY: We put safety and well-being first for our children, families, and early learning and care professionals.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: We set goals, seek input from community, and use data to improve quality of service and programs, increase quality and efficiency, and drive innovation.

INTEGRITY: We are accountable for our actions, decisions, and our work to reliably achieve high-quality outcomes.



DELC's Equity Statement

We are committed to dismantling the systems of oppression that harm and create disparities for communities who are historically and institutionally excluded. We are adopting anti-racist principles, expanding access to services, and ensuring community representation and shared power in agency efforts. We are fostering a culturally responsive environment in which all individuals can experience a sense of belonging as they access programs, services, and resources.

We take the responsibility to support employees, early learning providers, and all children 0 – 5 years in diverse racial and ethnic communities and families, while also working toward improved results for all children in rural and urban Oregon.

DELC expects its workforce, partners, and community collaborators to embrace the same values, demonstrate the same commitment, and produce results toward eliminating disparities and improving outcomes for all children and families in Oregon.



Roadmap: Path to Implementing the DEI Action Plan

This plan has four goals and nine strategies that are in alignment with the [State of Oregon DEI Action Plan](#). Additionally, the strategies are embedded in the DELC Strategic Plan, Growing Oregon Together.



- **Goal 1:** Establish strong leadership to eradicate racial and other forms of disparities at DELC.
- **Goal 2:** Build capacity of social equity principles throughout all DELC positions.
- **Goal 3:** Strengthen relationships internally at DELC and externally with all communities .
- **Goal 4:** Improve quality and access to services and programs while tracking measurable goals.

DEI Action Plan Objectives

- Normalize concepts of social equity at DELC – acknowledge history, utilize a social equity roadmap, and use tools to support efforts to put social equity at the forefront.
- Operationalize and embed social equity into every part of the agency.
- Organize efforts and build capacity across divisions for connected, cohesive and amplified impacts.
- Guide and direct agency-wide level operationalizing of social equity and DEI work.
- Inspire expansion of social equity by sharing and collaborating to build on what is already happening.

Nine Strategies

1. Develop DELC agency-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan
2. Build Diversity, Equity and Inclusion infrastructure.
3. Foster accessible and inclusive communications
4. Cultivate meaningful Tribal consultation and government-to-government partnership
5. Strengthen engagement, empowerment, and partnership with communities.
6. Leverage disaggregated data as a lever of change.
7. Develop equitable Budget, inclusive budget process, and investing.
8. Advance contract equity and improve DELC procurement processes.
9. Build a more diverse workforce, and create an inclusive workplace, free from discrimination.

Strategy 1: Develop DELC Agency-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan

As a new state agency, it is critical that DELC is rooted in a clear plan that recognizes the multiple social identities, such as race, ethnicity, Tribal nations, as well as geography and economic factors of the children, families, child care providers, and community partners we serve.

Actions:

- Establish a DEI plan design team and assign a lead.
- Develop an engagement plan to gain feedback from internal and external partners.
- Develop an implementation plan to carry out actions to achieve plan goals.

Strategy 2: Build Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Infrastructure

A robust diversity, equity, and inclusion infrastructure is critical to the success of the implementation of DEI initiatives within DELC. DELC will include and empower racial equity as part of agency executive leadership to advise and influence budgets, policies, and decisions.

Actions:

- Dedicate staff capacity and resources to operationalize DEI initiatives to support the agency.
- Build capacity for all staff to apply equity to their work.
- Provide technical assistance to support policy, programs, practices, and evaluation.



Strategy 3: Foster Accessible and Inclusive Communications

For maximum transparency and accountability, communicating DELC's work needs to unfold in consistent, clear, and accessible ways. Intentional collaborative and coordinated messaging efforts are needed to create public narrative shifts around race, diversity, and equity in early learning and care.

Actions:

- Develop a culturally effective communication plan.
- Develop an Inclusive Communication Report.

Strategy 4: Cultivate Meaningful Tribal Consultation and Government-to-Government Partnership

Tribal consultation is a formal, two-way, government-to-government process designed to ensure timely and meaningful consultation on issues affecting American Indian and Alaska Native children and child care providers. Tribal consultation must be done in such a manner and at such a time that provides the opportunity for appropriate officials from Indian Tribes or Tribal governments to meaningfully and substantially contribute to plans served under covered programs. DELC has a responsibility to uphold its government-to-government role in honoring Tribal sovereignty and Tribal self-determination.

