



Children's
Institute

2025

ANNUAL REPORT



Children’s Institute shapes early childhood policy, secures public investments for early childhood programs and services, and works with school communities to strengthen early learning for children and teaching practices for educators.

Support Children’s Institute



2025 was a year of hardship and hope. Communities across Oregon faced financial strain, educators navigated immense pressures, families were torn apart leaving children without parents/caregivers, and the systems meant to support young children were stretched thin. Yet even in a difficult year, we saw glimmers of hope with communities coming together, teachers leaning in, and elected leaders fighting to protect children and their basic human rights. Community action rooted in love shows that better outcomes are possible for Oregon’s children, and with intention, real change can follow. This was exemplified in myriad ways.

Thanks to the leadership of Senator Reynolds, our strong partnership with the Black Futures Initiative, and vocal advocates across our state, we expanded access to doulas and lactation specialists for women and families who have long faced barriers to quality care. We also trained and mobilized hundreds of new advocates who elevated the voices of young children and families, across this diverse state, with legislators and community leaders.

Across the state, educators engaged in professional learning and coaching that will strengthen outcomes for students from PreK through third grade. Research confirms that this alignment is critical to improving literacy outcomes and lifelong learning. Our school partners’ commitment and their support for young children experiencing unimaginable losses and challenges gives me great optimism.

Progress isn’t possible in isolation, but in partnership, in community, transformation gains wings and impact becomes real. Our team is deeply grateful to the partners and champions who stand with us. Your dedication not only strengthens Children’s Institute, but it also underscores the importance of early relational health and a robust early learning and care system. But now is not the time to let our foot off the accelerator. Community needs require that we stay focused on Oregon’s young children. Their success is the foundation of our state’s future prosperity. They are the hope we’ve been waiting for.



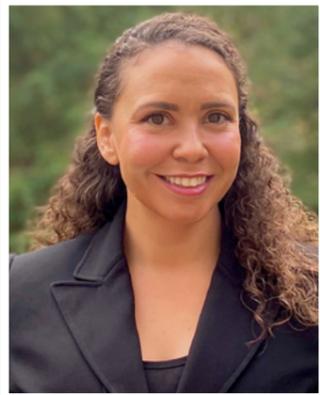
Kali Thorne Ladd
Chief Executive Officer

New Faces on Children's Institute Board of Directors



Jean Back

Shareholder at Schwabe,
Williamson & Wyatt



Alicia Chapman

Founder, Owner and
CEO, Willamette
Technical Fabricators



Cory Carman

Owner, Carman Ranch



Marc Monaghan

Vice President of
Revenue Operations,
Pence Construction



Corey Kehoe

Executive Assistant

A Message from the Board

I am thrilled to step into the role of Board Chair at Children's Institute and am proud to share the progress we made in 2025. Last year offered powerful opportunities to watch as the organization deepened its impact on children and families across Oregon.

At this year's Champions for Children luncheon, I was honored to share the stage with CEO Kali Thorne Ladd and Karina LeBlanc, Executive Vice President of Strategic Growth and Development at RAJ Sports, for a timely conversation about why early learning is one of the smartest, most forward-looking economic investments a state can make.

This year also marked the launch of Great by Age 8, a framework that is already strengthening how Children's Institute supports the first eight years of a child's life. These early years—especially birth to five—are the most critical window for brain development. During this time, secure early relationships, access to quality care, smooth transitions into kindergarten, and the confidence to learn and explore lay the foundation for lifelong wellbeing, academic success, and long-term economic prosperity.

I'm grateful for the dedication of our partners, supporters, and staff who make this work possible. Together, we are building a future where every child has the foundation to grow, learn, and thrive.



**Joth Ricci,
Board Chair**

2025 Highlights



We organized Early Childhood Day of Action
Mobilizing 60+ leaders in Salem



We trained 278 new early learning advocates
Advocacy training in English and Spanish



We helped pass Oregon's Doula Bill, co-led with Black Futures Initiative
Expanding access to perinatal care



We conducted a survey of Oregon's district-run preschools
Shining a light on where and how thousands of children are being served



We hosted Choose Children Bend
Convening Central Oregon leaders for action



We launched Échale Ganas bilingual professional learning series
Serving 40+ educators to better support students



We launched a rural coaching program
building on lessons from a decade-long partnership with Yoncalla School District, Early School Success, and the Academy.



We expanded Children's Institute's early literacy capacity
Strengthening statewide support for literacy development birth through third grade.



We believe every child deserves to be Great by Age 8!

