



# Action Agenda for Early Childhood

Prepared for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation and the Nebraska Leadership Team for Preschool Development

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## About Center for Early Learning Funding Equity

Center for Early Learning Funding Equity (CELFE) builds capacity for assessing adequacy and equity in early learning funding systems through research and transformative partnerships. We create innovative approaches and funding mechanisms that support the diverse needs of children and families. We bring decades of experience in developing and implementing early learning systems at the state and local levels and are driven by our deep belief in the power of early experiences to shape the trajectory of children's lives.

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# Executive Summary



Like most states across the country, Nebraska's Early Childhood sector is facing a decisive moment because the COVID-19 relief funds are winding down while the sector continues to struggle for survival. At the same time, Nebraska has embarked upon an ambitious goal to strengthen, integrate, and eliminate inequities in its early childhood system so that all Nebraska children and their families have better access to quality early childhood services. That goal will take several years and durable leadership to achieve. As a result, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), in partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Fund (NCFE), committed to build upon the previous work done to operationalize a shared vision and long-term goals—represented most clearly in the [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#) (updated in 2023) and Nebraska's Preschool Development Grant: [Needs Assessment Report](#) (2019). This Action Agenda represents the next iteration of the work—digging deeper to establish *actionable* priorities capable of moving the needle for children ages 0-5 across Nebraska.


Established through a twelve-month results-based stakeholder engagement process, over 80 stakeholders curated this Action Agenda to help accelerate Nebraska's momentum toward a more longer-term vision aimed at greater equity across the state's early childhood sector, while identifying ownership, timelines, and progress as well as additional resources needed for success. The recommendations in it are bold and will require leadership by elected officials as well as the larger Early Childhood Education (ECE) community, which is diverse, rich with passion, committed to data, brings years of experience and knowledge, and consistently holds children and families at the center. The work will require an ongoing commitment to elevate parent and provider voices, to use data to inform policy, to budget and to decision-making for program administration, and will most assuredly require additional financial investment to realize a high-quality ECE system that all Nebraska children and families can access.

To date, Nebraska has received \$22M in federal funding through the Preschool Development Birth to Five (PDG B-5) grant that has laid the foundation for achieving this ambitious vision. The work leading to and including this Action Agenda is made possible through those grants to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) as the state's lead Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) agency. In partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska now has the blueprint to better align strategies and coordinate resources across state agencies to elevate the needs of Nebraska's youngest learners. The Action Agenda and preceding work elevate best practices and lessons learned through existing programs. Potential challenges were also identified, including multiple funding streams administered by multiple agencies. Nebraska's ECE community is now taking bold action because anything less falls short of meeting the early learning and developmental needs of young children, misses the mark to prepare students for school success, fails the working parents who need and rely on early learning programs so they can work—and ultimately, shortchanges the larger Nebraska economy in the short- and the long-term.

As we look ahead, and with future investments and increased coordination, this Action Agenda elevates the five most strategic priorities that usher in greater equity for Nebraska's early childhood programming and provides a detailed road map for reaching them. These priorities are:

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRIORITY 1</p>   | <p><b>ACCESS</b></p> <p>More equitably address service gaps for Nebraska's working families based on parent needs and preferences, while simultaneously meeting the developmental needs of children 0-5 years old by expanding funding sources that pay providers for the full cost of quality care, including the expansion of child care subsidy, other public funds, and public/private endowments.</p> |
|  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRIORITY 2</p>   | <p><b>WORKFORCE</b></p> <p>Address the early childhood workforce crisis in early childhood by effective, innovative, and sustainable solutions that align to the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan's definition of quality and Nebraska Early Learning Standards.</p>  |
|  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRIORITY 3</p> | <p><b>DATA</b></p> <p>Ensure data-driven decisions at all levels by continuing to build data and analytic capacity across all early childhood stakeholders, including parents and community members.</p>   |
|  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRIORITY 4</p> | <p><b>COORDINATED GOVERNANCE</b></p> <p>Strengthen government coordination to operationalize a fully funded and aligned system to ensure access to full-day, year-round, high-quality early care and education for children regardless of the setting and experiences parents choose.</p>  |
|  <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">PRIORITY 5</p> | <p><b>PARENT VOICE &amp; COMMUNITY COLLABORATION</b></p> <p>Elevate parent, provider, and community voice through well-resourced community collaboratives to inform both local and system-wide decision making by examining both quantitative and qualitative data.</p>  |

Instead of having a separate priority related to targeting families and children with the greatest need, all priorities above include a commitment to equity and inclusion. In a special section of this Action Agenda, Commitment to Equity & Inclusion, we call out the ways that each priority above identifies priority populations composed of children and families with the greatest need and the least access to inclusive, quality early childhood programming, especially children with developmental delays or disabilities and English Language Learners.

Those are designated throughout the Action Agenda using the following symbol: 

This Action Agenda goes beyond making high-level recommendations—it details concrete activities that will begin in 2024. It is written as a blueprint for Nebraska's transformative journey ahead. In fact, it has already been leveraged by Nebraska's early childhood leaders to inform the use of the \$860,000 in recent Preschool Development Grant B-5 (PDG) supplemental funding beginning in 2023 with two strategic initiatives related to priorities #3: workforce and #5: community collaboration.

Specifically, the funding will be used to upgrade Nebraska's workforce registry as a central resource for professionals to build their credentials, a critical data hub for researchers and policymakers to identify pay inequities, and for ECE providers to proactively manage recruitment and retention strategies. Additionally, the funding will also support Nebraska's community collaboratives through a comprehensive landscape scan of regional intermediaries to identify strengths and gaps of the current systems for supporting parent and family choice, funding sources, services, and care available to children with special needs. Both investments are critical in launching this Action Agenda and setting up Nebraska's ECE system for more equitable impact.

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**In all of these efforts, we must acknowledge the strengths of Nebraska's existing early childhood workforce and seek to build on those strengths.<sup>1</sup>**

# The Collective Task



## BACKGROUND

With the recent completion of [Nebraska's Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#) and the upcoming opportunity for more strategic investments in 2024 leveraging federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) funding, the State of Nebraska's early childhood system is in a unique position to make innovative and bold systemic improvements for Nebraska's young children and families. Additionally, the winding down of one-time federal COVID relief dollars creates a financial 'cliff' for states who have relied on these temporary dollars, while also providing a unique opportunity to leverage future funding to maintain innovative strategies identified and tested during the pandemic to inform sustainable and meaningful change for children going forward.

The federal PDG funding is aimed at helping states build the necessary infrastructure for a coordinated system which offers high-quality early childhood services for children ages birth to five. In Nebraska, PDG funding has backed a successful partnership between the Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Nebraska's Children and Families Foundation (NCFF). In its ideal implementation, PDG funds are complementary to existing federal, state, and local early childhood investments and strategically deposit more flexible funding where needed to make state policies and investments more innovative, efficient, and impactful. Through new ways of examining funding allocation, making programmatic improvements, using data, and taking bold steps to address quality, accountability, and equity, Nebraska's recent efforts have set the stage for innovative and meaningful solutions to reshape the future of early childhood experiences for all Nebraskans for generations to come.

