

**Nebraska Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDG B-5)
Renewal Grant Application
HHS-2019-ACF-OCC-TP-1567**

Elevating Nebraska’s Early Care and Education System

November 5, 2019

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Project Summary/Abstract

Project Title: Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education System

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Nebraska is committed to building its early childhood care and education (ECCE) system through the development of community-level infrastructure. Local leaders across Nebraska have expressed eagerness to improve services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and the state is partnering with them to build essential local capacity. This PDG project will continue the state's work to ensure that the children with the greatest needs have improved access to quality ECCE.

Nebraska's 2019 Needs Assessment (NA) illuminated the needs of the state's underserved children- which includes children in rural areas, children whose home language is not English, and children who are low-income. The NA shows that the state does not have an adequate supply of quality care to meet family needs in too many communities. The system is heavily reliant on home-based providers, who lack access to quality supports. Even when services are available, the enrollment process is difficult for families to manage.

The state's PDG grant will be used to systemically address the issues raised in the NA. Nebraska's approach will include:

- A subgrant strategy focused on building community-level capacity. Communities will be funded to develop collaborative structures for programs and multi-sector stakeholders to work together, improve the quality of services, and expand access – all focused on improving the experience of the most vulnerable families, with support from a strong centralized backbone.
- A set of statewide programmatic supports for all communities to improve their family engagement, both to draw information from families and to provide information on child development and services back to them. This work will build on successful initiatives like Community Coalitions, Getting Ready, and ReadyRosie.
- A comprehensive approach to improving the experience of early childhood professionals that builds on the recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission. The state will continue its efforts to make professional development and preparation more coherent while expanding multiple initiatives designed to improve quality.
- Nebraska will continue its commitment to strengthening its data infrastructure and using the results of program evaluations to drive continuous improvement.

Nebraska's ECCE system is a true partnership among state agencies, the state's university system, private and philanthropic partners, and community leaders. This PDG B-5 Renewal grant will allow the state to continue building community-level leadership and improving the quality of services for the families who need it most.

Expected Outcomes

Nebraska expects to achieve the following outcomes from a PDG B-5 Renewal Grant:

- Continually updated information about the status of young children in Nebraska to inform decision-making at the state, community, and program level, with an emphasis on improving capacity in rural communities;
- Stronger community-level infrastructure to help families learn about available early childhood programming, and to help connect families to the services they need;
- Expanded efforts to engage with families, obtain information about their needs, inform them about child development, and connect them to services to benefit their young children;
- A stronger early childhood workforce, supported by a coherent set of professional development (PD) initiatives and meaningful incentives to stay and grow in the field;
- Improved services for infants and toddlers to begin the birth-to-five years, and stronger transitions into kindergarten to end them;
- A stronger, more integrated state system with updated governance and finance policies that support community-level leadership;
- A Nebraska public that is well-informed about the importance of child development, the impact of the grant, and the state's investment in early childhood; and
- Evaluation results that inform continuous quality improvement.

Organizational Capacity and Management

The lead agency for the grant will be the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), working in close partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The mission statement of NDHHS is: *Helping people live better lives*. It is the state's lead child care agency, and its Division of Children and Family Services (overseeing the grant)

also includes child welfare, and family economic supports like SNAP, energy assistance, and refugee resettlement. NDHHS's work includes services for behavioral health, developmental disabilities, domestic abuse and sexual assault, community health, and Medicaid. NDHHS will be responsible for grant oversight.

NDE's mission is: *To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.* NDE is organized around distinct functions and responsibilities that encompass leadership and support for Nebraska's system of early childhood, primary, secondary and postsecondary education -- and direct services to clients needing vocational rehabilitation and assistive technology. As described in the Mixed Delivery System overview above, NDE is responsible for the state's preschool program.

The NDHHS and NDE co-lead the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC), the State Advisory Council. Nebraska's government oversight agencies also work frequently with university, non-profit, and other partners to strengthen Nebraska's early childhood (EC) system. This state management team will work closely with partners serving on the PDG evaluation team and as project leads, including:

- The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE) leverages public and private funds, provides technical assistance and leads efforts in cross-sector community systems planning and high-quality programming, including EC mental health through collective impact.
- Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI), University of Nebraska -- is a university-wide, multidisciplinary research, education, outreach, and policy institute helping transform EC development and education in Nebraska and nationally.
- The Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF) is an Omaha-based foundation that has long played an active, supporting role in Nebraska's EC ecosystem.

- First Five Nebraska (FFN) is a statewide EC policy and communications organization.
- Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) is an ECCE shared services organization

Activity One: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan

Nebraska's PDG Needs Assessment (NA) engaged stakeholders statewide in the process of analyzing the quality and availability of EC services.

The Status of the Needs Assessment

Nebraska's NA report – soon to be completed by BECI -- will summarize the current status of its approximately 158,267 children under the age of 5. A working draft shared publicly on October 23 defines vulnerable children as those “experiencing conditions that could have a negative impact on their development and learning,” and then tracks outcomes on 10+ data points relevant to that definition. In a survey of families with a child aged 0-5, 61.7% experienced at least one condition of vulnerability. The NA process has included a strong focus on rural populations and will provide deeper analysis of their condition. The NA process led to definition of “underserved children” as those who cannot access services for which they are eligible or for which they have need.

The family survey and a provider survey identified some key barriers in the system. Almost half of families find ECCE programs too expensive; more than a third have challenges with leaving work to deal with child care; more than a quarter find that the hours are not flexible; and more than a quarter believe that quality is poor. Among providers, less than half accept public subsidies; less than a third offer emergency care; only about one in six offers early morning or evening care; and barely more than 5% offer sick child care. Low percentages of providers use a curriculum in their program (39%), use a formal assessment system (25%), or participate in the

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) quality rating and improvement system (20%) – with the time needed for required training the most common barrier. Despite concerns about cost and quality, demand outstrips supply; more than a third of parents state not enough programs are available, and providers report having very few available slots.

The key preliminary findings of the NA tell the story of a system where a lack of resources leads to inadequate service levels and limited support for providers and families:

Issue	Findings
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are essential services a vast majority of providers are not funded to deliver -- nor are those providers referring families to others who can deliver them. Vulnerable families are more likely to need those services and more likely to have difficulty accessing them. They report that it is important that their providers be able to connect them to services when needed. • Most families use home-based ECCE, and most vulnerable families are using more than one form of ECCE – and are likely to have changed arrangements in the last year. About half of families had issues at work because of child care, with vulnerable families most affected. • Cost is the biggest barrier to access. • Administrative burden and low reimbursement rates limit the number of providers who accept childcare subsidy. Providers are frustrated by paperwork, which contributes to high levels of burnout. • Families have a difficult time navigating the different ECCE programs available, which disproportionately affects vulnerable families. • Families need flexible hours, which they are more likely to find with home-based providers. But home-based providers can get burned out by working long days to provide those flexible hours, due to insufficient capacity to meet the need.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families described high-quality care as an ECCE setting where staff are warm, kind, and well educated; communicate with them frequently about their child’s development; and support whole child development (social-emotional, physical, nutrition) in a clean, sanitary environment. Other factors (curriculum, licensure, location, recommendations from friends/family) were less important. • Although parents value communication, most families rarely talk to their providers about critical child development and behavioral issues. • Home-based providers report little access to PD and coaching. While center-based providers have more access to PD, they are also more likely to have staff turnover. • Home-based providers are extremely unlikely to be a part of the SUTQ quality rating program. Those providers who have joined were motivated by a desire to improve their craft, and by encouragement from colleagues in the field; financial incentives and parent demand are not meaningful drivers of SUTQ participation. • Moreover, SUTQ is not as effective as it needs to be at measuring and improving quality, particularly for home-based providers.

Issue	Findings
Collaboration and Alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based providers do not feel they have strong partnerships with schools. • Very few ECCE providers are implementing best practices to manage the process of kindergarten transition. • One of the key data gaps in available information in the state is about issues with facilities (or physical environment) needs and what work is needed to improve access to facilities that support quality care. Discussions of facilities needs in communities must take into account the availability of home-based care – and the potential impact on home-based care of opening new center-based facilities. • A lack of integrated data challenges collaboration, evaluation, and improvement. • A program-level data gap is information about programs serving children with disabilities, which would allow the state to be more effective in its service delivery. • The state would benefit from richer information about children enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start.

Nebraska is committed to continually updating its NA. Building on this initial start, the state will develop sustainable new systems for keeping information updated over time. In grant year one BECI will work with the state leadership team to design and begin implementing an ECCE ongoing assessment process and tools that address gaps in knowledge, incorporates needs of the mixed delivery system, and builds on work to improve the state’s data linkages. Options that will be considered include: development of a parent panel for regular survey and focus groups; adding key questions into the Nebraska Annual Social Indicators Survey (NASIS); addition of key questions to the NDHHS Market Rate Survey; semi-annual focus groups, including those focused on underrepresented populations; regular key informant surveys; and more.

To keep the NA updated BECI will integrate the work with the Program Performance Evaluation (PPE). BECI will hire three researchers to be shared with the PPE: a database manager and two research specialists. Institute leadership and communications staff will also provide support. BECI will convene and lead these efforts and will implement processes for data-sharing and turnover of the data to the appropriate state agency at grant completion. BECI will also track evaluation results to update the research base on the programs being implemented through the grant. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$1,886,337.40.

The Collaborative Process Used to Complete the Needs Assessment

The NA began with several important information-gathering activities. In June -August surveys were conducted of parents, ECCE leaders, and ECCE professionals; key informant interviews were conducted with nine field leaders, and an online survey of 61 key informants was conducted in October; 15 parent focus groups were held around the state that included rural, urban, refugee, Tribal, Latinx, African-American, and low-income participants. Analysis of findings was conducted in September and October.

The family survey was the most ambitious EC-focused survey conducted in Nebraska's history. Almost 3,600 families participated, and the survey over-sampled for poverty and racial/ethnic groups. Surveys were provided in English and Spanish, with sampling conducted at the level of the state's 19 Educational Service Units (ESUs) – the state's intermediate service agencies, and the current infrastructure for providing high-quality PD.

Engagement with parents and partners went beyond surveys and focus groups. The table below summarizes how many participants engaged in different forms, and which objectives those engagements addressed. (The list of objectives is detailed in a table in Activity 2.)

Assessment	Participants	#	PDG Objectives Addressed
Surveys	Families with children <6	3541	1,2,4,5,6
Surveys	Providers	1337	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
Online surveys	ECCE teachers (including home visitors)	487	2, 3, 4, 6, 7
Focus groups	Families	87	1, 2, 4, 5, 6
Interviews	Key informants	9	2, 3, 7, 8, 9
Surveys	Key informants	61	3, 7, 8, 9
Stakeholder meetings	Stakeholders and community members	200+	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9

In conducting the NA, the state also built on 22 previous assessments, surveys, and reports. These included state-level reports like the ECICC's biennial report and the University of Nebraska Lincoln's (UNL) study on the distribution of poverty; reports from national resources

like Voices for Children’s Kids Count report; multiple regional studies of access to child care and other services in rural areas by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development and Head Start community assessments; the results of multiple annual surveys of Nebraskans about ECCE, conducted by Gallup and published by BECI; a BECI analysis of infant-toddler care in the Nebraska panhandle; and several publications from the Interdisciplinary Center of Program Evaluation at the University of Nebraska Medical Centers Munroe-Meyer Institute. The previous reports did not cover the full breadth of topics required by PDG, reinforcing that this NA is the most comprehensive analysis ever conducted of Nebraska’s EC system.

The NA included the definition of key terms relating to ECCE systems transformation to help align efforts and avoid unintentional miscommunication. Draft definitions were circulated among leaders and advisors of Nebraska’s PDG process in August 2019, with an on-line survey about the definitions that received 18 responses. The definitions have been organized into three groups:

Foundational Concepts of the PDG Vision and Goal	Terms Describing Target Populations	Elements of the ECCE Mixed Delivery System or Systems Monitoring Process
“Nebraska’s Early Childhood Mixed Delivery System” (including ECCE services and essential services for early childhood development), “Vulnerable,” “Quality early childhood care and education,” “Availability of ECCE,” and “Access to ECCE.”	“Rural,” “Poverty,” “Low income,” “Underserved,” and “Unduplicated count.”	“Transition Support,” “ECCE facility issues,” and “Early childhood integrated data system.”

Another critical element of the NA is the development of key indicators for tracking systems change, led by Nebraska’s Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC). The indicators will track change across a range of outcomes to measure the impact of the Strategic Plan – and serve as a foundation for the design of an integrated data system. This process has started and the ECDC will complete it by February, at which time the indicators will be included in the Strategic Plan.

To ensure all indicators are grounded in PDG outcomes, the ECDC’s analytic process begins by defining the components of those outcomes. For example, if the outcome is “increased access to high quality ECCE and essential services,” then the components include “quality,” “access,” and “essential services.” The ECDC then considers indicators for each of those elements, broken down by age and location. The ECDC is not limiting its inquiry to data already available; it will determine the best possible list of indicators, and then determine how to get the data. For each outcome and associated indicator, the ECDC is also identifying key operational questions that the indicator will answer, to ensure that the indicators align to activities in the Strategic Plan.

On October 23, a draft NA report was shared with the state leadership team for feedback; revisions will be accepted through mid-November, when the report will be shared with the federal grant administrators. The process is coordinated with the development of the Strategic Plan to ensure that the two remain aligned through the drafting process.

Activity Two: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan

Nebraska’s Strategic Planning process has made significant progress through substantial stakeholder engagement, with more engagement planned by the SP’s release in February 2020. The state has learned valuable information about the needs and gaps of its EC system, including the need for expanded access to comprehensive services. Already the state has made changes likely to impact child outcomes, including more frequent and purposeful coordination among key stakeholders as well as new avenues for communication -- including the PDG website and quarterly newsletter with 247 subscribers.

The Process of Developing the Strategic Plan

Nebraska launched its Strategic Planning process in June, developing draft outlines that formed the basis of data collection over the summer (in coordination with the NA). In August,

initial findings were shared with stakeholders whose input then helped shape plan development. On October 9th, the ECDC considered a draft list of potential key indicators to measure PDG outcomes, which was then discussed at the ECCIC Strategic Planning Task Force. Three meetings with video options were held in the western (Bridgeport), central (Kearney), and eastern (Omaha) parts of the state to collect input into the SP and PDG renewal grant. The full scope of stakeholder engagement is described further under Activity 6.

The ECICC Task Force will hold discussions in November to review the NA findings, the results of stakeholder engagement, and to discuss how to leverage partners and resources in the SP. A final synthesis of stakeholder engagement will be conducted in late November 2019, and a “near-final” plan will be developed based on the most recent stakeholder feedback. In January 2020 the “near-final” plan will be shared widely with stakeholders around the state; feedback from this round of stakeholder outreach will be incorporated in early February. The ECICC Task Force will then approve the final version of the plan for release on February 21, 2020.

Once the SP has been approved, the ECICC will receive quarterly updates on the progress toward the plan’s objectives and strategies. The ECICC – or its assigned task force – will evaluate effectiveness of the activities. At least annually the ECICC will make recommendations for changes needed to the activities in the plan in order to achieve its desired goals and outcomes. The goals and outcomes will be reviewed every two years.

