

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council**
Monday, March 14, 2022
1:30 P.M. CT – 3:30 P.M. CT
Nebraska Public Service Commission Hearing Room
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508,

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

Tentative Agenda

1:30	<p>Roll Call</p> <p>Notice of Posting of Agenda</p> <p>Notice of Nebraska Open Meetings Act Posting</p> <p>Review and Approve April 1, 2021 Minutes and Oct. 25, 2021 Minutes*</p> <p>Public Comment</p>
1:35	<p>Membership*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pam Adams has resigned
1:40	<p>Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PSC and Broadband Bridge Program Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Nebraska Broadband Map includes a layer for the awards. ○ List of Awards—Jan 4, 2022 ○ Additional Award-Feb. 1, 2022 • Rural Broadband Task Force Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2021 Rural Broadband Task Force Report • Brief Federal Funding Update • Brief Legislative Update • Library Updates • NROC Broadband Event—March 21 • Other Updates
2:30	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updating outreach materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional case studies lessons learned similar to Growing Communities: Connecting to Broadband & Partnering with Local Providers ○ Updating the quiz in Leveraging Broadband in Your Community workbook (2014) • Supporting broadband deployment and digital equity planning
3:30	<p>Adjourn</p>

*Denotes action item.

[Nebraska Open Meetings Act |Community Council Meeting Documents](#)

The Community Council will attempt to adhere to the sequence of the published agenda, but reserves the right to adjust the order and timing of items and may elect to take action on any of the items listed.

Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on March 4, 2022. The agenda was posted on the NITC Website on March 7, 2022.

**Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council
Thursday, April 1, 2021
2:30 P.M. CT
Zoom Videoconferencing**

The meeting was held as a virtual meeting of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission conducted pursuant to Neb. Exec. Order No. 21-02 (<http://govdocs.nebraska.gov/docs/pilot/pubs/eofiles/21-02.pdf>).

MINUTES

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

Members Present via Zoom: Pam Adams, Chris Anderson, Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Randy Bretz, Johnathan Hladik, Nichole Reiner, Megan McGown (joined late), Judy Petersen, Mary Ridder (joined late) and Cullen Robbins alternate for Mary Ridder, and Holly Woldt

Members Absent: Connie Hancock, Shonna Dorsey, Mehmet Can Vuran, and David Young

The meeting was called to order by Rod Armstrong at 2:30 p.m. Ten members were present via videoconferencing. A quorum was present.

Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on March 19, 2021. The agenda was posted on the NITC website on March 29, 2021. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available online at https://nitc.nebraska.gov/documents/statutes/NebraskaOpenMeetingsAct_current.pdf.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 14, 2018 MINUTES

Judy Petersen made a motion to approve the May 29, 2020 and November 12, 2020 minutes. Randy Bretz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote: Adams-Yes, C. Anderson-Yes, J. Anderson-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, Bretz-Yes, Hladik-Yes, Reiner-Yes, Cullen Robbins for Mary Ridder-Abstained, Woldt-Yes. Results: Yes-9, No-0, Abstained-1. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS AND UPDATES

NROC and Economic Development Districts Broadband Planning—Tom Bliss

Tom Bliss from the Southeast Nebraska Economic Development District shared information on the broadband planning grant that the Nebraska Regional Officials Council (NROC) and the regional economic development districts received from the Economic Development Administration. The economic development districts have contracted with GeoPartners to set up a broadband speed testing program. Nebraskans can take speed tests by going to <https://www.nebraskaspeedtest.org/>. GeoPartners is using MLab to conduct the Nebraska tests. A map of results can be viewed at the website. The regional economic development districts are also working with NEDA, NACO, NIFA, NPPD, NREA, OPPD, AARP and BCom on the project. A webinar with Christopher Mitchell from the Institute for Local Self-Reliance

is planned for next week. Tom Bliss indicated that he was willing to share speed test data with other organizations. He also said that he could have maps of the results made for specific geographic areas like school districts, public power districts, or legislative districts. The program also allows administrators to prepare preliminary engineering designs and cost estimates for building out broadband in an area. Commissioner Ridder asked if results for mobile and fixed broadband can be segregated. Mr. Bliss will check and send Ms. Byers that information.

