The Nebraska Early Childhood Education Grant Program, which serves children ages 3 to 5, originally started as a pilot program in 1992 and expanded in 2001. Each participating preschool program is required to use at least 70 percent of grant funding to serve children with one of the four following risk factors: eligibility for free or reduced-priced lunch, living in a home in which English is not the primary language, being born prematurely or with a low birth weight, and having teen parents or parents who have not completed high school. One of the goals of this program is to integrate children of diverse social and economic characteristics.

Public schools and education service units that partner with child care centers as well as Head Start agencies and/or human services agencies can be awarded direct funding to provide services. Funding for up to half the cost of a classroom is given to grantees, however, they are required to match 100 percent of the grant funding using local and/or federal sources. A process is used to monitor child, program, and family outcomes each year.

In 2005, legislation that allows 4-year-olds to be included in the school district state-aid formula was passed. School districts must first be approved for three consecutive years to be eligible to include these students in the state aid formula. Since 2005, there has been a large increase in the number of children served in state-funded pre-k. Students in programs receiving aid were included in the enrollment count for the first time during the 2009-2010 school year. Programs receiving state aid should use the same types and levels of matching funding from federal and local sources as are used by non-state programs though the state does not track federal and/or local spending for programs that receive aid.
NEBRASKA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAM

ACCESS
Total state program enrollment ....................................................10,204
School districts that offer state program ......................................75%
Income requirement .................................................................185% FPL
Hours of operation .................................................................Determined locally
Operating schedule ..............................................................Academic year
Special education enrollment ....................................................3,114
Federal Head Start enrollment, ages 3 & 4 ..............................4,419
State-funded Head Start enrollment .........................................0

RESOURCES
Total state pre-K spending .....................................................$9,629,490
Local match required? .............................................................Yes, 100% 5
State spending per child enrolled ..........................................$944
All reported spending per child enrolled* ..............................$2,094

QUALITY STANDARDS CHECKLIST

POLICY STATE PRE-K REQUIREMENT BENCHMARK DOES REQUIREMENT MEET BENCHMARK?
Early learning standards ........................................................Comprehensive Comprehensive
Teacher degree ........................................................................BA BA
Teacher specialized training ..............Certification and EC endorsement3 Specializing in pre-K
Assistant teacher degree ..................................12 semester hours in CD CDA or equivalent
or ECE or equivalent
Teacher in-service ....................................................12 clock hours At least 15 hours/year
Maximum class size .........................................................20 or lower
3-year-olds ........................................................................20
4-year-olds ........................................................................20
Staff-child ratio ....................................................................1:10 or better
3-year-olds ........................................................................1:10
4-year-olds ........................................................................1:10
Screening/referral ..............................................................Determined locally; Vision, hearing, health; and
and support services support services only4 at least 1 support service
Meals ..................................................................................Snack At least 1/day
Monitoring ............................................................................Other monitoring Site visits

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1 Seventy percent of each program’s funding must be used to serve children having at least one of the risk factors, only one of which is family income. The other risk factors are child disability or developmental delay, non-English speaking family members, teen parent, parents who have not completed high school, or low birth weight or premature birth.
2 Most programs operate part-day, 3.5 to 4 hours per day, 4 or 5 days per week.
3 Certification types include ECE Birth–grade 3, Preschool Disabilities Birth–K, and ECE Unified Birth–grade 3.
4 Support services include home visits, parent conferences, parent involvement activities, transition to kindergarten activities, and other locally determined services.
5 There is a requirement of 100 percent match of grant funds, although it is not required to come from a local source. The state does not track matching funds from local and federal sources for programs that receive state aid so these funds are not reflected in all reported spending.

TOTAL BENCHMARKS MET

1 $2,094
2 $6,983
3 $10,244

SPENDING PER CHILD ENROLLED

STATE PRE-K AND HEAD START ENROLLMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION

3-YEAR-OLDS 4-YEAR-OLDS
Pre-K 30% 10%
Head Start 70% 68%
Special Ed† 1%
Other/None 0%

† This is an estimate of children in special education who are not enrolled in state-funded pre-K or Head Start.