



## PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM RATIONALE

**TO:** Matthew L. Blomstedt, Ph.D.  
Commissioner of Education

**FROM:** Dr. Dean R. Folkers  
Information Systems Officer

**PROPOSED AGENDA ITEM:** Grant the Commissioner the authority obligate up to \$800,000 from the Education Improvement lottery Fund to create the Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) Education Innovation Network and enact related contracts.

### **RATIONALE/BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

An *Innovation Grant Program* was initially created with the passage of Legislative Bill (LB) 519 (2015) and codified in Nebraska Revised Statute (NRS) §79-1054. The competitive grant program provided resources and opportunities to Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and consortiums to support the development, expansion and investment in innovative best practices. The projects and efforts ranged from personalized learning, career academies, afterschool design network, and digital ecosystem development.

Building on the culmination of our successful collaboration on the NDE Innovation Grant funded Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) Design Challenge, Beyond School Bells together with a group of key partners, is proposing second phase Innovation grant funding to launch *Nebraska's ELO Innovation Network* for the two-year period starting in January 2020.

This two-year, would generate a 2:1 private sector match, creating a total, two year pool of \$2.4 million to launch and grow a Network supporting 1) an **ELO Design Studio**, developing and disseminating low cost, high quality, ELO programming, staffing and evaluation innovations, 2) new **ELO incubator program** supporting underserved rural and NDE priority districts, and 3) **ELO Centers of Excellence** promoting and sharing ELO Innovations. Annually, Innovation grant funds would support these key components:

- **A competitive grant programs supporting ELO Expansion and Excellence** (pursuant to §79-1054) **including:**
  - **ELO incubator grant program** (under \$50k total per site) Supporting new, small scale ELO programs in rural communities below the 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC threshold and NDE priority / needs improvement schools using ELO supports to expand and enhance school day instruction. Grant funds would be leveraged with local 1:1 matching funds or in-kind contributions.
  - **ELO Communities of Excellence grant program-** Supporting existing ELO sites / communities with \$20,000 - \$40,000 grants to promote ELO best practices, including STEM innovations. Grants to these centers of excellence, selected to contribute to a portfolio of experiences, will enhance their STEM offerings and

their ability to offer regular PD and coaching opportunities showcasing ELO Innovations to statewide audiences and contributing to a digital toolbox to further disseminate best practices.

- **Design Studio and Network Facilitation and Administration.** Beyond School Bells will raise matching funds; manage the Network and administer competitive grant programs, convene networking meetings and coaching opportunities; develop, field test and scale up new programming and staffing models; partner with NE Extension and others on program development / coaching; partner with NDE's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program to develop new tools to enhance data collection on the impact of ELO interventions on student growth, and to capture and broadly disseminate lessons learned, enhancing NDE's 21<sup>st</sup> CCLC program and other ELO program across Nebraska.

The vision for the **ELO Innovation Network** is to create a new public-private partnership that leverages public funds to 1) provide more opportunities for key state level partners to work closely with new and established ELO programs to grow high quality, locally sustainable initiatives that can serve thousands of Nebraska youth, including youth from Nebraska's most challenging urban and rural educational environments, and 2) to identify and cultivate characteristics of high quality programming that can be shared with other communities across the state through a variety of in-person and on-line platforms. This nationally unique ELO Innovation Network will create new opportunities for Beyond School Bells to cultivate new local, state and national partnerships to that can sustain the Network beyond the two-year Innovation Grant start-up phase.

This *Education Innovation Networks* will provide an opportunity for interested districts to apply for future competitive grants pursuant to §79-1054 for participation in the established Networks and become involved in building, supporting, and scaling innovations, as well as statewide implementation strategies, and enabling policy recommendations to support systemic improvement.

A part of this specific Network would include districts working with Beyond School Bells and the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation based in Lincoln, Nebraska to manage the Network and the efforts.

**ESTIMATED COST:** To accomplish this Education Innovation Network, \$800,000 would be obligated for contracts and competitive grant supports for the Network over the next two years.