

Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce

Report and Recommendations
of the Nebraska Early Childhood
Workforce Commission

THREE-YEAR UPDATE

MARCH 2023



THREE-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](#). Just a few weeks later, Nebraska issued its first Directed Health Measure, closing schools and businesses to limit the spread of COVID-19. Very quickly, the pandemic made it abundantly clear that Nebraska's early childhood workforce was indeed a priority profession. Since then, the pandemic and its aftermath have both exposed and exacerbated funding problems in the system and elevated the urgent need for quality services for children and families in communities across the state.

Building on the collaborative relationships established through the commission, commission members and the organizations they represent acted quickly to address some of the most urgent needs of Nebraska's early childhood workforce. And today, they continue to engage in collaborative statewide efforts to elevate the workforce and to build the infrastructure and capacity Nebraska needs to support early childhood educators in providing quality early care and education to every child. Several of these ongoing efforts support the goals articulated in the commission's report.

In this document, the following updates are provided:

- Highlights of 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 2023
- An invitation to share your work and help us shine a 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.

SELECTED COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES TO ELEVATE THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE: APRIL 2022–FEBRUARY 2023

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 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 and with checkmarks indicating 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 strategic plan, each initiative also addresses additional goals across both statewide efforts, as shown in the table.

Selected Collaborative Initiatives (April 2022–February 2023) 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
Responsive Equitable Systems for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers (RESPECT) across Nebraska	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Step Up to Quality 2.0	✓				✓			
Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Network	✓				✓	✓		
Updated funding landscape technical reports and new Nebraska Early Childhood Funding Map	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to Stabilize Child Care	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
LR 378: Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Study	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños Campaign			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2022 Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska Early Childhood Champion Awards			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Workforce Commission Implementation initiative (PDG Activity 4a)				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Nebraska COVID-19 Early Care and Education Provider Survey III				✓	✓			
Implementation of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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.

Responsive Equitable System for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers. In support of Goal 1, the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska (the Institute) has worked with colleagues across the university and the state to establish collaborative partnerships among institutions of higher education engaged in early childhood teacher preparation. In spring 2022, the Institute convened more than 70 higher education faculty from 15 colleges and universities across Nebraska for a full-day event, “Transforming Early Childhood Preparation With Respect: Opportunities to Challenge Our Problems of Practice.” Facilitated workshops throughout the day focused on problems of practice, as identified in a 2021 survey of higher education faculty and the recommendations of the Workforce Commission.

The convening also served as a first step in launching Responsive Equitable Systems for Preparing Early Childhood Teachers (RESPECT) across Nebraska. Funded by a grant from the Early Educator Investment Collaborative and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, RESPECT is a collaborative effort led by Julia Torquati, professor in the Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies and Buffett Institute Community Chair at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, who serves as the principal investigator. In addition to UNL, the partnership includes representatives from the University of Nebraska at Omaha and the University of Nebraska at Kearney; all six community colleges, including Metropolitan Community College 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 and Little Priest Tribal College. Other core partners include the Institute, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), Nebraska Council on Teacher Education, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children. 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).

The RESPECT initiative is designed to transform Nebraska’s system for preparing early childhood educators and ensuring access to education and certification. The project aims to dramatically affect the structure of early childhood teacher preparation by (1) building a competency-based framework that defines common expectations for educator preparation, credentialing, and licensing across all early childhood settings; (2) collaborating with local communities to ensure that competency-based curriculum and accessible pathways are implemented in ways that are contextually grounded and culturally relevant; and (3) developing accessible pathways and support mechanisms to ensure that all members of Nebraska’s early childhood workforce have equitable opportunities to earn a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education and teaching certification.

