

**Improving Teacher Quality
State Grant Program**

**2015 - 2016 Allocation
to the State Agency for Higher Education**

Recommendations	3
Project Summaries, 2015-2016	6
Panel Members	7

IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANT PROGRAM

The purpose of the Improving Teacher Quality State Grant Program is to increase student academic achievement by helping to ensure that highly qualified teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals have access to sustained and intensive high quality professional development in core academic subjects. The program provides grants to partnerships comprised of Nebraska institutions of higher education and high-need local educational agencies (LEAs) for projects to improve the skills of teachers, paraprofessionals, and principals.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT EVALUATION PANEL December 7, 2015

The evaluation panel met on December 7, 2015, at the Coordinating Commission office in Lincoln. Eight proposals were submitted by partnerships that involved three different institutions (UNL, UNK, and Creighton University) and a variety of school districts and educational service units (ESUs). The panel ranked the proposals based on the degree to which they met the criteria identified in the RFP, discussed the proposals, and made their recommendations, attempting to fund as many quality projects as possible (available funds have been reduced over the past several years, most recently due to federal sequestration).

At this time, the total amount of funds available for awards in 2015-2016 is \$293,324. The total amount recommended for the following four projects is \$252,522. This is less than the current available amount. The remaining funds will be made available for projects that may have more participant applications than slots funded or other unexpected costs. This includes projects funded last year that have a second workshop scheduled this summer.

Below are synopses of the four proposals the panel has recommended for funding. The title of the project is listed, followed by the project director, the partners required by federal statute, and any other partners. Projects that are open state-wide may not have all additional partners identified until after their recruitment phase.

Committee recommendation: concur with the panel's recommendations.

Approved by the Commission on Jan. 21, 2016.

Micro-Credential Based Professional Development to Support Writing Composition

Project Director: Dr. Brian Wojcik

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNK, Ed Administration & Teachers Ed, College of Education**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNK, English, College of Fine Arts & Humanities**
- **High-need LEA: O’Neill Public Schools, Sandhills Public Schools, Scottsbluff Public Schools, Arnold Public Schools**
- **Other partners: Central City Public Schools, Hastings Public Schools**

This project would focus on increasing the content knowledge of general and special education teachers for teaching writing composition, especially for struggling learners. Fifteen teacher pairs (one general education, one special education) would be introduced to effective teaching strategies and skills for the phases of the writing process and ways to utilize low-cost or free commercial technology tools in their classrooms. They would participate in a series of online learning experiences, experience face-to-face coaching sessions using a web-based platform, implement strategies in their classrooms over a year’s time, and become part of an online community of practice for ongoing support.

Amount Requested: \$55,618

Amount Recommended: \$55,618

Primarily Math: Investing in Greater Nebraska

Project Director: Dr. Michelle Homp

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNL, Department of Teaching, Learning and Teacher Education**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNL, Center for Science, Mathematics & Computer Education**
- **High-need LEA: Arapahoe Public Schools, Southern Valley Public Schools, Dundy County Public Schools, Wauneta-Palisade Public Schools**
- **Other partners: Educational Service Units 10, 11, and 15; Lexington Public Schools**

Primarily Math is an 18-credit hour graduate program that culminates in a K-3 Mathematics Specialist certificate from UNL. The program would deepen the mathematics knowledge and pedagogy of 30 primary grade teachers in southwest and south central Nebraska. The Primarily Math program would consist of two, week-long courses in summer 2016, two hybrid courses (combination face-to-face and online) during the 2016-17 school year, and two, week-long courses in summer 2017. The majority of funds requested is to reduce the cost of tuition for the teachers. Other outside funding has been secured, but costs remain; the ITQ grant would cover partial reimbursement for six courses for each teacher.

Amount Requested: \$79,133

Amount Recommended: \$89,565

Reason for Increase: To encourage teachers to participate in this rigorous and expensive project, the panel recommended increasing funding so that each teacher had one summer course fully funded, with support for the others as proposed.

Improving Teacher Quality through Biomedical Engineering BLAST! Workshops

Project Director: Dr. Jennifer Keshwani

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNL, College of Education and Human Sciences**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNL, Institute of Agricultural and Natural Resources**
- **High-need LEA: O’Neill Public Schools**
- **Other partners: 21st Century Learning Community schools in northeast Nebraska and Lincoln**

Leveraging existing resources within the Nebraska Department of Education (21st Century Community Learning Centers), this project would offer two-day workshops in two locations, focusing on biomedical engineering. One would be held in northeast Nebraska and the other in Lincoln. Engineering provides an excellent framework to teach STEM concepts, but teachers are often uncomfortable incorporating it into their classroom. The workshops would serve 20 middle school teachers, providing content knowledge and support through brainstorming sessions and a virtual chat community. Each school represented would receive two classroom kits so that teachers can easily replicate the activities with their students.

