



PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

DATE: November 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: Authorize the Commissioner to enter into contracts using US Department of Education Competitive Grants for Statewide Assessment (CGSA) funds to carry out grant activities.

AGENDA ITEM TYPE: Action

RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

CGSA is a discretionary grant program of the US Department of Education whose purpose is to enhance the quality of assessment instruments and assessment systems used by States for measuring the academic achievement of elementary and secondary schools students. The program is authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

Performance period: October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2028

- At the October 4, 2024 state board meeting, the board accepted the Competitive Grants for State Assessments award, Enhancing the Instructional Value of Statewide Assessments: Coherence and Alignment for Educators and Families (CAEF) Grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Education.
- CAEF 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.
- 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.

- To complete the work of the grant the Nebraska Department of Education will contract with an organization that will engage with the stakeholders, and others, in an equitable design process. Education First, a national, mission-driven strategy and policy organization with expertise in education improvement, specifically in assessment design, was one of the first national organizations to research through-year assessment designs in the 13 states that launched this test design in response to the Every Student Succeeds Act's support for innovative statewide test design. When Nebraska decided to apply for a CGSA grant based on the feedback from the Request for Information regarding usability of score reports, Nebraska anticipated building the reports and items for a through-year design. Education First has specific expertise in this area, which is why Education First was written into the grant as the facilitator.
- To complete the work of the grant the Nebraska Department of Education will contract with an organization to evaluate the processes employed to implement the project strategies and activities, as well as the outcomes of this work to assess the progress toward the project's goals. Marzano Research is a national organization that supports educators and system leaders through education research and consulting with a collaborative, small-business approach. They conducted the evaluation of the feedback we collected during the Request for Information cycle, from which they wrote the Request for Proposal with input from the Technical Advisory Committee. Because of their expertise in evaluation of systems, Marzano Research was written into the grant as the grant evaluator.
- Members of the assessment team applied to the U.S. Department of Education's Competitive Grants for Statewide Assessment, Enhancing the Instructional Value of Statewide Assessments: Coherence and Alignment for Educators and Families (CAEF) Grant in collaboration with the vendors who will add capacity to the NDE to perform the work. The U.S. Department of Education reviewed the grant and selected it to be funded.

PROPOSED BOARD MEETING (MONTH/YEAR): December 2024

ESTIMATED COST: Education First - \$340,000
Marzano Research - \$400,000

FOR CONTRACTS AND GRANTS:

- Indicate the Funding Source: Federal CGSA Grant
- 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: N/A
- Rationale for the 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