

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska)	Application No. C-5529
Public Service Commission, on)	
its own motion, to implement)	ORDER SETTING FORTH GRANT
the Precision Agriculture)	PROCESS AND PROCEDURAL
Infrastructure Grant Act.)	SCHEDULE
)	
)	Entered: January 23, 2024

BY THE COMMISSION:

The Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission") opened this docket on its own motion on August 16, 2022, to implement the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-1401 *et seq* (the "Act"). The purposes of PRO-AG, as stated in the Act, are to propel Nebraska agricultural producers to lead the nation in precision agriculture connectivity, sustainability, traceability, and autonomy to accelerate rural economic development, and to provide high-speed Internet service to farm sites in unserved areas of the state.

In the order opening this docket,¹ the Commission sought comment on a number of topics relating to the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program ("PRO-AG") and received comments from interested parties.² Following receipt and review of the comments, and after receiving a \$1 million legislative appropriation to fund the program, the Commission entered an order seeking further comment on September 19, 2023 ("Sept. 19 Order"). Comments were received from one party, Ethos Connected ("Ethos").³ In the Sept. 19 Order, the Commission also set this matter for hearing.⁴

¹ Commission Docket No. BEAD-1, In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, to implement the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Act, Order Opening Docket and Seeking Comment (Aug. 16, 2022) ("August 16 Order").

² Commenters included CTIA – The Wireless Association ("CTIA"); the Nebraska Agriculture Leaders Working Group ("NALWG"); the Nebraska Rural Broadband Alliance ("NRBA"); Paige Wireless; and Reinke Manufacturing, Hamilton Telephone Company, and Nebraska Central Telephone Company ("Reinke and Hamilton"). The NALWG includes the Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Corn Growers Association, Nebraska Dairy Association, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Soybean Growers Association, Nebraska Pork Producers Association, and Nebraska Wheat Growers Association.

³ Formerly known as Paige Wireless.

⁴ The Sept. 19 Order also redocketed this matter, removing the docket number BEAD-1 and assigning it the docket number C-5529.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 2

E V I D E N C E

A hearing in this matter was held on October 26, 2023, in the Commission Hearing Room, Lincoln, Nebraska. Sallie Dietrich appeared on behalf of the Telecommunications and NUSF Department of the Commission ("Department"). Exhibits numbered 1 through 17 were entered into evidence.

Cullen Robbins, Director of the Telecommunications and NUSF Department, testified on behalf of the Department. Mr. Robbins testified that PRO-AG has been allocated approximately \$1 million in funding for each of the next two fiscal years.⁵ Mr. Robbins testified that the funding for the program is required to be divided into two parts: half to provide adequate precision agriculture connectivity ("Connectivity"), and half for precision agriculture applications and devices ("Devices and Technology").⁶ Mr. Robbins proposed that these two subprograms remain separate and independent, with the award of a grant in one subprogram having no impact on whether an applicant receives a grant in the other subprogram.⁷

Mr. Robbins recommended that the Commission not impose any matching funds requirement for PRO-AG grants, but that additional points would be available for applications offering at least a twenty-five percent match.⁸ He further suggested that the Commission should perform a reasonableness review of costs in grant applications.⁹ Mr. Robbins suggested developing preference criteria that prioritize local producers, family-owned farms, or cooperatives to incentivize participation by smaller farming operations.¹⁰ Mr. Robbins recommended that grant applications be reviewed administratively to expedite grant awards.¹¹

⁵ Transcript at 8.

⁶ *Id.* at 8-9.

⁷ *Id.* at 9-10.

⁸ *Id.* at 10.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 3

Mr. Robbins proposed that Connectivity applications be reviewed for technical capability to deliver the promised service.¹² Applicants would need to define the area and locations where this connectivity will be provided, describe rates to be charged, and provide a technical description of the intended technology and use case.¹³ Mr. Robbins testified that the applicants should provide evidence supporting their ability to provide 100/20 Mbps service, and that the Department would confirm that the area to be served does not receive service of at least 25/3 Mbps by use of the FCC Broadband Map.¹⁴ Applicants would be allowed to submit evidence refuting the data on the broadband map.¹⁵ Mr. Robbins suggested that post-deployment speed testing should be similar to that used in other Commission broadband grant programs, but with modifications to accommodate the unique needs of farm sites.¹⁶ Mr. Robbins recommended that speed testing be required for five years after project completion.¹⁷

Mr. Robbins further recommended that for the Devices and Technology subprogram, applicants would be required to submit an executive summary describing the project, a technical section detailing the applicant's expertise, and a business plan identifying costs and proposed returns on investment.¹⁸ Mr. Robbins proposed prioritizing applications which demonstrate better or more efficient use of water resources, applications which serve multiple farm sites, and especially applications which provide continuing or increasing economic or technological benefits to Nebraska over time.¹⁹

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁴ *Id.* This definition of what constitutes "unserved" meets the standard used in the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1302(12).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Transcript at 12. See also Commission Docket No. NUSF-133, In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, to implement standards for the verification of broadband service provider coverage and speed data, Order Setting Speed Test Requirements (Nov. 8, 2022).

¹⁷ Transcript at 14.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 13.

¹⁹ *Id.* at 13-14. For example, an organized farm group were to apply for a specific equipment item, that application would score higher than an individual farm site making the same application. *Id.* at 15-16.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 4

Mr. Robbins also recommended that Devices and Technology projects should be subject to a twelve-month completion deadline, with one six month extension available for good cause.²⁰ Mr. Robbins suggested that the equipment funded by these grants should remain in service for five years after project completion, with the awardee submitting annual reports on the usage and maintenance of grant-funded equipment for a period of five years after completion.²¹ Maintenance costs would be at the awardee's expense.²²

Following Mr. Robbins' testimony, Johnny Ference of Ord, Nebraska, offered testimony. Mr. Ference stated that he is an agronomist who has been focused on applying insecticide in a timely manner in the summer.²³ Mr. Ference stated that he has been working with precision technology and drones, and recommended that every small town or rural community have a drone sprayer.²⁴ Mr. Ference testified that one new drone sprayer with a 10-gallon tank might cost about \$30,000 to \$40,000, whereas a drone with an 18-gallon tank might cost up to \$75,000.²⁵

Mr. Ference testified that a grant to purchase a drone might provide economic benefit by allowing a party to start their own business.²⁶ He also suggested that agricultural producers might be able to save money by performing more targeted spraying.²⁷ Mr. Ference stated that drones might perform for up to ten years but would require maintenance.²⁸ Mr. Ference testified that drones require little connectivity to operate, as little as a 4G cellular network, but that uploading the data requires significant processing power.²⁹

Mr. Ference stated that a twelve-month timeline would require an applicant for drone technology to be proactive, and that some permits required by the Federal Aviation Administration may take approximately eight months to obtain.³⁰ He stated that the

²⁰ *Id.* at 14.

²¹ *Id.*

²² *Id.* at 16.

²³ *Id.* at 37.

²⁴ *Id.* at 32.

²⁵ *Id.* at 33-24.

²⁶ *Id.* at 34-35.

²⁷ *Id.*; *Id.* at 40.

²⁸ *Id.* at 39.

²⁹ *Id.* at 43-44.

³⁰ *Id.* at 49-50.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 5

permitting process might cost up to \$2,000, and liability insurance costs about \$3,500 to \$4,000 per drone.³¹ Mr. Ference testified that drones are easy to use, but recommended that an agronomist would bring additional scientific and technical capability.³²

Following Mr. Ference's testimony, Julie Bushell, CEO of Ethos Connected, offered testimony. Ms. Bushell testified that Ethos specializes in deploying on-farm broadband to live stream video from drones to autonomously drive combines and other machines.³³ Ms. Bushell stated that Ethos has also built a statewide long range wide area ("LoRaWAN") network in Nebraska to facilitate the use of low bandwidth sensors such as water quality and soil moisture probes.³⁴

Ms. Bushell recommended that the Commission require sensors and devices made in the United States, stating that there are several participants in Nebraska making devices.³⁵ She also suggested that speed tests should be performed at the on-farm infrastructure site, such as a livestock facility, a combine, or a center pivot system.³⁶ Ms. Bushell supported treating PRO-AG grants as two separate programs for connectivity and devices.³⁷

Ms. Bushell testified that Ethos' goal would be to reach as many producers as possible, stating that it would be possible to reach several farms with broadband for about \$300,000.³⁸ Ms. Bushell stated that the adoption of precision agriculture could increase farm revenue by about twenty-five percent.³⁹ Ms. Bushell testified that Ethos has performed water monitoring which allows farmers to reduce their ground pumping usage by several inches.⁴⁰ On questioning, Ms. Bushell recommended that devices be subject to a three-year in-service requirement rather than a five-year requirement.⁴¹

³¹ *Id.* at 55-56.

³² *Id.* at 52-53.

³³ *Id.* at 63-64.

³⁴ *Id.* at 64.

³⁵ *Id.* at 65, 83-84.

³⁶ *Id.* at 65-66.

