

A. Successful State Systems

(A)(1) Demonstrating past commitment to early learning and development.

SECTION (A)(1) OVERVIEW

Nebraska is committed to high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs and services. Commitment to children is the heart of everything Nebraska, starting at the very top of our political leadership. Governor Dave Heineman, a strong proponent of quality education for all children, supports high academic standards and increased parental involvement in education. This kind of dedication to children is seen daily across Nebraska: in rural communities and in urban neighborhoods, in home-based child care and in large preschool centers, in child care teachers and in philanthropic foundations.

Nebraska's commitment to early learning and development is evidenced by the state's role in providing high-quality, accessible Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) and services. The Nebraska's Department of Education Office of Early Childhood's vision to ensure "All young Nebraska children are secure, healthy, and successful," embodies the philosophy that has guided the state's endeavors. It captures the spirit, direction, and goals of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative), which is Nebraska's response to the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC).

The ELN Initiative sets forth an ambitious, innovative, and comprehensive reform plan that meets the core components of the RTT-ELC. The ELN Initiative aligns the current early childhood landscape of Nebraska at all levels to better coordinate, implement, and evaluate high-quality ELDPs, with a focus on families and building capacity at the local community level. The ELN Initiative is based on a strong partnership of the early childhood leaders in Nebraska, 1) Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), the lead agency for the initiative, 2) Department of Education (NDE), and 3) the University of Nebraska. These are the organizations that are at the heart of most state interactions with young children and their families and early childhood educators (ECE). The ELN Initiative



leverages the reach and expertise of the partners to improve child outcomes by building on state strengths and commitment in order to make substantial changes in the way the state supports and leads the early childhood community.

(A)(1)(a) Financial Investment in Early Learning and Development Programs. Nebraska’s commitment to and investment in high-quality, accessible ELDPs and services for Children with High Needs, is demonstrated through its stable and growing investment in all early childhood programming and services. Nebraska has maintained a steadily increasing financial commitment to early childhood programs for all children and especially for Children with High Needs. In addition to unquestionably helping children, our future citizens—this commitment makes financial sense. “Investing in early education generates economic development for communities in the short run in the form of jobs, the purchase of goods and services, and a more efficient workforce. In the long run, quality early education builds an employable, educated workforce. Children who receive quality early education arrive at school ready to learn, do better in school and need fewer costly special education classes. They are more likely to graduate from high school and to hold jobs, thus less likely to need public services. Additionally, they are significantly less likely to enter the criminal justice system. (Calman and Tarr-Whelan, *“Early Childhood Education for All,”* 2005) In addition, investments in quality child care and early childhood education create economic development in communities now and in the years to come.

Nebraska has made investments in programs that are targeted to low-income children in order to increase their access to high quality education. According to the National Institute for Early Education Research, State of Preschool Report for 2010, Nebraska ranks sixteenth out of all states on access to childcare for four-year-olds and fourth for three-year-olds. Nebraska has developed innovative partnerships with private funders in order to create sustainable streams of funding for ELDPs serving Children with High Needs.

Specific areas of investment are highlighted in narrative and supported in Tables (A)(1)-1–5 following this section. Unfortunately, specific data about numbers of uniquely participating children and children in non-government funded programs are difficult to track and aggregate using the current fragmented state data system. The ELN Initiative puts substantial effort towards building a system to



accurately track participation of children in all ELDPs to ensure that Nebraska is meeting the needs of all children and families and to make more informed policy choices.

Number of High Needs Children Served by Government Funded Programs. The number of Children with High Needs served in federally-funded programs (Individual with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Part C, IDEA Part B 619, Title 1, and Head Start) has remained relatively stable from 2007-2010 with approximately 14,500 children participating each year. However, Children with High Needs served in state-funded preschool programs have increased from 5,510 in 2008 to 6,816 in 2011, a total increase of 1,300 or 1.2 percent (Table (A)(1)-5). Due to the current tracking system, Nebraska is unable to determine an unduplicated count of the total number of children being served in state and federally funded programs.

Relation of Population of High Needs Children to State Spending. Although the state population of Children with High Needs has remained steady over the past five years (see comments in Table (A)(1)-1 about estimated numbers) and participation in state-funded preschools have grown, Nebraska has dramatically increased state funding for early childhood programs that serve Children with High Needs; rising from \$155,773,571 (2008) to \$224,914,442 (2011) (Table (A)(1)-4). The state made increasingly significant investments in the child care subsidy amounts and rate of reimbursement under the Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) program. Additionally, funding for ELDPs operated by schools and Educational Service Units (ESUs) has more than tripled in the past six years. Both the Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program for ages three to five and the legislation authorizing the inclusion of four-year-olds in the Nebraska's Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Equalization Formula is designed to encourage collaboration (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 79-1003 (17) and (32)). These combined policies are designed to provide up to 50 percent of the funding to operate an early childhood classroom. Schools utilize multiple funding sources, collaborate with other partners, and implement sliding fee scales which are set to ensure families with High Needs are able to access the program.

Public-Private Partnerships. The state has been especially successful in leveraging private funding for early childhood programs that serve Children with High Needs. This includes partnerships with private funders to support Building Bright Futures (BBF), a



community driven response to disparities in achievement, Teacher Education And Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.®) scholarship program, and the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3), (funded through an endowment established in 2006 by state law (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-1-4.01) and an amendment to the Nebraska State Constitution (VII-9)). Private contributions in partnership with state initiatives have increased from \$33,698 (2007) to \$3,780,173 (2011) (Table (A)(1)-4). In particular, the Early Childhood Education Grant Program birth through age 3 (fully discussed in section (A)(1)(c)) provides high quality focused programming in high needs communities for children birth to three and reached a total of 308 children in 2011. The Endowment funding the birth to three ELDPs was created by a unique combination of both state and private funds to create an ongoing \$60 million endowment that provides grant awards distributed to public schools in partnership with community programs throughout the state, with awards totaling \$1,774,989 in 2011. (Table (A)(1)-5).

Child care subsidies for low-income families. State contributions for childcare subsidies under CCDF are almost equal to the amount of federal dollars received by Nebraska to help low-income families access high quality ELDPs. Nebraska exceeded the required Maintenance of Effort (MOE) for each of the past five years, exceeding it by \$32,549,000 for 2011. Additionally, Nebraska uses discretionary Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars at the highest level allowed to support the child care subsidy program, realizing the critical need for child care in order for parents to work and be economically self-sufficient.

Participation by ELDPs in CCDF. Almost half of all ELDPs that are eligible to receive state subsidies (requires state license) are currently serving children on the subsidy. Of the 46 percent of those participating, High Need children who currently receive the subsidy account for more than one-fifth of the center population. The ELN Initiative will increase the number of ELDPs providing high quality programs through Step Up to Quality, the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Program Standards.

(A)(1)(b) Participation of Children with High Needs In Early Learning and Development Programs. As discussed in the previous section, the state has directed strong, dedicated funding streams to ELDPs that serve Children with High Needs. The state has



worked to increase access to high quality programs through the subsidy rate structure for ELDPs serving such children. The state has encouraged and developed public-private partnerships that support and implement ELDPs for Children with High Needs and their families. Participation of Children with High Needs in state-funded preschools has increased from 5,510 in 2008 to 6,816 in 2011 a total increase of 1,300. Numbers of children receiving subsidies for enrollment in private ELDPs have increased from 21,583 in 2007 to 23,292 in 2010. The state has taken several specific steps to encourage and support participation in high quality ELDPs and increase access for Children with High Needs.

Expanded Equalization formula to support programs under the Early Childhood Education Grant Program. Nebraska is one of the few states that has expanded its funding base for school-based preschool (ages 3 to 5) by including four-year-old children in The Formula. This has made a remarkable impact on the state's ability to provide high quality programs for Children with High Needs. The Formula provides funds to school districts for four-year-old children enrolled in preschool programs (either grant or school district funded). While the NDE Office of Early Childhood Education Grant Program-Ages 3-5 budget remains fairly stable (around \$3.5 million) for funding preschool for three to five year old children each year, the state is able to fund new programs (thus reaching more children) each year because the four-year-olds are included in the Formula. As four-year-olds in early childhood programs (grant programs or district funded) are supported by the school Formula funding stream, more dollars become available in the NDE's \$3.5 million budget to fund more grant programs. For example, a district with a \$50,000 Early Care and Education Program Grant in Year Four only needs \$30,000 of grant funds (as \$20,000 is paid by the Formula, and \$30,000 is paid by the Early Care Education Program Grant) and this frees up \$20,000 to fund a new Early Care Education Grant Program. The direct result is more dollars to meet the needs of high need families and children, thereby increasing access to high quality environments for Children with High Needs. This Formula aid for early childhood has increased from \$2.2 million in 2008 to \$11.9 million in 2011.

Collaborative Programs. The NDE has established regulations which encourage partnerships with community agencies, particularly Head Start programs, to ensure the largest numbers of children with the highest needs are served by public funds. NDE regulations (92



Nebraska Administrative Code (NAC) 11 Regulations for Early Childhood Programs, often referred to as ‘Rule 11’) are backed by legislation designed to facilitate collaboration by school districts. Nebraska enacted legislation in 2005 to allow collaborative programs to include preschool children in Nebraska’s Primary Elementary and Secondary Equalization Formula (the Formula), thereby providing extra funding for Children with High Needs (including children from low-income families and for whom English is not their primary language). The NDE Office of Early Childhood offered administrator training opportunities throughout the state in both the 2006-07 and 2007-08 school years to help school administrators learn about high quality ELDPs and to help them plan implementation of ELDPs within their school district. Since then, NDE early childhood staff members have been available to provide technical assistance to individual districts planning to add ELDPs. To ensure that as many children are served as possible, schools advertise within their communities and use their network of partners to spread the word to families in the community.

(A)(1)(c) Nebraska’s Early Learning and Development Legislation, Policies, and Practices. Nebraska has prioritized early learning for decades. The definition of an early childhood education program (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 79-1101) includes children from birth to kindergarten entrance age, school-based, center-based, and in-home programs, and includes family development and support as a key component. The ELN Initiative broadens the early childhood focus to address children from birth through age eight, since the alignment of and transitions through this developmental continuum is vital in building a foundation for future learning and success. Key programs and policies include:

Systems for Strong Central Early Childhood Leadership.

Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council. Nebraska’s integrated early childhood council was established in statute in 2000 (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-3401). The Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) brought three previous councils together to form a unified group to advise the Governor and Legislature, and advise and assist state agencies regarding issues in early childhood care and education (birth through age eight). These issues cross agency boundaries, funding



streams, program type, and geographic area within the state. The ECICC is Nebraska's Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) for IDEA Part C, and is the State Advisory Council (SAC) as named in the Head Start for School Readiness Act.

The Early Childhood Systems Team was established in 2010 to formalize an interagency work team that brings together the various divisions within state agencies, Head Start grantees, and other key stakeholders from local communities to implement ECICC recommendations and early childhood priorities. The Early Childhood Systems Team creates ongoing collaboration across the public and private agencies through which early childhood systems needs for children (birth through eight) are identified and addressed through strategic action plans. Additionally, the Team identifies early childhood funding opportunities and jointly prepares grant applications, identifies opportunities to braid funding across agencies to support comprehensive early childhood services and systems, and develops policy recommendations that promote high quality comprehensive early childhood services and systems development.

State Funded Preschool programs. Nebraska funds preschool programs by providing funding directly to public schools and educational service units (ESUs) which then partner with local human service agencies, child care centers, or Head Start agencies to provide services. Grantees receive state funding for up to half the cost of a classroom and are required to match 100 percent using local and/or federal sources. Early childhood programs operated by schools and ESUs have increased in number and capacity over the past five years. The number of school districts operating an ELDP has increased from 105 (2006-07 school year) to 175 (2011-12 school year), or 65 percent of the state's school districts. Laws, 2005, LB 577 was passed which Nebraska moved to include four-year-olds in the Formula. This has resulted in a large increase in the number of children being served in state-funded preschool programs. State-funded preschool programs are implemented under the following categories:

- **Early Childhood Education Grant Program—Ages 3-5.** Since 1990, this program is funded out of state general funds to assist public school districts or ESUs and their partners operate comprehensive early childhood education programs to support the learning and development of children. The grants leverage federal, local, and private dollars to provide high quality center-based experiences for children across Nebraska. In 2011, the state legislature enacted LB 333 which temporarily moved the



grant program into lottery funds to protect it from cuts affecting other programs funded through state general funds. This ensured the grant program will continue without interruption during this difficult economic time (Appendix A-01: Early Childhood Education Grant Program–Ages 3 to 5).

- **School district funded preschool.** School districts that are non-equalized (they have resources to meet their calculated needs) or that are in the first three years of state approval often use local district funds to support part or all of their early childhood program.
- **State funded home visiting program.** Laws, 2005, LB 264 was signed into law on March 22, 2005, and established the Home Visitation Pilot Programs. Through an RFP process, one rural and one urban pilot program were selected: Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services and the Visiting Nurses Association, respectively. A total fund appropriated for these pilot projects was \$200,000 per year. Following the pilot period, the legislature increased funding to \$600,000 per year and another RFP was issued leading to funding of four programs across the state.

Reimbursement Rate for ELDPs. In the most recent report by the National Women’s Law Center, Nebraska ranked among the top 20 states in reimbursement rates for the amount of child care subsidy to child care centers. Nebraska sets its rate at approximately the 60th percentile of the annual Market Rate Survey (MRS), with accredited providers receiving a tiered rate which is set at approximately the 75th percentile and consistent across all geographic regions of the state. This past legislative session due to state budgetary considerations, the rates were adjusted so no one was below the 50th percentile of the MRS; otherwise the rates remained the same as the previous year Laws, 2011, LB464. Nebraska pays enrollment fees, fees for summer activities, and transportation costs to and from child care when the parents are unable to transport the children themselves.

Scholarships for ECE development. In 2002, NDE established the T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood Nebraska scholarship program to assist early care and education professionals in pursuing a college degree in early childhood education. During 2010, T.E.A.C.H.® provided scholarships to 224 students in 47 counties across the state. Twenty percent of the students were working toward a Bachelor’s Degree and 80 percent were working toward an Associate’s degree. This support increases the access of children to a high



quality workforce. The ELN Initiative will specifically target this scholarship program to ECEs working in ELDPs that serve low-income populations.

Public-Private Partnerships.

Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program - Birth to Age Three. In 2006, the Early Childhood Education Endowment was created by the Nebraska Legislature (Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-1104.01) to put highly effective early care and learning opportunities within reach of our youngest and most vulnerable children. An amendment to the Nebraska Constitution, passed in November 2006, earmarked \$40 million dollars from the state permanent school fund to be set aside in the Endowment and combined with interest from private investments (which will total \$20 million by December 2011). Interest from the Endowment is used to fund projects across Nebraska for Children with High Needs ages birth to three. The first grants were awarded in 2008. Eleven programs are operated by school districts and their partners in high need areas across the state (Appendix A-02: Overview of Early Childhood Education Grant Program-Birth to 3 (Sixpence)).

Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska. The Buffett Early Childhood Institute is a new research, policy, and teaching institute funded through a gift by the Buffet Early Childhood Fund to the University of Nebraska Foundation. The goal of the newly established Buffett Early Childhood Institute (Institute) is to give every child a good start in life. The primary focus of the Institute will be on the learning and healthy development of children from birth to age 8, with special attention paid to those who are vulnerable or at risk as a result of poverty, developmental delays or other learning challenges, health issues or stress. The Institute will serve a critical role in the state, providing a central early childhood academic focus for three primary areas: an integrated program of early childhood research and scholarship; teaching and professional development; and outreach and policy concerning the early childhood years. The Institute will include all four University of Nebraska campuses in order to facilitate collaborative work. The University ELN project coordinator will report to the Buffet Early Childhood Executive Director.



Private investments.

Building Bright Futures. Building Bright Futures early childhood services is a comprehensive, public-private partnership located in the most populous urban area in Nebraska that seeks to improve academic performance, raise graduation rates, increase civic and community responsibility for students at risk, and ensure that all students are prepared for post secondary education. These funds support intensive teacher coaching and mental health consultation for children with behavior issues, professional development opportunities for staff, child developmental screenings, and quality enhancement grants. Additionally, these private funds support home visitation services for teen parents and their children, as well as educational services to assist young parents in graduating from high school.

T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood Nebraska. Private investment in T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood Nebraska by private funders provides significant financial support to improve the quality of the early childhood workforce by funding scholarships (fully described in section D). Since 2007, the private funders have contributed \$247,601 to fund TEACH scholarships.

Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (NeAEYC). The NeAEYC has provided targeted coaching and mentoring to child care providers to increase the quality of the early childhood education and care experienced by Children with High Needs. Since 2009, private funders have contributed \$99,695 to increase the competence and skills of early education and care staff.

(A)(1)(d) Nebraska's Building Blocks for a High Quality Early Learning and Development System. The current status of Nebraska's statewide achievements in early childhood key areas is summarized as follows:

Early Learning and Development Standards. Nebraska completed comprehensive Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3 to 5 in 2005, and Early Learning Guidelines for Ages Birth to 3 in 2006. The guidelines are available in both English and Spanish. School Districts applying for an NE Early Childhood Education Grant must show how the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines Ages 3 to 5 will be used in support of the curriculum. In addition, Nebraska completed a nature education supplement to the Early Learning



Guidelines in 2008. The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines are aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and with the Nebraska K-12 Standards. Revision is underway to update the Guidelines and to align with the new Head Start Performance Standards and the revised Nebraska K-12 Standards.

Comprehensive Assessment Systems. Nebraska implemented the assessment system of Results Matter in Nebraska in 2006. Results Matter is a child, family and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all young children birth to age five. The system implements formative assessments and measures of environmental quality. Use of the system is required for state-funded programs and a majority of the Early Head Start and Head Start programs as required by 92 Nebraska Administrative Code (NAC) 11 Regulations for Early Childhood Programs, often referred to as ‘Rule 11’. Lastly Results Matters includes state Regulations for Special Education Programs 92 NAC Rule 51, often referred to as “Rule 51, and the federal mandates of IDEA, Part C (infants and toddlers) and Part B -619 (children ages 3-5).

The child outcomes component of Results Matter measures young children’s progress using authentic child assessment and online reporting. Beginning 2012-13 school year the system will use one integrated assessment, the Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold). The items on the TS Gold have been cross walked with the Nebraska Early Learning Standards, demonstrating that there is an alignment with the assessment and the standards.

Nebraska currently does not require screening measures or measures of the quality of adult-child interactions for state funded preschools. Other ELDPs, including Head Start and Early Head Start, programs funded under the federal mandates of IDEA, Part C (infants and toddlers); Early Childhood Education Grant programs, and ELDPs participating in Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Teaching Pyramid Pilot Sites do implement all four assessments of a comprehensive assessment system (screening measures, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality, and measures of quality of adult-child interaction). Further detail provided in Table 7.



Health Promotion Practices. Nebraska was selected in 2007 for state technical assistance through the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations of Early Learning (CSEFEL) to support implementation of the research-based Teaching Pyramid, a model framework for promoting children’s social-emotional competence and to assist in prevention and/or to address challenging behavior in young children. The Pyramid framework includes a comprehensive approach of increasing levels of intervention, beginning with a foundation of an effective workforce and moving upward: 1) positive and nurturing relationships with children, families, and colleagues; 2) a supportive and responsive learning environment; 3) social and emotional teaching strategies; and 4) inclusive early childhood positive behavioral intervention and support strategies (PBiS) (Appendix A-03: Teaching Pyramid).

Family Engagement Strategies. Described in Table (A)(1) – 9.

Professional Development of Early Childhood Educators. Nebraska has a defined early childhood professional development system that is spearheaded by the Early Childhood Training Center, part of the Nebraska Department of Education’s Office of Early Childhood, and the seven full-time regional Early Learning Connection Coordinators (part of the resource and referral system). This system offers an array of trainings based upon needs assessment of the regionally-based trainers and their local partners, and feedback from program observers, and monitors. Training offerings include the Management Training Program that assists centers with business practices, the Early Learning Guidelines Training on the Early Learning Guidelines domains, Environment Rating Scale (ERS) training and ERS reliability training, Teaching Pyramid training using CSEFEL modules, coaching training including for training about the Core Competencies, SpecialCare Training (for inclusive practices), and “Getting Down To Business” management training for family child care home providers.

Nebraska completed the development of Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (Core Competencies) in March 2008. Nebraska’s Core Competencies defines workforce knowledge and competencies. There are six levels to the Core Competencies ranging from the skills those first entering the field should have all the way through knowledge and skills one would expect to see in



someone with a Masters Degree or PhD in Early Childhood Education. Nebraska's Core Competencies address nine core knowledge areas. The areas are:

- Child, Growth and Development
- Health, Safety and Nutrition
- Learning Environments
- Planning Learning Experiences and Curriculum
- Interacting with Children and Providing Guidance to Children
- Observation, Assessment and Documentation
- Partnerships with Families and Communities
- Professionalism and Leadership Administration, Program Planning, and Development

NDE works with early childhood educator preparation programs to ensure ECEs meet the requirement that all teachers in state-funded preschools have a Bachelors degree a Nebraska teaching certificate and have one of four recognized early childhood endorsements. Two-year and four-year institutions are collaborating to provide articulation of courses leading to early childhood education endorsements.

Kindergarten Entry Assessments. No kindergarten entry assessment is currently implemented by the state. But Nebraska will be developing this process and assessment over the next four years as this is a key goal of this grant.

Effective Data Practices. Required data and all early learning and development system profiles are included in Table (A)(1)-13.

Table (A)(1)-1: Children from Low-Income families, by age		
	Number of children from Low-Income families in the State	Children from Low-Income families as a percentage of all children in the State
Infants under age 1	11,145	44%
Toddlers ages 1 through 2	22,290	44%
Preschoolers ages 3 to kindergarten entry	33,435	44%
Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families	66,870	44%
<small>Total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families comes from National Center for Children on Poverty (NCCP), 2009 Nebraska Early Childhood Profile. NCCP calculated state data from the Annual Social and Economic Supplement of the Current Population Survey from 2007, 2008, and 2009, representing information from calendar years 2006, 2007, and 2008. NCCP averaged three years of data because of small sample sizes in less populated states. Because birth rates and population trends for the 0-5 population are steady in Nebraska, estimates for each age cohort were calculated by dividing the total number of children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families by the total number of age cohorts. All numbers are estimates.</small>		



Table (A)(1)-2: Special populations of Children with High Needs		
Special populations: Children who . . .	Number of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...	Percentage of children (from birth to kindergarten entry) in the State who...
Have disabilities or developmental delays	6,600	5.0%
Are English learners	870 [^]	12.76%
Reside on "Indian Lands"	2,456**	1.86%**
Are migrant	158	0.12%
Are homeless	3,737*	0.81%*
Are in foster care	1,302	0.99%

[^] This number accounts for only the children who are served in public school early childhood programs 0-5. The largest urban district in Nebraska has not reported data on the number of English Learners 0-5 in their district. The percentage of children is calculated using the 6,816 children 0-5 being served in school districts this year.

*The number of children who are homeless includes children birth through 18. Data on the number of children birth through kindergarten entrance age are not available. Therefore the percentage is also calculated based on the number of children 0-18 in Nebraska.

**The number of children ages 0-5 who are identified as Native American on the 2010 Census. Percentage is calculated using the 131,908 children 0-5 residing in Nebraska according to the 2010 Census.

Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age				
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
State-funded preschool Specify: Number of Children with High Needs served by school districts in early childhood programs operated using all funding sources Data Source and Year: Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS) 2010-2011	0	0	6,550	6,550
Early Head Start and Head Start Data Source and Year: Actual number of children served, not funded enrollment Head Start Program Information Report 2009-2010	604	876	5,156	6,636
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 Data Source and Year: October 1 Child Count, reported in NSSRS (2010)	169	1,297	5,134	6,600
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA Data Source and Year: Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS) 2010-2011	11	30	2,698	2,739



Table (A)(1)-3: Participation of Children with High Needs in different types of Early Learning and Development Programs, by age				
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program, by age			
	Infants under age 1	Toddlers ages 1 through 2	Preschoolers ages 3 until kindergarten entry	Total
Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program Data Source and Year: Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Care, Numbers for State Fiscal Year 2010	3,926	8,301	10,416	22,643
Other Specify: <i>Early Childhood Education Grant Programs ages Birth to 3</i> are operated by school districts in Nebraska to provide evidence-based services to young children, birth through age three, and their families. Services include high-quality center-based childcare and/or family engagement services. Data Source and Year: 2010, Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3)	322	59	27	408
Other Specify: <i>Building Bright Futures</i> , Early Childhood System Data Source and Year: 2011, Building Bright Futures	36	48	138	222
Other Specify: <i>State Funded Home Visitation</i> Data Source and Year: Healthy Families America, July 1, 2008-June 30, 2011	42	23	0	65
NSSRS is the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System. There is only one student data system. Also refers to NSSRS as a longitudinal data system.				

Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Supplemental State spending on Early Head Start and Head Start	None	None	None	None	None
State-funded preschool Specify: Early Childhood Education Grant Program-Ages 3-5	3,570,856	3,544,882	3,579,477	3,604,328	3,365,962
State-funded preschool Specify: Nebraska's Primary Elementary and Secondary Equalization Formula	None	2,232,837	3,668,441	7,776,128	12,906,240
State-funded preschool Specify: Local Education Agency Funded	304,254	802,762	2,473,760	2,470,957	Not yet available



Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
State contributions to IDEA Part C	3,314,942	3,491,759	3,417,532	3,922,958	Not yet available
State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	0	0	0	0	0
Local Education Agency contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	2,187,442	4,448,273	6,331,447	8,270,747	10,349,606
Total State contributions to CCDF	20,861,842	39,257,436	32,026,503	36,535,937	46,467,109
State match to CCDF Exceeded/Met/Not Met (if exceeded, indicate amount by which match was exceeded)	Exceeded 7,200,746	Exceeded 25,412,332	Exceeded 18,573,115	Exceeded 23,239,073	Exceeded 32,549,963
TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs	17,000,000	15,000,000	16,000,000	17,000,000	17,000,000
Other State contributions* Specify: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth- 3)	--	1,838,648	1,714,332	1,717,779	1,774,989
Other State contributions Specify: State Funded Home Visitation Program	200,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
Other State contributions** Specify: Medicaid	78,202,449	88,238,729	74,532,118	69,146,790	69,889,035
Total State contributions:	104,779,943	120,199,890	112,317,107	114,509,687	114,914,496
Private Contributions to State Initiatives					
Private Building Bright Futures, Early Childhood Systems	--	--	--	3,296,624	3,550,153
Private T.E.A.C.H.® Funding	33,698	34,253	19,808	44,832	115,010
Private funding for Quality Enhancement Projects	--	--	--	47,989	115,010



Table (A)(1)-4: Historical data on funding for Early Learning and Development					
Type of investment	Funding for each of the Past 5 Fiscal Years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Privately funded Head Start-Goldenrod Hills	Not available	66,500	65,850	72,849	Not available
Private Specify: United Way of the Midlands and Lincoln United Way	677,673	1,114,261	1,235,804	1,325,222	1,313,222
Total Private Contributions	711,371	1,215,014	1,321,462	4,787,516	5,093,395
Total State and Private Contributions:	105,491,314	121,412,904	113,638,569	119,297,203	120,007,891
<p>State contributions for Special Education, Part B, 619 data are estimated for years 2007, 2008, and 2011. Local district contributions for Special Education, Part B, 619 are estimates for years 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2011.</p> <p>*Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) funding amounts include amounts for providing technical assistance and completing the evaluation components of the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) program in addition to operating costs.</p> <p>** Total expenditures are Fee For Service (FFS) Medicaid claims paid during each state fiscal year as noted. Blended match rates were used to estimate federal and state expenditures. Nebraska's CHIP Program expanded eligibility from 185% to 200% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) effective 10-1-09. Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) and Lawfully Present (LP) children and pregnant women were made eligible for Medicaid effective 7-1-10.</p>					

Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State <i>Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.</i>					
Type of Early Learning and Development Program	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
State-funded preschool (annual census count; e.g., October 1 count)	Not Available	5,510	5,895	6,085	6,550
Early Head Start and Head Start (funded enrollment)	5,385	5,397	5,443	5,866	Not yet Available
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 (annual December 1 count)	Not Available	6,552	6,019	6,423	6,600
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA (total number of children who receive Title I services annually, as	Not Available	2,303	2,528	2,389	2,739



Table (A)(1)-5: Historical data on the participation of Children with High Needs in Early Learning and Development Programs in the State *Note: A grand total is not included in this table since some children participate in multiple Early Learning and Development programs.*

Type of Early Learning and Development Program (reported in the Consolidated State Performance Report)	Total number of Children with High Needs participating in each type of Early Learning and Development Program for each of the past 5 years				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Programs receiving CCDF funds (average monthly served)	21,583	21,672	21,599	22,643	23,438
Other: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3)	--	--	360	308	242
Other: State Funded Home Visitation Data collected by fiscal year of July 1-June 30 th .	0	12	23	30	Not yet available
Other: Building Bright Futures , Early Childhood System	--	--	--	264	222

Table (A)(1)-6 : Current status of the State's Early Learning and Development Standards

Essential Domains of School Readiness	Age Groups		
	Infants	Toddlers	Preschoolers
Language and literacy development	X	X	X
Cognition and general knowledge (including early math and early scientific development)	X	X	X
Approaches toward learning	X	X	X
Physical well-being and motor development	X	X	X
Social and emotional development	X	X	X

Nebraska completed the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages 3 to 5 in 2005. They were followed by the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines for Ages Birth to 3 in 2006. The Guidelines are available in both English and Spanish and are required to be implemented in all programs operated by school districts or Educational Service Units in the State. In addition, Nebraska completed a nature education supplement to the Early Learning Guidelines in 2008. The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines are aligned with the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework and with the Nebraska K-12 standards. Revision is underway to update the Guidelines and to align with the new Head Start Performance Standards and the revised Nebraska K-12 Standards.



Table (A)(1)-7: Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System currently required within the State

Types of programs or systems	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System				
	Screening Measures	Formative Assessments	Measures of Environmental Quality	Measures of the Quality of Adult-Child Interactions	Other
State-funded preschool: Early Childhood Grant Program Ages 3-5	--	X	X	--	--
State-funded preschool: Funded by Nebraska's Primary Elementary & Secondary Education Equalization Formula	--	X	X	--	--
State-funded preschool: Local Education Agency Funded	--	X	X	--	--
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X	X	--
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X	X	--	--
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	--	X	X	--	--
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	--	X	X	--	--
Programs receiving CCDF funds	X*	X*	X**	X*	--
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements	--	--	--	--	--
State licensing requirements	--	--	--	--	--
Other: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3)	X	X	X	X	--
Other: State Funded Home Visitation	X	X	X	X	--
Other: Building Bright Futures	X	X	X	X	--
*Only required for programs that are participating in the Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Teaching Pyramid Pilot Sites					
**Only required for programs that are participating in the Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Teaching Pyramid Pilot Sites AND those participating at the Options 1 and 2 of the Early Head Start Infant Toddler Initiative Sites in Nebraska.					



Table (A)(1)-8: Elements of high-quality health promotion practices currently required within the State

Types of Programs or Systems	Elements of high-quality health promotion practices				
	Health and safety requirements	Developmental, behavioral, and sensory screening, referral, and follow-up	Health promotion, including physical activity and healthy eating habits	Health literacy	Other
State-funded preschool: Early Childhood Grant Program Ages 3-5	X	--	--	--	--
State-funded preschool: Funded by Nebraska's Primary Elementary and Secondary Equalization Formula	X	--	--	--	--
State-funded preschool: Local Education Agency Funded	X	--	--	--	--
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X	X	--
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X	X*	X*	--
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619	X	X	X*	X*	--
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA	X	--	--	--	--
Programs receiving CCDF funds	X	--	--	--	--
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements	--	--	--	--	--
State licensing requirements	X	--	--	--	--
Other: Early Childhood Education Grant Program(Birth to 3)	X	X	--	--	--
Other: State Funded Home Visitation	X	X	X	X	--
Other: Building Bright Futures	X	X	X	X	X

*If this is listed as an outcome for a child or family on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP)



Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
<p>State-funded preschool</p> <p>Specify: All funding sources</p> <p>Source: State Regulation 92 NAC Rule 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written information for parents about the program’s philosophy, policies, and procedures. • An orientation to the program for children and parents. • At least two home visits per year between the parent(s) and the teacher to discuss the child’s development and learning. These visits may occur in locations other than the home as determined by the parent(s) and teacher. • Specified opportunities for program staff to dialogue with parents through such activities as parent conferences, participation on advisory committees, needs assessments, participation as classroom volunteers, and flexible scheduling of meetings and events. • Family development, support, and services based on the family’s needs and interests, including but not limited to their economic and logistical needs.
<p>Programs funded under IDEA Part C</p> <p>Source: State Regulation Rule 11 & Results Matter Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All outlined under State Funded Preschool and: • An annual statewide family survey to learn if participating in Part C early intervention services for infants and toddlers have helped the family: know their rights, effectively communicate their children’s needs, and help their children develop and learn.
<p>Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619</p> <p>Source: State Regulation 92 NAC Rule 11 & Results Matter Guidance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All outlined under State Funded Preschool and: • An annual statewide family survey to determine the extent to which schools are facilitating parent engagement and to design strategies to improve parent engagement.
<p>Early Head Start and Head Start</p> <p>Head Start Performance Standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantee and delegate agencies must: • Engage in a process of collaborative partnership building with parents to establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports, • Offer parents opportunities to develop and implement individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as progress in achieving them, • Work collaboratively with all participating parents to identify and continually access, either directly or through referrals, services and resources that are responsive to each family’s interests and goals, • Follow-up with each family to determine whether the kind, quality, and timeliness of the services received through referrals met the families’ expectations and circumstances, • Provide medical, dental, nutrition, and mental health education programs for program staff, parents, and families. • Support and encourage parents to influence the character and goals of community services in order to make them more responsive to their needs and interests, • Be provided regular opportunities to work together, and with other community members, on activities that



Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	<p>they have helped develop and in which they have expressed an interest,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide parent involvement and education activities that are responsive to the ongoing and expressed needs of the parents, both as individuals and as members of the group, • Be open to parents during all program hours. Parents must be welcomed as visitors and encouraged to observe children as often as possible and to participate with children in group activities, and • Provide opportunities for parents to participate in the program as employees or volunteers.
<p>Programs funded under Title I of ESEA</p> <p>Source: Serving Preschool Children Under Title I Non-Regulatory Guidance, US Department of Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of family environments and parent-child interactions is central to a child's literacy and cognitive development. Parents strengthen their child's literacy development and school-related competencies when they engage in language-rich, parent-child interaction, provide supports for literacy in the family, such as by reading to their children, and hold appropriate expectations of the child's learning and development. High-quality preschool programs provide explicit training for parents in the skills and behaviors that support their child's development. For example, parents and other family members should be encouraged to— • Talk with children and engage them in conversations, and help them to name objects in their environment (“labeling”); • Read and re-read stories; • Encourage children to recount experiences and describe ideas that are important to them; • Visit the library and museums; and • Provide opportunities for children to draw and print, using a variety of implements, such as markers, crayons, and pencils. • Teachers and parents are partners in preparing children for future school success. It is essential that teachers engage in consistent and meaningful sharing of information with parents and caregivers, including meeting with parents to talk about any areas in which their child is experiencing difficulties. In addition, by sharing specific information about the topics children are learning, and the skills they are developing, teachers strengthen parents’ ability to support their children’s learning at home. Some examples of ways in which teachers can communicate with parents are— • Talking to parents as they deliver and pick up their children; • Sending home newsletters or notes that share what children are learning at school; • Arranging regular meetings to discuss the child’s progress; and • Identifying strengths and any areas in which the child could use extra support at home. • Teachers should communicate with parents in other languages when appropriate to facilitate effective communications, (see for example, 34CFR200.6(c)(2) of Title I regulations). Teachers also should work with parents to develop a plan for summer or other vacation periods between preschool and kindergarten that allows the child to continue in an instructional program and prevents the loss of previously acquired skills.



Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State	
Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	Teachers can encourage parents to become their child's advocate and spend time in the preschool observing and helping their own child.
Programs receiving CCDF funds Source: Child Care State Licensing Regulations (391 NAC 6-001, 391 NAC 8-001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents shall have access to their children at all times that children are in care. • Denial of immediate and unrestricted access to the licensed premises to parents will be basis for suspension or revocation of the child care license.
Current Quality Rating and Improvement System requirements	--
State licensing requirements Source: Child Care State Licensing Regulations (391 NAC 6-001, 391 NAC 8-001)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents shall have access to their children at all times that children are in care. • Denial of immediate and unrestricted access to the licensed premises to parents will be basis for suspension or revocation of the child care license.
Other Describe: Early Childhood Education Grant Program(Birth to 3) Source: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Center Based Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Active parental participation on Partnership Advisory Board · Daily written and verbal communication with parents · Conduct at least two parent/caregiver conferences annually · Conduct at least two home visits annually · Offer ongoing opportunities for parent involvement and at least monthly parent education opportunities that include, but are not limited to; car seat safety, safe infant sleep practices, child medical needs, prenatal care, abstinence from smoking, alcohol, and drugs while pregnant, and breast feeding. · Providers have written agreements with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs • Family Engagement Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Active parental participation on the Partnership Advisory Board · Program must offer parent's opportunities to develop and implement individualized family partnership agreements that describe family goals, responsibilities, timetables and strategies for achieving these goals as well as progress towards achieving them. · The family partnership agreement must build upon information obtained from the family and other community agencies concerning preexisting family plans. Provider must coordinate, to the extent possible,



Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State

Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	<p>with families and other agencies to support the accomplishment of goals in any preexisting plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Program develops policies and procedures that encourages family engagement and how staff shares information with families · Offer ongoing opportunities for parent involvement and at least monthly parent education opportunities that include, but are not limited to; car seat safety, safe infant sleep practices, child medical needs, prenatal care, abstinence from smoking, alcohol, and drugs while pregnant, and breast feeding. • · Providers have written agreements with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs.
<p>Other: State Funded Home Visitation</p> <p>Source: Program Specialist, Children and Family Services, NE Department of Health and Human Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy Families America is a national model of home visitation developed by Prevent Child Abuse America and is one of the models supported through the State Funded Home Visitation Program. The model is built upon research-based critical elements. Many of these elements include family engagement strategies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin services prenatally or at birth: Services can be initiated by the family or by a referral from another agency. • Use standardized assessment tools to identify families who are most in need of services: The assessment tools utilized is based on two-way communication with the family. • Offer services voluntarily: Staff consistently utilizes creative outreach methods to find new ways to keep families engaged in the program. The program is voluntary—parents may discontinue services at any time. Services are primarily offered in the family’s home or wherever the family chooses. • Utilize well-defined criteria for increasing or decreasing intensity and outreach: Intensive services are delivered based on each family’s level of need as assessed at intake and throughout the family’s participation in the program. On-going communication is necessary. • Are culturally sensitive: Workers are provided on-going training and weekly one-on-one supervision. Families are given participant surveys bi-annually that include collecting cultural competency information. • Focus on supporting the parent-child interaction: Staff members make every effort to balance case management functions with inter-active teaching and education. Staff members utilize the Partners for a Healthy Baby prenatal and early childhood curriculum developed by Florida State University as the primary prenatal and early childhood development tool. This structured program provides step by step parent education that is designed to involve both parents and other family members involved in that child’s life. Includes information on child development. • Limit staff caseload and provide intensive supervision: Caseloads are limited so that staff can have enough time for each family. • Staff training is intensive & specific to their role: Staff members for the program are selected because of



Table (A)(1)-9: Elements of a high-quality family engagement strategy currently required within the State	
Types of Programs or Systems	Describe Family Engagement Strategies Required Today
	<p>their personal characteristics (i.e. nonjudgmental, compassionate, able to establish a trusting relationship, etc), their willingness to work in or their experience working with culturally diverse communities, and their skills to do the job.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service plans empower families: Families are encouraged to establish a support system. They set goals that they want to accomplish. Staff is in place to support the family. Referrals to other community agencies are frequently used.
<p>Other: Building Bright Futures Source: Executive Director, Building Bright Futures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are welcome to participate, volunteer, and visit any child care program. • A variety of family night activities, such as, children programs, open house, provide a meal for families, or Parent - teacher conferences. • Partnership with Omaha Children’s Museum to create a non threatening environment for children and their parents to learn and grow while participating in family oriented activities.

Table (A)(1)-10: Status of all early learning and development workforce credentials currently available in the State				
List the early learning and development workforce credentials in the State	If State has a workforce knowledge and competency framework, is the credential aligned to it? (Yes/No/ Not Available)	Number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators who have the credential		Notes (if needed)
		#	%	
Child Development Associate	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
Certificate program from Community College	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
Diploma program from Community College	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
Associate Degree from Community College in Early Childhood Education	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
Bachelor’s Degree	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
Master’s Degree	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	
PhD	Informal agreement of alignment	*	*	

* No baseline data exists. This demonstrates a need to implement a federated data system in the state.



Table (A)(1)-11: Summary of current postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators

List postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers in the State that issue credentials or degrees to Early Childhood Educators	Number of Early Childhood Educators that received an early learning credential or degree from this entity in the previous year	Does the entity align its programs with the State's current Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and progression of credentials? (Yes/No/ Not Available)
University of Nebraska-Omaha	19*	Informal agreement of alignment
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	33*	Informal agreement of alignment
University of Nebraska-Kearney	35*	Informal agreement of alignment
Peru State College	31*	Informal agreement of alignment
Wayne State College	13*	Informal agreement of alignment
Chadron State College	3*	Informal agreement of alignment
Midland University	7*	Informal agreement of alignment
College of St. Mary	11*	Informal agreement of alignment
Concordia University	13*	Informal agreement of alignment
Central Community College	42	Informal agreement of alignment
Metro Community College	36	Informal agreement of alignment
Northeast Community College	8	Informal agreement of alignment
Western Nebraska Community College	1	Informal agreement of alignment
Mid-Plains Community College	4	Informal agreement of alignment
Southeast Community College	21	Informal agreement of alignment

* This number represents only those graduates who graduated and received a teaching endorsement in Early Childhood Education Unified (0-8), Early Childhood Education, or Preschool Disabilities. This does not include graduates with a child development/early childhood education degree that in which no teaching certificate is earned.

*Source: Nebraska Department of Education, Teacher Certification Office. Endorsements on Initial Certificates Issued in 2009-2010.

Source: Community College (2010) Annual Graduation Reports or Graduate Placement Reports



Table (A)(1)-12: Current status of the State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment					
State's Kindergarten Entry Assessment	Essential Domains of School Readiness				
	Language and literacy	Cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development)	Approaches toward learning	Physical well-being and motor development	Social and emotional development
Domain covered? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
Domain aligned to Early Learning and Development Standards? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
Instrument(s) used? (Specify)	--	--	--	--	--
Evidence of validity and reliability? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
Evidence of validity for English learners? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
Evidence of validity for children with disabilities? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
How broadly administered? (If not administered statewide, include date for reaching statewide administration)	--	--	--	--	--
Results included in Statewide Longitudinal Data System? (Y/N)	--	--	--	--	--
There is currently no kindergarten entrance assessment that is being used uniformly across the state. In this application there is a High Quality Plan to implement a kindergarten entrance assessment process.					

Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State							
	Essential Data Elements						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
Results Matter-- Department of Education	X#	X#	X#	X#	X#	--	X#
Early Childhood Education Grant	X***	X	X***	X	X	X	X***



Table (A)(1)-13: Profile of all early learning and development data systems currently used in the State

	Essential Data Elements						
	Unique child identifier	Unique Early Childhood Educator identifier	Unique program site identifier	Child and family demographic information	Early Childhood Educator demographic information	Data on program structure and quality	Child-level program participation and attendance
Program (Birth to 3) Public-Private Partnership							
N-Focus NE Department of Health and Human Services	X	--	X	X	--	--	--
Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS) Department of Education	X	X	X	X [^]	X	--	X
Consolidated Data Collection Department of Education	--	--	--	--	--	X!	--
License Information System~ NE Department of Health and Human Services	--	--	X	--	--	X*	--
Child Care Roster NE Department of Health and Human Services	--	--	X	--	--	X**	--
Answers for Families~ Center for Children Families and the Law, UNL	--	--	X	--	--	X	--
<p>*Negative actions available to public through Child Care Licensing **Roster lists all licensed providers their licensed number, and if provider is accredited /accepts children on the childcare subsidy ***Collected through Results Matter System !Linked with Results Matter System #Same as what exists in the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System but is not linked to this system. ^Only child demographic information is collected, currently collect family demographic information is not collected. ~These two systems do communicate and share information between systems.</p>							



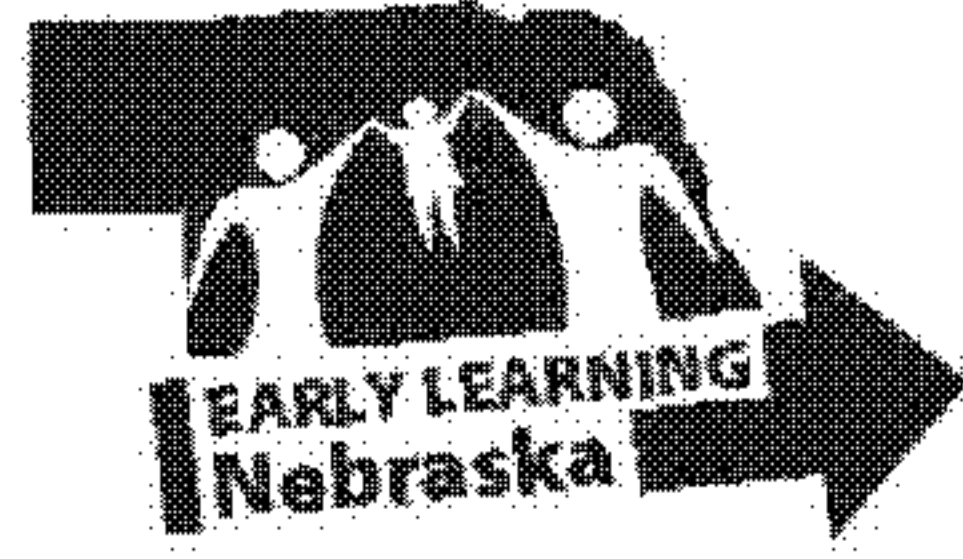
(A)(2) Articulating the State’s rationale for its early learning and development reform agenda and goals.

SECTION (A)(2) OVERVIEW

The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) is based on a vision of safe and supportive communities where all children and their families are a top priority. These communities and families will be surrounded by a high quality, integrated, sustainable system of early childhood learning and development, family services, and supports. Families, communities, schools, service providers, and policy makers are committed and accountable for helping families and Children with High Needs succeed.

The illustration below, *Goals of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative* visually captures how the ELN Initiative aligns the current early childhood landscape of Nebraska at all levels to better coordinate, implement, and evaluate high quality Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) with a focus on families and building capacity at the local community level.





Goals of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative

Children Arrive at School
Fully Available to Learn

Strong Communities

- Targeted approach to reach highest need first
- Scaled-up implementation statewide
- Local, regional and state level investment in solutions

Strong Early Childhood Professionals

- Improved practice based on assessment
- Updated standards of practice (Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines)
- Implementation of Nebraska's QRIS – Stepping Up to Quality
- Increased availability to coaching, training, assessments, and higher education for parents and others caring for children

Strong Families

- Increased number of parents engaged in their child's learning with special emphasis on culturally and linguistically diverse families
- Improved child/parent relationships
- Increased options to high quality early learning environments

Strong Children

- Increased participation in high quality early learning environments to close the readiness gap
- Alignment of learning goals from the early years to Kindergarten
- Earlier identification for special education, health and mental health supports
- Improved school readiness

Strong Early Childhood System

Goals of Early Learning Nebraska 10.10a



It is an essential step in redefining the primary years by expanding the traditional K-3 focus into early childhood. This will help create a seamless system that reaches children from birth through age 8. The ELN Initiative leverages the reach and expertise of key partners to improve child outcomes by implementing substantive and sustainable policies and programs to increase the capacity and reach of Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and ELDPs in all corners of the state. Nebraska is poised to move forward on its agenda with many critical foundational elements in place due to the state's strong commitment to early childhood. Nebraska has identified its strengths and commitment, and is now ready to address gaps and challenges in order to build a comprehensive early childhood system. The goals and objectives of the ELN Initiative as explained in this section represent Nebraska's agenda in early childhood and will make substantive changes with a resulting significant impact on the school readiness of children.

(A)(2)(a) Articulates a comprehensive early learning and development reform agenda that is ambitious yet achievable, builds on the State's progress to date, is most likely to result in improved school readiness for Children with High Needs, and includes ambitious yet achievable goals for improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers.

Building on the strong foundation and commitment of Nebraska to its families, children, and educators, the ELN Initiative provides a platform to align services, leverage resources, and use the expertise, incentive, and policy of the state's leadership to make high quality ELDPs available to all families and children. Nebraska's effective and established training infrastructure of seven Early Learning Connection Regions throughout the state which use an integrated system of professional development delivery is the vehicle for many of the key training objectives. Nebraska already has developed and implemented statewide common Early Learning and Development Standards and Workforce Competency standards. Nebraska's long-time spirit of collaboration in the early childhood community will be deepened through integrated management, vision, and objectives. Finally, the Initiative builds on past proven successes, an initiative-wide strategy of ongoing evaluation and assessment of program effectiveness will allow the state to adopt and expand effective strategies and make adjustments to strengthen programs. The objectives that the ELN Initiative undertakes are



carefully aligned with existing state priorities so that the state can successfully achieve its goals during the four year period of the grant and sustain the changes and programs well into the future. In addition, the goals and core components of the ELN Initiative are well aligned with the goals and reform areas of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grant program (Appendix A-04: Alignment of ELN Initiative Components and Objectives with RTT-ELC Reform Areas). Nebraska has set five overarching goals for its early childhood agenda:

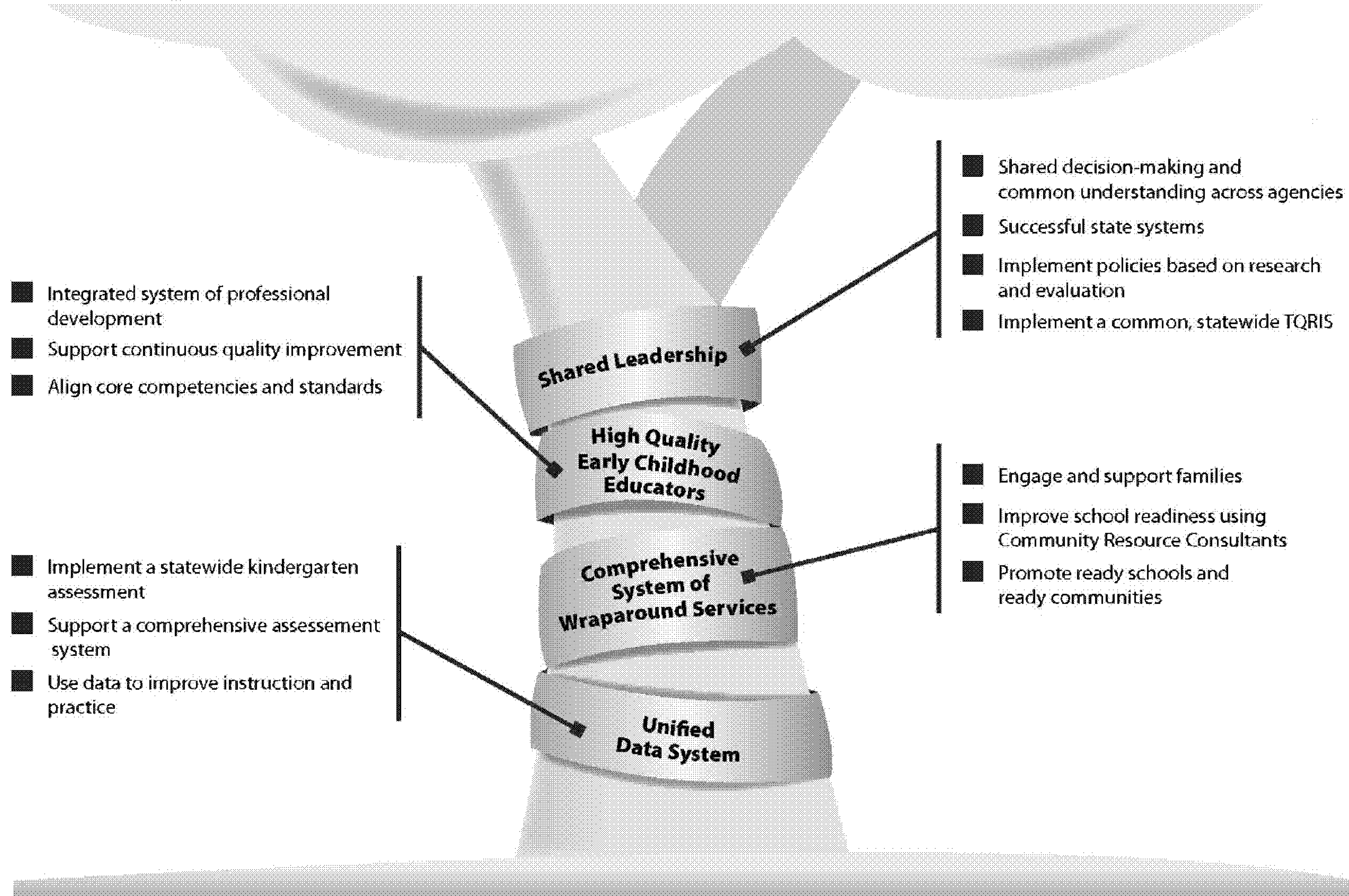
- **Strong Children.** Children, especially Children with High Needs, enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, health and dispositions they need to be successful.
- **Strong Families.** Nebraska families are engaged and empowered to understand the importance of the early years and promote their child’s learning, overall health, and positive social-emotional development.
- **Strong Early Childhood Professionals.** Nebraska provides expanded early childhood professional capacity across the state and across the various Early Childhood settings through increased knowledge, supports, and resources for professionals to continually improve their work with young children.
- **Strong Communities.** Community policy makers and providers of child services are committed, engaged, and accountable and will sustain the work in their own communities and for their own families.
- **Strong Early Childhood System.** Strong leadership at all levels of an aligned and responsive early learning and development system with unified approach, sustainable policies, and integrated resources to support young children, their families, and early childhood educators.

Nebraska’s goals are clear. The following illustration deepens the reader’s understanding of the ELN Initiative’s goals by summarizing them in Core Components.





Core Components of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative



Core Components Schematic 10.10a



Nebraska will focus on the four Core Components of Nebraska’s Early Childhood System in order to meet the Initiative’s five overarching goals (which embrace the RTT-ELC goals of improving program quality, improving outcomes for Children with High Needs statewide, and closing the readiness gap between Children with High Needs and their peers). The following table shares the key objectives for each core component.

ELN Initiative’s Core Components and Key Objectives	
Core Components	Key Objectives
1) Enhance state leadership alignment and support for High Quality Early Childhood Programs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align and coordinate early learning and development throughout the state through leadership of Nebraska’s Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education , the Early Childhood Advisory Council, and the ELN Initiative management structure • Develop and implement sustainable early childhood policies based on research and evaluation results that support families, children, ELDPs, early childhood workforce, and other providers • Implement a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (Step Up to Quality) to increase quality of programs and provide meaningful information to families • Revise and expand use of statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards • Support effective use of comprehensive assessment system which includes screening, formative assessment, a measure of environmental quality, and a measure of teacher child interactions
2) Develop high quality early childhood educators through system reform, training support, and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise and align the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (Core Competencies) and a progression of credentials • Provide integrated system of professional development supporting all ELDPs and workers through training, coaching, materials, online resources, and demonstration sites • Provide training, coaching, and materials to providers participating in Step Up to Quality in order to support continuous improvement and advancement along the tiers • Focus on alignment of Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines into course curriculum, articulate courses among higher education colleges and institutions, integrate early learning curriculum into other child and family serving professional coursework, provide outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse early education providers, and provide process evaluation to inform ongoing professional development work



ELN Initiative's Core Components and Key Objectives	
Core Components	Key Objectives
3) Support a comprehensive system of wraparound services for early childhood care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness through community-based work of Health and Community Resource Consultants • Provide training and support to strengthen exposure to early childhood learning and development issues for professionals • Engage and support families • Develop and support partnerships between schools and ELDPs to promote alignment and smooth transitions for positive child outcomes • Improve school readiness of children and ready schools and communities
4) Build a unified data system to support programs that are accountable and use of data to guide instruction and program development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry by implementing a Kindergarten Entry Assessment • Build an integrated early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies • Use assessment data, both individual and program-wide, to continually improve early learning programs.

Four Core Components of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative

Core Component 1. Enhance state leadership alignment and support for High Quality Early Childhood Programs. Although Nebraska has many strong structures in place to support the early childhood system and delivery of services to children, families, and ECEs, the structures have competing priorities. In addition, while Nebraska has developed strong and sustainable policies in some areas, such as investment in child care subsidies and access to ELDPs for children, there are other areas that need attention. By better alignment of state policies and procedures and providing more systemic support for the development and maintenance of high quality programs, program quality will increase, school readiness of children will strengthen, and more Children with High Needs will have access to programs with improved quality.



Specifically, the ELN Initiative will accomplish the following key objectives:

- 1) *Align and coordinate early learning and development throughout the state* through the leadership of Departments of Education (NDE) and Health and Human Services (NDHHS), the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC), and the ELN Initiative management structure. The governance structure described in section A(3) holds leaders accountable for coordinating efforts and pulling together towards identified Initiative goals and objectives. Although the NDE and NDHHS traditionally operate and implement services for ELDPs in separate spheres, many of the project objectives require a collaborative process such as *shared management of the Initiative, and integrated training and support of ECEs in the domains of learning and development.*
- 2) *Develop and implement sustainable policies and programs based on research and evaluation results that move the state forward in early childhood practices* such as:
 - a. *The ELN Initiative will partner with the University of Nebraska- Lincoln (University) to conduct research, teach findings, and most importantly to develop policy recommendations* based on research and evaluation. The policy recommendation will result in an opportunity for state leaders to advance Nebraska’s ability to effectively support families, children, ELDPs, early childhood workforce, and other providers. By establishing integrated management of the ELN Initiative with the University and the established Buffet Early Childhood Institute (BECI), Nebraska has elevated and supported their role and influence in the future of early childhood. The University’s President Milliken has identified early childhood as one of the major areas of focus for the University, establishing a new level of commitment and engagement for a major land grant, public research university. The leadership and faculty of the four University of Nebraska campuses and the University of Nebraska Foundation, which has identified early childhood as one of a handful of key priorities in its \$1.2B capital campaign, have embraced this focus. ELN includes strong evaluation of effectiveness of the strategies that are being implemented and a continuous feedback process for improvement and program modification– including Step up to Quality



Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Teaching Pyramid strategies to support positive social emotional, behavioral development of children, coaching model, and Health and Community Resource Consultant work.

- b. *Building on Nebraska's history* as an ideal location to test programs and models of change. Nebraska is a small population state where representatives from higher education, public K-12 education, government, and the early childhood community are longtime and effective collaborators. In addition, its vast rural and frontier areas and concentrated urban regions provide a unique setting for designing effective state-wide systems. These realities will make it possible to develop models, test implementation efforts, replicate effective programs in new settings across the state, and bring them to scale in regional and national contexts. The University's land-grant philosophy of extending knowledge within and across systems, with stakeholders as partners in the research/practice enterprise and within the policy arena is highly congruent with this approach. The close collaboration and communication between the University, NDE, NDHHS, practice communities, and policy-makers makes translational efforts highly feasible. It also provides the context for using Nebraska as a national laboratory model for realizing significant and lasting change in early childhood practices.
 - c. Including an *intentional process to further develop early childhood policies* in areas where Nebraska has identified need. Strategies in the Initiative identify the stakeholders, process, and timeline for considering policy implications and making recommendations in several areas, including identifying incentives for ELDPs to participate in Step up to Quality QRIS, support for families enrolling in QRIS programs, assessing community capacity to implement full-day preschool, and expanding the number of educational scholarships for ECEs working with QRIS providers.
- 3) *Implement a common, statewide QRIS to increase and recognize quality of programs and provide meaningful information to families.* Implementation of Nebraska's Step up to Quality for ELDPs is a cornerstone of the ELN Initiative. This strategy builds on proven practices and Nebraska's pilot work in this area. The strategy will allow NDE and NDHHS to develop more focused and consistent support for ELDPs, particularly in the areas of regular monitoring of ELDPs; ongoing, in-depth professional development such as coaching and use of assessments; and incentives and support to increase participation in



QRIS (or otherwise increase program quality) for ELDPs. Since all licensed ELDPs will automatically participate in QRIS, Nebraska has set goals for participation and advancement into the upper tiers of QRIS. It is anticipated that one hundred percent of publicly funded ELDPs (state-funded preschools) will participate in QRIS and receive support for improvement by 2015 (207 programs); ten percent of the ELDPs receiving CCDF funds will participate in QRIS and receive support for improvement by 2015 (160 programs); and eight percent of the remaining ELDPs will participate in QRIS and receive support for improvement by 2015 (202 programs).

