

Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce

Report and Recommendations
of the Nebraska Early Childhood
Workforce Commission

TWO-YEAR UPDATE

MARCH 2022



TWO-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission Report and Recommendations

On Jan. 30, 2020, the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission released its report and recommendations, [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce](#). In the two years since then, commission members have continuously upheld their strong commitment to take collaborative action in support of the report's vision, goals, and recommendations.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to dramatically impact the early childhood workforce and the children and families they serve, commission members and the organizations they represent are proactively engaged in collaborative statewide efforts to address some of the most urgent needs of Nebraska's early childhood workforce. At the same time, commission members are collaborating with partners in diverse communities across the state to build the infrastructure and capacity Nebraska needs to support early childhood educators in providing quality early care and education to every child. Many of these ongoing efforts were inspired or informed by the commission report.

In this document, the following updates are provided:

- Highlights of selected collaborative early childhood initiatives that support one or more of the goals of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission
- A look ahead at continued capacity building and infrastructure developments in 2022
- An invitation to share your work and help us to continue shining the spotlight on collaborative efforts across the state that are helping elevate Nebraska's early childhood workforce

VISION. Nebraska will elevate the early childhood workforce to a priority profession benefiting all children from birth through Grade 3.

- **Goal 1.** Nebraska's early childhood workforce will be highly qualified and will reflect the diversity of the children and families they serve.
- **Goal 2.** Early care and education in Nebraska will be fully funded by 2030.
- **Goal 3.** Nebraska will champion high-quality early care and education and the critical role of the workforce in young children's learning and development.
- **Goal 4.** Nebraskans will implement the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission's recommendations to achieve a highly qualified and diverse workforce on behalf of all young children and their families.

The work summarized here represents only a sample of the many efforts that are underway in communities across Nebraska to support the early childhood workforce. Future updates will include more stories about the work that commission members are involved in across the state.

SELECTED COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES TO ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE: APRIL 2021–FEBRUARY 2022

Commission members and the organizations they represent continue to demonstrate a commitment to cultivating relationships and partnerships with colleagues across the state. This is shown by several collaborative initiatives that are contributing to one or more of the four goals articulated in the commission report. The commission’s four goals are highly interrelated—initiatives that focus primarily on one of the goals often impact the other three.

In addition, many of the ongoing initiatives also align with the goals of the [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#), which was informed by the commission’s work and is currently being implemented with funding provided through the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) Birth through Five Initiative administered by the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In April 2020, Nebraska was awarded \$8.9 million annually for three years by the federal Preschool Development Continuation Grant. Contributing partners, including several organizations represented on the commission, have pledged \$2.7 million annually in matching funds. The PDG renewal grant provides funding from 2020 to 2023 to implement the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan.

The table on the next page summarizes selected collaborative initiatives over the past year, grouped according to their relevance to each of the four commission goals. In the table, primary relevance to a given goal is indicated by the darkly shaded cells. Since the goals of the commission report are highly interrelated and complement the goals of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan, each initiative also addresses additional goals across both statewide efforts, as shown in the table.

Selected Collaborative Initiatives (April 2021–February 2022) That Support the Goals of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission and the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan

COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVE	GOALS IN WORKFORCE COMMISSION REPORT				GOALS IN NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGIC PLAN			
	Highly qualified workforce	Full funding by 2030	Informed, engaged, and committed public	Implementation and accountability infrastructure	Access	Quality	Collaboration	Alignment
Growing partnership among institutions of higher education	✓			✓		✓		✓
Increased opportunities for collaboration among early childhood faculty	✓			✓		✓	✓	
Step Up to Quality revisions	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
Publication of Nebraska Early Childhood Career Advising Guide	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
New Alliance for Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health	✓			✓		✓		✓
Rollout of Legislative Resolution 390 report	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Continuation of Governance and Finance Task Force	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Planned updates to funding landscape technical report	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
National dissemination of commission’s funding work	✓	✓	✓					✓
Child Care Stabilization Program		✓			✓			✓
Investment brief on use of federal relief funds	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Expansion of Child Care Subsidy		✓			✓			✓
Involvement in Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation	✓	✓						✓
Team of scholars assembled to develop Early Childhood Evidence-Based Investment Dashboard© (E-BID©)	✓	✓				✓		✓
Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska’s Early Childhood Communications Roundtable			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implementation Matrix and Advisory Group	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

In this document, updates on targeted initiatives for each of the commission’s four goals are provided first by goal, followed by a discussion of broad initiatives that intentionally span all four goals. Each of these collaborative initiatives is described briefly below, and links are provided to additional information.

