

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission,) Application No. C-3206
on its own motion, to administer)
the Nebraska Internet) ORDER ADOPTING GRANT
Enhancement Fund.) DOCUMENTS AND FORMS AND
) GRANT SCHEDULE
)
) Entered: May 10, 2011

BY THE COMMISSION:

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

The Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission") opened the above-captioned docket, on its own motion, to administer the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund ("NIEF") established by the Legislature pursuant to *Neb. Rev. Stat.* §§ 86-579 through 86-580 (Reissue of 2008). NIEF is to, "be used to provide financial assistance to install and deliver broadband or other advanced telecommunications infrastructure and service throughout the state." *Neb. Rev. Stat.* § 86-579 (Reissue of 2008).

In furtherance of its statutory duty to establish an application process through which Nebraska counties and municipalities may apply for financial assistance from NIEF, the Commission staff, with the assistance of the NIEF Advisory Board,¹ ("NIEF Board") drafted grant application and project documents and forms to be used in the NIEF grant process which were subsequently adopted by the Commission. The Commission has opened three rounds of grants in 2004, 2006 and 2008 and has to date awarded eleven grants.

In the order issued by the Commission on March 10, 2010, awarding grants in the last grant period, contained the following direction to the NIEF Board:

Due to the concerns raised by the advisory board, the Commission directs the advisory board to carefully consider and evaluate the current grant guidelines for the NIEF program and to make recommendations to the Commission for possible changes and/or additions to the grant guidelines. We find that such consideration of the grant guidelines should be conducted prior to the

¹ Established pursuant to Title 291 Chapter 5 of the Nebraska Administrative Code, Section 6.15.

Commission soliciting further grant applications.²

Pursuant to the direction of the Commission, the NIEF Board has reviewed and made modification to the Grant Guidelines to further clarify prioritization between grant applications for projects to serve unserved and underserved areas of the state. The NIEF Board also reviewed the other documents used in the grant program, including the Pre-Application Form, Application Form and Scoring Sheet, and Grant Agreement. Copies of the recommended documents are attached hereto as Exhibits A, B, C and D, respectively.

The Commission staff, with the assistance of the NIEF Board has evaluated the grant process from the previous grant periods and is prepared to recommend that another grant application period be opened.

The NIEF Advisory Board recommends that the Commission approve and adopt the attached forms for use in administering the 2011 round of Grant Applications and Awards from the Fund.

The NIEF Advisory Board further recommends that the Commission adopt the following schedule for the grant application period:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| May 16, 2011: | The Pre-Application period opens. |
| August 15, 2011: | The Pre-Application period ends. All Pre-Applications must be submitted to the Commission no later than 5:00 p.m. CDT. |
| September 1, 2011: | The Application period opens. Approved Pre-Applicants will be notified and asked to submit a full application. |
| November 15, 2011: | The Application period ends. All Applications must be submitted to the Commission no later than 5:00 p.m. |

The Advisory Board will then evaluate all Applications and submit its recommendation to the Commission as soon as possible. The Commission anticipates announcing the recipients of the grants sometime in December 2011, or January 2012.

² Docket C-3206, *In the Matter of the Commission, on its own motion, to administer the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund. Order Awarding Grants* (March 9, 2010).

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Program Description and Grant Application Guidelines, Pre-Application Form, Application Form and Scoring Sheet and Grant Agreement are approved and adopted for use in administering the Fund for a 2011 round of Grant Applications and awards.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the schedule for the grant application period as described herein is adopted.

MADE AND ENTERED at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 10th day of May, 2011.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Executive Director

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O R D E R


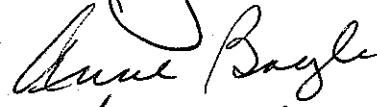
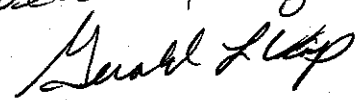
IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that the Program Description and Grant Application Guidelines, Pre-Application Form, Application Form and Scoring Sheet and Grant Agreement are approved and adopted for use in administering the Fund for a 2011 round of Grant Applications and awards.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the schedule for the grant application period as described herein is adopted.

MADE AND ENTERED at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 10th day of May, 2011.


NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:


Chairman

ATTEST:


Executive Director

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