Lessons from Strategic Planning Activities

The SP is being written to achieve outcomes aligned with Nebraska’s PDG vision and its NA. These outcomes will reflect changes experienced by children, families, communities, providers, state agencies, and the ECCE system as a whole. The framework that guided both the NA and SP process identified nine critical common objectives, which are reflected in the SP:

#	Objective Description
1	Improve outcomes for the vulnerable, underserved, and/or rural children ages 0-5 in Nebraska
2	Improve availability of and access to high-quality ECCE services for vulnerable families
3	Strengthen Nebraska's systems that define, assess, track, and improve quality of ECCE
4	Give families more resources to make informed choices about ECCE in support of their child's healthy development
5	Create more efficiencies to ease families' access to the full range of services needed to support their child's healthy development
6	Improve access to supports to help children make successful transitions into kindergarten
7	Create more opportunities for collaboration and coordination among ECCE programs
8	Build Nebraska's administrative capacity to support coordination and alignment of ECCE programs and services
9	Create greater efficiency in Nebraska's early childhood programs and services by reducing funding and policy barriers for families, for providers, and for state programs.

Nebraska is working with stakeholders to identify and review the strategies and activities most likely to help achieve these objectives, to identify indicators for tracking progress, and to assess how the objectives can best be achieved in different communities. Focuses for systems change activities in initial drafts of the SP have included increasing access to high quality ECCE across all types of care settings; revising the state's definition of quality and developing workforce policies keyed to that definition; improving the quality of ECCE across all settings (including stronger transition supports); strengthening collaboration at all levels within the mixed delivery system; updating the state's QRIS; and aligning policies, supported by improved data systems, to make it easier for vulnerable families to access services.

The SP articulates the need for more effective communication across multiple linkages – among families and providers, among ECCE providers, among ECCE providers and schools, among communities and the state – to align policies and practices in service of achieving strong child and family outcomes. In that spirit, Nebraska has been further developing the cross-sector relationships needed to support achievement of the objectives – including objectives that are heavily dependent on partnerships, such as supporting improved kindergarten transitions (objective 6) and coordination and collaboration (objective 7). In the statewide survey of 4000

ECCE providers that received 1337 responses, less than half of respondents reported partnering with local school districts, including supporting the transition to kindergarten. Also, in meetings across the state, stakeholders reported that schools and community-based programs see themselves in independent roles and with different responsibilities, rather than as professionals in a network of integrated support programs serving the young children of the community. As described later, this will be a significant area of work for Nebraska in its PDG Renewal Grant.

A consultant will be hired to lead the SP implementation process; BECI will provide support related to convening the ECICC task force, writing, and disseminating plan aspects. Through the PPE BECI will collect data and report on SP progress at regular intervals, referenced in the logic model. The PPE team will assure that the SP is aligned with Nebraska's vision and logic model. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$921,921.80.

The Inclusion of Comprehensive Services

Another targeted outcome of the SP is that families have increased access to the full range of services needed to support their child's healthy development (objective 5), which was discussed during October stakeholder meetings. Stakeholders described the need for communities to have a vision across sectors that the community's children are everyone's responsibility, and that coordination of information and services would improve service. This led to a recommendation to expand the use of community-level "central navigators," who both helps families find needed services and helps providers of all types know what is available to serve families. This recommendation will be integrated with other access-related objectives to address systems changes needed at the state, regional, and community levels to better assist families' access of services, and is addressed in Activity 3 and in the state's subgranting plan in Activity 5.

How Nebraska Will Change Policy Based on the Strategic Plan

As part of the NA, Nebraska conducted a thorough inventory of state policies, organized by the nine objectives of the state's PDG framework. In particular, the project sought to categorize policies that may be barriers to providing high-quality ECCE - or to interagency coordination and system integration. This PDG work was coordinated with the development of an infant/toddler policy agenda funded by the national Pritzker Children's Initiative, described further in the narrative regarding the Infant/Toddler bonus points.

The analysis summarized policies in multiple key areas: access to essential services for child development; high quality ECCE services (including quality requirements and funding approaches); family engagement and support; and state capacity, including an evaluation of the state's ability to operate efficiently. In November and December 2019 the results will be analyzed and recommendations will be made for changes that would have a substantial impact; a report on these policies will be issued in January 2020 at the start of the legislative session.

The SP will be presented to and discussed at the Nebraska State Board of Education meeting in March 2020, setting the stage for NDE to act on any actions and policies within its control. The NA and SP will also inform the development of NDHHS' Child Care Development Fund State Plan, which will occur in 2020 and into 2021. Partners will collaborate with Nebraska's Maternal and Child Health Department to incorporate these findings in their NA before it is submitted to the federal government by July 15, 2020. The Governor and other agencies, such as advocacy groups will also review the NA and SP to determine whether to seek legislative action or act on any actions and policies within its control. Infant-toddler policy priorities will be the heart of the state's next application to the national Pritzker Children's Initiative which will help implement Nebraska's infant-toddler policy agenda.

Activity Three: Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge

The Needs Assessment shows that many Nebraska families are getting information about ECCE services primarily from their friends and family, from web searches, or from their school district. All of these can be valuable sources but speak to the absence of focused infrastructure to help families find needed ECCE services. PDG funds will be used to build such an infrastructure, with a focus on expanding promising efforts at the community level – in keeping with Nebraska’s theory of action that family engagement is most effective at the community level, where it can be more sensitive to family context.

Bring Up Nebraska (BUN): Multiple engagement approaches have been used to hear from families about their needs. BUN has been Nebraska’s primary strategy for engaging vulnerable children and families; it is a state-supported place-based two-generation model that focuses on helping the most vulnerable families connect to services. Supported by Nebraska First Lady Susanne Shore and by NCFE, it uses a collective impact approach to support local coalitions and help families access a full range of services – including not only ECCE but housing, physical and mental/behavioral health care, nutrition, literacy and education for English and non-English dominant persons, and gainful employment. There are now BUN coalitions in 36 counties, with plans to expand to 54 counties (including two tribal nations) by 2021.

The BUN approach is also one of the state’s targeted strategies to support tribal children. Nebraska is home to eight tribes, four of which are federally recognized as sovereign nations and three that hold reservation land. The BUN initiative has been introduced to all eight tribes and has been fully implemented by the Santee Sioux Nation, serving almost 200 children to date.

Community Coalitions: Coalitions engage families to learn about their needs through local needs assessments. These coalitions compile data, hold community forums, and conduct surveys

and focus groups with parents and other stakeholders. Community-level stakeholder meetings are held monthly or bi-monthly and provide additional opportunities for family input.

Community Cafés: Another emerging approach is the use of “Community Cafés” supported in part by local school districts. Training on the Community Café model is provided by the National Alliance for Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, supported by Nebraska’s Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board. The events are led by parents in partnership with staff from local schools and are used to learn about family needs for services, and to provide a local peer-to-peer parent network supporting information exchange. These events develop leadership and advocacy skills among families. There have been six active Community Café teams that have hosted 38 Cafés, many in Spanish or dual-lingual Spanish/English. A total of 805 parents and 174 other community members have taken part. Participants have reported increased connections of families to local organizations and services, with most of them also reporting changes in services based on Café feedback. As part of the PDG the Café model will be expanded to three new communities. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$188,846.00.

Informing Families About Child Development

Learning Begins at Birth: In addition to engaging families to understand their service needs, it is also critical that families be supported in their engagement with their child’s development. Through PDG support Nebraska has re-developed a material resource called Learning Begins at Birth, with information about child development and how to nurture it; parent-child interactions that build social-emotional mental health; what quality child care is and how to find it; children’s health; and services available to children and parents. In 2019 PDG funds are being used to engage experts to update the document; get feedback from parents; translate it into Spanish, Karen, and Arabic; and print and ship copies to birthing hospitals so parents of each child born in

Nebraska in the coming year can receive a copy. In 2020 PDG funds will be used to solicit additional feedback from families on distribution, print additional copies, translate into more languages, and create a website for online accessibility, to more easily link families with additional information and services. Partners will be engaged to develop a sustainable plan to ensure ongoing distribution. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$126,500.

Sixpence: Another signature initiative designed to engage parents of very young children is the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a public-private partnership that supports child development, parent and provider coaching, and training through high-quality home visiting and center-based early learning, as well as partnerships with community child care center and home providers, for 1,800 children 0-3. Sixpence focuses on families with significant risk factors, and 68% of the programs it funds are rural; it is also available on tribal lands. A two-generation strategy, Sixpence also connects parents to mental health treatment and substance abuse services.

Two other initiatives that support family engagement throughout EC are Getting Ready (GR) and ReadyRosie (RR), both of which will be expanded using PDG support.

Getting Ready: GR is an evidence-based initiative focused on interaction among children, their families, and EC professionals to promote parental warmth, sensitivity, and active participation in supporting children's early learning. GR promotes kindergarten transition by helping parents become more confident in working with educational systems. Its strong evidence base developed through randomized controlled trials show positive effects on child development.

GR has been used in 20 Nebraska Head Start/state funded preschool center-based programs and in three Early Head Start home-based programs as part of research trials. In 2016 it was adopted by Nebraska IDEA Part C services to be used statewide as the evidence-based intervention to promote quality home visiting services for infants/toddlers with disabilities. In

2019 it expanded into six agencies across the state using PDG funds, which provided valuable lessons about the level of coaching needed for effective implementation.

Research evidence illustrates the effectiveness of the intervention in preschool settings, and many communities are asking for an approach to support parent engagement in center-based preschool programs. Thus, Nebraska will use PDG funds to support continued expansion to 120 providers across the state. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$879,240.

ReadyRosie: RR is an evidence-based, birth-elementary age family engagement resource currently being piloted in more than 300 classrooms with 4,500 children statewide. RR uses current research on family engagement, developmentally appropriate practice, standards, family protective factors, and core social emotional competencies as the foundation of learning games and activities. It provides data for educators and families to measure outcomes. RR offers 1,000+ “Modeled Moment” English and Spanish videos to families via text, email, and a website, letting educators target specific skills and individualize the videos to be shared with parents of their students. It can also be used to provide interactive family workshops, for PD, and to support a cohesive family engagement plan. Through PDG, RR will be expanded to 100 more classrooms and 2,000 more children statewide. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$555,852.

Public Engagement: In addition to the GR and RR expansions, Nebraska will use PDG funds to support public awareness efforts that center on educating parents and families about quality child care and education programs and services - in ways that are accessible, digitally-driven, culturally and linguistically appropriate, and responsive to how today’s parents receive information and make decisions. This will be a communications overlay to programmatic activities engaging families directly through PDG and complementary ECCE initiatives

statewide, to build support for high-quality ECCE and promote actions that can be taken to improve early learning outcomes.

The campaign will start with an audit of current efforts and the identification of potential partners; communications research will inform planning and development of materials and strategies. Materials will be disseminated to target audiences, including through digital platforms and social media. The effort will be evaluated to inform future materials development and campaigns. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$1,334,062.21.

Partnerships to Connect Families to Services

The NA found that families struggle to navigate the fragmented EC system which lacks clear entry points and handoffs. PDG funding will support expansion of successful pilot efforts focused on connecting families to the services they need, where and when they need them. Through four PDG supported connection-to-service pathways, every family in Nebraska wishing to participate in ECCE services will have locally available enrollment support options. The entities managing each of the four options described below will collaborate to streamline enrollment support services prior to expansion implementation.

Coordinated Enrollment Pilot: With PDG funds, Nebraska will implement a coordinated application, eligibility, and enrollment pilot, building on a successful model currently used in Omaha. The Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) -- using shared services principles to increase high-quality early learning opportunities -- provides coordinated application, eligibility, and enrollment for three high-quality early learning centers serving at-risk infants and toddlers through an Early Head Start-Child Care partnership.

In this model families are recruited through targeted marketing in high-poverty zip codes and through formal partnerships with agencies serving at-risk populations. Families are directed to an

Enrollment Specialist who assesses their eligibility, processes their enrollment, refers the family to another community-based agency, and/or places the family on a waitlist. NECC's Child Care Subsidy Specialist helps enrolled families navigate the process of applying for subsidy assistance and other public benefits like WIC, Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and LIHEAP.

Through PDG, Nebraska will expand this approach to six more sites serving vulnerable populations. NECC will spend six months gathering feedback from parents in participating programs to better understand barriers families face in accessing benefits that support child development and to refine the approach to serve a more diverse group of programs. With adjustments from parent feedback, the model will provide one point of access and public benefits enrollment navigation for parents in participating centers. NECC will work with state agencies and statewide partners to share lessons learned. The total three-year PDG request is \$320,000.

Bring Up Nebraska: The BUN model is an important strategy for connecting children to services. The parental choice process starts with families having the information they need – but once they have that information, professionals with whom they have strong relationships can provide valuable assistance in helping them find and enroll in the right services. BUN communities provide centralized service navigation with members trained in family centered practices, cultural responsiveness, and trauma-informed care approaches.

In addition to engaging with families to support their referral and enrollment, BUN communities also engage with service providers to redesign the enrollment process. Service providers enter into agreements on data sharing and “no-wrong-door” access to make it easier for families to enroll in the right services regardless of where they make their first inquiries.

NDHHS employs four regional Community Support Specialists that connect with BUN Community Coalitions to ensure community partners know how to help potentially eligible

families access state economic support benefits (i.e. Child Care Subsidy, SNAP, TANF, LIHEAP), including co-location of NDHHS staff in several communities. Nebraska's child welfare data revealed that "neglect" was the primary factor for family involvement in 80% of the open caseload and that nearly 50% of state wards under age 5 have parents with foster care experience. Addressing and alleviating poverty and generational involvement in the child welfare system through these public-private partnerships is essential to whole-child ECCE support.

System of Care (SOC): Another important partnership working with tribal children ages 0-21 and their families is the SOC, which focuses on behavioral health while working to improve whole-family community support systems. Funded in part by SAMHSA grants, SOC delivers culturally competent services and helps strengthen EC and multi-generational approaches. A specialized approach to help connect indigenous families to needed resources through indigenous navigators in their tribal communities is called Society of Care.

Help Me Grow: Nebraska is also testing the Help Me Grow (HMG) model through a pilot in Lincoln/Lancaster County, and PDG funds will be used to expand use of the model. HMG uses effective universal early screening - including the Ages and Stages Questionnaire - and then links expectant mothers and children 0-5 with essential health, developmental, and social-emotional services. It includes outreach to families and providers, including physicians, and a centralized point of communication using phone technologies, trained Care Coordinators, and NowPow - a self-care referral platform ECCE and other health and human services professionals can use to better connect families to needed services. The PDG will fund Children's Hospital and Medical Center's Center for the Child and Community to facilitate expansion of the HMG model, to include child care resource and referral services with potential to reach 37,426 0-5 year old children. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$1,644,495.

Informing Families About IDEA Screening and Services

NDE and NDHHS serve as co-lead agencies for Early Intervention (EI). Together they conduct statewide ChildFind activities to ensure referrals of infants and toddlers with possible delays and disabilities (with NDE taking the lead for children of preschool age). Nebraska has a website and toll-free phone number to support parents and conducts awareness and outreach activities in communities around the state – including a focus on underserved communities.

