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# Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSFRF) Funding Report

December 2023

Pursuant to LB 1014, Section 13, signed into law on April 2021, the Nebraska Department of Education, Office of Special Education received funds through the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSFRF). There is included in the appropriation to this program, \$1,000,000 Federal Funds for state aid. The Nebraska Department of Education shall spend the funds appropriated in this section exclusively for programs and interpreters that provide services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing in the following manner: (1) \$300,000 for equipment; (2) \$300,000 for service; and (3) \$400,000 for an enhanced educational interpreter training and mentoring program.

Amount:	Intended Use:	Timeframe:
\$300,000	Selection of Specific Services that can be enhanced to support students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or training on services provided to service providers based on Needs Assessment.	<p>Purchases or Contracts entered into for the 2023-24/2024-25 School Year(s).</p> <p>SY 2022-23 Completed Needs Assessment</p> <p>Developing SY 23-24 and 24-25 contract for professional development activities to support educators based on needs assessment.</p>
\$300,000	Selection of Specific Equipment that can be enhanced to support students who are Deaf of Hard of Hearing or training on equipment provided to service providers based on Needs Assessment.	<p>Purchases or Contracts entered into for the 2023-24/2024-25 School Year(s).</p> <p>SY 2022-23 Completed Needs Assessment</p> <p>December start date of MOU with ATP to purchase statewide loan pool equipment.</p>
\$400,000	Selection of Projects to support students who are Deaf of Hard of Hearing regarding Educational Mentoring Support.	<p>Purchases or Contracts entered into for the 2023-24/2024-25 School Year(s).</p> <p>Completed RFP/Procurement process – State Board Approval for following grants in August:</p>

The NDE Office of Special Education has conducted a needs assessment in collaboration with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Programs and the NDE Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) ensure the use of funds within the Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds (CSFRF) would meet the needs of students who are Deaf or hard of hearing in Nebraska. Based on the needs assessment, The NDE Office of Special Education and Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Programs has developed action plans to carry out the activities related to the needs of the needs assessment and to ensure appropriate use of funds.

### **Selection of Specific Services that can be enhanced to support students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or training on services provided to service providers based on Needs Assessment.**

#### **Total Allocation - \$300,000**

In collaboration with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the NDE Office of Special Education will be offering American Sign Language at Home: A Family Curriculum to families that had not access to supporting their student using educational interpreters.

The estimated cost, based on the delivery of 1000 student's families, is \$35,699.89. This curriculum will be provided to families through a regional training facilitated by the Nebraska Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Coordinators.

Also, in partnership with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the NDE Office of Special Education will be developing statewide trainings through Northern Signs Research Inc, who aims to support the development of creative teaching and assessment materials to promote children's language, learning and literacy in American Sign Language and English.

Item Name	Price	Quantity	Total
American Sign Language at Home: A Family Curriculum, 2nd Edition PDF book	\$31.99 (volume discount from \$39.99)	1000	\$31,990.00
Economy service charge	\$3.00	1000	\$3,000
	Shipping		\$252.25
	Tax		\$457.64
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$35,699.89</b>

Northern Signs will develop a “Nebraska Only Cohort” supporting up to 15 participants, with over 50% being deaf or hard of hearing themselves.

Cost: \$4,000

NDE will also be able to allow for registrants to sign up for Open Trainings (already scheduled and open world-wide):

\$486.62 – Training and Test Materials for up to 8 participants = \$3,888

\$374.48 – Training Only for up to 10 participants = \$3470

Total Cost of Northern Signs Research Contract = \$11,358.00

**Total Committed Funds - \$47,057.89**

**Plan for additional funds, to be expended by June 30,2025.**

The NDE Office of Special Education has conducted a needs assessment in collaboration with the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Programs to see what training for service providers are needed in each of the regions. A survey of parents, families, and service providers was conducted to see what additional supports are needed to support families in understanding services that are available through the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Based on this needs assessment and regional plan action plan completion, the remaining funds of \$252,942.11 will be dispersed amongst the regions to provide training and support services based on need and student count per region to conduct individualized trainings to support the developed action plans. In addition, the Regional Programs will be partnering with the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf or Hard of Hearing to conduct a statewide conference in June of 2025. This conference will aim to support Regional Teachers of the Deaf, Educational Interpreters, Special Educators, General Educators, Administrators, and Related Service Providers to ensure best practices in the area of inclusive supports for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing are provided.

