



June 2026

Nebraska's Afterschool Conference Call for Presentations!

Interested in sharing your story and experience with others in the afterschool community?
Apply to present at Nebraska's Afterschool Conference today!

Key Deadlines:

- **June 12 @ 3:00 PM CT:** Workshop Proposal submission deadline
- **July 1 @ 11:59 PM CT:** Walk n Talk Proposal submission deadline
- **July 1:** Conference registration opens (*Please wait to register for the conference until you receive confirmation about your session selection.*)
- **September 11:** Final registration deadline (Presenters and Walk & Talk tables must be registered)

STRONGER TOGETHER:

Connecting People, Programs, and Possibilities!

September 25, 2026 | Younes Conference Center South - Kearney, NE



2026 Nebraska Afterschool Conference Request for Proposals

The Nebraska Department of Education and its partners are pleased to announce the 2026 Nebraska Afterschool Conference Request for Proposals. Proposals are sought for workshops and Walk and Talk (vendor) tables. Key details of each proposal type are listed below.

Workshop Proposals

- **Session Length:** 50 minutes
- Should include **interactive elements** for attendees
- Consider the **Workshop Pathways:**
 - **Frontline Staff:** Professionals working directly with students in afterschool programs
 - **Program Coordinators:** Those who manage or train frontline staff and oversee a single afterschool site
 - **Program Directors & Administrators:** Leaders overseeing multiple sites and/or setting program strategy.
 - **Partners & Funders:** Organizations that support or collaborate with afterschool and summer programs.
- **Deadline to Submit:** May 29th, 2026 @ 3:00 PM CT
- **Selection Notification:** Mid-July
- **Registration Fees:**
 - \$100
 - Includes breakfast and lunch for one person. Additional meals may be purchased separately.

Walk and Talk Proposals

- **Dedicated exhibit time** during conference breaks to maximize **attendee engagement**
- Opportunity to **showcase your resources, programs, or services**
- **6-ft table with 2 chairs** provided. Space available for **interactive displays** upon request.
- **Deadline to Submit:** July 1st, 2026 @ 11:59 PM CT
- **Selection Notification:** Early August
- **Registration Fees:**
 - For-Profit: \$225
 - Non-Profit: \$150
 - Includes breakfast and lunch for one person. Additional meals may be purchased separately.

Registration and payment is required to confirm participation. Those who submit for both Walk and Talk and a Workshop will only pay one registration fee. Workshop-only participants who do not plan to eat lunch or otherwise participate in the conference beyond their accepted session need not pay a registration fee.



Scan the QR code to access the RFP document. The RFP document is the same for both proposal types.



Nominations open for the Michelle Arehart Nebraska Afterschool Community Champion Award

Beyond School Bells (BSB), in partnership with the Nebraska Afterschool Conference (GetConnected) Committee, is currently accepting nominations for the Michelle Arehart "Nebraska Afterschool Community Champion Award." We encourage you to nominate yourself or a fellow program leader honoring the incredible legacy of Michelle Arehart. The award will be presented during the 2026 Nebraska Afterschool Conference on Friday, September 25, in Kearney.

This award honors the legacy of Michelle Arehart, the longtime director of the Kearney CLC program, whose life was tragically lost in a car accident in Fall 2024. Michelle was known for her outstanding leadership, her dedication to youth and families, and her exceptional ability to build strong community partnerships to strengthen her program.

The award will recognize one outstanding program leader who exemplifies leadership, steadfast dedication, and an inspiring commitment to strengthening and connecting their community. Michelle possessed many strengths, but one that truly distinguished her is her exceptional talent for building strong partnerships and engaging the community to enhance her program and drive meaningful outcomes for children, youth, and families. If this sounds like you or a colleague, we encourage you to submit a nomination. Nominations may be submitted by administrators, colleagues, parents, or by a program leader like yourself.

Nomination deadline: Friday, July 3. Please find the nomination form linked below.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Beyond School Bells, Patricia Sanchez-Stewart, at psanchezstewart@nebraskachildren.org

Nomination Form

Staff Resources

Move, Unlock, & Reap the Harvest

Bring learning to life through movement, agriculture, and hands-on exploration! The Nebraska Department of Education is excited to invite elementary and middle schools to apply for a **new pilot opportunity for the 2026–27 school year, combining Walk to Unlock virtual trails with Farm to School Harvest of the Month resources**. This initiative blends physical activity with lessons on Nebraska’s agriculture, history, and nutrition through interactive “checkpoints” and classroom activities. Participating schools will pilot at least one trail and complete brief surveys - while **receiving \$250 mini-grant funding**. With a **flexible timeline and options to participate as a classroom, club, or after-school program**, this is a great way to engage students in active, experiential learning. Check out the flyer for all the details!

Apply today to be part of this exciting pilot!

Apply Here

All Paths Lead to Education with...



HISTORY • AGRICULTURE • NATURE

WALK 2 UNLOCK

NEBRASKA

Utilize Walk 2 Unlock as individuals or teams to move (not limited to walking) through each virtual trail, where all participants will gain foundational checkpoint knowledge about Nebraska's history, agriculture, and nature. Checkpoint learning resources are designed for K-8th grade which include supplemental Harvest of the Month lessons that will provide additional resources to enhance the experience. Be Active, and then log in to walk2unlock.ne.gov. Enter steps or minutes of activity into the activity calculator, watch them convert into miles on your trail, choose checkpoint resources to complete, and repeat the process!

