State Broadband Plan Kickoff
Nov. 1, 2013

9:30 a.m. CT – 12:00 noon CT

**Lincoln—1526 K Street, Lower Level, Large Training Room, Lincoln, NE**

Video Sites

- **Scottsbluff—**Scottsbluff Vocational Rehabilitation Service Office, 505A Broadway, Ste 500, Scottsbluff, NE
- **Norfolk—**Norfolk Vocational Rehabilitation Service Office Norfolk 1212 West Benjamin Ave, Norfolk, NE.
- **Chadron—**Chadron State College, Administration Building, Room 137, Chadron, NE
- **Sidney—**Cheyenne County Extension Office, 920 Jackson Street, Sidney, NE
- **West Point—** Cuming County Extension Office, 200 S. Lincoln St., West Point, NE
- **Valentine—** Cherry County Extension Office, Courthouse, 365 N. Main Street, Suite 3, Valentine, NE
- **North Platte —** West Central Research and Extension Center, 402 West State Farm Road, North Platte, NE
- **McCook—** Red Willow County Extension Office, 1400 West 5th Street, Suite 2, McCook, NE
- **Omaha—**Douglas County Extension Office, 8015 W. Center Road, Omaha, NE

Approximately 50 stakeholders attended the state broadband plan kickoff meeting in Lincoln and at video sites across the state. Lt. Governor Lavon Heidemann welcomed participants and thanked project partners. Meeting materials are available at www.nitc.nebraska.gov.   Information on related activities can be found at broadband.nebraska.gov.

Anne Byers, Community IT and eHealth Manager for the Nebraska Information Technology Commission, gave an overview of the project.   The project is funded through the broadband mapping and planning grant the Nebraska Public Service Commission received from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration.   Project partners include the Nebraska Public Service Commission, Nebraska Information Technology Commission, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension and Center for Applied Rural Innovation, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and the AIM Institute.   The Nebraska Information Technology Commission will be the lead organization for the development of the state broadband plan.

Developing a broadband plan will help the State of Nebraska meet the demand for increasing connection speeds, create capacity to effectively utilize broadband, and stimulate the demand for increasing connection speeds.

Broadband Map. Nebraska's broadband map (broadbandmap.nebraska.gov) provides information about broadband availability in a specified location or throughout the state.   Through the Public Service Commission's mapping activities, we can see that broadband deployment has grown from 2010 to 2013.
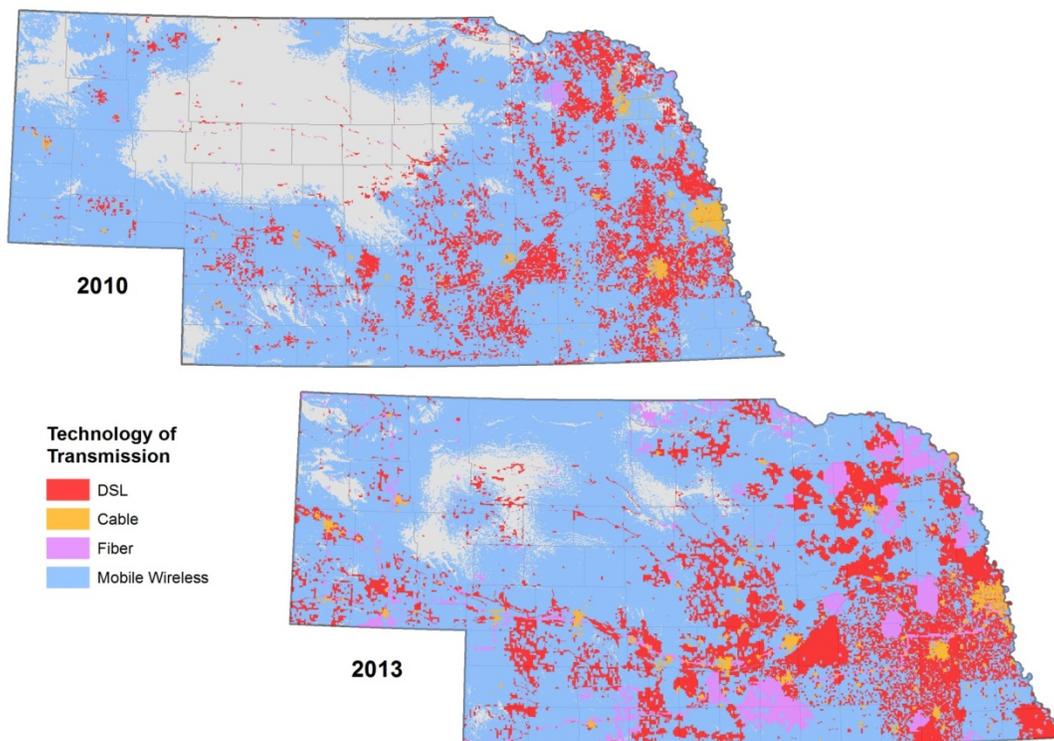
Broadband Adoption.   Nationally, approximately 70% of adults and 72% of households have broadband connections at home. Generally, Nebraska ranks near the average or slightly higher than average on measures of broadband adoption, with urban areas of the state adopting at high levels than rural areas. There also appear to be differences in adoption rates among the nonmetropolitan areas of the state. A 2010 survey of Nebraska households by the University of Nebraska Center for Applied Rural Innovation found that Central Nebraska lagged behind other areas of the state in having broadband connections at home.

