

# Panhandle Childcare Expansion Project

## Program Overview

The Panhandle Childcare Expansion Project is a regional initiative designed to expand licensed family home childcare capacity across the Nebraska Panhandle. The program supports individuals interested in starting a childcare business through mentorship, practical toolkits, financial incentives, and local peer support. This program is tailored to meet the unique rural, workforce, and community needs of the Panhandle in partnership with the Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC).

## Eligible Participants

Participants must:

- Be located in the Nebraska Panhandle (Sioux, Dawes, Sheridan, (West) Cherry, Box Butte, Scotts Bluff, Banner, Morrill, Garden, Grant, Kimball, Cheyenne, Deuel)
- Be starting a licensed family home childcare program
- Complete all required NECC toolkits and mentorship
- Participate in check-ins and local support opportunities

## Mentorship & Toolkits

- Structured childcare business and licensing toolkits provided by NECC
- One-on-one or guided mentorship through NECC

\*Toolkits and mentorship available in English and Spanish

## Regional and Local Support

- Quarterly in-person support opportunities for peer learning, childcare resources, and problem-solving.

## Incentives & Stipends

- Up to \$1,000 in incentives (after 2<sup>nd</sup> toolkit completion) for approved childcare items
- \$2,500 stipend upon receiving DHHS childcare provisional license.

## Use of Funds

- Incentives must be used for approved childcare-related items
- Stipends support business startup or licensing costs

Note: Documentation may be required

## Timeline

Flexible pace, not to exceed 24 months

## Participant Expectations

- Maintain communication with Western Regional Child Care Navigator
- Complete required documentation and progress tracking
- Participate in feedback and evaluation activities

## Participants will additionally be connected to:

- Ongoing training and licensure support
- Quality improvement programs (Step Up to Quality, Sixpence, etc.)
- Regional and statewide early childhood resources

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## How to Get Started & Apply

Follow the steps below to begin your journey toward becoming a licensed family home childcare provider in the Nebraska Panhandle.

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### Step 1: Submit Your Interest

Start by completing the *Nebraska Early Childhood Collaborative (NECC) Licensing Toolkit* interest form:

👉 <https://toolkit.nebraskaearly.org/get-started/>

Once submitted, NECC will contact you with the next available orientation date.

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### Step 2: Attend NECC Orientation

Orientation is held the 4th Wednesday of each month.

Time: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM (Mountain Time)

Format: Virtual (Zoom)

NECC will email you:

Orientation registration instructions

Zoom access details

During this process, you will also be enrolled in the NECC Learning Library.

✅ All of this is completely FREE

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### Step 3: Complete Required Orientation Follow-Up

After attending orientation, you must complete:

- 1) NECC Licensing Toolkit Readiness Checklist
- 2) NECC Licensing Toolkit Orientation Reflection

Submit both to NECC for review.

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### Step 4: Sign Participation Agreement

Once your documents are received:

NECC will send you a Licensing Toolkit Participation Agreement via Adobe Sign

You must:

- √ Review the agreement
  - √ Electronically sign and date
  - √ Submit it through the system
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### Step 5: Get Matched with a Mentor

After your agreement is completed: An NECC mentor will be assigned to you. Your mentor will contact you to begin guiding you through the toolkit process.

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### Step 6: Connect with the Panhandle Childcare Navigator

NECC will notify the Panhandle Childcare Navigator once you are matched with a mentor. The Navigator will support you locally throughout your journey.

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## **Ongoing Participant Responsibilities**

To stay eligible and successful in the program, participants must:

- √ Maintain regular communication with the Panhandle Childcare Navigator
  - √ Stay engaged with your NECC mentor
  - √ Report progress and any challenges or barriers
  - √ Complete all required toolkits and documentation
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## **Progress Tracking & Support**

NECC will also communicate directly with the Panhandle Childcare Navigator to:

- Share participant progress
- Verify completion of toolkits

This ensures you receive coordinated support at both the regional and state levels.

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## **You Got This!**

This program is designed to support YOU every step of the way—from interest to licensure. With mentorship, structured tools, and local support, you are not doing this alone!