³⁷ *Id.* at 67.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.* at 68.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 70-71.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 84-85.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 6

Following Ms. Bushell's testimony, Hannah Borg, a farmer in Dixon County, testified. Ms. Borg described a cloud-based application in use by her farm, and stated that her farm needed higher quality broadband to progress.⁴² She stated that having better broadband would allow her to consider new tools, such as virtual fences for cows.⁴³ She stated that a nearby internet provider has quoted her \$36,000 to place fiber to her farm.⁴⁴

Following Ms. Borg's testimony, Dennis Fujan of Prague, Nebraska testified. Mr. Fujan recommended the Commission expedite the grant process and seek additional funding for the program.⁴⁵

Following Mr. Fujan's testimony, no further evidence was offered, and the hearing was adjourned.

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

The Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Act ("Act"), Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-1401 - 86-1406, seeks to accelerate rural economic development and provide high-speed Internet service to farm sites in unserved areas of Nebraska. With the passage of the State's biennial budget, the Nebraska Legislature has allocated approximately \$1 million of State General Funds to be used for PRO-AG grants for each fiscal year in the current biennium.⁴⁶ The Commission therefore finds that for the fiscal year 2023-2024, \$906,478 in grant funding will be available for grants. Any funds unused in this fiscal year will be available in fiscal year 2024-2025.

In the Sept. 19 Order in this docket, the Commission set forth several topics and preliminary findings for comment. The Commission hereby makes the findings described below.

⁴² *Id.* at 89.

⁴³ *Id.* at 91.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 92.

⁴⁵ *Id.* at 101.

⁴⁶ The Legislature included \$906,478 towards PRO-AG for fiscal year 2023-2024 and \$901,216 for fiscal year 2024-2025, with the remainder of the \$1 million each year allocated for operations costs. LB 814 (2023), Slip Law at 14. Although Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1403(2) states that the Commission may utilize federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment ("BEAD") funds for the program, those funds are not presently available.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 7

1. Entities Eligible to Receive Grants

In the Sept. 19 Order, the Commission sought comment on and proposed to adopt the following definitions of "agriculture cooperative," "agronomist," and "agricultural producer":

Agricultural Cooperative: A business entity that is cooperatively owned and controlled by agricultural producers, in which members' resources are pooled, and which operates for its members' benefit rather than the benefit of outside investors.

Agronomist: A scientist who specializes in the science of farming, including but not limited to crop production, soil control, or soil management.

Agricultural Producer: An individual or entity directly engaged in the production of agricultural products, including the cultivating, growing, and harvesting of plants and crops, including farming; breeding, raising, feeding, or housing of livestock, including ranching; forestry products; hydroponics; nursery stock; or aquaculture, and whereby 50 percent or greater of their gross income is derived from these products.

Upon review of the comments submitted and testimony offered in this proceeding, the Commission finds that the above definitions should be, and are hereby, adopted. Additionally, the term "provider" shall be defined pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1402 as "a wireless network provider that provides adequate precision agriculture connectivity." The term "adequate precision agriculture connectivity" shall be defined pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1402 as "high-speed Internet service to farm sites supporting various on-farm precision agriculture applications, of at least 100/20 Mbps." Only entities which meet one or more of the definitions set forth in this Order shall be eligible to apply for and receive PRO-AG grant funding.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ See Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1404(1). Connectivity applications must therefore be submitted by a Provider. However, another approved type of applicant as listed above may jointly submit an application for a Connectivity project with a Provider. Applications for Devices and Technology grants may be made by any type of provider meeting the definitions listed above.

2. Priority for Grant Distribution

The Commission proposed in its Sept. 19 Order to review Connectivity applications administratively, and require that Connectivity applications serve only unserved locations. The Commission further proposed to review applications for financial, legal, and technical capability. Upon review of the comments and testimony submitted in this matter, the Commission finds that this proposal should be adopted.

With regard to Devices and Technology applications, the Commission proposed to prioritize projects which include a demonstration of substantial economic benefit to rural Nebraska to be obtained through the project, prioritizing projects which provide continuing or increasing economic and technological benefits over time. In comments and at hearing, however, multiple parties suggested that water management should be prioritized.⁴⁸ The Commission therefore finds that while all projects will be reviewed for their potential to economically benefit Nebraska, those projects which provide water management or other water conservation resources will receive additional scoring.

The Commission further finds that applications should be assigned score values to prioritize their distribution. Applications will therefore be required to include the following elements:

1. A business plan including an executive summary, a description of the applicant, a summary of the project, a description of the business(es) and/or area(s) which would realize benefits from the project, a timeline for project completion, evidence of project sustainability for a minimum of five years, and financial projections, including the expected return on investment (ROI). This should also include the project budget, the grant amount requested and any matching fund commitments by source;
2. Legal capability information demonstrating the applicant's legal capability to effectively carry out the proposed project;
3. A technical summary, describing the technology to be used and/or purchased with grant funding, and the technological capability of the applicant;

⁴⁸ Transcript at 68-69; see also Ex. 11 at 7.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 9

4. A project impact statement, describing the benefits of the project to its local community, to Nebraska, and to the advancement of precision agriculture technology; and
5. A cybersecurity plan, including an attestation that the applicant does not use any equipment prohibited for use by the Federal Communications Commission pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 1601.

Detailed information regarding the scoring of these application materials is attached to this Order in a Scoring Summary, Attachment B, and a Program Guide, Attachment C. Questions regarding these materials should be directed to Commission staff at psc.broadband@nebraska.gov. Following the award of grants, scoring results for each application will be published on the Commission's website.

3. Match Percentage and Grant Amounts

In the Sept. 19 Order, the Commission proposed to not impose a matching funds requirement for PRO-AG grants. However, applications which provide at least a 25% match will receive additional scoring, with higher scores available to applicants providing a higher match percentage. A detailed scoring rubric is attached to this order as Attachment B.

The Commission also sought comment regarding whether a maximum single project funding amount is advisable. Upon review of the comments and testimony submitted, the Commission finds that it will not adopt a maximum single project funding amount at this time. However, the Commission will review projects holistically, and applications should demonstrate that the economic benefit to be obtained throughout Nebraska from the project will exceed the amount of funding requested.

The Commission notes that some projects may require the construction of internet service to be brought to the customer premises as part of a Connectivity project. The Commission finds that the direct costs required to bring internet service to customer premises to support on-farm connectivity should constitute no more than twenty-five percent of the project total costs. While these costs may be allowable if necessary to facilitate projects which otherwise fit the requirements of Connectivity, they should not exceed the stated twenty-five percent cap on costs.

4. Speed Testing

Connectivity projects funded through PRO-AG are required to be completed within twelve months after the date on which the grant is awarded.⁴⁹ These applicants must further submit speed testing results, and shall be allowed a "reasonable time" to correct any deficiencies found by the speed testing.⁵⁰ The Commission set forth a proposal in its Sept. 19 Order regarding speed testing requirements for Connectivity projects. In reviewing the feedback received on this proposal, the Commission finds that it should be adopted, with modification.

Connectivity grantees will be required to submit speed and latency testing results on an annual basis for a period of five years following project completion. Performance testing will focus on key operational locations that would represent typical usage scenarios. Applicants must submit a list of key operational locations for proposed post-completion speed testing. Each location should be briefly explained, highlighting its significance, and specifying how speed testing will confirm compliance with required performance standards. Upon project completion, the wireless network provider must test those locations and demonstrate that adequate connectivity is being provided. The same testing must be performed annually for a period of five years thereafter.

Specific requirements for speed testing for each project will be issued on a case-by-case basis, and are set out in detail in the Program Guide attached to this order as Attachment C. However, some general principles will apply for speed and latency testing across all projects. Speed testing must be conducted for one week (7 calendar days) for each project, and must be performed during daylight hours for at least a four hour window each day. Speed testing must include a minimum of one download test and one upload test per location, per hour during the test window. Carriers must conduct one latency test per minute at each selected test location for the duration of the testing period. If the speed testing shows deficiencies, the applicant must provide the test results along with a written proposal to remedy the deficiencies within the next sixty days, including the date upon which speed testing will be conducted a second time. If the deficiencies are not corrected, the provider will be subject to penalties as described below.

⁴⁹ One extension of up to six months is available. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1405(1).

⁵⁰ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1405(2).

5. Affordability and Maintenance of Projects; Annual Reports

The Commission also sought input as to how it might ensure connectivity projects funded by PRO-AG are affordable for Nebraskans. The Commission proposed requiring the submission of a business plan demonstrating the value proposition of the application, as well as a requiring Connectivity awardees to maintain the rates stated in their application for at least five years after project completion.

Upon review of the evidence submitted to date, the Commission finds that applicants for both Connectivity and Devices and Technology grants should be required to submit a business plan. The business plan should demonstrate the economical and agricultural value of the project. Connectivity applicants must demonstrate that the rates they offer in the project area will be comparable to those offered elsewhere for the same type of service.⁵¹ Applicants may score additional points by demonstrating that the rates to be offered in the project area are affordable in the long term for producers who would benefit from the service.

The Commission additionally finds that Devices and Technology grant recipients should be required to submit annual reports regarding the usage and maintenance of grant-funded equipment and benefits to Nebraska obtained by the project. These reports should be submitted on an annual basis, beginning on July 1, 2025, for a period of five years.

