

HORIZONS

UPDATES

Though the holidays are right around the corner, the NBO team isn't slowing down. We just wrapped up a statewide circuit – check out some highlights on page 2!

In other news, Initial Proposal Volume 2 (IPV2) has been posted to our website. Sections highlighted in red reflect corrections submitted to NTIA, which are pending approval. While we expect approval soon, we wanted to share the document now given the strong interest and many inquiries. Please visit: <https://broadband.nebraska.gov/publications/>

We're also getting close to finalizing our NBEAD eligible inventory. NTIA tells us we're at the finish line with the challenge process data, and once that's done, we'll be able to publish the Defined Project Areas (DPAs). It's a big step, and one that we're anxious to take.

Our RFA is under legal review now and we are working with Submittable to set up and test the application portal. If all goes as anticipated, we're aiming to open applications in the next month or two. For a breakdown of the timeline, flip to page 2!

Thanks for sticking with us as we keep things moving forward – we're so grateful for your support.

WELCOME JENNIFER THRASHER!

We are excited to welcome Jennifer Thrasher to the NBO team as our new Accountant and Budget Manager!

Jennifer brings nearly 30 years of expertise in Accounting and Business Administration, including 20 years of dedicated service to Nebraska State Government. Her career highlights include a year monitoring grant budgets for the Nebraska Crime Commission and 19 years with Revenue Finance, specializing in statewide Accounts Payable operations.

A proud native of Nebraska, Jennifer grew up in Dawson County and deeply understands the importance of connectivity in rural areas. Her wealth of experience and commitment to supporting Nebraska's communities make her a fantastic addition to our team.

Please join us in welcoming Jennifer to NBO!

On another note, there is a gap on our team as Trevi Harrison, our Outreach Coordinator, departed at the end of October. While we are excited for her as she embarks on her next chapter, we will greatly miss her talents and energy in the office.

Engagement

This fall, our office has prioritized outreach to areas that will be most impacted by the NBEAD program. Our efforts concluded in a statewide circuit of 12 cities, where we shared updates about our work, the anticipated impact of NBEAD, and ways to collaborate to ensure the success of bringing high-speed internet to all Nebraskans.

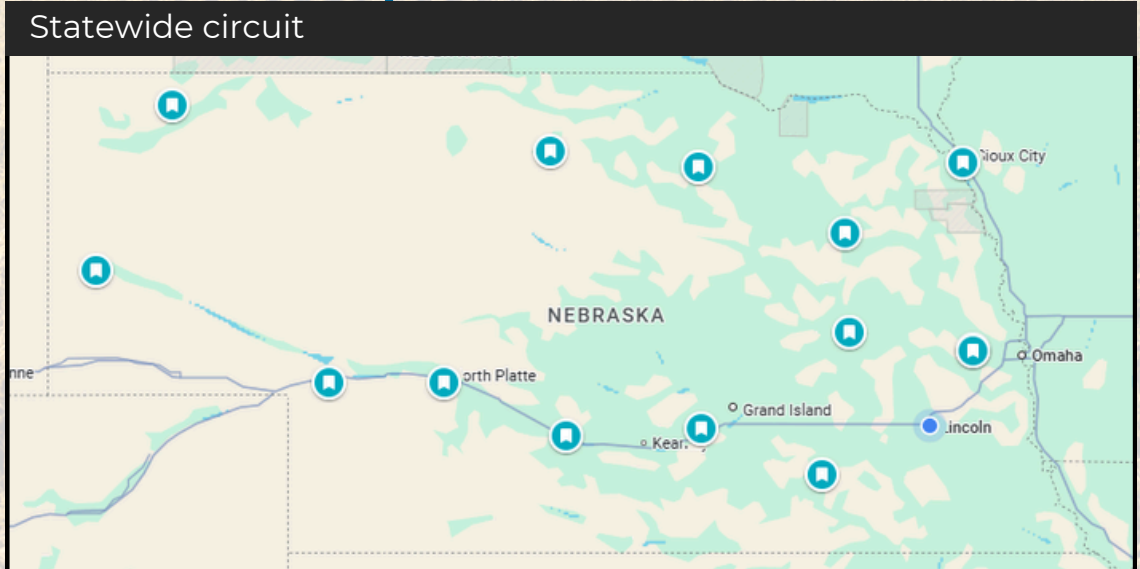
A key focus of these discussions was preparing local officials for the expected increase in right-of-way permitting applications once subgrants are announced. We also highlighted information regarding pole attachments: a significant number of utility poles across Nebraska either need replacement, lack space for additional lines, or cannot structurally support more lines. This critical insight will have substantial implications for project planning and costs.

Beyond the circuit, we've been actively engaging with other partners, including:

- Nebraska Rural Electric Association (NREA)
- Natural Resource Districts
- Omaha Public Power District (OPPD)
- UNL Engineering Club

If we missed your community on our travels and you'd like to learn more about how ROW permitting or pole attachments will impact your area, please reach out to our communications team. We'd be glad to arrange a meeting – either in person or virtually.

Next Steps



Digital Equity Update

We are thrilled to announce that NBO was notified by NTIA on November 21, 2024, that we were awarded \$6.5M in Digital Equity Capacity 2024 (DECAP4) funding. This is the first of three anticipated installments of digital equity capacity funding.

NBO’s plan is to subgrant most of this funding out to communities – where it can do the most good. The 2024 funding will be used to support projects targeting goals 1, 4, and 5 of Nebraska’s Digital Equity (DE) Plan, which is available at <https://broadband.nebraska.gov/digital-equity/>.

Watch our website for a DECAP4 Request for Applications anticipated in early March 2025.

Between now and then, DE staff will be working with a contractor to spread the word about the availability of funds and meeting with potential subgrantees to talk through ideas and possibilities. DE staff also want to offer technical assistance – tips for writing a successful application – while we can do so. If you are interested in such a discussion, either to support your own ideas or those of your community, please contact the DE team at NBO.admin@nebraska.gov.



2024 DECAP4 Funding Goals

- 1 Increase the proportion of Nebraska households with affordable, quality broadband service.
- 4 Improve the technology skills of Nebraskans, including use of privacy and security practices.
- 5 Increase the use of telehealth technologies in Nebraska to increase access to care in underserved areas and to reduce health disparities.

TOWN HALLS

Watch for upcoming Town Halls on our website and follow us on Facebook.

Town Hall recordings are available on our website if you were unable to attend. Attending live provides the opportunity to ask questions to staff directly.

If there is a topic you would like to hear more about or a speaker you would recommend, we welcome your input!

NBO STAFF

- Patrick Haggerty**, Director
- Patrick Redmond**, Deputy Director
- Diane Lowe**, Grants & Budget Director
- Rachel Kilcoin**, Communications Director
- Jennifer Thrasher**, Accounting & Budget Manager
- Joshua Russo**, Grants Manager
- Amber Ross**, Grants Analyst
- Caleb Pruss-Hansen**, Administrative Policy Officer
- Vacant**, Outreach Coordinator

