

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES

ELEMENTARY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMMING INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

This ELEMENTARY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMMING INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT ("Agreement") is entered into as of August 24, 2026 by and between the Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties, a Nebraska political subdivision ("Learning Community") and Whispering Roots, a Nebraska nonprofit corporation ("Provider").

WHEREAS, Learning Community is statutorily authorized to establish a system of elementary learning centers to enhance the academic achievement of elementary students within Learning Community, particularly students who face challenges in the educational environment due to factors such as poverty, limited English skills, and mobility; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to the Interlocal Cooperation Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 13-801 – 13-827) (the "Act"), public entities are authorized to enter into an agreement for joint or cooperative action so as to make the most efficient use of their powers, and this Agreement is made and entered into pursuant to the Act;

WHEREAS, Learning Community desires to engage Provider, and Provider desires to be engaged by Learning Community, to provide programming for the benefit of elementary students and their families located within Subcouncil District No. 5.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual agreements, promises and covenants set forth herein, Learning Community and Provider (each referred to herein individually as "Party" and collectively as "the Parties") agree as follows:

1. Interlocal Agreement. This Agreement is entered into pursuant to the Act. No separate legal entity is created by this Agreement, and no property will be acquired which would need to be disposed of upon termination. This Agreement will be administered on behalf of Provider by its Chief Program Officer, and on behalf of Learning Community by its Executive Director, Elementary Learning Centers ("ELC ED").

2. Statement of Work. Pursuant and subject to the terms and conditions set forth in this Agreement, Learning Community hereby agrees to provide funding and Provider agrees to undertake and conduct the program(s) more specifically set forth in the Elementary Learning Center Programming Description(s) & Budget(s) in the form(s) submitted by Provider and approved by Learning Community (including any amendments thereto) (collectively and individually, the "Program"), a summary of which is marked as Exhibit "A" attached hereto and by this reference incorporated herein (all references herein to the "Agreement" include the Agreement as supplemented by the Elementary Learning Center Programming Description(s) & Budget(s) in the form(s) submitted by Provider).

3. Performance Period. Provider will commence work on the Program and conclude such work on a timeframe consistent with the dates identified in the document(s) on Exhibit A ("Program Term"), which date(s) may be extended by mutual written agreement of the parties hereto. Notwithstanding the foregoing, neither party to this Agreement shall hold the other party responsible for damages or delays in performance caused by acts of God, strikes, lockouts, accidents, or other events beyond the reasonable control of said party.

4. Fiscal Agent. Provider shall be the fiscal agent for the Program. As fiscal agent,

Provider shall be solely responsible for compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this Agreement related to the incurring of Program expenses, including the approval thereof, the payment of any and all bills and invoices related to the Program, and the submission of financial reports to Learning Community related to the Program.

5. Elementary Learning Center Program. The Program shall be implemented as an Elementary Learning Center program of Learning Community and Provider. Funding for the Program shall be provided from the Elementary Learning Center Fund Budget of Learning Community (the "Program Amount"). The Parties acknowledge and agree that the Program funding provided under this Agreement may not be the exclusive source of funding for the Program. The ELC ED shall, on behalf of and for Learning Community, have general oversight of the Program with regard to compliance by Provider with the terms of this Agreement, but shall have no authority with regard to the implementation, day-to-day operations or staffing of the Program, which shall be the sole responsibility of Provider.

6. Participants. Provider shall determine how many children will enroll in the Program and select the children that will participate in the Program; provided, however, that the Program shall not have an official enrollment of less than fifty percent (50%) of the projected enrollment set forth in the Program.

7. Program Funding.

a. The Program Amount will be paid in monthly installments over the course of the Program Term, and paid in arrears pursuant to statements submitted to Learning Community for costs incurred and services rendered by Provider during the previous calendar month, which shall be itemized and include the budgeted category for each item (as appropriate). Such statements will be provided to Learning Community on or before the tenth (10th) calendar day of the month following the month to which such statement applies. Upon the written request of Learning Community, Provider will provide accurate and reasonable documentation substantiating all itemized expenses set forth in such statements within fifteen (15) days of request. The Learning Community has the sole discretion to approve an expense or request a refund of an impermissible expense based on submitted documentation. Provider has the right to request a reconsideration of a disallowed expense through the Learning Community's CEO. The Learning Community shall make payments pursuant to approved statements/invoices within thirty (30) days of The Learning Community's receipt of such approved statements/invoices. The Learning Community will reconcile all statements/invoices for contracted services for the Program to an already approved budget by expense category. The Learning Community will complete a randomized audit of no less than 10% of each category per year. Depending on the expense, this could occur at one time. If an audit uncovers Program Amounts paid to Provider are deemed to be inappropriate, the Learning Community can request such Program Amounts be returned to the Learning Community within ninety (90) days of such request. The Learning Community can charge interest on such Program Amounts at a rate of the lesser of 5% per year or the highest rate allowed by applicable law, at the discretion of the Learning Community. Such interest can be charged if such Program Amounts are not returned within such ninety (90) day period. The interest charge begins on the day of the fund return request.

