

PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST

Nebraska Public Service Commission
June 2023/Volume 16

PSC Awards Capital Project Funds 2023 Grants

On June 27, the Nebraska Public Service Commission (PSC) approved an Order in docket CPF-1 awarding 65 grants totaling more than \$61 million from the 2023 Capital Projects Fund (CPF) Grant Program.

CPF grants are awarded by the PSC in Congressional Districts One and Three. At least \$40 million dollars in grant funding was available in each congressional district for eligible broadband projects.

During the 2023 CP grant cycle, the PSC received 130 applications for funding. As a part of the grant review process, the Commission also received challenges from parties indicating that they already serve an area covered by a grant application or that they plan to provide service to the area in the near future.

“These CPF grants will help connect Nebraskans who are most in need of broadband and the services it provides,” said Cullen Robbins, Director PSC Telecommunications/NUSF Department.

Upon review of the applications and challenges the PSC determined 65 submissions qualified would be funded

Of the grants awarded 27 were located in Congressional District One totaling \$40.3 million. In Congressional District Three 38 grants were awarded totaling \$21.03 million.

With funding remaining in District Three, the Commission plans to open an additional window for CPF applications. Projects not approved during the initial funding round may be resubmitted for considering during the additional grant funding cycle.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Capital Projects Fund Award Fact Sheet Nebraska

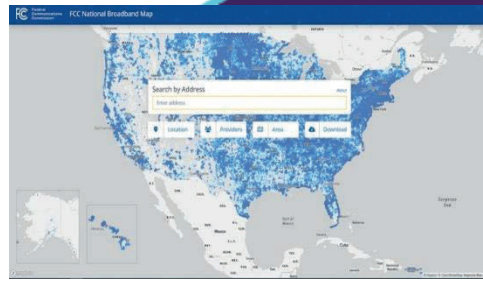
Treasury approves Nebraska's plan to invest \$87.7 million of CPF funding in broadband infrastructure projects that will provide high-speed internet to locations that lack access to adequate service.

Nebraska Capital Projects Fund Program Overview

- **Program Summary:** \$87.7 million for Broadband Infrastructure (68% of CPF allocation)
- **Locations to Be Served:** 21,000 (estimated)
- **Program Description:** The Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program, a competitive grant program, will award grants for broadband infrastructure. The program is designed to reach areas without access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet service, especially the state's rural areas.
 - The Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program is designed to provide internet service with speeds of 100/100 Mbps symmetrical to households and businesses upon project completion.
 - Each of the internet service providers funded by the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program will participate in the FCC's [Affordable Connectivity Program \(ACP\)](#) – a \$30 per month subsidy for low-income families.
- **Key State Contact:** Nebraska Department of Economic Development

As reported by Nebraska, estimates show that investments made using the Capital Projects Fund will serve **23% of locations** still lacking high-speed internet access in the state.

FCC Releases New Version of its National Broadband Map



The new version (#2) of the [FCC National Broadband Map](#) is out. This map shows updated broadband availability after the first round of availability challenges and will be used by the NTIA to allocate \$42.5 billion in the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program to states.

As a result of over one-million availability challenges filed by the Nebraska Public Service Commission, 700,000 of which were successful, the FCC map now shows over 68,000 unserved locations, an increase of 240% over the first version of the map.

This represents one of the largest increases in unserved locations nationwide. We want to thank our Telecommunications/NUSF department for its hard work to ensure Nebraska is positioned to receive the federal support needed to bring broadband to unserved and underserved Nebraskans.

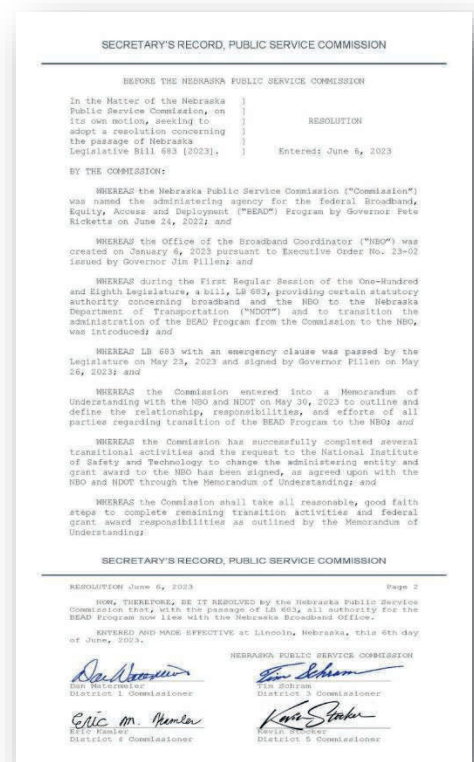
The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) announcement of allocations for funding can be found @ <https://internetforall.gov/news-media/biden-harris-administration-announces-state-allocations-4245-billion-high-speed-internet>

PSC Transitions BEAD Program to Nebraska Broadband Office

On June 6, a majority of Nebraska Public Service Commissioners approved a resolution transitioning the Commissions' role in the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program to the Nebraska Broadband Office (NBO) and the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT).

