

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT BIRTH -5 INITIAL GRANT FINAL REPORT

State: Nebraska

Grantee/Lead Entity: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services

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Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 Initial Grant Final Report

I. Executive Summary

Activity 1 – Needs Assessment

In 2019, Nebraska conducted its first-ever comprehensive Needs Assessment (NA) pertaining to the multiple components of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system from diverse perspectives:

- Two large surveys captured the needs and concerns of families and ECCE providers in communities across the state.
- Fifteen focus groups with parents succeeded in gathering deeper, more nuanced information about families' perspectives and needs.
- Interview and surveys with key systems informants working within and across multiple ECCE systems levels highlighted system-wide needs and alignment barriers.

Through this effort, agency knowledge was greatly expanded regarding how families are using ECCE services and the challenges they are facing, especially factors that increase vulnerability, and challenges faced by families living in rural areas of the state. In response to the findings of the NA, and through engagement with stakeholders in communities across the state, the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan (SP) was developed.

Activity 2 – Strategic Plan

The SP defines a shared strategy for Nebraska to create a more integrated ECCE system in which children continuously experience quality services from birth through the transition to school. This plan establishes the framework for how Nebraska will, through systems alignment and increased collaboration, increase the overall participation of children in quality ECCE services in a coordinated mixed delivery system.

From the initial design of the NA through the development of the SP, stakeholder engagement was a top priority. In meetings across the state, stakeholders provided recommendations for how to fill the gaps and barriers identified through the NA based on their experiences as providers, early childhood professionals, school teachers and administrators,

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community leaders, resource coordinators, and parents. This feedback was analyzed to create the foundation for the goals, objectives, and strategies of this SP.

Activity 3 – Parent Knowledge and Choice

In many Nebraska communities there is limited access to services for parents, and/or there are barriers, such as transportation, to the services that are available. Nebraska’s approach to supporting parents in making more informed early childhood choices took that into account and built upon existing efforts to maximize the scope and effectiveness of the following approaches:

Identifying the Information Parents Need- Parent Information Playbook: Development of video campaign and media placement of community specific videos to promote the importance of the Early Childhood infrastructure and economic development. This included:

- Eleven (11) community-specific videos were created, bringing together perspectives of business leaders, employers, working parents and early childhood professionals on child care as a major infrastructure element throughout the state. These consisted entirely of live videography of stakeholder interviews and footage from the featured communities.
- One (1) community-agnostic video that combined footage from the various video shoots conducted throughout the state.
- Two (2) fully animated “explainer” videos. One of these focused on strategies for local businesses to be more directly involved in promoting child care infrastructure. The second focused on the importance of home-based child care providers in Nebraska.
- A campaign microsite was developed to house the videos and related campaign collateral:

Community	Final Vimeo link
Broken Bow	https://vimeo.com/394327914/aee09e7422
Gothenburg	https://vimeo.com/394076934/2d5f3586b0
Lincoln	https://vimeo.com/393792012/f1245bfd55
McCook	https://vimeo.com/394043966/1c52e1f5a6
Norfolk	https://vimeo.com/394017618/67674fb627
North Platte	https://vimeo.com/393816083/5ca0c481d6
Ogallala	https://vimeo.com/393840301/5609e99eb6
Oshkosh	https://vimeo.com/393187456/ce36ea2a12
Schuyler	https://vimeo.com/394273197/0f77f1b9c0
Stuart	https://vimeo.com/393046983/1ad38de9f3
Statewide/Community Agnostic Video	https://vimeo.com/394492201/dd9fcb0da6

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Learning Begins at Birth: An existing parent guide was redeveloped and updated to include the most recent Early Learning Guidelines and to provide current resource information to inform parents. Parents representing target populations were recruited and compensated for their review and feedback concerning its content and potential resources. Subjects include:

- How to guide children's early cognitive and physiological development;
- Selecting child care;
- Accessing child and family service systems; and,
- Other relevant information for families with young children.

The guide was distributed to a broader audience, and included translated versions from English into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Arabic. A website to make the information more available was built with downloadable PDFs of all four versions.

Getting Ready Train-the-Trainer Expansion: This evidence-based program supports the engagement of parents of vulnerable children to promote parental warmth, sensitivity, and active participation in children's early learning. This approach targets partnerships between families and professionals and aligns with any home visitation curriculum, encouraging parent empowerment, confidence in decision making, and facilitating effective transition to kindergarten by building parent competencies in working with educational systems. The work supported through the PDG increased reach and sustainability by building a coaching infrastructure and a robust intervention package for Head Start, Early Head Start and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) programs in targeted service areas across Nebraska. Changes in Home Visitors Behaviors were tracked over the effort and demonstrated the impact of the training.

ReadyRosie: ReadyRosie is a research-based and standards aligned comprehensive family engagement resource that builds on parents' knowledge for families with children 0- 3rd grade. The PDG proposed to expand ReadyRosie by 300 classrooms and 2,400 users. As a sponsor of the ReadyRosie Program, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund supported an evaluation completed by the University of Nebraska's Interdisciplinary Center of Program Evaluation. This evaluation provided valuable information about successes and lessons learned from the expansion efforts. Based on the information from the evaluation, implementation strategies for improvement and expansion in the future were proposed.

Public Awareness and Early Learning Tuition Assistance for Eligible Families: Lincoln Littles Pilot Project tested a potentially annual public awareness campaign to build understanding for the importance of early care and education as well as to raise private funds to support tuition assistance for eligible families. This community effort spearheaded by the Lincoln Community Foundation could offer a roadmap for replication in other communities in garnering community buy-in and financial support that offered some relief to working families along with a new source of funds for the provider community. The pilot showed great promise and will be tested in other locations in Nebraska. Encouraging results included:

- Greater public awareness of early childcare cost and quality resulted in attracting additional funding at local and state levels.

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- For programs, having access to “scholarships” for families of children in their care, the funds provided an incentive for participation in the Step Up to Quality system. This expanded the pool of quality environments and increased the opportunity for families to access quality care and education for their children.
- Information collected from participating programs demonstrated that low- to moderate-income families are able to access high-quality care. Programs that were not serving children eligible for the child care subsidy are now serving these children. It has promoted continuity of care for children who lost eligibility for the state child care subsidy. In such circumstances a parent would otherwise have been faced with finding alternative (more affordable) arrangements for the child or declining a raise so they may remain on the subsidy and continue with their childcare provider. The privately funded scholarships assisted children of working parents earning up to 200% FPL to access or remain in high-quality care.

Activity 4 – Sharing Best Practice

Nebraska’s approach to sharing best practices among providers to improve quality and efficiency included strategies to engage with new early care and education providers, as well as strategies for bringing together continuing providers.

Improving Quality of Adult Child Interaction - All Our Kin pilot to train Family Child Care Providers in business operations and improving quality: Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) piloted a model from All Our Kin, a nonprofit organization based in New Haven, Connecticut, for providing business coaching and consultation to family child care providers, and for supporting providers in gaining licensure. The model is intended to strengthen the business of family child care as an important part of the path to higher quality. NECC provided the 10-week business training to 73 family child care providers to strengthen their business practices in four Nebraska communities: Norfolk, Fremont, Lincoln, and Omaha. The pilot project was intended to inform possible statewide implementation. During the grant period, NECC also worked with All Our Kin to train their trainers to implement the business consultation component, which family child care providers may elect to participate in following the completion of the training series, and to reinvent and produce the licensing tool kit for the Nebraska-specific licensing context. Business consultation and the licensing tool kit was implemented with family child care providers beginning in 2020.

Curriculum Alignment and High-Quality Instructional Tools: Nebraska focused on alignment between programs and services for children post-birth to age 5 and kindergarten. Goals included:

- Dissemination of materials about the alignment of learning standards from birth through grade 12, focusing on gaps and duplications between the expectations for children’s growth and learning at the end of preschool and the expectations for what children should know and be able to do at the end of kindergarten.
- Identifying implementation methods for high quality instructional materials for children in the preschool to kindergarten age range.

