

You are receiving this email because of your interest in early childcare work in Nebraska.

NEBRASKA PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT



Quarterly Newsletter - August 2020

“Nebraska’s vision is for an Early Childhood Care and Education system where community leaders work together to provide high-quality early care and education starting at birth, and in coordination with the health, mental health, and social service supports that families may need.”

Nebraska Receives PDG Renewal Grant

Nebraska’s early childhood programs have taken another significant step forward with the renewal of the National Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families Preschool Development Grant. Building on the success of last year’s Preschool Development Planning Grant, which supported a comprehensive needs assessment and allowed for the creation of a statewide strategic plan, the \$8.9M Preschool Development Grant Birth-Five (PDG) Renewal Grant will span three years to implement Nebraska’s Early Childhood Strategic Plan.

The Preschool Development Grant (PDG) provides Nebraska the opportunity to continue building strong community leadership, creating innovations in infant-toddler services, and collaborating through private/public partnerships to continue improving access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) for families of children from birth through 5 years.

It is designed to offer Nebraska's most vulnerable families access to improved early childhood services while strengthening and streamlining state-level infrastructure. Twenty-four projects will address gaps and align resources within the Early Childhood System in six targeted areas:

- Statewide Needs Assessment Plan
- Statewide Strategic Plan
- Maximizing Parental Choice and Knowledge
- Sharing Best Practices and Professional Development for the Early Childhood Workforce
- Improving Overall Quality and Service Integration, Expanding Access and Developing New Programs, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Use for Continuous Improvement
- Meaningful Governance and Stakeholder Engagement.

[Management Team Flowchart](#)

[Renewal Grant Overview](#)

Expected Outcomes from PDG B-5 Renewal Grant:

Provide up-to-date information on the status of young children in Nebraska that can be used to inform decision-making at the state, community, and program levels, with an emphasis on improving capacity in rural communities;

- Create stronger community-level infrastructure for helping families learn about available early childhood programming, and for connecting families to the services they need;
 - Expand efforts to engage with families, obtain information about their needs, inform them about child development, and connect them to beneficial services for their young children;
 - Strengthen the early childhood workforce through a coherent set of professional development (PD) initiatives and by providing meaningful incentives to stay and grow in the field;
 - Improve services for infants and toddlers for their first five years, and strengthen the transition into kindergarten;
 - Build a stronger, more integrated state system with updated governance and finance policies that support community-level leadership;
 - Inform the Nebraska public about the importance of child development, the impact of the grant, and the state's investment in early childhood;
 - Evaluate results that inform continuous quality improvement.
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Needs Assessment

In 2019, Nebraska conducted a statewide early childhood needs assessment that engaged stakeholders from communities across the state. In addition to identifying and analyzing existing early childhood data and reports, the needs assessment team gathered state-level, regional, and local data by conducting surveys, focus groups, and interviews with stakeholders across Nebraska. These data collection efforts included the following:

- Statewide surveys with families and early childhood care and education providers;
- Focus groups with families;
- Interviews and surveys with key informants;
- Stakeholder meetings.

These data collection and analysis efforts focused on understanding Nebraska's resources, characteristics, strengths, challenges, and needs related to all aspects of the state's early care and education systems. The PDG Renewal Grant will make it possible to continue working on the Needs Assessment to explore gaps in services and outreach to vulnerable families.

[Read the Needs Assessment Report](#)

Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan

The Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan establishes a shared vision for a more integrated early childhood care and education (ECCE) system in which children are offered uninterrupted quality ECCE services from birth through the transition to school. The Strategic Plan was developed by asking stakeholders across Nebraska for feedback on the key findings of the 2019 comprehensive Needs Assessment and for recommendations for taking action to fill gaps in meeting families' and providers' needs.

The resulting Strategic Plan provides clear direction on how Nebraska will, through systems alignment and improved collaboration, increase the overall participation of children in quality ECCE services.

By creating a more integrated system of services, more families can access quality ECCE and other essential services they need to help their young children thrive.

The four goals of the Strategic Plan are designed to work together so that as progress is made toward one goal, other goals are also advanced.

Goal 1: Access—Each child and their family can access the quality ECCE services and the essential services they need to support healthy development.

