

# Great Plains Communications, Inc.

2013 Nebraska Broadband Pilot Program

Application Checklist Responses

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## Application Checklist Item #1:

**“A listing of all companies associated with the proposed broadband project that will provide the broadband or voice component of the service to consumers, including a main point of contact for all companies. (This requirement does not refer to vendors such as construction companies or equipment providers.)”**

### Narrative:

Great Plains Communications, Inc. (“GPC”) will be responsible for managing the implementation of the projects submitted through this application. The broadband services for these projects will be offered through Netlink, Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of GPC. The mailing address for both these organizations is:

1600 Great Plains Centre  
P.O. Box 500  
Blair, NE 68008

The main points of contact are:

### Great Plains Communications, Inc.

John Greene  
Chief Network Engineer

Office: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

### Netlink, Inc.

Mike Huggenberger  
Director - IT and Internet Services

Office: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

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## Application Checklist Item #2:

**“A description of the proposed broadband project plan for which NEBP funding is being requested including download and upload speed capabilities which can be provided using the proposed infrastructure. Minimum speed standards should be 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload.”**

Great Plains Communications provides voice, data and other services to customers in primarily small rural communities and surrounding areas across the Nebraska. GPC’s regulated services footprint spans more than 14,000 square miles, and the company provides voice, data, and other services in other communities and rural areas elsewhere in the state to meet the needs of customers who have not had availability of sufficient services from existing providers. GPC believes it is an exemplary steward of Nebraska Universal Service Fund (“NUSF”) high-cost support since the inception of that program and of NEBP support awarded in 2012. GPC already has customers utilizing broadband services following completion of the rural Sutherland wireline project for which it received an NEBP grant in 2012, and its rural Arnold/Broken Bow fixed wireless projects awarded last year that will be completed later this year. Thus, the company has demonstrated it has the operational wherewithal to put important NEBP funding to good use in a timely and efficient manner. GPC commits to do the same with funding it may be awarded in the 2013 award cycle.

In this application, GPC proposes to construct and operate six (6) separate projects within its regulated service area, each in a unique geographic area of the state. GPC believes it is appropriate that NEBP funding be distributed in a manner that customers in all parts of the state have an opportunity to benefit from the availability of broadband service. The company has the unique opportunity to provide that reach given the expanse of its network across so much of the state’s geography. Importantly, each of the projects represents an effective use of scarce funding, bringing broadband service to sizeable numbers of unserved and/or underserved numbers at a relatively low per-unit cost. However, should the Nebraska Public Service Commission (“Commission”) determine it necessary given total demands on NEBP funds, each project in GPC’s application can be reviewed individually on its own merits. Therefore, GPC presents the six projects in order of their priority of importance, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. GPC welcomes Commission inquiries on each of these three projects, as well as any of the other projects contained in the application.

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#### Project Narratives:

#### **#1 - Wisner Project**

The Wisner wireline project proposes to expand GPC's Digital Subscriber Loop ("DSL") service availability to [REDACTED] unserved customers in the rural areas outside the community of Wisner, including a number of commercial feedlots. Expanding services to these rural areas has been desired in GPC's long-term network planning, but the expense of doing so has prohibited the project to date. The Commission's pilot program provides the opportunity to finally bring broadband services to these rural customers. The project represents an efficient maximization of existing facilities, while providing a scalable solution that can be expanded in the future when GPC is in a position to upgrade local loop facilities. Enclosed with this application are endorsement letters from State Senator Lydia Brasch and a key cattle feeder customer who would be served by the proposed project.

The Wisner project consists of placing [REDACTED] broadband Digital Loop Carrier ("DLC") equipment, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Wisner central office. GPC has utilized [REDACTED] DLC and other broadband equipment throughout the state and had excellent results. If requested by the Commission, GPC will provide additional information on the [REDACTED] equipment to be utilized in the project.

Each of the new sites will require placement of fiber backbone cable and a new cabinet to house the [REDACTED] equipment, power, and associated equipment. The existing copper loops will be retained for customer locations served by the project. The new [REDACTED] equipment will provide both voice and broadband, with speeds of at least "5/1" available to all customers. Some of these locations will be capable of upgrades to FTTx<sup>1</sup> by the future addition of cards in the existing frames and fiber loops placed to the customers.

