A business plan for the proposed network: The business plan should include: details of the proposed project, including the objectives and purpose of the project. Who will be served, what critical needs of the community will be met? A description of any risk factors or legal challenges that must be addressed prior to or during the project in question, such as local zoning, right of way, tribal approval*, and permitting processes, and how the applicant intends to mitigate these risk factors or legal challenges. A financial analysis for the project including cash flow projections for the project for a minimum of 5 years including an explanation of revenue assumptions and take rate. A description of the plans for long-term maintenance of the network built through the grant. Disclose any prior receipt of federally awarded grant funds for broadband deployment and provide copies of any past audits of federal awards. Community engagement demonstration including identification of the community leaders or individuals with decision making authority for the community/communities within the project area. NOTE: Projections that do not reflect positive capitalization should include a written explanation as to how a project will be maintained over the life of the facilities. For projects that involve broadband development on tribal lands, permission from and approval by tribes is required and documentation of the approval must be provided to the Commission no later than March 27, 2024.

Applicant Response:

a) Objectives and Purpose of the Proposed Project
The objective of the proposed project is to bring high speed internet access to unserved, overlooked, under-resourced rural areas. The people who will benefit from this service will experience a dramatic difference in their ability to participate in today's economy. Students will be able to participate in digital education and access resources from a much larger network. Senior citizens and people who are home-bound will be able to receive tele-medicine advice and care without having to go through the onerous, and often costly, hassle of commuting for an in-person appointment. Farmers and other agricultural businesses will be able to utilize devices that monitor environments wirelessly, thereby, enhancing their ability to react promptly and accurately to needs as they arise. Overall, citizens will be more able to participate in their community, and work to make their homes, institutions, families, and businesses thrive.

b) Risk Factors and Challenges
One risk factor common to all projects is the uncertainty around the timing of permitting for construction. However, Nextlink mitigates this risk by bringing its extensive experience in building its own fixed wireless network, and the team is adept at navigating permitting applications and requirements. Additionally, the various jurisdictions within the project areas are highly motivated to make high-quality, high-speed internet available to their citizens and will work with Nextlink to streamline this process.

c) Financial Analysis
A financial analysis is included in Attachment G_7c that includes projected five-year balance sheets, income statements and cash flows with an analysis for the project both with and without the grant. This project is expected to generate net positive cash flow greater than 10 years. Revenue is based on plan pricing for the internet plans anticipated for the area and based on the build, The subscribers grow over

time from year 1 to year 3 as towers become active and households obtain or switch to Nextlink, estimated to be 20% take rate in year 1, 35% in year 2, and 15% in year 3.

The project includes a request for **$607,144.50** in Nebraska Broadband Bridge funding and assumes **$188,397.93**, or **20**% in matched funds. The matched funds will come from Nextlink through its operating cash flows (reflected in equity in the attached financial analysis) or revolving credit facility (reflected as debt in the attached financial analysis).

Payback Period Summary with Grant Support		
Grant %		80%
Operating cash flows	$	(14,982.71)
Grantee investment	$	(151,786.12)
NWC funding	$	4,441.22
Net cash flows	$	(162,327.61)
Payback Period (months)	Greater than 10 years	
Payback Period (years)	Greater than 10 years	

d) Long-term Maintenance of the Network
The expected useful life of tower facilities is 20+ years. Fiber facilities have an expected life of 30+ years.

The technological components attached to the tower facilities and installed at the customers' premises that are used to deliver internet service to the end-user are high-end, high-quality components that are backed by manufacturer warranties and are constantly monitored and maintained. The expected useful life of these components is typically around 5 years. In addition, as wireless equipment continues to rapidly improve in capabilities and quality, Nextlink has historically responded by upgrading its gear to meet the growing needs of the end-user. We anticipate continuing to do so here as well.

e) Federal Broadband Awards and Additional Grant Projects
Nextlink is the largest winner of CAF2 (Connect America Fund Phase 2) funding of $281m to serve 100,000 households and the 5th largest winner of RDOF (Rural Digital Opportunity Fund) funding of $429m to serve 206,000 households. Nextlink is required to submit locations served and speeds to the USAC (Universal Service Administrative Company). The CAF2 program required construction to be 40% complete by December 31, 2023. Nextlink, in fact, exceeded that benchmark, by completing over 50% of its CAF2 construction in the state of Nebraska within that timeframe. Nextlink has submitted 100/20 Mbps speed and sub-100ms latency tests in response to USAC randomly selected service locations.