Lead for Nebraska— *Rebecca Johnson and Brent Comstock, BCom*

Brent Comstock explained that Lead for Nebraska will work to reduce the digital divide between rural and urban communities and will empower rural Nebraska communities for growth. The program will place recent college graduates as fellows in participating rural communities for two years. Participants will receive training with participants in the Lead For America program before their placement in communities. Host communities are asked to provide funding to aid in living expenses and are asked to help provide housing and office space. The estimated cost is about \$30,000. Matching funds have been provided from state and national level sources. BCom is currently recruiting participants. Anne Byers asked if BCom would be interested in participating in a work group to help identify and develop resources for digital inclusion planning. Mr. Comstock said he would be willing to participate.

Discussion and Possible Action Item: Resources for Developing Digital Inclusion Plans— *Anne Byers*

Anne Byers explained that LB 388 would establish a broadband grant program. Underserved areas with a digital inclusion plan would be among the areas eligible for funding. She proposed forming a working group to identify existing resources and develop other resources if needed to help communities develop digital inclusion plans. Holly Woldt suggested asking Amanda Sweet from the Nebraska Library Commission. Pam Adams and Brent Comstock volunteered to participate in the work group.

Updates on the Rural Broadband Task Force and Broadband Legislation and Funding

Anne Byers noted that updates were included in the meeting materials. Cullen Robbins said that he would also provide updates on some legislation in the PSC update.

PSC Updates—*Cullen Robbins and Commissioner Ridder*

Cullen Ridder gave an update on two bills:

- LB 338 would set up a community-based option to a reverse auction. It also changes the definition of broadband for boundary changes to 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps down. Any new projects funded must be able to provide 100 Mbps up and down. The bill also requires speed tests for recipients of support.
- LB 388 would establish a state broadband grant program and was introduced by Senator Friesen at the request of Governor Ricketts. The first round of grant applications would be due Oct. 1. Telecommunications providers do not have to be Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs). The program would include a challenge process. The maximum award would be \$5 million. Commissioner Ridder and Mr. Robbins expressed concern that the 50% match requirement could be a barrier. Jay Anderson commented that counties could use funding from the American Rescue Plan for a match.

The Commission has instituted a new process for distributing support for price cap carriers in which they have to inform the Commission where they are going to use their support.

Mr. Robbins also gave an update on NUSF contribution reform. Residential voice connections contribute \$1.75 per month. The Commission is looking at moving businesses to a per connection fee. The Commission is close to a final decision.

The Commission is also making changes to the telehealth program to better align with the FCC Healthcare Connect program. Health care providers can get up to a 65% discount through the federal program. The PSC would provide up to a 25% discount through the telehealth program.

Homework Gap and Library Broadband Update —*Tom Rolfes and Holly Woldt*

Holly Woldt said that seven Nebraska libraries are getting fiber as a result of the Special Construction E-Rate Matching Program. Bancroft Public Library, Bayard Public Library, Beatrice Public Library, Clay Center Public Library, Verdigre Public Library, and Wymore Public Library received matching funds from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund. North Bend Public Library did not require matching funds for fiber construction because fiber was already very close to the building. Ms. Woldt shared a map with more information on each library. The map is available at:

<https://www.zeemaps.com/view?group=4074707&x=-98.480918&y=43.961874&z=12>

Tom Rolfes shared that K-12 educational entities in Nebraska have received \$853 million in COVID-19 relief funding. The funding may be used for devices and broadband connectivity for students. Mr. Rolfes has worked with the Department of Education to develop and provide resources for school administrators. Six approaches to providing connectivity are being piloted. The American Rescue Act passed in December 2020 created a new \$7.1 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund to support remote learning for schools and libraries.