Based in research, we have identified four "milestones" that children need for healthy development in their first eight years. **These milestones support children's relational, emotional, and physical wellbeing; setting a foundation for children to thrive in school and in life.**





Great By Age 8

Milestone 1 | Birth to Age 2

Secure Attachment

Secure attachment is the strong, trusting bond that forms when a baby or toddler has consistent, nurturing care from a parent, grandparent, or early care provider. The earliest months and years of a child's life are the most formative time to build healthy relationships that shape how children grow, learn, and relate to others for the rest of their lives.

Secure attachment is the foundation for the path to becoming Great by Age 8.

Policy and Advocacy Highlights!

The 2025 Oregon Legislature ended June 29, 2025; a welcome close to a long and difficult legislative session shaped by federal funding constraints and sweeping policy changes. Advocates from the [Early Childhood Coalition](#) (ECC) worked together to elevate early childhood issues and advance policies that strengthen support for children, families, and communities.

Oregon's Doula Bill Passed, Expanded Access to Perinatal Healthcare

Notably, Oregon's [doula bill](#) (SB 692) passed! The bill—led by Black Futures Initiative for Perinatal Health—was part of the Omnibus package of bills designed to improve health outcomes for babies and birthing parents.

Building Momentum for Early Childhood Policy

Advocates delivered a unified message to policymakers about the importance of strong, connected early childhood system. Increased engagement from advocates and growing public awareness helped build momentum for policies that support Oregon's youngest learners and their families.





Great By Age 8

Milestone 2 | Birth to Age 5

Access to quality care

Children need access to quality child care and health care in their earliest years to grow, learn, and build a strong foundation for a lifetime of well-being. That means full range of support, including special education, well-child visits, behavioral health, and developmental screenings need to be designed to be accessible and affordable for families.

As infants grow into toddlers and prepare for school, these essential services help them stay on the path to be Great by Age 8.

What we learned about Oregon's District-run Preschools in 2025...

We [surveyed school districts across Oregon](#) to better understand how district-run preschool programs are serving young learners.

The findings highlight opportunities to expand access, strengthen supports for children and families, and invest in the early learning workforce.

[Download full report](#)

Access and Scale
Most district preschool programs remain small, and demand for spots continues to exceed available capacity

Transition Supports
Schools commonly provide kindergarten transitions, though family-centered supports like home visiting are less widely used.

Funding
Public preschool dollars are the primary funding source, but rising costs and limited district budgets constrain growth.

Workforce and Professional Development
Workforce shortages, inconsistent compensation, and growing needs for professional learning and bilingual educators remain major barriers to expansion.

Assessment and Screening
Districts often used shared assessment and screening tools, sometimes in partnership with Education Service Districts (ESDs) or Head Start programs.



Great By Age 8

Milestone 3 | Age 4 - Age 6

Strong and supported kindergarten transition

A strong kindergarten transition means children and families do not have to navigate the start of school alone. It means schools, early learning providers, health systems, and family-serving agencies help children enter kindergarten feeling known, welcomed, and ready to participate.



In 2025, our school district partnerships helped strengthen the early supports children need to be Great by Age 8.

Equipping Schools, Empowering Students: Kindergarten Transitions at Howard Elementary School

In 2025, through our Early School Success (ESS) Academy, we partnered with **15 school districts across Oregon** to reimagine kindergarten readiness.

With our partnership, **the Eugene 4J School District focused on "getting kindergarten ready for kids,"** by introducing field trips and scavenger hunts designed to build identity and belonging.





THRIVE IN LIFE

Great By Age 8

Milestone 4 | Age 5 – Age 8

Confidence to learn and explore

When children feel secure, supported, and encouraged to explore, they are better able to build confidence, develop new skills, and engage fully in learning at home, in care settings, and in school.

When children feel seen, safe, and supported, they dare to take risks, make mistakes, and try again. This is what it means to be Great by Age 8!



Expansion of our Early School Success!

Reimagining practice for multilingual learners

Children Institute's **first bilingual professional development session**, Échale Ganas, brought together bilingual and multilingual educators to support students. Read more about the day [here](#).

[Learn more](#)

Rural Coaching

Building on our success with the Early Works partnership in Yoncalla, we are now offering **specialized, hands-on support to rural school districts** working to strengthen early learning from preschool through third grade.

