

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STIMULUS MONEY AWARDED IN NEBRASKA FOR
BROADBAND MAPPING AND PLANNING**

On January 13, 2010, the State of Nebraska was approved for \$2.1 million in stimulus funding for broadband mapping and planning activities as part of the Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to increase broadband access and adoption throughout the country. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), an agency within the Department of Commerce, awarded \$1.2 million of the funding for a two year period ending December 31, 2011 to complete broadband data collection and mapping activities and \$500,000 over the next five years ending December 31, 2014 to complete broadband planning activities. Last August, the NTIA released a Notice of Funds Availability (NOFA) which allowed each state or its designated entity to apply for funding necessary to gather broadband data and produce a broadband availability map for the applicant's state. The state data will be submitted to the NTIA for inclusion in the national broadband database and the mapping efforts will assist the NTIA in producing a national broadband map expected to be publicly available by February, 2011.

The Nebraska Public Service Commission (NPSC) was named the designated entity by Governor Dave Heineman to apply for the grant and complete the mapping and planning project. Commission Chair Jerry Vap of McCook stated "The funding provided through this grant will enable the Commission to expand upon previous broadband surveys we have completed. The information obtained from this effort will significantly increase the ability of Nebraska residents and businesses to see where broadband services

are and are not available.” Commissioner Rod Johnson of Sutton added “This grant should result in the information necessary to identify unserved and underserved areas in Nebraska and develop strategies to provide broadband to those areas”. The NPSC has selected a contractor, Apex CoVantage, through a competitive bidding process, to gather broadband data and map that data for Nebraska. Apex CoVantage plans to open a temporary office and hire Nebraska residents to assist in the broadband data collection, verification and mapping portion of the grant.

The broadband planning portion of the grant awarded will be a collaborative process led by the Nebraska Information Technology Commission’s (NITC) Community Council, University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL), and Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED). A number of approaches will be used to develop both regional and statewide plans to address the broadband needs of Nebraska communities. Initially a statewide mail survey will be conducted to determine the current utilization of Internet service across the state. The survey will also identify barriers to the adoption of broadband Internet service and other information technology services. This information, along with broadband mapping results, will be shared at regional forums. Additional information will be gathered through focus groups and Department of Economic Development business surveys. During the second year of the grant, targeted demonstration workshops and training will be offered to encourage greater use of technology that broadband can deliver with the goal of greater adoption of broadband service.

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