Local EI programs and school districts receive IDEA funds specifically for ChildFind outreach activities, with an emphasis on referrals from underserved populations. Once a child is referred to EI, a services coordinator supports the family through the process until transitioning to preschool special education. If a preschool-aged child is referred to special education, a case manager from the district assists the family through the evaluation and IEP process.

Nebraska’s Part C/EI system uses the Eco-Map and Routines-Based Interview (RBI) to meet the child/family assessment IDEA Part C regulatory requirements. The RBI is a semi-structured interview about the family's day-to-day life, focusing on the child's engagement, independence, and social relationships. Its purposes are to create a strong relationship with the family, to obtain a rich description of child and family functioning, and to result in a family-chosen list of functional and family outcomes/goals for Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) implementation. The family chooses both participation-based child outcomes and family outcomes through the RBI process. The RBI assessment is conducted at least annually to ensure families’ updated priorities, routines, and developmental concerns are reflected on the IFSP.

Family Engagement at the State and Community Level

Nebraska’s state advisory council, the ECICC, is required to have parents comprise at least 20% of its membership—with attention to diverse representation, and assuring inclusion of

parents of children with disabilities The ECICC is appointed by the governor and also includes agency staff, providers, a legislative representative, a business leader, and a physician. In addition to serving as the state advisory council under the Head Start Act, the ECICC was established by state law to serve as the advisory body on child care and IDEA (including serving as the State Interagency Coordinating Council). Currently the Council includes parents from four communities of diverse size in different parts of the state.

In Nebraska, 216 of 244 school districts and two ESUs operate prekindergarten (PK) programs. According to state statute and regulation, PK programs include all EC part-day or full-day center-based programs or in-home family support programs provided for children who have not reached the age of five on or before July 31. Each school or regional ESU operated program is required to have an advisory committee, and advisory committees are required by state regulation to include families. Additionally, the school or ESU must provide opportunities for family engagement, including but not limited to at least two home visits per year. As in every state, each Head Start and Early Head Start program in the state embeds family engagement and includes a Policy Council made up of parents with children in the program.

There are a number of other initiatives where families are embedded in leadership structures:

Body	Responsibilities	Family Representatives
Sixpence-funded local school-community collaboratives	Advise development and delivery of coordinated services for 0-3 year olds and families	Parents required to be members of the local EC collaborative advisory team
Nebraska Mental & Behavioral Health System of Care Governing Board	Designing mental health services and supports for children with serious emotional disturbance and their families	Leadership board has a Family Connector member; system has parent advisory board with 14 members
Children’s Commission’s Community Ownership of Child Well-Being Team	Define and inventory evidence-based programs, and support community collaboration	One parent representative
Children’s Commission’s Strengthening Families Committee	Make recommendations regarding youth in foster care	One voting foster parent representative

Body	Responsibilities	Family Representatives
Connected Youth Community Councils & NCFE Youth Advisory Board	Advise on pregnancy and parenting issues specific to young people with foster care, and other adverse experiences; direct advocacy efforts	Approximately 30% of local council members and 42% (5 of 12) Board members are pregnant, parenting, or both
Communities for Kids local EC Advisory Teams	Identify ECCE strengths and gaps; participate in decision-making about strategies and desired outcomes relevant to assessment identified needs	23 parents are represented on the 23 current C4K community teams

Nebraska actively engages parents of children receiving IDEA services. The state has 29 Planning Region Teams that bring together parents, advocates, and representatives from a wide range of education, health, and human services; at least 20% of the team members are parents of children with disabilities. Parents are also represented on the statewide Part B advisory council, the Nebraska State Autism Collaboration, local Developmental Disabilities Councils, and the Newborn Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Advisory Committee.

Nebraska has included two parent leaders on its PDG statewide leadership team and is cultivating future parent leadership through a Parent Ambassadors program. In addition, the Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy is designed to recruit and train community leaders, including parents, for leadership roles at the state and community levels. These strategies will help to increase the number of parents serving on statewide advisory boards in the future.

Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce

Current PD Activities, and Work to Improve the Training and Experience of Providers

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission: Nebraska has a host of ongoing PD initiatives and efforts to improve the training and experience of providers. To bring greater coherence to the state’s work, the BECI led the 2017 creation of the Nebraska Early Childhood

Workforce Commission (NECWC). One of the NECWC's major goals is to develop and implement an infrastructure to support continued collaboration and communication across sectors. The NECWC will build on existing relationships and efforts statewide to fulfill the vision of elevating EC professionals to a priority profession. Nebraska's initial PDG accelerated this work, and PDG renewal funds will continue expanding successful initiatives.

Over the next three years, the NECWC will assist in efforts like a landscape analysis of current initiatives and the sharing of best practices. It will also oversee workforce related activities that emerged as priorities through the NA. For example, the NA found that providers struggle to access quality PD and formal education for advancement and quality standards, so through the NECWC BECI will convene a cross-system study group to examine alternative pathways for ECCE educators. The NECWC will continue to support all initiatives in Activity 4. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$473,361.30.

Nebraska will build on multiple PD activities to strengthen provider training and experience, including some activities that build quality and others that align systems at the local level: Early Learning Connection (ELC): Nebraska supports the ELC, an integrated system of PD with a statewide hub – NDE's Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC) - and seven regional partnerships. The ECTC maintains Core Competencies to define the knowledge needed for EC professionals and has developed the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS) for practitioners and trainers. As of October 2019, there were 7,262 active users in the professional record system. Regional ELCs partner with other local entities that provide training, including Head Start/Early Head Start programs, child care providers, UNL Extension-Learning Child teams, and others.

Coach Collaboration: In 2016 Nebraska formed its Coach Collaboration team, which has organized the work of practice-based coaches across multiple initiatives. Work has included standardizing training, improving coordination among partners, and ensuring that supports are available to ECCE professionals. The Collaboration Team's goal is to improve ECCE quality and reduce staff turnover. Nebraska currently has two Coach Consultants who provide coach training, reflective practice, and technical assistance. Using PDG funds Nebraska will hire three additional consultants, two in year two and another in year three. Nebraska will also hire a Coaching Collaboration Team Manager at NDE to provide multi-agency coaching coordination -- including the initiatives described below -- and to bring leaders and funders together for joint planning and implementation. The three-year request for PDG funds is \$1,084,688.

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ): The NA highlighted the need to make SUTQ more effective and responsive to providers and families -- with a focus on how it reaches family child care providers, and implementing high-leverage strategies to improve the lives of children and families. A SUTQ revision work group will issue recommendations by the end of the current PDG grant; during year one of the renewal grant the proposed revisions will be shared with ECCE providers and other stakeholders statewide for input. After revisions are finalized new SUTQ materials will be translated into the five most used languages in child care centers and homes, and related materials will be printed. The total one-year PDG request is \$36,860.

Pyramid Model: Since 2006 Nebraska's PD system has utilized the Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, which is an evidence-based model that provides a systematic process for preventing challenging behavior. The pyramid framework has four tiers: (1) an effective workforce to promote positive relationships; (2) a nurturing and supportive environment; (3) targeted strategies for social and emotional

support; and (4) individualized support for children with more acute needs. The framework guides professionals in teaching children positive ways to interact with their families, and each other. NDE's Office of Special Education is using IDEA funds to hire five Early Childhood Pyramid Facilitators to be assigned regionally across the state to support statewide, systemic implementation of the Pyramid Model for any interested community EC program. NDE has also partnered with NCFE to provide ongoing training and coaching supports to public and private preschool providers, including Head Start.

Reflective Practice: The Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP) is a resource for the ECCE workforce, developing the supports and building the reflective capacity needed to be successful in an emotionally intrusive field. The Center – which is part of the Nebraska Resource Project for Vulnerable Young Children (NRPVYC) at the University of Nebraska Center on Children, Families and the Law– trains ECCE professionals through consultation on EC mental health. Data from the NCRP pilot evaluation suggests that reflective practice contributes to reduced turnover among ECCE and child welfare professionals. PDG funds will support the training of two additional trainers and expand reflective practice training and support among three additional cohorts of 20 ECCE and Child Welfare system partners per year. Over three years this provides 180 cross system professionals trained in reflective practice for their work with families and supervision. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$250,000.

Families Thrive: Nebraska has trained 91 people on the Families Thrive framework through the BUN initiative, supported by NCFE. The framework integrates the Center for the Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families and Youth Thrive frameworks to create a two-generation approach supporting resilience and development in both children and parents. The model works with practitioners across a range of settings, including home visiting, health care, human

services, and coaching and counseling providers. PDG funds will support the training of 200 more practitioners. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$211,491.

Licensing Tool Kit: To increase the availability of child care, Nebraska will expand the Licensing Tool Kit program supported by the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC). This Tool Kit is designed for home-based child care, which are often unlicensed and therefore ineligible for the quality supports and incentives that require licensure. The Tool Kit provides materials and support to help providers meet health and safety standards and fulfill licensing requirements, and NECC provides mentorship and support through the licensing process.

Communities for Kids Bilingual Child Care Providers Outreach: NCFE's Communities for Kids (C4K) initiative is partnering with Midland Latino Community Development to implement a U.S. DHHS Office of Refugee Resettlement grant to bring training on EC development, business practices in family home child care, and understanding licensing regulations to refugees providing family, friend, and neighbor care in four communities. In partnership with NECC's Licensing Tool Kit, C4K is also expanding outreach, training, and coaching to Latinx family informal care providers who do not qualify for existing programs. PDG will support bilingual consultants with ECCE experience to conduct outreach and provide quality improvement resources to informal caregivers. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$450,000

Social Emotional Support Infrastructure: The NA identified the urgency of continuing to build upon the state's social emotional support infrastructure. PDG funding will support a task force of cross system partners and stakeholders to explore three identified focus areas. After year one NCFE will lead the follow up-up needed to implement its findings and recommendations in years two and three PDG funds will be used to support this work at both the community and state

levels. Topics addressed will include reflective practices, trauma-informed approaches, and addressing suspension and expulsion. The total 3-year PDG request will be \$460,640.10.

Topic	Background
Implementing and Expanding Reflective Practices with Sustainable Models	Reflective practice, also known as reflective supervision, is a relationship-based approach that can be used in different models of service delivery, and supports professionals to increase their skills, maintain perspective, and avoid burnout. The Nebraska Center on Reflective Practice (NCRP) is a leading resource for the ECCE workforce; the task force will explore issues of scale and sustainability.
Trauma-Informed Approaches	The task force will research and recommend strategies to develop a cross-systems approach addressing systemic trauma competency issues, emphasizing integration of resources across systems and planning for scaling information and skills to the ECCE workforce. This work will leverage existing Nebraska trainings focused on trauma-informed approaches, including Families Thrive, Trauma Matters Omaha, and federally-recommended National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) training.
Addressing suspension and expulsion in urban areas	The NA found urban providers were more likely to expel, exclude, and send children home for behavior challenges – and that those urban providers were less likely to know how to access mental health consultation. The task force will review existing ECCE social-emotional support services to identify strengths and weakness in the current service array, the feasibility of expanding current or adding new evidence-based models, and will develop an implementation plan for enhanced access to social-emotional supports in year three of the project period.

Provider Mental Health: Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME) was created by University of Nebraska Extension to support and enhance the well-being of EC educators. The program provides education and guidance on how to incorporate mindfulness and reflective practice into daily routines, teaching and caregiving. Benefits for the health and well-being of both providers and young children include reduced stress, improved emotion management, better sleep quality, increased focus and attention, and enhanced relationships. The CHIME program consists of a two-hour introduction followed by seven weekly sessions. Extension Educators across the state will provide this training, reaching 150 teachers over the project period, and will collect, aggregate, and report participant data. Family tipsheets about CHIME’s activities and benefits will be provided to participating families. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$140,279.

Business supports for providers: In addition to providing opportunities for providers to learn together in support of greater quality, there is a strong need to support the business operations and sustainability of child care programs, many of which play an essential role as the only providers in small communities. Elevate 2019 -- a business practices summit for ECCE providers -- was held in June 2019, and will be held in 2020 with video conferencing options.

Two other business supports to be provided through the grant are All Our Kin and Wonderschool, both supported by NECC. All Our Kin is a model that includes training on business practices for family child care providers - allowing them to sustain operations, maintain necessary licenses, and focus on teaching and learning. This is critical in numerous communities where family child care is a primary source of ECCE. NECC is piloting the use of the All Our Kin model in four communities where family child care is prevalent: Norfolk (English), Fremont (English), Omaha (Spanish/English), and Lincoln (Spanish/English). PDG will allow the addition of a fifth pilot site in year one in a cluster of rural western Nebraska communities who will receive two 10-week training series to reach geographically dispersed family child care providers. During Years 2 and 3, NECC will refine the Nebraska All Our Kin model, based on lessons learned during the pilot, and implement the model in additional communities and with Arabic-speaking providers. The total 3-year PDG request is \$630,000.

In addition, NECC is preparing to pilot the Wonderschool model to provide business training and mentorship for family child care providers. The Wonderschool platform helps providers set their rates, market their program, bill and collect, and communicate with parents. After the initial pilot NECC intends to expand the model to additional communities, with an emphasis on reaching providers in rural areas that have limited access to supports. After an initial startup period the model becomes cost neutral. The total three-year PDG request is \$82,500.

Transition Agreements: On July 31, 2019, NDE partnered with Sixpence and the Nebraska Head Start Collaboration Office to host a conference session that brought together 29 school administrators to discuss transition agreements between EC and schools. The session emphasized having systems to support transitions and establishing regular channels of communication among EC professionals, school professionals, and parents. It included a focus on how to fulfill ESSA's requirements for transition support. Similar sessions will be included in future conferences.

Early Intervention (EI): Nebraska has provided tuition assistance to current EI providers and service coordinators – with an emphasis on rural providers – to participate in three masters-level courses through the University of Nebraska at Lincoln (UNL). These courses were specifically designed to close a gap in EI providers' knowledge and experience in working with infants and toddlers with special health care needs. Particularly in rural areas EI programs are challenged to hire providers with competencies related to working with children with disabilities, so this initiative provides access to online coursework to increase provider skills.

NDE and NDHHS continue to provide ongoing training opportunities in partnership with NCFE, Nebraska's Child Advocacy Centers, and the University of Nebraska system. These trainings focus on trauma-informed approaches, inclusionary practices, social-emotional development, assessment, and intervention approaches, with effective strategies for working with vulnerable families. These partners also work with the Nebraska judicial branch to sponsor the Nebraska Young Child Institute, a two-day biennial event with over 600 multi-disciplinary participants focused on the needs of young children.

Interdisciplinary Connections: Importantly, many PD opportunities support interdisciplinary work across ECCE and other health and human services. For example, Coach Collaboration works with coaches from multiple sectors; Families Thrive trains a range of providers across

ECCE, health, and human services; Reflective Practice training includes cohorts of professionals engaged in ECCE, child welfare, and the court system. Nebraska's role as one of five "early adopters" of the Families First Prevention Services Act provides an opportunity for greater collaboration and cross-training between the ECCE and child welfare systems as the state pivots toward greater investments in prevention.