PDG's nearly \$22M investment in Nebraska to date has been instrumental to test and disseminate nearly 30 pilots, programs, and initiatives across the state. However, most of those efforts were not explicitly linked to a broader strategy and therefore ran the risk of remaining underutilized, unsustainable, and disconnected from any lasting, systemic change. The goal moving forward with this Action Agenda is to prioritize the most impactful efforts elevated in the Strategic Plan and, in doing so, seek to better align strategies across state agencies and partners.

This Action Agenda harnessed the momentum generated across the hundreds of stakeholders and communities engaged over the last several years into five priority focus areas—all linked to at least one Strategic Plan goal—to move forward with purpose, clarity, and alignment. Beginning in 2024, our hope is that this Action Agenda will provide the blueprint for implementation and be the 'go-to' resource for architecting future investments in Nebraska's early childhood sector.



**This Action Agenda strategically positions Nebraska to build a stable, quality early education and care system that is equitable for all children.**

In 2023, the Action Agenda was already leveraged by Nebraska's early childhood leaders to inform the allocation of \$860,000 in recent PDG supplemental funding using the following two strategic initiatives related to the ECE workforce and community collaboration:

### Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System *(see Action Agenda Priority 2; it will also support Action Agenda Priorities 1 & 3)*

The Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS) is an existing 'dual purpose' resource for supporting both Nebraska's ECE workforce with robust professional development opportunities *and* Nebraska's state-level policy and decision makers with data on the state of workforce across Nebraska counties. NECPRS has the potential to grow to include more robust information on professionals' career progress, but currently falls short to meet the needs of the state in capturing the early childhood workforce landscape. Increasing its value as a 'go-to' resource for professionals, providers, and policy makers alike is foundational to all the priorities identified in the Action Agenda. An actionable registry is a central resource for professionals to build their credentials and a critical data hub for researchers and policymakers to identify pay inequities or opportunities to support professional well-being, and for ECE providers to proactively manage recruitment and retention strategies. Ultimately, with technological improvements, NECPRS can generate an increasingly accurate understanding of the state of the ECE workforce—and most importantly, can help pave the path for growing the ECE workforce and increasing the education and training credentials required to provide high-quality early learning experiences for Nebraska's youngest children.

### Early Childhood Community Landscape Analysis *(see Action Agenda Priority 5; it will also support Action Agenda Priorities 1, 2, 3 & 4)*

Community collaboratives, coalitions, and/or other early childhood efforts throughout Nebraska will participate in an Early Childhood Landscape Analysis, through which intermediary early childhood structures' strengths, services, and data systems will be mapped for the purpose of examining and connecting organizations' knowledge of early childhood capacity, needs, and services across the state. This comprehensive landscape analysis will also identify strengths and gaps of the current systems for supporting parent and family choice, funding sources, services, and care available to children with special needs. It will also document knowledge about the system such as access to a mixed delivery system of high-quality ECE options, partnerships (including Nebraska Chamber of Commerce and Nebraska Department of Labor), Head Start/Early Head Start involvement, business involvement, other local partnerships, early childhood initiatives within the community, child care coops, and the EC workforce.

## METHODOLOGY

CELFE was contracted to support the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) and the members of the Nebraska Leadership Team (NLT) to facilitate the creation of this Action Agenda through an extensive twelve-month stakeholder engagement process which began in January 2023. The goal of this Action Agenda is to build upon the participatory process that began with the most recent Preschool Development Grant B-5 (PDG) investment in Nebraska's Early Childhood Strategic Plan to collectively prioritize five bold and systemic improvements to begin implementing in 2024. This Action Agenda aims to help Nebraskan stakeholders pursue a shared vision with implementation in mind.

### Inclusive

Collectively, the Action Agenda builds off the thorough and representative work completed to date with *thousands* of voices across the state, ranging from parents to providers, administrators, advocates, and funders. In addition to the Buffett Early Childhood Institute's (BECI) most recent completion of the Strategic Plan, there are several organizations and bodies of work represented in this Action Agenda (*see Appendix 1 for a complete list of sources*).

More specifically, this Action Agenda:



Builds upon extensive input from the Strategic Plan's far-reaching SPEAQ Up focus groups conducted throughout the PDG-3 and PDG-4 grant years—capturing community and parent voices from every region of Nebraska.



Represents the input of **70+ individuals** from **17+ organizations** in the early childhood sector, including government agencies, direct service providers, advocates, funders, and researchers as members of the Nebraska Leadership Team (NLT).



Is informed by the comprehensive Needs Assessment conducted to elevate the needs of Nebraska families statewide and the overall early childhood system of care to meet family needs.

## Results-Based

### Results-Based Leadership

CELFE’s approach to generating a data- and stakeholder-informed Action Agenda followed the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s results-based leadership framework called Results Count® framework, adopted for Nebraska’s early childhood context. The Results Count® framework is rooted in the for-profit sector’s decades-long approach to Continuous Quality Improvement made popular by companies like Toyota, Procter & Gamble, and several healthcare companies seeking a proven method for getting to measurable patient results. For the non-profit sector, the Results Count® framework includes several stages of input and consensus-building to articulate the intended results, baseline, strategies—and ultimately, a method for indicating success. Accordingly, each item in this results-based Action Agenda contains the staged inputs outlined in the table below.

Each Action Agenda item includes:

|                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Opportunity</b>                    | The condition of well-being you want.  |
| <b>Current Conditions<sup>2</sup></b> | These are what the data shows about where you’ve been and where you’re headed.   |
| <b>Root Causes</b>                    | The stories behind the curve, the conditions that contribute to the result you currently see.  |
| <b>Strategies</b>                     | The goals that you are trying to accomplish to solve your problem.   |
| <b>Activities</b>                     | The activities you are taking on to meet the SMARTIE (see detail below) targets and are connected to the key factors that you are working to impact. |
| <b>Timeline</b>                       | The deadline by which you want to accomplish the SMARTIE targets.  |
| <b>Action Commitments</b>             | These are the pledges that individuals make to move the work forward.  |

### Implementation Science

To ensure the Action Agenda’s achievability, CELFE used the inquiry-based methods of implementation science that acknowledge the personal beliefs, behaviors, and values of people involved in implementing this Action Agenda affect the quality of implementation and therefore, the outcomes. Implementation Science is a method of improvement that concentrates on how education changes are carried out to ensure that the implementation process accounts for local variables and other relevant contextual factors in order to be successful in any setting. The model arose in the healthcare field as early as the 1940s when researchers and healthcare professionals noticed how promising results of interventions tested in controlled settings were not getting the same outcomes in real-life clinical practices.

