



## North Idaho Early Learning Collaborative (ELC)

### 2025 Strategic Plan

#### Introduction

The North Idaho Early Learning Collaborative (ELC) is a regional initiative dedicated to strengthening early childhood education across **Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties**. Through coordinated partnerships, shared resources, and ongoing professional development, the ELC addresses the diverse needs of families, educators, and communities.

Guided by Idaho's statewide Early Learning Collaborative framework, the North Idaho ELC works to expand access to early learning, promote best practices, and support the healthy development and school readiness of young children. By uniting school districts, early childhood providers, community organizations, social service agencies, and higher education institutions, the ELC cultivates a sustainable and inclusive system of care and learning across the region.

#### Vision

All young children in North Idaho have access to high-quality, inclusive early learning experiences that support healthy development, strong families, and lifelong success.

#### Mission

To strengthen early childhood education through collaboration, professional development, resource sharing, and community engagement, ensuring families, providers, and children are supported and empowered.

#### Core Goals

##### 1. Access

Ensure families can obtain **quality, affordable childcare** by addressing and overcoming the financial and quality barriers identified in the regional needs assessment.

##### 2. Sustainability

Support the stability and growth of childcare small businesses through strong partnerships, professional supports, and workforce strategies that promote **professional-level compensation** and long-term viability.

##### 3. Quality

Promote high-quality care delivered by a **skilled, well-supported workforce** using developmentally appropriate practices, ensuring school readiness, child well-being, and positive family outcomes.

## Strategic Priorities & Action Targets

### Priority 1: Expand Affordable Childcare Options

**Goal Alignment:** Access

**Objective:** Increase the availability of high-quality, affordable childcare slots across the five-county region.

#### Strategies / Targets:

- **READY! for Kindergarten®** programs to empower caregivers with tools for school readiness.
- **Childcare Tuition Scholarships** to reduce financial burden for families.
- **Parent Cafés** that build parent networks and strengthen families.
- **Community Outreach** to connect families with available programs, supports, and resources.

### Priority 2: Support Economic Stability for Families

**Goal Alignment:** Access, Sustainability

**Objective:** Strengthen families' economic resilience by reducing childcare costs and connecting them to supports that stabilize employment and well-being.

#### Strategies / Targets:

- Expand **tuition assistance** to offset the rising cost of care.
- Partner with employers to explore **childcare benefits** and workforce-supportive policies.
- Increase family access to **financial, health, and social supports** through coordinated referrals and outreach.

### Priority 3: Support Childcare Businesses

**Goal Alignment:** Sustainability

**Objective:** Ensure childcare providers have the financial stability, workforce support, and technical assistance needed to thrive as small businesses.

#### Strategies / Targets:

- **Monthly Business Discussions** for ongoing peer networking and problem-solving.
- **Advocacy** at the local and state levels for sustainable funding and improved workforce supports.
- **Fundraising** initiatives to help providers access resources, training, and quality-enhancing materials.

### Priority 4: Build Resilience

**Goal Alignment:** Quality, Sustainability

**Objective:** Strengthen the social-emotional resilience of children, families, and early childhood professionals.

**Strategies / Targets:**

- Implement the **Strengthening Families Framework of Hope** to build protective factors.
- Facilitate community partnerships that support family mental health, parenting support, and trauma-informed practice.
- Offer training that equips educators with strategies to support emotional regulation, inclusion, and responsive caregiving.

**Priority 5: Engage the Entire Community**

**Goal Alignment:** Access, Quality

**Objective:** Build regional awareness and shared responsibility for the importance of early learning.

**Strategies / Targets:**

- Advocacy campaigns that promote understanding of early childhood needs.
- Community events and outreach that bring families, providers, and partners together.
- Collaboration with business, civic, and philanthropic partners to elevate early learning as a regional priority.

**Priority 6: Expand Inclusive & Responsive Care**

**Goal Alignment:** Quality

**Objective:** Ensure childcare is welcoming, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all children, including those with diverse developmental, linguistic, or behavioral needs.

**Strategies / Targets:**

- Strengthen provider skills through **Professional Learning Communities** focused on inclusive and developmentally informed practice.
- Support resource fairs and community connections that help families access services.
- Promote training and resources for providers to meet individual child needs effectively.

**Priority 7: Support Understanding of High-Quality Care**

**Goal Alignment:** Quality

**Objective:** Improve regional understanding among families, providers, and the public of what high-quality childcare looks like and why it matters.

**Strategies / Targets:**

- READY! for Kindergarten® and Parent Cafés to reinforce shared standards of quality.
- Community education campaigns that highlight indicators of high-quality childcare.

- Disseminate tools and resources that help families navigate care options confidently.

## **Implementation & Evaluation**

### **1. Partnership Coordination**

The ELC will convene partners quarterly to share data, assess progress, and align regional resources.

### **2. Professional Development**

Ongoing training, coaching, and PLCs will be used to measure improvements in teaching practice and provider confidence.

### **3. Data Tracking**

Progress will be evaluated through:

- Increased access to childcare slots
- Number of families receiving scholarships or supports
- Provider participation and business stability metrics
- Quality indicators aligned with state frameworks
- Community engagement outcomes

### **4. Annual Review**

Each year, the ELC will update strategies based on data, community feedback, and emerging needs across North Idaho.

## **Conclusion**

Through shared vision, strong community partnerships, and targeted action across seven priority areas, the North Idaho Early Learning Collaborative is building a sustainable, inclusive system of early childhood support. Together, we are expanding access, improving quality, strengthening families, and preparing young children across North Idaho for lifelong success.