

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council**

Friday, May 29, 2020

9:30 A.M. CT – 11:00 A.M. CT

Zoom Videoconferencing –E-mail anne.byers@nebraska.gov for connection information

Tentative Agenda

9:30	<p>Roll Call Notice of Posting of Agenda Notice of Nebraska Open Meetings Act Posting Approval of February 19 2019 minutes* Public Comment</p>
9:40	<p>DED’s Broadband Efforts—Nichole Reiner PSC Updates—Mary Ridder and Cullen Robbins Homework Gap and Library Updates—Tom Rolfes and Holly Woldt Other Updates from Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIM <p>Broadband Case Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gothenburg • Seward County • Ravenna • Lincoln • Norfolk • Imperial • Paige Wireless Public-Private Partnership • Lancaster County RDOF (done) • Consolidated and Great Plains Public-Private Partnerships with Public Power Districts
	<p>Next Steps: How can the Community Council support broadband efforts in the state?</p>
3:50	<p>Finalize Action Items for Statewide Technology Plan* <i>The Community Council will discuss how to incorporate the next steps identified into an action item for inclusion in the statewide technology plan.</i></p>
4:00	<p>Adjourn</p>

Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on May 22, 2020. Agenda posted on the NITC Website on May 22, 2020. *Denotes action item.

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council
Wednesday, February 19, 2020
1:30 P.M. CT – 4:00 P.M. CT
Atrium, 1200 N St., Lincoln Suite 206**

MINUTES

ROLL CALL NOTICE OF POSTING OF AGENDA NOTICE OF NEBRASKA OPEN MEETINGS ACT POSTING

Members Present: Pam Adams, Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Randy Bretz, Jessica Chamberlain, Shonna Dorsey, Steve Fosselman, Charlotte Narjes, Johnathan Hladik, Allison Hatch, Mary Ridder, and Megan McGown

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Brett Baker, Tim Lindahl, and Holly Woldt

The meeting was called to order by co-chair Rod Armstrong at 1:35. Twelve members were present, making a quorum. Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on Jan. 29, 2020. The agenda was posted on the NITC Website on Jan. 29, 2020. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the table by Tom Rolfes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 30, 2019 MINUTES

Jay Anderson made a motion to approve the October 30, 2019 minutes. Randy Bretz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J. Armstrong-Yes, Bretz-Yes, Chamberlain-Yes; Dorsey-Yes; Fosselman-Yes; Narjes-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Hatch-Yes, Ridder-Yes, McGown-Yes. Results: Yes-12, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

COLLABORATING ON BROADBAND OUTREACH TO COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS

Ms. Byers welcomed guests to the meeting. She explained that one of the recommendations of the Rural Broadband Task Force was to encourage communities and regions to develop broadband plans. The Community Council has invited other stakeholders to the meeting to explore how the Community Council and other interested stakeholders can collaborate on an outreach effort to help communities and regions develop broadband plans and improve broadband availability. Some communities and regions may also want to address related issues such as IT workforce development and the homework gap.

She also mentioned that the Community Council needs several new members. Those interested in serving on the Community Council should contact Anne Byers. Participants introduced themselves and shared information on broadband-related activities. Those present included:

- Anne Byers, Nebraska Information Technology Commission
- Johnathan Hladik, Center for Rural Affairs
- Charlotte Narjes, University of Nebraska

- Eric Carstenson, Nebraska Telecommunications Association
- David Young, City of Lincoln
- Tom Rolfes, Nebraska Information Technology Commission
- Mary Ridder, Nebraska Public Service Commission
- Dan Spray, Connecting Point
- Cullen Robbins, Nebraska Public Service Commission
- Dusty Vaughn, representing Paige Wireless
- Julie Bushell, Paige Wireless
- Rod Armstrong, AIM Institute
- Randy Bretz
- Jay Anderson, NebraskaLink
- Allison Hatch, Nebraska Department of Economic Development
- Pam Anderson, American Broadband
- Jina Ragland, AARP
- Danny DeLong, AARP
- Greg McKee, University of Nebraska
- Steve Fosselman, Grand Island Public Library
- Judy Peterson, Central Nebraska Economic Development District
- Jessica Chamberlain, Norfolk Public Library
- Megan McGown, Great Plains Health
- Andy Pollack, Rembolt Ludtke, representing the Rural Telecommunications Coalition of Nebraska
- Shonna Dorsey, Mutual of Omaha
- Leigh Ann Spellman, NextLink

Rod Armstrong asked for information about LB 996 which was debated by the Legislature on Tuesday, Feb. 18, 2020. Johnathan Hladik explained that LB 996 would authorize the Nebraska Public Service Commission to collect crowd-sourced information to verify broadband availability. Accurate broadband maps will help correctly identify unserved areas which would be eligible for funding through the second phase of the FCC Rural Digital Opportunity Fund reverse auction.

