



Funding partners

Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska philanthropies

Nebraska Expanded Learning Opportunity Innovation Network

In 2020, Beyond School Bells, in partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education, Nebraska philanthropies and Nebraska schools, communities and nonprofit organizations, formed the Expanded Learning Opportunity (ELO) Innovation Network. The ELO Innovation Network connects and supports new and established afterschool programs and informal education innovators. The initiative creates opportunities for experimentation, learning and scaling-up new tools and approaches to high quality afterschool and summer learning that can be sustained locally and is replicable statewide.

The ELO Innovation Network includes four components/ grant categories:

ELO Design Studio

The ELO Design Studio creates opportunities for Nebraska college and graduate students to work with outside professionals to develop new hands-on education experiences for K-12 youth that are relevant and near-peer driven. The curriculum produced can be facilitated by high school students or caregivers that serve K-8 youth. Beyond School Bells coordinates the developing, prototyping, testing and refining of these new ELO experiences and ultimately makes the materials freely available on its website.

Centers of Excellence

Centers of Excellence grant recipients are school and community-based programs and nonprofit organizations that have expertise in an area related to ELO programming, staffing and partnership development. Over the grant period they will develop professional development resources and offer coaching opportunities to showcase and share best practices to statewide audiences. The products they create in the coming year will be incorporated into the online toolkit of ELO resources that all ELO programs can use to build capacity and enhance quality.

Incubator Programs

Incubator grant recipients are afterschool and summer programs in underserved communities that are experiencing barriers to sustaining their programming or starting a new ELO program. They will use the ELO Innovation Network to jumpstart exciting, engaging and inspiring educational opportunities during the non-school hours for youth with the aim of becoming locally sustainable. Grant funds can be used for program development, staffing, program expansion, technical assistance, capacity building and local partnership development.

Pilot Programs

In recognition of the challenges presented by COVID-19, the ELO Innovation Network allocated support for programs in communities hard hit by the pandemic. The ELO programs selected for this grant will leverage the grant funding with existing investments their communities have made in their ELO systems through supporting additional staffing needs and purchasing necessary cleaning and program supplies. As recipients of this grant, programs will be piloting BSB curricula and programming. The programs will also test and improve ELO innovations (such as design studio curriculum, take home kits, virtual instruction, challenge competitions) that can be used by communities this school year and beyond.

