

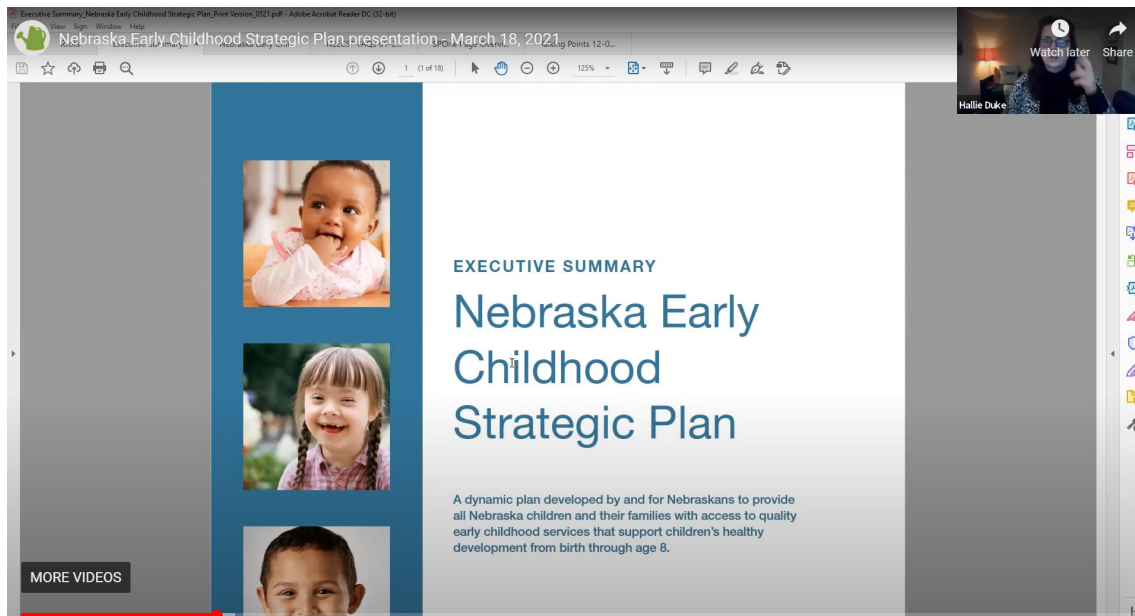


Bi-Monthly Newsletter - August 2021

Nebraska's Strategic Plan Goal 1: Access

This is part 2 of the focus on access in Nebraska's Preschool Development Renewal Grant Birth to Five Years. For the coming year, issues of the newsletter will not only focus on the particular goals of the Strategic Plan, but also the major themes that the Plan addresses. This month's issue continues to spotlight PDG initiatives that focus particularly on access.

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



Strategic Plan Update

The Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan's vision is that *ALL* Nebraska children and their families have access to quality early childhood services that support healthy development from birth through age 8. In July, conversations started with over 100 Nebraskans through interactive webinars as a first step to creating an expanded strategic plan that represents more diverse voices in statewide communities.

In addition to the goals, the webinar examined the [values of the Strategic Plan](#), including "Equitable access for all children and families." The value of equity directs initiatives to ensure

that each family, no matter their circumstances, has access to quality care. By taking a “systems change” approach, Nebraska’s early childhood partners will work together to identify and change elements in the early childhood system that create barriers (or close the doors) to services. The more stakeholders understand the factors that maintain barriers, the better they can shift those conditions. When all the doors are open to quality early childhood services, children and their families can thrive.

To learn more or to watch a recording of the webinar visit the [Strategic Plan webpage](#), or you can register for upcoming events by using the [PDG Events Calendar](#).

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

Needs Assessment Update

Throughout spring 2021, Nebraska’s PDG Needs Assessment team worked in partnership with eleven community-based facilitators to conduct focus groups with 84 parents of young children from traditionally underrepresented groups. About half of these parents (53.6%) identified as Black or African American, and nearly a quarter (22.6%) identified as Hispanic or Latinx. More than half of parent participants reported speaking a language other than English at home (22.6% Somali, 21.4% Spanish, 11.9% Karen, and 1.2% Arabic).

