



PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

DATE: September 25, 2024

TO: Dr. Brian L. Maher
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Dr. Trudy K Clark, Director of Statewide Assessment and Cassie Seiboldt, Assistant Director of Statewide Assessment

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM: Action Item: Accept Competitive Grants for State Assessments Program (CGSA) Award and Authorize the Commissioner to Include the Tasks and Activities in the Scope of Work with NWEA.

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

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Award number S368A240010 October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2026

The purpose of the Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA) program is to enhance the quality of assessment instruments and assessment systems used by States for measuring the academic achievement of elementary and secondary school students. This program is authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The grants are expected to propose activities in these categories:

- a) Developing or improving assessments for English learners
- b) Developing or improving models to measure and assess student progress or student growth on State assessments
- c) Developing or improving assessments for children with disabilities
- d) Allowing for collaboration with institutions of higher education
- e) Measuring student academic achievement using multiple measures
- f) Evaluating student academic achievement through the development of comprehensive academic assessment instruments

This grant meets the conditions in letter “f”.

The Assessment team submitted the grant application on May 23, 2024. On September 4, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education publicly announced that the NDE would be awarded the Enhancing the Instructional Value of Statewide Assessments: Coherence and Alignment for Educators and Families (CAEF) Grant.

- Enhancing the Instructional Value of Statewide Assessments: Coherence and Alignment for Educators and Families (CAEF), supported by the Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA), aims to improve the usability of Nebraska's through-year statewide assessment reporting system. The project is designed to improve the instructional utility of Nebraska's statewide assessment system by enhancing the accessibility and usability of assessment data for educators and families. It includes developing user-friendly score reporting templates, refining assessment items, and building capacity through professional learning opportunities. The project will involve key stakeholders—such as educators, families, and students—in co-designing score reports and communication tools that facilitate actionable insights from assessment data. The project will also engage districts statewide in pilot activities, providing resources and training to ensure the assessment system supports improved teaching and learning.
- Feedback from educators and families, collected during the Request for Information process, indicated that the current assessment reports do not provide actionable insights for improving instruction. The project seeks to improve score reporting, refine assessment items, and provide professional learning to help educators and families use assessment data to better support student learning. This initiative aligns with Nebraska's ongoing commitment to improve statewide assessments and is supported by the Competitive Grants for State Assessments (CGSA). It also complements the state's broader educational priorities, including closing achievement gaps and ensuring high-quality, standards-aligned instruction. The grant ensures that Nebraska's assessment system better serves educators and families, allowing for data-driven instructional decisions that positively impact student outcomes.
- The CAEF project primarily serves educators, families, and students in Nebraska's K-12 public school system, particularly those in grades 3-8. It aims to provide teachers with enhanced tools to use assessment data effectively to inform instruction, while also empowering families to better understand their children's assessment results and support learning at home. Additionally, the project supports school districts involved in the pilot phases, as well as the broader statewide education community, by improving the overall usability of the through-year assessment system.
- The CAEF project is administered by the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and involves extensive stakeholder engagement, including educators, families, and district leaders. Key stakeholders serve on design teams that provide input into the development of score reports and assessment tools, ensuring that the project addresses real needs. The project includes collaboration with external vendors for assessment development, who were selected through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, ensuring vendors meet the project's usability and data reporting requirements. The grant's implementation includes pilot phases with select school districts, with statewide expansion planned based on feedback and evaluation results. Professional learning opportunities are also developed and delivered as part of the project to build educators' and families' capacity to use assessment data. Regular evaluations of project milestones and outcomes will be conducted to ensure alignment with the grant's goals and to assess the impact on teaching and learning. The program will be piloted in select districts during Year 1, before expanding to additional districts and eventually rolling out statewide by Year 3. The evaluation process will include feedback from pilot districts, ongoing stakeholder input, and data analysis to monitor the success and impact of the project.
- Timeline: October 2024-September 2027

- **Year 1 (2024-2025):** Planning and stakeholder engagement begins, including forming Design Teams with educators and families. Initial pilot testing of score report templates and professional learning framework with three partner districts.
- **Year 2 (2025-2026):** Expanded pilot involving at least 15 additional districts. Further development and refinement of score reports and professional learning resources based on feedback from Year 1.
- **Year 3 (2026-2027):** Full pilot with at least 15 districts. Continued testing and refinement of score reports and professional learning resources. Development of a broader communication strategy to engage additional districts.
- **Year 4 (2027-2028):** Statewide rollout of enhanced assessment tools, score reports, and professional learning opportunities. Ongoing support and evaluation of the system's impact on instructional practices and student outcomes.

PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR): October 2024

ESTIMATED COST: CGSA Award Funding from United States Department of Education- **\$2,705,389**

FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:

- Indicate the Funding Source: United States Department of Education, through the CGSA Grant
- New or Renewal: New
- If renewal, date of first approval:

FOR NEW CONTRACTS OR OTHER CONTRACTS REQUIRING PROCUREMENT:

- Indicate the method of procurement: NA
- Rationale for method of procurement: NA
- Rationale for contractor selection: NA

FOR GRANT SUBAWARDS:

- Describe the grantee selection process: NA

**Updated 08.15.2023*