Step Up to Quality 2.0. Nebraska’s quality rating and improvement system, Step Up to Quality, introduced several new components in 2022 in preparation for the release of [Step Up to Quality 2.0](#), which was launched Feb. 1, 2023. The changes were based on input from Nebraska’s early childhood workforce and are designed to better serve the needs of all providers, including home-based providers. Changes launched in 2022 include providing earlier coaching for enrolled providers and implementing the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale. In addition, the Step Up to Quality team launched [This is](#)

[Your Quality Time](#), a podcast just for Nebraska’s early childhood education professionals. Step Up to Quality is administered by NDE and DHHS.

Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Network. Coaching is an evidence-based approach to helping early childhood providers develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to equitably support all children and families in their care. With PDG funds, Nebraska is building the infrastructure needed to increase equitable access to quality coaching for early childhood professionals across the state. Led by NDE, the Coach Development Network includes representatives from several organizations involved in early childhood coaching across the state, including Rooted in Relationships, Head Start, Sixpence, Step Up to Quality, and Kids Squad. Working together, network members mapped the state into five regions, and a coaching consultant was assigned to each region. These regional consultants assess coaching strengths and needs and help coordinate responsive resources, supports, and opportunities for peer collaboration among early childhood professionals in their region. The network also connects coaches to resources and opportunities available through state-level organizations. In August 2022, the network released *The Nebraska Early Childhood Coaching Guidebook: Competencies for Professional Practice*, which is available on the [Coach Development Network website](#).

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

Updated funding landscape technical reports and new Nebraska Early Childhood Funding Map. A collaborative team led by Cathey Huddleston-Casas, associate director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute, and Jen Goettemoeller Wendl, consultant—with assistance from colleagues from DHHS, NDE, and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation—are tracking investments across the entire early childhood education system of direct service delivery, workforce supports, and quality assurance and improvement for each biennial budget of the Nebraska Legislature. Building on the public-sector investment baseline established in *Nebraska’s Public Investment in Early Childhood Care and Education, Fiscal Year 2017: Technical Report*, the team is following how public-sector funding provided via 15 finance mechanisms changes over time. This data will serve as an indicator of how allocation and distribution of investments in quality early childhood care and education reflect efforts to align policy and regulations across the mixed-delivery system.

In early 2023, the team released technical reports for fiscal years 2019 and 2021 and prepared for the launch the Nebraska Early Childhood Funding Map, an interactive web-based tool that enables users to highlight individual funding streams while still viewing the overall complexity of the fiscal situation. Data from fiscal years 2017, 2019, and 2021 will be available in this tool. Approaching the funding of the system from a holistic, yet granular, view allows policymakers and researchers to visualize inequities as well as opportunities for policy and budget corrections. For example, the tool makes immediately apparent that home-based professionals do not have access to as many funding streams as center-based professionals, which presents a striking policy dilemma given the very high percentage of children who are in home-based care in Nebraska.

Distribution of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds to Stabilize Child Care. ARPA provided much-needed one-time support to help early care and education providers recover from the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services initiated

various processes to distribute these funds to providers. In April 2022, DHHS offered a second opportunity and expanded eligibility for providers to apply for [Child Care Stabilization Grants](#), and most Nebraska counties (86%) have received funds (see [Nebraska ARP Child Care Stabilization Fact Sheet](#)). Additional funds are being released to directly support the early care and education workforce through [Nebraska Child Care Workforce Stipend and Loan Repayment Grants](#).

LR 378: Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Study. Legislative Resolution 378 (LR 378) was introduced to the Nebraska Legislature in spring 2022, calling for an interim study to examine methods of setting child care subsidy reimbursement rates in Nebraska. First Five Nebraska collaborated with Pillars Research and Strategy to conduct the study, which was released in October 2022. The policy brief and the full report, *Setting Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates: Nebraska’s market rate survey and other methodologies*, are available on First Five’s website ([Reports and Publications page](#)). As noted in the policy brief, “Nebraska’s process for setting child care subsidy reimbursement rates directly influences the viability of our state’s early childhood programs and the working families who depend upon them. We must ensure our process for setting reimbursement rates reflects the changing economic realities faced by child care providers and this critically important industry as a whole.” The interim study provides the data policymakers need to make informed decisions about subsidy reimbursement rates.