b. The final monthly payment will be remitted subsequent to the termination of the Program or expiration of the Term, whichever occurs first, and submission of the final report to Learning Community pursuant to Section 8.b of the Agreement. The final report will include a statement for Program services provided during the Program Term, which statement will set forth an itemized listing of expenses actually incurred by Provider and will be accompanied by documentation substantiating all itemized expenses set forth on such statement. Learning Community will, after review and approval

of the statement submitted by Provider, remit the final monthly payment to Provider within thirty (30) days after receipt of the final report; provided, however, that the amount remitted in the final monthly payment will not result in the total amount paid to Provider exceeding either the lesser of the budget amounts reflected on Exhibit A of the Agreement or the total amount of Program expenses actually incurred by Provider. If, upon receipt and review of the final report, Learning Community has, after application of all remittances made pursuant to Section 7.a and this Section 7.b. of the Agreement, made payments to Provider which exceed the total amount of Program expenses actually incurred by Provider, Provider will refund to Learning Community the amount by which the total remittances made by Learning Community exceed total expenses actually incurred. Notwithstanding anything in this Agreement to the contrary, in the event that Provider does not incur expenses during a given fiscal year of the Program Term for the Program equaling the Program Amount approved for such fiscal year, as applicable, any unused Program Amount not used by Provider for such fiscal year will not carry over to any subsequent fiscal year during the Program Term.

c. The amount(s) to be paid by Learning Community as provided under Sections 7.a and 7.b shall constitute the entire amount of funding by Learning Community for the Program. Learning Community shall not be liable for any further costs, including, but not limited to, such items as overhead, social security, pension, employment compensation, taxes, or any other expenses, incurred by Provider in the performance of the services related to the Program.

d. Provider expressly agrees and acknowledges that Provider shall be solely and exclusively responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Program and for any and all payments to any contracted service providers contracted by Provider for services related to the Program. Learning Community shall not be responsible for any payment to any such contracted service providers for services related to the Program and Provider specifically acknowledges that Learning Community has no obligation for the day-to-day operations of the Program or for any payments of any kind or nature to any contracted service providers.

e. Learning Community reserves the right to withhold or suspend any payment(s) to be made by Learning Community pursuant to this Agreement, or to require a total or partial refund of Learning Community funds, if, as determined by Learning Community in its sole discretion, such action is necessary: (i) because Provider has not complied with the terms and conditions of this Agreement; (ii) to protect the purposes and objectives of the Program; or (iii) to comply with the requirements of any law or regulation applicable to Learning Community, Provider, or the Program.

f. Provider expressly agrees and acknowledges that the enactment of legislation by the Nebraska Legislature subsequent to the date of this Agreement which either eliminates or reduces the levy authority of Learning Community pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 77-3442(2)(i) may result in the termination of this Agreement by Learning Community in accordance with Section 12 herein.

8. Reporting.

a. Within sixty (60) days of the termination of the Program or expiration of the Program Term, whichever occurs first, Provider shall collect and report to the Munroe-Meyer Institute for Genetics and Rehabilitation, University of Nebraska Medical Center ("Evaluator"), the third-party evaluator of the Program retained by Learning Community, or such other qualified third-party evaluator retained by Learning Community and who is compliant with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, as amended ("FERPA"), specified demographic and program evaluation data, as follows: (i) that data specified in the Program; and (ii) data mutually agreed upon by Provider, Learning Community and Evaluator. Learning Community acknowledges and agrees that any personally identifiable student information obtained by Evaluator from Provider pursuant to this Agreement is subject to FERPA, and

in accordance with Provider's position thereon, such personally identifiable information shall not be disclosed to Learning Community, and Learning Community will not be provided access to such personally identifiable information. All Classroom Assessment Scoring System ("CLASS") videos collected by Evaluator will either be returned to Provider (if submitted via a memory stick or similar data storage device), or destroyed (if submitted electronically via email) once confirmation is made that Provider has received all CLASS rating reports.

b. Within sixty (60) days of Program completion, Provider shall prepare and submit to Learning Community a written final Program report ("Report"). The Report shall include a narrative description of Program activities and accomplishments, including progress made on student learning outcomes and evaluation data described in the Program, and a detailed accounting of all expenditures made from payments received pursuant to Sections 7.a and 7.b. Said Report shall be submitted to the ELC ED. At the request of Learning Community, Provider shall make a live presentation of the Report to the appropriate achievement subcouncil of the Learning Community Coordinating Council and the Elementary Learning Centers Task Force.

9. Obligations of Provider.

a. Provider is responsible for administering and conducting the Program in accordance with this Agreement and for maintaining documentation of all actions taken and expenditures incurred with regard to the Program. Provider acknowledges that failure to comply with the requirements of this Agreement could result in suspension or termination of the Program Amount by Learning Community and could result in Provider being required to return Learning Community funds to Learning Community. Prior to commencing the Program, Provider shall have submitted a fully-executed Statement of Assurances regarding the Program to Learning Community with this Agreement.

b. The ELC ED, or other designated representative of Learning Community, will be permitted to conduct pre-arranged site visit(s) to the Program during the Program Term in order to evaluate the Program, the provision of services, and the administration and implementation of the Program. For purposes of this Section 9.b, such site visits shall be scheduled by the ELC ED, or other designated representative of Learning Community, with Provider not less than twenty-four (24) hours in advance.

