



BEYOND SCHOOL BELLS

2023-2024 Annual Report



Jolene Johnson, Ed.D.
Director, Education and Child Development

Alison O'Toole, PhD
Vice President (Network Lead) for Beyond School Bells

Allison Jadoobirsingh, M.S.
Assistant Project Director, Education and Child Development

Megan Volz, M.S.
Program Evaluator, Education and Child Development

University of Nebraska Medical Center
Munroe-Meyer Institute, Education and Child Development
6902 Pine Street
Omaha, NE, 68106
jolene.johnson@unmc.edu

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
Beyond School Bells
215 Centennial Mall South, Suite 200
Lincoln, NE 68508
aotoole@nebraskachildren.org





Table of Contents

About Beyond School Bells	4
Program Goals	6
Overview of ELO Innovation Network Grants	7
Students Served	8
Key Findings	9

About Beyond School Bells

Beyond School Bells, Nebraska's Statewide Afterschool Network, is an initiative of the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF), whose mission is to create positive change for Nebraska's children through community engagement. The focus of Beyond School Bells is to increase access to expanded learning opportunities (ELOs) for youth in grades K-12 across Nebraska. ELOs occur outside of the regular school day and include hands-on, engaged learning that builds the skills students need for their future.

Research shows that when youth regularly participate in high-quality, expanded learning opportunities, their attendance, positive behaviors, and overall schoolwork increase and improve. High-quality learning programs can help low-income students succeed academically and can also help high-performing students stay engaged and achieve greater levels of understanding.

ELOs also play a vital role in preparing young people for the workforce by providing leadership opportunities, career pathway exploration and

THE CORE ABCS OF AFTERSCHOOL SUCCESS:



- ATTENDANCE INCREASES
- POSITIVE BEHAVIORS INCREASE
- COURSE WORK IMPROVES

learning, and hands-on experiences that build real-world skills. These opportunities spark curiosity about future careers, help youth develop critical employability skills such as teamwork and problem-solving, and open doors to postsecondary and workforce success.

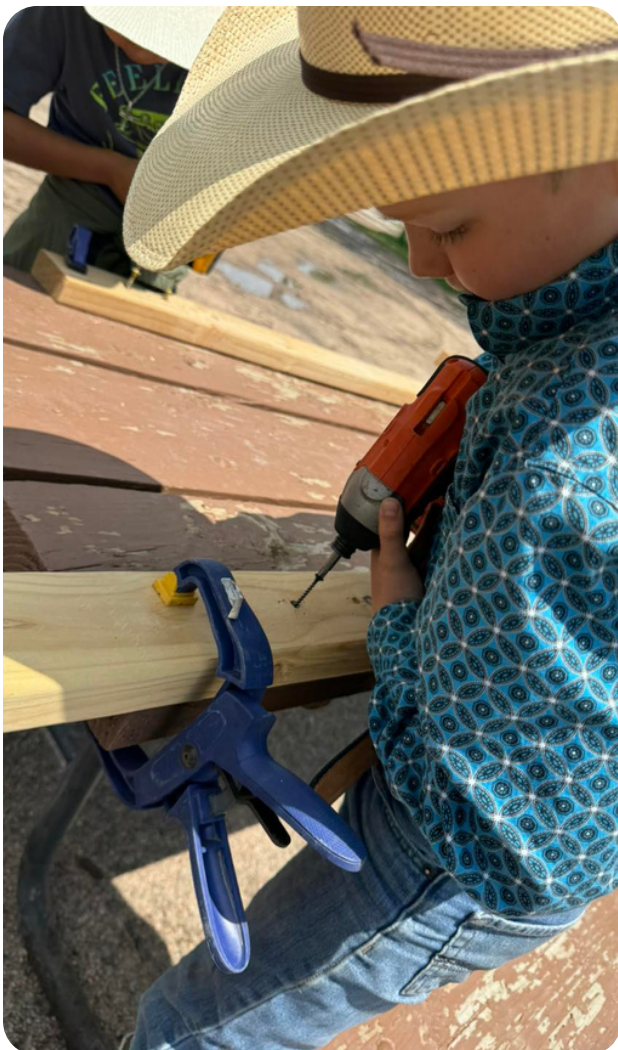
Grounded in strong school-community partnerships, these programs are vital to Nebraska's long-term educational and economic success. BSB collaborates with local and national partners to strengthen ELO access and quality across the state.



Core Assumptions

Beyond School Bells (BSB) is guided by the following core set of values centered on youth, families, and communities:

- **Youth Voice & Leadership:** Elevate youth as co-creators and leaders in shaping programs.
- **Family Engagement:** Deepen family partnerships to strengthen youth growth and success.
- **Local Leadership & Partnerships:** Empower communities to design lasting solutions, supported by statewide and national innovation.
- **Professional Growth:** Advance afterschool as a recognized profession with clear career pathways.
- **Innovative, Whole-Child Learning:** Champion engaging, hands-on learning that prepares youth for school, work, and life.