6. Completion of Grant Projects

In the Sept. 19 Order, the Commission proposed that both Connectivity and Devices and Technology grants should be subject to a twelve-month completion deadline, based upon the date the award is issued. Upon review of the comments and testimony offered, the Commission finds that this requirement is reasonable and should be adopted. A project will be considered complete when the project can fulfill the primary operations that it was designed to perform. Extensions of the twelve-month deadline may be available upon a showing of good cause. All requests for extension should be filed by email to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov as soon as the awardee reasonably foresees the need for an extension. Failure to complete the project within twelve months, without a showing of good cause,

⁵¹ The rates offered are not required to be static over the five-year period described in the business plan. However, the applicants are asked to commit to the rates listed in the business plan for the five-year reporting period.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 12

may result in penalties. Any grant recipient which fails to complete an awarded project must repay ten percent of the grant for each month that the project is not complete after the project deadline.

7. Program Schedule and Application Deadline

The Commission finds that PRO-AG grant cycles should run on an annual basis, with awards to be made on or before June 30 of each year. For the 2024 program year, applications may be filed on or before February 23, 2024. Grant awards will be released on or prior to April 30, 2024. Application materials and scoring results will be posted to the Commission website.

The Commission hereby adopts the procedural schedule for the 2024 PRO-AG grant cycle attached hereto as Attachment A. All deadlines listed are at 5:00 p.m. Central Time. All deadlines will be strictly enforced. Applications and other materials should be filed by email with service to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov. Applications should be complete at the time of filing. While the Commission reserves the right to seek clarification from applicants regarding their application, any applications missing required attachments or other required information will not be eligible for funding. The Commission encourages interested parties to engage with Commission staff with any questions regarding the program materials or application process.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above findings be adopted and the 2024 Nebraska Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program shall be conducted in accordance with said findings.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that that the procedural schedule and filing deadlines described above and attached hereto as Attachment A shall be adopted. All deadlines shall be at 5:00 p.m. Central Time unless otherwise noted, and will be strictly enforced.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the scoring rubric and program guide attached hereto as Attachments B and C, respectively, shall be adopted and shall constitute the criteria by which precision agriculture infrastructure grant applications are reviewed and scored.

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Page 13

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that that the application form attached hereto as Attachment D shall be released and shall be the form upon which applications shall be submitted for grants under this program.

IT IS FINALLY ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that applications for grants awarded during the 2024 Nebraska Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program shall be filed with the Commission by email to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov no later than 5:00 p.m. Central Time on February 23, 2024.

ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska this 23rd day of January, 2024.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION


COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Eric M. Hamler








Chair

ATTEST:


Thomas W. Golden
Executive Director

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Application No. C-5529

Attachment A: Procedural Schedule

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Application period begins	January 23, 2024
Deadline to submit applications	February 23, 2024
Grant awards released	On or before April 30, 2024
State of Nebraska W-9 and ACH enrollment form due from successful applicants	One week following grant awards
Project completion deadline	One year following grant awards
Annual Report #1 due	July 1, 2025
Annual Report #2 due	July 1, 2026
Annual Report #3 due	July 1, 2027
Annual Report #4 due	July 3, 2028
Annual Report #5 due	July 2, 2029

Precision Agriculture Grant (PRO-AG) Scoring and Weighting Sheet

Criteria	Points Available	Y/N	Points	Reference Sheet Lookup
Eligible Entity/Project - <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	A
Application Completeness – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	B
Business Plan – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	C
Business Plan Points	0-25			
Legal Capability – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	D
Legal Capability Points	0-10			
Technical Capability - <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	E
Technical Capability Points	0-10			
ETC Certification (<i>Connectivity only</i>)	0-5			F
Match Percentage	0-10			G
Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit	0-10			H
Continued or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts	0-10			I
Water Conservation Focus	0-20			J
Connectivity Subprogram TOTAL	100			
Devices and Technology Subprogram TOTAL	95			

PRO-AG Scoring Criteria Reference Sheet

Introduction: The scoring rubric assesses grant applications for the Precision Agriculture Grant (PRO-AG), evaluating both gating criteria for eligibility and scoring criteria for project merit and impact.

A – Eligible Entity/Project

Gating Criteria (Yes/No):

- Connectivity Subprogram applicant is a wireless network provider; Devices and Technology Subprogram applicant is an agricultural cooperative, agronomist, or agricultural producer.
- The project proposed serves Nebraska farm sites.
- Application includes contiguous project area.
- Applicant adheres to all eligibility requirements outlined in the Precision Agriculture Connectivity Infrastructure Grant Act & Commission Order C-5529.

Scoring Criteria: N/A

B – Application Completeness

Gating Criteria (Yes/No):

- Application is submitted on prescribed forms provided by the Public Service Commission.
- All required sections, attachments, and documentation are completed and included.

Scoring Criteria: N/A

C – Business Plan

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Submission of a comprehensive business plan is mandatory for evaluation, including all required elements (projection, long-term maintenance plans, and financial statements for non-ETC applicants). Submission of a comprehensive budget breakdown and a cost-benefit analysis is mandatory for evaluation. If the applicant is an ETC, has the applicant demonstrated overall financial viability based on financial statements recently submitted to the Commission?

Scoring Criteria (up to 25 points):

- Executive Summary (up to 2 points):
 - 2 Points: Comprehensive and well-articulated summary covering farm/business history, mission, goals, and specific precision agriculture connectivity or technology objectives.
 - 1 Point: Limited information provided in the executive summary or lacking depth or specificity.
- Project Proposal (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: Clear and detailed description of the project, with a comprehensive explanation of how connectivity or devices and technology will enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability.
 - 2 Points: Adequate project description and explanation with significant tangible outcomes identified as related to productivity, efficiency, and sustainability benefits. Some aspects may lack specifics.
 - 1 Point: Little to no consideration of the precision agriculture project or its potential impacts.
- Timeline (up to 4 points):
 - 4 Points: Well-structured timeline for deployment, including clear milestones and indications of readiness for immediate action upon grant award. Feasibility of project implementation within the proposed timeline. Clear and realistic milestones for project completion. Includes adequate measures to address potential challenges.

- 3 Points: Adequate timeline provided with milestones, but some details or indications of readiness may be lacking.
 - 1 Point: Limited detail in the timeline, with minimal clarity on milestones or readiness.
- d. Sustainability (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Strong evidence demonstrating project sustainability for a minimum of five years, including clear strategies and considerations for long-term success.
 - 2 Points: Adequate evidence of sustainability, though some areas may lack depth or specificity.
 - 1 Point: Limited evidence of project sustainability for a minimum of five years.
- e. Project Budget (up to 5 points)
- 5 Points: Clear and detailed funding breakdown for the project provided. The proposed budget reflects a comprehensive breakdown of cost elements with the total allowable costs transparently presented. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds from various sources are explicitly detailed. The proposed project is cost-effective, with a reasonable budget in relation to expected outcomes and reflects efficient allocation of funds to achieve program goals.
 - 3 Points: Adequate funding breakdown with most cost elements clearly outlined with total allowable costs presented. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds are provided with reasonable clarity. The proposed budget is moderately reasonable and cost-effective.
 - 0 Points: Funding breakdown with minimal detail on cost elements and the presentation of total allowable costs lacks clarity. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds are outlined with limited detail.
- f. Financial Projections (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Clear and detailed financial projections provided which includes comprehensive breakdowns of income and expenses; demonstrates accuracy and realism in estimating income and expenses; includes financial health indicators (e.g., net cash flow, profitability ratios) that provide insights into the overall financial viability of the proposed project
 - 2 Points: Adequate clarity and detail in the projections. Some sections may lack depth or coverage, but overall, the document offers a reasonable understanding of income and expenses.
 - 0 Points: Little to no clarity and detail in the projections. The document lacks transparency, making it challenging to understand the financial forecast. Lack of information on key financial metrics diminishes the ability to assess the project's financial viability.
- g. Cost-Benefit Analysis (up to 5 points):
- 5 Points: Comprehensive cost-benefit analysis quantifying expected financial returns, both short-term and long-term. The analysis provides a clear understanding of the financial impact of the investment.
 - 2 Points: Adequate cost-benefit analysis with clear projections of short-term and long-term financial returns. The analysis provides a reasonable understanding of the investment's financial impact.
 - 0 Points: Little to no cost-benefit analysis provided. Minimal information on short-term and long-term financial returns, lacking clarity on the investment's financial impact.

D – Legal Capability

1. Connectivity Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Applicant submitted contact information for their legal representation and includes a licensed attorney in good standing to practice law in Nebraska, or an attorney admitted to practice pro hac vice in Nebraska. Applicant submitted a letter of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application that expresses the owner's consent for the connectivity project and their understanding of the proposed on-farm connectivity services.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points): If the required information is included, applicant will be awarded up to 10 points, Deductions to points will be made as follows:

- Applicant fails to provide a comprehensive description of risk factors and legal challenges that are anticipated, such as local zoning, permitting, access to rights-of-way, etc., along with a well-defined plan for mitigation. (-2 points).