Developing and Enhancing Aligned Credentials and Coursework

Nebraska has developed an inclusive EC education teaching credential that qualifies an individual to teach children from birth through third grade with or without disabilities. This credential is needed for teachers to work in school district and ESU-operated programs. Nebraska does not yet have a credentialing system for EC education providers such as a Director's credential, or another license that is not linked to public school PK-12 certification. A key goal of the NECWC is to examine credentials and competency-based approaches to credentials; the NECWC will partner with NDE to lead these efforts, which will address how credentials are tied to two- and four-year degrees.

Nebraska has taken significant steps to align the preparation opportunities for teacher candidates. In particular, the EC departments in the Nebraska Community College system use a common curriculum with common course titles, many of which are offered online. Faculty from each community college participate in an EC consortium led by the NDE's Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC), which continually updates and revises the EC course of study. The Consortium -- along with the ECTC and BECI -- have been working to improve articulation agreements so that students have seamless transitions from two- year degrees into a bachelor's degree program. To date articulation agreements are not consistent across the state, so the NECWC will provide support for continued articulation efforts.

There are several programs operating in Nebraska that are designed to assist EC professionals in achieving a Child Development Associate (CDA). The ECTC has been working with the Council for Professional Recognition, the national entity that awards CDAs, to ensure all programs that are accepted for preparing professionals to earn CDAs are approved by the Council. In addition, an intensive, hands-on approach to CDA attainment is offered through the NECC, which uses a cohort approach designed for providers who need more individualized coaching to get through the CDA coursework, portfolio, application, and test.

The NECWC will continue to develop PD pathways that are affordable and accessible to all EC professionals. These pathways will build on the strengths of Nebraska's diverse EC workforce by making opportunities accessible in urban and rural areas, and to traditional and non-traditional students alike. A subgroup of the NECWC will bring together leaders from two- and four-year colleges, multiple NDE and NDHHS representatives, and state ECCE associations, school and community leaders, representatives of families, and other key stakeholders. The group will start by planning phases of implementation and develop articulation agreements, and the governance and financing task force (described in Activity 6) will address the need for sustained funding for the work. Funding for this project is included in the NECWC budget.

Increasing the Availability of Qualified Educators Throughout the State, Including Rural Areas

Nebraska has taken steps to support ECCE educators and ensure that the state has an adequate supply. Knowing that low salaries are a major reason that professionals leave the field, Nebraska passed legislation in 2016 to provide tax credits for ECCE professionals working in programs committed to high quality or improving their quality. The credits are calculated using a formula based on the professional's education and experience. Implementation of the tax credit has yielded lessons about how changes in the statute could maximize the impact of the program.

In 2019 legislation was introduced to make the tax credits accessible to more providers; this legislation will be addressed in the 2020 legislative session.

Teacher candidates in Nebraska benefit from TEACH Early Childhood® scholarships, which in 2018 funded 153 EC professionals (31% women of color and/or Hispanic origin). But TEACH scholarships are underutilized in Nebraska, as programs struggle to provide the necessary supports for their staff to participate in the TEACH scholarship programs - which require them to offer paid time off with substitutes and wage increases. Communities in the subgranting project described in Activity 5 will have the option of using PDG funds to offset the costs incurred by participating providers whose teachers are participating in TEACH.

Nebraska also is piloting a Child Care WAGE\$® program that provides salary supplements for ECCE professionals based on their level of education.

The NECWC has an estimate for funding quality ECCE for children 0-5 from a cost-based quality approach (based on the National Academy of Sciences Report). A landscape analysis of policies and financing strategies will be conducted in 2020. This analysis will be shared with the PDG leadership and ECICC to inform potential policy recommendations.

Activity Five: Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs (including subgranting)

For many years Nebraska has focused on building community-level commitment and infrastructure to support high-quality ECCE experiences. Communities have enthusiastically embraced their leadership role – more than 415 people from 92 communities participated in the recent Thriving Children, Families and Communities Conference in only its second year. As a result of this community level ownership there is wide variation in the solutions communities choose, but the state has a critical role to play in supporting locally-designed efforts to improve

family experiences. Through the Communities for Kids Plus (C4K+) project, Nebraska will increase the number of communities with high-functioning and sustainable family support and ECCE infrastructures and services. Building from lessons learned in 23 C4K communities, in coordination with BUN, C4K+ will extend impact with additional access and quality enhancement options, ensuring more communities can offer families quality ECCE services.

As part of C4K+ and with PDG funding, Nebraska will provide to help communities strengthen EC infrastructures. Community subgrants will be distributed by NCFE, which has decades of experience in managing statewide capacity-building projects. Priority will be given to communities - or a consortium of communities - focused on serving children with the greatest needs. Each proposal will include these three elements:

1. Use of the C4K community collaboration model to bring multiple systems and providers together, to ease families' access to services and ensure their voice shapes service delivery;
2. Implementation of one or more high-quality EC supports for which the state is supporting expansion in Activities Three and Four or the Bonus sections; and
3. Explanation of how the community will leverage these state supports to expand access to high-quality EC services in a sustainable manner.

Infrastructure to Support Community Collaboration

The need and appetite for community-level leadership and coordination infrastructure has been made clear from the success of communities who've developed this infrastructure, and by the emerging SP recommendation that communities need a "central navigator." Communities have recognized that leaders in the EC field generally lack the resources to fulfill all roles expected of them; there are significant challenges in serving diverse communities with inadequate resources; and service options are often limited. Through C4K+ communities will

receive funds - and ongoing technical assistance through NCFE -that allow them to develop collaborative infrastructure using the C4K model, including dedicated local coordination staff. This approach is called C4K+ because it builds on the C4K model to achieve the state's goals.

The C4K model assists communities by engaging stakeholders and leaders, using data for planning, and connecting to other resources; it provides facilitation, technical assistance, and serves as a hub for community actions around ECCE. Communities complete a self-assessment tool to identify strengths and gaps in their EC resources, and then combine assessment findings with other data to develop plans for addressing identified gaps – with the plans focused on increasing access to high-quality early learning. Projects undertaken by 23 current C4K communities include developing stronger provider networks; increasing quality; conducting needs assessments and stakeholder focus groups (including parents, providers, business leaders, and others); improving facilities; and increasing infant/toddler care capacity. In addition to TA, C4K provides grants to support the development and implementation of community plans to address ECCE accessibility and quality. Plans focus on elements that align with those in the PDG, including parent engagement, workforce retention, increased PD, building community-level networks, and developing common plans for kindergarten transition.

The total cost of the subgranting project will be \$8,008,939.80 over three years, which includes \$1,829,612 to support NCFE's extensive TA and backbone support to communities.

Implement Supports for High Quality

As part of C4K+ Nebraska will expand specific initiatives already showing success in many Nebraska communities, and to achieve priorities of the overall PDG grant. Communities will be encouraged to participate in any of the initiatives funded through Activities Three and Four, to improve their parent engagement and the quality of their workforce.

Leveraging C4K+ Activities to Increase Access to Quality

While infrastructure to support community collaboration and the implementation of key statewide initiatives are important starting points of C4K+, communities will be required to describe how they will use these programs as a launch point for increasing access to quality and sustaining their investments. As described below, any criteria for this portion of the application will be developed collaboratively by the state and interested communities. NCFE will provide continuous technical assistance to communities implementing PDG-funded quality enhancements to support this community-level access expansion.

The definition of quality used will be based on the work of the NA and SP, which are seeking to shift the definition of quality to have a greater focus on child experiences. To date, “quality” has largely been defined by the quality of the environment, but Nebraska’s collaborative work has led to a new definition that includes ensuring that children experience: “(1) physical and emotional safety, and (2) frequent, 1:1, language-rich, warm interactions with a caring adult (serve and return).” Consistently providing these experiences requires environments that are culturally sensitive, adults who understand the full range of a child’s developmental needs, programs that are continuously improving, and the community- and state-level capacities to support providers effectively. Communities in C4K+ will be expected to use the state’s definition as their “north star”, with activities designed to support the environments children need.

Communities applying to participate in C4K+ will describe how they will use PDG funds to increase quality, with a focus on implementing strategies described in Activities 3 and 4.

Another quality opportunity for which communities will be eligible are Nebraska Early Learning Scholarships, which have shown success in a Lincoln pilot. The Scholarships program provides funds to child care subsidy or tuition assistance programs to narrow the gap between the

subsidy/tuition amount and the actual cost of care. It has been supported by private funding, which can be combined with PDG funds to support the expansion. Communities will identify the number of scholarships anticipated and the number of children to be served, all of whom will be from families with incomes under 200% of FPL (with a priority on children in families with additional indicators of vulnerability). Communities will use existing infrastructure to select eligible programs – programs that are nationally accredited or highly rated under Step Up to Quality Program - who will track scholarships use and keep necessary data about Scholarship recipients served in their programs. The Scholarships' impact will be evaluated to inform future decision-making about subsidy levels and private-pay expectations at the state and local levels.

The Process of Developing C4K+ Grants

Before awarding any subgrants, the state will spend the first six months of the grant period working with communities to design the subgrant program in greater detail, to ensure it meets each community's ECCE priorities, and to determine a match contribution by applicants that respects community size, local resources available, and the severity of family ECCE needs; communities will identify resources (cash and/or in-kind) they can reasonably contribute to building quality ECCE services. Communities will also provide input on the proper size of community sub-grants, to balance breadth of coverage with the need to provide sufficient funds to each community to make a substantial and sustainable difference in ECCE access and quality. While the subgrant process will require grantees to implement some combination of the programs and strategies described above, it will also identify areas where flexibility is needed to ensure implementation success. A menu of options will be developed to ensure flexibility while assuring that NA data guides the process at both the state and community levels.

Subgrants to communities will be made through an RFP process, with two-year grants to be issued for 2021 and 2022. This will allow the state to collaborate with communities in designing the program, and for communities to be thoughtful about their approach to seeking and implementing PDG funds. While the collaborative process will be used to develop specific criteria, there are core principles that Nebraska will ensure are reflected in the application process. Community applications will be evaluated based on how effectively they:

- Identify specific populations of vulnerable children and families who will be positively impacted by the subgranted funds. This will require not only identifying the populations to be served but also articulating the need to be met by the expansion and expected outcomes. The state will utilize the NA analysis to cross-check community applications.
- Discuss the specific ways in which funds will be used to help families access quality services. This includes both the strengthening of centralized community-level capacity to support families and community-level efforts to improve quality.
- Ensure that families are supported in their efforts to find quality EC services. One key metric will be the number of vulnerable families counseled on how to find quality EC services.
- Expand the availability of quality EC services to meet community needs. Communities receiving subgrants will be required to report how many more high-quality opportunities were created for families utilizing subgrant funds.
- Ensure that more vulnerable families actually enroll their children in quality EC services, which will be another critical metric of the program. Communities will be expected to report how children receive services in multiple settings as part of the mixed delivery system. This reporting must include specific reference to meeting the needs of children with disabilities, children involved in the foster care system, and those experiencing homelessness.

- Engage partners in the work. Communities will be expected to include as part of their implementation school districts, Head Start providers, community child care providers (including both center- and home-based providers where both exist), local homeless assistance and affordable housing systems, health providers, and other partners who can contribute to the delivery of quality EC services.
- Utilize local funds when possible to complement their federally-funded state grant, and how they plan to use PDG funds for one-time supports that will allow for sustained local investment. While many low-resource communities do not have significant dollars to contribute, the time and engagement of local leaders is a critical component in the success of the work and will be treated as in-kind support.

The state will also ensure that a substantial percentage of rural communities are given awards, with tribal communities also receiving priority as applicants.

C4K+ Subgranting Project Objectives

The C4K+ objectives will be SMART, and integrated into the PPE metrics:

Attributes	Description
Specific and Measurable	Communities will be required to report specific numbers of families supported in finding services and who actually access services; they will report on the number of high-quality opportunities created through C4K+. Communities will identify specific sub-populations receiving services, including children with an IEP, in the foster care system, and homeless children. Overall targets for C4K+ subgrants will be developed in collaboration with communities by July 2020.
Achievable and Realistic	Nebraska’s approach is based on successful experience at the community level with the core initiatives funded through C4K+. The specific expansion targets will be ambitious, but achievable and realistic based on the experience of communities that have implemented these initiatives to date. As noted, the projections here will be refined through community engagement in early 2020.
Time-Scaled	Nebraska’s experience has shown that a great deal can be accomplished in three years. By engaging with communities first, Nebraska can ensure that the distribution of funds meets community needs, and two years will be enough time for communities to utilize the funds effectively. Community plans will be required to account for the one-time nature of the funds and explain how the impact of the C4K+ investment can be carried forward.

Summary

In sum, C4K+ subgrants will substantially strengthen the ability of Nebraska communities to serve their most vulnerable children by improving the quality of EC services and building their capacity to connect families to those services. NCFE will provide backbone support and technical assistance, and be responsible for distributing, supporting, and monitoring subgrants to communities. Grant funds will be used in the following ways:

Activity	Community Role (Subgrants)	State Role (Backbone)
<i>Grant setup</i>	Collaborative six-month process led by the PDG Leadership Team and NCFE C4K personnel with community participation to design the grant process in more detail	
<i>Community Collaboration</i>	Utilize the C4K framework to design, implement, evaluate, and sustain whole-child ECCE services and supports across sectors	Provide technical support and backbone capacity to communities for each collaboration model
<i>Quality Improvement</i>	Participate in at least one quality improvement initiative, including any of the initiatives in Activities 3 & 4	Provide quality improvement grants and backbone support, including TA
<i>Expand Access to Quality</i>	Leverage local funds for more access to quality, using state definition of quality, and join key state initiatives	Provide technical support as needed, and grants to support scholarships

The grant will allow communities to develop infrastructure and build new ways of working that will impact the quality and availability of services long after the conclusion of the grant period.

Activity Six: Monitoring, Evaluation, Data Use for Continuous Improvement, Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

Data Integration, Management and Data Use

Nebraska has done significant work in the last decade to prepare for a data system that links across agencies to create an unduplicated count of children served in EC. Key partnerships have been formed among NDHHS, NDE, the University System, and nonprofits. A Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) called ADVISER collects unique individual level data of PK-12 students involved in public education and the state continues work to modernize the

connection of additional priority data sets, especially early childhood.

Nebraska has been developing an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) known as NeKids that will collect, connect, integrate, and report information from EC programs across multiple entities serving children and families from 0-8. NeKids will enable better coordination across service providers, inform decisions to achieve common goals, support continuous service improvement, and magnify collective impact. The roadmap for development of NeKids is integrated into the PDG Strategic Plan, and its proposed design includes a hybrid, federated architecture for NeKids, taking advantage of centralized resources at NDHHS and NDE while: connecting and linking data from other systems; protecting privacy with the highest level of role-based access and data security across systems; specific views of data to provide parents and public with pertinent aggregate and summary data; support for operations and cross-agency case management with unified individual data; support for decision makers with timely, actionable data; and support for research and data analysis needs with anonymized longitudinal data.

