

NEBRASKA

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS:
ERIC KAMLER
CHRISTIAN MIRCH
TIM SCHRAM
KEVIN STOCKER
DAN WATERMEIER



February 8, 2023

Chairman Leander Merrick
Omaha Tribe of Nebraska
PO Box 368
100 Main Street
Macy, NE 68039

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

On behalf of the Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission) and working in coordination with the Nebraska Information Technology Commission/Office of the CIO (NITC/OCIO) and the Nebraska Broadband Office (Broadband Office), I am initiating a Tribal Consultation request concerning the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) and Digital Equity Act programs administered by the National Telecommunications Information Administration (NTIA). The BEAD program would use funding allocated to the state by the NTIA through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The primary goal of the BEAD program is to bring affordable broadband access to unserved areas lacking broadband at minimum speed of 25/3 Mbps. The Digital Equity Act programs promote digital equity and inclusion aiming to ensure that all people and communities have the skills, technology, and capacity needed to fully benefit from the digital economy. In accordance with the NTIA's process, the Commission and NITC/OCIO, working with the Nebraska Broadband Office are developing a statewide plan for both digital equity planning and assessing broadband availability and affordability needs and challenges to determine how best to distribute the BEAD funding as well as the development of digital equity projects and implementation of digital equity plans. As part of this process, we are required to file a proposed five-year action plan to address how BEAD funding should be prioritized on or before August 12, 2023.

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Thomas W. Golden, Executive Director
Public Service Commission

P.O. Box 94927
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Lincoln, Nebraska 68509

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As an alternative to an in-person meeting, we would be happy to work with you to discuss these issues in any way that is convenient for you. We can arrange for a virtual meeting, a telephone conversation, or if you would prefer, written suggestions can be submitted to the undersigned at psc.broadband@nebraska.gov.

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Sincerely,



Dan Watermeier, Chair
Nebraska Public Service Commission



Ed Toner
Nebraska Chief Information Officer



Patrick Redmond
Interim Director, Broadband Office

cc: Tom Rolfes, NTIA Broadband Program Specialist-Nebraska (trolfes@ntia.gov)
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February 8, 2023

Chairwoman Candace Schmidt
Ponca Tribe of Nebraska
PO Box 288
Woodbine Street
Niobrara, NE 68760

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

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Sincerely,



Dan Watermeier, Chair
Nebraska Public Service Commission



Ed Toner
Nebraska Chief Information Officer



Patrick Redmond
Interim Director, Broadband Office

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February 8, 2023

Chairman Roger Trudell
Santee Sioux Nation
108 Spirit Lake Avenue West
Niobrara, NE 68760-7219

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

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February 8, 2023

Chairwoman Victoria Kitcheyan
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska
PO Box 687
100 Bluff Street
Winnebago, NE 68071

Dear Honorable Tribal Leader:

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Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska

Tribal Consultation Notes

February 24, 2023

Notes on the agenda/meeting structure:

- Questions included, but not all were posed. Generally asked for feedback about each topic area (infrastructure access, digital equity, and workforce)
- Spent about 30 mins on invocation; welcome/intros; review engagement goals; and discussing KS Broadband program
- Spent about 15 minutes reviewing BEAD, Digital Equity and TCBP
- Remaining time was spent on discussion.
- They used an app (fireflies.ai) to transcribe the meeting (worth exploring?)
- No hand outs provided other than agenda

General Notes:

- Iowa Tribe has GIS analysts; offered to include their GIS data in the Kansas map
- They have a need for both wired and wireless connectivity (expressed it as a safety concern)
- Focus on affordability – there were a lot of concerns about the cliff effect for families
- Large focus on educational training programs
- They are working on a radio station (going through the process with FCC to get an FM license)
 - Motivated by a need to provide public safety and information dissemination in the absence of reliable internet connection (both wired and wireless)
- They are specifically looking for solutions that are vendor agnostic so that they have the right to choose which vendors they do and don't work with
- It is important from sovereignty perspective for them to own the network (focus on last mile)
- They have experienced challenges with ACP awareness
- Digital Equity:
 - Hard to say what their digital equity needs are
 - Elders have difficult time finding and using devices; same is true for children
 - There are both financial and educational/knowledge-based barriers to access
 - They expressed a need for a digital navigator embedded in the tribe that is already associated with the Tribe to improve credibility and trust among Tribal members

Nebraska Specific Feedback:

- Challenges between the Sovereignty of the Iowa Tribe and the reality that their Tribe crosses state lines; expressed a desire for creativity and coordination with projects that cross state lines
 - Three different school districts in their lands (one in Nebraska) – connection to Community Anchor Institution outreach

- Their awareness was on a lot of grants that have focused on the Kansas side...looking to expand infrastructure to Tribal lands and businesses into Nebraska side
- Working on a Smart Farm Initiative on the Nebraska side, but they don't currently have the connectivity to support that

Post meeting Debrief on Ride Home:

- Need to connect with Judy gaiashkibos from the Nebraska Indian Affairs Commission. Need to make an effort to get her involved in Tribal Consultations
- Create and provide Fact Sheets:
 - Current Programs
 - BEAD/DE FAQs
 - Acronym guide/glossary of terms
- Be clear about what it is we are asking of the Tribes and what follow up mechanisms we will use; discuss next steps
- Make sure we set a realistic agenda; KS did not accomplish everything in two hours
 - Is two hours the right amount of time; or
 - Make sure we manage discussion to get through everything identified