Cullen Robbins also provided information on LB 992 which would implement several recommendations of the Rural Broadband Task Force. The bill would establish a process for using existing electric utility easements for telecommunications, establish a broadband coordinator position with the Office of the CIO, authorize the Nebraska Public Service Commission to establish an E-Rate Special Construction Matching Program, would modify rules regarding leasing dark fiber by public entities, and would establish term limits for Rural Broadband Task Force members. The bill currently includes language establishing four technicians to provide E-Rate and Technical assistance to libraries. This section is expected to be removed. Other options for providing assistance for libraries are being explored.

Governor Ricketts and Tony Goins, the Director of the Department of Economic Development, have made broadband availability a priority. Dan Curran reached out to Anne Byers while Ms. Byers was on vacation. She will follow up with Dan Curran to learn more about DED's plans to make sure that the Community Council and DED are working together and supporting each other. The group discussed options for helping communities. Ideas discussed included:

- **Developing case studies/best practices.** Participants suggested several communities and initiatives that could be profiled in case studies, including Gothenburg. Charlotte Narjes suggested looking at communities profiled by the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank. Julie Bushell offered to provide information on how Paige Wireless is working with telecommunications providers, NPPD, and two public power districts on a pilot project
- **Hosting a broadband conference**
- **Establishing a facilitator program**

NEXT STEPS

The group identified several next steps:

Coordinate with the Department of Economic Development. Anne Byers will meet with Dan Curran to learn more about DED's plans to address broadband availability and to coordinate efforts.

Develop Case Studies of Successful Community Broadband Initiatives. The following individuals volunteered to serve on this work group:

- Mary Ridder
- Randy Bretz
- Charlotte Narjes
- Johnathan Hladik
- Jeremy Lipschultz (nominated by Charlotte Narjes)

Solicit New Community Council Members. The Community Council includes 18-24 representatives from:

- Rural/community IT development
- Local government and libraries
- Resource providers
- Other groups

Participants were asked to e-mail Anne Byers if they were interested in serving on the Community Council.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTION ITEMS*

Ms. Byers explained that the NITC is beginning the process of updating the Statewide Technology Plan. Each NITC advisory council is asked to submit one or more action items to be included in the Statewide Technology Plan before the NITC's March 12 meeting. Ms. Byers proposed the following action item:

Work with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and other stakeholders to explore the development of a collaborative broadband outreach effort.

Commissioner Ridder expressed concerns that the action item was not well-defined. Ms. Byers agreed that the action item should be better defined, but the Community Council doesn't have much time to further define the action item before the March 12 NITC meeting. The action item can be better defined before the NITC adopts the final version of the plan in July.

Jay Anderson made a motion to approve the Community Council action item. Randy Bretz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J. Bretz-Yes, Chamberlain-Yes; Dorsey-Yes; Fosselman-Yes; Narjes-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Hatch-Yes, Ridder-Yes, Results: Yes-10, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

With no other business, the chair adjourned the meeting at 3:37 p.m.

Meeting minutes were prepared by Lori Lopez Urdiales and Anne Byers.

Nichole T. Reiner

Chief Strategy Officer, Nebraska Department of Economic Development



Born and raised in Vermillion, SD, Nichole joined the Navy in 1999 as an Intelligence Specialist. Following her commissioning as an Intelligence Officer she deployed on the USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT (CVN-71) as part of Carrier Air Wing EIGHT (CVW-8). In 2009, Nichole was the first intelligence officer to be selected, and successfully complete the Seahawk Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course in Fallon, NV and graduate from Joint Targeting School.

In 2010, she earned her Master's Degree in International Business and Leadership from the University of San Diego. Nichole was selected and reported to Chief of Naval Operations – Intelligence Plot in 2012 at the Pentagon.

