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## PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

**DATE:** April 19, 2023

**TO:** Deborah A. Frison, Ed.D.  
Deputy Commissioner of Education

**FROM:** Zainab Rida, Office of Coordinated Student Support Services

**PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM:** Authorize the Deputy Commissioner to contract with the University of Nebraska Omaha Center for Afghanistan Studies to develop and provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support to Afghan refugee students and their families to survive and thrive in the state of Nebraska.

**AGENDA ITEM TYPE:** Contract

### **RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**What:** The Nebraska Department of Education received a two-year Afghan Refugee School Impact Supplements Federal Grant Award which requires the state education agency to:

- Building state capacity, including support for communities of practice among LEAs/schools (e.g., activities that focus on Afghan parent engagement or information exchange between ELL teachers instructing eligible clients)
- Producing and securing educational resources ensuring full accessibility, including classroom materials, parent engagement resources, computers, digital services, and internet connections

**Why:** Capacity development for school systems should be prioritized to improve skills and competencies related to concept-based teaching learning and evaluation. Educators need to be exposed to cultural professional development opportunities around the unique and varied needs of Afghan refugees and access to necessary resources. This could include specialized trainings for school staff, ensuring language access by offering translated documentation, interpretation, and specialized staff dedicated to working with the population. Gaining the knowledge and understanding of Afghan students' needs are critical for designing and elaborating any refugee education action or program. Educational systems should align with the Afghan students' needs and characteristics. Therefore, appropriate training and professional development and cultural exposure opportunities would lead to a coherent educational program and prepare qualified NDE staff and school districts staff.

**Who:** The contractor will provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support to Afghan refugee students and their families to survive and thrive in the state of Nebraska.

**How:** The goal is to provide professional Development Opportunities to help elementary and secondary teachers, principals, other school staff and NDE staff to achieve the following:

- Expand and strengthen opportunities for cultural and linguistic integration and education.
- Understand some basics about their legal obligations to Afghan refugees.



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- Provide welcoming schools and classrooms for Afghan students and their families.
- Provide Afghan students with the academic support to attain English language proficiency (if needed) and to meet college- and career-readiness standards.
- Support and develop Afghan refugees' social emotional skills.
- Strengthen the skills, knowledge, and competence of NDE staff for the benefit of Afghan refugee students.
- Ensure equitable access to services for all Afghan students and families.
- Enhance the capacity of NDE staff to offer quality and delivery of existing programs that focus on Afghan refugees.
- Develop culturally linguistically appropriate resources related to Afghan refugee needs.
- delivery in school settings by school staff and includes components that will fill existing educator skill-gaps related to identifying students with mental health issues, mental health promotion, and appropriately responding to crises (including de-escalation).

**When:** Over the course of the project (May 1, 2023-August 1, 2024)

**PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR):** May 2023

**ESTIMATED COST:** \$100,000 for Year 2 year.

**FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:**

- Indicate the Funding Source: Department of Health and Human Services/Office of Refugee Resettlement.
- New or Renewal: New
- If renewal, date of first approval: N/A

**FOR NEW CONTRACTS OR OTHER CONTRACTS REQUIRING PROCUREMENT:**

- Indicate the method of procurement: Non-competitive Negotiation
- Rationale for method of procurement:  
Nebraska Revised Statute 73-507 identifies exceptions for competitive bidding requirements including the following statement. "Agreements for services to be performed for a state agency by another state or local government agency or contracts made by a state agency with a local government agency for the direct provision of services to the public."
- Rationale for contractor selection: The contractor has extensive & invaluable knowledge, experience, & expertise working with Afghan communities, and developing culturally relevant curricula, classroom management strategies, and school-wide cultural proficiency plans.

*\*Updated 02.07.2023*