Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Community Council
Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2023
8:30 A.M. CT – 10:00 A.M. CT
Nebraska Public Service Commission Hearing Room
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508,

Tentative Agenda

8:30	Roll Call Notice of Posting of Agenda Notice of Nebraska Open Meetings Act Posting **Review September 26, 2022** minutes Public Comment
8:35	Review and Comments on Draft Digital Opportunities Plan.

9:15	**Updates**
	
	    o PSC updates
	
	    o Updates from other members
	
	    o NITC updates

9:40	**Future of the Community Council**
10:00	**Adjourn**

*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 announcement and agenda was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting website on Dec. 1, 2023 .

Join Zoom Meeting

https://zoom.us/j/96471324272
Meeting ID: 964 7132 4272
Passcode: 567934

"Or Dial by your location
• +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)
• +1 719 359 4580 US
• +1 253 205 0468 US

Community Council
Monday, September 26, 2022
9:30 A.M. CT – 11:00 A.M. CT
Nebraska Public Service Commission Hearing Room
1200 N Street, Suite 300
Lincoln, NE 68508,

Minutes

Minutes and record of attendance were not availlable.

News Release

NEBRASKA
Good Life. Great Vision.

CONTACT: Anne Byers — anne.byers@nebraska.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan Draft Available, Public Comment Sessions Scheduled

December 4, 2023 (Lincoln, Neb.) — The Nebraska Information Technology Commission/Office of the CIO is pleased to announce that the draft of the [Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan](#) is now available. Public comments on the plan are being accepted until Tuesday, January 2nd, 2024.

The Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan lays out how Nebraska will grow its economy and improve the lives of Nebraskans by ensuring that State citizens have access to affordable, quality broadband internet, an appropriate device, and the skills to use technologies at home, in school, on the farm or ranch, in business, in healthcare, and the government.

Join one of our [scheduled public comment sessions](#) to learn more about the plan and to share your comments. Comments on the plan may also be [submitted online](#).

Meeting Schedule

General Public Virtual
Tuesday, December 5, 2023
10:00 a.m. CT to 11:00 a.m. CT
Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/96361688686
Meeting ID: 963 6168 8686
Passcode: 424440
Dial by your location
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 444 9171 US
- +1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

General Public-Virtual
Tuesday, December 5, 2023
2:00 p.m. CT to 3:00 p.m. CT
Join Zoom Meeting
https://zoom.us/j/99646592507

Meeting ID: 996 4659 2507
Passcode: 378842
Dial by your location

- +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)
- +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)
- +1 669 444 9171 US

General Public-In Person
Tuesday, December 12, 2023
11:00 a.m. CT to 12:00 p.m. CT
Nebraska Department of Transportation, 1500 Building, 139A Auditorium
1500 Nebraska Parkway, Lincoln, NE

Additional sessions can be scheduled upon request. To request a session, please email Anne Byers at anne.byers@nebraska.gov.

Link URLs

- Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan:
  https://nitc.nebraska.gov/digital_equity/Draftplan/DraftNebDigitalOpportunities.pdf
- Public comment sessions schedule:
  https://nitc.nebraska.gov/digital_equity/Draftplan/PublicCommentSessions.pdf
- Online comment submissions:
  https://nitc.nebraska.gov/community_council/publicFeedback.php

Draft
Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan
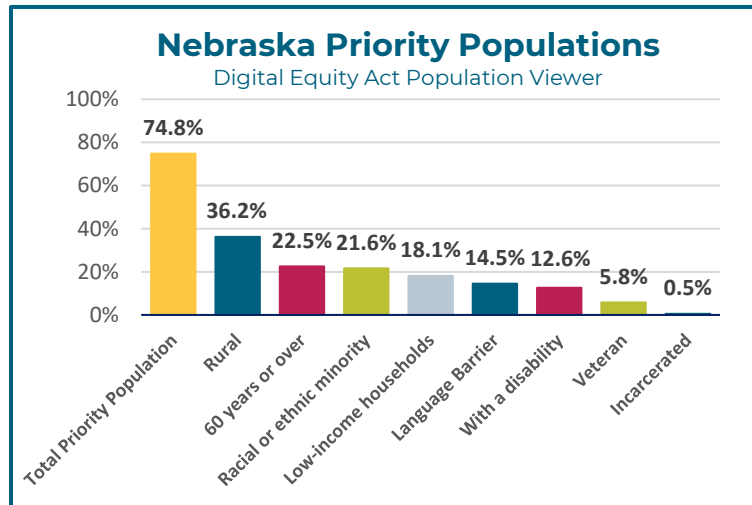
November 30, 2023