The process specifically examined the following questions related to future adoption, adaptation, fidelity, sustainability, and feasibility of the Action Agenda:

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Adoption</b>       | What are the most effective techniques to ensure this is a known and shared problem to be solved (e.g. local champions)?                               |
| <b>Adaptation</b>     | What contextual factors will affect implementation success or failure and how can these contextual factors be modified to increase chances of success? |
| <b>Fidelity</b>       | What are the new processes, mechanisms, or administrative changes that need to be in place to operationalize change?                                   |
| <b>Sustainability</b> | How do these new processes, mechanisms or administrative changes align or not to the state agencies’ current process and mechanisms of administration? |
| <b>Feasibility</b>    | What is the vehicle or mechanism that will enable impactful change? What is the investment (funding, human capital, technology, etc.) needed?          |

Answers to these questions have been incorporated throughout each Action Agenda item and were particularly useful in setting goals and targeted activities.



## SMARTIE Goal Setting

CELFE recognizes that setting goals is a concrete way to drive results but without an explicit equity and inclusion component, goals won't produce better outcomes for marginalized communities, address disparities, or support belonging. CELFE used The Management Center's SMARTIE Goal Worksheet® to embed inclusion and equity into this Action Agenda's goals.<sup>3</sup>

SMARTIE stands for:

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Strategic</b>  | Reflects an important dimension of what your organization seeks to accomplish (programmatic or capacity-building priorities).                                |
| <b>Measurable</b> | Includes standards by which reasonable people can agree on whether the goal has been met (by numbers or defined qualities).                                  |
| <b>Ambitious</b>  | Challenging enough that achievement would mean significant progress—a "stretch" for the organization.  |
| <b>Realistic</b>  | Not so challenging as to indicate lack of thought about resources, capacity, or execution; possible to track and worth the time and energy to do so.         |
| <b>Time-Bound</b> | Includes a clear deadline.   |
| <b>Inclusive</b>  | Brings traditionally marginalized people—particularly those most impacted—into processes, activities, and decision/policy-making in a way that shares power. |
| <b>Equitable</b>  | Seeks to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression.  |

By using a SMARTIE Goal Worksheet®, the input into the Action Agenda goals and targeted activities ensure a strategic, measurable, and inclusive blueprint for improving Nebraska's early childhood outcomes.

# Action Agenda Priorities

## PRIORITIES-AT-A-GLANCE

This Action Agenda elevates five priorities for implementation beginning in 2024 and an additional commitment to equity and inclusion that is woven throughout. Each of these priorities is cross-walked with the goals outlined in the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan and the federal PDG goals (*see Appendix 2 for more details*).<sup>4</sup>

These priorities have been drafted with extensive input from DHSS, NDE, and other key partners including members of the PDG Nebraska Leadership Team (NLT) to detail clear activities, timelines, and ownership outlined in the subsequent section of this Action Agenda. Additionally, the priorities below are meant to be complementary to one another and many contain 'thru-lines,' or recurring themes, highlighted throughout.

**PRIORITY 1:  
ACCESS**



**Strategic Plan Access Objective 1:**  
Increase families' access to quality early care and education by addressing common barriers, including affordability

More equitably address service gaps for Nebraska's working families based on parent needs and preferences, while simultaneously meeting the developmental needs of children 0-5 years old by expanding funding sources that pay providers for the full cost of quality care, including the expansion of child care subsidy, other public funds, and public/private endowments.

**Current Conditions**

- Nearly 50% of families believe that ECE programs are "too expensive" and reported cost as a primary challenge in finding care and education for their child.<sup>5</sup>
- Only 9% of Nebraskan counties have enough child care slots to meet the needs of families with young children.<sup>6</sup>
- More than 75% of Nebraska's children under the age of 5 live in a home where all adults work.<sup>7</sup> NU economists estimate this results in 3,000 unfilled jobs and \$21M in lost tax revenues.<sup>8</sup>
- 73.0% of providers reported having to turn away families who wanted to enroll children because they did not have an available slot, and 51.5% (n = 668) of providers had a waitlist for their program. Waitlists were more common for infant/toddler programs.<sup>9</sup>
- 60% of children in Nebraska are cared for every day in a home-based setting.<sup>10</sup>
- Only 50% of licensed providers accept subsidies statewide.<sup>11</sup>
- Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 62% of Nebraska families reported at least one condition that might negatively impact their children's learning and development—and these families were nearly four times more likely to report difficulty in paying for their child's early care and education.<sup>12</sup>
- Most Nebraska families do not have the information they need to make informed decisions about early care and education options. More than 90% of the families surveyed would like to have a list of early care and education providers in their area with information about cost, quality ratings, availability, and user reviews.<sup>13</sup>
- 29% of families stated that they had experienced a lack of flexible hours as a challenge to finding early care and education.<sup>14</sup>
- In 2017, an estimated \$460 million was spent on early care and education in Nebraska, of which 17% came from state funds, 29% came from federal funds, 52% from families, and an estimated 2% from business and philanthropy.<sup>15</sup>

**Short-term Goals (1 year)**

- Complete a fiscal analysis that includes a narrow cost analysis using the Nebraska cost model and an assessment of the differences between the narrow cost analysis and the cost model.
- Educate policymakers and the public about the difference between the narrow cost analysis and the cost analysis model. Seek community input to provide findings in lay language.

**Long-term Goal (3-5 year)**

- Make access to child care more equitable from the perspective of Nebraskan families based on recent cost model analysis, latest Needs Assessment, and Community Collaborative input.

**PRIORITY 2:  
WORKFORCE**



**Strategic Plan Quality Objective 1:** Prepare and educate the workforce.  
**Strategic Plan Quality Objective 2:** Elevate and support the workforce.

Address the early childhood workforce crisis in early childhood by effective, innovative, and sustainable solutions that align to the Strategic Plan's Definition of Quality<sup>16</sup> and Nebraska Early Learning Standards.

**Current Conditions**

- At nearly 30%, Nebraska is the state across the country with the highest percentage of early childhood professionals living in poverty. By comparison, the poverty rate for Nebraska's K-12 teachers is only 3%.<sup>17</sup>
- Only 15% of Nebraskan families are satisfied with the quality of early care and education programs in the city or area where they live.<sup>18</sup>
- Of an estimated 10,790 professionals in Nebraska, ~3,000, are living in poverty.<sup>19</sup>
- The median annual pay for early childhood professionals is \$25,980 for those providing in-home early care and education, \$18,706 for center-based teachers, \$36,000 for Prekindergarten teachers, and \$41,000 for Kindergarten-Grade 3 teachers.<sup>20</sup>
- By comparison, the median average salary for a dishwasher or store clerk is about \$24,500 and a parking attendant or telemarketer is approximately \$25,800.<sup>21</sup>
- The average turnover rate in the state was higher in child care (26%) than in public school PreK settings (16%). Turnover for assistant teachers was very high (36%).<sup>22</sup>
- 58% of child care teachers left for higher salaries.<sup>23</sup>
- The Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS) currently has about 700 ECE programs participating, and approximately 19,000 active users entered into the record system.<sup>24</sup>
- 27.7% of all caregivers in their programs had obtained a bachelor's degree. The number of caregivers with bachelor's degrees is much higher in school-based settings (48.2%, including teachers and paraprofessionals), where in many cases regulations require that lead teachers have a bachelor's degree.<sup>25</sup>
- Programs in remote rural areas have a higher percentage of professionals with bachelor's degrees (35.1%) than those in micropolitan (25.6%) or metropolitan (26.7%) areas.<sup>26</sup>

**Short-term Goals (1 year)**

- Use data to help identify targeted areas for workforce funding in areas with the highest-need for professional recruitment and retention.
- Conduct a diagnostic of the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS) to assess its comprehensiveness, value to professionals, and ability to inform decision-making.
  - Identify support for incentivizing statewide data collection related to workforce needs.
  - Identify sources for sustained funding for NECPRS.

