

SECRETARY'S RECORD, NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska) Application No. NUSF-92.44
Public Service Commission, on)
its own motion, seeking to)
administer the Nebraska)
Universal Service Fund's)
Broadband Program: Application)
to the Nebraska Broadband)
Program received as a RLEC)
Joint Application from:)
Arlington Telephone Company,)
Blair Telephone Company,)
Eastern Nebraska Telephone) GRANTED
Company, Rock County Telephone)
Company, HunTel CableVision,)
Consolidated Telephone Company,)
Consolidated Telco, Inc.,)
Consolidated Telecom, Inc., The)
Curtis Telephone Company,)
Hamilton Telecommunications,)
Nebraska Central Telephone)
Company, Northeast Nebraska)
Telephone Company and Three)
River Telco/Adoption.) Entered: August 30, 2016

APPEARANCES:

For the Commission:

Shana Knutson
300 The Atrium Building
1200 N Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

BY THE COMMISSION:

By Application filed March 28, 2016, Arlington Telephone Company, Blair Telephone Company, Eastern Nebraska Telephone Company, Rock County Telephone Company, HunTel CableVision, Consolidated Telephone Company, Consolidated Telco, Inc., Consolidated Telecom, Inc., The Curtis Telephone Company, Hamilton Telecommunications, Nebraska Central Telephone Company, Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company and Three River Telco jointly seek Nebraska Universal Service Fund support for a broadband adoption grant in the amount of \$102,000. Notice of this application appeared in the Daily Record, Omaha, Nebraska on April 6, 2016. No protests or petitions of formal intervention were filed by any other interested party.

On July 20, 2016, a procedural order was entered determining the schedule for processing adoption applications. Pre-filed

testimony was submitted on August 9, 2016.¹ A hearing was held in Lincoln, Nebraska on August 16, 2016 with appearances as shown above.²

Description of the Proposed Project:

The joint applicants in partnership with local schools, senior centers, libraries, and community centers within their service areas and Consortia Consulting propose to provide in-depth digital literacy training at locations within the joint applicants' service areas.³ The joint applicants' training partner, Consortia Consulting, will utilize a "train-the-trainer" model. Consortia will train individuals from each RLEC and will provide all necessary materials and resources needed for the local provider to offer successful workshops in their communities. By training individuals within each local company and providing them with the requisite skills, tools, and materials, they can be the "go-to" place for training and supporting their community members in the use of the Internet with on-line skills and knowledge. The local provider can repeat its training at multiple locations and at multiple times depending on the relevant needs of those individuals in the communities they serve.

O P I N I O N A N D F I N D I N G S

The Commission set aside \$500,000 for broadband adoption projects to increase broadband adoption and usage in Nebraska. Because it is a pilot program, the Commission found it would address these applications on an ad hoc basis rather than utilizing a specific methodology for choosing projects. Three applications for adoption support have been filed this year. The collective request for all three projects was less than \$500,000. Accordingly, the staff did not make a recommendation.

Mr. Dan Davis, Director of Policy Analysis and Advocacy at Consortia Consulting, testified in support of the application. Consortia will be providing the training to the Joint Applicants' personnel. The training programs are designed to increase knowledge of the Internet and provide a relevant skill set in an easy to

1 The pre-filed Direct Testimony of Mr. Dan Davis, Mr. Brian Thompson, Mr. Andy Jader, Ms. Pam Adams, Mr. Pat Shaw, Mr. Neil Classen, and Ms. Renae Chase was collectively offered and received into evidence as Exhibit No. 9.

2 The hearing was consolidated with other broadband adoption applications for administrative efficiency.

3 The Joint Application was offered and received into the record as Exhibit No. 8.

understand format. By increasing the confidence and digital literacy in current non-adopters, including the elderly and low income populations, Consortia believes the objectives of increased adoption and utilization can be achieved. In addition, Consortia believes providing digital literacy training to the low-income populations could enhance the value of the FCC's Lifeline for broadband program. The total cost was estimated to be \$17,000 per company, or \$102,000 in total.

Pam Adams, Marketing Manager for the American Broadband Companies; Neil Classen, General Manager of Three River Telco; Ranae Chase, Marketing and Customer Support Director for Northeast Nebraska Telephone Company; Andy Jader, Vice President-Administration for Nebraska Central Telephone Company; Pat Shaw, General Manager for Hamilton Telecommunications; and Brian Thompson, Vice President of External Relations for the Consolidated Companies all testified in support of the application. Each witness described how their respective communities would benefit from the digital literacy training. Each witness gave proposed outreach locations and descriptions of how the training would be marketed to non-adopters.

Based upon the application and information provided at the hearing, the Commission finds the application should be granted. The lack of computer or digital literacy skills among non-adopters is one of the key barriers that must be overcome to promote broadband adoption. The Commission finds the proposed project will provide valuable training to the companies and for consumers in their respective communities who are reluctant to embrace broadband services. Accordingly, the Commission approves support for the proposed project up to an amount of **\$102,000.00 or the actual cost** of the project whichever amount is lower. The joint applicants shall submit detailed and accurate invoices and other documentation required by the Department prior to reimbursement for the supported project(s).

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above-captioned grant application be, and it is hereby approved as provided herein.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Applicant shall submit detailed and accurate invoices and other documentation required by the Department prior to reimbursement for the supported project(s).

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that Applicant shall use Nebraska Broadband Program support only for the purposes described in its application and authorized by the Commission.

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ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 30th day of August, 2016.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Gerald F. Up

Crystal Unadvis

Frank E. Landis

//s//Frank E. Landis
//s//Tim Schram

Tim Schram
Chairman

ATTEST:

James L. Puley
Executive Director