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Applicant submitted information regarding pertinent qualifications and certifications essential for the proposed devices/technology, along with a statement specifying whether the applicant currently holds the necessary qualifications and certifications.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Qualifications and Certifications (up to 5 points):
 - 5 Points: Detailed information provided, covering all pertinent qualifications and certifications for the proposed devices/technology.
 - 3 Points: Adequate outline, but some qualifications or certifications are not fully detailed or explained.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete outline of qualifications and certifications.
- b. Current Status and Acquisition Plan (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: Includes a clear statement on the status of qualifications and certifications, with a well-defined plan and timelines for acquisition if not currently secured.
 - 1 Point: Some clarity on the status, but the plan for acquisition lacks detail or specific timelines.
 - 0 Points: Inadequate or missing information on the status and acquisition plan.
- c. Strategies for Sustaining Qualifications (up to 2 points):
 - 2 Points: Detailed strategies and commitments outlined for sustaining qualifications and certifications over the five-year post-deployment period.
 - 0 Points: Inadequate or missing information on strategies for sustaining qualifications.

E – Technical Capability

1. Connectivity Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Demonstration of the applicant's technical capability and experience in providing precision agriculture on-farm connectivity solutions; evidence supporting their ability to provide 100/20 Mbps service (could include an attestation from a qualified engineer specific to the proposed project confirming the technical feasibility of meeting the speed requirements).

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Innovation and technology (up to 4 points):
 - 4 points: Prevalent utilization of the latest technologies (ex. 5G, LoRa, LoRaWAN, Wi-Fi 6, Wi-Fi 6E, Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 5 or better, etc.) for optimal performance.
 - 3 points: Prevalent utilization of advanced communication protocols (ex. LTE, Sigfox, Wi-Fi 5, Zigbee 3.0, NB-IoT).
 - 2 points: Prevalent utilization of standard communication technologies (ex. 3G, Satellite, Wi-Fi 4, etc) for satisfactory performance.
 - 0 points: Reliance on outdated or limited communication technologies (ex. older Wi-Fi standards, older Bluetooth standards, older Zigbee standards, etc).
- b. Maintenance and Scalability Evaluation (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: The proposal presents a robust plan for network expansion, ensuring that adding more devices will not compromise overall network speed or performance.

- 2 Points: Mentions the need for network expansion and need for increased device density support but lacks specificity and a clear strategy on preserving performance.
 - 1 Points: Limited acknowledgment and vague plans for both expansion and increased device density.
 - 0 Point: Fails to address scalability adequately for both network and device density.
- c. Low-latency networks (up to 3 points):
- 3 points: Low-latency networks with minimal delays (less than 20 ms), ideal for real-time applications.
 - 2 points: Moderate-latency networks (20-50 ms), suitable for most precision agriculture needs.
 - 1 points: Noticeable latency (50-100 ms), may impact real-time data handoff.
 - 0 points: High latency (above 100 ms), potentially hindering timely data transfer.

2. Devices and Technology Applicants:

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Demonstration of the applicant's ability and experience in precision agriculture devices and technology solutions, specifically relevant to the devices/technology included in the application. In cases where the applicant lacks direct experience, a clear explanation is required on how they plan to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to operate the equipment effectively.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Applicant's Expertise (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Clear overview of the applicant's experience and expertise in precision agriculture devices and technology solutions. Detailed information on past successful projects or initiatives related to precision agriculture or similar technologies.
 - 2 Points: Adequate information on the applicant's expertise, with some details on past successful projects. Moderate evidence of experience in precision agriculture devices and technology.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information on the applicant's expertise. Lack of clarity on past successful projects or experience in precision agriculture devices and technology.
- b. Program Details (up to 2 points):
- 2 Points: Comprehensive details provided about the proposed program, including precision agriculture devices and technology specifications and technical requirements. Clear alignment with the goals of the project demonstrated.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information about the proposed program, specifications, and technical requirements. Lack of clarity on how chosen technologies align with project goals.
- c. Expected Useful Life (up to 2 points):
- 2 Points: Clear presentation of the expected useful life of devices/technology, along with a well-defined statement regarding components that may require more frequent repair or replacement.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information on the expected useful life of devices/technology. Lack of clarity on components that may require repair or replacement.
- b. Maintenance Plan (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Comprehensive explanation of how devices/technology funded with PRO-AG grant funds will be maintained throughout the useful life or for a minimum of five years following project completion.
 - 2 Points: Adequate information on the maintenance plan for a minimum of five years following project completion. Moderate clarity on how devices/technology will be sustained long term or over the useful life.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete information on how the project will be maintained for a minimum of five years following project completion. Lack of clarity on how devices/technology will be sustained long term or over the useful life.

Scoring Criteria (Up to 5 points):

- 5 points: The applicant/carrier partner is an ETC at the time of application.
- 3 points: An ETC application is pending for the PRO-AG applicant.
- 1 point: The applicant/carrier partner commits to filing for ETC Certification within 30 days of the application deadline, 1 point will be awarded.
- 0 points: The applicant does not fall under an ETC certification category as listed above.

G – Match Percentage

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points): Points will be awarded for match commitments of at least 25%, with a maximum of 10 points achievable. Points will be assigned as follows:

Match Percent	Points
25% match:	2 points
30% match:	4 points
35% match:	6 points
40% match	8 points
45% or greater match	10 points

H - Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points available):

- 10 Points: The proposal showcases an exceptional understanding of and commitment to generating a significant economic impact on rural Nebraska. It provides a thorough and well-supported analysis of tangible and quantifiable benefits, emphasizing job creation, income generation, and overall economic development. Project costs are not excessive, and the economic benefit to be gained exceeds the cost of the grant funding. The economic model presented is robust, demonstrating a clear strategy for sustained growth and progress. The proposal outlines innovative approaches that have the potential to significantly contribute to the economic vibrancy of the region. Additional consideration may be provided for applications which serve multiple farm sites, or that involve participation of small producers, family-owned farms, or cooperatives.
- 5 Points: The proposal exhibits a moderate understanding of the economic benefits it can bring, and tangible outcomes are identified. While some consideration is given to aspects such as job creation, income generation, and economic development, the depth and clarity of the proposal are limited.
- 0 Points: The proposal demonstrates little to no consideration of substantial economic benefits. The economic impact is not effectively addressed or is entirely absent from the proposal.

I – Continued or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points available):

- 10 Points: Project proposal reflects comprehensive and sustainable impacts. The proposal demonstrates a profound understanding of both immediate and sustained economic and technological impacts. It clearly outlines robust strategies for continuous growth over time, ensuring a lasting contribution. The proposal showcases innovative approaches that contribute significantly to economic and technological advancement for sustainable impact. Additional

consideration may be provided for applications which serve multiple farm sites, or that involve participation of small producers, family-owned farms, or cooperatives.

- 5 Points: The proposal demonstrates moderate understanding of continuing impacts and their importance; it identifies tangible outcomes and presents reasonable strategies for achieving economic and technological advancements over time. However, details are missing regarding specific long-term impacts.
- 0 Points: The proposal demonstrates little to no focus on sustaining economic and technological benefits. It lacks clear articulation of strategies for continued growth over time or fails to address the necessity of ongoing contributions to sustained progress.

J – Water Conservation Focus

Scoring Criteria (Up to 20 points available):

- 20 Points: Proposal places a significant emphasis on water conservation, with comprehensive strategies and technologies to address water management, especially crucial in light of continuing drought conditions. Examples include but are not limited to: well monitoring, crop water usage data collection, adoption of water and energy-efficient irrigation technologies and practices, research in the areas of water & energy efficiency, remote sensing, and irrigation water management.
- 10 Points: Moderate emphasis on water conservation, with identified measures for better water management.
- 5 Points: Limited focus on water conservation, with minimal strategies for addressing water-related challenges.
- 0 Points: Little to no emphasis on water conservation.

Scoring and Tiebreaker

Applications will be prioritized based on overall scores, with higher scores indicating a higher priority project.

If applications receive the same score requiring a tiebreaker, the application with the lower amount of PRO-AG grant dollars requested, would be given preference.



Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Program Guide Program Year 2024

Table of Contents

1	Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant: General Information	2
1.1	Program Overview	2
1.2	Program Components	2
1.3	Funding Availability	2
1.4	Connectivity Subprogram	2
1.5	Devices and Technology Subprogram	2
1.6	Definitions	3
1.7	Eligible Applicants	3
1.8	Eligible Project Areas	3
1.9	Eligible Program Costs	4
1.10	Matching Fund Requirement	4
2	Application Process	4
2.1	Program Schedule	4
2.2	Filing Window	4
2.3	Preparing an Application	4
2.3.1	Application Section I - Applicant Details	5
2.3.2	Application Section II – Project Details	6
2.3.3	Preparing Application Attachments	7
2.3.4	Attachment Requirements	7
2.4	Submitting an Application:	11
2.5	Protecting Confidential Information in an Application:	11
2.6	Administrative Review	11
3	Selection Criteria	11
3.1	Priority for Grant Distribution	11
3.2	Grant Program Areas	12
3.2.1	Connectivity Subprogram Scoring:	12
3.2.2	Devices and Technology Subprogram Scoring:	12
3.2.3	Scoring and Tiebreaker	12
4	Grant Award Notification	12
5	Distribution of Support Details	12
6	Post-Award Requirements	13
6.1	Completion Deadlines	13
7	Post-Deployment Requirements	13
7.1	Speed and Latency Testing – <i>Connectivity Subprogram only</i>	13
7.2	Annual Report Requirement	14
8	Other Conditions and Requirements	14
9	Failure to Complete an Awarded Project	15
9.1	Post-Award Repayment	15
10	Contact Information	15

1 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant: General Information

1.1 Program Overview

The Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) is a State-funded program created pursuant to the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Act (the Act), Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-1401 – 1406, to propel Nebraska agricultural producers to lead the nation in precision agriculture connectivity, sustainability, traceability, and autonomy to accelerate rural economic development, and to provide high-speed Internet service to farm site in unserved areas of the state. The Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission) has the authority to grant awards to assist applicants with eligible costs for qualifying projects.

