



Vision, Goals, Needs, and Values of
**The Nebraska Early
Childhood Strategic Plan**

A Dynamic Plan by and for Nebraskans



Purpose

Introduce the Nebraska Early Childhood
Strategic Plan

Present Key Concepts

Generate Interest and Involvement



Vision

All Nebraska children and their families have access to quality early childhood services that support children's healthy development from birth through age 8.



A Dynamic Plan by and for *ALL* Nebraskans

The Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan is grounded in a collaborative and ongoing process of needs assessment, strategic planning, and performance evaluation designed to:

- Address the priorities of Nebraskans in diverse and communities across the state
- Identify changes at local and state levels that will last over time



A Dynamic Plan by and for *ALL* Nebraskans

The strategic planning team is committed to ensuring that the voices of diverse communities are included throughout the strategic planning process and in the 2023 Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan.

Feedback from stakeholders will determine how equity is defined and will be the source of action plans to achieve equity in the strategic plan.



Equity Principles for Strategic Planning

ENSURE DIVERSE REPRESENTATION throughout the strategic plan development process.

- Design and planning
- Stakeholder engagement
- Data analysis and writing
- Approval

Intentionally take steps to ELIMINATE IMPLICIT BIAS in the strategic plan development process.

- Strategic plan information resources
- Stakeholder engagement materials

Implement a DATA DRIVEN strategic planning process, WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS REPRESENTED IN THE DATA.

- Ensure the voices of communities that are often marginalized are in in the data
- Describe who is and is not accessing services

Set MEASURABLE TARGETS and hold ourselves ACCOUNTABLE.

- Define measures for implementing an inclusive and diverse process
- Track and report those measures during the life of the project and take corrective action



How Stakeholder Feedback Has Changed the Process

Stakeholders said ...

... there is not enough focus on diversity of voices or on equity in the Preschool Development Grant work and in the strategic plan.

... and this is what happened.

The Needs Assessment conducted family focus groups across the Omaha metro area with Black and African American, Hispanic and Latinx, immigrant and refugee families, families of children with disabilities, families experiencing poverty or homelessness, and families providing foster care.

Surveys of early childhood providers were translated into Spanish.



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... and this is what happened.

Current stakeholder engagement is designed to reach previously unrepresented voices;

- the process includes recurring accountability checks to ensure that people of color and people in rural areas are reached.

The Race and Equity workgroup was established to ensure that equity is addressed in the strategic plan and other PDG work.



Goals of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan



Access Goal – Each child and their family can access the quality early care, education, and other services they need to support each child’s healthy development.

Quality Goal – All early care and education settings provide quality experiences for children.

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

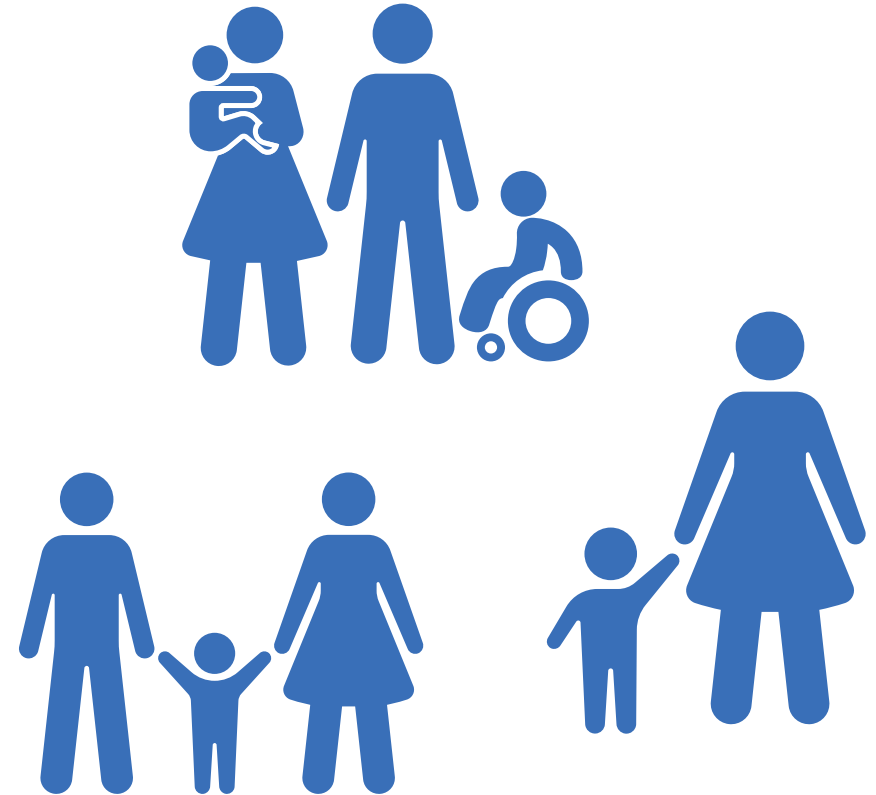
Alignment Goal – Statewide systems align to support communities in creating an integrated and comprehensive mixed delivery system for all children.



Ensuring *access* for children and families...

The Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan:

- Places the well-being of children and families at the center of this work
- Seeks to ensure that each child in Nebraska can access quality early childhood education and other services that are essential for a child's healthy development





The Mixed Delivery System: Services Essential for a Child's Healthy Development

Early Care and Education

Social Services

Health Care



...to *quality* experiences in every setting...

Children and families seek services from professional service providers in various settings, including:

- Home-based child care
- Center-based early education
- School-based early education (PreK through Grade 3)
- Health care
- Social services



...requires *collaboration*
across every community...