c. Absent express approval from Learning Community, funds provided by Learning Community pursuant to this Agreement shall be accounted for separately in the financial books and records of Provider. Provider shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining adequate financial records for the Program, which records shall include a systematic accounting of the receipt and disbursement of Learning Community funds, and shall retain original substantiating documents related to specific expenditures of Learning Community funds and shall make these records available for review by Learning Community, or its designated representatives, upon request. Provider shall keep all financial records with respect to this Program for at least four (4) years following the year during which the Program Term ended. Learning Community, or a designated representative thereof, reserves the right, upon prior written notice, to audit Provider's books and records relating to the expenditure of any funds provided by Learning Community related to the Program.

d. Provider shall assure that all Provider employees providing services in conjunction with the Program shall have the appropriate credentialing or other licenses required by state law. Provider shall require, via contract with any contracted provider of Program services, that such third party shall require that its employees have the appropriate credentialing or other licenses required by state law.

e. Provider shall conduct, for its employees providing Program services who will, or may,

directly interact with children a criminal background check, a national sex offender registry check and a Nebraska Sex Offender Registry check, and Provider shall require, via contract with any contracted provider of Program services, that such third party conduct said checks on all officers, employees and volunteers of said contracted provider involved with the Program who will, or may, directly interact with children. Neither Provider nor, if applicable, a contracted entity shall knowingly permit the involvement with the Program of any officer, employee or volunteer of said entity who does not pass all checks.

f. If applicable, Provider shall assure that all entities with whom Provider contracts to provide services for the Program have a license to operate in Nebraska.

g. Provider shall procure and maintain at all times during the Program Term, and, if applicable, shall require that all contracted service providers with whom Provider contracts for the Program procure and maintain at all times during the Program Term, the following minimum types and amounts of insurance:

i. Commercial General Liability Insurance providing coverage to Provider and naming Learning Community as Additional Insured on a primary and non-contributory basis, including completed operations, with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence, \$2,000,000 general aggregate, \$2,000,000 product and completed operations aggregate, and \$1,000,000 personal and advertising injury. Provider shall waive its rights of recovery against Learning Community and will obtain a waiver of subrogation from its insurer. Such waiver of subrogation shall be contained in the policy or in an endorsement attached to the policy in favor of Learning Community;

ii. Sexual Abuse & Molestation coverage with a limit of not less than \$500,000 each occurrence and \$1,000,000 in the annual aggregate;

iii. Professional or Educator's Legal Liability insurance with a limit of not less than \$1,000,000 each claim;

iv. Automobile Liability insurance with a combined single limit for bodily injury, death and property damage of not less than \$1,000,000 per accident, which coverage shall apply to all owned, hired and non-owned vehicles used by Provider, its employees, agents, representatives, or volunteers in conducting the Program;

v. Workers' Compensation Insurance covering Provider and its employees for all costs and statutory benefits and liabilities under the Nebraska Workers Compensation Act and any similar laws for its employees, and Employer's Liability Insurance with limits of not less than \$100,000 each employee injury, \$100,000 each employee disease, and \$500,000 policy limit for all accident injury or disease. Provider shall waive its rights of recovery against Learning Community and will obtain a waiver of subrogation from its insurer. Such waiver of subrogation shall be contained in the policy or in an endorsement attached to the policy in favor of Learning Community; and

vi. Umbrella / Excess Liability Insurance with limits of not less than \$1,000,000 each occurrence which shall provide additional liability coverage in excess of the Commercial General Liability, Auto Liability and Employer's Liability.

Before Provider or any contracted service provider shall be permitted to begin work or provide services, Provider and all such contracted service providers shall provide Learning Community

with evidence of such insurance issued on a standard ACORD Certificate of Insurance as will meet all insurance requirements stated in this Agreement. Learning Community has the right to withhold payments under this Agreement until such insurance requirements are satisfied to the reasonable satisfaction of Learning Community. It is the sole responsibility of Provider and any contracted service provider to provide Learning Community with written notice should any required insurance pursuant to this section be cancelled or non-renewed. Failure of Provider or a contracted service provider to provide and maintain all insurance required, or failure to provide written notice, shall not relieve Provider or such contracted service provider of its obligation under this Agreement.

By requiring insurance under this Agreement, Learning Community does not represent that the coverage and limits required will necessarily be adequate to protect Provider or its contracted service providers for all claims or amounts of loss. Such coverage and limits shall not be deemed or construed to be any limitation of Provider's, or its contracted service provider's, liabilities under any indemnification obligations provided to Learning Community under this Agreement.

h. Provider shall allow Learning Community to review and approve the text of any proposed publicity or external communication concerning the Program prior to its release, which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld. Learning Community may include information regarding the Program, any photographs provided by the parties, and any general information about the parties and their activities in any external communications of Learning Community; provided, however, that Learning Community shall not use any Provider logos or trademarks without the prior approval of Provider, which approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.

10. Obligations of Learning Community. Learning Community shall:

a. Provide funds to Provider in a manner consistent with the terms and conditions of this Agreement; and

b. Comply with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, as well as all applicable laws, rules, and regulations applicable to Learning Community

11. Warranties & Representations. Provider hereby warrants and represents to Learning Community that:

a. The Program and use of Learning Community funds will comply with the terms of this Agreement, as well as all applicable laws, rules and regulations applicable to Provider and the Program.

b. There is no fact known to Provider, its board members, officials, employees, representatives or agents which would materially affect the decision of Learning Community to enter into this Agreement which has not been disclosed to Learning Community.

c. Provider is responsible for administering the Program in accordance with this Agreement and for maintaining documentation of all actions taken and expenditures incurred with regard to the Program. Provider acknowledges that failure to comply with the requirements of this Agreement could result in suspension or termination of the Program Amount by Learning Community and could result in Provider being required to return Learning Community funds to Learning Community.

