

Nebraska Preschool Development Grant Application

Project Summary/Abstract

- Project Title: Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education
- Applicant Name: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (Nicole Vint, Child Care and Development Fund Administrator)
- Address: 301 Centennial Mall S., Lincoln, NE 68508
- Contact Phone Numbers (Voice, Fax): 401-471-9208 (ph) 402-471-9286 (fax)
- E-Mail Address: Nicole.Vint@nebraska.gov
- Web Site Address, if applicable: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/default.aspx>

Nebraska's early childhood system is noteworthy for its community-level leadership, and its innovations in infant-toddler services. This grant will allow it to build on those strengths, providing more options for parents with the support of strong community leadership and a well-aligned state system. Nebraska's work will start with an integrated needs assessment and strategic plan process, which will give it a more precise sense of its needs and set a direction for addressing those needs. We know that some communities are building amazing collaborations – but that others have much further to go, and need support to get there. Nebraska's process for developing the needs assessment and strategic plan will build on past analyses and stakeholder engagement, with a robust plan for collecting more insights from around the state and ensuring that the voices of families and communities shape the work ahead.

Nebraska's approach to parent engagement will be shaped by its community-level focus. Much of the state's work will be about creating tools to support community- and program- level work – and those tools will be developed by actively engaging parents. At the end of the grant period communities will have clear recommendations on how to provide parents with the information they want, and how to set up coordinated enrollment systems to make it easier for parents to access services. Parents will also have better information, including updated guidance for new parents provided after their child's birth.

Achieving the state's goals for young children also requires strengthening the support for professionals. Through the grant Nebraska will build the capacity of elementary school principals, provide support for improving curriculum and instructional materials, create targeted assistance for new providers, and work with existing providers to make the system more efficient.

The state will continue its progress toward having a data system that can inform decision-making, and through its evaluation of the grant's implementation will set up a continuous improvement cycle that can continue after the conclusion of the grant period.

Nebraska's early childhood community is proud of what it has accomplished and energized for the hard work ahead. Nebraska is requesting a Preschool Development Grant of \$5,853,683 to help it build on its successful efforts to create the next-generation system the state's children deserve.

Table of Contents

Contents

Project Summary/Abstract	1
Table of Contents	2
State B-5 Mixed Delivery System Description and Vision Statement	3
Activity One: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan	13
Activity Two: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan	21
Activity Three: Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge	26
Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices among State Early Childhood Care and Education Providers	33
Activity Five: Improving Overall Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education Programs/Providers/Services	39
Organizational Capacity and Management	43
Project Timeline and Milestones	47
Logic Model	53
Program Performance Evaluation Plan	54
Expected Outcomes	60
Project Sustainability Plan	61
Dissemination Plan	64
Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds	65
Project Budget and Budget Justification	66
Third-Party Agreements	71

State B-5 Mixed Delivery System Description and Vision Statement

The story of Nebraska's B-5 Mixed Delivery System is grounded in the leadership of its communities. A combination of federal, state, local, university-based, and philanthropically-funded initiatives have led to an increase in the number of young children receiving high-quality services, with a strong birth-to-five focus. Nebraska's system also includes a strong and growing focus on infants and toddlers, grounded in critical research on brain development showing that those years offer the greatest opportunity for impact on child development.

The Current Landscape of B-5 Early Childhood – Existing Programs, Successes, and Challenges

Nebraska is a state known for its high levels of employment – and indeed, it ranks among the top 10 of all states for the percentage of households where all adults are in the workforce. Nearly 80% of children age 5 and younger in Nebraska are in some type of paid care. This puts significant pressure on the system, and 84% of counties in Nebraska with child care facilities do not have enough available slots to meet the current demand.

A survey of Nebraskans expressed strong support for early care and education, paired with an overwhelming recognition that high-quality care and education is not available or affordable to enough Nebraska families. The annual cost for center-based infant care (\$12,272) is higher than the average tuition at public four-year colleges in Nebraska (\$7,883). Care is also expensive in home-based settings, which serve a significant percentage of Nebraska's young children; Nebraska is the least affordable state in the nation for infant and toddler family child care. An October 2018 report from Child Care Aware of America found that Nebraska ranked among the 10 least affordable states for child care in multiple categories: center-based infant care (41st), family infant care (50th), center-based toddler care (43rd), family toddler care (50th), center-based 4-year-old care (50th), and family 4-year-old care (50th).

A major challenge to the provision of quality early care and education is the availability of skilled professionals. The median salary for child care professionals in Nebraska is less than half that of K-12 teachers (\$18,706 compared to \$41,000) and is in fact well below the federal poverty line for a family of four. The median salary for Early Head Start teachers with an Infant/Toddler Child Development Associate degree is \$23,268. This makes it a struggle to attract and retain talent in the field; indeed, in 2016-17 Head Start and Early Head Start programs had a collective turnover rate of 33.2%. The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission is working on recommendations to address this problem.

Nebraska's state preschool program is operated by school districts and regional Education Service Units (ESUs) – and is noteworthy for its balance between 3- and 4-year-olds, in keeping with the state's recognition that serving children earlier offers the best strategy for success. In the latest national preschool rankings, Nebraska placed 6th for the percentage of 3-year-olds served (15%); it placed 17th for the percentage of 4-year-olds served (32%). In Nebraska 4-year-olds are included in the school funding formula. In addition to the almost 13,000 3- and 4-year-olds served by school districts, and ESUs, Nebraska also serves more than 4,000 3- and 4-year-olds through the federally-funded Head Start program. Almost half of these children (1,983) were served in inclusive, collaborative programs with school districts – which is encouraged by state law. Nebraska's innovative infant-toddler program, Sixpence (described below), also collaborates with Early Head Start and local school districts. This collaborative system demonstrates Nebraska's commitment to efficient use of resources.

Nebraska has a great statewide demand for infant/toddler care: more than 65% of the requests for child care referrals in Nebraska are for infant or toddler care. The state also is serving only a small percentage of the infants and toddlers eligible for Early Head Start (4%). Nebraska also

provides a framework for school districts to serve infants and toddlers: Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Rule 11 – the rule governing school district prekindergarten programs – includes provisions for infant-toddler programs.

In addition to these programs, Nebraska’s signature infant-toddler program is the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, a public-private partnership that promotes high-quality early care and education for infants and toddlers. Sixpence supports statewide and community-level collaboration, with an emphasis on school district leadership at the local level. It provides grants to support family engagement, home visiting, center based early care and education, and partnerships between schools and licensed child care programs. Under the Sixpence model, services are supported through a combination of state funds, federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) money, and/or the proceeds of a \$60 million endowment created by \$40 million in state money and \$20 million from private donations. Grant recipients are required to provide a 100% match to ensure local investment in the programs.

Another way in which Nebraska is a national leader is in Educare schools. Educare schools operate birth to five and are national leaders in high-quality infant and toddler education. They offer education and comprehensive services to low-income children on a full-day, full-year schedule, utilizing private support to leverage public funding. Nebraska has four Educare schools, including the nation’s only Educare school on tribal lands.

Nebraska also recognizes the importance of services that begin before birth. Early Head Start provides services to new and soon-to-be mothers, which is another focal area for Nebraska. The federally-funded Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program serves 244 children (228 of them aged birth to 3) at three sites, and Nebraska uses state funds to support four additional sites serving an additional 259 children (251 of them aged birth to 3).

Nebraska's early childhood systems have strong support from the public higher education system. Three of the four campuses of the University of Nebraska system have identified early childhood as a priority and have significant research and teaching investments in early childhood. The fourth campus has numerous programs focusing on young children, especially childhood obesity. The Nebraska system has also invested in a significant endowment with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, the largest endowment of a public university in early childhood in the nation. The Institute works across the four campuses and the state with signature programs in closing the achievement gap and the early childhood workforce.

Nebraska's statewide early childhood funding is administered by two separate agencies: The Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) and NDE. NDHHS is responsible for child care licensing and subsidy, and the federal and state 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 services, and has primary responsibility for the state early childhood professional development system. The two agencies have joint responsibility for *Step Up to Quality* (the state's quality rating and improvement system), Nebraska's professional recognition and improvement system, and Part C-Early Intervention (EI). Together, they also support the integrated Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) -- which serves as the State Advisory Council under the Head Start Act, and the state interagency coordinating council for Part C. Additionally, both agencies are responsible for the administration of the public dollars going into the public/private Sixpence Early Learning Fund; both agency heads sit on the Sixpence Board of Trustees.

Nebraska's community-level leadership has led to numerous local initiatives focused on early learning. For example, Prosper Lincoln is the state capital's comprehensive community agenda.

After an extensive stakeholder engagement process Lincoln chose Early Childhood as one of three key priority areas. Lincoln is far from alone in prioritizing this work: since 1997, the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFE) has been working in communities across Nebraska to support collaboration around a shared vision of strengthening families and communities to promote child well-being. This requires multiple entities -- including government, private organizations, business leaders, funders, family, and other stakeholders -- working collectively toward a shared vision for community well-being and desired outcomes for all in a community. These Community Collaboratives review community level data revealing strengths and challenges, then develop a local plan to support improved outcomes. Each community has identified early childhood services as an integral part of its work, with one or more committees focused on Birth to Five. Another NCFE initiative is Rooted in Relationships, which partners with communities to implement evidence-based practices that enhance social-emotional development for children birth to age 8; in 2017, a mix of public and private funds supported services impacting over 1,200 children.

Statewide initiatives like *Bring Up Nebraska* and the *Communities for Kids* project have demonstrated the state's commitment to building community-level capacity. *Bring Up Nebraska* has been strongly supported by First Lady Susanne Shore and helps communities develop long-term strategies to reduce the number of families in crisis. The *Communities for Kids* project is another effort to help communities build better systems to meet the needs of families and increase the supply of quality early learning environments for children. Another important statewide support for communities is the University of Nebraska's Extension office, which includes an initiative called *The Learning Child* that supports families and providers across the state. Extension educators live in or near the communities they serve, with a significant focus on

parent engagement and support, as well as coaching for providers. Stakeholders from all these initiatives participated in this grant preparation process, ensuring that the overall goals and outcomes will be relevant to Nebraska communities and families.

While communities are committed to early learning, some communities face significant resource challenges. In five Nebraska counties, poverty rates are over 35%, more than twice the national rate. The poverty rate of Native American Nebraskans is 43.2%, significantly higher than the national 28.8% poverty rate for Native Americans. In five counties the poverty rate for minorities is over 50%.

Communities in Nebraska are now struggling to attract the desired workforce needed to supply local businesses, schools, and hospitals. Emerging awareness around the challenges of balancing affordability for families against the costs of operating a quality program (especially serving infants and toddlers) is one unintended positive result as communities take steps toward raising local awareness to quality care for their workforce. But while each of these individual initiatives are excellent, they still exist largely in isolation from each other; they share a common focus on quality for young children, but lack consistent standards, requirements, and the full system of resources needed for families and their children.

The Vision for Nebraska's Early Childhood System

Nebraska's goal is for families to have strong early childhood options to choose among, supported by strong community leadership and a well-aligned state system.

Nebraska's vision is of 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. In particular, vulnerable families will be able to choose services that will help ensure that their

children have the opportunity to thrive, from birth through kindergarten and beyond.

Communities will identify their local needs, and with state data support and expertise to then be able to meet those needs through integrated systems of educators across multiple settings. A strong local control state, Nebraska state agencies look to regional and local entities to best understand these efforts by providing the regional infrastructure while state agencies provide overall guiding standards. These standards will aim for the highest quality in all services, while maintaining flexibility for unique local circumstances.

Specific examples of the state's role in this system include initiatives such as developing a singular definition of quality services, with the state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) tailored to that definition. Early childhood educators' competencies and learning standards will also be tied to that definition, so that professionals understand what is expected of them – including the instruction they are expected to provide. Its higher education workforce preparation institutions will focus on preparing teachers to meet those competencies. The state will continue to develop an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS), providing support for state-level policy and serving as a resource to communities. The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission has begun the process of aligning competencies and working with higher education institutions.

Regional entities and local communities will have primary responsibility for coordinating among educators and providers, which is logical given their knowledge of those educators and families' needs. Communities will establish systems ensuring that parents are able to understand their child's needs, and then find available services that meet those needs. Localities will also be responsible for bringing together providers from multiple sectors – including schools – to ensure

seamless transitions among programs, and into kindergarten. Regional entities such as the ESUs will provide support, especially in rural areas where there is limited community infrastructure.

Schools are a major provider of early learning services in Nebraska, and also play an important role in community level systems. NDE included a focus on the importance of kindergarten transition in its school accountability system. There are also numerous examples of collaborative local efforts to improve transition planning. One example is the Superintendents' Early Childhood Plan in Douglas and Sarpy Counties, which provides a blueprint for early childhood services in 11 Omaha-area school districts. This plan uses the school as a hub to connect early childhood providers, home visitors, and an integrated prekindergarten to third grade curriculum.

Involving Key Partners and Stakeholders

Nebraska's approach to policy change has always been a collaborative one. Only seven states have a lower population density than Nebraska, and many state level and regional leaders serve in multiple capacities for planning, allowing for extensive collaboration. In particular, state agencies have focused on engaging multiple stakeholders at the community level, where educators and providers from multiple sectors need to maintain working relationships-

At the state level, Nebraska's state advisory council is the umbrella for a great deal of coordination. The membership of the ECICC includes not only representatives of multiple state agencies but also service providers – including licensed center-based and family child care providers, public schools, social services, a pediatrician, business representatives, higher education, parents, and a state legislator. The ECICC will provide feedback and guidance over the year of the grant.

At the regional and local level, the Early Learning Connection (ELC) system builds partnerships including -- but not limited to -- early childhood education providers from the public school, Head Start/Early Head Start, child care, and special education/EI, as well as representatives from medical and mental health, higher education, child care licensing, and food and nutrition programs. Each system is unique, but all work to meet the needs of children in their specific region of the state. The Early Learning Connection system will be utilized to implement the activities in the grant, given its strong connections to their communities.

In preparing this application the state solicited feedback from a broad array of partners. An outline of the draft application was shared on-line, and 72 respondents provided feedback through an on-line survey. In addition, a meeting was held on October 4 for interested stakeholders; 116 people attended at eight video-connected sites in urban and rural areas across the state. Feedback was also solicited from leaders in three of Nebraska's four Native communities. The information gathered informs this application and will be revisited to frame in-depth work during the needs assessment and strategic plan processes.

In September of 2018, 74 Nebraska communities gathered in one location to engage in learning and conversations about enhancing, aligning, and sustaining early care and education systems in an event entitled "Thriving Children, Families, and Communities" sponsored by seven state-wide organizations. The event included active engagement from business owners, local governmental leaders, the state school board, public school leaders and practitioners, philanthropists, and state legislators. National and state experts presented and engaged alongside community leaders in transformative early childhood projects. The interest in this event indicates that Nebraska communities are primed to work with the state and provide parents with the best choices for their children.

Nebraskans also know it is necessary to close gaps identified in previous analyses of its early care and education system. This includes significant shortages of high-quality services for infants and toddlers and shortages of services for many pre-kindergarten children in numerous rural communities. These service gaps go beyond early care and education to include shortages of mental health and other services – which are often particularly acute in rural and frontier counties. Essential to closing those gaps will be ramping up Nebraska’s efforts to strengthen its early care and education workforce, which to date has been underpaid and undersupported.

