

Community Perspectives:

Findings from the
Early Childhood Care
and Learning System
Listening Sessions

Executive Summary

The Early Childhood Care and Learning System Roundtable was convened in 2026 to help shape a future in which every Oregon family can access affordable, high-quality early care and education from birth through preschool.

Co-chaired by Children's Institute CEO Kali Thorne Ladd, the Roundtable brings together state and national experts on early child care and early education. The first phase of the Roundtable's work focused on identifying opportunities for better alignment, coordination, and value within Oregon's current early child care and learning system; later phases will consider ways to expand that system to meet deeper needs across the state.

To ensure the recommendations being made by the Roundtable at the end of phase one align with the perspectives, needs, and experiences of families and providers throughout the state, Children's Institute led a community engagement process during the summer of 2026. This process included 23 listening sessions in both English and Spanish, held virtually and in-person across Oregon. A statewide survey, also available in English and Spanish, was conducted during the same period. Participation was open to all interested community members.

This report reflects what families and providers across Oregon shared in those conversations, which focused on the four topic areas that the Early Childhood Roundtable explored in the first phase of their work:

- **Family Access and Program Improvements**
Efforts to ensure Oregon families can access care that meets their needs
- **Workforce**
Efforts to recruit, educate, and retain sufficient numbers of early childhood instructors and child care workers across Oregon
- **Facilities and Infrastructure**
Efforts to support building, expanding, and sustaining safe learning environments for early childhood education and child care throughout Oregon
- **Quality Assurance**
Efforts to improve how the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC) and other state agencies regulate, oversee, and support early childhood education and child care across Oregon

The most highly ranked recommendations that emerged from the community engagement process are:

Family Access Recommendations	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Create one common online application for publicly funded programs	33%	75%
Establish coordinated enrollment pathways across public programs	27%	72%
Develop regional family navigators	27%	62%
Program Improvements Recommendations	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Prioritize subsidized infant and toddler care	31%	67%
Expand access for families above 200% of the federal poverty level	32%	66%
Workforce Recommendations	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Offer affordable, flexible degree pathways for licensed providers	30%	74%
Expand apprenticeship and internship pathways	18%	60%
Facilities and Infrastructure Recommendations	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Restore Child Care Infrastructure and Co-Location funding	39%	78%
Provide incentives for child care facility development	36%	80%
Quality Assurance Recommendations	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Expand coaching and technical support for providers serving children with special needs	38%	80%
Formalize a shared ODE-DELC approach to inclusion of children with disabilities.	23%	66%
Develop pathways for providers to meet Preschool Promise requirements	27%	59%

A fuller list of recommendations appears on page 7 of this report; notably, many of these recommendations align with the recommendations being made by the Roundtable. This report highlights community insights that provide context for and expand on these priorities.

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Community Perspectives: Findings from the Early Childhood Care and Learning System Listening Sessions

Understanding the Underlying Challenges for Early Childhood Care and Learning in Oregon

Oregon families and communities have benefited from more than a decade of state investment in programs, services, and supports designed to help young children and families thrive. Despite the progress resulting from these investments, however, many families continue to struggle to find and afford care that aligns with their schedules, languages, locations, or other needs.

Conversely, providers face workforce shortages, facilities challenges, unpredictable enrollments, and other pressures that make it difficult to remain financially viable. When families cannot find care that works for them, they adjust their work schedules, including reducing their hours or exiting the workforce entirely, or they rely on informal child care arrangements, while providers struggle to stretch limited resources to meet community needs. The economic impacts of inadequate child care and poorly coordinated early learning systems ripple out across the state.

Approach to Community Engagement

To center community perspectives on these challenges, Children's Institute reviewed community feedback, reports, and other relevant inputs collected between 2019 and 2025 and worked with Oregon's Department of Early Learning and Care (DELG) to identify key questions for engagement. Children's Institute then partnered with For All Families Oregon (FAFO), the Early Learning Hub Alliance, The Ford Family Foundation, and the Governor's Office to design and implement a statewide community engagement process.

From June through early August 2026, Children's Institute and FAFO hosted 23 listening sessions across Oregon in both English and Spanish, offered in virtual and in-person formats. A statewide survey, also available in English and Spanish, was conducted during the same period. Participation was open to all interested community members, with a particular focus on hearing from early learning and care providers and others with direct insights into the areas the Roundtable was considering during this phase of its work. Details about the listening sessions, including participants' demographics, are included in the Appendix to this report.

Centering Community Experience

The engagement process focused on four topic areas aligned with the Early Childhood Care and Learning System Roundtable's areas of inquiry. Survey respondents and listening session participants were asked to provide feedback on the same set of questions across four key topics:

Family Access and Program Improvements

Efforts to ensure Oregon families can access care that meets their needs

Workforce

Efforts to recruit, educate, and retain sufficient numbers of early childhood instructors and child care workers across Oregon

Facilities and Infrastructure

Efforts to support building, expanding, and sustaining safe learning environments for early childhood education and child care throughout Oregon

Quality Assurance

Efforts to improve how DELC and other state agencies regulate, oversee, and support early childhood education and child care across Oregon

Participants responded to a combination of structured questions and open-ended prompts within each topic. Structured questions helped identify areas of shared priority, while open-ended responses provided deeper context about the experiences, needs, and perspectives behind those priorities. Throughout this report, findings from both sources are presented together to provide a more complete understanding of what participants shared.

Through more than 550 survey and listening session responses, participants shared the challenges and opportunities they encounter when seeking child care, providing care, or connecting families to available supports. They described a system with strong programs, dedicated providers, and foundational public investment, while also identifying key components that do not yet function as seamlessly as families and providers need them to. Participants shared concrete ideas about which aspects of the system need improvements first.

The findings presented here are intended to inform conversations about the future of early learning in Oregon. They complement the expertise, analysis, and policy discussions taking place through the Roundtable and related state efforts by bringing forward the voices, priorities, and experiences of the people who interact with the system every day.

Recommendations

Family Access and Program Improvements

- Create a single application across publicly funded programs to decrease the burdens on families and providers.
- Build on and strengthen existing coordinated enrollment efforts to effectively and equitably connect families with the best suited program to meet their needs.
- Fund navigators with multilingual capacity and hours outside the standard workday to support families in finding child care and early education that matches their needs.
- Raise eligibility thresholds above the current 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) cutoff to reach more families, and phase out support gradually as income rises, to end the current “service cliff” in which a relatively small increase in household income results in the loss of subsidies and support, rendering care unaffordable.
- Prioritize access to subsidized care for infants and toddlers, which is both the most cost-intensive and currently the scarcest child care across Oregon.
- Coordinate eligibility and enrollment across Preschool Promise, Employment Related Day Care (ERDC), and Head Start so families can more easily access the programs for which they qualify and which best meet their needs.
- Build pathways connecting publicly funded preschool to care that covers the full workday and the full year, including extended day and summer options.

