

EDUCATION COUNCIL

NITC Nebraska Information Technology Commission

December 17, 2025, at 9:00 a.m.

Nebraska Department of Education

500 S 84th Street, Room 204

Lincoln, Nebraska

Host Location: Nebraska Department of Education-Conference Room 204

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Co-Chair, Mr. Gary Needham, ESU 09

Co-Chair, Mr. Andrew Buker, University of Nebraska

Mr. Derek Bierman, Doan College

Mr. Corey Gearhart, Grand Island Public Schools

Mr. Scott Isaacson, ESUCC

Ms. Elizabeth Kumru, Nebraska Association of School Boards

Mr. Leonard Kwapnioski, Columbus Public Schools

Mr. Nick Muir, Wayne State College

Mr. Matt Chrisman, Mitchel Secondary School

Dr. Cheri Polenski, Nebraska State College Systems

Mr. Rob Uctman, Bennington Public Schools

Mr. Tom Peters, Central Community College

LIAISONS PRESENT:

Ms. Christine Struebing, Nebraska Department of Education

Ms. Kathleen Fimple, Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education (Alt. for Dr. Paul Turman)

MEMBERS/LIAISONS & ALTERNATES ABSENT:

Dr. Mathew McCarville, Chief Information Officer, State of Nebraska

Mr. Brandon Eckmann, Northeast Community College

Mr. Jeremiah Ourada, Nebraska Wesleyan University

Dr. Jaci Lindburg, University of Nebraska

Ms. Molly Delany, Nebraska Public Media

OCIO/NITC STAFF PRESENT:

Callie Richards, Education IT Programs Officer

Vanessa Castro, NITC Administrative Manager

Marcus Rechtenbach, Legal Counsel and Chief Privacy Officer

Lori Lopez Urdiales, Office Services Manager

CALL TO ORDER, ELECTRONIC POSTING AND OPEN MEETINGS ACT

Co-Chair, Gary Needham, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. There was a quorum present to conduct official business. Council members and alternates introduced themselves.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 17, 2025 MEETING AGENDA

Mr. Kumru moved to approve the December 17, 2025 meeting agenda as presented. Mr. Bieber seconded. Roll call vote: Buker-Yes, Bierman-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Uctman-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Muir-Yes, Needham-Yes, Peters-Yes, and Polenski-Yes. Results: Yes-11, No-0, Abstained-0. Motions carried.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF OCTOBER 15, 2025 MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Uctman moved to approve the October 15, 2025 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Polenski seconded. Roll call vote: Polenski-Yes, Peters-Yes, Needham-Yes, Muir-Yes, Kumru-Yes, Uctman-Yes, Gearhart-Yes, Isaacson-Yes, Chrisman-Yes, Bierman-Yes, and Buker-Yes. Results: Yes-11, No-0, Abstained-0. Motions carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

NITC UPDATE

Approval of New Members. The following new members were approved by the NITC at the November meeting:

- Scott Issaacson
- Cory Gearhart
- Leonard Kwapnioski

BEAD non-deployment funds. At the November NITC meetings, Senator DeBoer, who serves on the NITC, informed the Commission that the Legislature is concerned about this funding. Funding is now available but there are no clear directions. The OCIO will be meeting with the Broadband Office to discuss collaboration of projects. Originally \$405 million dollars was awarded but approximately 45 million. Governor would like to use it for agricultural needs. Requirements and guidelines are to be released soon.

NETWORK NEBRASKA UPDATE

RFP 2025 Update. The RFP is in the final stages and should be ready for release in a week or two. Once released, there will be timelines for submission and evaluation. The contract should be finalized in early March with a start date of July 1. Stuhr Museum will become a new Network Nebraska participant. Other contracts will be with existing customers.

Newsletter and Marketing Initiatives. At the last meeting, the council discussed the need to communicate the benefits of Network Nebraska, as well as to introduce the NITC and the Education Council. It was suggested for Network Nebraska and the NITC Education Council to have a booth at state conference, as well as provide information at school board meetings. Ms. Richards would like to publish a newsletter. In addition to the digital newsletter, it was suggested to produce short video messages.

Hardware refresh. Mr. Buker reported that the Juniper contract is expiring. Cisco is the contractor now.

DATA AND CYBERSECURITY

Nate Watson, Nebraska Information Technology Commissioner, provided a power point presentation on “How to Use AI in Classrooms”. We need to teach our children what AI is, what it is good at and what it is not good at. Our children also need to learn how to use AI. Establishing a NITC AI Work Group is currently being discussed with Dr. McCarville, State CIO. Mr. Watson will be assisting in organizing the work group and acknowledged that all educational sectors of the state are represented. The goal of the work group is to assist the state and the OCIO with AI. Members were asked to let him know if they are interested in serving or if they want to recommend people to serve.

Mr. Watson entertained questions from the council members. He also offered to provide the presentation at members locations.

NOC LETTER

On December 8, 2025, ESU, NOC and NETA sent a letter to the Education Council Co-chairs and NITC. Mr. Gearhart provided history of the letter. Several years ago, districts started seeing more cybersecurity events that occurred in 2023. A call to action was issued in 2023.

Members asked, “what can the council do regarding the letter”. Mr. Rechtenbach stated that as a council, the council can provide support for the letter or give the OCIO some time to discuss and address the letter and have the OCIO at the next meeting. The group decided to invite the OCIO to their next meeting. Dr. Polenski would like to discuss this topic with the Education Council Security Task Group as well. Members asked if it could be shared with their sectors and it can.

SUBSECTOR REPORTS

The following sectors provided updates: University of Nebraska; Nebraska State Colleges; Nebraska Community Colleges; Nebraska Independent Colleges; Public K-12 and ESU’s; Coordinating Commission for Post Secondary Education; and the Nebraska Department of Education.

TASK GROUPS & BREAKOUT DISCUSSION

The Council broke out into Task Groups for discussion regarding membership and goals: Security, Digital Education, Network Nebraska Services and Communication. Task Groups are open to all council members and their alternates.

Ms. Richards will work on the updated Task Group members list and will get out to the Council members.

Members were asked to meet prior to the February meeting and provide an update. They also asked if there is a way to have a shared drive where documents can be shared, meeting notices of the work groups, etc. Ms. Richards will check on this and report back to the Council.

CLOSING DISCUSSIONS

The February 18, 2026 Education Council meeting will be a virtual meeting. We will need a host location with a current voting member.

Agenda items for next meeting included:

- Charter. It was suggested to have an Executive Committee to review the document. Interested council members were asked to contact Ms. Richards. A current copy of the Charter will be sent to the council members
- NOC Letter Discussion with Dr. McCarville

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Muir moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Kumru seconded. All were in favor. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Meeting minutes were taken by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by the NITC staff of the Office of the CIO.