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The impact of BSB's grant extends beyond just providing activities. It has opened doors for our community's youth to experience new things, develop new skills, and stay active and engaged during the summer. Without this support, many of these children would have had a more limited summer experience, missing out on the enriching and memorable opportunities that BSB's funding has made possible.

We were able to provide a community-wide event in partnership with local downtown businesses as well as the Nebraska Farm Bureau, and several other Ag related businesses which focused on Ag in Nebraska, career exposure, hands-on learning, and lunch all for zero cost. We served around 300 people at this event. Without BSB funding this would not have been possible.

– Summer of Discovery Grantee Program Directors

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Program Goals

BEYOND SCHOOL BELLS MISSION

BSB's mission is to build partnerships that lead to policies and actions at both the state and local levels resulting in more high-quality, locally sustainable afterschool and summer programs serving more Nebraska youth, especially youth living in some of Nebraska's highest need communities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



Goal 1: Quality

To support continued improvement of ELOs via an ecosystem of partnerships to enable high-quality ELO programs across the state of Nebraska

Objectives:

- 1.1 Network of Cross-Sector Partnerships
- 1.2 Knowledge Cultivation
- 1.3 Relationships with local ELO programs
- 1.4 Youth Voice
- 1.5 Family and Community Engagement
- 1.6 Frameworks
- 1.7 Coaching
- 1.8 Strategic Grants
- 1.9 Innovative, engaging curriculum



Goal 2: Sustainability

To leverage and align partnerships, people, and funding to promote local sustainability of ELOs.

Objectives:

- 2.1 Strategic Partnerships
- 2.2 Awareness Building
- 2.3 Tailored Support
- 2.4 Innovative Solutions
- 2.5 Resources



Goal 3: Policy

To promote the creation and refinement of local and state policies that support and sustain NE's ELO programs.

Objectives:

- 3.1 Policy-Oriented Partnerships
- 3.2 Capacity Development
- 3.3 National Policy Trends
- 3.4 Advocacy
- 3.5 Policy Environment



Goal 4: Strategic Programming

To develop, pilot, refine, disseminate and fund innovative active learning-based ELO programming.

Objectives:

- 4.1 Workforce Development and Career Exploration
- 4.2 STEM
- 4.3 Service Learning and Youth Leadership
- 4.4 Literacy
- 4.5 Collaborative Programming Leadership Aligned for Youth Success



Overview of ELO Innovation Network Grants



BSB PARTNERS GRANT PROGRAM AND INTRODUCTORY GRANTS

\$383,786 AWARDED IN 2023-2024

The Beyond School Bells Partners Grant supports schools and districts in creating engaging, inspiring ELO programs for children and families. Introductory Grants serve as an entry point for new programs. In total, BSB awarded \$337,801 in Partners Grants and \$45,985 in Introductory Grants.



SUMMER OF DISCOVERY

\$162,898 AWARDED IN 2024

The Summer of Discovery 2024 Grant provided opportunities for programs across Nebraska to create enriching, impactful, and lasting summer learning experiences for students.



ESSER III

\$10,925,714 AWARDED FOR 2022-2024

While not the grantor, BSB partnered with the Nebraska Department of Education to administer ESSER III COVID-relief funds, supporting new and expanded afterschool programs. BSB provided technical assistance, coaching, and coordinated compliance and evaluation to new programs.



CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE (COE)

\$165,841 AWARDED FOR 2023-2024

These grants support established organizations with expertise in their fields in developing high-quality resources that can be shared statewide.



PROJECT-BASED GRANTS

\$495,223 AWARDED FOR 2023-2024

BSB provides a range of project specific grants including Family Engagement, Youth Videography, Engineering, Environmental Education, and more.

Total BSB Grants awarded for 2023-2024: \$1,207,748



Students Served in 2023-2024

Beyond School Bells’ funding and programming initiatives sometimes provide multiple opportunities for the same youth at a site. The figures below show both the number of youth served by each project and the total number of unique youth served across all projects, ensuring no duplication in the overall count.