Everyone has a role in ensuring access to quality early childhood services, including:

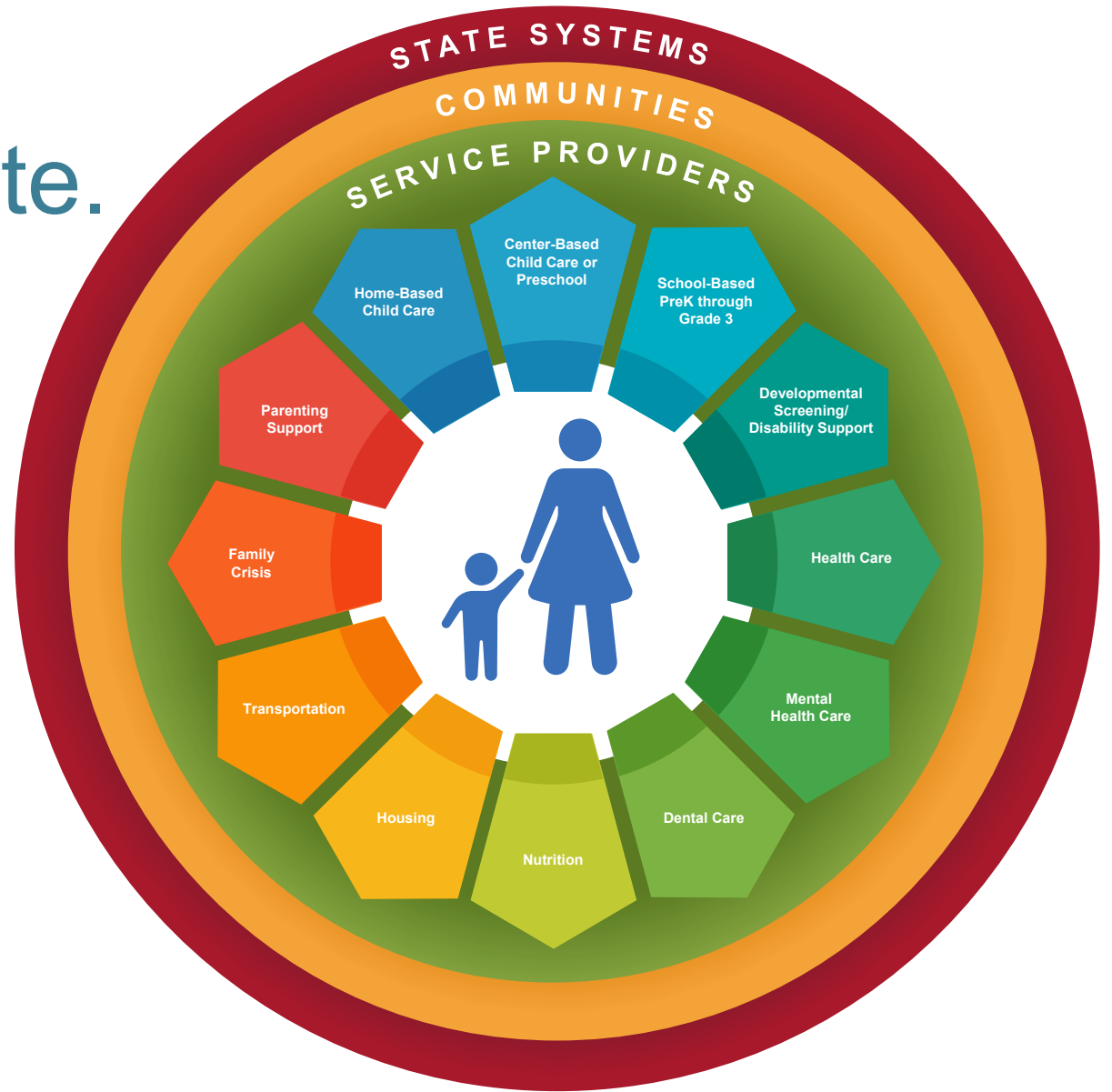
- Community leaders
- School personnel
- Business leaders
- Nonprofit leaders
- Elected officials



...and *alignment* of systems across the state.

Decisions about statewide policies, funding, and programs involve:

- State agencies
- Elected officials
- Early childhood organizations
- Statewide programs, policies, and systems
- Institutions of higher education



Successful implementation of the strategic plan will result in an aligned early childhood mixed delivery system in Nebraska...



...that provides equitable access to quality early childhood services for each child in Nebraska.





But we are not there yet.

To achieve the vision and goals, we must work together to address gaps and remove barriers that prevent some children and families from accessing the quality early childhood services they need to thrive.



Access
means getting
through the
door.





Doors close when there are gaps in availability or barriers to access.

Many communities across Nebraska face the following:

- Significant lack of available space in early care and education
- Limited availability of other essential services

Cost was the barrier most often reported by families to enrolling their child in early care and education. Other barriers include:

- Eligibility criteria for child care subsidy that limit access
- Transportation to reach care settings
- Hours of operation (for families who work shifts other than the typical 8-5)
- Only finding options that did not meet families' expectations for quality



While all children experience a variety of conditions that impact their development and learning...

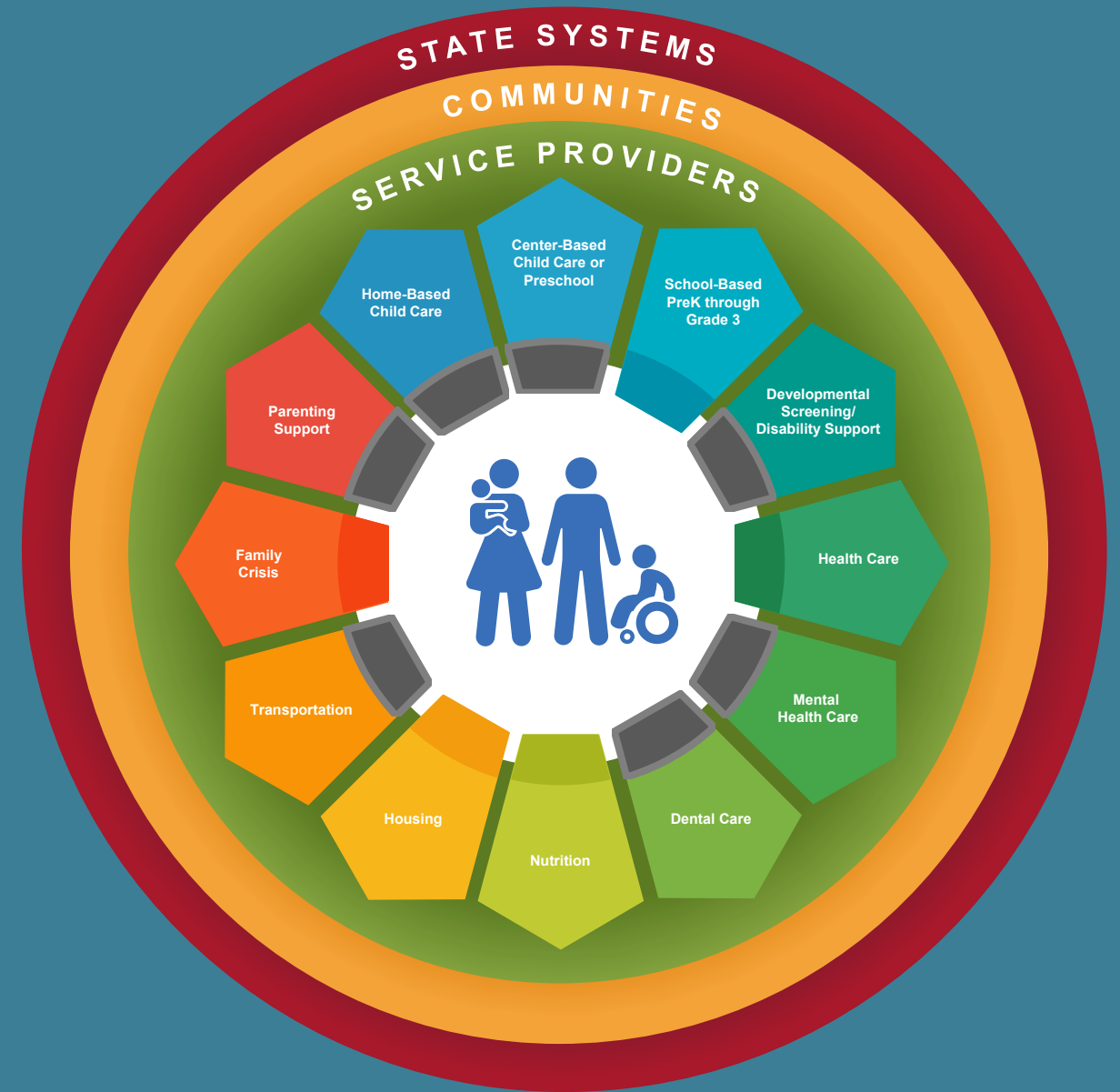
... families who experience certain types of conditions, or more than one of these conditions, report more difficulty accessing the full range of services they need to build their children's well-being.