Populations of Children Targeted and Intended Outcomes

While Nebraska will refine its definition of vulnerable children through Activity One as described below, its working definition will be the definition of “at risk” from NDE’s Rule 11. In this definition, a child is vulnerable if the child “is experiencing conditions or factors which could have a negative impact on his or her development or learning, including but not limited to such factors as low birth weight, poverty, being a child of teen parents or parents who did not graduate from high school, or living in a home whose occupants have limited ability to speak and understand English.” In 2016 almost 8% of Nebraska’s 26,594 live births were moderately low or very low birth weight, and approximately 1,200 were to teen mothers. Additional information about Nebraska’s children targeted is included under Activity One, and information about intended outcomes is included in the Expected Outcomes section.

A focus on rural children is important for any statewide initiative in Nebraska. The state defines “rural children” as those living in unincorporated areas or cities with fewer than 2,500 people. The Department of Rural Health within NDHHS classifies 71 of Nebraska’s 93 counties as rural. The Census Bureau currently estimates that Nebraska has 132,000 children under the age of five; about 20% of those children live in these rural counties.

Activity One: B-5 Statewide Needs Assessment Plan

Nebraska's goal in the Preschool Development Grant -- aligning state systems to equip local communities to deliver services, resulting in parents and families choosing options that support their child's healthy development -- requires that the needs assessment address not only state-level data and infrastructure but also local and regional data. Accordingly, Nebraska's needs assessment will include a focus on communities; not only will the needs assessment review the availability of services at the statewide level, it will drill deeper into community-level needs. In doing so the needs assessment will build on previous efforts to quantify the successes and opportunities of Nebraska's early childhood system.

In 2016-17 Nebraska's mixed delivery system served an unduplicated count of 22,543 children in public schools, ESUs, and Head Start/Early Head Start, including children with disabilities. This system is supported by local school district funds, State TEEOSA (Nebraska's compensatory state aid formula), Federal IDEA B and C funds, ESSA, Federal Head Start funds, and some parent pay. The NDE data system contains the number of children who are served by school districts and ESUs, including children from birth on receiving services in EI and Early Childhood Special Education. Additionally, the NDE system tracks children served by Head Start in classes in which schools and the Head Start grantees collaborate. Head Start data from state level PIR data has been examined and duplicate Head Start child records were subtracted to reach the unduplicated count. Nebraska's early childhood system also includes children in one of the 2,957 licensed community early childhood programs, including center-based and family child care, preschools, and faith-based programs.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) is building a new approach to updating unique counts of children receiving various services. The federated approach to data

matching will utilize data linked across source data housed within the NDHHS, the NDE, and other partners. A secure and unique linking identifier created through the matching process will be used to protect data privacy and support the delivery of distinct counts for reporting and analysis purposes. The current status of this work is addressed under Activity Five.

The Process of Developing the Needs Assessment: Developing Key Questions and Indicators

Nebraska will ensure that its key questions are aligned to the goals of its strategic plan by contracting with a consultant to oversee both the needs assessment and the strategic planning processes.¹ This allows for more efficient stakeholder engagement, given that both efforts will be seeking important input from the public and the field during the same six-month period.

The needs assessment process will begin with the development of definitions for key terms that will be used -- including “quality early childhood care and education” (which will begin with the definition of quality in *Step Up to Quality*), “availability,” “vulnerable or underserved,” and “children in rural areas” -- building on current state and federal eligibility guidelines for services. The definitions will be operationalized for data collection, analyses, and disaggregation, and will be phrased to be easily understood by the general population, including parents. The definition of vulnerable children will build on NDE’s Rule 11 definition of “at risk” (as described in the Mixed Delivery System Overview) and include, at a minimum, children who:

Definition	Population
Have special needs or disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1,619 infants and toddlers had an Individualized Family Service Plan • 14.7% of Nebraska school children are classified as special education
Are homeless	Unknown at this time
Are in the child welfare system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,485 children entered the child welfare system in 2016 • 10,135 were involved in child welfare system at some point during the year

¹ The consultant will need to have strong expertise at management of a needs assessment and strategic planning process, excellent writing and communication skills to prepare a final report, and strong research expertise. For this reason we anticipate that the consultant may in fact be a partnership among consultants, but for simplicity’s sake this narrative refers to a single consultant.

Definition	Population
Are income-eligible for Head Start, or in families supported by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32% of Hispanic children were living below the poverty line; 50% of American Indian children; and 43% of Black/African-American; • 29,986 children received child care subsidy in 2016; 23,711 were from families living below 100% of the federal poverty level • 140,275 public and nonpublic students were eligible for free and reduced lunch in 2015/16
Are experiencing or have experienced trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20.6% of children 4 months to 5 years were at moderate to high risk of behavioral or developmental problems based on parents' specific concerns • An estimated 20% of Nebraska children have 3 or more Adverse Childhood Experiences • 33,977 reports of alleged maltreatment • 21.8% of maltreatment cases were infants 0-1 • Nebraska has the nation's highest rate of refugee resettlement per capita in the US, but the population of refugee young children in the state is unknown.
Come from a home where the primary language spoken is not English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.1% of students were English language learners
Need care during non-traditional hours	Unknown at this time
Live in rural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 26,000 children 0-5 live in rural counties • More children live in rural areas of counties that are not entirely rural

The final needs assessment will use those definitions to identify how many children in the state are vulnerable or underserved.

The needs assessment consultant will analyze numerous existing reports, including but not limited to: Head Start/Early Head Start needs assessments; the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey, a comprehensive survey of the state's early childhood workforce from birth through grade three; the results of a joint statewide survey by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) and Gallup, Inc. to explore beliefs and attitudes about early childhood education; the results of a needs assessment of child care in rural Nebraska and Kansas being jointly conducted by the University of Nebraska Extension and Kansas State University;

evaluation reports of *Step Up to Quality*; a 2017 report published by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) entitled *Mapping Quality of Life in Nebraska: The Geographic Distribution of Poverty*; and qualitative needs assessments conducted by public health departments and BECI with 15 focus groups in the rural Panhandle area of the state. This existing data will allow the needs assessment to more specifically target questions for families and providers.

The needs assessment will also address issues identified as important by stakeholders -- including through the development of this grant application – such as the following:

Category	Key Questions
Access to Quality Early Childhood Care and Education (disaggregated by county where possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many vulnerable children are there in Nebraska? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How many of these children are 0-3? ○ How many of these children live in rural Nebraska? How many live in low-income urban areas? • How many vulnerable children are served in high quality programs? • How many programs are a part of <i>Step Up to Quality</i>? What are the characteristics of those programs? What are the characteristics of programs that are not part of <i>Step Up to Quality</i>? • How many children identified under IDEA receive required services? Don't receive required service? • How many children need mental health services? • How many children need care outside of traditional hours? • How many children experiencing illness need care? • How many children 0-5 are excluded or suspended from early childhood programs? What are the impacts of those exclusions or suspensions?
Availability of Quality Services (disaggregated by county where possible)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many programs/providers serve vulnerable children? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How many children do they serve? Include a focus on 0-3 and rural populations. • What are the quality standards of early childhood care and education (ECCE) programs where vulnerable children are served? • In what settings is ECCE provided (i.e., homes, centers, schools, including faith-based)? By what kind of providers (e.g. for-profit, non-profit, religious)? How many children are in each kind of setting? • Do providers have the capacity to delivery high quality ECCE? Capacity for trauma-informed ECCE? • What facility requirements do providers have to meet accreditation standards or Step Up to Quality standards? • How many early childhood facilities do we have? Need? • How many programs coordinate with the other ECCE/Kindergarten programs to support transitions?

Category	Key Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What mental health services and supports are available for children? Families? Providers? • Do programs provide supports for families when children transition into new settings, especially the transition to Kindergarten?
Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the qualifications required by programs for their early care and education teachers, assistant teachers, and home visitors? • Are qualified personnel available for ECCE programs? • What are the qualifications of the personnel available? • Are existing preparation programs meeting the state's needs? • Is the supply of professional development adequate to meet the need? What is the quality of that professional development? • Does the state offer enough training on high quality services and trauma-informed care to meet the needs of providers?
Gaps in Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the state CCR&R system provide the information that parents report they need? • What gaps are there in data about the quality and availability of ECCE services? • What gaps are there in research about the quality and availability of ECCE services?
Funding barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What barriers do families have when accessing funding assistance programs (e.g., child care subsidy, SNAP, WIC)? • What barriers do providers have when accessing funding assistance for families in their care (e.g., child care subsidy)?

Nebraska will use the needs assessment process to update its key indicators. Nebraska's Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) -- described further under Activity Two -- developed 15 key indicators significant for predicting child well-being and success. An indicator report highlighting the trends among these indicators was published in 2011. The ECDC is in the process of reviewing the 15 key indicators for a new report while supporting broader efforts related to the creation of a Nebraska ECIDs. The ECDC's current indicators will be used at the outset to inform the launch of the needs assessment, and the ECDC will be consulted throughout the needs assessment process so that the final report can reflect any updates to those indicators.

As part of the needs assessment programs will be asked about their facility related needs, particularly as they relate to moving up in *Step Up to Quality* or to meet accreditation standards.

Additionally, a family home provider project in Activity Five will explore the facilities needs of these programs; many of Nebraska's children are in these settings and as small businesses they face significant facility challenges. Many communities have struggled to find adequate space for program expansion, and the needs assessment can build on a recent report prepared by RDG Planning and Design and local funders to identify the factors communities need to take into consideration when deciding how to build or renovate existing facilities to expand the number of children for whom they can provide services. RDG, an Omaha based architectural firm, has designed high quality ECCE centers nationally and internationally.

The Process of Developing the Needs Assessment: Stakeholder Engagement

The state will define the final scope of the inquiry with stakeholder input on the key questions. A stakeholder engagement process will ensure that parents, educators and providers, and other community leaders have an opportunity to react to the key questions and identified gaps. Nebraska has established groups that can provide detailed guidance, including the ECICC, the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission, and the Sixpence Board of Trustees.

The stakeholder engagement process will include a focus on families and their input. To maximize the efficiency of the stakeholder feedback process, the consultant will conduct stakeholder engagement for the needs assessment and strategic plan simultaneously through an integrated process. Using the network of UNL Extension Educators and NDE Early Learning Coordinators six open forums for parents, educators, and providers that will be held around the state to maximize citizen feedback; two of these forums will be parent focused. The use of Extension Educators and Early Learning Coordinators to facilitate these forums will help to increase parent involvement due to their connections with the local communities. Additionally, Head Start/Early Head Start parent Policy Councils and Planning Region Teams for EI will

ensure their communities are engaged. Data collected by the Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC) resource and referral system will also provide input from families.

Early in the second quarter, draft findings will be presented by the consultant for public consideration at moderated public forums hosted by members of the ECICC. An additional meeting of ECICC will be held to discuss the findings before the report is finalized by the NDHHS; the draft will also be circulated to all the key stakeholders engaged in the process (including those that hosted and attended public forums) and posted on-line. The sequence of events is described more fully under Activity Two, Strategic Planning. Nebraska has designated \$2,712,000 in grant funds to support a thorough needs assessment process.

Analyzing the Mixed-Delivery System and the Scope of the Needs Assessment

The needs assessment must address both what families encounter as they search for services for their children and what services the state actually offers. Therefore, Nebraska’s mixed-delivery system will be examined from both a bottom-up and a top-down approach to determine the quality and availability of programming and supports for young children. Multiple surveys and analyses will be utilized to identify (1) family views of what services they need, what services they have access to, and what barriers they encounter in accessing those services; (2) the needs articulated by educators and providers; (3) regional analyses of existing services and geographic gaps of services; and (4) state agency level information about services offered and capacity. The comparison of state level data and the regional and family level data will allow for identification of gaps to be addressed at local and state levels.

Input Source	Process
Families	A random sample of families (final sample weighted to match Nebraska demographics) will be surveyed to determine their knowledge of and access to educational, social, and mental health services. Methodology from the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) will be utilized to help identify all child care arrangements used by families. Oversampling will

Input Source	Process
	<p>occur for families in poverty, minorities, and Spanish-speaking families. The survey will also be translated into Spanish in order to target families with English as a second language (Spanish is the second most spoken language to English in the state). Focus groups will be conducted in communities identified as frontier, rural, or lacking services.</p>
<p>Educators and Providers</p>	<p>All licensed child care providers, license-exempt, Head Start, Sixpence, and Prekindergarten programs will be surveyed to determine the services offered to parents such as transportation and acceptance of subsidy. The public forums for input on this grant also raised expulsion and suspension as an issue of concern therefore programs will be asked about their policies and the number of children have been expelled or suspended. In order to better understand informal and unlicensed child care providers' role in families' lives, the methodology from NSECE will be used to identify these providers.</p>
<p>Regional Service Providers and Communities</p>	<p>Nebraska has 17 ESUs that cover the state and are designed to support efforts over multiple school districts. They provide specialized services to schools including professional development, student services, and technology infrastructure. As a mid-level state entity, the ESUs can serve as geographic organizers to analyze data. School district and county level data will not provide sufficient power and risks the identification of individual providers and families. Family level data will therefore be aggregated to the ESU level to look for trends and gaps.</p> <p>To identify the actual services available to families, key informants from ESU personnel, Nebraska Extension educators, Early Development Network personnel, and licensing specialists will be surveyed and asked to participate in focus groups. These professionals live in the local communities and often refer families to services in the area. Other key respondents in communities will also be surveyed to ensure a comprehensive view of local availability of services. Previous data indicate that families are often unaware of services in their area. By surveying these professionals, the state can gain a better understanding of what services actually exist. This data can also be compared to reports from state-level agencies (see below).</p>
<p>State level agencies</p>	<p>Systems change requires an understanding of the actual systems and their capacity at the state level. The needs assessment process will therefore make use of existing system-level analysis tools such as <i>Comprehensive Early Childhood System Building: A Tool to Inform Discussions on Collaborative, Cross-Sector Planning</i>; the ACF Office of Child Care's <i>System Building Resources and Tools and Capacity Building Self-Assessment Tool</i>; and <i>Infant and Toddlers in the Policy Picture: A Self-Assessment Toolkit for States from Zero to Three</i>. These tools will help the state plan for more efficient services to families and children. This analysis will also utilize data from NDHHS, the NDE, Sixpence, and Head Start/Early Head Start to determine the number of children served by the state.</p>

The final needs assessment will include both a reporting of the critical data relating to the chosen indicators, and an analysis and explanation of what the data mean. In addition to the statewide analysis, the needs analysis will consider how these issues play out across different communities. The needs assessment will show if there are meaningful differences in service levels based on geography, with deeper dives into a small number of different kinds of communities (urban, suburban, and rural) as exemplars.

Activity Two: B-5 Statewide Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan Process

Nebraska's process for developing its strategic plan will draw on the best thinking of a wide cross-section of stakeholders and build on the significant work the state has already undertaken. In particular, the statewide plan will recognize the importance of local leadership and capacity, and proposes to make state government's support of local leaders more efficient and effective. As noted in Activity One, the work will be led by the same consultant that will lead the development of the Needs Assessment.