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The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) contracted with a local early childhood expert to complete the Gap Analysis and to identify high quality instructional materials. The NDE led a Multi-Tiered System of Support (NeMTSS) initiative contracting for detailed reviews of curricula from birth to grade 12. School district staff and others requested a curriculum be reviewed.

Project Outcomes

- The NeMTSS curriculum reviews can be accessed at:
<http://nemtss.unl.edu/resources/program-comparison-tool/>
- The Gap Analysis and Research review was published and is being disseminated widely to school district early childhood and Head Start programs.

Nebraska Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) Early Childhood Principal Leadership: NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy was a blended professional learning experience that allowed a cohort of elementary school administrators to learn together to increase their competence in leading an early childhood program by:

- Building their capacity as Pre-K-3 leaders by increasing their knowledge and skills through the effective use of technology-based tools.
- Engaging as adult learners through technology-mediated professional development and online communities of practice.
- Completing a capstone experience that was both individualized and relevant to their professional growth and the success of their current school or community.

The NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy was a face-to-face day of learning followed by an online course of 10 lessons and facilitated cohort meetings led by five experienced Nebraska Early Childhood Administrators. At the midpoint of the course, a second face-to-face day of learning was held. Afterwards, a second online course was accessed by the participants along with discussions in their virtual cohorts. The participants planned and completed a capstone project that was presented at the third and final face to face meeting.

Eighteen administrators completed the Academy. Capstone project examples included: implementing practices, study and use of child outcome data, and changing policies and practices in kindergarten to first grade to better align with high quality early learning principles. The short timeline caused by the delay in receiving the initial grant, coupled with naturally occurring busy times for administrators meant that the normally 12-month course was condensed into eight months. The participants and the advisors were equally excited about the work, so they were willing to commit to the compressed timeline.

Administrators' Day Conference Sharing Practices:

NDE partnered with the Nebraska Council of School Administrators to offer a session to assist school leaders in learning about, and planning for, implementation of research-based kindergarten transition practices. Partners included Head Start and community child care to highlight practices that have been shown to smooth transitions.

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The session was a part of the state school Administrator's Days annual conference. About one month prior to the event, the conference center and surrounding hotels were flooded. The entire conference of 1,000 participants had to be relocated. The planned session was altered to be presented in a virtual format allowing the session to be presented to online participants. The NDE communications team set up rooms for presenters to pre-record sessions. They also set up zoom links so that presenters were live and could receive questions for a "give and take" with participants accessing the session. The session was recorded and made available to participants who were not available to attend at the scheduled time.

This session was a panel discussion attended by partners from NDE Title I Office, community agencies, school districts and Educational Service Units active in assisting school districts, child care programs and Head Start grantees with a focus of improving their transition processes. The panel presenters included subject matter experts from Title 1 programs, private philanthropy supporting EC Programs, NeMTSS, Public Schools and Head Start administration.

Engaging Existing Providers – Coaching Infrastructure:

NDE led an effort to align existing coaching systems so that early childhood programs receive streamlined services, financial resources are used efficiently, and coaches maintain a high degree of skill. In partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, implementation proceeded through the following methods:

- **Early Childhood Coach Training:** The state and privately funded partners supported reflective practice training and consultation across early childhood systems for program coaches. Coach booster sessions and other areas of professional development were provided to coaches across state systems.
- **Coach Collaboration Team meetings:** Regularly scheduled meetings included representation from across the various systems that provide coaches to early care and education programs.
- **Coach Development Team meetings:** Regularly scheduled meetings focused on professional development and system-wide needs for coaching support, and efforts to improve coach practice.

Key Outcomes for the project included:

- Development of Coach Competencies to align with the existing Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Skills and Competencies document. Final review was to be included and then rolled-out at the April 2020 Coach Collaboration Team meeting.
- The Coach Development team created a document which is inclusive of Early Childhood Coaching initiatives in the state for the purpose of education related to the focus of the various coaching initiatives. This document is available at:

<https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/NE-Early-Childhood-Coaching-Initiatives.pdf>

Activity 5 – Improving the Overall Quality

Revision of Step Up to Quality:

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The Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) Program, Nebraska's Quality and Rating Improvement System, is administered by the NDE - Office of Early Childhood. This program turned 5 years old in July of 2019 and has seen tremendous growth since its inception. SUTQ is a points-based system that rewards participating programs for implementing excellent practices and policies. The PDG provided an opportunity to evaluate the overall implementation of the program, and to make recommendations for potential program enhancements.

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and NDE worked with a broad team of stakeholders to thoroughly and carefully examine the criteria used for awarding points in the step levels. The group delved into current research, reached out to other states, and accessed federal technical assistance centers. The process examined current indicators and possible additions. NA information helped to revise criteria, and the review included a focus on whether any changes to SUTQ would 1) align more tightly with the goals of the SP, and 2) support providers to engage effectively with families to encourage their participation in child development.

The stakeholder group included current SUTQ providers, other ECCE representatives, higher education staff, coaches, and trainers. Six meetings were held between August of 2019 and February of 2020 with 52 representatives participating over that time. Recommendations considered equity between family child care and center-based providers. Initial recommendations were made available in February of 2020, with continuing work planned for finalization and program changes later in 2020.

Additional Activity: Program Performance Evaluation Plan (PPE)

The primary purpose of PPE was to consider how the projects independently and cumulatively progressed in achieving the grant goal: *Nebraska's goal in the Preschool Development Grant is aligning state systems to equip local communities to deliver quality services, resulting in parents and families accessing options that support their child's healthy development.*

To assist in achieving this goal, continuous improvement infrastructures and feedback processes were put in place soon after the grant was received. These processes were followed during the project development, and continued through project implementation. The Nebraska Leadership Team (NLT), aided by the PPE team, installed short-term (monthly) and mid-term reporting and monitoring systems to 1) evaluate ongoing grant activities and processes including fidelity and implementation reviews, and 2) evaluate activities and outcome metrics in direct relation to NA and strategic planning.

II. Utilization of Grant Funds

1. Describe how grant funds were allocated for each of the Activities 1 – 5 and in the development of your PPEP.

A detailed budget of expenditures has been attached. Budgets were established based on scope of work and contract deliverables. They were initially modified based on a shorter implementation period. Budgets were re-visited later in the year based on a reconciliation

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of actual to projected expenses, and changes in project implementation allowing for pre-approved re-allocation.

The PPE was funded through the SP, specifically Activity 2. It was implemented by Dr. Gallagher and Buffett Institute staff in coordination with the NA and SP teams, State Leadership, and Grant Administration teams. A data collection plan leveraging data for continuous improvement, program evaluation, and reporting was designed in Qualtrics, a data compilation and reporting application. Expenses of the PPE were attributed to the SP.

2. Address how non-federal match funds were used.

Match funds provided by private or state dollars were used in tandem with the federal PDG funds to support elements of the overall project, i.e. match supported from the University directly aligned with the costs of completing the NA and SP. Additionally, match funding supported the infrastructure for professional development focused on building quality across the early care and education workforce. Coaching and consultation services enhanced the understanding and implementation of newly learned skills and practices. Private and state funds were infused to grow the capacity of this work. See budget for more detail.

3. Whether or not you received a Renewal Grant Award, describe if any activities will continue without federal funding.

Learning Begins At Birth: Work will continue on expanding the distribution network; continued discussion/development of other mediums and promotion materials; web page enhancements, and strategies developed for long term sustainability.

ReadyRosie: The Buffett Early Childhood Fund has committed to supporting expansion of the program if the pilot is successful.

Administrators Day Conference: The work to support transitions will be continued through the NDE Head Start Collaboration Director/Office of Early Childhood and the NDE Title I office.

SUTQ Revisions: Initial recommendations were made available in February of 2020, with continuing work for finalization and program changes later in 2020.

Coaching Infrastructure: Development of Coach Competencies to align with the existing Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Skills and Competencies document. Final review is to be included and then rolled-out at the April 2020 Coach Collaboration Team meeting.

Getting Ready: More professionals were trained in the approach, and training materials were created based on user requests to support and sustain local capacity.

