

SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska)	Application No. C-5600
Public Service Commission, on)	
its own motion, to administer)	ORDER SETTING FORTH GRANT
the Precision Agriculture)	PROCESS AND PROCEDURAL
Infrastructure Grant Program)	SCHEDULE
in the 2024-2025 program year.)	
)	
)	Entered: November 19, 2024

BY THE COMMISSION:

The Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission") opened this docket on its own motion on August 6, 2024, to implement the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-1401 et seq (the "Act") in the 2024-2025 program year. The purposes of the Precision Agriculture Grant Program ("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.

E V I D E N C E

In the order opening this docket,¹ the Commission sought comment on a number of topics relating to PRO-AG. Comments were received from one interested party, PTx Trimble.²

A hearing in this matter was held on October 1, 2024. Sallie Dietrich appeared on behalf of the Telecommunications and NUSF Department of the Commission. Exhibits numbered 1 through 3 were entered into evidence.

Carrie Gans, Assistant Director of the Telecommunications and NUSF Department ("Department"), testified first. Ms. Gans testified that PRO-AG provides funding for the purpose of supporting precision agriculture in two subprograms, Connectivity

¹ Commission Docket No. C-5600, *In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service Commission, on its own motion, to administer the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant Program in the 2024-2025 program year*, Order Opening Docket and Seeking Comment and Notice of Hearing (Aug. 6, 2024) ("August 6 Order").

² These comments were entered into the hearing record as Exhibit 3.

and Devices and Technology.³ She stated that Connectivity grants support the building of 100/20 megabits per second ("Mbps") wireless connectivity to on-farm structures and devices.⁴ Devices and Technology grants support the acquisition of precision agriculture tools such as on-farm traceability solutions, water and soil monitoring, and autonomous machinery.⁵ Ms. Gans stated that grants are distributed with ninety percent of the grant issued at the time of the award, and ten percent issued upon successful completion of the project.⁶

Ms. Gans stated that during the prior grant cycle, a significant number of applications in the Devices and Technology subprogram focused on drone technology.⁷ She noted that the Act allows for a broader range of eligible uses, including water and soil sensors, traceability solutions, and autonomous agriculture machinery.⁸ Ms. Gans stated that she would encourage prospective applicants to consider those areas to promote innovation.⁹ She noted that in the previous grant year, the Commission prioritized applications demonstrating substantial economic benefits, those with continuing or increasing economic and technological impacts, and projects dedicated to water conservation.¹⁰ Ms. Gans proposed to continue to incentivize projects meeting those criteria.¹¹

Ms. Gans then discussed pending federal legislation relating to drones manufactured by Da-Jiang Innovations ("DJI").¹² She noted that drone technology may present cybersecurity vulnerabilities

³ Transcript at 8.

⁴ *Id.* at 8-9.

⁵ *Id.* at 9.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* See also Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1404(2).

⁹ Transcript at 9.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 10.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.* See H.R. 2864, 118th Cong. (2024) ("Countering CCP Drones Act"), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2864/text>. The current Covered List is maintained by the FCC at <https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist>. Detailed information regarding the creation and maintenance of this list can be found at 47 C.F.R. § 1.50000 *et seq.*

including hacking, unauthorized access, or data breaches which could compromise sensitive agricultural data.¹³ Ms. Gans stated that in the previous PRO-AG grant cycle, applicants were required to submit cybersecurity plans that included an attestation that the applicant did not use any equipment prohibited by the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC").¹⁴ Ms. Gans stated that if DJI drones were added to the list of prohibited equipment ("Covered List"), the Commission would not fund applications seeking to use DJI drones.¹⁵ She recommended that applicants intending to use DJI drones include with their application an attestation acknowledging the potential risks associated with DJI drones, and stating the applicant's understanding that federal legislative action could jeopardize grant awards.¹⁶ Ms. Gans recommended that if federal legislation were passed prior to grant awards, DJI drone applications could be rendered ineligible.¹⁷ She further stated that any funding commitments would be contingent on the applicant's compliance with all applicable federal laws in place at the time of the final grant reimbursement.¹⁸

Ms. Gans then discussed the application forms. She noted that during the previous grant cycle, many applications were incomplete or unclear, leading to delays in the review process.¹⁹ She recommended that the application forms be revised to reduce the number of required attachments, and incorporate specific questions directly into the application form.²⁰ She further recommended that applicants be required to verify their status as an eligible entity within the application process, to include documentation demonstrating the entity type.²¹

¹³ Transcript at 10.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.* at 10-11.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* Ms. Gans noted that potential consequences for awardees using DJI drones could be a requirement to use different equipment, or the revocation of the grant. *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.* at 11-12.

²⁰ *Id.* at 12.

²¹ *Id.* at 12-13.