In 2018, Nichole reported to US Strategic Command in Omaha, NE. Following her certification as a Senior Watch Officer in the Global Operations Center she was selected as Branch Chief for the Russia Strategic Analysis Branch and oversaw the daily production requirements for 30 joint military and civilian personnel.

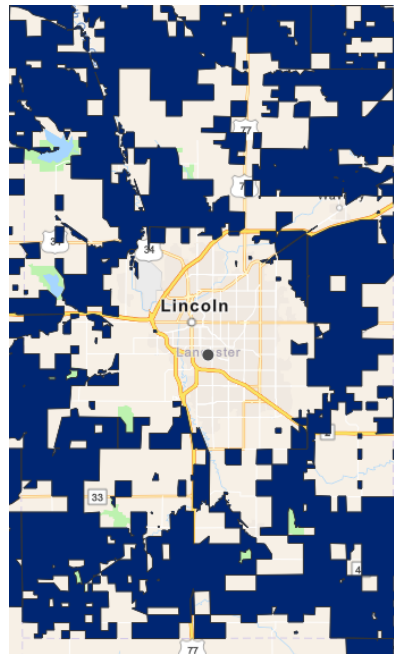
In December 2019 Nichole retired from the Navy at 20 years of service and became a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Since February, Nichole has served as the Chief Strategy Officer for the Nebraska Department of Economic Development charged with creating a regional strategy to increase broadband throughout the state, increase internships, retention, recruitment and oversee the marketing team. Nichole is married to CDR John Reiner, an MH-60 helicopter pilot and they have three children, Jack (7), James (5), and Joseph (4) they reside in Papillion, NE.

Lancaster County explores leveraging FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund

Leaders in Lancaster County are exploring how to leverage up to \$2.5 million in funding from the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) reverse auction to bring broadband to over 4,000 residences and businesses in rural parts of the county.

Telecommunications companies may submit RDOF bids to provide broadband via fiber, fixed wireless or satellite. Forming a public-private partnership to leverage the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund may increase the likelihood that the award will support a fiber buildout by minimizing costs for providers or reducing uncertainty.

"So what you are trying to do in some ways is make fiber competitive with wireless," explained Loel Brooks, a telecommunications lawyer and consultant.



Initial RDOF-eligible areas for Lancaster County, Nebraska

Reverse Auction Will Award Broadband Support

Up to \$59 million in funding will be available to telecommunications carriers to provide broadband to 53,623 locations in Nebraska through the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund reverse auction. The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund will award support over 10 years to provide broadband of at least 25 Mbps down/3 Mbps up to areas identified as unserved.

In a multi-round process, bids will be placed as a percentage of the reserve price for the area. The FCC will assign support to the bidder offering the best combination of speed and latency, once the combined price of bids in each area in the auction falls below the available budget.

The reverse auction is scheduled to begin Oct. 22, 2020.

Lancaster County Nebraska

Model: Leveraging Rural Digital Opportunity Fund to fund fiber buildout through public-private partnerships

Champions and Key Supporters: Lancaster County Commissioners, CIO David Young

Funding: Up to \$2.5 million in RDOF funding. Additional funding from municipalities, counties, private sources and philanthropies may be required.

Key Takeaways

The Rural Digital Opportunity Fund provides an opportunity for local entities in Nebraska to leverage federal funding to support broadband buildout in rural areas.

Leveraging RDOF will require multiple elements: having locations eligible for funding, local leadership, and a provider interested in providing broadband to the area.

Additional funding may be required to make bids to build a fiber-to-the-premise network competitive with those to build a fixed wireless network.

Community leadership can mobilize partnerships and secure funding.

Additional Resources are available at <https://ruralbroadband.nebraska.gov/resources>

Interview Date: April 2020

Key Elements

Leveraging RDOF will require multiple elements: having locations eligible for funding, local leadership, and a provider interested in providing broadband to the area. Additional funding from municipalities, counties, private sources and philanthropies will likely increase the competitiveness of bids.

Locations Eligible for RDOF Funding

Seventy-eight Nebraska counties have locations initially identified by the FCC as eligible for RDOF funding. The initial reserve prices range from \$2,653,788 for Gage County (2,233 locations averaging \$1,188 per location) to \$2,670 for Arthur County (1 location).