8,430 Students Served Directly

20,408 Students Served Indirectly

STUDENTS SERVED BY BSB FUNDING, GRANT ADMINISTRATION, AND AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMER PROGRAMMING SUPPORT

Beyond School Bell’s funding, programming initiatives, and targeted technical assistance served a total of **12,974 unique Nebraska students** at **42 afterschool and summer programs** during the 2023-2024 reporting period. BSB provided **direct grant support to 36 programs**, serving the **8,430 unique students** who attended those programs.*

BSB PARTNERS GRANT

4222 STUDENTS SERVED DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

ENGINEERING PATHWAYS

320 STUDENTS SERVED DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

SUMMER OF DISCOVERY

1043 STUDENTS SERVED IN SUMMER 2024

STEM FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

2618 STUDENTS SERVED IN 2023-2024**

ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF (ESSER III)

Incubator sites: Newly developed programs and/or sites that did not receive 21st Century Community Learning Center funds.

2753 STUDENTS SERVED DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR & SUMMER 2024

Accelerator sites: Established programs and/or sites that received 21st Century Community Learning Center funds in addition to ESSER funding.

9290 STUDENTS SERVED DURING THE 2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR & SUMMER 2024

Beyond School Bells and Nebraska 21st Century Learning Centers: Through its partnership with the Nebraska Department of Education, BSB provides technical assistance, coaching, and a suite of programming and professional development resources that are made available to all Nebraska 21st CCLC sites. Supporting 21st CCLC indirectly served **17,655 students at 142 sites** during the 2023-2024 school year and **6,346 students** in Summer 2024.

* While BSB supported both Accelerator and Incubator sites, established Accelerator programs received less intensive guidance. As a result, students enrolled at Accelerator sites are not included in the direct support count.
** Six of ten programs receiving the STEM Family Engagement Grant reported student participation for 2023-2024.

Key Findings

Beyond School Bells' investments in communities and programs highlight the impact of providing high-quality programming, partnership development, commitment to youth and family voice, sustainability, and innovation to programs that serve Nebraska students.

STRENGTHENING PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH GRANTS

Grantmaking is one of BSB's most powerful tools for strengthening innovation and sustaining ELOs across Nebraska. As both a convener and funder, BSB directs resources where they are most needed—particularly in rural and low-income communities—while pairing investments with coaching, technical assistance, and evaluation to maximize impact.

In 2023-2024, BSB distributed nearly \$1.2 million in grants statewide through the ELO Innovation Network, a public-private partnership with Nebraska philanthropy, the Department of Education, and national partners. These investments expanded afterschool and summer opportunities, supported workforce development and youth leadership, and deepened family engagement. More than half of BSB's budget was invested directly in local programs and partners, ensuring communities of all sizes have access to high-quality, hands-on learning for young people and families.



ENGAGING YOUTH THROUGH DIVERSE OPPORTUNITIES

Partners Grants and Summer of Discovery each reached 11 districts, supporting a wide array of clubs, camps, and enrichment activities. Partners grantees hosted 11 Lights On Afterschool events with up to 700 attendees, offered clubs in sports, culinary arts, gardening, and STEM, and took students on 60 field trips.

Summer of Discovery grantees shaped programming around student voice, resulting in 21 clubs, 8 camps, 29 programming strands, and 59 field trips.

The Environmental Conservation Action Program (E-CAP) supported more than 10 programs in building gardens and outdoor classrooms, engaging students in project-based learning rooted in environmental stewardship.

Engineering Pathways introduced 320 students from four rural districts to design thinking, mentoring, and postsecondary pathways in engineering. Survey data showed that elementary students gained awareness of engineering careers and increased their belief in their own potential. Middle schoolers reported increased confidence and curiosity at a critical age when STEM interest often declines. High school near-peer leaders deepened their understanding of engineering, strengthened leadership skills, and grew more curious about the field.

The Youth Leadership Council empowered 10 students to grow their confidence as leaders, and high school and college students in the Design Studio worked with community partners and content experts to co-create new curriculum for afterschool and summer programs.

ELEVATING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family engagement remained a cornerstone of BSB's work. Ten programs received STEM Family Engagement funds that included planning tools that structured professional development. BSB funds helped support 78 family engagement events hosted by Partners grantees, including 37 STEM

family nights. Summer of Discovery grantees hosted 16 events featuring family meals, STEM activities, and end-of-club celebrations. STEM Family Engagement Backpacks were checked out 128 times, with families reporting that they spent an average of over 90 minutes together on the hands-on learning take-home lessons.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND PARTNERSHIPS

To ensure lasting impact, BSB invested in professional learning and sustainability. Programs participated in a new sustainability series, attended regional meetings both in-person and online, and shared innovations at the annual Innovation Invitational, which drew 250 participants and featured 44 workshops. Partnerships flourished as well, with Partners grantees reporting 99 active collaborations and Summer of Discovery grantees reporting 91.

Through these combined efforts, Beyond School Bells not only enriched daily experiences for Nebraska youth but also strengthened the ecosystems of support around them—building skills, relationships, and opportunities that prepare students for success in school, work, and life.



