

# Nebraska's Journey to Inclusive Literacy through Nebraska's Multi-Tiered Support System

## Table of Contents

I. Need for the Project.....	- 3 -
Weaknesses in Services, Infrastructure, and Opportunities Severity and Magnitude	
II. Quality of Project Design.....	- 9 -
Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes Logic Model Project Implementation Promising Evidence	
III. Quality of Management Plan.....	- 26 -
Gantt Chart Feedback and Continuous Improvement Key Project Personnel Subrecipient Monitoring	
IV. Quality of Project Services.....	- 39 -
Likely Impact of Services Improving Practice through Professional Learning Applying Up-to-Date Knowledge	
V. Quality of Project Evaluation.....	- 44 -
Thorough, Feasible, and Appropriate Evaluation Performance Feedback and Assessment of Progress	
Appendices.....	- 51 -



**NeMTSS**  
FRAMEWORK



# Nebraska's Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS

For over a decade, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has sought additional state and federal resources to ensure students can read at or above grade level. Beginning in 2011, NDE developed a Statewide Literacy Plan and application for a Comprehensive Literacy State Development (CLSD) grant. With the passage of the Nebraska Reading Improvement Act in 2018, NDE again requested a state literacy investment that was not fulfilled. NDE then made biennial budget requests in 2020 (denied) and 2022 (also denied).

Despite the legislature's refusal of critical resources to address systemic literacy needs and fulfill the requirements of the Reading Improvement Act, NDE created the NebraskaREADS initiative, developed rigorous content standards, and implemented Nebraska's Multi-Tiered System of Support (NeMTSS) Framework. This NeMTSS implementation focused on statewide accountability and supported districts with the selection and implementation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), creating small wins for Nebraska's readers.

In 2022, the legislature established a statewide goal: 70% of Nebraskans will attain a postsecondary diploma, degree, or credential of economic value by 2030. Nebraska's State Board of Education supported this goal with its own "Nebraska Ready" legislative priorities, naming the PK-12 policies and actions necessary to reach this goal. One such priority is to increase third-grade English Language Arts proficiency to 75% by 2030. This goal is fueling momentum and interest in statewide literacy and positioning NDE to enact a myriad of initiatives with CLSD partners such as Nebraska's Governor's Office, other state agencies, districts, Universities, early childcare programs, teachers, families, and public and private partners.

In 2023, NDE again made a push for transformative funding for literacy to Nebraska's legislature and achieved partial funding: a \$1.8 million appropriation for job-embedded

professional learning, literacy coaching, and family literacy<sup>1</sup> initiatives. In the same year, NDE leveraged state set-aside funding from three tranches of pandemic relief funds to support literacy initiatives. In fact, one such program has served nearly 34,000 children across 1,000 sites statewide, with a plan to distribute 800,000 books and eliminate Nebraska’s book deserts.

These investments still fall short of the resources needed for Nebraska’s readers to attain proficiency. With CLSD funding, Nebraska is poised to expand the reach of existing initiatives, strengthen literacy infrastructure, and ensure equitable implementation of best practices.

As evidenced by investments over the last five years, Nebraska’s proposal demonstrates a commitment to ensuring students have the literacy skills and resources necessary to become proficient readers, considering the needs of all students including students with disabilities, English learners, and those reading or writing below grade level. This proposal addresses **Competitive Preference Priorities 1 through 4** and the **Invitational Priority**. CLSD funding will allow NDE to significantly expand literacy efforts within the robust NeMTSS Framework.

## I. Need for the Project

**(A) Weaknesses in Services, Infrastructure, and Opportunities:** Nebraska’s CLSD project proposal was informed by a statewide needs assessment by NDE’s Literacy Leadership Team that includes the Offices of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Early Childhood, Special Education, and Coordinated School and District Support along with partner organizations including the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and the Region 11 Comprehensive Center. Nebraska’s Literacy Needs

---

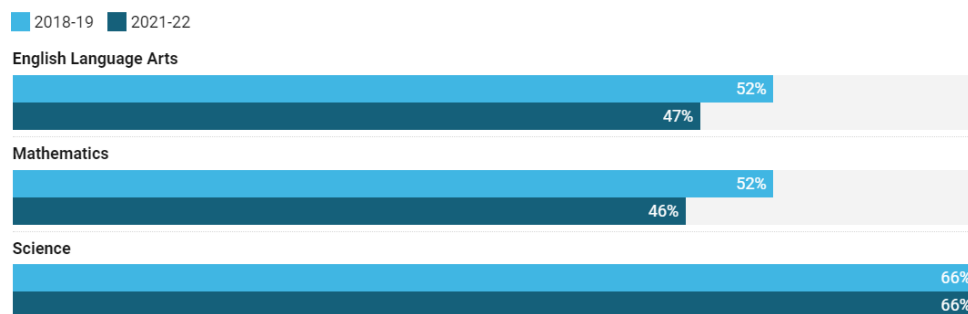
<sup>1</sup> Defined according to the U.S. Dept. of Ed. as a continuum of programs that addresses the intergenerational nature of literacy, integrating (1) interactive literacy activities between parent and child; (2) training in parenting activities; (3) literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency; (4) age appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Assessment, included in Appendix E and summarized below, found four key weaknesses.

**(1) Proficiency:** Statewide summative data from the 2022-2023 school year indicate that 42% of Nebraska’s grades 3-8 students are not reading proficiently, while 54% of Nebraska high school students are not reading proficiently. Pandemic-related challenges such as changes in opportunities to learn, the impact of trauma, and shifts in access to instruction due to quarantine and shortened assessments are still being addressed in Nebraska. A recent update to the Education Recovery Scorecard reported students in Omaha Public Schools, Nebraska’s largest school district, experienced a loss of 6.75 months of reading instruction resulting in a total economic loss of over \$1 billion in lifetime earnings (Harinstein, 2023).

Figure 1.1 below shows additional negative impacts of COVID-19. The Nebraska Student-Centered Assessment System (NSCAS) and the ACT® assess Nebraska’s third through eighth graders and high school juniors, respectively, in English Language Arts (ELA), mathematics, and science. These assessments resumed last school year following a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. According to Figure 1.1: Covid Impact on NSCAS Scores, Nebraska’s statewide proficiency declined across all subjects except science compared to pre-pandemic scores (Bonderson, 2022). From the 2018-19 school year to the 2021-22 school year, Nebraska proficiency in all grades dropped an average of 6% in math and 5% in ELA.

**Figure 1.1: Covid Impact on NSCAS Scores**



The impact of the pandemic appears to have widened many achievement gaps. 56% of

White students were on track or met the benchmark for college and career-ready in ELA. By comparison, 25% of African American students, 31% of Hispanic students, and 24% of English learners met the same standards.

In 2022, only 1,145 out of 4,358 grade 4 students with disabilities achieved proficiency on the NSCAS, resulting in a proficiency rate of just 26.27%. While this represents a slight improvement from previous years, significant efforts are needed to ensure all students reach reading proficiency and return to pre-pandemic achievement rates. Nebraska’s Literacy Needs Assessment provides additional details in Appendix E.

Achievement profiles in Nebraska reveal significant gaps in literacy proficiency. In 2022, there was a 30-point achievement gap between White and Black eighth-grade students and a 22-point gap between White and Hispanic eighth-graders. Similarly, there was a 20-point difference in reading outcomes between those eighth-graders who were eligible for National School Lunch and those who were not (USED, 2022). This indicates students are not advancing to the literacy levels required for college and the workforce between grades 3 and 11.

A compounding concern between grades 3 and 11 is chronic absenteeism, which NDE’s accountability system defines as an absence rate of 10% or more. During the 2022-2023 school year, 69,000 students (22% of all Nebraska students) were chronically absent (NDE, 2023). Absenteeism has a disproportionate effect on students of color, students with disabilities, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students (NDE, 2023).

**(2) Significant Disproportionality:** Across the nation, students of color are more likely than their White peers to be misidentified as students with disabilities. These students are then isolated or provided instruction and materials below their grade level, compounding barriers to literacy attainment.

In response to pandemic-related academic needs, NDE’s Office of Special Education launched its Journey to Inclusion pilot program that supports coherent school improvement strategies and utilizes Inclusive Education for students with disabilities as a framework to implement evidence-based practices identified in school improvement plans. While NDE’s Journey to Inclusion, now a statewide initiative in its third year, aims to mitigate the practices of misidentification, sufficient resources are needed so that participating schools can address the organizational and structural changes necessary.

**(3) Inequity in Access to Quality Teachers and HQIM:** In the 2022-2023 school year, only 42% of Nebraska’s public school districts reported the use of HQIM as the primary resource for ELA instruction. While the selection of HQIM has grown 5% since 2019, additional resources are needed for increased adoption rates. NDE currently lacks the resources to track implementation efforts or to bring essential curriculum-based professional learning to scale. The shortfall of both materials and strong implementation means students miss crucial learning opportunities due to reliance on non-evidence-based materials or ineffective instruction.

Research indicates that the quality of instructional materials is a key indicator of the quality of instruction (Allen, et al., 2015). When teachers have comprehensive training in SoR or structured literacy accompanied by standards-aligned materials, student mastery of foundational skills improves. Currently, there is a lack of consistency in professional development for the Science of Reading across Nebraska, a benchmark for NDE in determining the quality of teachers. Until very recently, Nebraska’s teacher preparation programs have not been required to include SoR or structured literacy concepts within course sequences for pre-service elementary or ELA teachers. Regulations for the Approval of Educator Preparation Programs, known in Nebraska as Rule 20, were approved by the Governor in May 2023 and now direct programs to

include such content. Currently, NDE lacks the resources to train faculty in course design or instruction thoroughly.

Only nine of Nebraska’s seventeen Educational Service Units (ESUs) have offered Lexia’s Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling training in their respective regions. While a small number of ESUs have trained over 300 teachers, others have reached fewer than five teachers. The percentage of leaders who have received training is smaller still, resulting in insufficient skills to provide instructional leadership. This disparity means fewer students benefit from evidence-based instruction in foundational skills.