These conditions may be:

- Unique to the child (*such as a disability*)
- Unique to the parents (*such as age, mental illness, or education level*)
- Affecting the child's family (*such as housing or food insecurity*)
- Affecting the child's community (*such as discrimination based on perceptions of a child's or family member's race, ethnicity, or immigration status*)

See page 5 of the Strategic Plan Executive Summary for the full list of conditions impacting children's development.

Creating equity for all families begins with opening the doors that are closed and promoting the well-being of *all* children.

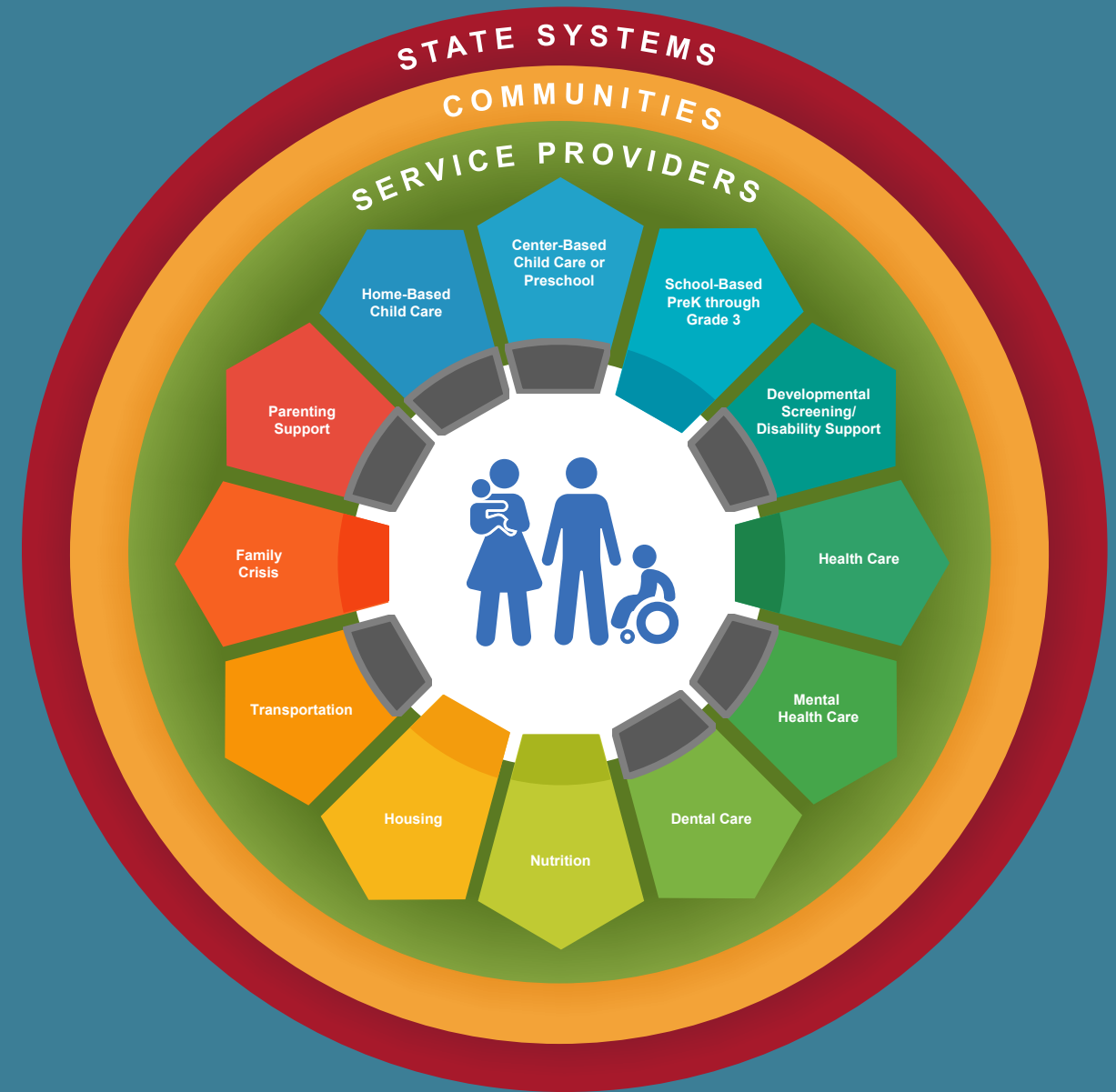


Creating equity for all families begins with opening the doors that are closed and promoting the well-being of *all* children.

Example Equity Principle

Examine data about barriers and which children are getting served, and which are not.