Workforce

- Reduce child care and early education workforce shortages by making degree pathways more affordable and flexible, lowering the financial burden on individuals earning child care credentials and degrees while wages remain low.
- Decrease schedule and financial burdens on people pursuing degrees and professional certification as early childhood educators and care providers, by paying them for their practicum hours and/or allowing them to use their existing place of employment as their practicum site.
- Tie any new credential expectations for providers to commensurate increases in compensation.
- Expand retention strategies to include benefits (health insurance, paid time off, and sick leave) as well as wages.

Facilities and Infrastructure

- Restore the Child Care Infrastructure and Co-Location funds, with awards that reflect actual project costs.
- Provide continuing infrastructure funding, including funding to repair, maintain, and improve or expand existing facilities.
- Streamline the permitting process for child care facilities to meet building and safety standards, which currently involves burdensome interactions with multiple state and local agencies and offices.
- Create local or regional navigator positions to provide technical assistance to providers during the state licensing process.
- Designate a single point of contact within local government for child care facility permitting, to help providers navigate zoning, land use, and building permit processes.

- Address housing-related barriers for home-based providers, with supports such as mortgage access, down payment support, and clear guidance on operating in rental housing under current state law.
- Create a statewide inventory of vacant and underused public buildings, including closed schools, and assess the viability of repurposing them as child care spaces.
- Treat child care as community infrastructure in state and local planning, and explore the use of economic development funding streams to develop and maintain needed child care.

Quality Assurance

- Expand support for inclusion of children with disabilities and developmental delays so families can access child care and preschool, including a funding formula that accounts for higher costs in caring for children with disabilities.
- Expand existing coaching for educators with a focus on ensuring there is support available in multiple languages, and that coaching addresses specific areas in which educators need support (as detailed below, these areas include use of the “Pyramid Model”, inclusion support for children with disabilities and delays, and other educator needs).
- Ensure providers have the necessary support to serve children with significant needs during the extensive time it can take for a child to be evaluated for and receive specialized services, such as behavioral health services, speech therapy, and occupational therapy.
- Reduce adult-child ratios and/or provide additional staff/co-teaching support in classrooms with a high proportion of children with disabilities and delays.
- Align Oregon Department of Education (ODE)’s and Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC)’s recommended practices to best support inclusion for children with disabilities and delays so providers have a consistent set of expectations to follow.
- Create a clear, supported, accessible pathway for providers to qualify to participate in Preschool Promise.

These priorities largely align with the strategic considerations presented in the Early Childhood Care and Learning System Roundtable’s Phase 1 report.

Understanding the Findings

This report details the community input on which these recommendations are based. During the community engagement process, participants ranked a fixed list of policy options, showing which proposals rose to the top when people were asked to choose among them. Participants also answered open-ended questions in their own words, allowing them to address issues of particular interest or concern to them.

Throughout this report:

- **Rankings show which policy options respondents prioritized when asked to choose among a set of proposals. The tables in this report indicate both the percentage of participants who selected a particular option as their top priority and the percentage who included it among their top three priorities.**
- **Open-ended responses show the concerns, challenges, and ideas respondents raised on their own.**

The themes below were identified by reviewing and grouping open-ended comments into recurring topics raised by respondents. Some themes appeared frequently in comments despite lower priority rankings, while some highly ranked policy options generated relatively little discussion. Considering both the rankings and comments provides a more complete picture of families' and providers' priorities.

Family Access and Program Improvements

Helping families find child care that works for them

What We Heard

Participants shared their perspectives on a range of ways to improve family access to early care and education, along with a set of program improvements related to how publicly funded programs are designed and funded. The findings below reflect the changes they ranked as most important for children, families, and communities across Oregon.

Family access

Option	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Create one common online application for publicly funded programs	33.1%	74.8%
Establish coordinated enrollment pathways across public program	27.2%	72.1%
Develop regional family navigators	27.4%	61.5%
Track enrollment and capacity across publicly funded programs	10.7%	48.6%
Improve 211info with real-time information on openings	14.5%	46.6%
Give providers/hubs that determine eligibility for Baby Promise, Preschool Promise, and Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten access to the state's ONE eligibility system	9.7%	33.8%

Participants also shared their perspectives about specific program improvements that impact which families are able to access the care their children need.

Program Improvements

Option	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Prioritize subsidized infant and toddler care	31.0%	66.7%
Expand access for families above 200% of the federal poverty level	31.6%	66.1%
Create a funding formula that accounts for children with special needs	12.2%	49.9%
Fund preschool classrooms, not only individual children	16.8%	43.7%
Create extended-day and summer-care pathways in publicly funded preschool	14.1%	40.1%
Align eligibility requirements and processes across programs	7.6%	37.3%
Align regulations and requirements across funding streams	6.7%	30.8%

Theme 1: Respondents want one connected path into services

Respondents consistently voiced the challenges that arise because families are currently expected to move between programs, agencies, and providers on their own. Each program has its own application, its own income requirements, and its own timeline, leaving families with the burden of managing transitions between programs, often without support.

Having one hub to view and/or apply for the options. As a new mom I didn't even know where to get started and many people miss resources available to them simply by unawareness.

Parent and family advocate, Eastern Oregon, survey

One application and one set of income guidelines, one system. Keeping it simple and things in alignment makes the system easier for busy, overwhelmed families.

Former program director, rural Eastern Oregon, survey

Respondents broadly supported the concept of coordinated referrals, but their assessments of existing systems varied depending on how accessible, trusted, and user-friendly those systems were in practice. Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) are regional organizations funded by DELC to recruit and support child care programs, both home based and at standalone child care centers. Until 2016, CCR&Rs also handled child care referrals for families, a role now centralized

through 211info.

Bring the 211 referrals back to CCR&R for better alignment of resources and referral pathways. In rural areas families don't trust in 211 as much as walking in and/or calling the CCR&R.

Child care or preschool provider and system partner, Umatilla, Union, and Morrow counties, listening session

In addition to streamlined procedures, respondents explicitly identified navigators as a key part of the solution.

Navigators or staff working with families, reflective of community = trust.

System partner, Multnomah County, listening session

Hacer un grupo de navegadores en el estado que conecten a la gente directamente con los servicios necesarios. OHP y más.

Create a group of navigators across the state who connect people directly to the services they need. OHP and more.

Parent, Multnomah County, Spanish-language listening session

Notably, there can be a disconnect between the terminology families use and the terminology used across the early learning field. Respondents described the need for someone to answer questions, explain options, connect them to services, and guide them through enrollment, all core functions of a navigator, even though many of these respondents did not use the term in their open-ended answers. That distinction matters because the need for the role may be overlooked when the conversation focuses on the title rather than the support families are seeking.

Necesito una persona que enseñe los procesos.