Rural Nebraska students face additional challenges compared to those in metropolitan areas, including limited access to diverse teachers, high-quality teachers, ESU services, technology, and advanced academic programs. Nebraska’s two primary urban areas are clustered along its eastern border, each with a dedicated ESU for their public school system. As such, the vast majority of the state’s expansive geographical area, 77,421 square miles, is considered rural, along with over 200 of the 244 public Local Education Agencies (LEAs).

**(4) Capacity:** NDE has developed a vision for improving literacy outcomes for children but does not currently have the internal capacity to build a coherent system of effective K-12 literacy, or to complete wraparound evaluations of existing and future initiatives. For example, NDE has a single K-3 Reading Specialist on staff serving all 244 Nebraska school districts. This position is jointly funded between three offices and shares duties and responsibilities between those offices, diluting the ability to meet the vast professional learning needs of schools throughout the state.

**(B) Severity and Magnitude:** see Appendix E for Nebraska’s Literacy Needs Assessment data and findings in more detail; a summary follows.

15% of children entering Kindergarten in Nebraska fell below the widely held



expectations of Language and 11% below the threshold for Literacy (*Early Childhood Education State Report*, 2024). This leaves **one in ten** observed students entering Kindergarten unprepared to build the literacy skills necessary for future academic success.

According to NSCAS data from the 2022-2023 school year, 43% of participating grade 5 students did not meet grade-level proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments. 37% of participating grade 8 students did not meet grade-level proficiency on the same assessments. This equates to more than **one in three** students in middle schools across Nebraska reading below grade level.

High School ELA proficiency is currently measured by the ACT® in grade 11. According to data from the 2022-23 school year, more than half of Nebraska’s eleventh-grade students are not reading at grade level (NDE, 2023). This means **one in two** students in high schools across Nebraska are reading below grade level.

Table 1.2 illustrates additional inequities in proficiency measures, showing five student groups consistently achieving 50% proficiency and above including Asian students, White students, and students who identify with two or more races. By comparison, student groups with less than 50% proficiency, marked by red, include several diverse student groups: Hispanic or Latino, American Indian or Alaska Native, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, Special Education students, English learners, highly mobile students, and students served by migrant programs.

With a staggering 93% of students identifying as English learners falling below grade 11 ELA expectations on the ACT®, now is the time for Nebraska to align with partners, secure additional resources, and employ evidence-based programs and culturally responsive pedagogy from birth to grade 12 for all of Nebraska’s learners.



**Table 1.2: NSCAS English Language Arts Data**

\*Results from the ACT®

\*\*Results from both NSCAS and ACT® are unavailable for this student group at the 11<sup>th</sup> Grade level

Grade	Hispanic or Latino		American Indian or Alaska Native		Asian		Black or African American		Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander		White		Two or More Races		Students Eligible for Free and Reduced Meals		Special Education Students		English Learners		Highly Mobile Students		Students Served in Migrant Programs	
	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient	% below	% proficient
3	55%	45%	65%	35%	39%	61%	62%	38%	51%	49%	29%	71%	40%	60%	52%	48%	63%	37%	60%	40%	63%	37%	65%	35%
4	62%	38%	64%	36%	42%	58%	67%	33%	56%	44%	36%	64%	49%	51%	60%	40%	74%	26%	68%	32%	73%	27%	65%	35%
5	62%	38%	75%	25%	40%	60%	67%	33%	60%	40%	34%	66%	47%	53%	59%	41%	75%	25%	70%	30%	68%	32%	72%	28%
6	62%	38%	75%	25%	41%	59%	72%	28%	56%	44%	36%	64%	48%	52%	60%	40%	77%	23%	75%	25%	71%	29%	68%	32%
7	63%	37%	73%	27%	39%	61%	72%	28%	55%	45%	37%	63%	51%	49%	61%	39%	80%	20%	80%	20%	75%	25%	70%	30%
8	53%	47%	65%	35%	34%	66%	62%	38%	53%	47%	28%	72%	40%	60%	52%	48%	75%	25%	76%	24%	63%	37%	65%	35%
11	76%*	24%*	80%*	20%*	48%*	52%*	82%*	18%*	**	**	44%*	56%*	60%*	40%*	72%	28%	47%	53%	93%*	7%*	88%*	12%*	83%*	17%*

## II. Quality of Project Design

**(A) Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes:** As a result of CLSD funding, NDE will achieve the following goals and objectives, while addressing the Competitive Preference Priorities (CPP) and Invitational Priority, by 2029. \*Objectives marked by an asterisk are at least partially supported by competitive sub-awards.

1. Goal 1: Cohesion and alignment of statewide tools and resources.

- Objective 1.a: Update Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan. **CPP1, CPP3**
- Objective 1.b: Supplement Nebraska’s statewide literacy coach network. **CPP3\***
- Objective 1.c: Expand and align tools and resources to ensure families and caregivers, including early childhood education centers, can equip literacy at home. **CPP2, CPP3, CPP4, IP\***

2. Goal 2: Statewide teacher and leader training and preparation in structured literacy and the Science of Reading encompassing strategies from early childhood through adult literacy.  
**CPP1, CPP2, CPP3, CPP4, IP**

- Objective 2.a: Large-scale, evidence-based professional learning centered on instructional approaches to increasing literacy, such as structured literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. **CPP3, CPP4, IP\***
- Objective 2.b: Collaborate with teachers and Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) to update State licensure standards in the area of literacy instruction and ensure the preparation of teachers and leaders in Nebraska is based on structured literacy and the Science of Reading. **CPP1, CPP4**

3. Goal 3: Support the selection, implementation, and continuation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and evidence-based practices to promote adequacy in resources for

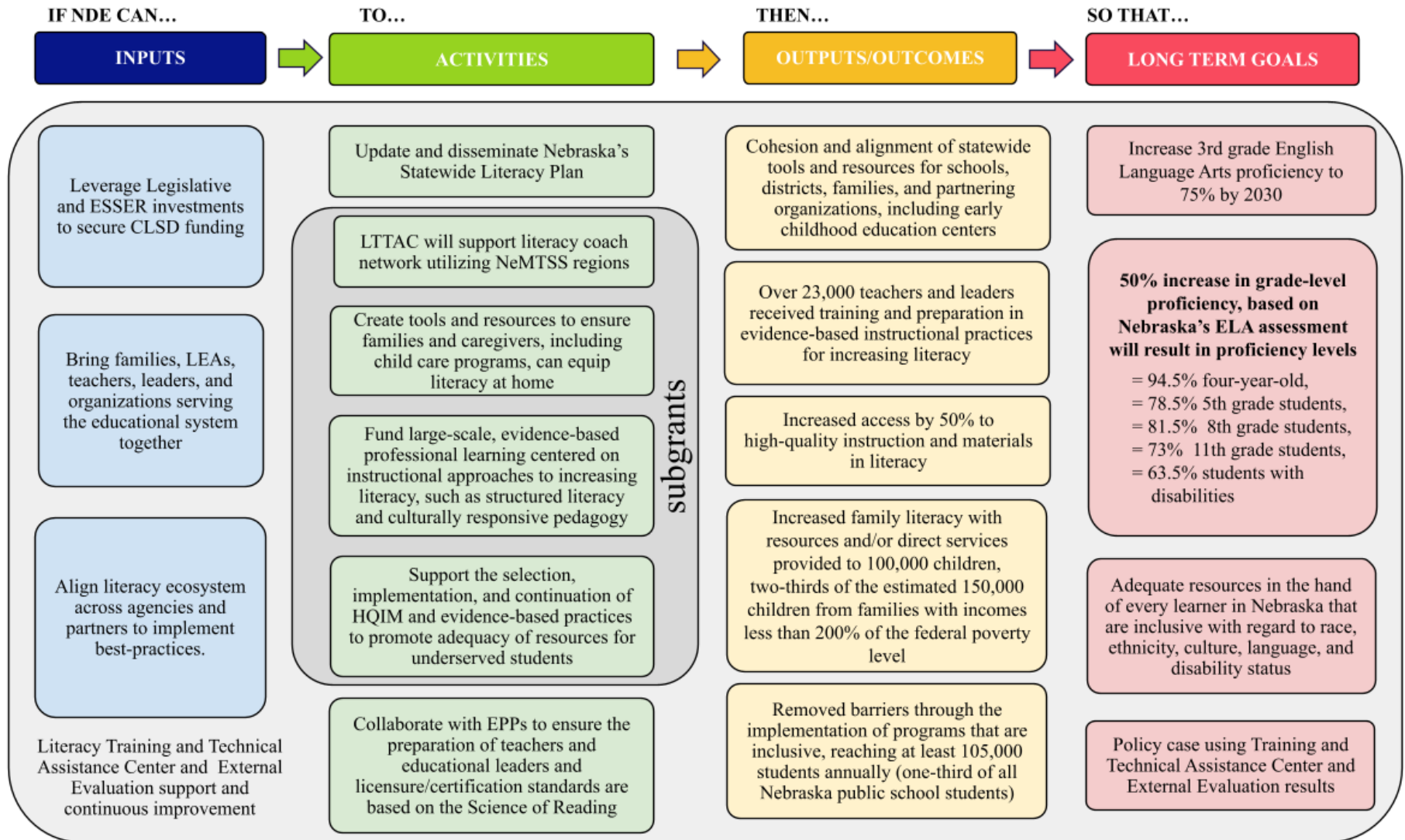
underserved students in early learning programs and school settings. **CPP2**

- Objective 3.a: Support the selection and implementation of HQIM to promote adequate resources through inclusive programs. **CPP2, CPP3\***
- Objective 3.b: Address the impacts of COVID-19 through continuing best-practice ESSER investments to expand access to high-quality learning by removing barriers through the implementation of inclusive programs. **CPP2, CPP3\***

**Outcomes:** A tiered model will provide all of Nebraska’s LEAs and associated ECE providers with access to some level of differentiated literacy support. By doing so, Nebraska’s CLSD project will indirectly impact the quality of literacy instruction for all 328,722 students in the state. Additionally, NDE anticipates approximately ten statewide initiatives will receive competitive subgrants annually (a breakdown of anticipated use of funds is available in Table 3.3: Sub-Award Requirements). The specific sites receiving sub-awards will be determined through an application process, with priority given to applicants updating or providing materials or learning opportunities to low-income or underserved students, including students with disabilities, English learners, and those reading or writing below grade level. NDE anticipates 105,000 to 110,000 students, or approximately one-third of all Nebraska public school students, will be served annually by organizations selected for subgrants and targeted or intensive support. Additionally, NDE anticipates supporting all 23,758 educators in the five-year performance period.

