

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT

RENEWAL YEAR TWO



Bi-Monthly Newsletter - June 2021

Nebraska's Strategic Plan Goal 1: Access

Welcome to Year 2 of Nebraska's Preschool Development Renewal Grant Birth to Five Years. For the coming year, issues of the newsletter will not only focus on the particular goals of the PDG Strategic Plan, but also the major themes that the Plan addresses.

As part of their aim to increase access to quality early childhood care and education, the initiatives focused on Goal 1 seek to increase the availability of quality care and services by creating funding strategies for providers, removing barriers to families who seek quality childcare, making it easier for families to find and enroll for care and services, and increasing access for vulnerable and rural families.

This issue is part 1 of the focus on access and will highlight several initiatives that identify particularly with this goal.



First Year Success of PDG Renewal Sets Up Second Year Funding and Continued Implementation

Year 1 of the Preschool Development Renewal Grant has come to a close, and the award of a second year of funding speaks to the successes of the work grant initiatives have accomplished in the first year. Just a few of the highlights include:

- [Communities for Kids](#) contracted with 27 communities for Early Childhood Community Coordinator sub-grants, 9 communities for Spanish Speaking/Bilingual Provider Support Initiative sub-grants, 18 communities for Early Learning Scholarships, 31 communities for Quality and Capacity Building sub-grants;
- [Learning Begins at Birth](#) updated, printed, and distributed across Nebraska 60,000 copies of their guide in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic;
- [Ready Rosie](#) enrolled 29 communities/programs and added 400 classrooms to their program, an evidence-based, birth-elementary age family engagement resource;
- [The Coaching Collaboration](#) developed and finalized [The Nebraska Early Childhood Coaching Guidebook: Competencies for Professional Practice](#) for coaches who work within the early childhood system.
- [Getting Ready](#) trained and coached a total of 91 Early Childhood Professionals in their approach to support family engagement, impacting 32 communities and more than 780 families.

There is so much more and just not enough space to say it, but thank you to each initiative for the fabulous work you've done in Year 1.

Looking forward to Year 2, a number of programs have already begun to take shape or have built on the accomplishments in place from Year 1. Here are a few things to look forward to in 2021-2022:

- [Social Emotional Support Infrastructure](#) plans to expand access to Circle of Security and complete accreditation with the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health;
- [Coordinated Enrollment](#) will expand to 3 more sites serving vulnerable populations;
- [Step Up To Quality 2.0](#) will roll out in spring 2022;
- The [Reflective Practice](#) team will build training capacity and support 4 training cohorts of 20 each;
- The [Transition Committee's](#) toolkits will be finalized and ready for dissemination in October 2021.

The newsletter will continue to update PDG progress for all initiatives over the course of the year.

Strategic Plan Update

The first strategic plan engagement opportunity for partners and stakeholders is an interactive webinar that will provide in-depth understanding of the strategic plan. Participants can expect:

- to explore the strategic plan's values and how they support the goals to achieve the vision;
- understand more about the main themes and terminology used in the plan;
- learn about the current strategies under each goal.

Throughout the presentation, participants will have interactive feedback opportunities to consider and share how their experiences and work in the early childhood system align to the work outlined in the strategic plan.

To register for one of the webinar events, please go to the [PDG Calendar of Events](#) and look in late June and early July for "NE EC Strategic Plan Webinar." Click on each event to find the registration link. (Note: Each of these webinars will cover the same information.)

If you are unable to attend one of the webinars offered, a recording will be posted on the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan website after the series is complete.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan is a dynamic plan created by Nebraskans for Nebraskans. Learn more about the plan at www.NEearlychildhoodplan.org.

For questions about the Strategic Plan contact [Susan Sarver](#).

Needs Assessment Update

As a continuation of the focus groups conducted in 2019, the Needs Assessment team recruited community-based facilitators to reach underrepresented families within target populations. Focus groups explored families' experiences with childcare needs, educational services, and other community resources that can enhance the lives of children in the community.

Eleven community-based focus group facilitators conducted a series of 15 focus groups with targeted populations, including African American, Latino, Somali, Karen, and families with disabled children, to better understand the needs of families with children birth to five years of age.

A total of 84 participants engaged in conversations about the needs of families. Following the focus group, the participants completed a post-survey of demographic information, family structure, childcare, and necessities. Qualitative coding of focus group transcripts is underway, and key findings will be shared with Preschool Development Grant stakeholders soon.

If you have questions concerning Needs Assessment activities, please contact [Kimberly Norman-Collins](#).