- 4) *Revise and use statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.* This objective builds on Nebraska's existing comprehensive, standards-based Early Learning and Development Standards for children birth to 8 years old. Standards-based programming is the essential foundation for a strong early childhood system. Strategies include updating the standards, further alignment with the existing Kindergarten Early Learning Guidelines (K-Guidelines), and expanding their use into more ELDPs through training and support throughout the tiers of Step up to Quality QRIS.
- 5) *Support effective use of comprehensive assessment system* which includes screening, formative assessment, and measures of environmental quality and adult-child interactions. Nebraska has a very ambitious goal to implement health screening measures for all publicly funded preschool programs and all ELDPs that participate in QRIS and to increase use and understanding of formative assessments and measurements of environmental quality and adult-child interactions. Training and support for use of these important tools will improve children's outcomes by addressing the whole child and addressing health and safety issues early.

Core Component 2. Develop high quality early childhood educators through system reform, training support, and resources.

All ECEs across the state and across the various Early Childhood settings (child care centers, school-based preschool and other publicly funded programs, early intervention, K-3 programs, child care home providers, Head Start, Early Head Start, after school programs, and home visitation) will have the knowledge, supports, and resources to continually improve their work with young



children. Nebraska is a large state geographically with a largely rural population, and the professional development strategies must be responsive to this specific need. The project leverages Nebraska's effective training infrastructure and integrated delivery system to reach ECEs and families across the state and to focus services on 20 targeted high needs counties throughout the state in the early years of the Initiative (fully discussed in section (A)(2)(b)). The capacity of the state's trainers will be expanded through master coaching and training. This objective also addresses strong workforce standards, program quality assessments, strategic planning with higher education, and community engagement and outreach. By achieving the goal to develop high quality ECEs in all ELDP settings, program quality will increase, school readiness of high needs children will increase, and more high needs children will have access to programs with improved quality and start school with increased readiness, therefore closing the achievement gap.

Specifically, the ELN Initiative plans to accomplish the following key objectives:

- 1) *Develop and align the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.* This objective builds on Nebraska's existing standards-based Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that is aligned with both early childhood credential and degree programs and professional development opportunities. Many more ECEs will receive the Competency Framework overview trainings as part of the Quality Portfolio training in Tier 2 of Nebraska's Step Up to Quality QRIS.
- 2) *Provide integrated system of professional development supporting all ELDPs and ECEs through training, coaching, materials, online resources, and demonstration sites.* Professional development and support to build the capacity of Nebraska's ECEs, ELDPs, trainers and coaches, and families is woven throughout all components of the ELN Initiative. Proven training and support strategies such as the coaching model will be rigorously evaluated to determine their effectiveness and make program adjustments when necessary. With over 12,000 Nebraska workers in center- and home-based ELDPs (as estimated by the May 2007 report on *The Economic Impact of the Nebraska Early Care and Education Industry*), 392 Head Start/Early Head Start teachers, and 265 state-funded preschool teachers, a robust professional development system will have the biggest impact on program quality and child outcomes. Many in the early learning workforce do not have formal college education in the early



childhood field, or have some hours but have not yet received a degree. The Initiative focuses on making access to training easier through the existing regional training centers, development of online training courses, free or subsidized training, and other incentives to improve knowledge and skills, while simultaneously supporting college education through scholarships and embedding standards and best practice advances into curriculum updates in higher education.

- 3) *Build capacity of state's Early Learning Connection (ELC) Coordinators and cadre of trainers through master coaching support, on-line coaching certificate, and additional training.* Early childhood coaches are increasingly being called upon in a variety of early childhood settings to support implementation of effective practices. The coaching model of ongoing, one-to-one support shows much promise for influencing transformative change and promoting ever higher standards of quality in settings for young children, thus improving the chances of more effective outcomes for children. The ELN Initiative will expand support for ECEs through implementation of an Early Childhood Coaching Model, provide master coaching to support and develop a pool of qualified coaches, increasing in number from 181 to 480 by 2015, and develop an online coaching certificate program. This pool is essential to supporting ELDPs and ECEs across the state and improving practitioner skills.
- 4) *Provide training, coaching, and materials to providers participating in QRIS in order to support continuous improvement and advancement along the levels (including training in early learning, health and safety standards, understanding and use of program and child assessments, and family engagement strategies).* Nebraska will provide multi-modal training opportunities for ELDPs participating in QRIS in order to build capacity of ECEs and make sustainable change. Strategies include developing online courses and long-distance training options, hiring additional trainers and coaches to provide intensive support, and implementing the Early Childhood Coaching Model.
- 5) *Align Core Competencies and Early Learning Guidelines into course curriculum, articulate courses among higher education colleges and institutions, integrate early learning curriculum into other child and family serving professional coursework, provide outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse early education providers, provide process evaluation to inform ongoing professional development work.* This objective focuses on creating a distinguished early childhood workforce that



serves both urban and rural parts of the state. The University will collaborate with faculty and administrators of public and private colleges and universities to expand high-quality course offerings, particularly long-distance offerings, and to promote articulation between institutions. The early learning coursework articulation, with new opportunities to be formally aligned with the Competency Framework (see process of formal alignment in section (D)(2)), will ensure that educators gain skills for data-based decision-making and use of assessments as appropriate to advance their educator knowledge, preparedness and competency.

Core Component 3. Support a comprehensive system of wraparound services for early childhood care. The lack of access to comprehensive services by Children with High Needs can significantly interfere with positive early learning and development outcomes. These challenges can result in lack of school readiness for children who must start school already behind in their learning and development. In rural settings in particular, services may be scarce and geographically difficult to access. This objective leverages the resources and expertise of local partners to build a comprehensive system that promotes the health and safety of young children (ages birth – 8) and provides access to integrated child services (based in a community Health Resource Hub). By achieving the goal to support a comprehensive system of wraparound services for early childhood care, school readiness of Children with High Needs will increase and more Children with High Needs will start school with knowledge and skills equal to their peers, therefore closing the achievement gap. The strategies include supporting professionals in related fields (health care, mental health care, addiction treatment, higher education, child welfare) to be able to recognize and support the needs of young children whenever the professionals are providing services to children or their parents.

Specifically, the ELN Initiative plans to accomplish the following key objectives:

- 1) *Identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness through community-based work of Health and Community Resource Consultants (HCR Consultants).* HCR Consultants will be embedded on the local level in targeted high needs communities to help map and connect health and safety resources for family and community. Community plans will be selected based on their understanding of community systems of



care for young children and their families, and evidence that they have built or are building the necessary partnerships with ELDPs, schools, health and mental health providers, and human service programs. This innovative strategy ensures solutions are tailored to the community and builds sustainability through expectations of local support. Through supportive strategies of the HCR Consultant, the Initiative has a goal to increase the number of Children with High Needs screened by 4,000 (10% of population) in 2015.

2) *Provide training and support to strengthen exposure to early childhood learning and development issues for professionals.*

The University and BECI lead the effort for Cross Profession Early Learning Curricular Integration across the state. Experts and stakeholders will embed Early Childhood Content into other professional disciplines such as mental health professional training programs, social work, psychology, and educators/administrators in K-12 systems. This may include content about brain development, stress effects on the brain, trauma, self-regulation, and bonding and attachment.

3) *Engage and support families.* Nebraska will partner with engaged and empowered families to create a system that supports families' access to and understanding of high quality programs. The strategies will increase access to meaningful data about ELDPs program quality (QRIS ratings) and children's developmental progress, develop and provide family workshops around early learning and development issues (including family engagement strategies in QRIS tiers), update Early Learning Standards and Core Competency standards to include family engagement, implement a public relations and educational initiative through Nebraska's public television network, and increase the number of high quality ELDPs. The Initiative will increase capacity of ELDPs around family engagement strategies through implementation of Family-Centered Coaching Model and outreach to ECEs who are non-English speaking and new to the United States to provide support to increase program quality for the children they serve.

4) *Develop and support partnerships between schools and ELDPs to promote alignment and smooth transitions for positive child outcomes.* Several strategies will aid in the alignment of ELDPs practices and knowledge with school classrooms. Communities will be assessed to determine ways to integrate state-funded preschools, Head Start, and ELDP settings to



provide full-day services for families and children. To align early childhood and early elementary systems, NDE's early childhood specialists will train school-based and community-based providers on curriculum, assessments, and other topics as necessary. HCR Consultants will support and promote community partnerships between schools and ELDPs through the Health Resource Hub work by including early elementary educators and schools in Hub-activities and resources. The training and exposure of ELDPs to the use of child screening measures, formative assessments, and kindergarten entry assessment will start aligning expectations of programming between the birth-to-five and the kindergarten settings.

Core Component 4. Build a unified data system to support programs that are accountable and use data to guide instruction and program development. The ELN Initiative supports various strategies to collect, organize, and understand evidence of children's progress across a range of domains through comprehensive data systems and use of data to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies. By achieving the goal of building a unified system to support programs that are accountable and to provide accurate data for ECEs and ELDPs to use to guide instruction and program development, program quality will increase, school readiness of high needs children will increase and more high needs children will start school with increased readiness, therefore closing the achievement gap.

Specifically, the ELN Initiative plans to accomplish the following key objectives:

- 1) *Understand the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry by implementing a statewide Kindergarten Assessment.* Having a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school, will enable Nebraska to provide its youngest citizens with a first-rate education. A high-quality, comprehensive, statewide kindergarten entry assessment strategy promotes the success of every Nebraska child by building on each child's strengths and individualizing instruction and learning opportunities. Furthermore, at a systems level, this process will strengthen the alignment between Nebraska's early childhood and elementary school systems. The strategy uses a phased in approach to



select and implement the assessment that results in all public schools implementing the standard kindergarten assessment by fall 2014.

- 2) *Build an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.* As ECEs and ELDPs become well-versed in understanding and using assessments through QRIS, Nebraska needs a system to provide easy access to meaningful information. Currently systems are separate and not compatible, departments and agencies can't talk to each other or integrate data, families can't get reliable information, and policy makers don't have reliable data to back up decisions. Even as Nebraska worked to prepare data and support for the Initiative and this application, workers struggled with confusing existing data systems—located in many places and held firmly by many people using different accountability systems that are not interchangeable. Processes are often not complementary with different methodologies for collecting information.
- 3) *Use assessment data, both individual and program-wide, to continually improve early learning programs.* ELN includes a strong commitment to use of data through rigorous evaluations of effectiveness of the strategies and implementation fidelity and a continuous feedback process for improvement and program modification. While Nebraska has shown great commitment to and development of effective and promising early childhood practices and programs through isolated, funded projects, often a lack of infrastructure or resources to share those findings and implement the practice to scale statewide result in pockets of greatness but not the ability to sustain. The infrastructure and partnerships of the ELN Initiative will sustain program change and innovation and provide leverage and resources to implement on a broader more consistent basis.

(A)(2)(b) Summary of Nebraska's Early Childhood and Learning Agenda and Guiding Principles.

Guiding Principles: The ELN Initiative partners (NDHHS, NDE, University of Nebraska (BECI)) and the Early Learning community have come together to develop a comprehensive and well-supported plan that is aligned with state initiatives and priorities. But most importantly, the early childhood agenda responds directly to the needs of Nebraska's community, schools,



families, and children. This ambitious agenda is organized around four main Guiding Principles that form the rationale and unifying principles behind the objectives and strategies endorsed by the Initiative.

Early childhood policies, practices, and services are delivered through a *strong partnership* of the early childhood leaders in Nebraska 1) Department of Health and Human Services System (NDHHS), the lead agency for the project, 2) Department of Education (NDE), and 3) University of Nebraska, the organizations that are at the heart of most state interactions with young children and their families and early childhood educators. The Initiative leverages the reach, expertise, and resources of the Departments with the support of the

University to work in a collaborative manner to ensure a comprehensive, integrated, and aligned early childhood system.

- In order to most effectively and efficiently increase school readiness of Children With High Needs in Nebraska, the initiatives and resources of the Plan are prioritized and *geographically targeted* to areas of the state with children and families experiencing the most need.



- Families are valued and supported as children’s first teachers; all components of the state plan are focused around the family and child to ensure easy access to services, information, and support for parents to be successful in supporting their children’s education and development.
- Implementation of strategies that sustain the impact of effective early childhood policies, practices, services, and programs into the early elementary grades.

Partnership/Leadership. As described in section (A)(3), the Initiative builds on the existing positive working relationships among the partners. With NDHHS reporting to the Governor and NDE reporting to the State Board of Education, the Initiative structure leverages and integrates the strengths and resources of different systems and different levels of government to focus on the intended audience—families and their children (birth through 8).

Targeted Services and Initiatives. Research shows that children with social-behavioral problems early in their school careers are at high risk of developing long-term, pervasive, intractable problems. Each year, the NDE evaluates the long term outcomes of the Early Childhood Education Grant Program—Ages 3 to 5. The Report is provided to the State Board of Education and the Legislature. Utilizing the unique identifier of each child the evaluator is able to identify trends in children's progress over their course of their involvement in the ECE Grant Program and draw conclusions about the effect of the program on child outcomes. In addition, utilizing longitudinal data of children who had been in an ECE Grant Program, the evaluator looks at scores on academic tests in the areas of reading, writing, mathematics and science in grades 3-11 and compares those who had been in an ECE Grant Program to the state average and to students who qualify for Free & Reduced Lunch. In 2009-2010 assessments across the school years found the gap was narrowed or eliminated between at-risk students and their more advantaged peers across all academic areas for children who participated in the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Appendix A-05: Early Childhood Grant Program—Ages 3 to 5 2009-2010 State Report).



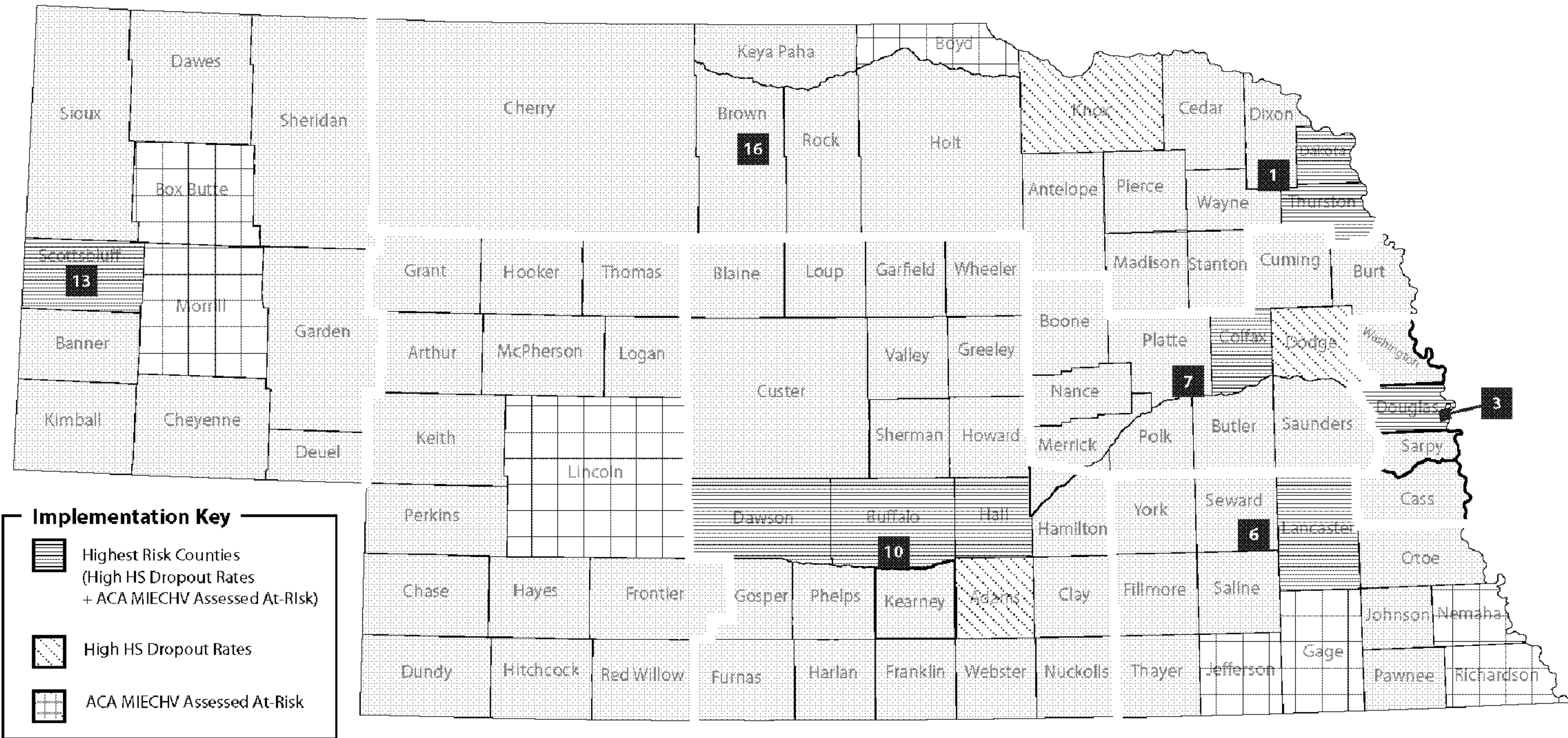
However, schools in rural settings struggle to access specialized services, including consultation and parent involvement programs. In Nebraska, more than 47,000 children under the age of 5 are at-risk of failing in school and later in life. This at-risk population is spread out across the state of Nebraska—and it is growing at a faster pace in rural communities. In order to most effectively increase school readiness of Children With High Needs and all children in Nebraska and have the biggest immediate impact, the objectives of the ELN Initiative are geographically targeted to areas of the state with children and families experiencing the most need.

A 2009 Progress Report developed by Nebraska’s Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education revealed that 14 (5.5%) of the state’s 254 public high school districts currently account for 73% of the state’s dropouts from public high schools. These 14 school districts are located in 12 Nebraska counties. Additionally, the NDHHS conducted a thorough statewide analysis to determine the state’s counties with the highest risk for poor outcomes that could be addressed through the Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visitation (MIECHV) Program. From an initial pool of 72 indicators, those that were highly correlated and/or redundant were eliminated, resulting in thirty four (34) different health and well-being indicators. Indicators were then sorted into one of eight general risk factors that were selected based on the language for the MIECHV Program found in the Affordable Care Act. The eight factors are: 1) child welfare, 2) crime, 3) economics, 4) education, 5) health behaviors, 6) pregnancy outcomes, 7) health outcomes, and 8) social welfare. Within each of the eight factors, Principal Components Analysis was used to summarize and develop a weight for the 2 to 6 individual indicators. County scores were generated by multiplying the indicator values by these weights and then summing the products. This resulted in one score per county per factor. County scores were ranked from highest to lowest for each of the 8 factors, with higher scores indicating higher risk. Counties with scores within the top 10% (top 9 counties) of a factor were identified as being “at risk” on that factor. Through this process, 17 counties were identified to be at highest risk for poor outcomes (Appendix A-06: Methodology for Targeting High Needs Communities; Appendix A-07: ELN Implementation Map). The ELN Implementation Map overlays the counties identified by these two independent studies to identify the nine counties which are identified in both studies. The eleven remaining counties which were identified in one study or the other are also included to result in a total 20 targeted counties for the Initiative. The map below summarizes the high-need counties.





Implementation Map of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative



Implementation Key

- Highest Risk Counties (High HS Dropout Rates + ACA MIECHV Assessed At-Risk)
- High HS Dropout Rates
- ACA MIECHV Assessed At-Risk

Educational Service Unit Locations

1 ESU #1 North/Northeast (Wakefield)	6 ESU #6 Southeast (Milford)	10 ESU #10 Central (Kearney)
3 ESU #3 ECCOA (Omaha)	7 ESU #7 Platte Valley (Columbus)	13 ESU #13 Panhandle (Scottsbluff)
		16 ESU #16 High Plains (Ainsworth)

Implementation Map 10.1.0a



The implementation of ELN uses statewide and regional infrastructures to deliver services with a primary requirement that efforts be targeted first at the nine counties identified in both reports, second at assuring efforts reach the 20 identified counties, and finally that strategies are implemented throughout each training region and therefore the entire state.

Focus on Families. Over 80 percent of Nebraska parents are employed, making childcare, and other settings like preschool, an essential part of the day. Through community engagement and outreach strategies, the ELN Initiative ensures that family is the center of all early childhood programs, policies, and systems. Families will be supported to understand the importance of the early years and will promote their child’s learning and social-emotional development.

Building Local Capacity Through Local Programs. Another challenge in Nebraska is distance. This Initiative allows Nebraska to be more intentional about the use of available technology. In order to ensure the sustainability of key objectives, Nebraska has focused on objectives that account for a rural landscape, building local capacity, and are based on partnerships with the local community. These strategies include a targeted approach with local Health and Community Resource Consultants in each of the high need communities in order to empower local leaders to address local needs but guided by strong statewide standards and requirements and training for ELDPs provided through regionally-based trainers who partner with the community to identify training needs.

OVERALL TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY LEARNING NEBRASKA INITIATIVE

Major Milestone	Completed
Section A Successful State Systems	
Hire a Program Manager (NDHHS) and (NDHHS, NDE, University), convene Leadership Council for ELN Initiative	March 2012
Hold annual, statewide ELN Initiative Summits	Dec. 2013, 2014, 2015
Section B High Quality, Accountable Programs	
Develop and implement comprehensive tiered Step Up to Quality QRIS	August 2012



Major Milestone	Completed
Participation and advancement in upper tiers of Step Up to Quality System by 100% of publicly funded ELDPs, 10% of ELDPs receiving CCDF funds, and 8% of the remaining ELDPs	December 2015
Section C Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes for Children	
Revise Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines to align to new domains in the Head Start Frameworks and new Nebraska K-12 standards in reading, math, social studies content and science	August 2012
Select/ implement health screening measure as part of Nebraska's comprehensive assessment system	August 2012
Launch family engagement/education campaign with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET)	July 2012
Embed 20 Health and Community Resource Consultants in high needs communities across Nebraska to help map and connect health and safety resources for family and community	August 2013
Hold statewide Early Childhood Health Summit	August 2014
Implement all four components of the Nebraska comprehensive assessment system for all state-funded preschool programs and an increasing number of providers within the QRIS network	August 2015
Section D Great Early Childhood Education Workforce	
Develop and implement an integrated Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry to track training and education	August 2012
Provide training, coaching, materials, and technical assistance to ELDPs participating in the QRIS, with 569 projected to participate in upper tiers by 2015.	August 2012
Develop and conduct on-line Coaching Certificate Program	Cohort 1: Years 2-3 and Cohort 2: Years 3-4
Develop and implement Early Childhood Coaching Model for ECEs and expand pool of trained coaches from 181 to 480	August 2015
Section E Measuring Outcomes and Progress	
Implement kindergarten entry assessment for children entering all public schools	Fall 2014
Develop and launch an integrated, statewide, data system for early childhood data	December 2014



(A)(2)(c) Rationale for State Plan inclusion of criteria from Focus Areas (C), (D), (E).

The objectives and strategies included in the ELN Initiative have been carefully designed and tailored to build on existing strengths of Nebraska's early childhood system, address Nebraska's demonstrated need, and implement strategies that will have significant impact on children's outcomes. Nebraska has chosen to address all four criteria in Focus Area (C); both criteria in Focus Area (D); and both criteria in Focus Area (E). The rationale for each objective has been discussed in the narrative above.

Focus Area (C). Nebraska has chosen to address all four criteria in Focus Area (C):

- **(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.** Standards-based programming is the essential foundation for a strong early childhood system. Strategies include updating the standards to take into account recent changes in K-12 standards, further alignment with the existing Kindergarten Early Learning Guidelines (K-Guidelines). Expanding the use of Early Learning and Development Standards into more ELDPs through training and support throughout the tiers of Step up to Quality QRIS.
- **(C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.** Nebraska needs to update its assessment system to include a screening measure. The ELN Initiative has a very ambitious goal to implement health screening measures for all publicly funded preschool programs and all ELDPs that participate in QRIS and to increase use and understanding of formative assessments and measurements of environmental quality and adult-child interactions. Training and support for use of these important tools will improve children's outcomes by addressing the whole child and addressing health and safety issues early.
- **(C)(3) Identify and address the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.** Nebraska has already developed and implemented research-based health and safety standards and needs to expand their use and incorporate them in QRIS criteria. Nebraska has researched and supported the health consultation model at various levels for a number of years and the ELN Initiative provides the opportunity to build on this knowledge to further develop, scale-up, and evaluate its impact. In targeted communities, other strategies for school readiness will be less effective



without addressing the physical and emotional needs of the child first. This innovative strategy ensures solutions are tailored to the community and builds sustainability through expectations of local support and builds access to service in isolated rural settings.

- **(C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.** This is a strong priority of state leadership on all levels and across all agencies and programs. The effectiveness of parents and families to have the strongest impact on learning and development is well researched and documented.

Focus Area (D). Nebraska has chosen to address both criteria in Focus Area (D). The objectives implemented under these criteria both build upon existing strengths of Nebraska’s early childhood system and implement strategies that will have significant impact on children’s outcomes.

- **(D)(1) Developing Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.** This objective builds on Nebraska’s existing standards-based Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that is aligned with both early childhood credential and degree programs and professional development opportunities. Many more ECEs will receive the Competency Framework overview trainings as part of the Quality Portfolio training in Tier 2 of Nebraska’s Step Up to Quality QRIS.
- **(D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.** In order to successfully carry out most of the objectives and strategies of the initiative and make a sustainable impact on the outcomes of children, well-trained and supported ECEs are vital. The initiative supports the necessary changes in training topics, expanded one-on-one coaching, improved pathways to further training through higher education – all strategies that are proven to increase ECE knowledge and skill.



Focus Area (E). Nebraska has chosen to address both criteria in Focus Area (E). The objectives implemented under these criteria both build upon existing strengths of Nebraska’s early childhood system and implement strategies that will have significant impact on children’s outcomes.

- **(E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry.** Currently, Nebraska does not implement a kindergarten entry assessment. A high-quality, comprehensive, statewide kindergarten entry assessment strategy will promote the success of every Nebraska child by building on each child’s strengths and individualizing instruction and learning opportunities. Furthermore, at a systems level, this process will strengthen the alignment between Nebraska’s early childhood and elementary school systems.
- **(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.** Currently systems are separate and not compatible, departments and agencies can’t talk to each other or integrate data, families can’t get reliable information, and policy makers don’t have reliable data to back up decisions. As ECEs and ELDPs become well-versed in understanding and using assessments through QRIS, Nebraska needs a system to provide easy access to meaningful information.

<p>Identification of the two or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (C): Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality Early Learning and Development Standards.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (C)(2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (C)(4) Engaging and supporting families.</p>
<p>Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (D): Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (D) the State is choosing to address</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.</p>



Identification of the one or more selection criteria that the State has chosen to address in Focused Investment Area (E):
Please check the box to indicate which selection criterion or criteria in Focused Investment Area (E) the State is choosing to address

(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.

(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies.

(A)(3) Aligning and coordinating early learning and development across the State

(A)(3)(a) Governance structure of the Participating State Agencies

Nebraska has a history of strong commitment to the early learning and development of the state's youngest children. This commitment to the vital importance of education and healthy development includes senior leadership from all public and private sectors in Nebraska, including the Governor, Legislature, the Commissioner and Administration of the Department of Education, the State Board of Education, the CEO and Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services, the President and Educators of the University system, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council members and sub-committee membership, early childcare systems planning teams, Head Start Association, members of the Early Childhood Investment Council, Business Round-Table for Early Childhood, leading non-profit and philanthropic organizations, regional and community leaders, educators, early childhood accrediting bodies, early education professionals, and families. All key stakeholders have been engaged in the planning process of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) and identifying needed objectives and strategies that leverage the system's existing strengths and resources.

(A)(3)(a)(1) Organizational structure for managing the grant and how it builds upon existing interagency governance structures, if any already exist and are effective.

Backed by Governor Dave Heineman's leadership and commitment to early childhood learning and development, the success and effectiveness of the ELN Initiative will depend on the collaborative leadership and communication between the project partners. The ELN Initiative will be led by proven early childhood leaders in Nebraska, 1) Department Health and Human Services System (NDHHS), the lead agency for the initiative, 2) Department of Education (NDE), and 3) University of Nebraska (University). These



organizations are at the heart of most state interactions with young children and families and early childhood educators (ECE). Nebraska is a small population state where representatives from higher education, public K-12 education, government, and the early childhood community are longtime and effective collaborators. The strong central partnership will enhance and deepen the early childhood system's ability to extend knowledge within and across systems with the key stakeholders as partners.

Early childhood care and education services in Nebraska are governed primarily through the NDHHS, a code agency (reporting directly to the governor), and the NDE, a constitutional agency, governed by the State Board of Education. Collaborative working relationships between these two agencies have been ongoing and long-term as demonstrated by Nebraska being the first state in the nation to establish two agencies as Co-Leads for administering infant/toddler services through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Additionally, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies Child Care and Development Funds for Quality Improvement, expansion of Infant Toddler Care, Resource and Referral, and School-Aged Care, are administered through shared planning, administration, and implementation. This integration allows for efficiencies, avoids duplication of effort, and sustains the critical infrastructure necessary to implement quality initiatives and newly identified best practices throughout a vast geographic area with diverse population densities.

Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services. NDHHS, the lead agency of the ELN Initiative, is charged with overseeing the licensing of all childcare settings (not including those connected to the public schools), as well as licensing for childhood service providers such as medical and dental. The Division of Public Health has responsibility for child care licensing and administration of maternal and child health programs, including the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. The Division's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems project has extensively studied child care health consultation and potential models for implementation and support. In addition, the Division of Public Health has a long history of working with a wide range of stakeholders and community organizations in supporting systems of care for children, through such efforts as School Health consultation.



Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood. In NDE, the Office of Early Childhood carries out much of its work through the Early Childhood Training Center, which disseminates an extensive print and media collection of early childhood resources, maintains a comprehensive training calendar, manages a broad array of training opportunities for early childhood personnel and families, and facilitates the state's integrated early childhood professional development system. The Office of Early Childhood works jointly with the NDE Office of Special Education and the Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO), and provides support for the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC).

University of Nebraska. The University of Nebraska has a strong and well-honed land grant tradition, in which researchers and educators put the University's critical resources of knowledge and expertise to work on the challenges facing children and families in Nebraska communities. The University will serve as a key partner in the implementation and evaluation of the ELN Initiative and will use the principles and structures associated with the land grant tradition to uniquely craft a land grant approach to early childhood education and the ELN Initiative.

The land grant university is a uniquely American model, created to challenge the one-time notion that education was principally for the wealthy and the privileged. Beginning with the Morrill Act of 1862 and further defined by the Hatch Act (1887), as well as the Smith-Lever Act (1914), the land grant idea evolved in three important ways:

- To provide a broad segment of the population with a practical education that has direct relevance to their daily lives.
- To make a public commitment to research that addresses the needs of the state each institution serves.
- To diffuse among the people of the community useful and practical information.

Thus, within land grant institutions, the three functions of teaching, research, and community engagement have traditionally been viewed as equal in importance and as embedded within a context in which reciprocity and sharing among the functions is paramount. Today's land-grant universities are engaged institutions defined by the following characteristics (Kellogg Commission, 1999; NASULGC, 2008):



- **Responsiveness** – To be responsive requires listening to the communities, regions and states served; asking the right questions; and offering relevant and timely services.
- **Respect for Partners** – Respect involves both joint academic-community definitions of problems and solutions, and providing the university’s expertise to the community.
- **Academic Neutrality** – The University is a neutral facilitator and source of information, especially when public policy issues, including contentious ones, are at stake.
- **Integration** – Integration requires a commitment to interdisciplinary work and to institutional scholarship that is deeply intertwined with the teaching and outreach missions of the university.
- **Coordination** - The task of coordination is to make intentional efforts to align goals, activities and outcomes to achieve the greatest impact for the common good.
- **Resource Partnerships** – Alliances, strategic partnerships, and strong and healthy relationships with partners in government, business and non-profit organizations, permeate land grant.

The use of the University Extension in the ELN Initiative is a prime example of how the land grant structure in Nebraska can contribute to efforts to develop a network of engaged partners. In Nebraska there are four regional offices and a large cadre of educators providing services to all 93 Nebraska counties. Extension staff members are viewed as trusted translators of research to end users in their local communities. The Initiative will take full advantage of this structure, along with that provided via Regional Training Coalitions and Educational Service Units, as part of the agenda for development and dissemination/outreach as well as for making connections among early childhood entities throughout the state.

The University of Nebraska System has partnered with many national, state, and local leaders in the early childhood field to improve upon our collective understanding of the importance of the early years of life, and how adult knowledge, skills, abilities, and interactions can impact child outcomes, family engagement, and effective practice. Nebraska has participated in a number of studies



that moved forward the understanding in the field around what elements contribute to quality, and continue to improve upon defining these characteristics of quality environments, and what may contribute to sustaining improved practices.

The university objectives will be lead by the newly founded Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) at the University (described in section A(3)(a)(2)). The BECI will include all four University of Nebraska campuses in order to facilitate collaborative work.

Interagency Governance Structures.

(A)(3)(a)(2)The governance-related roles and responsibilities of the Lead Agency, the State Advisory Council, each Participating State Agency, the State’s Interagency Coordinating Council for part C of IDEA, and other partners.

The Administrative Structure Diagram and the ELN Initiative Organizational Chart contains the organization chart depicting the governance related roles and responsibilities, staffing and organization needed for the three ELN partners (NDHHS, NDE, University). The partners have developed detailed job descriptions for the key positions including how each position interacts and responds to each other (Appendix A-08: ELN Initiative Key Job Descriptions). This level of detail will establish a Leadership Council and the ELN Management Team to meet the aggressive timelines. This timeline will flow throughout this entire document between sections.. An interim staff will serve in the lead position to ensure that once the grant monies are awarded, the ELN Initiative agenda will begin execution on the first day. The work and oversight of committees are timed so that the groups with work that is imperative for initiative start-up and setting objectives in motion begin first through the work of task forces-which have a short-life but have specific and clear deliverables.

The Leadership Council of the ELN Initiative will consist of Governor Dave Heineman, CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services, Kerry T. Winterer, and the Commissioner of the Department of Education, Dr. Roger Breed. The Leadership Council carries the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the goals and objectives of the Initiative are being carried out, that policy issues are addressed, and disputes resolved.



The operational level of the ELN Initiative will be led by a Program Manager who is a discretionary employee of the NDHHS the lead agency. The Leadership Council will select the Program Manager. The anticipated term of service is four years. The lead agency NDHHS and both of the Participating Agencies- NDE and the University will hire a Project Coordinator (three total) and a Staff Assistant (three total); to oversee and carry out the work assigned to their respective organization. These employees will be hired according to the rules of the organization for which they are being employed. The Program Manager and the three Coordinators will work together and form the ELN Management Team.

Nebraska will strengthen the governance structure for the ELN Initiative by building upon past successful partnerships and utilize three major structures that contribute to stakeholder involvement and to pooling resources.

- 1) The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)—State Advisory Council
- 2) Early Childhood Systems Team—a subcommittee of the ECICC
- 3) University of Nebraska/Buffett Early Childhood Institute

1) The Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)

Nebraska recognized the importance of early childhood over a decade ago by creating the ECICC in 2000 to advise the state agencies around issues of early childhood care and education. **ECICC** was created to advise and assist the collaborating agencies in carrying out the provisions of the Early Intervention Act, the Quality Child Care Act, sections 79-1101 to 79-1104, and other early childhood care and education initiatives under state supervision (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-3401). The ECICC is also identified by the governor as the State Early Learning Council to meet the federal requirements of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act [December 2007, PR110-134]. The founding statute requires that the Council report biennially to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of



early intervention and early childhood care and education in the state. All members of the Council are appointed by the Governor and serve up to two three-year terms. Representation on the council includes: parents of children with disabilities, early care and education providers and programs, Head Start programs, state agency representatives, and other health professionals as designated.

The Council is chaired by a governor-designated chairperson. As described in Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) 43-3401 through 43-3403, the Council is responsible to:

- Promote policies set forth in the Early Intervention Act (NRS 43-2501 through 43-2516), the Quality Child Care Act (NRS 43-2601 through 43-2625), and the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to three) (NRS 79-1101 through 79-1104).
- Facilitate collaboration with the federally administered Head Start program.
- Make recommendations to the NDHHS, the NDE, and other state agencies responsible for the regulation or provision of early childhood care and education programs on the needs, priorities, and policies relating to such programs throughout the state.
- Make recommendations to the lead agency or agencies which prepare and submit applications for federal funding.
- Review new or proposed revisions to rules and regulations governing the registration or licensing of early childhood care and education programs.
- Study and recommend additional resources for early childhood care and education programs.
- Report biennially to the Governor and the Legislature on the status of early intervention and early childhood care and education in the state.

In 2008 Governor Heineman designated the ECICC as the State Advisory Council as required by the 2007 federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act. State law also includes information that is required according to federal statutes.

The state advisory council has additional responsibilities as required under the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act. The new responsibilities include:

- Conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and



development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the state;

- Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally- funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs. Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- Develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the state;
- Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
- Assess the capacity of 2-year and 4-year public and private institutions of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or prekindergarten program; and
- Make recommendations for improvement in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards as appropriate.

The ECICC currently has three standing committees and the Family Leadership Team. The three standing committees are Gaps and Barriers, Legislative and Communications, and the Early Childhood Systems Team. The current responsibilities of the Council align well with the scope of the ELN Initiative. The work of the ELN Initiative will be a standing agenda item for the quarterly ECICC meetings held each year. Additionally, one sub-committee of the ECICC, the Early Childhood Systems Team shall operate as the



integration team of the Initiative. This group membership does comprise the administrative leadership of the various programs and services carried out within NDHHS, NDE, and the University. The group also has key leadership from non-profit and philanthropic organizations who are extremely invested in initiatives within the state to address the gaps for children and families in Nebraska. The Integration Team will work with the ELN Initiative's Program Manager and the three Program Coordinators to identify necessary time limited work groups to address the cross sector work of the Initiative. Such cross cutting teams will be focused on integrating systems, aligning work, reducing redundancies, and collaborating to implement the key objectives and strategies. Nebraska anticipates a team focused on data system integration, implementation of the QRIS, implementation of Professional Development, implementation of Assessments, etc. As such teams are formed there will be further opportunity and need at the state, regional, and local levels for stakeholders to engage in this ambitious reform work.

2) The Early Childhood Systems Team was established in 2010 to formalize an interagency planning body that brings the various divisions within state agencies, Head Start grantees, and key stakeholders from local communities, as a working group to move ECICC recommendations and early childhood priorities forward. The Early Childhood Systems Team creates ongoing collaboration across the public and private agencies through which early childhood systems needs for children (prenatal through age eight) will be identified and addressed through strategic action plans.

The scope of the Early Childhood Systems Team is as follows:

- Assist in prioritizing recommendations from the ECICC in the biennial Report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood.
- Identify opportunities and, when appropriate, develop strategic action plans for responding to the highest priority recommendations from the ECICC in the biennial Report to the Governor on the Status of Early Childhood.
- Identify early childhood funding opportunities and jointly prepare grant applications that seek to improve comprehensive early childhood systems across Nebraska.



- Identify opportunities to braid funding across agencies to support comprehensive early childhood services and systems.
- Provide policy analysis and develop policy briefs that may assist to inform policymakers, the ECICC, and others of policies and practices that promote high quality comprehensive early childhood services and systems development.
- Identify mechanisms for increased efficiencies in utilizing resources to promote effective service provision, data collection and outcomes measurement, and systems improvement in support of quality programs.
- Maintain regular communication with the ECICC by providing regular updates on the Integration Team’s work. An annual progress report will be submitted to the ECICC summarizing the successes, obstacles encountered, and plans for the next year’s work.
- Support the ECICC’s work, when appropriate, in state plan development and recommendations regarding regulatory changes (Appendix A-09: Membership Roster for the Systems Team).

3) **University of Nebraska, Buffett Early Childhood Institute.** The new Buffett Early Childhood Institute is a research, policy, and teaching institute funded through the University of Nebraska Foundation. The goal of the newly established BECI is to give every child a good start in life. The primary focus of the Institute will be on the learning and healthy development of children from birth to age 8, with special attention paid to those who are vulnerable or at risk as a result of poverty, developmental delays or other learning challenges, health issues or stress. The institute will include all four University campuses in order to facilitate collaborative work. The three primary focus areas are an integrated program of early childhood research and scholarship; teaching and professional development; and outreach and policy concerning the early childhood years.

(A)(3)(a)(3) The method and process for making different types of decisions (e.g., policy, operational) and resolving disputes.

The management plan for the ELN Initiative includes many avenues for input and consultation at local, state, and national levels. Nebraska will rely on the existing structures of the ECICC and the Early Childhood Systems Team (standing committees). The Early



Childhood System Team, utilizing sub-committees that are implementing plans and strategies, will be utilized to advise and advance the work of the ELN Initiative. The Early Childhood Systems/Integration Team will meet regularly with the ELN Management Team. This is where integration across systems and operationalizing the objectives and strategies of the Initiative will occur.

The ELN Initiative has clearly articulated goals, roles, and responsibilities of the two Participating Agencies. The Project Coordinator within each of the three participating agencies needs to assure that work is carried out, and will bring issues to the ELN Initiative Management Team for resolution. The Management Team members will continually communicate with the Leadership Council and key leadership and essential staff within their own organizations to keep the work moving forward.

Disputes will be resolved at the levels closest to the work, through group decision-making process when possible or within agency protocols as needed. Policy decisions will be taken to and managed by the Leadership Council. If a dispute should arise that cannot seem to be resolved through other avenues, a decision or resolution would be sought from the Leadership Council.

(A)(3)(a)(4) The plan for the State to involve others in the planning and implementation of the activities. Participating Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs), Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), parents and families, including parents and families of Children with High Needs, and other key stakeholders will be involved in planning and implementing activities at local, regional, and state level throughout this Initiative. At the state level of planning and decision-making, parents, families, ECEs, and other key individuals are on the ECICC. Additional opportunities for involvement occur at the Integration team and subgroup levels for the various initiatives. Family Engagement is a current subgroup of the Early Childhood Systems Team. The Family Leadership Team is an ongoing team within the ECICC.

Prior to implementation of the QRIS in Nebraska, Program Standard criteria will be examined further by focus groups across the state, comprised of ECEs, ELDPs, parents, and local stakeholders. This offers opportunities for involvement in development and design prior to implementation. The hiring criteria for Health and Community Resource Consultants who provide resource navigation and



support services locally (fully described in section (C)(3)) will include criteria for demonstrated community level participation in planning, placement, and sustainability. Key objectives such as building a high quality early learning workforce includes regional and community level planning, decision-making, and implementation.

The ELN strategies include many opportunities to become involved on local Early Learning councils or teams, participate in the research projects, become trained ECEs and provide coaching or consultation services. Outreach efforts include use of Extension Educators to engage early educators who may be culturally or linguistically diverse and use of distance technologies to reach across wider geographic spaces. Strategies with NET allow for outreach, training, and recognition events in communities.

ELN Initiative Summits. Nebraska will conduct three annual Early Learning Nebraska Summits in order to encourage a groundswell of early childhood supporters in Nebraska. This is critical to both ensure effective implementation of the Initiative objectives and strategies, but also to sustain the work well after the initial RTT-ELC investment. The Summit will—

- Connect Nebraska childhood advocates to early childhood-friendly national policy to both apply and influence these policies.
- Provide an environment for emerging leaders to build an early childhood system in Nebraska that is supportive, sustainable, practical and effective.
- Support existing providers and prepare a high-quality early childhood workforce.
- Highlight local community ECEs by recognizing their innovative application and creating of best practice.

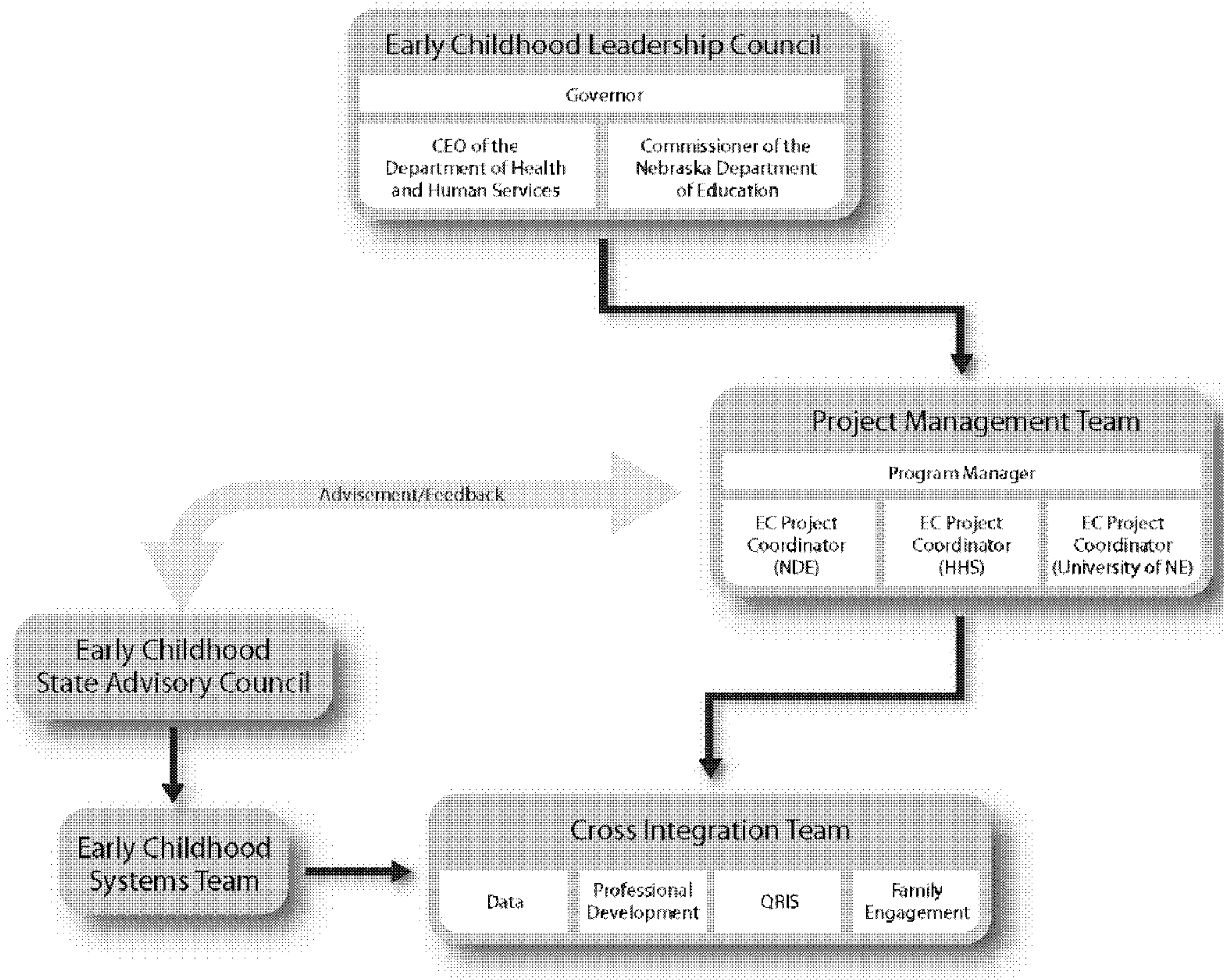
(A)(3)(b) Demonstrate that the participating state agencies are strongly committed to the State Plan and the governance structure of the grant, and to the effective implementation of the State Plan, by including in the MOU

In an effort to demonstrate the strong commitment of the Participating State Agencies to the State Plan Nebraska has created the following governance structure that will enable the state to effectively implement the Plan (Appendix 10: Administrative Infrastructure: ELN Initiative).





Administrative Infrastructure: Early Learning Nebraska Initiative

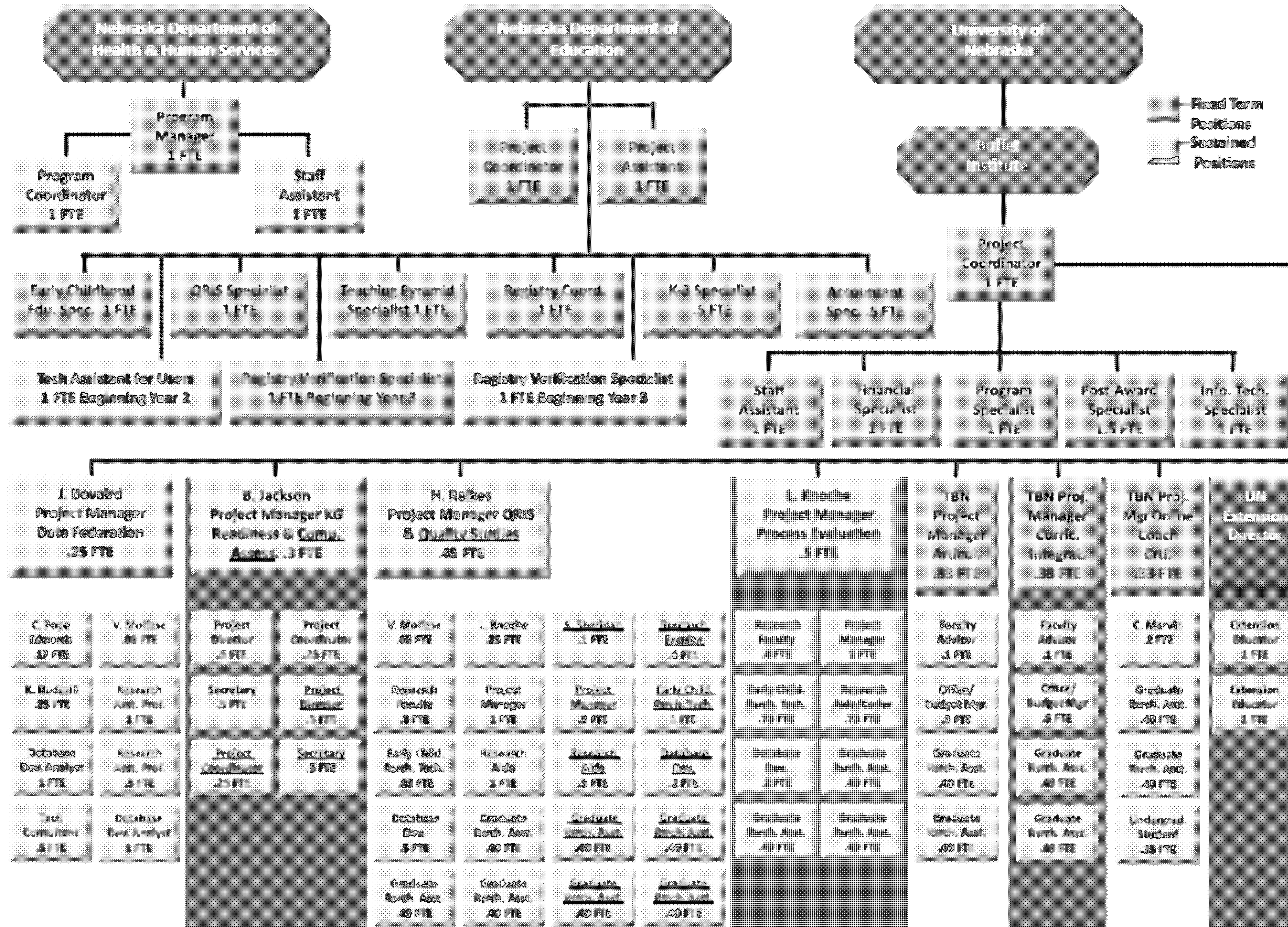


This diagram shows how Nebraska intends to align and coordinate early learning and development across the state by an administrative infrastructure depicting the governance related roles and responsibilities of the lead agency, each participating state agency, the state's early childhood advisory council/ interagency coordinating council for IDEA-Part C, and our other partners. The roles and responsibilities are described in Table (A)(3)-1 below.

In an effort to demonstrate the strong commitment of the Participating State Agencies to the State Plan Nebraska has created the following management structure to effectively implement the State Plan (Appendix 11: ELN Initiative Management Structure).



Early Learning Nebraska Initiative Management Structure



The MOU (Appendix A-12: Memorandum of Understanding) between the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the University of Nebraska, clearly delineates:

- (1) Terms and conditions that reflect a strong commitment to the State Plan by each Participating State Agency, including terms and conditions designed to align and leverage the Participating State Agencies' existing funding to support the State Plan, including required assurances;
- (2) "Scope-of-work" descriptions that require each Participating State Agency to implement all applicable portions of the State Plan and a description of efforts to maximize the number of Early Learning and Development Programs that become Participating Programs; and
- (3) A signature from an authorized representative of each Participating State Agency.

The Exhibit 1 of the MOU clearly specifies each the role and specific deliverable of each state agency, in accordance with each selection criteria, starting with (A) (1-4).

The 22 pages of the MOU demonstrates the commitment to the State Plan from a broad group of stakeholders that will assist Nebraska to reach the ambitious yet achievable goals outlined in response to selection criterion. (This is further defined in the letters of support identified in Table A(3)-2 and found in Appendix A-13: Letters of Support.)



Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
NDHHS-Lead Agency Responsibilities	<p>In assisting the Participating State Agencies to implement their tasks and activities described in the State’s ELN Initiative application, the Lead Agency will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Work collaboratively with, and support the Participating State Agency in carrying out the Participating State Agency Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I of this agreement; 2) Timely award the portion of Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant funds designated for the Participating State Agency in the State Plan during the course of the project period and in accordance with the Participating State Agency’s Scope of Work, as identified in Exhibit I, and in accordance with the Participating State Agency’s Budget, as identified in section VIII of the State’s application; 3) Provide feedback on the Participating State Agency’s status updates, any interim reports, and project plans and products; 4) Keep the Participating State Agency informed of the status of the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant project and seek input from the Participating State Agency, where applicable, through the governance structure outlined in the State Plan; 5) Facilitate coordination across Participating State Agencies necessary to implement the State Plan; and 6) Identify sources of technical assistance for the project.
Joint Responsibilities with NDE	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Lead Agency and the Participating State Agencies will each appoint a key contact person for the ELN Initiative. 2) These key contacts from the Lead Agency and the Participating State Agencies will maintain frequent communication to facilitate cooperation under this MOU, consistent with the State Plan and governance structure. 3) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will work together to determine appropriate timelines for project updates and status reports throughout the grant period. 4) Lead Agency and Participating State Agency personnel will negotiate in good faith toward achieving the overall goals of the State’s Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, including when the State Plan requires modifications that affect the Participating State Agency, or when the Participating State Agency’s Scope of Work requires modifications.



Table (A)(3)-1: Governance-related roles and responsibilities	
Participating State Agency	Governance-related roles and responsibilities
University – Buffet Early Childhood Institute	Supportive role in the beginning as BECI was formed early in 2011. Presently they are in the process of hiring its executive director (professor level). The primary leader of the university objectives will be the newly founded BECI. The BECI is a new research, policy, and teaching institute with a primary focus on the learning and healthy development of children from birth to age 8, with special attention paid to those who are vulnerable or at risk as a result of poverty, developmental delays or other learning challenges, health issues or stress. The Institute will serve a critical role in Nebraska’s early childhood system, providing a central early childhood academic focus for three primary areas: an integrated program of early childhood research and scholarship; teaching and professional development; and outreach and policy concerning the early childhood years.
Other Entities	
Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC)—State Advisory Council	Roles and responsibilities described in narrative to section (A)(3)(a)(2)

Table (A)(3)-2: Early Learning Intermediary Organizations and local early learning councils (if applicable)			
<i>List every Intermediary Organization and local early learning council (if applicable) in the State. Did this entity provide a letter of intent or support which is included in the Appendix (Y/N)?</i>			
Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13	Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
University of Nebraska James B Milliken	Y	Nebraska State Legislature Senator John N. Harms	Y
Nebraska State Legislature Senator Kathy Campbell	Y	The Buffett Early Childhood Fund Susie Buffett	Y
Nebraska State Legislature Senator Michael J. Flood	Y	Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Heather Gill	Y
Nebraska State Legislature Senator Greg L Adams	Y	Nebraska Head Start Association Deb Ross	Y



Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children – TEACH® Linda Zinke	Y
Nebraska State Education Association Nancy Fulton	Y
Nebraska Council of School Administrators Dr. Michael Dulaney	Y
Boystown Thomas Tonniges	Y
Nebraska Association of School Boards John Spatz	Y
Nebraska Medical Association Dale Mahlman	Y
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Mary Jo Pankoke	Y
Inspire Nebraska NET Gary Targoff	Y
Public Health Association of Nebraska Rita Parris	Y
The First Five Years Jim Krieger	Y
First Five Becky Veak	Y
Nebraska Department of Insurance Bruce R Range, CPCU, CIE	Y
University of Nebraska, College of Education and Human Services Marjorie Kostelnik	Y
University of Nebraska Extension Kathleen Lodl	Y
University of Nebraska Public Policy Center Mark DeKraai, JD, PhD	Y

Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Nebraska Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health Candy Kennedy	Y
Parent Training and Information of Families of Children with Disabilities Glenda F. Davis	Y
Nebraska Community College Association Dennis G. Baack	Y
Community Action Roger Furrer	Y
Early Childhood Education Endowment Board of Trustees Jessie Rasmussen	Y
Mission: Readiness Amy Dawson Taggart	Y
Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Timothy F. Dunning	Y
Educational Service Unit # 1 Dr. Bob Uhing	Y
Ewing Public Schools Ted Hillman	Y
Lynch Public Schools Ted Hillman	Y
Stanton Community Schools Dr Michael Sieh Dr Chris Stogdill Mrs. Mary McKeon	Y
Walthill Public School Ed Stansberry	Y
Educational Service Unit #3 D Gil Kettelhut Ed.D	Y
Omaha A+ Public Schools John Mackiel	Y



Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Blair Community Schools Dr. Jane Stavem	Y
Millard Public Schools Keith W Lutz, Ed.D	Y
Gretna Public School District #37 Dr. Kevin Riley	Y
Elkhorn Public Schools Stephen R Baker	Y
Educational Service Unit #6 Daniel J Shoemake, EdD	Y
Thayer Central Community Schools Drew Harris	Y
Lincoln Public Schools Stephen C. Joel, Ed.D	Y
York Public Schools Mike Lucas	Y
School District of Seward Greg Barnes	Y
Falls City Public Schools Tim Heckenlively	Y
Beatrice Public Schools Jon T Lopez Ed.D	Y
Crete Public Schools Kyle McGowan	Y
Educational Service Unit #7 Dr. Norman Ronell	Y
North Bend Central Public Schools Dan Endorf	Y
Fremont Public Schools Stephen Sexton	Y
Bancroft-Rosalie Community Schools Dr. Jon Cerny	Y

Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Twin Rivers Public Schools Donald Graff	Y
Osceola Public Schools Steven A Rinehart	Y
Humphrey Public Schools Greg Sjuts	Y
Boone Central Schools Cory Worrell	Y
Educational Service Unit #10 Roxanne Vipond	Y
Centura Public Schools Julie A. Otero	Y
Holdrege Public Schools Todd Hilyard	Y
Alma Public Schools Jon Davis	Y
Kearney Public Schools Carol Renner, PhD	Y
Harvard Public School Michael Derr	Y
Grand Island Public School Dr. Robert Winter	Y
Educational Service Unit #13 Jeff West	Y
Bayard Public Schools Travis W Miller	Y
Chadron Public Schools Dr. Caroline Winchester	Y
Educational Service Unit #16	Y
Perkins County Schools Tobin L Buchanan	Y



Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Theford Public Schools Henry Eggert	Y
McCook Public Schools Grant Norgaard	Y
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties Ted Stilwill	Y

Intermediary Organization/ local early learning council in the State	Letter in Appendix A-13
Building Bright Futures John Cavanaugh	Y
The Educare Center of Omaha Gladys Haynes, Ph.D	Y
Public Health Solutions M. Jane Ford Witthoff	Y

(A)(4) Developing a budget to implement and sustain the work of this grant.

(A)(4)(a). Demonstrates how the State will use existing funds that support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources. Nebraska’s use of existing funds to support early learning and development from Federal, State, private, and local sources as investments over the next four years (as summarized in Table (A)(4)) are projected for Federal Funds at \$1,134,063,135, State Funds at \$871,864,531 and Private Contributions at \$76,090,748.

These funds are committed to serving children and families with the highest needs through the many services in the state that impact their overall well-being. While this is not inclusive of all funds that directly impact children and families available, it does capture the various funding streams to determine cross-over, areas of improved collaboration, and systems integration. The funds described in table (A)(4) are projected investments in the next 4 years provided by agencies and fund administrators to the best of their ability, realizing that they cannot control for all possible events of the future, but giving it their best faith effort. Nebraska does make substantial investment to the children of Nebraska as evidenced in the above figures. The state is also fortunate to have a strong base of private philanthropists invested in seeing that the future of the next generation holds great promise for families, communities, state, and nation.