HOW TO IMPLEMENT WALK 2 UNLOCK:

Set Up:

Create teams (recommended 10 or fewer per team).



Optional: Invite other teams to join your league and compete.

Move and Log:

Track any activity - our calculator converts minutes into miles.



Teach:

Each trail checkpoint includes several 10-40 minute activities & resources.



Repeat!



Exploring Future 21st Century Community Learning Center Partnerships

The Nebraska 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) First-Time Grant competition opens new opportunities for public school districts, community-based organizations, city or county government agencies, and others to launch or expand high-quality afterschool and summer Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) programs.

Are you interested in expanding or strengthening your afterschool or summer program but not sure if you have the capacity to do it on your own?

Beyond School Bells is ready to partner with your organization and a Local Education Agency (LEAs) and others as a subcontractor and strategic implementation partner to support strong applications and successful, sustainable programs.

BSB can help communities navigate the grant process while providing ongoing support with program design, staff development, evaluation, community partnerships, and long-term sustainability planning.

For programs with limited capacity, this partnership can provide access to statewide expertise, resources, and coaching designed to help build high-quality, locally sustainable opportunities for youth and families.

If you'd like to learn more about how a future partnership might benefit your program or community, we'd love to connect. More information and partnership ideas are attached. If interested, you can book a 30-minute exploratory call with Stephanie Vadnais: [Book time with Stephanie Vadnais: Beyond School Bells Support for 21st CCLC Grant](#)

[Download the Overview](#)

Catalyst 2026-27 Preview

Beyond School Bells is excited to offer year two of our Catalyst Funding to support established Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) programs that are committed to innovation, sustainability, and youth-centered learning.

Catalyst 2026-27 is an invitation to join a growing statewide movement focused on improving literacy outcomes and expanding career possibilities for Nebraska youth through high-quality afterschool learning.

Catalyst applications will be released via a newsblast and posted on BSB's website on Monday, June 15. BSB will host a webinar on Thursday, June 18, 12-1 pm CST. This will be recorded for those unable to attend. A limited number of applicants will be chosen for school-year funding. Contracts will begin September 1, 2026, and run through May 31, 2027. Funding for summer 2027 will be offered separately. Applications are due August 7 and awards will be announced August 14.

[Learn More](#)

North American Monarch Institute Training

The [North American Monarch Institute](#) (NAMI) is an intensive professional development opportunity for K-12 and preservice teachers and non-formal educators hosted by [Monarch Joint Venture](#) (MJV). This workshop spans 2 days and includes asynchronous coursework through MJV's [NECTAR Hub](#). At its core, NAMI aims to provide participants with knowledge and confidence to use monarchs and other invertebrates to teach science, math, art, language, or other subjects. Participants gain an introductory

understanding of the monarch life cycle, migration, and conservation, as well as hands-on experience in practicing several of the lessons from the [Monarchs and More curriculum](#), which is the backbone for content and instruction of this workshop.

Thanks to USFS support, there is NO registration cost for the workshop and lunch is included, though attendees are responsible for their own breakfast, dinner, and optional on-site lodging (\$75/night).

Educator Benefits:

- Standards-based instruction led by experts in monarch conservation and experienced educators
- 12-24 Continuing Education Hours (depending on workshop length)
- Curriculum materials, resources, and activities
- Connections to other educators across the monarch flyway

Participant Goals:

- Acquire a basic understanding of monarch biology and ecology
- Explore biodiversity and invertebrate education
- Gain confidence in teaching science and using NGSS standards
- Practice educational activities that can be done in the schoolyard or other green spaces
- Experience the process of science as practiced by professional scientists, and how to fully immerse students or program participants in this process
- Participate in conservation efforts and research for monarchs
- Join an international community of educators along the monarch migration flyway

Please reach out to education@monarchjointventure.org with any questions!

Trees for Nebraska Towns

Grant applications are now open for Plant Nebraska's [Trees for Nebraska Towns program](#), which provides free, high-quality trees to public-oriented projects in Nebraska communities. We offer 10 free trees for small-scale, public-oriented projects, and the option to apply for more trees if your community project is larger.

Consider applying and run a [Tree-a-thon club or event](#) with students to learn about, plant, and care for trees!

[Learn More](#)



NAA to Launch Pilot Phase for the National Youth Development Foundational Practices Credential

The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) is proud to announce the launch of the pilot phase of the National Youth Development Foundational Practices Credential — a major milestone in our effort to strengthen, stabilize, and professionalize the out-of-school-time workforce.

The pilot phase will test implementation across diverse contexts while exploring reciprocity, employer recognition, systems integration, and practitioner experience. More importantly, it represents another step toward youth development professionals being recognized as skilled practitioners within a respected and supported profession.

While the pilot launches soon with select organizations, NAA invites partners across the field to engage, learn, and help shape what comes next. Members and partners will be the first to hear about milestones, beginning with pilot site selections later this summer.

For more information about this pilot phase, please visit: <https://naaweb.org/news/728131/Elevating-the-OST-Profession-NAA-Launches-Credential-Pilot.htm>

To become a member of NAA through Beyond School Bells, an affiliate of NAA, review the information here: <https://beyondschoolbells.org/resources/naa-membership.html>

Any questions about NAA membership, please email Patricia Sanchez-Stewart at psanchezstewart@nebraskachildren.org

[Learn More](#)

Our Contact Information

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