1.2 Program Components

The program is divided into two distinct subprograms: (1) Connectivity Subprogram and (2) Devices and Technology Subprogram. Each subprogram is designed to fulfill a specific purpose, and applicants can submit multiple project proposals. However, applicants must apply separately for each subprogram. It is important to note that each application will be assessed individually, and there will be no priority given to applicants who choose to apply for grants in both subprograms. Each application will be considered on its own merits within the subprogram in which it was filed.

1.3 Funding Availability

The Nebraska Legislature has allocated approximately \$1 million of State General Funds to be used for PRO-AG grants for each fiscal year in the current biennium. The available funding for the 2023-2024 fiscal year (2024 program year) of \$906,478 will be divided into two categories:

1. Connectivity Subprogram: The Commission shall award up to 50 percent of the available grant funds, or \$453,239 for projects within the Connectivity Subprogram.
2. Devices and Technology Subprogram: The Commission shall award up to 50 percent of available funds, or \$453,239 for projects within the Devices and Technology Subprogram.

1.4 Connectivity Subprogram

Grants within the Connectivity Subprogram shall be used to provide adequate precision agriculture connectivity to on-farm structures and devices, including, but not limited to, tractors, combines, irrigation systems, livestock facilities, and farm offices.

NOTE: Adequate precision agriculture connectivity means a download speed of at least one hundred megabits per second and an upload speed of at least twenty megabits per second (100/20 Mbps), or greater.

1.5 Devices and Technology Subprogram

Grants within the Devices and Technology Subprogram shall be used to provide:

1. On-farm traceability solutions that satisfy food supply stakeholder demand, including blockchain.
2. Products that improve soil health, water management tools and sensors that facilitate judicious use of water resources, and products that promote the use of water efficiency seed technologies that lower agriculture's water, carbon, and nitrate footprint.
3. Products that use autonomous solutions in agricultural machinery, including but not limited to, grain carts, spreaders, precision drone scouting, and scouting robots.

1.6 Definitions

For the purpose of this program:

1. Adequate precision agriculture connectivity means high-speed Internet service to farm sites supporting various on-farm precision agriculture applications, with a download speed of at least one hundred megabits per second and an upload speed of at least twenty megabits per second (100/20 Mbps).
2. Farm site means the portion of land contiguous to land actively devoted to agriculture which includes improvements that are agricultural or horticultural in nature, including any uninhabitable or unimproved farm home site.
3. Farm home site means land contiguous to a farm site which includes an inhabitable residence and improvements used for residential purposes and which is located outside of urban areas or outside a platted and zoned subdivision.
4. Unserved area means a geographical area of the state which lacks broadband Internet service providing access to the Internet at speeds of at least twenty-five megabits per second for downloading and three megabits per second for uploading (25/3 Mbps).
5. Commission means the Nebraska Public Service Commission.
6. Program means the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program created in Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1401 to 86-1406 and Commission order C-5529.
7. Provider means a wireless network provider that provides adequate precision agriculture connectivity.
8. Agricultural Cooperatives means a business entity that is cooperatively owned and controlled by agricultural producers, in which members' resources are pooled, and which operates for its members' benefit rather than the benefit of outside investors.
9. Agronomist means a scientist who specialized in the science of farming, including but not limited to crop production, soil control, or soil management.
10. Agricultural Producer means an individual or entity directly engaged in the production of agricultural products, including the cultivating, growing, and harvesting of plants and crops, including farming; breeding, raising, feeding, or housing of livestock, including ranching; forestry products; hydroponics; nursery stock; or aquaculture, and whereby 50 percent or greater of their gross income is derived from these products.
11. Eligible Land means cropland, grassland, rangeland, pastureland, farm sites, and other agricultural land used for active production in the state of Nebraska.

1.7 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants for this program include:

1. Providers
2. Agricultural Cooperatives
3. Agronomist
4. Agricultural Producer

Please note that applications under the Connectivity Subprogram are permissible from Agricultural Cooperatives, Agronomists, or Agricultural Producers only if submitted in partnership with a Provider as defined in section [1.6](#).

1.8 Eligible Project Areas

The Act stipulates that funding should support connectivity sufficient for precision agriculture activities to farm sites in unserved areas of the state. For the purpose of the grant program, farm sites mean the portion of land contiguous to land actively devoted to agriculture which includes improvements that are agricultural or horticultural in nature, including any uninhabitable or unimproved farm home site (Nebraska Rev. Statute §77-1359). Unserved area means a geographical area of the state which lacks broadband Internet service providing access to the Internet at speeds of at least twenty-five megabits per second for downloading and three megabits per second for uploading (25/3 Mbps).

Grant funding must contribute to the advancement of precision agriculture initiatives within the state of Nebraska.

1.9 Eligible Program Costs

Examples of allowed and disallowed costs can be found on our website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>. These examples may be periodically updated by Commission staff.

Please note that direct costs associated with providing internet service to the customer premises to support on-farm connectivity as part of a Connectivity Subprogram grant application, will be considered but should not exceed 25% of the total project costs.

The PRO-AG grant funding period begins after the grant application is received, reviewed, and officially approved with an award notification. Eligible program costs are those that are incurred after the program year grant award notice and end at the conclusion of deployment, or at the established deadline for deployment for the PRO-AG grant project, based on whichever is earlier. In-kind contributions will not be allowable expenses in this program.

1.10 Matching Fund Requirement

There is no matching funds requirement for PRO-AG grants. However, applications which provide at least a 25% percent match will receive additional scoring, with higher scores available to applicants providing a higher match percentage.

Applications that demonstrate a minimum 25% match will be eligible for additional scoring points based on their match percentage commitment. Refer to [Section 3](#) Selection Criteria for details.

2 Application Process

2.1 Program Schedule

The PRO-AG grant cycles will run on an annual basis, with awards to be made on or before June 30 of each year.

2.2 Filing Window

The grant application window for program year 2024 will open on January 23, 2024, and close at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on February 23, 2024. While the Commission will consider any applications received before the end of the filing window, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications as soon as they are ready.

Applicants must submit their applications to the Nebraska Public Service Commission on or before the application deadline of February 23, 2024, no later than 5:00 p.m. Central Time. Late filed applications will not be considered.

2.3 Preparing an Application

To be considered for funding, the application and all required information and attachments must be submitted as part of a complete application package.

The application form is located on the Commission website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>. For the best experience, we recommend that you download the file and complete the application in Acrobat Reader or Professional, rather than through the browser. You may submit additional pages to expand on application form fields if additional room is needed. The completed application and supporting documentation should be emailed to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov no later than February 23, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time.

The application form is a fillable PDF and applications must be received in PDF format. Printed applications will not be accepted. Upon request, the Commission can return a date-stamped, printed PDF of the application to the applicant as confirmation of the data submitted.

Ensure that your application and all attachments are clear, concise, and address all the specific requirements. Tailor the information to demonstrate how your project aligns with the goals of the grant program and how it will contribute to the advancement of precision agriculture.

The items that make up an application are further outlined below:

2.3.1 Application Section I - Applicant Details

- Field 1. Subprogram type: This field should include the Subprogram for which the application pertains. Options include:
- a. Connectivity Subprogram
 - b. Devices and Technology Subprogram
- Field 2. Applicant name: This field should include the legal name of the entity applying for the grant.
- Field 3. Applicant type: This field should identify the applicant type. Options include:
- Provider
 - Agricultural Cooperative
 - Agronomist
 - Agricultural Producer
- Field 4. Applicant street address: This field should include the street address of the applicant.
- Field 4a. Applicant city: This field should include the city for the address of the applicant.
- Field 4b. Applicant state: This field should include the state for the address of the applicant.
- Field 4c. Applicant zip code: This field should include the zip code of the applicant.
- Field 5. Applicant contact (first and last name): This field should include the name of the contact person for questions related to the application and the overall project.
- Field 6. Applicant e-mail: This field should include the e-mail address of contact person identified in field 4.
- Field 7. Applicant phone number: This field should include the phone number of contact person identified in field 4.
- Field 8. Connectivity only: Applicant's Nebraska ETC status: This field should include the applicant's Nebraska ETC status. Options include:
1. Not applicable;
 2. Currently certified as Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC), in good standing;
 3. Application for Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC) certification has been filed with the Commission;
 4. Applicant attests they will submit application to the Commission for NETC certification at least six months prior to project completion.
- Field 9. Connectivity only: Does the applicant currently report through FCC Broadband Data Collection (BDC) system speeds of at least 100/20Mbps provided to customers within the State of Nebraska? This field should indicate whether the applicant/service provider partner currently reports through FCC BDC speeds of at least 100/20Mbps service is being provided to customers in Nebraska located outside of the project area. Response options include: Yes; No; Not applicable.