Nebraska has a history of working together to braid funds and make the most of the resources available. Examples of this are evident in how the federal programs under IDEA Part C, and Part B (619) are integrated to support overall professional development strategies, not funding separate services for children segregated from natural and inclusive environments. Nebraska is meeting the needs of children with special needs in the settings that all children experience while growing up. This includes their homes, Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs), and schools. Head Start and Early Head Start have worked with community schools to integrate services and programming for children in their communities. In rural settings of Nebraska, the school is often the hub of all activity and buildings are used for multiple purposes to meet the needs of that community. Collaboration is not a ‘new’ concept to Nebraska communities, it is necessary and valued. Additionally, Head Start and Early Head Start Programs have partnered well with child care providers in many communities across the state, working for over a decade through the Infant/Toddler Initiative to build quality, support, and capacity for infant/toddler care (funded by CCDF quality funds).

NDHHS and NDE are integrated through legislation (The Quality Child Care Act- Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-2601) regarding responsibilities for addressing needs of professional development and quality programs. NDHHS is the lead agency for administration of the CCDF funds that include all the quality set asides. Supported by legislation and an interagency Memorandum of Understanding, NDE administers the initiatives targeting quality improvements, through their leadership in the Office of Early Childhood, the Early Childhood Training Center, and the Early Learning Connection Coordinators located through seven regions and employed through Educational Service Units (ESUs). Nebraska is committed to using this infrastructure to roll out the new and exciting improvements made possible through the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative).

Elements of the ELN’s tiered Quality Tiered Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Step up to Quality, have already been being developed through the support of CCDF set asides, state-funded preschool, Head Start, and private initiatives such as the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) providing center based and home based services, Building Bright Futures (investments in the Omaha community toward quality early care experiences), and Nurturing Healthy Behaviors (advancing social



emotional behavioral consultation and services into ELDPs through CCDF quality set asides and private funds). Nebraska will build upon and make these efforts more accessible to communities throughout the state.

Additionally, the NDHHS Division of Public Health has played an integral role in Early Childhood Systems Planning through the federal grant supporting Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems. The foundation of partnerships and collaboration laid over numerous years of this initiative, make Nebraska ready and able to move this aggressive plan of reform forward. The Division will be carrying out one of the key strategies outlined in this plan to promote access to needed health, dental, social emotional and family supports so necessary for success in school. Partnerships at the state and community level will be the focus of this effort to deliver what is needed, at the time it is needed, thereby closing the readiness gap and assuring smooth transitions as children enter school. The Health and Community Resource Consultants (HCR Consultants) will use the existing services available through Medicaid, EPSDT, public health, and home visitation to assist families with access as well as work with communities to identify and fill gaps using the strengths inherent in all communities.

Finally, the strategies employed in raising quality in ELDPs accessible to Children with High Needs are made stronger by a component of collecting data, evaluation of both process (how are we doing) and outcomes (did it matter). Equally important is reporting back to field practice, making necessary adjustments, and then identifying the next steps, the next questions that need to be answered.

Therefore, Nebraska has committed significant private funds and will be utilizing RTTT-ELC funds to improve Nebraska's ability to collect and analyze data, study results of the work to inform practice, study the impact of strategies related to the QRIS such as validity of the tiers in the standards, and how this may impact the ability of children to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. While some of the departments in the university system will be heavily involved in this research aspect, others will be focused on making systemic changes to reform the system.



Such strategies include embedding the program standards, Early Learning Guidelines, and professional Core Competencies into college curriculum, articulating courses across higher education institutions, integrating early childhood curriculum into other professions to better prepare mental health and school aged educators on early development, improvements to family engagement through use of research based interventions and existing Extension Educators, and improved outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse populations through two additional Extension Educators. These Extension Educators will have the specific role of assisting ELDPs who are English Language Learners or newly arriving refugees to understand the law related to licensing, navigate contracting and understanding appropriate billing practices for serving children on the child care subsidy, and improve integration of Nebraska's newly arrived citizens into local professional development systems.

(a)(4)(c). Demonstrates that it can be sustained after the grant period ends to ensure that the number and percentage of Children with High Needs served by Early Learning and Development Programs in the State will be maintained or expanded.

Nebraska is using existing infrastructure to carry out the goals and objectives of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative. Approaches of the Initiative are aimed at currently operating ELDPs, state-funded preschools, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Nebraskans' take pride in supporting young children and have enthusiastically written this proposal to ensure best services for families while addressing sustainability throughout the entire planning process.

1. **Unified data system to support programs that are accountable and use data to guide instruction and program development.** A majority of investments are in adapting technology to build an aligned data systems to better share information services across state agencies and for early learning professionals and families. (approximately \$10M) These systems include aligned data systems that retain the highest level of privacy while braiding the information to advance Nebraska's work in the long term. The sustainability plan relies on the fact that once the systems are in place (Year 3, with one year to make additional changes if needed) no additional investments will be needed to *build* the systems. Key to the plan is the training of *existing* staff on how to use the new tools including all aspects—entering data, maintaining validity. It is possible that with the new system there will be a decrease existing staff that presently hand entry data. For example, a state



employee enters the training that each individual childcare provider participants in. The new system will be set up so that the individual enters their own training course which the system will be able to validate. In addition, the system will be able to automate course offering notification through email and on the web reducing cost of mailers while meeting the needs of early childhood providers in a more timely and convenient way.

2. **Training/Coaching/Consultation/Formal Education.** The second largest pool of capital will be invested in supporting ELDPs to strengthen ECEs understanding and the purpose and uses of each type of assessment included in the comprehensive assessment system (approximately \$28 million). While there is always more need for training, the intensity of the trainings provided in the next four years will provide Nebraska with the depth and breadth needed to bolster Nebraska's entire system. The materials that will be updated during this process will remain current for some years. Also, because all materials are on the web the documents may be more readily changed as standards continue to evolve.

Additionally, approximately \$1 million is being spent on course articulation across higher education, alignments of course content to early learning standards and workforce competencies, integration of early childhood content across professions, on-line course development and coaching credential, and improved integration of professional development training with Extension Educators. These linkages and improvements provide for greater efficiencies in the preparation of Nebraska professionals, are sustainable within the ongoing work and mission of the University system and the broader base of higher educational systems in the state, and reduce the need for some of the content currently being provided after professionals graduate from these systems of education.

Key to Nebraska's overall strategy is the work with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET). From the first day of this award, the community based campaign to reach individuals and communities about the need for and their access to higher quality childcare will begin. This continues over all four years. NET will create the marketing plan and then provide them as



PSA to all radio and televisions across the state. The ELN logo will be used consistently and all media outlets will have a link from their websites to the ELN Initiative. Why is this part of the sustainability plan? It is critical to both ‘pull and push’ ELDPs around the state to demand and use the free trainings and services that will be available to them for the four years. The Campaign will help accomplish that goal.

- 3. Regional and community based programming.** Nearly 60% of the funds under this grant will support the early childhood workforce at the regional and local level, approximately 30% will be spent upon developing a system of assessment and data integration (with one-time costs), and only 10% will be spent at the state level. The ELN Initiative’s financial support is targeted to where it is needed most in Nebraska communities having Children with High Needs and with educators who are poised to make the needed impacts. Some strategies for sustainability include evidence of community match or reasonable sustainability plans to sustain staff in the long-term.

Other strategies for longer range sustaining effects at the local levels include a strong evaluation component of all efforts to interest philanthropic partners, and local and state leaders that the models implemented are being carried out as proven by evidence based practice and that the outcomes being sought are being realized.

Additionally, strategies are implemented in order to address ECEs who often work long hours and in isolation from other adults with whom to share ideas and challenges they face in their work. Strategies aimed at the local level will continue to foster “learning communities” of ECE professionals which will broaden impact, reach wider audiences, and foster the local relationships of these professionals, motivating many on their own quest for improved practices and learning. This is based on past successes with implementation of professional development strategies that promoted collaboration across systems (in schools, Head Start, childcare) and brought ECE together, such as the Quality Portfolio Training Series and other initiatives described in the following sections of this application.



4. **Tools.** A newly developed Kindergarten assessment tool, a valid QRIS, along with updated Early Learning Guidelines (Ages Birth to 3, Ages 3 to 5 and Kindergarten), make up another sustainable investment of this reform plan. NDE has committed to the continuing development of Kindergarten Standards. The Early Learning Guidelines will be updated to align with the standards and include all Essential Domains of school readiness. Again all ELDPs and ECEs will be trained on each tool that aligns with their work and will provide sustainability for years to come.

5. **Private Investment.** An exceptional aspect of the Nebraska application is who and how this high level work to advance the early childhood systems once the grant is completed will continue. The Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), established in 2005, recognizes the critical importance of strong foundations in the early years in setting children up to be successful in school and later in life. BECF is committed to eliminating the *achievement gap in K-12, often evidenced in children of poverty, by eliminating the opportunity gap in the first five years. By investing in practice, policy and knowledge, BECF hopes to level the playing field* for children at risk of failure in school through high quality early childhood experiences in the first five years of life. The BECF supports multiple early childhood practice initiatives in NE (Educare schools, Early Steps, Helping Babies from the Bench) as well as policy and communication strategies (First Five, Business Roundtable). The Sherwood Foundation (funder of BECF) has also made a substantial contribution to the University of Nebraska to establish a new hundred million dollar Buffett Early Childhood Institute that will focus on the integration of policy, practice and research in the field of early childhood for children birth to eight years of age. The key purpose of the Institute will be to ensure that all children in Nebraska, especially those most vulnerable, will have access to quality early childhood services.

In addition to the impressive record of both financial support and a shared vision for increased access to high quality early childhood programs, the philanthropic community of Nebraska has committed to support the ELN Initiative with state leaders in two significant, sustainable ways (further described in Priority 5):



- Over \$45 million in **planned investments** in early childhood projects that directly align with and support the goals of the ELN Initiative; and
- Private sector interest and intent to establish an **Early Childhood Investment Council**. While too early to share details here the goal is to mirror what private investors in other states have been able to accomplish by pooling resources (Appendix A-14: Existing Private-Public Partnerships for ECE and Buffet Early Childhood Priorities).

Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
Federal-funds *					
Child and Adult Care Food Program	28,382,450	28,382,450	28,382,450	28,382,450	113,529,800
Child Care Development Funds (CCDF)-Quality 4% for licensing	1,700,000	1,700,000	1,700,000	1,700,000	6,800,000
CCDF Quality Accreditation Supports	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	80,000
CCDF Child Care Grants for start-up and quality improvements	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000	1,000,000
CCDF-School Aged -Community Learning Centers	33,000	33,000	33,000	33,000	132,000
CCDF-Early Head Start Infant/Toddler Initiative	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	600,000
CCDF—Quality Infant/Toddler-Professional Development-ECTC	675,831	675,831	675,831	675,831	2,703,324
CCDF—Quality Professional Development—ESU Regions	667,500	667,500	667,500	667,500	2,670,000
CCDF-Quality License Exempt Program Quality Incentives	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000	100,000



Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
CCDF-Quality Nurturing Healthy Behaviors Grants (Teaching Pyramid)	401,120	401,120	401,120	401,120	1,604,480
CCDF Quality TEACH Funding	404,000	404,000	404,000	404,000	1,616,000
CCDF Resource and Referral	45,512	45,512	45,512	45,512	182,048
CCDF School Age Connections On-Line Training	34,987	34,987	34,987	34,987	139,948
CCDF-Subsidy	29,725,738	29,725,738	29,725,738	29,725,738	118,902,952
Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	600,000
Head Start and Early Head Start	35,962,321	35,962,321	35,962,321	35,962,321	143,849,284
Head Start Collaboration	125,000	125,000	125,000	125,000	500,000
Homeless Children Education Act	230,465	230,465	230,465	230,465	921,860
IDEA Part B, Section 619 Preschoolers	4,293,312	4,293,312	4,293,312	4,293,312	17,173,248
IDEA Part C	5,155,020	5,155,020	5,155,020	5,155,020	20,620,080
Immunization Program	2,198,086	2,198,086	2,198,086	2,198,086	8,792,344
Maternal and Child Health Block Grant	3,989,608	3,989,608	3,989,608	3,989,608	15,958,432
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	4,000,000
Medicaid Waiver—Aged and Disabled (supports children 0-18 with disabilities through Medicaid)	3,448,063	3,448,063	3,448,063	3,448,063	13,792,252
Medicaid & (Children’s Health Insurance Program) CHIP (Children 0-5)	125,323,893	129,098,308	128,603,825	128,603,825	511,629,851



Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program	449,656	449,656	449,656	449,656	1,798,624
State Advisory Council Grant	500,000	500,000	--	--	1,000,000
Title I Preschool Projects	2,300,000	2,300,000	2,300,000	2,300,000	9,200,000
Women Infant Children (WIC) Food Funds	23,221,961	23,221,961	23,221,961	23,221,961	92,887,844
WIC Nutrition Services, Administration, and Breastfeeding Peer Counseling	10,319,691	10,319,691	10,319,691	10,319,691	41,278,764
Total Federal Contributions	281,182,214	284,956,629	283,962,146	283,962,146	1,134,063,135
State-Local Funds					
(a) State-funded preschool <i>Specify: Early Childhood Education Grant Program-Ages 3-5</i>	3,365,962	3,365,962	3,365,962	3,365,962	13,463,848
(b) State-funded preschool <i>Specify: Nebraska's Primary Elementary and Secondary Equalization Formula</i>	12,066,462	12,247,459	12,431,171	12,616,638	49,361,730
(c) State-funded preschool <i>Specify: Local Education Agency Funded</i>	2,470,957	2,470,957	2,470,957	2,470,957	9,883,828
(d) State contributions to IDEA Part C	3,922,958	4,123,705	4,324,452	4,525,199	16,896,314
(e) State contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	0	0	0	0	0



Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
(f) Local Education Agency contributions for special education and related services for children with disabilities, ages 3 through kindergarten entry	12,390,147	14,430,688	16,471,229	18,511,770	61,803,834
(g) Total State contributions to CCDF	36,535,937	36,535,937	36,535,937	36,535,937	146,143,748
(h) State match to CCDF Exceeded/Met/Not Met (if exceeded, indicate amount by which match was exceeded)	Exceeded 23,239,073	Exceeded 23,239,073	Exceeded 23,239,073	Exceeded 23,239,073	92,956,292 (included in total of line g above, so not included in total below)
(i) TANF spending on Early Learning and Development Programs	17,000,000	17,000,000	17,000,000	17,000,000	68,000,000
(j) Other State contributions Specify: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to 3 Endowment)	1,774,989	1,774,989	1,774,989	1,774,989	7,099,956
(k) Other State contributions Specify: State Funded Home Visitation Program	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	2,400,000
(l) Medicaid Waiver—Aged and Disabled (supports children 0-18 with disabilities through Medicaid)	2,343,108	2,343,108	2,343,108	2,343,108	9,372,432
(m) Other State contributions Specify: Medicaid & CHIP	91,724,907	98,802,892	99,297,375	99,297,375	389,122,549
(n) Medically Handicapped Children’s Program	1,050,000	1,050,000	1,050,000	1,050,000	4,200,000
(o) Newborn Screening	290,000	290,000	290,000	290,000	1,160,000



Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.					
Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
Total State contributions:	208,774,500	218,274,770	221,194,253	223,621,008	871,864,531
Private Contributions to State Initiatives					
(p) Building 3-4 additional Educare Schools in Nebraska, Lincoln-breaking ground, Winnebago(tribal), Western and Mid-western NE locations	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	10,000,000	40,000,000
(q) Building Bright Futures, Early Childhood Systems	3,750,000	5,000,000	6,000,000	6,000,000	20,750,000
(r) Early Steps—early literacy program	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
(s) Early Childhood Scholarships Program for Children to attend quality programs	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
(t) Buffett Early Childhood Institute at University	500,000	500,000	500,000	500,000	2,000,000
(u) Private T.E.A.C.H.® Funding	192,500	82,500	75,000	75,000	425,000
(v) Private funding for Quality Enhancement Projects	75,000	55,000	25,000	25,000	180,000
(w) 1. First Five Nebraska,	750,000				
2. Business Roundtable,		850,000	900,000	1,000,000	3,500,000
3. Developing Early Childhood Investment Council	—	—	—	—	—
(x) Local United Ways of Nebraska (Omaha and Lincoln)	1,308,937	1,308,937	1,308,937	1,308,937	5,235,748



Table (A)(4) – 1 Existing other Federal, State, private, and local funds to be used to achieve the outcomes in the State Plan.

Source of Funds	Fiscal Year 2012	Fiscal Year 2013	Fiscal Year 2014	Fiscal Year 2015	Total
Total Private Contributions	12,581,437	18,796,437	19,808,937	24,903,937	76,090,748
Total State and Private Contributions:	221,355,937	237,071,207	241,033,190	248,524,945	947,955,279

**Source: federal funds were compiled and verified with Nebraska Administrators of these programs.*

*** FFS Medicaid are estimates looking at trend and using blended match rates federal and state expenditures for the past 4 years.*

(a) Assumes level funding.

(b) Projecting 1.5% increase each year.

(c) Projecting based on 2010 funding levels.

(d) Projecting based on 2010 funding level adding \$200,747 to each year based on average in past 4 years.

(e) Projecting \$2,040,541 increase each year based on past 4 year average increases.

(f) Projecting \$2,040,541 increase each year based on past 4 year average increases.

(g) and (h) Projecting based on 2010 funding level, (h is already in the total of line g so is not included in the state total)

(i) Assumes level funding,

(j) Assumes level funding, includes amounts for providing technical assistance and completing the evaluation components of the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) program in addition to operating costs,

(k) Assumes level funding.

(l) Assumes level funding

(m) Assumes level funding with a slight increase in utilization and a slight decrease in the federal match rate (FMAP).

(n) Assumes level funding.

(o) Assumes level funding.

(p) Annual projections are estimates, the commitment is up to \$40,000,000

(q) Goal is \$6,00,000/year estimating it will take two years to reach goal

(r) Based upon contributions of past 10 years=\$5,000,000 and intention to continue this, so \$500,000/yr.

(s) Assumes continued funding at past levels.

(t) \$100,000,000 endowment with an estimated \$500,000 annually for programming, this is an estimated 5% of the interest earned which goes into perpetuity and is an anchor for sustainability.

(u) T.E.A.C.H®—Estimates from NAEYC Director

(v) Quality Enhancement Program (Q.E.P.)—Estimates from NAEYC Director

(w) Additional private funding that may come from the Early Childhood Investment Council is not included.

(x) Projections only for United Way of the Midlands (Omaha), and Lincoln. Projections subject to change due to community priorities and strategic planning.



B. High-Quality, Accountable Programs

(B)(1) Developing and adopting a common, statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

SECTION (B)(1) OVERVIEW

In order to enhance state leadership and support for high-quality early childhood programs, Nebraska has been working towards implementation of a statewide tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for several years. The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) provides the necessary support to finalize critical planning steps and begin implementation of QRIS. This statewide system will increase the quality of programs and provide meaningful information to Nebraska families. The proposed QRIS Program Standards—entitled Step Up to Quality—and the system implementation plan include incentives and supports for providers, including professional development; ongoing learning opportunities throughout the tiers; and in-depth evaluations to improve early childhood programs.

Step Up to Quality provides several strategies to share provider rating information publicly in order to display providers' commitment to improving upon the early learning and development of all the children in their care. The ELN Initiative will assess the effectiveness of Step Up to Quality in improving Early Learning and Development Program (ELDP) practices, and improving child outcomes. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln will conduct two evaluations of Step Up to Quality: 1) a study of the fidelity of implementation of the Teaching Pyramid (strategies for supporting positive social emotional development) to assess the quality of ELDPs social-emotional programming (Appendix B-01: Process Evaluations-Study 3c); and 2) a study of the ability of the Step Up to Quality tiers to reflect differing program quality and of Step Up to Quality's ability to affect child outcomes.

(B)(1)(a) Program Standards address all areas outlined in the federal definition of Program Standards. Because it does not yet have a fully implemented QRIS, Nebraska embraces the opportunities that Race to the Top funding provides, enabling the state to implement the proposed Step Up to Quality statewide by August 2012.



In 2008, the Midwest Child Care Research Consortium (MCCRC) QRIS Pilot Project tested QRIS systems in four states (Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri) and advanced a number of issues for policy and future research (Appendix B-02: Executive Summary of Pilot Project). Nebraska's involvement in the pilot project influenced the current plan to implement Step Up to Quality and the content of the draft Program Standards (Appendix B-03: Nebraska Early Childhood Programs Step Up to Quality (QRIS Standard)). Currently, many differing sets of regulations and standards are used in Nebraska (evidenced by Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State). The existing regulations and standards guide practice, but none are as rigorous or inclusive as the proposed Step Up to Quality Program Standards. Step Up to Quality's Program Standards were developed by Nebraska Department of Education's (NDE) Office of Early Childhood, utilizing existing state and federal standards and regulations as references and resources. The Program Standards are aligned and integrated with Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines (described in section C), Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (described in section D), and the Nebraska Early Childhood Career Advising Guide. Elements from 92 NAC Rule 11 Regulations for Early Childhood Programs, 92 NAC Rule 51 Regulations and Standards for Special Education Programs, Head Start Performance Outcomes, Early Childhood Education Grant Program Ages Birth-3. Early Learning Fund Quality Criteria, and Nebraska Child Care Licensing Regulations (391 Neb. Admin. Code) are evident in the proposed Step Up to Quality criteria (Appendix B-04: Nebraska Early Childhood Program Comparison Matrix). Using the state's wealth of evidence-based information about use of standards, Step Up to Quality integrates and streamlines expectations from each of the existing regulations and standards into one system, with progressive levels of quality. The criteria are comprehensive and designed to cover all areas that are essential to a child's education and development and successful early childhood programming, including the use of a comprehensive assessment system, early learning and development standards, qualifications for early childhood educators (ECEs), family engagement strategies, health promotion practices, and effective data practices.

To further refine the Step Up to Quality Program Standards, NDE will hold a series of meetings over six months with key stakeholders, including representatives from state Head Start, state-funded preschool programs, Early Childhood Education Grant



Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to Three Endowment) programs, ELDPs, higher education experts and researchers, and the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children. Broader public input will be sought by sharing draft criteria with the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC), members of Together for Kids and Families Work Groups (Nebraska’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems [ECCS] work groups), focus groups within the seven Early Learning Connection regions (regional providers of NDE early childhood training discussed in section D), and public input from website posting. NDE staff (including regional Early Learning Coordinators (described in section D(2)(a)) and Nebraska’s Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS) staff (including the regional HCR Consultants (described in section (C)(3))), will consult with NDE to ensure that the Program Standards meet the criteria requirements under this section, especially 1) evidence-based standards for physical health and safety; and physical, social, and emotional development across all the levels of Step Up to Quality, 2) family engagement strategies, and 3) all components of a comprehensive assessment system (screening measures, formative assessments, measures of environmental quality, and measures of adult-child interaction). NDE Office of Early Childhood staff will make final revisions to the Program Standards and Step Up to Quality implementation will begin in the second half of 2012.

Strategy 1: Develop and finalize Step Up to Quality Program Standards that are measurable, differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 1a Hold working sessions with stakeholders to gain feedback on criteria content and format.	February-April 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 1b Seek broader public input through sharing of draft	April-May 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 1c Draft final Step Up to Quality criteria. Allow for final comment and revision as part of this process.	April-July 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 1d Enrollment in Step Up to Quality begins	August 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood



(B)(1)(b) QRIS standards are measurable, differentiate program quality levels, and reflect high expectations of program excellence commensurate with nationally recognized standards. By participating in the professional development, ongoing learning, and evaluations of the Step Up to Quality QRIS, ELDPs display their interest and commitment to improving upon practices that promote the early learning and development of children. The Step Up to Quality tiers are designed to break down overall proficiency goals into manageable steps with necessary supports along the way. Efforts are focused on 1) imparting information on best practices, 2) having opportunities to share experiences and information with others doing this work, 3) practicing new skills, 4) accessing new resources, 5) receiving ongoing coaching and feedback, and 6) experiencing continuous improvement. The following are the key principles that guide the content of the Step Up to Quality Program Standards:

- Learn from research conducted as part of the MCCRC pilot and the experiences of other nationwide efforts regarding Step Up to Quality criteria development and implementation strategies.
- Focus on sharing ideas and supporting professionals working with young children to challenge themselves and one another to continuously improve their practices.
- Focus on behavior changes known to improve environments and interactions, and to promote learning for young children across the early learning and development array of programs.
- Measures to track progress must be valid and implemented by reliable raters. They must be meaningful to the early learning and development workforce in order to realize observed behavior changes needed to promote positive environments.
- Education is important. Higher education, training, ongoing education for credit and not for credit are all valid avenues for imparting information to ECEs and bringing what is learned by research to inform practice. Therefore, offering a variety of paths to receive the ever-changing information on best practices is critical to reaching providers wherever they are. The path needs to be individualized, diverse, and accessible for all ECEs.



- Strategies to alleviate some costs to the ELDPs and ECEs for accessing training, materials, information, and education are the incentives that ELDPs and ECEs will respond to; therefore these incentives should be developed and maintained.

Explanation of Tiers

Tier1 includes all ELDPs that are licensed, meet 92 NAC Rule 11 (such as state-funded preschools), or meet Head Start Performance Standards. Nebraska Department of Education will develop an online Step Up to Quality Curriculum that is provided to licensed ELDPs to introduce the QRIS and criteria addressed in each tier.

Tier Two is a foundational level for learning and is focused on improving statewide access across all systems for ELDPs and ECEs through formation of learning communities that promote professional development of the early care and education workforce. Tier Two focuses on the key strategy of completing the series of training topics necessary to create a Quality Portfolio (Appendix B-05: Quality Portfolio Training Program). Research and the MCCRS pilot program have shown that the strategies included in Tier Two have a positive effect on child outcomes and reduce the achievement gap. Individual coaching is provided to ECEs in order to complete their portfolios. Another key element is ensuring that an individual professional development plan is implemented for each participant. These plans are designed to coincide with the career ladder levels and are tied to the state's Core Competencies (Appendix B-06: Core Competencies).

Tier Three introduces the use of Environment Rating Scales (ERS) for professional development and program improvement and decision making. Participants in Step Up to Quality will use research-based environmental assessment tools that include Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ECERS-R; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2005); Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 2003); Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-R; Harms & Clifford, 2007); and the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS; Harms, Jacobs, & Romano, 1996).



ELDPs also receive an introduction to the Teaching Pyramid strategies for supporting positive social-emotional development and each participant completes the Center on the Social Emotional Foundation of Early Learning (CSEFEL) Readiness Self-Assessment. (Pyramid included in Appendix A-03: Teaching Pyramid Model and fully discussed in section D). Tiers Four and Five build on this foundational learning, as each level becomes more specific in terms of introducing, practicing, and measuring observable behaviors and environments that research shows improve program quality and increase the likelihood of positive growth and development of children.

Tier Four requires the use of the appropriate ERS for the ELDP environment (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, or FCCERS-R), with the requirement that programs receive an overall average score of 4.0, and no subscale score lower than a 3.0 as the quality standard. In Tier Four, Step Up to Quality will assess social and emotional supports in family child care homes using the Teaching Pyramid Observations Tool (TPOT; Hemmeter & Fox 2006) and the Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS; Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning. Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning & Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Interventions 2009). In Tier Four the average anchor score for the TPOT is 3.0 and for TPITOS, 3.2. Classroom-based programs such as Head Start, child care centers, and school-based preschools will utilize the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS; Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre 2008) to better understand teacher-child interactions. There are three sub-scales that are part of the CLASS Observation Tool; the average score for the Emotional Support Subscale in Tier Four will be 4.5, Instructional Support Subscale will be 2.0 and subscale score for Classroom Organization will be 5.0.

Tier Five continues to utilize the appropriate ERS with maintenance of an average score of 5.0 or higher, with no subscale score below a 4.0. TPOT/TPITOS scores must be at a level 4.0 or higher in family child care homes. The subscale scores for the CLASS in Tier Five are Emotional Support 5.0, Instructional Support 2.5, and Classroom Organization 5.5. These assessments are completed by reliable raters every three years. This tier adds the science, technology, engineering, math (STEM) and literacy training series for center-based and family child care. As with earlier tiers, professional development plans are in place and providers should show



evidence of progress. Child assessment data is included in planning and developing individual plans with parents twice a year. A program may opt to follow the criteria outlined in Tier Five or it may become accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for center-based care or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) for family child care homes. Programs choosing the accreditation option will follow the requirements of maintaining their accreditation and will be monitored every five years in accordance with the rules of the accrediting body. Therefore, providers who are accredited will not be re-evaluated by the state but would share proof of ongoing accreditation status to remain at Tier Five in Step Up to Quality.

As programs move from Tier One to Tier Five, the family engagement strategies move from unidirectional (sharing a parent handbook) to more collaborative methods of family engagement such as home visits and parent education (discussed in section (C)(4)). In addition to the ERS, CLASS, TPOT and TPITOS measures, the Step Up to Quality Program Standards will be revised to require use of formative assessments through ELDPs participation in Results Matter (Nebraska's assessment system that includes screening measures and formative assessments). ELDPs will receive training and support to implement Results Matter assessments (described in section (C)(2)). In the same way, effective data practices and health and safety criteria become more rigorous as programs move through the tiers of Step Up to Quality. Additionally, each tier requires ECE to advance along the steps of professional development. Each level of the career ladder includes various options or avenues to move between steps of the career ladder. These options include combinations of experience, training, and education. Each tier also promotes increasing percentages of staff working within the ELDP who are engaged in their own professional development.



Summary of Each Tier of Step Up to Quality

Tier	Area of Emphasis
One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELDPs that are licensed, meet 92 NAC Rule 11, or meet Head Start performance standards. • On-line orientation to Step Up to Quality
Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build learning communities for ECEs that promote professional development, including completing the series of training topics necessary to create a Quality Portfolio and coaching to complete an individual professional development plan that coincides with the career ladder levels and is tied to the state's Core Competencies • Child Development screenings as defined by the comprehensive assessment plan • Family engagement strategies • Introduction of data practices and health and safety criteria
Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to use and purpose of ERS for professional development and program improvement and decision making • Introduction to the Teaching Pyramid strategies for supporting positive social-emotional development and complete CSEFEL Readiness Self-Assessment • Continued implementation of professional development plans for ECEs • Child development screenings and formative assessments as defined by the comprehensive assessment plan • Increased family engagement strategies • Increasingly rigorous data practices and health and safety criteria
Four	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of appropriate ERS and Teaching Pyramid observation tools • Continue more specific training in terms of introducing, practicing, and measuring observable behaviors and environments that research shows improve program quality and increase the likelihood of positive growth and



Five

development of children

- Continue use of appropriate ERS and Teaching Pyramid observation tools (for homes) and start use of CLASS (for centers)
 - Continued implementation of professional development plans for ECEs
 - Child assessment data is included in planning
 - Develop individual plans with parents twice a year
 - Increased family engagement strategies
 - Increasingly rigorous data practices and health and safety criteria
- Continue more specific training in terms of introducing, practicing, and measuring observable behaviors and environments that research shows improve program quality and increase the likelihood of positive growth and development of children.
 - Continue use of appropriate ERS, CLASS, and Teaching Pyramid observation tools
 - Continued implementation of professional development plans for ECEs
 - Continued use of child assessment data for planning individual plans with parents
 - STEM and literacy training series for center-based and family child care
 - Increased family engagement strategies
 - Increasingly rigorous data practices and health and safety criteria
 - Alternative way of meeting criteria through NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation



(B)(1)(c) QRIS linked to the State licensing system for Early Learning and Development Programs. Step Up to Quality is directly linked and integrated into the state child care licensing system because in order to enroll in Step Up to Quality Tier One, ELDPs must be licensed, meet 92 NAC Rule 11, or meet Head Start performance standards.

Table (B)(1)-1: Status of all Program Standards currently used in the State							
	Program Standards Elements						
List each set of existing Program Standards currently used in the state; specify which programs in the state use the standards	Early Learning and Development Standards	Comprehensive Assessment Systems	Qualified workforce	Family engagement	Health promotion	Effective data practices	Other
State-funded preschool Source: 92 NAC Rule 11 for EC programs (NDE)	X	--	X	X	--	--	--
Programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619 Source: 92 NAC Rule 51 for Children with Special Needs (NDE)	X	--	--	X	--	--	--
Early Head Start and Head Start Source: Head Start Performance Standards	X	X	X	X	X	--	--
Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to 3 Endowment) Source: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) Quality Criteria	X	X	X	X	--	--	--
Licensed childcare providers receiving CCDF funds and those not receiving CCDF Funds Source: Child Care Licensing Title 391 Neb. Administrative Code	X*	--	--	--	--	--	--
* Voluntary							



(B)(2) Promoting participation in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

SECTION (B)(2) OVERVIEW

Key early childhood stakeholders in Nebraska have demonstrated, and research supports, the success that participation in a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) can bring to Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) through increased program quality and child outcomes. As a result, the early childhood community in Nebraska supports the goal of participation in the system by all publicly funded ELDPs and—equally as important—increasing participation by other ELDPs, such as licensed child care homes and centers. Nebraska has set ambitious goals for participation and the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) supports a process to continually evaluate and make adjustments in strategies to reach the goals. The ELN Initiative will lead a statewide process to identify, develop, and implement effective policies and practices designed to help more families access high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs.

(B)(2)(a) Implementing effective policies and practices to reach the goal of having all publicly funded Early Learning and Development Programs participate in QRIS. State-funded preschools, including programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619; and programs funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) will participate in Step Up to Quality, Nebraska’s proposed QRIS Program Standards. Participation will be encouraged through the programs’ grant agreements and NDE’s 92 NAC Rule 11. Additionally, the state will partner with Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs to participate in Step Up to Quality through grant agreements for funding. For licensed ELDPs and Early Head Start and Head Start programs that are not in partnership with school district programs, Nebraska will encourage participation through the incentives offered for training, coaching, and materials.

Clarification regarding publicly-funded preschool programs. Children in Nebraska are served in inclusive and natural environments that reflect the diversity of local communities. State- funded preschool programs may be funded with Part B, 619 and/or



Title I, part A and/or Head Start funds based on a braided funding and service delivery model. Part B and Title I programs, operating as state-funded preschool programs, will be included in the performance measures set for state-funded preschools and will be addressed throughout this section as state-funded preschools (Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c) Table). Additionally, Part C funds are used to fund services for children enrolled in center-based programs and home visitation programs in Nebraska. Part C funding supports services for children in Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs and Early Head Start and as such will be represented in the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) explanations. Programs that use home visitation as the service delivery method are not included in Step Up to Quality.

Incentives for Participation in Step Up to Quality. In order to increase participation by ELDPs that receive child care subsidy funds under Nebraska's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, Nebraska will maintain a higher reimbursement rate for ELDPs that meet Tier Five requirements through accreditation by a national organization. Additionally, Nebraska's Departments of Education (NDE) and Health and Human Services (NDHHS) will lead a collaborative process to identify and implement additional effective incentives and related costs.

The ELN Initiative will also look for incentives to expand participation in Step Up to Quality, beyond licensed ELDPs. For example, Nebraska will leverage the existing NDHHS Quality Improvement Grant option—a source for assistance to family child care programs and center-based programs that serve low-income families and engage in activities designed to make programmatic changes for quality enhancement—as an incentive to expand participation in Step Up to Quality. The grant funds that providers currently receive will be used, along with additional ELN Initiative funds, to support the goals that early childhood educators (ECEs) have included in their professional development and program improvement plans developed as part of Step up to Quality.

Instead of releasing CCDF grant funds for quality improvement through an application for funds process, coaches who have been working with the ECE and assisting them in developing their improvement plans will ensure that funds requested are needed;



prioritized; address targeted improvements; and move the program to higher levels of quality, and ultimately, better outcomes for children.

(B)(2)(b) Effective policies and practices to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs. The ELN Initiative’s strong goals for ELDPs to participate in Step Up to Quality—with resulting increases in quality of the programs, as well as child outcomes—must be paired with an equal emphasis for helping families afford high quality child care programs and ensuring availability of those programs. Nebraska has a deep-seated history of helping low-income families access quality child care through investment of additional CCDF funds (as discussed in section (A)(1)(a)). Additionally, Nebraska has used the discretionary TANF dollars at the highest level allowed to support the child care subsidy program, realizing the critical need for child care in order for parents to work and be economically self-sufficient. Under the ELN Initiative, the policies that support families and programs will be continued.

Nebraska’s Primary Elementary and Secondary Education Equalization Formula (The Formula), which has been expanded to include four-year-old children enrolled in state-funded preschools, allows the current Early Childhood Education Grant Program to fund additional state-funded preschool programs each year (since the four-year-olds are now covered by Education Funding). These programs serve children with the highest needs at no cost to the family. In the last year alone, these programs were able to serve 11.7 percent more Children with High Needs than previous years. Maintaining the inclusion of four-year-olds in Nebraska’s The Formula provides an opportunity to continue increasing the number of Children with High Needs who are served in high-quality ELDPs, thereby increasing the ability of families to access and afford high-quality child care.

Professional Development. The Step Up to Quality system will initially target professional development and other supports for participating programs that serve Children with High Needs, enabling participating programs to improve their quality as they advance up the tiers of Step Up to Quality (as outlined in Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2)). Therefore, children with the highest needs will have access to programs with increasingly higher quality. Additionally, in partnership with Nebraska Educational



Telecommunications (NET), the NDE will launch a media campaign explaining Step Up to Quality and encouraging participation in many aspects of the ELN Initiative (further description of programming included in section (C)(4)). In response to the need for more early learning experiences and high quality early childhood programs statewide for children from birth to five years, the NDE is joining with NET Television through its Community Engagement and Educational Outreach unit to provide access and support to child care providers and communities. NET will coordinate with the NDE in the statewide promotion of the ELN Initiative to develop Early Learning Guidelines online learning modules for providers, and support community engagement activities to increase community support for high quality ELDPs in communities throughout Nebraska.

Educating and engaging families in ELN Initiative activities. During 2012, NET, in collaboration with the NDE and other key stakeholders, will develop and implement a statewide public relations plan to inform communities, families, and early childhood providers of the state's commitment to high quality early childhood education. The announcement for the Early Learning Initiative will coincide with the Week of the Young Child events scheduled for April 2012. NET will conduct a robust project campaign through news releases and radio and television spots on NET and PBS Kids, encouraging all Nebraska counties to take part in the ELN Initiative.

Through this innovative partnership, Nebraska will develop an “engaged partner” network in each county to implement local initiatives that align with ELN Initiative objectives. Each community will be provided with a “Workshop in a Box” resource kit to get them started that will include customizable resources and promotional materials. Participating counties will present a community plan and will be encouraged to take advantage of social media by creating a Facebook page, Twitter account, etc. At the end of the first year, efforts will be made to recognize “Early Learning Nebraska Communities” that have a strong commitment to improving access to high quality child care in their communities (among other factors) as evidenced by the number of ELDPs participating in Tiers Two-Five of Step Up to Quality. By engaging all counties of the state, Nebraska plans to reach both licensed ELDPs who receive funds from the state's CCDF program and those who do not, thus increasing the access to high quality child care for families.



University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educators will improve support and outreach to culturally and linguistically diverse ECEs and ELDPs by helping ECEs access introductory early childhood courses in Spanish through community colleges and helping new refugee populations, who provide early care and education services, navigate and understand contracts, billing procedures, and licensing requirements in Nebraska. This outreach will remove barriers that diverse providers (often serving Children with High Needs) can experience when they participate in Step Up to Quality.

Study of Participation and Provider Perception of Step Up to Quality. University of Nebraska-Lincoln will conduct an implementation study of Step Up to Quality that focuses on the extent to which intended elements are in place and being utilized. This will not focus on specific early childhood programs, but rather the larger structural components of Step Up to Quality. Analyses will include an investigation of number of programs targeted and enrolled in Step Up to Quality and the development and implementation of services within levels of quality. Additionally, program participants' perceptions of value added by the Step Up to Quality process will be gathered via focus group data from providers and parents participating in the program as indicators of responsiveness and satisfaction. (Appendix B-01: Process Evaluation Studies, Study 3a.).

(B)(2)(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for the numbers and percentages of Early Learning and Development Programs that will participate in the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Nebraska has set ambitious, yet realistic, targets for participation of ELDPs in Step Up to Quality. All licensed programs, those who meet 92 NAC Rule 11 and those who meet Head Start Performance Standards, will be in Step Up to Quality at Tier One from the initiation of the system in 2012. Because all licensed ELDPs will be in Step Up to Quality as long as they maintain a child care license, the Performance Measures are set for the goal of progression of ELDPs into Tiers Two-Five (see performance measure chart for (B)(2)(c) at end of section). Based on the experience of other states, Nebraska set performance measures to anticipate a similar result for participation. *The Child Care Quality Rating System (QRS) Assessment* summarized the experiences, policies, and practices of 26 states that were implementing such systems at the time of the report. “Nearly half of the QRS (12) examined in the Compendium have a density of 30 percent or less, and



three have less than 10 percent density. Thirteen of these states have been operating a QRIS for more than five years (ranging from 1998-2003), five states have been operating for three to five years (2004-2006), and eight states for two years or less (2007 or later).” (Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, 2010).

Strategy 2: Implement policies and practices to ensure all publicly funded ELDPs participate in Step Up to Quality at Tiers Two-Five and encourage all other ELDPs to participate.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 2a Conduct awareness campaign and notification to ELDPs statewide. Notify all publicly funded programs regarding required participation in Step Up to Quality and all other programs about the availability of the system	December 2011-July 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 2b Initial Training. Hold training sessions for publicly funded programs and other interested programs about Step Up to Quality, content of the tiers, and available supports and incentives	March - May 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 2c Online Training. Develop and implement online Step Up to Quality orientation	December 2012-March 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 2d Policy Development. Hold high-level policy discussion meetings to identify effective and feasible monetary and other incentives for participation of all ELDPs in Step Up to Quality	December - June 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 2e Policy Development. Hold high-level policy discussion meetings to identify effective and feasible policies and practices to help more families afford high-quality child care and maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs	December - June 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 2f Implement policies. Make policy recommendations and develop and enact implementation plan to move forward recommendations	August 2013 -May 2014	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 2g Gather data for Step Up to Quality implementation study	Third Quarter 2013	University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Strategy 2: Implement policies and practices to ensure all publicly funded ELDPs participate in Step Up to Quality at Tiers Two-Five and encourage all other ELDPs to participate.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 2h Complete and share results of implementation study with ELN Initiative leadership	December 2014	University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in Step Up to Quality, the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System*

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in Step Up to Quality									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool	175	0	0	18	10%	53	30%	131	75%	175	100%
Early Head Start and Head Start Grantees**	21	0	0	6	30%	11	50%	21	100%	21	100%
Programs receiving CCDF funds	1,598	0	0	80	5 %	112	7%	144	9%	160	10%
Licensed Child Care Programs not receiving CCDF Funds	2,522	0	0	76	3%	126	5%	177	7%	202	8%
Other Describe: Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to 3 Endowment)	11	0	0	11	100%	11	100%	11	100%	11	100%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part C**		0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c): Increasing the number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs participating in Step Up to Quality, the statewide Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System*

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percentage of Early Learning and Development Programs in Step Up to Quality									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Programs funded by IDEA, Part B, section 619***		0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA***		0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

* Level one of the Step Up to Quality is all licensed programs, so 100% of programs will be participating in the QRIS. This chart shows the goals for programs participating in the Step Up to Quality at levels 2-5.

The rationale for setting performance measures for licensed programs who are not receiving CCDF funds and those who are receiving CCDF funds is based on results from the Compendium of Quality Rating Systems and Evaluations published by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation at the Administration of Children and Families in April 2010. This document reported that the majority of states implementing QRIS found that after 10 years of implementation they had less than 30% of most licensed providers in the Step Up to Quality. For this reason, 4 year targets are set to have 18% of those licensed providers in the Step Up to Quality levels 2-5.

~Through 2012 Nebraska has 31 Head Start/Early Head Start due to American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding. These programs are expected to end in 2012. Therefore, the performance measures represent the number of Head Start and Early Head Start Programs that will remain after the ARRA funded programs are finished.

** Part C funds are used to fund services for children enrolled in center based programs and home visitation programs in Nebraska. Part C funding supports services for children in Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs or Early Head Start; see the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) program performance measures. Programs that use home visitation as the service delivery method are not included in Step Up to Quality.

***Children in Nebraska are served in inclusive and natural environments that reflect the diversity of local communities. State funded preschool programs may be funded with Part B, 619 and/or Title 1, part A and/or Head Start funds depicting a braided funding and service delivery model. Part B and Title 1 programs, as state funded preschool programs, will meet the performance measures identified for state funded preschools.

Data Sources:

Programs receiving from CCDF funds data from DHHS Child Care Programs Accepting Subsidy by County and Facility Type, Run date 5/26/2010

Licensed Child Care Programs not receiving CCDF Funds from DHHS Early Child Capacity Count by County run date 5/14/2010



(B)(3) Rating and monitoring Early Learning and Development Programs.

SECTION (B)(3) OVERVIEW

Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) includes a rigorous, transparent, and accessible system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) that participate in Step Up to Quality, Nebraska's proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Based on previous experience and established protocols from other programs that require observations and raters, NDE will lead the monitoring of participating programs, rating of programs using the Step Up to Quality criteria, and training and oversight of observers.

(B)(3)(a) Valid and reliable tool for monitoring, trained monitors whose ratings have an acceptable level of inter-rater reliability, and monitoring and rating with appropriate frequency.

Valid and Reliable Tools. Valid instruments are used throughout the five tiers of Step Up to Quality to promote learning, promote guide goal-setting and coaching, and demonstrate progress for each participating ELDP. Nebraska will use the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised for center-based programs serving children ages three-five (ECERS-R), the Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) for center-based programs serving children ages birth-three, and the Family Child Care Rating Scale-Revised (FCCRS-R) for family child care programs. These are research-based measures used consistently within the field of early education to measure program quality. Additionally, Step Up to Quality will utilize the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) tool at Tiers Four and Five for center-based care. The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) and the Teaching Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) will be introduced in Tier Three and carried out as an option in Tier Four for centers, and in Tiers Four and Five for family homes. These tools help providers create environments that promote positive social, emotional, and behavioral development.

The ELN Initiative will also use Head Start Performance Standards throughout the levels. Programs may seek and receive accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or National Association for Family Child



Care (NAFCC) as alternative ways to meet Tier Five Quality Program Standards. These standards and rating instruments have been tested for validity and will demonstrate that movements between levels of the Step Up to Quality are sufficiently rigorous.

Trained Monitors and Inter-rater Reliability.

Step Up to Quality Anchors. Step Up to Quality Anchors will serve as the trained monitors for ELDPs needing outside observation on one of the measurement tools listed above. The Anchors will complete the required observations of programs; provide mentoring and coaching to other observers; and during observer training, serve as the gold standard or leader of an assigned group of observers achieving inter-rater reliability. The NDE will utilize existing reliable observers in their professional development system and hire and train Anchors as needed to create a pool of qualified observers. The Anchors will be individuals who have degrees in child development, early childhood education or a related field and experience in early childhood education. Additionally, an Anchor must obtain a program reliability of at least 90 percent within one of the consensus score and there should be no more than one item that is not within one of the consensus score during the inter-rater reliability process. (For details about qualifications and reliability protocols for those conducting observation and rating work in Nebraska (Appendix B-07: Qualifications and Protocols for Conducting Observations and Rating Performance.) The NDHHS will provide training and support for Anchors in the health and safety components of Step Up to Quality through the ELN Initiative's regional Health and Community Resource Consultants.

Inter-rater reliability. The ELN Initiative will follow protocols around inter-rater reliability according to the stipulations of the tools being used and those currently established and operating within Nebraska and identified by NDE. Step Up to Quality will adopt the current processes, including the requirement that to achieve inter-rater reliability on the ECERS-R, ITERS-R or FCCERS-R, an observer must obtain a program reliability of at least 85 percent within one of the consensus score. In addition, there should be no more than one item in any subscale that is not within one of the consensus score. Observers must re-establish inter-rater reliability yearly or every 10 visits, whichever comes first.



Monitoring and Rating Early Learning and Development Programs. Nebraska plans to accept applications for participation in Step Up to Quality by the fourth quarter of Year One. Initial ratings for ELDPs will be completed within three months. An appeals and grievance process will be developed by NDE and placed on its website and included along with any printed materials describing the Step Up to Quality system. Providers who are rated in Tiers One and Two of Step Up to Quality may request a review when they feel ready to move to the next level. Nebraska will reassess the Tier Three and Tier Four programs every three years and will reassess the Tier Five programs every three years, unless they are accredited (if they are accredited they are reassessed every five years according to the accrediting body practices). However, certain events may trigger an earlier reassessment of the program, such as new ownership of a program, a change in the center director, a change of location of the program, high staff turnover, or licensing violation.

Process Study of the Teaching Pyramid Strategies. Nebraska is particularly interested in the fidelity of implementation of the Teaching Pyramid (strategies for supporting positive social-emotional development) and the impact on the quality of ELDPs social-emotional programming. In Year Four, University of Nebraska-Lincoln will conduct a study to assess the implementation of the Teaching Pyramid model in participating ELDPs. From the full QRIS sample among those implementing the Teaching Pyramid, 15 centers (three classrooms/ center resulting in 45 classrooms) and 15 family child care homes will be selected to participate in the process study. Additionally, the early childhood mental health consultants providing services to the target programs will be evaluated (Appendix B-01: Process Evaluation Studies, Study 3c).

(B)(3)(b) Providing quality rating and licensing information to parents with children enrolled in ELDP and making program quality rating data, information, and licensing history publicly available in formats that are easy to understand and use.

Nebraska's child care licensing roster contains basic information regarding all the licensed ELDPs in the state. This roster is available on-line and updated regularly by NDHHS Division of Public Health, Licensure Unit. The roster also includes information regarding participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, participating in The Child Care Subsidy Program whether or not the ELDP holds national accreditation. The provider's license number enables families to easily search the License Information System (LIS)



where more detailed information is located on each provider, including any negative or discipline actions resulting from violations of licensing regulations. Under the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will upgrade both the roster and the LIS to include information indicating the current tier rating of the program.

Nebraska will distribute certificates of recognition to programs for posting at the program site. In addition, a public awareness campaign developed by NET in collaboration with the NDE and NDHHS will be directed to parents and the general public. The goal of this public awareness campaign is to aid parents and the public in understanding what characteristics of quality to look for and why high quality child care is important for child, community, and economic outcomes.

Nebraska also has a publication entitled *The Right Place* which was adapted from the notebook designed for parents and published by NACCRA in 2006. This publication was designed specifically for parents seeking child care, and includes sections on choosing child care, finding help paying for child care, matching the child's style to the right child care setting, as well as listings of various resources and websites. It has been published in both English and Spanish, and has been distributed free of charge at local NDHHS offices and mailed to parents who request inspection and complaint findings on licensed child care programs. It is also distributed through the Early Childhood Training Center, as well as at various child care workshops and conferences throughout the state. This publication will be updated to advise parents to ask providers about their involvement in the Step Up to Quality system when selecting care for their children. Through the partnership with NET, the publication will be turned into short segments that will run on NET television starting with the public awareness launch in April 2012.



Strategy 3: Ensure rigorous and reliable rating of programs through reliable tools and inter-rater reliability.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 3a Conduct inter-rater reliability training	Ongoing, every three months beginning in 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 3b Gather data for Teaching Pyramid implementation study	Fourth Quarter 2013	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Activity 3c Complete and share results of implementation study with ELN Initiative leadership	December 2015	University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Strategy 4: Provide well-trained, effective anchors to monitor participating programs and provide additional consultation and coaching to support improvement and increased child outcomes.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 4a Identify existing Anchors	January 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 4b Hire and train new Anchors	February-May 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 4c Monitoring of Anchors	Quarterly 2012-2015	NDE, Office of Early Childhood

Strategy 5: Provide information about QRIS and provider participation to parents and families in accessible formats.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 5a Modify existing license information databases	January-July 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 5b Conduct NET public awareness campaign	April 2012-December 2015	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NET
Activity 5c Revise “The Right Place” as television segment to run on NET in all 93 counties	September-December 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NET, NDHHS



(B)(4) Promoting Access to High Quality Early Learning and Development Programs for Children with High Needs

SECTION (B)(4) OVERVIEW

To create a strong early childhood system through the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative), Nebraska believes it is essential to promote access to high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) for Children with High Needs and to develop and implement a system for continuously improving the quality of those ELDPs. By establishing a unified system, with sustainable policies and integrated resources, the ELN Initiative will support young Children with High Needs and their families. Nebraska currently supports families who have Children with High Needs by helping them access high-quality ELDPs, by providing a variety of program types, and by family support services. In addition, Nebraska is implementing several policies and practices that support and encourage ELDPs to continuously improve through training, technical assistance, and onsite support. These strategies are carefully aligned with existing state priorities in order to ensure the success of the ELN Initiative and to sustain success into the future.

(B)(4)(a) Develop and implement policies and practices that provide support and incentives for participating ELDPs to continuously improve. In order to provide support and incentives for ELDPs to continuously improve, the ELN Initiative will provide training, coaching, materials, and technical assistance to programs participating in Step Up to Quality. Nebraska will implement these practices by building on the existing infrastructure of professional development and support for high quality ECEs and ELDPs. In addition ELN will focus resources and funding to support programs that serve children with the highest needs in the state.

Nebraska's experience to date has demonstrated that if the costs associated with access to training, coaching, and materials are alleviated, ELDPs participate, appreciate, and request additional information about effective early childhood and development practices. NDE's current capacity to meet requests for coaching and consultation resources in Nebraska is insufficient to meet the demand. The ELN Initiative will increase the capacity and offer outreach to providers to fill currently unmet needs across the state.



Step Up to Quality offers all ECEs concrete steps to take in order to improve practices and increase the likelihood that Children with High Needs reach kindergarten ready for school success. Nebraska has not had enough infrastructure, coaches, and resources to meet the demand of ELDPs for such program information and development. The ELN Initiative will provide support strategies to all ECEs and ELDPs at no cost including:

- Professional development and coaching
- Support, technical assistance, and coaching for participating programs to navigate Step Up to Quality and implement strategies for success based on their assessment and rating
- Online, telephone, or one-on-one consultations to help ELDPs meet and improve on health and safety criteria and to provide support for health and safety referrals in the community by regional Health and Community Resource Consultants (HCR Consultants) (through NDHHS)
- Coordinated professional development for participating providers, including access to online statewide training calendar
- Mental health consultation
- Introduction to valid tools that evaluate program environments and are conducted by reliable raters and coaches
- Materials that address: enhancing environments for inside and outside spaces, promoting development of early learning, creativity, positive approaches to learning, movement and play, and social-emotional and behavioral development. Guidelines for material distribution will be developed by NDHHS/NDE Project Leads, with ELC Coordinators in the regional areas carrying out the distribution according to the guidelines. The guidance will be developed for statewide use and consistency, using guidelines currently used by several pilot coaching projects that exist in Nebraska. Current CCDF Quality Improvement Funds will be used along with additional ELN funds to increase capacity and oversight of this strategy
- Funds to assist programs to pay for substitutes so staff can attend trainings or work with on-site coaches



- Improved access to distance learning so that college courses in early childhood and education are accessible across Nebraska

All training and support activities will be conducted by NDE, Office of Early Childhood, Early Childhood Training Center and through the ELC Coordinators, located in the seven regional ESUs and in collaboration with HCR Consultants. Additional trainers, coaches, (including Early Childhood specialists and when applicable, mental health specialists), and coordinating staff will be hired and trained to work through the ESUs to provide these services.

Because state-funded preschool programs, Early Childhood Education Grant programs (Birth to 3), and Head Start programs already routinely participate in continuous quality improvement practices as required by policies governing their individual programming, Nebraska will be able to focus its immediate attention on other ELDPs in areas of the state determined as higher risk areas. The ELN Initiative will phase in statewide implementation over the four-year period (geographic focus fully discussed in section A).

(B)(4)(b) Providing supports to help working families who have Children with High Needs access high-quality Early Learning and Development Programs that meet those needs. Through the existing Early Childhood Education Grant program for state funded preschools, Nebraska has demonstrated a commitment to providing high quality ELDPs at no cost to families. Additionally, Head Start and Early Head Start programs often offer wrap-around services for children that extend beyond the school day. The initiation of Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3) created additional opportunities for parents to access high quality care at no cost for their young children. Under 92 NAC Rule 11 regulations, these programs must offer at least one meal a day (either breakfast or lunch) and may also include a snack. State funded preschool programs are encouraged to provide transportation to and from the program site. State funded preschool programs and Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3) also support families through family engagement activities (as outlined in table (A)(1)-9, section (A)(1)).

Inclusive Programs. The intent of Nebraska's Early Childhood Education Grant Program (ages 3 to 5) is to help communities move away from programs that exclusively serve *at-risk* four-year-old children. Programs are expected to serve the targeted population



within inclusive classrooms of three and four-year-old children that represent a range of abilities and disabilities and the social, linguistic, and economic diversity of families within the community. Grants are intended to improve equity of access to early childhood education programs; therefore the program grant should increase the number of children served in the community or expand the duration and intensity of an existing program through the provision of comprehensive center-based programs. During the 2010-11 school year, 6,650 of Nebraska's Children with High Needs attended state funded preschools under the grant program (as outlined in table (A)(1)-3, section (A)(1)).

Expand Access to Full-Day Programs That Serve Children With High Needs. In order to increase the number of full-day programs and provide more options for working families, NDE will hire an additional Early Childhood Education Specialist to help school districts assess the capacity of communities to provide full-day preschool and make recommendations for ways Head Start programs can best meet the needs for full-day care and education of children. Currently under the grant program, school districts and ESUs apply for funding for a part-day classroom or a full-day classroom. Applicants are encouraged to carefully consider the results of their family and community needs assessment, including describing the needs of working families within the service area and how the proposed ELDP will impact families and other community programs before designing the length of classroom day. Early Childhood Education Grant programs can be operated in two ways: 1) classrooms of 11-20 children or 2) classrooms of 7-10 children or less. One classroom of 11 to 20 children may receive up to \$75,000 to operate for a full day or up to \$50,000 to operate for part of the day (less than six hours). For classrooms of 7-10 children, school districts may receive up to \$40,000 to operate for a full-day or up to \$20,000 to operate for part of the day (less than six hours). Currently, 151 of the 176 school districts with state-funded preschools are only operating half-day classrooms. Only 16 (9 percent) of school districts offer full-day preschool programs at this time. Additionally, nine school districts offer a combination of both full and part day programs.

Based on the EC specialist's assessment of community need and partner Head Start programs, communities will be encouraged and supported to expand full-day services. One option is for state-funded preschools and Head Start programs to work collaboratively with



local ELDPs to braid resources and provide the full-day services at the same location. Criteria will be developed by the specialist and NDE to provide guidance for when same site care is appropriate. If programs provide joint services, but cannot be co-located, transportation must be provided for children at the responsibility of the blended program so as to eliminate this barrier to access of quality programs for working parents. The specialist will conduct on-site visits by the end of 2012 to school districts that operate full-day classrooms to determine successes and challenges of this approach. Following the on-site visits, the specialist will conduct focus groups with school districts to discuss challenges and barriers to implementation of full-day preschool or otherwise blended programs. In 2013, the consultant will conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the full-day preschool approach and make recommendations for transitioning half-day programs into full-day programs.

Beginning in 2014, NDE will increase the incentive for school districts who apply for an Early Childhood Education Program Grant (ages 3-5) with the intention of operating a full-day program. In 2015, NDE will commit funds to support existing half-day programs to transition to full-day programs and the specialist will provide technical assistance and support to school districts during this transition.

(B)(4)(c) Setting ambitious yet achievable targets for increasing Number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top Tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. Nebraska has set ambitious, yet achievable goals, to increase the number of ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality during the four years of the ELN Initiative. In addition, Nebraska's dedication to creating a strong early childhood system means that the state is committed to increasing the number of ELDPs in the top tiers of its rating system by building on the strong foundation that the Step Up to Quality system presents.

Upon initiation of Step Up to Quality, all licensed providers (4,327) will join Step Up to Quality at Tier One. Some programs such as state-funded preschools, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3) are expected to enter the Step Up to Quality at Tier Two or Tier Three in Year One due to their programming level. In addition, there are 58 accredited ELDPs in Nebraska (as of August 2011) that will enter the Step Up to Quality at Tier Five. From 2012-2015 the number of



programs at Tier One will decrease as more programs progress to the upper tiers. Additionally, all other tiers (with the exception of Tier Three) have increased numbers of programs participating in them as the years progress. Because state-funded preschools, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3) are expected to enter the QRIS at Tier Two or Tier Three there will be a large number in 2012 and then decrease in 2013. It is expected that these programs will progress to higher levels and it will take other programs that enter at a lower tier longer to get the Tier Three rating. At the conclusion of each year, NDE will check progress towards targets and re-evaluate the supports and strategies as necessary to ensure that the targets are met.