I need someone who teaches the processes.

Parent, Multnomah County, Spanish-language listening session

Pienso que es importante tener un equipo que realmente quiera ayudar a la comunidad e informar acerca de los recursos que ellos tienen.

I think it's important to have a team that genuinely wants to help the community and inform them about the resources available to them.

Child care or preschool provider, Yamhill County, Spanish-language listening session

For multilingual families in particular, ensuring meaningful access requires more than just translation. Respondents described language access as a relationship issue as much as a communication issue, emphasizing the importance of trusted navigators, community-based organizations, and staff who reflect the communities they serve.

Language access also requires navigation from trusted partners, organizations that have staff from the community, in-person meetings, not just surveys.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Poder elegir a dónde ir, tener acceso a la información de todo lo que hay en la comunidad y en su idioma.

Being able to choose where to go, to have access to information about everything available in the community, and in your own language.

Parent, Multnomah County, Spanish-language listening session

Key Takeaways

While respondents often addressed applications, enrollment, referrals, and navigators as separate topics, they also described them as interconnected parts of the same challenge. Families are expected to navigate a fragmented system of programs with different rules, timelines, and points of entry. Respondents consistently called for a more coordinated approach that combines common applications, aligned eligibility and enrollment processes across programs, a trusted referral infrastructure, and culturally responsive navigation. Together, these strategies would create a more seamless and equitable pathway into early learning services and reduce the administrative burden placed on families and providers alike.

Theme 2: Families are caught between eligibility limits and the cost of care

Respondents repeatedly described families who earn too much to qualify for programs like ERDC, Preschool Promise, or Head Start, but still cannot afford child care on their own. One provider called this “falling in the gray area.” Several noted that programs use different income limits, so a family may qualify for one service but not another. One respondent also pointed out that state and federal income guidelines can lead to different eligibility decisions for the same family.

When ranking priorities, two-thirds of respondents identified “Expanding access for families above 200% of the federal poverty level” as one of the top three options. The open-ended responses expanded on this idea, with families and providers stressing the many ways income eligibility limits affect families. Several respondents described the challenge families face when a small increase in earnings causes them to lose their ERDC eligibility. Some suggested reducing benefits gradually as income rises instead of ending support at a fixed cutoff. One respondent pointed to affordable housing programs, which often cap costs at a percentage of household income, as a possible model.

Expand access to ECE for families. There are so many families in the grey area where they make too much to qualify for programs but with the high cost of living can't afford childcare on their own.

Parent, Multnomah County, Spanish-language listening session

El cuidado infantil debería ser más accesible para las familias que rebasan por poco el límite de ingresos para recibir apoyo.

Child care should be more accessible for families who go just slightly over the income limit for assistance.

Parent and family advocate, Multnomah County, Spanish-language survey

Rather than advocating for a single income threshold, many respondents called for a system that responds more gradually to changes in family earnings. Participants frequently described families whose wages increase modestly but whose child care costs rise dramatically when eligibility ends. Sliding-scale copayments and phased benefit reductions were viewed as ways to promote economic mobility without creating abrupt losses of support.

Current income limits create an 'all or nothing' cliff. Many working families in our region earn slightly too much to qualify for state-funded slots or subsidies, yet they still cannot afford private care. The state needs to use a sliding scale or adjust for regional realities so middle-class working families aren't left stranded without options.

Parent and family advocate, Eastern Oregon, survey

Make more funds available for the existing program ERDC and reduce the wait list. Increase the income level in Klamath Falls so that more families can access programs.

Child care or preschool provider, Klamath County, listening session

In rural and remote rural communities, eligibility policies can also affect the supply of child care. Respondents noted that when too few families qualify for publicly funded programs, providers may struggle to maintain enrollment levels needed to sustain operations. In these communities, expanding eligibility was viewed not only as a strategy for supporting families but also as a means of preserving local child care capacity.

Many respondents pointed to a more immediate constraint: families who already qualify for ERDC cannot use it. They called for fully funding ERDC, particularly opening up or shortening the waitlist. Providers described turning families away and struggling to keep enrollment steady. A smaller group of private providers went even further, arguing that state funding should shift away from Preschool Promise and Head Start toward ERDC so families could choose among all providers.

Open the waitlist. Fully fund ERDC. Prior to the ERDC Waitlist, I was actively looking to open a Center. Now, I can barely keep my family child care full.

Family child care provider and parent advocate, south central Oregon, survey

Key Takeaways

Across respondent groups, the underlying concern was not simply income eligibility but continuity of access. Participants described a need for policies that allow families to maintain stable child care arrangements as earnings increase, while

also ensuring that providers have sufficient enrollment numbers to remain operational. Eligibility gradual phase-outs, and investments in child care capacity function as interconnected strategies to support both family economic stability and a sustainable early learning system.

Theme 3: Families need care that is available, accessible, and responsive

Participants articulated strong support for prioritizing subsidized infant and toddler care, which ranked first among program improvement options. Transportation and multilingual child care supply were also raised consistently.

Infant and toddler care was named the hardest child care to find in every region and in both languages, and was the single most frequently raised family access topic among Spanish-language respondents. Adult to child ratios make those slots the most expensive to staff, which is why families with the newest babies have the fewest options.

Creo que el cuidado infantil, bebés o niños de 1 año a 3 años es más difícil encontrar cuidado y es más complicado porque necesitan más atención.

I think care for babies and children ages one to three is harder to find and more complicated, because they need more attention.

Grandparent, parent, and care advocate, Marion County, Spanish-language listening session

Respondents described transportation and scheduling as key factors determining whether available care was truly accessible. Transportation was cited in 140 open-ended responses, while others emphasized the need for care that accommodates evenings, weekends, and other nontraditional work schedules.

Transportation barriers. Parents can't drop kids off to child care. Assistance for families who don't have transit. Hard for providers to pay for a bus, insurance is costly, and maintenance every three years.

Listening session participant, Redmond, Deschutes County

Ampliar los horarios de atención, incluyendo noches, fines de semana y horarios flexibles para familias con trabajos no tradicionales.

Extend hours of care, including nights, weekends, and flexible schedules for families with nontraditional jobs.

Community organization, Multnomah County, Spanish-language listening session

As noted above, respondents indicated that for childcare to be truly accessible, there needs to be an availability of programs staffed by people who share a family's language and culture.

Provide multilingual licensing, coaching, and business support. Language should never be a barrier to opening quality child care.

Culturally specific organization, Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties, listening session

Key Takeaways

Collectively, these responses highlight a broader understanding of what it means for care to be available, accessible, and responsive to families. Respondents consistently identified infant and toddler care as the greatest unmet need, while also emphasizing that families need care that accommodates the demands of work, transportation, and caregiving and reflects the languages, cultures, and communities it serves. Expanding access therefore requires not only increasing capacity generally, but having a targeted approach to build the capacity of child care that matches the children, schedules, and communities that need it most.

