

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)
Enhancement Fund.) ORDER AWARDING GRANTS
)
)
) Entered: January 24, 2012

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). The Commission in its May 10, 2011 Order adopted updated grant forms and established a schedule for the 2011 application process and grant awards under the NIEF Grant Program.

The Commission received two pre-applications. On September 20, 2011, the Commission entered an Order inviting the following pre-applicants to submit full applications: Box Butte County, Nebraska and Nebraska Cooperative Government.

Applications from the applicants mentioned above were received on or before November 30, 2011. Box Butte County, Nebraska, requested funds in the amount of \$75,000. Nebraska Cooperative Government requested funds in the amount of \$50,000.

The NIEF Advisory Board reviewed the above-mentioned applications during its January 9, 2012, meeting. In a letter dated January 13, 2012, the Advisory Board recommended that the both applications be approved for NIEF grants in the amounts requested. With respect to the application filed by Box Butte County, the Advisory Board advised the Commission in the January 13, 2012 letter, that the Board felt the benefits of the project merited an award amount in excess of the \$50,000 cap set forth in the guidelines.

The Commission has reviewed the applications submitted and finds that the proposed projects are consistent with the statutory purpose and goals of the NIEF program. Furthermore, the proposed projects will provide financial assistance to communities in which the provision of the internet and advanced telecommunications services are particularly costly due to factors including population scarcity and location remoteness. Furthermore, the Commission finds that the proposed projects are

economically viable and sustainable, provide benefits to the areas they propose to serve in terms of access to the internet and advanced telecommunications services and will enhance rural development, economic development, education or telemedicine.

Although the County of Box Butte has applied for funds in excess of the \$50,000 grant cap, the Commission finds that the potential benefits of the proposed project and the fact that the project will fund a high cost rural area of Nebraska, warrants the additional funds and constitutes exceptional merit.

The Commission finds that the following applications should be approved for the amounts requested:

Box Butte County, Nebraska
Nebraska Cooperative Government

The Commission further finds that pursuant to NIEF guidelines, each grant recipient shall sign a Grant Agreement containing the terms or conditions of the grant, previously approved by the Commission, prior to receiving any grant funds.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that the above-captioned applications are approved for the requested amounts.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the grant recipients shall sign a Grant Agreement, as previously approved by the Commission, containing the terms and conditions of the grant.

MADE AND ENTERED at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 24th day of January, 2012.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Deputy Director

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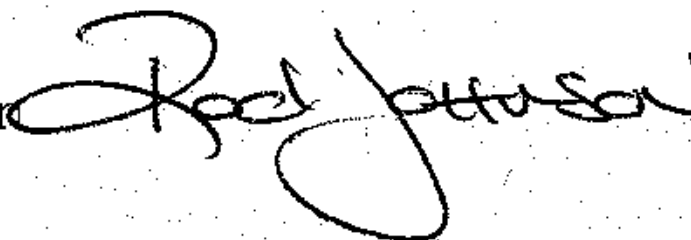
NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:



//s// Rod Johnson

Chairman



ATTEST:



Deputy Director