**Long-term Goal (3-5 year)**

- Begin addressing the funding gap between Nebraska's current investments and the total investments needed to fully fund high-quality early care and education by first identifying critical areas to incrementally support ECE professional recruitment and retention across the state.<sup>27</sup>

**PRIORITY 3:  
DATA**



**Strategic Plan Alignment Objective 3:** Develop Integrated data systems to enable informed decision-making

Ensure data-driven decisions at all levels by continuing to build data and analytic capacity across all early childhood stakeholders, including parents and community members.

**Current Conditions**

- Nebraska’s Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) developed 15 key indicators significant for predicting child well-being and success. An indicator report highlighting the trends among these indicators was published in 2011.
- Nebraska’s Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) technology to receive child level data is installed and Phase 1 (unduplicated enrollment counts) reports are ready to populate.
- In April 2023, ECIDS launched Nebraska Early Childhood Data Explorer for User Acceptance Testing.
- Data-sharing agreement between ECIDS and DHHS is pending.<sup>28</sup>

**Short-term Goals (1 year)**

- Continue to build sustainable capacity to make data-informed decisions through the development of an early childhood integrated data system by the end of 2024.
- Continue to identify strategies to track progress and to refine processes in early childhood data systems by the end of 2024.
- Re-engage the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) by February 2024.

**Long-term Goal (3-5 year)**

- Launch a statewide Data and Learning infrastructure that leverages ECIDS, Needs Assessment data collection and findings, program evaluation and workforce needs (via NECPRS).

**PRIORITY 4:  
COORDINATED  
GOVERNANCE**



**Strategic Plan Alignment Objective 1:** Establish shared leadership & planning efforts to implement systems changes to improve equitable access to quality early care for all Nebraska children.

**Strategic Plan Alignment Objective 4:** Create state-level tools to support community planning coalitions

Strengthen government coordination to operationalize a fully funded and aligned system to ensure access to full-day, year-round, high-quality early care and education for children regardless of the setting and experiences parents choose.

**Current Conditions**

- In Nebraska, federal and state funds are distributed through fifteen different financing mechanisms, originating from agencies with distinct regulatory standards, compliance monitoring, and qualifications requirements. Without an organizing governance structure, these disparate funding sources make efficiency and efficacy in generating sustained child and families outcomes a challenge.<sup>29</sup>

**Short-term Goal (1 year)**

- Use the tools developed at the recommendation of the Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force for coordination/alignment at the systems level.

**Long-term Goal (3-5 year)**

- Increase equitable access and availability of full-day, year-round, high-quality early care and education programs by supporting Nebraska’s Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force’s<sup>30</sup> recommendations to redesign Nebraska’s early childhood system of governance and financing into a Shared Leadership model that is comprehensive for both service delivery and financing.

**PRIORITY 5:  
PARENT VOICE  
& COMMUNITY  
COLLABORATION**



**Strategic Plan Collaboration Objective 1:** Expand collaboration across sectors in communities

**Strategic Plan Collaboration Objective 2:** Build customized collaboration plans that meet local families’ need

Elevate parent, provider, and community voice through well-resourced community collaboratives to inform both local and system-wide decision making by examining both quantitative and qualitative data.

**Current Conditions**

- While numerous community collaboratives exist to support local early childhood needs, they often lack the following support:
- Long-term funding to sustain their capacity to organize, make sense of local data, help parents navigate existing resources and advocate for additional resources as needed.
- A cohesive, collective impact network that measures progress towards a shared agenda
- Feedback loops for local parents and providers to inform policy decisions
- Ongoing, timely data to help contextualize the local conditions in supporting early childhood families.
- Opportunities to scale up proven local strategies in other geographies.
- Compensation for time taken by parents to participate in these collaborative efforts.<sup>31</sup>

**Short-term Goal (1 year)**

The first step in creating authentic statewide parent, provider, and community voice elevation is to understand the community-level assets that exist today.

- Conduct landscape scan to map all community partnerships who demonstrate a current or potential focus on early childhood and ascertain status towards goals related to early childhood outcomes and caregiver input.

**Long-term Goal (3-5 year)**

- Launch a cohesive and 'ground up' decision-making structure for regional networks linked to statewide early childhood goals and initiatives.



## PRIORITY 1

### ACCESS

Access to high-quality early childhood learning environments is not only good for Nebraska’s developing children, but also for its economy. According to a study conducted by the University of Nebraska, “When parents face inadequate childcare, they may choose family over work.” This has implications for their incomes, firms’ outputs, and state tax revenues. Working parents [who need to stay home from work due to inadequate childcare] lose \$489 million in annual income. The effects of reduced productivity and increased costs in businesses are \$234 million per year. State income tax revenues fall by \$21 million annually.<sup>32</sup> However, access is not simply about making more slots available.

When addressing access, the best solution will also address the following considerations:

- Access is inherently about ensuring equity and inclusion across the early childhood sector. Often rural, non-english speaking families, and children requiring specialized services are left out.
- Families across the state of Nebraska cannot afford the child care that is available today.
- Providers struggle to secure the true cost of running a high-quality program with the fragmented and unsustainable funding there is today. Since those fundings streams are administered through different state agencies, government coordination is required to make funding more efficient and streamlined (*see thru line to Priority 5*).
- It’s not just a funding issue. Even when the finances are in place, programs often struggle to find a teacher for a classroom (*see thru-line to Priority 2*).

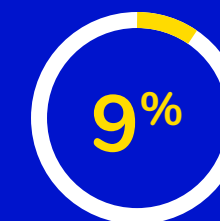
### Opportunity

More equitably address service gaps for Nebraska’s working families based on parent needs and preferences, while also meeting the developmental needs of children 0-5 by expanding funding sources that pay providers for the full cost of quality care, including the expansion of child care subsidy, other public funds, and public/private endowments.

### Short-term Goals

Complete a fiscal analysis that includes a narrow cost analysis using the broader Nebraska cost model tool and an assessment of the differences between what the narrow cost analysis and the cost model show.<sup>33</sup>

Ensure that the findings from the narrow cost analysis and the assessment of the difference between the narrow cost analysis and the cost model are known, and that local/community partners are recruited to help both translate that information in a way lay people can understand and advocate for why this information is important to families.