Finally, Ms. Gans described the proposed procedural schedule. She recommended no changes to the schedule initially proposed in this matter.²² Ms. Gans noted that applications would be due on January 17, 2025, with applicants able to modify or supplement their applications until March 7, 2025, and awards issued in mid-April.²³ Ms. Gans encouraged applicants to take advantage of the opportunity to revise their applications to ensure the applications are accurate and complete.²⁴

Following Ms. Gans' testimony, Dinen Subramaniam testified on behalf of PTx Trimble. Mr. Subramaniam testified that he is the product manager for the OutRun product for PTx Trimble.²⁵ He stated that OutRun is a retrofit autonomous kit that goes on existing tractors, allowing them to run autonomously.²⁶ Mr. Subramaniam stated that PTx Trimble has a team in Lincoln, Nebraska putting forward a driver-less grain cart operation.²⁷ He stated that his company has engaged with Nebraska farmers and have heard feedback that it is difficult to find labor during harvest season, which can lead to loss in yield due to delay.²⁸

On questioning, Mr. Subramaniam stated that PTx Trimble is a venture by AGCO and Trimble, and that OutRun is a product brand developed by PTx Trimble.²⁹ He stated that the autonomous kit he described has been in development for four to five years, and was tested in 2023 with one farmer in Rising City, Nebraska.³⁰ He stated that the product will be "beta" tested in eight or nine locations in Nebraska and Kansas in 2024.³¹ Mr. Subramaniam stated that in 2025, the product will be opened up to larger commercial availability.³²

²² *Id.* at 13.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.* at 20.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.* at 20-21.

²⁹ *Id.* at 22.

³⁰ *Id.* at 23.

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

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Mr. Subramaniam was asked about the useful life of this equipment. He stated that these products will last three to five years.³³ When asked how the equipment could be repaired, Mr. Subramaniam stated that farmers acquire the system, but continue to pay an annual maintenance cost to cover costs of hardware and software repairs and upgrades.³⁴ He stated that the initial activation cost would be \$30,000, and the annual subscription fee would be \$10,000 a year.³⁵ Mr. Subramaniam acknowledged that subscription costs have not previously been reimbursable in PRO-AG grants, but suggested the initial \$30,000 cost would be reimbursable.³⁶ Mr. Subramaniam stated that the pay-as-you-go cost model was designed to help farmers put forward the up-front cost of equipment.³⁷

On further questioning, Mr. Subramaniam stated that the product works in farms lacking in cellular or internet connectivity.³⁸ He stated that the system is able to communicate independently, without a separate connection using 900 megahertz radio.³⁹

Following Mr. Subramaniam's testimony, no further evidence was adduced, and the hearing was adjourned.

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

The purposes of the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant 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.⁴⁰

³³ *Id.* at 24.

³⁴ *Id.* at 25.

³⁵ *Id.* at 25-27. Mr. Subramaniam also stated that there would be a per-hour use fee for subscribers, but did not specify the hourly rate. *Id.* at 34-37.

³⁶ *Id.* at 27.

³⁷ *Id.* at 28.

³⁸ *Id.* at 42.

³⁹ *Id.* at 42-43.

⁴⁰ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1403.

In the August 6 Order in this docket, the Commission set forth several topics and preliminary findings for comment. The Commission hereby makes the findings described below.

1. Available Funding for 2024-2025 Program Year

In the 2023-2024 program year, funding was available in the amount of \$453,239 for each of the two subprograms. In the Connectivity subprogram, the Commission awarded \$391,280 in grant awards. In the Devices and Technology subprogram, the Commission awarded \$287,336.29 in grant awards. The total amount of funding remaining following these grant awards is \$227,861.71. This amount will be carried over to the 2024-2025 program year and equally divided between the two subprograms.⁴¹

For the 2024-2025 program year, \$901,216 was appropriated by the Legislature for PRO-AG awards. Each subprogram will also be allocated one-half of the unawarded funds from the prior year, in the amount of \$113,930.85. The total amount available for each subprogram will therefore be \$564,538.85.

2. Procedural Schedule and Application Deadline

In the August 6 Order, the Commission set forth a proposed procedural schedule. Upon review of the schedule and comments submitted in this matter, the Commission finds that the proposed schedule is appropriate and should be adopted. The application window for the 2024-2025 PRO-AG cycle will therefore open on December 13, 2024, with applications due by January 17, 2025. Grant awards will be released by April 15, 2025. The full procedural schedule for the 2024-2025 PRO-AG program year is attached to this order as Attachment A.

In order to ensure a fair and complete review of proposed PRO-AG projects, Commission staff may request that applicants modify or supplement applications until March 7, 2025. Commission staff may seek additional or supplemental information from

⁴¹ See Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1404(3) ("The commission shall award up to one-half of the available grant funds for the purpose described in subdivision (2)(a) of this section and up to one-half of the available grant funds for the purposes described in subdivisions (2)(b), (c), and (d) of this section."). The Commission interprets the phrase "available grant funds" to include all sources of funding available each program cycle, including carryover funds from previous years.

applicants regarding the proposed project prior to this deadline. Applicants will not be permitted to supplement or modify applications unless requested by Commission staff. Following the deadline to supplement or modify applications, no further changes will be accepted.

3. Application Forms

In the August 6 Order, the Commission also proposed to update its PRO-AG application forms. The Commission finds that this proposal should be adopted. Accordingly, the application form for PRO-AG grants in the 2024-2025 program year has been adjusted such that the form asks specific questions regarding program requirements. A copy of the application form is attached to this order as Attachment B. The form has been revised for the purpose of increasing accessibility. However, applicants are encouraged to reach out to Commission staff with any questions or if any assistance is needed to complete the forms.

Additionally, sample budgets have been prepared for applicants' review and are available on the Commission website. Applicants are encouraged to review the program materials, including the sample budgets and Program Guide, before preparing their applications. Applicants may contact the Commission at psc.broadband@nebraska.gov with any questions at any time.