Strategy 6: Develop and implement policies and practices to support incentives for participating ELDPs to continuously improve.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 6a Policy Development. Hold high level policy discussion meetings to identify incentives for participation of all ELDPs in Step Up to Quality	December 2011-June 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 6b Policy Development. Hold high level policy discussion meetings to identify effective and feasible policies and practices to maintain the supply of high-quality child care in areas with high concentrations of Children with High Needs	December 2011-June 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 6c Implement policies. Make policy recommendations and create and enact implementation plan to move forward recommendations	August 2013-May 2014	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, NDHHS
Activity 6d Hire additional trainers, coaches, and coordinating staff	January –July 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood

Strategy 7: Provide supports to help working families access high-quality ELDPs that meet family needs.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 7a Hire Early Childhood Specialist to assist local communities to determine need and capacity for full-day preschool programs.	January-July 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood



Strategy 7: Provide supports to help working families access high-quality ELDPs that meet family needs.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 8b Develop criteria to guide full-day programs and co-location of programs	July –September 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, Consultant
Activity 4c Conduct on-site visits to school districts operating full-day classrooms	July-December 2012	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, Consultant
Activity 4d Conduct focus groups with school districts	January-May 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood
Activity 4e Conduct cost-benefit analysis	June-December 2013	NDE, Office of Early Childhood, Consultant
Activity 4f Increase incentive for operating full-day programs and support for half-day programs to transition to full-day	January 2014-December 2015	NDE, Office of Early Childhood

Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1): Increasing the number of Early Learning and Development Programs in the top Tiers of the Tiered Step Up to Quality System.					
	Baseline (Today)	Target- end of calendar year 2012	Target- end of calendar year 2013	Target- end of calendar year 2014	Target- end of calendar year 2015
Total number of programs covered by the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System	0	4327	4327	4327	4327
Number of programs in Tier One (Lowest Tier)	0	4141	3980	3720	3550
Number of programs in Tier Two	0	128	238	418	510
Number of programs in Tier Three	0	70	35	50	70
Number of programs in Tier Four	0	3	40	67	120
Number of programs in Tier Five (Highest Tier)	0	58	64	71	77
<p>Note: Due to the fact that programs will be mobile through the Tiers at any given point in time, the numbers presented in this table are not cumulative. Rather they are a look at each year the number of providers who will be in each Tier at a given point in time (end of calendar year).</p> <p>At the initiation of Step Up to Quality in Nebraska all licensed providers (4,327) will be on the Step Up to Quality at the Tier One level. Some programs such as school district preschools, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to 3 Endowment) are expected</p>					



to enter the Step Up to Quality at a level 2 or 3 in the first year. In addition, there are 58 accredited programs in Nebraska as of 8/2011 who will enter the Step Up to Quality at Tier Five. Across the years, the number of programs at the Tier One goes down as more programs are expected to progress through the upper Tiers of the Step Up to Quality. Additionally, all other Tiers (with the exception of Tier Three) have increased numbers of programs as the years progress. Because school districts, Head Start and Early Head Start, and Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs are expected to enter the Step Up to Quality at Tier Two or Tier Three there is a large number in 2012 and then a dip in 2013. It is expected that these programs will progress to higher levels and it will take other programs that enter at a lower Tier longer to get the Tier Three rating.

Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top Tiers of the Tiered Step Up to Quality Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top Tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
State-funded preschool	6,816	0	0	682	10%	3,318	50%	4,645	70%	5,640	85%
Early Head Start and Head Start	6,636	0	0	330	5%	660	10%	1,320	20%	1,990	30%
Early Learning and Development Programs receiving funds from the State's CCDF program~	23,438	0	0	937	4%	1,406	6%	2,109	9%	2,812	12%
Other Specify: Early Childhood Grant Program (Birth to 3)	304	0	0	76	25%	152	50%	258	85%	304	100%
Early Learning and Development Programs funded by IDEA, Part C* and Part B, section 619**		0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--



Performance Measures for (B)(4)(c)(2): Increasing the number and percentage of Children with High Needs who are enrolled in Early Learning and Development Programs that are in the top Tiers of the Tiered Step Up to Quality Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Type of Early Learning and Development Program in the State	Number of Children with High Needs served by programs in the State	Baseline and Annual Targets -- Number and percent of Children with High Needs Participating in Programs that are in the top Tiers of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System									
		Baseline (Today)		Target- end of calendar year 2012		Target -end of calendar year 2013		Target- end of calendar year 2014		Target- end of calendar year 2015	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Early Learning and Development Programs funded under Title I of ESEA**		0	0	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Tiers 4 and 5 are identified as the “top Tiers” for setting this performance measure. It is expected that by the end of 2015, nearly all of the state funded preschools will be in Tiers 4 or 5 of Step Up to Quality. Additionally, it is expected that all Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) (Birth to 3 Endowment) programs will also be in Tiers 4 or 5 by this time. Head Start/Early Head Start (EHS) programs that partner with the school districts will as a result of their partnership with either of the two programs listed above also be in Tier Four or Tier Five of Step Up to Quality by the end of calendar year 2015.

Head Start/EHS data from 2009-2010 Head Start Program Information Report (PIR). HS/EHS 6,349, AIAN, 240, MSHS, 47 Total Children 6,636. State funded preschool, Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3), and CCDF numbers of Children with High Needs is the same as data in section (A)1.

~Performance measures for programs receiving funds from the state’s CCDF program were based on Based on data as of 8/2011 of the number of children on subsidy who are currently enrolled in accredited programs (these programs will enter Step Up to Quality at Tier Five). At this point in time approximately 1,000 children are served in accredited programs that received child care subsidy.

* Part C funds are used to fund services for children enrolled in center based programs and home visitation programs in Nebraska. Part C funding supports services for children in Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs or Early Head Start; see the Early Childhood Grant Program (Birth-3) performance measures. Programs that use home visitation as the service delivery method are not included Step Up to Quality.

**Children in Nebraska are served in inclusive and natural environments that reflect the diversity of local communities. State funded preschool programs may be funded with Part B, 619 and/or Title 1, part A and/or Head Start funds depicting a braided funding and service delivery model. Part B and Title 1 programs, as state funded preschool programs, will meet the performance measures identified for state funded preschools.



(B)(5) Validating the effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

SECTION (B)(5) OVERVIEW

The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) contains a comprehensive evaluation plan to assess the validity, accuracy, and effectiveness of Step Up to Quality QRIS ratings to reflect improving quality of participating ELDPs in a way that improves children's outcomes. The full details of the plan to design and implement evaluations by independent evaluators, the University of Nebraska (through the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools and the Buffett Early Childhood Institute), and the plan to examine the relationships between the ratings generated by Step Up to Quality, the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Program Standards, and learning outcomes are included in Appendix B-08: Validating the Effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System. In order to fully understand if the Rating System is making a difference, it is important to have an understanding of how the strategies are carried out to support adult learning and quality improvements within the early learning environments. Therefore, Nebraska is interested in knowing how the QRIS is being implemented with a series of process evaluations to obtain feedback on implementation of the strategies being employed. Four components include:

- 1) QRIS Implementation: Beginning in Year 2 (3rd quarter), begins by conducting an implementation study of the QRIS. This will focus on the extent to which intended elements are in place and being utilized. This will not focus on specific early childhood programs, but rather the larger structural components of the QRIS.
- 2) Process Study of the Early Childhood Education Coaching. In Year 2 and Year 3, will conduct an Implementation study of Early Childhood Education Coaching, including analyses of coaching data in the Training Registry, including number of coaching visits, number of teachers each coach worked with, and other details of coaching service provide, including length of coaching interactions and location of interactions. This study also includes an evaluation of the fidelity with which coaches are



implementing the coaching model in their interactions with teachers and parents. These data will be collected twice annually for a random selection of a group of 80 coaches across the state who are implementing early childhood coaching as a form of professional support. The Early Childhood Coaching Observation tool has been developed in Nebraska for this purpose and will be used to assess observations. Multivariate analyses of service utilization data and observational data will be conducted to assess fidelity of the early childhood coaching project. Finally, this study will include survey or focus groups with a random selection of teachers and providers receiving coaching to determine their perceptions of the coaching experience. This will provide an indicator of participant responsiveness. This data will be transcribed and analyzed quantitatively.

- 3) **Process Study of the Early Childhood Mental Health Project.** In Year 4, will conduct an implementation study of the Early Childhood Mental Health project. Specifically, this study is being conducted to assess the implementation of the Teaching Pyramid model in programs. From the full QRIS sample among those implementing the Teaching Pyramid, 15 centers (3 classrooms/ center will result in 45 classrooms) and 15 family child care homes will be selected to participate in the process study. Additionally, the early childhood mental health consultants providing services to the target programs will also be evaluated. Indicators will be collected from each classroom on the fidelity of implementation of the Teaching Pyramid Model. To assess the degree to which teachers supported social-emotional development and positively managed challenging behavior in the classroom, the TPOT, Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool, or the TPITOS, The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale will be completed. Additionally, the services offered by the mental health consultants will be tabulated, and analysis of their written records will be conducted as indicators of adherence and dosage.
- 4) **Process Study of the Early Learning and Development Program (ELDP) Health and Community Resource Consultants.** In Years 3 - 4 will conduct an implementation study of the Health and Community Resource Consultants. The process evaluation will focus on the extent to which the consultants act as liaisons and navigators in local communities to support physical health



and safety, and physical, social and emotional development for children. Data will be collected on various service utilization features from each Consultant including frequency of contacts, number of referrals, and available resources for children and families. Additionally, data will be collected to assess change in resources; the referral forms completed by the Health and Community Resource Consultants will be qualitatively assessed. A sample of participants who received and/or provided services/resources/ referrals via the Health and Community Resource Consultants will be asked to participate in focus groups to provide feedback on the Early Learning and Development Program (ELDP) Health and Community Resource Consultant component of the project.

Finally, Nebraska intends to conduct a study which compares the findings of Step Up to Quality participants with those of the state ELDPs at large to determine how Step Up to Quality affects the factors of interest (process and structural quality and attitudes) and the extent to which teachers and providers are embracing Step Up to Quality as determined by a representative sample study of all Nebraska ECEs and ELDPs. The “Child Care (Revisited) Study” is replicating a study done in 2002 by the Midwest Childcare Research Consortium regarding the “Child Care Characteristics and Quality in Nebraska”. The 2002 study established a baseline for comparing the progress 10 years later. For a full overview of the studies to be conducted see Appendix B-08 as stated above, Appendix B-01: Process Evaluation, Studies 3a-3d, and Appendix B-09: Study of Child Care (Revisited). Appendix B-08: The Study Validating the Effectiveness of the Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System– is the focus of the description in the following sections.

(B)(5)(a) Validating, using research-based measures, whether the Tiers in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality. A study, designated as Study One will focus on validating Step Up to Quality to determine whether the different tiers (and the criteria that distinguish them) actually represent differential levels of program quality in the 20 Nebraska counties where the Step Up to Quality is being implemented. This study will randomly sample 75



early childhood center-based programs and 75 family child care programs (15 at each of the five levels of quality) from the pool of Step Up to Quality participants. Building on knowledge gained from the MCCRC QRS pilot study (of which Nebraska was a part), within the center-based programs, 50 percent of classrooms will be randomly selected for participation from 225 classrooms.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln will assess process quality using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R, ECERS-R and FCCRS) in order to obtain a valid measure of global quality and, for centers only, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) to obtain a more rigorous assessment of instructional and interactional quality. These measures together will provide a valid and differentiated picture of quality across the wide spectrum of five tiers and they are represented in the Step Up to Quality plan. University of Nebraska-Lincoln will also assess structural quality related to education, training, and wages of providers, thereby utilizing the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Register for evaluation purposes and will administer a survey to teachers and providers in select classrooms and family child care homes to measure professionalism attitudes shown in other studies to be associated with levels of quality. Using complex multivariate analyses, the study will determine if levels of Step Up to Quality predict observational/process, structural, and attitudinal quality variables, controlling for type of care, rural/urban status, and time of data collection. For greater detail, see Appendix B-08: Validating the Effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

(B)(5)(b) Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children’s learning, development, and school readiness. Study Two will assess, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in section (B)(2)) and corresponding to measures used in other Nebraska early childhood evaluations of programs for low-income children, the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children’s learning, development, and school readiness. For this study, University of Nebraska-Lincoln will again select 15 center-based programs (and 50 percent of the classrooms) and 15 volunteer family child care



programs and in the fall will randomly select from children who will be three-years-old (and in preschool) the following fall and a second group of children who will be five-years-old the following fall for a cross sectional sample of 600 children for each of three years from the same programs. University of Nebraska-Lincoln will chart fall to spring trajectories of children on well-used measures of language (PLS-5, in English and Spanish) and social emotional (DECA) development and will gather standardized data on the PPVT-IV and school readiness (Bracken) when children are three and five (in order to compare children’s scores to well established national and state study norms). The study will also collect data on family support for literacy, demographic, and risk factors. The carefully constructed plan enables the evaluators to examine data alongside other data used in state evaluations. Because the study will gather child data in the same programs over three years, programs can see progress and will have time to potentially change quality levels so relations between child outcomes and quality as well as changes in quality can be examined. University of Nebraska-Lincoln will give these children unique identifiers in the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS) so the child outcomes data collected during preschool years, program quality, and preschool participation can be linked to kindergarten-grade three (and beyond) school data. This will enable programs to see the extent that levels of quality have sustained effects. The analysis plan will involve determining if the level of Step Up to Quality predicts child scores on measures or changes in fall to spring scores, controlling or moderating for SES, race/ethnicity, dual language learner status and parental education level. For greater detail, see Appendix B-08: Validating the Effectiveness of the State Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Strategy 8: Validating, using research-based measures, whether the Tiers in the State’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System accurately reflect differential levels of program quality.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 8a Gather data	Years Three and Four	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Activity 8b Provide final report and recommendations to ELN Initiative leaders and Nebraska early childhood community regarding the validity of levels.	End of Year Four	University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Strategy 9: Assessing, using appropriate research designs and measures of progress (as identified in the State Plan), the extent to which changes in quality ratings are related to progress in children’s learning, development, and school readiness.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 9a Conduct child assessments and collect data in fall and spring	Years Two, Three, Four	University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Activity 9b Report on Validation Study of Levels and Observational Quality; Report on Validation Study of QRIS and Child Outcomes	Year Four	University of Nebraska-Lincoln

C. Promoting Early Learning and Development Outcomes in Children

SECTION (C) OVERVIEW

Since 2005 Nebraska has used statewide high quality Early Learning Standards. The existing standards are culturally, and linguistically and developmentally appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness.

(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high quality Early Learning and Development Standards. Nebraska recognizes the importance of a comprehensive, standards-based uniform set of Early Learning and Development Standards in building a strong early childhood system available to all families and young children birth through eight years old. Nebraska has a robust track-record of having established an early learning and development system that offers a statewide unified approach, sustainable policies, and integrated resources. Developed and implemented in 2005-2006, Nebraska’s Early Learning and Development Standards, used statewide, are entitled Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (Guidelines) for Ages Birth to 3, and Ages 3-5 and are used statewide. The development and provision of these voluntary standards were an important step by the state to provide leadership in promoting



consistency and high standards for strong early childhood programs and strong families. Nebraska continues to build on the foundation of the Guidelines by implementing policies and supports to integrate the Guidelines into all of Nebraska’s Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) (the complete guidelines can be found in Appendix C-01: Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines Ages Birth-3, and Appendix C-02: Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines Ages 3-5.)

(C)(1)(a) Standards developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and cover all Essential Domains of School Readiness. The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines were developed by a diverse team of experts that included representatives from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services System (NDHHS), the Nebraska Head Start Association, the Nebraska Head Start-State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) and the NDE’s Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC). Early childhood specialists from across the state provided additional guidance and expertise.

Developmentally, Culturally, and Linguistically Appropriate Across Each Age Group. To ensure that the Guidelines are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate across each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers and that they cover all essential domains of School Readiness, they are based on research and evidence about child development and practices that result in the best outcomes for young children. Based on national best practices and standards, the Guidelines are further developed in unity with state policies and standards for other companion early childhood state programs. In addition, Nebraska carefully aligns the Guidelines with public school policies and standards. Organized in a format that is specific and appropriate for the changing development of children, the Guidelines are divided into two documents—one that covers birth to three years and provides developmental expectations for infants (birth to 18 months) and toddlers (18 to 36 months), and one that covers ages three to five and provides expectations for each year of growth.

Abbreviated Bibliography. The following sources were used to determine the content of the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (Guidelines). Complete research base is discussed in the Guidelines (see Appendix C-01: Guidelines ages Birth-3, pp. 85-89; and Appendix C-02: Guidelines ages 3-5, pp. 69-73).



- ***DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education.*** Identifies effective practices based on research and shared beliefs to help early childhood educators, other practitioners, families, and administrators provide quality learning experiences that result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities and their families.
- ***Early Learning Standards: Creating the Conditions for Success. A Joint Position Statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education.*** This position statement defines the desired content and outcomes of young children's education.
- ***Eager to Learn: Educating our Preschoolers,*** Barbara T. Bowman, Suzanne Donovan and M. Susan Burns. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2001.
- ***From Neurons to Neighborhoods, The Science of Early Childhood Development,*** Jack P. Shonkoff and Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Susan B. Neuman and David K. Dickinson. Manhattan, NY: The Guilford Press, 2003.
- ***Rethinking the Brain: New Insights Into Early Development,*** Rima Shore. New York, NY: Families and Work Institute, 1997.
- ***Handbook of Early Childhood Intervention (Second Edition),*** Jack Shonkoff, Samuel Meisels. New York, NY; Cambridge Press, 2000. Deborah Phillips. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 2000.
- ***One Child, Two Languages: A Guide for Preschool Educators of Children Learning English as a Second Language,*** Patton O. Tabors. Baltimore, MD: Brookes Publishing Co., 1999.

Essential Domains. The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines articulate expectations for child development and learning in seven essential domains of school readiness: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development, language and literacy development, mathematics, science, and creative arts. These voluntary guidelines are a resource for adults who care for infants, toddlers, three-five year olds, and five-eight year olds, and provide clear examples of what to expect and how to support learning across the domains. Each standard includes four sections: 1) *Widely Held Expectations* describes what children should know and be able to do; 2) *Learning in Action* provides examples of ways children might show that they meet the expectations and also outlines practical strategies that adults can implement to support the child's growth and learning; 3) *The Environment* lists



considerations for adults to think about as they organize indoor and outdoor spaces for children's learning; and 4) *Related Standards* aligns the Guidelines with the Nebraska K-12 Standards, Nebraska 92 NAC Rule 11: Regulations for Early Childhood Education Programs, and the Head Start Outcomes Framework. As part of a continuous improvement and review process for Guidelines content, Nebraska recently added Nature Education as a supplement to the original Guidelines.

(C)(1)(b) Standards are aligned with the State's K-3 academic standards. As stated above, the fourth Guidelines section is called *Related Standards*. The *Related Standards* section shows the alignment of the Guidelines with the Nebraska K-12 Standards, Nebraska 92 NAC Rule 11: Regulations for Early Childhood Education Programs, and the Head Start Child Outcomes Framework. The Guidelines align with *all* subject areas for which Nebraska has kindergarten through twelfth grade standards.

Update to include revised standards. Since 2006, Nebraska has made a number of changes on the education front. The state revised its kindergarten through twelfth grade standards in language arts in 2009 and in mathematics in 2010.

The state is currently revising standards for science and social studies. Additionally, the Head Start Outcomes Framework has been revised since the publication of Nebraska's Guidelines. NDE will lead the updating of the Guidelines in Year One of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative in order to integrate these changes. In order to do so, NDE will establish a stakeholder group, composed of representatives of NDE, NDHHS, Nebraska Head Start Association, HSSCO, ECTC, and other early childhood specialists. The stakeholder group will select a tool to use for alignment using the Curriculum Assessment and the Head Start Framework: an Alignment Review Tool (from the national Head Start Office). NDE will revise the Guidelines to address any gaps between the Guidelines and the Head Start Frameworks and new Nebraska K-12 standards in reading, math, and social studies content. Then the state will provide training to ELDPs and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) on the updated Guidelines with appropriately revised materials.



(C)(1)(c) Standards incorporated in Program Standards, curricula and activities, Comprehensive Assessment Systems, the State’s Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework, and professional development activities.

Program Standards. Nebraska ensures that state-funded preschools use the Guidelines by requiring school districts that apply for funds from the Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Ages Three to Five) to describe how the program uses the Guidelines to support the program curriculum. Furthermore, NDHHS licensing regulations proposed in 2011 and include required professional development about and use of the Guidelines for licensed child care programs.

Although the standards are voluntary for other ELDPs, the state leads the way to both encourage use and understanding of the standards and incorporate them into all aspects of ELDPs as a resource for adults working in early childhood education to use in their planning of meaningful learning experiences for young children. These efforts are described in the professional development plan in section (D)(2).

Curricula and Activities. The Guidelines support the curricula used by ELDPs. Early childhood professionals reference the Guidelines when they examine the adequacy of their chosen curriculum and then supplement that curriculum with additional activities and materials. Professionals choose activities to ensure children have opportunities to learn and practice the skills of each domain of school readiness. Doing so enables educators to provide children, especially Children with High Needs, with the skills, knowledge, health, and dispositions they need to be successful in kindergarten, school, and in life.

Comprehensive Assessment Systems. ECEs are able to compare documentation of child mastery on formative assessments, which are required by state-funded preschool programs and Head Start and used voluntarily by family child care homes and centers, with the criteria in the Guidelines. This process allows early childhood professionals to compare a child’s skills with developmental expectations.



In addition, all ELDPs operated by school districts currently participate in the Results Matter comprehensive assessment system (fully described in section (C)(2)). Results Matter is a child, family, and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all children, birth to age five, served by school districts and their community partners, including Head Start. Approximately half of the Nebraska Head Start grantees participate in Results Matter.

Nebraska is currently modifying the Results Matter system to change from allowing districts and their partners to select from one of three assessments, to an integrated system with only one ongoing assessment for child data called Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold). All state-funded preschools; programs funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619; programs funded under Title I of ESEA, a majority of the Early Head Start and Head Start programs; and other ELDPs participating in QRIS will use TS Gold by the beginning of the 2012-13 school year. Nebraska has worked with the system vendor to align TS Gold with the Guidelines. The Kindergarten Readiness Entry Assessment that will be fully implemented in all school districts in the last quarter of 2014 (described in section (E)(1)(a)) will also be aligned with the Guidelines and cover all the essential domains of school readiness. (Appendix C-03: TS Gold/Guidelines Alignment)

Competency Framework. The Early Learning Guidelines assist adults working in early childhood to plan meaningful learning experiences for young children. Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (Core Competencies) describe the knowledge and skills adults working with children from birth to age five are expected to develop over years of experience and/or through a course of study. (Core Competencies included in Appendix B-06 and fully described in Section D). The introduction to each Competency contains a description of relevant sections from the Guidelines. Capability in helping children master the expectations of the Guidelines is an important focus of the Core Competencies; therefore the Guidelines are embedded into Nebraska's expectations for all professionals working with young children.

Professional Development Activities. Nebraska has created Early Learning Guidelines professional development workshops to help early childhood professionals learn more about supporting the education and development of children. Professional development



workshops for each essential domain of the Guidelines are available in all regions of Nebraska. Different formats are available to meet the varying needs of the early childhood workforce, including center-based, home-based, and school-based programs.

Two-hour professional development programs acquaint early childhood professionals with the specific Guidelines' essential domain. More comprehensive six-hour professional development sessions for each domain are designed to allow early childhood staff the ability to understand the domain, as well as learn hands-on ways to embed activities into routines and lesson plans to support children's mastery of the developmental expectations of the essential domain. Because Nebraska has so many rural communities, the independent study modules are especially valuable. These are available both for professionals who live in remote areas and for those who find the convenience of a self-paced learning format to be most appropriate for their work situation. Finally, Nebraska has developed a parent workshop to help families understand appropriate developmental expectations for young children and to provide strategies for parents to support their children's growth and learning.

(C)(1)(d) State supports in place to promote understanding of and commitment to the standards by all Early Learning and Development Programs. In addition to the in-depth way Nebraska incorporates standards into its programs, systems, workforce, professional development, curricula, and activities described in (C)(1)(c), the state has developed a parent workshop designed specifically to help families understand appropriate developmental expectations for young children and to provide strategies for parents to support their children's growth and learning. This educational offering outlines guiding principles of child growth and development: 1) Children are active learners; 2) Each child learns in unique ways, 3) Learning is most meaningful when it is integrated across all areas of development, 4) Development and learning, are rooted in culture and supported by the family. The programs explain strategies that families can use to support the development and learning of their children.

As discussed in section (C)(1)(c), requirements that child care providers complete professional development regarding the Guidelines are included in the proposed licensing regulations for family child care home providers, center-based childcare providers, and community based preschools. Paraprofessionals in ELDPs operated by school districts are required to have at least 12 college credit



hours in early childhood learning. Completion of the in-depth training modules in each of the seven domains of the Guidelines is recognized as an equivalency to three college credit hours for paraprofessionals.

Beginning in 2012, the state comprehensive assessment system, Results Matter, will be based on TS Gold, which is aligned with the Guidelines. As noted in this narrative, policies have been implemented to ensure the use of the Guidelines in ELDPs across funding streams and program types. By implementing the same policies and infrastructures statewide, Nebraska demonstrates its commitment to the use of Early Learning Guidelines and their continued use once the Guidelines are updated.

Every Early Learning Guidelines professional development opportunity is advertised on the training calendar maintained by the NDE Early Childhood Training Center. ECEs across Nebraska can locate any Guidelines professional development offering that has been scheduled anywhere in the state. The Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry section of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (described in Section (E)(2)) will simplify registration for professional development opportunities and will document participation in the state identifier records of the early childhood professional.

The Guidelines were used extensively in the creation of the Nebraska Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and are referenced throughout the document. Higher education institutions use the Guidelines in child development classes—more so in two-year colleges than in four-year colleges—however, the use is not reported to NDE. Copies of the Guidelines are accessible to ELDPs and ECEs and posted on the NDE website. Nebraska also provides print copies of the Guidelines to all licensed ELDPs.

(C)(1)(a): Strategy – Revising Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 1: Identify stakeholder group	Fiscal Year (FY) One	NDE, HSSCO
Activity 2: Choose alignment tool	FY One	Stakeholder Group
Activity 3: Identify gaps based on new domains in Head Start Frameworks	December 2011	Stakeholder Group



(C)(1)(a): Strategy – Revising Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines		
Activity 4: Map new Nebraska K-12 standards in reading, math, science and social studies to current Guidelines	December 2011	Stakeholder Group
Activity 5: Conduct Literature Review of expanded areas of Head Start Framework	March 31, 2012	Stakeholder Group
Activity 6: Create, alter, or adapt current criteria to cover gaps identified in mapping activities	June 1, 2012	Stakeholder Group
Activity 7: Format new version of Guidelines to publish on websites and other methods	June 31, 2012	NDE
Activity 8: Update Early Learning Guidelines professional development material to reflect changes	July 31, 2012	Early Childhood Training Center (ECTC)
Activity 9: Implement professional development to teach the early learning professionals about the new guidelines	August 1, 2012 and continuing	NDE, ECTC

(C) (2) Supporting effective uses of Comprehensive Assessment Systems.

SECTION (C)(2) OVERVIEW

The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) recognizes the importance a comprehensive assessment system plays in creating a strong early childhood system. An effective assessment system accurately measures child progress and program quality. Practitioners thoroughly trained in effectively implementing assessments and using data, as well as programs that support comprehensive assessments, can:

- Improve the experiences, learning, development, and lives of young children and their families
- Inform program practices
- Demonstrate program effectiveness



- Guide the development of local and state policies and procedures
- Provide data to demonstrate results

The ELN Initiative will enable Nebraska to augment its early childhood assessments by enhancing the existing assessment system (Results Matter in Nebraska), the increased availability of training and coaching for ECEs and Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs), will work to increase overall understanding on proper use of screening tools and formative assessments. Additionally, as program move to higher levels in the NE QRIS they will be implementing the assessment and collecting data, broadening the participation in Results Matter across all ELDPs and giving a more complete picture of early childhood in NE.

Project Partner, MMI. Nebraska's Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI), a state leader in early childhood evaluation located on the University of Nebraska Medical Center campus in Omaha, will lead Nebraska's efforts in developing the comprehensive assessment protocols and collecting, analyzing, and reporting on data used in Nebraska's comprehensive assessment systems in order to narrow the student achievement gap in high-risk communities. MMI's program evaluation arm, the Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation (ICPE) has conducted numerous statewide evaluations of initiatives to enhance the quality of early education to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and their families, including community needs assessments, identifying and developing tools, developing data management systems, and the evaluation of early childhood programs. ICPE has conducted evaluations of Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3), Results Matter, Educare of Omaha, and the Early Childhood Grant Program.

(C)(2)(a) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches that are appropriate for the target populations and purposes. ELN will support implementation of a comprehensive assessment system that uses a two-pronged approach: 1) comprehensive child assessments (currently implemented as part of Results Matter) and 2) comprehensive environmental and child-adult interaction assessments (implemented as part of the new Step Up to Quality QRIS). The Results Matter system will include four primary assessment processes (each with a distinct purpose) that address 1) screening (added in Year One of the ELN Initiative), 2) comprehensive assessment for instructional planning and outcome accountability (formative



measures), 3) diagnostic assessment, and 4) kindergarten readiness assessment. The comprehensive environmental assessment system includes both classroom and home environmental rating and adult-child interaction measures.

1) Comprehensive Child Assessment System:

Results Matter. In 2006, Nebraska successfully implemented an assessment process for child outcomes of all children (birth-five) in state-funded preschools and a majority of the Early Head Start and Head Start programs. The statewide assessment system, Results Matter, provides data at the child, program, district, and state levels to support early childhood teachers, administrators, and state policy makers in program planning, individual instruction, and outcomes accountability.

Results Matter is a child, family, and program outcomes measurement system designed and implemented to improve programs and supports for all children served by state-funded preschools; programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619; programs funded under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and a majority of the Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Results Matter is responsive to the state requirements of NDE 92 NAC Rule 11 Regulations for Early Childhood Programs, NDE 92 NAC Rule 51 for Special Education Programs, and the federal mandates of IDEA, Part C (infants and toddlers) and Part B - 619 (ages three to five). Currently, more than 200 school districts and Early Head Start and Head Start programs participate in Results Matter, with more than 18,000 children assessed.

The child outcomes component of Results Matter measures young children's progress using authentic child assessment and online reporting. Results Matter:

- Conducts ongoing observations of children engaged in real activities, with people they know, in natural settings
- Reflects evidence-based practices.
- Engages families and primary care providers as active participants.
- Integrates information gathered across settings.



- Addresses each child’s unique ways of learning with an individualized approach.
- Informs decision about day-to-day learning opportunities for children.
- Reflects that development and learning are rooted in culture supported by the family.

Screening. Currently, the Results Matter system does not include a screening tool, but the majority of Nebraska ELDPs use some type of screening assessment to identify children who may be in need of further assessment. These are not consistently used across early childhood programs and settings in Nebraska. The ELN Initiative will result in statewide use and training to support implementation of developmental and health screening tools by all ELDPs participating in Results Matter. To gather information on what screening tool currently is being used by ELDPs, staff from MMI will conduct a statewide survey of ELDPs in various settings and conduct research to determine reliability and validity of various tools and the evidence-based practice related to the tools.

An Assessment Stakeholder Task Force—composed of representatives of ECE, including teachers, school district and Head Start administrators, members of the existing Results Matter Task Force, higher education early childhood experts, the Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Coordinating Council (ECICC), the Early Childhood Systems Team (a state advisory group for federally funded programs), and family members—will review the information about screening tool use and validity and establish the values and characteristics of an optimal screening tool/process. These characteristics will include conformance to the recommendations of the National Research Council reports on early childhood and selection of tools that are appropriate for Children with High Needs, including those children in poverty, who are culturally diverse or have families who are English language learners. The screening tools will identify children who may need follow-up services to address developmental, learning, or health needs in the areas of physical health, behavioral health, oral health, child development, vision, and hearing. The Assessment Stakeholder Task Force will use these principles to guide selection of “approved screening assessments” and recommended practices that programs can then select from.

MMI will work with the ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality to determine what resources are necessary (e.g., professional development and materials) to successfully incorporate screening practices within their programs. The goal is to implement screening



tools on a broad scale across settings to maximize the number of children who are assessed, especially supporting those programs that serve the highest number of at risk children. This will ensure that children who may need additional services are identified at the earliest point in time. Because Nebraska has a strong system of Early Intervention Services (Early Development Network) and early childhood special education services, the state can improve outcomes for High Needs children and families.

Program Planning and Outcome Accountability Assessments (Formative Assessment Measures). Currently, programs participating in Results Matter can select one of three state approved assessments. Beginning in 2012-2013, Nebraska will require all participating programs to use one, integrated assessment program—Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold) online assessment system. TS Gold is a national program developed by Teaching Strategies that is based on their earlier assessment program called Creative Curriculum. The decision to use one assessment was made based on the need for:

- Streamlined, simplified and sustained data collection and data quality processes at every level.
- Completely seamless birth to five assessment system to reduce data errors and improve efficiency.
- Comprehensive, user-friendly system with multiple unique features and resources for teachers, families, and administrators embedded in the system.
- System with the capacity and infrastructure to address and respond to multiple needs for managing a statewide system efficiently and effectively.

In addition, Nebraska statutes require in Neb. Rev. Stat. §79-760.03 that NDE and the K-12 school system in Nebraska use a single assessment system for comparability of student data. This makes sense for Results Matter as well. The need for comparability of early childhood data and confidence in the use of the data for decision-making at every level cannot be overstated. The move to a single assessment system will enable Nebraska's school districts and other early childhood programs to work together in a framework that is effective, efficient, and sustainable over time. This alignment with a single tool will take place July 2012. (A fuller description of the TS Gold system and research base can be found in Appendix C-04: Teaching Strategies Gold (TS Gold)).



TS Gold not only provides data for planning instruction, but also provides aggregated child outcomes data that are used for child outcomes reporting progress in meeting Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) child outcome requirements (baseline and annual targets). TS Gold child outcomes data is used to report to the Nebraska State Board of Education on the outcomes of all children in state-funded preschools. The outcome data from TS Gold is linked to the state longitudinal data system. This assessment system process is depicted and described on the Data System Flow Chart (Appendix C-05: TS Gold Outcomes Linked to Nebraska's Longitudinal Data System Flow Chart).

Diagnostic Assessment. Nebraska school districts have a comprehensive system for diagnostic assessment through its programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619. Any child in Nebraska in need of diagnostic assessment is referred to the Early Development Network (Part C) or school districts (Part B). Each school district uses a number of standardized assessments (Peabody Picture Vocabulary or Motor Test, Preschool Language Scale-IV, Bayley Scales of Infant Development, and review of medical records, etc.) to gather diagnostic information that is used to determine eligibility for Part C or Part B early childhood special education services.

Reading Readiness Entry Assessment. The ELN Initiative will implement a statewide Reading Readiness Entry Assessment system (described in section (E)(1)). The planning and implementation process for this assessment will mirror the successful planning process that was used in Results Matter.

2) Comprehensive Environmental and Adult-Child Interaction Assessments:

Measures of Environmental Quality. Through the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will implement measures of Environmental Quality for ELDPs as part of the Step Up to Quality (Environmental Rating Scales fully described in section (B)(1)(b)). Participating ELDPs will gain valid and reliable indicators of the overall quality of the early learning environment. Nebraska will provide support to the ELDPs so they understand results from classroom and home environmental rating measures used in Step Up to Quality. In addition, a debriefing process will be built into the process so that the assessment information can inform practice.



Measures of Adult-Child Interaction. The Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) and The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) along with Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and Pre-K CLASS will be the primary measures of adult-child interaction that Nebraska uses for this Initiative. These valid and reliable indicators of interaction will be implemented as part of the Step Up to Quality program (measures fully described in section (B)(1)(b)). The state will support participating programs to conduct these observations and understand the results so that the assessment information can inform practice.

(C)(2)(b) Working with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding the purpose and uses of each type of assessment included in the comprehensive assessment systems. Nebraska has an effective infrastructure for implementing statewide professional development through the statewide Early Learning Connections (ELC) Coordinators (each located in a regional Educational Service Unit(ESU)) and the central NDE Early Childhood Training Center (fully described in section (D)(1)). ELC Coordinators will work with ELDPs to understand the purpose and use of the assessments and conduct trainings to support use of feedback from the assessments to inform instruction and impact children's outcomes. ELN will increase required and voluntary participation in a comprehensive assessment system through various strategies.

All state-funded preschools, including programs and services funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619; programs funded under Title I of ESEA; and Early Head Start and Head Start programs will continue to implement all assessment components as part of Results Matter, including consistent implementation of the newly recommended developmental and health screenings. (Table (A)(1)-7 in section (A)(1) describes current ELDP use of assessments). In addition, use of Results Matter and the screening assessments will be substantially increased by requiring all ELDPs that participate in Step Up to Quality to use all the assessment components of Results Matter. All programs that participate in Results Matter will also implement measures of environmental quality and adult-child interaction as required by Step Up to Quality.



Elements of Comprehensive Assessments in Nebraska Required Under ELN

Type of Program	Elements of a Comprehensive Assessment System							
	Screening		Formative		Environmental Quality		Adult-Child Interactions	
	Pre ELN	Post ELN	Pre ELN	Post ELN	Pre ELN	Post ELN	Pre ELN	Post ELN
State-funded preschool		X	X	X	X	X		X
Early Head Start and Head Start	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Programs funded under IDEA Part C	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Programs funded under IDEA Part B, section 619		X	X	X	X	X		X
Programs funded under Title I of ESEA		X	X	X	X	X		X
ELDPs receiving CCDF funds	X*	X*	X*	X*	X**	X**	X*	X*
ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality		X		X		X		X

*Only required for programs that are participating in the Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Teaching Pyramid Pilot Sites

**Only required for programs that are participating in the Nurturing Healthy Behaviors/Teaching Pyramid Pilot Sites AND those participating at the Options 1 and 2 of the Early Head Start Infant Toddler Initiative Sites in Nebraska.

Pilot ELDPs. In order to both expand child care capacity in use of ongoing assessments for program planning and provide strategies to increase ELDP involvement in the upper tiers of Step Up to Quality, the ELN Initiative will implement a pilot project. The pilot will support full implementation of Results Matter (all four components) with 10 selected ELDPs that are participating in Step Up to Quality, as well as any other ELDP that volunteers to participate. Each year, Nebraska will add 10 new pilot sites and provide those sites with training and support. ECEs and administrators at the pilot sites will receive coaching support to build their capacity to effectively administer and use the assessment information. MMI will work with NDE and NDHHS to identify strategies to encourage and support programs participating in Step Up to Quality to fully join the Results Matter system.



Training. Since 2006, the NDE has provided intensive assessment training across the state to ECE as part of implementation of the Results Matter system. Multiple approaches have been initiated for both ECE and administrators, including building capacity of trainers, direct training workshops, informational resources, and webinars. Nebraska has the capacity to expand its professional development efforts to provide additional training to increase the number of ECEs who can effectively administer, interpret, and use assessments based on evidence-based practices. Continued professional development on the nature and use of assessments to inform practice; the Results Matter comprehensive assessment system, including the newly developed TS Gold; and new screening assessments will continue for both ELDPs that are new to the system and those already using the system. The professional development is designed to ensure that providers have achieved competencies in: 1) understanding the purposes of training, 2) reliably using each type of assessment in the comprehensive assessment system, 3) interpreting assessment results, and 3) engaging parents in the assessment process. Training and technical support will be provided at the district, classroom, and provider level to build capacity to review data and improve practices.

Feedback and Improvement of System. Nebraska will evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive assessment system through annual focus group interviews and surveys. These focus groups and surveys will target representative groups of those ELDPs using the comprehensive assessments (both child and environmental). The informant group targeted will include representative groups of ECE and administrators across settings (pilot sites, center-based child care, state-funded preschool, federally funded early childhood programs, and Early Head Start and Head Start) to determine the success of fully implementing the comprehensive assessment system. In addition, MMI and the (UNL) will analyze statewide child data on TS Gold to evaluate trends and subgroup differences among the children assessed. The Assessment Stakeholders Task Force, NDE, and NDHHS will reflect on the findings to help inform ways to improve the assessment system. The state will implement a continuous improvement process at the classroom, district, and state level, which will be based on a review of the data, plan, and act model. Training and technical assistance will be provided at the local level to enhance the continuous improvement process at all levels (see Appendix C-06: Comprehensive Assessment Work Scope, Munroe-Meyer Institute).



(C)(2)(c) Articulating an approach for aligning, integrating and sharing assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple early learning and development programs.

Integrating data from multiple agencies. Nebraska has taken many steps to integrate the assessment process for children who are served by multiple agencies. For example, memorandums of understanding (MOUs) have been established between Head Start and Early Head Start programs and state-funded preschools to determine the assessment process for children who attend two or more programs. These MOUs outline the assessments that are going to be completed, how the teachers will work together to complete the mandated assessments for multiple programs, and how to integrate their reporting. Since the majority of Head Start and Early Head Start programs are part of the Results Matter System, this allows for integrated reporting on child progress as well as to individual reporting by subgroups. Also, within the TS Gold online assessment, a team central function allows multiple providers to integrate assessment information from multiple sources. For example, teachers can observe children in multiple settings or multiple times within the same setting and enter observations that can be scored in one central location. All ELDPs that participate in Results Matter will have access to this integrated system of assessment. Training will be provided by NDE and MMI to maximize the integrated features of this assessment approach. This data system can be linked with the NDE longitudinal educational data system by a unique child identifier.

Alignment of assessments and strategies across early childhood systems. MMI will work with the Assessment Stakeholders Task Force to determine the degree to which the four Results Matter assessment components are aligned across agencies and systems and determine a plan to implement strategies that will improve alignment. NDE and NDHHS will evaluate strengths and gaps of the current ability to link data across programs with respect to child assessment data and determine strategies to improve integration and linkages with the NDE and NDHHS data systems. NDE and NDHHS will implement recommended strategies to improve linkages to maximize coordination for Children with High Needs served in multiple settings.



(C)(2)(d) Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs and services.

Through Nebraska's statewide training system of regional ESUs, broad based training efforts are in place that support the capacity of ECEs to conduct assessments, both child and environmental. These include:

- TS Gold assessment training implemented statewide.
- Results Matter Institutes that address understanding data and action planning.
- Training regarding assessment linked curriculum and instructional strategies.
- TS Gold's online assessment, which has built in training modules that are required of all teachers.
- Beginning in the fall of 2012, ECE participating in Results Matter will be required to complete the reliability certificate that is available on TS Gold to maximize their reliability in administering the assessments.

MMI will conduct a survey of ELDPs to determine training needed to build the skills of ECEs and providers to successfully implement each of the tools and processes related to each assessment component (screening, instructional planning, and accountability, diagnostic, kindergarten entry readiness, environmental quality, and adult-child interaction). Based on the survey, MMI will establish an integrated assessment training plan for each year of ELN Initiative and going forward, that address the areas of:

- Implementation of the TS Gold online assessment system and screening tools, including a process of inter-rater reliability, scoring, interpretation.
- Understanding the purposes of each of the assessments (e.g., screening, curriculum-linked, diagnostic, etc) within the recommended comprehensive assessment process.
- Use of child data—how best to use data for program planning, reflection on data findings, and continuous improvement process.
- Engaging families in understanding their child's progress and providing for ongoing communication with families regarding their child's development and learning.



- Use and understanding of developmental and health screenings, including screening materials, for all ELDPs.
- Use and understanding of environmental quality assessments and adult-child interactions.
- ELC Coordinators (with support from MMI trainers) will deliver these trainings using a variety of different modalities (online training, webinars, and workshops) and targeted at multiple levels including teachers and administrators. MMI will also work with higher education to infuse assessment training and knowledge into post secondary curriculum.

Action Plan. The state’s detailed action plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments is contained in the following chart.

Strategy 10: Work with Early Learning and Development Programs to select assessment instruments and approaches appropriate for the target populations and purposes.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 10a Complete survey of ELDPs to gather information on what screening tool is currently is being used	January – March, 2012	MMI
Activity 10b Review five to seven screening tools to determine the reliability and validity of the tools	January- March, 2012	MMI/ Expert Assessment Consultants
Activity 10c Review literature to determine evidence-based practices related to health and developmental screening tool	January-March , 2012	MMI
Activity 10d Convene stakeholders group to review screening tool information obtained in Activity One through Three and establish guiding principles to identify selection of recommended screening tools and practice	April , 2012	MMI/ Assessment Stakeholder Task Force
Activity 10e Approve list of recommended screening tools	May 2012	NDE/NDHHS Stakeholder Group
Activity 10f Develop and implement strategies to disseminate screening tool recommendations	May –August, 2012	MMI



Strategy 11: Work with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purpose and uses of each type of assessment included in the comprehensive assessment systems.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 11a Implement screening, environmental, and adult-child interaction assessments by ELDP through Step Up to Quality	August 2012 and ongoing	NDE
Activity 11b Identify strategies to support Step Up to Quality network providers in joining the Results Matter system using TS Gold to assess children to support instructional programming and accountability	May – July, 2012	MMI
Activity 11c Pilot implementation of Results Matter assessment (TS Gold) with 10 additional Step Up to Quality child care classrooms each year	August 2012 August 2013 August 2014 and ongoing	MMI
Activity 11d Evaluate the effectiveness of Results Matter and the ELN Initiative to implement a comprehensive assessment system and implement recommendations for improvement	April – July 2013, 2014, 2015	MMI/UNL Task Force
Activity 11e School district programs and their partners have already been notified of the new formative assessment in Results Matter. TS Gold trainings implemented throughout the state	June 2011 – July 2012 for existing programs	NDE, ECTC
Activity 11f Implement TS Gold In all state-funded preschools; programs funded by IDEA Part C and Part B, section 619; programs funded under Title I of ESEA, Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) programs, a majority of the Early Head Start and Head Start programs; and other ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality	August 2012 – August 2013 and ongoing	NDE, ECTC
Activity 11g Implement TS Gold in all ELDPs rated at Tier Three or higher in Step Up to Quality	August 2013-14 and ongoing	NDE, ECTC
Activity 11h Conduct focus group of ELDPs across all settings to assess effectiveness of Results Matter	December 2012 and annually thereafter	NDE/MMI
Activity 11i Implement all four components of the Nebraska comprehensive assessment system for an increasing number of providers within the Step Up to	August 2014 and ongoing	Selected child care programs in the Step Up



Strategy 11: Work with Early Learning and Development Programs to strengthen Early Childhood Educators' understanding of the purpose and uses of each type of assessment included in the comprehensive assessment systems.		
Quality network		to Quality network.
Activity vj Implement a continuous improvement process is at the classroom, district, and state level	August 2014- Dec 2015	MMI/ELC Coordinators/NDE/NDH HS

Strategy 12: Align, integrate and share assessment results, as appropriate, in order to avoid duplication of assessments and to coordinate services for Children with High Needs who are served by multiple early learning and development programs.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 12a Convene Assessment Stakeholders Task Force	April 2012	MMI/Stakeholders Task Force
Activity 12b Evaluate strengths and gaps of the current ability to link data across programs with respect to child assessment data	January-March 2013	MMI/NDHHS/NDE
Activity 3c Implement recommended strategies to improve linkages to maximize coordination for children served in multiple settings	September– December 2013	MMI/NDHHS/NDE

Strategy 13: Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs and services.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 13a Conduct training survey of ELDP	March – April, 2012	MMI
Activity 13b Establish an integrated pre-service/in-service assessment training plan for each year of the grant	May – July , 2012	MMI/ELC Coordinators
Activity 13c Train ELC assessment consultants at the regional ESUs to build their capacity to provide training and technical assistance to carry out training plan	July 2012	MMI/ELC Coordinators



Strategy 13: Training Early Childhood Educators to appropriately administer assessments and interpret and use assessment data in order to inform and improve instruction, programs and services.		
Activity 13d Implement the established training plan and work with higher education to infuse training information process into post secondary curriculum	Beginning Jan, 2013	MM/ECI
Activity 13e Convene meetings with higher education agencies including universities and four- and two-year colleges, to determine strategies to infuse assessment information into exiting course work	March 2013	MMI/UNL
Activity 13f Provide coaching to support pilot sites in adopting assessment practices	Oct 2012	UNL/Consultants
Activity 13g Assessment consultants provide coaching support to ELDPs use of assessment in pilot sites	Ongoing beginning Fall 2012	ELC Coordinators
Activity 13h Develop and implement four online modules related to assessment system. One will be completed each year	May 2012 May 2013 May 2014 January 2015	MMI/ Module consultants

(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of Children with High Needs to improve school readiness. Nebraska recognizes the importance of caring for the whole child and family to increase positive child outcomes. Two factors are especially crucial in improving school readiness for Children with High Needs. First, making sure that children have access to high-quality, ongoing physical, mental, and oral health care is one of the best ways that parents and caregivers can keep children healthy and ready to learn. This is especially imperative for Children with High Needs who are more likely to encounter barriers to comprehensive and consistent health care. Second are the environments in which children play, grow, and learn are equally important in ensuring good intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development. Nothing could be truer for Children with High Needs, as early intervention is well-documented as making significant improvements in their development. These two components are essential to ensuring that children enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, health, and dispositions they need to be successful.



These two areas of early childhood are often addressed separately through disparate programs and agencies that require different areas of training and expertise for professionals in the field, varied funding streams with specific requirements, and differing program priorities. This lack of coordination can cause gaps and duplication in service. Additionally, in rural and urban settings, families often encounter barriers in accessing needed health services, such as lack of information about resources and health needs, financial constraints, and lack of adequate services in remote locations. The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) implements an innovative program to address these concerns and increase the number of children screened; referred for services; and where appropriate, receive follow-up services and ongoing health care. The objectives also embrace a collaborative process for integrating training and supports in areas that traditionally have remained separate: the Nebraska's Department of Education focus on domains of language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge (including early mathematics and early scientific development) and the Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services focus on domains of physical well-being and motor development (including adaptive skills), and social and emotional development approaches.

Through the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will identify and address the health, behavior, and development of Children with High Needs by supporting children within the context and needs of their families and communities. Early Learning and Development Health and Community Resource Consultants (HCR Consultants) will act as liaisons and navigators in local communities to educate Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) and provide important links between the families served by Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) and the community resources and health providers. HCR Consultants will help families overcome barriers both by providing guidance and tools to access resources and by increasing their understanding of available resources. Nebraska will leverage the resources and expertise of local partners to build a comprehensive system that promotes the health and safety of young children within supportive community systems of care. Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health (NDHHS Division) will lead the initiative and collaborate with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) as well as local communities and ELDPs. The objectives include:



- 1) Incorporate rigorous evidence-based standards across Step Up to Quality, the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), tiers that promote the physical, social, and emotional well-being of young children.
- 2) Build a network of HCR Consultants in communities who:
 - Provide training and consultation to ELDPs to assist them in meeting progressive health related criteria within Step Up to Quality.
 - Develop and support community-based Health Resource Hubs that serve as centers for early childhood health service and education.
 - Help both programs and families navigate and access health resources within their communities.
- 3) Increase rates of screening, referrals for services, and participation in ongoing well-child care through collaboration between HCR Consultants, Medicaid Managed Care Providers, other primary care providers, and ELDPs.

The NDHHS Division has the expertise and reach to make lasting changes in building a comprehensive system that promotes the health and safety of young children. In particular, the Division of Public Health's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems project has extensively studied child care health consultation and potential models for implementation and support. Furthermore, the NDHHS Division has a long history of working with a wide range of stakeholders and community organizations in supporting systems of care for children, through such efforts as the School Health consultation. This comprehensive system will ease the barriers caused by disparate programs and agencies, eradicating gaps and duplication in service and addressing the challenges that Nebraska's rural and urban families face.

(C)(3)(a) Establishing standards for ensuring children's health and safety; ensuring that health and behavioral screening and follow-up occur; and promoting children's physical, social, and emotional development across the levels of QRIS. Incorporation of robust health and safety resources and standards into Step Up to Quality provides the means for improving the quality of health and safety practices among ELDPs statewide and over time. Nebraska will build on its substantive work to promote the physical, social,



and emotional well-being of young children by incorporating rigorous, research-based health and safety standards across the levels of Step Up to Quality.

Nebraska has developed and implemented research-based health and safety standards throughout the early childhood system in order to promote consistent practice. Health and safety standards, above and beyond those required for licensing, are included in Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines (Appendices C-01 (Guidelines ages birth-3) and C-02 (Guidelines ages 3-5)). The Teaching Pyramid model, containing strategies for supporting positive social emotional development in the classroom, has been implemented in four demonstration sites, with several related initiatives implemented at the community level (model can be found in Appendix A-03: Teaching Pyramid Model and a full discussion of the Pyramid is included in section D). The NDHHS Division developed and implemented the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child-Care (NAP SACC) initiative under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "Communities Putting Prevention to Work" grant. (Appendix C-07: Little Voices for Healthy Choices Initiative). Nebraska will incorporate NAP SACC into Step Up to Quality tiers in Year Two after the completion of the evaluation of the CDC project, so the results can inform the incorporation. In addition, some local health departments in Nebraska have provided child care health consultation in their districts. For instance, the Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department's consultation efforts have demonstrated positive outcomes in reducing communicable disease in child care. The expertise of such local programs will help guide the development of the statewide efforts.

As part of the Step Up to Quality criteria development process (described in section B(1)(a)), the NDHHS Division will include standards for physical health and safety, and physical, social and emotional development that provide a progression across the levels and address:

- Physical health and safety based on the national standards *Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*, Third Edition.



- Promotion of physical activity and improved nutrition and eating habits, based on the *Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs* and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention's evidence-based intervention of *NAP SACC* (added to Step Up to Quality in Year Two).
- Social, emotional and behavioral health through incorporation of The Teaching Pyramid model of interventions (Appendix A-03: Teaching Pyramid Model).

Meeting the Needs of Different Types of Early Learning and Development Programs. Nebraska is cognizant of and sensitive to the varying needs of different types of ELDPs. It has long regionalized training and technical assistance to accommodate programs. Health criteria proposed in Step Up to Quality were chosen based on the feasibility of ELDPs meeting them in most settings, including in-home child care programs. The NAP SACC standards are currently being implemented and assessed with over 300 in-home child care providers and are being piloted in urban child care centers. Based on that assessment, these standards will be adapted to the degree possible and yet maintain fidelity to the original evidence-based model.

(C)(3)(b) Training and supporting Early Childhood Educators on an on-going basis in meeting the health standards. The NDHHS Division will collaborate with the NDE to develop a network of HCR Consultants who will train and support ECEs and ELDPs to meet health standards. This child care health consultation model is based on the standards for child care health consultants (*Caring for Our Children*, Standard 1.6.0.1: Child Care Health Consultants). Nebraska has researched and supported this model at various levels for a number of years and the ELN Initiative provides the opportunity to build on this knowledge to further develop, scale-up, and evaluate its impact. One such effort, the NAP SACC training, has great potential to enhance ability of ELDPs to promote healthy environments, yet needs a network of consultants to bring up to statewide scale. This strategy will ultimately close the achievement gap for High Needs Children through its focus on the whole child.



Health and Community Resource Consultants. HCR Consultants will be licensed health professionals with qualifications and competencies based on *Caring for Our Children* Standard 1.6.0.1. In consultation with national experts in the field of child care health consultation, the scope of duties and minimum qualifications of the HCR Consultants will be developed and incorporated into the requirements for community-based contractors who will hire and supervise them. The NDHHS Division will develop and implement a training program for HCR Consultants, utilizing resources such as the National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants and regionally developed curricula.

NDHHS, in consultation with the NDE and Educational Service Units (ESU), will develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for community-based organizations (contractors) to provide the HCR Consultant services on a local level (either in a local community or serving several communities). This RFP will be explicit in its expectations for integration of health and safety consultation into the full range of training and supports provided for ELDPs and the families they serve. Potential contractors will be selected based on their understanding of community systems of care for young children and their families, and evidence that they have built or are building the necessary partnerships with ELDPs, schools, health and mental health providers, and human service programs. The RFP will also establish expectations for community level of support for the services, such as location of HCR Consultant and services in an existing setting (such as a school or community center) and with concurrent expectations for developing a sustainability plan to continue the services past the life of the grant.

Leveraging the ESU training model and resources (detailed in section (D)(2)), HCR Consultants will provide professional development and consultation to ELDP educators to help them meet the progressive health related criteria within Step Up to Quality. Training will be prioritized for ELDPs located in targeted communities as described in section (A)(2). The professional development will consist of on-site support if feasible, online and phone consultations, and group trainings. By providing coordinated training and working in a collaborative fashion, NDE's Early Learning Connectors (fully described in section D) and NDHHS's HCR Consultants will be cross-trained in areas of competency and develop ways to integrate their standards, materials, and training to better support



ELDP educators. HCR Consultants may also provide training and consultation to the QRIS anchors, which rate and monitor the participating ELDPs. (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 42-2620 and 2620.01) Consultants will assist the anchors to understand health and safety criteria and therefore implement health and safety environmental rating tools more effectively.

The training and consultation provided by the HCR Consultants to Step Up to Quality programs will be in addition to and supportive of the on-line curriculums that are provided to licensed ELDPs as part of the proposed Child Care Licensing Regulations (Appendix C-08: Proposed Child Care Licensing Regulations). These curriculums include *Safe with You, Early Learning Guidelines* (already available through Independent Study), and the two Management Training curriculums—*Getting Down to Business* for Family Child Care licensees and *Child Care Management Training* for Center Directors.

Meeting the Needs of Children with High Needs and Unique Populations. In addition to the services initially targeted to communities with the highest level of need, HCR Consultants will provide community level adaptations that will help ELDPs to meet the diverse needs of young children and their families, including cultural, language, physical, and behavioral needs. The Step Up to Quality standards include adaptation and accommodation of children with special health care needs, and the HCR Consultants will support ELDPs not only in meeting these criteria, but in connecting families to resources such as IDEA Parts B and C services.

Learning Community. The HCR Consultants will meet quarterly as a learning community to share experiences, current research, program results, strategies, and other professional issues. The meetings may also include the Early Learning Connection Coordinators (professional development coordinators located at the regional ESUs) to further integrate training knowledge, approaches, and practices. Because the HCR Consultants are geographically diverse (as discussed in section (C)(3)(d)) and provide training through different regional ESUs, it is imperative that a structure exists to build a supportive learning community to build capacity, knowledge, and support for success of their work.



Increasing Capacity of Early Childhood Educators. The state currently does not have a system to collect data on numbers of ECE who receive training and other support to meet health standards. The Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry (described in section (D)(2) and summarized in Appendix C-09: The Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry) will be the vehicle for collecting and reporting the provision of training on health related standards. The projected number and percentages of ECEs who receive training and support in meeting the health standards is based on the number of ELDPs projected to participate in Step Up to Quality - 569 ELDPs by 2015 (evidenced in table for Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c) in section (B)(2)(C)). Additionally, local ELDPs that are not participating in Step Up to Quality will obtain training and support in health and safety standards and issues through interactions with the Health Resource Hub.

(C)(3)(c) Promoting healthy eating habits, improving nutrition, expanding physical activity. The ELN Initiative promotes healthy eating habits, improves nutrition, and expands physical activity. The Step Up to Quality criteria and training for participating providers will include standards for physical health and safety, and physical, social and emotional development that specifically address promotion of physical activity and improved nutrition and eating habits—based on *Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs* and *NAP SACC*. The ELDP training builds on the training already provided through the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and will utilize findings of pilot projects being supported through the CDC TEAM Nutrition grant funded project. In addition to providing professional development, HCR Consultants will organize and conduct community-based informational sessions for families through the Health Resource Hub (described in section (C)(3)(d)), reinforcing the value of the Hub as a local resource. Additionally, HCR Consultants will develop resources, tools, and lessons for providers and families on health literacy topics, an area that has not been extensively pursued in the past.



(C)(3)(d) Leverage existing resources to increase the number of Children with High Needs who are screened, referred for services based on the results of those screenings, and where appropriate, received follow-up; and participate in ongoing care.

In addition to training and supporting ELDP educators, HCR Consultants will help both ELDPs and families navigate and access needed health resources within their communities and strengthen connections between and within community early childhood health providers and resources. The ELN Initiative leverages existing resources in high needs local communities by creating the innovative Health Resource Hub, which creates a network of local care providers, services, and resources for families and children at one convenient, local setting.

Health Resource Hub. The RFP described in section (C)(3)(b) will also establish expectations for provision of community level support services, including locating HCR Consultants and services in existing settings that meet community needs (such as a room or space in a school or community center). Community-based contractors, with the HCR Consultant, will develop the local Health Resource Hub, which will focus on the health and safety of children and provide one convenient place for early childhood services and information. Prior to submitting the RFP, the community-based contractor must convene a local Advisory Council (composed of early childhood and health stakeholders in the community, including those from the school district, public health department, Educational Service Units (ESU), community action agencies, ELDPs, and families) to submit the Hub plan as part of its contract requirements. The community contractor will propose a vision of what resources could be integrated at the Hub and provide assurance of proposed public health linkages and partnerships and other community partnerships such as educational supports.