Theme 4: Families and programs need funding and rules that work together

Respondents noted that despite the importance of publicly funded programs for Oregon families, providers, and communities, lack of alignment across programs and with the reality of families' needs result in a host of challenges. Lack of alignment in eligibility requirements means families may not be matched with the best programs for them. Too often, programs do not provide care when families need it. And funding public programs per enrolled child rather than per classroom creates instability for providers and families. Simply put, publicly funded programs will be more effective when their funding and rules fit how families actually use care.

Several respondents described families pushed to choose between programs, or moved from one to another, because eligibility for Preschool Promise, ERDC, and Head Start is poorly coordinated.

Preschool promise and ERDC need to work together so families do not have to choose between them.

System partner and parent, Coos, Curry, and coastal Douglas counties, listening session

If the hub tells a family they have to take a PSP slot the family will do that. Even if they have already started in a Head Start classroom. This happened many times last year. Overlapping eligibility is hard.

Head Start program leader, listening session

Other respondents focused on the program schedules that do not match what families' realities. Families in which the adults work full time need care that covers their workday, including during the summer months.

Families need full-time care. Many families choose daycare over preschool simply because it is full time. We recently did a regional survey and first and foremost, families need full day/full year care. Childcare providers cannot survive off of afterschool care children, we need to focus on funding schools, providers, and partners for full time/full year care.

Head Start program leader, listening session

Providers raised how funding flows as well. Several asked for funding tied to enrollment or classrooms rather than daily attendance, so programs can budget for staff and stay open.

Allow for enrollment based revenue, not attendance based, and pre-payment so the program can operate sustainably.

System partner, Coos and Curry counties, listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents saw program improvements as a way to make existing public investments reach more families. Coordinating eligibility across Preschool Promise, ERDC, and Head Start, extending the program day and year, and funding programs on stable terms would let families keep one arrangement that fits their work, while giving providers the predictability they need to stay open.

Workforce

Ensuring qualified, stable child care and early education staffing

What We Heard

Respondents shared their perspectives on a range of ways to recruit, train, and retain early childhood instructors and child care workers. The findings below reflect the changes they ranked as most important. In open-ended responses, they also raised the issue of wages and compensation, which the ranked options did not ask about (options being considered in this phase of the Roundtable's work focused on maximizing existing funding rather than making significant new investments, which will be addressed in later phases). Notably, pay and benefits came up in responses far more often than the cost of earning credentials.

Workforce

Option	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Offer affordable, flexible degree pathways for licensed providers	29.7%	74.2%
Expand apprenticeship and internship pathways	18.2%	60.1%
Make course credits transferable between colleges and universities	12.1%	49.8%
Provide mentorship, funding, and professional development for rural and Tribal communities	14.7%	42.8%
Expand multilingual and culturally responsive training	15.4%	40.1%
Create one ERDC reimbursement rate regardless of geography	23.0%	39.5%
Provide business-management curricula for child care providers	6.2%	30.0%

Theme 1: Compensation shaped how respondents viewed workforce strategies

Respondents strongly support the education and training pathways the Roundtable tested, particularly affordable and flexible degree pathways. At the same time, compensation surfaced frequently in participants' open-ended responses, even though it was not among the options presented in this phase of the Roundtable's work. Participants often described compensation as a factor that shapes the effectiveness and sustainability of other workforce strategies, suggesting its importance for future phases of the Roundtable's work.

Providers identified compensation as the condition that determines whether any other workforce strategy works, with compensation affecting recruitment, retention, participation in training and professional learning, and long-term workforce stability.

Number one, in my experience, is to raise wages, and many of the other issues take care of themselves.

Child care or preschool provider, Union County, listening session

I want to see the child care educators better valued. While I want to say I want to see every child enrolled and cared for, the truth is, if we don't get better pay and support we will lose teachers.

Health and behavioral health partner, Douglas County, listening session

While several respondents recognized that compensation lies outside the scope of this phase of the Roundtable's work, they consistently linked pay to the effectiveness of the strategies being considered. For that reason, many viewed compensation as a critical topic for the Roundtable's later phases.

Pay and benefits have to be addressed, but that feels like Phase 3.

System partner, Multnomah County, listening session

Mejores salarios, más capacitación y apoyo para retener al personal de cuidado infantil.

Better wages, more training, and support to retain child care staff.

Child care provider, Klamath County, Spanish-language listening session

Respondents also described where the money for wages currently comes from, and why that is the constraint.

State funding to help pay staff a competitive wage, and not the families who are already struggling to pay their child care bills funding the wages of the employees caring for their children.

Center based child care provider, Northwest region, survey

Key Takeaways

Compensation was not among the options respondents were asked to rank, yet it shaped how they assessed every option to be ranked. Respondents treated pay as the condition that determines whether other workforce investments hold.

Theme 2: Participants supported credential pathways, but not without compensation

Affordable, flexible degree pathways for child care workers ranked first among the options respondents were asked to rank, placed in the top three by 74 percent of respondents. The most consistent concern in the workforce responses, however, was the gap between increasing expectations for education and credentials, and the compensation available. This theme emerged across regions and was raised by both providers and faculty.

Asking a person to get a degree in a field that doesn't pay a livable wage isn't morally right. Could you live on minimum wage with your degree?

Child care or preschool provider, Klamath and Marion counties, listening session

Difficult to entice people into a field that has such high education expectations and low compensation. What is the value of a degree if it doesn't translate to better quality of life?

Parent, caregiver, and system partner, Coos, Curry, and coastal Douglas counties, listening session

When asking for providers to obtain more education, the pay needs to match.

Child care or preschool provider, Douglas County, listening session

Pay providers!!! Going to school typically results in very little financial improvement and may even just result in a net loss.

Community college or university partner, Multnomah County, survey

Respondents differed in how they believed the gap should be addressed. Most argued that compensation should rise to match higher credential expectations. Only a few, including the two respondents quoted below, suggested lowering requirements instead.

Lower the teacher qualifications. Finding someone out of college that wants to work for what centers pay is very challenging.

Child care or preschool provider, Klamath and Marion counties, listening session

Que no haiga tanta restrictions para las que quieren ser parte de este apoyo y que sean menos los requisitos para las proveedoras que quieren iniciar.

That there not be so many restrictions for those who want to be part of this support and that there be fewer requirements for providers who want to get started.

Single parent, Marion County, FAFO Salem Spanish-language listening session

A smaller set of about 15 responses voiced concerns related to the cost of earning credentials, asking for free training, scholarships, or student loan forgiveness for early educators. These requests echo the top-ranked workforce option, affordable and flexible degree pathways.

Key Takeaways

Respondents generally supported credential pathways, but expressed concerns about asking people to meet rising expectations without a corresponding increase in pay.