2.3.2 Application Section II – Project Details

- Field 1. Project name: Provide a concise and descriptive name for the project in this field.
- Field 2. Precision agriculture production type: This field should include the type of agriculture production benefiting from the project. Options include: Animal Production, Crop Production, or Both Animal and Crop Production.
- Field 3. Project location description: This field should include a brief description of the project location(s) where the project will take place. Please specify the geographical details, such as address, city/town/village, county, etc. that would be impacted by the project. Connectivity applications must include a contiguous project area to be considered for funding and must provide on-farm connectivity.
- Field 4. Estimated number of locations that will be directly served by the project. For connectivity projects involving a farm site, this input should be “1”.
- Field 5. Technology type(s) used in proposed project: The input in this field should describe the technology type(s) to be used in the proposed project.
- Field 6. Start Date: Enter the proposed start date of the project in mm/dd/yyyy format.
- Field 7. Expected project completion date in mm/dd/yyyy format.
- Field 8. Total project cost: This field should indicate the total estimated cost of the project based on costs deemed eligible within the PRO-AG grant program. See our website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture> for a list of examples of allowed and disallowed costs.
- Field 9. Total match amount: This field should include the sum of all matching funds committed, including those committed by outside sources and those committed by the applicant.
- Field 10. PRO-AG grant amount requested: This field should indicate how much grant money is being requested for this application.
- Field 11. Connectivity only: Farm Site(s) Size (acres): Enter the total acreage of the farm site (or sites) where the proposed connectivity project will be implemented.
- Field 12. Connectivity only: Number of Key Operational Locations: This should include the total number of key operational locations at the on-farm infrastructure site, such as the farm office, livestock facility, a combine, equipment shed, field operation center, center pivot system, and remote monitoring points. This should match what is included in the project diagram provided as Attachment J.
- Field 13. Connectivity only: Number of Connected On-Farm Entities: The total estimated number of on-farm structures and devices to be connected by project at completion. This represents the overall count of structures and devices on the farm that will be integrated into the proposed connectivity project. It encompasses all on-farm entities, including but not limited to tractors, combines, irrigation systems, livestock facilities, and farm offices.
- Field 14. Connectivity only: Current maximum connection speed bandwidth in project area in Mbps: This field should include the current maximum download and upload speeds available within the project area. To be eligible for funding, the current speeds must be less than 25/3 Mbps.
- Field 15. Connectivity only: Speeds upon completion: The speeds the connectivity project will provide upon completion. To qualify, the project must provide adequate precision agriculture connectivity with speeds of 100Mbps/20Mbps, or greater.
- Field 16. Connectivity only: Monthly customer rate for proposed 100Mbps/20Mbps service: This field should include the monthly customer rate to be billed for 100Mbps/20Mbps service provided within the project area. This should not include promotional rates such as new customer discounts, upgraded service discounts, or customer retention discounts.

2.3.3 Preparing Application Attachments

Preparing Grant Application Attachments: All attachments to your grant application must comply with the formatting requirements in this section and must be in .pdf (portable document format), to preserve the layout and appearance of submitted documents, unless otherwise noted.

Naming Convention: Please label attachments as follows: “Applicant_Name_Project_Name_Attachment_Letter” (Example: FarmTech_NEWaterConservation_AttachmentA). If it is necessary to submit multiple attachments under one attachment letter category, label the attachments to identify the separate attachments, such as the following: “ApplicantName_ProjectName_AttachmentLetter_1”, “ApplicantName_ProjectName_AttachmentLetter_2”, etc. (Example: FarmTech_NEWaterConservation_AttachmentA_1, FarmTech_NEWaterConservation_AttachmentA_2, etc.).

File Name Restrictions

- File names of .pdf attachments should be limited to 50 characters whenever possible.
- Names may not include special characters (e.g., &, –, *, %, /, #), periods (.), blank spaces or accent marks.
- An underscore (example: Attached_File.pdf) may be used to separate a filename.
- File names must be unique. No other attachment in the application package may have the same file name.

2.3.4 Attachment Requirements

Attachment A. Business Plan

All applicants should provide a business plan for the proposed network including the following:

1. **Executive Summary:** Briefly describe the farm/business, including its history, mission, and goals. Include specific objectives related to precision agriculture connectivity or technology adoption. Legal name of the farm/business applying for the grant.
2. **Project Proposal:**
 - a. Description of the precision agriculture project you plan to implement.
 - b. Explanation of how the on-farm connectivity -OR- devices and technology will be utilized to enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability.
 - c. Connectivity applicants: Include a statement certifying that the farm site(s) to be served are currently unserved or lacking broadband Internet service at speeds of at least 25 Mbps for downloading and 3 Mbps for uploading. Further, that upon completion of the project, that the farm site(s) will have access to minimum speeds of 100/20 Mbps for precision agriculture connectivity to on-farm structures and devices, as required by Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1404(2)(a). NOTE: Please note that if the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) indicates that the location is already receiving speeds of 25/3Mbps or higher, applicants are required to submit evidence refuting the data on the broadband map.
3. **Timeline for project implementation:** Provide a timeline for deployment of connectivity OR devices and technology with milestones. Include any indication of readiness as evidence that the applicant is prepared to move forward immediately upon award of grant.
4. **Sustainability:** Provide evidence of project sustainability for a minimum of five years.
5. **Eligible Entity Documentation:** Applicants may include supporting documentation, such as business registration certificates, cooperative bylaws, professional certifications, to further validate their eligibility status.
6. **Project Budget:** A project budget must be attached reflecting a clear and detailed breakdown of cost elements based on total allowable project costs. Any disallowed expenses must be adjusted from the total project costs to determine total allowable costs for calculating the grant amount requested and required match percentage. This should include the total costs, the total grant amount requested, and detail any matching funds committed by source.

7. **Financial Projections:** Include the financial projections for the projected, including a cost-benefit analysis that quantifies the expected return on investment (ROI). This should include both short-term and long-term projections.
8. **Financial Statements:** Connectivity Subprogram - Non-ETC applicants must include their most recent year's financial statements. Additionally, if an ETC applicant has not submitted financial statements to the Commission since January 2023, they are required to provide financial statements along with their application.
9. **Rate Comparability:** Connectivity Subprogram - Applicants must demonstrate that the rates they offer in the project area will be comparable to those offered elsewhere for the same type of service. The rates offered are not required to be static over the five-year period described in the business plan. However, applicants must commit to the rates listed in the business plan for the five-year reporting period.

Attachment B. Legal

1. Connectivity Subprogram:

- a. Include contact information for the applicant's legal representation. Legal representative must be licensed and in good standing to practice law in Nebraska, or an attorney admitted to practice pro hac vice in Nebraska. Omission of this information will disqualify the applicant from grant consideration.
- b. Applicants must submit a letter of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application. This letter should clearly express the owner's consent for the connectivity project and their understanding of the proposed on-farm connectivity services and rates charged for service.
- c. A description of any risk factors or legal challenges that must be addressed prior to or during the project in question, and how the applicant intends to mitigate these risk factors or legal challenges.

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram:

- a. Provide a detailed outline of the pertinent qualifications and certifications essential for the proposed devices/technology.
- b. Provide a statement specifying whether the applicant currently holds the necessary qualifications and certifications, including any expiration dates. If not currently secured, define the planned steps and timelines for acquiring any essential qualifications and certifications.
- c. Detail the applicant's strategies and commitments for sustaining the qualifications and certifications over the five-year post-deployment period.

Attachment C. Technical Summary:

1. Connectivity Subprogram:

- a. A description of the applicant's experience providing precision agriculture on-farm connectivity solutions including their technical capability to meet the requirement to provide a minimum 100/20 Mbps. Include details of past successful projects or initiatives related to precision agriculture connectivity or similar technologies. Specifically, whether they currently provide broadband at the minimum 100Mbps/20Mbps speeds.
- b. A detailed description of the proposed network architecture including the specific technologies and strategies to provide service, a list of the on-farm structures and devices to be connected by project, placement of access points, data collection devices, and other key elements. Include the expected latency of the network (in ms) upon completion.
- c. Explain how the solution ensures reliable and scalable connectivity. This could include a plan for network expansion along with a description of strategies for preserving performance with increased device density.
- d. The expected useful life of the facilities to be built including a statement as to the technological components used, and, if applicable, which components may require more frequent repair or replacement.
- e. Applicants should explain how the project will be resilient and sustainable in the long-term. Specifically, how the project area will be maintained throughout the useful life of the facilities along with the applicants plans

to meet the minimum speed requirements in place for the PRO-AG grant for a minimum of five years following completion.

- f. Applicants may include an attestation from a qualified engineer describing whether the speed requirements can be fulfilled using the proposed technology and design.

