



## 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 \$750,000 from the Education Improvement Lottery Fund to create the Education Innovation Network (EIN) for Asynchronous Professional Learning (APL) 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 from these initial grant projects, NDE seeks to establish a set of *Education Innovation Networks* to support the statewide access, feature development, and ultimately access to districts. Online, asynchronous learning has become prevalent in many corporate and nongovernmental organizations because it provides greater access and flexibility to meet the needs of professionals in work settings. The proposed Education Innovation Network (EIN) for Asynchronous Professional Learning (APL) will advance the effective use of online, asynchronous learning for education professionals – teachers, early childhood care providers, professional staff, administrators, and faculty. The Network also directly supports the implementation of the State Board of Education Strategic Vision and Direction.

The EIN will establish two cohorts of 40 participants each and provide direct training, coaching and peer-to-peer learning in the planning, design, and development of online modules for use in APL. Collectively, EIN participants will establish templates for APL guidance documents (e.g., guiding models, core design principles, etc.), templates for evaluation plans, and samples of design playbooks and standard operating procedures that can be accessed and utilized by any education agency in the state planning to use APL. The Network builds upon the work of the Digital EcoSystem and focuses specifically on supporting the professional learning associated with Blended Digital Professional Learning

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 Vivayic, a Learning Design company based in Lincoln, Nebraska for training, facilitation, consulting, and managing the network that would be part of the budgeted costs of the funds used. Additional resources for participating districts, professional learning, and broader communication are included in the budgeted estimates for the Network as well.

**ESTIMATED COST:** To accomplish this Education Innovation Network, up to \$750,000 would be obligated for contracts and competitive grant supports for the Network.