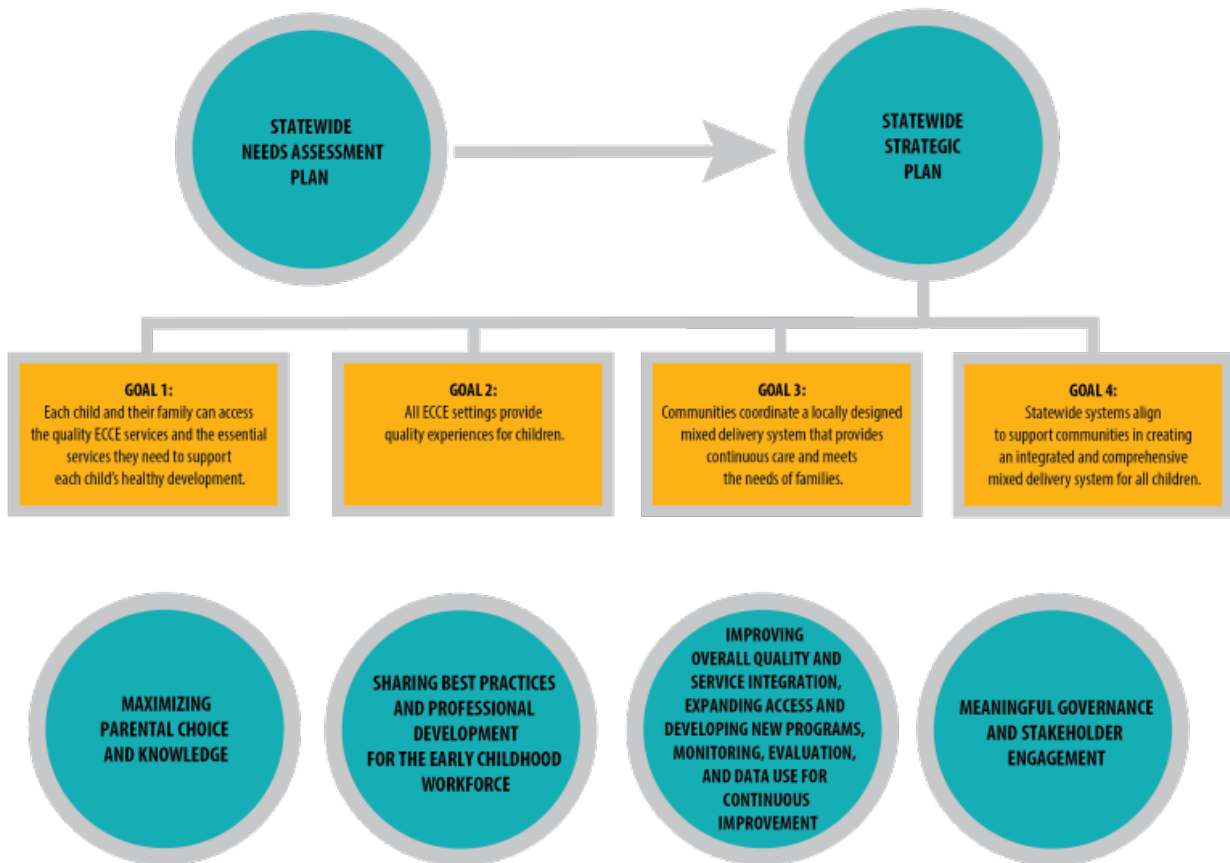
Goal 2: Quality—All ECCE settings provide quality experiences for children.

Goal 3: Collaboration—Communities coordinate a locally designed mixed delivery system that provides continuous care and meets the needs of families.

Goal 4: Alignment—Statewide systems align to support communities in creating an integrated and comprehensive mixed delivery system for all children.

[Read full plan here.](#)

PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT RENEWAL GRANT





My Nebraska Story debuts

Every family, business, and community in Nebraska has a story—full of hope, imagination, pride, and perseverance. Most of all, these are stories about opportunities people need to live, learn, work, and thrive in our hometowns. Quality child care plays a key role in how we work together to create prosperous, successful communities.

First Five Nebraska recently launched My Nebraska Story, a statewide campaign inviting business leaders, economic developers, and others to become involved in increasing the availability of quality child care in their communities.