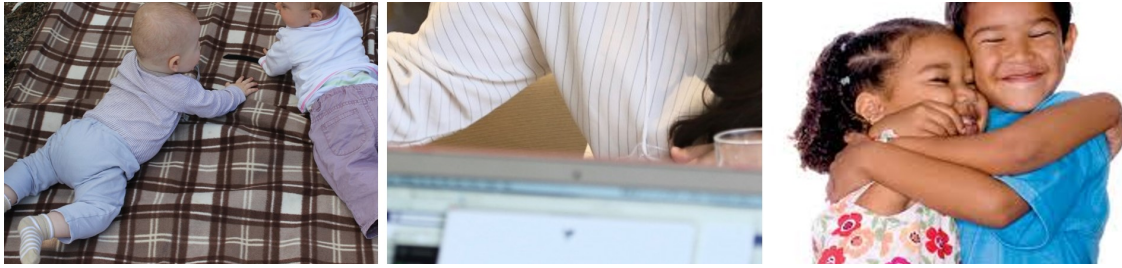
Among topics discussed, participants talked about the barriers they face in accessing quality care and education for their young children. One of the most frequent and salient themes that emerged from these conversations was the difficulty of finding an early childhood professional who could provide culturally appropriate care and education. While specific concerns varied between subgroups, the issue of trust was a common thread. Many families said that they find it difficult to trust a childcare provider who does not share their cultural and/or racial background, and a few described negative experiences with White providers.

For some families, this contributes to the decision to forgo employment. Others rely on family members, friends, or neighbors who share their cultural or racial identity but are not formally licensed. These findings highlight the importance of: 1) diversifying the early childhood workforce; and 2) providing professional development opportunities that build early childhood professionals’ capacity to build trust with children and families who are different from themselves.

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

Achieving Access through PDG Funding





Social Emotional Support Brings Families to the Table

During this past year, Rooted in Relationships staff met with early childhood stakeholders across Omaha to understand local systems and ensure collaboration. Rooted joined a collaboration between Kidsquad and the Learning Community Center of South Omaha to partner with families and early childhood providers to access a system of supportive services and resources that will promote the social-emotional competence of the children in their care.

A neighborhood approach was discussed, and, after looking at various sources of data, the zip code of 68107 was chosen. In early 2021, focus groups were held and after meetings with families and childcare providers, staff began to plan for a pilot in the second year of the Preschool Development Grant. The stakeholder group explored various evidence-based models that focus on the social-emotional development of young children. This group of parents and early childhood professionals became the Advisory Group for the project, and, on May 28th, the Advisory Group chose to implement the Pyramid Model.

Local families and childcare providers in the identified community are co-leading and co-designing the project by weaving the goals and outcomes they hope to achieve into the implementation of the Pyramid model. All the providers currently involved in this project speak Spanish as their primary language and have expressed the desire and need for training and coaching to be in Spanish. Families and providers have voiced their concerns regarding the lack of access to early childhood resources and training that promote quality and are offered in Spanish. The Advisory Group's advocacy will expand access to another population in our state as this project translates the Pyramid Model training modules and other materials into Spanish. Currently, efforts to recruit bilingual early childhood coaches in the Omaha area are underway.

If you want to learn more about the project, please contact [Stacy Scholten](#).

Communities for Kids Seeks to Expand Bilingual Support

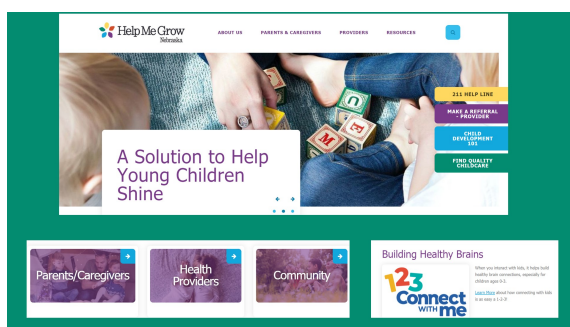
The Communities for Kids team has been very busy in Year 1 implementing projects for Bilingual Consultants and Community Subgrants. The Spanish-Speaking/Bilingual Provider Support Initiative is one of the smallest pots of money from the Preschool Development Grant, but it has generated a large buzz. Communities regularly confer to learn how to effectively engage with Spanish-speaking childcare providers in order to help them become licensed when applicable or otherwise give them opportunities to enhance the quality of their programs.

There are nine communities participating across the state (including many rural areas)—and they are all working in their collaboratives at executing all four goals of the Strategic Plan. During bi-monthly technical assistance Zooms, staff have heard repeatedly the same hurdle these communities are facing: the need for more translation and interpretation. One of the community members C4K works with put it like this (paraphrased): *We cannot do this*

outreach to the Latinx population, but then have nothing to offer to support their path to training and licensing. The first step should be to ensure our providers feel valued enough to be trained in their own language and the language of the children and families that they serve.

Because of this commonality in all C4K communities, staff have begun to ask, at the State and Federal levels, for more assistance in getting trainings and materials translated to Spanish as well as hiring people at the State level in order to process materials and communicate with this underserved population. In the meantime, C4K will continue to use PDG dollars in participating communities so that they can support Spanish-speaking childcare providers and include them in the ongoing important conversations around the early childhood landscape in their regions.

For more information about Communities for Kids Bilingual Support, please contact [Noelle Wegner](#).



