The impact of early childhood education on future academic achievement and later success in life is in the national spotlight. Afterschool, which is any time school age youth are not in school, is starting to move into that spotlight for the same reasons. The stakes are high. Government funding is steadily shrinking; therefore other funding opportunities are becoming more competitive. Policy makers are looking at new and different ways to buy the education outcomes for youth that our economy needs to thrive.

Libraries have been providing high-quality early childhood and afterschool programs for a century, but until recently the library community’s contribution to positive youth development has not been recognized by policy makers. In Oregon, public libraries are specifically included in the education agenda for the first time. The State Librarian created a task force to make recommendations about changing the Ready to Read Grant to leverage this opportunity for libraries to improve their efforts to reduce the achievement gap, and to demonstrate to policy makers that public libraries are essential partners in achieving statewide education outcomes for youth. This proposal to change the Ready to Read Grant is contingent on approval by the State Library Board of Trustees for inclusion in the State Library’s 2015-2017 budget request, which was be submitted to the Governor last summer.

**Proposed big changes:**

* The name of the grant program will change to Reading for Success.
* Funding to support library activities for youth, birth through high school, $1200 minimum grants and accounting for grant funds on a separate line in your library’s budget.
* Libraries will all work towards achieving the same broad outcomes and choose from a menu of methods for evaluating them.
* Libraries will be required to make an extra effort to engage underserved youth in grant funded activities.
* Libraries will be able to use grant funds to pay for materials, programs, and services for school age youth (K-12th Grade) all year round.
* Libraries will fill-out the report online via Google Forms (or similar). Paper report forms will be available on request to libraries with poor internet connectivity. Applications will still be paper.
* Libraries will be more accountable for reporting how they spend grant funds and what outcomes are or are not achieved through grant funded activities. Libraries that don’t submit their report by December 1st will not receive a grant the next year. They will have to wait until the following grant cycle to apply for and receive state funding again.

**Proposed to stay the same:**

* Continues to be a noncompetitive grant from the state general fund for legally established libraries to support youth services; with an emphasis on the library youth services best practices.
* Funding will be distributed on the same grant cycle, based on a formula weighted to address geographically underserved youth—80% based on population served and 20% based on square miles of service area.
* Libraries will continue to choose if they want to spend all their grant funds on one type of project or if they want to divide it between multiple types of projects (early literacy, school age, ***and/or*** summer reading).
* The grant will continue to encourage libraries to be innovative and facilitate self-evaluation for continuous improvement.
* The purpose of this grant is still to help youth get ready for kindergarten, maintain or improve their reading skills when they are not in school, and develop a love of reading and learning.

**Process timeline:**

* January 2014: Convene a task force to develop a proposal to align the Ready to Read Grant with the three library youth services best practices and 40-40-20. **DONE**
* January-March 2014: The task force will seek feedback from the public library community at least once. **DONE**
* April 2014: Submit final proposal to the State Library Board of Trustees for approval of inclusion in the State Library’s 2015-2017 budget request. **DONE**
* April-June 2014: State Library will educate the library community about the proposal. **LAST ROAD SHOW MEETING WILL BE A SESSION AT THE OREGON LIBRARY ASSOCIATION’S ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON APRIL 15-17, 2015**
* June or August 2014: State Library Board of Trustees approves the State Library’s budget request and submits it to the Governor’s office—the State Library budget will include the proposal. **DONE**
* December 2014: The Governor’s budget is released—including the State Library’s budget. **DONE**
* Spring 2015: The State Library’s budget goes through the regular legislative process. **WIP**
* July 2015: Reading for Success will launch, replacing the current Ready to Read Grant program.

**Task force members:**

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Email (katie.anderson@state.or.us) or call (503-378-2528) the Youth Services Consultant to ask questions about the proposed changes to the Ready to Read Grant.

Email the State Librarian (marykay.dahlgreen@state.or.us) to express support for or concerns about the proposed changes to the Ready to Read Grant to be shared with decision makers.