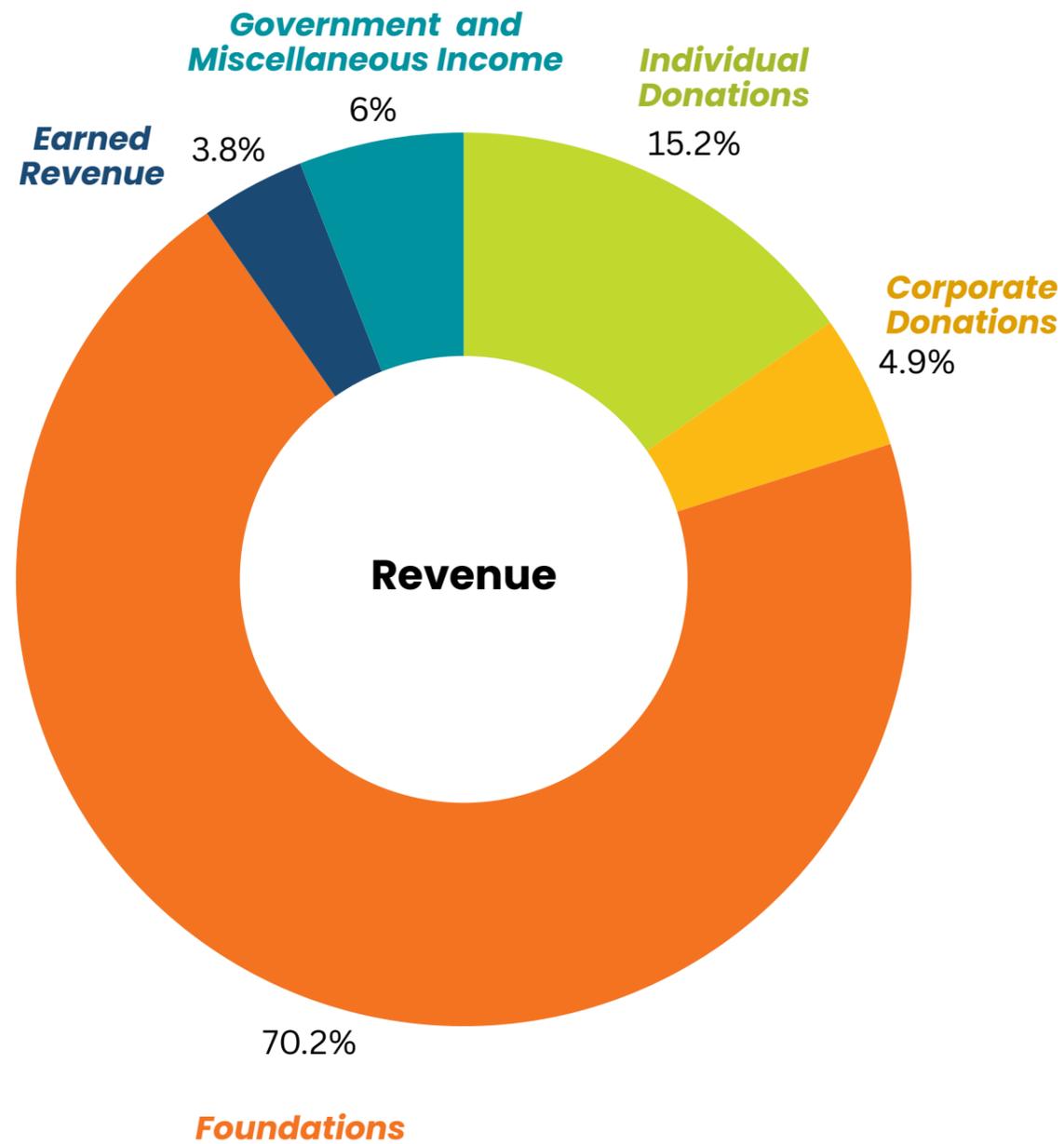
[Learn more](#)