The process will start with the lead consultant preparing a draft outline of the strategic plan, building on the feedback the state received in developing its PDG application and the analyses from the needs assessment. This initial outline will also draw on the strategic plans and goals developed by the Nebraska State Board of Education and the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission, as well as the NDHHS CCDF State Plan for Nebraska for FY 19-21. That draft will then be vetted with stakeholders for their input and consideration. The state will host in-person discussions in different parts of the state (as discussed in Activity One), and also offer the opportunity to provide feedback on-line.

As in the PDG application process described above, the state will solicit feedback from a wide range of stakeholders – including the many people who participated in the stakeholder engagement process used to develop this grant application. Input will be solicited from representatives of a broad set of services – including Head Start/Early Head Start and Tribal programs, child care subsidy and licensing, early education (including Early Childhood Special Education and EI), Title I, child nutrition, higher education, philanthropy, advocacy, and the regional professional development system, among others.

Once public feedback has been received on the initial draft outline that addresses these issues a full draft plan will be prepared by the consultant. The consultant will publicly share the plan for a final round of stakeholder feedback. The ECICC will play a leadership role in the consideration and approval of the strategic plan; members of the ECICC will be actively involved in the plan process throughout, and each ECICC meeting will include an update on the Plan’s progress. The Council is scheduled to meet in February, May, August, and November; it will add a special meeting in June to consider and comment on a full draft of the strategic plan before the plan is given final approval by the lead agency. Additional special meetings will be scheduled if needed. Nebraska has budgeted \$701,403 to support the strategic plan and performance evaluation activities.

The consolidated process for the needs assessment and strategic plan will be as follows:

Month	Needs Assessment Activity	Strategic Plan Activity
1	Prepare draft definitions, key questions, and indicators based on available resources and previous stakeholder input	Prepare plan outline based on available resources and previous stakeholder input
2 3	Share draft definitions, key questions, and indicators with stakeholders at public meetings around the state, including an ECICC meeting and meetings around the state as described under Activity One; post draft on-line	Share draft plan with stakeholders at public meetings around the state, including an ECICC meeting and meetings around the state as described under Activity One; post draft on-line

Month	Needs Assessment Activity	Strategic Plan Activity
4	Update definitions, key questions, and indicators based on stakeholder feedback; conduct research to answer key questions	Prepare revisions based on stakeholder feedback
5		Share updated draft plan on-line; notify stakeholders of opportunity to comment
6	Present final research and analysis and share near-final draft at ECICC for review. Finalize report with NDHHS for submission to federal government.	Integrate additional feedback and present near-final draft to ECICC for review. Finalize report with NDHHS for submission to federal government.

Areas of Focus in the Strategic Plan

The draft plan will utilize the key indicators of progress developed through the needs assessment process, to ensure alignment between the desired outcomes and chosen strategies. Based on the state’s existing initiatives and the feedback received through the PDG application process, the strategic plan will address at least the following topics:

Topic	Description
Access to high-quality services	The strategy for increasing access to high-quality early childhood services, based on the data in the needs assessment – including the known need to address shortages and challenges in infant-toddler services and in rural areas.
Improved quality and accountability	Nebraska’s QRIS, <i>Step Up to Quality</i> , is a key driver of quality improvement. The strategic plan will consider how participation in <i>Step Up to Quality</i> might be expanded, and how it can maximize its impact on participating programs – including through improved oversight and monitoring processes that streamline administrative requirements for providers. <i>Step Up to Quality</i> can serve as a framework for aligning and unifying quality across ECCE, and Nebraska will nest <i>Step Up to Quality</i> into a broader approach to improvement that identifies statewide cross-sector improvement metrics.
Qualified Professionals	The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission is dedicated to ensuring that all children from birth through grade three have access to a skilled, informed and diverse workforce. The Commission is engaging multiple state leaders to develop a consensus action plan that focuses on qualifications, funding, and public will and commitment to address Nebraska’s early childhood workforce shortage, a problem that to date has largely eluded resolution. Its report will include both short-term and long-term strategies. The strategic plan can build on the Commission’s work, and on existing efforts to coordinate hiring and benefits -- and address salary deficiencies -- across multiple programs, in multiple communities.
Pathways and credential for early	Nebraska requires all teachers employed by public schools and ESUs to have at least a bachelor’s degree and hold a teaching certificate. In center-based settings, 46% of teachers have a bachelor’s degree (Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Survey, 2017), but they do not hold a teaching certificate.

Topic	Description
childhood educators	Concerns about shortage of teachers -- particularly infant-toddler teachers -- have led the state to consider alternatives. For example, in the 2018 legislative session LB 803 gave the State Board of Education the authority to institute a waiver for districts with early childhood programs that do not employ certificated teachers. The strategic plan will address pathways for the early childhood educators to become qualified without sacrificing quality.
Barriers to Access	In addition to the need for skilled professionals, there are other barriers to access for families. For example, the hours at which services are available impact families with non-traditional work schedules; transportation issues can be particularly acute in the large parts of Nebraska with lower population density, and 42,715 (5.7%) households had no vehicle available in 2016. The strategic plan will consider how these issues can be addressed.
Suspension and Expulsion	Nebraskans are concerned about the suspension and expulsion of preschoolers, and will study efforts in other states to propose an approach to dealing with suspension and expulsion that protects the needs of children, builds the capacity of professionals, and engages families.
Integrating Data	Nebraska has been working to develop the linkages creating a better connection between information about children served in community programs and about children served in school districts, ESUs, and Head Start/Early Head Start. This will allow for much better collaboration at the state level, and will also provide communities with information they need to plan services. Nebraska’s Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) includes representatives from key data collection agencies – including NDHHS and NDE – and partners from outside of government, including foundations, advocacy groups, and university partners. The ECDC identified indicators available and needed to track the well-being of young children, and is now updating those indicators. Additionally, the state obtained a competitive grant to partner with ECDataWorks to plan an interactive community assessment tool that will provide information to the public and other stakeholders about existing programs and services. The state’s ESUs assist school districts with their data management and needs and their expertise will be utilized to better integrate data across systems. The public school system has struggled with integrating data across districts and agencies such as child welfare, and has insights that will assist the integration of data from birth to kindergarten.
Transition into Kindergarten	The state’s implementation plan for ESSA makes kindergarten transition a point of emphasis, which is also a critical priority of Head Start and preschool programs, and will work to incorporate transitions from child care settings. The strategic plan will articulate best practices for this important transition, including alignment across programs and parental engagement throughout the process, aligned to the work described under Activity Four.
Long-term outcomes	The Nebraska State Board of Education (SBE) recognizes that it cannot achieve its long-term goals without improving kindergarten readiness, which is reflected in its implementation of ESSA – and in its school accountability and improvement system, AQUESTT (Accountability for a Quality Education

Topic	Description
	System, Today and Tomorrow). The strategic plan will discuss the role of kindergarten readiness in the state’s broader educational goals.
Community-level systems	Nebraska’s approach to community systems development is broad, and goes beyond early care and education providers, as described in the Overview above. Within the realm of early care and education, community-level systems frequently need to take account of the high percentage of children served by private, faith-based, and home-based providers. These systems are at the core of Nebraska’s efforts to improve collaboration and coordination, and the strategic plan will address how the state can best support them.
Governance	The state-level governance of early childhood programs, and how the working relationships among NDE, NDHHS, the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, and other leading agencies can be strengthened to improve coordination and collaboration at the state and local level. This will include stronger coordination among all sectors of the system, school district/ESU operated, licensed and license-exempt child care, faith based, and state-funded programs and Head Start programs.
Private and Philanthropic Partners	The critical role of Nebraska’s private sector and philanthropic partners, who have supported numerous important initiatives: Nebraska’s groundbreaking Sixpence Early Learning Fund (described later in this application); the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, which has invested more than \$102 million in organizations and projects promoting early childhood practice, policy and research across Nebraska since its inception in 2003; the advocacy organization First Five Nebraska; and projects of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) including Rooted in Relationships, Communities for Kids, and more.

On each of these issues, Nebraska will identify ways in which policy and practice changes can lead to improved coordination and collaboration, and the partnerships that will be necessary for that improved coordination and collaboration to be successful. In doing so Nebraska will consider the appropriate role for communities, regional service entities, and state government agencies – along with private and philanthropic partners who routinely work with governmental leaders at all levels.

The strategic plan process will also incorporate the ECDC’s process of updating its indicators. By the end of the strategic planning process the ECDC will have updated the key indicators to reflect the direction of the strategic plan. The final indicators will be included in the plan and used by the ECDC and others – including the ECICC – to track progress in future years.

Activity Three: Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge

Nebraska's approach to maximizing parental choice and knowledge will utilize community-level structures to ensure that parents are provided with the information they need, and that they are empowered to advocate on behalf of their child(ren). In many Nebraska communities there is limited access to services – or there are transportation barriers to the services that are available – and Nebraska's approach to parental support will take that reality into account.

Parents Have Timely, Accurate Information in a Culturally & Linguistically Sensitive Manner

Nebraska's QRIS, *Step Up to Quality*, provides a pathway for providers to improve and to inform parents about their early education and care options. Using *Step Up to Quality* as a baseline, the grant will allow Nebraska to strengthen systems for informing and empowering parents. The state's approach will include a focus on supporting regional- and community-level systems that engage and inform parents, and based on the belief that parental choice is most meaningful when there are multiple quality options available.

Providing parents with the information they need starts with engaging parents to determine what that information actually is. The needs assessment and strategic plan processes will identify some of that information, but Nebraska will drill deeper by leveraging ongoing work with families around the state. NCFE-sponsored initiatives like *Rooted in Relationships* and *Communities for Kids* survey parents at the community level, with particular outreach in high-need communities. Early in the grant year these processes will be used to surface common interests across the state, to guide the provision of information that is useful to families. Families will also be asked about the methods of information distribution that are most effective for them.

Informed by what parents really want to know and how they want to learn it, grant funds will then be used to hire a consultant to help parents get that information in two important ways.

- The first will be to design guidance for communities on how to deliver the information parents need in a user-friendly manner. There are numerous communities in Nebraska that are already working on providing more useful information at a community level. During the grant period the consultant will use the information gathered from parents and interviews with communities to develop a playbook for disseminating information to parents, based on the needs of families and the modes in which they want to receive information. The playbook will acknowledge the fact that some needs are common across communities and others vary, so it will offer different options that allow flexibility in community approach. The playbook will also include a set of questions that communities should be asking to analyze existing services and service gaps, building on the statewide needs assessment.
- The consultant will also develop recommendations on the state's existing internet-based parent resources, including the NDHHS and *Step Up to Quality* websites. The goal is to ensure that parents have good information and to maximize efficiency, so the consultant will provide specific recommendations about what the overall web presence of the state should look like to achieve that goals.

The process of developing these recommendations will be supported by \$50,000 in grant funds, and a \$276,000 match from NCFE.

At both the local and state level the recommendations will address the need for parents to be provided information about the full complement of services that benefit children -- Medicaid, Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), Title V Maternal and Child Health Programs, Healthy Start, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), WIC, and other health, mental health, and human services programs. The consultant's report will emphasize the importance of

ensuring that parents of children identified for services under IDEA are able to find those services, and access inclusive settings -- which requires targeted efforts to inform parents about the services to which the law entitles them. This will also include efforts to ensure that parents have information on how to have their child screened for eligibility for services under IDEA.

The consultant's recommendations will be about the information parents want, not about the technical infrastructure needed to provide it – but the consultant will share its findings with the Early Childhood Data Coalition to inform the further development of the ECIDS (described further under Activity Five). The Early Childhood Data Coalition and the ECICC will also review and comment on the consultant's recommendations on how to structure the state's overall approach to internet-based parent information.

Increasing Involvement by and Engagement of Parents in Child Development and Education

Engagement Begins at Birth

Nebraska state statute requires NDE, in cooperation with the NDHHS, to develop a resource packet to be distributed to parents of every child born in Nebraska. This packet -- entitled *Learning Begins at Birth* -- is intended to inform parents about guiding their children's early cognitive and physiological development. It is also intended to contain information on selecting child care, accessing child and family service systems, as well as other information relevant to families with young children. Statute requires that this packet be made available to parents in multiple languages and may be in a variety of media formats.

This packet was first created in 2003 and revised in 2010. While it currently exists as a downloadable PDF in both English and Spanish, it is neither widely nor consistently distributed to its target audience. The PDG would allow Nebraska state agencies to redevelop this resource, ensure the information it contains is both accurate and timely, and increase its availability to

parents through multiple media formats and distribution methods, and in a range of languages to meet the state's needs. Using information gleaned from the family engagement focus groups, child development experts and contracted marketing professionals will create the resources that will be family centered and easily accessed. Draft materials will then be shared for review with established parent groups, such as Early Head Start Policy Councils. Ensuring that every family with a newborn receives an updated and improved resource packet will strengthen the knowledge base of parents as caregivers and educators of very young children, and their ability to make more informed decisions about quality ECCE settings. In sum, improving this resource has the potential to contribute significantly to better developmental outcomes for children statewide. Nebraska has budgeted \$69,700 to support the update of *Learning Begins at Birth*.

Train-the-Trainer Expansion

Getting Ready is an evidence-based approach to parent engagement in early childhood settings with a specific focus on vulnerable young children and families. In *Getting Ready* professionals support the engagement of parents as they interact with their children in ways that promote parental warmth, sensitivity, and active participation in supporting children's early learning. The approach targets partnerships between families and professionals and aligns with any home visitation curriculum, encouraging parent empowerment and confidence in decision making -- and targeting effective transition to kindergarten by building parent competencies in working with educational systems. *Getting Ready* has a strong evidence base developed through randomized controlled trials over the last decade that show positive effects on children's development -- including social-emotional skills, behavioral competencies, and language and early literacy for children birth to age five. Effects have been identified for parental engagement.

To date *Getting Ready* has been used in 20 Head Start/state funded preschool center-based programs and in three EHS home-based programs throughout state as part of research trials. In 2016 it was adopted by Nebraska Part C services to be used statewide as the evidence-based intervention to promote quality home visitation services for infants/toddlers with disabilities.

Nebraska proposes a \$455,537 grant project using a train the trainer model. Within four targeted areas home visitation professionals serving children birth to three and Head Start center-based programs serving children 3-5 will be targeted. This extension of *Getting Ready* services will build on the infrastructure that has been developed through Part C.

First, the *Getting Ready* training materials will be modified to align with MIECHV and EHS/HS curricula -- including the refinement of video modules that can be used for remote training in rural communities. Four trainers will be identified from each of the participating ESUs; each will be trained to deliver the initial one-day *Getting Ready* training and provide up to three virtual coaching sessions with each professional. Professionals must obtain fidelity on two home visits to be approved in the process. Trainers who are bi-lingual will be recruited specifically to be part of the train-the-trainer opportunity, to ensure the participation of providers for whom English is not their primary language. Thirty MIECHV home visitors and 50 EHS/Head Start home visitors and teachers will be targeted. Additionally, a one-day training will be offered in coordination with the Recharge for Resilience conference in October 2019 -- a professional development conference for home visitation -- to provide the initial *Getting Ready* training to professionals not affiliated with the targeted service areas and expand reach.

