



## Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle: Call for Letters of Interest

### Early Childhood Workforce Development Initiative

Today Oregon's early learning system leaders are paying more attention than ever before to the needs of the early learning workforce. Child care providers, preschool teachers, family advocates, parent educators, and home visitors are increasingly recognized for their professionalism, and training for the workforce is viewed as critically important to the care and education of our children. Experienced trainers and adult educators are essential to build the skills of Oregon's early learning providers.

Yet, the training needs of important groups of providers have been ignored or marginally addressed: providers of color, providers who speak diverse languages and providers in rural Oregon. Despite strong evidence of the importance and effectiveness of culturally responsive programming and education, very few trainers from these communities are certified to deliver the high-level trainings providers need to advance in Oregon's career lattice and, few trainings are available in languages other than English.

The Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle, recognizing this disparity, is investing in a project to work with impacted communities to address these systemic gaps. This investment will do the following:

- Develop a Community Council to lead systems change.
- Invest in the development and support of trainers of color, rural trainers, and linguistically diverse trainers, through a community based mentorship model. Mentor Master Trainers will be recruited from focus communities to mentor Emerging Master Trainers over a two-year period.
- Invest in the creation and delivery of advanced trainings in diverse languages.

This opportunity focuses specifically on:

- The African American, Latino, Chinese, Vietnamese, Native American, Russian, and immigrant/refugee communities.
- Rural communities
- Communities that speak diverse languages specifically, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Russian, as well as the languages spoken by Oregon's refugee communities. Please note the ECFLC is committed to ensuring all grant-related materials are translated into each of these languages.

For a full description of the project, please see Attachment A at the end of this document.

The ECFLC seeks representatives from community-based organizations to comprise the project's Community Council. Selected community organizations will receive a \$10,000 stipend to partner with the Oregon Center for Career Development (OCCD) to lead systems change. Applicants must:

- Have members and staff who represent the grant's focused communities.
- Have a track record of successfully working and building trust with community members.
- Have experience and knowledge of early childhood programming and systems. Applicants are not required to have experience training early learning providers, but should have knowledge of the training gaps and needs within the community they represent.

- Must have a staff member or community trainer/volunteer able to commit time to the project as a Community Councilor. The Community Council will meet quarterly through mid-2018.

Community Council roles and responsibilities:

- Participate in a Community Council in partnership with OCCD to identify the components the state's training and Master Trainer certification program that are barriers for their communities.
- Establish a language translation policy so that all materials are appropriately translated into languages spoken by the project's focus populations.
- Identify the barriers that can successfully be removed in the three-year grant period.
- Identify trainers in their communities and organizations who can serve as Mentor Master Trainers.
- Support recruitment of Emerging Master Trainers.

How to apply:

Submit your letter of interest by 5 p.m. on March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Submissions are accepted via Survey Monkey ([https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ecflc\\_loi](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ecflc_loi)). Please address each question below.

- What is your organization's membership? Who do you serve or support?
- What is your relationship with and track record of work in the focus community you are applying to represent?
- What are specific challenges, struggles, and disparities that your community faces as a result of the current structure of the early childhood training program/system?
- What is your organization's experience in the early childhood care and education field?
- What staff resources will your organization make available for participation in this program?
- Do you think this proposal as currently constructed will meet the needs of your community? If not, what changes are needed?

# **Joint Investment Opportunity for the Early Childhood Funders Learning Circle (ECLC)**

## **The Need**

Based on a series of qualitative interviews and a literature review conducted this past year, we know that strengthening the early childhood workforce is a top priority for improving outcomes for children in Oregon. The State is creating new policies and incentives for providers to improve quality (e.g., Preschool Promise and Employment-Related Day Care or ERDC subsidies) but critical barriers exist. Many providers, particularly those from underrepresented communities (communities of color, communities whose first language is not English, and rural communities), face financial, transportation, linguistic, cultural, and other logistical barriers that prevent them from accessing high quality professional development that is grounded in both the latest research and science regarding child development, and the culture of the provider and the children they care for.

Although a large body of evidence tells us that children of color see greater success when taught and cared for by educators who represent their culture, Oregon has a relatively underdeveloped professional development system that is supportive of providers of color.

Oregon also has a lack of trainers from both communities of color and low income rural communities, as well as a lack of higher level trainings available in languages other than English.

## **The Opportunity: Conceptual Framework/Project Goal**

Through this three-year funding initiative, grantees and community partners will develop a pipeline of culturally-specific, culturally relevant and rural-based trainers to provide all levels of training for early childhood care and education providers for underserved families. The pipeline will be developed through the creation of a cohort of trainer-mentors who will work with master trainers in training to develop their skills as trainers and achieve master trainer certification.

These trainings will ultimately help more providers in culturally specific communities and rural Oregon access culturally appropriate training to improve quality and move up on the Oregon Registry system (Step 3-10).

