

EDUCATION COUNCIL

Nebraska Information Technology Commission

June 17, 2026 | 9:00 a.m.

Host Location: Doane University – Lincoln Campus
303 N. 52nd Street, Room 301
Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS PRESENT

Co-Chair

- Gary Needham, ESU 09

Co-Chair (Virtual)

- Andrew Buker, University of Nebraska

Members

- Derek Bierman, Doane University
- Bryce Swiggum (Alternate for Jeremiah Ourada)
- Corey Gearhart, Grand Island Public Schools
- Scott Isaacson, ESU Coordinating Council
- Elizabeth Kumru, Nebraska Association of School Boards
- Leonard Kwapnioski, Columbus Public Schools
- Matt Chrisman, Mitchell Secondary School
- Dr. Cheri Polenski, Nebraska State College System
- Tom Peters, Central Community College

LIAISONS PRESENT

- Dr. Matthew McCarville, Chief Information Officer, State of Nebraska
- Christina Struebing, Nebraska Department of Education
- Dr. Paul Turman, Coordinating Commission for Postsecondary Education

MEMBERS/LIAISONS ABSENT

- Nick Muir, Wayne State College

- Brandon Eckmann, Northeast Community College
- Dr. Jaci Lindburg, University of Nebraska
- Molly Delaney, Nebraska Public Media

Currently, the Council has vacancies representing the Private/Parochial Schools and the Nebraska State Education Association sectors.

OCIO/NITC STAFF PRESENT

- Dr. Matthew McCarville, Chief Information Officer
- Bryce Bailey, Deputy Chief Information Officer
- Callie Richards, Education IT Programs Officer
- Vicki McElroy, Office Specialist (Virtual)
- Lori Lopez Urdiales, Office Services Manager

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Gary Needham called the meeting to order at **9:02 a.m.** A quorum was present to conduct official business.

The meeting notice was posted to the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar, and the agenda was posted to the NITC website in accordance with the Nebraska Open Meetings Act.

Council members and attendees introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion: Ms. Kumru moved to approve the June 17, 2026 agenda as presented. Mr. Isaacson seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

Yes: Bierman, Chrisman, Gearhart, Isaacson, Kwapnioski, Kumru, Needham, Peters, Polenski, Swiggum

No: None

Abstained: None

Motion carried (10-0).

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 18, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Motion: Ms. Kumru moved to approve the February 18, 2026 meeting minutes as presented. Mr. Peters seconded the motion.

Roll Call Vote

Yes: Bierman, Chrisman, Gearhart, Isaacson, Kwapnioski, Kumru, Needham, Peters, Polenski, Swiggum

No: None

Abstained: None

Motion carried (10-0).

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were received.

INTRODUCTIONS AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Chris Waschlin, Chief Information Officer for the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE), introduced himself to the Council and provided an update on current NDE initiatives.

Mr. Waschlin shared that NDE recently adopted a six-year strategic plan centered on four priorities:

1. Accelerate student achievement.
2. Strengthen the educator workforce pipeline.
3. Equip learners for future workforce success.
4. Deliver exceptional service.

Mr. Waschlin also discussed the passage of **LB937**, noting that support from the Nebraska Educational Technology Association (NETA) and Nebraska Operations Center (NOC) was instrumental in advancing the legislation.

NDE has established a statewide cybersecurity workgroup and is developing a voluntary cybersecurity assessment for Nebraska school districts. The online assessment is expected to be released this fall, with responses requested by late October or early November. Results will be used to better understand statewide cybersecurity needs and help guide future funding opportunities.

Council members discussed additional opportunities to strengthen the initiative, including:

- Including the cybersecurity assessment in the annual Network Nebraska participant communication.
- Developing benchmarking data that would allow districts to compare cybersecurity expenditures on a per-student basis.
- Exploring E-Rate Category Two funding opportunities to support cybersecurity improvements.

LEGISLATIVE DISCUSSION

The Council continued discussion regarding **LB937** and future funding opportunities.

The Nebraska Department of Education has committed **\$250,000** toward a statewide cybersecurity coordinator with the expectation that the pilot program will demonstrate the need for ongoing funding. The Office of the CIO and NDE will continue working with the Legislature to identify sustainable funding sources for cybersecurity services benefiting Nebraska schools.

Council members also discussed recent reports suggesting students average seven hours of daily screen time. Members noted that the statistic may be misleading because it does not distinguish between instructional and non-instructional screen time. Mr. Needham offered to share additional federal resources related to the topic with interested members.

NETWORK NEBRASKA UPDATE

Network Infrastructure

Mr. Buker reported that Network Nebraska is transitioning from its existing Juniper platform to a new Cisco platform as the current equipment approaches end-of-life.

E-Rate Update

Ms. Struebing reported that Nebraska submitted **801 E-Rate funding requests** for FY2026, including:

- 464 requests for Internet access
- 317 requests for internal connections

Nebraska applicants requested approximately **\$18.1 million** in funding, with roughly **60 percent** of requests currently funded.

Circuit Implementation

Ms. Richards reported that implementation of the FY2026 Network Nebraska circuits is nearing completion. Viaero was awarded a significant number of circuit projects, and all implementations remain on schedule for completion by August. No significant implementation issues or delays have been encountered to date.

Zoom Licensing and Communications

Ms. Richards reported that the Network Nebraska website has been updated and encouraged Council members to identify additional opportunities to improve communication and outreach regarding Network Nebraska programs and services.

TASK GROUP UPDATES

Council members were encouraged to recommend additional education leaders and partners who may be interested in participating in one of the Council's four standing task groups:

- Network Nebraska Services
- Digital Education
- Communications
- Security

Discussion included several potential initiatives for future task group work, including:

- Expanding the Education Council newsletter.
 - Conducting a Network Nebraska customer satisfaction survey.
 - Increasing participation from higher education institutions.
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STATEWIDE TECHNOLOGY PLAN

The Council reviewed the timeline for developing Education Council recommendations for inclusion in the **2026 Statewide Technology Plan**, which will be submitted to the Governor and Legislature by **November 15, 2026**.

The following timeline was established:

- **July:** Task Groups will meet to develop proposed action items.
- **August:** The Education Council will review and refine recommendations during its in-person meeting.
- **October:** Final action items will be considered for Council approval.

Dr. McCarville also announced that the NITC is establishing a statewide Artificial Intelligence Committee and encouraged the Education Council to identify a representative to participate.

Additionally, he shared that the Office of the CIO is currently recruiting for both a Chief Data Officer (CDO) and a Chief Operating Officer (COO).

SUBSECTOR REPORTS

Updates were provided by representatives from:

- Nebraska State College System
- Nebraska Independent Colleges and Universities
- Public K-12 Schools and ESUs
- Nebraska Department of Education

OTHER BUSINESS

No additional business was brought before the Council.

NEXT MEETING

The Council confirmed its next meeting for **Wednesday, August 19, 2026**, from **9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.**

Dr. McCarville offered the Office of the CIO training room as the meeting location.

Council members were encouraged to submit agenda topics to the Co-Chairs or Callie Richards in advance of the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Ms. Kumru moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bierman seconded the motion.

The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned.

Minutes prepared by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by Callie Richards.