Actions:

- Co-develop the DELC Tribal Consultation and Communication Policy, in partnership with Tribes, to provide guidance, tools, and expectations for DELC staff to understand Tribal government and communities.
- Implement the DELC Tribal Consultation and Communication Policy to provide guidance, tools, and expectations for DELC staff to engage in consultation and communication with Tribal leaders and representatives.
- Establish in-person and virtual communications and connections between DELC and Tribal leadership that foster and elevate ways to honor and respect Tribal and Native community strengths, needs, and government structure.



Strategy 5: Strengthen Engagement, Empowerment, and Partnership with the Communities Across Oregon

DELC intends to provide information, build relationships, co-design, and proactively work with community partners to represent their voices in decision-making. Through community engagement, empowerment, and partnerships, DELC is committed to elevating the voices and representation of communities who have been marginalized and impacted by the system, aiming to increase community access to resources and policy development.

Actions:

- Identify service areas requiring increased community outreach and partnership.
- Develop an early learning community engagement & partnership plan.
- Assign community engagement roles and responsibilities to employees.
- Allocate resources to support community outreach and engagement work.
- Engage agency internal partners.
- Engage in meaningful and collaborative partnerships with community based organizations, families, and other partners system-wide.
- Empower community partners and communities of color to inform policy, resource allocation and budget decisions.
- Ensure policy making bodies center those most impacted.



Strategy 6: Leverage Disaggregated Data as a Lever for Change

DELIC will build a culture and practice of leveraging qualitative and quantitative data to drive questions and mitigate data limitations. This includes integrating data into ongoing practices across DELIC to illuminate and monitor progress, make informed decisions, and convey progress with analytics and storytelling. DELIC's actions in this area will be informed by [Oregon's Data Strategy](#) developed by Enterprise Information Services, and the data practices will be anchored in data justice, making community-driven needs and strengths visible and promoting community self-determination. We will use the data as a lever for change and ultimately ensure the equitable distribution of resources at the forefront.

Actions:

- Conduct an inventory of data necessary to be collected at each program or office.
- Collect, analyze, and report granular data, with respect for the privacy and self-determination of Oregonians.
- Conduct baseline data analysis on existing data and how it is used in agency decision making.
- Use administrative data to prepare annual reports to transparently show how funds are spent and their impact.

Strategy 7: Develop Equitable Budget, Inclusive Budget Process, and Investing

It is important to acknowledge and address the racial roots of inequity that currently exist whenever making revenue, procurement, and contract grant decisions. Racial equity in budgeting can also be highly cost-effective if done thoughtfully and with community input. DELIC will build on the existing budget structure by ensuring equity is embedded and reflects the priority and needs of the children, families, and providers impacted by DELIC's programs and services.

Actions:

- Create a DELIC specific budget equity assessment tool.
- Integrate the Budget Equity Tool into the budget proposals.



Strategy 8: Advance Contract Equity and Improving DELC Procurement Processes

Many early learning and care programs are minority- and women-owned small businesses. DELC is committed to continuing to identify innovative and inclusive contracting and granting processes to promote recovery and community economic development for minority-owned, women-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, and emerging small businesses.

Actions:

- Create DELC specific guidance for contracting and procurement.
- Develop tools and technical assistance to implement the guidance.

Strategy 9: Build a More Diverse and Inclusive Workplace Free from Discrimination

DELC will participate in the state's efforts to promote public service through intentional and purposeful recruitment, hiring, and retention of culturally and ethnically diverse staff at all levels of the organization. DELC will look toward leadership pipeline opportunities and ensure the workforce reflects the changing population of those served. Simultaneously, DELC will work to ensure a safe, inclusive, accessible, and belonging working environment for all. DELC will work toward protecting civil rights and taking active measures against harassment, discrimination, racism, xenophobia, stigmatization, violence, and hate crimes. Our goal is that our executive team, directors, and managers more closely reflect the communities we serve.

Actions:

- Train managers on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Develop practical tools on diversity, equity, and inclusion for staff use.
- Implement the DELC Affirmative Action Plan.
- Develop strategies to create a welcoming, supportive, and inclusive workplace for everyone.
- Develop and provide equity training to DELC staff.



Acknowledgements

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