- Based on the usage patterns, change policies that limit access and increase financing to make quality early learning services available to all children.





Stakeholder Feedback that Got Results

Stakeholders said ...

...they would like to have a list of child care providers in their area with information about cost, quality ratings, availability, and user reviews.

... and this is what happened.

The Nebraska Child Care Referral Network (CCRN) was developed to help working parents find child care in their area for children from birth to age 12.

NEChildCareReferral.org

The website allows parents to search for providers using filters including:

- Type of child care environment
- Type of child care license
- Ages of children needing care
- Geographical distance
- Does/does not accept subsidy
- [Step Up to Quality participation](#)

Quality

early care and education is defined in terms of what **each child experiences**.

A quality experience is characterized by positive and language-rich interactions between the developing child and familiar, caring adults—no matter the setting.



Sensitive and responsive interactions



Structuring Settings to Promote Quality

To increase the likelihood that a child experiences quality, **early care and education, settings are structured to:**

- Promote the well-being of early childhood professionals (*appropriate qualifications and training, promotion of physical and mental health, appropriate compensation and professional supports*)
- Foster the child's healthy development and learning (*developmentally appropriate materials, routines, ratios, and individualized instruction; culturally relevant family engagement; clean and safe facilities*)



Shaping Policies and Practices to Promote Quality

The delivery of quality care and education across settings is facilitated by **policies and continuous quality improvement practices that prioritize the child's experiences**, including, for example:

- Policies designed to enable providers to cover the full cost of quality care
- Assessment practices that capture the child's experiences of quality



Creating equitable access to quality means every child experiences language-rich, caring one-on-one interactions in all settings.





Creating equitable access to quality means every child experiences language-rich, caring one-on-one interactions in all settings.

Example Equity Principle

Create practices and policies that cultivate early care environments that minimize the impact of adults' implicit bias on young children's development and learning.





Stakeholder Feedback that Got Results

Stakeholders said ...

... that earning a degree in early childhood development does not necessarily lead to a subsequent increase in wages. To earn more, early childhood professionals must be certified to work in school settings.

... and this is what happened.

The University of Nebraska is working with state colleges, tribal colleges, and community colleges across the state to bring more equity to the early childhood programs in all institutions across the state.

Work has already begun to create

- a career lattice,
- stackable credentials, and
- apprenticeships that can make the EC profession a priority profession.



Collaboration

refers to community-level coordination of local and regional resources to promote the well-being of all children and families.

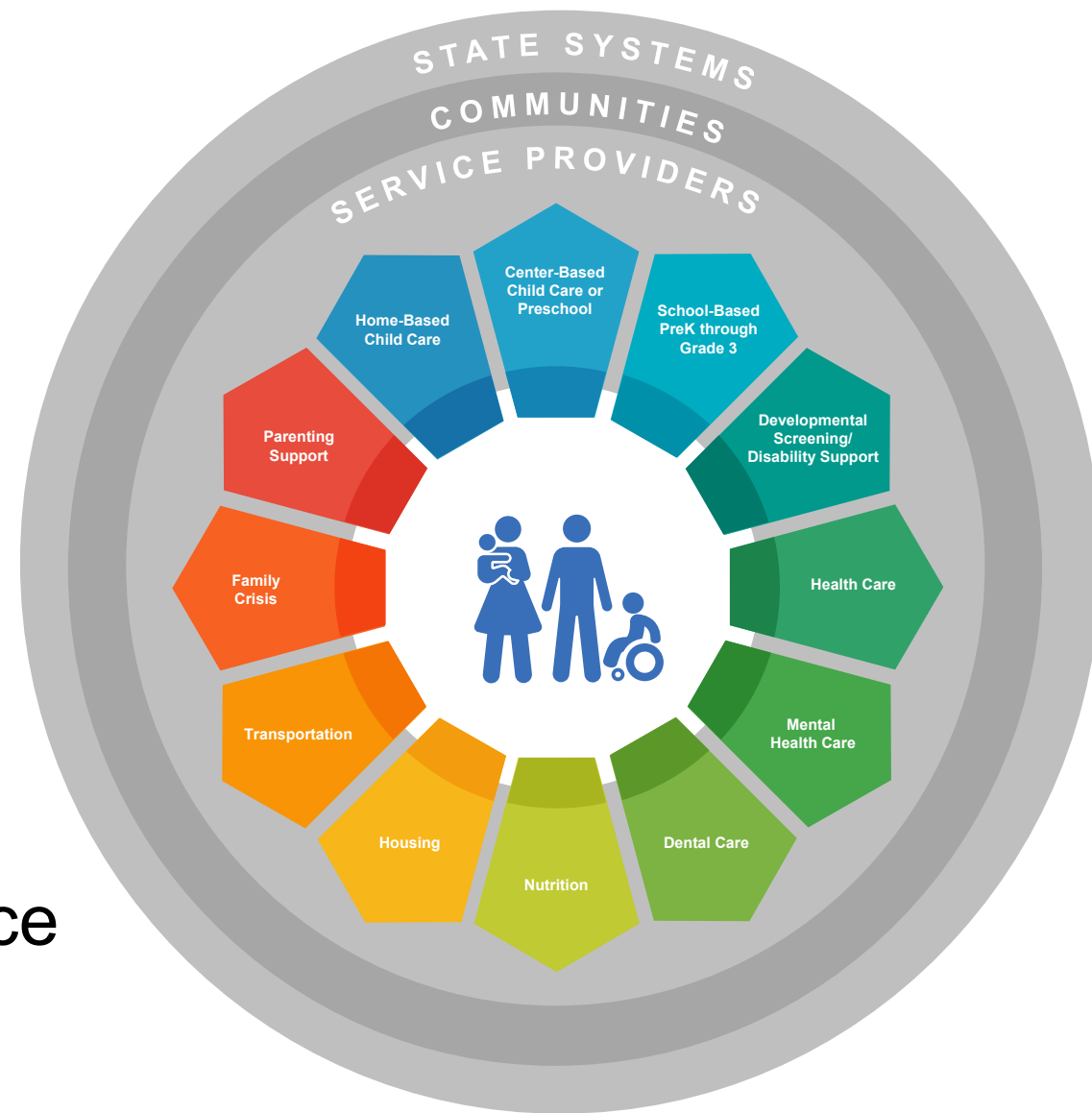




Collaboration and consistent coordination of resources ensure more continuity of care.