12. Termination. Either party may terminate this Agreement, with or without cause, at any

time upon sixty (60) days prior written notice to the other party; provided, however, that performance may be terminated with immediate effect by Learning Community upon delivery of written notice to Provider if Learning Community determines, in its sole discretion, that Provider is in breach of this Agreement. For the avoidance of doubt, in the event of the termination of this Agreement by Learning Community, notwithstanding any other provisions in this Agreement to the contrary, Learning Community shall have no further obligation to make any payments to Provider from and after the date of termination except for costs incurred and services provided in accordance with this Agreement prior to the termination date of this Agreement.

13. Notice. Any notice required to be given by this Agreement shall be sufficient if communicated in writing and sent by hand delivery or by certified United States Mail, postage prepaid, or by facsimile transmission. Notice shall be given as follows:

If to Learning Community: Chief Executive Officer
Learning Community of Douglas and Sarpy Counties
1612 North 24th Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68110
FAX: (402) 964-2478

If to Provider: Anna Curry
Director of Culinary and Nutrition Programming
Whispering Roots
2624 Edward Babe Gomez Ave
Omaha, NE 68107
PHONE: (402) 730-7776

or to such other address as any party hereto may, from time to time, give notice of to the other party in the above manner.

14. Independent Contractor. The parties hereto are independent contractors in their relationship to one another and are not, by virtue of this Agreement or otherwise, made agents, employees, employers, or joint venturers of one another. Neither party shall have any authority to bind the other party hereto.

15. Indemnification. Provider covenants and agrees to indemnify and hold harmless Learning Community, its Council members, officers, consultants, agents, employees and representatives, and their successors and assigns, individually and collectively, (collectively, the "Indemnified Parties") from and against any and all costs, expenses, liabilities, losses, damages, suits, actions, fines, penalties, demands or claims of any kind, including, but not limited to, attorney's fees, in any way arising out of or based upon the negligent or willful acts or omissions of Provider, its employees or agents in administering the Program as specified in this Agreement, and Provider further agrees to pay all expenses in defending against any claims made against the Indemnified Parties; provided, however, that Provider shall not be liable for any injury, damage or loss occasioned by the negligence or willful misconduct of the Indemnified Parties.

16. Non-Discrimination. The parties to this Agreement shall not, in the performance of this Agreement, discriminate or permit discrimination in violation of federal or state laws or local ordinances because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, age, marital status, citizenship status, or economic status.

17. Governing Law. This Agreement shall be interpreted according to the law of the State

of Nebraska.

18. Citizenship Verification. Provider agrees and acknowledges that it shall use a federal immigration verification system to determine the work eligibility status of new employees physically performing services within the State of Nebraska pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 4-108 to 4-114, as amended.

19. Compliance with Applicable Laws. The parties hereto shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and ordinances applicable to the Program, including, but not limited to, FERPA and Neb. Rev. Stat. § 84-712 to 84-712.09, as amended.

20. Amendment. This Agreement may only be amended or modified by written agreement of all parties hereto. The parties hereto agree that amendments or modifications to the Program services, activities or budget which do not increase the total Program Amount set forth in this Agreement may be approved on behalf of Learning Community by Learning Community's Chief Executive Officer or Executive Director.

21. Severability. Should any part hereof or any sections of this Agreement be rendered or declared illegal, invalid or unenforceable by any court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining portions of this Agreement shall not be affected thereby.

22. Waiver. Any waiver by either party of a breach of any provision of this Agreement shall not operate as or be construed as a waiver of any other provision or any subsequent breach.

23. Assignment. This Agreement may not be assigned or transferred by either party to this Agreement except by written agreement of the non-assigning party.

24. Time is of the Essence. The Parties acknowledge and agree that time is of the essence with respect to the final execution of this Agreement. As such, in the event Provider fails to provide Learning Community with an executed copy of this Agreement by September 15, 2026, the offer to enter into this Agreement by Learning Community shall automatically expire and become null and void as of such date. At the discretion of Learning Community, this may result in the funding identified in this Agreement being reallocated to other Providers within the Subcouncil.

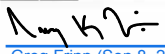
25. Entire Agreement. This Agreement, together with any exhibits or schedules hereto, constitutes the entire agreement between the parties as to the subject matter hereof, and replaces all prior written and oral statements and understandings.

[Signature page follows]

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement has been executed in duplicate on the respective dates set forth below.

WHISPERING ROOTS, a Nebraska nonprofit corporation

Name: Greg Fripp

Signature: 
Greg Fripp (Sep 8, 2026 11:45:03 CDT)

Title: CEO

Date: 9/8/2026

LEARNING COMMUNITY OF DOUGLAS AND SARPY COUNTIES, a Nebraska political subdivision

Name: Gerald Kuhn

Signature: 

Title: CEO

Date: 8-28-2026

ELEMENTARY LEARNING CENTER PROGRAMMING AGREEMENT

Exhibit “A” Elementary Learning Center

Programming Description & Budget

Learning Community Center of North Omaha – Workforce Development Program 2026 Proposal

Mission

Whispering Roots is dedicated to bringing healthy, fresh food, food supply chain logistics and management, nutrition education, innovative agriculture techniques, and S.T.E.M. education to students and residents living in urban and rural areas. Founded in 2010, the agency targets communities in the greater Omaha metropolitan area that are facing difficulty from an unlivable income, poor education, and marginalization, including immigrants, indigenous peoples, houseless individuals, veterans, and the elderly. Major programs include emergency food distribution, farm stands, a food pharmacy, STEM, nutrition, culinary education, and indigenous agriculture and health. The Culinary Advancement Program applies that mission through workforce training for parenting adults seeking entry into or advancement within the restaurant, hospitality, and institutional food service sectors.