Expanding Family Engagement Pilot

The grant will also allow Nebraska to pilot a family engagement resource called *ReadyRosie*. *ReadyRosie* is a birth through elementary family engagement resource that facilitates family

partnerships that will influence student outcomes. The program incorporates the latest research on family engagement, developmentally appropriate practice, state and national standards, family protective factors and core social emotional competencies as the foundation of learning games and activities. It provides data for administrators, teachers, and families to measure outcomes.

ReadyRosie has over 1,000 “Modeled Moment” English and Spanish videos that are delivered to families via text, email, and website. It allows educators to target specific skills and customize and individualize the videos to be shared with the parents of the students in their classrooms. It can also be used to provide interactive family workshops, for professional development, and to support to build a cohesive family engagement plan.

Using \$150,000 in grant funds and \$40,000 in matching funds, ReadyRosie will be piloted in 300 birth through preschool classrooms statewide with parents and teachers. The Buffett Early Childhood Fund has committed to supporting expansion of the program if the pilot is successful.

Empowering Parents in the Transition to Kindergarten

One important element of this grant will be to redesign the transition point between kindergarten and preschool, focusing on standards, curriculum, and assessment; that work is discussed further under Activity Four. But even with better alignment between preschool and kindergarten, families still need support to navigate the transition. *Getting Ready* aids with transitions across settings within early childhood, as well as the transitions that occur as children age. Its focus on supporting parents as active partners in their children’s learning and development helps parents with the skills needed to engage effectively with educators and other professionals -- including their child’s kindergarten teacher and other elementary school professionals. *ReadyRosie* also supports parents to effectively communicate with kindergarten teachers about who their child is as a learner, and helps to prevent learning loss over the summer.

Meeting the Needs of Parents Who Are Vulnerable or Whose Home Language Is Not English

As described above, the state’s parent information template design process will include a focus on ensuring that the template is responsive to the needs of parents who are vulnerable, or who speak a home language other than English. The design of the project will solicit feedback from these parents and engage appropriate experts to ensure that the final design of the project meets their needs. *Learning Begins at Birth*, *Getting Ready*, and *ReadyRosie* are available in Spanish to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking families.² The strategic plan and needs assessment will also include a focus on the needs of these families, as discussed under Activities One and Two. This includes the need to address suspension and expulsion policies and transportation gaps, both of which likely have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable families.

Supporting Coordination at the State Level

Coordination of family engagement at the state level will be led by NDHHS and NDE, with the leadership of the ECICC. These agencies already coordinate on important initiatives relating to parent engagement, including *Step Up to Quality*, the co-administration of EI services, and the use of quality set-aside funds in the Child Care Development Block Grant – which flows through NDHHS and is used to fund a major portion of the state’s early childhood professional development system, including many projects administered by the NDE Office of Early Childhood Education. The ECICC will be used to inform all of the projects described in this Activity, and will ensure that it is implemented in a manner that is consistent with the needs assessment and strategic plan. Importantly, the ECICC includes parent representatives, and representatives of programs such as Head Start that have a strong parent engagement component.

² U.S. Census data indicates that Spanish is by far the second-most common home language in Nebraska.

Activity Four: Sharing Best Practices among State Early Childhood Care and Education Providers

Nebraska has numerous efforts underway to strengthen its professional development system, and will accelerate those efforts through this grant. Nebraska's current system for training early childhood providers includes ELCs who provide professional development through the Nebraska Department of Education's ECTC, University of Nebraska Extension (Extension), and other private trainers. The state also has multiple promising efforts that provide coaching to early childhood professionals. Head Start/Early Head Start grantees also have access to federally-funded professional development opportunities.

Improving the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions

In preparing Nebraska's PDG application, state agency leaders worked with stakeholders to identify several key subject areas where providers would like to see stronger sharing of best practices to improve quality. Nebraska is already addressing several of those issues, and will continue to do so throughout the course of the grant (using \$276,400 in matching funds). For example, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund is piloting the All Our Kin model, which gives home-based providers intensive business training on effective child care management – followed by a two-year program of support through quality coaching. The pilot will begin with the training of trainers and coaches in spring 2019, with recruitment of providers launching in June.

The focus of Nebraska's grant work to improve quality will relate to supporting the transition into kindergarten, including sharing best practices among educators working with children in the preschool and early elementary years to support continuity of expectations and strategies. To better define the policy and practice framework for that transition, Nebraska will engage teachers and other education leaders to solicit their feedback to inform state policy. Specific activities led by NDE will include:

- Disseminating materials about its aligned learning standards – from birth through grade 12 – contained in the Early Learning Guidelines and K-12 content area standards.
- Examining best practices in the alignment of instructional practices across the birth to age eight continuum. Grant-funded activities will focus on the birth to five years and their connection to kindergarten.
- Identifying high quality instructional materials. Through the Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative the state already provides this support to K-12 educators, which will expand to the prekindergarten years. The review process will include *Step Up to Quality* leaders to ensure that the curricula identified can be implemented effectively in a broad set of mixed-delivery settings.
- Partnering with the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) to bring the NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy to Nebraska to provide learning and mentoring opportunities to principals and early childhood coordinators about best practices in prekindergarten through third grade, including partnering with community programs for successful transitions.
- Partnering with the Nebraska Council of School Administrators. Each year the NDE works with the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to present *Administrator's Days*, a multi-day event of professional development targeted specifically to principals, superintendents, special education directors and other school leaders. A pre-session will be held to assist school leaders in learning about, and planning for, implementation of research-based transition practices. In addition to school and ESU administration, Head Start leaders and community child care directors will be invited. NDE staff from the Office of Early Childhood with expertise and experience in Head Start, district preschool programs, and

community child care will team with practitioners in the field to highlight practices that have been shown to smooth transitions. The Head Start Collaboration Director will be instrumental in facilitating local transition agreements.

Nebraska will allocate a total of \$195,057 from the grant to support these activities.

Nebraska will also provide mental health supports to providers to support their ongoing success. Research shows that ECCE teachers face multiple job-related stresses – including low pay, challenging child behaviors, and inadequate role preparation. To help them be in the right mental state to provide the connection children need -- and to support retention and job satisfaction -- Nebraska will support participation in an eight-week mindfulness-based reflection program that is showing promising evidence, *Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME)*. The program hosts small group meetings for 90 minutes a week to reflect and choose a mindfulness activity, with participating early childhood teachers supported by a Guiding Teacher. This focus on provider mental health has been shown in other research to support educator retention, an acknowledged need in the state. Nebraska will use \$141,849 in grant funds to support the enrollment of 50 teachers, and to evaluate the impact of their enrollment. Sharing Best Practices Among Early Childhood Providers to Reduce Duplication of Effort,

Leverage Financial and Other Resources, Increase Program Quality and Efficiency

Nebraska's approach to sharing best practices among providers to improve quality and efficiency will include strategies to engage with new early care and education providers, and also strategies for bringing together continuing providers. Nebraska already has numerous leading-edge policies to improve early childhood financing – including tax credits for providers to encourage quality, financial incentives built into *Step Up to Quality* special grants to providers

made available through CCDF, and the innovative Sixpence Early Learning Fund. It will add focused supports to those building blocks through Activity Four.

Getting New Early Care and Education Providers Started on the Right Foot

Getting providers off to a strong start is critical to their long-term success, and new providers are often are unprepared for the challenges of launching and sustaining an early care and education business or non-profit. Through this grant Nebraska will pilot a new approach to engaging with prospective providers that gives them specialized support as they move through the licensing process and begin serving children.

The initiative would focus on new providers beginning the licensing process who agree to participate in the state's subsidized child care program, the CACFP, and in *Step Up to Quality*. It would include both home- and center-based providers. New providers would be offered support in numerous essential functions, including: navigating the licensing process and the subsidy process; participating in the CACFP; entering staff into the state's professional registry; preparing for annual inspections; improving business planning; and understanding shared services and reimbursement rates. The program will assist providers in working with families in a culturally and linguistically sensitive way, as well as serving children with disabilities -- and collaborating with other providers serving young children.

Providers would receive technical assistance and coaching individually tailored to the center or Family Child Care Home. After programs are licensed and begin serving children, they would be welcomed into cohorts, and would receive continuing support over the course of the year. The participating programs would be exempted from taking the state required training, eliminating the expense of paying for staff to attend outside training events. This is possible because the content of the required training will be embedded in the individualized technical assistance.

The program would be offered initially to providers in areas with substantial service gaps. A contractor(s) will be identified at the beginning of the grant year and will work with experts in child care licensing and subsidy, as well as the CACFP and *Step Up to Quality*. The first quarter of 2019 will be spent planning the program, advertising the alternate pathway and learning from experts in each area to ensure that correct information will be provided. Prospective child care providers will be offered the chance to participate beginning in April. Job embedded coaching and tailored professional development will ensure that the content of the required training will be delivered, and support regarding successful participation in the aforementioned programs. In total this project will require \$200,000 of grant funds.

Engaging Existing Providers

This grant will also accelerate efforts to connect providers around issues of business operations and efficiency through shared services. The Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) will host a first ever statewide child care business summit in June 2019, designed to improve the operational efficiency and effectiveness of family child care and centers. Attendees will hear from industry leaders -- including Louise Stoney of the Alliance for Early Childhood Finance -- and share ideas with colleagues and peers. Breakout sessions will cover business topics including human resource management, financial management, budgeting, enrollment and billing, marketing, facilities, and leadership development. The summit will cost \$27,125 in grant funds, and private funders have committed to supporting the summit in future years.

The NECC will engage existing providers by offering 1,500 complimentary subscriptions to the Nebraska Early Childhood Exchange (NECE), an online portal that promotes best practices, offers cost-savings through economies of scale, and supplies providers with administrative and classroom resources. NECE will work with state partners to develop the criteria for selecting

subscription recipients (i.e. providers at a certain *Step Up to Quality* levels). The work of NECC will utilize \$24,000 in grant funds.

These grant investments will complement ongoing supports for quality improvements to the mixed delivery system from numerous sources. Federal IDEA funds support local planning region teams that work to ensure that the youngest children with disabilities are identified and served appropriately. Planning region teams also fund professional development that improves providers' abilities to serve children with disabilities in inclusive environments. Federal Child Care and Development Block Grant dollars provide backbone funding for the ELCs, the Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC), and partial quality improvement activity from *Step Up to Quality*. This funding is matched by state general funds that support the *Step Up to Quality* system (\$375,000) and coaching (\$175,000), technical assistance by NDE staff (\$90,000), and Sixpence coaching and technical assistance (\$220,000). Additionally, program consultation services from Communities for Kids assists communities and programs with financing (\$181,000), and Rooted in Relationships (\$185,000)/Nurturing Healthy Behaviors (\$300,000) provide evidence based training and coaching for community based ECCE programs. Finally, higher education actively supports quality through the UNL Extension Learning Child initiatives, and Buffett Early Childhood Institute PD for All series.

Partnerships and Opportunities for Collaboration, Coordination, and Sharing Best Practices, with Systemic Technical Assistance from the State

One approach to partnering to improve systemic technical assistance will be a pilot project led by NDE to provide coaching infrastructure to coaches who are working in quality improvement programs. This pilot will be fully operational by January 2019 and be offered in the two most populous regions of the state. It will provide a coach facilitator to work

individually and in networking groups with coaches who work with providers implementing one of the quality improvement initiatives (*Step Up to Quality, Rooted in Relationships, Head Start, etc.*). The coach facilitators will be trained in Reflective Practice and use this model with programs also implementing this type of research-based coaching. The coach facilitators will also study the coaching initiatives to identify and recommend ways to align systems to ensure that early childhood programs receive streamlined services, financial resources are used efficiently, and coaches maintain a high degree of skill. No grant funds will be used for this activity, but information from this pilot will be added to the findings of the needs assessment to tailor coaching infrastructure supports in the future.

Activity Five: Improving Overall Quality of Early Childhood Care and Education Programs/Providers/Services

Disseminating the Needs Assessment

Once the needs assessment and strategic plan are approved, Nebraska will disseminate the results of the needs assessment and strategic plan widely. As representatives of specific constituencies, the ECICC will be instrumental in taking the results to statewide and regional groups – including all of the groups and stakeholders involved in the process. State agencies will also share the results broadly through programs administered by each agency. Additionally, NDE will share with the State Board of Education and will provide links to the results on its state website. Finally, a report of findings will be shared with the Governor.

Developing a Data System that Can Address the Strategic Plan's Key Questions

Nebraska has had an ongoing commitment to developing an Early Childhood Integrated Data System that would tie together data across agencies. Having better information about which children are receiving what combination of services will allow the state to be more efficient in

deploying its resources and structuring its capacity. Whatever specific recommendations the strategic plan includes, the state will want better data to act on those recommendations.

Nebraska has completed a roadmap report that identified next steps in the process of developing its ECIDS, and now seeks to use PDG funds to continue advancing its work. Through the grant Nebraska will conduct the first phase of an implementation study that will position the state to issue an RFP for system buildout. The state will engage consultant(s) to study the data currently held by agencies, and map what it would take to link data across agencies to be able to answer the critical questions raised by Nebraska's strategic plan. The consultant(s) will also examine Nebraska's data governance structures and make recommendations for potential improvements to that structure. The study will examine: what data fields Nebraska already collects; what linkages among systems are needed to generate the information desired; technical and regulatory barriers to building those linkages, with recommendations for addressing those barriers; and the state's situational readiness to manage data going forward, from both an organizational and a technological standpoint.

Nebraska has allocated \$285,000 in grant funds for this activity. That will allow it to perform a high-level study that sets the state up for deeper work in the future, making informed choices – and managing and mitigating the risks inherent in data systems development work. The result of the project would be a landscape assessment, problem identification and resolution, and goal formation and prioritization to occur prior to entering into a more extensive Phase II.

Developing and Implementing a Community Assessment Tool

Nebraska has been engaged in a project supported by a competitive grant from ECDataWorks to produce a feasibility report and technical specification document to produce a Community Assessment Tool (CAT). The CAT will leverage the indicators identified through

the needs assessment and utilize integrated data from a number of sources. This data will be organized and displayed through the tool using ECDataWorks' EASI framework (Eligibility, Access, Services, and Impact). Users of the tool will be able to drill-down into the data based on specific geographies, compare data across programs and time, and download data and graphics from ad hoc reports. For example, parents may be interested in the availability of quality childcare in their community; policymakers could examine whether state investments in early care and education services and programs are reaching the targeted populations; and researchers could investigate if enrollment in specific programs corresponds with academic success. The CAT will allow for a deeper investigation of critical issues raised by the needs assessment, and will be aligned to the direction of the strategic plan.

Nebraska has allocated \$224,000 in grant funds to hire a contractor who will develop and test a CAT. The chosen contractor will work closely with NDE, the Nebraska ECDC, and other partnering organizations to ensure the tool meets the needs of the users and is aligned with the outcomes of the Needs Assessment and Activities Three and Four of this application. Upon development and implementation of the CAT, a dissemination and marketing of the tool will occur coupled with evaluation efforts to examine the extent to which it is being utilized by the intended stakeholders.

Understanding the Landscape of Family Child Care Providers

Nebraska's family child care providers are an essential part of its mixed delivery system, but the state has a limited understanding of the family child care landscape. The needs assessment will provide a helpful start, but grant funds will be used for a deeper study of the state's family child care providers -- with emphasis on family child care providers who may be serving hard-to-

reach families, such as immigrant and refugee families, families living in low-income urban areas, and other high-risk areas of the state.