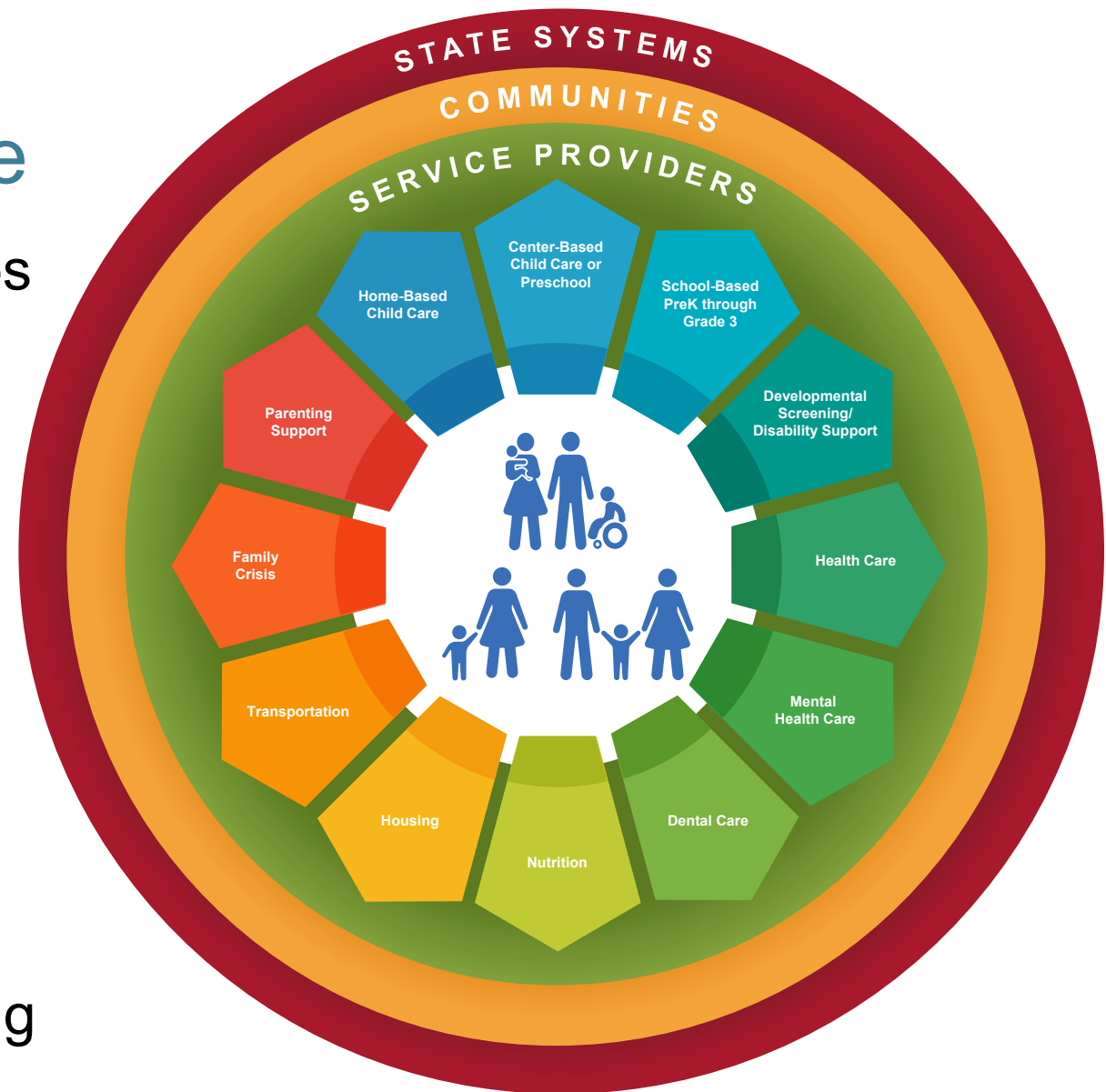
When a child experiences continuous care, their participation in care settings is stable, with few daily or weekly changes.


Families with children who have disabilities and other special needs face unique challenges to experiencing continuous care.



Collaboration strategies that increase access to quality care


- Build new and collaborative relationships in the community
- Increase communication around transition to Kindergarten
- Ensure representation across the community
- Develop local or regional plans to improve access to quality care
- Coordinate with state-level partners to support plans to build families' well-being





Creating equity through collaboration means including diverse representation from across the community in developing plans that ensure community resources benefit all children.





Creating equity through collaboration means including diverse representation from across the community in developing plans that ensure community resources benefit all children.

Example Equity Principle

Ensure diverse representation in creating coordinated, community-based plans and in making decisions about using local resources.





Stakeholder Feedback that Got Results

Stakeholders said ...

... that early child care providers and schoolteachers wanted to better prepare children and classrooms for the transition to kindergarten.

... and this is what happened.