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.

We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños 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. In response, We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños was launched in 2022.

We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños is a collaborative statewide campaign to build support for quality early childhood education for all Nebraska families and raise awareness concerning the important role of early childhood educators in ensuring that children, families, and communities thrive. A Campaign Advisory Group that includes 25 Nebraskans was first convened in February 2022 and continues to provide important feedback and counsel to the campaign. Advisory group members serve as ambassadors for the effort, helping to share, amplify, and encourage engagement across the state. The campaign launched publicly in June 2022 with a statewide virtual event kicked off by University of Nebraska System President Ted Carter that featured a panel of state and community leaders who are involved with the campaign.

Notably, the campaign is offered in two languages, and *Por todos los niños* provides Spanish-language materials and resources to reach Nebraska’s growing Latino population. In addition to websites in English and Spanish, the campaign has developed print, radio, and video ads and public service announcements as part of a robust paid, statewide media plan, and focuses extensively on digital communications to reach families in ways that are most effective for them. Campaign staff work across the state to build new relationships with key organizations in the field and employ grassroots efforts to

engage and organize Nebraska parents, families, educators, and leaders. Virtual town hall meetings highlight local and state voices; the inaugural town hall meeting that was held during We Care for Kids Week in September 2022 attracted nearly 7,500 Nebraskans who logged on to hear from a panel of education, community, and parent leaders and have their questions answered in an engaging hourlong session.

The Buffett Institute coordinates the campaign in association with external communications and media firms, and dozens of organizations from across the state participate as campaign partners. The campaign is research-based and includes a comprehensive evaluation being conducted by the University of Nebraska Medical Center's College of Public Health that is designed to inform subsequent phases of the campaign. All efforts are being documented so that our experience in Nebraska will be useful to others.

Funding for the campaign is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Preschool Development Grant, which is administered by DHHS in partnership with NDE and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation. Additional funding is provided by the Holland Foundation and the Buffett Institute.

2022 Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference. Since its inception in 2018, the Thriving Children Conference has emphasized partnerships, elevated local voices, and provided much-needed time and space for community leaders from across Nebraska to collaborate and learn from each other, share success stories, and offer solutions to common challenges such as workforce retention and child care shortages. The conference has grown dramatically over the past five years, including during the COVID-19 pandemic when the conference was forced online for two years. The fifth annual conference, held in September 2022, attracted 670 registrants from 108 Nebraska communities, 30 states, and six countries.

In each of the five years of the conference, the Institute has partnered with Communities for Kids, an initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, to host a second day of learning and planning with a smaller number of communities that are working more intensively on community-driven strategies for improving early childhood care and education in their communities. In 2022, more than 250 community leaders from 49 communities participated in this "Day Two" experience.

Nebraska Early Childhood Champion Awards. In fall 2022, the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative and the We Care for Kids campaign launched the Early Childhood Champions Awards to highlight the importance of the early childhood workforce. Each month for 12 months, two winners are selected from a pool of early childhood professionals who were nominated by their communities to receive the award. Each winner receives a \$1,000 gift and a plaque in honor of their commitment to excellence and service to their communities. Winners are featured on the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative website (see, for example, the [February 2023 Early Childhood Champions page](#)).

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.

Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre. From the beginning, 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, the Buffett Institute led an effort to create the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre, which was first convened in February 2022 and continues to meet quarterly. Twenty-six cadre members were chosen from a pool of more than 250 applicants. These early childhood educators are highly skilled professionals and innovative leaders in their field, representing diverse communities across the state.