**Only 9% of Nebraska counties have enough child care slots to meet the needs of families with young children.<sup>34</sup>**



## 2024 Activities

### ACTIVITY 1



By the end of the second quarter, the narrow cost analysis will be completed by the BECI Research and Evaluation unit and reviewed by a steering committee which will include parents and providers from communities in need of more equitable access. The steering committee will be asked to provide input on the analyses to allow them to reflect their lived experiences.

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | BECI                                |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | June 30, 2024                       |

### ACTIVITY 2

By the end of the second quarter, BECI will partner with First Five Nebraska to share findings from the narrow cost analysis, specifically highlighting any findings that have implications for legislation (*see thru-line to Priority 4*).

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | BECI and FFN                        |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | June 30, 2024                       |

### ACTIVITY 3



Coordinate more closely with the BECI Workforce Planning and Development Unit to take the findings from the assessment of the difference between the narrow cost analysis and cost model and develop recommendations related to how funds could be distributed to more accurately reflect the financial needs of providers who provide care for families and children who are furthest from resources.

|                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$</b><br>Partially Funded |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | BECI teams, FFN                   |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | Sept. 30, 2024                    |

### ACTIVITY 4



By the end of the fourth quarter, BECI will have partnered with organizations (FFN, NCFE, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC), Early Learning Connections (ELCs), Communities 4 Kids (C4K+), and Community Well-being Partnerships and communities (e.g. North Omaha, South Omaha, Tribal, Lexington, Columbus, Schulyer, McCook, Nebraska City) who are trusted by parents and families to disseminate findings. To reach communities and populations most in need of opportunities and resources, developing these partnerships and relationships with trusted organizations and within communities will be crucial.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$</b><br>Partially Funded                 |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | BECI & organizations and communities listed above |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | Dec. 30, 2024                                     |



PRIORITY 2

## WORKFORCE

At nearly 30%, Nebraska has the highest percentage of early childhood professionals living in poverty. By comparison, the poverty rate for Nebraska’s K-12 teachers is only 3%.<sup>35</sup> The overall well-being and professional development of early childhood professionals is a primary driver of children’s experiences in an early childhood setting. Yet, wages often remain stagnant at entry level rates, there are pay inequities across various settings (school, centers, and homes), regulations for qualifications and credentials are inconsistent, and statewide systems that support the workforce sustainably over time are lacking.

In 2020, Nebraska launched a statewide registry to better understand the needs of the early education workforce and to make it easier for them to directly navigate their career trajectory with resources and professional development opportunities. Nebraska leaders have also generated a cost model to identify how much is needed to adequately compensate providers. Now there is an opportunity to upgrade the registry so that it is more actionable and to incentivize more of the workforce population in early childhood to enter their information. Increasing participation in the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS) is one step toward ensuring it is a comprehensive registry. This would enable the state to take a data-informed approach to increasing program quality, provider compensation, and support of the overall wellbeing of early childhood educators.

## Opportunity

Address the early childhood workforce crisis in Nebraska through effective, innovative, and sustainable solutions that also align with the Strategic Plan’s Definition of Quality and the Nebraska Early Learning Standards.

## Short-term Goals

Use data to help identify targeted areas for workforce funding in areas with the highest-need for professional recruitment and retention.

Conduct a diagnostic of NECPRS to assess its comprehensiveness, value to professionals, and effectiveness to inform decision-making.

Identify support for incentivizing statewide data collection related to workforce needs.

Identify sources for sustained funding for the workforce registry.



**There is pride swallowing when I think about the fact that I could qualify to have a child in the program where I am the teacher.<sup>36</sup>**





## 2024 Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

By the first quarter, complete the pre-planning phase that includes:

- Identify a project lead who can organize a steering committee that includes early childhood professionals, NDE personnel currently managing NECPRS, ECIDS representatives, and other stakeholders.
  - Identify individuals within NDE and DHHS who will complete activities
- Understand what data already exists regarding Nebraska's Early Childhood workforce.
- Work with the National Workforce Registry Alliance (NWRA) and join a cohort of states completing a registry audit.
- Identify groups that will need to be surveyed including researchers, groups of providers that both do and do not utilize the current system, and state agencies.

|                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | \$\$\$\$<br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | Staff from DHHS/NDE/NCFF     |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | February 2024                |

### ACTIVITY 2

By the end of the second quarter, complete the user diagnostic that includes the following questions:

- What information would be beneficial to include/gather?
- What reports (questions answered) will be most useful for decision-making and funding?
- What is the accessibility and ease of use of the system for all audiences (including providers, trainers, state partners, and researchers)?
- What is the ultimate (gold-standard) we want from NECPRS? What would help the state move forward? What is a small step forward (low-hanging fruit)?
- What are rules for data governance and data privacy? How does this impact each audience?
- What incentives could be introduced to encourage more participation in the registry?

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | \$\$\$\$<br>Existing Funding                              |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | External, third party partner identified by DHHS/NDE/NCFF |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | March 2024  |

### ACTIVITY 3

By the end of the third quarter, complete the 'blueprint' report of the initial user diagnostic with recommendations for feedback and review. Ideally the recommendations are finalized by Summer 2024 in order to have in hand for 2025 legislative planning.

- Report should include: timeline, cost, sourced data to populate, ideas to encourage participation, estimated front-end cost for implementation, ongoing sustainability plan, and cost to maintain the system with integrity and reliability.
- Report delivered (initial diagnostic, report back to field to get buy-in, then report to collaborators action/decision-making).
- Need to be sure to include communication and buy-in about NECPRS in general as the report is finalized and shared before legislation or policy makers are included.
- DHHS and NDE, in collaboration with partners, decide on next steps.

|                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | \$\$\$\$<br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | DHHS/NDE/NCFF                |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | September 2024               |

### ACTIVITY 4

Throughout the process, make sure to reflect on the following diversity and inclusion considerations:

- Are we collecting data that would be helpful to disaggregate by race/ethnicity, by disability, low-income communities, etc.?
- Are questions (within NECPRS and diagnostic) equally necessary in all parts of the state?
- What is the impact of having and not having technology available?
- Are materials available in multiple languages?

|                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | \$\$\$\$<br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | All involved                 |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | Ongoing                      |





PRIORITY 3

## DATA

Any state early childhood strategy requires a robust data and learning infrastructure to recognize the impact of investments and continuously improve quality over time. Toward that aim, and with the partnership of the state university system, Nebraska has conducted thoughtful needs assessments, evaluation, and various analyses that inform the work of ECE efforts, including this Action Agenda. Nebraska's Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) has launched as a powerful tool to begin integrating and reporting on early childhood data across the state.

However, further investment in statewide data collection and integration is needed to facilitate strategic policy-making and local decision-making aligned with the Needs Assessment, evaluation efforts, and ECIDS tools. In particular, here are the barriers to achieving a more robust data and learning infrastructure today:

- Unique count data not yet available due to a lengthy data sharing legal process.
- Lack of standard data collection to capture return on investments.
- Inconsistent collection of community-level or program-level data.
- Workforce data in NECPRS may be inconsistent across users.

