

ARPA Draft Recommendations – last updated 8.19.2021

Description of Visioning Work to Date

The Nonprofit Association of the Midlands (NAM) began working with Nebraska Children & Families Foundation (NCF), OpenSky Policy Institute (OSPI), Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations (NABHO), Strong Nebraska, and others to leverage the nonprofit organizations in the state of Nebraska to come together to make thoughtful and impactful recommendations for the ARPA funding at a state level.

Three(3), ninety-minute roundtables were hosted virtually by NAM. Core topic areas had been identified prior to the first Roundtable. Individuals were able to self-select which of the five possible topics they wanted to in small group discussions.

Recommendations

Early Childhood

1. Workforce Development

- a. Simplify the certification process for providers and educators by providing helplines and written materials in multiple languages
- b. Conduct a pilot study to understand workforce needs especially as they relate to diverse and underrepresented communities
- c. Provide enhanced scholarships and loan repayment and forgiveness options for early childhood educators
- d. Enhance mentorship and career ladder programs (i.e. funding for practicums and internships)
- e. Provide mental health supports for educators and their families
- f. Provide hiring and retention bonuses for educators
- g. Provide funding for enhanced professional development and training opportunities for educators with priority given to those serving underrepresented and complex need populations.
- h. Support the inclusion of family caregivers and advocates in professional development and training opportunities

2. Increase Support for Children with Special Needs

- a. Enhance state supports for providers concerning proper billing and service delivery practices
- b. Increase Child Care Subsidy program rates for providers serving children with special needs
- c. Provide enhanced funding for training on special education topics
- d. Provide funding/scholarships/tuition assistance to support special education certifications/endorsements.
- e. Provide dedicated hiring and retention bonus dollars for providers serving children with special needs

3. Build a Sustainable Data Infrastructure System for Early Childhood Providers

- a. Create a statewide early childhood integrated data system
- b. Enhance the Nebraska Early Childhood Professional Record System (NECPRS)
- c. Create an early childhood provider shared services alliance (SSA) in Nebraska (SSAs could provide support to providers through the centralization of administrative services, enhance economies of scale in purchasing, and the establishment of a centralized training and resource hub)

4. Increase Access to High Quality Broadband Technology

- a. Support provider access to educational technology (hardware/software) to support modern curriculum options and programming

- b. Support provider training in educational technology
- c. Emphasize technology assistance and training for in-home providers
- 5. Provide Home Visitation for New and Young Families**
 - a. Support universal newborn home visitation (i.e. in-home nurse visits to post-natal mothers)
- 6. Expand Subsidy for Early Childhood Programs**
 - a. Eliminate family copayments for care
 - b. Modify the attendance-only billing model (Child Care Subsidy Program providers can currently only bill for days children are in attendance. Allowing Subsidy Program providers to bill based on reservation harmonizes billing practices for those in the Subsidy Program with standard practices most commonly used by child care providers.)
 - c. Increase Subsidy Program enrollment outreach to reach underrepresented groups
 - d. Increase Subsidy Program provider reimbursement rates
 - e. Permanently increase Subsidy Program enrollment threshold to 200% FPL

Food.

- 1. Data collection and sharing platform to assist hunger relief organizations to inform clients of resources while also measuring impact of the work being done.**
- 2. Provide incentives to the food industry to donate healthy food to reduce food waste while assisting Nebraskans struggling with food insecurity.**
- 3. Address Food Deserts in the State of Nebraska**
 - a. Resources needed for learning and research
 - b. Incentives needed for businesses/industry partners
 - c. Infrastructure needed for updated technology and access

Health.

- 1. Increase Access to Same-day Primary Care, Mental Health and Substance abuse Providers**
 - a. Rural access, telehealth
 - b. Behavioral health access to services, particularly substance
 - c. Consumer access, uninsured and under-insured ease of access
- 2. Create a technology infrastructure that allows health care access in rural and urban communities that connects patients, providers, billing & insurers.**
 - a. Include education on how to use it and ensure cultural and linguistic accessibility
- 3. Provide broadband access statewide. Eliminate 'dead spots'.**
 - a. Build infrastructure to ensure broadband access in rural areas.
- 4. Create a targeted health literacy marketing campaign and build health literacy resources**
- 5. Nebraska will sustain & expand its healthcare workforce to meet the diverse needs of it's population, through....**
 - a. Student loan forgiveness & scholarships
 - b. Recruitment & Retention payments/bonuses/tax credits
 - c. Targeted recruiting efforts - diverse staff
 - d. Housing issues for people training in rural Nebraska
 - e. Marketing - Promote health care fields in demand & programs that support
 - f. High school - mentoring programs
 - g. Internships

Housing.

1. Provide financial support to agencies who can provide legal counsel for every tenant in need of representation in eviction court to protect individuals from unfair practices.
2. Provide educational outreach and prevention campaigns targeting landlords, property owners, and renters about tenant rights, legal and financial assistance, and diversion programs.
3. Provide rental assistance budget to cover non-payment of rent related for tenants facing economic hardship.
4. Expand the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) to include mortgage assistance and down payment assistance to first time home buyers.
5. Expand the area median income (AMI) and citizenship eligibility for ERAP.
6. Increase the current statewide funding for affordable housing development, including the Nebraska Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Rural Workforce Trust Fund, and the Middle-Income Workforce Housing Investment Fund.
7. Increase the supportive, disability access, family units, and universal design housing inventory to meet current demand of individuals experiencing homelessness, domestic violence, formerly incarcerated individuals, and larger families.
8. Make Rehabilitation Funds available for the maintenance of existing affordable housing-Keeping Housing up to code.

Workforce.

1. **Increase support to underrepresented communities to secure and maintain High Wage, High Demand and High Skilled Jobs.**
 - a. Include nontraditional career paths within the medical field
 - b. Mental health support for individuals looking for employment
 - c. Address barriers in regard to criminal history
 - d. Address barriers in regard to attaining certifications (income barriers)
2. **Create a pilot program for employers to access funds to invest in employees to access career and technical education for non-traditional career pathways**
 - a. Removes barriers to education and upskilling.
 - b. Puts the proximity of the problem more locally and allows communities to create strategies specific to their workforce
 - c. Puts individuals in our community better opportunities to provide for their family and themselves. Better able to create a different cycle for their family.
3. **Incentive individuals to start-up accessible (financially & transportation & hours of operation) childcare businesses in targeted communities.**
4. **Increase tax incentives for employers to hire higher-risk employees**
 - a. Onboarding is a large expense. Incentives could allow employers to take that risk that they wouldn't otherwise.
 - b. Fingerprinting is an additional cost as well. If employer could pay for fingerprinting. Streamline some of these processes.
 - c. Identify what programs already exist and how to enhance it, replicate it in areas where the funds do not exist (i.e., RHOP)
5. **Provide assistance to overcome barriers that make it difficult to access documents necessary to take part in federal programs (formerly foster care, homeless).**
 - a. Assistance to get them into the workforce.
 - b. Maximize programs already in existence.

- c. Funds to increase awareness regarding what is already available
- 6. **Examine, enhance, and build on current programs that offer these credentialing to move forward.**
- 7. **Expand access to broadband in rural communities.** (Determine how we can use these funds to underwrite “connection” in urban and rural areas.)
- 8. **Set up free and safe public Wi-Fi for people who cannot afford personal Wi-Fi**
- 9. **PSA campaign around diversity of career paths**
- 10. **Create a pipeline from education to workforce that supports open and available jobs**

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