Leadership

Community leadership can mobilize partnerships and secure funding. Successful economic development projects require local leadership. “People that can gather people together to solve problems, to undertake projects, to bring bankers and main street and neighborhoods and schools and institutions and banks and everybody together to make decisions—that is really the heart of what our effort is,” said Brooks.

Telecommunications Providers

A number of Nebraska providers have expressed interest in partnering with communities.

Additional Funding

Funding sources in addition to the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund may be required to make bids to build a fiber-to-the-premise network competitive with those to build a fixed wireless network. Funding may include public funding sources such as LB 840, private funding, or philanthropic funds.



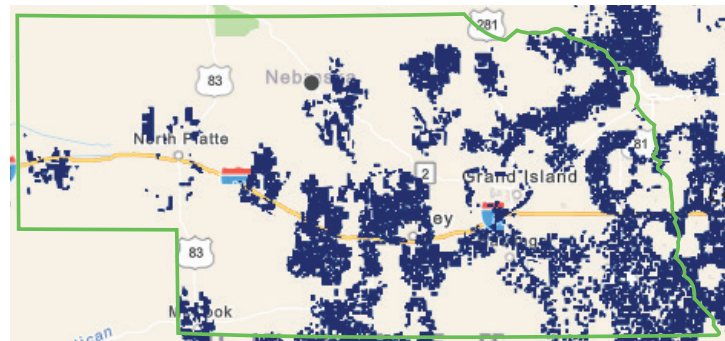
Photo Credit Anne Byers

Models for Leveraging RDOF

Lancaster County is exploring several options to leverage RDOF funding to improve broadband availability in rural areas of the county according to David Young, CIO for the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County as well as a telecommunications consultant.

Model 1. A community could act as an anchor tenant to help start off the network. In return, the carrier would agree to provide service to households in the surrounding rural areas that are eligible for funding over the term of the RDOF agreement.

“The carrier instead of going into RDOF by themselves making a reverse auction pitch of say \$100 a home to provide fiber—if they have the city’s partnership commitment to serve as an anchor tenancy—then they can probably drop that price to \$80 or \$75 a month because they have taken out uncertainty,” said Young. “They know they have an anchor tenant, and it is a large circuit.”



Initial RDOF eligible locations in Nebraska

Model 2. In less densely populated rural areas, supplemental funding may also be necessary in addition to RDOF funding in order to make a viable business case for a fiber-to-the-premise buildout.

“So other financing techniques with upfront money—low interest loans or grants—are all going to be probably at play whether it’s private money or public money or philanthropy or whatever it is,” said Brooks. “There are a whole host of combinations that are going to have come together to leverage the RDOF money.”

For more information, contact:

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Brooks, Pansing Brooks, PC, LLO
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402.476.3300

Both Young and Brooks are also consultants with Universal Broadband Consulting.

What Counties and Communities Can Do:

1. Learn more about the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund and funding models for broadband. Links to information on the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund are available at: <https://ruralbroadband.nebraska.gov/resources/index.html>.

2. Get organized.

- Identify champions.
- Form a committee.

3. Take action.

- Talk to telecommunications providers to learn if they plan to submit a bid or how the auction may impact them.
- Explore forming a public-private partnership to leverage RDOF funding.
- Leverage local assets, including:
 - **Community leadership.** The ability of local leaders to convene and engage stakeholders and partners is an area’s greatest asset.
 - **Demand for telecommunications services.** Local entities can act as an anchor tenant for expanded broadband services and can work with businesses and other users to quantify and aggregate demand for broadband services.
 - **Infrastructure assets** include conduit, dark fiber, poles, water towers, and GIS information.
 - **Control over rights-of-way, permitting and inspections.** Local entities should review their processes and take steps to clearly communicate these processes and to streamline them if needed.
 - **Access to financing.** Public funding sources including LB 840, private funding, and/or philanthropic funds may be used.

DRAFT COMMUNITY COUNCIL ACTION ITEMS

Work with the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and other stakeholders to explore the development of a collaborative broadband outreach effort.

Lead: NITC Community Council and Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Timeframe: 2020-2021

Funding: Leveraging existing resources

Targets/Deliverables

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Develop a series of case studies illustrating successful strategies and models that communities can use to improve broadband.

Lead: NITC Community Council

Timeframe: 2020

Funding: Leveraging existing resources

Targets/Deliverables:

1. A booklet of at least 8 case studies
2. A marketing/social media plan to share information on the case studies