The Institute’s role in convening the cadre is to provide the supports, resources, and coordination necessary to help cadre members engage with one another in ongoing professional learning that elevates their teaching skills and increases their capacity to create change at the systems level in the communities where they work and live. This approach is informed by such approaches as collective impact, human-centered design, and design thinking. Members of the cadre play a central role in designing meeting agendas and cadre activities, with facilitation and support provided by the Institute. The current needs of the early childhood workforce, including such topics as limited staffing and funding, also inform both meeting content and processes.

As cadre participants move from the learning phase into the design, prototyping, and implementation of impact projects, Institute staff will continue to play a supportive role. In this way, we are providing early childhood professionals with the resources, skills, and knowledge to narrow opportunity gaps through high-quality teaching and learning, while also amplifying their voices as change leaders in their field.

Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS). The commission also called for developing and implementing the statewide infrastructure needed to help policymakers and stakeholders make informed decisions about early childhood care and education. ECIDS (pronounced “e-kids”), is a key piece of this developing infrastructure. ECIDS represents a collaboration between state agencies, providers, organizations, and communities to collect, connect, integrate, and report information about the early childhood population and programs across Nebraska. ECIDS will use a hybrid, federated architecture to link data across systems and will protect privacy by honoring the data access rules from the source systems. ECIDS is designed to equip communities with the data and information necessary to deliver and coordinate early childhood services by informing decision-making at the state, community, and program levels.

In 2022–23, the ECIDS team completed initial discovery sessions, in which they engaged with stakeholders on issues related to system requirements, configuration, and design. This included refining and prioritizing use requirements. The team also began building the technical infrastructure for ECIDS and is actively working on data-sharing agreements for the data included in the first phase of ECIDS development. Going forward, the team will continue engaging with stakeholder groups to ensure the project is meeting their needs. *(Note: The information provided here is from the [ECIDS website](#) and “News and Updates for ECIDS Nebraska, January 2023” newsletter.)*

Communities for Kids Early Childhood Community Coordinators. The commission’s recommendations are grounded in a commitment to build upon the resources and strengths found in local communities across the state. Funded in part by PDG and led by Communities for Kids, Nebraska’s Early Childhood Community Coordinators collaborate with stakeholders in local communities to build sustainable early childhood systems that leverage community strengths and meet community needs. Embedded in the

communities in which they work, the coordinators work with community stakeholders—including early childhood providers, families, and community leaders—to build partnerships and coordinate resources, planning, and support at the local, regional, and state levels. Highlights of recent coordinator efforts are summarized on the [Communities for Kids blog](#).

Broad Initiatives Addressing All Four Commission Goals

Workforce Commission Implementation. The PDG-funded Workforce Commission Implementation initiative (PDG Activity 4a) is focused on developing, implementing, and sustaining the statewide infrastructure needed to fulfill the vision and goals of the commission report. Susan Sarver, director of workforce planning and development at the Buffett Institute, leads the initiative, which seeks to engage partners and stakeholders across Nebraska in collaborative, integrative, and systems-based improvement initiatives, such as those described throughout this update.

Implementation efforts are grounded in a commitment to consistently and authentically engage early childhood professionals in the work of elevating the profession. This means that early childhood professionals are involved in creating solutions, rather than just identifying problems or reacting to proposed solutions. In 2022–23, early childhood professionals were engaged in the RESPECT initiative, efforts to improve Step Up to Quality, the Coach Development Network, and the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre.

The ongoing and emergent implementation work also depends on developing and sustaining authentic and trusting collaborative relationships across multiple, diverse sectors—including early care and education, K–12, higher education, public policymakers, state regulatory agencies, businesses, philanthropic organizations, and families in communities across the urban to rural continuum. Several of the initiatives described here, from the Child Care Subsidy Reimbursement Rates Study to the We Care for Kids Campaign, provide evidence of authentic, ongoing, and growing collaborations to elevate Nebraska’s early childhood workforce.