#### **#2 - Imperial Project**

The Imperial wireline project proposes to expand GPC's DSL service availability to [REDACTED] customers [REDACTED] in the rural areas outside Imperial. Here too expanding services to these rural areas has been desired in GPC's long term network planning, but the expense of doing so has prohibited the project to date; thus, GPC seeks a pilot program grant to bring broadband services to these rural customers. Again, the project represents an efficient maximization of existing facilities, while providing a scalable solution that can be expanded in the future when GPC is in a position to upgrade local loop facilities. Enclosed with

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<sup>1</sup> FTTx: **F**iber **T**o **T**he x: curb, home, pedestal, node, or loop

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the application are endorsement letters from State Senator Mark Christiansen and a cattle feeder/farmer customer in the area who would be served by the proposed project.

The Imperial project consists of replacing multiple existing fiber-fed, but not currently broadband-capable DLC sites with [REDACTED] broadband DLC equipment, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Imperial central office. No additional fiber infrastructure is required. In addition to the rural areas outside Imperial, the small communities of Champion and Enders would also be served. If requested by the Commission, GPC will provide additional information on the [REDACTED] equipment to be utilized in the project.

Each of the new sites will require placement of a new cabinet to house the [REDACTED], power, and associated equipment. The existing copper loops will be retained for all customer locations served by the project. The new [REDACTED] equipment will provide both voice and broadband, with speeds of at least “5/1” available to all customers. Some of these locations will be capable of upgrades to FTTx by the future addition of cards in the existing frames and fiber loops placed to the customers.

#### **#3 - Huntley and Ragan Project**

The Huntley and Ragan wireline project proposes to expand GPC’s DSL service availability to approximately [REDACTED] customers in the rural areas southwest of Wilcox, including the small communities of Huntley and Ragan and near Republican City. Expanding services to these rural areas has also been a goal of GPC’s long- term network planning, but the company has been unable to accommodate this project in its budgets. As with the Wisner and Imperial proposals, this project represents a good utilization of existing facilities, while providing a scalable solution that can be expanded in the future when GPC is in a position to upgrade local loop facilities.

The Huntley and Ragan project consists of placing [REDACTED] broadband DLC equipment, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Huntley and Ragan central offices. If requested by the Commission, GPC will provide additional information on the [REDACTED] equipment to be utilized in the project.

#### **#4 - Creighton Project**

The Creighton wireline project proposes to expand GPC’s DSL service availability to approximately [REDACTED] customers in the rural areas west of Creighton. GPC has long wanted to expand broadband services to these rural areas but has been unable to do so financially.

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The Creighton project consists of placing [REDACTED] broadband DLC equipment, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Creighton central office. Each of the new sites will require placement of fiber backbone cable and a new cabinet to house the Adtran equipment, power and associated equipment. The existing copper loops will be retained for customer locations served by the project. The new [REDACTED] equipment will provide both voice and broadband, with speeds of at least “5/1” available to all customers, and some of these locations will be capable of upgrades to FTTx by the future addition of cards in the existing frames and fiber loops placed to the customers.

#### **#5 - Nenzel Project**

The Nenzel wireline project proposes to expand GPC’s DSL service availability to [REDACTED] customers in the rural community of Nenzel, west of Cody in north-central Nebraska. The expense of providing broadband service in this very rural part of the state has been prohibitive in the past.

The Nenzel project consists of placing [REDACTED] broadband DLC equipment in an existing hut located just outside Nenzel, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Cody central office. Since existing fiber backbone cable is already located near this hut, no additional fiber cable placement will be required. The hut will be used to house the [REDACTED] equipment, power and associated equipment. The existing copper loops will be retained for customer locations served by the project, and the new [REDACTED] equipment will provide both voice and broadband, with speeds of at least “5/1” available to all customers. This location will be capable of upgrades to FTTx by the future addition of cards in the existing frames and fiber loops placed to the customers.

#### **#6 - Clinton Project**

The Clinton wireline project proposes to expand GPC’s DSL service availability to approximately [REDACTED] customers in the rural area west of Gordon in northwest Nebraska, including the rural community of Clinton. As with Nenzel, the major expense of providing broadband service in this area has prohibited this project to date.

The Clinton project consists of placing [REDACTED] broadband DLC equipment, as well as new [REDACTED] equipment in the Gordon central office.

The new site will require placement of new fiber cable off an existing backbone cable and a new cabinet to house the [REDACTED] DLC, power and associated equipment. The existing copper loops

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will be retained for customer locations served by the project. The new [REDACTED] equipment will provide both voice and broadband, with speeds of at least “5/1” available to all customers, and this location will be capable of upgrades to FTTx by the future addition of cards in the existing frames and fiber loops placed to the customers.