## **Selection of Specific Equipment that can be enhanced to support students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing or training on equipment provided to service providers based on Needs Assessment.**

### **Total Allocations - \$300,000**

The NDE Office of Special Education conducted a needs assessment in collaboration with the NDE Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) to capture a statewide picture of what needs for equipment are currently present in the state. Currently equipment for deaf and hard of hearing students is handled by the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional programs, allowing for regional equipment needs to be met. The NDE Office of Special Education will work with NDE ATP to build out a statewide repository of all equipment specific to supports for students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing purchased with CSFRF funds as well as the equipment that is intended for statewide distribution and loan within school districts. NDE ATP, in coordination with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Programs gathered information regarding current equipment in the regions to ensure that appropriate purchases of new or updated equipment is being purchased for districts to utilize in a loan fashion for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Now that the Needs Assessment is complete, an Interagency Agreement, starting December 1, 2023, with NDE ATP to make the statewide purchases of equipment that is needed to complete the Deaf or Hard of Hearing loan pool.

### **Total Committed Funds - \$300,000**

## **Selection of Projects to support students who are Deaf of Hard of Hearing regarding Educational Mentoring Support.**

### **Total Allocation - \$400.000**

Interpreter mentorship programs are being created to address the increased demand for high quality interpretation services and the need for ongoing support for new and experienced interpreters. ASL/English interpretation is a complex social-linguistic task.

Increased demand for qualified American Sign Language (ASL)/English interpretation led to growth of professional training opportunities for aspiring as well as working interpreters. However, the interpreting community's efforts to increase the numbers and availability of qualified ASL/English interpreters met with several challenges:

- Time lag between new interpreters' graduation from an interpreter preparation program and their attaining national certification
- A skills gap, including the level of ASL proficiency, among new and working interpreters
- Need for more professional development opportunities and networking support for interpreters
- Alternative entry pathways into professional interpreting, often by members of diverse racial/ethnic groups
- Lack of awareness of the role and acceptance of Deaf interpreters
- Lack of persistence in or dropping out of the interpreting profession

For students who are deaf who are attending school in general education settings, the provision of an educational interpreter is an important accommodation. The demand for educational interpreters has soared in recent years and has paralleled the increase in the number of students who are deaf who are attending local schools. Rapid growth in the field of educational interpreting has resulted in a shortage of well-prepared interpreters, a situation that is even worse in rural settings. Many individuals employed as interpreters have not

completed formal preparation through interpreter preparation programs, and even fewer still have had appropriate training for employment in educational settings. The paucity of interpreters, coupled with the concern about the quality of interpretation puts a high emphasis on the need to “grow your own” in rural and high shortage areas.

One way of addressing these challenges is through the design and implementation of interpreter mentoring programs to support new interpreters, interpreters from diverse populations, Deaf interpreters, and working interpreters seeking professional growth.

Below are the entities that were selected through a Request For Proposal to enhance education interpreter training and mentoring programs in Nebraska that are aligned to the following priority goals.

Priority Goals:

- I. Provide for development of and/or access to training modules for educational sign language interpreters
  - II. Enhance the signing skills of school-based sign language interpreters in Nebraska through onsite and virtual mentoring.
  - III. Provide opportunities for providers to network on Low Incidence issues.
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- 1) **Central/Western Nebraska Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Program** - ASL Immersion Program - ASL immersion program (4-day voice-off) for school district staff interested in becoming educational sign language interpreters or teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing. Staff for the proposal would be fluent in ASL and have knowledge of EIP A testing for requirements for educational sign language interpreters. Areas of focus would include ASL linguistic features, text analysis, classroom discourse, and managing the interpreting process. Our proposal would be to offer this opportunity in the summer of 2024 and again in 2025.



