



READ Nebraska Grant Program Guidelines

State of Nebraska

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Introduction: READ Nebraska Grant Program

The READ Nebraska program aims to expand mentorships throughout the state of Nebraska to improve the reading levels of elementary students. Mentoring programs equip students with academic and relational skills that position them for success. Mentorships also strengthen students' sense of belonging—increasing the likelihood they will remain connected to their community throughout their education and upon graduation. Additionally, mentoring assures youth they are cared for, providing valuable encouragement during times of adversity. Close, healthy, supportive relationships between mentors and mentees, lasting at least a year, are crucial to student success.

Section A: Eligibility

To be eligible, the applicant, mentorship and student must meet all of the following requirements.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are nonprofit mentorship organizations that have been established in Nebraska for at least 15 years. The mentorship program should involve reading programs for elementary students in order to improve their reading. For profit organizations and governmental organizations are not eligible to apply for funding from the READ Nebraska program.

Eligible Mentorships

The mentorship provided may be either:

- Traditional one-to-one mentoring
- Group mentoring
- Team mentoring
- Peer mentoring
- E-mentoring

Mentors should meet with their mentees for at least one hour every week in order to build a relationship and provide support to the student in reading, school attendance and other components to facilitate success in school.

**Definitions for each of the mentorship styles are provided by the Department in the definitions page*

Eligible Mentors

1. Be 18 years of age
2. Have a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent life experience
3. Be able to commit to two years of mentoring with the goal of continuing to mentor a young person through high school graduation
4. Adhere to an annual criminal background check
5. Has completed mentorship training and safety training before working with the mentee.
6. Must reside in Nebraska

Ineligible Mentors

- You have an open warrant for a felony.
- You have any felony convictions for a crime involving violence, terroristic threats, weapons, sexual offenses, crimes against nature, or any felony relating to the welfare of a child.

- You have a serious misdemeanor conviction involving violence, theft, drugs, terroristic threats, crimes against nature, or weapons in the last 5 years.
- You have a record of child abuse or neglect.
- You have a conviction for which you have not yet completed court-ordered disposition:
 - still on probation
 - unfinished community service
 - unpaid fines, restitution, or any other unmet obligation arising from diversion or sentencing
- Have been charged with Driving Under the Influence the last 3 years.
- Have more than one charge of Driving Under the Influence. May be eligible if there have been substance-related charges more than 5 years ago.

Eligible Students/Mentees

An eligible student is any person who:

1. Is in kindergarten to fifth grade in a public school, private school, or a school which elects pursuant to section [79-1601](#) not to meet accreditation or approval requirements in Nebraska.
2. Resides in Nebraska
3. Performs below the threshold level determined pursuant to section [79-2603](#) of LB1081 on an approved reading assessment. A student who is identified as having a reading deficiency pursuant to this subsection shall remain identified as having a reading deficiency until the student performs at or above the threshold level on an approved reading assessment.

Section B: Grant Amounts

The Department received \$4,800,000 for FY2023 -24 and \$4,800,000 for FY2024-2025. Award amounts will be determined on a pro rata basis on the number of mentors currently working with the organization at time of application.

Section C: Eligibility

READ Nebraska grant funds may reimburse a variety of mentorship related expenses including training, background checks, marketing supplies, volunteer recruitment, evaluation, and other costs. Not all proposed expenses are necessarily approved if they do not address the stated need of the mentorship grant program.

- Travel – Including any use of personal vehicle resulting in mentoring duties (ex. Driving to meet mentee or to attend an event with mentee).
- Marketing and advertising – Costs used to promote the mentoring program and its services.
- Volunteer recruitment – Costs used to attract potential mentors to the mentoring program where they will help a mentee with their reading.
- Mentor onboarding – Costs used for orientation and initial processing.
- Mentor Training – Costs used to train the mentor in best practices, techniques to working with students, etc.
- Safety Training – Costs used to train the mentor in ethical and safety issues when building a relationship with the mentee, appropriate forms of contact, discussions, and activities.
- Evaluation – Costs associated with the analysis of the mentorship process.
- Mentor background investigation – Costs used for processing public and private record checks.
- Mentee Support – Costs used for activities that supports the mentorship such as tutors, recreation, transportation, food, etc.

Grant funds may not be used for:

- Indirect Costs
- Politically related activities (ex. Lobbying services, etc.)
- Individual donations or fundraising activities
- Costs incurred outside of the contract period
- Other costs deemed unallowable by DED

Section D: Application and Contract Schedule

Applications are accepted on an annual basis during the dates below under Application Cycle. Notices of Award or Denial will be emailed out to the point of contact on the application during the Notice of Award/Denial timeframe below. Applicants awarded grants funds will sign a one-year contract.

Application Cycle	Notice of Award/Denial	Contract Dates	Contract End Date
8/17/2023 – 9/7/2023	9/8/2023 – 9/14/2023	9/15/2023 – 9/14/2024	9/14/2024
8/14/2024 – 9/4/2024	9/5/2024 – 9/14/2024	9/15/2024 – 9/14/2025	9/14/2025

Section E: Review Criteria

The Department will evaluate applications competitively; approval and the amount granted per mentorship will be dependent on the availability of funds. The Department reserves the right to fund mentorships at its discretion.

Section F: Reimbursement Requirement

Once the contract and ACH Enrollment Form are completed with signatures, reimbursements may be requested through DED's grant management software, AmpliFund, in amounts no less than \$1,000. All final requests must be submitted by September 4, 2024.

Expenses must be tracked by the grant recipient in AmpliFund. Each request for reimbursement must include expense documentation such as invoices and signed receipts of payment (for verification of expenditures). The requested amount is typically deposited within 10-15 business days after approval.

Section G: Contract Time of Performance

All costs must be incurred within the 12-month contract time of performance.

Section H: Reporting Requirements

1. Programs are required to provide programmatic details in reporting
 - Includes number of youths served, successes and challenges in meeting goals and outcomes
 - Include reading level improvement (Ex. Increased reading scores)
2. Average cost of a mentorship match
 - Understanding what specific costs contribute to the mentorship
3. Success of mentorships
 - Report the number of mentorships that stayed together and were separated
4. Number of mentors and mentees enrolled in mentorship program
 - Report the number of individuals recruited for the mentorship program

Section I: Technical Assistance for Using the Grants Management System

To administer this program, DED uses its GMS known as AmpliFund. Applications will be submitted and awards will be managed through the GMS.

User guides about DED's specific business processes for accessing and using the GMS to apply and facilitate the grant are available on DED's website, <http://opportunity.nebraska.gov/amplifund/>. The help portal is organized by topic. You can enter key words into the search bar to find specific articles.



GMS Help Portal

For user guides about using AmpliFund, please visit <https://ne-amplifund.zendesk.com>. This help portal will help you learn how to use the system, navigate the system, and more.