



# Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy



## Leaders Wanted

Build momentum for early childhood policy in your community and state

### What is the PLA?

The Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy (PLA) is the state's premier, nonpartisan leadership development program that prepares advocates to help shape policies affecting the care, education and healthy development of young children. Participants in the program learn alongside experts in grassroots advocacy and public policy at the community, state and federal levels.

### Who should apply?

The PLA welcomes applicants with a diverse range of personal and professional experience, including:

- Early childhood care and education
- Maternal/child health
- K-12 and higher education
- Business and economic development
- Nonprofit and community services/development

The PLA encourages applicants representing traditionally marginalized or underserved communities.



### Dan Mauk

Executive Director, Nebraska City Area Economic Development Corporation

PLA Class 2019-20

*"The relationships I built in the PLA helped me better understand the early childhood challenges facing southeastern Nebraska and the state as a whole. Those challenges are crucially important to many of the issues I address in my work as an economic developer."*

*"What you learn in this program doesn't just make you a more effective early childhood advocate—it makes you a more effective, engaged Nebraskan."*

## What is expected of participants?

- **Competitive Application Process:** Admission to the program is based on thoughtful and thorough responses to the application questions, as well as a letter of recommendation from a professional or community reference. Finalist candidates will also participate in a short interview with the program coordinator.
- **Six-Month Commitment:** The 2025-26 PLA program begins in October and concludes the following March. Applicants must obtain signed permission from their employers (if applicable) approving the time required for them to participate fully in the program's activities.
- **Required Workshops:** Participants will attend four in-person, daylong workshops and one virtual workshop. Workshops are held monthly except in December. In-person workshops are conducted in either Kearney or Lincoln. Meal, travel and lodging expenses are reimbursed by First Five Nebraska.
- **Capstone Project:** PLA participants will complete monthly take-home assignments culminating in a capstone project in which they will apply their advocacy knowledge to a topic in early care and education, maternal/child health, or a related issue.
- **Alumni Engagement:** Graduates of the PLA are expected to stay involved in early childhood policy advocacy efforts as program alumni.

## What will I learn as a PLA member?



### Principles of grassroots advocacy

Learn strategies and best practices for building sustainable, full-community momentum to address local early childhood challenges.



### Data collection and interpretation

Learn how to identify, interpret and use community data to increase the impact of your advocacy efforts.



### Asset mapping and mobilization

Identify and align local expertise, resources and relationships that can advance your community's early childhood goals.



### Navigating the policymaking process

Get to know the nuances of the legislative and administrative process and identify targets of opportunity for advocacy.



### Positioning yourself for leadership

Establish your role with decision-makers and fellow community members as a credible source of information and coordination on early childhood issues.



### Itzeni Nayeli Lopez

Executive Director,  
Elementary Learning Centers,  
Learning Community  
PLA Class 2024-25

*"I joined the PLA because I wanted to be involved in public policy as a participant, not just as someone impacted by it. Grassroots advocacy is about letting people know that their voice matters."*

*We may not have all the answers as individuals, but when we come together and combine our knowledge and resources, we can accomplish a lot."*

## Application Window

# May 5 - July 18, 2025

*For workshop dates, locations and other information about the program, visit us online.*



[FirstFiveNebraska.org/Advocacy/PLA](https://FirstFiveNebraska.org/Advocacy/PLA)

*The Nebraska Early Childhood Policy Leadership Academy is an initiative of First Five Nebraska*