



PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

DATE: August 23, 2023

TO: Brian L. Maher.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Lane Carr
Administrator, Office of Policy and Strategic Initiatives

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM: Authorize the Commissioner to extend and expand the contract with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to augment the Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center and implement the Nebraska Growing Readers Project from September 2023 to December 2024.

AGENDA ITEM TYPE: Action

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

In May 2021, the NDE entered a partnership with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation to supplement funding for the Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center (SFEC), focused on family engagement and family literacy. In collaboration with local districts, the SFEC implemented a two-generation, four-component model of family literacy. ESSER funding deepened and expanded the work.

Context of Funding Availability:

In September 2021, the NDE began conversations with partners with the preschool development grant (PDG), specifically DHHS and Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) to dramatically increase the availability of ReadyRosie, a family engagement and literacy software that was already being piloted in some early childhood settings. The NDE wrote this use of funds in the “Family and Community Engagement” bucket of its approved ESSER plan.

Over the past several months, DHHS has pulled back support from the software since it has not been taken up widely and does not interface well with other tools it uses in the early childhood settings. To stay true to the state’s approved ESSER plan, the NDE must re-appropriate these funds in the area of family and community engagement.

Projects:

- 1) Continued Augmentation of the Statewide Family Engagement Center - \$300,000

The Statewide Family Engagement Center continues to expand to new communities across the state and deepen services. The SFEC applied for additional federal funding, and paired with this investment, can continue to reach additional families and communities.

2) Nebraska Growing Readers Project - \$ 2 million

The Nebraska Growing Readers Initiative would send age-appropriate books developed by [Unite for Literacy](#) to families and childcare providers across the state and support strategies and training for reading to preschool children, particularly in “book deserts.” Unite for Literacy is a culturally and linguistically responsive literacy platform that actively partners with Nebraska Children and Families Foundation’s Sixpence early learning sites, Beyond School Bells expanded learning projects in elementaries, and the Statewide Family Engagement Center in 12 Nebraska school districts.

Nebraska Growing Readers will be a statewide effort coordinated by the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation in partnership with the Sixpence Early Learning Fund, the Nebraska Department of Education, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (TBD), Unite for Literacy, and the Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center.

With this investment, approximately 16,000 children across 12,000 households and 1,000 early childhood providers would be provided dozens of age-appropriate children’s books. Partners at NCFE will support professional learning and development through pre-existing contracts and leverage the Nebraska Statewide Family Engagement Center.

This strategy supports the State Board’s legislative and regulatory priority of having 75% of 3rd graders reach proficiency by 2030.

PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR): June 2023

ESTIMATED COST: \$2.3 million

FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:

- Indicate the Funding Source: ESSER III
- New or Renewal: Renewal
- If renewal, date of first approval: May 2021

FOR NEW CONTRACTS OR OTHER CONTRACTS REQUIRING PROCUREMENT:

- Indicate the method of procurement: N/A
- Rationale for method of procurement: N/A
- Rationale for contractor selection: N/A

FOR GRANT SUBAWARDS:

- Describe the grantee selection process: N/A
- New or Renewal: N/A
- If renewal, date of first approval: N/A