Membership

Anne Byers shared that the Community Council has several openings. Two library representatives—Steve Fosseman and Jessica Chamberlain—have resigned. Holly Woldt and Sam Shaw have identified two library directors below are interested in serving on the Community Council

- Karen Connell, Director Columbus Public Library
- Deb Robertson, Director York Public Library

Also, Connie Hancock has retired. Charlotte Narjes has served as Connie's alternate. She is willing to serve on the Community Council. Rod Armstrong is no longer with the AIM Institute but is still interested in remaining on the Community Council. Tim Lindahl has accepted a position out of state so his position is also vacant.

Commissioner Ridder suggested that Ms. Byers put together a list of current members and vacancies and send it to members.

Other Updates

There were no other updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m. CT.

Nebraska Information Technology Commission

Community Council

Monday, October 25

1:30 P.M. CT

Nebraska Public Service Commission, Hearing Room

1200 N Street, Suite 300

Lincoln, NE 68508

MINUTES

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

Members Present: Jay Anderson, Rod Armstrong, Randy Bretz, Mary Ridder, Mehmet Can Vuran,

Members Present via Zoom (Non-voting): Pam Adams and Johnathan Hladik

Members Absent: Chris Anderson, Charlotte Narjes for Connie Hancock, Megan McGown, Judy Peterson, Danny Rockhill, Holly Woldt, and David Young

The meeting was called to order by Rod Armstrong at 1:30 p.m. Six members were present in person. A quorum was not present.

Meeting notices were posted on the Public Meeting and NITC websites on Oct. 8, 2021. The agenda was posted on the NITC website on Oct. 8, 2021. A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available on the wall.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF April 1, 2021 MINUTES

Approval of the minutes was tabled.

Membership

Three Community Council nominees were present via Zoom and introduced themselves: Debora Robertson, director of the Kilgore Memorial Library in York; Karen Connell, director of the Columbus Public Library; and Rick Nelson, general manager of Custer Public Power District and interim general manager of the Nebraska Rural Electric Association. Members voiced their support for their nominations.

Updates

PSC and Broadband Bridge Update. Commissioner Ridder reported that the Broadband Bridge grant program is going well so far. Seventy-six applications were received requesting approximately \$31 million in funding. Approximately 20 providers submitted applications. Challenges are due November 5. Grant awards will be announced in early January.

Rural Broadband Task Force Update. Commissioner Ridder and Anne Byers highlighted key recommendations from the Task Force's 2021 report to the Legislature and Governor Ricketts. Key recommendations include:

- Initiate a program to map broadband availability for serviceable locations in the state augmented by speed test data.

- Evaluate the results of the Nebraska Public Service Commission's expected reverse auction of NUSF support.
- Coordinate the distribution of NUSF support with other funding sources to avoid duplication of funding and to target funding to areas most in need of support.
- As funding from multiple sources is being utilized for broadband deployment projects, state and federal policymakers will need to develop mechanisms to ensure that broadband networks are being supported.
- Express appreciation to Governor Ricketts and the Legislature for recognizing the importance of broadband to Nebraska and for providing funding for broadband through the Nebraska Broadband Bridge grant program and the Remote Access Rural Broadband Grant program.
- Review the initial round of awards from the Broadband Bridge Grant Program to determine the impact of the program.
- Encourage local and regional broadband planning.
- Establish a state goal of having broadband access to every farm or ranch headquarters. • Focus a portion of broadband funding on the highest cost areas. • Review the initial round of awards from the Broadband Bridge Grant Program to determine if adjustments to program requirements could aid in funding extremely high cost rural areas.
- Encourage public libraries and schools without fiber connections to apply for support for new fiber construction from the E-Rate Special Construction matching fund.
- Encourage school districts, ESUs, public libraries, and communities to implement programs such as Wi-Fi on buses, hotspot lending programs, low cost pay-by-the-month internet access, or alternative wireless deployments for student access on school-issued devices in order to reduce the number of unserved and underserved students.
- Encourage communities and regions to develop digital inclusion plans to address multi-generational needs.
- The telecommunications industry, the state's community colleges, local school districts, and economic development and workforce development agencies should engage in conversations about recruitment of technicians as well as developing training and apprenticeship programs.

