

NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

The Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign is a statewide collaborative effort designed to build support for quality early childhood care and education in Nebraska. Principal funding is provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' [Preschool Development Grant](#) (PDG). Eleven Nebraska organizations are included in the grant, all seeking to ensure that Nebraska children and their families can access quality early childhood services to support healthy development from birth through age 8.

One of the key tasks of the Preschool Development Grant is to design and implement a statewide communications campaign. This work is being led by the [Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska](#) in collaboration with many other organizations and consultants. Building upon the strengths, resources, materials, and committed personnel in Nebraska today, the campaign will help strengthen public understanding and appreciation of quality early care and education for young children across the state. The Buffett Institute has teamed with [Neimand Collaborative](#), a nationally recognized social impact firm with extensive experience in early care and education, to implement the campaign in collaboration with other early childhood and communications partners.

Beginning in 2021, several months of research and planning were devoted to developing a comprehensive campaign plan. Those efforts were informed by input from partners, stakeholders, and review of a wide range of materials and resources concerning early childhood care and education in Nebraska, including:

- [Nebraska Early Childhood Strategic Plan](#) – The campaign directly aligns with this statewide plan, made possible by PDG, and continues to be refined by stakeholders across the state.
- [PDG Needs Assessment](#) – This critical component of the grant surveyed families and stakeholders across the state, providing data and information for the campaign. Ongoing data collection continues to inform campaign planning and implementation.
- [Elevating Nebraska's Early Childhood Workforce: Report and Recommendations of the Nebraska Early Childhood Workforce Commission](#) – Recommendations from this 3-year commission of more than 40 public and private sector leaders provide focus and direction for the campaign plan. Goal 3 of the commission's recommendations speaks directly to building public will and commitment in the state to support quality early care and education and the workforce that provides those services.

Campaign Audiences, Goal, and Objectives

Audiences

The campaign intends to reach Nebraskans across the state with a special emphasis on three primary groups, including:

- Parents and families
- Early childhood workforce
- Networks and organizations that engage influencers (defined as opinion and community leaders)

Goal and Objectives

The goal of the Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign is to build support for quality early childhood care and education in Nebraska. The campaign will focus on the following objectives:

- Promote an aligned understanding of quality in early childhood care and education
- Increase understanding and appreciation of the role of the early childhood workforce in providing quality care and education in Nebraska
- Expand recognition of the economic importance of quality early care and education and the early childhood workforce
- Build public will for access to quality early childhood care and education
- Increase communications capacity among campaign partners and collaborators to sustain and continue community engagement efforts made in public campaigns

To achieve this goal and these objectives, the campaign will:

- Promote a shared understanding between families and the field of the definition of quality early childhood care and education
- Empower parents and families to ask for access to quality
- Position the early childhood workforce as a critical provider of quality care other than the family
- Emphasize that access to quality for all children requires a well-trained and well-compensated workforce
- Provide parents and others with a website that is a clearinghouse for easy-to-find resources, information, and materials that present a cohesive picture of quality care to parents and the public
- Create and disseminate supplementary materials about quality care and the early years of life to Nebraska communities and partners
- Use existing networks, relationships, and aligned activities of partners to reach early childhood system leaders and policymakers

Communications and Marketing

The campaign will complement work already taking place by a wide range of collaborating organizations in Nebraska's early childhood community. New elements include:

- Market research to better understand audience attitudes and effective outreach strategies
- Message and materials development
- Building a website for sharing information and resources
- Direct outreach, advertising, and engagement
- Media and public relations
- Campaign evaluation and documentation

Campaign Advisory Group

The campaign will leverage the insights and partnership from a key group of statewide early childhood care and education stakeholders who are closely connected to Nebraska communities and families. This group 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.

Campaign Milestones

The campaign is planned as a robust and dynamic set of strategies and activities that build on a foundation of research, analysis, and feedback from a diverse set of stakeholders. It will fully launch in May 2022 and continue through December 2023. Milestones since the inception of the campaign include the following:

- **January 2020:** Nebraska is awarded \$8.9 million annually for three years by the federal Preschool Development Continuation Grant (PDG). The grant includes 27 projects across 11 organizations, including a statewide public outreach campaign that is led by the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska.
- **April 2020:** PDG formally begins amid the COVID-19 pandemic; supplemental funding is secured to support sustainability efforts
- **September–December 2020:** Staff is hired to assist with campaign planning; preliminary campaign outline is developed and shared with partners
- **January 2021:** Campaign planning groups are formed and early analysis of the PDG Needs Assessment takes place
- **March 2021:** Communications research is conducted, including a comprehensive audit of materials and messages related to early childhood care and education in Nebraska
- **May–August 2021:** Campaign plan is developed by Neimand Collaborative in consultation with key partners
- **December 2021:** Neimand Collaborative is hired to implement the campaign after a competitive RFP process
- **January 2022:** Statewide market research is undertaken and the Campaign Advisory Group is formed
- **February 2022:** Campaign Advisory Group becomes operational and reviews campaign plans and market research
- **March 2022:** Campaign name and messaging development
- **April 2022:** Campaign website and materials development
- **May 2022:** Campaign launches publicly
- **June 2022–December 2023:** Campaign implementation continues, and quarterly reports guide ongoing efforts. The Campaign Advisory Group meets quarterly to review progress and advise on campaign strategy.
- **December 2023:** Campaign concludes
- **January–March 2024:** Campaign evaluation and documentation occur and final report is produced

Join Us

The Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign will ultimately rely on the strength and energy of all Nebraska citizens to strengthen support for access to quality early childhood care and education for all Nebraska children. Outreach and engagement strategies will continue throughout the life of the campaign, and opportunities will be made available for Nebraskans to connect at the state and community levels in order to leverage the many related efforts of early childhood and community partners.

Please join this growing effort and become part of the Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign. A website will soon provide more information about the campaign and how to become engaged. For additional information, contact Kara Ficke, Nebraska Early Childhood Campaign Manager, 402-226-6500, kara@neimandcollaborative.com.