



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Early Learning Indiana launches \$50-million Early Years Initiative focused on the development of Indiana's youngest learners.**

*Program and statewide grants supported by Lilly Endowment Inc.*

**INDIANAPOLIS** – Early Learning Indiana (ELI) announced today the launch of the Early Years Initiative, which will provide grants to help organizations in Indiana strengthen their efforts to support the development of very young children.

Through the competitive initiative funded by Lilly Endowment, ELI is making available up to \$50 million in grants to help eligible organizations meet the developmental needs of infants and toddlers (birth through age three) and surround Hoosier families with the resources to make the most of these crucial years of learning. Organizations eligible in this 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.

Studies show that a child's brain is hardest at work during the first three years of life, busy creating the foundation for all future learning capacity, social-emotional development, and mental and physical health. Through the Early Years Initiative, ELI will fund programs and projects that influence healthy brain development in young children and other aspects of their physical, social-emotional and cognitive wellbeing.

ELI expects to make approximately 200 grants ranging from \$75,000 to \$500,000. Proposals are due by June 15, 2023. ELI plans to announce funding decisions by August 31, 2023. Learn more about the initiative and the application process [here](#).

"We only have a few short years to set our youngest Hoosiers on a path to thrive in life, and we're committed to ensuring they have opportunities for the best possible start," said Maureen Weber, president and CEO of Early Learning Indiana. "This unprecedented initiative will accelerate the scaling of proven programs and bring innovative practices to Indiana — developing stronger and more resilient children who are ready to learn."

Eligible organizations can submit proposals to address a range of needs as varied as those of the infants and toddlers they are designed to serve. Examples may include strengthening families through home visits, ensuring access to supportive childcare, bolstering development through early detection of developmental needs and disabilities and responsive interventions, and cultivating essential skills through early language programming, among others. The Early Years Initiative has a focus on the needs of children in low-income households, children from communities of color and children who are multi-language learners.

“The environment and experiences of a child’s first three years of life substantially influence cognitive social, emotional and physical development and often affect long term academic success and quality of life,” said Ted Maple, Lilly Endowment’s vice president for education. “They are especially important for children in economically disadvantaged households whose families often lack access to supportive programs and information about child development, both of which can make a big difference for parents and their children.”

“ELI, with its deep knowledge of and experience in early childhood education, is well-positioned to support organizations that have the interest in and ability to implement proven and promising programs and interventions for very young children.”

Lilly Endowment has made a \$55 million grant to support the Early Years Initiative, which includes \$50 million for grants and \$5 million to help ELI administer the competitive initiative and provide technical assistance to organizations funded through it.

### **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 11 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](http://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.