Help Me Grow Links Families to Community-Based Services

Help Me Grow Nebraska reached installation, in Year 1 of the Preschool Development Renewal Grant, with the launch of 211, which accepts calls through a trained Help Me Grow

Navigator. Help Me Grow promotes early identification of developmental, behavioral, or educational concerns, then links children and families to community-based services and supports at no cost to parents, caregivers, and health and childcare providers.

Caregivers and providers can simply call 2-1-1 and ask for Help Me Grow or go online at www.helpmegrownebraska.org and refer a child for support with social and developmental needs. The Help Me Grow Navigator will also engage a Help Me Grow Care Coordinator at the Munroe-Meyer Institute to conduct developmental screening and provide care coordination services, including making it easier for families to find and enroll in quality early childhood care and education services. Developmental screening results are shared with the family and back to primary care providers, upon consent, and appropriate referrals and follow-ups to local services are tracked.

Year 1 successes included establishing the Help Me Grow Centralized Access point at 211, determining referral pathway and coordination with the Care Coordinators at the Munroe-Meyer Institute, establishing a Help Me Grow referral form, and going live with the Help Me Grow website.

Children's Hospital & Medical Center serves as the backbone organization for Help Me Grow Nebraska and regularly convenes a Leadership team with over 40 individuals, representing 15 different Nebraska organizations. Help Me Grow Nebraska is the collective-impact model in action and weaves together partner assets to build greater communication and collaboration across the community and services serving families with young children.

For more information, please contact [Rick Helweg](#) or visit the [Help Me Grow website](#).

PDG-Related News

Race Equity



Communication as Collaboration

If you're a regular reader of the PDG newsletter, you'll be aware of the collaborative efforts between organizations connected to grant initiatives, collaborations built on sometimes small moments of communication. A few that have been highlighted in the newsletter arose from breakout rooms at monthly Nebraska Leadership Team meetings. You may have read, for example, of the joint effort between Sixpence and Getting Ready that began as a breakout room conversation between Steph Renn and Lisa Knoche (see ["Beautiful Moments in Collaboration"](#)). Or you might have read of how Communities for Kids Noelle Wegner worked with Kerry Miller from the Munroe-Meyer Institute to try to combine Ready Rosie's "Modeled moments" with the Institute's "Milestone Moments" (["Baby Steps in Collaboration"](#)).

These small watercooler moments can be transformative for interorganizational connections and growth, but official communication can be crucial to creating collaboration as well, particularly when efforts reach across physical distance to unite groups that don't often come into contact. In April of 2021, a blog post designed to draw an audience for a bilingual event

planned for Madison and Dakota Counties, caught the eye of Erika Felt, an in-home provider from neither of the two counties. But she was so intrigued that she contacted Early Childhood Community Coordinator Shelina Williams for her home county of Douglas and asked if she could attend.

The event, created by Abigail Gustad and conducted by Angelina Fregoso, presented two sessions, one for English speakers and one for Spanish speakers, in which attending providers could hear the lived experiences of bilingual children and their families and could try new techniques to help Spanish-speaking students acclimate to and feel more comfortable in a new environment. Attendees received continuing education credit and a set of toys designed to speak to Latinx cultural experiences.

Even though Erika would not receive credit, she saw the potential the training had not only for Spanish-speaking students, but also to broaden the cultural awareness of her English speakers. After contacting Shelina, Erika did receive the set of toys thanks to PDG funds. And from there, things blossomed.

[Read the full article.](#)

View the PDG Events Calendar

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

Family Engagement

Family Engagement Invites Parents to the Table

The Family Engagement group is assessing the current level of parent engagement happening for all 26 PDG projects. The group hopes to have, by the end of December, at least

one parent sitting on each PDG project and offering input into the creation of next steps, policies, and procedures. Conversations have begun about methods for evaluating family engagement. The group has recognized the critical need to have parents involved in the evaluation process. This important cultural shift will bring an invaluable voice to PDG-involved organizations.

The team is also organizing (along with several partners) the first “Nebraska Family Leadership Conference” set for May 5, 2022, at the Conference Center in Grand Island. The goal for this first conference is to invite 200-250 family representatives from all over the state to attend an event where they can learn, network, and be inspired to act in their communities on behalf of



their children. This first conference will be focused on early childhood (0 to 8), but the team aims to hold it annually and ultimately include all ages.

If you are interested in participating, please contact [Mariana Schell](#).

Do You Have Questions?

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

Get Answers to Your Questions



PDG Partners

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

This project is made possible by funding received through Grant Number 90TP0079-01, of the USDHHS-Administration for Children and Families, Office of Early Childhood; Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services; Nebraska Department of Education; and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, following grant requirements of 70% federal funding with 30% match from state and private resources. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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

[Shannon Mitchell-Boekstal](#), Assistant Vice President Preschool Development

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

Our Contact Information

Nebraska Children & Families Foundation
215 Centennial Mall South
Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-476-9401
<http://www.NebraskaChildren.org>

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Manage email preferences](#)