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram

- a. Overview of the applicant's experience and expertise in precision agriculture devices and technology solutions, specifically as related to the devices/technology included in the application. In cases where the applicant lacks direct experience, an explanation is required on how they plan to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to operate the equipment effectively. Provide details of past successful projects or initiatives related to precision agriculture or similar technologies.
- b. Details about the proposed program involving precision agriculture devices and technology, including specifications and technical requirements. Include an explanation of how the chosen technologies align with the goals of the project.
- c. The expected useful life of devices/technology included in the request for funding including a statement related to which components may require more frequent repair or replacement.
- d. Applicants should explain how the devices/technology funded with PRO-AG grant funds will be maintained throughout the useful life or for a minimum of five years following project completion.

Attachment D. Cybersecurity: Applicants must attach a cybersecurity plan, including an attestation that the applicant does not use any equipment prohibited for use by the Federal Communications Commission pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 1601. NOTE: Remember to avoid sharing sensitive details that could compromise your security posture.

Attachment E. Match documentation:

1. Provide a table detailing the confirmed matching fund commitments by source. The table should include the total amount committed for matching funds, a detailed description of the dollar amount of each match as well as the source of the match. The table should first list the amount committed by the applicant, and then list each funding partner. Below is an example:

Match Source:	Funding Commitment:	Percentage of Total Matching Funds
<i>Applicant</i>	<i>\$80,000</i>	<i>80%</i>
<i>Funding source A</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>Funding source B</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>	<i>10%</i>
<i>(continue as needed)</i>		
Total Matching Funds:	\$100,000	100%

2. Documentation of the match source(s) should also be provided. This could include but is not limited to a signed contribution certification for community partner match.

Attachment F. Monitoring and Evaluation:

1. Plan for monitoring and evaluating the success of the precision agriculture project.
2. Clearly define milestones and key performance indicators (KPIs) that will be used to measure the outcomes.

Attachment G. Project Impact

Impact statement: Summarize the project's significance and potential impact.

1. Connectivity applicants should explain:

- i. Specify the direct benefits to the farm site, outlining how the proposed project will positively impact its operations and overall functionality.
 - ii. Is there a potential for expansion? Include any details as to how the proposed project allows for scalability and growth beyond its initial scope, indicating the potential for broader application or increased capacity in the future.
 - iii. Engagement measures with proposed project location.
- 2. Devices and technology applicants should explain:
 - i. The type of farm operation/business to benefit from project (e.g., crop farming, livestock, mixed farming).
 - ii. What are economic or technological benefits, and how broad are the benefits?
 - iii. Demonstration of more efficient use of Water resources, if applicable
 - iv. Delineate project area and locations to be served.

Attachment H. Other supporting documentation (if applicable):

- 1. Other supporting documentation could also include documentation such as supplemental speed test data, letters of support from members of the community, supplemental financial information such as the most recent year's federal tax return, etc.

2.3.4.1 Additional Required Attachments for Connectivity Subprogram

Attachment I. Shapefiles:

- 1. Polygon shapefiles reflecting the project area must be included. Any supporting files necessary to open the shapefile must also be attached.
- 2. Point shapefiles identifying serviceable locations in the project area must be included. Any supporting files necessary to open the shapefile must also be attached. (Attachment Letter: B). The points in the shapefile should match the number of locations reported to be served on the application in Field 3c.
- 3. Applicants must include tower location shapefiles for existing and planned towers. They must also provide a shapefile polygon demonstrating coverage for the planned and/or existing networks, including where the upload and download speeds will meet or exceed the required speeds (100/20 Mbps), and showing that coverage encompasses the locations included in the application.

Attachment J. Project Diagram:

- 1. Provide a detailed diagram of the project design, as well as a list of key operational locations:
 - Diagram: The diagram should include the entire project layout, including key infrastructure components and connectivity pathways. Highlight the central hub, distribution points, and connectivity routes. Differentiate between wired and wireless components. Clearly depict the connection of on-farm structures, devices, and key operational locations. The diagram should provide a description of the size of the project location and should be appropriately scaled.
 - List of Key Operational Locations: Applicants must submit a list of key operational locations for proposed post-completion speed testing. Examples include the farm office, livestock facilities, equipment sheds, field operation centers, irrigation control points, critical pathways, and remote monitoring points. Each location should be briefly explained, highlighting its significance, and specifying how speed testing will confirm compliance with required performance standards.

2.4 Submitting an Application:

Completed applications and all required supporting documentation must be received electronically via e-mail to the Commission at psc.broadband@nebraska.gov by 5:00 p.m. Central Time on February 23, 2024. The application form should be submitted in .pdf format using the provided application form, all required attachments should be submitted. If all documents CANNOT be attached within a single e-mail due to size limitations, the submission may be sent in more than one e-mail. If it is necessary to submit in separate transmissions, the subject of the e-mails should clearly indicate the applicant and project name, and how many e-mails are being sent (e.g., Email 1 of 4, etc.). Files should be attached to the e-mails; links to websites are not acceptable. Alternatively, you may utilize programs such as zip files, Dropbox, Sharefile, etc., if they contain individual files. Each attachment should be clearly labeled to indicate the contents (Refer to [2.2.3 Attachments](#) for details). Late filed applications will not be considered.

2.5 Protecting Confidential Information in an Application:

A Protective Order governing the 2024 grant application cycle will include specific information that can be submitted confidentially. A copy of the Protective Order will be available on the Commission website once entered. Applicants are required to closely follow the terms of the Protective Order. All confidential materials must be clearly marked as such both in the filename and as a stamp or watermark on each page of the document itself. Commission Staff will contact applicants who submit information incorrectly marked as Confidential to provide an opportunity to remove the marking. The Commission does not guarantee that information submitted that is not marked in accordance with the terms of the Protective Order will be protected.

2.6 Administrative Review

The Commission seeks to avoid unnecessary delay in PRO-AG. Therefore, the Commission will use an administrative review process for PRO-AG connectivity applications. The Commission will verify that the project exclusively serves unserved locations, as required by the Act. Applications will either qualify for scoring based on whether it serves exclusively unserved locations based on review of all applicable data sources, or it will be removed from further consideration.

3 Selection Criteria

The Act specifies certain purposes and conditions for use of grant funding. The Commission intends to evaluate applications to ensure statutory requirements are met and to award grants to the projects that provide the highest return in public benefit for the public costs incurred. The PRO-AG applications will be reviewed by a team composed of Commission staff who will use the following criteria to prioritize, score, and award grants:

3.1 Priority for Grant Distribution

Projects will be prioritized if they meet the following criteria:

1. **Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit:** Projects that showcase a significant economic impact on rural Nebraska. The evaluation will consider the tangible and quantifiable benefits the project brings to the local economy, emphasizing job creation, income generation, and overall economic development.
2. **Continuing or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts:** Projects that would provide continuing or increasing economic and technological benefits over time will be prioritized. This approach aims to support initiatives that not only yield immediate benefits but also contribute to sustained growth and progress over time, fostering long-term economic and technological advantages in the state.

3. **Water Conservation Focus:** Priority will be provided to projects dedicated to water conservation. Proposals that explicitly address and implement innovative strategies, technologies, or practices aimed at conserving water resources will be prioritized. The assessment will focus on the project's potential to mitigate water usage, promote sustainable water management, and contribute to environmental conservation efforts.

3.2 Grant Program Areas

Grant applications will first be sorted into two different subprograms: Connectivity OR Devices and Technology

Once applications are sorted into the two sub-program areas, applications will be further reviewed and scored. The following criteria and associated point values will be used to score and award grants within each respective subprogram.

3.2.1 Connectivity Subprogram Scoring:

Applications are eligible for a maximum 100 scoring points. The scoring will assess grant applications, evaluating both gating criteria for eligibility and scoring criteria for project merit and impact. The scoring rubric can be found on our website at: <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>

3.2.2 Devices and Technology Subprogram Scoring:

Applications are eligible for a maximum 95 scoring points. The scoring will assess grant applications, evaluating both gating criteria for eligibility and scoring criteria for project merit and impact. The scoring rubric can be found on our website at: <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>

3.2.3 Scoring and Tiebreaker

Applications will be prioritized based on overall scores, with higher scores indicating a higher priority project.

If applications receive the same score requiring a tiebreaker, the application with the lower amount of PRO-AG grant dollars requested, would be given preference.

4 Grant Award Notification

For program year 2024, grant awards will be released on or before April 30, 2024. ACH documentation requirement: Successful applicants will need to submit required documentation for receipt of ACH payments from the State of Nebraska immediately upon the award of a grant to ensure that the first payment is not delayed. Additional instructions will be provided when grant awards are released.

5 Distribution of Support Details

Successful applicant must submit a State of Nebraska W-9 and ACH enrollment form one week following grant awards. The PRO-AG grant funds awarded will be distributed to individual grant recipients as follows:

- 90% of the funds awarded will be distributed upon award of the grant, receipt of Acknowledgement and Attestation Form, and the W9/ACH form.
- 10% of the funds awarded will be distributed upon successful completion of the project, submission of the Certification of Project Completion, successful speed testing results if applicable, and receipt of invoice submittals to justify allowable expenses.