The first step will be a study to review financial sustainability, quality, provider characteristics, professional development opportunities, and other essential questions derived from the needs assessment and strategic plan. The study will focus on hearing directly from family child care providers about their experiences and preferences for interventions to help them improve quality. Building on insights from the needs assessment, a strong emphasis will be placed on understanding what family child care providers need for accreditation, including the state of facilities.

The second step will be a collaboration with the NECC to build intervention models to reach family child care providers who are not participating in SUTQ, who may be the providers who would benefit the most from support. Ideas for intervention models specifically for family child care providers will be generated in partnership with NDE and other partners to build on synergies with other work in the state to improve quality.

In total the work will cost \$249,526 in grant funds.

Revision of Step Up to Quality

On July 1, 2019, *Step Up to Quality* will turn five years old. The program has seen tremendous growth. *Step Up to Quality* is a points-based system that rewards participating programs for implementing excellent practices and policies. In the last two quarters of 2019, a team of stakeholders will thoroughly and carefully examine the criteria used for awarding points in the step levels. Information from the needs assessment will be used to revise criteria as appropriate, and the review will include a focus on whether any changes to *Step Up to Quality* would (1) align more tightly with the goals of the strategic plan, and (2) support providers to

engage more effectively with families to support their engagement in child development. The NDHHS and NDE will work with stakeholders -- including current *Step Up to Quality* providers, other ECCE representatives, higher education staff, coaches, and trainers -- to delve into current research, reach out to other states, and access federal technical assistance centers. The revision process will carefully examine current indicators and possible additions. Decisions will take into account equity between family child care and center-based providers. The work group will engage with the ECICC and provide initial recommendations by the end of the grant year.

Organizational Capacity and Management

The lead agency for the grant will be NDHHS, working in close partnership with 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 (which will oversee the grant) also includes child welfare and adult protective services, youth rehabilitation and treatment centers, and economic supports like SNAP, energy assistance, and refugee resettlement. NDHHS's overall mission also includes behavioral health, developmental disabilities, assistance for domestic abuse and sexual assault providers, prevention and community health (including licensing physicians), and the state's Medicaid program. NDHHS will be responsible for grant oversight.

NDE's mission statement 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 have a close working relationship. The Departments currently meet frequently on a variety of projects, including a quarterly standing meeting to co-lead the *Step Up to Quality* program. To ensure appropriate oversight for the work of the PDG grant, key staff from the organization selected to manage the grant will meet monthly. These staff will form the state management team. The monthly meetings will be used to review monthly financial data, review and update the project plan, and make adjustments as necessary. At least quarterly, the management team will meet with the program evaluation team to ensure that the evaluation is on track to provide actionable data. The specific personnel who will comprise the state management team include:

Leader	Background
Nicole Vint, Child Care and Development Fund Administrator, NDHHS	Nicole Vint has a master’s degree in Social Work. She has been with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services since 2006, in an array of positions primarily focusing on empowering individuals and families to become self-sufficient. Nicole has been the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Administrator with the NDHHS since November 2013. As CCDF Administrator, Nicole administers the Child Care and Development Block Grant and actively works to increase accessibility and quality of child care for low income children and families. Combining state and federal dollars this program spends over \$90 million annually.
Michaela Hirschman, Child Care and Development Fund Grant Specialist, NDHHS	Michaela Hirschman has a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. As the CCDF Grant Specialist, Michaela monitors all contracts and subawards related to the spending of the CCDF discretionary funds; ensuring state and federal compliance. Prior to this role, Michaela’s work has primarily focused on high-risk, low-income children and their families.
John Meals, Comptroller, NDHHS	Since 2015 John Meals has held roles in NDHHS including Internal Auditor, Grants and Cost Accounting Manager, and Comptroller. In his current role he oversees the Accounting Unit, the Grants and Cost Accounting Unit, and the Financial Responsibility Unit. These areas combine to administer over 150 annual grants valued at over 1.4 billion dollars. Prior to NDHHS, he worked as an external auditor with the Nebraska Department of Revenue from 2011-2015.
Heather Arnold, Grants and Cost Accounting Manager, NDHHS	Heather Arnold has worked for NDHHS since 2013, where she started as the Internal Audit Intern and moved up to an Internal Auditor. She is both a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and a Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE).

Leader	Background
Melody Hobson, Administrator, Office of Early Childhood, NDE	Melody Hobson has a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and a master’s degree in Early Childhood Special Education. She has 10 years’ experience as Administrator of the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) at the NDE. She oversees the use of more than \$8 million in state and federal funds for the Office of Early Childhood.
Lauri Cimino, Director, <i>Step Up to Quality</i> , NDE	Lauri Cimino has a bachelor’s degree in education and has been leading the growth of <i>Step Up to Quality</i> since 2015. Prior to working at NDE she directed child care centers and managed regions in for-profit child care organizations.
Meleah Gamvroudis, Section Leader for ECTC, NDE	Meleah Gamvroudis holds a master’s degree in public administration. She has also been the Director of the ECTC Media Center since 2012.
Joan Luebbers Head Start State Collaboration Director	Joan Luebbers has served in her role since 2014, prior to which she was the state’s Part C Coordinator in the Office of Special Education since 1995. She has a B.S. in Speech and Audiology and graduate work in Early Childhood Special Education.

The state management team represents agencies with responsibility for child care licensing, CCDF, the state resource and referral system, the early childhood professional development system, *Step Up to Quality*, Part C EI and Early Childhood Special Education (Part B-619), child nutrition, Title 1, Head Start Collaboration, and Medicaid. The NDHHS and NDE also co-lead the work of the ECICC, which will be asked for input and appraised of progress on the grant activities at each of its meetings in 2019. As described above, the Council will meet in February, May, June, August, and November, with additional meetings if needed. The management team and the ECICC will be responsible for ensuring that grant activities align with and build on other initiatives affecting Nebraska’s mixed delivery system; as described throughout this application, Nebraska’s planned activities under the grant build on the extensive work currently underway. The state will also hire a grant manager outside of state government with the ability to fulfill grant management functions; the grant manager will be selected if Nebraska is awarded a grant.

Nebraska’s government oversight agencies work frequently with university, non-profit, and foundation partners who share their commitment to improving Nebraska’s early childhood

system. The state management team will work closely with the partners who will serve on the program evaluation team and as project leads. These partners include:

- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation is the Sixpence TA provider. The organization also leads efforts in community systems planning and early childhood mental health.
- The needs assessment and performance evaluation will be overseen by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, part of the University of Nebraska system a partner in this grant. The Buffett Early Childhood Institute is a four campus, university-wide, multidisciplinary research, education, outreach, and policy institute of the University of Nebraska committed to helping transform early childhood development and education in Nebraska and across the nation. Two of the Institute Directors will be members of the program evaluation team and/or project leads.
- First Five Nebraska, a statewide early childhood policy and communications organization, agrees to play a supporting role in working with the legislature in the event there are statutory changes required in early childhood policy because of this grant.

The state management team will also be responsible for overseeing the projects individually and collectively, including ensuring that their work is aligned and that there is appropriate communication with the program evaluation team.

Project Timeline and Milestones

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<i>NEEDS ASSESSMENT</i>													
Step 1: Prepare draft definitions, key questions, and indicators based on available resources and previous input	Consultant, with support from NDHHS and NDE												
Step 2: Share draft definitions, key questions, and indicators with stakeholders at public meetings around the state, including an ECICC meeting; post draft on-line													
Step 3: Update definitions, questions, and indicators based on feedback; conduct research to answer key questions													
Step 4: Present final research and analysis and share near-final draft at ECICC for review. Finalize report with NDHHS for submission to federal government.													
<i>STRATEGIC PLAN</i>													
Step 1: Prepare plan outline based on available resources and previous stakeholder input	Consultant, with support from NDHHS and NDE												
Step 2: Share draft plan with stakeholders at public meetings around the state, including an ECICC meeting as described under Activity One; post draft on-line													
Step 3: Prepare revisions based on stakeholder feedback													
Step 4: Share updated draft plan on-line; notify stakeholders of opportunity to comment													
Step 5: Integrate additional feedback and present near-final draft to ECICC for review. Finalize report with NDHHS for submission to federal government													
<i>MAXIMIZING PARENTAL CHOICE</i>													
<i>Identifying the information parents need and providing support</i>													
Step 1: Survey parents about their needs	NCCF												
Step 2: Interview communities about info sharing	Consultant												
Step 3: Review current state web presence													

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Step 4: Develop playbook													
Step 5: Develop recommendations on state web presence													
Step 6: Incorporate final needs assessment info into recommendations													
Step 7: Share recommendations, including with ECDC													
<i>Learning Begins at Birth</i>													
Packet updated and streamlined, distribution plan developed	First Five, Contractors for content and media, NDE												
Step 1: Choose agencies to create materials in alternate media													
Step 2: Materials creation underway													
Step 3: Materials completed in alternate media													
Step 4: Materials dispersed and marketed													
<i>Getting Ready Train-the-Trainer Expansion</i>													
Step 1: Modification of training materials and content to align with MIECHV and EHS/HS curricula	UNL; Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools												
Step 2: Training 4 regional trainers by UNL master coaches													
Step 3: Training of 80 home visitors and teachers (5 cohorts)													
Step 4: Initial one-day training at Recharge for Resilience for interested professionals from non-targeted areas													
Step 5: Modification of video training modules for sustained use by training teams to support infrastructure													
Ongoing virtual coaching support by 4 regional trainers/coaches for 80 home visitors and teachers beginning one month after initial training; up to three monthly sessions per professional													
<i>ReadyRosie Implementation</i>													
Step 1: Applications from interested communities are solicited.	NECC												
Step 2: Communities Selected.													
Step 3: Train the trainer training provided by <i>ReadyRosie</i> program trainers; Training completed at local sites.													

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Step 4: Families recruited and signed up for the program.													
Step 5: Distribution of videos.													
Ongoing monitoring of usage by families and teachers.													
Ongoing technical assistance to Sixpence programs	NCFF/Sixpence TA												
Ongoing work with communities													
<i>SHARING BEST PRACTICES</i>													
<i>Getting providers started on the right foot</i>													
Step 1: Identify contractor(s) to work with experts in child care licensing and subsidy, as well as the Child and Adult Care Food Program and Step Up to Quality.	Grant Project manager												
Step 2: Set up program, advertise alternate pathway and learn from experts in each area to ensure accurate information													
Step 3: Prospective child care providers offered the opportunity to participate.													
Step 4: Pre-licensing process for each provider will take place													
Step 5: Coaching provided at least weekly, or based on need, from the planning licensing phase through the end of the year.													
<i>Improving quality of adult-child interactions</i>													
<i>All our Kin</i>	NECC												
Step 1: Hire and train business coaches													
Step 2: Recruit homebased providers to be trained at each site (12 providers for each coach)													
Step 3: Coordinate and provide 10 week business training through NECC and rural hub sites													
Step 4: Begin implementation individualized coaching.													
Step 5: Ongoing supervision; monitoring of implementation													
NDE led activities for transitions													
<i>Mental health support for providers CHIME</i>	NU: Extension												

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Step 1. Recruit teachers													
Step 2. 8 weeks train the trainers													
<i>Engaging existing providers</i>													
Child Care Business Summit	NECC												
NECC free subscriptions													
Sixpence TA and coaching	NCFE												
Step Up to Quality infrastructure and coaching	NDE/Coaches												
Communities for Kids	NCFE												
NDE technical assistance	NDE												
Rooted in Relationships/Nurturing Healthy Behaviors	NCFE												
<i>Aligned Learning standards materials</i>													
Step 1. Contract with content expert	Grant Manager/NDE												
Step 2. Review with content expert													
<i>Identifying high quality instructional materials</i>													
Step 1. Contract with content expert	Grant Manager/ NDE												
Step 2. Review with content expert													
<i>NAESP Leadership academy</i>													
Step 1. Contract with NAESP	Grant Manager NAESP/NDE												
Step 2. Leadership Academy cohort													
<i>Administrator's Days Partnership Pre-session</i>													
Partner with presenters/planning /Pre-Session	Grant Manager/ NDE												
<i>QUALITY IMPROVEMENT</i>													
<i>Development and Implementation of Community Assessment Tool (CAT) VI.0.</i>													
Step 1: Select contractor for development of CAT	Early Childhood Data Coalition; Contractor												
Step 2: Development, user testing, and implementation													
Step 3: Marketing and dissemination of CAT													
<i>Revision of Step Up to Quality</i>													

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Step 1: Team of Stakeholders will examine the criteria used for awarding points in the step levels	NDE												
<i>ECIDS Development</i>	Early Childhood												
Step 1: Select contractor	Data Coalition,												
Step 2: Development	NDE												
Step 3: Market to stakeholders and public													
<i>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION PLAN</i>													
Step 1. Approve and finalize budgets, timelines, scope of work	State Mgmt. Team												
Step 2. Hire Implementation Specialist, Office Associate, 2 Graduate Assistants	Buffett Team (NA, SP, Prog. Eval)												
Step 3: Develop and prioritize metrics for implementation, continuous improvement, outcomes	State Mgmt. Consultant (SMC), Program Eval.												
Step 4: Review existing data sources	Program Eval., SMC												
Step 5: Establish feedback communication loops and specify roles	Program Eval., SMC												
Step 6: Refine evaluation in response to needs assessment	Program Eval.												
Step 7: Refine logic model aligned with vision (including indicators)													
Step 8: Establish/identify fidelity measures for Activities													
Step 9: Identify new data needed, sources, and processes (e.g. interview, survey, etc.)	Program Eval., SMC												
Step 10: Refine program eval. integrated with approved strategic plan													
Step 11: Collect and analyze data re: designated key metrics	Program Eval.												
Ongoing: Convene regularly to receive updates and provide feedback on project progress (based on data)	Program Eval., SMC												
Ongoing: Draft monthly (short) feedback updates (for state team, stakeholders identified)	Program Eval.												