4. Eligible Uses for Grant Funding; Scoring

In the August 6 Order, the Commission sought comment as to whether it should encourage Devices and Technology applicants to pursue grants for projects for traceability solutions, water and soil sensors, or autonomous agriculture machinery.⁴² The Commission also sought input as to whether its scoring criteria should be adjusted to encourage applications of a certain type.

Upon review of the application materials and comments submitted in this matter, the Commission finds that adjustments to the scoring criteria are not necessary at this time. Applicants are, however, encouraged to seek funding for innovative projects which may be funded under the terms of the Act. It is the hope of the Commission to receive a wide range of applications to improve innovation in the field of precision agriculture. As set forth in

⁴² See Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1404.

the Act, PRO-AG funding is to be used 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.⁴³ The Commission will consider any applications which meet the criteria set forth in Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 86-1403 and 86-1404, and hopes to receive a wide variety of applications.

As in the previous program year, applications which provide at least a 25% match of the total funding required will receive additional scoring, with higher scores available to applicants providing a higher match percentage. The Commission also notes that certain categories of costs will be disallowed, including subscription-based costs. All project applications will be reviewed holistically, and applications should demonstrate that the economic benefit to be obtained throughout Nebraska from the project will exceed the amount of funding requested.

Detailed information regarding the eligible uses of funding is contained in the Program Guide for the 2024-2025 PRO-AG funding year. A copy of the Program Guide is attached to this order as Attachment C. Additionally, the Commission has prepared a scoring rubric to be used in reviewing and prioritizing applications for grant funding. A copy of this scoring rubric is attached hereto as Attachment D. Following the award of grants, final scoring results will be published on the Commission's website.

5. Eligible Applicants

As in the previous program year, grant applications must be submitted by an entity eligible for funding pursuant to the Act. For the Connectivity subprogram, applicants must be a provider, defined pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1402 as "a wireless network provider that provides adequate precision agriculture connectivity." However, applications may also be submitted by Agricultural Cooperatives, Agronomists, or Agricultural Producers if submitted in partnership with a provider. For the Devices and Technology subprogram, applicants must be one of the following:

⁴³ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1403.

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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.

The Commission will verify that applicants are one of the above-listed applicant types. If the applicant type cannot be verified from the application materials provided, the Commission may seek additional information from the applicant, including business organization documentation, professional certifications, and/or tax returns. Such information may be submitted under confidential seal pursuant to a protective order entered separately in this docket. Applicants are encouraged to reach out to Commission staff with any questions ahead of the application deadline.

6. Prohibited Equipment

In the August 6 Order, the Commission noted that federal legislation has been introduced which would add telecommunications and video equipment produced by Shenzhen Da-Jiang Innovations Sciences and Technologies Company Limited ("DJI") to the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") covered list (the "Covered List").⁴⁴ The pending federal legislation could result in drones

⁴⁴ H.R. 2864, 118th Cong. (2024) ("Countering CCP Drones Act"), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/2864/text>. Since the entry of the August 6 Order, this bill passed the House of Representatives and has been referred to the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The current Covered List is maintained by the FCC at <https://www.fcc.gov/supplychain/coveredlist>. Detailed information regarding

manufactured by DJI, which would otherwise be eligible for PRO-AG grant funding, to be ineligible for funding. The Commission has prohibited the distribution of PRO-AG grant funding to entities utilizing equipment on the FCC's Covered List.⁴⁵

The Commission sought comment as to whether additional steps should be taken to ensure no PRO-AG grant funding is issued to entities utilizing equipment on the FCC's Covered List. At hearing, the Department testified on this topic. The Commission finds that the Department's proposed approach is appropriate and should be adopted. If legislation is passed adding equipment manufactured by DJI to the FCC's Covered List, the Commission will not fund applications seeking to use DJI drones. Additionally, applicants intending to use DJI drones must include with their application an attestation acknowledging the potential risks associated with DJI drones, and stating the applicant's understanding that federal legislative action could jeopardize grant awards. A sample attestation is attached to this order as Attachment E. Grants will also be reviewed at the time of final grant reimbursement, and grantees must be in compliance with all applicable federal laws in place at the time of the final grant reimbursement in order to receive funding. In cases where a grantee is found to be out of compliance with federal laws, the Commission reserves the right to require the return of previously disbursed grant funds.

7. Performance Testing for Connectivity Projects

The Commission finds that the performance testing requirements in place in the previous program year should be adopted for the 2024-2025 program year.⁴⁶ Connectivity projects funded through PRO-AG are required to be completed within twelve months after the date on which the grant is awarded.⁴⁷ These

the creation and maintenance of this list can be found at 47 C.F.R. § 1.50000 *et seq.*

⁴⁵ See 2023 PRO-AG Program Guide, available at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/sites/psc.nebraska.gov/files/doc/2023%20PRO-AG%20Program%20Guide.pdf>, at 9 (requiring applicants to attach a cybersecurity plan to applications, and include an attestation that the applicant does not use any equipment prohibited by the FCC).

⁴⁶ Performance testing refers to testing of the speed and latency capabilities of a network or connectivity project completed with a PRO-AG grant.