All Our Kin: The All Our Kin model for business training, consultation, and licensing tool kits will continue to be implemented in a limited number of communities. A renewal award will allow these activities to be expanded to new areas of the state, including some of our underserved rural communities that have been seeking additional support.

Public Awareness and Early Learning Scholarships: This will be continued on a smaller scale. The resources utilized for piloting early learning tuition assistance will be tested in a few additional communities in Nebraska.

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Video Campaign Development: Public Awareness and understanding of the importance of early care and education was greatly assisted by the development of community-based video, using local leadership to spread the message related to the economic health of any community.

Resources for Teachers, Home Visitors, Programs and Coaches: Social Emotional Toolkits, Mind in the Making books, materials, and tip sheets that were distributed through Sixpence, Rooted in Relationships, and Communities for Kids will continue to be used throughout the state.

Strategic Plan: As activities were wrapping up and the Nebraska Early Childhood SP was going through a review process, meetings with stakeholders and the partners group convened, committing to continuing the work on the implementation of the SP even if funding was not received. This commitment included a plan specific to carrying out the SP and related governance issues.

4. What amount of funds were returned unspent – and why?

None

5. What difference did the grant make to the state? What would not have occurred had this funding not been available? Be specific.

- Enhanced partnership between public and private staff teams. Ability to collect data on provider and parent voices on a large scale.
- Funding from this grant brought awareness to the diverse early care and education system in the state, enabled communication between agencies, entities, and programs that previously had not been possible, and allowed for meaningful (and coordinated) NA and strategic planning at a statewide level.
- Huge difference in advancing the efforts for creating an online tool to display integrated and appropriate data. This is described in greater detail under section XIII: Unduplicated Number of Children.
- Jump start for an EC SP with funds to support activities. Helped to forge partnerships instead of competition.
- An “ages and stages” type literature development.
- Created materials for future public awareness use in multiple venues and within specific communities as described on page 2.
- Allowed the state to revise, renew, translate into multiple languages, and widely distribute its “Learning Begins at Birth” information for new parents that had not been updated for nine years.
- Supported piloting numerous strategies to support parents and early childhood programs (ReadyRosie, All Our Kin, Early Learning Scholarships).
- Allowed Nebraska to distribute quality materials to programs statewide to support everything from meeting basic licensing requirements, to raising overall quality, and promoting social emotional development in young children.
- The resources moved development forward with our professional development system, providing information to parents, and providing the foundation for establishing a more robust Child Care Resource and Referral system across the state.

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- The alignment work was crucial in developing the EC infrastructure and poised Nebraska to respond collectively in addressing the needs for the early care and education workforces when the COVID-19 pandemic hit the state.

III. Development and Implementation of the Comprehensive, Statewide, B-5 Strategic Plan

1. Identify what you learned during the development of your needs assessment.

Nebraska's PDG work was guided by the vision of a system where community leaders work together to provide opportunities for quality early childhood care and education (ECCE), starting at birth, and in coordination with the full suite of health, mental health, and social supports that families may need. The goal of this work is to align state systems to equip local communities to deliver services, resulting in parents and families choosing options that support their children's healthy development and learning.

The PDG initiative began in early 2019 with a NA that identified strengths and gaps in Nebraska's early childhood care and education system. By conducting the first-ever comprehensive NA of the multiple components of the ECCE system from diverse perspectives, Nebraska has a greatly expanded understanding of how families are using ECCE services, especially regarding the challenges of families with vulnerable children and those living in rural areas of the state. These challenges, or barriers, exist statewide and prevent families from enrolling their children in quality ECCE services. In response to the findings of the NA, and through engagement with stakeholders in communities across the state, the *Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan* was developed.

The *Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan* defines a shared strategy for Nebraska to create a more integrated ECCE mixed delivery system in which children continuously experience quality services from birth through the transition to school. This plan establishes the framework for how Nebraska will, through systems alignment and increased collaboration, increase the overall participation of children in quality ECCE services in a coordinated mixed delivery system.

From the initiation of the design of the NA through the crafting of the SP, stakeholder engagement was a top priority.

- Stakeholder feedback directly informed the organizing framework for the integrated NA and SP processes and the design of the data collection tools within the NA.
- Later in the process, in meetings across the state, stakeholders provided recommendations for how to fill the gaps and needs identified through the NA based on their experiences as providers, early childhood professionals, school teachers and administrators, community leaders, resource coordinators, and parents. This feedback was provided the foundation for the goals, objectives, and strategies of this SP.

In addition to describing the actions that are needed to change the ECCE system in communities and across the state, stakeholders articulated core values about approaching

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systems change in Nebraska. Applying these values to the goals, objectives, and strategies ensures that the work of the SP will improve availability and access to quality ECCE for every family and every child in every community across Nebraska.

About the Respondents to the Needs Assessment Family and Provider Leader Surveys:

Overall, the sample of families who responded to the survey included more Whites. It also included families with higher than average income and slightly more people with college degrees. Sixty-four percent of the respondents lived outside of metropolitan counties, creating an over-representation of families outside of the state's urban centers. The percentages of providers in different settings who responded to the survey are similar to the actual proportion of licensed providers in the state. More than half of the providers in the sample live in non-urban counties.

After initially assigning one project to the NA, mid-term adjustments led to four projects being implemented to address the state's need for a comprehensive and cross-systemic NA.

Needs Assessment Surveys and Focus Groups, BECI:

The NA engaged families, early care and education providers, community stakeholders, and local experts to build a better understanding of the availability, access, and quality of existing early childhood services, particularly those that serve Nebraska's most vulnerable children. Two large surveys captured the needs and concerns of families and early childhood providers in communities across the state. Fifteen focus groups with 87 parents gathered deeper, more nuanced information about families' perspectives and needs. Focus groups included perspectives from diverse groups, including Native American, African American, Latinx, rural, and urban families. Interviews and surveys with key system informants who work within and across the multiple levels of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) system highlighted system-wide needs and barriers to alignment (*Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan, 2020*). The NA provided a foundation for Nebraska's SP.

Data Systems Alignment, BECI:

Consultants collaborated with the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC), state and community stakeholders to take critical steps forward in the design and implementation of an integrated data system. This alignment is intended to provide access to data-informed decision-making across the ECCE system. Activities included:

- capturing and documenting data needs as defined by prioritized use cases;
- designing an overarching data topology and architecture;
- developing a data system blueprint to inform and support the SP; and
- developing technical specification for key components of the future data system.

Nebraska Early Childhood Data Explorer, NDE:

A proof of concept for the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Explorer (NECDE, previously the Community Assessment Tool) was completed. The NECDE will serve as the tool for

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users to easily access and utilize data directly from the ECIDS as well as other data that can be used in combination with the ECIDS (e.g., Census data). The NECDE will also provide a means for leveraging indicators from the NA to inform decisions made by communities and other stakeholder groups. 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 summary data and graphics from *ad hoc* reports.

Family Child Care (FCC) Landscape Study, UNMC:

To better understand the FCC system, a targeted study of family child care homes investigated strengths and challenges among FCC providers, and perceived advantages and barriers to participating in the state quality improvement program, SUTQ. The study included three points of contact for data collection, including a focus group or interview and two surveys. Providers (N = 101) filled out one or both surveys, and 50 of those providers participated in the focus groups or interviews.

2. How are the results of your comprehensive, statewide, B-5 needs assessment reflected in your comprehensive, statewide, B-5 strategic plan?

The *Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan* that was completed in February 2020, leveraged data from the NA to guide a statewide SP and was developed with input from stakeholders across the state and all system sectors. The SP focused on identifying policy and practice changes that can enhance and improve coordination and collaboration for a more integrated Early Childhood Care and Education delivery system. It also documented gaps, including inadequate data available for systems change, data integration challenges, and a need for increased data to provide understanding of Nebraska families' utilization of ECCE services.

3. What else influenced the development of your strategic plan (data, stakeholder input, parent engagement, legislation, etc.)?

An implementation science approach was utilized in its evaluation. To that end, evaluation efforts focused on 1) inputs, resources, activities, and outputs (efforts) to inform continuous improvement (formative) and 2) outcomes to describe progress relative to grant goals.