Current Status of System Development

Nebraska's work moved multiple aspects of the state's data system into the planning process, and some are already operational. These include:

Integrated data: Integrating early learning data has focused on providing metrics to inform policy, practice, and progress; focused on workforce or program data; or was generally limited to public school information. PDG funded the creation of a reporting tool known as the Community Assessment Tool (CAT) that allows Nebraska to use the EASI framework to identify programs that match service needs (Eligibility), assess the location and characteristics of current service providers (Access), monitor the service status of children (Services), and compare current service landscape to available outcome metrics (Impact). The state identified key use cases and

developed a plan to build a prototype data system that can be expanded using an iterative framework, with a cloud-based infrastructure for hosting integrated data.

Key data elements: During ECIDS development work, Nebraska conducted a data inventory, identifying available data at NDHHS, NDE, Sixpence, Head Start, and others. Documenting data from vital records, immunization, health insurance, child support, unemployment, licensing, Step Up to Quality, homelessness, Head Start/Early Head Start, school district PK and K-12, TANF, WIC, SNAP, SSI, IDEA Part B/C, Medicaid, and other systems to support community collaboration. These sources are currently available to execute use cases, including eligibility determinations and identifying underserved children. A large amount of data is in two primary source state agencies (NDE and NDHHS) that already have MOUs supporting data sharing.

Linkages across health and ECCE: As described above, the proposed interagency data linkages include health-related data including immunization and insurance records.

Community data on transition practices: Ready use of community-level data is central to the EASI framework and segments children and families based on their eligibility for various services. Linking disparate data sources at the child level allows community members to assess and improve program referrals and transitions across related or complimentary programs.

Supporting the data literacy of key users: Nebraska developed a core set of data literacies that promote essential knowledge and skills for effective data use. Key users receive training and support through a Data Cadre, which builds on a K-12 model to ensure that early learning leaders have the skills to utilize data effectively for program- and policy-level decisions. In addition, embedding interpretive documentation and guidance of analysis with an interactive interface allows for real-time analysis that meets the needs of users at the state and local levels.

Interagency data governance: Since 2009, the formally chartered Early Childhood Data Coalition

(ECDC) has driven Nebraska’s statewide work on EC data. ECDC includes leaders from state agencies including NDHHS and NDE, universities, and ECCE and health sector partners.

Enhancing this governance is underway in Nebraska.

Using unique identifiers and unduplicated count: Nebraska’s PK-12 data system, ADVISER, establishes a unique identifier linking postsecondary and workforce data. The state will establish a process that crosswalks the ADVISER ID with identifiers in legacy systems, allowing the state to connect data about individual learners from birth through the workforce. A secure data hub will be used to match records and assign a unique ID to connect information across agencies and systems. The proposed system allows Nebraska to establish an ongoing and accurate distinct unduplicated count of children enrolled in any combination of EC programs.

Plans to Create an Unduplicated Count

Nebraska plans to expand the use of the ADVISER ID across ECCE programs to provide distinct, unduplicated counts of children accessing ECCE and other services. Securely matching the ADVISER ID to identifiers used in other existing systems allows providers in multiple ECCE services to identify children across various ECCE programs and services. This approach also supplies functionality supporting a matching process to determine whether an enrolled child is already served and ensures ADVISER IDs are assigned only to new children. The state already can execute a matching process for some components of this feature set.

The plan includes a “federated” architecture, meaning the state will maintain links among various data systems rather than moving all data into a central repository. The approach expedites results and cost effectiveness while allowing organizations control of data and how it is shared. PDG grant resources will support providers with systems including both a mobile application to collect basic information and a full-featured web-based application.

Nebraska will complete a plan in the first year of the grant for the system design and governance structure. The design will use adaptable technology to minimize infrastructure cost, reducing the likelihood of the technology becoming outdated quickly, and allowing for rapid action – and to use the system effectively Nebraska will need a governance structure that is nimble and responsive. In years two and three the system buildout occurs, focusing on creating operational capacity and supporting early wins that make a case for the continued growth.

Nebraska has made significant progress to establish data integration and intends to leverage PDG funds to finish its planning, development, and implementation of an expanded data system. PDG funds will be used to hire a full-time staff person housed at NDE to lead the work of ECIDS - with additional contractual support. This NeKids Expansion Product Owner (NEPO) will be a senior leader responsible for driving proposed efforts; the NEPO role will work across agencies to ensure necessary interagency agreements, both to create a centralized governance structure and ensuring appropriate data use. The NEPO will also coordinate efforts with entities already established in Nebraska to support this work, including the ECDC, and to ensure data privacy and security, including compliance with FERPA and HIPAA. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$5,962,000. Nebraska has applied for the most recent round of Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) grant funds, with a proposal that specifically addresses a need for linked interagency data in EC; this proposal complements the SLDS request.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

Tools and Methods to Promote Accountability Across the Mixed Delivery System

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) is Nebraska’s QRIS system for ECCE center-based programs and family child care homes. As described in Activity 4, the state is convening a revision work group to improve SUTQ’s effectiveness.

All licensed child care providers and licensed preschools receive one or more unannounced inspections from NDHHS annually. During these inspections, NDHHS Licensing Specialists review the program's compliance with health and safety standards, review child records and staff training. School District and ESU ECCE programs are monitored by NDE Office of Early Childhood using a combination of an audit of compliance documentation and program quality observations. Head Start/Early Head Start programs are subject to federal monitoring, those that integrate with school operated ECCE programs also meet the school district required standards in areas where those are higher than Head Start/Early Head Start Performance Standards.

Nebraska is Addressing Fragmentation in Its Mixed Delivery System

Nebraska is committed to studying the management of its mixed delivery system to ensure that its governance structure is effective and that the needs of its stakeholders are met. In 2020 the state will launch a task force to study the redesign of Nebraska's EC governance structure and relevant financing mechanisms. The primary goal of the task force is to eliminate categorical barriers to offering full-day, year-round, high-quality affordable ECCE for children 0-5 and their families, regardless of the setting. This will include a close examination of blending and braiding practices, and how the state can support more effective resource use at the local level. The task force will engage stakeholders that represent the state and community level, the public and private sector, EC professionals, and parents or family members. It will make recommendations that build on the NA and SP by the end of 2020. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$120,236.

In addition to this focus on reducing fragmentation at the state level, Nebraska's Activity 5 project to build community coordination capacity will reduce fragmentation at the local level.

Nebraska's Approach to Updating its Program Performance Evaluation Plan

The Purpose, Intended Audience, and Expected Evolution of the Evaluation: The purpose of the Nebraska Program Performance Evaluation (PPE) is to build a sustainable structure for integrating data on evidence-based program implementation with community-based systemic change to help Nebraska reach its vision. The PPE will leverage existing accountability and monitoring systems to support and sustain ongoing, community-based systems change. Multiple audiences will benefit from a systems-based approach - with program leads, community teams, state leadership, and local policymakers able to access data.

Work in year one will consist of cross-sector collaborations focused on how data can be collected, used, and reported – with an emphasis on creating sustainable infrastructures and building capacity across the mixed-delivery system for data collection and use. Continuing into years two and three, the PPE will align with the ongoing NA, SP, and Integrated Data System work to increase stakeholders' capacity to use data to inform changes at the program, community, and state levels.

Alignment with the Strategic Plan: One primary goal of the PPE will be to align ongoing data collection and learning with the SP, focused on answering the following questions:

1. How are collection and learning systems of the PPE aligned to Nebraska vision and measurable outcomes? (e.g. How are we documenting improved outcomes for underserved children? Objective #1)
2. How do program outcomes contribute to systemic changes? (e.g. How are Leadership Academy activities improving access to successful kindergarten transitions? Objective #6)

The objectives from the SP will serve as the over-arching framework for the evaluation. Each month the State Leadership Team will review aligned data from the PPE, SP, NA, and ECIDS.

The PPE team will use feedback from these meetings to refine evaluation systems. Leveraging the continuous improvement feedback loops implemented in the current PDG, the ECICC and State Leadership team will use data to make decisions about ongoing programs and progress.

Key Personnel Involved in the Evaluation, and their Responsibilities: For the ongoing PPE to succeed Nebraska will need to build out its data capacity (including through NeKids) - and provide adequate staffing to ensure stakeholders can access the data. The PPE project lead will coordinate those efforts and monitor data from the emergent integrated data system, project implementation, NA, program evaluation, and community systems. Required personnel will include a Primary Investigator from BECI who will oversee the project and assure progress of PPE and alignment with NA, SP and integrated data system. It will also require the following staff (with positions to be hired designated by “TBH”; * indicates shared position with NA):

Title	Responsibility	%
Lead Evaluator (TBH)	Oversee coordination of program evaluation for community projects; work with communities and local evaluation partners to implement and align local program evaluations.	100
Project coordinator (TBH)	Coordinate daily meetings, multiple convenings, communication and documentation. Assist with data collection, reporting and other functions as needed.	100
Data manager (TBH)*	Develop and manage data from program and systems-level assessments; monitor and track key indicators, alignment with SP	50
Qualitative research specialist (TBH)*	Focus groups, coding, analyses, writing and reporting.	50
Quantitative research specialist (TBH)*	Analyses of multiple data sources to provide rapid cycle feedback to state leaders regarding program effectiveness and systems change, integration with PPE objectives.	50
Graduate assistant (TBH)	Assist with all functions, including data collection and reporting.	100
ECIDS Lead – Welch (BECI)	Integrate the work around key indicators in ECIDS with the PPE work – creating groundwork for sustainability.	10
ECIDS – Baumfalk (FFN)	Integrate the work around key indicators in ECIDS with the PPE work – with a focus on policy and potential legislative recommendations.	10

As co-Chairs of the ECDC and leaders of efforts to integrate and use data across MDS systems, Greg Welch of NDE and Benjamin Baumfalk of First Five Nebraska will lead ECIDS efforts in collaboration with NDE and other members of the ECIDS Core team; Dr. Welch will be included at 10% and Mr. Baumfalk at 10%. Including travel and other expenses, the total three-year PDG request for this work is \$1,973,317.50

Potential Data Sources and Necessary Improvements: In the first six months of the grant period, the Evaluation Network Team (ENT – described below) will identify essential data sources for assessing change and progress relative to the SP goals. This will include existing data from the NA and data compiled from previous implementations of programs. To track progress toward SP goals and vision, data must address systems level change (see New Data Sources) and program-level effectiveness (e.g. fidelity assessments and outcomes matched to SP).

New Data Sources: The Nebraska PDG will create an ECIDS that brings together ongoing NA data, enhanced program-level data, and systems-level data. Systems-level data will be gathered using modifications of existing rubrics and systems of care tools used across the mixed-delivery system for individual projects. Focus groups with families and community stakeholders and interviews with key informants will round out the data to understand how programs are impacting communities, and how communities are creating systemic changes to enhance access and availability. Data from NeKids will be used to track key indicators across the community engagement efforts. ECDC will meet monthly to finalize SP indicators. Data elements from state data systems that feed into NeKids will be identified and/or created for these purposes.

Evaluation Approach, Including Strategy for Data Collection and Analysis: In grant year one, BECI will form the ENT from existing leadership and program implementation teams - including membership from state agencies, project partners, and the ECICC. An evaluation researcher with

expertise in evaluating systems change will lead the ENT to design final questions and identify indicators and assessment tools, with a focus on supporting continuous improvement in C4K+.

There will be four levels of evaluation:

Level	Description
Program	Enhanced program evaluation work will rely on data already generated by each established program. The ENT will meet in Q1 of Y1 to discuss enhancements to individual program evaluations, answering the questions: What information do communities and implementers need to report on the effectiveness of each program? What outcomes are desired for children? Families? Communities? These enhanced evaluations will be used throughout the remainder of the PDG project and beyond.
Community	Community-based systems evaluation will support communities to leverage data/evaluation from the program level to make decisions that improve service quality, aligned with the SP.
PDG Systems	An evaluation of systems changes aligns the ongoing NA, SP, and ECIDS with the community-based evaluation processes and feeds this information up to the state-level systems to inform changes in policy and funding.
Mixed Delivery System	At the highest level the PPE will evaluate if the systems changes align to Nebraska's vision.

Leveraging Findings to Support Continuous Improvement: This evaluation framework is designed to generate and disseminate data to inform continuous improvement. For example, data from NA and other sources will be shared with communities to drive programmatic decisions about use of grant funds. Likewise, communities will regularly share data with the program evaluation team to assess programs' impact on the vulnerable population, and indicators of community-level change.

The current PDG has used ongoing feedback loops (shown in the adjacent figure) to guide the PPE. This data-sharing allowed for increasingly efficient evaluation of project implementation and outcomes. Nebraska has learned a lot about timely



sharing of data and the need for shared problem-solving in the context of barriers (time, resources, hiring). In the next phase, the PDG PPE project lead will coordinate efforts to enhance this system of feedback loops to accommodate more data and be accessible to more stakeholders.

Periodically Updating the PPE: The PPE will gather feedback monthly from the ENT and State Leadership Teams to gauge how the data are supporting programmatic excellence and systems change in communities. Ongoing feedback will be used to make small modifications as needed; an annual survey (described below) will generate data to inform more substantive changes (e.g. increasing focus on gathering community leaders' perspectives). These inputs will be used to inform needed changes in subsequent years' NA and SPs.

Building on Progress from Previous Activities: A critical component of the annual review will be to survey ENT partners, and community stakeholders, for what is being learned that should shift how funds are spent in subsequent years. The PPE will play a major role in how decisions are made for subsequent grant years and for sustainability. Community input (via focus groups and surveys) will be gathered regularly, and used at annual intervals, or shorter, if deemed appropriate, to inform how systemic changes are being supported. Decision-making regarding ongoing funding decisions will be collaborative, with input from ENT and entities like the ECICC Strategic Plan Task Force.

Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement

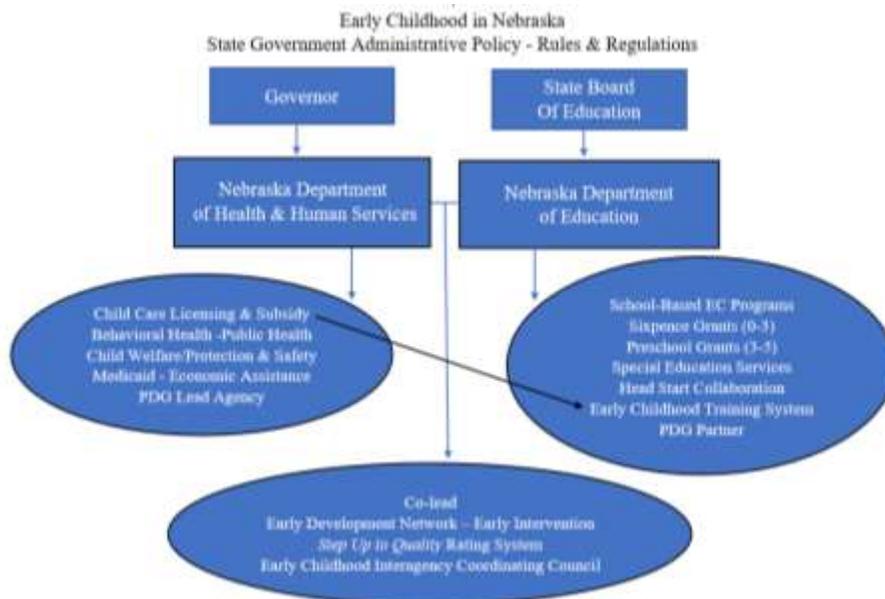
Nebraska's Early Childhood Governance

Nebraska's EC funding is administered primarily by two state agencies: NDHHS and NDE. NDHHS is responsible for childcare licensing, subsidy, and MIECH-V programs. NDE is responsible for the state's preschool program, houses its Head Start State Collaboration office, administers IDEA Part B/619 Preschool Special Education, and has primary responsibility for

the state’s EC PD system - including all training required for child care licensing and Step Up to Quality (SUTQ.) The two agencies jointly administer SUTQ, Nebraska’s professional record system, and Part C-Early Intervention. In addition, both agencies, along with two representatives of the private sector and two early childhood professionals, are responsible for funding distributions into the public-private Sixpence Early Learning Fund.