### **Letters of Recommendation**

GPC’s four letters of recommendation for the proposed Wisner and Imperial projects are presented in Tab 15 of this binder, and they are also provided electronically in the attached files:

Project #1 – Wisner

*Senator Brasch Letter.pdf*

*Feller Cattle Feeder Letter.pdf*

Project #2 - Imperial

*Senator Christensen Letter.pdf*

*Stromberger Farms Letter.pdf*

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## Application Checklist Item #3:

**“A description of which areas are “unserved” or “underserved” in accordance with the Commission’s definition.”**

### Narrative:

The household counts in this table were obtained using three different information sources:

1. “Business and Consumer” data from InfoUSA
2. GPC’s customer information and billing database
3. GPC’s CAD system

<b>Project</b>	<b>Wireless Providers<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Underserved Households</b>	<b>Unserved Households</b>	<b>Total Households</b>
#1 - Wisner	TDS, VznW	■	■	■
#2 - Imperial	TDS, VznW	■	■	■
#3 - Huntley and Ragan	ATC	■	■	■
#4 - Creighton	TDS, VznW	■	■	■
#5 - Nenzel	TDS	■	■	■
#6 - Clinton	VznW	■	■	■
<b>TOTALS</b>		■	■	■

This information has been verified by GPC’s local managers and technicians, and cross-checked against the Nebraska Broadband Map.

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<sup>2</sup> TDS: Telephone and Data Systems, Inc (U S Cellular)  
VznW: Verizon Wireless  
ATC: Arapahoe Telephone Company

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## Application Checklist Item #4:

**“An electronic map of all geographic locations where broadband facilities would be deployed under the proposed project which shall include 2010 Census Block boundaries of service area, by project, along with a demonstration that the area is currently unserved or underserved. The map must demonstrate coverage in 2010 census blocks. (The map must show proposed project locations and does not need to depict the applicant’s other service territory.)”**

### Narrative:

GPC has provided electronic maps in Adobe Acrobat (.pdf) format. Printouts of these maps are also provided with this application for reference. For all six projects, all census blocks that fall under the proposed service solutions are numbered according to the 2010 Census Block boundaries and shown on the maps.

The individual maps for all six project locations are available in 11” x 17” print format in Tab 13 of this document, and they are also provided electronically in the attached files:

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #1 - Wisner.pdf*

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #2 - Imperial.pdf*

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #3 – Huntley and Ragan.pdf*

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #4 – Creighton.pdf*

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #5 – Nenzel.pdf*

*GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project #6 – Clinton.pdf*

The legend on the Nenzel project map is titled “Cody” because the village of Nenzel is part of the Cody exchange. Likewise, the legend on the Clinton project map is titled “Gordon” for the same reason.

If required by the PSC, GPC can provide the above maps in the file format native to our internal CAD system.

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## Application Checklist Item #5:

**“An estimate of the number of potential new broadband subscribers.”**

*Narrative:*

At this time, GPC has about a [REDACTED] take rate in the areas where a “5/1” broadband service is offered. That same percentage is used to identify the estimated number of customers projected to sign up for the “5/1” service offered by each project.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Underserved Households</b>	<b>Unserved Households</b>	<b>Potential Subscribers</b>	<b>Estimated Subscribers</b>
#1 - Wisner	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
#2 - Imperial	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
#3 - Huntley and Ragan	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
#4 - Creighton	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
#5 - Nenzel	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
#6 - Clinton	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
<b>Total</b>	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

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#### Application Checklist Item #6:

“A schedule for broadband deployment with commitment to complete the build-out within 24 months of approval of the application. The schedule should describe milestones in project completion increments of 25 percent, and the estimated date by which the milestones will be completed.<sup>3</sup>”

#### Narrative:

Below are the primary activities and planned start dates for all six of the proposed projects. The “Production Date” shown for each project is when the service will be available for full consumer use.

2014 Project Milestones					
Project	Fiber Optic Construction	Equipment Orders	Equipment Installation	System Testing	Production Date
#1 - Wisner	████	████	████	████	████
#2 - Imperial	██	████	████	████	████
#3 – Huntley and Ragan	████	████	████	████	████
#4 - Creighton	████	████	████	████	████
#5 - Nenzel	██	████	████	████	████
#6 - Clinton	████	████	████	████	████

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<sup>3</sup> While the applicant must provide a build-out plan which shows a commitment to complete the project within 24 months. This timeframe may be extended by the Commission upon a showing of extraordinary circumstances.