## Opportunity

Ensure data-driven decisions at all levels by continuing to build data and analytic capacity across all early childhood stakeholders, including parents and community members.

## Short-term Goals

Begin strengthening Nebraska's data and learning infrastructure with the following goals:

Continue to build sustainable capacity to make data-informed decisions through the development of an early childhood integrated data system by the end of 2024.

Continue to identify strategies to track progress and to refine processes in early childhood data systems by the end of 2024.

Re-engage the Nebraska Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) by February 2024.



The Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) is building a new approach to updating unique counts of children receiving various services, utilizing a federated approach to data matching across sources, including the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), and other partners. This approach aims to protect data privacy and enable distinct counts for reporting and analysis.





## 2024 Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

Identify a new co-chair of Early Childhood Data Coalition (ECDC) and recruit greater diversity representation for committee members. Engage the ECDC on a regular basis to inform data governance, strategic planning, and sustainability.

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | Current ECDC committee members      |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | By February 2024                    |

### ACTIVITY 2

Establish and implement a robust data governance structure with formal policies and guidelines, including signed data sharing agreements with partnering entities.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding                                |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | By NDE (ECIDS team), state agencies, and ECDC member organizations |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | By December 2024   |

### ACTIVITY 3

Engage a wide variety of stakeholders to map current data sources and document how the data are used and by whom.

- Ensure voices at all levels are heard within the mapping process.

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding  |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | By state agencies, researchers, community members, family providers (individuals at every level) |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | By December 2024   |



### ACTIVITY 4

Develop a plan for system alignment across Nebraska's early childhood existing data and learning infrastructure, including:

- Establishing common data definitions and cross-walks across all data collection and reporting efforts.
- Understanding where there is overlap / gaps between reporting applications with common underlying data sources (Example: ECIDS, Child Care Referral Network (CCRN), State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS), Needs Assessment, Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS), Nebraska Statewide Workforce and Educational Reporting System (NSWERS)).

|                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | By state agencies and partners      |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | By December 2024                    |

### ACTIVITY 5

Establish and implement an ongoing strategic planning process for the continued development and improvement of ECIDS.

- Identify future use cases, including key questions focused around equity (*see thru-line to Priority 4, Activity 4*).
- Address sustainability with a focus on equity and inclusion.
- Identify how this process could be replicated beyond ECIDS.
- Create local champions to adopt data utilization and demonstrate the value of using the data.

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>FUNDING STATUS</b>             | <b>\$\$\$\$</b><br>Existing Funding                     |
| <b>RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY</b> | By ECIDS, state agencies, and ECDC member organizations |
| <b>COMPLETION DATE</b>            | By end of 2024  |



PRIORITY 4

## COORDINATED GOVERNANCE

In Nebraska, federal and state funds are distributed through *fifteen* different financing mechanisms each with distinct regulatory standards, compliance monitoring, and qualifications requirements.<sup>37</sup> Further, these fifteen disparate funding mechanisms are administered across several state departments that abide by different rules and regulations. The result is a fragmented early childhood system that makes any state-level goal for improving child outcomes much more challenging. It also imposes a cascading burden on providers and families who have to navigate this complicated system locally.

This is further exacerbated by the fact that many Nebraska families still can't afford child care and that providers cannot afford to offer the higher quality offerings that children across the state deserve. Having more alignment across the state agencies' departments that oversee early childhood funding—starting with the adoption of repeatable, data-informed methodologies to diagnose the current conditions—can begin to relieve those access and financial burdens faced by providers and families today and dismantle some of the barriers in place to realizing more equitable outcomes across Nebraska's early childhood sector.

### Opportunity

Strengthen government coordination to operationalize a fully funded and aligned system to ensure access to full-day, year-round, high-quality early care and education for children regardless of the setting and experiences parents choose.

### Short-term Goal

Use the tools developed at the recommendation of the Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force for coordination/alignment at the systems level.

**Nebraska should establish a new collaborative structure to lead the system for early childhood care and education. In this new shared leadership structure, state agencies retain their legal and fiscal obligations and authority for their respective programs but approach the entire system (not just the programs within their jurisdiction) in a shared manner.<sup>38</sup>**



## 2024 Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

Complete any follow-up analysis needed as part of the Nebraska Child Care Cost Model commissioned by the Cost Model Advisory Workgroup of the Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force.

**FUNDING STATUS**     **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**     FFN, P5FS, and Prairie Oak Publishing & Consulting

**COMPLETION DATE**     March 31, 2024

### ACTIVITY 2

Work with state agency partners and the advocate community to prioritize the most achievable recommendations from the Nebraska Child Care Cost Model Advisory Workgroup and additional analysis for implementation beginning in 2024.

**FUNDING STATUS**     **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**     FFN

**COMPLETION DATE**     March 31, 2024

### ACTIVITY 3

Secure statutory changes to ensure the Nebraska Child Care Cost Model, its supplemental analyses, and other similar federally approved alternative methodologies are allowable, utilized, and updated over time.

**FUNDING STATUS**     **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**     FFN

**COMPLETION DATE**     First step by May 2024.

### ACTIVITY 4



Utilize the forthcoming Data Equity Feasibility Study to establish a data-driven foundation to articulate disparities in policies, practices, and funding that have inequitable impact on children, families, and providers (*see thru-line with Priority 4, Activity 5*).

**FUNDING STATUS**     **\$\$\$\$**  
New/Pending Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**     FFN and Prairie Oak Publishing & Consulting

**COMPLETION DATE**     Ongoing through 2024

### ACTIVITY 5

Finalize and explore strategic use of the *systems*-level cost model.

**FUNDING STATUS**     **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**     FFN, P5FS, Prairie Oak Publishing & Consulting, DHHS, NDE

**COMPLETION DATE**     March 31, 2024



PRIORITY 5

## PARENT VOICE & COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Nebraska has several regional-level intermediaries that aim to address the needs of children and families. Together, they provide an already-existing infrastructure to elevate community/regional voice regarding early childhood needs and workforce. However, many of these intermediaries are not aligned, do not collaborate, and lack the 'infrastructure' by which to elevate local voices to truly impact the state's decision-making.

Nebraska will conduct a 'landscape assessment' with the goal of improving coordination, increasing impact, and aligning with the state's early learning priorities while elevating the local and regional needs of children and families. Strengthening these intermediary structures by investing in them as a network—and in their capacity and data use—will help Nebraska achieve greater collective momentum and cohesion towards its mission to elevate outcomes for children more equitably across the state.

### Opportunity

Elevate parent, provider, and community voice through well-resourced community collaboratives to inform both local and system-wide decision making by examining both quantitative and qualitative data.

### Short-term Goal

The first step in creating authentic statewide parent, provider, and community voice elevation is to understand the community-level assets that exist today.

Conduct landscape scan to map all community partnerships who demonstrate a current or potential focus on early childhood and ascertain status towards goals related to early childhood outcomes and caregiver input.