**Logic Model:** Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS is driven by a logic model, outlined in Figure 2.1: Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS Logic Model.

**Figure 2.1: Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS Logic Model**



**(1) Inputs:** The model shown in Figure 2.1 begins with the inputs needed to catalyze Nebraska’s CLSD project activities. NDE currently staffs one full-time literacy program specialist. CLSD funding would expand NDE capacity by two additional personnel and would allow the NDE to create an Office of Literacy to continue working toward student achievement and grade-level proficiency. The second input focuses on bringing together families, LEAs, teachers, leaders, and organizations serving the educational system. Finally, NDE will need the support and capacity of aligned providers and departments administering literacy programs, including feedback, coherence, and continuing ESSER investment successes. These inputs will allow NDE and partners to implement the activities listed next in the Logic Model.

**(2) Activities:** NDE will leverage state-level activities and sub-awards to successfully implement the activities described in Figure 2.1: Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS Logic Model.

**(i) State-Level Activities:** NDE will reserve not more than 5 percent of the CLSD funds it receives for:

**(a) Administration:** NDE will create an Office of Literacy, hire two new staff, initiate and execute sub-award processes, publicize best-practices through the NDE website, and ensure implementation with fidelity through program monitoring.

**(b) EPP Alignment:** strengthening and enhancing pre-service courses for students preparing to teach children from birth through grade 12 in explicit, systematic, and intensive instruction in evidence-based literacy methods through coordination with Nebraska’s 16 EPPs. While the new Rule 20 shows Nebraska’s overall system alignment, NDE will need to bolster capacity to support these

EPPs in implementation.

**(c) Certification and Licensure Standards:** reviewing and updating Nebraska’s teacher certification and licensure standards in the area of literacy instruction in early education through grade 12.

**(d) Training and Technical Assistance:** to enable the eligible entities to design and implement literacy programs with fidelity.

**(f) Evaluation:** NDE will perform monitoring and reporting subgrant successes and best practices to inform continuous improvement during and after the life of the CLSD award. Additionally, NDE will contract for external evaluation and comply with national CLSD evaluation.

**(ii) Sub-awards:** 95% of funds will be sub-awarded as agreed to in the assurances published in the notice of funding opportunity by the U.S. Department of Education. NDE will publish competitive awards seeking partners to align statewide tools and resources, offer professional learning to educators, leaders, and early childcare providers from birth through grade 12, and address the impacts of COVID-19 including rigorous HQIM, tutoring services, extended learning opportunities, family engagement, and/or chronic absenteeism. NDE aims to directly impact 4,000 teachers and leaders each year through training and preparation in evidence-based instructional practices for increasing literacy.

**(3) Outputs:** These activities will lead to many outcomes and outputs including:

- Cohesion and alignment of statewide tools and resources for schools, districts, families, and partnering organizations, including early childhood education centers.
- Over 23,000 teachers and leaders receive training and preparation in evidence-based

instructional practices for increasing literacy.

- Increased access by 50% to high-quality instruction and materials in literacy.
- Removed barriers through the implementation of programs that are inclusive, directly impacting at least 105,000 students annually (one-third of all Nebraska public school students).
- Increased family literacy with resources and/or direct services provided to 100,000 children, two-thirds of the estimated 150,000 children in Nebraska from families with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.

**(4) Long-Term Goals:** Nebraska’s CLSD plan will achieve measurable long-term goals:

- Increase third-grade English Language Arts proficiency to 75% by 2030.
- Adequate resources in the hands of every learner in Nebraska that are inclusive with regard to race, ethnicity, culture, language, and disability status.
- 94.5% of participating four-year-old children will achieve significant gains in oral literacy. This includes only the children who are observed for oral language skills which occur in Nebraska in an ESU or LEA-operated early childhood education centers through the TS GOLD assessment, described in Appendix E: Nebraska’s Literacy Needs Assessment.
- 78.5% of fifth-grade students will meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.
- 81.5% of eighth-grade students will meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.
- 73% of high school students who meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments, currently measured by the ACT administered to eleventh-grade

students.

- 63% of students with a disability will meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.
- A policy case will be developed using Nebraska’s Literacy Training and Technical Assistance Center (LTTAC) and external evaluator results.

**(B) Project Implementation:** With these evidence-based, best-practice activities in mind, Nebraska’s CLSD project also includes a high-quality plan for project implementation. This Implementation Plan is later detailed in the Gantt Chart in Table 3.1.

NDE will begin to make sub-awards in Year 1 with the expertise of the Offices of Procurement and Budget and Grant Management. These competitions will operate similarly to ARP ESSER state set-aside fund awards with the addition of CLSD preferences to serve students facing barriers to literacy achievement and achieve Objectives 1.b, 1.c, 2.a, 3.a, and 3.b as indicated by an asterisk at the beginning of Section II.A.. Additionally, the sub-award resource distribution will align with both the assurances provided in the funding announcement for CLSD by the U.S. Department of Education, representing a geographically diverse area including students in poverty, and the NeMTSS regional model. NDE plans to implement an annual funding cycle with required annual reporting.

Year 1 will also see the hiring of relevant NDE staff and the continued focus on updating Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan. First, relying upon the expertise of NDE’s Office of Human Resources, NDE will begin its hiring process for the two full-time positions described later in the narrative, upon notice of award. Central to their role will be coordinating the update of the Statewide Literacy Plan, utilizing Nebraska’s existing State Literacy Writing (SLW) Team members, described in more detail in the Literacy Needs Assessment found in Appendix E, with



the addition of external stakeholders to create Nebraska’s Literacy Team. The Literacy Team will utilize CLSD funding to complete a thorough feedback loop to ensure continuous improvement will play a critical role in the new Statewide Literacy Plan.

Finally, in Year 1, NDE will establish a Literacy Training and Technical Assistance Center (LTTAC). NDE is seeking a statewide nonprofit organization that is well-positioned to serve as the LTTAC for the Comprehensive Statewide Literacy Development Plan. This organization will be leveraging its extensive statewide reach and robust infrastructure. With established, place-based partnerships in communities across the state, the organization will have demonstrated its capacity to engage diverse local stakeholders effectively. This organization will have collaborated with the Nebraska Department of Education on COVID relief or other efforts, showcasing its ability to respond to emergent needs and implement large-scale initiatives. Additionally, its strong cross-agency partnerships will provide a solid foundation for fostering interagency collaboration, ensuring comprehensive and cohesive literacy development efforts across the state. By drawing on these strengths, the organization can offer critical support and guidance to enhance literacy outcomes for all Nebraskans.

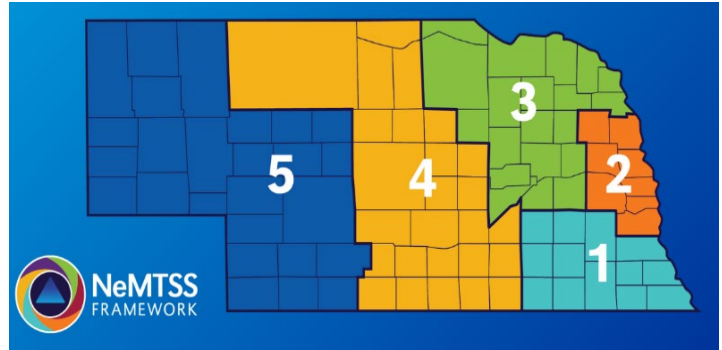
Years 2 through 5 will include additional subgranting periods, anticipated to last one year each. Additionally in these years, NDE will seek out all 16 EPPs across Nebraska through the close collaboration of Brad Dirksen, Administrator of NDE’s Office of Accreditation, Certification, and Approval, and his membership with the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE). Dirksen will facilitate the alignment of teacher training programs to the Science of Reading. He will also lead feedback sessions with teachers and EPPs through NCTE to update licensure and certification standards in the area of literacy instruction in early education through grade 12, with support from the Office of Literacy staff as needed.

**Nebraska’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (NeMTSS):** States are increasingly recommending that districts and schools use multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to improve reading outcomes for all students. States have also suggested MTSS is a viable service delivery model in response to new state legislation to screen, identify, and treat students with word-level reading disability (i.e., dyslexia). One model of MTSS that utilizes Enhanced Core Reading Instruction (ECRI MTSS), has demonstrated significant increases in students’ early acquisition of foundational reading skills (Smith et al., 2016). Impact data indicates moderate to strong effects on student decoding, word reading, and fluency skills for students in the schools with MTSS that utilize Enhanced Core Reading Instruction. Results suggest that schools can use ECRI MTSS to improve foundational reading skills for struggling early readers, including students with or at risk for word-level reading disabilities.

At the heart of Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy is Nebraska’s Multi-Tiered System of Support (NeMTSS). This framework was designed through the lens of continuous improvement to guide school districts, schools, and all educators to ensure each and every student has access to learning experiences that enhance their educational outcomes. This is accomplished through a whole child approach to ensure each student’s social, emotional, behavioral, academic, and environmental needs are met from pre-kindergarten through graduation. Continuous improvement is not the job of one or two people, working in isolation, but rather unfolds progressively and implementation is driven by district, school, and student-level teams that are dependent upon a common purpose and collaboration. The NeMTSS Framework outlines specific skills and actions to organize, support, deliver, and drive continuous improvement.

Nebraska will infuse money to bolster the regional model within NeMTSS, depicted in Figure 2.2: NeMTSS Regional Support Map. Each of the five regions has a team that is providing implementation support in the area of MTSS including school improvement efforts to build a system of support that meets the needs of all students. Each region includes anywhere from two to three ESUs which partner to provide support to schools in that overall region.