⁴⁷ One extension of up to six months is available. Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1405(1).

applicants must further submit speed and latency testing results, and shall be allowed a "reasonable time" to correct any deficiencies found by the testing.⁴⁸

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 and latency 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. Additional information regarding the Commission's speed and latency testing practices, including updated guidance issued in 2024, may be found on the Commission website.⁴⁹

8. Completion of Grant Projects; Annual Reports

The Commission further finds that the project deadlines and reporting requirements in place in the previous grant cycle should continue in this program year. 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, may result in penalties. Any grant

⁴⁸ Neb. Rev. Stat. § 86-1405(2).

⁴⁹ See <https://psc.nebraska.gov/telecommunications/nusf-133-speed-testing>. See also Commission Docket No. NUSF-133, Progression Order No. 1, *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 Revising Speed Testing Requirements (Oct. 8, 2024).

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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.

Additionally, Devices and Technology grant recipients will 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, 2026, for a period of five years. Additional information is included in the procedural schedule, attached hereto as Attachment A.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above findings be adopted and the 2024-2025 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 that the application form attached hereto as Attachment B shall be released and shall be the form upon which applications shall be submitted for grants under this program.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that as described above, applications may be modified or supplemented at the request of Commission staff until March 7, 2025. After that date, no further modifications will be accepted or reviewed.

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

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IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that any applicants seeking to make use of technology manufactured by Da-Jiang Innovations must submit an attestation regarding the use of this technology, attached hereto as Attachment E.

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 January 17, 2025.

ENTERED AND MADE EFFECTIVE at Lincoln, Nebraska this 19th day of November, 2024.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION


COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Eric M. Hamler





Kevin Stocker


Chair

ATTEST:


Thomas W. Golden
Executive Director

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Attachment A:
Procedural Schedule

Precision Agriculture Grant Program Procedural Schedule 2024 - 2025 Program Year

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
Application period begins	December 13, 2024
Deadline to submit applications	January 17, 2025
Deadline to supplement or modify applications	March 7, 2025
Grant awards released	April 15, 2025
State of Nebraska W-9 and ACH enrollment form due from successful applicants	One week following grant awards
Project completion deadline	April 15, 2026
Annual Report #1 due	July 1, 2026
Annual Report #2 due	July 1, 2027
Annual Report #3 due	July 3, 2028
Annual Report #4 due	July 2, 2029
Annual Report #5 due	July 1, 2030



2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application (Docket C-5600)

Submit signed PDF applications with all attachments via email to psc.broadband@nebraska.gov by **January 17, 2025, 5:00 p.m. Central Time.**

IMPORTANT: Applicants must carefully review the PRO-AG Program Guide and PRO-AG Scoring Reference Sheet for details on application requirements and scoring. This includes but is not limited to application field descriptions, attachment content, and other necessary documentation and requirements. These resources, along with examples of allowed and disallowed costs are available on our website at <https://psc.nebraska.gov/telecommunications/2024-2025-precision-agriculture-infrastructure-grant-program-c-5600>.

If additional space is needed for any section of the application, you may include extra pages if needed, noting the application Section, Subsection, and Field Number on the attachment.

NOTE: This application is a fillable PDF and should be submitted in its original format, rather than as a printed or scanned copy. If technical difficulties or other challenges prevent you from submitting the form in this format, please contact us to discuss alternative solutions.

Subprogram Descriptions:

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. Adequate precision agriculture connectivity means at least 100 megabits per second download and 20 megabits per second download speeds (100/20 Mbps).

Note: Applications for the Connectivity Subprogram are permitted from Providers. Agricultural Cooperatives, Agronomists, and Agricultural Producers may apply only if partnered with a Provider.

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.

NOTE: Each subprogram is designed to fulfill a specific purpose, and applicants can submit multiple project proposals in separate submissions. 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.

Eligible Applicant Types:

- **Provider:** A wireless network provider that provides adequate precision agriculture connectivity. Proof needed: Proof of business registration and service authorization in Nebraska.
- **Agricultural Cooperatives:** 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. Proof needed: Articles of incorporation, membership information, and proof of registration as a cooperative in Nebraska.
- **Agronomist:** A scientist who specialized in the science of farming, including but not limited to crop production, soil control, or soil management. Proof needed: Professional certifications, degrees in relevant fields, and portfolio of agriculture-related projects.
- **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. Proof needed: See "Agricultural Producer Affidavit" on our website.

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

Section I: Applicant Details *(Applies to all applicants)*

1. Subprogram Type: <i>(See Descriptions Above)</i>	[Drop-down: Connectivity Subprogram; Devices and Technology Subprogram]
2. Applicant name (Legal name of the farm/business applying for the grant):	
3. Applicant type: <i>(See Definitions Above)</i> Proof of applicant type should be included with application as Attachment B.	[Drop-down: Provider; Agricultural Cooperative; Agronomist; Agricultural Producer]
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. Executive Summary: Provide an overview of the applicant, detailing the history, mission, and goals of the farm or business. Include specific objectives related to precision agriculture connectivity or technology adoption.

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

Section II: Project Details *(Applies to all applicants)*

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: (This should include a detailed description of the project area and location(s) to be served.)