Theme 3: The practicum requirement emerged as a concrete, fixable barrier

Participants ranked expanding apprenticeship and internship pathways second, while also identifying unpaid practicum hours as a specific challenge within the degree pathway. Many respondents noted that the requirement can be difficult for working parents and current providers, who may need to reduce work hours or forgo income to complete it. The most common suggestions were to compensate practicum students and to allow a student's existing workplace to count as a practicum site when appropriate.

As a working mom with a child, I am supposed to get 60 hours of practicum in 3 months. Unpaid. How? Possible to pay students for practicum, or allowing their employer to be their practicum site.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Paid practicing hours. If a student has to pay to attend college, they might need to earn a salary.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Practicum is a barrier as a working mother. Being able to take the time out of my working schedule to do volunteer hours is hard. Is there a way we can compensate practicum students who are parents?

Health and behavioral health partner, Douglas County, listening session

Respondents frequently focused on implementation solutions rather than changing the requirement itself. In eastern Oregon, participants suggested workplace-based practicum models that integrate training with employment, while a community organization in Washington County emphasized the importance of clear practicum policies and expectations.

Partnering with community colleges, placing early childhood education students in child care, Head Start, and center classrooms to gain the work experience or practicum. It helps build them up and could help build those programs' staff.

Child care or preschool provider, Umatilla, Union, and Morrow counties, listening session

*Pólizas claras para los practicantes.
Clear policies for practicum students.*

Community organization, Washington County, Spanish-language listening session

Key Takeaways

Practicum requirements surfaced as the most concrete and immediately addressable barrier in this focus area. Respondents proposed implementation fixes rather than changes to the requirement itself.

Theme 4: Respondents were divided on whether ERDC reimbursement rates should be the same statewide

Creating a single, statewide ERDC reimbursement rate produced one of the most polarized responses in the survey. Many respondents identified it as one of the most

important changes the state could make, yet a significant number of participants did not view it as a priority.

Some context helps explain the divide. Oregon currently pays one ERDC rate in urban areas and a lower rate in suburban and rural areas, because rates are based on what providers currently charge (the “market rate study”) and urban providers currently charge more for care. The option was intended to raise the suburban and rural rate to match the urban rate.

About a dozen open-ended comments addressed ERDC rates by geography, most of them from rural counties on the South Coast and in eastern Oregon. Many asked that rural providers be paid at least the urban rate, noting the expenses particular to rural providers.

The same rate of child care subsidies for places across the state. Rural doesn’t always get the same amount as metro even though cost of living is often the same/higher.

System partner, Lane County, listening session

Others read the option differently, as a single rate that could lock rural providers in too low. They argued that rural care, with higher operating costs and smaller enrollment, needs a higher rate or more flexible funding than urban care.

I don’t think making a single reimbursement rate helps rural communities long term. We might actually need a higher reimbursement rate than urban areas. I would prefer a formula that better supports rural.

System partner, Coos and Curry counties, listening session

Create flexible rural funding that recognizes higher operating costs and smaller enrollment. One-size-fits-all funding leaves rural communities behind.

Child care or preschool provider, Malheur County, listening session

Survey rankings also show a divide by role: 23 survey respondents ranked the single rate first and 34 ranked it last, with family child care and center-based providers generally favoring it and Head Start and OPK providers giving it very little support.

Key Takeaways

Although Oregon already uses different ERDC reimbursement rates by geographic regions, respondents expressed competing views about whether the reimbursement rates should be more uniform or more responsive to local conditions. Across those perspectives, however, many were describing the same underlying challenge: ERDC reimbursement rates do not adequately cover the cost of providing care. Rural providers felt that gap most acutely, citing higher operating costs and smaller enrollments. These findings suggest that questions about rate structure cannot be separated from questions about rate adequacy and overall funding for the program.

Theme 5: Retention depends on benefits, not only on hourly pay

Although no ranked option addressed benefits beyond wages, in open-ended

responses, participants identified health insurance, paid time off, and sick leave as essential supports for retaining staff. Their comments suggest that educators' decisions to stay or leave are shaped by the overall quality and sustainability of the job, not just hourly pay. Providers operating on tuition revenue described significant challenges in offering the compensation and benefits they believe staff deserve.

We need ways to compensate our amazing staff. Insurance, PTO, vacation, sick time.

Child care or preschool provider, Josephine and Douglas counties, listening session

Livable wages that are affordable to the business.

Child care or preschool provider, Douglas County, listening session

That last comment reflects a challenge raised across the survey. Respondents described a gap between the compensation they believe early educators deserve and what many providers can afford to offer. Many provider-owners emphasized that they are balancing the needs of their staff, the affordability concerns of families, and the financial realities of operating a program. In their view, closing that gap will require sustainable funding alongside workforce investments.

Increase compensation and benefits for the early childhood workforce through sustainable funding mechanisms.

Child care or preschool provider, Washington and Clackamas counties, listening session

Agregaría un mayor enfoque en la retención y el bienestar del personal mediante salarios competitivos, oportunidades de desarrollo profesional y apoyo para la salud mental.

I would add a greater focus on staff retention and wellbeing through competitive salaries, professional development opportunities, and mental health support.

Community organization, Multnomah County, Spanish-language survey

Respondents occasionally pointed to examples of compensation models they believe are working. In eastern Oregon, one provider identified Head Start as a local benchmark for wages and benefits.

Head Start offers decent wages and a great benefit package in eastern Oregon.

Child care or preschool provider, Washington and Clackamas counties, listening session

Key Takeaways

The reference to Head Start is notable because it points to an aspiration as much as a model. Respondents consistently described compensation packages that support retention, but many also acknowledged that smaller providers often lack the funding base needed to offer similar wages and benefits. This tension appeared throughout the survey and reinforces the need for solutions that work across Oregon's mixed-delivery system.

Facilities and Infrastructure

Building, expanding, and sustaining safe learning environments

What We Heard

Oregon has made significant recent investments in child care facilities. In 2023, the Legislature created the Child Care Infrastructure Fund (CCIF) through HB 3005, with \$50 million in lottery bonds administered by Business Oregon and \$5 million for DELC to help providers access the fund. The same legislative session funded a review of how zoning, building codes, and permitting affect child care (HB 2727) and protected licensed child care operating in rental homes (SB 599). Oregon Housing and Community Services also funds projects that place child care alongside affordable housing. Yet demand has far outpaced these investments: nearly 2,000 CCIF applications requested about \$813 million from the initial \$50 million.

Participants' ranking of facilities and infrastructure priorities reflect the ongoing need for support in this area. Open-ended responses addressed a range of approaches to expanding and improving child care facilities.