Goal 1: Nebraska’s early childhood workforce will be highly qualified and will reflect the diversity of the children and families they serve.

Growing collaborative partnership among institutions of higher education. Successful implementation of the commission’s recommendations requires collaborative relationships built on mutual understanding, trust, and a commitment to prioritize shared goals over individual interests. In support of Goal 1, a growing collaborative partnership has been established among the largest institutions of higher education engaged in early childhood teacher preparation in Nebraska. In fall 2020, these partners came together to develop and submit a grant proposal to the Early Educator Investment Collaborative focused on developing a *Responsive Equitable System for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers (RESPECT) across Nebraska*. Although the proposal was not funded, the partners received very promising feedback, and in response, the team refined the proposal and submitted it successfully to another funder in December 2021. The University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) will serve as the lead entity, with Dr. Julia Torquati, professor in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies and Buffett Institute Community Chair, serving as the principal investigator. UNL and the other core partners will collaborate with each other and with a broad network of other partners across the state to implement the *RESPECT across Nebraska* initiative.

In addition to UNL, the partnership includes representatives from the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and the University of Nebraska at Kearney (UNK); all six community colleges, including Metropolitan Community College (MCC) in Omaha, Southeast Community College, Central Community College, Mid-Plains Community College, Western Nebraska Community College, and Northeast Community College; and two Tribal Colleges, the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) and Little Priest Tribal College (LPTC). Other core partners include NU’s Buffett Early Childhood Institute (the Institute), the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE), Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (NeAEYC). In addition, the proposed initiative is designed to include other higher education institutions as it is implemented (Peru State College, Wayne State College, Chadron State College, Creighton University, College of Saint Mary, Hastings College, and Concordia University).

Increased opportunities for input and collaboration among early childhood faculty. To facilitate the growing collaborative partnership among institutes of higher education and early childhood faculty, and to support related efforts around Goal 1, the Buffett Institute’s workforce planning and development unit hired a new program specialist, Holly Hickson, who began by conducting a listening tour with faculty across Nebraska. Between August and October 2021, she visited 13 campuses and met with 22 early childhood faculty members. Information from the listening tour was used to develop a survey, which was also sent to early childhood education faculty to inquire about course alignment, degree transfer

and attainment, apprenticeships, and the development of a career ladder and competency-based coursework. Results of the survey from 16 campuses and 34 faculty will inform a convening of early childhood faculty on May 6, 2022. The convening will allow faculty to work collaboratively on issues related to developing professional pathways that are affordable and accessible in order to recruit and retain a diverse early childhood workforce.

Step Up to Quality revisions. In April 2021, the Nebraska Legislature passed Legislative Bill 351 (LB 351), which changed provisions relating to quality scale ratings under the Step Up to Quality Child Care Act. Thanks to LB 351, licensed child care providers in good standing can now keep their Step Up to Quality rating if they change license type. As noted in a policy brief released by First Five Nebraska, LB 351 removes one potential barrier to growth for quality child care programs and businesses in Nebraska. For more information, see First Five’s policy brief, *LB 351: Revising Step Up to Quality to promote quality, capacity* (https://www.firstfivenebraska.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Policy_Brief_LB351-Step-Up-to-Quality_Final_2.3.21_edit.pdf) and the Step Up to Quality website (<https://www.education.ne.gov/stepuptoquality/providers-educators/overview/>).

Publication of Nebraska Early Childhood Career Advising guide. With funding from PDG, the Buffett Institute documented early childhood programs across the state that lead to certificates, degrees, and teacher certification. This information was used to update the Nebraska Early Childhood Career Advising guide in cooperation with NDE. The guide, which includes information on the various roles in the early childhood field, salary and income information, and options for increasing education, is now available in both English and Spanish on NDE’s Career Development in Early Childhood Education webpage (<https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/career-development/>).