Prioritized care providers include *providers of color, providers who speak languages other than English, and rural child care providers*. In addition to increasing the pool of quality trainers, the project will fund key stakeholders to work with OCCD to identify and overcome systemic barriers in the current professional development community. Activities will include:

- Work with OCCD to examine master trainer requirements, identify potentially barriers in the requirement, and come up with strategies for either adjusting the standards or developing friendlier pathways to achieve them.
- Develop new curricula/new trainings that are geared toward diverse communities, including developing trainings in the heritage languages of the providers who do not speak English.

A key component of this project will be to involve community-based partners and the providers they serve across the state in the design, structure, and activities of the project as it evolves. In addition, the project will include an evaluation to assess the impact of this work on the priority providers and communities.

### **The Opportunity: Systems Change**

By prioritizing providers from underserved communities who are predominantly in smaller family child care businesses, we fill a toe-hold in the space between the Bachelor's Degree pipeline being pursued by community colleges and Preschool Promise efforts and the unexplored network of informal Family, Friend and Neighbor Care (FFNC) where many of the children of color and rural children receive child care. Developing trainers and developing culturally appropriate curricula in this space can support state efforts to both inform and advocate for exploration, connections to, and quality improvements in FFNC and inform potential alternative pathways to quality (in addition to a Bachelor's degree) at higher steps on the Oregon Registry.

Private foundation funding and leadership in partnership with existing lead child care training organizations and community-based organizations will help bolster quality and push culturally appropriate systems change at the state level at a time of leadership transition at the Early Learning Division and potential competition with other state-level policy and funding mandates. This project presents opportunities for shared learning and advocacy for funders, grantee partners, and state leaders concerned with improving the quality of child care in Oregon and access to that quality care.

### **The Opportunity: Leveraging the Role of Private Philanthropy**

This funding initiative presents the opportunity for private philanthropy to seed this important workforce quality improvement effort. It will allow us to test strategies to improve culturally-specific and culturally relevant practices in recruiting and supporting trainers from underserved populations to delivering quality trainings for providers from these same populations across the state. This three-year project will entail testing and refining outreach, recruiting, and training approaches and strategies. To our knowledge, this intentional approach to developing an equitable quality training program for a diverse child care workforce has not been developed elsewhere. It presents the perfect incubation role for private philanthropy in Oregon.

This project is directly aligned with where staff from the Early Learning Division (ELD) hope to support the field if they are successful with their policy and funding proposals during the 2017 State legislative session. In addition, ELD recently received a Federal Impact Grant through the Office of Child Care, which does not provide direct funding but will provide access to expert technical assistance that ELD believes can be used to strengthen the implementation of this project.

## **Overall Structure of Funding Opportunity**

**Lead organization: Oregon Center for Career Development in Childhood Care and Education (PSU).** The Center is the lead organization for overseeing training and data collection for the Oregon Registry System, designed to improve training and subsequently the quality of care for individual providers across the state. The Center will be the primary recipient of grant funds, subgranting to the supporting organization, community partner organizations, and trainers/providers as appropriate.

### **Key Activities for the Project:**

- Identify lead community based partner agencies – organizations who work with and have the trust of communities of color and rural providers – to work with OCCD over the course of the project. These community partners will serve as contractors on the project and will recruit and support mentor master trainers to comprise the master trainer professional learning community.
- OCCD and community based organizations identify 20 Master Trainers who represent diverse cultures/languages and rural communities and bring together as a statewide professional learning community focused on: 1) Training and curriculum development for communities of color and linguistically diverse communities. 2) Identifying providers who have the potential to become master trainers through mentorship and support. 3) Training, coaching, and mentoring new trainers to become master trainers.
- Cull through existing data to identify providers at Step 10 or with BAs as well as existing standardized and/or community trainers who are on the cusp of becoming Master Trainers. Community partner agencies will also identify/nominate potential new trainer candidates.
- Select up to 50 new trainer candidates to pair with professional learning community of Master Trainers to develop a cohort of culturally, linguistically, and racially diverse trainers-in-training who will complete the program with Master Trainer certification as well as a suite of set-2 and set-3 trainings that are approved to provide to their community.
- Use learnings from trainers and providers to inform efforts to improve training curricula to be more culturally specific and culturally appropriate.
- Establish an Evaluation committee and develop a system for tracking providers accessing training and moving up the Registry, sharing learnings through annual convenings of funders and training partners to inform the project over three years as well as ongoing state efforts to increase training and improve quality through the Oregon Registry and QRIS.

### **Expected Outcomes from this 3-Year Project:**

- Increase the number of trainers across the state who represent culture/race/ethnicity and geography that mirrors the early childhood workforce and families in care.
- Increase the number of trainings available in languages other than English, particularly Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, to improve quality of care.
- Develop recommendations for Master Trainer quality standards from culturally specific, culturally relevant perspectives.
- Increase number of rural trainers and test models and strategies for reaching more geographically remote providers with quality training.
- Identify/develop culturally and linguistically specific curricula that can be shared broadly.
- Increase quality of child care by increasing providers in target communities who achieve higher steps and/or move up the Oregon Registry and/or achieve higher QRIS ratings.
- Increase funder and partner learnings around child care quality and increase advocacy efforts both inside and outside the state system.
- Through formalized shared learnings, support other states' efforts to develop quality professional development opportunities for diverse and rural communities.