Facilities and infrastructure

Option	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Restore Child Care Infrastructure and Co-Location funding	39%	78%
Provide incentives for child care facility development	36%	80%
Streamline building-permit processes for child care facilities	11%	53%
Expand shared-services support, including technology, payroll, and billing	12%	47%
Address prevailing-wage triggers for child care co-located with affordable housing	8%	35%
Issue official guidance to cities and counties on state laws	8%	30%

Theme 1: Restore the Infrastructure Fund and Co-Location Fund

Respondents were remarkably consistent about what would help create more child care facilities. There was particular interest in restoring the CCIF (the statewide grant created in the 2023 Legislative Session that provided funds to child care facilities for renovations, capital improvements, new construction and property acquisition) and the Co-Location Fund (a fund created in the 2021 Legislative Session that allocated \$10 million for development of affordable rental housing projects that are co-located with child care or early learning centers). There was also strong support for creating development incentives.

Participants cited the Child Care Infrastructure Fund as evidence that targeted facilities investments can work when they are available and adequately funded.

The Childcare Infrastructure Fund was amazing for the South Coast. Funding for projects large and small is vital to facilities and infrastructure.

System partner, southern Oregon, survey

Respondents described these investments as effective, familiar, and immediately actionable. Unlike many proposals that focused on creating new programs or processes, this option was often framed as restoring something Oregonians had already seen work.

CCIF grants are particularly effective because they can be used for renovations and capital improvements to facilities already in use, allowing providers to improve the safety, accessibility, and usability of existing space. Respondents cited seismic upgrades, ADA improvements, lead remediation, and accommodations for children with disabilities and medical needs. Restoring the fund would not only create new capacity but also help ensure that existing child care settings are safe, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs and abilities of children and families.

Provide funding & support to ensure child care facilities have what they need to retrofit for earthquake preparedness.

Parent and organization or system partner, Multnomah County, FAFO Portland listening session

Provide incentives for programs to update facilities to accommodate kids with mobility challenges and medical equipment.

System partner, statewide, listening session

A fund to pay for lead remediation in old schools so that childcares could use them.

System partner and child care or preschool provider, Douglas County, listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents were clear that facility development requires capital, and many viewed restoring these funds as the most direct way to increase child care capacity and to keep existing spaces safe and usable.

Theme 2: Funding needs to match the reality of facility development

Respondents described a mismatch between how facility projects are financed and

what development actually requires. Comments pointed to grant awards that fall short of project costs, one-time funding rather than ongoing investment, requirements that do not fit provider circumstances, and application processes that can be difficult for small providers to navigate.

One of the biggest barriers to starting up new childcare centers is start-up cost. The cost of everything has risen significantly post-Covid. Another barrier is cost of insurance and health insurance.

Child care or preschool provider, Jackson County, listening session

Infrastructure Grant Funding needs to be available on an ongoing basis, and it should not always be tied to accepting state payments or adding more capacity. The overwhelming need has not gone away, but the funding seems to have dried up.

Center-based child care provider, south-central region, survey

More opportunities for smaller grants that are not overly taxing to work with, (i.e. I work already 12 hours a day at minimum and have very little time to complete extra work.)

Child care or preschool provider, Douglas County, listening session

The comments also reveal a tension for future facilities investments. While many respondents supported creating new child care capacity through facility expansion, others argued that funding should better support existing providers seeking to maintain, improve, or expand established programs.

Key Takeaways

Respondents were asking not only for more capital funding, but for funding that is ongoing, appropriately sized, accessible, and responsive to the realities of different providers and projects.

Theme 3: Providers need help moving projects from planning to opening

Streamlining building-permit processes ranked third among facilities options (although with much less support than the two higher ranked options). Many participants cited challenges related to regulatory processes, including navigating permitting, zoning, building code, fire marshal, and licensing requirements when opening, expanding, or renovating child care facilities.

Notably, providers were frustrated with the challenging processes for meeting building and safety standards, not with the standards themselves. They noted the difficulty of moving a project from concept to opening when multiple agencies are involved. Many described the burden of needing to work across multiple agencies and offices that did not appear connected to one another, creating delays, uncertainty, and additional costs.

Streamline the permitting process! It's circular and confusing, and expect the provider to be the expert on the infrastructure and have to communicate with the fire marshal, sanitation, and licensing.

Participant, FAFO Redmond listening session

Working with city and county is very frustrating. No one knows how childcare works, and they point back and forth to each other. It would be great to have an appointed person at those offices.

Child care or preschool provider, Douglas County, listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents were less focused on changing regulations than on making facility development easier to navigate. They described needing a knowledgeable guide who could help them move through multiple systems without having to coordinate across permitting agencies on their own.

Theme 4: Home-based providers face a housing challenge

Construction or renovation are not the only issues to consider when it comes to child care facilities. No ranked option addressed factors like housing costs, but in open-ended responses participants noted that housing costs, residential zoning, and related issues can determine whether home-based providers can operate.

Personally I am in an apartment and I would like to have my own space or rent a house, but with prices so high it is almost impossible for me.

Family child care provider, Yamhill Early Learning Hub, Spanish-language survey

Some people are not sure if they are renting if they are allowed to be a childcare provider in their home.

Community-based organization and health or behavioral health partner, Linn-Benton region, survey

Notably, Oregon law already addresses part of this uncertainty. Since 2023, landlords may not prohibit a tenant from operating a certified or registered family child care home, although a landlord may require either signed liability waivers from parents or a liability policy that names the landlord (ORS 90.358). But comments like this one indicate both landlords and potential providers may be unaware of the law. Liability insurance itself came up rarely in the open-ended responses, where insurance mentions mostly concerned health coverage for staff.

Respondents also sought solutions that would allow for more stability by setting providers on a path to owning rather than renting facilities.

Allow the use of state funds to pay mortgage loans or purchase buildings.

Child care or preschool provider, Lane County, listening session

Key Takeaways

For home-based child care providers, the ability to provide care is closely tied to housing affordability, homeownership, rental policies, and residential zoning. These barriers may not be addressed through traditional facilities funding.

Theme 5: Reuse existing space before building new

Some respondents proposed repurposing existing buildings rather than constructing new facilities. They pointed to closed schools, vacant classrooms, public buildings,

affordable housing developments, and other underused community assets as opportunities for expansion.

When a school closes – that should be used for child care.

Participant, FAFO Albany listening session

Resource assessment/inventory statewide. Abandoned buildings, public resources, tax incentives, zoning, etc. align needs with resources from inventory.

Single parent and organization or system partner, Linn County, FAFO Albany listening session

Provide start-up funds for K-12 programs that want to convert an empty classroom to a preschool or childcare space.

Child care or preschool provider, Lane County, listening session

Key Takeaways

Facility shortages might be addressed in part by making better use of existing community assets.

Theme 6: Child care is community infrastructure

Respondents repeatedly described child care as community infrastructure, not just independently operated individual businesses. They argued that state and local planning and development efforts need to address it as such.