If the community plan is approved for implementation, the HCR Consultant will be located at the Hub and work with the community to create a network of local care providers, services, and resources for families and children. The HCR Consultant will help set up contracts and agreements between the community and health providers and other resources (dentists, doctors, mental health, screening, health education materials and trainings for parents) to provide services at that local setting. The HCR Consultant will support the use of the innovative NET training modules developed and aired over local television broadcasts (described in section C(4)) by setting up



viewing sessions and facilitating the use and understanding of the module content with EDLPs and families. Depending on individual community need, the Hubs could expand to provide a range of support and educational services for High Needs Children and families, including employment training, services for pregnant moms, reading and math tutoring, free legal services, free housing services, and free credit counseling services.

Build Local Capacity. This initiative is intended to build partnerships and capacity in the local communities between the HCR Consultant, ELDPs, and other local resources. The Consultants (seven in Year One and 13 more in Year Two, for a total of 20 for Years Two- Four) will initially be located in targeted communities, consistent with the ELN Initiative's guiding principle to prioritize resources to areas of the state with children and families experiencing the most need (described in section (A)(1)(b)). As part of the RFP process, potential community contractors will submit proposals of how best to integrate the HCR Consultants and place them within communities so as to impact the most ELDPs and educators within a geographic area. Most importantly, the HCR Consultants will be community-based and will be managed by community-based contractors who are connected and familiar with the communities' needs and systems of care. This collaboration will create a system of consultation with the ability to adapt to the varying needs of small and large providers and rural and urban settings and will be key to forming the relationships that make health promotion and access to supporting services successful.

Early Childhood Health Summit. To support and celebrate the work of the local communities, HCR Consultants, and the Health Resource Hubs, the ELN Initiative will conduct an Early Childhood Health Summit half way through the grant period. HCR Consultants, Early Learning Connection Coordinators, local Advisory Councils, ELDPs, families, and key health and human service partners will participate in the Summit. The Summit will provide an opportunity to share the successes in building local child care health consultation capacity, focus on health and safety topics, and provide updates on evidence-based practices that promote health and safety of young children and their families.



Navigation. The HCR Consultant will help the community they are located in to identify strengths, gaps, and weaknesses in their early childhood system of care and then work with the community to address those gaps when possible. HCR Consultants will use a community system of care assessment tool to gather information about the community, identify needs and priorities in communities they are serving to inform their work, and provide information and education to members of the local health care communities. This tool was developed through the Together for Kids and Families (TFKF) project implemented under Nebraska’s Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS) grant, funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and its Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Bureau. The ELN Initiative builds upon the work of TFKF to currently pilot the tool in three communities across Nebraska (Valentine, Ogallala and Omaha). Based on findings and recommendations of the TFKF pilot, the HCR Consultants will make modifications to the current tool to include more categories of information than the current social/emotional development information that is gathered, such as additional sections on routine medical care/medical home, oral health, and pediatric specialty care (Appendix C-10: Early Childhood System of Care Community Self-Assessment Tool).

The HCR Consultant will work within a targeted community to provide expertise and guidance to ELDPs and the families they serve. The HCR Consultant will also develop navigation tools and processes for understanding community systems of care. They will work with community organizations, as well as the health providers, to build and map the network of early childhood resources and services in the community. These tools will help families and ELDPs navigate complicated and confusing systems, identify what services providers cover and what information they require, and identify and remove other barriers that prevent families for accessing services—such as transportation, child care, transportation, and referrals. In addition, HCR Consultants will aid ELDPs in connecting families with important supportive services such as IDEA Parts B and C, home visitation services, and a wide range of social, educational, and economic assistance resources available within the community.

The HCR Consultants’ scope of work throughout these initiatives will require collaboration with other federally- or state-funded educational and health professionals. The HCR Consultants will not duplicate the work of these professionals, but augment their



efforts by offering expertise in early childhood. For example, HCR Consultants will collaborate with Medicaid nurse consultants who connect families with providers, but do not focus on early care providers or the health and safety environment of the provider's center or home.

QRIS. The QRIS criteria require and support screening and referral practices by ELDPs. The Health and Safety Criteria for the Tier Two of Nebraska's Step Up to Quality will include the completion of the Child Care Health Consultation Worksheet, which addresses the monitoring of health screening. Tier Three includes completion of health reports and working with the HCR Consultants in making referrals, with further competence in determining need for referrals in the Tier Four. (See Draft QRIS standard included in Appendix B-03).

Collaboration with Medicaid Managed Care Providers. The Consultants will work with Medicaid Managed Care Providers to achieve Medicaid care coordination standards through training with providers, ELDPs, and family organizations. Currently, Medicaid Managed Care only exists in 10 Nebraska counties, with the remaining 83 counties fee-for-service. In 2012, managed care will be implemented in all counties. This expansion provides an opportunity to promote screening, referrals, and routine care through the care coordination component of managed care for low-income families served through Medicaid. The HCR Consultant can help bring a local, system-perspective to help health providers in rural communities manage the care coordination requirements of managed care. The HCR Consultants can provide important links between the care coordination component of managed care and the families served through ELDPs. Through the collaborative efforts with Medicaid Managed Care Providers and other health care providers, the HCR Consultants will act as liaisons in promoting access to a medical home and routine medical care.

Sustainability. The ELN Initiative includes several strategies to implement HCR Consultants as a sustainable approach. The model builds capacity of local ELDP educators, who will then sustain permanent change and support for health and safety needs in their programs and communities. Local communities, who initially receive HCR Consultant services under ELN (as part of the Health



Resource Hub) will be asked to commit to financially supporting the HCR Consultant in future years. The NDHHS Division and HCR Consultants will work with the community to develop sustainability plans for maintaining the improvements and support after the grant period ends, including working with private funders and insurance companies.

Evaluation. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln evaluation team housed in the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools, in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, will conduct a process evaluation study of the implementation of HCR Consultant strategies (Appendix B-01: Process Evaluations, Studies 3a-3d). The study results will help inform the Nebraska early childhood community and leaders about the extent to which the HCR Consultants act as liaisons and navigators in local communities to support physical health and safety, and physical, social, and emotional development for high needs children. Nebraska will use the results to determine whether practices are being implemented as designed and intended.

Implementation Timeline and Milestones

Strategy 14: Update Step Up to Quality criteria to include health and safety standards		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 14a Physical health and safety Step Up to Quality criteria finalized	January 2012 – March 2012	NDHHS Division
Activity 14b NAP SACC standards incorporated into Step Up to Quality	January 2013 – March 2013	NDHHS Division

Strategy 15: Develop a network of Early Learning and Development Program Health and Community Resource Consultants.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 15a Establish scope of work, qualifications, and competencies for the HCR Consultants	January 2012 – March 2012	NDHHS Division
Activity 15b Develop training program for HCR Consultants	January 2012 – June 2012	NDHHS Division
Activity 15c Train initial cadre of seven HCR Consultants	June 2012 – September 2012	NDHHS Division



Strategy 15: Develop a network of Early Learning and Development Program Health and Community Resource Consultants.		
Activity 15d Train additional 13 HCR Consultants	January 2013–December 2013	NDHHS Division
Activity 15e Solicit contracts for community plans in eight targeted counties	March 2012 - June 2012	NDHHS Division
Activity 15f Solicit contracts for plans that provide statewide coverage with emphasis on remaining 12 targeted counties	July 2012 – Dec 2012	NDHHS Division
Activity 15g Contracts and consultants in place and trained in eight targeted counties; services initiated	July 2012–Dec 2012 ongoing	NDHHS Division HCR Consultants
Activity 15h Contracts and consultants in place statewide and trained; services initiated	Jan January 2013 – Dec 2013 ongoing	NDHHS Division HCR Consultants
Activity 15i Develop and implement navigation tools and processes for community systems of care in targeted 20 counties	Jan January 2013 – June 2013 ongoing	NDHHS Division
Activity 15j Develop and implement navigation tools and processes for community systems of care in remaining counties	July 2013 – Dec 2013 going	NDHHS Division
Activity 15k Work with communities and local health providers and early childhood resources to develop Health Resource Hubs	Jan January 2014- June 2014 ongoing	NDHHS Division
Activity 15l Hold statewide Early Childhood Health Summit	By third quarter 2014	NDHHS Division HCR Consultants
Activity 15m Collect data, conduct focus groups, and conduct implementation study.	Years Three – Four	UNL

Strategy 16: Screening, referrals, and health services increased through ELDP Health and Community Resource Consultants.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 16a Consultants work with Medicaid Managed Care Providers in achieving care coordination standards in 20 targeted counties	Jan 2013 - ongoing	NDHHS Division
Activity 16b Consultants work with Medicaid Managed Care Providers in achieving care coordination	July 2013 - ongoing	NDHHS Division



Performance Measures for (C)(3)(d) Leveraging existing resources to meet ambitious yet achievable annual statewide targets.					
	Baseline and annual targets				
	Baseline (Today, if known)	Target for end of calendar year 2012	Target for end of calendar year 2013	Target for end of calendar year 2014	Target for end of calendar year 2015
Number of Children with High Needs screened	49,268	50,253	51,258	52,284	53,330
Number of Children with High Needs referred for services who received follow-up/treatment	3,836	4028	4229	4441	4530
Number of Children with High Needs who participate in ongoing health care as part of a schedule of well child care	49,268	50,253	41,258	52,284	53,329
Of these participating children, the number or percentage of children who are up-to-date in a schedule of well child care	81%	82%	85%	90%	95%
Source of baseline data: Nebraska Health and Human Services Form CMS-416: Annual EPSDT* Participation Report, 2010; eligibility criteria for 2010 is 200 %< = FPL.					

(C)(4) Engaging and Supporting Families

SECTION (C)(4) OVERVIEW

Nebraska has a long record of supporting families of children from birth through age eight. Historically, the state has been committed to helping families be engaged and empowered to understand the importance of the early years and promote their children’s learning, overall health, and positive social-emotional development. One of the guiding principles of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN) is that families are valued and supported as children’s first teachers. To be successful in this role, families must have easy



access to consistent information and support. This support must include flexible options for high quality early care and education for their children, as well as the ability to access health, dental care, mental health, and other services as needed. Through the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will further strengthen its commitment to engage families in meaningful and collaborative ways. The proposed activities ensure that extended family, friends, neighbors, and community members have access to early childhood educational and resource materials and are encouraged to support, promote, and provide positive early learning environments.

(C)(4)(a) Establish a progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of its Program Standards, including activities that enhance the capacity of families to support their children’s education and development.

Family Engagement Standards in the QRIS. The inclusion of culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement standards in Step Up to Quality, Nebraska’s proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), demonstrates that the state is rethinking what works in order to engage families in supporting their children’s development and learning. The Step Up to Quality Program Standards—which are currently in a draft format and described fully in section B of this proposal—will outline a progression of family engagement strategies for Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) to follow to advance to higher tiers of the Step Up to Quality QRIS. The family engagement standards for Step Up to Quality will be developed in the first six months of the initiative and will address all the federal criteria: parent access to the program, ongoing two-way communication with families, parent education in child development, outreach to fathers and other family members, training and support for families as children move to preschool and kindergarten, social networks of support, intergenerational activities, linkages with community supports and adult and family literacy programs, parent involvement in decision making, and parent leadership development.

The family engagement strategies in the lower tiers are unidirectional and will include activities such as providing information to parents through parent handbooks and daily communication about the child’s activities. As programs increase their quality and move into Tiers Four and Five of Step Up to Quality, these strategies become bi-directional and more collaborative in nature, consisting of activities such as parent-teacher conferences, parent education nights, parent advisory councils, and home visits.



Nebraska's commitment to making family engagement a core part of the state's Step Up to Quality QRIS, acknowledges that positive and supportive interactions between the early childhood professional and the parent and family members increase parent confidence and give parents valuable insight into how they can best meet their child's individual needs. The family engagement standards in Step Up to Quality are based on doing what works, engaging with families in an informed, collaborative, flexible, and culturally responsive manner. Family engagement is successful when parents work in sync with their child's teachers and ELDPs, creating a positive learning environment at home and connecting with resources to improve family well-being. The ELDPs can help families meet young children's needs by identifying child and family strengths, determining important learning and socialization goals, assessing current levels of child performance or ability, brainstorming plans that parents and teachers can use at home and in the classroom to support a child's growth and development, and checking back to monitor child progress. ELDPs can use these strategies to support parent-to-parent collaboration and to aid in transition experiences across child care environments, and from preschool to primary and beyond.

The ELN Initiative will convene a planning group of representatives from early childhood, education, family engagement researchers, practitioners, and parents to meet in the first six months of implementation. The group will be led by NDE's Family and Community Engagement Impact Team, the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families, and Schools (CYFS), in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) (a description of this partnership can be found in Appendix C-11: CYFS and Buffet Early Childhood Institute Partnership). The task of this group is to further refine the progression of culturally and linguistically appropriate standards for family engagement across the levels of the proposed Step Up to Quality and to ensure that these strategies include activities to enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education and development. This group will build upon demonstrated positive outcomes for children and families in recent Nebraska programs—such as Getting Ready and Project READERS—infusing Step Up to Quality with evidence-based practices for culturally and linguistically appropriate family engagement. (Appendix C-12: Research on Getting Ready, Project READERS and the Family-Centered Coaching Model supports family engagement practice in Nebraska). Final writing of the Step Up to Quality criteria will be completed by July 2012 and Step Up to Quality will begin implementation in August 2012.



Through the family engagement strategies included in Step Up to Quality, Nebraska expects to emphasize collaborative strategies that promote partnerships and shared decision-making between education professionals, caregivers, and families. Collaborative strategies transcend content area and can be applied to all aspects of practice. They can and have been used successfully with Nebraska early childhood professionals and families during teacher and family interactions across a variety of settings, including family and center-based child care, home visitation programs, and early childhood special education.

(C)(4)(b) Increasing the number and percentage of Early Childhood Educators trained and supported on an on-going basis to implement the family engagement strategies included in the Program Standards.

The Quality Portfolio Process (Step Up to Quality Tier Two). As part of Step Up to Quality, all ELDPs that wish to move to Tier Two must complete the Quality Portfolio Process. (Description of the Quality Portfolio can be found in Appendix B-05) This 24-hour professional development process includes at least three opportunities to explore and examine family engagement strategies:

1. **Core Competencies (2 hours).** The Core Competencies professional development includes a section on partnerships with children and families that allows for discussion on the Step Up to Quality family engagement standards.
2. **Early Learning Guidelines (6.5 hours).** Professional development on Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines includes information about the adult's role in supporting the development of the child. It provides one more opportunity for educators to learn and reflect on how they can support the parenting role, particularly how they can use the Guidelines to support families with their children's education and development.
3. **Family Connections Workshop (3 hours).** The Family Connections workshop is a time for educators to discuss the role of the family and community in educating children, and strategies for family engagement in the early childhood education setting.

By the end of 2015, 569 Nebraska ECE programs will have completed the Quality Portfolio Process as they move into Tier Two of Step Up to Quality (as demonstrated in Performance Measure for (B)(4)(c)(1)).



Early Learning Connection Professional Development Regions. Nebraska delivers early childhood training and support statewide through a system of seven Early Learning Connection Professional Development Regions. Each region is staffed by a full-time Early Learning Connection Coordinator (ELC Coordinator) who works with local early childhood education partners to determine training needs and provide training through these partnerships. The Early Learning Connection Regions, along with the Early Childhood Training Center through the NDE, serve as Nebraska's resource and referral system. The local focus and partnership of the early childhood training and support is a key component of Nebraska's community-based model and delivery of services. As part of the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will increase capacity of professional development by hiring seven additional ELC Coordinators in the first year to reach underserved parts of the state. Part of the expanded training will include a focus on the Program Standards of Step Up to Quality including family engagement strategies. (Full professional development plan included in section D.)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educators. University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) has a well established system of Extension Educators located in counties across Nebraska. Known as the Learning Child Team, these experts in early childhood development are an important existing resource that the ELN Initiative will capitalize on in order to educate and provide ongoing support to providers in implementing the family engagement strategies included in Step Up to Quality.

Family Centered Coaching Model Training. The CYFS will train UNL Extension Educators on the family-centered coaching model and Extension Educators will then train ELC Coordinators by the end of 2013. The professional development includes a two-day institute on family-centered coaching strategies and monthly consultation to support use of the family-centered coaching model with practitioners. The content of the training series is consistent with that included in the on-line coach certificate training being developed under section (D)(2). Therefore, as cohorts of trainees participate in and complete the on-line coach certificate, they will also be prepared to provide family-centered coaching support. Utilizing the expertise of the CYFS faculty, the ELN Initiative will provide an opportunity to use this family-centered coaching model as the basis of a high quality professional development and support system across the state. In this model, Early Childhood coaches are trained to engage ELDPs in a process of observation, reflection, action,



feedback, and joint planning through both individual and group sessions. This research-based model has proven successful in positively impacting (a) teachers' behaviors and efficacy for working with families, (b) authentic practices in home visits and other parent outreach strategies, (c) child social emotional and literacy outcomes, and (d) parent-child interactions.

In partnership with other state organizations and agencies, the CYFS will provide leadership and support for a large-scale training and evaluation of this model from 2013-2015 (Appendix C-12: Research on Getting Ready, Project READERS and the Family-Centered Coaching Model supports family engagement practice in Nebraska). CYFS will also convene a group of key stakeholders to determine appropriate assessment of family engagement practices and outcomes, and the capacity of early childhood educators to successfully engage families across the state.

Increasing Capacity of Early Childhood Educators. Employing the family-centered coaching model, the ELC Coordinators and Extension Educators will provide professional development on family engagement strategies (as part of Step up to Quality QRIS) to all state-funded preschool, Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3), Head Start, and Early Head Start programs across the state, reaching all 207 programs serving Children with High Needs by 2015. In the final year of the ELN Initiative, the ELC Coordinators and Extension Educators will begin to reach other ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality, focusing initially on those programs and communities who receive funds from the state's CCDF subsidy program and those who serve the children with the highest needs, reaching an additional 160 programs by 2015 (10 percent of all ELDPs receiving CCDF funds) (evidenced in table for Performance Measures for (B)(2)(c) in section (B)(2)(c)). (See Appendix C-13: Family Engagement Through Outreach to Diverse ECE Programs and Expansion of Professional Development.) The state currently does not have a system to collect data on numbers of ECE who receive training and other support to meet family engagement. The Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry (described in section (D)(2)) will be the vehicle for collecting and reporting the provision of training on family engagement standards.

©(4)© Promoting family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers.



The NDE, Office of Early Childhood Education will leverage existing resources to promote family engagement in early childhood learning statewide starting with innovative programming and supporting materials created in partnership with Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) public television station through its Community Engagement and Educational Outreach Unit. The mission of NET is to enrich lives and engage minds, connecting communities and celebrating Nebraska with services that entertain, educate, and enlighten. NET reaches every home with a television. One million people across Nebraska’s 93 counties watch NET at least 15 minutes per week.

During the first six months of 2012, the NDE, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, will finalize a plan with NET to provide television programming and community engagement sessions that will support parents and families in the education and development of their children. In the remaining years of the ELN Initiative, NET will continue to work with the NDE to engage parents and other users through a 10-part educational series. Topics will be determined by NDE. Each segment will be developed into supporting materials, “Workshops in a Box” created and produced by NET and NDE and made available to initiative users, libraries, educational institutions, and human service organizations throughout the state.

Strategy 17: Update Step Up to Quality criteria to include comprehensive family engagement standards		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 17a Convene planning group to develop and refine family engagement Step Up to Quality, the proposed QRIS criteria	Jan 2012 – June 2012	NDE CYFS BECI
Activity 17b Finalize criteria and further refine strategies for inclusion in Step Up to Quality	July 2012	NDE CYFS BECI
Activity 17c Begin Implementation of Step Up to Quality	Aug 2012	NDE



Strategy 18: Develop and implement training for ECEs and ELDPs on Step Up to Quality standards for family engagement.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 18a Increase capacity of professional development by hiring seven additional ELC Coordinators to reach underserved parts of the state	2012	ESUs
Activity 18b Develop training for ELDPs on the Program Standards of Step Up to Quality, including family engagement strategies	Jan 2012 – June 2012	NDE
Activity 18c Conduct training for ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality	June 2012 and ongoing	NDE ELC Coordinators
Activity 18d Train ELC Coordinators and Extension Educators on family engagement strategies and family-centered coaching model	2013	CYFS UNL Childhood Extension Specialist
Activity 18e Develop implementation plan for family-centered coaching statewide for ELDPs	Dec 2013	CYFS NDE ELC Coordinators
Activity 18f Implement family-centered coaching statewide for ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality, targeting programs serving high needs initially	Jan 2014 and ongoing	ELC Coordinators UNL Extension Educators
Activity 18g Convene group of stakeholders to determine assessment of family engagement practices and outcomes, and capacity educators to engage families	2014	CYFS

Strategy 19: Promote family support and engagement statewide, including by leveraging other existing resources such as through home visiting programs, other family-serving agencies, and through outreach to family, friend, and neighbor caregivers		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 19a Develop innovative television programming and supporting materials to share family engagement strategies and early childhood education for families	Jan 2012 – June 2012	NET NDE
Activity 19b Broadcast and distribute 10-part family engagement series statewide	July 2012 and ongoing	NET
Activity 19c Develop and disseminate supporting materials for the family engagement series, “Workshops in a Box”.	Jan 2013 and ongoing	NDE NET



D. A Great Early Childhood Education Workforce

SECTION (D) OVERVIEW

“It is absolutely critical for the early childhood workforce to be intentional and systematic in the process of understanding young children's cognitive and non-cognitive domains.”
–Secretary Arne Duncan

To improve outcomes for children, Nebraska will elevate its early childhood workforce to boost the knowledge, competency, and productivity of its teachers. The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) plan for workforce development will advance early childhood educator preparedness, quality, and retention. The ELN Initiative ensures that all early childhood programs have well-trained, knowledgeable, and motivated Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) through 1) alignment of early childhood professional development offerings with the state’s Competency Framework, 2) implementing QRIS Program Standards that include meaningful educator knowledge standards and training supports, 3) strong state infrastructure that trains and supports early ECEs and all ELDP by expanded access to professional development, support, and resources improving their work with young children and Children with High Needs, 4) innovative and effective professional development strategies, including coaching and the use of the Teaching Pyramid model, and 5) state policies and incentives that promote professional advancement for ECEs.

(D)(1) Developing a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials.

(D)(1)(a) Develop a common, statewide Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework designed to promote children’s learning and development and improve child outcomes. The ELN Initiative builds upon a strong foundation of work that includes the standards-based Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework that Nebraska implemented in 2008. Aligned with both early



childhood credential and degree programs and professional development opportunities, the ELN Initiative's framework is entitled Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals (Competency Framework). The framework includes a set of expectations that describes what Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), including those working with children with disabilities, English language learners and other Children with High Needs, should know and be able to do. The framework and supporting materials are updated and published by Nebraska's Department of Education (NDE). (Appendix B-06: Core Competency Framework and supporting materials). The Competency Framework addresses nine core knowledge areas:

- Child growth and development
- Health, safety, and nutrition
- Learning environments
- Planning learning experiences and curriculum
- Interacting with children and providing guidance to children
- Observation, assessment, and documentation
- Partnerships with families and communities
- Professionalism and leadership
- Administration, program planning, and development

All core knowledge areas relate directly to the portions of the framework that address the specific learning domains as well as areas addressed in Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (social and emotional development, health and physical development, language and literacy development, mathematical thinking, scientific thinking, and creative arts).

The NDE also provides supporting materials and additional resources to support ECE use of the Competency Framework, including the Competency Framework self-assessments, the Competency Framework Professional Development Plan, and the Competency Framework Professional Development Record. The Competency Framework and supporting documents meet the requirements of the federal definition of Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework (contained in section III of the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Application for Initial Funding, CFDA Number: 84.412) and are designed to provide adults working with children



the skills they need to promote children's learning and development and significantly improve outcomes. (Appendix D-01: Alignment of Nebraska Competency Framework with federal Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework requirements).

Copies of the Competency Framework and supporting materials are distributed widely to ECE and ELDPs and are 1) available in printed format from the NDE and on the NDE website, 2) provided to all ECEs who receive professional development on the Competency Framework, including as part of the Quality Portfolio Training Series (an intensive foundational training course that includes Competency Framework), and 3) incorporated into the resources provided to early childhood education students by two-year and four-year colleges.

Professional Development. In April 2008, Nebraska began to promote the use and understanding of the Competency Framework. Training was developed and a cadre of 40 early childhood professionals provided two-hour overview trainings to ECEs and ELDPs. Nebraska expanded the Competency Framework training through implementation of the Quality Portfolio Training Series, an intensive training requiring more than 24 clock hours that addresses key professional development information for improving quality (further described in section (D)(2)(a)). Over 300 ECEs have participated in the Quality Portfolio Learning Community, which includes an overview of the Competency Framework, completion of the self-assessments, and development of a professional development plan. (Appendix B-05: Quality Portfolio Training Program). Many more ECEs will receive the Competency Framework overview trainings as part of the Quality Portfolio training in Tier Two of Step Up to Quality, Nebraska's tiered quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). ECEs will receive individual coaching in order to complete their portfolios and complete an individual professional development plan. Nebraska anticipates training approximately 2,095 ECEs by 2015. Current professional development opportunities related to the Competency Framework will continue as part of the ELN Initiative Professional Development Plan (described in section (D)(2)(a)).

(D)(1)(b) Develop a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. Nebraska has used a common, statewide progression of credentials and degrees aligned with the



Competency Framework. The Competency Framework defines six levels of knowledge and skills and aligns with Nebraska's sequence of professional preparation through higher education institutions. The six levels are:

- **Level 1**—Skills and knowledge anyone entering the early childhood field should have.
- **Level 2**—All skills in Level 1, plus skills and knowledge anyone working the early childhood field should have after one to two years of employment.
- **Level 3**—Increasing level of skills and knowledge anyone working in the early childhood field might have, as measured by the skills a Child Development Associate (CDA) would have, a one year certificate or diploma in early childhood education would provide, or three years of experience in early childhood education would provide.
- **Level 4**—Increasing level of skills and knowledge anyone working in the early childhood field might have, as measured by the skills someone with an associate's degree in early childhood education would have.
- **Level 5**—Increasing level of skills and knowledge anyone working the field might have, as measured by the skills someone with a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, or early childhood special education would have.
- **Level 6**—Increasing level of skills and knowledge anyone working in the early childhood field might have, as measured by the skills and knowledge someone with an advanced degree in early childhood education, child development, or early childhood special education would have.

In its mission to elevate the early childhood workforce and boost the knowledge, competency, and productivity of its teachers, Nebraska partnered with two- and four-year higher education institutions in the state. These institutions have reviewed and informally agreed to explicitly integrate the Competency Framework into their coursework. In addition, some programs have examined how the Competency Framework aligns with the competencies of their course sequence for degrees. Teacher education programs have revised course syllabi to ensure better alignment with the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Standards for Professional Preparation and Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals. Under the ELN Initiative, Nebraska will increase the alignment of higher education institutions sequence of courses for the early childhood education teacher preparation



programs with the Competency Framework by a process of review and revision of courses and course contents (process described in section (D)(1)(c)).

Nebraska’s Early Childhood Career Levels. To formalize the six levels and skills described above, the NDE recently developed the Early Childhood Career Levels to recognize the myriad of ways that knowledge and skills are acquired in the early childhood field and possible ways to progress and advance in the early childhood field. The ELN Initiative will integrate the Early Childhood Career Levels into the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry (discussed in section (D)(2)(a)) as a way to recognize ECE training, years of experience, and completion of formal education in early childhood education. The Early Childhood Career Levels will also be a critical measure in the Step Up to Quality criteria for teacher and director education. The Step Up to Quality professional development criteria specify the percentage of staff who must be at a certain career level in order for the program to be rated at different tiers of quality.

Early Childhood Career Levels
Level 6c —Has a Ph.D. or ED.D. in Early Learning Education (ECE), Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), educational research, assessment, educational administration
Level 6b —Has a master’s degree in ECE or ECSE
Level 6a —Has a master’s degree in Education in area other than ECE but has a bachelor’s degree in child development or ECE
Level 5b —Has a bachelor’s degree in child development or ECE from a regionally accredited four-year college
Level 5a —Has a bachelor’s degree in education but not in ECE, has at least 12 semester credit hours of ECE
Level 4c —Has an associate’s degree in ECE from a community college with at least 20 semester credit hours in ECE.
Level 4b —Has a bachelor’s degree in area other than ECE and has at least two continuous years of experience in ECE and at least 24 clock hours of training in ECE per year
Level 4a —Has at least five continuous years of experience in the field with an average of 24 clock hours of training in ECE per year
Level 3c —Has completed Child Development Associate (CDA) or a one-year certificate or diploma in ECE from a community college with at least 18 semester credit hours in ECE
Level 3b —Has an associate’s degree from community college in area other than ECE and at least two continuous years of experience in the field with an average of 24 clock hours of training in ECE per year



Early Childhood Career Levels
Level 3a —Has completed at least three continuous years of experience in the field and an average of 24 clock hours of training per year
Level 2b —Has completed at least three college courses in ECE
Level 2a —Has completed at least two continuous years of experience in the field and an average of 24 clock hours of training per year
Level 1b —Averages 24 clock hours of training per year
Level 1a —Has completed program orientation and 12 clock hours of training

Higher Education Institutions’ Articulated Pathways for Early Childhood Education. Nebraska’s two-year and four-year higher education institutions offer an array of certificate programs, diploma programs, and degree and endorsement programs that address child development and early childhood education. Five public colleges and universities in the state offer the early childhood unified degree. This degree specifically focuses on preparing early childhood education professionals to work with children from birth through grade three. The program includes a combination of general education courses, child development courses, teacher education courses, and special education courses. The chart below indicates the current status of articulation of courses between the associate degree programs in early childhood education at Nebraska’s community colleges and the four-year degree programs at the colleges/universities for the early childhood education unified endorsement.



Articulation of Courses between Two-year and Four-year Colleges and Universities for Unified Early Childhood Education Degrees

4-year colleges/ universities	2-yr colleges	Metro Community College	Southeast Community College	Central Community College	Northeast Community College	Mid-Plains Community College-McCook Campus	Western Nebraska Community College
University of Nebraska at Kearney		62	64	65	61	67	61
University of Nebraska Lincoln		41	53	50	50	53	41
Chadron State College		69	67	65	59	47	67
Wayne State College		47	66	66	65	36	35
Peru State College		63	69	61	61	64	64

The Numbers Represent Semester Credit Hours Articulating between the respective institutions.

Number of Early Childhood Education Degree Programs by Colleges/Universities

4-year Colleges/ Universities	Teacher Education Endorsements approved by Nebraska Department of Education					Child Development (non-teacher education degree)
	El Ed/Early Childhood Ed Endorsement	Early Childhood Unified	Early Care and Education- Special (Birth-5)	Preschool Disabilities	Early Childhood Special Ed	
Number of higher education institutions offering ECE/Child Development Degree	10*	6*	1*	1*	1*	4

*August 2010 Teacher Education and Certification Office report



2-year colleges	Associate of Applied Science Early Childhood Education	Associate of Arts (Focus in early childhood education)	Associate of Science (Focus in early childhood education)
Number of higher education institutions offering degree	5*	8*	1*
*August 2010 Teacher Education and Certification Office report			

Expanded Alignment of Early Childhood Credentials and Degrees with the Workforce Knowledge and Core Competency

Framework. Nebraska will revise the Competency Framework content to incorporate Career Levels and the sequence of credentials, diplomas, and degrees available from Nebraska’s two-year and four-year higher education institutions. Early education coaches facilitating the Quality Portfolio Learning Community series will work with participants to determine their career goals and link them with resources that can help them pursue credentials, diplomas, and degrees to enhance their knowledge, competency, and productivity, as well as move up their career ladders. The ELN Initiative will hold webinars with the existing training cadre for the Competency Framework to update their knowledge of the alignment and career information for ECE. It will also provide webinars to recruit and train other new trainers to meet the expanded schedule of Competency Framework trainings. The strategy of long-distance learning is especially critical to build capacity of rural trainers and communities who might not otherwise be able to attend trainings.

(D)(1)(c) Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers to align professional development

opportunities with the Competency Framework. There is a great need in Nebraska to improve professional development access for rural educators and for educators who work with underserved populations. The ELN Initiative’s strategies to increase access further support the overall project goal of creating a distinguished early childhood education workforce that serves both urban and rural parts of the state.

The Nebraska Office of Early Childhood’s Early Childhood Training Center and seven full-time regional trainers (Early Learning Connection (ELC) Coordinators) spearhead the state’s early childhood professional development system. This system uses a large



cadre of trainers across the state and offers an array of professional developments for ECE that include the Management Training Program and professional development on Early Learning Guidelines domains and effective practices, the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and reliability training, Teaching Pyramid training, and Competency Framework. All of these trainings are aligned with the Competency Framework. State-provided professional development opportunities are coded based upon the Core Knowledge Areas they address and the knowledge and skill level expected for the training participants. Private providers of professional development can submit professional development proposals to be considered for inclusion on the state early childhood training calendar at the NDE Early Childhood Training Center. Privately sponsored professional development must indicate the core competency the training will address. Once approved as addressing a core competency, the professional development is then included in the training calendar.

In addition, the UNL Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) will collaborate with the NDE Office of Early Childhood and public and private colleges and universities to create postsecondary education enhancements for pre-service students and in-service early childhood education professionals, expand high-quality course offerings, particularly long-distance offerings, and to promote articulation between institutions. The team will develop a course sequence in each ECE credential, diploma, and degree program that is aligned with the Competency Framework to ensure that educators gain skills for data-based decision-making and use of assessments as appropriate to advance their educator knowledge, preparedness, and competency. The collaborative team will identify a tool for alignment, a peer review process that improves all programs' alignment with Competency Framework, and hold a series of meetings over two years to revise and improve the early childhood preparation programs in the state.

Expanded PostSecondary Access for Early Childhood Professionals and Alignment of Coursework with Framework. The ELN Initiative will offer stipends to support college faculty in converting early childhood professional courses to distance and hybrid formats, and such efforts will be self-sustaining beyond the life of the Race to the Top funding because the new courses will generate tuition revenue based on credit hour production. To ensure statewide coherence and alignment of course content with the Competency Framework, selected faculty and college administrators and an expert panel will meet annually to review course syllabi, articulation



plans, and other relevant documents. (Full project description in Appendix D-02: Postsecondary Education Enhancements, Project 6a- Early Learning Coursework Articulation).

Strategy 20: Develop a Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework and a progression of credentials		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 20a Revise Competency Framework content to incorporate Career Levels and the sequence of credentials, diplomas, and degrees available from Nebraska’s two-year and four-year higher education institutions	Year One	BECEI, NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 20b Early childhood coaches work with ECEs to facilitate the Quality Portfolio Learning Community and determine their career goals and link them with resources	Year One – Four and ongoing	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 20c Conduct webinars with the existing training cadre for the Competency Framework to update their knowledge of the alignment and career information for ECE	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 20d Conduct webinars to recruit and train other new trainers to meet expanded Competency Framework professional development schedule	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 20e Implement current professional development opportunities related to the Competency Framework	Year One-Four ongoing	NDE Office of Early Childhood

Strategy 21: Increase the alignment of higher education institutions sequence of courses for the early childhood education teacher preparation programs and the Competency Framework.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 21a Engage two-year and four-year degree programs and graduate programs in a formal review and alignment of their courses related to Competency Framework	Years One and Two	Buffet Early Childhood Institute(BECCI), NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 21b Revise course competencies and content to better align with Nebraska’s Competency Framework	Year One and ongoing	BECCI, NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 21c Create postsecondary education enhancements for pre-service students	Year Two and ongoing	BECCI



Strategy 21: Increase the alignment of higher education institutions sequence of courses for the early childhood education teacher preparation programs and the Competency Framework.		
and in-service early childhood education professionals and expand high-quality course offerings, particularly long-distance offerings		
Activity 21d Engage two-year and four-year degree programs and graduate programs to promote articulation between post-secondary institutions	Year Two	BECI

Strategy 22: Engage postsecondary institutions and other professional development providers to align professional development opportunities with the Competency Framework and expand opportunities.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 22a Examine two- and four-year offerings across Nebraska to determine what is available to early childhood teachers (on campus, on line, otherwise) and gaps in urban and rural regions of the state towards reaching a four-year degree and key certifications	Year One	BECI
Activity 22b Provide technical support for conversion of designated courses on line and/or to hybrid form and offer support to institutions doing same.	Years Two-Four	BECI
Activity 22c Evaluate the success of the project and begin dissemination of results.	Years Three-Four	BECI

Elevating Nebraska’s early childhood workforce to boost the knowledge, competency, and productivity of its teachers will improve the lives of the state’s youngest children. Without a doubt, the education and professional development of early childhood teachers provides favorable outcomes for young children in ELDPs. The ELN Initiative will enable ECEs to improve the care and education for children by advancing educator preparedness and quality within a framework of best practices and common standards.

Overview of (D)(2) Supporting Early Childhood Educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities. “Twenty years of research has consistently identified teachers and practitioners as the key to high-quality early childhood programs and child



outcomes.” (Winton and McCollum, 2008) Because Nebraska knows just how true this is, one of its paramount endeavors will be to ensure that all early childhood programs have well-trained, knowledgeable, and motivated Early Childhood Educators (ECEs). The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) will accomplish this by addressing factors that currently present challenges to improving the effectiveness and retention of early childhood educators, including those who teach Children with High Needs.

The challenge. Currently, several factors in Nebraska’s child care environment combine to result in lower participation of ECEs in professional development opportunities and lowered motivation to seek professional advancement. These factors include limited formal education requirements by the state licensing agency, low wages for child care work, geographic isolation, and barriers to access professional development opportunities. Nebraska’s child care licensing regulations do not require workers in center-based Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) with 22 or fewer children or a home-based ELDP to hold a high school diploma. Nebraska has not established a formalized professional licensing or credentialing system for ECE in the state beyond what is offered through higher education institutions. Center-based ELDP directors are not required to have a high school diploma unless they are serving more than 22 children. Some programs have higher education requirements, such as teachers in state 92 NAC Rule 11 programs who must have a Bachelors degree and a teaching certificate in Early Childhood Education. Head Start teachers must meet the federal teacher education standards that require at least 50 percent of the teachers nationwide to have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education by September 30, 2013. Although ECE wages, particularly for center-based and self-employed workers, are uniformly low in Nebraska, the wages do increase sharply, based on ECE’s education attainment and setting that they work in. (Appendix D-03: Summary of Nebraska wage information)

While it is difficult to estimate the number of center- and home-based ECEs, the May 2007 report on *The Economic Impact of the Nebraska Early Care and Education Industry* estimated that there are more than 12,000 Nebraska workers in early care and education (including the self-employed). Of the 392 Head Start teachers in the state, 223 (56.89 percent) have a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education. Additionally, for the 441 Assistant Teachers in Head Start, 276 (62.51 percent) have no credential, but 188 of the



non-credentialed are working toward either a Child Development Associate (CDA) or an associate's or bachelor's degree. There are 265 early childhood teachers in Nebraska's state-funded preschools and all of these teachers are required to hold a bachelor's degree with an endorsement in early childhood education.

The solution. The ELN Initiative will address these factors by improving the effectiveness and retention of early childhood educators. According to Winton and McCollum, “simply having a degree may not be sufficient for helping all children learn and develop to their highest potential. Furthermore, the early childhood knowledge base is constantly expanding, requiring practitioners to engage in ongoing professional development to stay abreast of new discoveries; professional growth depends on lifelong learning, degree or no degree.” (Winton and McCollum, 2008) Never has supporting early childhood educators been more important. The knowledge and skills required of effective ECEs have increased as science has revealed more about the capabilities of young children, how they learn best, and the importance of early learning for later school success. Research shows that high-quality early childhood education produces substantial long-term educational, social, and economic benefits, with the largest benefits for children occurring when teachers are professionally prepared and adequately compensated. (Core Competencies for Rhode Island Early Childhood Teachers (Draft))

Professional development and support to build the capacity of Nebraska's ECEs is woven throughout all components of the ELN Initiative. The ELN Initiative will rigorously evaluate proven training and support strategies to determine their effectiveness and make program adjustments when necessary. Nebraska's Early Learning Connection Coordinators will work with their regional training partners, including local Head Start Programs; center- and home-based ELDPs; libraries; and special education providers, including regional Planning Region Teams, local school districts, community social service organizations, and other early childhood stakeholders, to help promote the ELN Initiative in their regions.

(D)(2)(a) Provide and expand access to effective professional development opportunities that are aligned with Competency Framework. The education and training of ECEs strongly correlates with favorable outcomes for young children. ECEs want to



provide high quality care and education for children within a framework of best practice standards and they want to understand their own practices with children within the context of the entire education continuum, birth through elementary and secondary education. (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011) The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Office of Early Childhood manages the professional development system for Nebraska. It delivers professional development through the central Early Childhood Training Center and the seven regional Early Learning Connection (ELC) Professional Development Regions across the state that are run by regional Educational Service Units (ESUs) (Appendix A-06: Map of seven Professional Development Regions). Regional ELC Coordinators provide localized training and are located in the ESUs for each region and have access to distance education equipment, technology, and meeting space for offering training through a variety of media. The ELC Coordinator works with local early childhood education partners to determine professional development needs for the region and provides training through these partnerships. The ELC Professional Development Regions, along with the Early Childhood Training Center, serve as Nebraska's resource and referral system. The local focus and partnerships for early childhood training is a key component of Nebraska's community-based model and delivery of services. The NDE is the major provider of early childhood professional development in the state and in 2010-11, the Early Childhood Training Center provided 1773 hours of training to 9886 participants (Appendix D-04: Training Hours Sponsored by NDE Early Childhood Training Center).

Expansion of Professional Development Delivery System. Given the size and scope of this initiative, Nebraska will increase its capacity to respond to local needs and demands for additional professional development. A professional development delivery system needs a comprehensive cross-agency system for planning, implementing, and evaluating professional development in order to address the challenges of fragmentation, alignment, and quality. “The system must be one that is embraced by the multiple disciplines, agencies and organizations that now have authority and resources for delivering professional development to early childhood practitioners. Such a system could bring together these disparate groups in a way that guides and integrates efforts at national, state, and local levels. The system would need to be organized around a shared vision and framework for planning, implementing, and evaluation professional development.” (Winton and McCollum, 2008) The ELN Initiative will add seven additional ELC Coordinators



(averaging one for each region) in order to develop and provide expanded professional development opportunities and meet the program of supports for ELDPs participating in Step Up to Quality, the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Program Standards (described in Section (B)(1)).

Existing Content of Professional Development. Nebraska's professional development system utilizes several cadres of trainers across the state in order to offer an array of professional development for ECEs that include: The Quality Portfolio Training Series, the Management Training Program, Early Learning Guidelines Domain Training Series, the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) and reliability training, the Teaching Pyramid training, and the Competency Framework Overview training. The current professional development activities offered through the Early Childhood Training Center and the ELC Coordinators are integral to developing the early childhood education workforce, and improving the quality of early childhood care. Additionally, Nebraska has developed two online courses offered through NDE: First Connections, an online training that addresses Infant Toddler Care and School Age Connections that addresses before and after school professionals. Any educator who has access to a computer and high speed internet can take advantage of these multi-module trainings. Furthermore, as part of the ELN Initiative, ELC Coordinators will continue to research and evaluate ways to utilize distance education systems to reach a broader audience of ECEs (Appendix D-05: First Connections and School-Age Connections). Nebraska will continue to offer these trainings to improve ECEs' knowledge and skills and improve the quality of programs (in depth description and research base for each area of training included in Appendix D-06: Nebraska Professional Development Supports Offered to ECEs). ELC Coordinators will provide these trainings through face-to-face or synchronous distance education programs.

Expansion of Professional Development Content. In order to continue to expand and build the capacity of ELDPs and other ECEs in the state, and provide sufficient support to ensure the successful implementation of ELN Initiative objectives, the Professional Development Plan includes several new areas of professional development.



Online training courses. NDHHS will modify curriculum that are required as part of proposed Child Care Licensing Regulations to be available on-line for greater access. These curriculum include “Safe with You”, Early Learning Guidelines (already available through Independent Study), and the two management training curriculums—“Getting Down to Business” for family child care licensees and “Child Care Management Training” for center directors. The trainings will include interactive learning, and require participants to demonstrate increased knowledge and competencies to ensure that the professional development meets the same high level of quality that the face-to-face trainings currently provide.

Health and Safety Standards. Health and Community Resource Consultants will provide training and consultation to ELDPs to both help them meet the progressive health related criteria within Step Up to Quality and to help all ELDPs to meet the diverse needs of young children and their families, including cultural, language, physical, and behavioral needs (fully described in section (C)(3)).

CLASS Overview Training. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observational tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning. The CLASS tool organizes teacher-student interactions into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. CLASS trainers will provide four-hour session to help ECEs better understand the importance of teacher child interactions in advancing children’s learning, the CLASS instrument scales and the types of data and information that programs will get through a CLASS Observation. This training will be provided at a minimum to ELDPs working toward Tiers Four and Five in Step Up to Quality. Other programs may also participate in the training, which will be offered at least three times per year in various geographic areas.

CLASS Reliability Training. The CLASS Reliability training is a two-day professional development program that helps build an in-depth understanding of the CLASS observation tool and teaches professionals how to use the tool to accurately observe and code classrooms. The goal is to have 10 to 12 additional CLASS Observers achieve “reliability”. Individuals who achieve reliability are certified to use the CLASS tool to observe a code classrooms for one year, after which recertification is required. Nebraska will ensure that CLASS Observers complete the two-day program and remain reliable throughout the ELN Initiative.



Early Learning Guidelines Modules. Modules that address the seven current Essential Domains in the Early Learning Guidelines and three new domains addressing social studies, logic and reasoning, as well as the supplemental information on English language development that is a subsection of the language development domain, will be developed and delivered through Nebraska Educational Telecommunications (NET) in collaboration with the NDE. Nebraska will develop these modules to address families, communities, and ECEs in order to increase the shared knowledge and community engagement surrounding young children’s learning. The modules will include a related enhanced web component and “Workshop in a Box” resource kits, available through local public libraries, to ensure broad access to the information.

STEM and Literacy Training. The Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) will develop a professional development series on a three-year rotational schedule that advances the knowledge and skills for ELDPs that have achieved Tier Five on Step Up to Quality. The training will address developmentally appropriate learning experiences for young children that can enhance their thinking and skills in the areas of science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), and literacy. Through this learning community of advanced and high quality programs, professionals will use classroom instruction, applied learning activities, and interactional work to advance everyone’s knowledge and skills.

Nebraska’s Professional Development Plan				
Content	Audience	Trainer	Existing or New?	Related section of narrative
Quality Portfolio Training Series	ELDPs in Step up to Quality, Other ELDPs	ELC Coordinators	Existing, new for Step up to Quality	(B)(2)
Management Training Program	ELDPs in Step up to Quality	ELC Coordinators	Existing, new online modules	(D)(2)
Early Learning Guidelines Domain Training Series	ELDPs in Step up to Quality, Other ELDPs	ELC Coordinators	Existing	(D)(2) (C)(1)
Environmental Rating	ELDPs in Step up to	ELC Coordinators	Existing	(B)(2)



Nebraska's Professional Development Plan				
Content	Audience	Trainer	Existing or New?	Related section of narrative
Scale and reliability	Quality, Other ELDPs			
Teaching Pyramid	ELDPs in Step up to Quality, Other ELDPs	ELC Coordinators	Existing	(B)(2) (C)(3)
Competency Framework Overview	ELDPs in Step up to Quality, Other ELDPs	ELC Coordinators	Existing	(D)(1) (B)(2)
Anchor Training	Step up to Quality Anchors	NDE HCR Consultants	New	(B)(2) (C)(3)
Online curriculum for child care licensees	ELDPs	NDHHS Division, Licensure Unit	New	(C)(3)
Health and Safety Standards	ELDPs in Step up to Quality, Other ELDPs	HCR Consultants	New	(C)(3)
CLASS Overview	ELDPs in Step up to Quality Tier Four and Tier Five, Other ELDPs as able	CLASS trainers	New	(B)(2)
CLASS Reliability Training	CLASS Observers, Step up to Quality Anchors	CLASS trainers	New	(B)(2)
STEM and Literacy Training	ELDPs in Step up to Quality Tier Five	Buffet Early Childhood Institute	New	(B)(2)
NET Early Learning Guidelines Modules	ELDPs, Parents and families, Early childhood community	NET in collaboration with NDE	New	(C)(4)
Early Childhood Coach Training	Early Childhood Coaches	ELC Coordinators, Master Coaches	New, expanded	(D)(2)
Early Childhood Coaching Model	ELDPs in Step up to Quality Tiers Two – Five, Other ELDPs as able	ELC Coordinators, Master Coaches, Early Childhood Coaches	New, expanded	(B)(2)



Expansion of Effective Strategies to Increase Professional Development Opportunities for ECEs.

1) Early Learning and Development Coaching Model. Early childhood coaches are increasingly being called upon in a variety of early childhood settings to support implementation of effective practices. This model of ongoing, one-one-one support shows much promise for influencing transformative change and promoting ever higher standards of quality in settings for young children, thus improving the chances of more effective outcomes for children. The ELN Initiative will expand support for ECEs through implementation of an Early Childhood Coaching Model (Appendix C-12: Research on Getting Ready, Project READERS and the Family-Centered Coaching Model supports family engagement practice in Nebraska).

Building Coaching Capacity. Nebraska has already begun to build capacity of early childhood coaches by designing and offering, through the NDE Early Childhood Training Center, an evidence-based and intensive training experience for prospective early childhood coaches. The three-day Early Childhood Coach Training series is designed to prepare coaches with the basic skills and processes that are needed to competently offer reflective, intentional, and focused support to those who are improving their practices. The professional development ensures that early childhood coaches and consultants across the state will have, as a minimum, a set of core competencies. It also provides a common objective for coaches and consultants to increase (teacher/caregiver/parent) effectiveness and increase child (family) outcomes. The primary areas of focus for this coaching include:

- 1) Classroom (setting) environment—health and safety, and supportive learning environment.
- 2) Classroom (setting) routines—management/guidance.
- 3) Adult-child interaction.
- 4) Teaching Strategies (including curriculum and assessment).
- 5) Pyramid Model implementation.



- 6) Strategies to ensure inclusion for all children.
- 7) Family engagement.

(Appendix D-07: Foundational Principles and Nebraska Coaching Process Model)

This Early Childhood Coach Training series, first piloted in May 2010, has trained 181 individuals to enhance their leadership and reflective supervision skills. These individuals are applying their skills acquired in a variety of center and home-based early learning settings. Nebraska is currently evaluating the impact of the professional development, both through review of the participant response evaluations following each of the workshop sessions and through a study conducted by the University of Nebraska and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC). The evaluation report was presented to Early Childhood Stakeholder in September 2011 and the findings will be used to modify the coaches training and inform ongoing practice.

The ELN Initiative will increase training and support of Early Childhood Coaches so that each of the seven ELC Professional Development Regions have ELC-trained or recognized coaches and consultants, with specializations of expertise to address the breadth of early childhood services—such as program quality, curriculum, curriculum assessment, program practices, early learning, development of health practices, behavioral health, and family engagement (Appendix D-08: List of Specialty Coaching Areas and Required Training). Additionally, coaches will bring the expertise they have gained in a variety of settings that include school-based centers, Head Start/Early Head Start centers, community child care homes and centers, home visiting programs, and other early childhood services. As provided in the Early Childhood Coaching Model implementation plan, the ELN Initiative will expand the state's infrastructure to support fully competent and accessible expertise throughout the state with a larger pool of coaches. At the same time, the ELN Initiative will expand and refine the individual specializations that coaches provide. The NDE will develop a strategic implementation plan to add 300 coaches over four years for a total of 480 coaches who are distributed for statewide access.

The ELN Initiative will include follow-up support for coaches completing the three-day training through voluntary participation in Learning Communities organized through an on-line information/learning management system (MyELearning), a regular schedule of



telephone conference calls, reflective supervision, and face-to-face refresher opportunities. The ELN Initiative will recommend, or in some cases require—based on the specialization of the early childhood coach/consultant—additional content training. Master coaches (one per ELC region) will support Early Childhood Coaches with reflective practices and coaching for coaches.

Early Childhood Coaching for ELDPs. The Early Childhood Coaches will be key partners with ELC Coordinators to help ELDPs and ECEs improve their knowledge and program quality. Some coaches will help improve the quality of learning environments and curriculum, some will assist with social and emotional supports for young children and social skills training, and some will help with health and safety consultation. Coaches will work directly with ELDPs as part of the Step Up to Quality at Tiers Two-Five (described in section (B)(1)).

2) On-Line Coaching Certification. The ELN Initiative will develop and implement a coaching certificate program in order to respond to the statewide need for early childhood coach professionals. The ELN Initiative will produce, in a sustainable way, a cadre of highly skilled experts who provide direct service within early childhood settings and become leaders who help train additional coaches. The family-centered coaching model is a key feature of the ELN Initiative. Currently, early childhood professionals who enter the workforce with a bachelor's degree have not experienced sufficient training opportunities in providing coaching support to enhance outcomes for programs, children, and families. Through the ELN Initiative, key stakeholders will develop and offer a specific curriculum dedicated to producing a first-rate early childhood workforce. In addition, by providing a coaching certificate program, the ELN Initiative will increase the number of individuals trained to provide coaching supports in early childhood settings, and will enhance the sustainability of the ELN Initiative work. (Full project description in Appendix D-02: Postsecondary Education Enhancements, On-Line Coaching Certification).

Through the proposed certificate program, early childhood professionals interested in acquiring skills and competencies to serve as early childhood coach professionals may complete requirements for a 12-credit hour graduate certificate as an Early Childhood Coach. Professionals may complete the program by enrolling in a combination of credit hour courses (online, face-to-face, or hybrid) offered



by the University of Nebraska in partnership with state professional development opportunities, such as the Nebraska Early Childhood Training Center. This Coach Certificate program is designed for individuals who have a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, or allied field and want to support the early childhood field.

Evaluation of Early Childhood Coaching Model. The University will conduct an implementation study of the Early Childhood Coaching model. This study involves:

- Analyses of coaching data in the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry, including number of coaching visits, number of ECE each coach worked with, and other details of coaching service provided, including length of coaching interactions and location of interactions
- An evaluation of the fidelity with which coaches are implementing the coaching model in their interactions with ECE and parents.

The results of the study will be shared with Initiative leadership, ELC Coordinators, master coaches, and Early Learning Coaches (Appendix B-01: Process Evaluations, Studies 3a-3d).

3) Buffett Early Childhood Institute, University of Nebraska. The work and expertise of the new Buffett Early Childhood Institute (BECI) is a key element in the early childhood professional development plan – participating and leading in early childhood training, evaluation, design, and policy development. The primary focus of BECI will be on the learning and healthy development of children from birth to age 8, with special attention paid to those who are vulnerable or at risk as a result of poverty, developmental delays or other learning challenges, health issues or stress. The institute will include all four University of Nebraska campuses in order to facilitate collaborative work. The three primary focus areas are an integrated program of early childhood research and scholarship; teaching and professional development; and outreach and policy concerning the early childhood years.



4) Cross-Profession Early Learning Curricular Integration. The BECI will work with University of Nebraska faculty at all four campuses and crossing over departments and programs of developmental psychology, educational psychology, social work, family therapy, educational administration, etc. to identify and plan ways to augment existing coursework and practicum experiences and to expand course offerings to strengthen exposure to early childhood (mental health content). The purpose of this objective is to improve cross-profession early learning curricular integration by infusing early childhood development content into other professional disciplines. Many professionals who emerge from mental health training programs go on to work with children and families without preparation in current theory and applied research on early brain development, stress effects on the brain, early childhood trauma, typical and atypical attachment development, and emotional regulation. Deeper knowledge of these mental health content domains is essential for Nebraska to develop a competent cadre of mental health practitioners who can interface effectively with other adults in children's services, for example, as mental health consultants who help teachers implement the Teaching Pyramid and other forms of evidence-based practice with children experiencing mental health and behavioral challenges and their families. (Full project description in Appendix D-02: Postsecondary Education Enhancements: Cross-Profession Early Learning Curricular Integration)

Additional Opportunities for Professional Development

Demonstration Sites. Nebraska currently has two Educare programs, supported by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. These programs only serve low-income children, offer high quality care, and are designed to provide learning environments that are developmentally appropriate and actively engage families. These programs offer opportunities to serve as learning laboratories for students working towards an early childhood education degree through the University of Nebraska system. Plans continue for further development and expansion of Educare programs across the state. Each of these new programs will offer high quality learning experiences for early childhood teacher educators in working with high need children. Within the next four years, Nebraska will add three to four additional project sites in Nebraska. Lincoln has begun groundbreaking, an additional site has been determined at Winnebago (Tribal land in Northeast Nebraska), and two other sites are being explored, one in the center of Nebraska and one in



western Nebraska. This infusion of private support for quality early learning and development environments will move the ELN Initiative forward toward the goals of serving (approximately 800) more Children with High Needs in high quality programs, through provision of direct services, while contributing significantly to the resources for professional development made available in the locations where Educare programs are built.

Expansion and Replication of Department of Health and Human Services Early Head Start Infant/Toddler Quality Initiative.

The Early Head Start Infant/Toddler Quality Initiative (EHS I/TQI) is an innovative collaboration of NDHHS and eight Early Head Start (EHS) programs to improve the quality of infant and toddler child care in Nebraska. EHS programs are selected based on their plan for selection and recruitment of home and center-based childcare, descriptions of professional development opportunities for the childcare partners, developmentally appropriate practices used, and consultation and technical assistance provided for moving toward licensing and accreditation.

The key component of this initiative is the partnerships established between EHS programs and their community child care partners. The most recent evaluation of this effort was in 2008. The initiative was evaluated yearly for 10 years and trend data provided evidence of positive results. During FFY 2008, EHS programs worked with 431 child care partners, these partners included 58 home-based and 285 center-based programs. Of the center-based child care, 38 were new in FFY 2008, 228 were ongoing, and 19 left the program and/or the area.

As a result of their involvement with this initiative, the participating childcare partners consistently demonstrate a statistically significant improvement in their overall ITERS or FCCERS scores. The child care partners either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” in the feedback of the initiative, that EHS staff helped them to increase the quality of care and education provided to the infants and toddlers in their care, and that participation in this initiative helped them to further their knowledge about infants and toddlers. The ELN Initiative will utilize this model of coaching and partnership with programs, expanding the work to cover providers serving children through age 8.



Increased Access for Second Language Spanish Speaking Child Care Providers. The ELN Initiative will continue to look for ways to provide and support professional development opportunities in ECEs' native language. T.E.A.C.H.®. Early Childhood NEBRASKA formed a partnership with Omaha Spanish-speaking child care providers to offer a core set of training course in Spanish with a Spanish textbook in order to increase the knowledge and skills of the providers. The project began in 2003 and by 2005 the classes for Spanish speaking providers were included in the course catalog at Metropolitan Community College. By supporting ECE in their first language, some of the students have built confidence to learn and continue their studies in English. Nebraska will continue to promote the inclusion of ECE courses taught in Spanish for those providers who are interested in pursuing higher levels of credentialing in early childhood education.

Increased Access to Early Childhood Education Degrees Programs. Nebraska's Community Colleges have worked over many years to align their early childhood education sequence of courses to allow students to take courses that count at all institutions and have them count toward the degree. A core sequence of courses was developed with common course names, course numbers, and common objectives and competencies. The community colleges also worked together to develop online courses for each of the core courses. There has been dramatic increase in the number of students taking online courses. T.E.A.C.H.® early childhood reports that the percentage of their students who take online courses has gone from 34 percent taking online courses in the fall of 2009 to 45 percent of their students taking online courses. The four-year colleges and universities have also seen an increase in the number of students wanting to take online courses.

The University of Nebraska-Kearney has developed an online Early Childhood Education unified degree, and the early childhood education subject endorsement online. The early childhood education program at the University of Nebraska-Kearney now has the second highest number of graduates of any program in their college of education. UNL has developed a new early childhood education endorsement program that places a greater emphasis on developing teachers to work with children from birth through



kindergarten. This endorsement was created to increase course content addressing infant and toddler care and education and to ensure that kindergarten teachers are better prepared to deliver developmentally appropriate programs in kindergarten.

Improved Systems and Feedback for Workforce Data.

Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry. Nebraska will improve state systems capacity by utilizing the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry to gather workforce data on practitioner's education, training, credentials, and Nebraska Career Levels. A data system that records ECE training and credentials will be valuable to assist ECE to make career planning decisions and to better inform the state and policymakers about the education and training of Nebraska's professional development providers. Such data will measure improvements in the education and qualifications of the early childhood workforce and help retain professionals within the field (Appendix C-09: Components of Registry System).

