

X. STRATEGIC ISSUES

A. Kindergarten Readiness Grant Program – Discussion Item

The goals of this pilot grant are:

1. Ensure that more Idaho four-year-olds and their families have public library cards to gain access to the tools and resources needed to help children succeed in school;
2. Increase the amount of early literacy activities done in the homes of four-year-olds; and
3. Increase the number of successful public library, school, and community partnerships aimed at third-grade reading proficiency.

The grant process was very competitive, and requests were submitted for well over \$100,000. All the project ideas that were submitted were worthy of being funded; therefore, it came down to the level of detail provided, the overall impact that was projected, the needs statement, and the evaluation measures. Geographic distribution and size of library were also taken into consideration. The following libraries were awarded grants:

Boise Public Library, Main Branch: \$7,500

The Boise Public Library is using the grant funds to run “The Kindergarten Lions,” a seven-week early literacy workshop that meets monthly at two Title 1 schools. Each location can serve up to 20 four-year-olds and their family members, with a program goal of serving 80 four-year-olds by the end of the grant period. The library is partnering with the **STEM Action Center** for the STEM content portion of its training, and the **Boise School District’s** preschool program.

Coeur d'Alene Public Library: \$7,500

The Coeur d'Alene Public Library is taking a multi-pronged approach with their grant funds. A mobile lab is being created to go to preschools and low-income housing common areas as a “pop-up library,” along with quality story time programming. They are also offering “**Ready! for Kindergarten**” classes at the library and sending literacy kits home with families attending the training. Take-home literacy kits are also available for checkout. The library is working with multiple partners, including the **CDA School District, United Way, Opening Books Opening Doors** and **Community Library Network**.

East Bonner County Free Library District: \$7,500

The East Bonner County Free District Library in Sandpoint is also be taking a multifaceted approach with its grant funds. A portion of the funding will be used to launch the “**1000 Books Before Kindergarten**” program with online options. The library has also purchased Launchpad Early Learning tablets for circulation, and is working with local Head Start centers to develop early literacy activity kits. They have assembled and distributed “Read and Return” libraries to five community partners, including daycares, to increase access to books for four-year-olds. The library is partnering with **Head Start** and **Kootenai Elementary School**.

Franklin County District Library (Larsen Sant): \$10,000

The Franklin County District Library hopes to reach out to every single one of the estimated 300 pre-kindergarteners for the coming year in its community by providing literacy kits to them all. The kits include a library passport that encourages families to visit the library. The **Franklin County Health**

Department and local daycares will help distribute the kits. The library is also partnering with the **Franklin City Council** to begin hosting weekly outreach storytimes for Spanish-speaking families at the community center in Franklin.

Gooding Public Library: \$10,000

The Gooding Public Library is using most of its grant funds to provide designated children's computers in the library and iPads and hotspots that can be used at partners' locations to access early literacy resources. The library is also providing kindergarten readiness programming. The library is working with the **South Central Public Health District WIC program, Gooding School District, North Valley Academy** and the **local migrant worker programs** to reach out to families in the area.

Jefferson County District Library, Hamer Branch: \$2,500

The Hamer Branch of the Jefferson County District Library is using grant funds to create a dedicated computer station for access to children's educational resources such as Smarty Ants™ and TumbleBooks™. The library will also be creating portable preschool totes for families to check out and will enhance existing preschool story times with parent interaction activities focusing on preschool skills. The library is partnering with **Hamer Elementary School** to enhance their pre-kindergarten programming.

Kuna Library District: \$5,000

The Kuna Library District is using grant funds to enhance its "Kinder-Set-Go" program by hosting a weekly kindergarten readiness program for 20 children who are on the waiting list for Head Start, along with providing literacy kits they can take home. They are also providing 100 take home kits to four-year-old children in local daycares and preschools, and additional kits will be available at the library for patrons to check out. The daycare kits include a coupon for a free book if the children come to the library to get a library card. The library is working with the **Kuna School District** and other community leaders in the **Get Ready for School Kuna steering committee**, who help them with promotion, advertising, assessment, and training of library staff.

Meridian Library District: \$10,000

The Meridian Library District is using grant funds to enhance its "Kindergarten All Stars" program at its **Tiny Library** location. Each week children focus on practicing skills necessary for kindergarten, such as using scissors, holding pencils and letter recognition. The funding also creates a Spanish session of the Kindergarten All Stars program and a sensory-sensitive session for children with special needs. In addition, the library is creating kindergarten readiness kits to help families prepare for starting school. The library is partnering with the other services co-located at The Hill, including **Treasure Valley YMCA** and **Hillsdale Elementary School**.

ICfL staff are working closely with the grant recipients to measure identified outcomes and identify best practices. Interim Reports are due February 6 and Final Reports are due May 30. A report summarizing project results and community impact will be released at the end of the grant timeline. ICfL is requesting an enhancement of \$60,000 for fiscal year 2020, in order to offer the Kindergarten Readiness grants again next year. The request was recommended by Governor Little and has been presented to the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee.

Preschool the Idaho Way Overview

Idaho is one of a handful of states that does not invest in preschool for families with children 3 to 5 years old. Only about half of Idaho students enter kindergarten with the skills necessary to learn, such as the ability to hold a crayon and recognize letters, numbers and shapes. The students who start school without those basic foundational skills often never catch up – they are more likely to repeat grades, require special education, drop out completely or get into future trouble with the law.

Evidence overwhelmingly supports early childhood education as a way to significantly benefit a child's school readiness, the family's ability to work, and community prosperity. The Idaho Association of Educators of Young Children (AEYC) developed a toolkit to support efforts to create a local preschool collaborative and draw on local expertise.

While it's intended to be comprehensive, the toolkit allows for customization based on the dynamics of your community. This toolkit will help you find inspiration and help you think through key decisions to bring or enhance local preschool options. Regardless of where your community starts, the important thing is to begin moving toward and having a plan to implement high-quality preschool options. For more information and a toolkit of resources, see <https://idahoaeyc.org/preschool/>

Idaho Business for Education's efforts

Idaho Business for Education (IBE) is a group of nearly 200 business leaders from across the state who are committed to transforming Idaho's education system. They are hoping to get legislative support to allow schools to use funds for to support education efforts for preschool – Kindergarten through the School Age Act. See www.idahobe.org for more information.