As Oregon grows, child care facilities should be considered part of community infrastructure.

Caregiver and organization partner, Deschutes County, FAFO Redmond listening session

Can we have ‘network adequacy’ defined in child care and use this as a way to ensure cities and counties plan for child care and have adequate zoning and space?

System partner, Marion County, listening session

When communities are building housing and expanding businesses, how can we educate them that they will need to support childcare?

Child care or preschool provider and system partner, Umatilla, Union, and Morrow counties, listening session

A smaller number of respondents made the economic case directly, calling on employers and chambers of commerce to invest in child care and describing it as integral to local economies. This framing connects to the Roundtable’s discussion of child care as economic development, which could open additional funding streams to the sector.

Key Takeaways

Respondents frequently viewed child care capacity as a community planning issue, not simply a provider issue.

Quality Assurance

Improving how state agencies regulate, oversee, and support early childhood education and child care

What We Heard

When asked how DELC and its partners could strengthen quality across early learning programs, participants consistently returned to one issue: ensuring programs have the support they need to serve all children well, especially children with disabilities and other support needs. Although the survey's ranked options focused on system-level improvements, many open-ended responses drew from participants' experience as providers, educators, and families. Some recommendations fell within DELC's sphere of influence, while others highlighted broader challenges across the early childhood and education systems.

Quality Assurance

Option	Ranked first	Ranked in top three
Expand coaching and technical support for providers serving children with special needs	38%	80%
Formalize a shared ODE-DELC approach to inclusion	23%	66%
Develop pathways for providers to meet Preschool Promise requirements	27%	59%
Enhance technical assistance for grantees to meet grant requirements	12%	57%
Expand access to Pyramid Model training and support	13%	58%

Theme 1: Providers want more support for inclusion, including additional staffing

Participants ranked coaching and technical support for providers serving children with special needs highest among the quality assurance and inclusion options they were given. Their open-ended responses also focused most on inclusion, disability, and support for children with higher needs. While many respondents valued coaching

and technical assistance, they also cited a need for additional staffing support. While coaching and technical assistance can build the expertise of current staff, participants also emphasized the need for lower staffing ratios and additional personnel so programs have the capacity to meet children's needs.

Sometimes we need consultants, but sometimes what we need is a reduction in ratios instead or in addition.

Participant, Facilities and Quality listening session

The largest quality improvement that we could make would be to decrease class size in OPK [Oregon Prenatal to Kindergarten]/PSP [Preschool Promise] programs when there are more than 10% IFSP [Individualized Family Service Plan, used for serving young children with disabilities] and 10% behavior support plans.

Child care or preschool provider, Union County, listening session

Some suggested sharing specialized staff across programs so that smaller providers could afford them.

A model for providing inclusion support staffing – shared between a couple of programs.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Respondents consistently emphasized that consultation, coaching, and technical assistance are valuable, but not sufficient on their own. Many described the need for additional staffing capacity and funding to support children with disabilities and other specialized needs. Across responses, participants connected inclusion to both workforce capacity and program finances, noting that providers often face additional responsibilities without corresponding resources.

Crear un sistema de elegibilidad más sensible para niños con alguna discapacidad.

Create a more responsive eligibility system for children with a disability.

Parent and child care provider, Washington County, Spanish-language listening session

The rankings reflect the same concern. Creating a funding formula that accounts for children with special needs ranked third of seven program improvement options, and half of the respondents who ranked it placed it in their top three. Providers connected inclusion directly to what they are able to staff and afford.

No solo apoyo técnico o capacitación, sino también apoyo monetario. Cuidar a un niño con discapacidad ya es una gran responsabilidad y de mucho trabajo.

Not just technical assistance or training, but financial support too. Caring for a child with a disability is already a big responsibility and a lot of work.

Family child care provider, central Oregon, Spanish-language survey

Respondents noted that children and families often must wait for evaluations or specialized services, including behavioral health, speech therapy, and occupational therapy. During these long waiting periods, providers without specialized staff or training are often expected to support children with significant needs. Many comments focused not only on the shortage of specialists, but also on the need for support, coaching, and consultation while children and families wait to receive services.

Sometimes the waiting lists are so long, kids don't get anything until kindergarten. We need more behavioral health professionals.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Support for child care & preschool to help teachers with kids who are on waitlists for other services.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Key Takeaways

The comments add an important nuance to the highest-ranked option. Respondents supported coaching and technical assistance, but many also emphasized that successful inclusion depends on having enough staff time and capacity to put that guidance into practice. Inclusion is also a condition of family access, because a child care opening is only available to a family if the program can serve their child. Providers are also concerned about what happens during the months children spend waiting for evaluations and services.

Theme 2: Providers want a more coordinated approach to inclusion

The second-highest ranked option involved formalizing a shared ODE-DELC approach to inclusion (i.e., ensuring children with disabilities and other needs have the support to participate fully in early learning settings alongside their peers). The comments confirmed that respondents currently often experience inclusion support as fragmented across programs and agencies. Participants described situations where providers were trying to follow multiple sets of requirements, guidance, and reporting expectations at the same time. Rather than asking for new inclusion policies, many respondents were asking for existing systems to work together more effectively.

It feels like there are different requirements for hours for kids with disabilities in EI/ECSE. We try to meet PSP hours requirements for all, but EI/ECSE has shorter hours of support. Mismatch.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

This comment illustrates a challenge raised by several respondents: programs serving children with disabilities may be expected to meet Preschool Promise participation requirements while also implementing services outlined in a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Both requirements are intended to support children, but respondents described challenges when expectations for schedules, staffing, or service delivery do not align. In those situations, providers often become the ones responsible for reconciling the differences between systems, and that can be costly.

Other respondents described receiving different guidance from child care licensing, Every Child Belongs (ECB), and Early intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) about how to respond to children's needs. Providers working across these systems are left to reconcile the differences themselves.

Align guidance between licensing and ECB/inclusion folks/ ECSE to reduce provider confusion when it comes to how to address challenging behavior.

System partner, Tillamook, Clatsop, Columbia, and Washington counties, listening session

Respondents also pointed to potentially duplicative or burdensome assessment requirements, because these are tied to different program mandates and funding streams. While early childhood classroom observation tools such as Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS) and the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) measure different aspects of program quality, providers often described experiencing them as part of a growing assessment burden. Comments suggested that the challenge was not only the number of observations, but also limited clarity about how results from different assessments connect to one another, inform improvement efforts, or translate into additional support for classrooms.

Remove redundancies (CLASS/TPOT are examples) in state funding (DELIC) and what publicly funded programs (such as Head Start) are required to do.

Child care or preschool provider, Clackamas County, listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents agreed on the importance of inclusive early learning environments, but noted the barriers that arise because providers often have to navigate multiple systems, expectations, and accountability structures to deliver inclusive services. Many viewed greater alignment across agencies and programs as a way to reduce administrative burden and allow staff to spend more time supporting children and families.