4. Project Proposal: (a) Description of the precision agriculture project you plan to implement. -AND- (b) Explanation of how the on-farm connectivity or devices and technology will be utilized to enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability. *Please include information showing that the applicant is prepared to move forward immediately upon award of grant.*

5. Total Project Cost *(include allowable costs only):*
See project budget instructions and examples on our website.

\$

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

6. Total Match Commitment Amount (in dollars), <i>if applicable</i> : NOTE: The project budget (attachment A) must detail any matching funds committed by source. Additionally, documentation of match commitment must be submitted as Attachment E. See "Contribution Certification Form" on our website.	\$
7. PRO-AG Grant Amount Requested:	\$ (Insert Formula: Total cost – match)
8. Estimated number of locations served in project area:	
9. Technology type(s) used in proposed project:	
10. Expected Start Date (<i>Should <u>not</u> be prior to 4/15/25</i>):	
11. Expected completion date (<i>Should <u>not</u> be after 4/15/26</i>):	
12. Timeline: Please outline the timeline for your project deployment, including clear milestones and indicators of readiness for immediate action upon grant award. Provide an explanation of any measures you have in place to address potential challenges during the implementation process.	

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

13. Sustainability: Provide an explanation of how the project will be sustainable for a minimum of five years; include strategies and considerations for long-term success. Attach any evidence of sustainability to the application as Attachment F.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

Section II Project Details – Subsection A: Applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY	
1. Farm Site Size (acres):	
2. Number of Key Operational Locations:	
3. Number of Connected On-Farm Entities:	
4. Current maximum connection speed bandwidth in project area in Mbps: (Must be < 25/3 Mbps)	
5. Speeds upon completion: (Must be ≥ 100/20 Mbps)	
6. Do you certify that the farm site(s) to be served are currently unserved or lacking broadband Internet service at speeds of at least 25/3 Mbps download/upload?	Yes/No
7. Do you certify that upon completion of the project, the farm site(s) served by the project 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: 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. (Include as Attachment F)	Yes/No
Section III: Technical Summary (Applicants must complete the relevant subsection)	
Section III: Technical Summary – Subsection A: Applies to Devices and Technology subprogram ONLY	
<p>1. Applicant's Experience: 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.</p> <div style="height: 400px; border: 1px solid #ccc; margin-top: 10px;"></div>	

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

2. Program Details: Provide 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.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

3. Expected Useful Life: The expected useful life of devices/technology included in the request for funding. Please identify any components which may require more frequent repair or replacement.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

4. Maintenance Plan: Applicants should explain how the devices/technology funded with PRO-AG grant funds will be maintained for at least five years following project completion.

SAMPLE

Section III: Technical Summary – Subsection B: *Applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY*

1. Applicant's Experience: Describe 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, and if so, where.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

2. Innovation and Technology: Provide 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.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

3. Scalability Evaluation: 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.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

4. Maintenance Plan: Include details regarding the expected useful life of the facilities to be built. Include a statement as to the technological components used, and, if applicable, which components may require more frequent repair or replacement. Applicants should explain how the project will be maintained throughout the useful life of the facilities along with the applicant's plans to meet the minimum speed requirements in place for the PRO-AG grant for a minimum of five years following completion.

5. Latency: Include the expected latency of the network (in ms) upon completion. Explain how the expected latency aligns with the needs of your application. How does this latency impact the ability to perform real-time operations or data transfers in the context of precision agriculture?

Section IV: Legal *(Applicants must complete the relevant subsection)*

Section IV: Legal – Subsection A: Applies to Devices and Technology subprogram ONLY

1. Provide a detailed outline of the pertinent qualifications and certifications essential for the proposed devices/technology. Explain 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.

SAMPLE

2. Detail the applicant's strategies and commitments for sustaining the qualifications and certifications over the five-year post-deployment period.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

Section IV: Legal – Subsection B: *Applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY*

1. Applicant's Nebraska ETC Status:	[Drop-down: Not applicable; Currently certified as Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC), in good standing; Application for Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC) certification has been filed with the Commission; Applicant attests they will submit application to the Commission for NETC certification at least six months prior to project completion.]
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2. Legal Representative Name (Must be licensed and in good standing to practice law in Nebraska or admitted pro hac vice)	
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3. Legal Representative Email:	
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4. Legal Representative Phone:	
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5. A description of any risk factors or legal challenges that must be addressed prior to or during the project in question (examples include local zoning, permitting, access to rights-of-way, etc.), as well as a plan for mitigation. Additionally, explain any engagement measures with proposed project location(s) or impacted communities.

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

6. Has the applicant received letter(s) of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application? Yes/No.
NOTE: Letters of support must be attached to the application as attachment G and 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.

Section V: Project Impact *(Applies to all applicants)*

1. Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit: Describe the significant economic impact your project will have on rural Nebraska. What tangible benefits can you quantify, such as job creation and income generation? Please provide illustrative examples.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

2. Continuing or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts: How will your project provide ongoing economic and technological benefits over time? Outline the strategies you will implement to ensure sustained growth and progress beyond the initial implementation phase.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

3. Water Conservation Focus: If applicable, please explain in what ways does your project prioritize water conservation? Explain the innovative strategies, technologies, or practices you plan to implement to promote sustainable water management and mitigate water usage.

SAMPLE

Section VI: Financial Projections *(Applies to all applicants)*

1. Provide comprehensive financial projections for the project. This should include both short-term (1-3 years) and long-term (4+ years) forecasts, detailing anticipated costs, revenues, and key financial health indicators such as net cash flow and profitability ratios. The projections should demonstrate a realistic estimate of income and expenses and the overall financial impact of the project.