In June of 2022, the Commission was named the administering agency for the federal BEAD program. Managed by the National Telecommunications Information Association (NTIA), BEAD will make \$42.5 billion available to states for broadband buildout.

The resolution reiterates the Commissions' commitment to the smooth transition of activities and federal grant responsibilities to the NBO/NDOT follows the passage of LB 683. Read the resolution @ [https://psc.nebraska.gov/sites/psc.nebraska.gov/files/do](https://psc.nebraska.gov/sites/psc.nebraska.gov/files/document/2023-06-06-Resolution-Transferring-Responsibilities-for-the-Federal-Broadband-Equity-Access-and-Deployment-Program-to-the-Nebraska-Broadband-Office-and-the-Nebraska-Department-of-Transportation.pdf)
[c/2023-](https://psc.nebraska.gov/sites/psc.nebraska.gov/files/document/2023-06-06-Resolution-Transferring-Responsibilities-for-the-Federal-Broadband-Equity-Access-and-Deployment-Program-to-the-Nebraska-Broadband-Office-and-the-Nebraska-Department-of-Transportation.pdf)



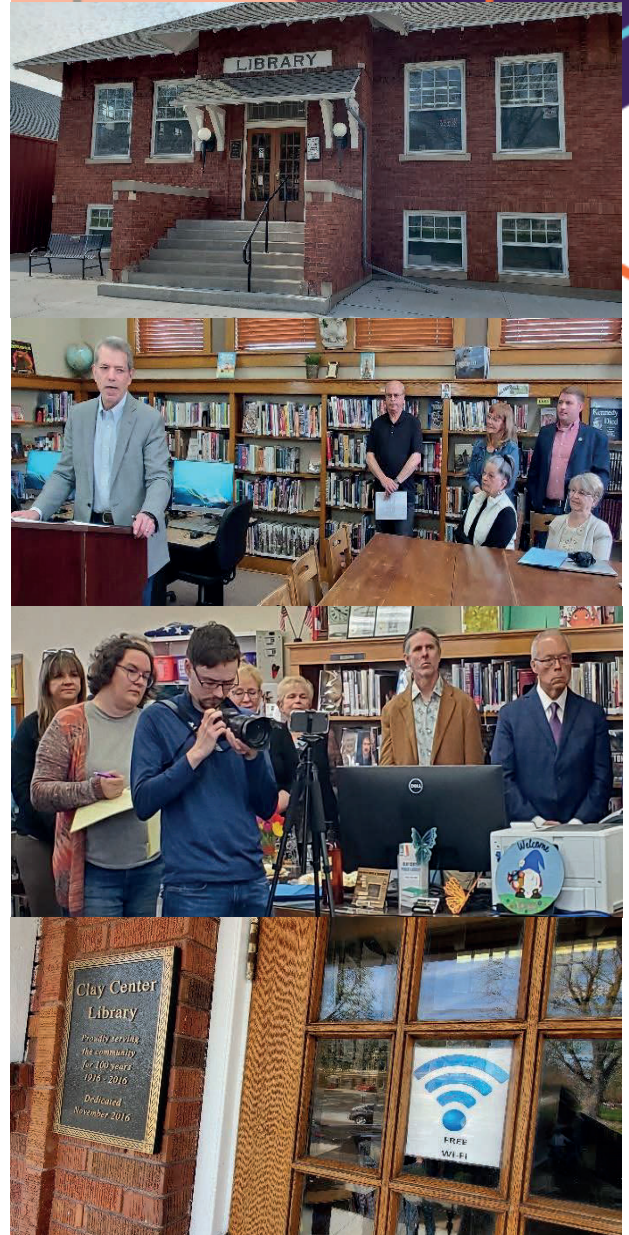
PSC Participates in News Conference to Highlight E-rate Special Construction Matching Grant Program (NUSF-117)

National Library Week (April 23-29) was the backdrop for a Governor's news conference to promote connecting Nebraska libraries to fiber. The Clay Center Library which recently completed its fiber build out was the site for the event.

Governor Pillen, Nebraska Public Service Commissioner Eric Kamler, and Nebraska Library Commission Director Rod Wagner talked about the importance of participating in the Nebraska E-rate Special Construction Matching grant program. Administered by the PSC, the program provides supplemental funds for new fiber deployment to libraries and schools participating in the federal E-rate program.

In April, the Commission opened a docket ([NUSF-117 P.O. #1](#)) to explore ways to enhance the current Nebraska E-rate Special Construction Matching Funds program. The docket posed a series of questions with the goal of helping to strengthen the Nebraska E-rate program and increase the applications from libraries in the program. At the completion of the comment period, PSC Commissioners will determine next steps for the state program

The Clay Center Library completed its fiber buildout at zero cost to the community by participating in both the federal E-rate program and the state E-rate Special Construction Matching Funds program. The federal program provided 90 % of the cost, with the state program providing the remaining 10% of the cost to complete the fiber buildout.



Natural Gas Department Updating Department Rules & Regulations

The PSC Natural Gas Department is conducting a review and update of its Rules & Regulations ([Title 291/Chapter 9](#)).