The Registry will be integrated and updated with information currently kept for Early Childhood Trainers about professional development and training of trainers, the training topic areas they are prepared to deliver related to the Competency Framework and other specifically identified training areas, and the ages of children they prefer to address when providing training. ELN will update this registry to include information on providers, program data, including quality improvements made, and child development and learning outcomes. It will include the current information regarding training available across the state and add coursework and other professional development opportunities available. This update will make information about training more accessible for ECE and providers. All training entered in the registry will be verified directly by trainers or documentation submitted to the registry. This workforce database will be a critical piece of the infrastructure needed for Step Up to Quality. Early childhood educator's career levels and professional development requirements can be reviewed in the Registry to determine if staff meets the professional development requirements of the various Nebraska Career levels defined for each of the tiers within the Step Up to Quality criteria.



Training Calendar and Newsletters. The Early Childhood Training Center maintains a web-accessible calendar of training events held within the state and key national early childhood conferences. This training calendar can be searched by various categories, such as the area of Competency Framework, region of the state, and date. Hundreds of training events are offered regularly. This calendar will be integrated into the Trainer Registry rather than operate as a stand-alone system, thus providing an integrated system for child care providers and other professionals to access. Additionally, each of the regional ELC Coordinators produces newsletters with information on upcoming training events. These newsletters are offered to ECE and ELDPs both electronically and in paper form, either quarterly or monthly.

Strategy 23: Expand professional development opportunities with new course, expanded content, and new programs.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 23a Continue providing current training opportunities and sessions through Early Learning Training Center and ELC Coordinators	Ongoing	NDE, ELC Coordinators
Activity 23b Add seven ELC Coordinators (one for each region)	Year One	NDE Coordinators
Activity 23c Modify curriculums that are required as part of proposed Child Care Licensing Regulations to be available on-line for greater access	Starting in Year One	Early Childhood Training Center
Activity 23d Develop STEM training for Tier 5 ELDPs	Starting in Year One	BECI
Activity 23e Develop new professional development curriculum such as Anchor training and Health and Safety Standards training to be delivered by the HCR Consultants to ELDPs	Starting in Year One	NDE NDHHS Consultants
Activity 23f Implement new CLASS Overview and Reliability training	Starting in Year Two	NDE Education Specialist
Activity 7 Develop interactive online training for Safe with You and Getting Down to Business	Year Two	Early Childhood Training Center



Strategy 24: Implement effective early childhood coaching support for ECEs and ELDPs.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 24a Develop a strategic implementation plan to increase coaches by 300 over four years	Year One	NDE
Activity 24b Establish the a statewide team of key stakeholders to determine relevant content for the 12-credit EC Coach Certificate program and identify the core competencies for the early childhood coach	Year One	University
Activity 24c Coordinate coaching course offerings and credit opportunities across key stakeholders	Year One	University
Activity 24d Pilot the course content and delivery	Year One	University
Activity 24e Develop and implement an online Coach Certificate program to two cohorts of 15 participants	Cohort One: Year Two-Three; Cohort Two: Year Three-Four	University
Activity 24f Recruit and Train Master Coaches -- each ELC Region has ELC-trained or recognized coaches	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 24g Implement the MyeLearning online information/learning system as part of a Learning Communities system for ongoing professional development of coaches	Year Two to Four	NDE
Activity 24h Make Ohio State University's Child Development Virtual Lab School available to coaches across the state	Years Three and Four	University

Strategy 25: Improve state systems capacity by utilizing the Early Learning Connection Registry to gather workforce data on practitioner's education, training, credentials, and Nebraska Career Levels.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 25a Enroll early childhood professionals in the Nebraska Early Learning Practitioner and Trainer Registry and develop comprehensive	Starting in Fall of 2013	NDE Coordinator



Strategy 25: Improve state systems capacity by utilizing the Early Learning Connection Registry to gather workforce data on practitioner's education, training, credentials, and Nebraska Career Levels.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
professional development records, including education, training, and credentials		
Activity 25b Assist early childhood professionals in Career Planning utilizing the Nebraska Career Levels, and the Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals	Starting in Year One	Early Childhood Training Center
Activity 25c Gather state early childhood workforce reports that can better inform the state and policymakers of the education and training of Nebraska's professional development providers	Starting in Year two	NDE Coordinators

Strategy 26: Develop and Implement the Early Learning Practitioner and Trainer Registry.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 26a Develop the Early Learning Registry to assist early childhood professionals in tracking their education, credentials and training related to Nebraska Core Knowledge and Competency framework.	Starting in Year One	Early Childhood Training Center
Activity 26b Launch updated Registry	Starting in Year Two	Early Childhood Training Center
Activity 26c Integrate Early Childhood Training Center's training calendar into the Registry	Starting in Year Three	Early Childhood Training Center



Strategy 27: Increase knowledge of early child learning and development at the post-secondary level across the child's support system including developmental psychology, educational psychology, social work, family therapy, and educational administration.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 27a Work with University faculty to identify and plan ways to augment existing coursework and practicum experiences and/or to expand course offerings to strengthen exposure to early childhood (mental health content).	Year One	BECI
Activity 27b Formalize early childhood emphases into specializations; support professors in creating and revising course offerings and curricular programs	Year Two	BECI
Activity 27c Organize interdisciplinary summer institutes on early childhood mental health.	Year Three-Four	BECI

(D)(2)(b) Policies and incentives that promote professional improvement and career advancement along an articulated career pathway. In addition to infrastructure support to ensure a comprehensive and accessible early childhood professional development system, Nebraska has implemented many policies and incentives to promote ECE professional improvement and career advancement.

Educational Policies. The pending revised child care licensing regulations include implementation of training requirements that directors, teachers, and family child care providers complete Management Training (child care centers), Getting Down to Business (child care homes), Early Learning Guidelines Training (Domain training series), and Safe with You training specific to child abuse prevention, shaken baby syndrome, and safe sleep (Appendix C-08: Proposed regulations for professional development and use of the Guidelines). NDE 92 NAC Rule 11 requires all teachers in early childhood programs (state-funded preschools operated by school districts or ESUs) to have a bachelor's degree and be certificated in early childhood education, early childhood special education, or early childhood education unified (birth-grade three) for serving all children, or the new endorsement area of birth through kindergarten.



Nebraska Career Levels and Incentives. Nebraska describes six levels of knowledge and skills as part of the Competency Framework. The Nebraska Career Levels were established to recognize that people acquire knowledge and skills from formal education, training, and from continuous work experience with children over many years. ECE professionals can move from one level to the next through obtaining at least 24 clock hours of training annually and continuous employment in the field, or by completing a Child Development Associate (CDA), certificate or diploma program from a community college, or working toward an associate's degree, bachelor's degree, or master's degree in ECE. Nebraska's Step Up to Quality will offer incentives to those persons who enroll in the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry, complete the core competencies self-assessments, develop a professional development plan, and keep their records in the registry updated. As ECEs move a full level on the Nebraska Career Levels they will receive recognition for their successful advancement on Nebraska's Career Levels and an incentive. Proposed incentives include:

- Recognition in the local newspaper of practitioner's accomplishment of a change in Career Level with story and photo of practitioner.
- Free registration to a child care conference or six-hour training.
- Annual membership in an ECE professional organization.
- Free resource materials on ECE curriculum, child development, learning activities, etc.
- Free ECE Workforce and Competencies Resources.

Scholarship Support. Nebraska became concerned about the slow progress to increase the education of early childhood professionals, the low compensation, and the very high turnover rate in early care and education programs (sometimes as high as 40 percent). In 2002, NDE established the T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood NEBRASKA scholarship program to assist early care and education professionals in pursuing a college degree in early childhood education. During 2010, T.E.A.C.H.® provided scholarships to 224 students in 47 counties across the state. Twenty percent of the students were working toward a bachelor's degree and 80 percent were working toward an associate's degree. In 2010, T.E.A.C.H.® students earned 1,625.5 semester credits. The average salary increase for



the teachers was just under 6 percent and the turnover rate was less than 5 percent. The program has proven to be effective in increasing education, reducing turnover, and increasing compensation for early childhood professionals over the last 10 years. T.E.A.C.H.® has also been highly effective in increasing the education of early childhood education professionals who are from racial and ethnic minorities. In 2009, 29 percent of T.E.A.C.H.® students were of a racial or ethnic minority and in 2010, 32 percent of T.E.A.C.H.® students were of racial or ethnic minority (higher than the statewide population of 86.1 percent Caucasian; 13.9 percent non-Caucasian, 2010 Census Data).

Nebraska will expand the number of T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood Scholarships offered to ECE in ELDPs that are part of the Step Up to Quality system. Coaches and program directors will be encouraged to determine which staff members are committed to advancing along Nebraska’s Career Levels by completing college credit hours in Early Childhood Education. As ECEs are identified to work toward a degree, Nebraska will have scholarships ready to assist them in achieving that goal. Nebraska will expand the scholarship offerings beyond associate’s and bachelor’s degree scholarships to also incorporate master’s degree scholarships.

Strategy 28: Expand the T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood® Nebraska scholarship program and establish incentives to recognize ECEs as they move up through Nebraska Career Levels.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 28a Increase the number of T.E.A.C.H.® Early Childhood® NEBRASKA scholarships offered to ECEs in Nebraska	Ongoing	NDE- Contract with Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children
Activity 28b Establish a notification system in the ECE Practitioner Registry when ECE moves a full step on Nebraska’s Career Ladder	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 28c Develop procedure for providing incentives and recognition to ECEs who move a full step on Nebraska’s Career Ladder	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood



(D)(2)(c) Publicly report aggregated data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement, and retention. The Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry will be web-based; assign unique identifiers for ECEs; include verified information on ECEs' formal education, including number of credit hours completed in early childhood education, their work history, and retention in their current program and in the field; and provide a central location for tracking annual clock hours of training by core competency areas. The registry will also assign the career levels of professionals so that movement from one career level to another can be recognized. ELDPs and ECE professionals participating in Step Up to Quality will be required to participate in the registry program. Through this process Nebraska will have the critical workforce data system for informing the state of the development, advancement, and retention of the early childhood workforce.

NDE Office of Early Childhood and the Data Systems Team are jointly working on the development of the database. The database will be accessible by the public and a link to the database will be included on sites where parents, families, and other professionals can readily access it, such as NDE site and NDHHS licensing site. Data fields, forms, and reports have been drafted and the database development is imminent.

Information from the new Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry will be used to generate state workforce reports and annual reports on education, credentials, and training related to the Nebraska Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and Nebraska's Career Levels. The data will help Nebraska better understand progress the state is making at improving the knowledge and education of the early childhood education workforce and connect that data with child outcome data.



Strategy 29: Improve state systems (Nebraska’s Early Childhood Practitioner and Training Registry) to gather and aggregate data on Early Childhood Educator development, advancement and retention, and make the information publicly available.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 29a Align the Early Learning Connection Professional Registry with Step up to Quality	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 29b Complete development of the Early Childhood Professional and Training Registry Database	Year One	NDE Office of Early Childhood and Data Systems
Activity 29c Define policies that specify who must participate in the registry	Year One	NDE and NDHHS
Activity 29d Create linkages to the publicly available data on sites where parents, families and other professionals can readily access it (NDE and NDHHS licensing sites)		

Strategy 30: Generate state workforce reports on education, credentials, and training related to the Nebraska Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals and Nebraska’s Career Levels.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 30a Develop state early childhood education workforce reports that provide information on the education, credentials, training, and career levels of early childhood education professionals	Year One	NDE and NDHHS
Activity 30b Generate annual reports on early childhood education workforce	Years Two-Four	NDE Office of Early Childhood
Activity 30c Conduct workforce data analysis to measure increases in education and credentials in early childhood education workforce	Year Four	NDE Office of Early Childhood and BECI



(D)(2)(d)(1) Increased numbers postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs aligned to state Competency Framework and numbers of Early Childhood Educators who receive credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers that are aligned to the Competency Framework. Nebraska higher education institutions have been integrally involved in the development of Nebraska's Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals. Representatives from higher education along with other early childhood stakeholders served on the writing and review teams, participated in focus groups held across the state, and did a special review to ensure that Levels Five and Six adequately addressed knowledge and skills one would expect to see from someone with a bachelor's degree or graduate degree in early childhood education. Higher education institutions have informally indicated that they have aligned their courses with Nebraska's Core Competencies for Early Childhood Professionals. NDE representatives have participated in meetings with community college instructors as they review and revise their core courses and have discussed ways to align the courses with the Competency Framework.

The ELN Initiative will increase alignment of Nebraska's Early Childhood Education degree programs with Nebraska Competency Framework for Early Childhood Professionals through a collaborative alignment process that all colleges with ECE degrees will participate in. The process will take place over the course of the Initiative with the final report on the alignment process generated by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute and completed by May 2014 (further described in section (D)(1)(c)).



Performance Measures for (D)(2)(d)(1): Increasing the number of Early Childhood Educators receiving credentials from postsecondary institutions and professional development providers with programs that are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework.

	Baseline (Today)	Target - end of calendar year 2012	Target - end of calendar year 2013	Target - end of calendar year 2014	Target – end of calendar year 2015
Total number of “aligned” institutions and providers	0	0	0	17	17
Total number of Early Childhood Educators credentialed by an “aligned” institution or provider	0	0	0	277	300

Nebraska has informal agreements with higher education institutions that they are aligned with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework. The High Quality Plan in this section specifies the process for completing the formal alignment of the institutions with the Workforce Knowledge and Competency Framework in Nebraska to be completed in 2014. There are 17 higher education institutions that graduate early childhood educators in the state.

The number of institutions is actual. The number of educators is an estimate based on graduation rates from the following sources: Nebraska Department of Education, Teacher Certification Office. Endorsements on Initial Certificates Issued in 2009-2010 and Community College (2010) Annual Graduation Reports or Graduate Placement Reports.

E. Measuring Outcomes and Progress

This section clearly defines ELN Initiative’s High Quality Plan to understand the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry. The Nebraska Kindergarten assessment will be administered to all children entering public kindergarten statewide. The narrative below shows the assessment’s characteristics and addresses all the essential domains of school readiness. Validity of the assessment is illustrated in this section. The description identifies the population to whom it will be administered and how the results will be reported. The plan below details how the assessment is appropriate for all children, including English language learners and children with disabilities, and how the results will be included in a longitudinal data system.



(E)(1) Understanding the status of children’s learning and development at kindergarten entry. Understanding the level of each child’s development and academic knowledge as they embark on his or her educational journey provides families and teachers with a compass to guide the experiences and environments that will best support learning. It is well established that children who enter kindergarten ready to meet the academic, social, and emotional demands are more likely to achieve later academic and life success (Stedron, Berger, August, 2010- NCSL Technical Report). Nebraska’s proposal to implement a high-quality comprehensive statewide kindergarten entry assessment will provide a critical tool that can help educators individualize curriculum to help children learn more effectively, guide professional development, and offer data to ensure accountability.

Children who enter kindergarten with the skills, knowledge, health, and dispositions they need to be successful, especially Children with High Needs, are strong children. And strong children who succeed in school do well in life. Having a common understanding of what children know and are able to do upon entering school will enable Nebraska to provide its youngest citizens with a first-rate education. A high-quality statewide kindergarten entry assessment strategy promotes the success of every Nebraska child by building on each child’s strengths and individualizing instruction and learning opportunities. Furthermore, at a systems level, this process will strengthen the alignment between Nebraska’s early childhood and elementary school systems—incorporating research-based instruction and effective communication among teachers, parents, and early learning and development programs (ELDPs). Nebraska will use information from the assessment to help document the importance of ELDPs in preparing children for elementary school and to identify ways to close the school readiness gap at kindergarten entry. The assessment strategy will result in a continuous improvement process, guiding both professional development and changes in practice on the part of early childhood educators (ECEs) and elementary level education professionals. All of this comes together to better meet the unique challenges of a largely rural state, where it has been historically difficult to share information, offer effective professional development, and provide uniformity in early childhood education.



While some school districts use kindergarten assessments, Nebraska does not currently have a statewide kindergarten assessment process. The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) provides the ideal opportunity to design and implement Nebraska's statewide Kindergarten Entry Readiness Assessment (KERA). Nebraska has already successfully implemented a statewide child outcomes assessment system, Results Matter in Nebraska, for children birth through five. This comprehensive child assessment system provides data at the child, program, district, and state levels to support early childhood teachers, administrators, and state policy makers in program planning/individual instruction and outcomes. In 2006, Nebraska began the planning process to identify and implement Results Matter in all school district funded programs. This process included assessment selection; implementation; provision of training and technical assistance support; development of a statewide data collection and analysis system; and support in helping programs reflect on their data in a continuous improvement process and to enhance individualized instruction. The ELN Initiative will adopt this successful process as it selects and implements KERA (Appendix E-01: Implementation of Kindergarten Readiness Assessment).

(E)(1)(a) Alignment with Early Learning Standards. The National Research Council and the National Conference of State Legislatures (*NCSL Technical Report* (2010) provides a superb framework for implementing a school readiness assessment process that both aligns with the Nebraska's Early Learning Guidelines and informs instruction and services in the early elementary grades. This framework will guide Nebraska's process as it develops a statewide kindergarten entry assessment. In addition, by closely aligning the current Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (Appendixes C-01 (Guidelines ages birth to three) and C-02 (Guidelines ages three to five)) with KERA, Nebraska will ensure the initiative is aligned with the state's early learning and development standards and covers all essential domains of school readiness in accordance with (E)(1)(a). KERA will be used in public schools with an option for use in private schools. The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (Guidelines) were published for ages three-five in January 2005 and expanded to cover ages birth-three in January 2006. The Kindergarten Through Grade 12 Guidelines were revised for language arts in 2009 and revised for mathematics and science in 2010. Revisions for kindergarten –grade 12 social studies and kindergarten – grade 12 science are targeted for July 2013. The Guidelines are based on research and evidence about child development and practices, with



the intent of maximizing outcomes for young children. They provide information related to seven domains, or areas of learning: social and emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development, language and literacy development, mathematics, science, and creative arts. They also provide guidance on what to expect in the development and learning of young children from the time they are born to age five and what adults can do to provide experiences and environments that support learning across developmental domains.

Nebraska will use a thorough, methodical, and innovative approach in selecting the statewide assessment tools and in implementing the assessment process. The Results Matter Task Force, which advised the state during the adoption of that early childhood comprehensive system, will be expanded as the Assessment Stakeholder's Task Force to serve in the same advisory capacity. The Assessment Stakeholder's Task Force, which will guide the implementation of this ELN Initiative component, will have broad representation from school- and community-based ECEs, Head Start/ Early Head Start, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) and the Committee of Practitioners, Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Health and Human Services, kindergarten teachers, school administrators, and parents. This collaborative task force will maximize the successful planning and implementation of KERA by:

- a) Reviewing evidence-based approaches to effective assessment practices that incorporate family engagement
- b) Using a process of stakeholder input and buy-in through focus groups and a task force process for feedback and recommendations
- c) Creating a two-phase pilot process that provides data to refine and improve KERA
- d) Offering training and technical assistance for teachers, parents, and administrators to maximize assessment fidelity and to support individualized instruction that will promote success in school
- e) Building a continuous improvement process so data helps inform practice and policies



- f) Addressing the large number of rural school districts throughout the state by using a statewide system of training and technical assistance
- g) Designating school district early childhood programs (early childhood special education, pre-kindergarten, Title 1, Head Start, and migrant programs) as the primary early childhood partners who will participate in the planning process. They will transform the process of successfully preparing children for kindergarten by ensuring early childhood guidelines are aligned with KERA and by playing an integral part in the continuous improvement process

Nebraska Framework for KERA—the Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment	
Nebraska Assessment Domains for Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (in accordance with (E)(1)(a))	<p>KERA will be broad based and include the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and emotional development • Approaches to learning • Health, physical well-being, motor development, and adaptive skills • Language and literacy development • Cognitive and general conceptual development—such as quantity, directional and size comparisons, colors and shapes, and time and sequence. These will relate to the development of mathematics, science, and the creative arts
Target Populations (in accordance with (E)(1)(b))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide families, teachers, schools, and school districts with a valid and reliable understanding of the level of development and academic knowledge of every Nebraska child embarking on his/her educational journey • Provide a valid, reliable, and appropriate understanding of the domains for kindergarten readiness for high need children, including children living in



**Nebraska Framework
for KERA—the
Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment**

**Data Use (in accordance with
(E)(1)(d))**

poverty, children with disabilities, and English language learners

- Inform decisions about day-to-day learning opportunities for children
- Provide useful information that can inform teachers and families on the strengths of the child’s skills
- Enhance program planning and instruction to provide effective supports and learning opportunities
- Provide useful information for both short- and long-term program planning and instruction
- Provide outcome data
- Describe the school readiness status of all children upon entry to kindergarten
- Connect readiness data to later school performance and to understand the impact of early childhood investments
- Support continuous improvement process
- Use data at a systems level (building, school district, and statewide) for both accountability and to support a continuous improvement process
- Review of the data with school district and early childhood programs to identify ways to improve both programs to maximize child success
- Inform policy
- Review data to document population trends, track children’s progress over



**Nebraska Framework
for KERA—the
Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment**

	<p>time, and determine if public expenditures are making a difference in order to make policy recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transform professional development • Develop a statewide system using the regional Early Learning Connections (ELC) network. Each ELC will have an Assessment Consultant, who will provide training and technical assistance to teachers. These trainers will be systematically trained through a train-the-trainer model • Develop web-based modules: one for parents on the reasons for KERA and understanding the findings, and a second for teachers on using assessment data for individual instruction
How is the data to be reported? (in accordance with (E)(1) (d))	<p>Nebraska will develop reader-friendly reports that can be useful for families, teachers, administrators, and policy makers</p> <p><u>Levels of reporting:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the individual child level, reports will be used by teachers and families to support instruction • Aggregate reports by the classroom level and at the district level reporting by English language learners (ELL) and students qualified for Free and Reduced Lunch(FRL) • Aggregate reports by the district level reporting at the state level (by ELL and FRL)
Alignment and best practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment is aligned with both the Guidelines and school standards • Reflects evidence-based practice, including meeting reliability and validity



**Nebraska Framework
for KERA—the
Statewide Kindergarten Entry Assessment**

Guiding principles	standards. Considers readiness behaviors that predict future academic and social success in school
	<p>In order for KERA to successfully support children’s development and academic achievement, and to help to inform practice and policy, Nebraska established the following guiding principles that KERA will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect that development and learning are rooted in culture and supported by the family • Engage families and primary care providers as active participants • Avoid inappropriate use of assessment information, such as high-stakes decisions, labeling children, restricting kindergarten entry, and predicting children’s future success • Be time efficient so that the process is sustainable • Collect information from multiple sources, such as ongoing observation of children engaged in classroom activities and integrating information gathered across settings, as well as standardized assessments

(E)(1)(b) Valid, Reliable, and Appropriate for the Target Population, Including English Learners and Children with Disabilities. National experts in tests and measurements will be asked to review the technical soundness of the assessments considered for use as KERA. By providing expertise and information to users of commercially published tests, the experts will promote meaningful and appropriate test selection, utilization, and practice. Information from the review will be reported to the Assessment Task Force to ensure that the assessments being considered are valid and reliable for the diverse populations of young children



entering kindergarten, including children with disabilities, those who are English language learners (ELL), and those from poverty. Nebraska has a growing population of ELL, so it is critical that any assessment chosen is appropriate for this population of children.

In addition, Nebraska will carefully select the pilot projects to ensure that these settings represent both diverse geographic settings and populations of children. Data from the evaluation of these pilot projects will help the state determine the extent that the KERA is effective in providing the information needed to achieve the intended outcomes of the KERA process. The state will then complete subgroup analyses to determine the efficacy of the assessments for different populations of children. These data analyses will help inform the final selection of the tool.

(E)(1)(c) Administered No Later than the Start of School Year 2014-15. Nebraska proposes to begin implementing KERA immediately and have it fully operational by the start of the school year 2014-2015 in accordance with (E)(1)(c). The state’s detailed action plan for supporting the transition to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments is as follows:

(E)(1)(a): Aligned with the State’s Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 1a Convene stakeholders group to review multiple sources of data	April 2012	Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI)/ Assessment Task Force
Activity 1b Review of the psychometric properties of the pool commercial kindergarten assessments (e.g., Bracken School Readiness Assessment, Teaching Strategies Gold, Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening (PALS), etc.	April 2012	MMI/ Assessment Task Force
Activity 1c Ensure the assessment content aligns with the state’s standards and covers all essential domains of school readiness in order to make recommendations on the tool(s) to be used for KERA pilot projects and ultimately the final selected tool	April 2012	MMI/ Assessment Task Force



(E)(1)(a): Aligned with the State's Early Learning and Development Standards and covers all Essential Domains of School Readiness

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 1d Convene the Assessment Stakeholders Task Force to review evidence-based approaches for implementation of kindergarten entry assessments and to recommend the implementation process for the pilot projects	June 2012	MMI/Assessment Task Force

(E)(1)(b): Is valid, reliable, and appropriate for the target population and for the purpose for which it will be used, including for English learners and children with disabilities

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 2a Identify five to seven potential commercial kindergarten entry readiness assessments. National assessment consultants will conduct in-depth reviews of their reliability and validity	January-March 2012	MMI/National assessment consultants
Activity 2b Conduct in-depth review of best practice approaches (other state and national models) to determine the optimal approaches to implementation of KERA	January-March 2012	MMI

(E)(1)(c): Administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 3a Conduct focus groups with key informants to gather information on: a) current practices and recommended tools, b) processes for implementing KERA, and c) potential challenges and barriers. Analyze data from focus groups capturing themes and recommendations	January-February 2012	MMI
Activity 3b Develop protocol to implement KERA as recommended by the	April 2012	MMI/NDE



(E)(1)(c): Administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Assessment Task Force		
Activity 3c Identify 10 school districts to pilot Phase One of KERA and train teachers and administrators at the 10 pilot sites on KERA and the implementation process. Sites will be chosen to represent both geographically and demographic diverse settings	April 2012	MMI/NDE
Activity 3d Implement the Phase One KERA Pilot—with 10 school districts. Evaluate implementation fidelity and collect and analyze child data	Aug-Oct 2012	MMI/NDE
Activity 3e Conduct follow-up evaluation to effectiveness of the implementation of the 10 pilot sites, analyze results and report findings	Nov-Jan 2012	MMI
Activity 3f Convene stakeholders group to review evaluation report and make recommendations about the tool(s) on the statewide KERA and the implementation process that will be adopted by Nebraska. This may include one tool or a combination of tools. Focus on ways to maximize parent engagement in the process	March 2013	MMI
Activity 3g Determine training needs of early childhood and kindergarten teachers, administrators, and parents to be able to effectively implement the assessment statewide. Train new pilot sites on measure and process	March 2013	MMI/ELC
Activity 3h Implement Phase Two Pilot with finalized assessment process at eight to 10 additional sites and gather feedback to fine tune the implementation process prior to statewide roll-out	Aug-Oct 2013	MMI
Activity 3i Develop an online module and print materials for parents on KERA about what the data means. Assessment Task Force meets to provide input	Nov 2013- Aug 2014	MMI/NDE
Activity 3j Identify an assessment trainer who will be located in each of the seven ELC sites on the kindergarten assessment process. They will initially support the Phase Two Pilot sites and will support the statewide roll-out	Jan 2013	MMI/ELC



(E)(1)(c): Administered beginning no later than the start of school year 2014-2015 to children entering a public school kindergarten

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 3k Establish technical assistance that outlines the implementation process, description of the tools, and information on use of data	Feb 2014	MMI
Activity 3l Implement statewide training of assessment process using the ELC statewide network, in addition to working with higher education to infuse process into curriculum. Training will occur at multiple levels, including teachers and administrators, and use multiple modalities (live workshops, technical assistance, web-based training)	March-Aug 2014	MMI/ELC
Activity 3m All school districts implement KERA during the first quarter of the school year, engaging parents in the process	Aug- Oct 2014	NDE/School Districts/ ELC
Activity 3n Provide technical assistance as the assessment process is implemented for all children	Aug – Oct 2014	MMI/ELC
Activity 3o Provide training and technical assistance on the continuous improvement process (collect, review, plan, and act model) to maximize use of child data at all levels: home, classroom, district, and state. Share information with early childhood partners and have them join in meetings to reflect on the meaning of the data for both the early childhood model, as well as the kindergarten program	Nov 2014 – May 2015	MMI/NDE

(E)(1)(d): Reported to Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, as permitted under and consistent with the requirement of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.

IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 4a Work with the NDE to determine data structures needed to integrate local data into the NDE statewide data system. This will involve	January 2013	NDE/MMI



(E)(1)(d): Reported to Statewide Longitudinal Data System, and to the early learning data system, as permitted under and consistent with the requirement of Federal, State, and local privacy laws.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
expansion of an already well-established statewide system that links local data to the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS)		
Activity 4b In Phase Two Pilot, test out structures to link data from KERA at local level with NSSRS, which houses all school age data. Revise strategies based on evaluation of the pilots' implementation of the data linkages systems	August-October 2013	NDE/Pilot Sites
Activity 4c Disseminate to all school districts information on how to link KERA data to NSSRS. Provide technical assistance as needed to implement process.	January - December 2014	NDE

(E)(1)(e): Funded with Federal or State resources other than those available under this grant.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 5a NDE will begin to determine the policies that need to be in place to implement statewide KERA and determine funding sources for statewide implementation. All activity will mirror the activity described above led by the University Partner	April 2012-December 2014	NDE

(E)(1)(d) Assessment Results Reported to the Statewide Longitudinal Data System, The NDE currently has a Statewide Longitudinal Data System that contains child-level data, including demographic data and state-required assessment scores. This data can be aggregated at the state and school district level. Each child, upon entering a school district funded program from birth through 21, is assigned a unique identifier. Once KERA is established, it will be added to the assessment data that will be reported to the NDE as permitted under and consistent with the requirements of federal, state, and local privacy laws in accordance with (E)(1)(d). The state will be able to link the results of this assessment with both the early childhood assessment data that was collected on all children



in state-funded programs, as well to longitudinal data that will be collected as part of the state longitudinal measurement system. Nebraska will use Race to the Top funding to help the NDE add the kindergarten assessment as part of its statewide child data system.

(E)(1)(e) Funding. Nebraska will use Race to the Top grant funds for the following activities:

- a) Fund the selection process for identifying the potential kindergarten assessments.
- b) Support 20 school districts to pilot the kindergarten assessments that are identified.
- c) Analyze the data from the assessments and feedback on the use of the assessment.
- d) Refine the selection of the kindergarten readiness assessment based on the review of the data.
- e) Support the training of school district staff to implement the full roll out of KERA, including assessment implementation, engaging families in the assessment process, interpreting results, and use of assessment finding in instruction.
- f) Support the development of the data linkages necessary to import the findings of the individual child assessment results so it is part of the NDE's child data system.
- g) In 2014, at the time that the KERA is implemented statewide, school districts will be responsible for the majority of implementation costs including: purchasing the assessments, any modifications made in the local data systems to allow for linkage with the state data system, and staff time to complete the KERA process.

By understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry, Nebraska is helping children succeed in school and in life. KERA will boost the productivity of schools by helping teachers build on each child's strengths and individualizing instruction and learning opportunities. In addition, in today's world of needing to do more with less, KERA improves efficiency by providing teachers and schools with a clear picture of each child's education needs. Most importantly, it provides a smart and innovative compass to jump start every Nebraska child's successful educational journey (Appendix E-02: The Nebraska Early Childhood Data Summit), (Appendix E-03: Uniform Data Collection).



(E)(2) Building or enhancing an early learning data system to improve instruction, practices, services, and policies

(E)(2)(a) Has all the essential data elements. Nebraska's use of essential data elements already includes those required by Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC): a unique statewide child identifier, a unique program site identifier, child and family demographic information, early childhood educator demographic information, program-level data and child-level program participation and attendance data.

A unique statewide child identifier. Nebraska currently assigns unique identifiers to children as they enroll in various programs throughout the state. This practice will continue. These include:

- All schools that administer an infant/toddler or a preschool program
- School district administered preschool programs including formal Head Start and Early Head Start partners
- Schools that administer preschools under Title I Part A and are designated School-Wide Title I (69 provide preschool programs)
- Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3) that are non-school based
- Every child who is verified with a disability or developmental delay and served by Part C and Part B-619

Additionally, as part of the validation study for the Step Up to Quality, the proposed Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) described in Section B-5, Nebraska will evaluate child outcome data as part of the research study. The design and measures of the study will be compatible with several other Nebraska early childhood program evaluations—Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth -Three), Educare, and Building Bright Futures—allowing Nebraska to examine early childhood outcomes for several programs on the same measures and at similar points in time.



- Nebraska will conduct child assessments in the research sample fall and spring (similar to how data collection is conducted for Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Programs (Birth to 3), Educare, and Building Bright Futures) in years two, three, and four of the project
- This assumes a sample of 300 children at each age per year ($n=600 * 2X/year * 3 \text{ years} = 3600$).
 - 100 three-year-olds from family child care
 - 100 five-year-olds from family child care
 - 200 three-year-olds from center-based programs
 - 200 five-year-olds from center-based programs
- Consent from each family will be requested for longitudinal data collection
- Consented children will receive a unique identifier in the Nebraska Student and Staff Record System (NSSRS). Children's scores will be entered directly into the NSSRS or in a linked file via the federated data system, enabling tracking the children into elementary school

A unique statewide Early Childhood Educator identifier. Currently all staff in public school programs are identified in the NSSRS. To further augment this data collection, Nebraska will develop a voluntary system where all early learning and development professionals, including child care providers, Head Start, special education services, health care professionals, and family educators—may register their information and receive a unique identifier in the Nebraska Early Learning Connections Professional Registry, which will be linked to Step Up to Quality.

A unique program site identifier. Currently, public school programs, Head Start and Early Head Start grantees, ELDPs receiving CCDF funds, and licensed ELDPs receive program site identifiers and are tracked in different systems. Through the ELN Initiative,



these programs will be identified in the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry. This data will help the state better understand and address the unique challenges and needs of Nebraska's extensive remote and rural areas.

Child and family demographic information. Nebraska's demographics are changing. Within the last decade Nebraska was considered second in a group of all Midwest states of increase per capita of families who do not speak English. Child and family demographic data are available through several sources; these important data will enable us to report about sub populations of great interest—low-income children (for example, free and reduced lunch recipients, subsidy recipients, and Medicaid recipients) and children with limited English language proficiency, etc. Aggregate data about the state (for example, students from rural counties whose families do not have access to Head Start/Early Head Start and students from medically underserved counties) will provide important context for interpreting the trends for all children and particularly for vulnerable children. The University of Nebraska, Center on Youth Family and Schools will convene a Formative Evaluation Review Panel (FERP). This committee is described more fully below in Section E(2)(b). This committee will concentrate its focus on methods to best track the progress of Nebraska's most vulnerable children.

Early Childhood Educator demographic information, including data on educational attainment and State credential or licenses held, as well as professional development information. Nebraska has a well-developed public school teacher credential and staff system that tells us who educators are, where they work, and what types of programs they serve. This aspect of data gathering is essential because Nebraska has seen an increase in college graduates with early childhood educator degrees, including those with unified endorsements in early childhood education so that they can meet the needs of atypical and typical developing children in inclusive settings. The state also has extensive information about educators accessing state and local professional development opportunities. Through RTTT-ELC funds and development of the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry as describe in Section D(2), Nebraska will be able to develop the capacity to track this information about its early childhood educators.



Program-level data on the program's structure, quality, child suspension and expulsion rates, staff retention, staff compensation, work environment, and all applicable data reported as part of the QRIS. Nebraska has extensive information related to state-funded preschools based on program approval reports and program quality as measured by environment rating scales. Head Start and Early Head Start collect this data as well. Through RTTT-ELC funds and development of the Early Childhood Practitioner and Trainer Registry, Nebraska will be able to develop the capacity to track this information on the early childhood educators in the state and integrate the data from disparate systems.

Child-level program participation and attendance data. Nebraska also has extensive data regarding child-level program participation in publicly funded programs. While the state has a great deal of child-level information, it is not yet consistent or easily accessible across all programs. The Early Childhood Data System (ECDS) will provide accurate information that provides a better picture about the quality of children's learning experiences in Nebraska.

(E)(2)(b) Enables uniform data collection and easy entry of the Essential Data Elements by Participating State Agencies and Participating Programs. Nebraska has a long history of collaborating around early childhood data issues. A cross-system data work group has been in existence in Nebraska since 2003 when the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grant, Together for Kids and Families (TFKF) began. As a part of ECCS Strategic Plan early childhood indicators around the topic areas of medical home, early care and education, parent education, family support and mental health were developed. The Data Work Group co-led by the Head Start State Collaboration Office and the NDHSS refined the original 23 indicators included in the TFKF Strategic Plan and through a rigorous process twelve early childhood indicators were selected to track over time for TFKF; data collection and analysis for the twelve chosen indicators has been completed and will continue to be an ongoing process. As part of this process early childhood data mapping was completed to determine data feasibility and availability. The Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) grew out of work previously completed by TFKF and includes early childhood stakeholders who report on and utilize EC data in Nebraska, such as Voices for Children, UNL, NCFE, NDE and NDHSS. The ECDC completed a cross-walk of indicators that the



different stakeholder entities monitor and have reached consensus on a core set of 15 early childhood indicators that can inform the work of several agencies/initiatives. Additionally the ECDC agreed to help implement the data priority section/activities of the State Advisory Council federal stimulus grant.

In collaboration with the ECDC, the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council held an Early Childhood Data Summit in June 2011, through which it developed a vision for a coordinated state early childhood data system that supports children's success in learning and living (Appendix E-02: The Nebraska Early Childhood Data Summit). The overwhelming consensus from Summit participants was that creating policies to streamline data collection and sharing was both critical and possible. A key component of Nebraska's plan to enhance its early learning data system is to remove the policy barriers that currently limit data collection and sharing. By creating a system that collects and shares data in a formalized and routine way, Nebraska will improve instruction, practices, services, and policies across the state.

Formative Evaluation Review Panel. The CYFS will build upon the vision submitted by the Early Childhood Data Summit. In developing a high-quality comprehensive system, CYFS will convene a Formative Evaluation Review Panel (FERP) on the current status of Nebraska data elements for continuous program improvement, drawing upon the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Coalition for guidance. The panel will:

- a) Review the formative evaluation and research questions of interest to the state
- b) Assess the current status of collection of data elements, uniform data collection, and easy entry of the essential data elements and data federation
- c) Determine which of the many formative evaluation and research questions of interest to the early childhood community can be addressed in an annual update
- d) Explore options (whether web based, individualized through coaches and trainers, or conferences, etc.) for providing feedback to practitioners and policy makers



This panel will consist of experts in data and content from across the university system, as well as representatives from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), and private and practitioner communities. The FERP will convene in Year One, and meet annually in Years Two through Four to review.

Formative Evaluation. CYFS will provide leadership in identifying and prioritizing key formative evaluation and research questions that are not already addressed by specific evaluations, across all intended data system pieces both within-systems and between-systems. These questions will be vetted by the Formative Evaluation Review Panel, which will coordinate formative evaluation activities as suggested by the FERP. Questions include:

- a) How are low-income children who have experienced high quality Nebraska early childhood programs faring in kindergarten readiness assessment, third grade reading and math assessments, and school attendance rates and is that changing over time?
- b) How do these outcomes vary according to attendance and years of participation in these programs?
- c) What are the characteristics of ELDPs in Nebraska (e.g., training, education of teachers/providers, quality, combined across multiple data bases) and are they changing over time?
- d) What health services do low-income children receive and are children in quality ELDPs receiving more health services than low-income children not enrolled in quality ELDPs?

(E)(2)(c) Facilitates the exchange of data among Participating State Agencies by using standard data structures, data formats, and data definitions such as Common Education Data Standards to ensure interoperability among the various levels and types of data. By creating a system that exchanges data among participating agencies using standard data structures, formats, and definitions, Nebraska will greatly improve the effectiveness of data sharing. Developing formal opportunities for data exchange across state agencies guided by appropriate policies, control, and data ethical standards, will enable Nebraska to model this data exchange for other state and local organizations.



Federated Database System. CYFS, in collaboration with Buffet Early Childhood Institute (BECI), will create the ECDS as a federated database system (FDBS) by August 31, 2013. A FDBS approach will allow key end users to have unified access to current information and reporting in a real-time environment, while local (agency) control over component data systems is maintained. In a FDBS, the need to merge data files within a central repository is eliminated. Creating a federated data system in this manner will allow Nebraska's ELDPs and key stakeholders to better understand the needs of the whole child within the context of families, schools, and communities.

Cross agency data camps will be hosted by the Data Management Team to review and analyze data from current relevant systems. These data camps will foster relationships across state agencies, as well as develop deeper and broader understanding of the status of children and families who are considered most vulnerable. These data camps will help inform a higher education research agenda, create program improvements, set the stage for removing barriers that have prevented the sharing of information in the past, and foster the beginning of a stellar data exchange approach.

In addition, the ECDS Data Management Team will host annual data summits to continue the inclusive public process for making data decisions for this project and to support sustainability planning (Appendix E-03: Uniform Data Collection).

(E)(2)(d) Generates information that is timely, relevant, accessible, and easy for Early Learning and Development Programs and Early Childhood Educators to use for continuous improvement and decision making. CYFS will collaborate with relevant partners in reporting findings through reports and other mechanisms. CYFS will take the lead in establishing principles and mechanisms for transferring findings to practitioners for continuous program improvement. In addition to report-out mechanisms and appropriate summary, the ELN Initiative will make reports available for the cross-agency data camps for discussion and analyses. The Data Management Team will then facilitate engagement of other identified state policymakers and early learning and development stakeholders to use the reports to inform continuous program improvement.



(E)(2)(e) Meets the Data System Oversight Requirements and complies with the requirements of Federal, State, and local privacy laws. Nebraska recognizes and supports the information protections provided to all young children and their families through various privacy acts in education and health and human services. These safeguards are critical to the development of a unified data system. All the policies and procedures related to data collection and easy entry; exchange of information by various stakeholders; necessary data linkages; and relevant, timely reports are needed for continuous improvement and decision making. In the FDBS environment, identifying information of children, families, and programs will be secured and protected in accordance with all policies, regulations, and statutory contexts (i.e., Family Educational Rights and Privacy (FERPA), Health Insurance Portability Act (HIPAA)).

Strategy 31: Develop an early childhood longitudinal data system (the Early Childhood Data System) as an essential step toward creating a seamless and aligned early childhood system for children birth through third grade.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 31a Convene Formative Review Panel (FERP) on the current status of Nebraska data elements for continuous program improvement, drawing upon the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Coalition for guidance	Year One substantive work; meeting annually Years Two-Four	CYFS
Activity 31b Identify and prioritize key formative evaluation and research questions not already addressed by specific evaluations, across all intended data system pieces both within systems and between systems	Year One	FERP, CYFS
Activity 31c Design the ECDS as a federated database system	Year Two (August, 2013)	CYFS and Buffet Early Childhood Institute
Activity 31d Organize and host cross agency data camps	First camp in Year Three	ECDS Data Management Team
Activity 31e Organize and host annual data summit to continue the inclusive public process for making data decisions for this project and to support sustainability planning	Yearly	Data Management Team
Activity 31f Create and test ECDS federated database system	Years Two – Three	Data Management Team
Activity 31g Conduct longitudinal analyses from the federated database as specified by the Formative Evaluation Review Panel	Year Three	Data Management Team, FERP



Strategy 31: Develop an early childhood longitudinal data system (the Early Childhood Data System) as an essential step toward creating a seamless and aligned early childhood system for children birth through third grade.		
IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBILITY
Activity 31h Coordinate the inaugural Nebraska Early Childhood Research Conference	Year Four	Data Management Team, Buffet Early Childhood Institute

Sustainability. The ELN Initiative will create the ECDS federated database system and a supporting infrastructure that will be maintained by CYFS and its internal university partners after the ELN Initiative funding ends. The infrastructure for this system will be self-sustaining and can be used for other research endeavors that support CYFS and ongoing early learning work in the future.

Developing an early childhood longitudinal data system will advance Nebraska’s efforts to create a seamless and aligned early childhood system for children from birth up through the third grade. “Ensuring the inclusion of early childhood data in longitudinal data systems is an essential step toward redefining the primary years—moving away from envisioning education only as K-12 toward a pre-k–12 framework.” (Bornfreund and Severns, 2010) By creating a high-quality, integrated, comprehensive system, Nebraska will be able to bridge varied funding and agency streams. Doing so will provide timely, relevant, and accessible data information that tells much more of the story about children, personnel, and providers, thereby creating a deeper level of understanding about the needs of vulnerable young children and their families.

Priority 3: Competitive Preference Priority – Understanding the Status of Children’s Learning and Development at Kindergarten Entry.

Specify which option the State is taking:

- (a) Applicant has indicated in Table (A)(1)-12 that all of selection criterion (E)(1) elements are met.
- (b) Applicant has written to selection criterion (E)(1).



“Research shows that high-quality early learning can substantially increase the likelihood of academic success. For example, studies show that children who attend high quality pre-kindergarten programs are ‘less likely to be held back a grade, less likely to need special education, and more likely to graduate high school.’” “Building and Supporting an Aligned System: A Vision for Transforming Education Across the Pre-K-Grade Three Years” Executive Summary.

Priority 4(a) Enhance State’s current standards for K – 3 to align them with the Early Learning and Development Standards across all Essential Domains of School Readiness.

Nebraska has demonstrated its commitment to aligning Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) with K-3 programs in order to sustain program effects throughout the early elementary school years. In 2009, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) extended the development of the Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines (Guidelines) for birth to five into the primary grades by creating the Kindergarten Early Learning Guidelines (K-Guidelines) (Appendix P-01: Kindergarten Early Learning Guidelines). In partnership with the NDE Curriculum, Instruction, and Innovation Team, the NDE Office of Early Childhood led the creation of this document with a multidisciplinary team. The K-Guidelines are an implementation guide to help ECEs meet kindergarten standards in developmentally and academically appropriate ways. Currently, the K-Guidelines address the areas of language and mathematics. At the time the document was created, the K-12 standards in Nebraska were in the beginning stages of revision and the only revised standards for K-12 were in the areas of language arts and mathematics. As K-12 standards continue to be revised, Nebraska plans to continue to draft additional K-Guidelines sections until all of the Essential Domains of School Readiness are addressed. NDE’s focus on creating the K-Guidelines is an intentional effort to align the existing Guidelines (0-5) with the primary grades.

The Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) will support NDE’s K-3 Education Specialist who will work with Educational Service Units (ESUs) across the state and school districts to support teachers as they implement the aligned practices which are articulated in the Standards Instructional Tool and the Early Learning Guidelines for Kindergarten. Additional early childhood specialists will assist ELDPs to align preschool and K-3 practices at the school level.



Nebraska created the K-Guidelines to help kindergarten teachers and school administrators across the state enrich the work that takes place in classrooms every day. Nebraska's Guidelines for Kindergarten illustrate the Nebraska kindergarten standards in language arts and mathematics and provides ways the state standards can be intentionally taught and informally integrated throughout a range of daily experiences to support optimal learning outcomes for young children. They are a practical resource to support the teacher; they also provide examples of authentic activities and assessments that can be incorporated into the existing curriculum to aid the child's academic and social growth. The K-Guidelines provide examples of what the learning environment should include, what children should be doing in the classroom, and the role of adults within the school and home community so the reader is able to see how adults, materials, and environments can work together to achieve optimal learning and positive lifetime outcomes for young children. Knowledge about child development and learning and evidence-based practices in kindergarten guided the writing of this document, including:

- Teaching and learning environments should encompass the holistic developmental needs of the child including academic concepts and skills along with social and emotional development.
- The kindergarten teacher has a complex and complicated role in the kindergarten classroom. This includes providing opportunities and experiences that allow children to come together as a community of learners.
- Learning experiences should be integrated and connected throughout the day. Literacy and other academic activities can occur throughout the day across all content areas and should not be segregated into separate time frames and experiences.
- Opportunities to express new information in a variety of ways (e.g., pictorially, through storytelling, emergent writing), are an essential element of the kindergarten classroom, both for the child to show an understanding of concepts, and as a way for the teacher to assess the child's understanding.
- Academic learning and social and emotional development occur through a variety of daily experiences including teacher directed experiences, child initiated experiences, play experiences, and frequent interactions with adults and peers.



- Observation and documentation, as well as other forms of formative and summative assessment, are essential for effective curriculum planning and instruction.
- Daily opportunities for play provide children with opportunities to practice the newly acquired skills taught in the classroom, along with supporting the child’s development of self-regulation, creativity, and problem solving.

In addition, from 2008-09 the NDE Office of Early Childhood led a multidisciplinary team in the revision of the state’s Kindergarten Position Statement which is used throughout all of the work in the Department and by kindergarten teachers, families and mostly recently the media as a synopsis regarding Best Practices (Appendix P-02: A Kindergarten for the 21st Century). The Statement was revised to address the current issues being faced in kindergarten throughout the state. The revision of this document was an intentional step to align the early childhood community (those serving children ages 0-8) in Nebraska. The main barrier to alignment is adequate funds and resources to move this work to the next level. The focus and resources of RTTT-ELC funding will allow this work to advance and become embedded across the state.

Nebraska believes that aligning early learning and development standards with kindergarten to third grade standards across all essential domains will greatly improve the educational outcomes of Nebraska’s future citizens. “Pre-Kindergarten (PreK) to third educational systems operate in a culture of shared responsibility and accountability for child outcomes: all the adults involved in children’s PreK to third experiences—PreK teachers in both community-and school-based settings, elementary grades teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents—hold themselves collectively responsible for ensuring that students acquire grade-level reading, math, and social emotional skills by the end of third grade.” (Guernsey and Mead, 2010).

In accordance with this, Nebraska also has a curriculum framework for the primary grades called The Primary Program. This primary education curriculum guide was developed jointly by the Iowa and Nebraska Departments of Education to provide educators with a coherent framework to guide local planning for reform of educational programs for children at the kindergarten and primary level.



Adapted from the British Columbia Primary Program, it stresses developmentally appropriate practices, multicultural education, partnerships with parents and communities, and curriculum integration.

- Section 1: Outlines the guiding principles of the volume, discussing the philosophy behind the curriculum and considerations for implementation, and offering position statements on such topics as family involvement, group learning, and evaluation.
- Section 2: Discusses the goals of the program in relation to students' emotional, social, physical, and artistic development.
- Section 3: Emphasizes the importance of understanding the context of primary education, exploring the need for and implementation of educational reform, partnerships with families and communities, and transition programs for children.
- Section 4: Examines assessment and evaluation, discussing the strengths and weaknesses of different assessment vehicles.
- Section 5: Contains curriculum outlines in the areas of integrated curriculum, multiculturalism, fine arts, language arts, social studies, responsible living, physical education, mathematics, and science.
- Section 6: Addresses the role of integrated studies in primary education. Each section contains reference and resource lists.

Through the ELN Initiative, NDE will revise and promote the use of The Primary Program as another tool for aligning and integrating services for children 0-8. NDE also plans to align the existing Early Learning Guidelines (0-5) with the Standards Instructional Tool (K-12). The tool is a new web-based application geared toward the classroom-teachers and was created by the NDE Curriculum, Instruction, and Innovation Team. This tool includes a glossary of key words, further definitions/explanations of the indicators, and classroom instructional resources.

Priority 4(b) Ensure that transition planning occurs for children moving from Early Learning and Development Programs to elementary schools. Nebraska has implemented several policies and practices to ensure that transition planning occurs for children moving from ELDPs to elementary schools. State Rules 11 and 51, Title I regulations, and Head Start Performance Standards require school districts to have a plan for transitioning children from preschool to kindergarten. In addition, programs funded under the Early



Childhood Education Grant Program are required to describe their plan for supporting children in the transition from preschool to kindergarten. As Nebraska moves forward and implements a comprehensive kindergarten entrance assessment (described in section (E)(1)), the information provided from this assessment is expected to help ease the transition of children into kindergarten. Using the entrance assessment data will allow teachers to know their incoming students more fully at the beginning of the school year.

Through Step Up to Quality, Nebraska's tiered quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) structure and the coaching infrastructure, Early Childhood Coaches will work with ELDPs in both center-based and family child care settings to utilize practices that support children and families in the transition to kindergarten. The Early Learning Connections Coordinators located regionally and in the ESUs, is an intentional policy decision to make connections between the early learning community and the K-12 educational community. The ELC Coordinators who are co-located with other educators and charged with meeting the professional development needs of K-12 teachers provides an opportunity for greater sharing of expertise and resources, and improved communication of needs and expectations bridging the early years to early elementary grades and beyond.

The Health and Community Resource Consultants (HCR Consultants) are another strategy the ELN Initiative utilizes to meet the needs of children 0-8 and ensure smooth transitions to school to promote school success. With the goals of addressing the needs of the "whole child" and paying attention to health, dental care, and social emotional well-being, children are screened for needs earlier, receive services when needs are identified and enter school ready to learn. The HCR Consultant continues this service for children, families, schools, and communities through the transition of the early elementary school years. HCR Consultants assure that needs are being met prior to school and at their earliest experience in school.

In addition, in school districts where state-funded preschools are operated, intentional efforts will be made by NDE to encourage implementation of effective transition processes, including:



- Coordinating the professional development activities of preschool and kindergarten teachers in order to align prekindergarten and kindergarten curricula and goals;
- Arranging for kindergarten and preschool teachers to visit each other's classrooms; and
- Having preschool teachers provide the future kindergarten teacher with children's portfolios or a written record of their learning during preschool.

Priority 4(c) Promoting health and family engagement in early primary grades. Nebraska's Step Up to Quality QRIS includes strategies for engaging families in early learning and development programs. Currently, only state-funded preschools have requirements for implementing strategies to engage families while licensed ELDPs only have the requirement to let parents have access to the program at all times. The implementation of Step Up to Quality will increase family engagement strategies in ELDPs, especially those that receive Childcare Development Fund (CCDF) funds and other licensed ELDPs in the community.

As stated above, the health and community resource support services as well as family engagement activities that are part of the Health Resource Hub (described in section (C)(3)) are provided for children aged birth to 8 and their families. Local community plans that are approved for implementation under section (C)(3) to provide health resources and support for families through a Health Resource Hub, will include partnerships with schools and school districts. Depending on individual community need, the Hubs could be located in public schools. The health education and family resources that are provided for families served by ELDPs would be expanded to support families with children in primary grades at the school. This would increase access to the local network of local care providers, services, and resources; allow families more convenient access to providers and resources, and engage families with the local school in a more meaningful way.

Priority 4(d) Increasing the percentage of children who are able to read and do mathematics at grade level by the end of the third grade. Several strategies will aid in the alignment of ELDPs practices and knowledge with school classrooms and help smooth transitions and ensure that achievements in high-quality early childhood programs are sustained in school. Communities will be



assessed to determine ways they can integrate state-funded preschools, Head Start, and ELDP settings to provide full-day services for families and children (described in section (B)(4)(b)). Programs that integrate differing settings and providers to provide expanded access to full-day programs will be supported by NDE's early childhood specialists to align programming and practices. NDE will develop and implement a plan to provide consultation and support to individual schools and ELDPs to create partnerships that provide a seamless transition for children, including joint training between school-based and community-based providers on programming, assessments, promoting social emotional behavioral health, and other topics necessary to bridge early childhood and early elementary systems. HCR Consultants will support and promote community partnerships between schools and ELDPs through the Health Resource Hub work by including early elementary educators and schools in Hub-activities and resources. The training and exposure of ELDPs to use of child screening measures, formative assessments, and kindergarten entry assessment will start aligning expectations of programming with the kindergarten setting.

Priority 4(e) Leveraging existing Federal, State, and local resources, including but not limited to funds received under Title I and Title II of ESEA, and IDEA. Early childhood programs that use braided funding, serving children with multiple needs in various integrated settings, and using Title I funds to support preschool programs are all strategies implemented by Nebraska to sustain and build upon improved early learning outcomes throughout the early elementary school years.

Priority 5: Invitational Priority – Encouraging Private-Sector Support. Nebraska's private sector funders have been national leaders as active partners in the state's early childhood landscape. Like-minded philanthropists have made significant investments in early childhood initiatives directly aligned with the state's early childhood priorities. This commitment will continue with the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative). The currently established private and joint public-private early childhood initiatives (such as Educare, Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3), and the new Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska) are directly aligned with, and often a key partner in implementation of, the state's early childhood priorities and the ELN Initiative.



A primary driver in Nebraska of philanthropic interest in early childhood is the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF). Established in 2002 with funding from Susan A. Buffett's Sherwood Foundation, BECF recognizes the critical importance of strong foundations in the early years in setting children up to be successful in school and later in life. BECF is committed to eliminating the achievement gap in K-12, often evidenced in children of poverty, by eliminating the opportunity gap in the first five years. By investing in practice, policy, and knowledge, BECF hopes to level the playing field for children at risk of failure in school through high quality early childhood experiences in the first five years of life.

The “practice” arm of BECF's work is the nationwide Bounce Early Learning Network which presently includes 13 operational Educare schools, with four more under construction and another eight to 10 under development. The Educare model is a high quality, birth to five early childhood program that operates full days, year round. The model is driven by research and grounded in Head Start and Early Head Start principles. The key characteristics of the Educare schools include parental engagement, highly qualified staff, embedded professional development, low adult-child ratios and class size, and the intentional implementation of evidenced based curriculum. Every Educare must participate in a rigorous evaluation of classroom quality and child outcomes which are used for continuous improvement as well as to answer the fundamental question—is the achievement gap closing? The assessment results thus far are very promising, reflecting that children who participate in Educare for more than two years are arriving at kindergarten on par with their peers from families with sufficient resources.

The policy investments of BECF are in the Birth To Five Policy Alliance, which focuses on state based policy, and the First Five Years Fund, which focuses on communication and federal policy. BECF also supports the development and implementation of Nebraska based policy via First Five Nebraska. The knowledge investments of BECF are through the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and the work of Nobel Laureate in Economics, Dr. James Heckman. The other major knowledge investment of BECF is the funding of the national evaluation of the Educare Network by the Frank Porter Graham Institute at the University of North Carolina.



Over the past 10 years multiple donors have joined BECF in partnering with the state and local communities in a number of initiatives designed to provide Nebraska's youngest and most vulnerable children with quality early childhood services. Some examples are:

- **Early Childhood Development Grant Program (Early Childhood Education Grant Program (Birth to 3) program).** The private sector pledged \$20 million to match the State of Nebraska's investment of \$40 million to establish a unique public-private endowment that funds quality birth to three services for children at risk all across Nebraska.
- **Educare.** The private sector in Nebraska led by the Buffett Early Childhood Fund initiated the national replication of Educare schools that provide a high quality early childhood program for children at risk, birth to five years of age. Funders in Omaha contributed over \$20 million to build two state of the art Educare schools in two communities with high concentrations of poverty.
- **Early Childhood Services.** As part of a larger initiative in Omaha (Building Bright Futures) established to increase the number of children at risk graduating from high school, private donors contribute \$3 million annually to enhance the quality of community based ELDPs serving children of low income. These funds support intensive teacher coaching, mental health consultation for children with behavior issues, professional development opportunities for staff, child developmental screenings, and quality enhancement grants. Additionally, these private funds support home visitation services for teen parents and their children as well as educational services to assist young parents in graduating from high school.
- **Early Childhood Scholarships.** More than \$5 million has been contributed during the past 10 years to fund scholarships to children of families with low income to attend high quality early childhood programs in Omaha.
- **Buffett Early Childhood Institute.** The Buffet Early Childhood Fund supported Sherwood Foundation of Nebraska has made a substantial contribution to the University of Nebraska to establish a new \$100 million Institute that will focus on the integration of policy, practice, and research in the field of early childhood for children birth to eight years of age. The key purpose of the Institute will be to ensure that all children in Nebraska, especially those most vulnerable, will have access to quality early childhood services.



- **Business Round Table.** In the past year, a statewide Early Childhood Business Round Table has been established. Funded through a private donation, the Round Table is educating business leaders about the importance of the early years. Chaired by the Chief Financial Officer of Gallup, the Round Table is building a new base of champions for investing in the early years in order to have a stronger, smarter and healthier state.
- **First Five Nebraska.** The private sector also supports the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, doing business as First Five Nebraska, to be a credible source and voice for smart policy and practice developments in Nebraska.

In addition to the impressive record of both financial support and a shared vision and commitment for increased access to high quality early childhood programs, the philanthropic community of Nebraska has committed to support the ELN Initiative with state leaders in two significant, sustainable ways:

- More than \$45 million in **planned investment** in early childhood projects that directly align and support the goals of ELN Initiative.
- Private sector interest and intent to establish an **Early Childhood Investment Council**.

Planned Investments. Multiple funders from the private sector across the state of Nebraska will contribute to the expansion of early childhood services intended to provide children at risk with strong foundations during their first five years.