Jay Anderson commented that it would be helpful for providers to have a map of ag headquarters when they are planning network builds. Local extension service staff were suggested as a possible resource

Federal Funding Updates. Anne Byers gave brief updates on the NITA Broadband Infrastructure Program, American Rescue Act Capital Projects Fund and American Rescue Act Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recover Funds. The Legislature is expected to appropriate federal funding when the Legislature convenes in January.

Other Updates

Anne Byers and Nichole Reiner discussed tentative plans for a broadband conference with Shawnna Silvius from MAPA.

Nichole Reiner is working on an economic development score card which includes broadband availability.

Can Vuran shared that the University of Nebraska was awarded a \$100,000 planning grant from the National Science Foundation to address rural broadband connectivity for agriculture.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m. CT.

Tentative Broadband Funding Timeline

March 4, 2022

Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program

2022 Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program—\$20 million available

April 25 Application Materials Available

July 5 Applications Due July 5

2023 Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program—We don't know the exact amount available yet but potentially/probably much more than the \$20 million available in 2022

Late April Application Materials Available

July 1 Applications Due

2024 Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program—We don't know the exact amount available yet but potentially/probably much more than the \$20 million available in 2022

Late April Application Materials Available

July 1 Applications Due

2025 Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program? —We don't know the exact amount available yet or if there would be a 2025 round

Late April Application Materials Available

July 1 Applications Due

Communities, counties and/or regions that have organized, assessed their current broadband availability and needs, and talked to providers (and/or developed a broadband plan), are more likely to have a provider submit an application.

State Digital Equity Grants

Starting in 2023 or 2024, there will probably be over \$1 million available annually for five years for digital equity grants through a state program. *Communities, counties and/or regions that have completed a digital equity plan will be much better prepared and positioned to apply for these grants.*

Digital Equity Competitive Grants (NTIA)

Starting in 2023 or 2024, there will probably be approximately \$250,000,000 a year for 5 years available for competitive digital equity grants administered by the NTIA. *Communities, counties and/or regions that have completed a digital equity plan will be much better prepared and positioned to apply for these grants.*

Nebraska Universal Service Fund

In addition, the Nebraska Public Service Commission funds broadband projects through the Nebraska Universal Service Fund. The Nebraska Public Service Commission will likely implement a reverse auction of funding to build out broadband in portions of unserved Frontier exchanges this year. The Nebraska Broadband Map (<https://broadbandmap.nebraska.gov>) shows the project areas funded by the NUSF in 2021.

Federal Broadband Funding Programs

	American Rescue Plan Act Broadband Funding for States		Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act/ Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
	State & Local Fiscal Recovery	Capital Projects	Broadband Equity, Access & Deployment Program
Funding available	State of Nebraska: \$1,040,157,440.40 Counties: \$375,736,074 Metropolitan Cities: 176,030,046 Non-entitlement Units: \$111,189,720	U.S.: \$10,000,000,000 Nebraska: \$128,740,178 Each Tribal Government: \$167,504	U.S.: \$42,450,000,000 Nebraska: \$100,000,000+
Administrative/ Planning Funding Available		5% or \$6.4 million	5% Pre-Deployment Planning 2% Administration of grant
Uses of Administrative/ Planning Funding		Costs of administering grant fund, providing technical assistance	Pre-Deployment: Research, data collection, outreach, technical assistance, employee training, broadband office
Areas eligible for broadband funding	Final Rule: Areas with identified need for additional broadband investment; Prioritize locations lacking reliable wireline 100/20 Interim Final Rule: Areas lacking reliable, wireline 25/3; Avoid locations with agreements to build wireline 100/20 by Dec. 2024	Areas without reliable wireline 100/20 (encouraged). If justified, can fund projects in areas with other funding commitments.	Unserved (lacking 25/3) and Underserved (lacking 100/20)
Eligible Uses	Public Health and Economic Impacts Premium Pay Revenue Loss Infrastructure Water and Sewer Broadband	Directly enable work, education and health monitoring & address critical needs Broadband Infrastructure Projects Digital Connectivity Projects Multi-Purpose Community Facility Projects	Unserved and underserved service projects Data collection and broadband mapping Connecting anchor institutions Service to multi-family buildings Broadband Adoption
Build out requirements	100/100 Mbps (unless not practicable) Or 100/20 but scalable if impracticable	100/100 Mbps- (unless impracticable) Fiber preference	100/20 Mbps
Application dates	—	Deadline to Request Funding: December 27, 2021 Deadline to Submit Grant Plan: September 24, 2022	Funding allocated after new FCC map available. Notice of Funding Opportunity issued 180 days after enactment inviting states to submit letter of intent. Letter of intent approved—get 5% for planning; must develop & submit broadband plan Initial proposal approved—get 20%+ Final proposal approved—get remaining \$
Required Completion/ Obligation Dates	Funds obligated by Dec. 31, 2024; Projects complete by Dec. 31, 2026	All funds must be expended by December 31, 2026	Broadband service to all customers 4 years after receipt of the subgrant
Match Requirements	None specified	None specified	25% except in high cost areas
Notes	Treasury encourages recipients to prioritize broadband networks owned, operated or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives	Treasury encourages Recipients to prioritize broadband networks owned, operated or affiliated with local governments, nonprofits, and cooperatives.	States may not exclude cooperatives, nonprofit organizations, public-private partnerships, private companies, public or private utilities, public utility districts, or local governments from eligibility for grant funds.