**Figure 2.2: NeMTSS Regional Support Map**



Four essential elements offered by the NeMTSS framework will support the rollout of CLSD activities:

- **Infrastructure and Shared Leadership:** Sound infrastructure and effective shared leadership are the foundation from which all the other essential elements are built. Without a strong infrastructure and effective shared leadership, it is not possible to design a strong, layered continuum of support, engage in sound data-based decision-making, or support collaboration and communication.
- **Layered Continuum of Support:** Within a layered continuum, tiered supports are provided to meet the unique needs of each student. Supports are dependent on data, and there is flexibility among the tiers, allowing each student to receive the support they need, when they need it. Adults are responsible for monitoring student progress and matching the support to each student’s specific needs.
- **Data-Based Decision-Making:** Collaborative Teams and Student Support Teams engage in the problem-solving model to identify, analyze, plan, implement, and reflect on student

**Figure 2.3: NeMTSS Problem Solving Model**



support, as demonstrated in Figure 2.3: NeMTSS Problem Solving Model, using a variety of data points to identify student needs and support planning. Supporting effective data-based decision-making in NeMTSS requires district and school teams to engage in the problem-solving model to drive continuous improvement of the support for the system.

- **Communication and Collaboration:** Effective communication and collaboration hinge upon the belief that student, family, and community engagement enhance learning experiences and are culturally inclusive and relevant for each student. Student success and engagement rely on positive partnerships and relationships to fundamentally improve the outcomes for each student, school, district, and community.

**Project Partners:** Utilizing this NeMTSS Framework, NDE will work with several project partners to drive the implementation of the project’s goals and objectives. Specific assurances are included regarding early childhood program partners. The early childhood partners mentioned below will play a vital role in collaborating to update the Statewide Literacy Plan and utilizing the Early Learning Guidelines to drive implementation of both the CLSD subgrants and the Statewide Literacy Plan. NDE has collaborated with the following organizations in the writing of the CLSD application, as it related to the Early Childhood portion and the Early Learning

Guidelines described in Figure 2.4, and will continue to collaborate with the following organizations and departments in making and implementing subgrants under the early childhood education portion of the CLSD program:

**Figure 2.4: Nebraska’s Early Learning Guidelines**



(1) The State agency responsible for administering early childhood education programs in Nebraska is NDE’s Office of Early Childhood. In coordination with NDE’s Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, NDE’s Office of Early

Childhood staff will develop a system for identifying programs that would benefit from literacy support. This team will also build a network of early childhood, kindergarten, and grades 1 through 3 educators and leaders for professional learning in structural literacy and the Science of Reading.

(2) The state agency responsible for administering childcare programs is the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS). Both the NDE and NDHHS are represented in the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council described in more detail below. In coordination with the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, NDE and NDHHS will administer the selection process for the competitive sub-awards under the early childhood education portion of the CLSD program.

(3) In Nebraska, the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care established

pursuant to section 642(b)(1)(A)(i)) of the Head Start Act is the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC). The ECICC is tasked to advise and assist collaborating agencies in carrying out the provisions of state and federal statutes pertaining to early childhood care and education initiatives under state supervision. Members are also tasked with required reporting to the legislature, Nebraska's Governor, and state agencies.

Supported by NDE's Office of Early Childhood and Special Education and NDHHS's Child Care Subsidy Unit, this Council includes members representing Nebraska's Department of Health and Human Services (Medicaid Office, Mental Health, Child Care Subsidy and Licensing, and Child Welfare), Nebraska's Department of Insurance, Social Services, Early Intervention, Homeless Education, childcare providers, organizations providing professional development, Head Start State Collaboration Office, and regional Education Service Units. While currently vacant, the ECICC holds space for additional members representing Higher Education, businesses, parents, physicians, developmental disabilities, Mental Health, Head Start, Public Health, the State of Nebraska's Legislature, and Head Start's Tribal organization. Representatives serving the ECICC are listed in Appendix F: Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Membership Roster.

Several of these entities currently belong to the State Literacy Writing Team as described in Section A: Need for the Project. Additionally, they are actively working with the NDHHS, Nebraska Head Start Association, and Nebraska Head Start State Collaboration Office on the Early Learning Guidelines depicted in Figure 2.4: Early Learning Guidelines.

These entities will collaborate in awarding subgrants under the early childhood education portion of the CLSD program to meet all requirements set forth in the CLSD assurances.

**(C) Promising Evidence:** Nebraska’s CLSD project includes a thorough, high-quality review of the relevant literature, as described in the Evidence Form completed in Grants.Gov and Table 2.5: Design and Activities Framework and Rationale. Nebraska’s CLSD design includes components from studies found in the What Works Clearinghouse showing strong (Tier 1) and moderate (Tier 2) evidence.

**(i) Strong Evidence: Tier 1** recommendations to increase reading proficiency include providing explicit vocabulary instruction, providing direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction, implementing intensive and individualized interventions for struggling readers provided by trained specialists, implementing tutoring, teaching academic language, teaching phonological and phonemic awareness, teaching decoding and writing word parts, and incorporating connected text daily to support reading accuracy, fluency, and comprehension. These strong evidences will support Goals 1, 2, and 3 and Objectives 1.a, 1.c, 2.a, 3.a and 3.b.

**(ii) Moderate Evidence: Tier 2** recommendations to increase reading proficiency include implementing literacy coaches, providing opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation, and increasing student motivation and engagement in literacy learning. These moderate evidences will support Goals and Objectives 1.a, 1.b, and 2.a.

Kamil also: Providing opportunities for extended discussion of text meaning and interpretation and increasing student motivation and engagement in literacy learning are supported by moderate evidence.

**Table 2.5: Design and Activities Framework and Rationale**

Goal/Objective	CLSD Activities	Supporting Research	What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence	Methodological Tools
Goal 1: Cohesion and alignment of statewide tools and resources. <b>CPP1, 2, 3, 4, IP</b>				
Objective 1.a: Update of Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan. <b>CPP1, CPP3</b>	Hire NDE Literacy Director, Update SLP, Continue State Literacy Writing Team meetings to align tools and resources to NeMTSS and NDE’s Journey to Inclusion	Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J. (2008).	Tier 1: Strong and Tier 2: Moderate Evidence	Statewide Literacy Plan and dissemination plan review, District implementation plan review during continuous improvements site visits
Objective 1.b: Supplement Nebraska’s statewide literacy coach network. <b>CPP3</b>	Competitive sub-awards to increase the impact of literacy coaches through support services (additional funding for more coaches, funding for HQIM materials, additional implementation support, and more)	Allen, J. P., Hafen, C. A., Gregory, A. C., Mikami, A. Y., & Pianta, R. (2015).	Tier 2: Moderate Evidence	Surveys of districts regarding HQIM implementation, ELA Assessments, TS GOLD results, Classroom observations by literacy coaches
Objective 1.c: Creation of tools and resources to ensure families and caregivers, including early childhood education centers, can equip literacy at home. <b>CPP2, 3, 4, IP</b>	Competitive sub-awards to create and distribute evidence-based resources targeted to family and caregiver engagement, including early childhood stakeholders, through inclusive programs	Kosanovich, M., Lee, L. and Foorman, B. (2020).  Esmaeeli, S. (2024).  Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J., & Lam, L. (2017).	Companion Guide to Tier 1: Strong Evidence  N/A  N/A	Resource review and creation, Surveys to families/caregivers TS GOLD results



Goal/Objective	CLSD Activities	Supporting Research	What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence	Methodological Tools
<b>Goal 2: Statewide teacher and leader training and preparation in structured literacy and the Science of Reading encompassing strategies from early childhood through adult literacy. CPP1, CPP2, CPP3, CPP4, IP</b>				
Objective 2.a: Large-scale, evidence-based professional learning centered on instructional approaches to increasing literacy, such as structured literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. <b>CPP3, CPP4, IP</b>	Competitive sub-awards for PL to strengthen student learning at transition times	Institute of Educational Sciences. (2022).	Tier 1: Strong Evidence	Classroom observations by literacy coaches, Surveys
	Competitive sub-awards for PL to strengthen HQIM implementation	Kamil, M. L., Borman, G. D., Dole, J., Kral, C. C., Salinger, T., and Torgesen, J. (2008).  TNTP (2018).	Tier 1: Strong and Tier 2: Moderate Evidence  N/A	Surveys to districts regarding their implementation of HQIM
Objective 2.b: Collaborate with teachers and EPPs to update State licensure standards in the area of literacy instruction and ensure the preparation of teachers and leaders in Nebraska is based on structured literacy and the Science of Reading. <b>CPP1, CPP4</b>	Advisory committee, including EPP faculty and Community College faculty in offered w/ CLSD funds, align w/ office of teacher certification and work on requirement for new educators and SOR	Leko, M. M., & Handy, T. (2019).  Moats, L. (2014).	N/A  N/A	First and third-year teacher surveys, Literacy coaches review syllabi for elements of the Science of Reading, Participants served, aligned EPP programs

Goal/Objective	CLSD Activities	Supporting Research	What Works Clearinghouse Extent of Evidence	Methodological Tools
Goal 3: Support the selection, implementation, and continuation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and evidence-based practices to promote adequacy in resources for underserved students in early learning programs and school settings. <b>CPP2, CPP 3</b>				
Objective 3.a: Support the selection and implementation of HQIM to promote adequate resources through inclusive programs. <b>CPP2, CPP3</b>	Competitive sub-awards to provide HQIM and implementation support to districts	Institute of Educational Sciences. (2022).	Tier 1: Strong Evidence	Surveys to districts regarding their implementation of HQIM
Objective 3.b: Address the impacts of COVID-19 through continuing best-practice ESSER investments to expand access to high-quality learning by removing barriers through the implementation of inclusive programs. <b>CPP2</b>	Competitive sub-awards for statewide tutoring with inclusive programs	Markovitz, C. E., Hernandez, M. W., Hedberg, E. C., & Whitmore, H. W. (2021).  Robinson, C.D., Pollard, C., Novicoff, S., White, S., and Loeb, S. (2024).	Tier 1: Strong Evidence  N/A	Quantitative program impact study, Surveys
	Competitive sub-awards for extended learning opportunities with inclusive programs	Johnson, J., Jadoobirsingh, A., Spencer, S., Skoglund, B., and Volz, M. (2024)	N/A	Quantitative program impact study, Surveys
	Competitive sub-awards to create and distribute evidence-based resources targeted to family and caregiver engagement, including early childhood stakeholders, through inclusive programs (repeated from above)	Kosanovich, M., Lee, L. and Foorman, B. (2020).  Esmaeeli, S. (2024).	Companion Guide to Tier 1: Strong Evidence  N/A	Resource review and creation, Surveys to families/caregivers, TS GOLD results

**Supplement Not Supplant:** CLSD grant funds awarded will be used to supplement, and not supplant, other Federal, State, and local funds. NDE’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS proposal leverages the Nebraska Legislature’s investment of \$1.8 million to provide regional literacy coaches without duplicating these efforts outlined in NDE’s implementation plan to support the current literacy coaches.