New Alliance for Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health. After many years of dedicated effort, the Nebraska Association for Infant Mental Health (NAIMH) joined the Alliance for the Advancement of Infant Mental Health. The Alliance is a nationally recognized organization that supports infant mental-health associations around the world to grow the professional knowledge, skills, and recognition of professionals working with infants and young children. As part of the Alliance, Nebraska can now offer Endorsement®, which is intended to recognize competency in the infant, young-child family field. The Competency Guidelines® provide a shared set of standards across multiple disciplines and service delivery systems (promotion, prevention/early intervention, intervention, and leadership), which makes this specific set of competencies unique and valuable for supporting early childhood mental health across Nebraska. Sami Bradley, assistant vice president for early childhood mental health at Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, and Holly Hatton-Bowers, assistant professor at UNL, are the co-leads of NAIMH and have been moving the work forward with planning. (NOTE: The information provided here is from the December 2021 PDG Newsletter: <https://www.nebraskachildren.org/what-we-do/preschool-development-grant/pdg-progress.html>.)

Goal 2. Early care and education in Nebraska will be fully funded by 2030.

Rollout of Legislative Resolution 390 (LR 390) report. On Feb. 16, 2021, Senator John Stinner publicly released the interim study report authorized by LR 390 and conducted by the Legislature’s

Appropriations Committee. Entitled *Examination of the Fiscal and Economic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce and the Early Childhood Care and Education System*, the report addressed impacts of the pandemic as well as the requirements of a fully funded early childhood system. The work of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission, and in particular, the work informing Goal 2, was foundational to LR 390.

Continuation of the Governance and Finance Task Force. In addition to a call to fully fund Nebraska's early childhood system (Goal 2), the commission report also recommends developing the infrastructure needed to implement the commission's goals and recommendations (Goal 4). As part of the PDG effort, a stakeholder task force, known as the Governance and Finance Task Force, was launched by First Five Nebraska in September 2020. In 2021, the task force explored Nebraska's early childhood financing practices, related regulatory barriers, and promising models of early childhood governance. Several members of the commission served on the task force and its workgroups, engaging in discussions designed to (1) develop a detailed concept for a shared leadership model of the early care and education system in Nebraska, and (2) develop a plan to coordinate and align early care and education revenue streams from disparate sources. The work of the task force provides a sound starting point for state agencies seeking to align their investments with Nebraska's young children.

Planned updates to the funding landscape technical report. The work of the task force is informed by a funding landscape technical report, *Nebraska's Public Investment in Early Childhood Care and Education, Fiscal Year 2017*, developed by Cathey Huddleston-Casas, associate director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, and Jen Goettemoeller, consultant, with assistance from colleagues from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. The FY 2017 report—the first in a series of reports to track Nebraska's investment in early care and education (ECE)—outlines the flow of public dollars through Nebraska's ECE system. An outgrowth of the groundwork done to inform commission goals and recommendations, this report has been used to inform efforts to stabilize, reform, and strengthen financing of the ECE system. Release of reports for FY 2019 and FY 2021 are expected in 2022. The FY 2017 report is available at https://issuu.com/buffettearlychildhoodinstitute/docs/workforce_funding_report_final.

National dissemination of commission's funding work. Nebraska is receiving national attention for its comprehensive approach to funding ECE. For example, drawing from the LR 390 report and the funding landscape technical report, Huddleston-Casas and Goettemoeller, in collaboration with Elena Montoya from the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment in Berkeley, California, led a presentation and discussion about the impacts of COVID-19 on early educators in Nebraska and California on April 28, 2021, at the 21st T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® and Child Care WAGE\$® 2021 National Professional Development Symposium, which focused on *Supporting the Essential Early Childhood Workforce Behind the Workforce*.

Child Care Stabilization Program. The Child Care Stabilization Program, established by Section 2202 of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act signed into law on March 11, 2021, provides approximately \$24 billion for child care organizations, of which approximately \$140 million has been allocated to the

State of Nebraska (<https://coronavirus.nebraska.gov/childcare>). These funds can be used by child care programs to cover expenses such as mortgage, utilities, sanitation supplies, and personnel costs. Almost 2,000 awards have been made across the state providing much-needed help to Nebraska's child care programs.