These two agencies were also the lead partners in administering the PDG, with NDHHS serving as the lead agency and NDE engaging with NDHHS on a weekly basis. NDHHS as the fiscal agent had led all financial discussions, and the Departments have shared leadership of the ECICC task force and the SUTQ revision team. The relationship between the two agencies is shown in the decision-making map below.

No changes have been made in Nebraska’s EC governance structure since the initial PDG application. As described in Activity 6, PDG Renewal funds will support a task force to study the redesign of Nebraska’s early childhood governance structure and financing mechanisms to maximize efficiencies and eliminate barriers to optimal service delivery.



Stakeholder Engagement

Nebraska has conducted extensive stakeholder engagement as part of its NA and SP processes. The table below summarizes the stakeholders who have been engaged in those processes.

Stakeholder and Role/Sector	Activities	People
Economic Development Agencies and Chambers of Commerce -- Business Development	Pritzker Children’s Initiative Grant (PCI), Strategic Plan Advisory Team (SPAT), NECWC	Dan Mauk (Nebraska City); Darby Paxton (Holt); Luke Virgil (Wayne); Garry Clark, Andy Long (McCook); Catherine Lang, Kristen Hassebrook, Bryan Slone (Lincoln); Kenny Edwards
Educational Service Unit #1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 16 -- Education Training	Early Childhood Content Team (ECCT), Early Learning Coordinators, Workforce Survey (Survey), NECWC, SPAT, Core interviews (CI)	Erica Fink (Wakefield); Jeff West (Scottsbluff); Nici Johnson (Scottsbluff); Cheryl Roche (North Platte); Jennifer Haggart (Omaha); Alexandra Dillon (Kearney); + 10 more
UN Extension Service --Community Training and Education	ECCT, Stakeholder, Survey	Dipti Dev; Lisa Poppe (Dodge County); Ruth Vonderohe (Northeast); LaDonna Werth (Northeast); Linda Reddish (Papillion); Leanne Manning (Saline County); Leslie Crandall (Phelps County); Lynne Devries (Adams County)
Community Colleges: Central CC; Metro CC (Social Services) – Professional Training	SPAT, ECDC, NECWC	Barbara Beck (Grand Island), Jane Franklin (Omaha)
Universities: UNL (Child, Youth, and Family Studies); Chadron State College (School of Ed) –Professional Training	SPAT, ECDC, NECWC, LT, PCI, Getting Ready, Performance Evaluation (PE)	Helen Raikes (Lincoln); James Powell (Chadron); Jackie Guzman (Scottsbluff); Amy LaPointe (Winnebago); + 13 more
Professional Associations: Family Home Providers Ass’n; Nebraska AEYC; Nebraska Ass’n of School Boards – Providers, Advocacy	PCI, ECICC, Learning Begins at Birth (LBAB), Survey, ECDC, CI	Suzanne Schneider, Kim Chase, Brandee Lengel, Tracy Gordon (Lincoln); Jason Spatz (Lincoln); Stephanie Knust (Omaha); Maddie Fennell, Carrie Sullivan, Sandy Kirchoff

Stakeholder and Role/Sector	Activities	People
Medical Schools: Children's Center for the Child & Community (Children's Hospital); Creighton University School of Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center-Munroe Meyer Institute – Higher Ed, Professional Training	ECICC, ECDC, CI, SPAT, PCI, Leadership Team (LT), Family Childcare Landscape Study via NECC	Rick Helweg (Lincoln); Karla Lester (Lincoln); Cristina Fernandez (Omaha); Barb Jackson (Omaha), Abbie Raikes (Lincoln), David Dzewaltowski (Omaha); + more
Parents	ECICC	Brenda McNiff (Beatrice); Jaime Hazlett; Janelle Butler
Center-Based Care: Building Blocks Daycare, Gingerbread Daycare, Safe Haven Academy, + 12 more - Providers	SPAT	Lyndsey Witte (Omaha); Connie Lewis (Hastings); JoAnn Golden, Adrienne Agulla (Omaha), Gwen; Easter (Omaha); +10 more
Head Start and Early Head Start – Providers	ECICC, ECDC, CI, Early Development Network	Dawn Murphy (Santee); Deb Ross (Hastings); Kelli Rhoades, Sharlene Mengel, Joyce Thomas, Shelley Maass
Home-Based Care: Lori's Daycare, Midwest Childcare, Natalie's Daycare – Providers	NECWC, Survey	Lori Retzlaff (Chadron); Janet Phelan, Natalie Hanna
School-Based Care: Agape Preschool, Archdiocese of Omaha Schools, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, + 3 more Providers	SPAT, ECICC, Survey	Amber Olsen (Gothenburg); Vickie Kauffold (Omaha); Melissa Timmerman, Peggy LaRose (Winnebago); Mandy Plog
Mental Health Services	ECICC	Susan Borchert
Regional Advocacy Organizations: Southeast Community Action, Head Start Gothenburg EC Learning Coalition, Blue Valley Community Action Central Nebraska, + 4 more – Social Services Providers	SPAT, CI, NECWC, ECDC	Angie Antholz, Nichole Hetz (Gothenburg); Cheryl Severance (Fairbury), Sue Obermiller (Aurora); Sarah Ochoa (Gering); Dusti Storm (Pender); Sarah Ann Kotchian, + 10 more
Public School: Gibbon Public Schools (PS), Grand Island PS, Hastings PS, Kearney PS, Morrill PS, North Platte PS- Providers	SPAT, NECWC, Survey	Cheryl Escritt (Gibbon); Tawana Grover (Grand Island); Wendy Keele (Hastings); Stacie Williams (Kearney); Joe Sherwood (Morrill); Peggy Romshek (North Platte); + 14 more
4-H Program Administrator - Education	NECWC	Kathleen Lodl

Stakeholder and Role/Sector	Activities	People
Nebraska Early Development Network – Early Intervention Services	Survey	Amanda Lans (Holdrege); Patti Drewes-Hynek (Papillion); Heather Beekman (Fremont); Cheri Matthews (Wakefield); Cristen Witte (Ainsworth); Ania Jaros (Auburn); + 51 more
Department of Health and Human Services (multiple divisions)– State Agency	LT, Project Management Team (PMT), SPAT, PCI, NECWC, ECICC, LBAB, CI, ECDC, Performance Eval, Survey	Nicole Vint (Project Lead - Lincoln); Heather Arnold (Lincoln); Sue Adams (Lincoln); Alison Wilson, Michaela Hirschman, Julie Doctor, Lindsey Braddock, Kim Hawekotte, + 8 more
Department of Insurance – State Agency	ECICC	Laura Arp
Local Public Health Departments (HD): Douglas County Public HD, Four Corners HD / Healthy Babies Program, Lincoln-Lancaster County HD – Local Agencies	PCI, SPAT	Stephen Jackson, Chris Blanke, Kodi Bonesteel
Nebraska Legislature	NECWC, ECDC	John Stinner
Legislative: Legislative Fiscal Office & NCSL Early Learning Fellow	ECDC, ECICC	Liz Hruska, Rick Kolowski
Nebraska Department of Education	Survey, ECICC, LT, PCI, NECWC, LBAB, ECDC, CI	Alyssa Anson (Lincoln); Cathy Mohnike, Joan Luebbers, Melody Hobson, Lauri Cimino, Dean Folkers, Nicole Johnson, Amy Bunnell, Lynne Cook, + 9 more
Nebraska State Board of Education	NECWC	Patricia Timm
Panhandle District Public HD, Public Health Solutions, South East District Public HD/Growing Great Kids, Two Rivers Public HD – Public Agencies	SPAT, CI, Survey	Sarah Bernhardt, Kim Engel, Laura Wooters, Amanda Drier, Jeremy Eschliman
Statewide Advocacy Organizations: Nebraska Appleseed, Nebraska Children & Families Foundation, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, Sherwood Foundation, Sixpence, First Five Nebraska, + 4 more	LBAB, PCI, PMT, SPAT, CINECWC, LT, ECDC, Performance Evaluation, Survey, C4K & Ready Rosie	Susan Johnson (Falls City); Kerry Miller, James Goddard, Karen Pinkelman, Amy Bornemeier, Jessica Hagerbaumer, Marti Beard, Lynne Brehm, Shannon Cotsoradis, Kristin Williams, Ben Baumfalk, + 37 more

Bonus - Coordinated Application, Eligibility, Enrollment

As described under Activity 3, Nebraska will implement a coordinated application, eligibility, and enrollment pilot, building on a successful model currently in use in Omaha, led by the NECC. This model will engage families in designing the pilot and will help streamline the ability of families to access services. Nebraska will also expand the Help Me Grow model, which helps to connect families to coordinated health, developmental and social emotional services for which they are eligible, and will include child care resource and referral. Moreover, Nebraska's C4K+ subgranting strategy focuses on building local collaborative capacity, which is a critical part of successful local coordinated enrollment systems.

Bonus - Infant/Toddler Emphasis

Nebraska approaches systems work on behalf of infants and toddlers from a position of experience and strength. The public-private Sixpence program is a nationally recognized model for serving infants, toddlers and their families in a mixed delivery model adaptable to rural and urban settings, with 68% of funded programs located in rural areas. Most infants and toddlers served are subject to multiple developmental hazards and severe traumas with cumulative effects on their neural development, skill formation, and executive functioning. Sixpence helps mitigate these risks by equipping parents and EC professionals with knowledge and skills to be more effective and responsive during children's critical first three years and beyond. During the PDG project period, it is expected another 11 Sixpence home visiting and center-based programs will be awarded to school-community partnerships in Nebraska's most vulnerable communities. State, private and community match funds leveraged by the new Sixpence programs will assure

high-quality infant and toddler programming for an additional estimated 220 – 242 of our youngest, most vulnerable children.

Building on the Sixpence experience, Nebraska is currently finalizing its comprehensive Prenatal to Age 3 policy agenda, with support from the PCI. This project included a thorough policy landscape analysis in 2019. The agenda is organized by a three-part framework:

Initiative	Focus
Healthy Beginnings	Healthy births, access to health care (including prenatal care), preventative screenings, adherence to recommended schedules for well-child visits, and mental health;
Early Learning	Safe and stable home environments, access to high-quality options that fit parents’ needs, ensuring parents and the early learning workforce support children in developing the skills important for future academic and workplace success, and financing policies
Supported families	Parent knowledge of child development, parental health and mental health, economic circumstances, and environmental factors that may take a parent’s focus away from their children’s development

The process has led to valuable new connections between ECCE and other key systems such as health and child welfare. Criteria for including issue on the policy agenda included alignment with PDG data and SP objectives, which will be used in tandem with the infant-toddler policy landscape analysis to select highest priority targets for focus in 2020.

The NA found that many infants and toddlers are served in small family, friend, and neighbor child care settings. With Sixpence as a partner, Nebraska is strengthening the business practices of these programs to make them more viable and reduce the size of infant-toddler child care deserts. The All Our Kin and Wonderschool pilots and Elevate Business Summits described in Activity 4 will provide business supports that increase the sustainability of home-based child care programs, which are often the only available resource for families with infants and toddlers. The Help Me Grow, Getting Ready, and ReadyRosie projects described in Activity 3 are other elements of the Nebraska plan that prioritize our very youngest children and families.

Bonus - Collaborative Transition & Alignment from Birth to the Early Grades

According to Nebraska's NA, the two most commonly used practices to prepare children for the transition to kindergarten are visiting a kindergarten classroom and holding a spring orientation about kindergarten for preschool parents, yet not even half of Nebraska's ECCE providers participate in these practices. There have been pockets of success, including work in the Omaha metro area with 11 superintendents in two counties to align the 0-5 experience with the elementary school years, with the elementary school serving as a hub for connecting children and families to needed community-based services. But the work has not been systematized statewide, despite the fact that NDE has built transition practices into its accountability system framework, and the State Board of Education's 10-year strategic vision includes a goal focused on ensuring elementary schools can "identify at least one high-quality ECCE program accessible to all of the school's resident preschool age population."

Using PDG funds Nebraska will launch a project to increase parent and provider understanding of transition processes, strengthen collaboration among ECCE providers and public schools, build knowledge among professionals in ECCE and schools, and align standards and curricula. This work will complement an information campaign currently being led by NDE to ensure that school districts are aware of their obligations to create transition agreements with Head Start and child care programs pursuant to Title I.

A cross-cutting group of Nebraska leaders will meet, supported by NDE and BECI resource specialists, to create alignment and coherence in state-level systems and resources for PreK through early grades. This group will include school district leaders, school principals, PreK and primary grades teachers, ECCE professionals, and parents. The process will include work to ensure the alignment of Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines and K-3 state standards, building

on work undertaken in the 2019 PDG to map gaps and redundancies between the two. It will include consideration of how to best disseminate the standards-implementation, ensuring that the materials are utilized and helpful for the various stakeholder audiences.

In year one, the work group will focus on planning and evaluating best practices and resources already in use in Nebraska, along with literature from other states and national experts in the field. In year two, the work will pivot to developing toolkits that promote understanding of kindergarten readiness and transition practices, with special considerations for children with special needs. There will be three aligned toolkits: one for families, one for schools and districts, and another for community-based ECCE providers. The toolkits will be translated and accessible online to school districts and community providers and will be promoted from the cross-sector entities mentioned in this proposal. Education Service Units will create collaborative opportunities for PK-12 and ECCE providers to build a common understanding of transition practices. The toolkits will include a particular focus on the needs of children with IEPs. In year three the toolkits will be implemented statewide, with funding provided to support communities building collaborative partnerships between ECCE providers and public schools. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$463,345.40.

To ensure that school leaders and ECCE program administrators are prepared to implement the new framework, Nebraska will expand its support of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Leadership Academy. Launched in 2019 in partnership with NAESP, this initiative provides training and ongoing support to principals to support effective transitions. It is a blended professional learning experience in which participants learn through in-person training sessions, online coursework, communities of practice, and through virtual support from experienced and knowledgeable advisors. In its first year, 20 administrators across

the state participated in the Academy. In future years the Academy cohort will be expanded to include partners from EC programs. The training is appropriate for both groups and having cohorts that mix K-12 and EC leaders will improve transitions systemically. PDG will support two cohorts, each serving up to 30 participants, with a total three-year request of \$312,500.

