

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Nebraska Information Technology Commission

March 23, 2009 9:30 AM to 12:00 noon CT

Lincoln-Executive: Lincoln Executive Bldg.-Suite 103, 521 S 14th ST.

Columbus: Columbus Public Library-Columbus Rm., 2nd Fl., 2504 14th St.

Kearney: Public Library and Info. Center-2nd Fl., 2020 First Avenue

Scottsbluff: Panhandle Research & Extension Center -High Plains Rm., 4502 Avenue I

Wayne: Wayne State College, Conn Library, Rm. 15, 1111 Main Street

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chris Anderson, City of Central City (Lincoln site)

Rod Armstrong, AIM Institute (Lincoln site)

Jason Barelman, Wayne State College (Wayne site)

Norene Fitzgerald, Economic Development Professional

Darla Heggem, Twin Cities Development, Scottsbluff-Gering (Scottsbluff site)

Lynn Manhart, Central City Public Library (Lincoln site)

Tim O'Brien, Nebraska Department Economic Development

Angie Ramaekers, Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce (Columbus site)

Jerry Vap, Public Service Commission

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mitch Arnold, Preferred Partners, LLC; Scott Bovick, City of Nebraska City; Don Costello, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Linda Fetting, Rural Development Commission; Dean Folkers, Department of Education; John Jordison, Great Plains Communication; Joan Modrell, Department of Labor; Dan Shundoff, Intellicom

Staff and Guests: Anne Byers, Community Information Technology Manager; Steve Henderson, IT Administrator; and Lori Lopez Urdiales, Administrative Assistant

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

Ms. Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. There were seven members present at the time of roll call. A quorum was not present to conduct official business. The meeting proceeded with informational items. The meeting announcement was posted on the NITC Web site on March 9, 2009 and on the Nebraska Public Meeting Calendar on March 17, 2009. The agenda was posted on March 19, 2009.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

Ms. Manhart arrived to the meeting. A quorum was now present.

STIMULUS FUNDING FOR BROADBAND, Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy

[\(Summary of Broadband Programs and Federal Register Notice: Joint Broadband Technology Opportunities Program Request for Information\)](#)

Lt. Governor Rick Sheehy provided information regarding the following grant opportunities published in the Federal Register on March 12th.

Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP): Section 6001 creates the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) which offers competitive grants for broadband deployment efforts from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), Department of

Commerce. There is \$4.35 billion available to fund projects. Grants are to be awarded by the end of FY 2010.

Requirements - grants may be awarded to:

- Acquire equipment, instrumentation, networking capability, hardware and software, digital network technology, and infrastructure for broadband services
- Construct and deploy broadband infrastructure
- Ensure access to broadband service by community anchor institutions
- Facilitate access to broadband service by low-income, unemployed, aged, or vulnerable population to provide educational and employment opportunities
- Construct and deploy broadband facilities that improve public safety broadband communications services

States may be consulted with respect to identifying unserved and underserved areas, and regarding “the allocation of grant funds within that State for projects in or affecting the State.” NTIA will award at least one grant in each state. A 20% match is required. The match may be waived. Eligible entities are states and political subdivisions, nonprofit organizations, and other entities, including broadband service or infrastructure providers.

Broadband Data Improvement Act Funding: NTIA (Department of Commerce) has \$350 million available for grants. The time frame has not been specified.

Requirements - grants may be awarded to:

- Create a statewide broadband availability map to identify unserved areas
- Conduct extensive market research to understand the barriers to broadband adoption
- Create and facilitate local technology planning teams to produce tactical business plans for improved technology use
- Generate collaboration between the public and private sectors to encourage broadband deployment and adoption
- Create programs for improved computer ownership and Internet use in low-adoption areas

A 20% match is required.

USDA – Rural Utilities Service: Loans, grants, and loan guarantees are available for open access broadband infrastructure projects that serve rural areas primarily from the USDA.

There is \$2.5 billion available for Loans, Grants, and Loan Guarantees. The time frame has not been specified. Priority will be given to projects that can commence quickly.

Requirements:

At least 75% of the area to be served shall be in a rural area without sufficient access to broadband service. Priority will be given to open access projects, to projects providing access to the highest number of unserved rural residents, and to current or former USDA borrowers. Priority will also be given to projects that can commence quickly. Projects funded through this program cannot also be funded through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program.