Achieving Access through PDG Funding



Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative Enhances Childcare Business Practices

[Family Child Care Network](#)

The Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) launched a statewide Family Child Care Network in August 2020 to respond to the growing challenges facing the childcare industry. NECC's Family Child Care Network provides a combination of technology and high-touch services to elevate childcare business practices, increase wages, and improve program quality. The goals of our Family Child Care Network (FCCN) are to address the industry's greatest challenges, including antiquated business practices, low wages, isolation, and large numbers of providers leaving the field.

Even though the FCCN is in the early stages, it is currently supporting nearly 350 childcare professionals across the state and is already receiving national recognition. NECC's Family Child Care Network was among 10 ventures selected, based on our extraordinary potential for scaled impact, by Promise Ventures Studio and recognized as a leader by *US News* in an article about providing financing childcare, including home-based programs, entitled "States Must Fund Early Child Care Programs."

[Wonderschool](#)

In 2019, NECC engaged Wonderschool, a national network of modern early education programs, to pilot their comprehensive technology platform in Nebraska. The platform allows childcare professionals to manage nearly



every aspect of their business through one mobile-friendly application. Through a partnership with Wonderschool, childcare business owners that are part of NECC's FCCN can access the platform at no initial cost. In turn, the provider's data dashboard is shared with NECC's team who can mentor the provider on key business metrics. FCCN members utilizing the Wonderschool platform also have access to a Nebraska-specific and a national Community of Practice, helping to address the isolation providers experience. Currently, over 50 Nebraska family childcare programs have on-boarded to Wonderschool. NECC has plans to add an additional 50 programs to the platform during the next year of the Preschool Development Grant.

Business Training Series & Consultation

NECC also partnered with All Our Kin (AOK), a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization that had garnered national attention, to pilot their business training curriculum, consultation model, and licensing toolkit. At the conclusion of the successful pilot in 2019-2020, NECC expanded the 10-week, 30-hour business training series and licensing toolkit to serve family childcare educators statewide. Since the inception of the business training series, NECC has provided the Business Training Series to more than 250 Nebraska family childcare educators. NECC plans to continue offering the business training series at least twice per year, training over 50 family childcare educators in each series.

Licensing Toolkit

Modeled after AOK's highly successful program, NECC's Licensing Toolkit program provides materials, guidance, and support to help unlicensed and potential providers fulfill state licensing requirements, meet health and safety standards, and become part of a professional network for family childcare business owners.



Last summer, NECC launched the Licensing Toolkit. The first participants are now provisionally licensed and are serving children in Nebraska. NECC's Licensing Toolkit program has enrolled 24 future family childcare educators in the program, including 6 educators whose primary language is Spanish. NECC plans to translate the entire program to Spanish during the next year of the Preschool Development Grant.

For more information about NECC's Family Child Care Network please email [Brandee Lengel](#) or visit the [website](#).

Coordinated Enrollment Pilot Expansion

Year 1 was certainly a whirlwind for the Coordinated Enrollment Pilot Expansion. The initiative began the year by surveying families who reached out to apply for services through the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) about barriers they had encountered while trying to access quality ECCE services and essential services for their children. The initiative used that information to develop processes, create partnerships with community childcare providers, and create a recruitment plan. They also hired and trained two Coordinated Enrollment Specialists to serve each family from initial intake until enrollment into a childcare program of their choosing.

In January, team members began recruiting families from over-income EHS-CCP programs waitlists whose income was between 100 and 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, which made them ineligible for EHS services. Families are screened to determine eligibility for childcare subsidy as well as other DHHS benefits and WIC. Families who are determined as qualifying are assisted in completing their applications. Parents also receive education about choosing quality childcare using resources from Learning Begins at Birth.

Coordinated Enrollment also helps parents make connections to other services that can assist them in supporting their child's healthy development. The initiative has developed partnerships with home visiting and parent education programs as well as other community resources for housing, utility, transportation, and food assistance to reduce barriers for parents.

For more information about Coordinated Enrollment Pilot Expansion, please contact [Mary Lariviere](#).

PDG-Related News

EVENTO GRATIS !!
También recibirá 5 artículos de juguete.

APOYANDO A LOS HISPANOHABLANTES EN LA PRIMERA INFANCIA

Durante este tiempo, los proveedores aprenderán cómo incorporar juguetes multiculturales, carteles en español y libros bilingües en su espacio. Incluyendo ideas sobre cómo explorar jugando con los niños.

24 DE ABRIL DE 2021 10:00-11:00

Plazas limitadas disponibles
Para registrarse:
Condado de Dakota: correo electrónico agustad@siouxlandship.org
Condado de Madison: correo electrónico ecccnfc@gmail.com

FREE EVENT!!! Will also receive 5 toy items

SUPPORTING SPANISH SPEAKERS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

During this time, providers will learn how to incorporate multicultural toys, spanish posters, bilingual books, and language into their space. Providers will be able to practice saying basic words in Spanish and learn about some Hispanic culture.