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES													
ACTION	RESPONSIBLE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Step14: Draft quarterly reports													
Step 15: Draft final report													
OVERALL GRANT MANAGEMENT													
Materials Dissemination Plan													
Solicit stakeholder input and feedback throughout the year	First Five												
Step 1: Conduct a stakeholder scan of ECE service and networks in the state	Consultant and/or subcontractor with support from NDHHS/NDE												
Step 2: Market the clearinghouse to key stakeholders through various platforms who will then disseminate to their larger networks													
Step 3: Program and format PDG clearinghouse to promote/market Needs Assessment materials													
Step 4: Populate the site with the completed Strategic Plan and related materials													
Step 5: Deliver first quarterly report on performance of the clearinghouse – site traffic, engagement metrics, downloads, use of online response forms, webinar/Q&A participation	NDHHS/NDE												
Step 6: Market the Strategic Plan for input and feedback	Subcontractor												
Step 7: Deliver second quarterly performance report	NDHHS/NDE												
Step 8: Populate additional sections of the clearinghouse as projects in Activity 3, 4, and 5 generate outcomes/results/data	Subcontractor												
Step 9: Deliver third quarterly performance report	NDHHS/NDE												
Step 10: Deliver fourth quarterly performance report													

Logic Model

Vision: 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	Outcomes	
			Short Term	Long Term
PDG Grant funds Full Collab. Partners: NDHHS NDE HSSCO NCFE UN ECDC EC WF Comm.	I. Needs Assessment Convene Stakeholders for Planning Prepare, share definitions, indicators Update based on feedback Conduct survey to answer questions Present and share findings Identify strengths, gaps for Strat.Plan	<i>Needs Assessment Report:</i> Definitions document NA survey document System strengths and gaps	<i>State EC agencies, partners, communities share:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions, indicators, unduplicated counts Understanding ECE system Knowledge of “vulnerable” 	<i>Parents demonstrate:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> knowledge access to quality child-interactions <i>NE Children:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> attend HQ ECE good transitions <i>Providers/Programs:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ child interactions Demonstrate resilience
	II. Strategic Plan Convene Stakeholders Use NA report to plan, address gaps Revise logic model, evaluation Share plan w/ federal & revise	Draft Strategic Plan Final Strategic Plan Revised logic model, scope of work, evaluation	<i>State EC agencies, partners, communities share:</i> Goals, advance access and quality for families and providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ programs Operate efficiently <i>Communities:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide HQ ECE services through coherent approach w/ parent support <i>ECE System:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses data to determine ongoing service needs Shifts policies and recommended practices to expand access to quality
	III. Maximizing Parental Choice Create parent info playbook for communities, and study state’s parent choice web presence Update info given to parents at birth Implement parent engagement pilots	Parent info playbook developed New materials for newborn parents Successful parent engagement pilots	<i>Parents are supported by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities knowing info they need and delivering it Better info at birth Community capacity to support their engagement 	
	IV. Sharing Best Practices Convene, engage educators to improve adult-child interactions Business help for new providers Shared services to improve efficiency	Educators trained on best practices Providers launch successfully and operate more efficiently	<i>Providers increase:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality instruction, transition best practices Business best practices 	
	V. Quality Improvement Disseminate NA & SP widely Implement ECIDS data study Develop and Implement CAT Implement FCC Landscape Study Assess potential SU2Q revisions	State-wide awareness of needs, gaps, strat. plan ECIDS landscape report CAT template FCC Landscape report SU2Q Revisions report	<i>Agencies, stakeholders have aligned HQ vision; ECIDS plan. Communities have tool to understand gaps in services State can recommend policy shifts for QRIS, FCC</i>	

Program Performance Evaluation Plan

The Nebraska PDG project, *Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education*, will use an implementation science approach toward evaluation -- supporting and documenting inputs and resources, activities and outputs (efforts), continuous improvement (formative), and process outcomes to inform its progress, incorporating existing and new data collection. The program evaluation will address the following questions for each Activity: How well is the Activity implemented? What are some features that enhance implementation? What are some barriers in the Activity's process? How are those barriers overcome? Additional Activity-specific questions will also be asked, such as:

- What are the needs and gaps in ECE services for Nebraska children, 0-5 years old, identified by the Needs Assessment?
- How well does the Strategic Plan help to facilitate next steps, including modification of the logic model?

The overall budget for the program evaluation will be \$701,403, which also includes support for the strategic planning process.

Metrics Necessary to Examine Proposed Process, Cost, and Implementation Reporting

The Nebraska PDG project, *Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education*, will develop metrics (indicators) to identify, monitor, evaluate, and report progress of the proposed project. Based on proposal acceptance, the state management team (see Organizational Capacity) will approve and finalize activity scopes of work, budgets, timelines, and reporting mechanisms. It will establish a program evaluation team to oversee and implement data collection and reporting processes immediately upon grant award, and communicate these to the entity executing the needs assessment and strategic plan. The program evaluation team will work closely with that

entity to engage in evaluation of the overall project, including establishing metrics, assessment tools, cost and activity reporting, and implementation processes. Formal, rapid-cycle feedback loops will be put into place to support efficient communication and reporting, as well as to support continuous improvement. Metrics to examine implementation processes (e.g. meetings held, stakeholders and leaders engaged, decisions made, grant activities underway, fidelity measures developed and used) will employ qualitative (e.g. brief interview check-ins) and quantitative (e.g. fidelity measures developed, activity rollout timelines) measures and outcomes (parents and children reached by activities, system efficiency enhancements). Due to the nature of a 12-month project, the program evaluation team will review implementation processes data monthly and meet at least quarterly with the project management team to provide updates.

Immediately upon receipt of the grant NDHHS, NDE, NCFF, and grant partners will establish and disseminate a process for continuous (rapid cycle) feedback loops, data collection, analysis planning, and reporting dissemination for the overall project. Nebraska partners implementing activities -- including the needs assessment and strategic plan -- will be responsible for implementing and communicating continuous feedback communication loops within their project, to leadership (NDHHS, NDE and ECICC) and put in place an activity program evaluation by February 15.

Programmatic activities (especially in activities 3-5) will be responsible for communicating with a short feedback report monthly, and a more detailed report quarterly. The feedback reports will include information about the program, regarding context capacity (Q1), installation and usability testing (Q2), implementation and modifications (based on strategic plan feedback) (Q3), and initial impact (Q4).

Refining the Proposed Logic Model and Identifying Associated Process Indicators and Outcomes

The logic model will serve as a “roadmap” for the implementation and evaluation of the project. As such, it will also serve to reflect learning as the project is carried out, within and beyond the scope of the grant project. Aligning the logic model to the state vision, needs assessment, strategic plan, and project activities will be led by the program evaluation team, and will be integrated from the start of the project. As soon as data are available and analyzed, needs assessment data will be examined to observe areas of consistency and difference from the functioning logic model. These findings will be shared with management team and stakeholders engaged in activities, to receive and incorporate feedback to the emergent logic model. The same process will be used following strategic planning. Following federal approval of the strategic plan, a revised logic model will be established and put in place for the remainder of the project year. It will guide ongoing project evaluation and planning.

As part of logic model refinement, the program evaluation team will identify process and outcome metrics (indicators) aligned with strategic planning. The team, in collaboration with state and project partners, will identify and refine short- and long-term child, family, program, and provider implementation processes and outcomes. These indicators will serve to guide the ongoing planning and implementation processes during the grant project and beyond. Initial indicators are included in the logic model, and expected outcomes are discussed further in the Expected Outcomes section.

Examining Existing Data Infrastructure to Address Process and Implementation Reporting

Data systems are currently in place to inform both Needs Assessment and Program Evaluation efforts. The program evaluation team will collaborate with state and project partners to review all available data sources in consultation with the management team, with the goal of

identifying useful information for implementation of activities and continuous improvement.

Some essential priorities will guide review and decision-making. In the table below are sources of data currently available, other data needed to provide feedback on project implementation and effectiveness, and who will be responsible for collecting. Existing data that will be useful in determining utility and new data needs will include, at a minimum, the following:

Example Data Sources for Program Performance Evaluation

Outcome/Metric	Source of Data/Type	Responsible Party
Information related to assessing needs: parent, provider, and state agency	Market rate survey	Buffett Institute; DHHS
	Workforce survey	
Capacity to evaluate implementation of activities	Fidelity measures available for projects (Activities 3 & 4)	Activity project leads will provide to Program Evaluation team
# Programs/providers engaged in quality improvement efforts	Revision of QRIS (Activity 5)	Step Up to Quality State Revision Team
Communities with sufficient access to quality ECE services	Community Assessment Tool development plan	Early Childhood Data Collaborative
Implementation status for Activity projects (e.g. capacity assessment, installation, implementation, etc.)	Development and implementation plans for all activity projects	Activity Project Leads
Leaders/ decision-makers linked to communication feedback	Leadership lists	NDE; DHHS; NCFE

Identifying New Data Sources to Address Proposed Implementation Reporting

Additional data will need to be collected to inform both continuous improvement (formative) and outcome-based (summative) efforts. As discussed above, metrics to examine implementation processes will employ qualitative and quantitative measures and outcomes. Upon receipt of the grant, the program evaluation team will review current state-level data and program evaluation processes to match required knowledge and products. Initial review will occur in the context of the needs assessment process, and new data needs will be identified in collaboration with state leadership, consultant, and project partners. A key decision point in the identification of new data sources will include using needs assessment data and findings to

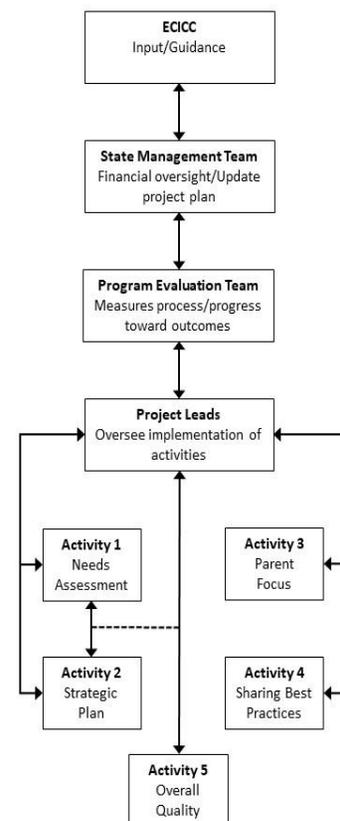
articulate in the strategic plan the Nebraska populations that will most benefit from the planned projects. In particular, the program team will work with state and project partners to identify parents, children and providers in specific groups (e.g. low-income, minority, dual-language; developmental delay) or specific geographic areas (e.g. rural town, rural remote, urban, etc.) that will benefit most from planned activities.

Methodological Approach to Inform Continuous Learning

The primary purpose of program evaluation will be to assess the quality and success of each activity in reaching stated goals. To do that effectively, continuous improvement infrastructures will be put in place and adhered to during project development, continuing through program implementation. The state leadership team, aided by the program evaluation team, will install short-term (monthly) and mid-term (quarterly) reporting and monitoring systems to 1) evaluate ongoing grant activities and processes including fidelity and implementation reviews; 2) match anticipated costs with expenditures; and 3) evaluate activities and outcome metrics in direct relation to needs assessment and strategic planning.

An essential component of ensuring that data collection informs continuous improvement will be establishing of continuous feedback loops to connect the ECICC, state management team, implementation team, and project leads (see Figure Eval.1). A critical component of managing this feedback process and

Figure Eval. 1
Project Continuous Improvement Feedback



continuous learning will be the program evaluation team. A dedicated implementation scientist/associate has been budgeted to lead and monitor the performance evaluation.

Each mandated grant activity will have a project lead (as designated by the state management team) and these leads will communicate monthly with the program evaluation team. The program evaluation team will use program management software to help track the processes and milestones. Every two months the implementation team will report to the state management team on the ongoing progress of each activity. This feedback loop will ensure that improvement and changes can be made immediately for any of the projects.

Formal, rapid-cycle feedback loops will be put into place to support efficient communication and reporting, and especially to support continuous improvement. The program evaluation team will review project activity implementation, including monitoring needs assessment and strategic plan, aligned with budget and timeline. Continuous improvement will provide insights for improving project outcomes, including observing and documenting unanticipated outcomes.

Each activity and the overall project evaluation will use continuous improvement, facilitated by clear identification of indicators, ongoing data collection and analysis (as described above), regular fidelity checks, member checks, and ongoing budget monitoring. An essential component of ensuring that data collection informs continuous improvement and summative evaluation will be the establishment of continuous feedback loops to connect stakeholders, project implementers, and grant administrators. Each project activity will have a responsibility to implement an evaluation plan that includes continuous improvement and summative evaluation.

To ensure continuous improvement and rich stakeholder-level data, the program evaluation team will conduct ongoing interviews and focus groups. The key questions will be drawn from program evaluation questions and will identify perceptions of project and activity progress and

success related to enhancing ECE systemic access and quality across the service systems and levels. The Implementation Specialist and graduate assistants will complete these interviews, and will provide ongoing feedback to state management team, project leads, and consultants. This type of data will be especially helpful in examining how implementation is occurring, perceived “small wins” related to access and quality, and barriers to be addressed in the ongoing work.

Incorporating Findings from the Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan

Regular convenings and reporting structures will be key to assuring quality program evaluation. The Program Performance Evaluation will entail a series of steps, integrated into the project activities, beginning with the development of the Needs Assessment. Process evaluation methods will be used to document how final items and surveys are developed, how the needs assessment is implemented, and partner and stakeholder perceptions of how the process is meeting needs. The BECI, partnering with the program process consultant, will work with the University of Nebraska Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) to partner in developing, disseminating, and analyzing data from state agencies, programs and providers, and families. Based on the needs assessment, the ECICC leadership and grant implementation team will convene to identify geographic areas and special populations (e.g. Head Start, rural, etc.) that require an intensive focus in the strategic planning and activity implementation targeting early care and education services. The logic model will be revisited at this time, and modifications made as needed.

Expected Outcomes

In the short term, Nebraska expects the following outcomes from the grant:

- A widely shared understanding of the opportunities and challenges of the ECCE system, with clear agreement on a strategic direction for taking advantage of opportunities while

addressing challenges. The ECCE community will share goals, and be working off a common set of definitions and indicators.

- The state and communities will be more effective at providing families with the information families want, both because they have a clear sense of what that information is and because they have strong mechanisms for delivering that information.
- Families have the support they need to be actively engaged in child development.
- Providers are working together to improve the quality of adult-child interactions, with well-aligned state and regional support.
- Similarly, providers are engaging in sound business practices that lead to efficiency of resource use and improved leverage of existing funding streams.
- Providers and parents will be well-equipped to work together to design and implement successful transitions into kindergarten.
- The state continues building toward the data system that will inform continuous improvement on an ongoing basis.
- The results of the evaluation inform continuous improvement in the short term, and assists with success sustainability of grant impacts beyond the grant period.

In the long term these systemic changes will lead to improved parenting, stronger adult-child interactions in ECCE settings, higher levels of kindergarten readiness, and a continuous improvement cycle in which the state and communities work together effectively on behalf of young children.

Project Sustainability Plan

The Preschool Development Grant offers an opportunity for Nebraska to support some one-time activities that will have an ongoing influence on its annual investment in ECCE.

- The needs assessment will provide a deeper understanding of Nebraska’s current landscape, which will inform state- and community-level decision-making in the years ahead. It will also inform the strategic plan, which in turn will shape the state’s approach to its early learning investment and system-building. On the issues to be addressed in the strategic plan (itemized under Activity Two), the field is looking for clearer direction; providing that direction will allow for the more efficient and aligned use of resources throughout the state.
- Nebraska’s approach to informing families about available ECCE services will focus on listening to families to understand what information they actually want. From that input, the state will produce materials to inform future action, primarily at the community level. These guides will include information parents want and will guide the development of systems that meet parent needs.
- Nebraska has also proposed a sustainable approach to family engagement. Under state law Nebraska is required to provide informational materials that support child development to all new parents; updating those materials with new research-based best practices will increase their impact on an ongoing basis. A train-the-trainer approach to family engagement support will build expertise that lasts beyond the year. The state will also pilot a family engagement program that a local philanthropy has committed to support if the pilot is successful.
- Similarly, the state’s approach to sharing best practices is focused on investments with a long-term impact.
 - Nebraska’s dissemination of materials about the learning standards will provide better information to providers, as will the results of its review of curriculum and assessment. This knowledge will be helpful on an ongoing basis.