Investment brief on use of federal relief funds for Nebraska's early care and education system. With the influx of one-time funds available to Nebraska through the American Rescue Plan, numerous proposals for spending the funds have been put forward for consideration. Among these, four provide Nebraska a unique opportunity to maximize long-term sustainability of quality early care and education by directly supporting the early care and education workforce. This was summarized in the investment brief, *Using Short-Term Investments to Leverage Long-Term Sustainability: Supporting the Early Childhood Workforce With Federal Relief Funds* (<https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/-/media/beci/docs/elevating-ece-workforce-with-arpa-funds-10-19-2021.pdf?la=en>), written by Susan Sarver, director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Institute, and Huddleston-Casas. See also the related news article, *Federal Money Is Available to Help the Struggling Child Care System. Investing in the Early Childhood Workforce Can Pay Off Long-Term* (<https://buffettinstitute.nebraska.edu/news-and-events/early-years-matter/federal-money-is-available-to-help-the-struggling-child-care-system>).

Expansion of Child Care Subsidy. As of Aug. 28, 2021, more Nebraska families are eligible for child care subsidy thanks to newly expanded income guidelines. This expansion, introduced through LB 485 (Senator Wendy DeBoer), is scheduled to be available through Sept. 30, 2023. Under these new rules, families with incomes up to 185% of the federal poverty level—or about \$4,000 per month for a family of four—are now eligible for subsidy (<https://nebraskaearly.org/innovating-child-care-subsidy-pie-for-providers/>).

Involvement in national project, Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation. The Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children (<https://www.nebraskaeaeyc.org>) is participating in a project, Moving the Needle on Early Childhood Workforce Compensation, funded by the Child Care Services Association and T.E.A.CH. Early Childhood National Center. The goal is to address early childhood educator preparation, compensation, and/or retention/recruitment through the development of new strategies, more informed public policies, and/or increased funding within participating states, given the current pandemic realities within these states.

Team of University of Nebraska scholars assembled to develop the Early Childhood Evidence-Based Investment Dashboard© (E-BID©). A team of scholars received an NU Collaboration grant to lay the groundwork for developing an investment dashboard. E-BID aims to provide local, regional, and state leaders with the information they need to make informed decisions about where and how to invest in early childhood education to stimulate economic growth while improving access to quality ECE. The project is led by the Buffett Institute's Cathey Huddleston-Casas in collaboration with faculty representing four other university centers, including Catherine Lang, state director of the Nebraska Business Development Center (NBDC), UNO; Kathleen Lodl, associate dean in the Nebraska Extension Office, UNL; Eric Thompson, associate professor of economics and director of the Nebraska Bureau of

Business Research, UNL; and Morgan Vogel, research associate, Center for Public Affairs Research, UNO. The team is actively seeking external funding to develop and pilot E-BID.

Goal 3. Nebraska will champion high-quality early care and education and the critical role of the workforce in young children’s learning and development.

Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign. In alignment with Goal 3 of the commission’s report, the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan calls for a statewide effort to create awareness and shared commitment to the fact that everyone—including parents, families, early childhood providers, schools, businesses, community leaders, state agencies, elected officials, and nonprofit organizations—has a vested interest in supporting the healthy development and learning of each child. With a goal of building support for quality early childhood care and education, the Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign (PDG Activity 3e) will support public awareness efforts that center on educating parents and families, among others, about quality early care and education programs and services—including the critical role of the early childhood workforce.

The Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign is led by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute. Conceptualized as a broad collaborative effort of the Institute and its public- and private-sector partners, formal planning for the campaign began with an audit of current communication efforts related to early childhood services and resources in Nebraska. Outcomes, which were summarized in the *Audit of Early Childhood Communications in Nebraska* released in July 2021, are informing the planning and development of materials and strategies for the campaign. The Institute also spent part of 2021 developing a campaign plan that will drive the campaign implementation efforts.

In December 2021, Neimand Collaborative was hired to implement the campaign after an extensive public search process through the University of Nebraska. Neimand Collaborative is a social impact firm with substantial expertise in early childhood and has worked with clients such as Professor James Heckman (*The Heckman Equation*) and the First Five Years Fund. In the first month of the contract, Neimand Collaborative hired Nebraska native Kara Ficke as campaign manager. In early 2022, Neimand Collaborative worked with New Bridge Strategy to conduct statewide market research and message testing that will be used to inform campaign messaging and strategy. Neimand Collaborative also secured KidGlov, a Lincoln-based agency, to assist with campaign implementation.

In February, the Campaign Advisory Group convened for the first time, marking the soft launch of the campaign. The Campaign Advisory Group consists of approximately 20 members, including several who also were part of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission. This key group of stakeholders will provide important feedback and counsel throughout the life of the campaign and will serve as ambassadors for the campaign, helping to share, amplify, and drive engagement across the state. The advisory group will assist in engaging networks to maximize Nebraska’s strengths and resources in support of outreach and dissemination of materials.