Early Literacy

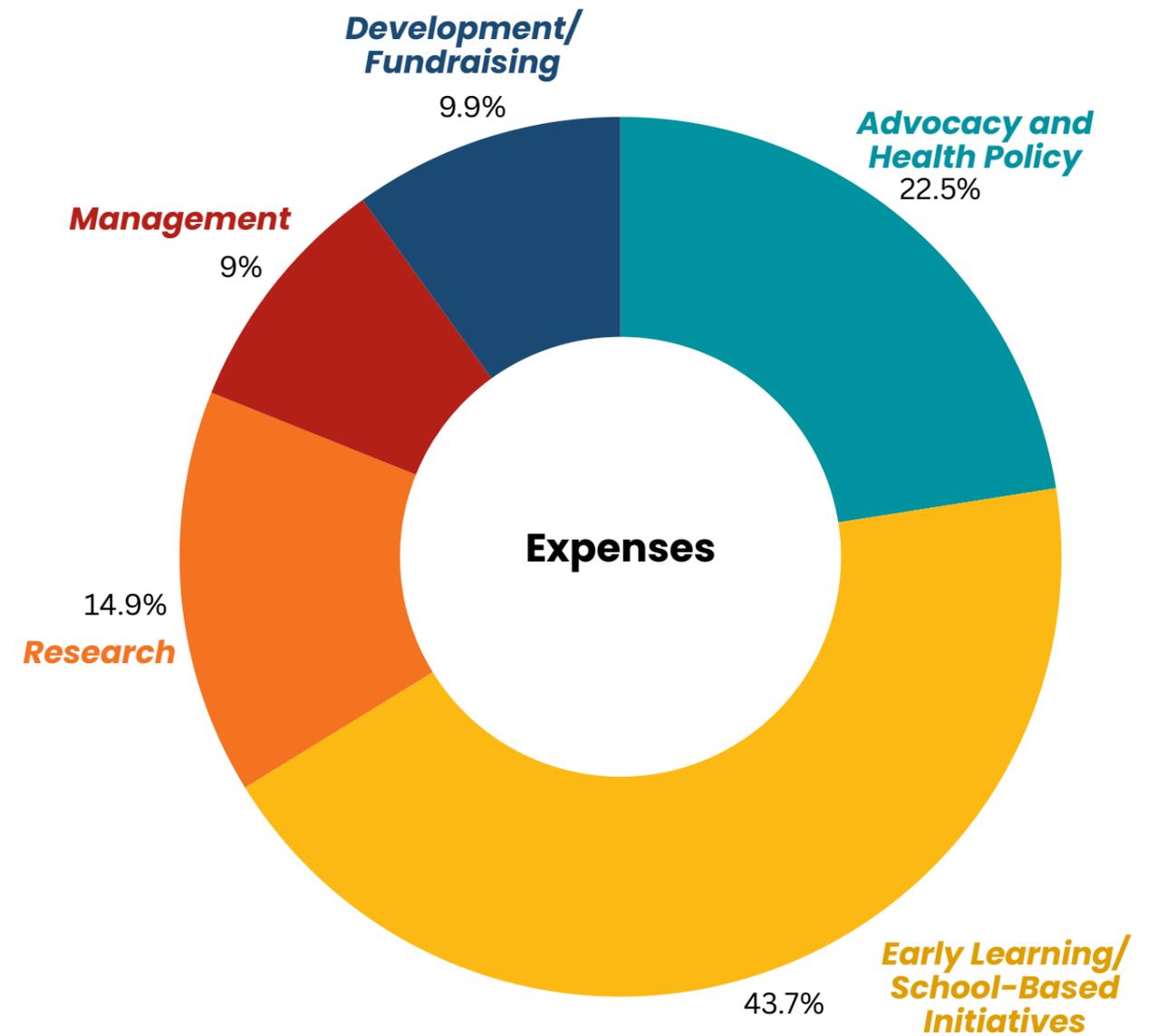
We also now offering **early literacy coaching and professional learning** that equips schools and early learning providers with the tools to help children from birth to 3rd grade develop early literacy skills!

[Learn more](#)

2025 Financials



Annual Budget: \$4,543,579



Children’s Institute is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding Section of any future federal tax code.



CHAMPIONS for CHILDREN

Thursday | October 29, 2026
Portland Art Museum

Save the Date

Alexander Award 2025

Celebrating Lyn Hennion's Life and Legacy

Children's Institute celebrates the life and legacy of Lyn Hennion with deep gratitude for her advocacy, dedication to young children, and lasting impact across Oregon.

Lyn believed deeply that every child deserves the chance to explore, imagine, learn, play, and feel a sense of belonging — and she worked tirelessly to make this possible. Her contributions have helped countless children discover that they matter and are capable of amazing things.

“Lyn was an unstoppable force for good. Her tenacity and spirit are an inspiration to anyone who had the privilege of being in her orbit.”

We were honored to present the **2025 Alexander Award** to Lyn, a fitting recognition for someone



Kali Thorne Ladd (left) and Lyn Hennion at Children's Institute's 2025 Champions for Children luncheon.



Dana Hepper (left) and Lyn Hennion at Children's Institute's 2025 Champions for Children luncheon.

whose leadership and commitment made a significant impact on young children, families, and communities.

Her strategic vision, enthusiasm, and belief in what's possible for children inspire us to carry her legacy forward with purpose and heart.

the Crayon Pack

EVERY CRAYON COUNTS, EVERY MONTH MATTERS.



Join the Crayon Pack

A MONTHLY GIVING COMMUNITY

Website: www.childinst.org | Email: info@childinst.org