Program Performance Evaluation Plan

The Nebraska PDG project, *Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education*, will use a systems science approach to the PPE - supporting and documenting inputs and resources, activities and outputs (efforts), continuous improvement (formative), and process outcomes to inform progress, incorporating existing and new data collection. The evaluation will include:

Monitoring ongoing activities and progress toward objectives: Nebraska will expand the current PPE evaluation platform using online surveys for project- and system-level data. For the larger project structure a database will be built to integrate with the larger ECIDS system.

Measuring inputs, activities and outcomes: A logic model will be used to illustrate inputs, activities, and outcomes slated for implementation of projects. The PPE team will work with programs (Activities 3, 4, 5) to build capacity around reflection on system change, and identify metrics required for evaluating and achieving impact (e.g. program leads will submit a program logic model and fidelity metrics).

Using the results of evaluations to inform improvement of funded activities: Projects will be required to report implementation and intended outcomes. The ENT will use regular data reporting from projects to make decisions regarding program effectiveness, contributions to systems change, alignment with the SP/vision and future funding in the PDG grant.

Ensuring the data quality of performance outcomes: PPE evaluators will work with programs, including C4K to regularly assure that data being collected matches expectations and aligns with

SP objectives. In creation of the database, processes for managing data and codebooks will be developed, and data will be regularly analyzed and shared for reliability and fidelity checks.

Transparency and regular sharing of data with ENT and state leadership will allow the PPE team to capture inaccuracies in data early on and allow for course correction.

Organizational systems to effectively track performance (including collecting and managing data): Processes and standards related to data collection and use will be established in the first months of the grant, led by the ENT and PPE teams. The plan will be integrated across the PDG, including the NA, SP, and ECIDS, and shared with the leadership team. Essential to this process will be making the data processes known to the program and community systems partners.

Anticipated obstacles: Building data and evaluation systems can be challenging, especially working out data use agreements among the parties, although Nebraska had a positive experience during the current grant period. Communities vary in their ability to identify and collect meaningful data; a prime objective over the three years will be for communities to build their capacity to do this.

Timeline for using evaluation results in the ongoing project:

Q	1	2	3
1	Establish and convene ENT; hire evaluation lead and other personnel	Convene ENT for development of enhanced program evaluation (e.g. fidelity measures)	Collect program and system data; provide feedback to ENT; make changes
2	Use PDG NA to inform communities about local needs and gaps (e.g. vulnerable children, access & availability, etc.); establish metrics for assessing progress toward vision	Community level focus groups; begin data collection with communities	Collect data; provide feedback to ENT; make changes
3	Establish guidelines for enhanced program evaluation; set up data collection systems/database	Collect data; provide feedback to Evaluation Network; make changes	Collect data; provide feedback to Evaluation Network; make changes

Q	1	2	3
4	Select communities for implementation; work with communities to learn about local and system level change (technical assistance)	Collect data; provide feedback to Evaluation Network; make changes; convene Y 2 meeting on evaluation	Convene Y 3 meeting on evaluation; install Evaluation Network into appropriate organization

At the conclusion of the three-year project Nebraska will publish and share ENT learnings, and identify resources for a technical assistance center for Nebraska ECCE evaluations.

Ultimately, this evaluation plan will allow Nebraska to:

- Refine and finalize the target population and geographic areas that will benefit most from ECCE (drawing on the work of the NA);
- Refine the project logic model and identify associated indicators and outcomes, including for process, cost, and program implementation reporting (drawing on the NA and SP);
- Identify measurable outcomes linked to proposed activities;
- Identify existing data systems aligned with proposed metrics and key data gaps and new data sources needed (drawing on work related to data system linkages in Activity 6);
- Develop toolkits to support community selection, implementation, and evaluation of projects to enhance ECCE local systems;
- Support the establishment of a backbone network for ongoing evaluation efforts that integrate implementation/impact and systems change in service of SP goals;
- Understand the impact of technical assistance implementation; and
- Report data about PDG implementation based on an appropriate methodological approach and use that data to inform continuous improvement.

The overall annual budget for the program evaluation will be \$657,772.50, which is included in the budget table as project line 6c.

Logic Model

Vision: A system where community leaders are working together to provide opportunities for high-quality early care and education starting at birth, and in coordination with the full suite of health, mental health, and social service supports that families may need.

Inputs	Activities		Outputs - Impact	
	Activities	Outputs	Short	Long
PDG Grant Funds Full collab Partners: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Nebraska Department of Education Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Buffett Early Childhood Institute First Five Nebraska The Buffett Early Childhood Fund	I. Needs Assessment Design and begin to implement a sustainable needs assessment	New systems developed for keeping info updated over time	State EC agencies, partners, communities share: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions, indicators, unduplicated counts Understanding of needs, strengths, and gaps in the mixed-delivery ECE system Understanding the needs of Nebraska's vulnerable children and families 	Parents demonstrate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge Access to quality Positive child-interactions
	II. Strategic Plan Quarterly updates to ECICC on the progress toward the strategic plan's objectives and strategies	Recommendations from ECICC for any changes needed to activities	Increased access to high quality ECE across all settings; strengthened collaboration at the community, regional, and state levels within the system; revised def'n of quality, and workforce policies keyed to that def'n; state's QRIS is updated; policy is aligned more effectively, supported by improved data systems	NE Children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend quality ECE Experience good transitions
	III. Maximizing Parental Choice & Knowledge 7 projects to engage families and connect them to needed services	A structured infrastructure to support families in finding the ECCE services they need	Families are engaged and informed about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> community services and organizations their child's development IDEA screening and services Families are connected to services they need	Providers/Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality child interactions Demonstrate resilience Quality programs Operate efficiently
	IV. Sharing Best Practices and PD 10 projects to improve PD, align competencies, and increase the supply of qualified educators	Improved professional practices Aligned system of credentials and competencies	Training and experience of providers is improved Professional development pathways are affordable and accessible to all early childhood professionals Increased availability of <i>qualified</i> educators throughout the state, including rural areas	Communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quality ECCE services through coherent approach with parent support
	V. Quality Improvement C4K+	Improved community infrastructure to support early childhood	Communities are supported to build their family support and ECCE infrastructure	ECCE System: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses data to determine ongoing service needs Shifts policies and recommended practices to expand access to quality
	VI. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Use Build data and evaluation infrastructure for continuous quality improvement	Sustainable infrastructure for collecting and learning from program and systems data	Increased understanding of and capacity to use data to inform changes at the program, community, stakeholder and state levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreases systemic barriers Increase collaborations and partnerships

Project Sustainability Plan

Nebraska’s approach to its Preschool Development Grant is heavily focused on the need to develop sustainable infrastructure. In particular, the C4K+ subgranting approach is meant to help build relationships at the local level that can be sustained after the grant period. Nebraska has taken a community-driven approach to building its EC system, and the PDG will allow more communities to get engaged and deepen their EC work. Statewide programs Nebraska is seeking to expand through the grant will include a focus on training professionals in best practices, and the knowledge and skills gained through those processes will also carry beyond the grant period. Nebraska’s philanthropic community will also play a critical role in sustainability.

As described in Activity 6, Nebraska will launch a task force in 2020 focused on governance and finance. This task force will include a review of blending and braiding practices and will make recommendations for how the state can design its funding in a manner that makes it easier to use at the local level to increase access to quality for vulnerable families. The PDG’s emphasis on building out local-level capacity will also help communities and providers to blend and braid more effectively, taking the best possible advantage of opportunities the state provides.

The PDG Renewal also builds very consciously on the work done in the initial grant year. The grant focuses on addressing problems identified in the NA, including the lack of community-level capacity, the need to better engage families, and the need to build capacity among providers – particularly home-based and rural providers. The objectives articulated in the NA and SP animate the projects chosen in the PDG (with the “Relevant Project” numerical titles derived from the budget tables below):

#	Objective Description	Relevant Projects
1	Improve outcomes for the vulnerable, underserved, rural children ages 0-5 in Nebraska	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d, 4e, 4f, 4g, 4h, 4i, 4j, 5

#	Objective Description	Relevant Projects
2	Improve availability of and access to high-quality ECCE services for vulnerable families	3f, 3g, 4a, 4c, 4f, 4i, 4j, 5
3	Strengthen Nebraska's systems that define, assess, track, and improve quality of ECCE	2, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4g, 6a, 6b, 6c
4	Give families more resources to make informed choices about ECCE in support of their child's healthy development	3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 3e, 4c, 5, D
5	Create more efficiencies to ease families' access to the full range of services needed to support healthy development	3f, 3g, 4g,
6	Improve access to supports to help children make successful transitions into kindergarten	5, 6d, 6e
7	Create more opportunities for collaboration and coordination among ECE programs	4a, 4b, 4c, 5, 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e
8	Build Nebraska's administrative capacity to support coordination and alignment of EC programs and services	1,2, 4a, 4b, 4c, 4g, 5, 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d, 6e, D
9	Create greater efficiency in Nebraska's early childhood programs and services by reducing funding and policy barriers, for families, for providers, for state programs	1,2, 3e, 4a, 4c, 6b

Dissemination Plan

The purpose of PDG is to increase access to quality ECCE, and the dissemination plan supports that purpose. A key goal is to increase the visibility, reach, and impact of the initiatives supported by continued PDG funding. Another will be to publicly represent the PDG as a coordinated effort to bring cohesion to the systems, services, and initiatives that address the needs of Nebraska's children and families.

During Nebraska's initial PDG grant dissemination, efforts have focused on websites, newsletters, feature stories, and blog posts, which provide a useful launch pad for future continuation grant work where Nebraska will reach more communities and families by engaging a wider range of dissemination partners and helping ensure policymakers are kept abreast of progress. This work will include working with a broader range of partners to leverage their networks, emphasizing partnerships with entities that have significant contact with vulnerable populations; developing a wider range of content enabling to better market PDG resources to target audiences using their own messaging networks and platforms; and taking advantage of

existing events to share resources and stories that communicate the impact of ECCE and of the PDG itself, and use presentations and webinars to update policy leaders, media, and other ECCE stakeholders about the progress of the work.

This work will be carried out by a full-time Communications Coordinator acting as an interagency liaison among the key entities leading PDG-funded projects. The Coordinator will cultivate a wider range of communications partnerships; develop multiple types of messaging content and sequence its distribution; and coordinate a media engagement strategy throughout the duration of funded activities. The total three-year PDG request for this work is \$242,252.

While reports from numerous PDG activities will be released at different times,, the Coordinator will be able to maintain a steady schedule of outreach. Nebraska’s evaluation plan will include attention to the success of the outreach, with the goal of ensuring that multiple audiences were made aware of the PDG work and its impact on Nebraska children and families.

Project Budget and Budget Justification

Nebraska is requesting \$10,000,000 in grant funds with \$3,000,000 in match, for a total project budget of \$13,000,000. This section includes a budget table that is organized by Activity with each proposed project budget detailed by budget category. Please refer to the proposal narrative for further details on identified projects and costs associated with each project.

Oversight and Technical Assistance: \$620,232.09
<i>NDHHS Oversight Personnel: \$37,500</i> CCDF Administrator .16fte CCDF Grant Manager .16fte Grant Unit Administrator .16fte Grant Unit Staff Person .16fte
<i>Fringe Benefits: \$10,876</i> CCDF Administrator .16fte CCDF Grant Manager .16fte Grant Unit Administrator .16fte Grant Unit Staff Person .16fte
<i>Required Technical Assistance Travel: \$11,652</i> Air Travel to Washington D.C.: \$350 x 6= \$2,100; Hotel: \$251 x 4 nights x 6 people = \$6,024 Ground Transportation in DC \$106 x 6 = \$636; Mileage to and from Nebraska airport \$60 per person x 6 people = \$360; Other transportation costs (airport parking) in Lincoln, NE \$16 per day x 5 days = \$80 x cars for 6 people = \$480; Food: 2 partial days (\$57/day) + 3 conference days per person (\$76/Day) = \$342 per person x 6 people = \$2,052

<i>PDG Grant Project Management:</i>	
Staffing: \$102,523; Fringe: \$29,731; In-State Travel: \$633; Supplies: \$3000; Contractual: \$90,000 Indirect: \$321,117.09	
<i>Lead Agency Indirect: \$13,200</i>	
Activity #1, B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan	
Needs Assessment Updates - \$658,189.40	
In-kind Match - \$681,647	
Activity #2, B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan	
Strategic Plan - \$347,267	
Activity #3, Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge	
Total Activity Three Costs - \$1,504,302.41	
In-kind match - \$212,260	
Activity #4, Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce	
Total Activity Four Costs - \$1,122,417.40	
In-kind match - \$1,379,062	
Activity #5, Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration	
Total Activity Five Costs – \$2,835,576	
In-kind match - \$584,777	
Activity #6, Monitoring, Evaluation, Data Use for Continuous Improvement	
6c Program Performance Evaluation - \$657,772.50	
Personnel: \$371,084 Fringe: \$133,391 Supplies, including software licenses, printing, paper, etc.: \$18,500 Contractual costs for integration of the ECIDS data in PPE and a strategic consultant to integrate with strategic planning: \$75,000 Indirect costs of 10%: \$59,797.50	
Total Activity Six Costs - \$2,832,088.90	
In-kind Match - \$104,830	
Dissemination	
Dissemination Plan - \$79,926	
Total Project Cost - \$10,000,000	Total Match Funds: \$3,000,000

The budget table includes figures for each budget category that have been figured ensuring that all costs are reasonable and allowable in accordance with federal guidelines.

Personnel costs have been figured based on the portion of time that each employee will dedicate towards the identified project. Each project is figured by the identified staff members base salary and portion of FTE dedicated to the identified project. All projects calculated the personnel based on the employee salary and FTE calculations between .1 FTE and 1 FTE.

Fringe Benefits are figured at a calculated rate for each project that is no more than 40% of the proposed employee's salary or wages.

Travel costs are figured based on the approved federal travel per diem rates for Out of State Travel. In-State travel is figured at \$94/night for hotel stays and \$55/day for food purchases. Travel to Omaha, NE is figured at \$109/night for hotel stays and \$61/day for food purchases. Mileage is figured at \$.58/mile for state or \$.25 for University-approved mileage.

Supplies are figured based on required materials to complete the projects, including printing, software, laptop computers, supplies for meetings and focus groups, etc. The supply budget is

based on an estimated cost for each item. Nebraska intends to hold multiple focus groups and task force meetings; all funds were estimated based on current estimated costs for meeting materials, venue rental, travel and lodging multiplied by the number of meetings/focus groups planned. Software licenses are required for several projects; these licenses are often based on a yearly cost of the license. No equipment costs have been requested as part of this grant.

Contractual costs include contracts and consultants to complete the work of the identified project. Any costs associated with travel and supplies for the consultants is also included in this category. Several of the consultants that were chosen during the 2019 PDG-B5 were identified to continue the work throughout the continuation grant. Estimates were completed based on the hourly rate of the consultant by the estimated amount of time required to complete the project.

Other costs include trainings, software costs, incentives to providers/families, etc. Training expenses are estimated by the cost of each training multiplied by the number of coaches, providers or trainers that require the training to complete each project. Incentives for families/providers was figured at \$20 per family/provider multiplied by the number of focus groups/meetings.