Two informal workshops one in February and another in May were held, providing the opportunity for discussion and suggestions on the updates and cleanup to the rules proposed by the Commission staff.

“This is the first major review of the department's rules and regulations in more than a decade,” said Nichole Mulcahy, Director PSC Natural Gas Department. “We appreciate the participation in the workshops and value the conversation and the suggestions we've received.”

Once a draft document is completed, the next step will be to open a formal rule making procedure which will then go out for formal comment. The formal rule making procedure is expected to begin in the fall of 2023.



Kelso Named Director of Housing/Rec Vehicle Department

The Public Service Commission welcomes a familiar face to the role of Director of its Housing/Recreational Vehicle Department.

Steve Kelso, who has been with the Commission since 2018 has been named as the department's new director.

Steve joined the Commission as a Housing and RV Inspector. He has been serving as the department's interim director since March.

“Steve has worked extensively in the housing industry and brings a tremendous amount of experience, talent and vision to the directors' position,” said Executive Director Tom Golden. “I am excited for him and the agency as he begins this important work.”

Kelso took over the role as department director on June 1.



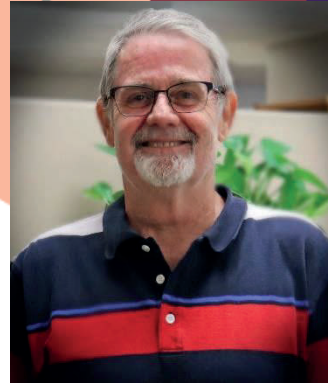
Three New Members Join PSC Staff

The PSC welcomes three new members to its team.

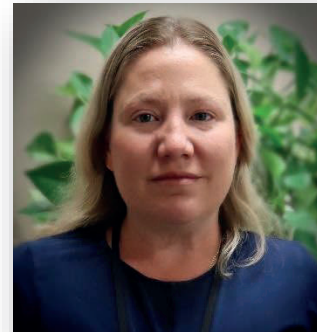
Doug Thomas brings a wealth of knowledge to the Commission as a grant auditor. Doug comes to the PSC after working for the past 11 years as the head of internal audits for the Nebraska Department of Labor. Prior to his career with the state, he spent 27 years with the City of Lincoln, 19 of which were as the Chief Information Officer for the City and County. Doug has a business administration/accounting degree from UNL. In his spare time, he enjoys working with his flora and koi ponds. He tells us he intends to buy another Harley upon retirement, just to get him out of the backyard from time to time.

Camelia Rogers, our new Grant Policy Analyst makes a return to the PSC, having started her career with the Commission in 2004. With a bachelor's degree in public administration and a master's in public policy, Camelia has 19 years of experience in broadband policy both at the state and federal level.

Born and raised near the foothills of the Himalayas, in what is now Tajikistan, Navruz Shaw joins the PSC as a Policy Analyst in the Telecommunications/NUSF department. He holds a Ph. D., in Political Science from Indiana University. Prior to joining the PSC, Navruz worked at LinkedIn, and taught at several colleges and universities, including St. Olaf College and the University of Nebraska Omaha. Outside of work, Navruz enjoys running, biking, cooking, coding, gardening, watching, playing and coaching soccer and is a huge fan of the FC Barcelona soccer club. Navruz lives near Omaha with his wife and three kids.



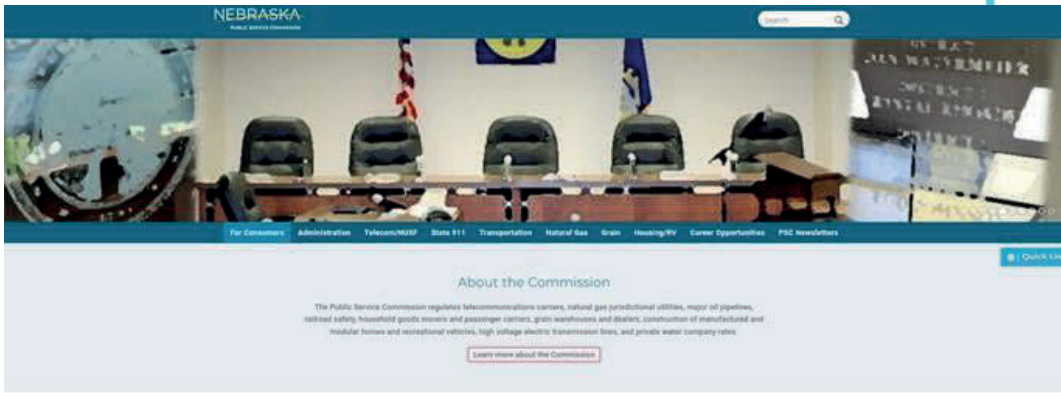
Doug Thomas
Grant Auditor



Camelia Rogers
Grant Policy Analyst



Navruz Shaw
Policy Analyst



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The Nebraska Public Service Commission regulates telecommunications carriers, natural gas jurisdictional utilities, major oil pipelines, railroad safety, household goods movers and passenger carriers, grain warehouses and dealers, construction of manufactured and modular homes and recreation vehicles, high voltage electric transmission lines, and private water company rates.

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