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Nebraska Wins Nationwide Grant Competition—Set to Expand High-Quality Prenatal-to-Age-Three Services to Nebraska’s Infants and Toddlers and Their Families

Pritzker Children’s Initiative awards Nebraska planning grant to establish actionable prenatal-to-age-three policy framework

Nebraska will receive a \$100,000 planning grant through the Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI) Prenatal to Age Three State Grant Competition to develop a policy framework to advance high-quality early learning opportunities for the state’s youngest children. The grant competition was designed to identify states who demonstrate strategic vision and cross-sector collaboration in support of infants, toddlers and their families. Nebraska was one of just 11 states to receive a grant out of 42 that applied.

Research shows that the first three years of life are a critically important period in the development of brain architecture, creating a foundation for lifelong learning, behavior and health. The planning grant will allow public and private sector stakeholders to collaborate on ways to reach more of the state’s nearly 80,000 infants and toddlers with high-quality opportunities for early development. Successful applicants are also eligible for Implementation Grants based on the quality of the plan they develop over the next six to nine months.

[First Five Nebraska](#) will lead the cross-sector effort to develop a cohesive prenatal-to-age-three policy framework for the state. According to First Five Nebraska Director Becky Veak, the grant award comes at a time when early childhood is an increasingly urgent topic in conversations about the state’s workforce challenges and prospects for continued social and economic growth. “The decisions we make about the care and education of very young children have everything to do with our ability to develop, attract and retain young families and talent in our state,” she said. “Education, business, industry, philanthropy and other interests need to be involved in shaping early childhood policy as well as helping to implement it.”

The PCI planning grant dovetails closely with other efforts currently underway to improve the coordination, efficiency and accountability of Nebraska’s early childhood infrastructure through a separate, federal Preschool Development Grant (PDG) award. Under the guidance of the Nebraska Department of Health and

Human Services, the federal grant will produce a comprehensive assessment of statewide early childhood needs that will in turn inform the work of the PCI planning grant. The PCI grant also connects Nebraska to the PCI-funded National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT), which facilitates the exchange of successful policies and practices developed by state-level coalitions.

“This grant competition has illuminated the nation’s commitment to supporting infants and toddlers. We knew that there was widespread agreement on the importance of the earliest years in a child’s life, but we were delighted to see the innovative thinking by states to significantly expand services to families with infants and toddlers,” said Gerry Cobb, director of the Pritzker Children’s Initiative. “Nebraska submitted a bold proposal that brings diverse leaders to the table to coordinate across fields and establish a unified policy agenda and action plan supporting infants, toddlers and their families.”

About the Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI)

The Pritzker Children’s Initiative (PCI), a project of the J.B. and M. K. Pritzker Family Foundation, is committed to building a promising future for our country by investing in and supporting solutions in early childhood development for children prenatal to age three, with the goal of every child reaching kindergarten ready to learn. More information about PCI can be found [here](#).

About The National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT)

The National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers (NCIT) is committed to advancing policies and programs that ensure families have the support they need to give their infants and toddlers the foundation for a strong start in life. Funded by the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, a program of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, this effort brings together national partners, early childhood leaders, policymakers and practitioners inside and outside state and local government to create and strengthen promising policies and programs and share what works so that more states and communities can support the healthy development of our youngest children. More information about NCIT can be found [here](#).

About First Five Nebraska

First Five Nebraska is a team of public policy, data analysis and communications professionals focused on growing the prosperity of our state and its citizens by engaging public and private sector interests to high-quality early care and learning opportunities for young children, especially those most at risk. We serve as a resource to legislators and other decision-makers to advance fiscally responsible, accountable and effective public policies to create a statewide environment where children, families, communities and employers can thrive.

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