The indirect cost rate is proposed at no more than 10% of the total project cost. In order to maximize the available funding NDHHS agreed to the Indirect Cost rate that was negotiated on the 2019 Preschool Development Grant project contracts.

Non-federal matching funds have been committed to the PDG-B5 Renewal by 4 separate entities. A letter included below is evidence of the Year 1 plan for meeting the 30% match requirement. Private match funds will be used to supplement the following projects:

Source	Amount	Description
NCFE (private)	\$37,424	Project Management: Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Contractual & Indirect
BECI (state & private)	\$681,647	Needs Assessment: Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Stipends and Focus Group Costs
NCFE (private)	\$22,260	Community Café Expansion: Personnel & Fringe
NECC (private)	\$190,000	Coordinated Enrollment Pilot Expansion: Personnel & Fringe
NDE (state)	\$505,504	Coaching Collaboration: Personnel & Fringe
NCFE (private)	\$526,105	Social Emotional Support Infrastructure: Personnel & Fringe
NCFE (private)	\$584,777	Community Subgrants: Personnel, Fringe, Contractual
NECC (private)	\$347,453	All Our Kin Expansion: Personnel, Fringe, Travel, Supplies, Training and Contractual
NDE/NCFE/BECI	\$104,830	ECIDS Buildout: Personnel, Fringe, Contractual

The identified partners have also committed to ensuring that the 30% match requirement is met in each subsequent year.

**Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Nebraska Preschool Development Grant
Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education
December 31, 2019 through December 30, 2020**

Project	Personnel	Fringe	Travel	Supplies	Contractual	Other	Indirect	PDG Fund Total	Match	Project Total
PDG Project Oversight										
NDHHS Oversight	\$ 37,500.00	\$ 10,876.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 13,200.00	\$ 61,576.00	\$ -	\$ 61,576.00
NCFF Project Management	\$ 102,523.00	\$ 29,731.00	\$ 633.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 90,000.00	\$ -	\$ 321,117.09	\$ 547,004.09	\$ 37,424.00	\$ 584,428.09
Travel for Nebraska Team to DC Conference	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11,652.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11,652.00	\$ -	\$ 11,652.00
Project Oversight Subtotal								\$ 620,232.09	\$ 37,424.00	\$ 657,656.09
Activity 1										
1a Needs Assessment Updates	\$ 409,228.00	\$ 136,614.00	\$ 6,012.00	\$ 16,500.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ -	\$ 59,835.40	\$ 658,189.40	\$ 681,647.00	\$ 1,339,836.40
Activity Subtotal								\$ 658,189.40	\$ 681,647.00	\$ 1,339,836.40
Activity 2										
2a Strategic Plan Implementation and Management	\$ 86,323.00	\$ 35,782.00	\$ 2,968.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 181,625.00	\$ -	\$ 31,569.80	\$ 347,267.80	\$ -	\$ 347,267.80
Activity Subtotal								\$ 347,267.80	\$ -	\$ 347,267.80
Activity 3										
3a Community Café Expansion	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,400.00	\$ -	\$ 53,220.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 5,662.00	\$ 62,282.00	\$ 22,260.00	\$ 84,542.00
3b Learning Begins at Birth	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 55,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 60,500.00	\$ -	\$ 60,500.00
3c Getting Ready	\$ 167,353.00	\$ 65,984.00	\$ 14,700.00	\$ 20,800.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 26,884.00	\$ 295,721.00	\$ -	\$ 295,721.00
3d ReadyRosie	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 118,440.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 16,844.00	\$ 185,284.00	\$ -	\$ 185,284.00
3e Parent Education Campaign	\$ 166,000.00	\$ 60,045.83	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 22,804.58	\$ 250,850.41	\$ -	\$ 250,850.41
3f Coordinated Enrollment Pilot Expansion	\$ 80,876.00	\$ 20,624.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 101,500.00	\$ 190,000.00	\$ 291,500.00
3g Help Me Grow	\$ 130,640.00	\$ 39,192.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 95,000.00	\$ 223,500.00	\$ 49,833.00	\$ 548,165.00	\$ -	\$ 548,165.00
Activity Subtotal								\$ 1,504,302.41	\$ 212,260.00	\$ 1,716,562.41
Activity 4										
4a Workforce Commission Implementation	\$ 99,491.00	\$ 36,868.00	\$ 4,084.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,344.30	\$ 157,787.30	\$ -	\$ 157,787.30
4b Coaching Collaboration	\$ 29,548.00	\$ 18,072.00	\$ 5,115.00	\$ 6,400.00	\$ 136,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,843.00	\$ 199,978.00	\$ 505,504.00	\$ 705,482.00
4c Step Up to Quality Revision Task Force	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,000.00	\$ -	\$ 22,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 2,860.00	\$ 36,860.00	\$ -	\$ 36,860.00
4d National Center for Reflective Practice	\$ 110,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 110,000.00	\$ -	\$ 110,000.00
4e Families Thrive Expansion	\$ 4,527.00	\$ 1,312.00	\$ -	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 27,000.00	\$ 6,408.00	\$ 70,497.00	\$ -	\$ 70,497.00
4f Communities for Kids bilingual consultants	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 136,364.00	\$ -	\$ 13,636.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ -	\$ 150,000.00
4g Social Emotional Support Infrastructure	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 4,350.00	\$ 3,317.00	\$ -	\$ 129,004.00	\$ -	\$ 15,167.10	\$ 166,838.10	\$ 526,105.00	\$ 692,943.10
4h CHIME	\$ 38,748.00	\$ 12,462.00	\$ 1,750.00	\$ 21,375.00	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 7,622.00	\$ 92,957.00	\$ -	\$ 92,957.00
4i All Our Kin Expansion	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 1,658.00	\$ 12,895.00	\$ 2,497.00	\$ 34,650.00	\$ 51,800.00	\$ -	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 347,453.00	\$ 457,453.00
4j Wonderschool Launch	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 27,500.00	\$ -	\$ 27,500.00	\$ -	\$ 27,500.00
Activity Subtotal								\$ 1,122,417.40	\$ 1,379,062.00	\$ 2,501,479.40
Activity 5										
5a Community Subgrants	\$ 230,928.00	\$ 66,969.00	\$ 27,400.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 2,245,000.00	\$ -	\$ 257,779.00	\$ 2,835,576.00	\$ 584,777.00	\$ 3,420,353.00
Activity Subtotal								\$ 2,835,576.00	\$ 584,777.00	\$ 3,420,353.00
Activity 6										
6a ECIDS Buildout	\$ 385,000.00	\$ 115,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 900,000.00	\$ 250,000.00	\$ 166,500.00	\$ 1,831,500.00	\$ 104,830.00	\$ 1,936,330.00
6b Governance and Financing Task Force	\$ 8,500.00	\$ 2,550.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ -	\$ 81,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 9,186.00	\$ 110,236.00	\$ -	\$ 110,236.00
6c Program Performance Evaluation	\$ 371,084.00	\$ 133,391.00	\$ -	\$ 18,500.00	\$ 75,000.00	\$ -	\$ 59,797.50	\$ 657,772.50	\$ -	\$ 657,772.50
6d Transition Committee	\$ 102,208.00	\$ 34,306.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 14,041.40	\$ 154,455.40	\$ -	\$ 154,455.40
6e NAEESP Leadership Academy	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 76,500.00	\$ -	\$ 1,625.00	\$ 78,125.00	\$ -	\$ 78,125.00
Activity Subtotal								\$ 2,832,088.90	\$ 104,830.00	\$ 2,936,918.90
Dissemination										
Dissemination Plan	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 14,500.00	\$ 1,909.00	\$ 4,511.00	\$ -	\$ 1,740.00	\$ 7,266.00	\$ 79,926.00	\$ -	\$ 79,926.00
								\$ 79,926.00	\$ -	\$ 79,926.00
Total Expenses	\$ 2,631,977.00	\$ 840,786.83	\$ 116,235.00	\$ 186,333.00	\$ 4,435,803.00	\$ 657,540.00	\$ 1,131,325.17	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 3,000,000.00	\$ 13,000,000.00
% Federal and Non-Federal Share								77%	30%	100%

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Nebraska Preschool Development Grant Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education Year 2 and 3 Budget				
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total 3 Yrs
PDG Project Overnight				
DHHS	\$ 61,576.00	\$ 61,576.00	\$ 61,576.00	\$ 184,728.00
NCCF	\$ 547,004.09	\$ 248,475.70	\$ 248,475.70	\$ 1,043,955.49
Travel	\$ 11,652.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 11,652.00
Subtotal	\$ 620,232.09	\$ 310,051.70	\$ 310,051.70	\$ 1,240,335.49
Activity 1				
1a	\$ 658,189.40	\$ 614,074.00	\$ 614,074.00	\$ 1,886,337.40
Subtotal	\$ 658,189.40	\$ 614,074.00	\$ 614,074.00	\$ 1,886,337.40
Activity 2				
2a	\$ 347,267.80	\$ 287,327.00	\$ 287,327.00	\$ 921,921.80
Subtotal	\$ 347,267.80	\$ 287,327.00	\$ 287,327.00	\$ 921,921.80
Activity 3				
3a	\$ 62,282.00	\$ 63,282.00	\$ 63,282.00	\$ 188,846.00
3b	\$ 60,500.00	\$ 33,000.00	\$ 33,000.00	\$ 126,500.00
3c	\$ 295,721.00	\$ 294,726.00	\$ 288,793.00	\$ 879,240.00
3d	\$ 185,284.00	\$ 185,284.00	\$ 185,284.00	\$ 555,852.00
3e	\$ 250,850.41	\$ 511,586.90	\$ 571,624.90	\$ 1,334,062.21
3f	\$ 101,500.00	\$ 109,250.00	\$ 109,250.00	\$ 320,000.00
3g	\$ 548,165.00	\$ 548,165.00	\$ 548,165.00	\$ 1,644,495.00
Subtotal	\$ 1,504,302.41	\$ 1,745,293.90	\$ 1,799,398.90	\$ 5,048,995.21
Activity 4				
4a	\$ 157,787.30	\$ 157,787.00	\$ 157,787.00	\$ 473,361.30
4b	\$ 199,978.00	\$ 442,355.00	\$ 442,355.00	\$ 1,084,688.00
4c	\$ 36,860.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 36,860.00
4d	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 70,000.00	\$ 250,000.00
4e	\$ 70,497.00	\$ 70,497.00	\$ 70,497.00	\$ 211,491.00
4f	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 150,000.00	\$ 450,000.00
4g	\$ 166,838.10	\$ 146,572.00	\$ 147,230.00	\$ 460,640.10
4h	\$ 92,957.00	\$ 33,572.00	\$ 13,750.00	\$ 140,279.00
4i	\$ 110,000.00	\$ 260,000.00	\$ 260,000.00	\$ 630,000.00
4j	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 27,500.00	\$ 82,500.00
Subtotal	\$ 1,122,417.40	\$ 1,358,283.00	\$ 1,339,119.00	\$ 3,819,819.40
Activity 5				
5a	\$ 2,835,576.00	\$ 2,552,434.90	\$ 2,620,928.90	\$ 8,008,939.80
Subtotal	\$ 2,835,576.00	\$ 2,552,434.90	\$ 2,620,928.90	\$ 8,008,939.80
Activity 6				
6a	\$ 1,831,500.00	\$ 2,079,000.00	\$ 2,051,500.00	\$ 5,962,000.00
6b	\$ 110,236.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 120,236.00
6c	\$ 657,772.50	\$ 657,772.50	\$ 657,772.50	\$ 1,973,317.50
6d	\$ 154,435.40	\$ 154,445.00	\$ 154,445.00	\$ 463,345.40
6e	\$ 78,125.00	\$ 156,250.00	\$ 78,125.00	\$ 312,500.00
Subtotal	\$ 2,832,088.90	\$ 3,052,467.50	\$ 2,946,842.50	\$ 8,831,398.90
Dissemination				
Dissemination	\$ 79,926.00	\$ 80,068.00	\$ 82,258.00	\$ 242,252.00
Subtotal	\$ 79,926.00	\$ 80,068.00	\$ 82,258.00	\$ 242,252.00
Total Expenses	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 10,000,000.00	\$ 30,000,000.00

Nebraska's narrative references its three-year plans, and the table to the left summarizes the state's plan for a three-year budget to implement the grant (recognizing that project budgets may be adjusting in years two and three). The letter below is evidence supporting the state's plan to fulfill the Cost Sharing or Matching requirement, which is described more fully above.

November 4, 2019

Nicole Vint
Child Care Administrator
Division of Children and Family Services
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Ms. Vint,

The following partners have committed to the implementation of the Preschool Development Renewal Grant. As part of this commitment, the table below identifies the source and amount of match contribution to the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant for Year One. The same entities have committed to meeting the 30% threshold of match funding by the end of each subsequent year of the PDG B-5 Renewal Grant.

University of Nebraska - Buffett Early Childhood Institute	\$700,939
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation	\$1,181,570
Nebraska Department of Education	\$580,038
Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	\$537,453
Total	\$3,000,000

Sincerely,



Susan M. Fritz PhD
Interim President
University of Nebraska



Matthew L. Bromstedt
Commissioner of Education
Nebraska Department of Education



Mary Jo Pankoke
President and CEO
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation



Shannon Cotsonadis
CEO
Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative

Third-Party Agreements



November 4, 2019

Nicole Vint
Child Care Administrator
Division of Children and Family Services
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Ms. Vint:

The Nebraska Department of Education is happy to partner with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for implementation of the Preschool Development Continuation Grant. Both agencies successfully partner to support the early childhood education and care system in Nebraska. PDG will provide an opportunity to improve the programs and services for young children and their families across the state.

Sincerely,


Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.
Commissioner of Education

To lead and support the preparation of all Nebraskans for learning, earning, and living.



November 4, 2019

Shannon Christian, Director
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families

Subject: Commitment for Nebraska's Preschool Development Grant Application

Dear Director Christian:

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCF) herein commits to carry out all roles and responsibilities identified for our organization in the enclosed grant application. NCF has provided input and recommendations based on our statewide and community-based experience working holistically and collaboratively across sectors in the fields of early childhood care and education, prevention of adverse childhood experiences, and community capacity building using collective impact frameworks, data, and evidence-based practices and policies to promote child, family, and community well-being.

We agree to work in partnership with NDHHS as the lead applicant, and all other partners included in the application, to fulfill PDG renewal goals and objectives. We further commit to contributing match to the federal funding request, as delineated in the application narrative and budget information.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Jo Pankoke
President & CEO, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

November 4, 2019

Nicole Vint
Child Care Administrator
Division of Children and Family Services
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Ms. Vint,

Nebraska's system of higher education, the University of Nebraska, is pleased to partner with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services for implementation of the Preschool Development Continuation Grant. Specifically, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) and the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools will be implementing research and conducting system-wide evaluation efforts.

I am confident that the activities described in this proposal will bring the state closer to the vision of providing all Nebraska families with well-developed early childhood options, options that are supported by strong community leadership, evidence-based interventions, and a well aligned state system.

Please contact me if I can provide any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Fritz, Ph.D.
Interim President

SMF/sh