A Strategic Planning Advisory Team (SPAT), with representation across the state and across system levels, was convened to advise the content and processes of the NA and SP. Early in the process, stakeholders provided feedback on the priority issues and themes that PDG B-5 should address, the data collection tools within the NA and the structure for the integrated NA and SP processes. SPAT team members also provided feedback for how to fill the gaps identified through the NA based on their experiences. Input and recommendations were incorporated to create the foundation for the SP.

Monthly survey data, mid-term and final interview data revealed substantive shifts in the ECCE systems related to infrastructure and processes. Within each of these, shifts in

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data use, communication, and partnerships were noted. Finally, the production and approval of a state SP for ECCE emerged as the artifact that, when implemented, will support the alignment and enhancement of Nebraska's ECCE systems. System processes were seen as foundational for supporting shifts manifest in data, communication, and partnerships. All elements supported the production and stakeholder engagement of the *Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan*.

4. **What parties will be involved in oversight of the strategic plan and what roles will those parties play?**

The scale of changes envisioned in the SP requires broad, cross-sector coordination and intentional collaboration across multiple public and private organizations. Nebraska will build on the increased coordination capacity developed during the first year of PDG activity to create a new oversight structure to lead a second phase of strategic planning to develop actionable plans for the objectives and strategies (Phase 2). The scope and pace of the implementation will be driven by the availability of resources. A proposed stakeholder partnership, called the Nebraska Strategic Partnership for Early Childhood (NSPEC), will be responsible for securing these resources.

The NSPEC will be established to orchestrate a public/private partnership using a collaborative strategy to oversee the transformation of the early childhood system. The partnership will lead the action plan development process for the SP, and subsequently provide long-term oversight of systems change through the SP implementation. The partnership's membership will include organizations in the Nebraska ECCE system that play significant roles in the implementation, coordination, and funding of the work to achieve the SP goals and objectives. Initial membership of the partnership will be expanded as needed during the formative stages of its work. Membership will initially include the following organizations:

- Buffett Early Childhood Fund: funding of multiple initiatives and long-term ECCE partner.
- Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI): Responsible for the NA, SP development and PPE.
- First Five Nebraska: leads the exploration of federal, state, and local statutory requirements to identify the policy changes needed to remove potential barriers.
- Nebraska Children and Families Foundation: funding partner with long-term public and private relationships. Facilitates and coordinates collaborative work among multiple stakeholders.
- Nebraska Department of Education: leads the development and implementation of public educational strategies.
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services: PDG Lead agency with oversight authority across many overlapping services of the EC system.
- Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative: connects child care providers with educational support, business services, and strengthens leadership.
- University of Nebraska: offers expertise in evidence driven and standards aligned programming and interventions as well as program evaluation.

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IV. New and Existing Partnerships

Partnerships existed among the following entities prior to, during, and after the PDG B-5 Planning Grant was provided to Nebraska. Key partnering entities serving children B-5 include:

1. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Division of Children and Family Services (CFS), managing the Child Care Development Fund, Nebraska Homeless Assistance Program, Refugee Resettlement, Child Welfare managing the Families First Services Program (FFSP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other programs focused on Economic Assistance.
2. DHHS-Division of Public Health (DPH), managing the licensing of child care programs, Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infant, Children (WIC).
3. DHHS-Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) and six Regional Behavioral Health Authorities provide oversight of behavioral health services for children and adults, manage a SAMHSA System of Care grant.
4. Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) - Office of Early Childhood includes the Early Childhood Training Center and seven regionally based Early Learning Connections staff housed in Educational Service Units, Step Up to Quality initiative, public Pre-K, and the Head Start Collaboration Office.
5. NDE Office of Special Education, Part C of IDEA is jointly managed by NDE and DHHS, Part B 619 managed by NDE, support Regional Training Coalitions, Early Development Networks, and the effort to embed Pyramid into schools and throughout the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) practice in Nebraska
6. NDE also manages the Child Care and Adult Food Program and Title 1 ESEA
7. Tribal Nations in Nebraska collaborate together and with state partners through the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Coalition, and the Society of Care (originally funded through a SAMHSA System of Care grant and then sustained).
8. Head Start Association and Head Start Programs, Early Head Start Programs.
9. Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, initiatives focused on overall well-being from birth through age 26; Communities for Kids (child care capacity building in communities), Rooted in Relationships (pyramid implementation and social emotional system building), Sixpence (birth-3 center-based child care, home visitation, and child care-school partnerships), Beyond School Bells (afterschool network), Connected Youth Initiative (connecting vulnerable youth and young adults to opportunity), Community Well-Being (community coalition building to address wellbeing), Community Response (prevent child abuse/neglect through supporting family needs), System of Care (connecting behavioral health services/systems) Native Outreach (connecting with tribal nations for access to services), Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska, and others effort.
10. Faith-Based Programs and Private Schools collaborate at the local level.
11. Housing Authorities also collaborate at local levels, along with Economic Development Councils and Chambers of Commerce.

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12. University of Nebraska, Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Center for Children Families and the Law, Center for Children Youth, Families, and Schools, University Medical Center-Monroe-Meyers Institute, UNL-Extension and others.
13. Private philanthropic partnerships, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the William and Ruth Scott Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation, the Lincoln Community Foundation, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Nebraska Community Foundation, and others.

The **two primary new activities** that partners came together to complete during this one year project was a **Statewide Needs Assessment** and **Strategic Plan**. Listed below are some of the projects that expanded through growing partnerships and new connections during the project year:

- Expanding the “Getting Ready” coaching model from school-based and pre-k classrooms to include Head Start, Early Head Start, and NMIECHV supported programs.
- State and local agencies such as Home Visitation Services, i.e. Sixpence, Early Head Start, and NMIECHV-funded sites collaborate through joint recruitment, referral, enrollment activities, joint socialization and family engagement activities, an increase in joint professional development, training activities, conferences, and participation on advisory groups.
- Members of the Pyramid State Leadership Team collaborated to expand Pyramid further in Pre-K and early elementary. Pyramid State Leadership Team also worked to embed the practices throughout the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) practice throughout education in Nebraska.
- Progress was made toward building and sustaining a coaching infrastructure across early care and education settings across the state. ESU 3 (Omaha), and ESU 6 (Lincoln) were able to pilot the hiring of two Early Childhood Coach Consultants. The goal is to hire additional EC Coach Consultants in a few additional sites in Nebraska for statewide support of the growing pool of program coaches working throughout the state.
- Strengthening a partnership between Systems of Care and other early childhood partners allowed for expansion in training and support for additional therapists being trained in Parent Child Interaction Therapy, and additional training of trainers in Reflective Practice.
- Through partnerships at local and state levels, expansion occurred under the Communities for Kids initiative, allowing for an extension of resources to additional communities, including building local capacity for improving access to quality child care, especially in areas where there may be zero to few licensed providers.
- Toolkits were distributed throughout the state by partnering organizations: licensing tool kits, social emotional toolkits, “Mind in the Making” resources, and video creation for community use in the upcoming year.
- Partners worked together on moving Child Care Subsidy policy forward by allowing for payment for up to five absences per month for enrolled children. It is still pending.
- Partnerships developed among the entities listed above allowed for a more cohesive rapid response to the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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V. Child Care and Development Block Grant (Section 13)

The NA recognized similarities in early childhood activities; however, duplication of efforts or funding was not identified. The NA identified a gap in funding for the state's overall early childhood efforts.

VI. Blending and Braiding of Funding

Throughout the months of Nebraska's PDG funded NA and SP, a project was underway that included a group of more than 40 public and private sector leaders whose work began three years ago. The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission was tasked with studying the complex challenges of the early childhood workforce in meeting the needs of children for the first eight years of life. The work included a thorough analysis of the multiple public and private funding sources that support Nebraska's mixed delivery system. This report "**Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce**," was published Jan 28, 2020, and is available via this link:

https://issuu.com/buffettearlychildhoodinstitute/docs/workforce_commission_report_pages_final

The report maps out funding streams and identifies the braiding of funds that must occur at the program level to operate. It also identifies the state's funding gap and sets out recommendations to address this gap in the future. This in-depth analysis will move Nebraska forward in implementation of the SP as it relates to funding the mixed delivery system in the future.