1 Executive Summary

Nebraska Digital Opportunities Plan

Nebraska's Digital Opportunities Plan was developed with funding from the NTIA State Digital Equity Planning Grant. States which complete plans and have them approved by the NTIA will be eligible to apply for funding from the State Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program to implement their plans and set up a state digital opportunities grant program. Nebraska's Digital Opportunities Plan is for the majority of Nebraskans and focuses on eight covered populations:

- Rural residents

- Those 60 years or over

- Members of racial or ethnic minorities

- Members of low-income households

- Individuals with language barriers

- Individuals with a disability

- Veterans

- Incarcerated individuals

Nebraska Priority Populations
Digital Equity Act Population Viewer

Total Priority Population: 74.8%
Rural: 36.2%
60 years or over: 22.5%
Racial or ethnic minority: 21.6%
Low-income households: 18.1%
Language Barrier: 14.5%
With a disability: 12.6%
Veteran: 5.8%
Incarcerated: 0.5%

The chart above shows the percent of population of each covered population in Nebraska. Altogether, members of these eight covered populations comprise nearly 75% of Nebraska's population.

Needs Assessment
Broadband Availability

- Broadband availability and affordability were the two issues most frequently identified by participants in listening sessions across Nebraska.
- 86.9% of Nebraska locations and 67.8% of rural Nebraska locations have broadband of at least 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up according to the Nebraska Broadband Office (August 2023).

Broadband Availability for Agriculture

- Broadband is important for agriculture. Farmers and ranchers need upload speeds of 50-100+ Mbps to transfer the immense amount of data generated to the cloud. In the future even greater upload speeds may be required.

Broadband Adoption

- To be fully connected in today's digital economy and society, most individuals need two kinds of connectivity: mobile and fixed connectivity. Nearly one-third of Nebraskans have no internet connectivity or only one kind of connectivity.
- Residents of rural areas and urban areas with high percentages of low-income households have lower rates of internet access at home. Members of covered populations also have lower rates of internet access at home.
- Even though rural areas and urban areas with high percentages of low-income households may differ in demographics and challenges, they express similar needs for broadband access, The ability for businesses to grow in the community
  - The need for older adults to access health care through telehealth
  - The need for broadband for completing homework and accessing online classes
  - The desire for their children to have opportunities to stay in their communities

Recognizing that similarities exist between rural areas and low-income urban areas with high percentages of members of ethnic and racial minorities may aid in building statewide support for digital opportunities initiatives.

Broadband Affordability

- A discount of $30 per month for low-income households is currently being provided through the FCC Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Residents of tribal lands and those in high-cost areas can receive $75 per month in support. Some participating telecommunications providers also offer discounted digital devices. Nearly 89,000 households out of 284,439 eligible households (31%) in Nebraska have enrolled in the program.

Digital Devices

- Approximately 7.2% of Nebraska household have no digital device.

- To be fully connected, most individuals need a mobile and large screen device. Approximately 20% of Nebraska households have no digital devices or only one digital device.

- Residents of rural areas and qualified census tracts have lower rates of device access. Approximately 26.4% of rural Nebraska residents either no device or one type of device v. 16.8% of residents of urban counties.

Digital Skills

- Most Nebraskans are very confident or somewhat confident in their ability to complete tasks using the internet. Respondents to the Nebraska Digital Access and Skills Survey were asked to indicate how confident they were at completing 11 internet tasks. Members of many covered populations were generally less confident in their ability to complete tasks.

Privacy and Security

- Fewer Nebraskans are very confident in their ability to use privacy and security practices. Respondents to the Nebraska Digital Access and Skills Survey were most confident in using strong password with 47% feeling very confident.

Assets

Nebraska has many assets which can be leveraged to increase digital opportunities in the state. A few assets are listed below.

- Do Space is a technology library in Omaha, providing free access to the latest software, devices, and ultra-fast internet. A variety of programs and events are offered at no cost.