Nextlink has been awarded other grants throughout its 12-state footprint, including Iowa's Empower Rural Iowa Broadband Grant Program NOFA 7 and 8, Louisiana's GUMBO (Granting Unserved Municipalities Broadband Opportunities) Program, and Indiana's Next Level Connections Program and the Indiana Connectivity Program. Nextlink has also been awarded county grants from Gage County, Nebraska; Wise County, Texas; and Champaign and Knox Counties in Illinois.

f) Long-term Viability of the Project

Nextlink commits for the long term, and consistently improves. All of our service areas that we deployed over a decade ago when the company was first founded are still served, typically with improved service quality and lower prices. We would do the same in this grant area.

Nextlink utilizes a variety of technologies and network architectures for the delivery of high-speed internet services to customers in rural communities. The services are delivered through both fiber and wireless technologies that are interconnected into multiple data centers across multiple states to provide customers with an exceptionally reliable and resilient customer experience. The fiber-related technologies and architectures used are further elaborated below.

Last Mile - For its near 100,000 subscribers across the twelve states, Nextlink utilizes last mile technologies using both fiber and fixed-wireless technologies. Internet speeds as high as 10Gbps are provided to subscribers. Nextlink is actively providing gigabit services to subscribers using **both** fiber and wireless technology methods.

Wireless - Nextlink's last-mile wireless connections to the premises today utilize PtMP wireless connections utilizing CBRS (Citizens Broadband Radio Service) 3.5 GHz, 5Ghz and 6Ghz spectrum bands. (Note: To further enhance the Gigabit service tier, 6 GHz will transition from testing to full production for select areas using the Cambium ePMP6K and Tarana ngFWA product solution to provide wireless speed performance at the gigabit level.) Table-1 below summarizes the wireless technologies and associated performance tier. The subscriber equipment used has an average mean time before failure (MTBF) of over 11 years. This is backed in most cases by a 3-year manufacturing warranty from defects or performance problems. Nextlink takes great care during the installation process to ensure all equipment is properly installed and has a full quality assurance team that reviews installation photos to ensure it complies with operational standards.

g) Community Engagement
Nextlink's community engagement and weekly outreach efforts have galvanized support for this project in several communities. While reaching out to community members, a common theme emerged. It is well understood by the anchor community institutions that adequate broadband service is lacking in the rural areas where the proposed project will be focused. As discussed throughout the grant application, this inadequacy manifests itself through difficulties for healthcare agencies, schools, businesses, and individual families. Support from all parts of the community has been tremendous and illustrates how well Nextlink's project will serve the community's needs.

Our goal is to be local providers and partners in every community we serve. We do this through membership with county level associations, chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, partnerships with schools and charitable contributions. For example, Nextlink's ongoing Giving Back Campaign donates funding to local non-profit organizations in the communities that it serves. Our Giving Back Campaign began with a donation to the Good Neighbor Community Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, and will be tailored to suit project communities' individualized needs. Furthermore, our membership with NACO (National Association of Counties) has enabled us to contribute to the

continuing improvement of county government within our Nebraska coverage areas 37 counties (and growing!) for the ultimate benefit, common good and general welfare of county residents.

Nextlink Internet is actively partnering with community stakeholders and anchor institutions to secure Digital Navigators to address the entire digital inclusion process — home connectivity, devices, and digital skills — with members of its communities through repeated interactions. Microsoft Airband partners, like Rural LISC, have been working with Nextlink to identify community organizations in the designated project areas to train, organize, and deploy volunteers to serve as digital navigators. Digital Navigators often come from the community they serve, which makes them well-positioned to understand and address the technology-related concerns of their fellow community members. A public library embodies the innate trust that is critical to the role of a Digital Navigator.

These navigators will be volunteers or cross-trained staff who currently work in social service agencies, libraries, health, and more who offer remote and in-person guidance. Digital Navigators will be familiar with resources that relate to digital equity and will help residents learn to use critical online services that provide guidance with food support, rent, education, employment, childcare, government benefits and more. Furthermore, they will recommend resources, monitor progress, and check back with people they help.

Nextlink is leveraging its established relationships with community colleges and public libraries that are trusted anchor institutions whose position at the intersection of media, information, and technology makes them dependable guides for the people they work with. As Dr. Grant W. Wilson, Executive VP of Educational & Student Services at Western Nebraska Community College pointed out in his letter of support for Nextlink's proposed projects, "blizzard conditions, subzero temperatures, and potentially lethal wind-chills, the option of getting physically to a location isn't always possible in this part of the state." Nextlink is committed to aiding the entire Panhandle of Nebraska, and this project will just be one of many efforts to meet that goal.