Objectives

Whispering Roots is requesting continued funding from the Learning Community Center of North Omaha to extend the Culinary Advancement Program into a second year of implementation. During the first year, Whispering Roots established the culinary curriculum and identified several changes needed to improve recruitment and connect participants more directly with employment opportunities. Continued funding will support dedicated outreach staff, Douglas County food safety certification, and a ninth class focused on Metropolitan Community College Institute for the Culinary Arts and local employers. The program will continue serving parenting adults with children under age four through hands-on culinary instruction, industry credentials, mentorship, job preparation, and direct connections to employment opportunities. The following objectives have been established for the next year of this program.

1. **Objective #1:** Over two 18-month terms, Whispering Roots will enroll and serve 80 parenting adults through eight cohorts of up to 10 participants, with four cohorts completed during each term.
2. **Objective #2:** Whispering Roots will deliver a nine-class culinary training curriculum for each cohort covering food safety, professional kitchen operations, recipe reading, culinary math, knife skills, batch cooking, baking, protein preparation, soups and sauces, food service, and catering, and will provide two individual mentorship sessions to each participant.
3. **Objective #3:** Whispering Roots will provide or refer to career-readiness services for each participant, including resume development, interview preparation, and an individualized employment or advancement plan, and will conduct a Metropolitan Community College culinary facility tour and at least one employer-engagement activity for each cohort, such as a restaurant site visit, employer presentation, hiring event, or mini job fair.
4. **Objective #4:** Whispering Roots will implement a targeted recruitment plan that includes dedicated outreach staff, participation in parent-focused community events, job fairs, neighborhood activities, or introductory cooking events during each term, and direct follow-up with prospective participants who are interested in entering or advancing within the restaurant and food-service industry.
5. **Objective #5:** Whispering Roots will provide all enrolled participants with ServSafe instruction, Douglas County food safety training, required certification materials, and access to certification testing to strengthen their qualifications for restaurant and food-service employment.
6. **Objective #6:** Whispering Roots will provide all graduating participants with a recipe book with recipes prepared in the classes as well as easy, budget-friendly and nutritious recipes that they can prepare at home for their families.

Outcomes

The second year of the Culinary Advancement Program will build on the training delivered during the first year while placing greater emphasis on participant recruitment, industry credentials, and connections to employment. Whispering Roots will measure progress through attendance records, program completion, certification results, pre- and post-program surveys, and follow-up with graduates. The anticipated outcomes below reflect the skills, qualifications, and employment preparation participants are expected to gain through the program.

- At least 85% of program completers will earn ServSafe and Douglas County food safety certifications, strengthening their qualifications for restaurant, hospitality, school food service, healthcare food service, and catering kitchens.
- At least 75% of participants who complete the pre-program and end-of-class surveys will report increased knowledge or confidence in five or more culinary skill areas, including food safety, recipe reading, measuring, culinary math, knife skills, baking, protein preparation, soups and sauces, and professional kitchen operations.
- At least 90% of program completers will report increased confidence in applying for jobs, completing interviews, discussing their qualifications with employers, and identifying their next employment or advancement step.
- Within six months of program completion, at least 75% of graduates will take steps toward employment or advancement in the food-service industry, such as submitting job applications, participating in interviews, pursuing a promotion, requesting additional work hours, or seeking positions with higher wages or greater responsibility.
- Participants will gain direct knowledge of local education and employment pathways through a tour of Metropolitan Community College's culinary facility and contact with restaurant, hospitality, catering, or institutional food-service employers.
- Participants will express increased confidence in their ability to prepare meals at home for their families.
- At least 85% of participants completing the end-of-class survey will rate the program as good or excellent and indicate that they would recommend it to others.

Benefits of the Program

The Culinary Advancement Program responds to the needs of the Omaha area labor market. In May 2024, food preparation and serving occupations accounted for 9.6% of all employment in the Omaha metropolitan area, making food service the second-largest major occupational group locally. The average wage for the occupational group was \$16.88 per hour, which points to the importance of helping workers move beyond entry-level positions and qualify for jobs with higher wages, additional hours, or supervisory responsibilities.

Nebraska's restaurant and food-service industry supported 100,400 jobs across 4,389 locations in 2025. Nebraska's Second Congressional District, which includes Omaha, contained 1,502 eating and drinking establishments employing 30,167 people. Recent state workforce data also identified 1,494 advertised openings in food preparation and serving occupations, including openings for entry-level workers and first-line food-service supervisors. The size of the industry and continued hiring demand provide participants with employment options in restaurants, catering companies, hotels, schools, healthcare facilities, grocery operations, and institutional kitchens.