- The Center for People in Lincoln's EduTech program prepares students for a career in technology using the EduTech curriculum developed by Google.

- The Digital Express located on Metropolitan Community College's North Omaha campus is open to everyone and offers technology checkout and support, low-cost technology repair, and basic technology programs/training.

- The Nebraska Tech Collaborative, AIM Institute, Nebraska Chamber's Tech Collaborative, and Prairie STEM are working to build Nebraska's technology workforce and tech ecosystem.

- The Nebraska Career Scholarship program provides scholarships to students at the University of Nebraska, Nebraska state colleges, community colleges or private postsecondary institutions pursuing degrees in programs of study leading to high wage, high-skill, and high-demand careers.

- The University of Nebraska system, state colleges, community colleges and private colleges offer a number of technology-related courses and degrees.

- Libraries are key community partners in promoting digital opportunities across the state. Nebraska has 273 public libraries with 78% of libraries having a service population size of 2,499 or less. Some of the smaller libraries have no paid staff. Other small libraries may only have one librarian working 20 hours per week. Lack of staff time to provide assistance and engage in digital equity activities is a significant barrier. While over half of all Nebraska public libraries offer fiber connections for patrons and healthy Wi-Fi connections, approximately 100 libraries currently do not provide fiber connections.

- Nebraska's 145 multi-purpose senior centers can be a resource for older adults. Approximately two-thirds of the state's senior centers provide Wi-Fi access.

- The state's economic development districts are actively involved in regional digital opportunities planning.

Vision

Nebraska will grow its economy and improve the lives of Nebraskans by ensuring that Nebraskans have access to affordable, quality broadband, an appropriate device and the skills to use technologies at home, in school, on the farm or ranch, in businesses, in health care, and in government.

Goals and Strategies

Goal 1: Increase the percent of Nebraska households with affordable, quality broadband service available (in conjunction with BEAD)

Strategy: Utilize funding from BEAD and other funding sources to ensure that broadband is available at all locations in Nebraska

Goal 2: Increase the percent of Nebraska households with a broadband subscription at home
Strategy: Increase awareness and utilization of the Affordable Connectivity Program by developing and strengthening partnerships

Goal 3: Improve internet access in Nebraska libraries and senior centers
Strategy: Increase the number of libraries with fiber connections and network infrastructure upgrades
Strategy: Increase the number of libraries applying for E-Rate
Strategy: Encourage and support libraries in utilizing the E-Rate Special Construction Matching Program
Strategy: Support efforts to improve internet access in Nebraska senior centers

Goal 4: Increase the percent of Nebraska households with an appropriate internet device
Strategy: Review Nebraska Statutes and policies to identify barriers to state entities donating digital devices to refurbishment programs and to make recommendations for addressing these barriers.
Strategy: Encourage and support the development or expansion of programs which refurbish and repair digital devices and/or distribute new devices to members of covered populations

Goal 5: **Improve the technology skills of Nebraskans including the development of a skilled workforce**
Strategy: Encourage and support the development or expansion of programs which provide digital skills training and support to covered populations and support the development of a skilled workforce

Goal 6: Increase the use of telehealth technologies in Nebraska in order to increase access to care in underserved areas and to reduce health disparities
Strategy: Support efforts by Nebraska hospitals, health care providers, associations and other stakeholders to increase the use of telehealth in Nebraska.

Goal 7: Increase the use of precision agriculture technologies in Nebraska
Strategy: Support efforts by the Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska farmers and ranchers and other stakeholders to increase the use of precision agriculture in Nebraska.

Goal 8: Increase awareness and adoption of internet privacy and security practices by local governments in Nebraska
Strategy: Assist local governments in implementing cyber governance and planning, increasing assessment and evaluation capabilities, prioritizing identified cyber risks, and helping to address cyber workforce changes through the Nebraska State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP).

Goal 9: **Increase awareness and adoption of internet privacy and security practices by Nebraskans**
Strategy: Support the development or expansion of privacy and security training programs for Nebraskans.

Goal 10: Improve the online accessibility and inclusivity of public resources and services
Strategy: Increase awareness of accessibility issues with state agencies and local governments including accessibility of PDFs.