SAMPLE

Section VII: Cost Benefit Analysis (*Applies to all applicants*)

1. Provide a detailed cost-benefit analysis for the project. This analysis should quantify the expected return on investment (ROI), outlining the financial impact of the project in both the short-term (1-3 years) and long-term (4+ years). The analysis should clearly demonstrate the financial returns of the investment.

SAMPLE

Section VIII: Monitoring and Evaluation *(Applies to all applicants)*

1. Clearly list the major milestones that will be used to track the progress of your project. This should include a timeline for deployment of connectivity OR devices and technology. Each milestone should include an expected completion date. Examples: (1) Installation of connectivity infrastructure by [insert date]. (2) Deployment of smart sensors by [insert date]. (3) Full project implementation by [insert date].

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

2. Identify the specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be used to measure the success of the project following implementation. Each KPI should be measurable and aligned with the project's objectives. Examples: (1) [X]% increase in crop yield by [insert date]. (2) [X]% reduction in water usage within [insert time frame]. (3) [X] number of devices connected to the system by [insert date]. (4) [X]% improvement in farm operational efficiency by [insert date].

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

3. Please explain the plan for monitoring and evaluating the success of the precision agriculture project. Include a detailed explanation of how Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included in Section VII, field 2 above will be tracked and monitored throughout the project. Include specific metrics, tools, and timelines that will be used to track progress and measure outcomes.

SAMPLE

2024-2025 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Grant Application

Attach/Include (see Program Guide for details):

ALL Applicants Must Include:

- ☒ Attachment A. Project Budget/Documentation
- ☐ Attachment B. Eligible Entity Documentation
- ☐ Attachment C. Cybersecurity
- ☐ Attachment D. DJI Attestation
- ☐ Attachment E. Match Documentation
- ☐ Attachment F. Other Supporting documentation
(if applicable)

Connectivity Subprogram Applicants Must Also Include:

- ☐ Attachment G. Legal
- ☐ Attachment H. Technical
- ☐ Attachment I. Financial Statements
- ☐ Attachment J. Rate Comparability
- ☐ Attachment K. Shapefiles
- ☐ Attachment L. Project Diagram
- ☐ Attachment M. List of Key Operational Locations

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION:

I, the undersigned _____, representing _____, hereby
[Legal Name] [Farm/Business Name]
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-5600. I certify that all information we have submitted on this application and its supporting documents is true and correct. I certify that we are not currently using, nor will we use, prohibited communications equipment and services developed by organizations on the Federal Communications Commission's Covered List pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 1601. I understand that the submission of any false information or failure to comply with Commission requirements may result in penalties towards me and/or my organization.

Your signature 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



Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG) Program Guide Program Year 2024-2025

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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, 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. Funds not spent in the previous fiscal year will be available for this year's grant awards. The available funding for the 2024-2025 program year of \$1,129,077.71 will be divided into two categories:

1. Connectivity Subprogram: The Commission shall award up to 50 percent of the available grant funds, or \$564,538.85 for projects within the Connectivity Subprogram.
2. Devices and Technology Subprogram: The Commission shall award up to 50 percent of available funds, or \$564,538.85 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 Docket No. C-5600.
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. For the 2024-2025 program year, grant awards are expected to be announced on April 15, 2025. Please see the 2024-2025 program year procedural schedule on our website for additional important dates.

2.2 Filing Window

The grant application window for program year 2024-2025 will open on December 13, 2024, and close at 5:00 p.m. Central Time on January 17, 2025. 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.

Applications must be received by the Nebraska Public Service Commission on or before the application deadline of January 17, 2025, 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>, on the page for the respective program year. 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 January 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Central Time.

The application form is a fillable PDF and applications should be submitted in its original format, rather than as a printed or scanned copy. This ensures that we can efficiently export your data into our system and helps to streamline the review process. If technical difficulties or other challenges prevent you from submitting the form in this format, please contact us to discuss alternative solutions.

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 Section I: Applicant Details (*applies to all applicants*)

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Field 1. | Subprogram type: This field should include the Subprogram for which the application pertains. Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Connectivity Subprogramb. 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: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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. Executive Summary: Provide an overview of the applicant, detailing the history, mission, and goals of the farm or business. Include specific objectives related to precision agriculture connectivity or technology adoption.

2.3.2 Section II: Project Details (*applies to all applicants*)

- 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. Project Proposal: This field should include: (a) Description of the precision agriculture project you plan to implement. -AND- (b) Explanation of how the on-farm connectivity or devices and technology will be utilized to enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability. Include any indication of readiness to show that the applicant is prepared to move forward immediately upon award of grant.
- Field 5. 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 6. Total match amount: This field should include the sum of all matching funds committed in dollars, including those committed by outside sources and those committed by the applicant.
NOTE: The project budget (attachment A) must also detail any matching funds committed by source. Additionally, documentation of match commitment must be submitted as Attachment E. See "Contribution Certification Form" on our website.
- Field 7. PRO-AG grant amount requested: This field should indicate how much grant money is being requested for this application.
- Field 8. 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 9. 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 10. Expected Start Date: Enter the proposed start date of the project in mm/dd/yyyy format.
- Field 11. Expected completion date in mm/dd/yyyy format.
- Field 12. Timeline: Please outline the timeline for your project deployment, including clear milestones and indicators of readiness for immediate action upon grant award. Provide an explanation of any measures you have in place to address potential challenges during the implementation process.
- Field 13. Sustainability: This field should include an explanation of how the project will be sustainable for a minimum of five years; include strategies and considerations for long-term success. Attach any evidence of sustainability to the application as Attachment F.