- Additional investment of up to \$40 will be made to build three to four more Educare schools in Nebraska. One of these schools will be in Lincoln (the state's capital) with ground breaking scheduled for October 2011 and the school opening in the fall of 2012. Plans are underway to build an Educare in mid-state Nebraska, one in western Nebraska, and one in the Tribal community of Winnebago. This Educare expansion will serve approximately 800 more children at risk with hundreds more impacted through activities designed to raise the practice of other ELDPs in the community.



- Approximately \$500,000 per year will be invested in the early literacy program Early Steps, designed by the national organization Save the Children. This program will be implemented in five sites in partnership with schools and will be targeted for children of low income in rural communities. Home visitation services will be provided for children under three and a book exchange program for children three to five years of age.
- Donors in Omaha intend to double their financial commitment to the Building Bright Futures-Early Childhood Services (ECS) program, expanding from \$3 million per year to \$6 million. This expanded investment will result in an additional 1000 children at risk being impacted. The private sector has been encouraged by the independent evaluation of child outcomes for children attending ELDPs that receive intensive coaching and support. The children in all eight programs showed significant gains in language development, early literacy, and kindergarten readiness as measured through standardized assessments.
- An initial commitment of \$1 million has been made towards a major goal of Early Childhood Services in Omaha in order to establish a scholarship program for children to participate in high quality ELDP's. These funds would offset the difference between what parents and public funding provide and what it actually costs to deliver a high quality early childhood program.

Early Childhood Investment Council. Given the planned statewide expansion of investments in early childhood by a growing number of philanthropists, there is interest in establishing a state Early Childhood Investment Council to focus and leverage resources. Through the proposed Council, philanthropic partners with a strong history of supporting high quality and innovative early childhood practices, proven strategies, and policy development, will work together to assess needs and identify promising practices for future investments. The Council will be established in the early months of 2012 to identify the parameters of their operation and will closely align its actions with the ELN Initiative goals and objectives.



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VIII. EARLY LEARNING NEBRASKA INITIATIVE BUDGET

BUDGET PART I: SUMMARY

BUDGET PART I—TABLES

Budget Table I-1: Budget Summary by Budget Category

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
Budget Table I-1: Budget Summary by Budget Category (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Categories	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	2,048,082	2,522,541	2,603,606	2,735,472	9,909,701
2. Fringe Benefits	740,923	929,412	1,001,998	1,064,132	3,736,465
3. Travel	103,578	146,928	145,433	134,493	530,432
4. Equipment	100,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	130,000
5. Supplies	154,389	59,875	52,375	52,375	319,014
6. Contractual	4,090,054	7,867,921	8,537,274	8,795,921	29,291,170
7. Training Stipends	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
8. Other	547,077	793,544	996,306	934,579	3,271,506
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	7,786,103	12,332,221	13,348,992	13,728,972	47,196,288
10. Indirect Costs*	595,886	607,311	592,466	602,969	2,398,632
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0



12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000	400,000
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	8,481,989	13,039,532	14,041,458	14,431,941	49,994,920
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	8,481,989	13,039,532	14,041,458	14,431,941	49,994,920

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6.

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT–ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.



Budget Table I-2: Budget Summary by Participating State Agency--

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
Budget Table I-2: Budget Summary by Participating State Agency					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Agency Name	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
NDHHS	930,987	2,203,770	2,698,536	2,761,085	8,594,378
NDE	3,372,066	5,946,960	6,513,395	6,716,677	22,549,098
Univ. of Nebraska	4,178,936	4,888,802	4,829,527	4,954,179	18,851,444
Total Statewide Budget	8,481,989	13,039,532	14,041,458	14,431,941	49,994,920

Budget Table I-3: Budget Summary by Project--

OVERALL STATEWIDE BUDGET					
Budget Table I-3: Budget Summary by Project					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Administration	1,211,626	1,085,221	1,142,217	1,142,242	4,581,306
2. QRIS Implementation	3,289,771	7,015,834	8,168,778	8,444,094	26,918,477
3. Data Systems	1,558,634	1,504,253	1,287,950	1,305,512	5,656,349
4. Statewide Kindergarten	461,973	852,348	730,029	739,218	2,783,568
5. Evaluation	1,082,790	1,508,487	1,465,814	1,577,886	5,634,977
6.Ed Enhancements	691,350	899,669	1,072,950	1,049,269	3,713,238



7. Family Engagement	185,845	173,720	173,720	173,720	707,005
Total Statewide Budget	8,481,989	13,039,532	14,041,458	14,431,941	49,994,920

BUDGET PART I -NARRATIVE

Budget Project #	Description	NDHHS	NDE	University	Narrative Selection Criteria	
Section	Administration					
1	a	Administration (Lead PSA 1)	X		Section A-3	
	b	Administration (PSA 2)		X	Section A-3	
	c	Administration (PSA 3)		X	Section A-3	
2	QRIS Implementation					
	a	Early Learning Connections Coordination-Learning Communities		X	Section C-2(d), C-4(b), D-1 c)	
	b	Early Childhood Coaches		X	Section B-4(a), C-4(b), D-2(a)	
	c	Early Childhood Mental Health/Teaching Pyramid Consultation		X	Section B-3(a), B-4(a), C-3(a), D-2(a),	
	d	Observers/Rates		X	Section B-3(a), C-3(b)	
	e	Community-Health Connectors	X		Section C-3	
	f	TEACH Scholarships		X	Section D-2(b)	
	g	Quality Portfolio		X	Section C-4(b)	
	h	Training (other)		X	Section B-4(a), C-3(b), D-2(a)	
3	Data Systems					
	a	Training Registry & Training Coordination Database		X	Section D-2(a)c)	
	b	Data Analysis (federation of data from multiple systems)	X	X	X	Section E-2
	c	QRIS Public Information Sharing of Program Status	X	X		Section B-3(b)
4	Statewide Kindergarten Readiness & Comprehensive Developmental Assessment					
	a	Research & recommend Kindergarten Entry Readiness Assessment			X	Section E-1
	b	Provide practitioner training on TS Gold, Writing Anecdote, Active Learning			X	Section C-2
	c	Conduct Comprehensive Assessment Evaluation - collect, analyze & report on data; provide technical assistance to training practitioners.			X	Section C-2
5	Evaluation					



	a	QRIS Validity			X	Section B-5 (a)(b)
	b	RTT-ELC Process Evaluation			X	Section B-2(b), B-5(b), C-3(d), D-2(a)
	c	Child Care Study (Revisited)			X	Section B-5(b)
6		Postsecondary Education Enhancements				
	a	Early Learning Coursework Articulation			X	Section D-1(b)D-2 (see charts D-2(d) 1 and 2
	b	Cross-Profession Early Learning Curricular Integration			X	Section D 2(a)
	c	EC online coursework for coaching			X	Section D1-2, B
	d	Extension Educators doing outreach to diverse EC Educators/Programs			X	Section B-2(b), C-4(b) Section D-2(a)
7		Family Engagement				
	a	NET		X		Section B-2(b) B-3(b),C-4

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), as the lead agency appointed by the Governor, holds ultimate responsibility for comprehensive budget management and fiscal accountability for all federal Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) funding awarded to the State of Nebraska. A full time Program Manager will be employed by and housed within the NDHHS structure for the project term. The position will report directly to the Early Learning Nebraska Leadership Council consisting of the Governor, NDHHS Chief Operating Officer, and Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) Commissioner. Complete budget reports from each Participating State Agency and contractors receiving RTT-ELC dollars will be compiled, analyzed, and presented to the Leadership Council members for review at least quarterly and on-demand if requested.

Each of the three Participating State Agencies (PSAs) created detailed budget descriptions of all costs requested under the RTT-ELC grant. NDHHS will be responsible for fund disbursement to PSAs in accordance with Nebraska’s federally approved RTT-ELC budget and strictly for the purposes described in PSA budget narratives and identified within the joint Memorandum of Understanding. The PSAs already utilize an inter-agency funds transfer system for complex grant and project budgets that cut across agencies. Upon award, monies will be deposited into the NDHHS account and disbursed via electronic transfers to appropriate PSA accounts. NDHHS can, at any time, access the remote agency accounts to check information as needed.



All contracts for services are reviewed by the NDHHS Legal Division for content and compliance with any State and Federal laws. Once approved, the contracts are entered into the State's Contract System, which is a part of the State's Accounting System. The System will automatically monitor the payments against the contracted amount so that the payments to the contractor will not go over the contract amount.

Each contractor will be required to submit a report on the deliverables as specified in the contract for reimbursement. The Project Coordinator will be making monitoring visits to the various contractors' to insure compliance with the contract and the contractors' reports.

Budgetary and Project Responsibilities of PSAs

PSA1. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS). The NDHHS possesses overall fiscal and project management and reporting responsibility for the RTT-ELC grant award and assures compliance with all federal and state laws, rules and regulations governing the receipt, administration and accounting of federal grant funds. The Program Manager, responsible for comprehensive oversight and implementation of Nebraska's RTT-ELC State Plan across state agencies and among local implementation sites, will be employed by NDHHS. The Program Coordinator's role is to coordinate and manage specific NDHHS RTT-ELC projects. The Program Manager and Program Coordinator and will be aided by a Staff Assistant II position.

NDHHS are engaged in the following projects: **1a.** Administration, **2e.** QRIS Implementation; Health and Community Resource Consultant contracts. Project **3** Data Systems; **3b** Data Analysis **3c.** QRIS Public Information Sharing.

PSA 2. Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The NDE will lead state efforts relevant to QRIS organization and implementations, including contractual arrangements with regional Educational Service Units to plan, deliver and evaluate all necessary training resulting from implementation of the State Plan and the array of revised guidelines, enhanced curricula, assessments, and tools that accompany Nebraska's early learning system reforms. To coordinate and manage specific work assigned to NDE for the ELN Initiative a Program Coordinator shall be hired and participate with the Program Manager and the other two Program Coordinators (one from NDHHS, one from the University). Together they make up the Project Management Team. A Project



Assistant shall be hired to assist the NDE Program Coordinator in carrying out their duties. One Accountant shall be hired at NDE to monitor and account for spending within a significant number of small contracts and diversified expenditures in carrying out the RTTT-ELC grant award. One QRIS Specialist shall be hired for coordination of all training, facilitating completion of QRIS criteria, and implementing QRIS in ELDP's statewide.

One Teaching Pyramid Specialist by the second quarter of the first year, this person shall be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the social emotional training and consultation across the state. One Registry Coordinator shall be hired by the second quarter of the first year, and is responsible for managing implementation of the Early Childhood Trainers, Practitioners, and Training Registry. Additionally a Technical Assistant shall be hired in year 2 to provide training to Registry users and ongoing technical assistance and resolution of technical issues. In Year 3, NDE will hire 2 Registry Verification Specialists. These specialists are responsible for verifying data in the provider registry. One half-time Specialist will be hired in the second quarter of Year 1, responsible for assisting public schools align expectations with birth to five programs and local implementation of the Kindergarten Assessment.

Contracts will be entered into with seven of Nebraska's Education Service Units (ESUs). Nebraska is broken into seven regions covered by Early Learning Connection Coordinators are housed within the ESU's. Contracts will allow an increase in resources to each regions for ongoing regional and community planning around the implementation of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative and to staff and coordinate QRIS training and technical assistance to ELDP's. This Early Learning Connection Network will carry out the many strategies of support to Early Childhood Educators necessary to assist programs in advancing through the levels of the QRIS including; training initiatives, coaching, and consultation, and resource supports. The second contract package to be held by the seven ESUs is to increase the number of coaching projects across the state with a four-year goal of reaching 362 QRIS participants with high quality coaching to improve teacher/provider practice. Contracts will include funds for coaching time, materials, and resources for ELDPs to improve quality. The third contract package includes implementation of the Quality Portfolio Training Series with the goal of training over 500 ECE's annually. The fourth contract package includes Practitioner Training on TS Gold, Writing Anecdote, Active Learning, with the seven ESUs coordinating one additional training event per year.



The ELN Initiative will use the Teaching Pyramid model as an evidence-based strategy and curriculum already proven to be successful in several Nebraska ELDPs. RTT-ELC funding will allow for replication of the program and practices statewide. NDE will issue contracts to 7 mental health specialists (one per region). Community readiness and site selection will be based on the Nebraska Teaching Pyramid Self-Assessment Tool. This model allows for consultation of a mental health practitioner in ELDP's, child observations, functional behavioral assessments, and up to three therapy sessions in the family home. Mental health practitioners will all complete both the Coach and Teaching Pyramid trainings.

ERS Observers/Raters, (including all the tools being used in the QRIS Program Standards.) ELN will include a rigorous, transparent, and accessible system for rating and monitoring the quality of ELDP's participating in Step Up to Quality, Nebraska's QRIS. Based on previous experience and established protocols from other programs that require observations and raters, NDE will lead the monitoring of participating programs, rating of programs using the Step Up to Quality criteria, and training and oversight of observers, assuring inter-rater reliability in accordance with established protocols and use of Anchors/Group Leaders.

NDE will contract with T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Nebraska to fund additional scholarships to assist ECE's in professional development goals related to postsecondary education.

Other Contracts consist of support for curriculum enhancement training I ECE's related to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Online Training Module Development to adapt current content for use in online training to expand delivery options of training as a result of pending new licensing regulations. Publishing revised Early Learning Guidelines, additional training for revised Guidelines annually. Contracting for an independent contractor qualified to supplement internal NDE resources for training registry development, management, and maintenance. Funds will be used to carry out training needs associated with implementation of the agreed upon Kindergarten Assessment tools/processes. NDE will utilize the Kindergarten through grade three specialist and ESU staff to work with school district teachers and administrators in carrying this out. NDE will contract with Nebraska Educational Television (NET) to create training modules and community events that can be used to impart information to Early Childhood Educators and Families across Nebraska. NDE will provide stipends to State Advisory Council members, including members who represent



families, to facilitate their participation in Early Learning Nebraska training events. Stipends may be used for transportation, lodging, child care or other expenses families may incur as a result of their training participation.

NDE is involved in the following Projects: **1b.** Administration, Project **2:** QRIS Implementation; **2a.** Early Learning Connections Coordination, **2b.** Early Childhood Coaches **2c.** Early Childhood Mental Health/Teaching Pyramid Consultation, **2d.** Observer/Raters, **2f.** T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships **2g.** Quality Portfolio Training, **2h.** Training (other) Project **3:** Data Systems; **3a.** Trainers, Practitioners, and Training Registry, **3b.** Data Analysis, **3c.** QRIS Public Information. Project **4** Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Comprehensive Development Assessments; **4a.** Carry out agreed upon Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, **4b.** Provide practitioner training on TS Gold, Writing Anecdote, Active Learning, Project **7** Family Engagement; Information, outreach, training with Nebraska Educational Television, and stipends to families to participate in planning.

PSA 3. University of Nebraska. The University will be the lead for Early Learning Nebraska Initiative (ELN Initiative) work related to development of methodology for data analysis, (federation of data from multiple systems), assisting NDE by researching and recommending Kindergarten entry readiness assessments, assisting with carrying out appropriate comprehensive assessment in ELDP's, providing technical assistance and training to practitioners, and collecting, analyzing, and reporting on data collected using the assessments. Additionally, the University will lead evaluation on QRIS validity of tiers of the standards and connection to child outcomes, process evaluations on strategies being utilized for professional development, and an overall study of the characteristics and quality of child care in Nebraska. The University is taking the lead in aligning standards and competencies into early childhood curriculum, articulation of courses across postsecondary education, cross-profession early learning curricular integration and Early Childhood Coaching coursework being developed and implemented. Finally, through work of Extension Educators, family engagement training will be carried to ECE's and outreach to cultural and linguistically diverse ECE's will occur. To coordinate and manage the work assigned to the University, a Project Coordinator will be hired to provide oversight to the individual project work to achieve comprehensive results, provide grant/contract administration, budget monitoring, and the development of detailed work plans, procedures, and monitoring protocols to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and Nebraska's RTTT ELC work plan. A Program Specialist will be hired to support the work of the Project Coordinator and overall NU projects. Post-Award Specialists,



TBN, 18 person month per year (1.5 FTE annually) will support all NU projects for day to day purchasing, reconciling and account matters that pertain to the overall project and an Information Technology Specialist, TBN, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) to support all University projects for computer, communications and general technology needs. For a complete listing and breakdown of the staffing that will carry out each Project assigned to the University see the University's project budget - University of Nebraska Summary Budget Justification.

The University is involved in the following Projects: **1c.** Administration, **Project 3:** Data Systems; **3b.** Data Analysis, (federation of data from multiple systems **Project 4** Kindergarten Readiness Assessment and Comprehensive Development Assessments; **4a.** Research and recommend Kindergarten Entry Readiness Assessment, **4c.** Conduct Comprehensive Assessment Evaluation—collect, analyze and report on data, provide technical assistance to training practitioners. **Project 5:** Evaluation; **5a.** QRIS Validity (Study one-validate QRIS, and study two, QRIS and Child Outcomes), **5b.** ELN Initiative Process Evaluations (Study three, (a) Process Study of QRIS, (b) Study of Early Childhood Education Coaching, (c) Process Study of Early Childhood Mental Health Project, and (d) Process Study of the Early Learning and Development Program (ELDP) Health and Community Resource Consultants. **5c.** Study of Child Care “Revisited”, (Study four), repeating the 2002 study of “Characteristics of Quality of Child Care in Nebraska”. **Project 6** Postsecondary Education Enhancements; **6a.** Early Learning Coursework Articulation, **6b.** Cross-Professional Early Learning Curricular Integration, **6c.** Early Childhood On-Line Coursework for Coaching, **6d.** Extension Educators doing outreach to diverse EC Educators/Programs and training EC Educators using a curriculum on Family Engagement.



BUDGET PART II: PARTICIPATING STATE AGENCY

BUDGET PART II – TABLES

PSA 1. Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services System

PSA 1: NDHHS-Level Budget Table II-1 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	156,226	158,571	162,535	166,598	643,930
2. Fringe Benefits	66,774	67,136	67,731	68,344	269,985
3. Travel	2,578	2,578	2,578	2,578	10,312
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	10,014	2,000	1,500	1,000	14,514
6. Contractual	548,560	1,856,640	2,345,661	2,402,302	7,153,163
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	12,500	0	0	0	12,500
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	796,652	2,086,925	2,580,005	2,640,822	8,104,404
10. Indirect Costs*	101,001	83,512	85,198	86,929	356,640
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0		0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	33,334	33,333	33,333	33,334	133,334
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	930,987	2,203,770	2,698,536	2,761,085	8,594,378



14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	930,987	2,203,770	2,698,536	2,761,085	8,594,378

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT-ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

PSA 1 NDHHS-Level Budget Table II-2 (Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Administration	444,927	367,130	372,875	378,783	1,563,715
2. QRIS Implementation	473,560	1,836,640	2,325,661	2,382,302	7,018,163
3. Data Systems	12,500	0	0	0	12,500
4. Statewide Kindergarten	0	0	0	0	0
5. Evaluation	0	0	0	0	0
6. Ed Enhancements	0	0	0	0	0



7. Family Engagement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Statewide Budget	930,987	2,203,770	2,698,536	2,761,085	8,594,378

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

BUDGET PART II - NARRATIVE

Project 1a: Project Coordination Administrative Budget Justification

Personnel

NDHHS Program Manager for Early Learning Nebraska, (1.0 FTE). Reports to the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative Leadership Council (Governor, NDHHS Chief Executive Officer, and NDE Commissioner) and holds overall responsibility for the administration and coordination of the Early Learning Nebraska Initiative Program. Assures complex, multifunctional aspects of the program are carried out in accordance with the State Program Plan and all relevant laws, rules and regulations of the State of Nebraska and the United States of America. Facilitates communication and collaboration routines among PSAs, contractors and partners to achieve assigned objectives. Serves as direct link among state and community level programs, the Leadership Council, and PSA Project Coordinators. Ensures activities are carried out in compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines through the work of subordinate managers, vendors and contracts; Formulates / proposes policies across PSA projects; Performs accurate and on-time administrative functions required to support the Program's operations including budget preparation and maintenance, program planning, monitoring work plans, problem resolution, assessing progress and ameliorating roadblocks to success.

Salary = \$80,000 YR1; \$81,201 YR2; \$83,231 YR3; and \$85,311 YR4 Total: \$329,743



NDHHS Program Coordinator for Early Learning Nebraska, (1.0 FTE). Reports to the Program Manager. Responsible for day-to-day management of NDHHS projects supported by the RTTT-ELC grant. General duties include grant/contract administration, budget monitoring, and development of detailed work plans, procedures, and monitoring protocols to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and Nebraska's Program Plan. Monitors program budgets, contractor audits, and conducts on-site evaluation reviews with contractors. Coordinates and confers with Early Learning Nebraska Initiative PSAs and other partners. Provides training, technical assistance and networking to communities, organizations and cooperative projects supported by or partnering with Early Learning Nebraska Initiative. Serves as liaison among federal and state authorities, policy review staff, and community leaders. Drafts legal contracts, evaluates proposals, negotiates contracts and recommends approval. Organizes meetings, forums and other public events to further the work of NDHHS assigned projects. Responds to information requests from the public, federal and state agencies. Researches and writes required plans, grants, proposals and reports for timely transmittal to federal and state authorities. Writes program policy and procedures consistent with state or federal guidelines under direction of Program Manager. Coordinates development of program goals and evaluation criteria with agency staff, community officials, and/or other state government staff. Prepares grant applications to federal agencies requesting funds to support program initiatives. Develops corrective action plans for program deficiencies. Serves on relative community organizations, committees, task forces, and advisory boards.

Salary = \$43,370 YR1; \$44,021 YR2; \$45,121 YR3; and \$46,249 YR4. Total: \$178,761

NDHHS Staff Assistant II, (1.0 FTE). Carries out assignments as directed by the Program Manager and Program Coordinator. Supports data collection and reporting for RTT-ELC activities. Determines applicability of and explains policies, procedures, and processes pertinent to program and/or administrative functions to agency employees, state and local officials and employees, and the public to answer inquiries and facilitate proper application of directives and processes; evaluates policies, procedures, and processes and applies them to situations to make determinations. Clerical duties to support communications and administrative responsibilities of the lead agency role in RTTT-ELC. .

Salary Totals = \$32,856 YR1; \$33,349 YR2; \$34,183 YR3; and \$35,038 YR4. Total: \$135,426



Fringe Benefits are calculated on annual salary x annual benefits rates as follows:

Program Manager: YR1 33.11 %, YR2 32.85%, YR3 32.41%, YR4 31.99%

YR1 \$26,488 YR2: \$26,675 YR3 \$26,975 YR4 \$27,291 Total: \$107,429

Program Coordinator: YR1 48.28%, YR2 47.79%, YR3 47.00%, YR4 46.22%

YR1 \$20,940 YR2 \$21,038 YR3 \$21,207 YR4 \$21,376 Total: \$84,561

Staff Assistant: YR1 58.88%, YR2 58.24%, YR3 57.19%, YR4 56.16%

YR1 \$ 19,346 YR2 \$19,423 YR3 \$19,549 YR4 \$19,677 Total: \$77,995

Fringe Totals: YR1: \$66,774 YR2 \$67,136 YR3 \$67,731 YR4 \$68,344 Total: \$269,985

Travel

In-State lodging and per diem costs for the Program Manager and Program Coordinator positions to conduct site visits, attend stakeholder and PSA meetings, and to attend relevant local events associated with the RTT-ELC program. The state vehicle fleet will be used for longer distance ground travel and is an expense covered under the indirect costs line item. All other in-State travel costs for DHHS staff are determined as follows.

Lodging	8 nights/yr x 2 staff x \$77/night = \$1,232/yr
Per Diem	8 days/yr x 2 staff x \$46/day = \$736/yr
Mileage	500 miles/yr x 2 staff x \$0.51/mile = \$510/yr (Personal car for trips within 1 hour radius of Lincoln, NE)
Misc. (parking)	2 staff x \$50 each/yr = \$100/yr

Travel Totals: YR1 \$2,578 YR2 \$2,578 YR3 \$2,578 YR 4 \$2,578 Total: \$10,312

Supplies

Consumable goods and materials with finite life spans valued at less than \$5,000 per item are included in the Supplies line item.

Included in this category are technology products such as laptops, desktop computers, mobile printers for field work, and smart phones



for use in the field and software for NDHHS staff to carry out job responsibilities of the RTTT-ELC grant regardless of location.

Most technology products will be purchased in YR1. Other supplies are meeting and training materials.

Supply Totals: YR1 \$10,014 YR2 \$2,000 YR3 \$1,500 YR4 \$1,000 Total: \$14,514

Contractual

Technical consultant/developer identified through a competitive process to develop a web site for Early Learning Nebraska. This web site will be designed to communicate the collaborative work of the PSAs rather than focusing on the work of any one PSA. It will allow users to navigate among projects, connect to resources, obtain initiative updates, and communicate with key staff. In Years 2-4 the site will need ongoing support and maintenance.

Contractual Total: YR 1 \$75,000 YR 2 \$20,000 YR 3 \$20,000 YR 4 \$20,000 Total: \$135,000

Indirect Costs

The USHHS approved indirect cost rate for Nebraska DHHS is 37% of personnel salaries + fringe. Nebraska DHHS will also recover 37% indirect on the first \$25,000 of each of the two contract packages identified in project 2e.

Indirect Cost Totals: YR1 \$101,001 YR2 \$83,512 YR3 \$85,198 YR4 \$86,929 Total: \$356,640

Funds Set Aside for Participation in Grantee Technical Assistance

The state must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT-ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years.

Total funds for grantee technical assistance: YR1 \$33,334 YR2 \$33,333 YR3 \$33,333 YR4 \$33,334 Total: \$133,334



Project 2e: ORIS Implementation, Health Resource Community Consultants

Contractual

Health & Community Resource (HCR) Consultant Curriculum Development/Training: A contract will be entered into with an existing, qualified child care health consultation curriculum developer. This developer will adapt a curriculum for Nebraska and train a Nebraska Trainer. The Nebraska Trainer will deliver in-person group training to the 20 HCR Consultants in years one and two, with online and remote follow-up training and coaching as needed in years three and four. A Technical Consultant will also be contracted in YR1 to design web-based access to the curriculum content and learning resources, augmenting the in-person trainings. Additional contractual costs relate to meeting space and other logistics for in-person training sessions.

Curriculum Development Consultant \$50,000 YR1 only

Nebraska Consultant Trainer

\$30,000 YR1 (in-person for 7 Consultants)

\$30,000 YR2 (in-person for an additional 13 Consultants)

\$10,000/yr in YR3 and YR4 = \$20,000 (online training and distance coaching)

Technical Consultant \$20,000 YR1 only

Training Logistics / Supports

3 in-person training sessions/yr x 2 yrs x \$5,000/session expense = \$30,000 (divided for YRS 1&2)

Health & Community Resource (HCR) Consultant Curriculum Development/Training Totals: YR1 \$115,000 YR2 \$45,000

YR3 \$10,000 YR4 \$10,000 Total: \$180,000

Early Learning Nebraska Initiative Statewide Conferences



An annual Early Learning Nebraska Conference will be held in three of the four project years. A YR1 kick-off meeting will inform and engage stakeholders statewide to rally early learning reform enthusiasm and commitments to action. YR2 conference topics will include state and local progress reports, shared learning from the national cadre of RTT-ELC grantees, highlights of local implementation success in programmatic and financial sustainability efforts, lessons learned from research, peer networking across local implementation sites and preparation for YR3 activities. YR4, a conference held during the first quarter will include the former topics plus prepare for grant conclusion and sustaining activities without the support of RTT-ELC funds. Public and private funding sources of relevance and with particular investment interest in early learning and child development will be invited to all conferences.

Early Learning Nebraska HCR Conference

YR3 will include a conference to provide training specific to the HCR Consultants and their community health and service provider collaborators. This conference will provide updates on evidence-based consultation practices and success in developing resource hubs.

Conference Coordinator

\$25,000 contract to plan and facilitate the annual conference x 4 yrs = \$100,000

Invited Speakers and Trainers

\$10,000/conference x 4 yrs = \$40,000

Meeting Space/Logistical Support

\$15,000/conference x 4 yrs = \$60,000

Early Learning Nebraska Initiative Statewide Conferences: YR1 \$50,000 YR2 \$50,000 YR4 \$50,000 = \$150,000

Early Learning Nebraska HCR Conference Totals: YR3 \$50,000



Health and Community Resource Consultants and Resource Hub

Qualified community-based entities in RTT-ELC implementation sites will be identified via a competitive RFP or RFQ process to establish, deliver, monitor, and sustain child and family health and supportive services which increase child wellness and their ability to enter school and continue their educational paths physically, mentally, and emotionally able to learn. RTT-ELC grant funds will be used as seed money to establish locally organized and staffed resource “hubs” that High Need Children and their families can access for physical and behavioral health and supportive service needs.

A total of 20 Health and Community Resource Consultants will be activated in years one and two. They will be professionals with health related credentials, e.g. licensed nurses, therapists, community health educators, etc. In addition to providing one-on-one child wellness consultation to children, families, schools and local health partners, the Consultants will be responsible for developing resource hubs that coordinate and expand the array of health and health-related services available locally for High Need Children and their families. The resource hubs may consist of centralized health and nutrition services, e.g. Immunizations / WIC / Medicaid EPSDT wellness clinics, family health education related to specific community needs such as high incidences of infant mortality, early onset of Type II diabetes in children, asthma management, etc., and general public awareness and community leader knowledge development about the inter-relatedness of child health and academic success throughout life and the necessity of supporting child and family health and well-being at the local level.

As part of the RFP or RFQ solicitation, DHHS will ask prospective applicants to identify commitments to sustaining the consultant positions and hub resources offered to the community after RTT-ELC grant funding ceases. Commitments may be in the form of cash and/or in-kind support. It is expected that consultants and resource hubs will be situated in schools, public health departments, Early Head Start/Head Start or Educare centers, or other existing physical sites that High Need Children and their families already visit regularly.



Ten support staff will be added to resource hubs in years three and four to assist the Health and Community Resource Consultants as it is anticipated their workloads will increase as families and communities build trust in, and understand the role and services of Consultant positions. Consultant hourly rate is based on NE labor contract for Nurse Consultant positions

YR1 Contracts to Local:

- a. (7) Consultants will work for six months of the first year x \$25/hr x 1080 hrs = \$189,000 YR1
- b. Fringe \$189,000 x 0.40 = \$75,600
- c. Travel @ \$2,500/Consultant x 7 = \$17,500
- d. Administrative/Overhead Costs @ 10% x (a+b) = \$26,460

YR2 Contracts to Local:

- a. (20) FTE Consultants 20 x \$25.625/hr (reflects annual COLA increase) x 2080 hrs = \$1,066,000
- b. Fringe \$1,066,000 x 0.40 = \$426,400
- c. Travel @ \$5,000/Consultant x 20 = \$100,000
- d. Admin/Overhead Costs @ 10% (a+b) = \$149,240

YR3 Contracts to Local:

Inflationary adjustments to YR2 base costs of \$1,741,640 x 1.025 = \$1,785,181 + the following new staffing at local resource hubs:

- a. (10) FTE Support Staff @ \$15.00/hr x 2080 hrs x 10 staff = \$312,000
- b. Fringe \$312,000 x .040 = \$124,800
- c. Additional Admin/Overhead Costs for new staffing @ 10% x (a+b) = \$43,680

YR4 Contracts to Local:

Inflationary adjustments to YR3 base of \$2,265,661 x 1.025 = \$2,322,303

HCR Consultants and Resource Hub Totals: YR1 \$308,560 YR2 \$1,741,640 YR3 \$2,265,661 YR4 \$2,322,302 Total: \$6,638,163



Indirect Costs

This has been calculated and is reflected on project 1a.

Project 3c: ORIS Implementation, Public Information Sharing of Program Status

N-FOCUS is the comprehensive Nebraska DHHS data collection and reporting system for all administered programs and services. Integration of Nebraska Early Advantage data goals and requirements with N-FOCUS requires support from a Technical Analyst and Business Analyst within the State government system (Dept. of Administrative Support).

In-house Technical Analyst

Functional Analysis/Design 24 hrs x \$75=\$1,800

Technical Design-DMR/Codes 12 hrs x \$75= \$900

Construction/Technical Tests 64 hrs x \$75 = \$4,800

In-house Business Analyst 100 hrs x \$50/hr = \$5,000

Public Information Sharing of Program Status Totals: YR1 \$12,500 YR2 \$0.00 YR3 \$0.00 YR4 \$0.00 Total: \$12,500



PSA 2. Nebraska Department of Education

PSA 2 NDE-Level Budget Table II-1					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	222,504	345,677	410,015	418,218	1,396,414
2. Fringe Benefits	118,102	194,843	259,843	280,479	853,267
3. Travel	40,000	40,000	40,000	40,000	160,000
4. Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
5. Supplies	42,975	2,475	2,475	2,475	50,400
6. Contractual	2,752,494	5,226,281	5,646,190	5,848,196	19,473,161
7. Training Stipends	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	8,000
8. Other	42,647	19,958	48,287	23,288	134,180
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	3,220,722	5,831,234	6,408,810	6,614,656	22,075,422
10. Indirect Costs*	118,011	82,393	71,251	68,688	340,343
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	33,333	33,333	33,334	33,333	133,333
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	3,372,066	5,946,960	6,513,395	6,716,677	22,549,098
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0
15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	3,372,066	5,946,960	6,513,395	6,716,677	22,549,098

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.



Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT-ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

PSA 2 NDE-Level Budget Table II-2					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Administration	313,567	309,169	349,509	332,390	1,304,635
2. QRIS Implementation	2,816,211	5,179,194	5,843,117	6,061,792	19,900,314
3. Data Systems	21,800	20,450	20,000	20,000	82,250
4. Statewide Kindergarten	34,643	264,427	127,049	128,775	554,894
5. Evaluation	0	0	0	0	0
6. Ed Enhancements	0	0	0	0	0
7. Family Engagement	185,845	173,720	173,720	173,720	707,005
Total Statewide Budget	3,372,066	5,946,960	6,513,395	6,716,677	22,549,098

Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The **Total Statewide Budget** for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.



Budget Part II - Narrative

Project 1b. Administration

Personnel

(1) FTE NDE Project Coordinator. To be hired at NDE pay grade 47, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries were calculated on an annual basis in the budget so by making the calculations on an hourly basis there are some minor differences. The salaries listed are those calculated on an annual basis. This is a limited-term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period.

YR1 \$38,714 YR2 \$52,651 YR3 \$53,704 YR4 \$54,778 Total \$199,847

FTE NDE Project Assistant. To be hired at NDE pay grade 42, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not on an hourly basis. The result is difference of a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. This is a limited-term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Carries out assignments as directed by the Program Coordinator. Supports data collection and reporting for RTT-ELC activities. Determines applicability of and explains policies, procedures, and processes pertinent to program and/or administrative functions to agency employees, state and local officials and employees, and the public to answer inquiries and facilitate proper application of directives and processes; evaluates policies, procedures, and processes and applies them to situations to make determinations. Clerical duties to support communications and administrative responsibilities of the lead agency role in RTT-ELC.

YR1 \$25,237 YR2 \$34,322 YR3 \$35,008 YR4 \$35,709 Total \$130,276

(1) FTE Accountant. To be hired at NDE pay grade 46, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries calculated in the budget document were



calculated on an annual basis not on an hourly basis. The result is a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. This is a limited-term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Primary responsibility will be to monitor and account for spending within a significant number of small contracts and diversified expenditures under NDE's purview of the RTT-ELC grant program. Reports to Program Coordinator. YR1 \$35,234 YR2 \$47,919 YR3 \$48,877 YR4 \$49,854 Total \$181,884

Fringe Benefits

NDE fringe benefits are calculated @7.65% FICA, 7.448% retirement, and 1.0827% worker's compensation. Family health insurance option, \$40/yr life insurance and the employee assistant program are included in the fringe benefit cost. Health insurance increases 10% per year.

YR1 \$53,940 YR2 \$77,387 Y R 3 \$83,368 YR4 \$89,911 Total \$304,606

Supplies

Supplies are categorized as durable or consumable goods and materials valued at \$5,000 or less and with limited life expectancies. Durable goods include such items as office furniture, file cabinets, desktop and laptop computers, etc. Consumable goods consist of disposable items such as pens, paper, computer ink cartridges, binder clips, etc. NDE calculates durable goods costs at \$4,225 per employee for the first year of employment only and consumable goods at \$550 per

FTE for the first year of operation and \$275 per FTE in subsequent project years. Durable Goods @ \$4,225/staff x 9 new NDE positions YR1 only = \$38,025

Consumable Goods @ \$550 x 9 staff in YR1 = \$4,950 and \$275 x 9 staff in YRS 2 through 4=\$2,475

YR1 \$42,975 YR2 \$2,475 YR3 \$2,475 YR4 \$2,475 Total \$50,400

Indirect Costs



NDE's indirect costs are calculated using the U.S. Department of Education's approved non-restricted rate of nine percent. The indirect rate of 9% is applied to all direct cost line item totals except line item 6 of PSA Budget Table II-1. Indirect is only applied to the first \$25,000 of each contract within the Contractual line item.

YR1 \$ 118,011 YR2 \$82,393 YR3 \$71,251 YR4 \$68,688 Total \$340,343

Other Costs

NDE requests funding for other direct program costs not budgeted elsewhere but required for staff to carry out their work, e.g. rent, repairs and maintenance, and other miscellaneous expenses necessary for successful administration of the RTT-ELC grant program. These costs were developed using NDEs Costing Guidelines for developing cost estimates mandated by the Nebraska State Legislature.

YR1 \$42,647 YR2 \$19,958 YR3 \$48,287 YR4 \$23,288 Total \$134,180

Project 2 –ORIS Implementation

Personnel

(1) FTE QRIS Specialist. To be hired at NDE pay grade 46, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not on an hourly basis. The result is a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amount not the calculated amounts. This is a limited-term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Responsible for coordination of all trainings, facilitating completion of QRIS criteria, and implementing QRIS in ELDPs statewide. Annual Salary includes a 2% COLA in years two through four.

YR1 \$35,234 YR2 \$47,919 YR3 \$48,877 YR4 \$49,854 Total \$181,884



(1) FTE Teaching Pyramid Specialist. To be hired at NDE pay grade 46, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not on an hourly basis. The result is a difference of a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. This is a limited- term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Responsible for coordinating implementation of the Teaching Pyramid work at the state and local levels.

YR1 \$35,234 YR2 \$47,919 YR3 \$48,877 YR4 \$49,854 Total \$181,884

(1) FTE NDE Registry Coordinator. To be hired at NDE pay grade 46, at 33% of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not on an hourly basis. The result is a difference of a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. This is a limited- term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Responsible for coordinating and managing implementation of the Early Childhood Registry.

YR1 \$35,234 YR2 \$47,919 YR3 \$48,877 YR4 \$49,854 Total \$181,884

(1) FTE NDE Technical Assistant for Registry. To be hired at NDE pay grade 45, at 33% of the salary schedule. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not an hourly basis. The result is a difference of a few dollars per year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. Responsible for training Registry users and providing ongoing technical assistance and resolution of technical issues. Beginning in YR2, the position will also be responsible for verifying data contained in the provider registry.

YR1 \$0 YR2 \$43,122 YR3 \$43,984 YR4 \$44,864 Total \$131,970



(2) FTE NDE Registry Verification Specialists. (Project 2a.) NDE will employ two specialists beginning in YR3 of the project period. One position will be a permanent employee retained after RTE-ELC grant funding ends, and the other will be a limited-term discretionary position retained for a two year period. The positions will be hired at pay grade 38, at the 33rd percent of the salary schedule. The salaries in the budget document were calculated on an annual basis not

On an hourly basis. The result is a difference of a few dollars each year. The amounts shown below are the budgeted amounts not the calculated amounts. Responsible for verifying data in the provider registry. Both specialists will be hired in YR3 of the project period.

YR1 \$0 YR2 \$0 YR3 \$28,686 YR4 \$29,260 Total \$57,946

Fringe Benefits

Fringe Benefits are calculated @7.65% FICA, 7.448% retirement, and 1.0827% worker's compensation. Family health insurance option, \$40/yr life insurance and the employee assistant program are included in the fringe benefit rate. Health insurance increases 10% per year.

YR1 \$54,996 YR2 \$104,319 YR3 \$162,336 YR4 \$175,334 Total \$496,985

Travel

Project 2 Travel Expenses. Travel expenses are figured for NDE staff participation in and/or facilitation of RTT-ELC meetings, conferences, trainings, local implementation site visits, and other person-to-person convening's critical to communication, education, monitoring, and evaluation of NDE supported work under the RTT-ELC grant program. Mileage reimbursement at NDE approved rate for personal vehicle use or fair share cost of using state vehicle fleet. In addition to mileage, the budgeted amount of \$20,000/yr includes any in-state lodging, per diem, and incidentals for overnight trips by NDE staff related to RTT-ELC work.

YR1 \$40,000 YR2 \$40,000 YR3 \$40,000 YR4 \$40,000 Total \$160,000



Supplies – all durable and consumable supply costs are included in Project 1b. Budget

Contractual

Project 2a. Early Learning Connection Network Coordination

Contracts will be entered into with seven of Nebraska’s Educational Service Units (ESUs) to staff, coordinate, and deliver QRIS training and technical assistance to ELDPs and other early learning professionals across Nebraska. The ESUs are hosts to Nebraska’s Early Learning Connection Network (ELC), an integrated system of early childhood professional development. The ELC consists of a statewide hub and seven regional Early Learning Connection partnerships, along with other state and regional partners. The Project 2a. Contract will include costs of trainers leading participants through the QRIS Quality Portfolio using a reflective practice training series, space and other training venue and participant expenses such as meals and a stipend for participants completing the entire series. This training is required for participants in the QRIS to move from the first Level of quality to the second level. At least 2,096 ELDP staff will be trained over the four year project period (524 participants annually).

YR1 \$1,174,197 YR2 \$1,524,545 YR3 \$1,537,893 YR4 \$1,549,899 Total \$5,786,634

Project 2b. QRIS Implementation: Early Learning Coaches

CONTRACTUAL

Coach Training

NDE will contract with two trainers to provide 24 hrs of training for early childhood coaches.

2 Trainers x 24 hrs x \$80/hr + \$350 in associated expenses = \$4,190 + participant resources at \$5,000 = \$9,190 x 3 trainings/yr =



\$27,570/yr x 4 yrs = \$110,280

YR1 \$27,570 YR2 \$27,570 YR3 \$27,570 YR4 \$ 27,570 Total \$110,280

Master Coach Training NDE will contract with two trainers to provide 32 hours of advanced coach training to Master Coaches. One master coach training will be held each year for 4 years. 2 Trainers x 32 hrs x \$80/hr = \$5,120 + 350 expenses = \$5,470 + \$5,000 participant resources = **\$10,470 per year x 4 yrs = \$41,880**

YR1 \$10,470 YR2 \$10,470 YR3 \$10,470 YR4 \$10,470 Total = \$41,880

Early Learning Coaches

The second contract package to be held by seven ESUs across Nebraska is for Early Learning Coaches and associated material and resource expenses.

Early Learning Coaches will work to increase the number of coaching projects across the state, with a four-year goal of reaching 362 QRIS participants with high quality coaching that will improve teacher/provider practice. Coaching projects will not be implemented until YR2 to assure adequate numbers of coaches are trained and available.

Contract costs include Quality Coach Projects and Coach Project materials and resources.

Quality Coaches YR 1 \$0, Year 2 \$700,000, YR 3 \$1,000,000, Year 4 \$1,000,000 Total= \$2,700,000

Coach Project Materials

Funding will be allocated for materials and resources for early learning program providers to use for program quality improvements locally. 7 ESU Coach Locations X \$28,785 per year for materials. \$28,785 X7 = 201,495 X 4 years = \$805,980



YR 1 201,495 YR 2 201,495 YR 3 201,495 YR 4 \$201,495 Total \$805,980

Project 2c. Early Childhood Mental Health / Teaching Pyramid

Contractual

Teaching Pyramid – Early Childhood Mental Health. Staffing and delivery of early childhood mental health service capacity building (training/technical assistance) for early learning program staff. The Nebraska Early Advantage Initiative will use the Teaching Pyramid model as an evidence-based strategy and curriculum already proven to be successful in several Nebraska ELDPs. RTT-ELC funding will allow for replication of the program and practices statewide.

Contract costs include Teaching Pyramid Training events and Teaching Pyramid Mental Health Specialists / Coaches. *Teaching Pyramid Training.* An annual training event will be held in each ESU region. 7 regions x \$25,000/event = \$175,000/yr x 3 yrs = \$525,000. Events will occur in YRS 2, 3, and 4 only. *Teaching Pyramid Mental Health Specialists/Coaches.* In addition to contracting for a mental health specialist in each of the 7 regions (7 specialists), this contract line item also includes cost of travel, child observations, functional behavioral assessments, and up to three therapy sessions in the family home. Mental health practitioners will all complete both the Coach and Teaching Pyramid trainings. Community readiness and site selection will be based On the Nebraska Teaching Pyramid Self-Assessment Tool. 7 specialists x \$113,497 each = \$794,479/yr x 3 yrs = \$2,383,437
YR2 \$969,479 YR3 \$969,479 YR4 \$969,479 Total \$2,383,437



PSA 2

Project 2d. ERS Observers/Raters and Program Assessment

Contractual

Nebraska's Early Advantage Initiative (NEA Initiative) includes a rigorous, transparent, and accessible system for rating and monitoring the quality of Early Learning and Development Programs (ELDPs) participating in Step Up to Quality, the proposed QRIS Program Standards. Based on previous experience and established protocols from other programs that require observations and raters, NDE will lead the monitoring of participating programs, rating of programs using the Step Up to Quality criteria, and training and oversight of observers.

ERS Observers/Raters

Observers trained to inter-rater reliability will complete observations of the participating classrooms and family child care homes at the 4th and 5th steps of quality. NDE will contract with reliable Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observers/Raters to conduct 100 observations in YR1, 300 observations in YR2, 480 observations in YR3, and 680 observations of ELDPs statewide in YR4.

An average cost of \$350 per observation will be used to pay Observers/Raters for their services. This average cost is based on past NDE experience contracting with reliable Observers/Raters.

$\$350/\text{observation} \times 100 = \$35,000$

YR1; $\$350 \times 300 = \$105,000$ YR2; $\$350 \times 480 = \$168,000$ YR3 $\$350 \times 680 = \$238,000$ YR4 for a total of \$546,000

ERS Training Funds will be used to defray costs for additional ERS training events, to include materials and logistics;

$\$2,100/\text{event cost} \times 9 \text{ events total} = \$18,900$



YR1 \$2,100 x 1 training = \$2,100; YR2 \$2,100 x 2 trainings = \$4,200; YR3 \$2,100 x 3 trainings = \$6,300; YR4 \$2,100 x 3 trainings = \$6,300 Total =\$18,900

ERS Anchors / Group Leaders. Step Up to Quality Anchors will serve as the trained monitors for ELDPs needing outside observation on measurement tools. The Anchors will complete the required observations of programs, provide mentoring and coaching to other observers, and during observer training, serve as the gold standard or leader of an assigned group of observers achieving inter-rater reliability. The NDE will engage existing reliable observers in its professional development system to train Anchors as needed to create a pool of qualified observers. The Anchors will be individuals who have degrees in Child Development, Early Childhood Education or a related field and experience in early childhood education. NDE will contract for 54 ERS Group Leaders.

6 Leaders at each ERS training x \$810 stipend/Leader x 9 trainings over the 4-yr period = \$43,740
1 training YR1 x 6 x \$810 = \$4,860; 2 trainings YR2 x 6 x \$810 = \$9,720; 3 trainings YR3 x 6 x \$810 = \$14,580; 3 trainings YR4 x 6 x \$810 = \$14,580 Total=\$43,740

ERS Anchors Training. Current and new ERS Anchors / Group Leaders will attend training @
One event annually at a cost of \$22,000/yr. x 4 yrs = \$88,000

TPOT and TPITOS Observers. The TPOT and TPITOS Observers will use the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) and The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale (TPITOS) to monitor model fidelity, measure progress, teacher effectiveness and child impacts. NDE will contract with Teaching Pyramid assessment Observers to work in the field with ELDPs. Contract costs are figured on a per observation basis.

100 observations x \$350/ea. \$35,000 YR1; 300 observations x \$350/ea. = \$105,000 YR2; 480 observations x \$350/ea. = \$168,000 YR3; 680 observations x \$350/ea. = \$238,000 YR4



Total for four years = \$546,000

TPOT and TPITOS Training. NDE will plan, carryout and evaluate seven training events over the project period at a cost not to exceed \$20,000 per event. 1 training YR1 x \$20,000 = \$20,000

2 trainings x \$20,000 (\$40,000/yr) x remaining 3 yrs of project period = \$120,000 for a four year total of \$140,000

CLASS Observers. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observational tool providing a common lens and language focused on classroom interactions that boost student learning. The CLASS tool organizes teacher-student interactions into three broad domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Individuals who achieve reliability are certified to use the CLASS tool to observe (CLASS Observers) and code classrooms for one year, after which recertification is required. Nebraska will ensure that CLASS Observers complete the two day training and remain reliable throughout the NEA Initiative. 100 observations x \$350/ea. YR1 = \$35,000; 300 observations x \$350/ea. = \$105,000

YR2; 480 observations x \$350/ea. = \$168,000 YR3; 680 observations x \$350/ea. = \$238,000

YR4 Total for four years = \$546,000

CLASS Training. The CLASS Reliability training is a two day training which builds an in- depth understanding of the CLASS observation tool and teaches professionals how to use the tool to accurately observe and code classrooms.

NDE contract with 1 trainer X 4 hours X \$60 = \$240 X 7regions = \$1,680 X 4 years = \$6,720

CLASS Training Events

Seven total training events x \$10,000 each.

1 training x \$10,000 YR1 = \$10,000; 2 trainings x \$10,000 YR2 = \$20,000; 2 trainings x



\$10,000 YR3 = \$20,000; 2 trainings x \$10,000 YR4 = \$20,000 Total = \$70,000

Project 2f. T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Nebraska® Scholarships

Contractual

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Nebraska® will be contracted with to select candidates, award and administer 230 total scholarships to qualified early childhood profession students seeking their Associate, Bachelor or Master level degrees in early childhood education or a related field to serve young children, such as mental health, speech-language pathology with a focus on early childhood, etc. Nebraska will expand the number of T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Nebraska® scholarships offered to early childhood providers as programs apply to be part of Nebraska's Step Up to Quality QRIS system. Coaches and program directors will be encouraged to determine which staff are committed to moving up Nebraska's Career Levels by completing college credit hours in Early Childhood Education.

YR1-20 AA scholarships x \$2,500 + 10 BA scholarships x \$4,000 + 3 MA scholarships x \$5,000 = \$105,000 T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships YR1

YR2-40 AA scholarships x \$2,500 + 15 BA scholarships x \$4,000 + 4 MA scholarships x \$5,000 = \$160,000 T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships YR2

YR3-50 AA scholarships x \$2,500 + 15 BA scholarships x \$4,000 + 4 MA scholarships x \$5,000 = \$205,000 T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships YR3

YR4-50 AA scholarships x \$2,500 + 15 BA scholarships x \$4,000 + 4 MA scholarships x \$5,000 = \$205,000 T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships YR4

Total of \$675,000 in T.E.A.C.H. Scholarships will be awarded over the four year period.



Project 2g: Quality Portfolio

Contractual

QRIS Quality Portfolio

\$385,560 is budgeted per year for the cost of delivering training to 524 participants annually. These costs include space and audio/visual rent at training locations, meals for participants during trainings, curriculum materials and training tools, and other products and services required for successful training experiences. **$\$385,560 \times 4 \text{ yrs} = 1,542,240$.**

QRIS Completion Stipend. This is included under the contract line item as it will be under the purview and responsibility of the ESUs to award stipends to participants. **$\$500 \text{ stipend} \times 524 \text{ participants/yr} (\$262,000/\text{yr}) \times 4 \text{ yrs} = \$1,048,000$.**

Project 2h. Other Training

Contractual

1. STEM Enhancements in Early Learning Settings (Project 2h) NDE requests RTT-ELC funding to support curriculum enhancement training of Early Childhood Educators related to Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) in the early learning environment. NDE will contract with 10 STEM content experts to write training materials for infusing STEM concepts into early childhood programs. NDE will then contract with five trainers to deliver STEM integration training to ECEs in project years 3 and 4. Evaluation of STEM training will be contracted to a qualified evaluator for the purpose of assessing and reporting the quality and impact of the training on early learning in ELDPs.

STEM Training Content Development YR1 and YR2. 10 writers x 60 hrs x \$60/hr = \$36,000 + \$10,000 for material production costs



STEM Training Delivery YR3 and YR4. Contract with 5 trainers to deliver content to Coaches and ECEs. 5 trainers x 12 hrs x \$60/hr = \$3,600 + \$5,000 in additional resources/yr x 2 yrs

STEM Training Evaluation

Design 15 hrs x \$100/hr = \$1,500

Data Collection/Analysis 120 hrs x \$100 = \$12,000

Report 15 hrs x \$100/hr = \$1,500

YR1 \$23,000 YR2 \$23,000 YR3 \$ 8,600 YR4 \$23,600 Total \$78,200

2. Online Training Modules Development NDE will work to adapt current content for use in online training modules. NDE will contract with an expert adept at writing technical code necessary for the creation of web-based modules for training required as a result of new licensing regulations.

Design modules 100 hrs x \$100/hr = \$10,000

Technical projection of content 50 hrs x \$100/hr x 4 modules = \$20,000

YR1= \$10,000; YR2 = \$20,000; No costs in YRS 3 and 4 for a total of \$30,000

3. Early Learning Guidelines Revision The Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines will be revised in their entirety to align with Nebraska Early Advantage Initiative reform work. Revisions will be made by NDE staff covered elsewhere in this budget. This



line item is for a contract to publish the large volume of revised guidelines, which will occur in years one and three of the project period.

YR1 – Publish 25,000 revised copies x \$3/copy = \$75,000

YR3 – Publish 11,667 copies x \$3/copy = \$35,000

Total of \$110,000

4. Early Learning Guidelines Training the seven ESUs will each receive contracted funds to coordinate deliver, and evaluate training to all relevant RTT-ELC personnel, contractors, and ELDPs on the revised Guidelines annually.

\$16,330.35/ESU x 7 ESUs x 4yrs

YR1 \$114,312 YR2 \$114,312 YR3 \$114,313 YR4 \$114,313 Total \$457,250

Project 3c. - Training Registry and Training Coordination Database

Contractual

Training Registry Contract. A single contract for 200 hours per year will be awarded to a qualified independent contractor to supplement internal NDE resources for training registry management and maintenance. This will be a four year contract and will be opened to qualified bidders in YR1 of the project period.

200 hrs x \$100/hr = \$20,000/yr x 4 yrs = \$80,000

Additional support of \$562.50/year for reimbursing contractor expenses (travel, meals, at allowable rates) x 4 = \$2,250.

YR1: \$20,562.50 YR2: \$20,562.50 YR3: \$20,562.50 YR4: \$20,562.50 = Total \$82,250



Project 4a. – Statewide Kindergarten Readiness and Comprehensive Developmental Assessments

Personnel

(1) 0.50 FTE Specialist. To be hired at NDE pay grade 46, at 33rd percentile of the salary schedule. Salary is calculated for 9 months of YR1 due to need to advertise, interview and hire the position during the first quarter (9 months at 50% time = 720 hrs). This is a limited-term discretionary position retained for a 4-year project period. Responsible for assisting public schools align expectations with birth to five programs and local implementation of the Kindergarten Assessment.

Annual Salary includes a 2% COLA in years two through four

780 hrs x \$22.80/hr = \$17,617 YR1

1040 hrs x \$23.032/hr = \$23,960 YR2

1040 hrs x \$23.492/hr = \$24,438 YR3

1040 hrs x \$23.962/hr = \$24,927 YR4 for a total of \$90,888

Fringe

Fringe Benefits are calculated @7.65% FICA, 7.448% retirement, and 1.0827% worker's compensation. Family health insurance option, \$40/yr life insurance and the employee assistant program are included in the fringe benefit rate. Health insurance increases 10% per year.

YR1 \$9,166 YR2 \$13,137 YR3 \$14,139 YR4 \$15,234 Total \$51,676



Contractual

Kindergarten Assessment Training. NDE will partner with the University and ESUs to train staff on using the Kindergarten Assessment tool/process training. Training will focus on teachers and administrators. NDE Kindergarten-through-grade-three specialist will partner with ESU staff to ensure training is provided in appropriate formats and at appropriate levels.

YR1- 1 training event x \$5,000

YRS 2-4, Three training events will be held each year – 3 yrs x 3 events/year x \$5,000 = \$15,000

YR1 \$5,000 YR2 \$15,000 YR3 \$15,000 YR4 \$15,000 Total \$50,000

Project 4b. Practitioner Training on TS Gold, Writing Anecdote, Active Learning

Contractual

The seven ESUs will coordinate one additional training event per year to cover assessment tools including TS Gold, Writing Anecdote, and Active Learning, among others.

1 Assessment Tool training beginning in YR2 x 7 ESU regions x \$10,000/yr = \$70,000/yr x 3 yrs for a total of \$210,000

Project 7 Family Engagement

Family Engagement

NDE will contract with Nebraska Educational Television (NET) to create training modules and community events that can be used with families across Nebraska.

\$170,750 per year X 4 years = \$ 683,000



Training Stipends

NDE will provide stipends to State Advisory Council members, including members who represent families, to facilitate their participation in Early Learning Nebraska training events. Stipends may be used for transportation, lodging, child care or other expenses families may incur as a result of their training participation.

\$2,000/yr. x 4 yrs. = \$8,000 total



BUDGET PART II – TABLES

PSA 3. University of Nebraska

PSA 3 University of Nebraska-Level Budget Table II-1					
(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))					
Budget Category	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
1. Personnel	1,669,352	2,018,293	2,031,056	2,150,656	7,869,357
2. Fringe Benefits	556,047	667,433	674,424	715,309	2,613,213
3. Travel	61,000	104,350	102,855	91,915	360,120
4. Equipment	100,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	130,000
5. Supplies	101,400	55,400	48,400	48,900	254,100
6. Contractual	789,000	785,000	545,423	545,423	2,664,846
7. Training Stipends	0	0	0	0	0
8. Other	491,930	773,586	948,019	911,291	3,124,826
9. Total Direct Costs (add lines 1-8)	3,768,729	4,414,062	4,360,177	4,473,494	17,016,462
10. Indirect Costs*	376,874	441,406	436,017	447,352	1,701,649
11. Funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners	0	0	0	0	0
12. Funds set aside for participation in grantee technical assistance	33,333	33,334	33,333	33,333	133,333
13. Total Grant Funds Requested (add lines 9-12)	4,178,936	4,888,802	4,829,527	4,954,179	18,851,444
14. Funds from other sources used to support the State Plan	0	0	0	0	0



15. Total Statewide Budget (add lines 13-14)	4,178,936	4,888,802	4,829,527	4,954,179	18,851,444
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Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount requested for each applicable budget category.

Column (e): Show the total amount requested for all grant years.

Line 6: Show the amount of funds allocated through contracts with vendors for products to be acquired and/or professional services to be provided. A State may apply its indirect cost rate only against the first \$25,000 of each contract included in line 6

Line 10: If the State plans to request reimbursement for indirect costs, complete the Indirect Cost Information form at the end of this Budget section. Note that indirect costs are not allocated to line 11.

Line 11: Show the amount of funds to be distributed to localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners through contracts, interagency agreements, MOUs or any other subawards allowable under State procurement law. States are not required to provide budgets for how the localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners will use these funds. However, the Departments expect that, as part of the administration and oversight of the grant, States will monitor and track all expenditures to ensure that localities, Early Learning Intermediary Organizations, Participating Programs, and other partners spend these funds in accordance with the State Plan.

Line 12: The State must set aside \$400,000 from its grant funds for the purpose of participating in RTT-ELC grantee technical assistance activities facilitated by ED or HHS. This is primarily to be used for travel and may be allocated to Participating State Agencies evenly across the four years of the grant.

Line 13: This is the total funding requested under this grant.

PSA 3 University of Nebraska-Level Budget Table II-2

(Evidence for selection criterion (A)(4)(b))

Project	Grant Year 1 (a)	Grant Year 2 (b)	Grant Year 3 (c)	Grant Year 4 (d)	Total (e)
Administration	453,132	408,922	419,833	431,069	1,712,956
QRIS Implementation	0	0	0	0	0
Data Systems	1,524,334	1,483,803	1,267,950	1,285,512	5,561,599
Statewide Kindergarten	427,330	587,921	602,980	610,443	2,228,674
Evaluation	1,082,790	1,508,487	1,465,814	1,577,886	5,634,977
Ed Enhancements	691,350	899,669	1,072,950	1,049,269	3,713,238
Family Engagement	0	0	0	0	0
Total Statewide Budget	4,178,936	4,888,802	4,829,527	4,954,179	18,851,444



Columns (a) through (d): For each grant year for which funding is requested, show the total amount this Participating State Agency plans to spend for each Project in the State Plan. If this Participating State Agency has no role in a particular Project, leave that row blank.