APRIL 24, 2021 9:00-10:00

Limited Spots Available
To register:
Dakota County - email agustad@siouxlandship.org
Madison County - email ecccnfc@gmail.com

Amanda Smith **Abigail Gustad** **Angelina Fregoso**

Early Childhood Event Builds Bilingual Partnerships between Providers and Families

“Speak English!” That’s the reception Angelina Fregoso received from one parent when she was overheard speaking Spanish to a child in her care. A story she recently shared with a gathering

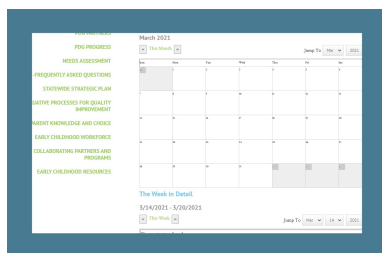
of providers who had come to hear how they could better support a bilingual environment for Spanish-speaking children.

Angelina was part of a dual county event that brought together (virtually) childcare providers and families. The two Nebraska counties, Madison and Dakota, took steps on Saturday, April 24, toward creating a more equitable early childhood care and education environment where providers and Spanish-speaking families can engage in a mutual journey of discovery. “Supporting Spanish Speakers in Early Childhood” was comprised of back-to-back Zoom sessions, one in English and one in Spanish, to inspire conversations about the bilingual experience in childcare. The event offered providers insight into Latinx cultures and invited Spanish-speaking families to better understand the requirements of the American educational system and to engage actively with the providers who care for their children.

The event was the brainchild of Abigail Gustad, who knows what it’s like to need extended help from Nebraska’s early childhood care and education system (ECCE). After receiving her associates degree in early childhood education, Gustad worked for some time in the ECCE system before taking an 11-year hiatus. But when her daughter was born and needed the assistance of the Early Development Network, Gustad realized that there was more she could do with her training than teach. Gustad became an Advocate for in-home support with Healthy Families and later joined Nebraska Children’s Rooted in Relationships as a Trainer of Trainers.

In her position as Early Childhood Community Coordinator (ECCC) for Dakota County, Gustad received community well-being funds for bilingual support in her area and immediately knew she wanted to “dive in with a project.” She gathered three providers in her community who had bilingual staff and asked them where to begin. Gustad said that “they really felt there needs to be some cultural inclusion training.” She describes the difficulty of an atmosphere where Spanish-speaking children enter childcare and “come into an environment where there’s nothing that reminds them of their culture.” This creates a barrier for children and their families.

[Read the full article.](#)



View the PDG
Events Calendar

The PDG Events Calendar is live. To see what's happening or to submit an event, please visit our Calendar of Events Page.

Family Engagement and Race Equity



Welcome Johanna Pesante-Daniel

When Johanna Pesante-Daniel first came to Nebraska from Puerto Rico 21 years ago to be with her mother and brother, she already knew she had a passion for assisting the Latinx community in moving beyond barriers that barred access to resources they needed. She began her work in the state by working with the Early Head Start program. For the last 14



years she has worked in Public Health where she began as a translator and moved up to be Minority Health Coordinator of Public Health Solutions.

She now joins Nebraska Children as the Translation and Interpretation Navigator and will apply her passion to

providing translation of crucial resources for Spanish-speaking families and to outreach to those who need interpretation services. Johanna understands how vital her work is toward Latinx populations, particularly in rural areas. She said, "I understand the struggles of the rural communities where services are more limited."

Johanna is no stranger to rural isolation as she lives in the countryside near Crete where, she jokes, during the pandemic, she "had to make friends with the deer and the rabbits." She enjoys a break from her quiet living space when she attends her 13-year-old son's baseball games and when she teaches adult ESL classes for Crete Public Schools.

Please welcome Johanna as she helps drive positive change toward greater racial equity in Nebraska's work with the early childhood community.



Opportunities to Learn More about Juneteenth

On June 19, 2021, Juneteenth celebrations will commemorate the emancipation of slaves in the United States. The day celebrates the anniversary of the 1865 General Order Number 3 issued in Texas by Union General Gordon Granger that read "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free."

If you would like to know more about the history of Juneteenth celebrations or read about African American experience, please check out the following resources:

[Short Video](#)

[Article](#)

[Readings](#)

Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about newsletter content, PDG-related activities, or partner organizations, we want to help you find answers. To receive information regarding your questions, please submit an online query by filling out the form at the bottom of our "PDG Progress" page, and we'll do our best to find you answers.

Get Answers to Your Questions



PDG Partners

Nebraska's PDG work is led by Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) under the authority of Governor Pete Ricketts, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the University of Nebraska system, and many other partners.

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For questions or comments regarding the Preschool Development Grant, please contact:

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For more information visit [Preschool Development Grant](#).

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