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**Application Checklist Item #7:**

**“A proposed budget, showing total project costs, in electronic format, with a detailed breakdown of the cost elements and a depreciation schedule showing the life of the investment.”**

*Narrative:*

Summary totals from the proposed project budget, along with a depreciation schedule, are provided below:

Project	Network Equipment	Fiber Optics	Customer Premise Equipment	Total Capital Budget	GPC Match (25%)	Annual Depreciation (5 Year Life)
#1 - Wisner	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
#2 - Imperial	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
#3 - Huntley	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
#4 - Creighton	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
#5 - Nenzel	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
#6 - Clinton	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████

<b>TOTALS</b>	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████	██████
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The budget details for each of the six proposed projects are available in Tab 14 of this document, and they are also provided electronically in the attached file: *GPC 2013 NUSF 77 Project Budgets.xlsx*. The budget information includes an estimate of anticipated penetration rates for each market (as described in Item #5) that was used to derive the CPE CapEx estimations in the above table.

For all the proposed projects, GPC has relied upon its vast depth of experience with projects of this nature to estimate CapEx requirements. Pending grant award, GPC plans to utilize its existing vendor, ██████, for the DSL equipment that will be installed for our projects. As a long-term existing customer, GPC receives “best-in-class” pricing from this vendor, although specific prices are also subject to non-disclosure agreement. The project budget presents representative pricing for each of the projects.

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## Application Checklist Item #8:

**“Proposed retail pricing, including both monthly recurring costs and nonrecurring costs for the new broadband service(s) to be offered.”**

### *Narrative:*

The recurring pricing of the broadband service offered through these projects will be consistent with GPC’s current a la carte and bundled monthly recurring prices. GPC will also use their standard nonrecurring costs (Installation Fees) for these services.

#### **Residential: a la carte**

5 Mbps	\$55.95
10 Mbps	\$65.95

#### **Business: a la carte**

5 Mbps	\$58.95
10 Mbps	\$68.95

#### **Residential Service**

Bundle: Phone, LD, Internet \$68.99  
(\$34.30 for the Internet service within the bundle)

#### **Installation Fees**

One service:	\$65.00
Two Services:	\$32.50
Three Services:	\$21.67



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## Application Checklist Item #9:

**“A description of the applicant’s commitment to offer broadband services to all households within the service area of the project for a minimum of five (5) years.”**

### Narrative:

GPC will provide broadband service to each household within the described service areas for a period of no less than five years.

For the proposed six projects GPC will provide service to each customer in the applicable census blocks as outlined in Item #4. Each of these locations is served by existing GPC facilities for regulated telephone service. Thus, GPC is already obligated to serve these customers and will do so for broadband as required by the pilot program.

The [REDACTED] product is capable of delivering broadband services over several different technology platforms, utilizing both fiber and copper facilities. It can be used to deliver ADSL or VDSL based broadband over copper local loops, for speeds from a minimal 5 Mbps x 1 Mbps up to 75 Mbps x 10 Mbps, dependent on the gauge and availability of copper pairs and the distance between the equipment and the subscriber. The [REDACTED] also fully supports the deployment of two FTTH technologies, GPON and Active Ethernet. These can deliver broadband from 75 Mbps x 1 Mbps up to 1 Gbps x 1 Gbps over a fiber local loop. In the more remote rural areas, the [REDACTED] may be deployed, which will allow for ADSL only service over copper loops. However, this product will still provide a robust 25 Mbps x 1 Mbps broadband service, dependent on distance and gauge of the copper cable.

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### Application Checklist Item #10:

**“A description of the applicant’s commitment to provide broadband data to the Commission and its vendors for the duration of the State Broadband Data and Development (SBDD) program so that this broadband coverage area can be depicted on the Commission’s state broadband data inventory map and on the National Telecommunications and Information Administration’s (NTIA’s) national broadband map.”**

#### *Narrative:*

To date for this activity, GPC has strived to supply timely and highly accurate mapping data for both the SBDD and NTIA mapping activities. As a successful applicant to Nebraska Broadband Pilot Program, GPC will provide the Commission and its vendors all required broadband mapping data for these new service areas, so the benefits of these projects can be recognized and incorporated into broadband inventory maps at the Commission and NTIA.

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## Application Checklist Item #11:

**“A description of the applicant’s financial qualifications, which may be filed on a confidential basis, to meet the commitments made in the application.”<sup>4</sup>**

### *Narrative:*

GPC’s Annual Report Form M illustrates the company’s financial position and is on file with the Nebraska PSC.

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<sup>4</sup> For companies filing Annual Report Form M information, such information would be sufficient to meet this requirement.

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## Application Checklist Item #12:

**“If the applicant does not have a certificate of public convenience and necessity to provide telecommunications services in Nebraska, a demonstration of the applicant’s financial, technical, and managerial competence.<sup>5</sup>”**

*Narrative:*

N/A

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<sup>5</sup> A balance sheet and income statement can be submitted to demonstrate financial competency.