Additionally, CLSD funding will ensure the continuation of ARP ESSER investments in literacy development for children still impacted by COVID-19 without supplanting services. This coordination will be reinforced by the policies and procedures of NDE’s Office of Budget and Grants Management detailed in Section IV: Ensuring High-Quality Products and Services.

**Methodological Tools to Ensure Successful Achievement:** Nebraska’s CLSD project uses the appropriate methodological tools to ensure the successful achievement of project objectives as outlined in the final column of Table 2.5: Design and Activities Framework and Rationale.

### III. Quality of Management Plan

**(A) Gantt Chart:** NDE has defined timelines and milestones for completing activities and accomplishing project milestones in Table 3.1: Nebraska’s CLSD Activities Gantt Chart.

NDE will begin the work of the CLSD grant immediately. With an anticipated September 2024 notice of award from the U.S. Department of Education, three tasks can begin before receiving funds and several more will take place in Quarter 1 after the anticipated October 1, 2024, start date. NDE will implement and monitor activities on a trimester calendar beginning in January 2025. In Year 1, NDE will build the Literacy Team comprised of cross-agency representatives, early childhood representatives, literacy-focused initiatives, and partners representing a diverse background and all geographic regions of the state.

**Table 3.1: Nebraska’s CLSD Activities Gantt Chart**

#	Task Title	Task Owner	Start Date	Due Date	1st Qtr	YEAR ONE			YEAR TWO			YEAR THREE			YEAR FOUR			YEAR FIVE		
					Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall
<b>Project Launch</b>																				
0.1	Recruit and hire NDE project team	A. DenBeste	Upon award notice	1/31/25																
0.2	Source a statewide technical assistance center	NDE Procurement Staff		1/31/25																
0.2.1	Contract with a statewide technical assistance center	A. DenBeste		1/31/25																
0.3	Source an evaluator	NDE Procurement Staff		1/31/25																
0.3.1	Contract with an evaluator	A. DenBeste		1/31/25																
<b>Goal 1 Cohesion and alignment of statewide tools and resources.</b>																				
1.1	Hold CLSD Project Team Meetings	Office of Literacy Director (OLD), Literacy Project Manager (LPM)	Ongoing	9/30/29																
1.1.1	Implement changes based on continuous improvement	LPM	4/1/25	9/30/29																
1.2	Continue updating Nebraska's Statewide Literacy Plan	LPM, CLSD Project Team (CPT)	5/1/25	8/31/29																
1.2.1	Disseminate and collect feedback on SLP	CPT and LTTAC	1/1/25	9/30/29																
1.4	Attend NCTE meetings to discuss alignment of teacher preparation programs to the Science of Reading	B. Dirksen	Ongoing	6/30/29																
1.5	Engage with teachers and EPPs to update licensure and certification standards in the area of literacy instruction to include the Science of Reading	B. Dirksen	Ongoing	8/1/29																

#	Task Title	Task Owner	Start Date	Due Date	1st Qtr	YEAR ONE			YEAR TWO			YEAR THREE			YEAR FOUR			YEAR FIVE		
					Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall	Spr	Sum	Fall
<b>Goal 2 Statewide teacher and leader training and preparation in structured literacy and the Science of Reading encompassing strategies from early childhood through adult literacy.</b>																				
2.1	Launch PL sub-award application process	OLD, LPM	1/1/25	1/31/29		█			█			█			█			█		
2.1.1	Review and score applications	CPT	3/1/25	3/31/29		█			█			█			█			█		
2.1.2	Approve sub-awards	OLD	4/1/25	4/30/29		█			█			█			█			█		
2.1.3	Review post-award reports	CPT	11/1/15	9/30/29			█			█			█			█			█	
2.2	Implement changes based on continuous improvement	CPT, LTTAC	5/1/25	9/30/29			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
<b>Goal 3 Support the selection, implementation, and continuation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and evidence-based practices to promote adequacy in resources for underserved students in early learning programs and school settings.</b>																				
3.1	Launch sub-award application process	OLD, LPM	1/1/25	1/31/29		█			█			█			█			█		
3.1.1	Review and score applications	CPT	3/1/25	3/31/29		█			█			█			█			█		
3.1.2	Approve sub-awards	OLD	4/1/25	4/30/29		█			█			█			█			█		
3.1.3	Review post-award reports	CPT	11/1/15	9/30/29			█			█			█			█			█	
3.2	Implement changes based on continuous improvement	CPT, LTTAC	5/1/25	9/30/29			█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
<b>Grant Management</b>																				
4.1	Hold Office of Literacy CLSD Grant Management Meetings	OLD, LPM, EE, LTTAC	3/31/25	9/30/29	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
4.2	Conduct surveys and focus groups	External Evaluator (EE)	1/1/25	7/30/29			█		█			█			█			█		
4.2.1	Collect quantitative and qualitative data	EE	1/1/25	9/30/29		█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	
4.3	Submit Annual Reports	OLD, LPM, EE, LTTAC	12/31/25	9/30/29			█			█			█			█			█	
4.3.1	Submit Final Report	OLD, LPM, EE, LTTAC	1/1/29	9/30/29															█	

This team will establish sub-award processes and procedures, including priorities and ranking systems to administer a competitive grant, leverage the Literacy Team to update Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan (some work is already being done as described in Section 1: Needs Assessment with the State Literacy Writing Team and in Appendix E) and disseminate best practices on the NDE website. Years 1 through 5 include an annual competitive sub-award process, biannual meetings of the statewide literacy team, a plan to continuously improve and disseminate a statewide literacy plan, EPP alignment to CLSD activities and the Science of Reading, teacher and EPP feedback gathered to update licensure and certification requirements, and the continued sharing and reporting of best practices.

**(B) Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** NDE will implement continuous improvement in a structure that aligns with the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle as described in the U.S. Department of Education’s Needs Assessment Guidebook (Cuiccio et al., n.d.) in coordination with the newly created Literacy Training and Technical Assistance Center (LTTAC). Through the LTTAC work with subgrantees and the External Evaluator, NDE will receive feedback from families, students, teachers, and community members in the forms of surveys, quotes, and data that will be shared with NDE’s CLSD Project Team described in Table 3.2. Feedback will also be solicited from aligned partners and advisory groups such as the Statewide Literacy Writing Team, Nebraska Council of School Administrators (NCSA), NCTE, and ECICC.

Using this feedback, NDE will follow the process outlined earlier in Figure 2.3: NeMTSS Problem Solving Model to create activities that will lead to greater outcomes for students. Collaborative Teams and Student Support Teams engage in the problem-solving model to identify, analyze, plan, implement, and reflect on student supports, as demonstrated in NDE will work with an external evaluation partner to examine the effectiveness of sub-awardees and

activities in producing student achievement outcomes. Because effective improvement requires a commitment to action, assessment, and ongoing adjustment, employing the elements of a successful needs assessment throughout implementation can support periodic data reviews to assess progress (Cuiccio et al., n.d.). NDE will use the needs assessment findings in Section A: Need of the Project and Nebraska’s Literacy Needs Assessment in Appendix E to inform the continuous improvement cycle by reflecting the needs of individuals and the context of use, which are essential for innovative work in education (Cuiccio et al., n.d.).

Feedback will be collected from partners through advisory meetings (NCFF, NCTE, NCFL, NCSA, ECICC) and annual post-award reports from sub-awardees. The external evaluator, to be selected through a competitive process, will assist in gathering data from partners regarding activities and feedback from participants as sub-awardees complete activities. The evaluator’s role is further detailed in Section V.B. Performance Feedback and Assessment of Progress. NDE will implement continuous improvement standards through these competitive processes and will review and rank sub-awardees' plans to include continuous improvement in their proposed grant-funded activities.

**(C) Key Project Personnel:** Objectives of the project will be completed on time and within budget with the support of NDE’s Offices of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments (TLA), Budget and Grant Management (BGM), and a newly created Office of Literacy.

From within the Office of TLA, the Office of Literacy Director, a new position funded by the CLSD project, will be responsible for implementing grant activities as detailed in Appendix A. Until a Director is hired, Dr. Payzant and the Office of TLA will execute grant activities, further assuring the timeliness of grant activities. The Director will collaborate with the Office of BGM to ensure activities are being completed with fidelity and within budget restraints. BGM

personnel are key to ensuring the success of CLSD activities. These staff are discussed in more detail in Section IV.

**Director (to be hired)** — *tentative title: Office of Literacy Director*

Role and Responsibilities: Provide leadership, coordination, and implementation for sections and programs related to Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan including CLSD initiatives, advisory councils, HQIM, and professional learning. Responsible for oversight of CLSD strategies, sub-awards, and school system communications and relations, project budget and reporting, dissemination of results, on-site monitoring of sub-awardees, and active monitoring throughout the life of the CLSD grant. Direct supervision of Literacy Project Manager.

Qualifications: Educational background in reading, literacy, or an aligned field of work. Master's degree in education required, Doctorate or Ed. Specialist preferred. Current teaching or administrative certificate and five years of experience or any combination thereof. 10 or more years of experience teaching or leading teachers to enhance student achievement or proficiency required. Successful PK-12 leadership experience including direct supervisory experience preferred.

