
Beyond School Bells Newsletter – August 2025

From Beyond School Bells <bsbinfo@nebraskachildren.org>

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August 2025

News and Events

Federal Afterschool Funding Restored

Federal Funding Update

Late last month, a huge sigh of relief swept across Nebraska's and the nation's afterschool and summer programs when the US Department of Education announced that it would release all previously approved funds for the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) program's 2025-26 year. These funds had been under review since July 1, creating uncertainty nationwide and raising concerns among many Nebraska programs about their ability to operate this fall.

This is a big win for Nebraska's kids and families—and it happened thanks to strong advocacy, from national organizations to local voices. Several members of Nebraska's congressional delegation played a key role in securing this outcome, and we thank them as well as everyone who spoke up in support of these critical programs.

Building on the momentum of this victory, we encourage all afterschool advocates and supporters to continue raising awareness about the vital work that takes place every single day in afterschool programs across Nebraska. The remainder of 2025 will offer multiple opportunities to get engaged in building and supporting afterschool programs that meet the needs of Nebraska's children, families, and communities. We will keep you posted as these opportunities arise, but encourage you to take the initiative and reach out to leaders in your community to let them know that you care about the future of afterschool in Nebraska.

Resources and Opportunities

Time to Register: GetConnected 2025



One opportunity we have to come together to plan for the future of afterschool programs in Nebraska is at [GetConnected 2025](#), Nebraska's annual statewide conference, which will be held September 26 in Kearney.

This gathering offers a unique opportunity to recharge, reflect, and reimagine what's possible in afterschool and summer programming. Don't miss the chance to connect with colleagues,

share ideas, and explore innovations that will drive our collective work forward.

Register Now for GetConnected 2025!

Launch of the Michelle Arehart ELO Administrator Fellows Program



Pictured from left to right: Tamma Zulkoski (Site Coordinator, Kenwood Elementary in Kearney), Maggie Pilar (Aftershock, Program Director, Norfolk), Nola Bennett (CLC Director, Lincoln Public Schools), Carrie Lienemann (Director, North Platte Kids Klub), Karmen Morse (Director, Cozad AfterZone), Nicole Everingham (Development Director, Collective for Youth, Omaha), Chelsea Sidel (Site Coordinator, Cardinal Community Learning Center, Crete Public Schools)

Members of the Michelle Arehart ELO Administrator Fellows Program officially launched their year-long leadership initiative on July 9. The seven-member team gathered in Kearney to begin addressing key issues within Nebraska's Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) field. Their focus includes strengthening program quality, advancing advocacy efforts, sustainability and developing leadership skills to better serve youth across the state. Throughout the year, the Fellows will collaborate with various partners and share their work with peers and stakeholders at the 2026 GetConnected Conference and other events.

Funding Opportunities

Catalyst Funding Opportunity from Beyond School Bells

Catalyst Funding Opportunity Applications due August 15

Our **Catalyst Funding** is designed for established K-12 ELO programs working to provide high-quality, locally sustainable learning experiences that inspire young people and build the skills they need to become Nebraska's future leaders.

Building on the legacy of our Partner and Leverage Grants, Catalyst Funding is designed to reflect the evolving needs of the field. In addition to core operational support and funding for community-driven innovation, grantees will be part of a statewide ELO learning community supported by BSB. This community will offer:

- Regular opportunities to share best practices
- Coaching and technical assistance
- Virtual and in-person gatherings
- Resources to support long-term sustainability and alignment with statewide goals, including workforce development, literacy, and attendance.

Funding will run from **October 1, 2025, to August 31, 2026.**

For more information or to begin your application, visit our website at: <https://beyondschoolbells.org/projects/>.

Support your Garden-Related Programming with Grow NE



Applications due September 1

What a summer for gardens across Nebraska! If your program and students are eager to jump into harvest season, start a fall garden, or find ways to continue grow projects through the school year, Grow NE is here for you.

This school year, BSB will support 4 unique tracks of garden-related programs including: **Innovative Agriculture** to grow food in new and creative ways; **Local Food Systems** to connect students and families to local produce; **Sustainable Growing** to introduce garden ecology; and **Afterschool to Table** to engage youth as local food chefs! Applications, sample club guides, and more can be found on our website.

Funding is limited, but all are encouraged to apply. Submit applications to Alexis Hansen (ahansen@nebraskachildren.org) and Dakota Staggs (dstaggs@nebraskachildren.org) by September 1st for fall clubs or reach out with any questions!

Apply Today!

Service-Learning through Conservation

A Paid Opportunity for High School Students



Do you have students interested in conservation? Students who would like to make a difference in their communities? Would they like to get funding for a service-learning project they create themselves surrounding something they care about?

BSB has an opportunity this fall for youth-led, conservation-based, service-learning projects in partnership with National Geographic's Slingshot Challenge. We will host this opportunity for high school students to join a cohort of conservation leaders and work in groups or individually to research, plan, and enact their service-learning projects. BSB is offering funding for student stipends, project supplies, and career exploration experiences. We will also provide assistance and coaching to youth and their adult supervisors.

More details on this opportunity will be released in September's newsletter. Please reach out to Dakota Staggs (dstaggs@nebraskachildren.org) or Alexis Hansen (ahansen@nebraskachildren.org) if you're interested or have any questions!



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