

SECRETARY'S RECORD, NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska ) Application No. NUSF-117  
Public Service Commission, on )  
its own motion, to consider )  
implementing a program to ) ORDER OPENING DOCKET AND  
incentivize new fiber ) SEEKING COMMENT  
construction for E-rate )  
eligible entities. )  
) Entered: December 10, 2019

BY THE COMMISSION:

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

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission) initiates this proceeding to consider implementing a program within the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (NUSF) to incentivize new fiber construction for E-rate eligible entities.

On April 17, 2018, the Governor signed LB 994, which created the Rural Broadband Task Force to review issues relating to availability, adoption, and affordability of broadband services in rural areas of Nebraska. In October of this year, the Rural Broadband Task Force released its Findings and Recommendations. Among its recommendations, the task force encouraged the implementation of a program within the NUSF to incentivize new fiber construction to public libraries in order to maximize federal support through the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) E-Rate Special Construction program.

As of the 2018 self-reported data collection, the Nebraska Library Commission reported 43 of 248, or approximately 17%, of the public libraries serving under 10,000 people within their respective Legal Service Area (LSA) reported "Fiber Optics" as their primary internet connection. Of the public libraries with LSAs less than 2,500 people, only 22 of 196 libraries, or approximately 11%, reported "Fiber Optics" as their primary internet connection. This indicates that 89%, or 174 of the 196 public libraries, do not have scalable fiber as their primary internet connection. As a result, the Rural Broadband Task Force has recommended the implementation of an E-Rate Special Construction matching program with funding from the NUSF.

The federal E-Rate program provides support for broadband connections in schools and libraries under two categories of service: Category 1 services to a school or library