Digital Inclusion and Middle Mile Grant Programs (Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act)					
	State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program Planning Grants	State Digital Equity Capacity Grants	Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program	Middle Mile Grants	Affordable Connectivity Fund
Funding available	Appropriation: \$60,000,000 Minimum State Award: \$300,000 (.5 percent of total)	Appropriation: \$240,000,000 for fiscal year 2022 \$300,000,000 for fiscal years 2023-2026 Minimum award: \$1,200,000 year 1 \$1,500,000 in fiscal years 2023-2026 \$7.2 million minimum over 5 years 3% Administration	Appropriation: \$250,000,000 a year for first five fiscal years	Appropriation: \$1,000,000,000 for fiscal years 2022 through 2026	Appropriation: \$14 billion (from news reports) Amends the Emergency Broadband Benefit Fund to the Affordable Connectivity Fund. Provides \$30 a month subsidy for broadband
Eligible Uses/Other Requirements	States receiving a planning grant will be required to develop a State Digital Equity Plan one year from the date of the award.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the State Digital Equity Plan and pursue digital inclusion activities consistent with the State Digital Equity Plan Evaluate the efficacy of the digital inclusion efforts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement digital inclusion activities Implement training programs that cover basic, advanced, and applied skills—or other workforce development programs, Make available equipment or digital network technology for broadband services 	Middle-mile infrastructure is any broadband infrastructure that does not connect directly to an end-user. Requires 30% match	Amends the Emergency Broadband Benefit Fund to the Affordable Connectivity Fund Provides \$30 a month subsidy for broadband for individuals with low incomes. Provides a \$100 subsidy for devices (not smartphones).
Timing	Beginning in the first fiscal year after enactment, the NTIA will award planning grants. State must apply no later than 60 days after the NOFA is issued.	Capacity grants will be awarded not later than 2 years after planning grants are awarded States must apply no later than 60 days after the NOFA is issued. States have five years to spend their grant awards.	Grants are to be used for no more than 4 years	NTIA has 6 months to issue a notice of funding opportunity about the new program. Awardees must complete construction within five years.	