Anecdotally, in administering the federal PDG Grant, it is important to note how critical access to private dollars was during the implementation of this project. Private funding allowed for flexibility and expediency that public funds just could not afford. Having both public and private dollars supporting any initiative is really the best scenario.

VII. Sharing Information with Families

In many Nebraska communities, there is limited access to services for parents – or there are transportation barriers to the services that are available. Nebraska's approach to supporting parents in making more informed early childhood choices took that reality into account and built upon existing efforts to maximize the scope and effectiveness of three existing approaches.

Nebraska state statute requires NDE, in cooperation with the DHHS, to develop a resource packet to be distributed to parents of every child born in Nebraska. This packet, entitled *First Connections: Learning Begins at Birth*, is intended to inform parents about guiding their children's early cognitive and physiological development, selecting child care, accessing child and family service systems and other relevant information for

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families with young children. The statute requires this packet be available to parents in multiple languages potentially in a variety of media formats. First created in 2003 and revised in 2010, the version available at the start of the PDG term was a downloadable PDF in English and Spanish. Without a specific allocation from the state, it was neither widely nor consistently distributed to its target audience. The PDG funding allowed Nebraska state agencies and EC stakeholders 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, in a range of needed languages.

To get started, First Five Nebraska and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation assembled a stakeholder group representing a broad cross section of organizations serving the target populations that could offer expertise. Many of these stakeholders had no previous knowledge of the guide. Building awareness was a first step in updating the guide and expanding distribution. The Stakeholder group split into two focus areas: 1) content that was responsible for updating the parent guide, and 2) distribution that was responsible for developing a plan for its broad dissemination. As the content was being developed, parents who themselves and their families represented vulnerable groups were recruited and compensated for feedback on existing and proposed documents that described potential resources. The parents reviewed a list of web-based resources that expanded on the resource list in the first Learning Begins At Birth (LBAB) edition and provided feedback on its user friendliness and parent-specific guidance. They also reviewed the updated guide itself and proposed revisions.

The Dissemination group focused on developing a distribution network of organizations that have contact with parents of newborns and those with children through age 5. There are no records for comparison on the distribution of the Guide prior to 2020, but the effort made possible by the PDG resulted in the final product available as follows:

- English: 120,000 copies printed, 60,000 shipped
- Spanish: 40,000 copies printed, 20,000 shipped
- Vietnamese: 3,000 copies printed
- Arabic: 3,000 copies printed

In addition, a full Learning Begins at Birth website has been built with downloadable pdfs in the four languages at www.learningbeginsatbirth.org.

Getting Ready Train-the-Trainer Expansion

Prior to the PDG efforts, Getting Ready had been used in 20 Head Start/state funded preschool center-based programs and in three EHS home-based programs across the state as part of research trials. In 2016 it was adopted by Nebraska Part C services to be used to promote quality home visitation services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The expansion through the PDG was an extension of Getting Ready services built on the infrastructure developed through Part C. The extension increased Getting Ready's reach and sustainability by building a coaching infrastructure and robust intervention package for Head Start, Early Head Start and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home

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Visiting (MIECHV) programs in targeted service areas across Nebraska. Getting Ready training and coaching support were delivered in-person and virtually.

Virtual coaching was conducted over a three to four-month time period after the initial Getting Ready training. Each home visitor video recorded one home visit, shared it with a coach, and then participated in a virtual coaching session. During the coaching session, they reflected on and received feedback about their use of the Getting Ready approach and created a plan for moving forward. This process was repeated up to three times.

Through the end of the grant term, 118 professionals were trained in the Getting Ready approach, exceeding the proposed total of 75. This included 17 supervisors, trainers, coaches, and 101 home visitors. Six agencies were involved, along with 23 communities. Some additional activities included:

- Developed and provided additional training to 17 agency supervisors, trainers and coaches on how to coach their home visiting professionals in the Getting Ready approach based on user requests in order to support local sustainability.
- Created materials to support use and sustainability of Getting Ready, including laminated prompts on lanyards and cue sheets.
- Developed video training modules for use by professionals in center and home-based settings.

Changes in Home Visitors behaviors were tracked over the course of the effort and demonstrated the impact of the training:

- Getting Ready Strategies: Home visitors' use of the 8 Getting Ready Strategies increased across the three coaching conversations. Best practice suggests using at least 5 of 8 Getting Ready strategies in a given home visit.
- Home Visit Structure (GUIDE): Home visitors' use of the 11 home visit structure GUIDE components also increased across the three coaching conversations. Best practice suggests using at least 7 of 11 GUIDE components at each home visit.

ReadyRosie

ReadyRosie is a research-based and standards aligned comprehensive family engagement resource that builds on parents' knowledge for families with children up to 3rd grade. ReadyRosie harnesses the power of video modeling and mobile technology combined with collaborative workshops and professional learning to empower families, schools and child care providers to work together to close the opportunity gap. ReadyRosie has more than 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 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 support in building a cohesive family engagement plan. The PDG was proposed to expand Ready Rosie by 300 classrooms and 2,400 users.

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As a sponsor of the ReadyRosie Program, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund supported an evaluation completed by the University of Nebraska Interdisciplinary Center of Program Evaluation. This evaluation provided valuable information about successes and lessons learned from the ReadyRosie expansion efforts. The PDG funds supported a third Cohort of participants in 2019. The total of 3,342 enrolled far exceeded the initial goal of 2,400, despite the fact the classroom number was just under the goal of 300, at 288.

Among the lessons learned, access to internet and technology was a factor in some communities and hindered the speed of inviting families to participate. For example, some sites only had access to one computer, so rather than teachers being able to update classroom rosters and send invites, the task fell to the site directors. Some teachers invited families using their phones, but it was too complicated, and they were unable to send invites efficiently. Some classrooms had access to iPads, but the ReadyRosie app is targeted for parents, and teachers were unable to use it to add families to the platform. Recognizing that additional tools would assist with this barrier and increase utilization, private resources helped purchase \$12,500 worth of iPads (31 total). These iPads were disseminated based on the survey results, prioritizing programs with highest needs.

Most parents accessed ReadyRosie using smartphones (89%). A quarter of parent respondents indicated the primary reason they were unable to access videos was a lack of consistent internet availability or a limited data plan on mobile devices. Parent focus groups indicated it would help if the videos were available to download to watch offline. If families have limited data on their cell phone plans and lack reliable Wi-Fi internet, it was difficult for them to watch weekly videos consistently, particularly in rural areas. Some parents reported they simply did not have time to watch a video and prepare materials for activities while caring for children, working fulltime, and meeting other family demands. When parents had the opportunity to view the videos, they appreciated the short clips and that the activities requiring common household items. While parents valued the short clips, many felt it was only manageable to do one activity per week based on the time needed to watch, prepare, and engage their child in the activity.

Based on the information from the evaluation, the following implementation strategies for future improvement and expansion were proposed:

- If possible, ReadyRosie should avoid mid-year start up. Integrating enrollment with fall school enrollment, open houses, and parent teacher conferences work well.
- Programs should work towards incorporating ReadyRosie into existing program structure. For example, home visiting programs have experienced increased participation and success when they have utilized ReadyRosie during their visitations and consider it a part of their program.
- Coordinators who oversee communities with multiple child care centers may wish to have a site-specific coordinator to aid in communication and understanding of ReadyRosie at the site level.
- Sites should consider offering parent workshops and utilizing the available ReadyRosie resources (i.e. parent conference form).

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Resources for Parents Distributed through Sixpence: This 0-3 initiative in Nebraska includes public/private partnerships delivering center-based care and home visitation across the state. The book *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky was purchased and distributed to the supervisors, teachers, and home visitation staff working in the initiative. *Mind in the Making* introduces early childhood providers and families to the seven-essential life- and executive function-based skills children need to have in life to thrive. New knowledge can help caregivers and families learn strategies to take the stress out of challenging behaviors by turning them into opportunities to build life skills. Correlating children's books were purchased. A book tip sheet was provided with each book to help caregivers read with their children in a way that helps the child with the executive functioning life skills, involving managing thoughts, actions, and emotions to help them bridge the gap between knowledge and practice. Each teacher and home visitor received 15-20 books to correlate with the essential life skills. Sixpence providers, serving 492 families, will educate the families on the reading strategies they can implement to best support their child's learning.