- 2) **Central Western Nebraska Deaf or Hard of Hearing Regional Program** – Dual Credit Sign Language I and II classes – CWNP regional schools will be offered beginning (Sign Language I) and more advanced (Sign Language II) classes. The classes will be taught by an experienced, fluent ASL teacher. The dual credit will be offered via a Nebraska-accredited community college. Students in the program will be provided classes through an online platform that uses a combination of live classes (1 time weekly) and asynchronous modules. The curriculum would be a commonly used book and video series that is evidence-based to learn ASL.
- 3) **Utah State d/b/a TAESE** – Facilitation and Mentoring - Provide facilitation and mentoring services for Nebraska participants taking the TAESE Deaf Interpreter online training course. This 16-week training course has been designed to bring participants together to explore the foundational skills required to work as a Deaf Interpreter (DI). Instructional and learning methods for the training include online assignments, small group mentor meetings, one-on-one mentor meetings, various interpreting assignments, and performing self-assessment and critical reflections.
- 4) **Utah State d/b/a TAESE** – Mentoring in Practice Courses - Provide training for current and potential mentors by using the TAESE Mentoring in Practice online training course. This online training explores the role of the mentor and mentee relationship as part of the growth trajectory for interpreters. The orientation of the mentoring process in this training is rooted in a growth mentality mindset and recognizes the need for interpreters to develop resiliency and embrace learning how to grow from their mistakes. The coursework will cover topics such as adult learning theory, effective mentoring strategies, pattern identification, performing assessments, giving constructive feedback, and developing rapport.
- 5) **Lincoln Public Schools** – Interpreter Training Supports - Lincoln Public Schools has been unable to hire enough interpreters for the last four years. The staffing shortage makes it difficult to provide students with equitable access due to having to work around the shortage. The shortage also strains current working interpreters as they are being pulled in multiple directions and often working with several students at one time. We have contracted services, but they are not the same as having someone in

person. This project will support a “grow your own” project in training and mentoring for personnel in Lincoln Public Schools.

- 6) **University of Nebraska – Omaha** ASL-English Interpreting Training and Support - This project aims to improve students’ readiness for the EIPA or NIC interpreting assessments by providing monthly mentoring sessions to undergraduate students within UNO’s Interpreter Preparation Program. UNO students will complete a readiness survey and the American Sign Language Proficiency Interview (ASLPI) to establish a baseline of existing ASL skills. Each month, UNO students will be required to participate in one hour of mentoring with an approved interpreter mentor. At the end of the mentoring cycle, UNO students will complete the survey and the ASLPI again as a post-test to evaluate readiness for taking the Educational Interpreting Proficiency Assessment (EIPA) or the National Interpreting Certification (NIC).

**Total Contracts COST:**

CWNP - ASL Immersion	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$93,280
CWNP - Dual Credit ASL	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$132,500
UNO Interpreter Mentoring -	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$66,014
LPS - Interpreter Tuition Reimbursement	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$10,000
TAESE - Deaf Interpreter	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$56,210
TAESE - ASL Mentoring	8/7/23 - 8/6/2025	\$37,852

**Total Grant Awards - \$395,856.00**

**Total Committed Funds - \$400,000**

### ARPA Expenditure Category Report 4 Q 2023

Field Name	Project Expenditure Category Group	Project Expenditure Category	Project Name	Project Identification Number (Assigned by recipient)	Status of Completion	Total Cumulative Obligations	Total Cumulative Expenditures
NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - FKTMJESNM3U6	2-Negative Economic Impacts	2.17 - Housing Support: Housing Vouchers and Relocation Assistance for Disproportionately Impacted Communities	ARPA NDE - EQUIPMENTS	13020231	Completed less than 50%	0	0
NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - FKTMJESNM3U6	2-Negative Economic Impacts	2.17 - Housing Support: Housing Vouchers and Relocation Assistance for Disproportionately Impacted Communities	ARPA NDE - SERVICES	13020231	Completed less than 50%	0	\$35,684.11

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION - FKTMJESNM3U6	2-Negative Economic Impacts	2.17 - Housing Support: Housing Vouchers and Relocation Assistance for Disproportion ately Impacted Communities	ARPA NDE - INTERPRET ER	13020233	Completed less than 50%	\$395,855.88	0
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