

EDUCATION COUNCIL
February 18, 2026, Meeting Agenda
Host Location: ESU 09
Zoom Link
MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER, ELECTRONIC POSTING, LOCATION OF OPEN MEETING LAW DOCUMENTS, ROLL CALL, INTRODUCTIONS

Gary Needham called the meeting to order at 9:00 am on 2/18/2026
Gary showed the Open meeting law documents to show that they were posted
Lori Lopez Urdiales took roll call of members. There were 11 people attending – have enough for a quorum.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA FOR THE FEBRUARY 18, 2026, MEETING*

Gary Needham called to approve the agenda for today's meeting.
Cheri Polenski seconded the approval.
Agenda was voted on and approved. There were: 11 yes, 0 no, 0 - abstained. Motion carried.

CONSIDER APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 17, 2025*

Tom Peters moved to approve the minutes from December 17, 2025.
Corey Gearhart seconded the approval
Scott Isaacson mentioned a slight correction that was needed in the minutes
Minutes were voted on and approved. There were: 11 yes, 0 no, 0 abstained. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments

PRESENTATION – INTERIM CISO BRYCE BAILEY

Bryce Bailey introduced himself and spoke about cybersecurity for the State of Nebraska.
Bryce talked about some of his goals for Nebraska. One goal was about K through 12 schools and how to keep our students here in the State of Nebraska.
Another goal for Bryce is to establish policies and procedures that can be used across the state and all be on the same team.
Bryce also talked about ransomware and how he handled the situation at his previous position.

Brandon Eckmann had questions for Bryce about security processes.

Tom Peters asked what the game plan was with his position and Bryce talked about filling the position – Cybersecurity and business continuity doesn't change no matter who is in place.

Gary Needham asked about code and non-code agencies and schools under these policies – partnerships with NDE and other associations.

Rob Uchtman asked questions on Network Nebraska – any changes – Bryce is learning the history and the goals of Network Nebraska.

Corey Gearhart asked questions about ISAC and sharing – help us be more actionable

Liz Kumru asked about communication across the state and other states.

Bryce answered everyone's questions and provided that he could meet with them at their locations.

Gary Needham – Mentioned the timeline on the agenda for talking about the next tentative meeting location – he wanted to make sure they had time to talk about this. He also wants to give everyone time in their task groups.

NETWORK NEBRASKA UPDATE

Callie Richards – Updates on the RFP process. We are now on the public posting phase. We received 11 vendor bid on our sites and one newcomer bid, Viaero, and they were very competitive. Andrew Buker mentioned Viaero being in two different areas of services now and was glad to hear they were bidding. Callie is excited to work with Viaero and hopeful for success.

Callie has submitted her paperwork for an open position and hopefully by next meeting she will had interviews and brought someone on board.

Callie also talked about website updates and moving the eduroam form that's currently on the ConnectED site to the Network Nebraska site. Andrew Buker would like to post new reports on this website. Callie has been invited to some Eduroam meetings and is looking forward to being a part of the eduroam Nebraska group. Gary Needham mentioned how he remembered about the branding and how this will be branded. Andrew said it was our brand and was set up this way. Gary agreed about using the dashboard for our information. Andrew talked a bit about Internet 2 seeking feedback.

Callie mentioned that the newsletter was approved and a newsletter was sent out in January. She has gotten some feedback on it and several members want to be added to the newsletter. Let Callie know about any feedback on the newsletter.

TASK GROUP DISCUSSION/ALIGNMENT

Gary Needham talked about the task group discussion/alignment. Thanked everyone for attending including the alternates.

Each task group is responsible for their action items and they need to meet.

Andrew Buker – Who can be in a task group? The primary members and their alternates can be in the task group. He would like everybody to be part of the task groups. Does everyone know which task group they are in and if they are happy with the task group they are on.

Gary Needham listed who is on what Task Groups.

Digital Education

Network Nebraska Services

Security

Communication

Executive

Chris Wlaschin, NDE, would like to be in the Security group.

Christina Struebing, NDE, would like to be in the Communications Group

Matt Moore, Grand Island Public Schools, would like to be in the Communication Group

Gary Needham talked about someone scheduling the task group meetings – this is one of the duties.

