Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) /Afterschool Programming

Well-designed and well-delivered summer enrichment and comprehensive afterschool programming can address "learning loss," accelerate learning, and expand opportunities for student success. From the American Rescue Plan, substantial new funding is now available to targeted communities for the next three years. These funds are provided through provisions in the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER III) portion of the Act and can be used to expand and improve existing summer and afterschool programs and partnerships to start new programs that are aligned with the principles identified in the Nebraska State Board of Education Quality Framework (October 2017).

The goal of this three-year, approximately $15,000,000 collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and Beyond School Bells (BSB) - a program of Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), and other partners is to provide Nebraska youth negatively affected by COVID-19 and historically underserved communities access to high-quality, school-based and community powered afterschool and summer programs, what we refer to as ELO programs. NDE is contributing all of its $11,000,000 allocation of federal ESSER III COVID-19 relief funding, plus $800,000 in staffing and evaluation costs, to this ambitious project. Nebraska Children is committed to secure a minimum of $3,000,000 in additional funding to leverage this one-time commitment of federal funds.

Through this unprecedented collaboration, NDE and BSB hope to encourage other organizations to partner with us to take full advantage of this one-time federal investment to establish new and enhance existing afterschool and summer programs that can provide all Nebraska youth with multiple, high-quality out-of-school time opportunities that will excite, engage, and inspire the next generation of Nebraska's leaders.

Highlights:

- Worked with the Department of Health and Human Services to help facilitate the use of $4.5 million in CARES Act funding to support the hard-hit school-aged care and learning sector during the pandemic
- Designed, built, and delivered a growing fleet of Think Make Create (TMC) Labs, a mobile STEAM learning and tinkering platform, across Nebraska (42 and counting) and via licensing arrangements with four other states and internationally, with our first contract to build a TMC Lab in Taiwan in 2022.
- Partnered with communities across the state to support quality programming and sustainability of existing afterschool and summer programs funded by NDE's 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative.

Ongoing work/Next steps:

Accelerator Grants to expand existing ELO programs. Three-year funding, starting with summer programming in 2022 and extending through Summer 2024 and year-long afterschool programming grants for both the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years. This element builds on existing NDE 21st CCLC infrastructure to quickly scale up high-quality programs.

Incubator Grants to expand into new communities. Multi-year grants starting with planning grants in Spring 2022, leading to three summer program years and two full years of programming, culminating at the end of the Summer 2024. As a starting point, we are looking at investment of $62,500 average for annual school-year afterschool programs and $35,000 for the summer programming strand.

Nebraska's ELO Innovation Network - Coordination / Innovation / Excellence
Nebraska Children's efforts for this unique public-private partnership will be administered within BSB's ELO Innovation Network, part of a series of networks NDE is supporting to enhance Nebraska's education system. Over the next three years, through December 2024, the ELO Innovation Network will recruit community organizations and school districts to identify, develop, test, and distribute best practices that will enhance high-quality, locally sustainable ELO programs across Nebraska. Activities will include designing, piloting, and scaling up new youth programming, parent engagement activities, youth empowerment, staffing, and partnership innovations. This work will be rigorously evaluated by Nebraska Children working in partnership with the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute and lessons learned will enhance future ELO programs.

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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