



Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy



Help lead a policy movement to create a stronger future for our youngest children and our state

Class 4 Recruitment | 2022-23



Apply now to join Nebraska's premier early childhood advocacy initiative

What is the Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy?

There are few aspects of public affairs that are not significantly affected by the decisions we make about the care, education and healthy development of young children. Leaders in all levels of government are more and more often called upon to address early childhood issues in the context of policy conversations about K-12 and higher education, public health and safety, job creation, economic development and even national security. As this trend increases, so too does the need for active and well-informed advocates to help public officials make better decisions about policies that impact the well-being of our youngest children, families, communities and state as a whole.

Now entering its fourth year, the **Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy (PLA)** is the state's premier, nonpartisan leadership development program focused specifically on empowering citizen-advocates to contribute information and insight so the policymaking process at all levels of government will benefit young children and create social, educational and economic opportunity for all Nebraskans.

What will I gain as a member of the Academy?

As a participant in the 2022-23 Academy, you will:

- Learn how to analyze local early childhood infrastructure and how it connects to your community's broader social, educational and economic profile
- Acquire an "insider" understanding of the policymaking process in state and local government from current and former elected officials, as well as other specialists in government affairs
- Identify and mobilize local resources and contacts to build political momentum for early childhood issues at the grassroots and grasstops levels
- Position yourself as a credible source of information and insight to elected officials who develop and/or implement public policy
- Become regularly and actively involved in a statewide network of current PLA members and alumni

Application Deadline

Friday, July 22, 2022

How to Apply

firstfive-nebraska.org/what-we-do/policy-leadership-academy/

Who should apply?

The Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy consists of individuals who have an authentic commitment to creating policy change in their communities and state.

The program welcomes applicants with a broad array of professional experience, civic involvement and cultural backgrounds. Participants in the Academy will engage with decision-makers, influencers and other stakeholders as current members and alumni of the 2022-23 program.

We particularly encourage:

- Early childhood providers who are committed to advancing early care and education as a valued and rewarding profession
- Employers, economic developers and local chamber of commerce leaders who want to address the state's workforce crisis through quality child care supports for working parents
- Civic leaders seeking to improve the quality of life offered in their own communities and in all areas of Nebraska through local early childhood programs
- Individuals representing communities that are typically under-represented in policy conversations about children and families
- Advocates who are willing to interact productively with policy leaders representing a wide variety of political and social viewpoints

What is expected of participants in the Academy?

- Attendance at all 4 in-person workshops and 1 virtual workshop beginning with an orientation banquet and workshop in October 2022 and concluding with a graduation ceremony in March 2023.
- In-person workshops are conducted in communities throughout the state. Expenses for meals, mileage and overnight accommodations will be reimbursed by First Five Nebraska.
- Workshops typically last from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Applicants are expected to verify that their employers agree to their participation in scheduled workshops and related advocacy activity.
- Participants will complete a capstone project that involves meeting with their district senator during our February workshop in Lincoln.
- Participants are expected to remain engaged in peer learning and early childhood advocacy activities as alumni of the Academy following the conclusion of the 2022-23 program.

Please Note

The PLA remains committed to making every effort to ensure the health and safety of its participants. All reasonable precautions will be taken to address the ongoing threat of COVID-19 and its variants with respect to in-person meetings of the Academy.



"Legislators both value and rely upon knowledgeable citizen-advocates who are willing and prepared to contribute their insight to the policymaking process."

The Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy is especially important because its members are uniquely positioned to represent the needs of those who cannot readily speak for themselves—our youngest children."

**State Senator Matt Williams
Legislative District 36**



About the 2022-23 Program

Specific dates and locations to be announced

Meeting 1 | October 2022

Understanding your community's early childhood profile

We launch our 2022-23 program with a special 2-day event, featuring a welcome dinner and orientation, followed by a full-day workshop on how early childhood systems connect to local infrastructure.

Meeting 2 | November 2022

Building an early childhood movement at the local level

Our November meeting focuses on the structures and processes involved in policymaking at the municipal, county or regional levels, as well as strategies to map and mobilize local assets for early childhood advocacy in your community.

Meeting 3 (Virtual) | January 2023

Influencing policy at the statewide level

We begin our examination of how legislative and administrative policy is made, review priority policies introduced in the 2023 Unicameral and prepare for our meetings with state senators at the Capitol in February.

Meeting 4 | February 2023

A day at the Unicameral

The Academy meets in Lincoln to attend committee hearings and listen to floor debate at the Capitol. Academy participants will meet with their senators and/or legislative staff to discuss early childhood policy priorities.

Meeting 5 | March 2023

Reflection and graduation

We conclude the 2022-23 program by sharing insights and lessons learned from their day at the Unicameral, discussing ongoing advocacy efforts as alumni of the PLA and participating in our Class 4 graduation celebration.



Aiesha Rahn

Assistant Vice President Early Childhood Programs, Nebraska Children and Families Foundation

PLA Class 2021-22

"I never thought I could have learned so much before participating in the Policy Leadership Academy. I have come to understand the legislative process and how I can influence it with the guidance and support of the PLA. I'm eager to move forward with what I've learned to better support the North and South Omaha communities."



Luke Virgil

Executive Director, Wayne Area Economic Development

PLA Class 2021-22

"The Policy Leadership Academy helped broaden my statewide network and gave me a new appreciation for the challenges Nebraskans face to access high-quality early childhood education."

As an economic developer, I believe this issue is integral to attracting and retaining talent and combatting our workforce issues. Simply stated, Nebraska will not grow without making early childhood a priority. The PLA helps cultivate that message."



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