They did not break into task group sessions at this time.

SUBSECTOR REPORTS (IF TIME PERMITS)

University of Nebraska

Andrew Buker – Nothing new to share today except what we've seen in the news about UNMC

Nebraska State Colleges

Cheri Polenski – Continuing our work with our colleges – application fee – no charge – they are seeing that between 20 to 30% applications are fraud.

Nebraska Community Colleges

Tom Peters – Last month they didn't meet to launch off their semester – nothing to add
Brandon Eckmann – Nothing additional to add

Nebraska Independent Colleges and Universities

Derek Bierman, Doan – Nothing to report

Jeremiah Ourada, Wesleyan University – Nothing to report

Public K-12 and ESUs

Corey Gearhart – Seeing an uptick in people/companies requesting transcripts for students who don't have authorization – the requester doesn't exist or isn't there. Same boat that Cheri Polenski is in.

Liz Kumru had a question about what they are requesting. Corey thinks the companies are legitimate – they are not trying to automate these requests.

Cheri Polenski – We have gotten transcripts that are valid for a person name who is applying but the driver's license doesn't match or the addresses don't match. They don't always know who are asking and why they are asking. False requests for transcripts at high school are likely being used in false college applications.

Leonard Kwapnioski – Thanked Bryce for coming in and letting them know about Cybersecurity and would like to have more conversations with Bryce.

Scott Isaacson – SLCG Grant – The state is looking at these proposals and how fast they can be approved. There were 66 proposals submitted. Discussions with ESU NOC members about Legislation. There are a couple of bills in the Legislature that are in committees. There is lots of work to do and what these bills mean. These are security bills in the Legislature.

Gary Needham – Mentioned Palo Alto maintenance contract ELA renewal for the statewide education community. Related to the NATA / NOC letter to NDE with cc to the NITC – NDE has the future ready K-12 profile survey out right now and have adopted some of the items listed in the letter and what these plans may look like. This is a positive thing.

Private/Denominational K-12

No one present

Nebraska Public Media

No one present

Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

No one present

Nebraska Department of Education

Chris Wlaschin – Chris and Scott Isaacson meet with AlumniFi and their interest in software elastic reporting, threat hunting, and several tools in the back end through dashboards – very informative presentation. NDE is working an AI process and polices (policy is on internal NDE employees – second document is guidance for school districts that don't have IT staff) and providing use cases and best practices and what tools are authorized to use. Working on a draft policy with best practices. Will share anything with whoever is interested.

Christine Struebing – Using stakeholders for the Future Ready survey. Surveys come in and the survey has capped. She will have a staff member on notice that will extract the data and get to the council the fastest they can. Everyone is working together.

Group discussed which task group would be taking on the issue of transcripts and what is happening with this issue? They discussed who should be on the group and which group. Cheri Polenski and Corey Gearhart talked about getting together and talking about this.

DISCUSS POSSIBLE LOCATION AND AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE APRIL 15, 2026, MEETING

Gary Needham talked about how they met at Sandy Creek last April. Would they like to meet at a new location in the fall?

Could possibly be held at Doane – Callie will look at that.

Tom Peters – Suggested Western Nebraska as a site for the next meeting

Gary Needham – If we chose a location outside of Lincoln, we just need to make sure we get enough members to have a quorum.

Agenda:

Need to discuss more about the fraud topic – keep that as a sharing item and how to address it and move in a group direction.

Maybe Gary Needham or higher ed could give us a presentation on it. Gary is hoping someone could volunteer for this discussion and have a solution to present on this fraud issue. Maybe something will develop from the task group meetings.

Cheri Polenski could possibly present scenarios from these frauds and would be happy to share what they have received, what to watch for, and have seen. Cheri could possibly get someone from Wayne State College to speak that is helping with the process.

Gary Needham talked to Leonard Kwapnioski and Chris Wlaschin about presenting once they are more comfortable. Possibly present in August.

ADJOURNMENT

Gary Needham mentioned that they would motion to adjourn the meeting and then break out into the task groups.

Liz Kumru moved to adjourn the meeting

Leonard Kwapnioski seconded the motion to adjourn

All were in favor of adjournment. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.