



DATE: December 28, 2022

TO: Patrick J. O'Donnell, Clerk of the Nebraska Legislature

FROM: Jan Handa, State Coordinator

RE: Report on Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program (Neb. Rev. Stat. Sec. 79-2509)

The Expanded Learning Opportunity Grant Program Act was created by the Nebraska Legislature to promote academic achievement in high-need schools during out-of-school time afterschool and during summer break. One percent of the education proceeds from the Nebraska Lottery began depositing into this fund on July 1, 2016. Several stakeholder input sessions conducted in the spring and fall of 2016 informed the eligibility criteria, competition timeline and development of policies and procedures for the administration of the Two-Year Opportunity Grant program. Applicants were required to offer at least 15 student contact hours of expanded learning grant activities in both the fall and spring school terms (summer is optional). Per statute, these grants require 1:1 matching funds. Eligible applicants must have been either a school district or community-based organization that intended to collaboratively deliver services in eligible 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLCs) where at least 40% of students participated in free or reduced-price lunch. Eligible sites must have been in operation at least five years, in good standing and receiving funding from a 21st CCLC Continuation Grant. Grant proposals are reviewed by external teams that make funding recommendations to the State Board of Education.

The inaugural competition was conducted in the spring/summer of 2017 and resulted in the award of thirteen grants totaling \$286,121. Two additional competitions were conducted in the spring of 2019 and 2020. The 2019 two-year cohort totaled \$310,738 and included thirteen grants serving forty-eight sites with a grant period of June 7, 2019-June 30, 2021. The 2020 one-year cohort included nine grants serving thirty sites that were awarded a total of \$164,577 with a grant period of June 5, 2020-June 30, 2021. Grant amounts ranged from \$10,000-\$30,000. Programming at these sites provided additional hands-on learning and positive youth development experiences for students, however, the afterschool and summer programming in both cohorts were severely impacted by school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Spring, 2020 and continued to be challenged during the summer of 2020 and the 2020-21 school year due to various pandemic protocols, such as remote schooling, restrictions on outside community partner participation and loss of field trip opportunities. Four grantees declined their awards and others were severely limited which resulted in unspent grant funds. The two-year cohort served 2,012 students at 42 sites during the 2019-20 school year and 501 students during the summer of 2020. The combined two-year and one-year cohorts served only 1,278 students at 60 sites during the 2020-21 school year. Of these students, 82% were eligible for free/reduced lunch, 21% were English learners, 68% were an ethnic minority and 13% were verified for special education.

The ending balance remaining from the two cohorts that ended June 30, 2021 was large enough to cover all of the new grant awards and administrative expenses for the 16 two-year grants awarded in the spring 2022 competition. This current cohort awarded 16 two-year grants for a total of \$1,158,991 with a grant period of April 8, 2022 – June 30, 2024. Award amounts ranged from \$10,000-\$227,720. Additional information about the current and previous cohorts is available at <https://www.education.ne.gov/elo/two-year-opportunity-grant/>.