Competitive Grant/Loan Program—Federal				
	USDA Reconnect	NTIA Broadband Infrastructure Program	Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program	Connecting Minority Communities Pilot Program
Funding available	U.S.: \$1.15 Billion	U.S. \$288 Million	U.S.: \$980,000,000 NTIA will allocate up to \$500,000 to each of the Federally Recognized Tribes	U.S.: \$268,000,000
Eligible Entities	Corporations, LLCs and LLPs, cooperatives, state or local governments, Indian Tribes	Public-Private Partnerships	Eligible Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian entities	1) a historically Black college or university (HBCU); (2) a Tribal College or University (TCU); (3) a Minority-serving institution (MSI); or (4) a consortium
Areas eligible for broadband funding	Areas lacking 100/20 Areas lacking 25/3 score higher Can be used in RDOF areas. Points awarded for areas with low pop density, economic need, socially vulnerable communities, tribal lands, and non-telco applicants	A census block in which 25/3 Mbps broadband service is not available at one or more households or businesses in the census block. No broadband provider has been selected to receive enforceable support to build out 25/3 broadband	Tribal areas lacking 25/3 Mbps broadband A Tribal government may certify whether an area within its own “Tribal Lands” is “unserved,” in lieu of using a non-tribal coverage/speed data set such as FCC 477 carrier sourced data.	
Eligible Uses	Broadband infrastructure projects	Broadband infrastructure projects	1. Broadband infrastructure deployment 2. Affordable broadband programs	Build the broadband and IT capacity of eligible institutions; Provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, equipment, and support; Provide subsidized broadband access and equipment
Build out requirements	100/100 Mbps	100/20 Mbps	NTIA encourages the submission of project proposals that deploy future-proof infrastructure to the extent feasible, e.g. fiber.	
Application dates	Application Period: Nov. 24, 2021-feb. 22, 2022	Applications due: August 17, 2021	Applications due: Sept. 1, 2021	Applications due: Dec. 1, 2021
Required Completion/Obligation Dates		1 year after receipt of grant funds	1 year after receipt of grant funds	2 years from receipt of grant funds
Match Requirements	25% for grants 50% for loan grants	None Scoring bonus for match of 10% or more	None	None

	0% for tribal areas and socially vulnerable communities			
Notes		No Nebraska applicants		

Quiz: Is Your Community Leveraging Broadband?

1. Are community leaders aware of the importance of information technology and do they work together to address broadband development?
 Yes, community leaders are working together to address broadband development. (2 pts.)
 Some, but not all, community leaders are aware of the importance of information technology. (1 pt.)
 No, community leaders are generally not aware of the importance of broadband technology. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

2. Are government, businesses, and educational entities working together to address broadband development?
 Yes, government, businesses, and educational entities are working together. (2 pts.)
 There is some cooperation among government, businesses, and educational entities. (1 pt.)
 No, government, businesses and educational entities don't work together. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

3. Are local businesses effectively utilizing broadband?
 Yes, nearly all businesses are effectively using broadband. (2 pts.)
 Some businesses are effectively using broadband. (1 pt.)
 No, most businesses are not effectively using broadband. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

4. Are local businesses satisfied with the broadband services currently available?
 Yes, nearly all businesses are satisfied with the broadband services currently available. (2 pts.)
 Some businesses are satisfied with the broadband services currently available. (1 pt.)
 No, most businesses are not satisfied with the broadband services currently available. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

5. Are agricultural producers and agribusinesses effectively utilizing broadband?
 Yes, nearly all ag producers and agribusinesses are effectively using broadband. (2 pts.)
 Some ag producers and agribusinesses are effectively using broadband. (1 pt.)
 No, most ag producers and agribusinesses are not effectively using broadband. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

6. Do local schools use technology to enhance educational opportunities and communication with families? This may include distance education using synchronous interactive video or asynchronous web-based courses, using content management systems to support classroom learning, using web-based systems that let parents check grades or lunch balances, and/or using web-based systems to schedule parent teacher conferences.