**Ensuring that the history and context of Nebraska's local communities are embedded in the solutions that are created will highlight and build upon the unique resources and solutions that already exist.<sup>39</sup>**





## 2024 Activities

### ACTIVITY 1

Identify and develop survey/auditing strategies to initiate data collection related to community early childhood initiatives.

**FUNDING STATUS**      **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**      NCFE Research and Eval Team and University of Nebraska Medical Center's Munroe-Meyer Institute (MMI) Evaluation Team

**COMPLETION DATE**      December 2023



### ACTIVITY 2

Gather a representative group of all entities/organizations/initiatives/parents/early childhood providers working in communities related to children 0-5 to establish a common definition of what an early childhood infrastructure/community collaborative is, including the role of parent engagement. In doing so, ensure traditionally marginalized and underserved populations are engaged at the START of the process vs. after-the fact and prioritize Spanish-speaking providers and families with young children.

**FUNDING STATUS**      **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**      Project Lead/NCFE/Community Members (Parents/Providers)

**COMPLETION DATE**      January 2024

### ACTIVITY 3

Deliver a preliminary report that 'maps' the initiative, data collection, and funding sources that support the work including:

- By what measures [of success] they are held to and their use of data.
- How and for what purpose each 'community initiative' engages parents.
- Ongoing recruitment of parents and providers to ensure representation in community collaboratives.
- How community-based initiatives prioritize children with special developmental and health care needs in their outreach and engagement strategies.
- Assessing duplicity through various coalition assets and overlap map of partners.

**FUNDING STATUS**      **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**      NCFE and MMI Evaluation Teams

**COMPLETION DATE**      August 2024

### ACTIVITY 4

Deliver a final report that assesses strengths and gaps in community collaboration resources available across Nebraska around early childhood.

**FUNDING STATUS**      **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**      NCFE and MMI Evaluation Teams

**COMPLETION DATE**      November 2024

### ACTIVITY 5

Convene a group of state agencies and partners to identify potential resources and funding to address gaps identified in the final report. Including but not limited to: DHHS, NDE, Head Start, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC), NCFE, FFN, BECI, University of Nebraska, Policy Makers, Department of Economic Development (DED), private philanthropy, parents, providers, and others.

**FUNDING STATUS**      **\$\$\$\$**  
Existing Funding

**RESPONSIBLE AGENCY / PARTY**      NCFE and DHHS

**COMPLETION DATE**      November/December 2024



PRIORITIES 1-5

## COMMITMENT TO EQUITY & INCLUSION

In Nebraska, and across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the urgent need to strengthen the early childhood infrastructure so that there would be more equitable access to quality services for all children and families. For this reason, Nebraska’s early childhood leaders decided to update the 2020 Strategic Plan based on new input intended to capture more voices of people living in rural areas, people of color, families of children with disabilities, and people in Spanish-speaking communities. This input was collected through focus groups and Strategic Planning for Equitable Access to Quality early care and education in Nebraska (SPEAQ Up! Nebraska) events.

This Action Agenda builds on that inclusive input and commits to promoting equity and inclusion by embedding it in *all five* priorities. All priorities share a commitment to target priority populations composed of children and families with the greatest need and the least access to inclusive, quality early childhood programming, especially children with developmental delays or disabilities and English Language Learners.

Additionally, the members of the NLT identified the following strategies that span across the five priorities above for actualizing their commitment to families with the greatest need:

Ensuring parent and provider representation in all stages of decision making.

Developing policy insights and/or recommendations using an equity lens.

Ensuring a broad dissemination of information, especially targeting those furthest from opportunities and resources today.



**All children means each child—in every town, county, and city; of every color and ethnicity; of every ability level; from every family, inclusive of language, religion, or family structure; and in every child care setting. Access to quality care and education for each child, no exceptions.<sup>40</sup>**



# Appendix 1:

## Sources

More specifically, following is a list of activities from each of the Action Agenda priorities that support one or more of these strategies. They are designated throughout the Action Agenda using the following symbol: 

### Ensuring parent and provider representation in all stages of decision making

- Ensure parents and providers are represented in the Steering Committee examining the narrow cost analysis (*Priority 1: Access; Activity 1*).
- Engage a wide variety of stakeholders to map current data sources and document how the data are used and by whom (*Priority 3: Data; Activity 3*).
- Gather a representative group of all entities/organizations/initiatives/parents/early childhood providers working in communities related to children 0-5 to establish a common definition of what an early childhood infrastructure/community collaborative is, including the role of parent engagement. In doing so, ensure traditionally marginalized and underserved populations are engaged at the START of the process vs. after-the fact and prioritize Spanish-speaking providers and families with young children (*Priority 5: Parent Voice & Community Collaboration; Activity 2*).

### Developing policy insights and/or recommendations using an equity lens

- Take the findings from the assessment of the difference between the narrow cost analysis and cost model and develop recommendations related to how funds could be distributed to more accurately reflect the financial needs of providers who provide care for families and children who are furthest from resources (*Priority 1: Access; Activity 3*).
- Ensure that the NECPRS diagnostic examines collecting data that would be helpful to disaggregate by race/ethnicity, disability, low-income communities, community context, access to technology and multilingual (*Priority 2: Workforce; Activity 4*).
- Utilize the upcoming data equity feasibility study to establish a data-driven foundation to articulate disparities in policies, practices, and funding that have inequitable impact on children, families, and providers (*Priority 4: Coordinated Government; Activity 4*).

### Ensuring a broad dissemination of information, especially targeting those furthest from opportunities and resources today

- Partner with local organizations trusted by parents and families to disseminate findings of financial analysis with a special emphasis on reaching communities and populations furthest from opportunity and resources (*Priority 1: Access; Activity 4*).

### BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD INSTITUTE

- [Nebraska Statewide Strategic Plan, 2020](#)
- [SPEAQ Up! Draft Quality Definition](#)
- [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#)
- [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce, 2020](#)
- [Gap Analysis: Early Childhood and Kindergarten Standards in the State of Nebraska](#)
- [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report](#)
- [Nebraska's Public Investment in Early Childhood Care and Education Fiscal Year 2021 Technical Report](#)

### EARLY CHILDHOOD INTEGRATED DATA SYSTEM (ECIDS)

- [White Paper: The Importance of Distinct Counts](#)

### FIRST FIVE NEBRASKA

- [The Bottom Line: Economic Impacts of Inadequate Child Care Access in Nebraska](#) (in partnership with University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Bureau of Business Research)
- [Shared Leadership and Financing Report](#)
- First Five Nebraska [Market Rate Study](#), October 2022

### NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

- [ECICC 2018-2021 Report to the Governor on the Status us of Early Childhood](#)
- [Early Childhood Education State Report, 2021-22](#)
- [Office of Special Education Public Reporting for Part C](#)
- [Early Learning Guidelines: Nebraska's Birth to Five Learning and Development Standards](#)

### NATIONAL DATA RESOURCES

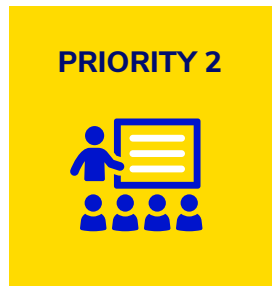
- National Institute for Early Education Research's [The State of Preschool Yearbook 2021](#)
- Berkeley University's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [Early Childhood Workforce Index](#)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids [Count Data Center](#)
- Bureau of Labor Statistics' [May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Nebraska](#)

# Appendix 2:

## Crosswalk with Nebraska's Early Childhood Strategic Plan



- **Access Objective 1:** Increase families' access to quality early care and education by addressing common barriers, including affordability.
  - **Access 1.1:** Expand funding sources that pay providers for the full cost of quality care, including the expansion of child care subsidy, other public funds, and public/private endowments.
  - **Access 1.2:** Make quality care affordable for families by changing eligibility criteria so more families can access the child care subsidy.