Upon project completion, grant recipients must submit the Certification of Project Completion Form certifying that the project described in the application has been completed. Within 90 days of project completion, Connectivity Grant Recipients must submit speed test results verifying that the connectivity can provide the required speeds (100 Mbps download/20 Mbps upload). The required forms are available on the PRO-AG website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>.

6 Post-Award Requirements

Quarterly progress reports regarding the construction of service in the project area must be submitted to the Commission by the fifteenth day of the first month following each quarter. A PRO-AG Awardee Progress Report form can be found on the PRO-AG website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>.

6.1 Completion Deadlines

1. Connectivity Subprogram

- a. **Deadline:** Grants awarded in this subprogram are subject to a twelve-month completion deadline after the date on which the grant is awarded.
- b. **Extensions:** The Commission may permit one extension of up to six months upon request and for good cause shown.
- c. **Completion:** Project completion signifies the fulfillment of all defined objectives and activities related to establishing or enhancing on-farm connectivity. This includes the successful construction of planned connectivity infrastructure, adequate connectivity of 100/20 Mbps is met, and connections have been made to on-farm structures and devices such as tractors, combines, irrigation systems, livestock facilities, and farm offices.

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram

- a. **Deadline:** Grants awarded in this subprogram are subject to a twelve-month completion deadline after the date on which the grant is awarded.
- b. **Extensions:** The Commission may consider allowing one six-month extension upon a showing of good cause.
- c. **Completion:** The project would be considered complete when the project can fulfill the primary operations that it was designed to perform.

7 Post-Deployment Requirements

7.1 Speed and Latency Testing – *Connectivity Subprogram only*

Connectivity Subprogram grants are required to submit speed test information to the Commission following deployment of the completed network as outlined in the application.

To confirm required speeds and latency are being met by the grant-funded on-farm connectivity network, performance testing will focus on key operational locations that would represent typical usage scenarios. Examples of locations for testing could include farm office, livestock facilities, equipment sheds, field operation centers, critical pathways, remote monitoring points, etc.

Upon project completion, the wireless network provider must test those locations and demonstrate that adequate connectivity is being provided. Specific requirements for speed testing for each project will be issued on a case-by-case basis.

The PRO-AG Speed Test Certification form should be used when reporting speed test information to the Commission. The form can be accessed on the PRO-AG website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture> and includes additional detail pertaining to this requirement. Performance testing must be performed for the on-farm network.

General principles for speed testing:

- All key operational locations identified in the application must be tested.
- Speed testing must be conducted for one week (7 days) for each project.
- Speed testing must be performed during daylight hours, for at least a four-hour window each day.
- A minimum of one download test and one upload test per location, per hour should be conducted during the test window.

- Each speed test must measure a connection between a specific farm site and selected test location for at least 10 seconds.

General principles for latency testing:

- All key operational locations identified in the application must be tested.
- Speed testing must be conducted for one week (7 days) for each project.
- Speed testing must be performed during daylight hours, for at least a four-hour window each day.
- A carrier must conduct one latency test per minute at each selected test location for the duration of the testing period.

Testing Deficiencies:

- Should an applicant's testing fail to reflect that the entire project area is capable of being served at the required speeds as approved in the grant application, the applicant will be allowed a reasonable time to correct the deficiencies.
- The applicant must submit the speed test results along with a written proposal to remedy the deficiencies within the next sixty (60) days, including the date upon which speed testing will be conducted a second time.
- If the deficiencies are not corrected and the provider fails to provide adequate precision agriculture connectivity after the second set of speed tests, the applicant shall be subject to penalties as outlined within the C-5529 order.

NOTE: In some instances, the Commission may also accept speed test data or reports submitted by the customer being served to determine whether adequate connectivity has been provided.

7.2 Annual Report Requirement

The awardee will be required to submit an annual report on the usage and maintenance of the on-farm connectivity network or the grant-funded devices and technology. The report should include a description of the benefits to Nebraska obtained by the project. Connectivity Subprogram participants must also provide speed testing to demonstrate the continued ability of the network to provide the required speeds. The annual reports would be required for a period of five years after project completion. Reports should be submitted to the Commission via e-mail to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov by 5:00 p.m. Central Time on July 1 of each year, or the first business day thereafter.

8 Other Conditions and Requirements

In accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute § 86-1401 et seq. and Commission Order C-5529, the applicant and its successors and affiliates are obligated to adhere to the following terms if receiving a grant:

1. Connectivity Subprogram:

- Grant recipients must offer broadband Internet service in the project area for at least five years post deployment; and
- Grant recipients must maintain minimum speed capability of 100Mbps for downloading and 20Mbps for uploading in the project area for five years post deployment.
- Prohibition: Grant recipients are prohibited from transferring deployment costs, initially supported by grant funds, to their customers through any form of charges. This includes direct charges, fees, or any other means of passing on costs associated with the deployment phase covered by grant funds. While end-users benefiting from the improved connectivity may provide matching funds, they shall not be required to bear the portion funded by the grant.

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram:

- Awardees must keep all equipment funded with PRO-AG grants in service for a minimum of five years after project completion.

- b. All necessary maintenance and repairs for the funded equipment must be performed at the cost of the awardee.

Any applicant that declines to accept these conditions shall not be eligible to receive a grant.

9 Failure to Complete an Awarded Project

9.1 Post-Award Repayment

Any grant recipient which fails to complete an awarded project must repay ten percent (10%) of the grant for each month that the project is not complete after the project deadline, including any extended deadlines.

10 Contact Information

For more information including the application and template forms, consult our website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/precision-agriculture>. The Commission staff can be contacted via e-mail at psc.broadband@nebraska.gov.



C-5529 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

IMPORTANT: Applicants are strongly advised to carefully examine the PRO-AG Program Guide and PRO-AG Scoring Reference Sheet for details regarding application and attachment requirements, including but not limited to details on application field descriptions, attachment content, and requirements.

Section I: Applicant Details

1. Subprogram Type:	[Drop-down: Connectivity Subprogram; Devices and Technology Subprogram]
2. Applicant name:	
3. Applicant type:	[Drop-down]
4. Applicant street address:	
4a. Applicant city:	
4b. Applicant state:	
4c. Applicant zip code:	
5. Applicant contact (first and last name):	
6. Applicant e-mail:	
7. Applicant phone number:	
8. <u>Connectivity Subprogram Only</u> : Applicant's Nebraska ETC Status:	[Drop-down]
9. <u>Connectivity Subprogram Only</u> : Does the applicant currently report through FCC BDC speeds of at least 100/20 Mbps provided to customers within the State of Nebraska?	[Drop-down: Yes; No; Not applicable]

Section II: Project Details

1. Project name:			
2. Precision agriculture production type:	[Drop-down list: Animal Production, Crop Production, or Both Animal and Crop Production.]		
3. Project location description:			
4. Estimated number of locations served in project area:			
5. Technology type(s) used in proposed project:			
6. Start Date:		7. Expected completion date:	
8. Total Project Cost:		9. Total Match Amount:	
10. PRO-AG Grant Amount Requested:			

Connectivity Subprogram Only:

11. Farm Site Size (acres):		12. Number of Key Operational Locations:	
13. Number of Connected On-Farm Entities:		14. Current maximum connection speed bandwidth in project area in Mbps: <i>(Must be < 25/3 Mbps)</i>	
15. Speeds upon completion: <i>(Must be 100/20 Mbps or >)</i>		16. Monthly customer rate for proposed 100Mbps/ 20Mbps service:	

Attach/Include (see Program Guide for details):***ALL Applicants Must Include:***

- ☐ Attachment A. Business Plan
- ☐ Attachment B. Legal
- ☐ Attachment C. Technical Summary
- ☐ Attachment D. Cybersecurity
- ☐ Attachment E. Match Documentation:
- ☐ Attachment F. Monitoring and Evaluation:

- ☐ Attachment G. Project Impact
- ☐ Attachment H. Other supporting documentation (if applicable):

Connectivity Subprogram Applicants Must Also Include:

- ☐ Attachment I. Shapefiles
- ☐ Attachment J. Project Diagram

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION:

I, the undersigned [Legal Name] representing [Farm/Business Name] , hereby certify the eligibility of our entity/project for the Precision Agriculture Grant (PRO-AG). By signing this statement, I confirm the legal name, contact details, size, and location of the farm site(s), along with our eligibility type as a [Provider/Agricultural Cooperative/Agronomist/Agricultural Producer] . Attached are supporting documents validating our eligibility, and I declare adherence to all requirements outlined in Precision Agriculture Connectivity Infrastructure Grant Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1401 et seq.) & Commission Order C-5529. I certify that the information submitted on the application and all supporting documents are true and correct. I certify that the applicant entity is not currently using, nor will it use prohibited communications equipment and services developed by organizations on the Federal Communications Commission's Covered List.

This application accepts handwritten, electronic, and typed signatures, all of which carry equal legal weight. Your signature, in any of these forms, confirms the accuracy and authenticity of the provided information. It will be considered binding for all purposes related to this application and any subsequent agreements or certifications.

Printed Name of Authorized Person _____ Date _____

Title of Authorized Person _____

Signature of Authorized Person _____