Broadband Business Survey. A survey of Nebraska businesses is currently being conducted.   Selected businesses who completed the survey will also receive coaching on how to better utilize broadband. Preliminary results show that Nebraska businesses are utilizing broadband at a slightly higher rate than businesses in the other states in which this business survey has been conducted.   Broadband is most often used by Nebraska businesses to purchase goods and services, for banking and financial services, and for government transactions.

Regional Broadband Plans. Broadband coaches from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension worked with stakeholders to develop regional broadband plans.   The regional plans are available at

broadband.nebraska.gov.   The plans express a consist vision of leveraging broadband technologies to attract and retain population, increase economic development, increase well-being/quality of life, and decrease the digital divide.   The regional plans also identified digital literacy and adoption, broadband availability and priority, economic development, and agriculture as priority areas on which to focus efforts.

The group discussed strengths, resources, areas in which the state could do better, and where we want to be in the future.

Strengths

- The Nebraska Public Service Commission has gathered information on the status of broadband in Nebraska. The Commission is considering options for showing broadband speeds on the map.
- Public facilities have broadband connections. Network Nebraska –Education has helped K-16 educational entities obtain affordable broadband connections and has encouraged the exchange of distance learning classes.
- Programs like Dream It Do It are teaching young people in high schools about trades.
- Technology is being adopted in schools. Many are using iPads.
- Libraries are using broadband technologies to provide resources. Libraries are also a source of training and public access.
- Nebraskans are collaborative and form partnerships to move broadband forward.
- There is a lot of fiber in Nebraska.
- Internet 2 backbone crisscrosses Nebraska
- Some areas of the state have good broadband coverage.
- In some areas (Northeast Nebraska was cited) telecommunications companies have worked collaboratively to build infrastructure.
- Many Nebraska businesses are utilizing broadband. Some of their best practices have been captured in videos available on youtube.com and on broadband.nebraska.gov.
- Preliminary results of business survey show that Nebraska businesses are utilizing at a higher rate than the other states that have participated.
- Nebraska is a leader in many aspects of eHealth.   The Nebraska Statewide Telehealth Network is one of the most extensive telehealth networks in the country.   NeHII is one of the largest health information exchanges in the country.
- Large agricultural producers are adopting precision agriculture technologies.
- Nebraska is in the center of the United States which is an advantage for certain industries.

What are our resources?