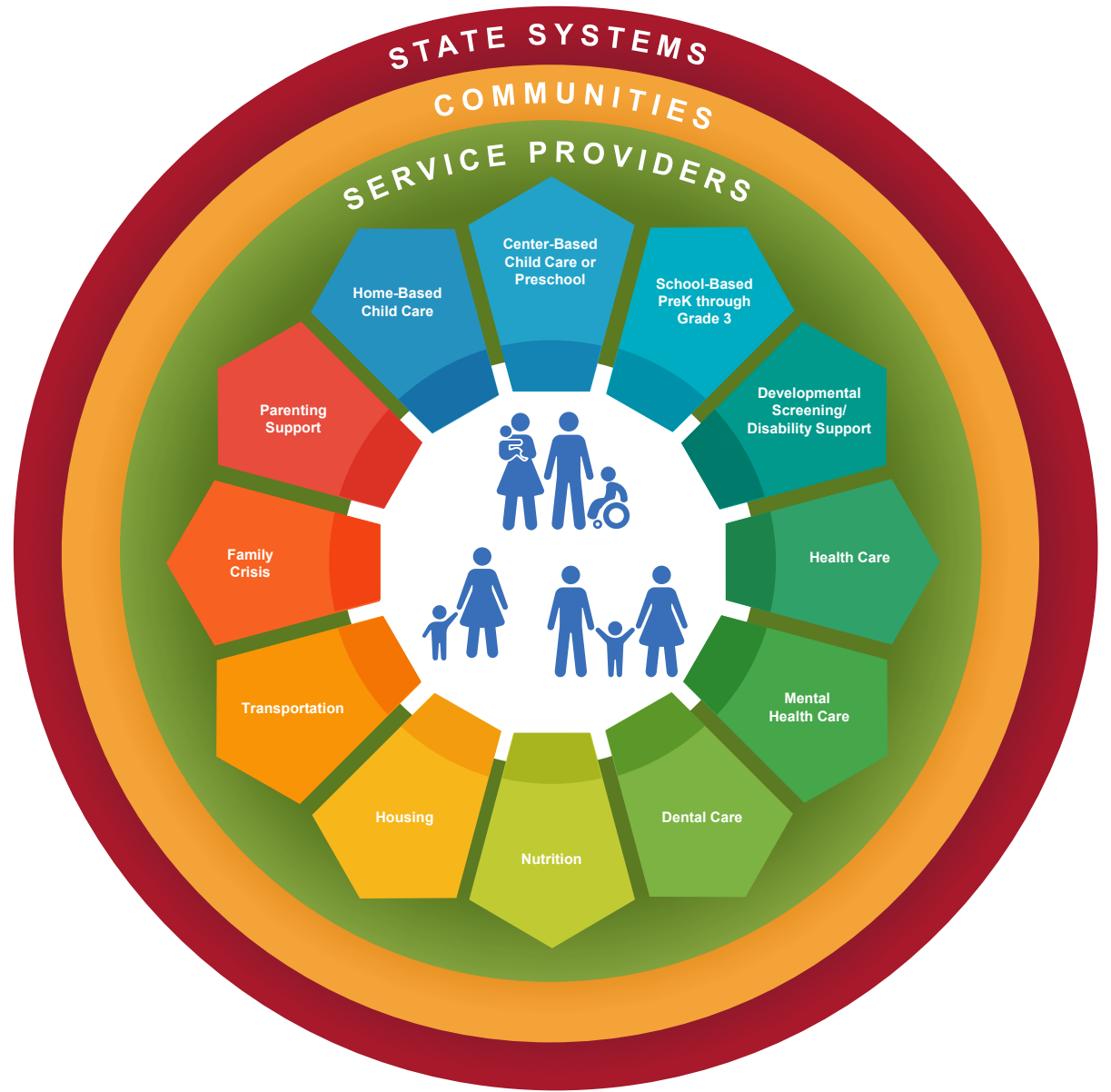
With Preschool Development Grant funds, the *Nebraska Transition to Kindergarten Toolkit and Resource Guide* was made available to early childhood providers, professionals, and schools statewide.

<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/nebraska-transition-to-kindergarten-toolkit-and-resource-guide/>



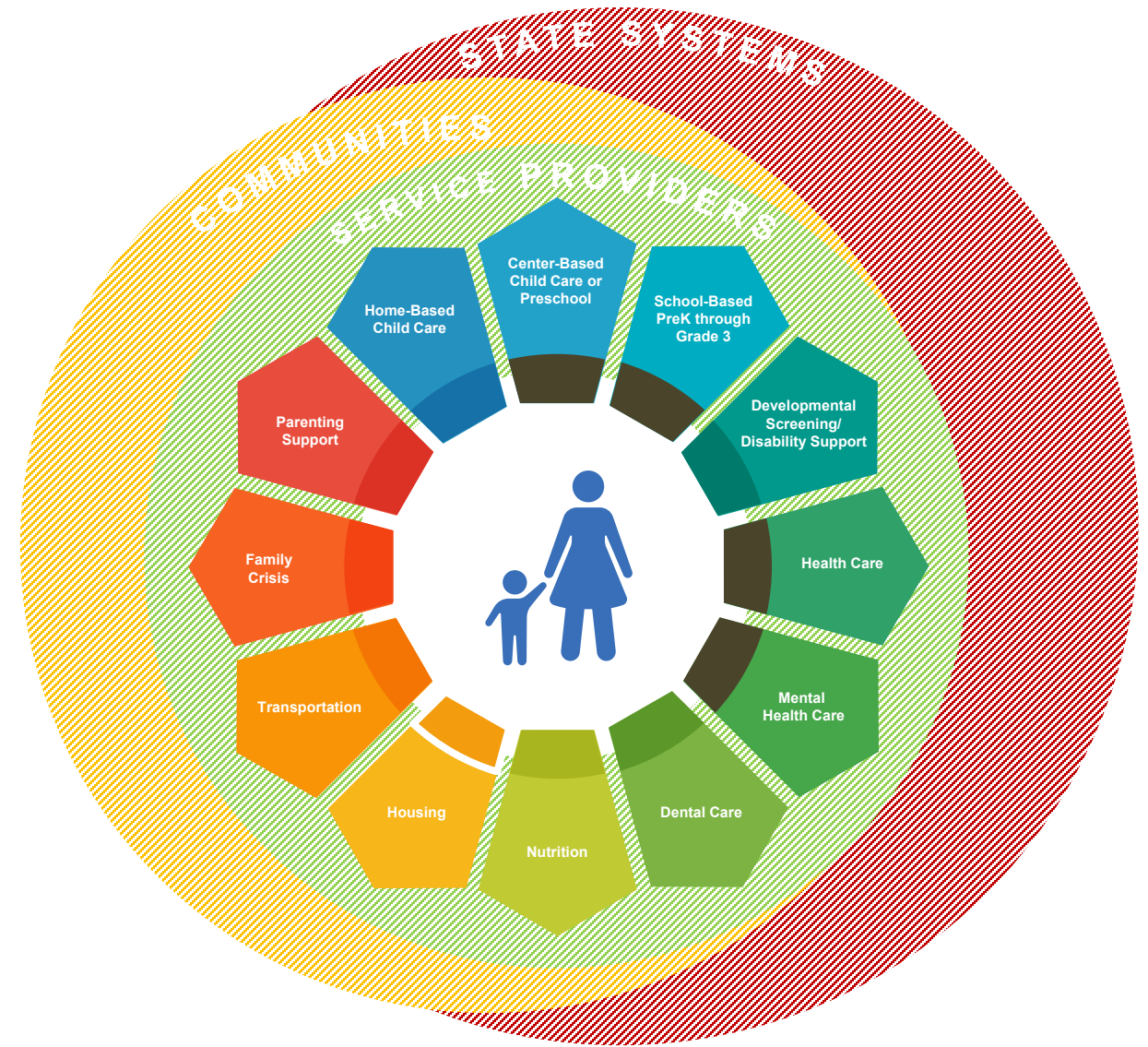
Alignment

focuses on a shared vision for Nebraska's early childhood system that will shape funding and policy decisions to ensure equitable access to quality early care and education.