Additionally, social emotional toolkits provided materials to 82 programs across Nebraska who were involved with existing program coaching occurring through Rooted in Relationships, Sixpence, and Communities for Kids. In addition, kits to support ReadyRosie implementation were distributed to 31 programs. PDG funds were utilized to support two new trainers in FAN (Facilitating Attuned iNteractions) in the way of supplies and resources for Sixpence supervisors and Child Care Partnership coaches. The goal of the training is to increase confidence and competence, strengthen relationships and enhance reflective practices.

VIII. Improvement in Parent Involvement and Engagement

It was recognized early on that parents needed to be involved in the development of many of the PDG Activities, especially as it relates to strategies developed to address the identified needs and barriers of vulnerable groups. Often, parents experience participation barriers associated with projects including work requirements, lack of transportation and lack of available time. To help address these barriers, the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation developed a contract and compensation method that helped to tangibly reward their participation and make participation more feasible by reimbursing associated out of pocket expenses, such as mileage, child care, and parking. Parents representing the target populations who experience vulnerabilities such as low-income, ethnic/racial minority origins, children with special needs and behavioral health issues in the family were recruited. Through this partnership, these parents were integrated into the PDG work in many areas.

Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council: A Task Force of the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) was responsible for oversight of the SP development and approval process. Although parents had been involved with the ECICC

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up to this time, two of the PDG parent representatives were recruited and participated through the task force process. Their familiarity with the overall scope of the PDG activities and intended outcomes made them especially well qualified to participate.

Strategic Plan: The PDG parent representatives also participated in the Strategic Planning Advisory Team (SPAT) meetings, especially as the final draft became available. Their insights about the feasibility of proposed intervention strategies were especially helpful in crafting reasonable approaches, especially for hard to reach populations.

Head Start Policy Councils: The Policy Council parents were integrated into the final approval process for the Learning Begins at Birth parent guide. Feedback from participants was routed to the guide developer for inclusion with the draft development.

LBAB Review: PDG parent representatives participated on the LBAB work group in planning and were involved in the review of materials at multiple levels. Their close review of the guide helped to ensure the information was presented at the right level, and they offered many practical tips that were especially helpful to new parents. Web based references embedded in the guide and resource section text were reviewed for their suitability and content changes were made based on this valuable feedback.

ReadyRosie Evaluation: Parents were involved in a robust feedback process regarding their participation in the ReadyRosie programs that involved both survey and focus group formats. They were asked about their specific utilization of the system, quality of training received, and overall perceptions about the system. This feedback provided significant overall program information that will be incorporated into future program implementation including technical, time, and user training/navigation issues that if addressed, could improve program service delivery. There was also very helpful feedback about the strengths of the system and appreciation for the resources and formats that were particularly helpful.

Nebraska Leadership Team (NLT): The NLT was established as part of a communication and coordination infrastructure for monitoring the development and facilitating collaboration among all the project leads and other stakeholders with implementation responsibilities. Several of the PDG parent representatives attended the meetings and provided helpful insights as barriers to progress were identified, especially with target populations. The parents participating gained helpful knowledge of the scope and intent of activities underway and became involved in the projects as time and interest allowed.

Needs assessment: Engaged families, early care and education providers, community stakeholders, and local experts to build a better understanding of the availability, access, and quality of existing early childhood services, particularly those that serve Nebraska's most vulnerable children.

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From the initiation of the design of the NA through the crafting of the SP, stakeholder engagement has been a top priority:

- Stakeholder feedback directly informed the organizing framework for the integrated needs NA and SP processes and the design of the data collection tools within the NA.
- Later in the process, in meetings across the state, stakeholders provided recommendations for how to fill the gaps and need identified through the NA based on their experiences as providers, early childhood professionals, school teachers and administrators, community leaders, resource coordinators, and parents. This feedback was analyzed to create the foundation for the goals, objectives, and strategies of this SP.

IX. Innovative Practices and New Procedures

Over the past year and a half, the PDG process has been responsible for bringing together a cohesive, collaborative, and cross sector team of leaders with a regular cadence and norms for their work together. The experience of writing and implementing the PDG grant activities and then co-creating the renewal grant has resulted in an effective group with high levels of trust that positioned the team well to react quickly to the COVID-19 crisis. In a matter of just weeks, leaders from the nonprofit sector, higher education, philanthropy, and state government worked together to design and implement an emergency child care provider relief fund, start up a child care referral website for essential workers, and submit shared policy recommendations at both the state and federal levels. These are outcomes that would have been far less likely without the PDG's support for building and sustaining productive partnerships.

Collaborative Evaluation Tool

To decrease reporting burden on the project leads, and increase capacity around implementation science using shared data, an evaluation tool was developed to document needs for both project monitoring and the PPE. This allowed evaluators and grant managers to meet multiple goals by tracking accountability and evaluating systems-level shifts in progress in one reporting mechanism.

X. Policy and/or Legislative Change

In April of 2019, Nebraska received a Pritzker Children's Initiative (PCI) Prenatal-3 Policy Planning grant, administered by First Five Nebraska, to create a policy framework to expand "needed state and community services for children prenatal to age 3 and their families." The focus of this grant was to develop a Policy Agenda and Implementation Plan through a five-step stakeholder process. Many of the leaders involved with the PDG effort also needed to be involved in the PCI Policy activities and concerns were expressed about potential fragmentation and duplication of effort. It was decided the PDG NLT should provide advisement of the plan, align the work with the SP, and identify opportunities to crosswalk interdependencies and facilitate collaboration. A consultant

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was hired to facilitate development of a policy agenda, including: a landscape and analysis, articulation of policies in the system from which to build, making inequities visible, and informing the development of initial targets to increase the number of children who are on track for success in school and life. The NA integrated policy-specific questions into the family and provider surveys to inform the PCI Implementation plan. Once the landscape analysis was finished, an intensive stakeholder feasibility and prioritization process was completed to target the most achievable and impactful policy initiatives to be addressed in the next year. The policy landscape analysis also informed the SP. In January 2020, First Five Nebraska finalized the PCI Implementation Plan with 13 policies identified.

The overlapping activities between the PDG B-5 and PCI grants helped accomplish some of the preliminary work that was necessary for the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Explorer (previously called the Community Assessment Tool or CAT). Most of this grant was used for information gathering and development of the SP as required. Some specific changes included:

- A plan was in place to continue to build coaching infrastructure even if renewal funds did not materialize. This would have entailed taking some funding from an existing program and looking for additional state funds.
- Update of LBAB which is required in statute.
- Discussion of changes to SUTQ.

XI. Sustainability

- Ongoing partnership meetings and commitment to prioritize the activities started through PDG with continued efforts to implement strategies recommended as part of the NA and SP.
- A plan was in place to continue to build coaching infrastructure even if renewal funds did not materialize. This would have entailed taking some funding from an existing program and looking for additional state funds.
- PDG activities provided an opportunity to connect with other state partners and make plans for sustainability. The infrastructure was enhanced by highlighting connections and opportunities for shared support.

XII. Governance and Oversight

Nebraska's early childhood governance is defined by state statute, and no changes were made through the course of the PDG term. Nebraska's EC funding is administered primarily by two state agencies: DHHS and NDE. DHHS is responsible for childcare licensing, subsidy, and MIECH-V programs. NDE is responsible for the state's preschool program, houses its Head Start State Collaboration office, administers IDEA Part B/619 Preschool Special Education, and has primary responsibility for the state's EC PD system, including all training required for child care licensing and SUTQ. The two

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agencies jointly administer SUTQ, Nebraska's professional record system, and Part C-Early Intervention. Both agencies, along with two private sector representatives and two early childhood professionals, are responsible for funding distributions into the public-private Sixpence Early Learning Fund. They were also the lead partners in administering the PDG, with DHHS serving as the lead agency and NDE engaging with DHHS on a weekly basis. DHHS, as the fiscal agent, led all financial discussions, and the department's shared leadership of the ECICC task force and SUTQ revision team. The Nebraska PDG Renewal Grant application described the development of a task force to study the redesign of Nebraska's early childhood governance structure and financing mechanisms to maximize efficiencies and eliminate barriers to optimal service delivery.