- The professional learning focused on principals and superintendents will build their capacity and create new networks and relationships.
 - The training it offers to new providers will help those providers immediately, and will educate the state about possible models of work going forward.
 - The supports to existing providers will be designed to improve their ability to improve their quality in a sustainable manner.
- While the grant offers very limited time to begin implementing quality improvements that support the strategic plan, Nebraska’s approach will take advantage of what time there is.
 - Data systems are an essential part of a state’s decision-making process and continuous improvement cycle. Nebraska has been building toward an improved data system that links across agencies. Grant funds will be used to support the next phase of this multi-step project, setting up future phases for success. This work will continue to be led by the Early Childhood Data Coalition.
 - Nebraska has been working to develop a Community Assessment Tool, and the PDG will allow it to complete the next steps of work that were set up by a previous competitive grant that expires in the spring. The Early Childhood Data Coalition will also continue to lead this work.
 - In Nebraska an important driver of ECCE quality is *Step Up to Quality*, and grant funds will be used to update the QRIS based on the strategic plan’s results. This study will also look at how to better embed parental engagement in the system. NDE will continue to maintain the redesigned system.

Nebraska will finish the grant period with a higher level of capacity, a deeper understanding of the work ahead, and better materials and guidance to support its future efforts to raise quality and

expand access in its ECCE system. It already has in place collaborative structures that will be used to guide the work, and high-capacity organizations to take advantage of the new resources.

Dissemination Plan

NDHHS/NDE will report on important grant activities as they produce results relevant to the public and the field, beginning with publicizing the needs assessment and strategic planning processes. These resources will be targeted at state and local government and key programmatic and systems-level stakeholders. It will be made available via a central information clearinghouse and promoted through interagency memoranda, social media, newsletters, listservs, webinars, online Q&A sessions and similar vehicles. A capstone report summarizing progress on all grant-funded activities will be developed in the fourth quarter and distributed to the audiences indicated above. NDHHS/NDE will also promote these “major milestone projects” to media outlets statewide. Success metrics will include download and site traffic data, webinar participation, audience feedback and documented media coverage. First Five Nebraska, the state’s early childhood advocacy partner, will promote the positive results Nebraska achieves in system efficiencies and mixed delivery improvements to Nebraska’s state policymakers and other major influencers.

NDHHS/NDE communications staff will work with specific service systems and providers leading individual projects throughout the grant year. This team will help these internal stakeholders to develop communications collateral targeted at external audiences—that is, their specific client populations. This collateral will be disseminated by leveraging and maximizing partners’ existing communications networks, messaging platforms and resources. While these information products will vary from project to project, state agency staff will work with partners to collect relevant success metrics including social media engagement, distribution of print,

electronic and multimedia resources, participation in parent education sessions and other factors. As with internal stakeholder engagement, state agency staff will work with partners on media engagement strategies relevant to their individual projects, client bases and communities. Nebraska has budgeted \$38,250 for dissemination activities.

Plan for Oversight of Federal Award Funds

Nebraska state government uses an enterprise-wide financial management system that meets all uniform grant government requirements as outlined in 2CFR200. Additionally, NDHHS utilizes a stringent internal auditing process for federal grants, overseen by John Meals (listed under Organizational Capacity). The NDHHS will combine the financial data from the Enterprise one system with progress and outcome data gathered by the management team. The NDHHS CCDF program grant specialist reviews all invoices and compares to budget for accuracy and appropriateness before payment.

NDHHS CCDF program staff and fiscal staff will continue to have regular monthly meetings to review current obligation and liquidation status of funds, as well as examining financial and programmatic data. This data will also be examined monthly at the Management team meetings as outlined under Organizational Capacity and Management. NDHHS will provide technical support when needed as it relates to the grant. Additionally, before submitting financial data to the Administration for Children and Families, NDHHS will use an internal auditing process to ensure that all expenditures are appropriate and directly in support of the grant goals. An estimated \$48,376 is budget for NDHHS CCDF Administrator, CCDF Grant Specialist, Grant Unit Administrator, and Grant Unit staff and an indirect cost of \$13,200 in accordance with Nebraska's Cost Allocation Plan.

Project Budget and Budget Justification

Nebraska is requesting \$5,853,133 in grant funds, with \$1,756,184 in match – for a total project budget of \$7,609,867. This section includes budget tables organized by Activity (including a budget for oversight and technical assistance), with a full summary budget at the end.

Oversight and Technical Assistance: \$304,736	
<i>NDHHS Oversight Personnel:</i> \$37,500	
CCDF Administrator .16fte	CCDF Grant Manager .16fte
Grant Unit Administrator .16fte	Grant Unit Staff Person .16fte
<i>Fringe Benefits:</i> \$10,876	
CCDF Administrator	CCDF Grant Manager
Grant Unit Administrator	Grant Unit Staff Person
<i>Required Technical Assistance Travel:</i> \$3,884	
Air Travel to Washington D.C.: \$350 x 2 = \$700	
Hotel: \$251 x 4 nights x 2 people = \$2008	
Ground Transportation in DC \$212	
Mileage to and from Nebraska airport \$60 per person x 2 people = \$120	
Other transportation costs (airport parking) in Lincoln NE \$16 per day x 5 days = \$80 x cars for 2 people = \$160	
Food: 2 partial days(\$57/day) + 3 conference days per person(\$76/day) = \$342 per person x 2 people = \$684	
<i>Equipment</i> = \$0	<i>Supplies</i> = \$0
<i>Lead Agency Indirect:</i> \$13,200	<i>In state travel (other):</i> \$200
<i>PDG Grant Project management</i> \$239,076	
Entity to manage the grant project has not been chosen. Selection process will take place after grant is awarded.	
Staffing: Estimated at approximately \$175,000 – oversight of day to day budgets, meetings, and activities of plan	
Travel to Washington, DC for Grant meeting \$5,826	
Computed at \$1,600/person x 3 = \$4,800	
Meals, Incidentals and Expenses per federal per diem for 3 people to travel to Washington DC grant meeting. Calculated as \$57 x 2 partial days=\$114; 3 full days @ \$76/day \$228	
Total: \$342/person x 3 = \$1,026	
Local travel (Other): 1009 miles x .545 = \$550	

Activity #1, Needs Assessment: \$2,712,000
Subcontractor - Bureau of Sociological Research (BOSR) – BOSR was established in 1964 to provide research services to the University of Nebraska System. The NU system is a partner in this grant application.

Activity #1, Needs Assessment: \$2,712,000
Family Survey (\$2,091,798): mail survey to families of young children in Nebraska. Mail surveys are used to stratify by geographic area, oversample by census area, and reduce expense compared to phone interviews. The majority of the costs are for printing and postage (\$1,585,171) of a survey and reminder: The first mailing will be 330,000 surveys; all households will receive a reminder postcard, and a second survey will be mailed to 290,400 families. Other expenses include obtaining the survey sample (\$46,300), mailing preparations (\$266,492), return processing (\$23,067), data entry (\$153,780), instrument development (\$3,442), translation (\$155), and staff time (\$13,390).
Provider Survey (\$29,924): mail survey to all 3000+ licensed child care providers in Nebraska.
Stakeholder Survey (\$6,701): mail survey of stakeholders
Focus groups (\$21,949): 14 focus groups
Analysis and report (\$10,459)
Indirect (\$551,169) -- university negotiated indirect cost rate

Activity #2, Strategic Plan: \$1,074,862	
<i>2a Strategic Plan and Program performance evaluation (Buffett Early Childhood Institute)</i> BECI was chosen as a partner because much of the needs assessment is built on past work of the Institute. It is in a prime position to further the research and best suited to inform Nebraska's efforts.	
Strategic planning consultant and assistant (\$214,132): To be engaged	Staff salary (\$178,800): 3.4 FTE Fringe benefits (\$74,395)
Convening of focus groups (\$60,590): 6 focus groups (>50 people); 8 focus groups (< 20)	
Local travel (\$18,800)	Supplies (\$8,900): Software and materials
Indirect (\$140,786) -- university negotiated indirect cost rate	
In-kind match (\$373,459 BECI): 4 FTE Staff salary (\$216,606): 4 FTE: Fringe (\$156,853)	
<i>2b. ECICC Expenses for Additional Meeting: \$5,000</i>	
<i>Strategic plan budget also includes the budget for Program Performance Evaluation</i>	

Activity #3, Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Choice: \$811,062
<i>3a. Parent Information Playbook and Internet Study</i> Consultant (\$50,000): Synthesize parent information, interview communities, study state web presence In-kind match (\$40,325, private philanthropy): Communities for Kids (\$40,325)
<i>3b. Learning Begins at Birth</i> Consultant (\$69,700): Develop content (\$11,200), translation (\$2,000), print (\$50,000), shipping (\$1,000), communications consultant (\$3,750), marketing specialist (\$500), paid social media placement (\$1,750)

Activity #3, Maximizing Parent Knowledge and Choice: \$811,062
<p><i>3c. Getting Ready</i> Contract (\$461,037): Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools (CYFS) was chosen because it is the originator of the program. CYFS has created and researched this program. No other entity implements this family engagement curriculum. Personnel (\$183,202) -- 2 FTE; Fringe (\$72,343); Local travel (\$1,250); Supplies (\$52,600); Indirect (\$146,112) – university negotiated indirect cost rate</p>
<p><i>3d. Ready Rosie</i> Contract (\$150,000): <i>ReadyRosie</i> is a research-based curriculum that has been shown to be effective for families of vulnerable children. The entity in Nebraska with the infrastructure and capability in-house to successfully implement this program is the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, which has been implementing <i>ReadyRosie</i> as a pilot. Training and materials (\$150,000): \$50 per classroom x 300 classrooms In-kind match (\$40,000, private philanthropy): Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative will implement <i>ReadyRosie</i> in an additional 80 classrooms with private philanthropic funds.</p>

Activity #4, Sharing Best Practices: \$1,890,431
<p><i>4a. Improving Quality of Adult-Child Interactions</i> Grant funds (\$0) In-kind match (\$276,400): Personnel (\$190,000); Fringe (\$49,400); Training and consultation (\$15,000); Local travel (\$5,000); Class materials (\$5,000); Incentive materials (\$12,000)</p>
<p><i>4b. Curriculum Alignment and High-Quality Instructional Tools</i> Grant funds (\$40,000): Content consultant (\$20,000); Materials (\$20,000)</p>
<p><i>4c. NAESP Early Childhood Leadership Academy</i> Grant Funds (\$150,057): The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) has been the leading organization for assisting elementary school leaders since 1921. This organization is the most credible source for assistance accepted by Nebraska principals. Candidate recruitment (\$8,775) – cohort members and advisors; Candidate enrollment (\$20,475); Training and implementation (\$84,240); Advisor expenses/stipends (\$21,600); Advisor travel (\$25,452) -- .545 x 100 x 6 advisors x 12 trips; Indirect (\$11,115)</p>
<p><i>4d. Administrator’s Day Pre-Session</i> Grant funds (\$5,000): Travel and expenses for speakers</p>
<p><i>4e. Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Education (CHIME)</i> Grant funds (\$141,849): To UNL-Extension. Salaries and benefits (\$63,170) – Partial FTE 4 senior staff, 1 graduate student and administrative staff; Guiding teacher (\$4,250); Local travel (\$3,000); Supplies (\$15,500); Teacher incentives (\$6,000); Indirect (\$49,379) -- university negotiated indirect cost rate</p>
<p><i>4f. New Early Care and Education Providers Started on the Right Foot</i> Grant funds (\$200,000): Sub-contracts with 5 coaches at \$40,000 each</p>
<p><i>4g. Business Summit and Provider Support</i> Grant funds (\$51,125): Business summit expenses (\$14,000) – speaker, venue, materials; Scholarship funds (\$10,000) – provider travel; Registration fees (\$3,125) -- \$25 x 125 attendees; Nebraska Early Childhood Exchange subscriptions (\$24,000) – 1500 subscriptions x \$16 per license</p>
<p><i>4h. Coaching Infrastructure</i></p>

Activity #4, Sharing Best Practices: \$1,890,431
Grant funds (\$0) In-kind match (\$1,026,000): Step Up to Quality staff (\$275,000, state general funds); Sixpence coaching and technical assistance (\$85,000, public endowment earnings); Communities for Kids coaching (\$181,000, private funds); Rooted in Relationships social/emotional coaching (\$185,000, private funds); Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Rooted (\$300,000, state general funds)

Activity #5, Quality Improvement: \$811,776
<i>5a. Early Childhood Integrated Data System</i> Grant funds (\$295,000): RFP for system development (\$295,000) Match (\$5,000, state funds): Additional RFP funding. The RFP will be for a total of \$300,000.
<i>5b. Develop Community Assessment Tool</i> Grant funds (\$224,000): Computer programmers (\$187,200) – 3 programmers @ \$65 per hour x 8 hours per day x 5 days per week x 24 weeks; License hosting software (\$36,800)
<i>5c. Study Family Home Child Care Landscape</i> Grant funds (\$249,526): University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC), one of the campuses of the NU System. Shares infrastructure with other NU campuses and has easy access to cross campus data and research resources. Salary (\$86,558) – 2.75fte; Fringe (\$26,420); Operating costs (\$26,420); Consultants (\$22,446); Indirect (\$85,902) -- university negotiated indirect cost rate
<i>5d. Dissemination Plan</i> Grant funds (\$38,250): Personnel – 637.5 hours @ \$60 per hour

Program Performance Evaluation: Costs included in Activity Two, Strategic Planning

On the following page is a full summary of the project budget, including both grant and match funds.