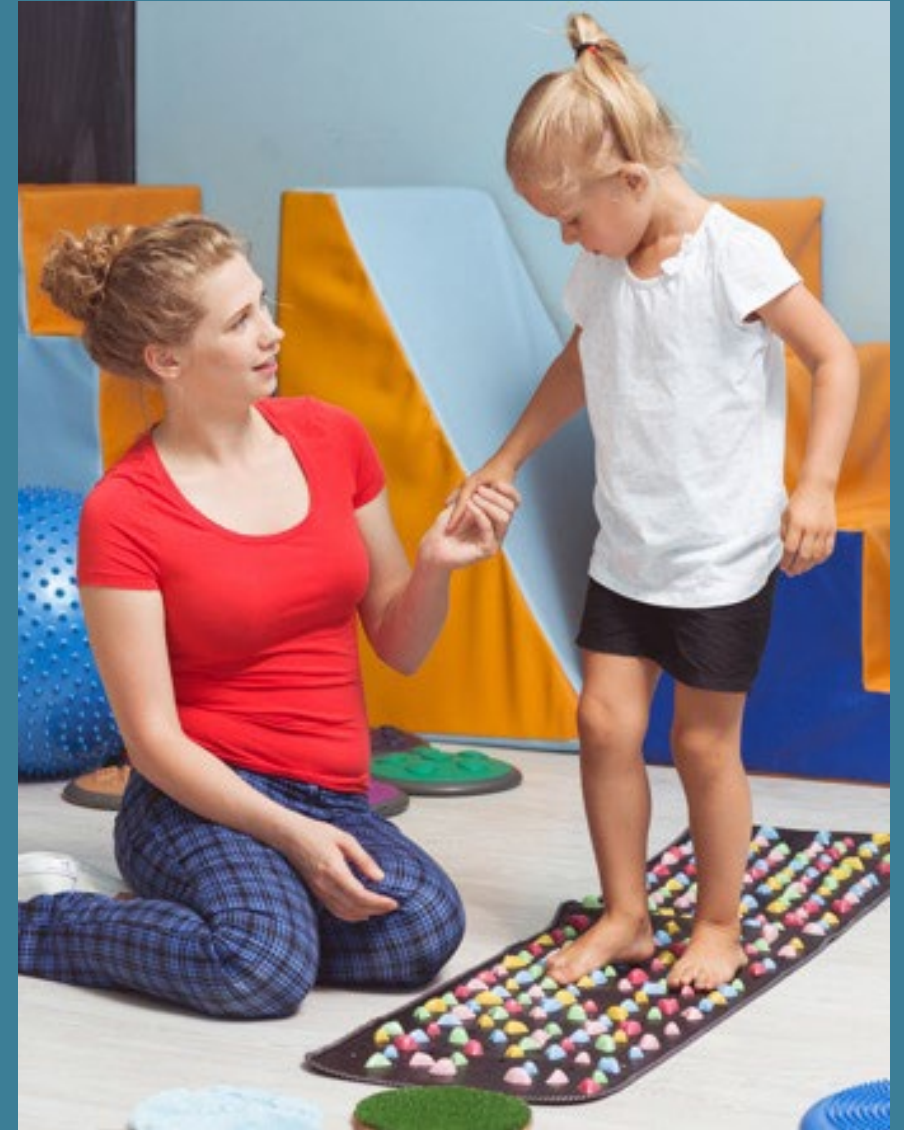


A lack of alignment in early childhood systems creates barriers for families and professionals at all levels, limiting access to quality early education and other essential services.





Creating equity through alignment means intentionally changing statewide systems to ensure each child in Nebraska has access to quality early childhood education and other essential services.

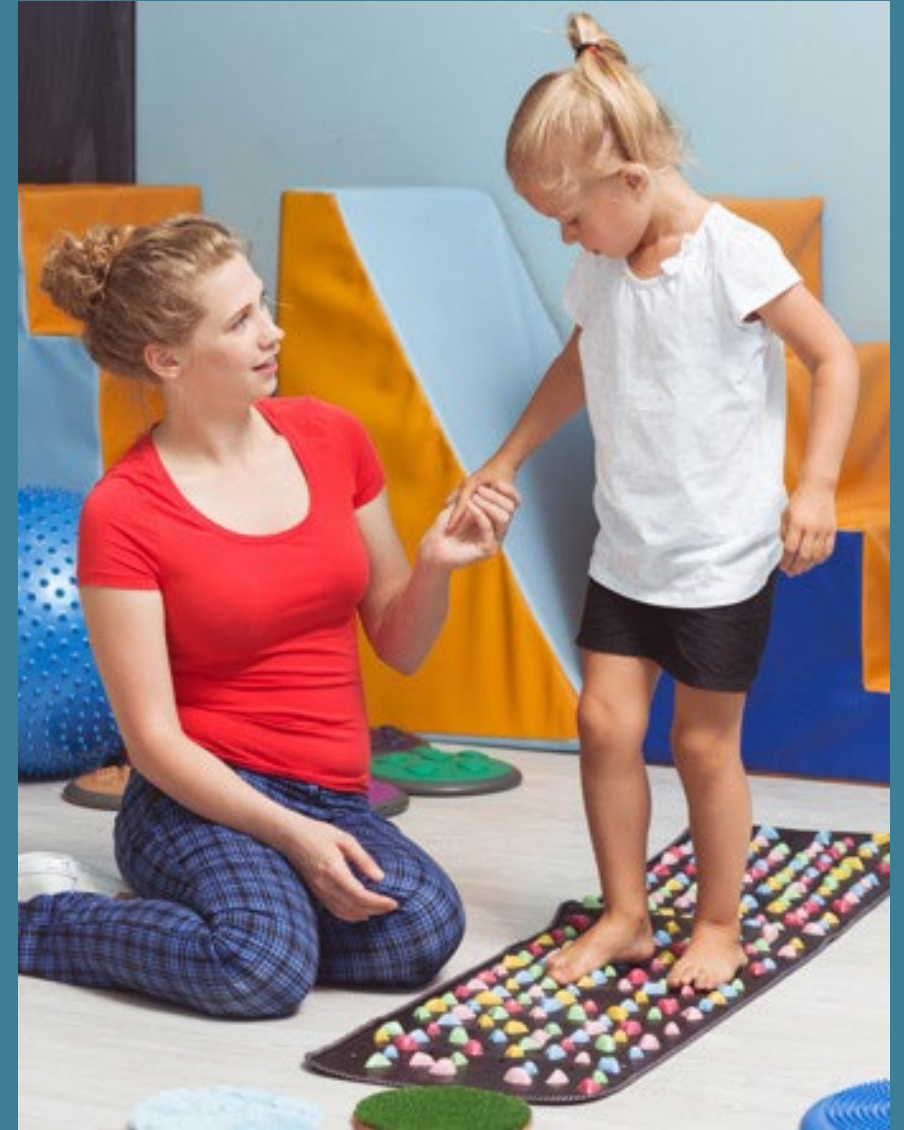


Creating equity through alignment means intentionally changing statewide systems to ensure each child in Nebraska has access to quality early childhood education and other essential services.