**Project Manager (to be hired)** — *tentative title: Literacy Project Manager*

Role and Responsibilities: Supports the statewide leadership, content area experts, Literacy Training and Technical Assistance Center, and other aligned partners such as the NeMTSS Regional Literacy Coaches, to implement CLSD activities and sub-award processes including monitoring and reporting. Ensures project management tools and processes are maintained through the lifecycle of Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS project (CLSD) including Literacy Team meetings with internal NDE staff, external partners, students, teachers, leaders, and community members.



Qualifications: Educational background in reading, literacy, or an aligned field of work.

Bachelor's degree required, Master's degree preferred, Literacy endorsement PK-12 preferred. 2 or more years of experience as a PK-12 teacher or school administrator to enhance student achievement and proficiency OR 2 or more years managing projects from inception to completion.

**Dr. Marissa Payzant, *Temporary Project Manager (until the new FTE is hired)*** — *Assistant Administrator and Director of Content Area Standards*

Role and Responsibilities: In her role as the Assistant Administrator and Director of Content Area Standards with the Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, Dr. Payzant provides strategic leadership and vision for content standards development and implementation.

Additionally, she provides broad support and supervision to the NDE's content specialists to ensure statewide work related to teaching, learning, and assessment adherence to agency policies and priorities. Dr. Payzant will support project strategy, execution, and communication while supervising the new hire, as detailed above. Dr. Payzant will play an integral role in the management of surveying or monitoring activities associated with the short- and long-term outcomes of the project.

Qualifications: Dr. Payzant has served at the NDE since 2018, formerly as the English Language Arts Specialist, Interim Academic Officer, and currently as the Assistant Administrator and Director of Content Area Standards. In her current role, she leads all content area specialists who directly implement the state's teacher professional learning and literacy initiatives.

**Allyson DenBeste, Principal Investigator and *Temporary Director (until the new FTE is hired)*** — *Academic Officer, Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments*

Role and Responsibilities: In her role at NDE as the Academic Officer and Administrator of the

Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, DenBeste provides strategic leadership and vision for content area standards and instruction. Additionally, she oversees the implementation of high-quality instructional materials within the state, sitting as a representative member of the Comprehensive Center Region 11 Governing Board. In her role, DenBeste will support project strategy, execution, and communications, ensuring alignment between work related to the CLSD project and Nebraska’s larger literacy ecosystem. Additionally, she supervises all staff belonging to the Teaching, Learning, and Assessments team, detailed below. DenBeste and her team will ultimately be responsible for managing any statewide activities and monitoring short- and long-term outcomes.

Qualifications: DenBeste has five years of experience serving in a variety of roles within NDE, including four years of service as NDE’s Title III Director and ELPA21 Coordinator. In her current role, she manages the office that is directly responsible for oversight of Nebraska’s teacher professional learning and literacy areas.

Additional key project personnel are listed and described in Table 3.2: NDE’s CLSD Project Team in order of time dedicated to Nebraska’s CLSD project. These additional personnel span the Offices of NDE demonstrating the importance of literacy and the critical need for CLSD funding and activities. This team will meet at least biannually to review feedback, implement continuous improvement strategies, and align the work being initiated statewide. Meetings will be convened and led by members of NDE’s Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments, most commonly the Project Manager or Dr. Payzant.

**Table 3.2: NDE’s CLSD Project Team**

Name	Title	Role With CLSD	Time on Project
TBD	Office of Literacy Director	Provide leadership, coordination, and implementation for sections and programs related to Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan including CLSD initiatives, advisory councils, HQIM, and professional learning. Responsible for oversight of CLSD strategies, sub-awards, and school system communications and relations, project budget and reporting, dissemination of results, on-site monitoring of sub-awardees, and active monitoring throughout the life of the CLSD grant. Direct supervision of Literacy Project Manager.	100%
TBD	Literacy Project Manager	Supports the statewide leadership, content area experts, Literacy Training and Technical Assistance Center, and other aligned partners such as the NeMTSS Regional Literacy Coaches, to implement CLSD activities and sub-award processes including monitoring and reporting. Ensures project management tools and processes are maintained through the lifecycle of Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS project (CLSD) including Literacy Team meetings with internal NDE staff, external partners, students, teachers, leaders, and community members	100%
Dr. Marissa Payzant	Assistant Administrator and Director of Content Area Standards, Office of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment	Provide direct supervision to Office of Literacy Director; oversee RFP process for procurement of statewide professional learning; coordinate support for districts in need of high-quality instructional materials and/or implementation support; manage initial reviews of sub-award applications	25%
Allyson DenBeste	Academic Officer and Office Administrator	Coordinate and oversee grant activities and ensure alignment with major agency initiatives; help to provide resources.	15%
Olivia Alberts	Reading Specialist	Serve as the primary point of contact for statewide professional learning; provide expertise and technical support in developing criteria for sub-awards; coordinate scheduling and other logistics for PL; assist in reviewing sub-award applications; serve as the primary point of contact for EPP faculty and provide expertise and technical assistance with activities to bring structured literacy to pre-service teacher programs	10%

Brad Dirksen	Administrator of the Office of Accreditation, Certification, and Approval	Alignment to teacher prep and certification/licensure requirements, facilitate NCTE collaboration with EPPs across the state, ensure alignment of EPP structure with Rule 20	10%
Melody Hobson	Administrator of the Office of Early Childhood Education	Alignment to statewide early childhood initiatives, ECICC representative, and liaison with Nebraska's partners in early childhood	10%
Becky Michael	ELA Content Specialist	Assist in reviewing sub-award applications and provide technical assistance while monitoring the progress toward the ongoing development of the State Literacy Plan	10%
Amy Rhone	Administrator of the Office of Special Education	Alignment to NeMTSS and initiatives affecting students with disabilities	10%
Zainab Rida	Equity Officer and Administrator of the Office of Coordinated Student Support Services	Prioritize equity in the administration of CLSD activities	10%
Stacey Weber	Teaching and Learning Associate	Administrative support as needed	10%
Zachary Bomberger	Grants Management Specialist	Oversee management of grant funds, submission of reimbursement information, assistance with budget management of payments and financial reports	5%
Lane Carr	Administrator of the Office of Strategic Initiatives	Alignment to leveraged funds from ESSER and the Nebraska Legislature and continued relationship building with Legislators to ensure sustainability	5%
Thomas Goeschel, Jr.	Director of Grants Compliance	Ensure timely and accurate financial reporting, grant compliance, and successful mitigation of any risk factors	5%
Shirley Vargas	School Transformation Officer and Administrator of Coordinated School and District Support	Align professional learning funded by CLSD with Learning Forward Nebraska standards and culturally responsive pedagogy	5%

NDE has established clear areas of responsibility in its management structure to promote efficient administration of the project. Nebraska CLSD staffing structures ensure sufficient time commitment to the project, with six NDE Office Administrators dedicating 5 to 15% time and effort as shown in Table 3.2: NDE's CLSD Project Team, the program will have sufficient

oversight and direction. Both the Director and Project Manager will dedicate 100% of their time to the project to ensure project objectives are reached on time and within budget.

The management structure makes use of several tools and processes to ensure success, including work plans and budgets, training, project and financial monitoring and support, data collection and management, and statewide partner coordination.

**(D) Subrecipient Monitoring:** Under 34 CFR 75.708(b) and (c), NDE will award subgrants to eligible entities to directly carry out project activities described in its application. NDE will award at least 95% of the funds received for subgrants to eligible entities selected through competition under procedures established by NDE and consistent with sections 2222–2224 of the ESEA and CLSD assurances totaling more than \$52,000,000 and prioritizing services that meet the needs of low-income and high-need students, and prioritizing geographic diversity (described in assurances, Appendix D). NDE will follow State Funding Allocations as depicted in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Sub-Award Requirements**

<b>% Allocated</b>	<b>Total \$ Allocated</b>	<b>Restrictions</b>	<b>Competitive Sub-award Focus Areas</b>
15% +	\$ 8,250,000.00	Birth-Kindergarten Entry	Professional Development, Family Literacy
40% +	\$ 22,000,000.00	Equitably among K-5	HQIM, Professional Development, Extended Learning Opportunities, Tutoring, Reducing Chronic Absenteeism
40% +	\$ 22,000,000.00	Equitably among 6-12	

Per the U.S. Department of Education’s assurances, NDE will give priority to applications for funding that serve children from birth to 5 who are from families with income levels at or below 200% of the poverty line or that serve LEAs with a high number of high-need schools. Additional priority is available to applicants covering a diversity of NeMTSS regions, ensuring a diversity of students and families impacted by CLSD funds.

Sub-Award Monitoring will include the reporting of demographic information that will allow NDE staff to ensure equitable services through the Office of Budget and Grants Management in collaboration with the Office of Literacy staff, as described in Section C. Quality of Management Plan above. Training and technical support and formal program evaluators will also be monitoring the demographics of students and families impacted by the CLSD project.

**Ensuring High-Quality Products and Services:** In establishing the sub-award strategies and priorities, NDE will utilize the reporting mechanisms in place within the Offices of Teaching, Learning, and Assessments and Budget and Grants Management to ensure that high-quality products and services are being created as a result of CLSD funds.

One such mechanism for monitoring sub-award activities is the Grants Management System (GMS). Through the ESSER experience, NDE's Office of Budget and Grants Management (BGM) staff have kept abreast of best-practices and new implementation techniques to create a user-friendly system that will allow for timely data collection and reporting. This data then informs the continuous improvement necessary for CLSD success.

This GMS system will inform sub-recipient monitoring. BGM staff will operate as the fiscal monitor for sub-recipients through GMS. Each awardee will be required to use GMS to submit receipts for and report on grant activities. The newly hired Project Manager within the Office of Literacy will operate as the program monitor utilizing GMS, site visits, and annual awardee reports. If at any time these systems or reports show that services or products are being offered as less than intended, NDE staff will initiate communication with the sub-awardee to review the expectations that accompany the sub-award.

NDE is making substantial time and effort available to the CLSD project so that more funds can be allocated directly to the benefit of students. In order to ensure timely and accurate

financial reporting, grant compliance, and successful mitigation of any risk factors, BGM and the Office of Literacy will leverage GMS and supporting processes that have led to a proven track record of success in managing federal and sub-awards in the past.