The Institute and Neimand Collaborative will move quickly in the upcoming months to finalize the campaign name, secure a media purchasing partner, and hire an evaluation partner. Full campaign

implementation is slated for May 2022 with an anticipated campaign sunset in December 2023 and evaluation completed in April 2024.

Nebraska's Early Childhood Communications Roundtable. To promote ongoing coordination and collaboration among communications colleagues engaged in early childhood work across the state, a Communications Roundtable was established. The roundtable brings together communications personnel from six organizations, including the Institute, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative, First Five Nebraska, and Nebraska Community Foundation. The roundtable convenes monthly to discuss shared communication objectives and strategies focused on building support for quality early care and education in Nebraska, including strategies to help elevate Nebraska's early childhood workforce.

Goal 4. Nebraskans will implement the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission's recommendations to achieve a highly qualified and diverse workforce on behalf of all young children and their families.

Implementation Matrix and Advisory Group. The PDG-funded Workforce Commission Implementation initiative (PDG Activity 4a) is focused on developing and implementing the statewide infrastructure needed to fulfill the vision and goals of the commission report. This initiative is led by Susan Sarver and Cama Charlet, manager of early childhood workforce initiatives at the Buffett Institute. In alignment with the commission report, they are working to ensure that implementation efforts build upon, rather than compete with, ongoing improvement initiatives. Organizations already engaged in change efforts related to the early childhood workforce were invited to complete a questionnaire asking project leads to identify whether their work aligns with the goals and recommendations of the commission report, and if so, how. The information gathered from this questionnaire was used to develop an implementation matrix, which was completed in early 2021.

Going forward, the implementation matrix will guide efforts to develop an infrastructure that honors the ongoing coordination, collaboration, and communication necessary to implement the commission's recommendations with fidelity. The organizational leads who have identified their work as aligning to the commission's goals will be invited to participate in the implementation advisory group, which will convene in early 2022. The implementation advisory group will seek to align ongoing efforts to elevate Nebraska's early childhood workforce and prioritize implementation efforts.

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre. Throughout the life of the commission, members emphasized the importance of authentically engaging stakeholders in the implementation of recommendations. Clearly, any effort to strengthen and expand the state's early childhood workforce requires leadership from the workforce itself. In 2021, Charlet led an effort to create the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre, which launched in February 2022.

Broad Initiatives Addressing All Four Commission Goals

Implementation of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan. Throughout 2021 and continuing into 2022, Nebraskans have been engaged in efforts to further develop the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan, with a focus on identifying strategies and action plans for accomplishing its goals. Stakeholders have been invited to participate in conversations to ensure that the plan addresses the priorities and needs of Nebraskans in diverse and unique communities across the state. These conversations include questions about what success consists of and how changes can be measured, helping to ensure that Nebraska has the capacity to evaluate progress and make data-informed decisions about how to improve early childhood services. This integrated and collaborative approach to needs assessment, strategic planning, and performance evaluation is designed to help ensure that Nebraska creates sustainable change at the community and state levels. Coordinators of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan continue to seek stakeholder engagement. Learn more at NEarlychildhoodplan.org.

Continued Development of the Nebraska Child Care Referral Network. The Nebraska Child Care Referral Network is an example of a collaborative and coordinated effort to promote quality early care and education in response to the child care crisis that emerged when pandemic restrictions were implemented. In 2020, individuals and organizations from the public and private sectors collaborated to build the network website, which provides a searchable database of licensed child care providers and programs across the state. In 2021, partners used CARES funds to continue developing the website. All licensed child care programs are integrated into the site, and providers can register on the site and create a profile to provide additional information beyond what is available on the child care roster. Refinements and additions to the site are ongoing, including school-based before and after school programs. Collaborations are in the works to encourage more providers to sign up for profiles on the site and to generate greater awareness of the site among parents. The referral network can be found at <https://www.nechildcarereferral.org/>. Links to the website are also available on the Nebraska Department of Education website at <https://www.education.ne.gov/oec/child-care-resource-and-referral/>.