The program gives parenting adults an entry point into local restaurant and food-service work. Participants do not need prior professional kitchen experience. The curriculum begins with food safety, sanitation, kitchen terminology, measurement, and equipment use and progresses into recipe preparation, culinary math, knife skills, batch cooking, baking, protein preparation, soups and sauces, food service, and catering. Participants who already work in the industry can use the training to prepare for expanded duties, increased work hours, promotions, or supervisory positions.

Participants will complete ServSafe training and Douglas County food safety training. Douglas County's program meets the requirements for food-service employees working in establishments governed by the Douglas County Food Code, and the resulting permit remains valid for two years. Providing both forms of training gives participants nationally recognized food-safety instruction along with the local permit applicable to employment in Douglas County food establishments.

Class 9 will introduce participants to culinary education at Metropolitan Community College and to employers hiring within Omaha's restaurant, hospitality, catering, and institutional food-service sectors. Participants will also complete an employer engagement activity, such as a restaurant or hospitality site visit, an employer presentation, a direct hiring meeting, or a mini job fair.

Participants who graduate from the program will receive a certificate of completion as well as kitchen tools such as a chef's knife and apron, as well as a book with all the recipes they prepared in class, along with many others that they can use to continue practicing their skills. Recipes will also include simple, easy options they can use to prepare nutritious meals at home for their families.

The Learning Community Center will provide childcare and transportation assistance for participating families. Whispering Roots will provide lunch during class and offer instruction in English and Spanish. The class schedule and participant supports are structured for parents with young children, allowing participants to complete training while managing childcare, transportation, and family schedules.

Program Outline

Program Structure and Eligibility

Whispering Roots proposes two 18-month terms of the Culinary Advancement Program. Each term will include four cohorts of up to 10 participants, allowing the program to serve 40 parenting adults per term and 80 participants across the full funding period. The 10-person cohort size reflects the number of participants who can safely receive hands-on instruction in the available kitchen space while working with knives, hot equipment, food preparation stations, sanitation procedures, and meal production.

Each 18-month term will include approximately 12 months of cohort delivery. The remaining months will support staff planning, participant recruitment, employer coordination, graduate follow-up, survey review, evaluation, and preparation for the next term. Each cohort will complete nine classes, generally offered once per week for approximately five hours. Class time will include instruction, hands-on food preparation when scheduled, lunch, and kitchen cleanup. Each participant will receive approximately 45 hours of classroom and kitchen instruction, two individual mentorship sessions, ServSafe training, Douglas County food safety certification, resume and interview assistance, an employment or advancement plan, a tour of Metropolitan Community College's culinary facility, and direct engagement with local food-service employers.

Eligible participants must be parenting adults with at least one child under age four. Recruitment will focus on adults who want to enter the restaurant or food-service industry, obtain a better position, increase their wages or scheduled work hours, or prepare for advancement with their current employer. Participants must commit to the class schedule, certification activities, two mentorship sessions, and employment-readiness services.

Graduates will leave the program with practical kitchen experience, food safety credentials, career goals, and knowledge of local employment and training options. Participants entering the industry will receive preparation for entry-level food-service positions, while participants who are already employed may use the training to pursue higher wages, additional hours, promotions, or positions with greater responsibility.

Recruitment and Enrollment

Recruitment will receive greater attention during the second year of the program. During the first year, Whispering Roots found that general program interest did not always translate into enrollment by adults who intended to pursue restaurant or food-service employment. A dedicated outreach staff member will attend parent-focused events and job fairs, respond to prospective participants, confirm eligibility, and follow each applicant through enrollment. Whispering Roots will also offer short cooking demonstrations or introductory cooking activities to give prospective participants a clear understanding of the program before they enroll. Recruitment expenses may include ingredients, demonstration supplies, bilingual materials, signage, and modest participation incentives.

Whispering Roots will also seek referrals from the Learning Community Center, Metropolitan Community College, workforce organizations, restaurants, hospitality businesses, schools, healthcare food-service departments, and other community partners. Restaurants may refer current employees who need additional training for advancement, while workforce and family-serving organizations may refer adults seeking entry-level employment. Program materials will clearly state the class schedule, attendance expectations, eligibility requirements, certifications offered, childcare and transportation assistance, and focus on employment or advancement. Staff will contact interested applicants directly rather than relying only on general advertisements or passive referrals. Before enrollment, staff will speak with each applicant about the following:

- Interest in restaurant, hospitality, catering, school, healthcare, or institutional food service work;
- Current employment status and prior kitchen experience;
- Employment or advancement goals;
- Ability to attend the full class schedule;
- Preferred language;
- Anticipated childcare, transportation, scheduling, or employment barriers; and
- Interest in completing food safety certifications and meeting employers.

Staff will track where each inquiry originated, whether the individual completed enrollment, and whether the participant attended and completed the program. Recruitment records will help Whispering Roots determine which events, referral partners, and outreach methods produce participants who are prepared to pursue food-service employment.

Curriculum

Each enrolled participant will complete the following nine-class curriculum. Hands-on classes will generally last five hours and include instruction, food preparation, a one-hour lunch and break period, and approximately 30 minutes for kitchen

closing procedures. Closing procedures will include sanitizing workstations, washing dishes, removing trash, cleaning floors, and properly storing and labeling food.

Class 1: Program Orientation and ServSafe Training

- Review program expectations, attendance requirements, class schedule, mentorship activities, and employment goals.
- Introduce restaurant and food-service career pathways.
- Begin ServSafe food safety instruction.
- Complete approximately three hours of ServSafe coursework.