XIII. Unduplicated Number of Children

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

Nebraska plans to expand the use of the ADVISER ID across ECCE programs to provide distinct, unduplicated counts of children accessing ECCE and other services. Securely matching the ADVISER ID to identifiers used in other existing systems allows providers in multiple ECCE services to identify children across various ECCE programs and services. This approach also supplies functionality supporting a matching process to determine whether an enrolled child is already served and ensures ADVISER IDs are assigned only to new children. The state already can execute a matching process for some components of this feature set. The system plan includes a "federated" architecture, meaning the state will maintain links among various data systems rather than moving all data into a central repository. The approach expedites results and cost effectiveness while allowing organizations control of data and how it is shared.

In the past year, significant progress has been made in the ongoing development of an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) that will collect, connect, integrate, and report information from EC programs across multiple entities serving children and families from ages 0 to 8. The system will facilitate better coordination across service providers, inform decisions to achieve common goals, support continuous service improvement, and magnify collective impact. Nebraska's work moved multiple aspects of the state's data system into the planning process, and some are already operational. These include:

- *Integrated data*: Integrating early learning data focused on providing metrics to inform policy, practice, and progress; focused on workforce or program data; or was generally limited to public school information. PDG funded the first viable reporting

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tool, known as the Community Assessment Tool (CAT), and renamed it the Early Childhood Data Explorer. It allows Nebraska to use the EASI framework to identify programs that match service needs (Eligibility), assess the location and characteristics of current service providers (Access), monitor the service status of children (Services), and compare current service landscape to available outcome metrics (Impact). The state identified key use cases and developed a plan to build a prototype data system that can be expanded using an iterative framework, with a cloud-based infrastructure for hosting integrated data.

- *Key data elements:* During ECIDS development work, Nebraska conducted a data inventory, identifying available data at DHHS, NDE, Sixpence, Head Start, and others. Documenting data from vital records, immunization, health insurance, child support, unemployment, licensing, Step Up to Quality, homelessness, Head Start/Early Head Start, school district PK and K-12, TANF, WIC, SNAP, SSI, IDEA Part B/C, Medicaid, and other systems to support community collaboration. These sources are currently available to execute use cases, including eligibility determinations and identifying underserved children. A large amount of data is in two primary source state agencies (NDE and DHHS) that already have MOUs supporting data sharing.
- *Linkages across health and ECCE:* As described above, the proposed interagency data linkages include health-related data such as immunization and insurance records.
- *Community data on transition practices:* Ready use of community-level data is central to the EASI framework and segments children and families based on their eligibility for various services. Linking disparate data sources at the child level allows community members to assess and improve program referrals and transitions across related or complimentary programs.
- *Supporting the data literacy of key users:* Nebraska developed a core set of data literacies that promote essential knowledge and skills for effective data use. Key users receive training and support through a Data Cadre, which builds on a K-12 model to ensure that early learning leaders have the skills to utilize data effectively for program and policy-level decisions. In addition, embedding interpretive documentation and guidance of analysis with an interactive interface allows for real-time analysis that meets the needs of users at the state and local levels.
- *Interagency data governance:* Since 2009, the formally chartered Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) has driven Nebraska's statewide work on EC data. ECDC includes leaders from state agencies, including DHHS and NDE, universities, and ECCE and health sector partners. Enhancing this governance is underway.

XIV. Technical Assistance

Continued emphasis on shared data and using a shared data system for collective decision making; updates regarding the proposed Community Assessment Tool; continuing to develop the idea of a shared governance structure for the ECE system in the state that continues to involve local, state, and federal partners.

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XV. Dissemination

Product Name	Organization(s) Producing	Description
PDG Website: https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/preschool-development-grant/	NCFE Communications	Overview of PDG intent, activities, progress and dissemination of products
e-Newsletter Editions – 2019 for May, July, October, and December	NCFE and Nebraska Leadership Team	Description of implementation efforts and progress. Promotion of participation and dissemination of products
Needs Assessment & Appendices	BECI	Describes the purpose, scope, methods and findings of a Nebraska Statewide Needs Assessment of the mixed delivery Early Childhood Care and Education system conducted in 2019.
Family Childcare Providers' Perceptions of State Quality Supports	University of Nebraska Medical Center – Munroe-Meier Institute	Summary of findings from a study to investigate Family Child care Providers' Perceptions of State Quality Supports; Observations of Quality in Family Child care.
Family Child Care Study Final Report	University of Nebraska Medical Center – Munroe-Meier Institute	Describes the purpose, process, results, feedback and conclusions from the FCC studies, including additional information gathered specific to the Phase 2: BECI Observation Tool study.
Data Alignment – Use Cases, Data Landscape & ECIDS Architecture	BECI and NDE	Documented system needs and strategic planning for the development phase of Nebraska's ECIDS. Includes descriptions of potential use cases, a data landscape analysis, and a proposed data system architecture. These deliverables will be leveraged for the full development and implementation of the ECIDS.
Strategic Plan & Appendices	BECI	Describes the purpose, process, goals and objectives of the Nebraska Strategic Plan. Links goals to the NA findings and lays-out plans for further development, implementation and governance in future years.
Learning Begins at Birth Parent Guide and Website www.learningbeginsatbirth.org	NCFE and FFN	The Parent Guide is intended to inform parents about guiding their children's early cognitive and physiological development. It also contains information about how to guide children's early cognitive and physiological development, selecting child care, accessing child and family service systems

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		and other relevant information for families with young children.
Getting Ready Final Report	UNL - Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools	Describes the goals, methods and outcomes of the Getting Ready Train-the-Trainer efforts.
Getting Ready Implementation Tools	UNL - Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools	Provides early childhood professionals with guidance on planning for and using the Getting Ready strategies and GUIDE process during family interactions.
ReadyRosie – Final Program Evaluation	NCFE and Buffett Early Childhood Fund	2018-2019 ReadyRosie Program Evaluation describes evaluation methods related to implementation, participant information, conclusions and recommendations to enhance future service delivery.
All Our Kin – Focus Group Training Feedback	Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	Summarizes Participant Survey Results about the training including what was most helpful, least helpful, how the information addresses challenges, gaps, ease of use, potential business improvements, and provider outreach.
All Our Kin – Licensing Toolkit including: Comprehensive Licensing Guidebook; Health and Safety Supplies; Quality Enhancement Materials; Resources for enhancing Health & Safety Practices; Mentorship with guidance and support	Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative	Materials, guidance and support to help unlicensed and potential providers fulfill state licensing requirements, meet health and safety standards and become part of a network for family child care business owners.
Gap Analysis: Early Childhood and Kindergarten Standards in the State of Nebraska	NDE -Office of Early Childhood	A summary describing an analysis of ideal learning outcomes for the kindergarten academic year and description of gaps in content area standards in Nebraska.
NeMTSS Comparison Chart and Glossary http://nemtss.unl.edu/resources/program-comparison-tool/	NDE – Office of Early Childhood	Detailed information on program studies with focus on skills to be developed, programs to build skills and study outcomes. Glossary provides a description of standardized terms used in the Comparison Chart.

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NAESP Principal Leadership Final Report	NDE – Office of Early Childhood	Describes the purpose, implementation and outcomes from the 2019-2020 NAESP PreK-3 Leadership Academy.
Administrators Day Conference Panel Presentation Recording	NDE – Office of Early Childhood	Recording of panel discussion regarding effective kindergarten and program transitions best practices
Coaching Infrastructure Final Report	NCFF and NDE – Office of Early Childhood	Description of the project, goals, implementation methods and outcomes for the coaching system alignment efforts.
Coaching Infrastructure Programs Inventory https://www.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/N-E-Early-Childhood-Coaching-Initiatives.pdf	NCFF and NDE – Office of Early Childhood	Description and contact information for Early Childhood Coaching Initiatives in the State.
Step Up To Quality Final Revision Recommendations	NDE – Office of Early Childhood	List of Final Recommendations for enhancement of the Step Up To Quality Program.
Program Performance Evaluation – Capstone Report	BECI	Describes the evaluation process focusing on inputs, resources, activities and outputs and their delivery of outcomes relative to grant goals.
Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission Report	BECI	Describes a comprehensive plan for elevating and strengthening the state’s early childhood workforce. The plan is based on and analysis of Nebraska’s strengths and challenges across all sectors affecting early care and education.