Communities for Kids Plus (C4K+) expansion. In 2021, 27 communities across Nebraska received funding from the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation's Communities for Kids Plus (C4K+) program to hire local early childhood community coordinators. They coordinate resources and expertise, and they engage with other leaders across their communities to implement locally developed plans for increasing quality and capacity in the communities' early childhood systems. The coordinators gather twice per month virtually to share ideas and learn from each other, contribute to evaluation efforts, and receive technical assistance. These meetings are facilitated by leadership and peer-engagement consultants from Mission Matters. (See also PDG Newsletter from February 2021 at <file:///C:/Users/ssarver/AppData/Local/Temp/PDG%20Newsletter%20February%202021%202.pdf> and *Communities for Kids Translates Passion and Knowledge into Action* on the NCFB blog at <https://blog.nebraskachildren.org/2021/12/08/communities-for-kids-translates-passion-and-knowledge-into-action/>.)

Together, these broad, collaborative initiatives, and many other efforts across Nebraska, are helping to advance the goals identified in the commission report.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2021, commission members and the organizations they represent made significant strides in building the organizational capacity and statewide infrastructure necessary to implement the commission's recommendations and elevate Nebraska's early childhood workforce. In 2022–2023, several foundational implementation initiatives will continue and grow, as follows:

- Nebraskans will continue to engage in efforts to further develop the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan, with a focus on identifying strategies and action plans for accomplishing its goals. Stakeholders will be invited to participate in conversations to ensure that the plan addresses the priorities and needs of Nebraskans in diverse and unique communities across the state.
- Continued collaboration among institutions of higher education will focus on developing a *Responsive Equitable System for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers (RESPECT) across Nebraska*.
- Continued collaboration among partners at the University of Nebraska will lead to the development and pilot testing of the Early Childhood Evidence-Based Investment Dashboard® (E-BID®), which will help leaders make informed decisions about how best to invest in early care and education to stimulate economic growth while improving access to quality ECE.
- Implementation of the statewide Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign will build support for quality early childhood care and education and the early childhood workforce.
- The Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre, a diverse group of early childhood professionals, birth through Grade 3, from across settings, will work together to collectively grow their capacity to lead change efforts in the communities where they live and work.
- The Implementation Advisory Group, composed of stakeholders from across Nebraska whose work is aligned with the commission's vision and goals, will work collaboratively to guide ongoing efforts to elevate Nebraska's early childhood workforce and prioritize implementation activities.

Help Spread the Word

This update presents just a snapshot of what is happening now and a small glimpse of what is yet to come in this growing effort to elevate the early childhood workforce in Nebraska. Going forward, commission members are invited to help spread the word and shine the spotlight on authentic partnerships that contribute to elevating the state's early childhood workforce.

You can help spread the word in several ways, including the following:

- Follow the [Buffett Institute](#) on social media for implementation updates and share with your networks.
- Continue to share copies of the commission's report, *Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce*, when presenting or communicating with stakeholders. If you need hard copies sent to you, please reach out to beci@nebraska.edu. A virtual copy and supporting materials can be found [here](#).

- Read the findings of the [legislative interim study report \(LR 390\)](#) and [contact your state senator's office](#) to show your support of the findings.
- Read the [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan Executive Summary](#) to learn more about the overarching vision to provide all Nebraska children and their families with access to quality early childhood care and education and other essential services that support children's healthy development from birth through age 8. Then share the plan using the supporting materials available at [NEarlychildhoodplan.org](#).
- Join the ongoing conversations with stakeholders to further develop the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan, with a focus on identifying strategies and action plans for accomplishing its goals. To view a calendar of upcoming engagement events, click [here](#).
- Save the date for the 2022 Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference, to be held on Sept. 19 in Kearney, Nebraska. Join community leaders, including those in education, economic development, child care, business, government, health care, higher education, and philanthropy, for a day of learning on key research, program, policy, and outreach aspects of high-quality early childhood education programs and services and their important role in economic development.
- Save the date for the early childhood higher education convening, Transforming Early Childhood Teacher Preparation through RESPECT, on May 6, 2022, in Lincoln. Share stories about your work. The Buffett Institute seeks input from commission members about ongoing partnerships and collaborations that contribute to elevating the workforce, as well as ideas about new partnerships that may be needed. To see your work highlighted in future updates, please send a brief summary (150 words or less) to [Cama Charlet](#) at the Buffett Institute. Please also include links to any relevant publications, events, or opportunities to get involved.

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