Class 2: Food Safety Certification

- Complete the remaining ServSafe lessons.
- Review foodborne illness prevention, personal hygiene, temperature control, cross-contamination, cleaning, and sanitation.
- Complete the ServSafe examination.
- Review Douglas County food safety requirements and complete the training and testing needed for county certification.

Class 3: Professional Kitchen Orientation and Basic Skills

- Review positions and responsibilities within a professional kitchen.
- Introduce common kitchen terminology and communication practices.
- Discuss food allergies, cross-contact, and allergen safety.
- Practice basic measurements, including:
 - Teaspoons and tablespoons;
 - Weight versus volume;
 - Liquid versus dry measurement; and
 - Culinary equivalents and conversions.
- Review kitchen opening procedures, including:
 - Three-compartment sink setup;
 - Sanitizer buckets;
 - Dishwasher operation; and
 - Workstation preparation.
- Introduce knife safety, basic knife cuts, equipment use, food labeling, storage, and freezing.
- Complete lunch service and kitchen closing procedures.

Class 4: Batch Cooking and Recipe Application

- Read and interpret professional recipes.
- Apply culinary math to increase or decrease recipe quantities.
- Prepare and use a written production and preparation list.
- Review proper cooling, storage, labeling, and reheating procedures.
- Practice knife safety and different cutting techniques while preparing a recipe.
- Complete lunch service and kitchen closing procedures.

Class 5: Soups, Sauces, and Salad Dressings

- Prepare two salad dressings, including one creamy dressing and one vinaigrette.
- Prepare a soup such as chili or chicken noodle soup.
- Prepare a second soup or meal component for later use.
- Prepare and store an additional sauces for later use.
- Practice seasoning, consistency, cooling, storage, labeling, and reheating.
- Complete lunch service and kitchen closing procedures.

Class 6: Baking and Dough Preparation

- Reinforce accurate measuring and recipe-reading techniques.
- Review the functions of common baking ingredients.
- Prepare selected baked goods, such as muffins, cookies, or brownies.
- Serve the prepared meal with salad and previously prepared dressing.
- Complete kitchen closing procedures.

Class 7: Proteins and Cooking Techniques

- Practice chicken fabrication, trimming, and safe handling.
- Use chicken bones to prepare stock.
- Prepare marinades and discuss flavor development.
- Review required internal cooking temperatures.
- Introduce common professional cooking techniques, including: Searing;
 - Sautéing;
 - Roasting; and
 - Braising.
- Practice multiple egg preparations, such as hard-boiled, scrambled, fried, and omelet-style eggs.
- Prepare a stir-fry meal using vegetables, protein, sauce, and rice.
- Complete lunch service and kitchen closing procedures.

Class 8: Food Service, Catering, and Meal Production

- Set up and operate a buffet service.
- Review safe hot- and cold-holding temperatures.
- Practice portion control, presentation, garnishing, and service timing.
- Prepare a complete meal that may include fresh fruit, a vegetable tray, pasta, and chicken piccata or a comparable entrée.
- Review production schedules, division of kitchen responsibilities, food transport, service, and cleanup.
- Complete kitchen closing procedures.

Class 9: Culinary Education and Employer Engagement

- Class 9 will connect participants with continued education and local employment opportunities. The session will not include a cooking lesson.
- Tour Metropolitan Community College's culinary facility.
- Learn about MCC culinary programs, certificates, degree pathways, enrollment requirements, and available student resources.
- Participate in an employer-engagement activity selected according to the needs of the cohort and availability of local partners. The activity may include:
 - A restaurant, hotel, catering, or institutional kitchen site visit;
 - Presentations from local food-service employers;
 - Individual meetings with hiring representatives;
 - A discussion with restaurant owners or culinary professionals; or
 - A small job fair for program participants.
- Discuss available positions, workplace expectations, hiring requirements, wages, advancement opportunities, and next steps.
- Complete final program reflections and the end-of-class survey.
- Recognize participant completion through a graduation activity.
- Provide lunch for participants during the session.

Mentorship and Career Preparation

Each participant will complete 1-2 individual mentorship sessions with program mentors. The first session will take place during the opening weeks of the cohort and will focus on employment interests, prior experience, personal goals, and barriers that may affect participation. The second session will occur during the latter part of the course or shortly after completion and will focus on job applications, interviews, advancement, additional training, and next steps, as needed. Sessions may be held in person or virtually outside regular class hours. Mentors will document the participant's goals and follow-up needs. Participants who are already employed may focus on advancement, wage growth, expanded responsibilities, or movement into a different food-service setting. Whispering Roots and the Learning Community Center will provide or coordinate resume development, interview preparation, job-search assistance, and referrals to existing workforce services. Staff will help participants identify positions that match their interests, schedules, experience, and career goals. Whispering Roots will also use its relationships with local restaurants and food-service employers to share job openings, arrange introductions, and identify opportunities for interviews or advancement.

Employer and Education Partnerships

Whispering Roots will maintain relationships with local restaurants, hospitality businesses, catering companies, schools, healthcare food-service departments, and other employers that hire kitchen and food-service staff. Participants will be

connected to these local businesses directly upon completion of the program for job interviews and/or site visits. Program staff will provide employers with a short description of the curriculum, certifications, cohort schedule, and participant qualifications. Employers may participate through presentations, workplace tours, mock interviews, job referrals, direct hiring conversations, or the Class 9 employer activity. Employers may also refer current staff members who need additional culinary or food safety training to qualify for advancement. Metropolitan Community College will provide participants with direct exposure to continued culinary education. The facility tour will introduce participants to professional training spaces, available programs, and possible next steps for participants who want to continue their education after completing the Culinary Advancement Program.

