Nebraska Department of Education—
AAQEP COOPERATION AGREEMENT

between

the Nebraska Department of Education

and

the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation

For the time period from: July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023

This agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) with regard to quality assurance activities in support of educator preparation in the State of Nebraska. The purpose of this agreement is to support quality assurance, continuous improvement, and innovation in educator preparation by entities approved by NDE as they seek and maintain national accreditation through AAQEP.

AAQEP affirms NDE's efforts to ensure quality preparation of educators to meet the needs of Nebraska's children, families, schools, and communities and commits to ensuring quality educator preparation by providers approved by NDE. By entering this agreement, NDE affirms AAQEP's mission of promoting and recognizing quality educator preparation that strengthens the education profession's ability to serve all students, schools, and communities.

1. Standards Used in Quality Assurance Reviews in Nebraska

Quality assurance reviews conducted by AAQEP in Nebraska will be guided by the current version of the AAQEP standards (available at www.aaqep.org) and in keeping with AAQEP policy regarding the application of those standards. In conducting reviews of educator preparation providers approved by NDE, AAQEP will require that all relevant NDE standards and rules and/or regulations be addressed.

In addition, providers are welcome to orient their quality assurance review to other relevant professional standards (e.g., those from professional associations such as the National Council for the Social Studies, International Literacy Association, National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, International Society for Technology in Education, etc.).

2. Scope of Quality Assurance Reviews in Nebraska

The scope of the AAQEP accreditation sought by providers in Nebraska will be determined by the provider in consultation with AAQEP. The provider will clearly identify which aspects of its work are and are not accredited in all public displays that make note of accreditation.
3. **Quality Assurance Review Process**
   All quality assurance reviews conducted by AAQEP will be guided by AAQEP's policies and procedures as specified in the *Guide to AAQEP Accreditation* (available at www.aaqep.org). AAQEP's process includes an optional proposal review stage two to three years prior to a scheduled site visit. All quality assurance reviews include an off-site review two months prior to each site visit, conducted virtually, and an on-site visit, the scope of which is determined by program size and complexity.

4. **Review Team Composition**
   AAQEP will appoint a sufficient number of Quality Review Team members to each case to ensure that the review is carried out thoroughly and efficiently. Each AAQEP review team will include at least one educational practitioner from Nebraska nominated by the provider hosting the review; that practitioner will receive training and support from AAQEP. The local practitioner(s) will support the review team’s understanding of and respect for the local and state educational context.

   One or more NDE staff members may observe both the off-site and on-site portions of AAQEP reviews in Nebraska. Staff from NDE also may participate in the AAQEP team’s interviews and/or request to schedule additional meetings to complete the state review in conjunction with the AAQEP site visit. Where NDE staff attends and observes the site visit, the provider hosting the visit will bear the costs for their lodging, meals, and transportation.

   Other observers, including those seeking a better understanding of the AAQEP process, may participate as agreed to by AAQEP and the host provider. These individuals will be responsible for their own lodging, meal, and transportation costs.

5. **Reviewer Preparation and Qualifications**
   All review team members will meet AAQEP requirements for preparation and qualifications. Reviewer training and professional learning opportunities will be made available to NDE staff at no cost (though AAQEP will not cover travel expenses), but completing reviewer training is not a prerequisite for NDE observers.

6. **Relation of Accreditation to Program Approval**
   The NDE has sole responsibility for program approval. The state program review shall be conducted by a state team, appointed by the Commissioner, that includes representation from the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE), persons with content knowledge in the endorsement areas offered by the teacher education program, and NDE staff. For institutions participating in a national accreditation review of education preparation programs, the state program review shall be conducted to coordinate with the national accreditation process.

   NDE may utilize information generated by the AAQEP review process to make decisions regarding Nebraska program approval. As evidence of quality, AAQEP accepts the
decisions of national accrediting organizations for specialized professional program areas that are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Proper documentation of current accreditation must be presented by the EPP.

For purposes of state program approval and to inform AAQEP accreditation, NDE conducts its own review of programs. NDE provides forms and instructions on how to meet all state standards for licensure/certificate program approval. Upon completion of the NDE forms, trained reviewers are selected and assigned within appropriate content areas. Reviewers make recommendations for further action and/or approval. The Nebraska State Board of Education makes the final decision on approval of all programs.

7. Accreditation Decisions
   AAQEP accreditation decisions are made by the AAQEP Accreditation Commission. Accreditation statuses and terms are detailed in AAQEP's Guide and policy documents, available at www.aaqep.org. Full accreditation is for a term of 7 years. Observers from NDE are welcome to attend meetings of the Accreditation Commission at which cases of Nebraska providers are considered (meetings are typically conducted via video conference). Accreditation decisions, including the reports on which decisions are based and the Accreditation Commission's rationale for each decision, will be shared with the designated office at NDE, which for purposes of this agreement means via email.

8. Communication and Logistics of Collaboration
   Providers seeking AAQEP accreditation will ensure that NDE is apprised of the schedule of accreditation activities, particularly of target site visit dates; providers will also send electronically a final copy of or links to the final version of their Quality Assurance Report (the self-study) to NDE at the same time they provide it to AAQEP.

   AAQEP will communicate scheduled site visit dates for Nebraska providers with NDE staff six to twelve months in advance. AAQEP will also apprise designated NDE staff of the schedule of Accreditation Commission meetings at which cases from Nebraska providers will be considered. In addition, AAQEP will provide designated NDE staff with copies of all reports and official letters for Nebraska providers generated by the review team and by the Accreditation Commission.

9. AAQEP Capacity Review and Formative Support Options
   AAQEP will make available to Nebraska providers, in cooperation with and at the discretion of NDE, two additional services:

   - At NDE's request, AAQEP will conduct capacity reviews of entities seeking first-time approval as an educator preparation provider. Such reviews will be conducted prior to the operation of the program to provide NDE with a third-party review to inform a program approval decision. Such reviews will be
designed and conducted in partnership with NDE using the AAQEP standards as the framework.

- AAQEP also facilitates program and provider improvement for entities that have identified specific shortcomings in their work, including cases where shortcomings have been identified through external evaluations such as state or accreditation reviews. AAQEP will enter into an agreement with the provider and NDE to establish a timeline, priorities, and outcomes for such reviews.

10. Membership
AAQEP views cooperation among accreditors, educator preparation providers, and SEAs as essential to effective quality assurance. It enters into this agreement with the intent of supporting both NDE and educator preparation providers authorized by it in ensuring the preparation of excellent and effective teachers and other professional educators. NDE agrees to join AAQEP as a state member at no cost in support of these goals.

In support of shared goals, AAQEP will provide supportive services including workshops and webinars to providers in Nebraska at reasonable cost. NDE staff may participate in any AAQEP activities offered within Nebraska at no cost (AAQEP cannot cover travel expenses, meals, or lodging). AAQEP will also provide one NDE staff member with a no-cost registration to its Annual Quality Assurance Symposium and provide any additional NDE staff registration at the reduced member rate. In addition, NDE staff may participate in virtual AAQEP professional learning events, including reviewer training, at no cost.

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President and CEO,  
AAQEP

July 7, 2022

Kelly Heineke, Director  
Educator Preparation  
Program Approval  
The Nebraska Department of Education

7.7.22