

Part 3: Project Abstract

Project objective and activities – Clatsop and Tillamook counties aim to expand access to, and improve the quality of, preschool programming in our school districts through the Northwest Oregon Kinder Ready program. With a Pay for Success (PFS) feasibility study grant from the U.S. Department of Education we will explore whether a PFS project can achieve these goals. Clatsop and Tillamook are both rural counties with poor access to high-quality preschool. Only one out of 54 licensed preschool and childcare providers has been rated a 3 or above on Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Therefore, through the feasibility study, we will focus on assessing the expansion of a new, evidence-based program targeting children who are not currently enrolled in preschool, specifically children that qualify for free and reduced lunch, children who fall just above this income threshold (up to ~300% FPL), and children who are English Learners. The feasibility study will explore the potential for a PFS project to improve the following outcomes: social emotional skill development, vocabulary development, school attendance, special education (SPED) utilization, high school graduation, student behavior discipline referrals, and involvement with law enforcement.

We propose a PFS feasibility study to be completed over 12 months that would be conducted by a competitively procured, experienced PFS intermediary. The intermediary would work closely with a dedicated county staff member to undertake the following activities: (i) conduct a landscape assessment and literature review to synthesize national evidence on successful preschool interventions, (ii) develop target population criteria to effectively identify and include the children most in need of preschool services, (iii) assess the capacity of local service providers and school districts to deliver the intervention, reaching out to stakeholders, and defining the service delivery budget and assessing costs, (iv) analyze local administrative and programmatic data to refine our understanding of the unmet demand, baseline outcomes and expected impact, (v) select appropriate outcome metrics and conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed program, and (vi) assess the potential for payor and private funder engagement. The counties are eager to move forward with a PFS transaction if PFS is determined to be a viable option for improving preschool access and outcomes.

Applicable priorities – Clatsop and Tillamook counties are committed to improving our children’s future through ensuring the accessibility of high-quality, evidence-based preschool programming. This proposal meets the Absolute Priority by proposing a PFS feasibility study to explore whether PFS is an appropriate option for improving preschool access and achieving positive outcomes in Clatsop and Tillamook counties. Our proposal also addresses the Competitive Preference Priority by including social emotional outcome measures, such as self-control, openness, engagement with others, the ability to plan, and resilience, as well as improved vocabulary development, school attendance and longer-time life outcomes.

Proposed project outcomes – The project will help both counties understand whether PFS is an effective model to improve our children’s outcomes by expanding access to high-quality preschool. In addition, the project will include an assessment of the design and expansion of an evidence-based preschool program in Clatsop and Tillamook counties as well as a detailed analysis of the project costs and benefits, an understanding of project evaluation options, and an assessment of payor readiness for PFS. The study will provide a unique opportunity for the education departments of Clatsop and Tillamook counties, as well as committed community partners, to engage with an experienced PFS intermediary and access resources such as PFS guidance and investment capital if PFS is deemed a viable option. Lastly, it will also contribute valuable learnings to the early childhood education and PFS fields more broadly to understand the potential for applying this model to a rural setting.