Evaluation

Whispering Roots will collect enrollment, attendance, completion, certification, mentorship, survey, referral, and employment follow-up data for each cohort. Participants will complete a pre-program survey at enrollment and an end-of-class survey after training. Surveys will be available in English and Spanish. The pre-program survey documents each participant's reasons for enrolling, confidence in completing the program and obtaining employment, current culinary knowledge, preferred food-service setting, interest in additional certifications, comfort with resumes and interviews, anticipated employment barriers, mentorship needs, and career goals. The end-of-class survey measures confidence in food safety, recipe reading, professional kitchen work, baking, soups and sauces, knife skills, measuring, chicken fabrication, and kitchen terminology. Participants also rate the clarity and pace of instruction, instructor communication, ability to apply the skills at home or work, readiness to begin food-service employment, interest in additional credentials, overall program quality, and willingness to recommend the program. Staff will compare pre-program and end-of-class responses when matching surveys are available. Whispering Roots will also contact graduates after completion to document job applications, interviews, employment, promotions, wage changes, increased work hours, continued education, and requests for additional assistance.

Budget

Line Item	Calculation (Per Year)	Term 1	Term 2	Total
A. PERSONNEL				
Culinary Director	40 hours x \$50	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Executive Chef	40 hours x \$50	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Chef Instructor	14 hours x 32 classes x \$50	\$22,400	\$22,400	\$44,800
Culinary Assistant	10 hours x 32 classes x \$30	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$19,200
Program Coordinator	12 hours x 32 classes x \$40	\$20,480	\$20,480	\$40,960
Dishwasher/Kitchen Support	4 hours x 32 classes x \$20	\$2,560	\$2,560	\$5,120
Outreach and Recruitment Specialist	160 hours x \$25	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000
Subtotal - Personnel		\$63,040	\$63,040	\$126,080
B. SUPPLIES/EQUIPMENT				
Smallware and Replacement Kitchen Supplies	Cutting boards, utensils, cookware, sanitation and storage supplies	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Line Item	Calculation (Per Year)	Term 1	Term 2	Total
Participant Tools and Incentives	\$50 x 40 participants	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,000
Stand Mixers	Purchased in Term 1	\$4,000	\$0	\$4,000
Prep Tables	Purchased in Term 1	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000
Food Used in Culinary Instruction	Ingredients for hands-on culinary classes	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$32,000
Participant Class Lunches	\$7 x 10 participants x 36 classes	\$2,520	\$2,520	\$5,040
Recruitment Event Materials	Bilingual materials, demonstrations, signage and	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000

	modest incentives			
Subtotal - Supplies		\$27,520	\$22,520	\$50,040
C. OTHER PROGRAM COSTS				
ServSafe Training and Testing	\$25 x 40 participants	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000
Douglas County Food Safety Certification	\$30 x 40 participants	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$2,400
Class 9: MCC Tour and Employer Engagement	MCC tour and employer presentation, site visit or mini job fair	\$500	\$500	\$1,000
Subtotal – Other Direct Costs		\$2,700	\$2,700	\$5,400
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS		\$93,260	\$88,260	\$181,520
D. INDIRECT/ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS				
Administrative Costs	10% of direct costs for fiscal management, accounting, technology, reporting and program administration	\$9,326	\$8,826	\$18,152
TOTAL PROGRAM REQUEST		\$102,586	\$97,086	\$199,672

Cost Per Participant

Term 1 Cost Per Participant: **\$2,565**

Term 2 Cost Per Participant: **\$2,427**

Overall Cost Per Participant: **\$2,496**

Terms

Total Period of Performance: September 1, 2026, to August 31, 2029, split into two 18-month terms

Term 1: September 1, 2026, to February 28, 2028

Term 2: March 1, 2028, to August 31, 2029

Whispering Roots FY 27-29

Final Audit Report

2026-09-08

Created:	2026-09-04
By:	Andrew Keck (akeck@learningcommunityds.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAgyfHSWcrWBhoTYWm0zSBxbSuc9Rb21Ay

"Whispering Roots FY 27-29" History

-  Document created by Andrew Keck (akeck@learningcommunityds.org)
2026-09-04 - 3:41:32 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Anna Curry (acurry@whisperingroots.org) for signature
2026-09-04 - 3:41:37 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Anna Curry (acurry@whisperingroots.org)
2026-09-04 - 4:22:49 PM GMT
-  Document signing delegated to Greg Fripp (gfripp@whisperingroots.org) by Anna Curry (acurry@whisperingroots.org)
2026-09-04 - 4:27:17 PM GMT
-  Document emailed to Greg Fripp (gfripp@whisperingroots.org) for signature
2026-09-04 - 4:27:17 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Greg Fripp (gfripp@whisperingroots.org)
2026-09-08 - 4:39:35 PM GMT
-  Document e-signed by Greg Fripp (gfripp@whisperingroots.org)
Signature Date: 2026-09-08 - 4:45:04 PM GMT - Time Source: server - Signature Appearance Selected: DRAW
-  Agreement completed.
2026-09-08 - 4:45:04 PM GMT