Additional Programs through which Nebraska Entities Could Receive Funding

- **BTOP Funding for Public Computer Center Capacity and Grants for Innovative Programs for Adoption of Broadband Service.** The BTOP funding language provides that “not less than \$200,000,000 shall be available for competitive grants for expanding public computer center capacity, including at community colleges and public libraries; not less than \$250,000,000 shall be available for competitive grants for innovative programs to encourage sustainable adoption of broadband service...”

Lt. Governor Sheehy stated that the funding should be available within the next year and a half.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments. Discussion points and concerns from the members included:

- Definitions will be a key issue as to eligibility.
- Deployment and the last mile - In rural areas, last and middle mile connectivity can be expensive.
- Determination of “equity” for underserved.

- Mapping issues. Mr. Hand stated that the Public Service Commission plans to apply for funding for broadband mapping.
- Competition among providers and proprietors may make public information on infrastructure difficult to acquire.

UPDATE ON DEVELOPING WEBSITES FOR GROWTH PROJECT

Tim O'Brien, Nebraska Department of Economic Development

Mr. O'Brien reported that he has been working with eleven communities to develop more interactive and informative websites that show the quality of life in their communities. A checklist is used to assess community's website. Some of the areas covered are health care, education, employment and recreational opportunities. Jobs and career opportunities have been the reasons why people are leaving Nebraska, especially in the I.T. field. Research shows that if jobs are available, 80% of those who have left would be interested in returning to Nebraska. Webinars have been developed for participants on marketing their communities. The project has been attempting to hire an intern through UNL Career Services but have not been successful. Ms. Byers informed the council that she and Connie Hancock gave a presentation to city clerks about website development. The Office of the CIO will not have funding for future projects but will explore other options for funding options. Perhaps there will be opportunities through the stimulus funding. The council recommended discussing this further in 2-3 months when more information on stimulus funding. The following website has been developed to provide updated information on the project: <http://websitesforgrowth.com/>.

MEMBERSHIP

Anne Byers, Community I.T. Manager

[Matthew Williams](#) has been nominated to serve on the council representing Libraries.

Mr. Vap moved to approve the nomination of Matthew Williams to serve on the council. Mr. Armstrong seconded. Roll call vote: Vap-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, Manhart-Yes, Heggem-Yes, Fitzgerald-Yes, Barelman-Yes, and Anderson-Yes. Results: Yes-8, No-0, Abstain-0. Motion carried.

Terry Lowe, representing Municipalities, has been approached to serve on the council but has not indicated his availability. Council members suggested the following persons to serve as new members: John Caske and Roger Hahn.

Ms. Fitzgerald asked members to consider nominations for the remaining vacant seats on the council: one Libraries representative and two Local Government representatives.

APPROVAL OF MAY 22, 2009 MINUTES*

Ms. Barelman moved to approve the [May 22, 2008 minutes](#) as presented. Mr. Armstrong seconded. Roll call vote: Anderson-Yes, Barelman-Yes, Fitzgerald-Yes, Heggem-Yes, Manhart-Yes, Armstrong-Yes, and Vap-Yes. Results: Yes-8, No-0, Abstain-0. Motion carried.

ACTION PLANS

Ms. Byers informed the council members to being thinking about the current action plans for Community I.T. Planning. Ideas and thoughts from members included:

- Continue communities web site development.
- Research other states for best practices.
- Utilize schools and libraries. Most all communities have a school and library. The state should collaborate with these entities, as well as county offices.
- Broadband and IT can promote entrepreneurship.

- Conduct another Community Needs Assessment Survey. The Community Council could utilize the results to be more proactive and educate and informed communities about technology. Some communities have no I.T. contact to even develop a web site, or a city council to promote one.
- Develop standards for communities or perhaps work with Department of Economic Development to develop standards.
- Utilize the league of municipalities to provide input and get information out to communities about the advantages of I.T. to promote their community. Some aggressive communities in Nebraska have made I.T. a duty of the City Administrator and is evaluated on this annually.
- Community Council should consider how we can market the State of Nebraska.

Mr. Hahn stated that St. Mary's and Emmit are the only Nebraska communities without broadband. Mr. Vap informed the members that 93% of Nebraska communities have broadband capabilities.

NEXT MEETING DATE AND TIME MEETING AND ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Byers will survey the council members regarding their availability for the next meeting.

With no further business, Ms. Fitzgerald adjourned the meeting at 11:11 a.m.

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