

# SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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## BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the	)	Application No. NUSF-99.128
Nebraska Public Service	)	
Commission, on its own	)	
Motion, to administer the	)	
Universal Service Fund High-	)	GRANTED
Cost Program: United	)	
Telephone Company of the	)	
West d/b/a CenturyLink,	)	
Broadband Grant Request.	)	Entered: December 15, 2020

BY THE COMMISSION:

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

By Application filed July 10, 2020, United Telephone Company of the West d/b/a CenturyLink, (CenturyLink or Applicant) seeks high-cost support from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (NUSF). Notice of the application appeared in The Daily Record, Omaha, Nebraska on July 15, 2020, and in the Star Herald, Scottsbluff, Nebraska on July 14, 2020. No protests or interventions were filed; therefore, the Commission processed this application pursuant to its Rule of Modified Procedure.

CenturyLink seeks support in the amount of Five Million Four Hundred Forty-Four Thousand dollars (\$5,444,000) for the construction of a proposed Fiber to the Premises (FTTP) project in the Minatare Nebraska Exchange. CenturyLink is seeking permission to withdraw or modify the following grants which were requested on June 3, 2019 and approved by the Commission on August 27, 2019: Docket Nos. NUSF-99.69, NUSF-99.70, NUSF-99.71 and NUSF-99.72. In addition, CenturyLink requested withdrawal or modification of the grant approved by the Commission on May 1, 2018, in Docket No. NUSF-99.07. Each of these projects were smaller network upgrades and not FTTP projects. CenturyLink had not made the investments in those projects. CenturyLink further stated that this grant would not just replace the five existing grants that were approved for specific neighborhoods; it would extend FTTP to the entire Minatare exchange.

According to CenturyLink this project will provide broadband service at download speeds up to 500 Mbps and upload speeds of 500 Mbps to approximately 1,071 living units in the Minatare Exchange. None of these households can receive broadband service from CenturyLink at sufficient speeds currently.

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CenturyLink estimates that the project will begin construction within 90-180 days after approval from the Commission, weather permitting, and complete the project within 24 months. If the project is approved, CenturyLink will commit to providing broadband service to all households in the project area for a minimum of five years.

The Commission staff conducted an analysis of the census blocks submitted and compared the information against the Connect America Fund Phase II eligible areas. The Commission staff also reviewed the census block information and compared it to its wireline Broadband Mapping data, which uses FCC Form 477 deployment data collected by the FCC biannually. The Commission finds support should be granted in the amount of \$5,444,000 as requested by CenturyLink.

### Requests for Reimbursement:

CenturyLink must first make the investment and then may file a request for reimbursement with the NUSF Department. CenturyLink does not need to complete the construction process prior to seeking reimbursement; rather, it may work with the NUSF Department to develop intervals at which reimbursement can be sought. The NUSF Department will reimburse CenturyLink for capital improvement costs made relative to and as included in the application filed by the company for the projects approved in this Order. Once the investment is made, CenturyLink shall file a request for support, provide the NUSF Department with documentation consistent with Department policy and shall certify to the Department that it had made the described investment for the provision, maintenance and upgrading of facilities and services in the described rural areas.

### Reporting Requirements:

CenturyLink shall file, on an annual basis, consistent with federally designated eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs), the information required by the Commission's Telecommunications Rules pertaining to ETCs and the investment information required by the Commission's Order in Docket NUSF-66. The report should make clear to the Commission that CenturyLink will not request reimbursement for equipment where grant money was also received from another source.

We further remind Applicant that consistent with the Commission's ETC requirements in Title 291 Neb. Admin. Code, Chapter 5, § 009.04A3, the Commission requires all ETCs to report on the number of unfulfilled requests for broadband service on an annual

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basis. Applicant must notify the Commission of any requests for broadband that it was not able to fulfill in the service territory where support is provided. At a minimum, Applicant should identify the following information in its annual ETC report to the Commission: 1) the support area, 2) a description of the measures taken, and 3) the reasons for its inability to provide the requested service. CenturyLink shall file its annual report on or before June 1 of each year.

As a condition of receiving support, ETCs must offer broadband service in the supported areas that meet certain basic performance requirements. Upon completion of the project approved herein, we require Applicant to demonstrate compliance with certain minimum performance requirements. We require Applicant to provide evidence that the service deployed using NUSF support is provided as indicated in the application. Applicant must conduct testing for both speed and latency and provide results from those tests. We will afford Applicant the flexibility to measure performance across deployments in a manner that is best suited to determine the speed and latency of the service provided to end user consumers. However, Applicant must indicate how they measured broadband performance, including whether it was consistent with existing network management systems, ping tests, or other commonly available network measurement tools, a provider-developed self-testing configuration, or results from the FCC's Measuring Broadband in America (MBA) program.<sup>1</sup> Such information should be filed no later than 90 days following completion of the supported project(s).

In addition, an ETC has an obligation to advertise the availability of services that are supported by universal service support mechanism using media of general distribution.<sup>2</sup> To ensure that this obligation is met, the Commission requires Applicant to provide it with a copy of its marketing materials to consumers as well as a description of how the supported service was advertised.

Applicant shall be required to complete the approved projects within two (2) years from the date of this Order unless good cause is shown for a later completion date.

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<sup>1</sup>See *In Re Connect America Fund*, CAF Phase II Price Cap Service Obligation Order, WC Docket No. 10-90, 28 FCC Rcd at 15071, paras. 23-25 (October 31, 2013); see also *Performance Measures Public Notice*, 32 FCC Rcd at 9323, para. 6 (December 6, 2017) and *In re Connect America Fund*, WC Docket No. 10-90, Order, 33 FCC Rcd 6509 (July 6, 2018).

<sup>2</sup>See 47 C.F.R. § 54.201.

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## Broadband Commitments:

The Commission maintains broadband availability data and updates that information on at least an annual basis. As a condition of this support, CenturyLink must report broadband availability to the Commission upon request. CenturyLink must also confirm that it will not seek duplicative support through the FCC's funding mechanisms.

## O R D E R

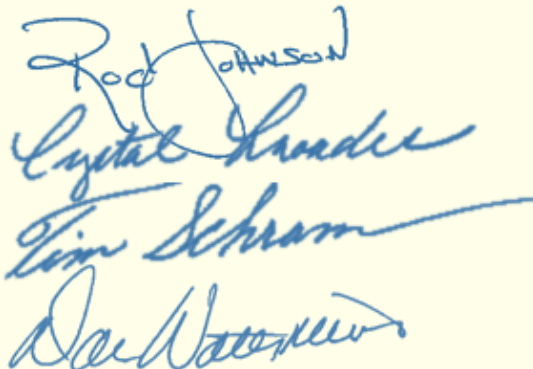
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above-captioned application submitted by CenturyLink be and it is hereby granted as described herein.


IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that CenturyLink shall be subject to all terms and conditions adopted in this Order.

ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 15th day of December, 2020.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:



  
Chair

ATTEST:

  
Executive Director