Example Equity Principle

Set measurable targets and track progress of change.

- Adapt strategies for systems change as the impact of the work shifts the landscape.





Stakeholder Feedback that Got Results

Stakeholders said ...

... all Nebraskans need to understand the value and impact of quality ECCE on children, the community, the economy, and the nation.

... and this is what happened.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign is being launched in June 2022. Its overarching goal is to build support for quality ECCE. Its objectives include

- Promoting an aligned understanding of quality early childhood education
- Increasing appreciation of the role of the early childhood workforce
- Expanding recognition of the economic importance of quality early education and the early childhood workforce



Values that Guide the Strategic Plan

Expressions of intention that define how and why the goals, objectives, and strategies will be implemented.



Nebraska
Early
Childhood
Strategic
Plan
Values



Equity



Nebraska
Early
Childhood
Strategic
Plan
Values

Equity



Whole
Child
Approach



Nebraska
Early
Childhood
Strategic
Plan
Values





Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan Values





Nebraska
Early
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Nebraska
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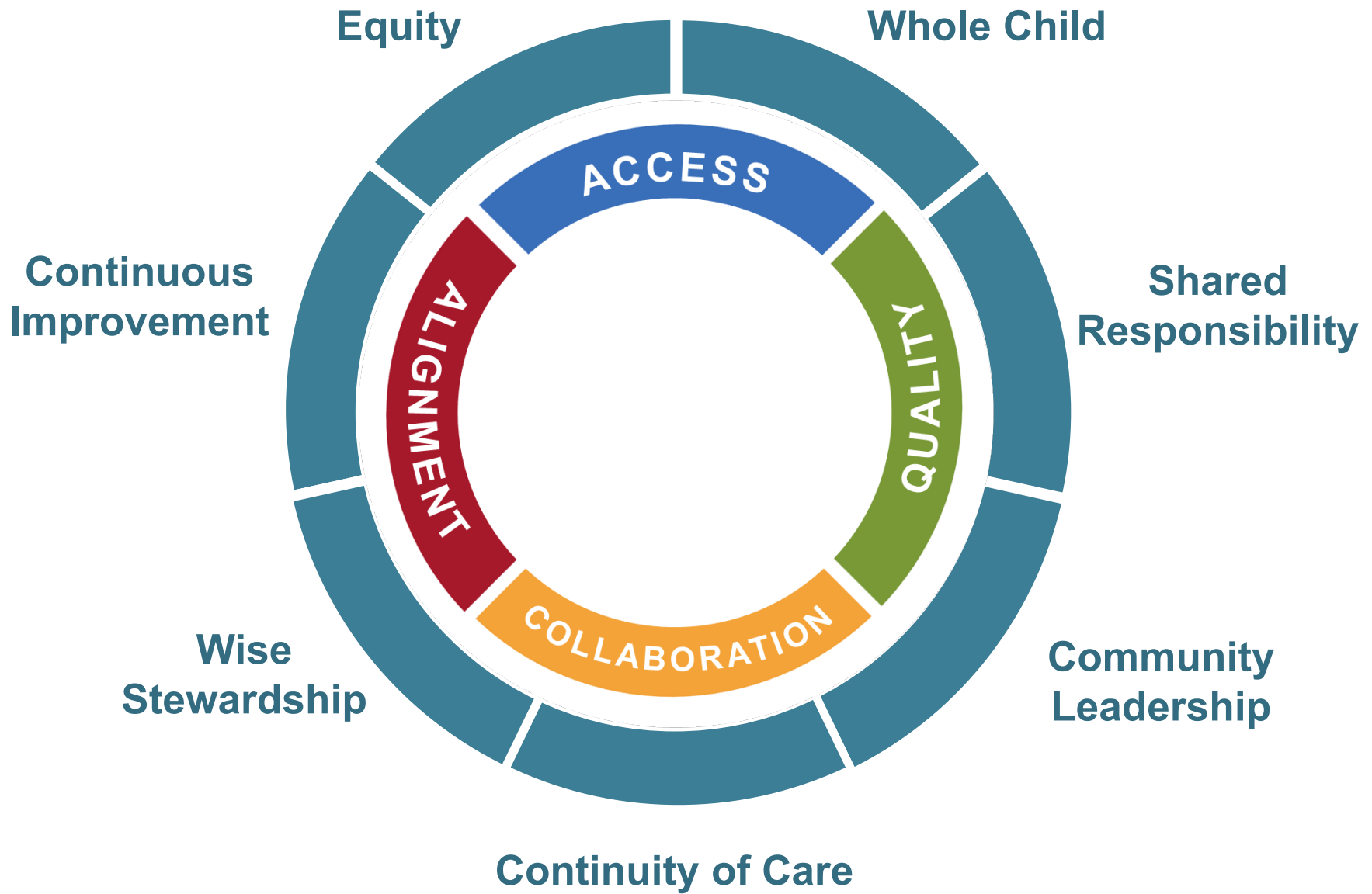


Nebraska
Early
Childhood
Strategic
Plan
Values





The four goals are grounded in seven values.





Vision

All Nebraska children and their families have access to quality early childhood services that support children's healthy development from birth through age 8.





What's next?

SPEAQ Up! Nebraska

Strategic Planning for Equitable Access to Quality Early Childhood Services in Nebraska

SPEAQ Up! Nebraska is a series of community-based conversations designed to ensure the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan adequately addresses the priorities of diverse communities and stakeholders across the state.



Learn more and get involved.

To learn more about the
strategic plan, visit
NEarlychildhoodplan.org.

To host or participate in a
SPEAQ Up! Nebraska
meeting, please contact Sara
Vetter at
svetter@nebraska.edu.



**THANK
YOU!**



Acknowledgments

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