Under the Office of BGM, NDE has specifically formed the Grants Compliance Section (GCS) headed by Thomas Goeschel, Jr., Director of Grants Compliance. GCS is responsible for ensuring NDE complies with all state and Federal regulations in aspects of grants fiscal management. GCS's Fiscal Monitoring Plan is a public document that fully outlines the controls, systems, and procedures in place to ensure successful reporting and monitoring of all federal grant dollars received. NDE is also committed to making future investments to ensure that there are robust and systematized data collection, storage, and review processes in operation during the grant period, as well as controls and mechanisms to ensure compliance with all reporting requirements.

The Director and Project Manager will work with an external evaluation team to provide formative and summative evaluation of services and associated student outcomes. NDE will contract with an eligible organization after completing a competitive RFP process, including a preference for an evaluator with a proven track record of evaluation of CLSD programs, to evaluate the program providing essential formative data and results for needed course corrections throughout the life of the project. This will guide CLSD implementation in terms of understanding the return on investment of time and where to further allocate time and resources.

**Cooperation with National Evaluation:** NDE and its subrecipients will cooperate with a national evaluation of the CLSD program (34 CFR 75.591). The evaluation will include high-quality research that applies rigorous and systematic procedures to obtain valid knowledge relevant to the implementation and effect of the CLSD program. The evaluation will directly

coordinate with individual State evaluations of the CLSD program implementation.

## IV. Quality of Project Services

**(A) Likely Impact of Services:** NDE will leverage CLSD funding to transform students' academic achievement and literacy proficiency rates, as described in Figure 2.1. With a substantial investment in the systems and activities related to Nebraska's literacy ecosystem (students, teachers, families, and early childhood education centers), NDE will:

- Ensure equitable access to resources by reducing barriers for students,
- Directly impact 24,000 teachers and leaders through professional learning which would, in turn, indirectly impact every student in Nebraska,
- Directly impact 105,000 students annually through sub-award activities, and
- Increase family literacy with resources and/or direct services provided to 100,000 children, two-thirds of the estimated 150,000 children in Nebraska from families with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.

To ensure equitable access for all participants, including those aligned to sub-award activities, NDE will address barriers to participation (**CPP3**) in the following specific ways related to the proposed project.

**Step 1. Materials development.** Materials produced by the proposed project will target students in the general education population, with a particular focus on ensuring the materials are accessible to all students including students with disabilities, English learners, and those reading or writing below grade level. All materials developed through this project will be reviewed for bias, sensitivity, and accessibility.

In addition, materials developed through this project will be made available in multiple forms to accommodate accessibility needs. Thus, the project's development efforts will





deliberately address equitable access and participation by **all** students.

**Step 2. Modifications of materials.** Since the materials developed for the proposed project will be distributed statewide, NDE staff and local educators will be collaborators in making the necessary adjustments to materials for students and families with accessibility needs. All materials produced through this project will be developed with accessibility in mind, thus all will be adaptable to accommodate a diverse range of accessibility needs for students, educators, administrators, families, and partner organizations including biliteracy.

**Step 3. Accessibility and accommodations.** Every effort will be made to ensure full accessibility to meetings, project deliverables, communications, and other project activities. Special accommodations for participants with all types of disabilities will be made so that anyone wishing to will be able to fully participate. For example, face-to-face meetings and workshops will be held at venues that are fully accessible. This includes providing interpreters for staff, partners, and stakeholders who have a disability or limited English proficiency. In addition, all project tools, resources, and relevant information will be made publicly available online via the project website, which will be in a format that meets standards for accessibility.

**Step 4. Recruitment of participants by sub-awardees.** Procedures will be in place to ensure equitable access to and participation by teachers, students, families, and stakeholders from diverse groups that represent Nebraska's widely varying demographic and cultural profiles. Teachers and other stakeholders from diverse backgrounds will be encouraged to participate. Project partners will provide NDE with criteria and strategies aimed at obtaining a diverse population of educators and students when recruiting participants. Other unforeseen barriers to full access may be identified as the project gets underway, and NDE will address those barriers as they arise. Within contractual service agreements, NDE requires all entities to encourage

applications from underrepresented groups and to identify strategies for doing so.

**(B) Improving Practice through Professional Learning:** Training and professional development services to be provided by the proposed project reflect up-to-date knowledge from research and effective practice as demonstrated in Table 2.5: Design and Activities Framework and Rationale and the Evidence Form completed in Grants.Gov.

A university in Nebraska has developed a model course and another provider has developed a literacy workshop that may be utilized as models for the professional development portion of sub-awards. These options offer relevant, evidence-based, and short-term learning opportunities based on structured literacy to providers, educators, and leaders of birth through grade 12 education. These courses and workshops have already begun serving educators and have been funded through ESSER investments and private dollars. Ranging from several weeks to semesters long, professional learning opportunities in Nebraska are making the shift to structured literacy instruction and beginning to offer these courses and workshops in cohorts starting each semester.

One such opportunity is a 5-session graduate course that builds knowledge and instructional practices focused on early literacy foundational skills such as print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, and fluency. Participants will be able to identify concrete strategies to support student learning and practice. The course helps to build knowledge and skills of evidence-based early literacy instruction and provides resources to support educators' planning and instruction.

In these courses, students: examine **concepts of print** and their influence on the development of early readers; identify the relationship between **phonemic awareness** and reading proficiency; develop strategies for teaching **phonics** using an explicit, systematic approach; develop strategies

to enhance students' **sight word vocabulary** and word analysis skills to identify words and their meaning; articulate the dimensions of **fluency**, how fluency or the lack thereof influences **comprehension**, and examine strategies to enhance fluency; and improve the field and/or school community by sharing expertise with colleagues through presentations, professional learning communities, and interdisciplinary **collaborations** to ensure comprehensive support of early readers.

A similar university opportunity targets providers and teachers of students in birth through grade 5. NDE funded the first cohort of 100 educators with ESSER funds and received interest from nearly 200. In addition to the Nebraska colleges, asynchronous online learning is also available to educators. This online learning addresses the Science of Reading and other structured literacy programs that are beneficial, though very costly to educators and districts. All of the professional learning opportunities discussed offer job-embedded and professional learning community elements to varying degrees.

Additional professional learning opportunities are needed in the area overlapping literacy and special education. Most EPPs for special education, particularly for special educators who will teach reading to secondary students with learning disabilities, lack both an adequate number of reading courses and reading courses that incorporate practiced-based approaches (e.g., case-based learning, video analysis, rehearsal, aligned field experiences, virtual reality simulation, lesson study, and structured tutoring experiences) (Leko & Handy, 2019). Referencing various research studies, Moats offers ways to improve teachers' ability to effectively teach reading. Namely, integrating the International Dyslexia Association's Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading and the associated certification exam in evidence-based instructional practices for literacy and language development (Moats, 2014). This will require EPPs and

professional learning to continually teach these foundational reading skills.

NDE intends to partner with Learning Forward Nebraska, a state affiliate of Learning Forward International, to ensure standards for professional learning are embedded into all learning opportunities. In order to make this a reality, the NDE, along with all sub-awardees, must develop an awareness and understanding of the standards for professional learning. This will allow for a set of common expectations for the use of language, accessibility and modifications, implementation support, and culturally responsive pedagogy.

The standards for professional learning will also serve as a tool to assess the quality and effectiveness of professional learning opportunities. The standards are focused on rigorous content for each learner, conditions for success, and transformational processes.

This will be supplemented by in-depth professional development about implementing the Science of Reading in community-based early childhood education settings for providers who have a high school diploma or some college education. This work will focus on the skills and knowledge necessary to help infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and children transitioning to kindergarten gain and use the language, pre-literacy, and pre-writing skills necessary to become fluent readers once they enter formal schooling.

NDE aims to directly impact 4,000 teachers and leaders each year through these training and preparation practices for increasing literacy. This would equip all of Nebraska's educators (just over 23,000 in the 2023-2024 school year) with evidence-based practices to take back to the classroom and would indirectly impact each student in Nebraska.

**(C) Applying Up-to-Date Knowledge:** In partnership with the Learning Forward Nebraska affiliate, the NDE and sub-awardees will ensure there is application of up-to-date knowledge related to adult learning and evidence-based literacy instruction through the use of surveys and

continuous improvement on-site visits. NDE will align the work of its Offices of Teaching, Learning, and Assessment with the Accreditation, Certification, and Approval to review survey feedback and implement continuous improvement strategies to provide up-to-date knowledge with districts and EPPs lacking in the implementation or planning phases of updating all content to the Science of Reading. These plans are the result of literature reviewed in Table 2.6, Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Needs Assessment in Appendix E, and a review of tools and resources from the U.S. Department of Education’s CLSD Literacy Center.

## V. Quality of Project Evaluation

**(A) Thorough, Feasible, and Appropriate Evaluation:** The following evaluation plan aligns with the NDE’s proposed CLSD grant initiative. Upon successful award, the NDE will contract with an independent, third-party evaluator for the CLSD grant. The planned evaluation will support the NDE by providing information regarding the implementation and outcomes of the initiative. Over the five-year project period, the evaluation team will collect data to examine project implementation and outcomes as aligned to the initiative’s main goals shown in Figure 5.1: Objectives and Associated Performance Measures.