XVI. Recommendations

1. Considering the PDG B-5 work that you have been engaged in over the last year, what are your practical recommendations to DHHS and NDE?

The approach of requiring a data-informed SP to map out the future was a critical piece of the work. Moving forward the collaboration and coordination required for NDE and DHHS will ensure continuity of support given the differences across states.

2. What specific issues are critical and should be given priority by you?

The first overall priority is to follow and implement the SP that offers Nebraska a road map to our state’s outcomes. Some specific activity priorities include efforts to encourage and support family engagement, as well as continued focus on policy advancements that will support Nebraska’s overall vision. All of this work needs to coordinate with federal funding/programs. In light of COVID-19, priority should be given to community work and actual changes that will make a difference. CHIME, Reflective Consultation,

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Workforce support inclusive of support regarding transition of children back to child care and mental health.

3. What specific policy changes can we implement from the federal level to address the barriers and challenges that you faced/are facing?

Wherever possible, aligning federal and state regulations, such as continuing to align federal funding and regulation for Pre-K, Head Start, and child care to promote full-day, full-year access to quality care for all children. Better alignment could prevent moving children from one location to the next throughout the parent's workday in order to access the appropriate service. Also, reducing the burden of reporting. The rigorous documentation needed is onerous for this grant and other federal grants. It must be made easier to get money to communities and the people doing the work.

4. How can we help you sustain the changes that you made during the course of this project?

Continued communication and intentional involvement will help Nebraska achieve the aspirations of the SP. Providing an opportunity to receive funding to implement the SP would be instrumental, with longer-term funding or a step-down approach to funding to allow states and private partners time to reallocate funds over several (5) years.

5. What guidance could we provide to all states that could help facilitate the successes you encountered in your work?

Breaking down barriers in funding structures and regulations to further streamline and align services could help support work going forward. Continuous work at relationship development at the state and local levels. Ask and respect the voice of those doing the work on the ground, and implement their ideas

XVII. Future Focus

Continued planning and coordination efforts along with securing the resources to move the SP priorities forward. The time commitment is critical to success. We need to keep doing what we are doing. It all takes time and effort, and as long as partners stay connected and focused on the same goals, we will reach outcomes.

XVIII. Other Comments

Please indicate any additional feedback you wish to provide.

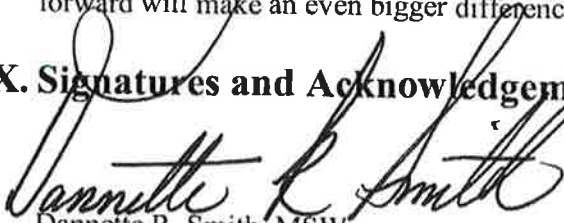
Project leaders conceptualized and implemented a decision-making and problem-solving infrastructure that was instrumental in the ultimate success of all the activities. A key element included a Program Management Team, a small group of stakeholders with decision-making power that discussed challenges, solved problems and made decisions to keep the work moving forward. The Nebraska Leadership Team was formed to oversee

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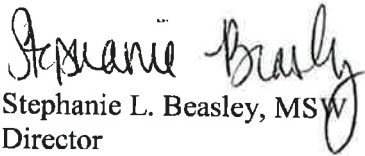
implementation of the five activities, met monthly and included all project leads and other statewide cross-sector leaders. Progress of the individual projects and the larger PDG B-5 effort was communicated at these meetings. For continuous improvement, the evaluation team presented ongoing findings at each of these team meetings. While each project formed its own implementation teams, it was the cross-organization teams that facilitated communication feedback loops, continuous improvement, and learning.

The future looks brighter as a result of PDG in Nebraska and the work ahead to move forward will make an even bigger difference for so many lives and systems in Nebraska.

XIX. Signatures and Acknowledgement



Dannette R. Smith, MSW
Chief Executive Officer
Department of Health and Human Services



Stephanie L. Beasley, MSW
Director
Division of Children and Family Services
Department of Health and Human Services

**Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Nebraska Preschool Development Grant
Elevating Nebraska's Early Care and Education
February 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019**

	NCFE PDG BUDGET	MATCH BUDGET	PROGRAM BUDGET
	2/1/19 to 12/31/19		
SUMMARY:			
Contract Services	\$3,457,050	\$863,622	\$4,320,672
Direct Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Payroll Taxes	\$86,792	\$40,934	\$127,726
Direct program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Conferences, Etc.)	\$6,374	\$122	\$6,496
Consultants	\$88,500	\$0	\$88,500
Subtotal	\$3,638,716	\$904,678	\$4,543,394
Indirect Fee	\$150,136	\$0	\$150,136
Total	\$3,788,852	\$904,678	\$4,693,530
DETAIL:			
Contracted Services			
Needs Assessment			
Buffett Early Childhood Institute, Bureau of Social Research at University of Nebraska Lincoln - Needs Assessment	1,684,243	0	1,684,243
Develop Community Assessment Tool (NDE)	0	0	0
UNMC Study - Family Child Care Landscape	108,196	0	108,196
Strategic Plan			
Buffett Early Childhood Institute - Strategic Plan	526,766	396,818	923,584
ECICC Meeting on Strategic Plan	0	0	0
Maximizing Parental Choice			
Identifying the Information Parents Need	400,000	0	400,000
Learning Begins at Birth	144,800	0	144,800
Getting Ready - Train-the-Trainer Expansion	318,116	0	318,116
Ready Rosie 300 Classrooms	150,000	24,000	174,000
Sharing Best Practices			
Improving the Quality of Adult-Child Interaction -- All our Kin	55,000	276,400	331,400
Curriculum Alignment and High Quality Instructional Tools (NDE)	0	0	0
NAESP Early Childhood Principal Leadership (NDE)	0	0	0
Administrator's Day Conference sharing practices (NDE)	0	0	0
Engaging Existing Providers -- Coaching Infrastructure	0	166,404	166,404
Quality Improving			
Disseminating Strategic Plan	69,929	0	69,929
Program Performance Evaluation			
Included in Activity #2, Strategic Plan	0	0	0
Total Contract Services	\$3,457,050	\$863,622	\$4,320,672
Direct Personnel and Benefits:			
Wages			
Payroll (FICA and SUTA) taxes - @ 7.78%	67,300	31,733	99,033
Health, Dental, STD, LTD, Life, ADD Insurance - @ 14.62%	5,211	2,277	7,488
Workmen Comp Insurance - @ .4%	9,839	4,721	14,560
Retirement Plan - @ 6.2%	269	58	327
Total Direct Personnel and Benefits	4,173	2,145	6,318
Total Direct Personnel and Benefits	\$86,792	\$40,934	\$127,726
Direct Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Conferences, Etc.)			
Out-of-State Travel and Lodging	0	0	0
In-State Travel	6,374	122	6,496
Out-of-State Meals	0	0	0
Program Supplies	0	0	0
Total Direct Program Expenses (Travel, Meals, Supplies, Conferences, Etc.)	\$6,374	\$122	\$6,496
Consultants			
Consultant - 11 months, 25 hours per week, (1,183 hours) @ \$60 per hour	65,500	0	65,500
Consultants, Parent Representatives	23,000	0	23,000
Total Consultant	\$88,500	\$0	\$88,500
Total Indirect Fee	\$150,136	\$0	\$150,136
Grant Project Manager Cost	\$331,802	\$41,056	\$372,858
Total Expenses	\$3,788,852	\$904,678	\$4,693,530
% Federal and non-Federal Share	80.72%	19.28%	100.00%