- Libraries are resources for training and public access. However, in some locations the libraries have limited hours and technology budgets.
- Economic development professionals
- Young IT professionals who have stayed within the state
- Youth who are adopting new technologies

- Educational institutions – Extension offices in counties, community colleges across the state, and universities
- Broadband providers in some areas do a good job at helping businesses understand how to utilize broadband.
- People are our first and foremost resource.
- Natural resources

What areas can we do better

- Attracting IT professionals is a challenge.
- Technology can be used to help homeless, hungry, rural Nebraska more effectively.
- Greater broadband connection speeds are desired.
    - Rural areas have a greater reliance on wireless and very weather impacted. Reliable delivery is needed.
    - Address middle mile costs for small, rural ISPs
- Libraries could be a technology resource to answer questions.
- The broadband map could be improved to show speeds rather just where there is broadband.
- Education – We should be creating the type of educational delivery that is most responsive to those desiring whether it be local government or other groups. Demonstration-based education can help show people how to use new technology and how it may benefit them.
- Communities/regions can better showcase opportunities for former residents and current students to return to work in community.
- Businesses can show schools/students how they are using technology.
- In some locations, broadband availability and reliability may limit the ability to take online courses.
- There are many economic development opportunities, but these could be better coordinated and delivered to local businesses.
- The perception exists that nonmetropolitan Nebraska is not a place where can data centers can be located. We can do a better job of marketing the broadband that is currently available in many areas.

Where do we want to be in the future?

- Jetsons☺
- Broadband is reliable and fast, enabling instant access to information, anywhere, anytime.
- Redundant connections and commitment to service will ensure always on connections.
- Technology incubators will provide assistance to technology entrepreneurs.
- eHealth will continue to grow. NeHII connects 26 hospitals. Additional hospitals are being connected. Technologies like personal health records and home monitoring devices will enable individuals and caregivers to better manage health care.
- Security and ethics concerns must be addressed.

- Broadband will be measured and mapped in future.
- The needs of unserved areas will be met through collaboration.

Vision

- Anne Byers, Roger Terry, Steve Henderson, and Roger Wess volunteered to work on a vision statement.

Evening meetings were suggested as a way to get more input. It was also suggested to make a distinction between wireless and fixed wireless when talking about broadband coverage.

Priority Areas

The group agreed that the state broadband plan should focus on the four priority areas identified in the regional broadband plan: economic development, agriculture, digital literacy/adoption, and broadband availability and affordability. Health and education were areas identified as areas that were best addressed at a state level. The NITC eHealth and Education Councils are addressing issues related to broadband and will contribute action items for the state broadband plan.

The group discussed each priority area.

- **Economic Development**
  o There is a demand for skilled technology workers.
  o Attraction/retention of people-- especially youth--is important.
  o Entrepreneurship is an important component of economic development. Technology is creating new business models. Technology can also be used to help entrepreneurs develop and grow their businesses.
  o Existing businesses may benefit from learning how to better utilize technology.
  o Fiber rings in downtown business districts can encourage competition.
  o A speakers bureau to broadcast/stream to smaller communities/chambers would be helpful.
- **Agriculture**
  o Agricultural producers need broadband to the combine/tractor.
  o Training is needed to build awareness of how technology is being used in agriculture.
  o Broadband providers may also benefit from training on precision ag and other technologies.
  o Cell phone coverage is an issue in some rural areas. Satellite has limitations.
  o Agriculture needs the support of communities.
- Digital Literacy and Adoption/Training
  o Software and videos can provide training (i.e., SIRI giving instructions)
  o Libraries can play a bigger role in providing training.
  o Demonstration-based education can help show people how to use new technology and how it may benefit them.
    ▪ Technology Fairs can provide hands on training or exploration

- Training in real time/place is needed.
  - o *Is there an opportunity to reach populations that have not adopted?*
    - Libraries are a key. For example many older adults have a history of accessing library.
- Broadband Availability
  - o Fiber rings in downtown business districts can encourage competition.
  - o Public-private partnerships between telecommunications companies and government can encourage broadband development.
  - o The need for minimum connection speeds should be established. The broadband map could be improved to provide additional information on broadband speeds available.
  - o Is there a list of communities that have fiber-to-the home?   The Nebraska Public Service Commission may be able to provide a list.

If want to be part of a work group email or call Anne at anne.byers@nebraska.gov and 402-471-3805.

Updates—Nov. 26, 2013

The Nebraska broadband map (http://broadbandmap.nebraska.gov) now includes information on speed tiers. From the Broadband Dashboard on the left, select Coverage.   You can select Wired Speed Tier Coverage and/or Wireless Speed Tier Coverage.

Here is a map of broadband availability which includes fix wireless.