Theme 3: Preschool Promise is both wanted by providers and hard to reach

Respondents identified Preschool Promise as an important source of access for low-income families, ranking it third among the priority options. But they also noted that the program can be difficult for providers to navigate, particularly in terms of the administrative requirements for participation. Respondents also described participation as uneven across regions.

Help providers meet Preschool Promise requirements. Don't make it so tedious. It's too much work.

Participant, FAFO Redmond listening session

We need MORE Preschool Promise slots, and for providers to become part of the program. Because there have been NO new provider becoming a Preschool Promise program in Central Oregon area.

Participant, FAFO Redmond listening session

Que no sea tan complicado para las proveedoras de aplicar para preschool promise. That it not be so complicated for providers to apply for Preschool Promise.

Single parent, Marion County, FAFO Salem Spanish-language listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents valued Preschool Promise as one of the few pathways to serve low-income families, yet they noted that lack of funding and demanding administrative processes limited the number of providers participating.

What counts as quality?

A broader question surfaced across multiple themes: what does Oregon mean by quality, and how should improvement be measured?

Respondents generally supported investments that help providers improve practice, but several also raised questions about how quality is defined, communicated, and assessed.

None of the ranked options addressed how Oregon defines or measures quality, yet respondents raised it on their own, with system partners in particular asking for a shared definition.

Quality should be more than licensure. So what is it? I hope we have a clear definition.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Data collection and analysis – we don't know if we are doing well on quality unless we CHECK – collect the same data using the same tool in the same way.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Would be good to know what is DELC's/Oregon's quality standard or how they define 'quality'.

System partner, Marion County, listening session

Theme 4: Respondents pointed to existing and emerging supports they value

In both the ranked options and open-ended responses, participants noted the value of Pyramid Model training and of coaching, with comments referencing Preschool Promise, Family Child Care Networks, Infant and Toddler Networks, CCR&R supports, and related quality improvement efforts. Respondents also highlighted the redesigned Spark framework, Oregon's quality improvement system, which has moved from star ratings to a statewide Quality Improvement Cycle, with other redesigned elements piloted around the state, and specific professional learning resources.

Programs such as Preschool for All provide access to coaches, inclusion specialists, and professional development opportunities that help educators strengthen their teaching practices, create more inclusive learning environments, and continuously improve their programs. These quality supports encourage reflective practice rather than simply focusing on compliance.

Family child care provider, Multnomah County, survey

The redesigned Spark with its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and trust/respect for providers is a giant step in the right direction.

Community college or university partner, Multnomah County, survey

Free e-pyramid modules in English and Spanish are a great resource.

Child Care Resource and Referral staff, Washington County, survey

Key Takeaways

Respondents identified existing or emerging approaches for quality improvement that they value and expressed interest in making them more available, more consistent, or easier to access.

Theme 5: Training exists but does not reach everyone

While respondents expressed support for expanding access to Pyramid Model training, some also noted current limitations. These include availability in languages beyond English and Spanish, scheduling that works for providers, and formats that count toward Oregon Registry Online steps. These concerns were raised predominantly from Portland and from multilingual respondents.

Not enough trainings or diversity of trainings are available (that count through ORO). They need to have options for multiple locations, time, virtual, etc.

Parent, Multnomah County, FAFO Portland listening session

Pyramid modules in multiple languages.

Parent and organization or system partner, Multnomah County, FAFO Portland listening session

Key Takeaways

Respondents pointed less to gaps in what training covers than to who can reach it. Language, scheduling, and format determine whether existing training was usable.

Taken together, the findings speak to the need to ensure that promising strategies are implemented consistently and equitably across the early learning system. Respondents described uneven access to coaching and technical assistance, conflicting expectations across programs, and barriers that affect providers differently depending on their setting, funding sources, and community. These responses underscore that quality improvement is not only about what supports are offered, but whether providers can access and use them in practice.

Looking ahead

The recommendations and insights that emerged during the community engagement process largely align with the Roundtable's own findings. Participants also raised several issues that align with later phases of the Roundtable's work, because they relate to expanding services. These are presented here with the understanding that they should be addressed in later phases:

- **Expand the amount of available child care in an intentional way that aligns with family child care needs.**
 - **Increase public funding for preschool and child care to serve more families, including funding ERDC so eligible families on the waitlist can use it.**
 - **Increase compensation for providers as an essential part of any expansion of preschool and child care.**
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Appendix

Who we heard from

Listening Sessions

Children's Institute (CI) hosted 17 listening sessions between June and August 2026, in English and Spanish, virtually and in person. For All Families Oregon (FAFO) hosted six additional sessions during the same period, bringing the total to 23.

Date	Location	Participants	Conducted by
June 18	Portland	8	FAFO
June 23	Virtual	15	CI
June 24	Albany	7	FAFO
June 25	Salem	15	FAFO
July 7	Virtual	30	FAFO
July 10	Virtual	19	CI
July 14	Virtual	11	CI
July 14	Virtual	2	CI
July 15	Klamath Falls	27	CI
July 16	Roseburg	33	CI
July 16	Wilsonville	28	CI
July 20	Coos Bay	28	CI
July 21	Virtual	11	CI
July 23	Virtual	7	CI
July 28	Tillamook	10	CI
July 28	Virtual	17	CI

July 29	Virtual	5	CI
July 30	Eastern Oregon	19	CI
July 30	Florence	14	CI
August 3	Madras	8	FAFO
August 3	Portland, Plaza Esperanza	21	CI
August 3	Redmond	22	FAFO
August 3	Virtual	7	CI
Total	23 sessions	364	274 CI, 90 FAFO

☐ English
 ☐ Spanish
 ☐ English and Spanish

Participant Demographics

Connection to early childhood care and learning	%
Connection to early childhood care and learning (n=532)	
Early childhood educators and child care providers	62%
Community or system partners	41%
Parents and caregivers	29%
Years in early childhood (n=457)	
1 to 5 years	21%
6 to 10 years	21%
11 to 15 years	14%
More than 20 years	33%

Note: Percentages reflect everyone who answered each item, including parents and caregivers. Participants could select more than one category for "Connection to early childhood care and learning" and "Populations served," so those percentages sum to more than 100. The FAFO listening sessions did not ask participants about their connection to the field or the populations they serve, so those two items do not include information from participants in those sessions. Because of rounding to whole numbers, the total percentage for "Years in early childhood" slightly exceeds 100.

Geographic distribution	%
Region (n=530)	
Southern Oregon	33%
Portland Metro	32%
Mid Willamette Valley	22%
Eastern Oregon	14%
Central Oregon	9%
Northwest Coast	7%
Southern Oregon	33%

Note: Some providers and partners serve more than one region, so percentages sum to more than 100.