Nebraska Preschool Development Grant Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education January 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019				
		PDG BUDGET	MATCH BUDGET	PROGRAM BUDGET
		1/1/19 to 12/31/19		
SUMMARY:				
	Direct Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Payroll Taxes	\$48,376	\$0	\$48,376
	Direct program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Supplies)	\$4,084	\$0	\$4,084
	Contract Services	\$5,788,023	\$1,756,184	\$7,544,207
	Subtotal	\$5,840,483	\$1,756,184	\$7,596,667
	Indirect Fee	\$13,200	\$0	\$13,200
	Total	\$5,853,683	\$1,756,184	\$7,609,867
DETAIL:				
Lead Agency Personnel and Benefits:				
	Personnel	37,500	0	37,500
	Payroll (FICA and SUTA) taxes - @ 7.78%	2,918	0	2,918
	Health, Dental, STD, LTD, Life, ADD Insurance - @ 14.62%	5,483	0	5,483
	Workmen Comp Insurance - @ .4%	150	0	150
	Retirement Plan - @ 6.2%	2,325	0	2,325
	Total Direct Personnel and Benefits	\$48,376	\$0	\$48,376
Lead Agency Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Conferences, Etc.)				
	Out-of-State Travel and Lodging	3,200	0	3,200
	In-State Travel	200	0	200
	Out-of-State Meals	684	0	684
	Program Supplies	0	0	0
	Total Direct Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Supplies, Conferences, Etc.)	\$4,084	\$0	\$4,084
Lead Agency Indirect Fee				
	Lead Agency Cost Allocation Plan	13,200	0	13,200
	Total Indirect Fee	\$13,200	\$0	\$13,200
Subaward/Contract Services				
Project Coordination				
	Grant Project Manager TBD	239,076	0	239,076
1 Needs Assessment				
	Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Bureau of Social Research at University of Nebraska Lincoln - Needs Assessment	2,712,000	0	2,712,000
2 Strategic Plan and Program Evaluation				
a	Buffett Early Childhood Institute - Strategic Plan and Program Evaluation	701,403	373,459	1,074,862
b	ECICC Meeting on Strategic Plan	5,000	0	5,000
3 Maximizing Parental Choice				
a	Identifying the Information Parents Need	50,000	40,325	90,325
b	Learning Begins at Birth	69,700	0	69,700
c	Getting Ready - Train-the-Trainer Expansion	461,037	0	461,037
d	ReadyRosie 300 Classrooms-Buffett Early Childhood Fund	150,000	40,000	190,000
4 Sharing Best Practices				
a	Improving Quality of Adult-Child Interaction--All Our Kin	0	276,400	276,400
b	Curriculum Alignment and High Quality Instructional Tools	40,000	0	40,000
c	NAESP Early Childhood Principal Leadership	150,057	0	150,057
d	Administrator's Day Conference sharing practices	5,000	0	5,000
e	Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME)	141,849	0	141,849
f	New Early Care and Education Providers Started on the Right Foot	200,000	0	200,000
g	Engaging Existing Providers--Elevate 19 Business Summit and Provider Support	51,125	0	51,125
h	Engaging Existing Providers--Coaching Infrastructure	0	1,026,000	1,026,000
5 Quality Improving				
a	Develop Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)	300,000	0	300,000
b	Develop Community Assessment Tool	224,000	0	224,000
c	UNMC Study - Family Child Care Landscape	249,526	0	249,526
d	Disseminating Strategic Plan	38,250	0	38,250
Program Performance Evaluation (cost included in Activity #2 strategic plan)				
Total Subawards/Contract Services				
		\$5,788,023	\$1,756,184	\$7,544,207
Total Expenses		\$5,853,683	\$1,756,184	\$7,609,867

Third-Party Agreements



November 5, 2018

Matthew Wallen, Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
301 Centennial Mall South, Third Floor
Lincoln, NE 68509

Dear Director Wallen:

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is happy to partner with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for implementation of the Preschool Development Grant (PDG). Both Agencies successfully partner to support the early childhood education and care system in Nebraska. The PDG will provide an opportunity to study, plan, and ultimately improve programs and services for young children and their families.

The Nebraska Department of Education will:

- Participate in the leadership and monitoring of the PDG activities by participating on the leadership team.
- Lead the work of preschool/kindergarten alignment.
- Partner with the National Association of Elementary School Principals to Implement the Pre-K-3 Leadership Academy.
- Plan and lead a pre-session at Administrators Days in July 2019, focused on transition and partnership.
- Lead the revision of Step Up To Quality: Quality Recognition and Improvement System.

The activities planned in this application will facilitate the alignment of systems and result in increased availability and accessibility and quality of programs and services for young children and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew L. Blomstedt".

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

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

November 5, 2018

Nebraska Dept. of Health and Human Services
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68508

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Nebraska's system of higher education. The University of Nebraska is pleased to partner with the State of Nebraska (NDE and DHHS) and its early childhood practitioners to lead activities outlined in the **Preschool Development Grant** proposal. Specifically, the Bureau of Sociological Research at UNL (BOSR) will conduct an in-depth needs assessment of the state's early childhood programs. The Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) will use that information to develop a strong strategic plan. BECI also will evaluate the success of the Preschool Development Grant. University of Nebraska Extension will implement the CHIME program to help support the positive mental health of children and providers in early education and care settings. Finally, the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools will implement research that is based upon its Getting Ready project.

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 Fritz, Ph.D.
Executive Vice President and Provost



Pete Ricketts
Governor

STATE OF NEBRASKA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
P.O. Box 94848 • Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4848
Phone: (402) 471-2244 • pete.ricketts@nebraska.gov

November 5, 2018

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:

As Governor of the State of Nebraska, I am pleased to support our application for a Preschool Development Grant. This letter designates the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) as the State entity best suited to easily and successfully oversee and manage the grant, as well as facilitate collaboration and coordination among the full range of programs, services, and funding streams. I am confident that with NDHHS's leadership Nebraska's Preschool Development grant will lead to the improvement of Nebraska's early childhood care and education mixed delivery system serving children from birth through age five.

NDHHS is the lead agency currently responsible for the administration of the Child Care and Development Block Grant; the licensing of child care centers, preschools, and family child care homes; collecting child health records; and the implementation of the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, as well as other family and child specific work. In addition, NDHHS has a long and successful history of partnering with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and other child focused entities for the benefit of Nebraska's youngest citizen and their families. The implementation of the work described in the application will require the collaboration of both NDHHS and NDE, along with other entities. NDHHS is well suited to facilitate partnership among public and private entities -- including professional organizations, institutions of higher education, private philanthropy and business.

The Division of Children and Family Services (CFS), under the leadership of Director Matthew Wallen, will provide oversight for the NDHHS. Within the CFS division, Nicole Vint, Administrator of the Child Care and Development Fund Program, will be the primary point of contact for the Preschool Development Grant application

We look forward to utilizing this grant to strengthen Nebraska's early childhood system.

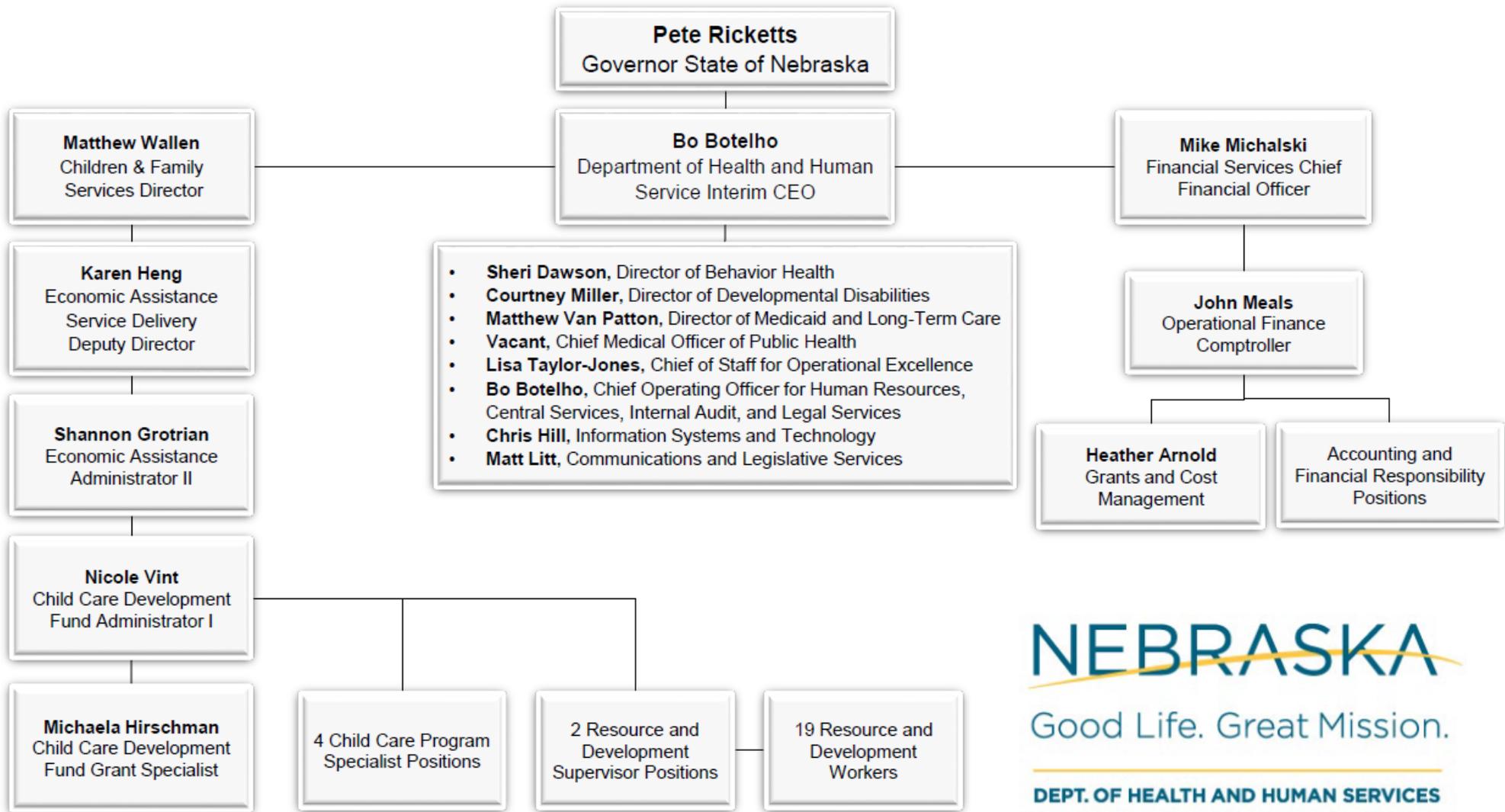
Sincerely,

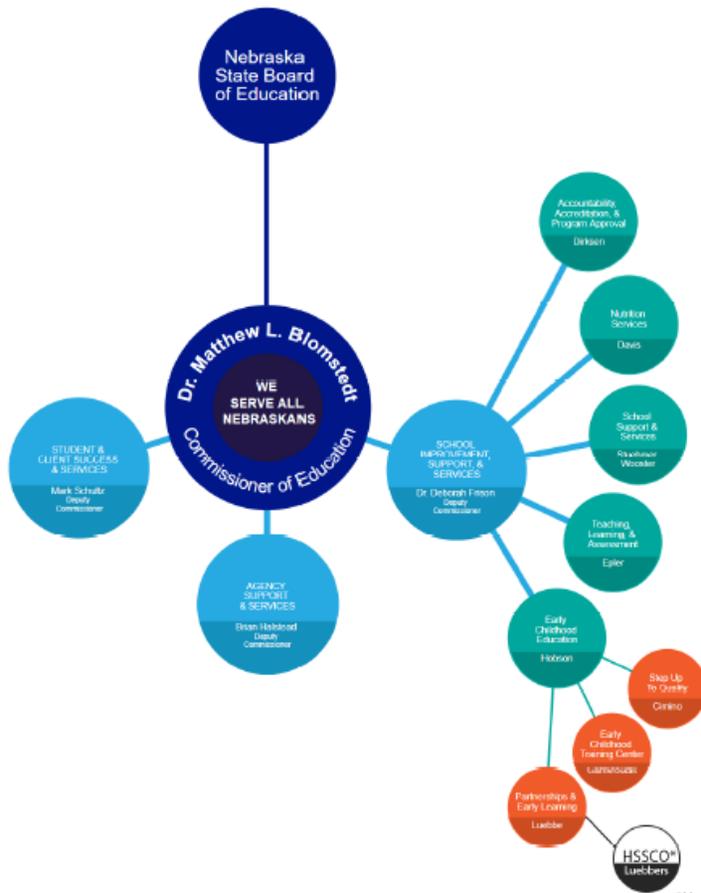
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pete Ricketts".

Pete Ricketts
Governor

cc: Matthew Wallen, Director
Nicole Vint, CCDF Program Administrator

An Equal Opportunity Employer





*Head Start Collaboration Office

- Accountability, Accreditation, & Program Approval – Brad Dirksen
- Nutrition Services – Sharon Davis
- School Support & Services – Diane Stuehmer and Beth Wooster
- Teaching, Learning, & Assessment – Cory Epler
- Early Childhood Education – Melody Hobson
- Step Up to Quality – Lauri Cimino
- Early Childhood Training Center – Meleah Gamvroudis
- Partnerships & Early Learning – Kristine Luebber
- Head Start Collaboration Office – Joan Luebbers

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
Nebraska Preschool Development Grant
Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education
February 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019
Revised Budget

		PDG BUDGET	MATCH BUDGET	PROGRAM BUDGET
		2/1/19 to 12/31/19		
SUMMARY:				
	Direct Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Payroll Taxes	\$48,376	\$0	\$48,376
	Direct program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Conferences, Etc.)	\$4,084	\$0	\$4,084
	Contract Services	\$4,075,900	\$1,242,468	\$5,318,368
	Subtotal	\$4,128,360	\$1,242,468	\$5,370,828
	Indirect Fee	\$13,200	\$0	\$13,200
	Total	\$4,141,560	\$1,242,468	\$5,384,028
DETAIL:				
Direct Personnel and Benefits (HHS):				
	Wages	37,500	0	37,500
	Payroll (FICA and SUTA) taxes - @ 7.78%	2,918	0	2,918
	Health, Dental, STD, LTD, Life, ADD Insurance - @ 14.62%	5,483	0	5,483
	Workmen Comp Insurance - @ .4%	150	0	150
	Retirement Plan - @ 6.2%	2,325	0	2,325
	Total Direct Personnel and Benefits	\$48,376	\$0	\$48,376
Direct Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Conferences, Etc.)				
	Out-of-State Travel and Lodging	3,200	0	3,200
	In-State Travel	200	0	200
	Out-of-State Meals	684	0	684
	Program Supplies	0	0	0
	Total Direct Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Supplies, Conferences, Etc.)	\$4,084	\$0	\$4,084
Lead Agency Indirect Fee (HHS)				
	Lead Agency Cost Allocation Plan	13,200	0	13,200
	Total Indirect Fee	\$13,200	\$0	\$13,200
Subaward/Contract Services				
	Project Coordination			
	Grant Project manager - NCFE	229,630	10,263	239,893
	1 Needs Assessment			
	Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Bureau of Social Research at University of Nebraska Lincoln - Needs Assessment	2,234,243	0	2,234,243
	2 Strategic Plan			
	a Buffett Early Childhood Institute - Strategic Plan	496,192	510,000	1,006,192
	b ECICC Meeting on Strategic Plan (NDE)	5,000	0	5,000
	3 Maximizing Parental Choice			
	a Identifying the Information Parents Need	0	40,325	40,325
	b Learning Begins at Birth	70,200	0	70,200
	c Getting Ready - Train-the-Trainer Expansion	318,116	0	318,116
	d ReadyRosie 300 Classrooms	150,000	40,000	190,000
	4 Sharing Best Practices			

	a	Improving the Quality of Adult-Child Interaction -- All our Kin	0	276,400	276,400
	b	Curriculum Alignment and High Quality Instructional Tools (NDE)	40,000	0	40,000
	c	NAESP Early Childhood Principal Leadership (NDE)	100,863	49,194	150,057
	d	Administrator's Day Conference sharing practices (NDE)	0	5,000	5,000
	e	Cultivating Healthy Intentional Mindful Educators (CHIME)	0	0	0
	f	New Early Care and Education Providers Started on the Right Foot	0	0	0
	g	Engaging Existing Providers -- Elevate 19 Business Summit and Provider Support	0	0	0
	h	Engaging Existing Providers -- Coaching Infrastructure	0	311,286	311,286
	5 Quality Improving				
	a	Develop Early Childhood Integrated Data Systems (ECIDS)	0	0	0
	b	Develop Community Assessment Tool (NDE)	224,000	0	224,000
	c	UNMC Study - Family Child Care Landscape	169,406	0	169,406
	d	Disseminating Strategic Plan	38,250		38,250
	6 Program Performance Evaluation				
	Included in Activity #2, Strategic Plan				
	Total Subawards/Contract Services		\$4,075,900	\$1,242,468	\$5,318,368
	Total Expenses		\$4,141,560	\$1,242,468	\$5,384,028
	% Federal and non-Federal Share		76.92%	23.08%	100.00%