Amount Requested: \$43,222

Amount Recommended: \$48,722

Reason for Increase: Stipends and classroom kits for five additional teachers.

Helping Middle School Science Teachers Create Content-based Digital Games on the Structure and Energy of Matter

Project Director: Richard Meyer

- **Higher education partner (teachers college): UNK, Ed Administration & Teachers Ed, College of Education**
- **Higher education partner (arts and sciences): UNK, Chemistry, College of Natural and Social Sciences**
- **High-need LEA: Arapahoe Public Schools, Arnold Public Schools, Grand Island Public Schools, Sandhills Public Schools, Southern Valley Public Schools**
- **Other partners: Educational Service Units 10 and 11, Lexington Public Schools**

This project would provide six months of professional development for all of the physical science teachers in grades 6-8 in the partner schools (24 teachers). The activities would include three face-to-face workshops held at ESU #11 and two follow-up online learning modules. Participants would learn how to create digital games and how to teach their students to do the same for topics that align with ten objectives in the Nebraska Science Standards.

Amount Requested: \$58,617

Amount Recommended: \$58,617

IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY STATE GRANTS: SUMMARY SHEET – 2015-2016

Projects in bold are recommended for funding by the Independent Review Panel

PROJECT TITLE	INSTITUTION/ DIRECTOR	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
1. Micro-Credential Based Professional Development to Support Writing Composition	UNK / Dr. Brian Wojcik	Increase content knowledge of 30 general and special education teachers for teaching writing composition; 15 pairs of teachers	\$55,618
2. Increasing Students' Scientific Literacy through Prolonged Professional Development for Teacher	UNL / Dr. Nathan Conner	15-month program to enhance science literacy; teach real-world science through the topics of agriculture, animal science, and scientific inquiry; 20 participants	\$59,560
3. UNL World Language Teacher Institute	UNL / Dr. Ali Moeller	Five-day residential immersion for 35 world language teachers; build language and cultural competency and develop skills to integrate digital media in the classroom	\$67,778
4. Primarily Math: Investing in Greater Nebraska	UNL / Dr. Michelle Homp	30 primary grade teachers participate in an 18-credit hour graduate program (Primarily Math); funding requested for part of the cost for tuition	\$79,133
5. Read Write Tech	UNL / Dr. Guy Trainin	Workshops for teachers to learn the content of new literacies and ways to integrate the technology into language arts curricula; for PreK-8 th grade teachers	\$75,053
6. Improving Teacher Quality through Biomedical Engineering BLAST! Workshops	UNL / Dr. Jennifer Keshwani	Using biomedical engineering to deliver STEM concepts; 20 teachers at two workshops	\$43,222
7. Helping Middle School Science Teachers Create Content-Based Digital Games on the Structure and Energy of Matter	UNK / Dr. Richard Meyer	Six-month professional development for 24 teachers of 6-8 grade physical science; creating digital games as an effective teaching technique	\$58,617
8. Modeling Instruction Institute (MI ²): Teaching Secondary Physical Science using Research-based Modeling Instruction	Creighton University / Dr. Gintaras Duda	Two-week summer workshop for 24 physical science teachers (grades 6-12); increase content and pedagogical knowledge	\$69,967
TOTAL REQUEST			\$508,948

December 7, 2015

Voting Members

Members are selected who have expertise in a variety of fields. Many are recipients of local or regional awards or recommended by a curriculum specialist from the Nebraska Department of Education. As a partner with the Commission in promoting quality education for Nebraska students, the Department of Education is always asked to provide a panel member.

Jayson Stoddard
Science
Hastings Middle School
2015 Nebraska Department of Education Award of Excellence Recipient

Pat Madsen
Adult Program Services
Nebraska Department of Education
Lincoln

Mike Musil
English
Papillion LaVista South High School

Mattie Olsen
Instructional Technologist/Social Science
Creighton Preparatory School
Omaha

Cory Forbes
Associate Professor of Science Education
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Staff

Kathleen Fimple
Academic Programs Officer

Miste Adamson
Administrative Assistant

Kadi Lukesh
Office Manager