- Yes, local schools are effectively using technology. (2 pts.)
 Local schools are using broadband for some applications, but could be doing more. (1 pt.)
 No, local schools are not effectively using broadband. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)
7. Do local hospital and health care providers use technology to improve patient care? This may include using telemedicine for patient consultations with specialists, participating in health information exchange, providing patient access to health information, and utilizing technology to remotely monitor patients.
- Yes, hospitals and health care providers are sharing health information electronically and are using telemedicine and remote technology to improve patient care. (2 pts.)
 Hospitals and health care providers have implemented electronic health records, but most providers are not sharing health information. Telemedicine may also be in use. (1 pt.)
 No, hospitals and health care providers are not using electronic health records or telemedicine. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)
8. Are local governments using technology to communicate with citizens, to provide information, and to provide services?
- Yes, local governments are effectively using technology to communicate and provide services. (2 pts.)
 There is some use of technology by local governments. (1 pt.)
 No, local governments are not effectively using technology to communicate and provide services. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)
9. Does the local library offer access to computers and the Internet and free or affordable training on basic computer and Internet skills?
- Yes, the local library offers access to computers and the Internet and provides training. (2 pts.)
 The local library provides limited access to computers and the Internet and limited training. (1 pt.)
 No, the local library does not provide access to computers and the Internet. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)
10. Is the local library using technology to effectively deliver services and information? This may include offering e-books, online renewals, and access to new technologies like 3D printers. It may also include using social media to publicize library programs.
- Yes, the local library is using technology effectively to deliver service and information. (2 pts.)
 The local library is using some technology to deliver services. (1 pt.)
 No, the local library is not using technology to deliver services and information. (0 pts.)
 Don't Know (0 pts.)

11. Do most households subscribe to broadband service? In 2014, 82% of households in Nebraska subscribed to broadband service.

- Nearly all households (90% or more) subscribe to broadband service. (2 pts.)
- The community is near the state average in households subscribing to broadband service. (1 pt.)
- Broadband subscription in the community is less than the state average. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

12. Is there an adequate IT workforce to meet the demands of local businesses?

- Yes, there is an adequate IT workforce. (2 pts.)
- Some businesses have a hard time recruiting IT workers. (1 pt.)
- A shortage of IT workers is a significant concern. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

13. Are there opportunities for advanced information technology training through local high schools, colleges and universities, or other institutions?

- Yes, there are adequate opportunities for advanced technology training. (2 pts.)
- There are some training opportunities, but more are needed. (1 pt.)
- There are no opportunities for advanced IT training. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

14. Are programs which teach coding to youth offered in local schools or by other organizations?

- Yes, there are adequate opportunities for youth to learn coding. (2 pts.)
- There are some opportunities for youth to learn coding, but more are needed. (1 pt.)
- There are no opportunities for youth to learn coding. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

15. Does your community have a well-designed website which provides information for both prospective and current residents? Is information on a wide range of areas available and up to date, including information on health care, schools, local government, libraries, housing, and economic development?

- Yes, the community website provide is a good source of information. (2 pts.)
- The community website provides some information, but could be improved. (1 pt.)
- The community website provides very little current information. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

16. Does your community/region support entrepreneurship and innovation through business incubation facilities, meet ups for entrepreneurs, coworking facilities, maker spaces/clubs, or other programs for start-ups?

- Yes, several programs support beginning businesses. (2 pts.)
- There are limited programs which supports beginning businesses. (1 pt.)
- There are programs which support beginning businesses. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

17. Is adequate broadband service available to all businesses, organizations, and residents?

- Yes, adequate broadband services are available to all businesses, organizations, and residents. (2 pts.)
- Adequate broadband services are available to nearly all businesses, organizations, and residents. (1 pt.)
- No, adequate broadband service is not available. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

18. Does your community have **affordable** access to broadband service?

- Yes, affordable broadband services are available. (2 pts.)
- The cost of broadband services is a barrier for some businesses and residences. (1 pt.)
- The cost of broadband services is a significant barrier to adoption. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

19. Does your community have adequate mobile broadband service?

- Yes, adequate mobile coverage is available. (2 pts.)
- Adequate mobile coverage is available in most, but not all areas. (1 pt.)
- Mobile coverage is a significant issue. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

20. Does your community pay careful attention to quality of life issues? A high quality of life is essential to attract and retain IT workers and businesses.

- Yes, the community has a great quality of life. (2 pts.)
- The community has a fair quality of life. (1 pt.)
- The community needs to address quality of life issues. (0 pts.)
- Don't Know (0 pts.)

Scoring. Give your community one point for each question answered with a "yes":

0-20 Stage I
21-35 Stage II
36-40 Stage III

This assessment has undergone many revisions. Many of the original assessment questions were drawn from "Building eCommunities: Getting Everyone Connected" by Andrew Michael Cohill, available at <http://www.designnine.com/library/docs/ecommunities.pdf>.