Column (e): Show the total expenditure, across all grant years, for the Project.

The Total Statewide Budget for this table should match Line 15 for Budget Table II-1.

BUDGET PART II – NARRATIVE – UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

Project 1c: Project Coordination Administrative Budget Justification

Personnel

Project Coordinator, TBN, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) will coordinate the administration of NU projects supported through Nebraska's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge (RTTT ELC) grant. General duties include coordination of individual project work to achieve comprehensive results, grant/contract administration, budget monitoring, and the development of detailed work plans, procedures, and monitoring protocols to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations and Nebraska's RTTT ELC work plan.

Salary = \$75,000 YR1; \$77,250 YR2, \$79,568 YR3; and \$81,955 YR4. TOTAL = \$313,773

Post-Award Specialists, TBN, 18 person month per year (1.5 FTE annually) will support all NU projects for day to day purchasing, reconciling and account matters that pertain to the overall project.

Salary = \$72,000 YR1; \$74,160 YR2; \$76,385 YR3; and \$78,676 YR4. TOTAL = \$301,221

Information Technology Specialist, TBN, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) to support all NU projects for computer, communications and general technology needs.

Salary = \$38,440 YR1; \$39,593 YR2; \$40,781 YR3; and \$42,004 YR4. TOTAL = \$160,818



Program Specialists, TBD, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) will support Project Coordinator and overall NU projects.

Salary = \$48,000 YR1; \$49,440 YR2; \$50,923 YR3; and \$52,451 YR4. TOTAL = \$200,814

Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and 42 % for staff. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$87,545 YR1; \$90,171 YR2; \$92,877 YR3; and \$95,662 YR4. TOTAL = \$366,255

Equipment

Data Storage - server and support to be used by all NU projects. Cost is estimated based on previous experience.

Equipment = \$50,000 YR1. TOTAL = \$50,000

Travel

Funds are requested for travel reimbursement for Project Coordinator for meetings in Washington, DC (2 trips per year at \$1,500 per trip)

Funds are included for project coordinator to travel to sites around the state.

Mileage: Omaha 2 trips monthly (120 miles round trip) \$66.60 x 24
Kearney 1 trip monthly (266 miles round trip) \$147.63 x 12
Scottsbluff 4 trips annually (846 miles round trip) \$470.00 x 4

Lodging: \$100 per night for 4 nights in Scottsbluff

Meals: \$46 per day x 20 days

Total Travel Per Year: \$9,570 TOTAL = \$38,280



Other

Data ports for project coordinator, post-award specialists and project specialist.

Other = \$1,080 YR1; \$1,260 YR2; \$1,260 YR3; and \$1,260 YR4. TOTAL = \$4,860

Indirect Costs - Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$38,164 YR1; \$34,144 YR2; \$35,136 YR3; and \$36,158 YR4. TOTAL = \$143,602

Budget (3b): Data Systems

Personnel

Dr. James Bovaird, Project Manager (PM), 3 person months, (0.25 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will direct this investigation. He will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the University's role in developing, evaluating, and analyzing data from the federated data system created as part of the current Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge proposal. He will chair the Data Management Team (Task 3); oversee all elements involved in developing the federated database system, including recruiting faculty collaborators and external (to the NU system) consultants to provide all necessary expertise not held by key personnel (Task 3); directed data analysis activities (Task 5); assist in developing and delivering training sessions on the use of the federated database system (Task 6); dissemination (Task 7); and submitting grant progress reports to the appropriate entities.

Salary=\$22,779 YR1; \$23,463 YR2; \$24,167 YR3; and \$24,892 YR4. TOTAL = \$95,301

Dr. Carolyn Pope Edwards, Co-PM, 2 person months (0.17 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4), will chair the Formative Evaluation Review Panel (Task 1) and coordinate all formative evaluation activities along with Co-PM Rudasill (Task 2). She will work closely with the Research Assistant Professor (TBN) for program evaluation activities.

Salary = \$32,361 YR1; \$33,332 YR2; \$34,332 YR3; and \$35,362 YR4. TOTAL = \$135,387



Dr. Victoria Molfese, Co-PM, 1 person months, (0.08 FTE; Years 1-4), will coordinate activities associated with facilitating continuous program improvement and translation to practice (Task 4). She will collaborate with PM Bovaird in designing and contextualizing the results of all directed data analysis activities (Task 5).

Salary = \$15,226 YR1; \$15,682 YR2; \$16,153 YR3; and \$16,637 YR4. TOTAL = \$63,698

Dr. Kathy Rudasill, Co-PM, 3 person months, (0.25 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4), will coordinate activities of the Formative Evaluation Review Panel (Task 2) in collaboration with Co-PM Edwards. She will collaborate with PM Bovaird in designing and contextualizing the results of all directed data analysis activities (Task 5), and she will collaborate with Co-PM Molfese in project activities geared towards facilitating continuous program improvement and translation to practice (Task 4). She will work closely with the Research Assistant Professor (TBN) for program evaluation activities.

Salary = \$22,417 YR1; \$23,089 YR2; \$23,782 YR3; and \$24,495 YR4. TOTAL = \$93,783

Research Assistant Professor, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in development and implementation of federated data systems and statistical analysis of integrated longitudinal data. The position will assist the PI in identifying and implementing technical solutions during development and testing of the integrated federated database system. The position will collaborate with the PI in designing and implementing directed data analysis activities from the federated database as specified by the Formative Evaluation Review panel (Task 5). This position will develop and deliver training workshops for partners and constituents in Years 3 and 4 on (a) technical usage of the federated database system and (b) the resulting data capacity to facilitate continuous program improvement and translation to practice.

Salary=\$70,000 YR1; \$72,100 YR2; \$74,263 YR3; and \$76,491 YR4. TOTAL = \$292,854

Research Assistant Professor, TBN, 6 person months, (0.5 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in program evaluation. This position will assist Co-PI Edwards and the Formative Evaluation Review Panel to provide leadership in



identifying and prioritizing key formative evaluation and research questions possible to be answered and in conducting all evaluation activities.

Salary = \$35,000 YR1; \$36,050 YR2; \$37,132 YR3; and \$38,245 YR4. TOTAL = 146,427

Database Developer and Analyst 1, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in development and implementation of federated data systems. This person will provide technical assistance to partners providing access to data as part of the federated database system (i.e. NSSRS, NDE, DHHS, etc.) to facilitate seamless data sharing. These activities may include consultation on or direct development of web-based data systems for partners to facilitate the federated system.

Salary = \$50,000 YR1; \$51,500 YR2; \$53,045 YR3; and \$54,636 YR4. TOTAL = \$209,181

Database Developer and Analyst 2, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in development and implementation of federated data systems. This person will provide technical assistance to partners providing access to data as part of the federated database system (i.e. NSSRS, NDE, DHHS, etc.) to facilitate seamless data sharing. These activities may include consultation on or direct development of web-based data systems for partners to facilitate the federated system.

Salary = \$50,000 YR1; \$51,500 YR2; \$53,045 YR3; and \$54,636 YR4. TOTAL = \$209,181

Technical Consultants (NU System Faculty), TBN, 6 person months, (0.5 FTE, Yrs 1-4), will be hired to provide critical expertise to the datasystem development process as needed. Up to 5 faculty collaborators each year will provide a total of 50% effort in providing critical expertise in various aspects of design, implementation, and evaluation of the federated data system.

Salary = \$50,000 YR1; \$51,500 YR2; \$53,045 YR3; and \$54,636 YR4. TOTAL = \$209,181

Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.



\$97,379 YR1; \$100,301 YR2; \$103,311 YR3; and \$106,408 YR4. TOTAL = \$407,399

Travel

Travel funds are included for travel to six conference/meetings or external professional development courses per year (2 each for the PI and research assistant professors). Funds are estimated as follows:

Airfare:	\$500
Lodging (3 nights @ \$200 per night)	\$600
Per diem (4 days @ \$60 per day)	\$240
<u>Ground transportation & baggage fees</u>	<u>\$160</u>
Total cost per trip:	\$1,500/per trip (\$9,000/ annually)

TOTAL TRAVEL = \$36,000

Equipment

Funds are requested for a one-time purchase of a computer server for CYFS for centralized web-based databasing in Year one. Additional funds for maintenance of data server system are requested in subsequent years. Cost estimate based on previous experience.

Equipment = \$50,000 YR1; \$10,000 each in YR2 - YR4. TOTAL = \$80,000

Supplies

Funds are requested for four high-end computers for the 2 research assistant professors and 2 database developer/analysts (\$3,000 x 4 in Yr 1). Other supplies and office materials will be purchased to support the research team (\$2,000 Yrs 1 – 4).

Communications -Funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity (\$1,000/annually).



Supplies & Communications = \$15,000 YR1; \$3,000 each in YR2-YR4. TOTAL = \$24,000

Consulting Services

Funds are requested to secure the services of external (to NU) experts to advise and provide logistical, legal, and technical assistance in implementing the federated database system. Cost estimates based on prior external consultation obtained by staff at NDE.

Consulting = \$750,000 each YR1 & 2; \$500,000 each YR3 & 4. TOTAL = \$2,500,000

Other

Training Workshops

Funds are requested to support and deliver comprehensive training/workshops for data system users to be held during years three and four. Funds for participant stipends are estimated at \$30,000 (\$250 per 1 day X 30 participants X 4 1-day workshops), \$10,000 for food and lodging for an estimated 15 non-Lincoln participants per workshop, \$3,000 for meeting food expenses estimated at 30 people X \$25 per person X 4 1-day workshops, parking at \$10 per permit X 30 participants X 4 1-day workshops and mileage averaged at 120 miles round trip for a total of \$4,163.

Local Meetings

One meeting of the Formative Evaluation Review Panel (FERP) will be held each year to bring together data and content experts across the university system as well as representatives from NDE and DHHS, together with representatives from the private and practitioner communities. One multi-day and/or multiple one-day working meetings of the Data Management Team will be held in Years 1 and 2. Food, parking, meeting space and hotel costs are included.

SRM Unit



Evaluation and analysis staff in the Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Support Unit in CYFS will provide analytic support for all formative evaluation and directed longitudinal data analysis activities as directed by the project PI and co-PIs. The SRM will provide approximately 1040 hours of support annually. The current SRM approved service center rate is \$54.42 per hour.

Other = \$116,596 YR1; \$118,395 YR2; \$158,407 YR3; and \$160,208 YR4. TOTAL = \$553,606

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$138,576 YR1; \$134,891 YR2; \$115,268 YR3; & \$116,865 YR4. TOTAL = \$505,600

Project 4a: Kindergarten Assessment : MMI Budget Justification

Personnel:

Principal Investigator: Jackson, 0.10 FTE. Dr. Jackson will be responsible for the overall direction of the project. She will be responsible for facilitating task meetings and state planning meetings. She will be the liaison with the state team. She will partner with NDE in developing the data linkage system. Dr. Jackson will be responsible for overseeing data analysis and writing the reports.

Salary = \$10,911 YR1; \$11,184 YR2; \$11,463 YR3; and \$11,750 YR4. TOTAL = \$45,308

Project Director: TBA, 0.50 FTE. The director will be responsible for overseeing all of the training and implementation of the pilots. She will be the primary liaison with the pilot sites and the training consultants. She will oversee the development of the training modules.

Salary = \$30,375 YR1; \$31,134 YR2; \$31,913 YR3; and \$32,711 YR4. TOTAL = \$126,133



Project Coordinator: TBA, 0.25 FTE. The project coordinator will be responsible completing all the day to day arrangements and will assist the director in coordinating the training and implementation of the pilot sites. The coordinator will assist in the data collection.

Salary = \$11,391 YR1; \$11,675 YR2; \$11,967 YR3; and \$12,266 Y4. TOTAL = \$47,299

Secretary: M. Robinson, 0.05 will be responsible for maintaining project files, any typing, and correspondence related to project.

Salary = \$1,900 YR1; \$1,948 YR2; \$1,996 YR3; and \$2,046 YR4. TOTAL = \$7,890

Dr. Barb Jackson, Project 5b, 1.2 person months (10% FTE annually; Yrs 1 - 4), will collaborate and provide oversight related to the process evaluation of the Early Childhood Mental Health study. *(Salary for Dr. Jackson is for project 5b is budgeted here to ensure payment at UNMC.)*

Salary = \$10,911 YR1; \$11,184 YR2; \$11,463 YR3; and \$11,750 YR4. TOTAL = \$45,308

Fringes

University benefits include contributions to health insurance of Life Insurance, retirement, and social security. Benefits are calculated at 28%.

Benefits = \$18,336 YR1; \$18,796 YR2; \$19,266 YR3; and \$19,746 YR4. TOTAL = \$76,144

Travel

Local travel costs for meetings related to grant activities, including mileage and parking (1000 x.55). Travel will also include costs related to national meetings, e.g., including airline, meals, parking, hotels, and ground travel. (\$2400 for 1 trip)

Travel = \$1,750 each year. TOTAL = \$7,000

Supplies:



Office supplies and the first year they will include computer and office furniture for staff.

Child assessments will be purchased for each of the pilot sites.

Supplies = \$10,000 YR1; and \$12,250 each in YR2 – YR4. TOTAL = \$46,750

Consultants

Module Development: This will support the costs associated with the development of 2 online modules, including production, design, and development.

Training and Assessment Consultants: Specialized training consultants will provide training to the ELC training consultants to build the training capacity of the ELC trainers. They will also help to design the training modules. The assessment consultants will be experts in the field of test development and will be asked to review the selected commercial kindergarten assessments with respect to reliability and validity.

Material Development Consultants: These consultants will help to design the print materials that will be used to disseminate information on the assessment protocols.

Consulting = \$10,000 YR1; \$5,000 YR2; \$35,000 YR3; and \$35,000 YR4. TOTAL = \$85,000

Other

UNL SMR Unit: UNL SMR Unit will be responsible for consulting on the design of the data analyses and will work with project staff in the analyses of child data.

Early Learning Connections Network Agencies: NDE has established 7 training sites across Nebraska. Each of these agencies will be contracted for the services of an assessment consultant. This consult will be a .25 -.5 FTE dependent on the region she/he serves.



They will be responsible for all training related to any of the assessment components, will provide technical assistance to pilot sites and assist with the training for implementation of the kindergarten assessment.

Telephone: This will include telephone costs for communication between collaborative agencies, school districts and project staff.

Postage: Postage will cover the cost of mailing information to the participating partners and programs.

Copy/Print Service: Printing costs will be incurred for training and technical assistance activities, printing reports and assessment materials.

Other = \$82,650 YR1; \$152,099 YR2; \$153,850 YR3; and \$153,850 YR4. TOTAL = \$542,499

Indirect

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$18,822 YR1; \$25,702 YR2; \$29,092 YR3; and \$29,312 YR4. TOTAL = \$102,928

Project 4c: Comprehensive Assessment: MMI Budget Justification

Personnel

Principal Investigator: Jackson, .10 FTE. Dr. Jackson will be responsible for the overall direction of the project. She will be responsible for facilitating task meetings and state planning meetings. She will be the liaison with the state team. She will partner with NDE in developing the data linkage system. Dr. Jackson will be responsible for overseeing data analysis and writing the reports.

Salary = \$10,911 YR1; \$11,184 YR2; \$11,463 YR3; and \$11,750 YR4. TOTAL = 45,308



Project Director: TBA, .50 FTE. The director will be responsible for overseeing all of the training and implementation of the pilots. She will be the primary liaison with the pilot sites and the training consultants. She will oversee the development of the training modules.

Salary = \$30,375 YR1; \$31,134 YR2; \$31,913 YR3; and \$32,711 YR4. TOTAL = \$126,133

Project Coordinator: TBA, .25 FTE. The project coordinator will be responsible completing all the day to day arrangements and will assist the director in coordinating the training and implementation of the pilot sites. The coordinator will assist in the data collection.

Salary = \$11,391 YR1; \$11,675 YR2; \$11,967 YR3; and \$12,266 Y4. TOTAL = \$47,299

Secretary: M. Robinson, .05 will be responsible for maintaining project files, any typing, and correspondence related to project.

Salary = \$1,900 YR1; \$1,948 YR2; \$1,996 YR3; and \$2,046 YR4. TOTAL = \$7,890

Fringes

University benefits include contributions to health insurance of Life Insurance, retirement, and social security. Benefits are calculated at 28%.

Benefits = \$15,281 YR1; \$15,664 YR2; \$16,056 YR3; and \$16,456 YR4. TOTAL = \$63,457

Travel

Local travel costs for meetings related to grant activities, including mileage and parking (1000 x.55). Travel will also include costs related to national meetings, e.g., including airline, meals, parking, hotels, and ground travel. (\$2400 for 1 trips)

Travel = \$1,750 per year. TOTAL - \$7,000



Supplies

Office supplies and the first year they will include computer and office furniture for staff.

Child assessments will be purchased for each of the pilot sites.

Supplies = \$10,000 YR1; \$12,250 each YR2 – YR4. TOTAL = \$46,750

Consulting

Module Development: This will support the costs associated with the development of 2 online modules, including production, design, and development.

Training and Assessment Consultants: Specialized training consultants will provide training to the ELC training consultants to build the training capacity of the ELC trainers. They will also help to design the training modules. The assessment consultants will be experts in the field of test development and will be asked to review the selected commercial screening with respect to reliability and validity.

Consulting = \$29,000 YR1; \$30,000 YR2; \$5,000 YR3; and \$5,000 YR4. TOTAL = \$69,000

Other

UNL SMR Unit: UNL SMR Unit will be responsible for consulting on the design of the data analyses and will work with project staff in the analyses of child data.

Early Learning Connections Network Agencies: NDE has established 7 training sites across Nebraska. Each of these agencies will be contracted for the services of an assessment consultant. This consult will be a .25 -.5 FTE dependent on the region she/he serves.



They will be responsible for all training related to any of the assessment components, will provide technical assistance to pilot sites for the Gold.

Teaching Strategies: Teaching Strategies will complete two training sessions each year on the GOLD online assessment system. This contract will also pay for the subscriptions for the pilot sites that will participate each year.

Telephone: This will include telephone costs for communication between collaborative agencies, school districts and project staff.

Postage: Postage will cover the cost of mailing information to the participating partners and programs.

Copy/Print Service: Printing costs will be incurred for training and technical assistance activities, printing reports and assessment materials.

Other = \$89,650 YR1; \$161,849 YR2; \$164,850 YR3; and \$167,600 YR4. TOTAL = \$583,949

Indirect

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$20,026 YR1; \$27,745 YR2; \$25,725 YR3; and \$26,183 YR4. TOTAL = \$99,679

Budget (5a): For Studies 1 and 2: QRIS Validation Study

Personnel¹

Dr. Helen Raikes, Co-PI, 2.25 person months, (0.25 academic FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will co-direct this investigation. She will co-develop research protocols and monitor ongoing study execution. She will advance the conceptual and scientific agenda for this study. She will

¹ Several new faculty in early childhood education and related disciplines will be joining the NU system and will be incorporated into this work to maximize the expertise available across the NU system as a resource. Exact personnel could shift to incorporate these additions.



be responsible for communicating preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader research community.

Salary = \$26,980 YR1; \$27,789 YR2; \$28,623 YR3; and \$29,482 YR4. TOTAL = \$112,874

Dr. Lisa Knoche, Co-PI, 3 person months, (0.25 annual FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will co-direct this investigation. She will provide direction and oversight of the study, co-develop research protocols, provide training and oversight of intervention and research functions, including the collection and management of data; collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses, support collaboration with community early childhood programs and coordinate dissemination activities.

Salary = \$17,398 YR1; \$17,920 YR2; \$18,458 YR3; and \$19,012 YR4. TOTAL = \$72,788

Dr. Victoria Molfese, Co-I, .9 person months (0.10 academic FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses.

Salary = \$13,703 YR1; \$14,114 YR2; \$14,538 YR3; and \$14,974 YR4. TOTAL = \$57,329

Research Faculty, TBN, 2.7 person months (0.30 academic FTE; Yrs 1-4), will collaborate with the PIs on the research protocol, will collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses, and support the reporting of study results.

Salary = \$22,500 YR1; \$23,175 YR2; \$23,870 YR3; and \$24,586 YR4. TOTAL = \$94,131

Project Manager, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 annual FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in managing large, multi-site studies. The Project Manager will be responsible for the oversight of the daily operations of the study. The PM will coordinate agencies and arrange observations and data collection.

Salary = \$48,000 YR1; \$49,440 YR2; \$50,923 YR3; and \$52,451 YR4. TOTAL = \$200,814

Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors), TBN, Yr 2 =36; Yr 3 =40 ; Yr 4 =40.25 Person Months) (0.83 FTE). Dedicated data collectors will be hired to ensure complete and reliable data collection over the course of the study. This cadre of



individuals will be hired in a manner consistent with the variable nature and unique data collection needs of the project. These individuals will collect observational data and child assessment data.

Salary = \$115,690 YR2; \$132,400 YR3; and \$137,225 YR4. TOTAL = \$385,315

Research Aides, TBN, 12 person months (1.0 FTE; Yrs 2,3,4) One to four individuals will be hired to provide research assistance to the project, including processing of data and supporting data collection and data entry. The aides will work on a variable schedule.

Salary = \$29,994 YR2; \$30,893 YR3; and \$31,820 YR4. TOTAL = \$92,707

Database Development, TBN, 6 person months (0.50 FTE, Years 1 – 4). A database developer will build and maintain a data management system for tracking child and program assessment information, and ensuring its availability for analysis.

Salary = \$24,811 YR1; \$25,555 YR2; \$26,321 YR3; and \$27,111 YR4. TOTAL = \$103,798

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, 17.64 person months (0.49 FTE – x3; Yrs 1 - 4), Three Graduate students in early childhood development, psychology, school psychology or a related program will assist with ongoing coordination, communication, data collection and entry, and general research needs in all project years.

Salary = \$55,000 YR1; \$57,165 YR2; \$58,880 YR3; and \$60,646 YR4. TOTAL = \$232,191

Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff, 42% for technical assistants. . Benefits for graduate students include 36% for tuition remission and graduate health insurance is \$1,225 for year one, \$1,348 for year two, \$1,483 for year 3 and \$1,631 for year four. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefit = \$74,260 YR1; \$121,737 YR2; \$129,381 YR3; & \$133,811 YR4. TOTAL = \$459,189



Travel

Travel funds are included for travel to two conference/meetings per year. Funds are estimated as follows:

Airfare:	\$500
Lodging (3 nights @ \$200 per night)	\$600
Per diem (4 days @ \$60 per day)	\$240
<u>Ground transportation & baggage fees</u>	<u>\$160</u>
Total cost per trip:	\$1,500/per trip (\$3000 annually)

Funds for statewide data collection and site visits by the PIs are estimated as follows:

Study 4a: 125 observations x 200 miles per trip x .555 mile = \$13,750 (\$6,875 Yr3; \$6,875 Yr 4)

Study 4b: 600 children x 2 assessments annually x 20 miles x .55 = 13,200 annually (Yrs 2,3,4)

Travel = \$3,000 YR1; \$16,200 YR2; \$23,075 YR3; and \$23,075 YR4. TOTAL = \$65,350

Supplies

Funds are requested for five computers for the project director, data collection team, and the graduate research assistants. These computers are essential to the success of this work. They will be used over the life of the project, and will be essential for all implementation of all aspects of the study including planning activities, data collection, and data processing/ analysis. One printer will be purchased and shared among project director, data collectors, and graduate assistants. Additionally, program observational materials and child assessment materials will be purchased, as well as child incentives (e.g. stickers). Other supplies and office materials will be purchased to support the research team.



Supplies = \$15,000 YR1; \$7,000 YR2; \$3,500 YR3; and \$3,500 YR4. TOTAL = \$29,000

Other

SRM Unit

Staff in the Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Support Unit in CYFS will be responsible for the randomization process, data checking, data management, and data analysis for the validation study. The SRM will provide approximately 1040 hours of support annually. The current SRM approved service center rate is \$54.42 per hour.

Training in Assessments for Data Collectors

Funds are requested to support ten data collector/graduate assistants for training in the quality observation scales and CLASS. Cost for each participant is \$200 (\$200 x 10 data collectors = \$2000; Yr 2)

Participant Incentives - Programs

Funds are requested to incentivize participation in data collection activities. Each participating family child care setting will receive \$50 in early childhood materials (75 observations x \$50 each). Each center-based program participating in an observation will receive \$100 in materials (75 observations x \$100) (during Yrs 3,4)

Participant Incentives - Families

Funds are requested to incentivize family participation in data collection activities 600 families annually x 2 assessments x \$20/family = \$24,000 annually (Yrs 2-4)



Communications

Funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity.

Other = \$56,853 YR1; \$83,153 YR2; \$86,778 YR3; and \$86,778 YR4. TOTAL = \$313,562

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$36,841 YR1; \$59,964 YR2; \$63,867 YR3; and \$65,584 YR4. TOTAL = \$226,256

Budget (5b): Study 3: Process Evaluation Study

Personnel²

Dr. Lisa Knoche, PI, 3 person months, (0.25 FTE annually; Yrs 1 - 4), will co-direct this investigation. She will provide direction and oversight of the study, co-develop research protocols, provide training and oversight of intervention and research functions, including the collection and management of data; collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses, and support collaboration with community early childhood programs and coordinate dissemination activities.

Salary = \$17,398 YR1; \$17,920 YR2; \$18,458 YR3; and \$19,012 YR4. TOTAL = \$72,788

² Several new faculty in early childhood education and related disciplines will be joining the NU system and will be incorporated into this work to maximize the expertise available across the NU system as a resource. Exact personnel could shift to incorporate these additions.



Research Faculty, (TBN), 3.6 person months (0.40 FTE academically; Yrs 1-4), will develop research protocols and monitor ongoing study execution. Will be responsible for communicating preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader research community.

Salary = \$30,000 YR1; \$30,900 YR2; \$31,827 YR3; and \$32,782 YR4. TOTAL = \$125,509

Project Manager, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in program evaluation. The Project Manager will be responsible for the oversight of the daily operations of the study.

Salary = \$48,000 YR1; \$49,440 YR2; \$50,923 YR3; and \$52,451 YR4. TOTAL = \$200,814

Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors), TBN, (Yr 2 =2.76; Yr 3 =2.76; Yr 4=3.5 Person Months) (0.73 FTE). Dedicated data collectors will be hired to ensure complete and reliable data collection for the early childhood mental health project and the early childhood coaching project. This cadre of individuals will be hired in a manner consistent with the variable nature and unique data collection needs of the project.

Salary = \$8,870 YR2; \$9,136 YR3; and \$11,933 YR4. TOTAL = \$29,939

Research Aides/Coders, TBN, 6 person months Yr 2; 8.76 person months Yrs 3,4 (Yr 2 – 0.50 FTE; Yrs 3,4 = 0.73 FTE) One to four individuals will be hired to provide research assistance to the project, including processing of data and supporting data collection and data entry. The aides will work on a variable schedule.

Salary = \$14,997 YR2; \$22,552 YR3; and \$23,229 YR4. TOTAL = \$60,778



Database Development, TBN, 2.4 person months (0.20 FTE, Years 1 – 4). A database developer will build and maintain a data management system for tracking process evaluation data and ensure its availability for analysis.

Salary = \$9,924 YR1; \$10,222 YR2; \$10,529 YR3; and \$10,844 YR4. TOTAL = \$41,519

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, 17.64 person months (0.49 FTE – x3; Yrs 1 - 4). Three Graduate students in early childhood development, psychology, school psychology or a related program will assist with ongoing coordination, communication, data collection and entry, and general research needs in all project years, including conducting focus group with participants.

Salary = \$40,410 YR1; \$51,647 YR2; \$56,180 YR3; and \$58,924 YR4. TOTAL = \$232,191

Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff, 42% for technical assistants and 36% for graduate students. Health insurance for graduate students is estimated at \$1,302 (year one). Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$64,065 YR1; \$76,270 YR2; \$81,826 YR3; and \$85,650 YR4. TOTAL = \$307,811

Travel

Travel funds are included for travel to two conference/meetings per year. Funds are estimated as follows:

Airfare:	\$500
Lodging (3 nights @ \$200 per night)	\$600
Per Diem (4 days @ \$60 per day)	\$240
<u>Ground transportation & baggage fees</u>	<u>\$160</u>



Total cost per trip: \$1,500/per trip (\$3000/ annually)

Funds for statewide data collection and site visits by the PIs are estimated as follows:

Study 3c: 60 observations x 200 miles per trip x .555 mile = \$6,660 (Yr 4)

Study 3b: 80 observations x 2 per year x 200 miles x .555 = \$17,600 (annually Yr 2, 3)

Annual (Yr 2, 3, 4) mileage for focus group data collection: 5 trips x 200 miles x .555 = \$1,000 (annually)

Travel = \$3,000 YR1; \$21,600 YR2; \$21,600 YR3; and \$10,660 YR4. TOTAL = \$56,860

Supplies

Funds are requested for four computers for the project director, data collection team, and the graduate research assistants. These computers are essential to the success of this work. They will be used over the life of the project, and will be essential for all implementation of all aspects of the study including planning activities, data collection, and data processing/ analysis. One printer will be purchased and shared among project director, data collectors, and graduate assistants. Other supplies and office materials will be purchased to support the research team. DVDs will be purchased for video coding. Digital audio recorders will be purchased for focus group data collection. Video-cameras will be purchased for fidelity taping of coach visits. Headphones will be purchased for coding.

Supplies = \$10,000 YR1; \$4,500 YR2; \$2,500 YR3; and \$1,500 YR4. TOTAL = \$18,500



Other

SRM Unit

Evaluation staff in the Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Support Unit in CYFS will be responsible for the randomization process, data checking, data management, and data analysis, including qualitative data analysis of focus group data. The SRM will provide approximately 1040 hours of support annually. The current SRM approved service center rate is \$54.42 per hour.

Training in Assessments for Data Collectors

Funds are requested to support five data collector/graduate assistants for training in TPOT/TPITOS). Cost for each participant is \$200 (\$200 x 5 data collectors = \$1000; Yr 3)

Transcription and Transfer

Funds are requested to support transcription of focus group data (\$1000; Yr 2 - 4) and transfer of video data to DVD (\$640 – Years 2, 3)

Participant Incentives - Programs

Funds are requested to incentivize participation in data collection activities for centers and child care homes (TPOT/ TPITOS); Yr 4

15 centers x \$100 in early childhood materials = \$1,500

15 family child care homes x \$50 in early childhood materials = \$750



Participant Incentives - Focus Groups

Funds are requested to incentivize participation in focus group activities $\$25/\text{participant} \times 25 \text{ participants per project} = \$625/\text{project}$

Yr 2 = 3b (\$625); Yr 3 = 3a, 3b, 3d (\$1875); Yr 4 = 3c, 3d (\$1250)

Participant Incentives – Coaches

Funds are requested to incentive participation of coach participants (\$25/observation per coach and teacher)

$80 \times \$50 \text{ annually} \times 2 \text{ (coach, teacher)} = \$8,000 \text{ (Yr 2, 3)}$

Communications

Funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity (\$525/annually).

Other = \$57,378 YR1; \$68,643 YR2; \$70,893 YR3; and \$62,878 YR4. TOTAL = \$259,792

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$29,527 YR1; \$36,053 YR2; \$37,912 YR3; and \$37,159 YR4. TOTAL = \$140,651



Budget 5c: Study 4: Study of Child Care (Revisited)

Personnel³

Dr. Helen Rakes, Co-PI, 1.8 person months Yrs 1, 2; .9 PM Yr 3, 4, (0.20 FTE Yrs 1, 2; 0.10 FTE; Yrs 3, 4), will co-direct this investigation. She will co-develop research protocols and monitor ongoing study execution. She will advance the conceptual and scientific agenda for this study. She will be responsible for communicating preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader research community.

Salary = \$21,584 YR1; \$22,231 YR2; \$11,449 YR3; and \$11,793 YR4. TOTAL = \$67,057

Dr. Susan Sheridan, Co-I, .9 person months (0.10 academic FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses and support functions within the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools.

Salary = \$10,922 YR1; \$11,250 YR2; \$11,587 YR3; and \$11,935 YR4. TOTAL = \$45,694

Research Faculty, (TBN), 5.4 person months Yrs 1-4; (0.60 academic FTE) will collaborate with the methodology team on data analyses, and provide training and oversight of intervention and research, including the collection and management of data;

Salary = \$45,000 YR1; \$46,350 YR2; \$47,741 YR3; and \$49,173 YR4. TOTAL = \$188,264

Project Manager, TBN, 6 person months, (0.50 FTE; Yrs 1 - 4), will be hired with specific background and experience in managing research projects. The Project Manager will be responsible for the oversight of the daily operations of the study.

Salary = \$24,000 YR1; \$24,720 YR2; \$25,462 YR3; and \$26,225 YR4. TOTAL = \$100,407

³ Several new faculty in early childhood education and related disciplines will be joining the NU system and will be incorporated into this work to maximize the expertise available across the NU system as a resource. Exact personnel could shift to incorporate these additions.



Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors), TBN, Yrs 2, 4 =12 Person Months (1.0 FTE Yr 2, 4). Dedicated data collectors will be hired to ensure complete and reliable data collection of the observational assessment and phone calls. This cadre of individuals will be hired in a manner consistent with the variable nature and unique data collection needs of the project. Salary = \$38,563 YR2; and \$40,912 YR4. TOTAL = \$79,475

Research Aides, TBN, 6 person months Yrs 2,4; (Yrs 2,4 – 0.50 FTE) One to three individuals will be hired to provide research assistance to the project, including processing of data and supporting data collection and data entry. The aides will work on a variable schedule.

Salary = \$14,997 YR2; and \$15,910 YR4. TOTAL = \$30,907

Database Development, TBN, 2.4 person months (20% FTE, Years 1 – 4). A database developer will build and maintain a data management system for tracking data and ensure its availability for analysis.

Salary = \$9,924 YR1; \$10,222 YR2; \$10,529 YR3; and \$10,844 YR4. TOTAL = \$41,519

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, 23.52 person months (0.49 FTE – x4; Yrs 1 - 4), Four Graduate students in early childhood development, psychology, school psychology or a related program will assist with ongoing coordination, communication, data collection and entry, and general research needs in all project years, including phone survey completion.

Salary = \$74,000 YR1; \$76,220 YR2; \$78,507 YR3; and \$80,862 YR4. TOTAL = \$309,589



Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff, 42% for technical assistants. Benefits for graduate students include 36% for tuition remission and graduate health insurance is \$1,225 for year one, \$1,348 for year two, \$1,483 for year 3 and \$1,631 for year four. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$66,101 YR1; \$85,525 YR2; \$67,654 YR3; and \$88,234 YR 4. TOTAL = \$307,514

Travel

Funds for statewide data collection are estimated as follows:

105 observations x 200 miles per trip x .55 mile = \$11,550 (Yr 2)

Travel TOTAL = \$11,550

Supplies

Funds are requested for four computers for the project director, data collection team, and the graduate research assistants. These computers are essential to the success of this work. They will be used over the life of the project, and will be essential for all implementation of all aspects of the study including planning activities, data collection, and data processing/ analysis. One printer will be purchased and shared among project director, data collectors, and graduate assistants. Other supplies and office materials will be purchased to support the research team.

Supplies = \$12,000 YR1; \$3,000 YR2; \$1,500 YR3; and \$3,000 YR4. TOTAL = \$19,500



Other

SRM Unit

Evaluation staff in the Statistics and Research Methodology (SRM) Support Unit in CYFS will be responsible for the randomization process, data checking, data management, and data analysis. The SRM will provide approximately 1040 hours of support annually. The current SRM approved service center rate is \$54.42 per hour.

Participant Incentives

Funds are requested to incentivize participation in data collection activities – phone interview and observations.

365 interviews x \$10 = \$3650 (Yr 2,); 730 x \$10 = \$7,300 (Yr 4)

105 observations x \$50 = \$5250 (Yr 2)

Postage/Mailing

Funds are requested to support mailing and postage costs for contacting research participants (\$500 Yrs 2,4)

Communications

Funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity (\$525/annually).

Other = \$57,153 YR1; \$66,553 YR2; \$57,153 YR3; and \$64,953 YR4. TOTAL = \$245,812

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$32,068 YR1; \$41,118 YR2; \$31,476 YR3; and \$40,702 YR4. TOTAL = \$145,364



Project 6a: Postsecondary Education Enhancements : Early Childhood Course Articulation Budget Justification

PERSONNEL

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 FTE; Yrs 1-4), will work with colleges and universities throughout the state to expand course offerings-particularly courses in distance formats, increase articulations between institutions, ensure that these changes are aligned with Nebraska core competencies, that they increase access of rural educators, and improve diverse educators in settings serving low income children. The project manager will also determine need and evaluate the success of this program.

Salary = \$20,000 YR1; \$20,600 YR2; \$21,218 YR3; and \$21,855 YR4. TOTAL = \$83,673

TBN, Faculty Advisor, 0.9 person months, (0.10 FTE) Yrs 1-4, will provide direction and oversight of the early childhood course articulation project. He/she will advance the conceptual and scientific agenda for this project and serve as its representative to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. He/she will work with the Project Manager in supporting collaboration with other institutions of higher education and coordinating dissemination of preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader public and professional communities.

Salary = \$6,088 YR1; \$6,271 YR2; \$6,459 YR3; and \$6,653 YR4. TOTAL = \$25,471

Office/Budget Manager, TBN, 6 person months (0.50 FTE: Yrs 1-4), will support the project manager and faculty advisor in communications and preparing documents to be shared among faculty. This person will be responsible for tracking number of students, background, settings of students, levels of education, majors and if involved in endorsement programs. The office/budget manager will conduct and compile student evaluations of courses. Meetings will be planned and organized also.

Salary = \$20,000 YR1; \$20,600 YR2; \$21,218 YR3; and \$21,855 YR4. TOTAL = 83,673



Faculty stipends, \$5,000 per course, (Yrs 2-4). Faculty will create a distance course or convert a traditional course into a distance course.

Salary = \$30,000 YR2; \$30,000 YR3; and \$30,000 YR4. TOTAL = 90,000

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE each, Yrs 1-4), will assist the manager in all tasks. The GRAs will work closely with faculty members as they implement their new distance courses including assisting with roll-out of distance course, serving as a repository as these courses are implemented. Assist with preparing internal reports as part of on-going formulation of the project.

Salary = \$37,000 YR1; \$38,110 YR2; \$39,253 YR3; and \$40,431 YR4. TOTAL = \$154,794

BENEFITS

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff. Benefits for graduate students include 36% for tuition remission and graduate health insurance is \$1,225 for year one, \$1,348 for year two, \$1,483 for year 3 and \$1,631 for year four. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$31,475 YR1; \$40,992 YR2; \$42,159 YR3; and \$43,378 YR4. TOTAL = \$158,004

Travel

Funds are included for faculty advisor, project manager and selected faculty to travel to state, regional and national conferences to stay current on developments in the field and disseminate what is learned from the project.

Airfare: \$500

Lodging: \$500



Baggage: \$ 50
Meals: \$140
Taxi/misc: \$100
Registration: \$300
TOTAL TRAVEL PER TRIP: \$1,590

Travel for advisor, manager and graduate students to visit campus administrators to expand course offerings and promote articulation agreements is also requested. Funds for travel estimated at an average of 300 miles with food and lodging (due to distance) for some trips is included.

Travel = \$13,370 each year. TOTAL = \$54,680

Supplies

Laptops for graduate students and project manager, portable projector, sample curricula and funds for flash drives (for meeting information to be easily shared) and copies for meetings. Funds are also requested for a desktop computer for office/budget manager.

Supplies = \$10,000 YR1; and \$5,000 each in YR2 – YR4. TOTAL = \$25,000

Other

Local Meetings – one meeting will be held during years one and two bringing together faculty administrators from different campuses to collectively plan a coherent system for Nebraska to promote project goals. Food, parking and hotel costs are included.



Stipends – \$5,000 per course. Faculty will create a distance course or convert a traditional course into a distance course during years two, three and four.

Communications – funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity.

Other = \$6,725 YR1; \$26,725 YR2; \$20,225 YR3; and \$20,225 YR4. TOTAL = \$73,900

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$14,496 YR1; \$20,197 YR2; \$19,920 YR3; and \$20,307 YR4. TOTAL = \$74,920

Project 6b: Postsecondary Education Enhancements: Cross-Professional Integration Budget Justifications

PERSONNEL

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 annual FTE; Yrs 1-4), will work with University of Nebraska faculty and administrators at all four campuses to infuse early childhood mental health content into programs preparing diverse types of mental health consultants. The project manager will also determine need and evaluate the success of this program. The project manager will also collaborate with Nebraska branches of relevant professional organizations in this work. The project manager will also work with NU faculty partners at NDE administrator days.

Salary = \$20,000 YR1; \$20,600 YR2; \$21,218 YR3; and \$21,855 YR4. TOTAL = \$83,673

TBN, Faculty Advisor, 0.9 person months, (0.10 academic FTE; Yrs 1-4), will provide direction and oversight of the cross-professional integration project. He/she will advance the conceptual and scientific agenda for this project and serve as its representative to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. He/she will work with the Project Manager in supporting collaboration with



other institutions of higher education and coordinating dissemination of preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader public and professional communities.

Salary = \$6,088 YR1; \$6,271 YR2; \$6,459 YR3; and \$6,653 YR4. TOTAL = \$25,471

Office/Budget Manager, TBN, 6 person months (0.50 annual FTE; Yrs 1-4), will organize the interdisciplinary summer institutes along with supporting the project manager in communications and preparing documents to be shared among faculty. This person will be responsible for tracking number of students, background, settings of students, levels of education, majors and if involved in endorsement programs. The office/budget manager will conduct and compile student evaluations of courses. Meetings will be planned and organized also.

Salary = \$20,000 YR1; \$20,600 YR2; \$21,218 YR3; and \$21,855 YR4. TOTAL = \$83,673

Faculty stipends, \$5,000 per course (Yrs 2-4). Faculty will create a distance course or convert a traditional course into a distance course.

Salary = \$46,350 YR2; \$47,741 YR3; and \$49,173 YR4. TOTAL = \$143,264

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE each; Yrs 1-4), will assist the manager in all tasks. The GRAs will work closely with faculty members and administrators as they infuse early childhood mental health content into their courses, gather and conduct formative assessments as improvements are implemented. Assist with preparing internal reports as part of on-going formulation of the project.

Salary = \$37,000 YR1; \$38,100 YR2; \$39,253 YR3; and \$40,431 YR4. TOTAL = \$154,794



BENEFITS

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff. Benefits for graduate students include 36% for tuition remission and graduate health insurance is \$1,225 for year one, \$1,348 for year two, \$1,483 for year 3 and \$1,631 for year four. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$31,475 YR1; \$45,570 YR2; \$47,126 YR3; and \$48,746 YR4. TOTAL = \$172,917

Travel

Funds are included for faculty advisor, project manager, and selected faculty to travel to state, regional and national conferences to stay current on developments in the field and disseminate what is learned from the project.

Airfare:	\$500
Lodging:	\$500
Baggage:	\$ 50
Meals:	\$140
Taxi/misc:	\$100
Registration:	\$300

TOTAL TRAVEL PER TRIP: \$1,590

Travel for manager and graduate students to visit campus administrators to infuse mental health content into existing programs preparing mental health consultants is also requested. Funds for travel estimated at an average of 300 miles with food and lodging (due to distance) for some trips is included. Travel = \$13,670 each year. TOTAL = \$54,680



Supplies

Laptops for graduate students, portable projector, sample curricula and funds for flash drives (for meeting information to be easily shared) and copies for meetings. Funds are also requested for a desktop computer for office/budget manager.

Supplies = \$8,000 YR1; \$5,000 each YR2 – YR4. TOTAL = \$23,000

Other

Local Meetings – one meeting will be held during years one and two bringing together faculty administrators from different campuses to collectively plan a coherent system for Nebraska to promote project goals. Food, parking and hotel costs are included.

Stipends – \$5,000 per course. Faculty will create a distance course or convert a traditional course into a distance course.

Summer institutes will be held during years three and four. Funds for participant stipends are estimated at \$30,000 (\$250 per day X 4 days X 30 participants), \$15,000 for food and lodging for an estimated 25 participants, \$3,000 for meeting food expenses estimated at 30 people X 4 days X \$25 per person, parking at \$10 per permit X 4 days x 30 participants and mileage averaged at 120 miles round trip for a total of \$4,163.

Communications – funds are requested annually to support long distance phone calls and internet connectivity.

Other = \$11,325 YR1; \$41,325 YR2; \$84,225 YR3; and \$84,225 YR4. TOTAL = \$221,100

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$14,756 YR1; \$23,750 YR2; \$28,591 YR3; and \$29,161 YR4. TOTAL = \$96,258



Project 6c: Postsecondary Education Enhancements: On-Line Coaching Certification Budget Justification

Personnel

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 FTE) will work with University of Nebraska faculty and administrators at all four campuses and with key stakeholders from state agencies and programs. The project coordinator will also collaborate with Nebraska branches of relevant professional organizations in this work. The coordinator will be responsible for the day to day operations of the certificate program, including coordinating all meetings and supporting students. This position will be housed in CYAF.

Salary = \$16,000 YR1; \$16,480 YR2; \$16,974 YR3; and \$17,484 YR4. TOTAL = \$66,938

Dr. Christine Marvin, 2.4 person months (b)(6) annual FTE; Yrs. 1-4), will provide direction and oversight of the coaching project. Dr. Marvin will advance the conceptual and scientific agenda for this project and serve as its representative to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. She will work with the Project Manager in supporting collaboration with other institutions of higher education and coordinating dissemination of preliminary and final results to and making data and materials available to the broader public and professional communities.

Salary = \$16,144 YR1; \$16,629 YR2; \$17,128 YR3; and \$17,641 YR4. TOTAL = \$67,542

Graduate Research Assistants (GRA), 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE each), will assist the coordinator in all tasks.

Salary = \$37,000 YR1; \$38,110 YR2; \$39,253 YR3; and \$40,431 YR4. TOTAL = \$154,794

Funds are requested to support an undergraduate student who will work approximately 10 hours per week for 12 months over each year of the project. Average pay is assumed to be \$10 per hour. Salary = \$5,200 YR1; \$5,356 YR2; \$5,517 YR3; and \$5,682 YR4. TOTAL = \$21,755



Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff. Benefits for graduate students include 36% for tuition remission and graduate health insurance is \$1,225 for year one, \$1,348 for year two, \$1,483 for year 3 and \$1,631 for year four. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$24,770 YR1; \$25,686 YR2; \$26,646 YR3; and \$27,652 YR4. TOTAL = \$104,754

Travel

Funds are requested for travel reimbursement for coach participants for two in person campus meeting sessions annually (15 x 200 miles – year 2,4) (30 x 200 miles – year

Funds are included for project coordinator and selected faculty to travel to state, regional and national conferences to stay current on developments in the field and disseminate what is learned from the project.

Airfare:	\$500
Lodging:	\$500
Baggage:	\$ 50
Meals:	\$140
Taxi/misc:	\$100
Registration:	\$300
TOTAL TRAVEL PER TRIP:	\$1,590



Travel for coordinator and graduate students to visit campus administrators to infuse mental health content into existing programs preparing mental health consultants is also requested. Funds for travel estimated at an average of 300 miles with food and lodging (due to distance) for some trips is included.

Travel = \$1,590 per year. TOTAL = \$6,360

Supplies

Laptops for graduate students and project coordinator, portable projector, sample curricula and funds for flash drives (for meeting information to be easily shared) and copies for meetings.

Supplies = \$4,400 YR1; \$400 YR2; \$400 YR3; and \$400 YR4. TOTAL = \$5,600

Consulting

Evaluation

Costs for PEARL

Costs for video observations and coding (10 hours – coding + taping = 10 x 15 = 150 hours x \$18/hour each in years 3 and year 4.)

Data Analysis – SRM (50 hours; years 3, 4)

Consulting = \$5,423 in each of YR3 & YR4. TOTAL = \$10,846

Other

Participant support costs are requested to support 15 EC Coaches in Cohort 1: Years 2/3 and 15 EC Coaches in Cohort 2: Years 3/4.

- a. To incentivize certificate completion, coaches will receive a \$4,000 stipend upon completion of the EC Coach Training Series (15 x \$4000 (Yr 3); 15 x \$4000 (Yr 4)).



- b. Funds are requested for tuition reimbursement 15 x 6 credits in years 2 and 4; 30 x 6 in year 3.
- c. In Years 2-4, funds are requested to cover the cost of fees (registration, library, technology, program and facilities fee) that the UNL charges to Graduate Students.
- d. Funds are requested to provide participant materials (books, supplies)
- e. Funds are requested for Years 2-4 for light refreshments (coffee, juice, and snacks) for participants during periods when they are participating in day long trainings.

CLASS training (\$200/ per participant – 15 in Year 3; 15 in Year 4)

Faculty stipends, \$5,000 per course. Faculty will create a distance course or convert a traditional course into a distance course.

Local Meetings – three meetings will be held during years one and two bringing together faculty administrators from different campuses, and Nebraska agencies to collectively plan a coherent system for the certificate program. Food, parking and hotel costs are included.

Purchase materials and access to Ohio State University virtual laboratory and publications.

Other = \$12,520 YR1; \$53,584 YR2; \$150,378 YR3; and \$109,314 YR4. TOTAL = \$325,796

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$11,762 YR1; \$15,784 YR2; \$26,331 YR3; and \$22,562 YR4. TOTAL = \$76,439



Project 6d: Postsecondary Education Enhancements: Extension Budget Justification

PERSONNEL

Extension Educator (2), TBN, 12 person months each (1.0 FTE x 2)), Yrs 1-4, will provide outreach to diverse early childhood practitioners and programs by helping programs and practitioners access introductory early childhood courses in Spanish through community colleges. They will also assist new refugee populations—those providing early care and education services--to navigate and understand contracts, billing procedures, and licensing requirements in Nebraska, thus improving support and outreach to a culturally and linguistically diverse early educator population.

Salary = \$162,000 YR1; \$166,860 YR2; \$171,866 YR3; & \$177,022 YR4. TOTAL = \$677,748

BENEFITS

Benefits are estimated at 28% for faculty and staff. Actual costs for benefits will be charged to funded projects.

Benefits = \$45,360 YR1; \$46,721 YR2; \$48,122 YR3; and \$49,566 YR4. TOTAL = \$189,769

Travel

\$2,000 for in-state travel to provide educational programs with partner schools and \$2,000 for travel/registration/expenses to professional meetings (\$1,000 per educator).

Travel = \$4,000 in each year. TOTAL = \$16,000



Supplies

These funds would include: \$1,000 for in curriculum and supplies (e.g., consumable teaching supplies, curriculum for students and teachers, \$4,000 for two computers/printer/ipad (year 1 only), \$2,000 for communication services (e.g., phone/data service for connecting with clientele and other educators, adobe connect sessions with state and national experts),

Supplies = \$7,000 YR1; \$3,000 each YR2 – YR4. TOTAL = \$16,000

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

Indirect = \$21,836 YR1; \$22,058 YR2; \$22,699 YR3; and \$23,359 YR4. TOTAL = \$89,952

University of Nebraska Summary Budget Justification

Personnel

(See individual project budget justifications for more detailed descriptions)

\$1,669,352 YR1; \$2,018,293 YR2; \$2,031,056 YR3; and \$2,150,656 YR4. TOTAL = \$7,869,357

Project 1c:

Project Coordinator, TBN, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) \$75,000 base

Post-Award Specialists, TBN, and 18 person month per year (1.5 FTE annually) \$48,000 base

Information Technology Specialist, TBN, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE) \$38,440 base

Program Specialists, TBD, 12 person months per year (1.0 FTE annually) \$48,000 base



Project 3b:

Dr. James Bovaird, Project Manager (PM), 3 person months, (b)(6) FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$91,117 base

Dr. Carolyn Pope Edwards, Co-PM, 2 person months (b)(6) Yrs 1 – 4) \$194,167 base

Dr. Victoria Molfese, Co-PM, 1 person months, (b)(6) FTE; Years 1-4) \$182,707 base

Dr. Kathy Rudasill, Co-PM, 3 person months, (b)(6) FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$89,667 base

Research Assistant Professor, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$70,000 base

Research Assistant Professor, TBN, 6 person months, (0.5 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$70,000 base

Database Developer and Analyst 1, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$50,000 base

Database Developer and Analyst 2, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$50,000 base

Technical Consultants (NU System Faculty), TBN, 6 person months, (0.5 FTE) \$100,000 base

Project 4a:

Dr. Barbara Jackson, Project Manager, (b)(6) FTE \$109,110 base

Dr. Barbara Jackson, Evaluator for project 5b, (b)(6) FTE, \$109,110 base

Project Director: TBN, 0.50 FTE \$60,750 base

Project Coordinator: TBN, 0.25 FTE \$45,562 base

Secretary: M. Robinson, 0.05 FTE \$38,000 base

Project 4c:

Dr. Barbara Jackson, Project Manager, (b)(6) FTE \$109,110 base

Project Director: TBN, 0.50 FTE \$60,750 base



Project Coordinator: TBN, 0.25 FTE \$45,562 base

Secretary: M. Robinson, (b)(6) FTE \$38,000 base

Project 5a:

Dr. Helen Raikes, Co-PI, 2.25 person months, (b)(6) academic FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$107,919 base

Dr. Lisa Knoche, Co-PI, 3 person months, (b)(6) annual FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$69,593 base

Dr. Victoria Molfese, Co-I, .9 person months (b)(6) academic FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$182,707 base

Research Faculty, TBN, 2.7 person months (0.30 academic FTE; Yrs 1-4) \$75,000 base

Project Manager, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 annual FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$48,000 base

Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors), TBN, Yr 2 =36; Yr 3 =40; Yr 4
=40.25 Person Months) (0.83 FTE) \$37,440 base

Research Aides, TBN, and 12 person months (1.0 FTE; Yrs 2, 3, 4) \$29,120 base

Database Development, TBN, and 6 person months (0.50 FTE, Years 1 – 4) \$49,621 base

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, and 17.64 person months (0.49 FTE – x3) \$37,755 base

Project 5b:

Dr. Lisa Knoche, PI, 3 person months, (b)(6) FTE annually; Yrs 1 – 4) \$69,593 base

Research Faculty, (TBN), 3.6 person months (0.40 FTE academically; Yrs 1-4) \$75,000 base

Project Manager, TBN, 12 person months, (1.0 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$48,000 base

Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors), TBN, Yr 2 =2.76; Yr 3 =2.76; Yr
4=3.5 Person Months) (0.73 FTE) \$37,440 base

Research Aides/Coders, TBN, 6 person months Yr 2; 8.76 person months Yrs 3, 4 (Yr 2 – 0.50



FTE; Yrs 3, 4 = 0.73 FTE) \$29,120 base

Database Development, TBN, and 2.4 person months (0.20 FTE, Years 1 – 4) \$49,621 base

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, and 17.64 person months (0.49 FTE – x3) \$37,755 base

Project 5c:

Dr. Helen Raikes, Co-PI, 1.8 person months Yrs 1, 2; .9 PM Yr 3, 4, (b)(6) FTE Yrs 1, 2; 0.10 FTE; Yrs 3, 4) \$107,919 base

Dr. Susan Sheridan, Co-I, .9 person months (b)(6) academic FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$145,625 base

Research Faculty, (TBN), 5.4 person months Yrs 1-4; (0.60 academic FTE) \$75,000 base

Project Manager, TBN, 6 person months, (0.50 FTE; Yrs 1 – 4) \$48,000 base

Early Childhood Research Technicians (Data Collectors) \$37,440 base

Research Aides, TBN, 6 person months Yrs 2, 4; (Yrs 2, 4 – 0.50 FTE) \$29,120 base

Database Development, TBN, and 2.4 person months (20% FTE, Years 1 – 4) \$49,621 base

Graduate Research Assistant, TBN, and 23.52 person months (0.49 FTE – x4) \$37,755 base

Project 6a:

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 FTE; Yrs 1-4) \$60,000 base

TBN, Faculty Advisor, .9 person months, (0.10 FTE) \$60,883 base

Office/Budget Manager, TBN, 6 person months (0.50 FTE: Yrs 1-4) \$40,000 base

Faculty stipends, \$5,000 per course, (Yrs 2-4) \$30,000 base

Graduate Research Assistants, 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE x 2) \$37,755 base



Project 6b:

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 annual FTE; Yrs 1-4) \$60,000 base
TBN, Faculty Advisor, .9 person months, (0.10 academic FTE; Yrs 1-4) \$60,883 base
Office/Budget Manager, TBN, 6 person months (0.50 annual FTE; Yrs 1-4) \$40,000 base
Faculty stipends, \$5,000 per course (Yrs 2-4) \$45,000 base
Graduate Research Assistants, 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE x 2) \$37,755 base

Project 6c:

Project Manager, TBN, 4 person months (0.33 FTE) \$48,000 base
Dr. Christine Marvin, 2.4 person months (b)(6) annual FTE; Yrs. 1-4) \$ 80,722 base
Graduate Research Assistants, 2, TBN, 5.88 person months each (0.49 FTE x 2) \$37,755 base
Undergraduate student who will work approximately 10 hours per week (0.25 FTE) \$10/hour

Project 6d:

Extension Educator (2), TBN, 12 person months each (2.0 FTE) \$81,000 base

Salaries are increase at an estimated rate of 3% in year 2-4 for all projects other than 4a and 4c. 4a and 4c are increase at an estimated rate of 2.5% in years 2-4.

Benefits

Benefits are estimated at 28% of salary for faculty and 42 % of salary for staff. GRA benefits include tuition remission estimated at 36% of salary and health benefits estimated at \$1,225 in year 1; \$1,348 in year 2; \$1,483 in year 3; and \$1,631 in year 4. The actual cost of benefits for each person will be charged to the project.



\$556,047 YR1; \$667,433 YR2; \$674,424 YR3; and \$715,309 YR4. TOTAL = \$2,613,213

Travel (please see individual project budget justifications for details)

Funds are requested for travel reimbursement for Project Coordinator for meetings in Washington, DC and to travel to sites around the state. Funds are requested for faculty and staff to attend conferences to disseminate information and learn more about their field of study. Travel to local meetings and for statewide data collection as well as provide education programs to partner schools.

Project	Amount requested over 4 years
1c	\$38,280
3b	\$36,000
4a	\$ 7,000
4c	\$ 7,000
5a	\$65,350
5b	\$56,860
5c	\$17,910
6a	\$54,680
6b	\$54,680
6c	\$ 6,360
6d	\$16,000

TOTAL = \$360,120

Equipment

(Project 1c) Data Storage - server and support to be used by all NU projects. Cost is estimated based on previous experience.

(Project 3b) One-time purchase of a computer server for CYFS for centralized web-based data basing in Year 1. Additional funds for maintenance of data server system in subsequent years. Cost estimate based on previous experience.

\$100,000 YR1; \$10,000 YR2; \$10,000 YR3; and \$10,000 YR4. TOTAL = \$130,000

Supplies (please see individual project budget justifications for details)



Funds are requested for high end computers for data analysis and collection, meeting and training supplies, DVDs for video coding, digital audio recorders and video recorders for interviews, as well as other supplies necessary to set up the administrative portion of the grant.

\$101,400 YR1; \$55,400 YR2; \$48,400 YR3; and \$48,900 YR4. TOTAL = \$254,100

Consulting (please see individual project budget justifications for details)

(Project 3b) Funds are requested to secure external advisory services for logistical, legal and technical assistance in implementing the federated database system.

(Project 4a and 4c) Funds are requested to hire consultants to assist in Module Development as well as Training and Assessment.

(Project 6c) Funds are requested to support Evaluation, such as PEARL, video coding and data analysis.

\$789,000 YR1; \$785,000 YR2; \$545,423 YR3; and \$545,423 YR4. TOTAL = \$2,664,846

Other (please see individual project budget justifications for details)

Funds are requested for publications, communications, data ports, and long distance charges, cost of local meetings and workshops, evaluation support from internal NU units, work with outside agencies, postage, copying and printing services, participant incentives, transcription work, stipends, summer institutes, and curriculum supplies.

\$491,930 YR1; 773,586 YR2; \$948,019 YR3; and \$911,291 YR4. TOTAL = \$3,124,826

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are calculated at the 10% limited rate as is typical for State of Nebraska agreements to the University.

\$376,874 YR1; \$441,406 YR2; \$436,017 YR3; and \$447,352 YR4. TOTAL = \$1,701,649

TOTAL UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA REQUEST = \$18,718,111

\$4,145,603 YR1; \$4,855,468 YR2; \$4,796,194 YR3; and \$4,920,846 YR4.



BUDGET: INDIRECT COST INFORMATION

University of Nebraska

PSA 3

To request reimbursement for indirect costs, please answer the following questions:

Does the State have an Indirect Cost Rate Agreement approved by the Federal government?

YES
NO

If yes to question 1, please provide the following information:

Period Covered by the Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (mm/dd/yyyy):

From: 7 / 1 / 2009 To: 6 / 30 / 2012

Approving Federal agency: ED HHS Other

(Please specify agency): _____