2.3.3 Section II: Project Details – Subsection A *(applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY)*

- Field 1. Farm Site(s) Size (acres): Enter the total acreage of the farm site (or sites) where the proposed connectivity project will be implemented.
- Field 2. 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 3. 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 4. 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 5. 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 6. 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.

2.3.4 Section III: Technical Summary *(applicants must complete the relevant subsection)*

2.3.5 Section III: Technical Summary – Subsection A *(applies to Devices and Technology subprogram ONLY)*

- Field 1. Applicant's Experience: 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.
- Field 2. Program Details: 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.
- Field 3. Expected Useful Life: 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.
- Field 4. Maintenance Plan: 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.

2.3.6 Section III: Technical Summary – Subsection B *(applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY)*

- Field 1. Applicant's Experience: Provide 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.
- Field 2. Innovation and Technology: Provide 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.
- Field 3. Scalability Evaluation: 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.
- Field 4. Maintenance Plan: Include details regarding 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. Applicants should explain how the project 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.

- Field 5. Latency: Include the expected latency of the network (in ms) upon completion. Explain how the expected latency aligns with the needs of your application. How does this latency impact the ability to perform real-time operations or data transfers in the context of precision agriculture?

2.3.7 Section IV: Legal (*applicants must complete the relevant subsection*)

2.3.8 Section IV: Legal – Subsection A (*applies to Devices and Technology subprogram ONLY*)

- Field 1. Provide a detailed outline of the pertinent qualifications and certifications essential for the proposed devices/technology. Explain 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.
- Field 2. Detail the applicant's strategies and commitments for sustaining the qualifications and certifications over the five-year post-deployment period.

2.3.9 Section IV: Legal – Subsection B (*applies to Connectivity subprogram ONLY*)

- Field 1. Applicant's Nebraska ETC Status: This field should include the Connectivity applicant's current ETC status in Nebraska. Options are: Not applicable; Currently certified as Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC), in good standing; Application for Nebraska Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (NETC) certification has been filed with the Commission; Applicant attests they will submit application to the Commission for NETC certification at least six months prior to project completion.
- Field 2. Legal Representative Name (Must be licensed and in good standing to practice law in Nebraska or admitted pro hac vice)
- Field 3. Legal Representative Email:
- Field 4. Legal Representative Phone:
- Field 5. A description of any risk factors or legal challenges that must be addressed prior to or during the project in question (examples include local zoning, permitting, access to rights-of-way, etc.), as well as a plan for mitigation. Additionally, explain any engagement measures with proposed project location(s) or impacted communities.
- Field 6. Has the applicant received letter(s) of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application? Yes/No. NOTE: Letters of support must be attached to the application as attachment G and 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.

2.3.10 Section V: Project Impact (*applies to all applicants*)

- Field 1. Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit: Describe the significant economic impact your project will have on rural Nebraska. What tangible benefits can you quantify, such as job creation and income generation? Please provide illustrative examples.
- Field 2. Continuing or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts: How will your project provide ongoing economic and technological benefits over time? Outline the strategies you will implement to ensure sustained growth and progress beyond the initial implementation phase.
- Field 3. Water Conservation Focus: If applicable, please explain in what ways does your project prioritize water conservation? Explain the innovative strategies, technologies, or practices you plan to implement to promote sustainable water management and mitigate water usage.

2.3.11 Section VI: Financial Projections (*applies to all applicants*)

- Field 1. Provide comprehensive financial projections for the project. This should include both short-term (1-3 years) and long-term (4+ years) forecasts, detailing anticipated costs, revenues, and key financial health indicators such as net cash flow and profitability ratios. The projections should demonstrate a realistic estimate of income and expenses and the overall financial impact of the project.

2.3.12 Section VII: Cost Benefit Analysis (*applies to all applicants*)

- Field 1. Provide a detailed cost-benefit analysis for the project. This analysis should quantify the expected return on investment (ROI), outlining the financial impact of the project in both the short-term (1-3 years) and long-term (4+ years). The analysis should clearly demonstrate the financial returns of the investment.

2.3.13 Section VIII: Monitoring and Evaluation (*applies to all applicants*)

- Field 1. Clearly list the major milestones that will be used to track the progress of your project. This should include a timeline for deployment of connectivity OR devices and technology. Each milestone should include an expected completion date. Examples: (1) Installation of connectivity infrastructure by [insert date]. (2) Deployment of smart sensors by [insert date]. (3) Full project implementation by [insert date].
- Field 2. Identify the specific Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will be used to measure the success of the project following implementation. Each KPI should be measurable and aligned with the project's objectives. Examples: (1) [X]% increase in crop yield by [insert date]. (2) [X]% reduction in water usage within [insert time frame]. (3) [X] number of devices connected to the system by [insert date]. (4) [X]% improvement in farm operational efficiency by [insert date].
- Field 3. Please explain the plan for monitoring and evaluating the success of the precision agriculture project. Include a detailed explanation of how Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included in Section VII, field 2 above will be tracked and monitored throughout the project. Include specific metrics, tools, and timelines that will be used to track progress and measure outcomes.