**Evaluation Framework:** The proposed evaluation framework will incorporate a developmental approach (Patton, 2010), which has been shown to best support innovation and allows for just-in-time feedback to support iterations. This is also a preferred approach for evaluating complex and dynamic systems, such as statewide literacy initiatives. While just as rigorous as traditional evaluation approaches, developmental evaluation is superior because of its dual focus on processes and outcomes as well as its positioning of the evaluator as a key partner in determining the next steps. It is particularly useful in situations where traditional evaluation methods might

**Table 5.1: Strategies, Objectives, and Performance Measures**

Objectives	Performance Measures	Data Sources	Instruments/ Methodology	Completion Dates
<b>Goal 1: Cohesion and alignment of statewide tools and resources. CPP1, 2, 3, 4, IP</b>				
Objective 1.a: Update of Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan. <b>CPP1, CPP3</b>	Y1: Build Statewide Literacy Writing Team Y2: Updated Plan Crafted and Published Y3 + 4: Updated Plan Feedback Collected Y5: Updated Plan Crafted and Published	SEA website: education. ne.gov	Surveys to writing plan members and document review	Y1: July 2025 Y2: July 2026 Y4: August 2027 Y5: Dec 2028
Objective 1.b: Supplement Nebraska’s statewide literacy coach network. <b>CPP3</b>	Y1: Baseline data collected on districts reached/utilization of NeMTSS Framework Y2: Baseline +5% Y3: Baseline +10% Y4: Baseline + 15% Y5: Baseline + 20%	SEA report to the Legislature on Statewide Literacy Coaching Network	Surveys to ESU and School District administration	Y1: Sept 2025 Y2: Sept 2026 Y3: Sept 2027 Y4: Sept 2028 Y5: Sept 2029
Objective 1.c: Creation of tools and resources to ensure families and caregivers, including early childhood education centers, can equip literacy at home. <b>CPP2, 3, 4, IP</b>	Baseline: 89% of participating four-year-old children achieve significant gains in literacy skills (currently according to TS GOLD)  Y1: Align TS GOLD assessment to non-educational setting assessments used by NDHHS; TS GOLD measures student proficiency at 90.1% Y2: Baseline % of participating four-year-old children who achieve significant gains in literacy skills using newly aligned tools; TS GOLD measures proficiency at 91.2% Y3: Baseline +5% OR TS GOLD 92.3% Y4: Baseline +5% OR TS GOLD 93.4% Y5: Baseline +5% OR TS GOLD 94.5% (increasing proficiency by 50% of baseline)	TS GOLD for students in ESU and LEA centers, pre- and post-surveys indicating training knowledge for EC providers	TS GOLD Observations, Surveys of professional learning participants	Y1: Sept 2025 Y2: Sept 2026 Y3: Sept 2027 Y4: Sept 2028 Y5: Sept 2029

Objectives	Performance Measures	Data Sources	Instruments/ Methodology	Completion Dates
Objective 1.c (Continued)	Y1-5: Increased family literacy with resources and/or direct services provided to 100,000 children, two-thirds of the estimated 150,000 children from families with incomes less than 200% of the federal poverty level.	Participant, ECE, and family surveys, Participant count, Resource distribution count	Surveys, Qualitative data	Y1: Sept 2025 Y2: Sept 2026 Y3: Sept 2027 Y4: Sept 2028 Y5: Sept 2029
<b>Goal 2: Statewide teacher and leader training and preparation in structured literacy and the Science of Reading. CPP1, CPP2, CPP3, CPP4, IP</b>				
Objective 2.a: Large-scale, evidence-based professional learning centered on instructional approaches to increasing literacy, such as structured literacy and culturally responsive pedagogy. <b>CPP3, CPP4 , IP</b>	Y1-5: 4,000 teachers and leaders each year will receive training and preparation in evidence-based instructional practices for increasing literacy. Y5: All of Nebraska’s estimated 23,000+ educators are trained in evidence-based instructional practices for increasing literacy.	Participant surveys, EPP reports	Surveys of professional learning participants	Y1: Sept 2025 Y2: Sept 2026 Y3: Sept 2027 Y4: Sept 2028 Y5: Sept 2029
Objective 2.b: Collaborate with teachers and EPPs to update State licensure standards in the area of literacy instruction and ensure the preparation of teachers and leaders in Nebraska is based on structured literacy and the Science of Reading. <b>CPP1, CPP4</b>	Y1-4: Literacy coaches review syllabi for elements of the Science of Reading for 4 of Nebraska’s 16 EPPs. Y1 – 5: Attend NCTE meetings annually.	NCTE meeting minutes, Literacy Coaches reports	Surveys and reviews of NCTE member institutions, including all 16 EPPs in Nebraska	Y1: Sept 2025 Y2: Sept 2026 Y3: Sept 2027 Y4: Sept 2028 Y5: Sept 2029

Objectives	Performance Measures	Data Sources	Instruments/ Methodology	Completion Dates
<b>Goal 3: Support the selection, implementation, and continuation of high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) and evidence-based practices to promote adequacy in resources for underserved students in early learning programs and school settings. CPP2, CPP 3</b>				
<p>Objective 3.a: Support the selection and implementation of HQIM to promote adequate resources through inclusive programs. <b>CPP2, CPP3</b></p>	<p>Y1: Baseline % of districts have implemented literacy HQIM.  Y2: Baseline +12.5%  Y3: Baseline +25%  Y4: Baseline + 37.5%  Y5: Baseline + 50%</p> <p>Baseline: 62% of students in grade 3 meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.  Y1: 65.8%  Y2: 69.6%  Y3: 73.4%  Y4: 77.2%  Y5: 81% (increasing proficiency by 50% of baseline)</p> <p>Baseline: 57% of students in grade 5 meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.  Y1: 61.3%  Y2: 65.6%  Y3: 69.9%  Y4: 74.2%  Y5: 78.5% (increasing proficiency by 50% of baseline)</p>	<p>Surveys to districts regarding their implementation of HQIM</p> <p>NSCAS score reports</p> <p>NSCAS score reports</p>	<p>Surveys of districts</p> <p>Surveys of PL participants, NSCAS ELA Assessments</p> <p>Surveys of PL participants, NSCAS ELA Assessments</p>	<p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p> <p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p> <p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p>



Objectives	Performance Measures	Data Sources	Instruments/ Methodology	Completion Dates
Objective 3.a (Continued)	<p>Baseline: 63% of students in grade 8 meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.  Y1: 66.7%  Y2: 70.4%  Y3: 74.1%  Y4: 77.8%  Y5: 81.5% (increasing proficiency by 50% of baseline)</p> <p>Baseline: 46% of students in grade 11 meet or exceed proficiency on State reading/language arts assessments.  Y1: 51.4%  Y2: 56.8%  Y3: 62.2%  Y4: 67.6%  Y5: 73% (increasing proficiency by 50% of baseline)</p>	<p>NSCAS score reports</p> <p>ACT® score reports</p>	<p>Surveys of PL participants, NSCAS ELA Assessments</p> <p>Surveys of PL participants, ACT® ELA Assessments</p>	<p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p> <p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p>
Objective 3.b: Address the impacts of COVID-19 through continuing best-practice ESSER investments to expand access to high-quality learning by removing barriers through the implementation of inclusive programs. <b>CPP2</b>	Y1-5: CLSD funded activities will directly impact 105,000 students annually.	Post-award reporting	External Evaluation	<p>Y1: Sept 2025  Y2: Sept 2026  Y3: Sept 2027  Y4: Sept 2028  Y5: Sept 2029</p>

not be effective due to the complex and rapidly changing nature of the program. NDE will evaluate proposals to choose an evaluator who has demonstrated flexibility in allowing for feedback and adjustments, emergent learning from unexpected outcomes, and collaboration with multiple state agencies, LEAs, and stakeholders.

**Implementation Study** questions: (1) To what extent are CLSD initiative activities cohesive and aligned to current state literacy initiatives and Nebraska’s Statewide Literacy Plan? (2) To what extent have partners implemented the CLSD initiative activities as intended? (3) What factors impede or support the implementation of CLSD initiative activities? (4) To what extent does implementation support promote the selection, implementation, and sustainability of evidence-based practices? (5) What are the lessons learned that could strengthen or improve implementation?

**Impact Study** questions: (1) To what extent do the CLSD initiative activities promote equity? (2) To what extent has the CLSD initiative met its short-, mid-, and long-term outcomes?

**(B) Performance Feedback and Assessment of Progress:** The team will address the evaluation questions through both qualitative and quantitative methods and varied data sources as indicated in Table 5.1, including annual reviews of organizational and policy documents, surveys at varied intervals to varied groups, interviews occurring at the time of services rendered, site visits, assessment reports, and network analyses. In coordination with the external evaluator, a cadence for performance reviews and assessments will be dictated upon notification of award and included in the scope of work, not to exceed one year of length between evaluations.

**Evaluation Milestones and Deliverables:** The evaluation team and NDE will collaborate to develop an evaluation timeline suitable for each activity and identify appropriate evaluation participants. NDE and each sub-awardee will determine a point-of-contact who will have regular

communication with the lead evaluator at a cadence that ensures sufficient information without becoming burdensome. For each activity, the evaluation team will create quarterly updates and annual reporting, synthesizing findings to present a full picture of the program that can be used to inform improvements and assess outcomes. As needed, the evaluator will summarize new findings to inform iterative revisions to both the implementation of activities and evaluation.

**Quarterly Updates:** The purpose of the quarterly update is to provide a brief review and interpretation of any data for that specific quarter. The update will supplement the “just-in-time” feedback from each evaluation activity to fuel continuous improvement during the initial phases of the initiative and inform needed adjustments to evaluation activities. These updates will be shared with the NDE and its sub-awardees as appropriate and are included in planned grant activities demonstrated in Table 3.1: Nebraska’s CLSD Activities Gantt Chart.

**Annual Report:** At the end of each year of the NDE CLSD initiative, the evaluation team will generate an annual report that answers the evaluation questions through the synthesis of data. The team and NDE partners will co-interpret this report to ensure that the context is fully understood before the results and recommendations are finalized. This report will contain recommended areas for improvement for NDE partners to review and decide upon changes for the upcoming year. Additionally, the NDE will have the option to disseminate all or portions of the annual report to stakeholders. The evaluation team will support this process. Part of the dissemination will include in-depth co-interpretation sessions with identified sub-awardees who could provide context to ensure accurate interpretation of the findings and who could most benefit from the information to improve their funded work in the upcoming year. The annual report will also support NDE in meeting any federal reporting requirements and will contribute to the national evaluation of Nebraska’s Journey to Inclusive Literacy through NeMTSS.

# Appendices

- A. Resumes and Job Descriptions
- B. Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- C. Bibliography
- D. Assurances
- E. Nebraska's Literacy Needs Assessment
- F. Nebraska Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council Membership Roster
- G. Letters of Support