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Sixty-eight organizations receive funding for programs to boost early learning for Indiana children

Work will ensure more children have the skills to succeed in kindergarten and beyond

INDIANAPOLIS – Early Learning Indiana (ELI) announced today that 68 community organizations have joined the [Early Years Initiative](#) receiving \$23 million in grants to help them meet the developmental needs of infants and toddlers and surround Hoosier families with the resources to capitalize on the opportunities for learning that occur from birth to age 3.

This is the second round of grants in the Early Years Initiative, which began in 2023 and is made possible by \$60 million in grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. The goal of the initiative is to ensure Indiana’s infants and toddlers develop the foundational knowledge and skills needed to support their future learning and development.

In total, the initiative has awarded 154 grants to 133 organizations. Among other outcomes, grants are supporting the creation of more than 2,700 child care seats.

“Research is clear that a child’s brain develops most between birth and age 3 and that the neural pathways formed in these earliest years of life form the basis for all future learning and development,” said Maureen Weber, president & CEO of Early Learning Indiana. “That’s why the work of the Early Years Initiative is so critical. We must ensure supportive environments and responsive interactions between infants and toddlers and their caregivers to set the trajectory for their overall development and lifelong learning.”

All Early Years Initiative work is designed to strengthen foundational learning and development, but programs and projects are as varied as the needs of the young children they serve. They fall under four strategic priorities:

- Parenting Preparation and Support – Strengthening families through home visiting and parent education programs
- Child Care Access and Effectiveness – Ensuring access to supportive child care
- Early Detection and Intervention – Supporting the early detection of developmental needs or disabilities and implementing responsive interventions
- Early Language and Literacy – Promoting essential skills through early language strategies

“The environment and experiences of a child’s first three years of life substantially influence cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. What young children experience in those formative years can affect academic success and quality of life throughout their lives,” said Ted

Maple, Lilly Endowment's vice president for education. "We are enthusiastic about the potential impact these programs will have on children and their families across Indiana."

One organization that is expanding its reach through the initiative is Foundation for Better Health. A 2023 grantee in the initiative, the organization in southwestern Indiana has used funding to expand its Pre to 3 program to an additional 250 Vanderburgh County families. The program provides regular free home visits from a dedicated community health worker during pregnancy and until the child turns three. For families that do not speak English as a first language, the goal is to match them with a community health worker that speaks the family's native language.

"Our program is integrated into the community," said Lynn Herr, Vanderburgh County Health Department director of clinical and outreach division. "We have built strong partnerships with local birthing centers, and we're all working together to improve infant mortality rates. I couldn't be prouder of this program and the families in it who are working so hard to improve the lives of children."

Organizations participating in the Early Years Initiative include social service providers, faith-based organizations, community foundations, United Ways, child care providers, school districts, higher education institutions and other not-for-profit organizations in 80 counties in Indiana.

Learn more about the initiative and its success at [EarlyYearsInitiative.org](https://www.earlyyearsinitiative.org).

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About Early Learning Indiana

Early Learning Indiana is an expert and trusted voice on early childhood education that works statewide to provide leadership, advocacy and early childhood education services that continually improve the early learning landscape in Indiana. Early Learning Indiana operates 12 nationally accredited, high-quality Day Early Learning centers, a network of premier community-based centers used to advance the science of early learning, train the next generation of teachers and leaders, and instill knowledge and skills in the children we serve. Through regional and statewide programs, the organization works to ensure young children are empowered with essential skills to thrive in kindergarten and beyond. Learn more at [EarlyLearningIN.org](https://www.earlylearningIN.org).

About Lilly Endowment Inc.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by J. K. Lilly and his sons, Eli and J.K. Jr., through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company. While those gifts remain the financial bedrock of the Endowment, the Endowment is a separate entity from the company, with a distinct governing board, staff and location. In keeping with its founders' wishes, the Endowment supports the causes of community development, education and religion. Although the Endowment funds programs throughout the United States, especially in the field of religion, it maintains a special commitment to its founders' hometown, Indianapolis, and home state, Indiana.