2.4 Preparing Application Attachments

Preparing Grant Application Attachments: All attachments to your grant application must comply with the formatting requirements in this section and should 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.

2.4.1 Attachment Requirements

Attachment A. Project Budget/Documentation: 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. Documentation to justify project costs claimed in budget is required. See project budget instructions and examples for each subprogram on our website.

Attachment B. Eligible Entity Documentation: Applicants must include supporting documentation to validate their eligibility status:

- Provider - proof of business registration and service authorization in Nebraska.
- Agricultural Cooperatives - articles of incorporation, membership information, and proof of registration as a cooperative in Nebraska.
- Agronomists - professional certifications, degrees, and portfolio of agriculture projects.
- Agricultural Producer: See "Agricultural Producer Affidavit" on our website.

Attachment C. Cybersecurity: Applicants must attach a cybersecurity plan that includes their security measures, identification of risks, approach to safeguarding sensitive data, and strategy for responding to security incidents. NOTE: Remember to avoid sharing sensitive details that could compromise your security posture.

The cybersecurity plan is in addition to the certification on the application that the applicant does not use any equipment prohibited by the Federal Communications Commission pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 1601.

Attachment D. DJI Attestation (if applicable): Applicants proposing to use DJI drones must also include an attestation acknowledging the potential risks associated with DJI drones and confirm understanding that any federal

legislative action could jeopardize grant awards. The [DJI Drone Applicant Attestation](#) can be accessed on our website.

Attachment E. Match documentation: Applicants indicating match commitments must attach documentation from each listed match source for the application. This could include but is not limited to a signed “Contribution Certification Form,” or a “Certification of Commitment Letter” from a contributing partner. Please see the [2024-2025 PRO-AG Contribution Certification](#) document on our website for additional information about the requirements and to access the Contribution Certification Form.

Attachment F. Other supporting documentation (if applicable): Other supporting documentation could include documentation such as supplemental speed test data, letters of support from members of the community, evidence of sustainability, and/or supplemental financial information such as the most recent year’s federal tax return, etc.

[2.4.1.1 Additional Required Attachments for **Connectivity Subprogram ONLY**](#)

Attachment G. Legal: Applicants must submit a letter of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application. This letter(s) 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.

Attachment H. Technical: Applicants may include an attestation from a qualified engineer describing whether the speed requirements can be fulfilled using the proposed technology and design.

Attachment I. Financial Statements: 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 2024, they are required to provide financial statements along with their application.

Attachment J. Rate Comparability: 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 K. 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 L. Project Diagram:

1. Connectivity applicants must provide a detailed diagram of the project design. 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.

Attachment M. List of Key Operational Locations:

1. Connectivity 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.

[2.5 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 January 17, 2025. The application form should be submitted in .pdf format using the provided application form, all required attachments should be submitted

with the application. 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 [2.3 Preparing Application Attachments](#) for details). Late filed applications will not be considered.

2.6 Protecting Confidential Information in an Application:

A Protective Order governing the 2024-2025 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.

2.7 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 2024-2025, grant awards will be released on or before April 15, 2025. 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 applicants 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 and latency testing 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 provider must test those locations and demonstrate that adequate connectivity is being provided. Specific requirements for speed and latency 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 and latency 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-5600 order.

NOTE: In some instances, the Commission may also accept performance testing 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 Docket No. C-5600, the applicant and its successors and affiliates are obligated to adhere to the following terms if receiving a grant:

1. Connectivity Subprogram:

- a. Grant recipients must offer broadband Internet service in the project area for at least five years post deployment; and
- b. Grant recipients must maintain minimum speed capability of 100Mbps for downloading and 20Mbps for uploading in the project area for five years post deployment.
- c. 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:

- a. 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.

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-5600.

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.

F – ETC Certification (Connectivity Subprogram Only)

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.

C-5600 Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant (PRO-AG)
Attestation for DJI Drone Applicants

Applicant Name:	
Project Name:	
Date:	

I, the undersigned, hereby attest to the following regarding my application for the Precision Agriculture Infrastructure Grant under the Devices and Technology subprogram:

1. I acknowledge that certain drone technologies, including those manufactured by Da-Jiang Innovations (DJI), may present cybersecurity vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities could lead to unauthorized access, hacking, or data breaches that may compromise sensitive agricultural data.
2. I am aware that pending federal legislation may add DJI drones to the Federal Communications Commission's Covered List. I understand that if this legislation is enacted prior to the award of grant funds, applications proposing the use of DJI drones could be rendered ineligible for funding.
3. I understand that all funding commitments will be contingent upon compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and restrictions in place at the time of final grant reimbursement. Should the legislation be enacted, I acknowledge that it may jeopardize my grant award.
4. I recognize that in the event of a determination that my application involves the use of prohibited equipment as defined by applicable federal laws, the Commission may revoke the grant, require the return of awarded funds, or necessitate a switch to compliant equipment at my expense.
5. I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and accurate, and that I will comply with all requirements related to the proposed project.

By signing below, I affirm my understanding of the above conditions and agree to adhere to the stipulations set forth.

Printed Name of Authorized Person Date

Title of Authorized Person

Signature of Authorized Person