

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission,	)	Application No. NUSF-91
on its own motion, to increase	)	
broadband adoption among low-	)	ORDER SEEKING FURTHER
income consumers through the	)	COMMENTS
development of a Nebraska	)	
broadband telephone assistance	)	Entered: April 1, 2014
program.	)	

BY THE COMMISSION:

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (Commission) opened this docket on its own motion to investigate ways to increase broadband adoption among low-income consumers in Nebraska. The Commission previously found that it possessed the requisite authority to promote access to advanced services through its universal service fund programs. Through the Nebraska Broadband Program, the Commission has provided grant funding for capital improvement projects to help make broadband accessible to Nebraskans regardless of location.

In the present docket, the Commission sought comment on whether to extend universal service programs to make broadband service more affordable to low-income Nebraskans. The Commission received comments from CenturyLink, Center for People in Need, Citizens Telecommunications Co of Nebraska, Inc. d/b/a Frontier Communications of Nebraska, the City of Lincoln, Cox Nebraska Telcom, LLC, Rural Independent Companies, the Rural Telecommunications Coalition of Nebraska, Time Warner Cable Information Services (Nebraska) LLC, the Satellite Broadcasting and Communications Association, MCImetro Access Transmission Services d/b/a Verizon Access Transmission Services, N.E. Colorado Cellular, Inc. d/b/a Viaero Wireless, and Windstream Communications.

Upon review of the comments received, the Commission seeks further comment on a proposal to utilize a portion of the support currently allocated to the Nebraska Broadband Program, to establish a low-income broadband pilot project aimed at making broadband services more affordable to low-income consumers.

In calendar year 2014, the Commission allocated \$9 million for broadband grant support. The Commission has not determined the support amount for calendar year 2015. The Commission would propose allocating roughly \$2 million of the Nebraska Broadband Program support to establish a pilot program. As the Commission previously proposed, a broadband discount would be provided to qualifying eligible telecommunications carriers designated by

the Commission to receive low-income support similar to the way support is provided for voice service.

Specifically, the Commission seeks comments on the following:

#### **ISSUES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

1. Should the Commission allocate a portion of the universal service fund support currently set aside for broadband grants to initiate a pilot program subsidizing retail broadband service for low-income subscribers? Why or why not?
  - a. Is a \$2 million allocation for calendar year 2015 reasonable? Please explain.
  - b. For calendar year 2014, the Commission set aside \$9 million for the broadband grant program. An allocation of \$2 million in 2015 would leave \$7 million for the broadband grant program. Would this change be reasonable? Why or why not?
  - c. Are there other alternatives the Commission should consider to increase broadband adoption in Nebraska? Please explain.
2. If the Commission does initiate a pilot program to make broadband service more affordable to low-income consumers, how much should the Commission provide in monthly support?
  - a. Is a \$10.00 subsidy reasonable?
  - b. Would a \$10.00 discount on a monthly recurring bill result in consumers paying a reasonable share for their broadband service while addressing the Commission's affordability concerns? Why or why not?
  - c. Are there other alternatives the Commission should consider?
3. If the Commission does initiate a low-income broadband pilot program:
  - a. Should the Commission establish a test period for the pilot program and then determine the efficacy of the program?
    - i. If so, how should the success of the pilot program be measured?

- ii. Is there relevant data providers have collected from other broadband adoption programs that the Commission should consider?
  - b. If the Commission establishes a pilot program, how should the Commission encourage consumer awareness of the program?
  - c. Should there be a requirement for providers to advertise the availability of the discount program? Should this requirement be different from the requirement Lifeline providers have today?
4. Are there any other suggestions or proposals the Commission should consider at this time?

Interested persons are invited to provide comments responsive to the questions posed above, or on any other issues germane to this proceeding. We give commenters until **May 13, 2014** to file comments in response to this Order.

Commenters should file five (5) paper copies and one (1) electronic copy of their Comments with the Commission. Electronic copies should be sent to [Sue.Vanicek@nebraska.gov](mailto:Sue.Vanicek@nebraska.gov) and [Brandy.Zierott@nebraska.gov](mailto:Brandy.Zierott@nebraska.gov).

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that interested persons may file comments responsive to this Order on or before **May 13, 2014**.

MADE AND ENTERED at Lincoln, Nebraska, this 1st day of April, 2014.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Executive Director

- ii. Is there relevant data providers have collected from other broadband adoption programs that the Commission should consider?
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NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

*Tim Schram*

*Debra J. Jansen*

*Donald L. Vap*

//s//Frank E. Landis

*Frank E. Landis*

Chairman

ATTEST:

*Steve Meradith*

Executive Director