My Nebraska Story features more than 30 employers, economic developers, child care professionals, working parents, and others from Broken Bow, Gothenburg, Lincoln, McCook, Norfolk, North Platte, Ogallala, Oshkosh, Schuyler, Stuart, and York. Public awareness efforts and other materials encourage Nebraskans to reflect on their own roles in making quality child care a key element of improving economic opportunity and quality of life throughout the state.

www.myNEstory.org

Nebraska Survey Finds Child Care Providers Need Help During Pandemic

According to a new survey, Nebraska's early care and education providers are under extraordinary stress and

need more support to stay in business. In addition to other stressors, if the COVID-19 pandemic continues or worsens, Nebraska could lose many of its licensed child care providers unless financial assistance is made available.

The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska recently released initial findings from [The Nebraska COVID-19 Early Care and Education Provider Survey II](#), a statewide survey that examined how more than 1,000 licensed family home-based and center-based child care providers have been impacted by COVID-19. The survey assessed how financial supports are accessed, how providers are coping in the midst of an ongoing pandemic, and what providers still need to deliver the essential service of early care and education.

Findings show an urgent need among “essential” employees who operate in an environment that poses risks to health and disrupts revenue stability in industries already operating at poverty-level wages. A report from the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission released earlier this year underscored, before the pandemic, that Nebraska’s early care and education workforce is a profession already chronically undervalued and underpaid. Economic, health, and personal stressors reported from the Institute’s first provider survey in March 2020 continue and are increasing.

"Professional providers are experiencing profound economic effects of the pandemic, and they will need assistance to continue to provide the backbone early care and education essential for Nebraska's economy," said the survey's co-directors, Kate Gallagher, director of research and evaluation at the Buffett Institute, and Alexandra Daro, research specialist at the Buffett Institute. "Many providers reported experiencing physical, cognitive, and emotional stress over the last few months, yet they remain resilient."

For additional detail and key findings reflecting the impact of COVID-19 since its onset visit:

buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/covid-19-resources.

CARES Act Funded Covid-19 Responses

We would like to recognize the following PDG-informed partner activities funded by the CARES Act in response to the pandemic.

Funding Available for Licensed Child Care Providers

Nebraska received a federally funded Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 to assess child care needs and develop a strategic plan focused on the first five years. The purpose of this grant afforded Nebraska a huge opportunity to identify and begin to address gaps for meeting the needs of young children and their families. It also provided a year for key stakeholders focused on the education, care, and healthy development of young

children to get to know one another, understand the many moving parts of a complex system, and work together. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, these connections became vital to effectively galvanizing a collective response. When Nebraska received its share of CARES Act funding, these collaborative efforts supported the needs of child care providers and sourced funding to this vital workforce.

As part of the CARES Act funding that Nebraska received from the federal government, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, under an agreement with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, is managing the distribution of relief funding for child care providers. One is the Stabilization Fund for licensed child care providers who have stayed open during the pandemic and the other is an Incentive to Reopen Child Care Program Fund for providers who were forced to close temporarily.

To find out if they are eligible and how to apply. All licensed child care providers should visit:

<https://www.nebraskachildren.org/childcare-funds.html>

The application (available in both English and Spanish) will be open until September 30, 2020. For questions about the funds or the application process, call 1-844-340-7002 or email:

CCRR@nebraskachildren.org.

Nebraska Child Care Referral Network

As the COVID-19 pandemic crept into the State of Nebraska, a large group of stakeholders across agencies and systems that serve young children became aware of the unforeseen challenges of coping with the virus.

One clear challenge was to find ways to connect child care providers whose enrollments were plummeting due to parents staying home, with parents who had lost child care due to facility closures or who needed child care because they were essential employees.

While systems exist in Nebraska to connect parents to child care, there was not a system available that provided parents with up-to-date information about the number of openings a facility had available or whether the facility was currently open.

The stakeholder group connected with Student1, a trusted nonprofit organization, to create a website that would allow providers to indicate if they were open and what spots they had available so that parents could easily search for openings. The result of this collaboration is the Nebraska Child Care Referral Network. We are thankful to the many partners who helped bring the vision of this site to life by committing their time, resources, and knowledge. The site would not be available to parents without the tireless efforts of Student1 and of all the partners that helped make it possible.

Are you a provider looking for an opportunity to promote your visibility to potential families? <https://nechildcarereferral.org/register>

Are you a parent currently looking for quality childcare?
<https://www.nechildcarereferral.org/>

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

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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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