The Nebraska COVID-19 Early Care and Education Provider Survey III. Inherent in the commission’s recommendations is the understanding that early childhood professionals need to be well to do well. To ensure that Nebraska’s early childhood professionals are well prepared and equitably compensated and supported in their work, the Institute conducts surveys and research related to elevating the well-being of the early childhood workforce. The intent is to deepen understanding of Nebraska’s early childhood workforce and to develop innovative evidence-based solutions for the challenges they face.

The COVID-19 pandemic both exposed and exacerbated funding problems in Nebraska’s early childhood system and elevated the urgent need for quality services for children and families in communities across the state. Building on the collaborative relationships and shared understandings established through the commission, the Institute developed and distributed surveys to examine the early and ongoing impact of the pandemic on child care professionals across the state. The first two COVID surveys were distributed in 2020, and a third survey was conducted in February 2022. Results of the third survey were released in May 2022.

The survey found that two-thirds of providers had experienced income reductions in the previous year and that staff turnover among center-based providers was very high. Among the nearly 240 early childhood center directors who responded to the survey, 92% reported having difficulty hiring staff. These findings confirmed that Nebraska’s early care and education workforce continues to experience incredible stress in the context of the pandemic and its aftermath. This COVID-related stress intensifies existing challenges, including poor funding and compensation, high job stress, and policies that do not support small businesses. Child care providers are essential to Nebraska’s communities and economy, and many are struggling physically, emotionally, and financially.

Among early childhood organizations across the state, responses to findings from the COVID-19 surveys included calls for new funding, state policy changes, and increased resources for providers and families seeking child care. Government agencies mobilized to shift subsidy reimbursements for child care businesses so they would receive payment based on enrollment rather than attendance. Informed by the COVID-19 provider surveys and an increased appreciation for elevating the voice of providers, state agencies and organizations initiated listening efforts and are incorporating provider perspectives into the ongoing funding and policy efforts to support Nebraska’s child care system.

COVID-19 resources, including survey findings, are available on the Buffett Institute website.

Implementation of the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan. Throughout 2022, Nebraskans engaged in conversations to ensure that the Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan aligned to communities’ priorities and to identify additional strategies and action plans to accomplish the plan’s goals. These conversations included 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. These meetings reflect a commitment to elevate the voices of people across the state—including those living in rural areas, people of color, Indigenous people, families of children with disabilities, and more—and to include their perspectives and priorities in the revised plan, which will be released in 2023. Learn more at NEarlychildhoodplan.org.

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 2022, 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 2023–24, several foundational implementation initiatives will continue and grow, as follows:

- The RESPECT team will continue collaborative efforts to transform the structure of early childhood teacher preparation in Nebraska.
- Step Up to Quality 2.0 will provide improved services, including earlier coaching, to support early childhood professionals in developing the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need to deliver quality care and education to the children and families they serve.

- The Nebraska Early Childhood Coach Development Network will continue providing resources and support to increase equitable access to quality coaching for early childhood professionals across the state.
- The Nebraska Early Childhood Funding Map will provide policymakers and other stakeholders with the data they need to make informed decisions about the allocation and distribution of investments in Nebraska’s early childhood care and education system.
- Nebraska will continue to champion high-quality early care and education and the critical role of the workforce in young children’s learning and development through the statewide We Care for Kids/Por todos los niños campaign.
- The 2023 Thriving Children, Families, and Communities Conference will bring Nebraskans together to collaborate and learn from each other.
- Members of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Leadership Cadre will implement projects designed to make systems-level changes in the communities where they work and live.
- The development of the Nebraska Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) will continue, and data use agreements will be developed for the initial ECIDS development phase.
- Early Childhood Community Coordinators will continue collaborating with stakeholders to build sustainable early childhood systems that are responsive to the unique strengths and needs of communities across the state.

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.

Nebraskans 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. To request hard copies, please reach out to buffettinstitute@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.
- Save the date for the 2023 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.

- 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 [Susan Sarver](#) at the Buffett Institute. Please also include links to any relevant publications, events, or opportunities to get involved.

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