



PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

DATE: December 7, 2023

TO: Dr. Brian L. Maher
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Katie Graham, Ph.D.
Administrator; Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education

Sydney Kobza
Assistant Administrator; Office of Career Technical and Adult Education

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM: Action Item: Authorize the Commissioner to contract with WestEd to conduct a Nebraska Middle School CTE Landscape Analysis

AGENDA ITEM TYPE (contract/grant/rule/program/other): Contract

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Background:

In early 2020 the Nebraska Department of Education submitted its Perkins V State Plan to outline the Department's plan to address and adhere the provisions within the reauthorized career and technical education (CTE) legislation. Through intensive stakeholder engagement throughout the development of the plan, including with the State Board of Education, eight strategic priorities were identified to catapult Nebraska's high-quality CTE system forward to respond to the State's workforce needs, labor market information, and economic development priorities. Middle School CTE was identified as one of the strategic priorities.

In Nebraska's Perkins V State Plan, it outlines how middle grades (grades 5-8) CTE adds relevance to students' learning experiences by exposing them to real-world options and connecting academics to career and postsecondary possibilities. It equips students with transferrable skills needed as they transition to high school and beyond, and serves as a key dropout prevention strategy mitigating challenges such as disengagement and lack of preparation. Nebraska middle school CTE programming must be aligned with the overarching CTE system, encourage hands-on career exploration opportunities, and available to each student. Currently, there is a wide variety of middle school CTE approaches taking place across the state and an increase in district administrators reaching out to inquire about the best options available for their students.

In response to this strategic priority and district requests, a statewide middle school CTE landscape analysis will be conducted to assist the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education in evaluating its current approach to middle school CTE delivery, identifying strengths, barriers, and existing resources, and

highlighting concrete steps to provide more students access to high-quality middle school CTE programming across the state. The work to be completed includes:

- Engaging with Nebraska LEAs to identify and assess the strengths or traits of middle school CTE programs across various sizes and geographic locations in the State;
- Identifying other state and national approaches to middle school CTE and comparing them with Nebraska’s approaches;
- Reviewing Nebraska’s Standards for Career Readiness as they apply to middle school CTE delivery;
- Engaging various stakeholders with knowledge and experience planning and delivering middle school CTE;
- Evaluating student transition supports from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school;
- Identifying resources and best practices that are used to deliver middle school CTE in Nebraska and nationally;
- Identifying scheduling barriers and flexibilities to deliver middle school CTE effectively; and
- Evaluating the extent to which all student have access to middle school CTE programming in Nebraska, including exploring careers not traditional for their gender.

The results of this Landscape analysis will contribute to existing and new middle school initiatives and efforts across NDE, along with helping direct resources to increase student access to high-quality middle school CTE statewide. When complete, the landscape analysis will inform and support administrators, educators, school counselors, along with NDE staff.

Working through the Request for Proposals procurement process, a qualified vendor, WestEd, has been identified to engage in a contract with the NDE for this work. The contract will specify the work to be completed as detailed above.

Timeline:

Date	Activity
August 21, 2023	RFP released on DAS procurement website
September 27, 2023	Proposals Due
September 27 – October 10, 2023	Evaluation Period
November 1, 2023	Oral Interviews
November 30 - December 1, 2023	Provide informational update to State Board of Education with the intent to contract the following month
January 4-5, 2024	Request to State Board of Education to authorize the Commissioner to contract with selected vendor
January, 2024	Contract awarded
January, 2024	Tentative Contract Start Date
July, 2024	Project Completion

PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR): January, 2024

ESTIMATED COST: \$134,582.00

FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:

- Indicate the Funding Source: Federal – Perkins. The funds for this contract are included in the grant award for this program, through the use of statewide Perkins Leadership funds.
- New or Renewal: New

FOR NEW CONTRACTS OR OTHER CONTRACTS REQUIRING PROCUREMENT:

- Indicate the method of procurement:
 - RFP with Competitive Negotiation. The RFP for this project can be accessed here: <https://das.nebraska.gov/materiel/purchasing/NDERFP230803/NDERFP230803.html>
- Rationale for method of procurement:
 - Solicitation from multiple proposals from qualified vendors allows the NDE to benefit from a variety of technical perspectives in selecting the best solution for NDE's desired outcomes.
- Rationale for contractor selection:
 - Consistent with the principles of competitive negotiation model, the rationale for contractor selection is based on hiring the individual or entity who can best complete the tasks required while taking into account the contractor's total cost and any other factors relevant to the scope of the particular contracting application.
 - A five-person evaluation committee was formed to consistently evaluate each proposal based on pre-specified scoring criteria.

FOR GRANT SUBAWARDS:

- Describe the grantee selection process: N/A

**Updated 08.15.2023*