- **Quality Objective 1:** Prepare and educate the workforce.
  - **Quality 1.1:** Develop professional pathways that are affordable, accessible, and equitable to recruit and retain an early childhood workforce that provides quality care.
  - **Quality 2.1:** Enhance the well-being of the early childhood workforce through adequate wages, benefits, and other support services.
- **Quality Objective 2:** Elevate and support the workforce.
  - **Quality 2.4:** Establish a system-wide competency framework for members of Nebraska's early childhood workforce.



- **Alignment Objective 3:** Develop integrated data systems to enable informed decision-making.
  - **Align 3.1:** Continue assessing the needs and gaps experienced by children and families in accessing quality early care and education.
  - **Align 3.2:** Build ECIDS.



- **Alignment Objective 1:** Establish shared leadership and planning efforts to implement systems changes to improve equitable access to quality early care for all Nebraska children.
  - **Align 1.1:** Lead implementation of system changes and monitor progress of changes in equitable access to quality early care and education for all Nebraska children.
  - **Align 1.2:** Explore alternative funding and administrative policies to fully fund quality early care and education for all Nebraska children.
  - **Align 1.3:** Align, simplify, and meaningfully translate all tools, applications, processes, and systems within and across state agencies and other programs to make accessing services easier for families and early childhood professionals in all settings.
- **Alignment Objective 4:** Create state-level tools to support community planning coalitions.
  - **Align 4.2:** Create, continue, or expand programs that generate collaboration across sectors at the community and regional



- **Collaboration Objective 1:** Expand collaboration across sectors in communities.
  - **Collaborate 1.1:** Share resources across settings and provider types, particularly resources for children with special needs.
  - **Collaborate 1.2:** Build relationships between all professionals who serve young children and their families.
  - **Collaborate 1.3:** Build customized collaboration plans that meet local families' needs.
- **Collaboration Objective 2:** Build customized collaboration plans that meet local families' needs.



- **Access Objective 2:** Increase support to remove barriers specific to children with disabilities.
  - **Access 2.1:** Make policy, programmatic, and funding changes to eliminate barriers related to transportation, flexibility of hours, and additional costs faced by families of children with disabilities and challenging behaviors.
  - **Access 2.2:** Increase awareness among families and early childhood professionals about how to best identify and support families and young children with disabilities, challenging behaviors, or mental health needs.
  - **Access 2.3:** Provide necessary services and programmatic supports to professionals to eliminate suspension and expulsion practices in early care and education programs.
- **Quality Objective 4:** Family Engagement. Promote the provision of quality early care and education through improved family engagement practices.
  - **Quality 4.1:** Provide parents with information and tools in multiple languages to support them in nurturing their children's growth, development, and education, especially for children with disabilities and other special needs.



# Appendix 3:

## Endnotes

- 1 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 2 Most statistics here are from before the COVID19 Pandemic when data was made available.
- 3 [How to Embed Inclusion and Equity in Your Goals](#)
- 4 The PDG Goals are: Increasing Access to Quality Preschool, Serving Priority Groups of Children & Families, and Increasing Children's Kindergarten Readiness
- 5 Nebraska Children and Families Fund [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#) (in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute)
- 6 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#) updated analysis in 2023 by BECI
- 7 First Five Nebraska [The Bottom Line: Economic Impacts of Inadequate Child Care Access in Nebraska](#) (in partnership with University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Bureau of Business Research)
- 8 First Five Nebraska [The Bottom Line: Economic Impacts of Inadequate Child Care Access in Nebraska](#) (in partnership with University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Bureau of Business Research)
- 9 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#)
- 10 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#)
- 11 First Five Nebraska [Market Rate Study](#), October 2022
- 12 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Nebraska Statewide Strategic Plan, 2020](#)
- 13 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Nebraska Statewide Strategic Plan, 2020](#)
- 14 Nebraska Children and Families Fund [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#) (in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute)
- 15 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Nebraska Statewide Strategic Plan, 2020](#)
- 16 Children experience quality early care and education when they experience physical and emotional safety in the context of frequent one-on-one interactions with a caring adult that are warm, language rich, and educational.
- 17 Berkeley University's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [Early Childhood Workforce Index](#)
- 18 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 19 Berkeley University's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [Early Childhood Workforce Index](#)
- 20 Bureau of Labor Statistics' [May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Nebraska](#)
- 21 Bureau of Labor Statistics' [May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates for Nebraska](#)
- 22 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 23 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 24 NLT Stakeholder interviews conducted by CELFE in 2023
- 25 Nebraska Children and Families Fund [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#) (in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute)
- 26 Nebraska Children and Families Fund [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#) (in partnership with the Buffett Early Childhood Institute)
- 27 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 28 All current conditions above are based on stakeholder interviews with NDE ECIDS team and other members of the NLT.
- 29 NLT Stakeholder interviews conducted by CELFE in 2023; materials from the Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force including the Shared Leadership and Financing report found [here](#).
- 30 More information on the Shared Leadership and Financing Task Force can be found [here](#).
- 31 All current conditions above are based on input from members of the NLT.
- 32 First Five Nebraska [The Bottom Line: Economic Impacts of Inadequate Child Care Access in Nebraska](#) (in partnership with University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Bureau of Business Research)
- 33 A narrow cost analysis is an alternate methodology to a market rate survey for determining child care subsidy rates. Using the Nebraska cost model, the cost of providing quality care in Nebraska will be calculated to reflect different settings, age groups served, and geographic characteristics. The purpose of these calculations is to determine the range of what it costs to provide quality early care and education in Nebraska.
- 34 [Kids Count in Nebraska 2022 Report](#)
- 35 Berkeley University's Center for the Study of Child Care Employment [Early Childhood Workforce Index](#)
- 36 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 37 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Needs Assessment for Preschool Development Grant, 2019](#)
- 38 [Shared Leadership and Financing Report](#)
- 39 Buffett Early Childhood Institute [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce Report, 2020](#)
- 40 [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#) (updated in 2023)

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