



# NEBRASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

June 18, 2020

**To: Nebraska Public School Superintendents, Non-Public School Administrators, and ESU Administrators**

**CC: State Board of Education, Commissioner's NDE Cabinet**

**Re: Digital Learning Profile and Plans – CARES Act GEERS**

The federal CARES Act includes specific funding sources for State Education Agencies (SEAs) and governors to support statewide priorities in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, section 18002 of the Act establishes the Governor Emergency Education Relief (GEER) fund, and section 18003 establishes the Elementary Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund. The core purpose of these funds is to direct money to address areas most impacted by the disruption and closure of schools caused by COVID-19, which includes: continuing to provide educational services while schools are closed, such as remote learning; and developing and implementing plans for return to normal operations.

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) conducted a prioritization survey of stakeholders across the Nebraska and the following priorities were identified:

- Enhance technology infrastructure (e.g., broadband, devices, platforms, data privacy, etc.) for students and families.
- Build supports for planning for possible interruptions upon returning to school and student and staff reentry.
- Ensure student nutritional needs are met.
- Provide professional learning to support an inclusive remote learning environment and engagement, along with best practices for different student groups.
- Create or expand mental, behavioral, and social emotional supports (e.g., telehealth).

In addition, the Nebraska governor has determined the following for use of GEER funds:

- Address the digital divide and related issues to support remote learning for students in K-12 schools.
- Focus on providing equitable access to technology for all students and improving parity in access to all schools.
- Hardware purchases for use of school students and improving access to reliable, high-speed internet for students.
- Reserve some funds to provide flexibility to address additional COVID-19 issues.

The NDE and Office of the Governor are committed to coordinating and aligning these priority efforts to ensure an effective and efficient approach in providing technology supports for all Nebraska students and schools.

The NDE's creation of a "Hierarchy of Digital Learning Needs" serves as an organization model for planning and determining resources at the state level. The areas of focus include: Infrastructure (Broadband), Devices, Software Systems, Digital Content, and Professional Development/Training. Information about the Hierarchy and prioritized state-level projects is available at <http://www.launchne.com/>.

The next important statewide projects phase includes collecting specific status and technology-based needs of public and nonpublic schools. This will be accomplished through an online submission of a "Digital Learning Profile and Plan."

All public and nonpublic schools that desire to be considered for GEERS and ESSER funds, resources, and supports addressing digital inequities and gaps highlighted by COVID-19 **should promptly complete the Digital Learning Profile and Plan at <http://www.launchne.com> by July 6, 2020.**

As a reminder, public and nonpublic schools interested in participating in the statewide pricing for a Learning Management System should view and complete the information available at: <https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Why-a-Learning-Management-System.pdf>. The deadline for submission for a fall implementation of the Canvas LMS is **June 19, 2020.**

For specific questions, please contact Dean Folkers, [dean.folkers@nebraska.gov](mailto:dean.folkers@nebraska.gov) or Dorann Avey, [Dorann.avey@nebraska.gov](mailto:Dorann.avey@nebraska.gov)

Thank you.