

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Nebraska Public Service )  
Commission, on its own motion, seeking to )  
administer the Nebraska Universal Service )  
Fund's Broadband Program: Application )  
to the Nebraska Broadband Program )  
Received as a RLEC Joint Application )  
Three River Telco )

Application No. NUSF-92.44



**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF NEIL CLASSEN IN SUPPORT OF APPLICATION**

**Q. Please state your name.**

A. My name is Neil Classen.

**Q. Please state your position with and the name of your current employer and provide a summary of your duties.**

A. I am the General Manager of Three River Telco ("TRT") and have served in this role since December of 1999. My duties include oversight of all technical, administrative, operations, and financial areas of TRT.

**Q. Please describe the Applicant and its business.**

TRT is an incumbent local exchange carrier subject to the jurisdiction of the Nebraska Public Service Commission ("Commission"). TRT holds a certificate of public convenience and necessity issued by the Commission and provides wireline telecommunications service and Internet access service in parts of counties located in north-central Nebraska. TRT provides service in five exchanges and has approximately 1,780 voice lines and 725 broadband connections.

**Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

A. My testimony is provided to support TRT's application filed with the Commission for funding under the Nebraska Universal Service Fund Broadband Adoption

Program (“Application”).

**Q. Can you describe the Application and its objectives?**

A. Yes. Our application is a joint application with five other RLECs in Nebraska. One of our main objectives is to meet the criteria as listed in the NUSF-92 Order that was entered on January 26, 2016. Specifically, the Commission allocated monies for projects which include adoption and availability projects designed to reach low-income consumers and non-adopters. In addition, the Commission stated its desire to see proposals designed to bring broadband availability to community centers or public facilities where low-income and elderly consumers can obtain public access to free broadband service and digital literacy training. Our goal is to reach out to non-adopters, including the elderly and those with low income by providing them with digital literacy training in community centers and public facilities, as well as company facilities.

As we stated in our Application, research has indicated that major barriers to broadband adoption include relevancy and usefulness. Research has also indicated that many subscribers of broadband lack a sufficient level of digital readiness to use online applications. Our application is designed to train individuals in our communities that may not understand the relevance and usefulness of the Internet and may lack the basic digital literacy skills to feel comfortable accessing the Internet. Through proper training, it is our goal for those who attend the training will be able to overcome these barriers.

The training programs for this application are designed to increase individuals’ knowledge of the Internet and provide the relevant skill set in an easy to understand, non-intimidating format. By increasing the confidence and digital literacy in current

non-adopters, including the elderly and low income populations, we believe the objectives of increased adoption and utilization can be achieved.

In addition, we believe providing digital literacy training to those with low income could in fact enhance the value of the FCC's Lifeline for broadband program. We believe individuals who qualify for the program are more likely to apply for the program if they have the knowledge to use broadband to enrich them personally and professionally.

**Q. How will the availability of the training be maximized?**

A. To maximize the availability of this training, our training partner, Consortia Consulting, will utilize a "train-the-trainer" model. Consortia will train individuals from each local exchange carrier including TRT, and will provide all necessary materials and resources needed for each local provider to offer successful workshops in their communities. By training individuals from TRT and providing us with the requisite skills, tools, and materials, we can be the "go-to" place for training and supporting our community members in the use of the Internet with on-line skills and knowledge. We can repeat this training at multiple locations and at multiple times depending on the relevant needs of those individuals in the communities we serve.

**Q. Where in TRT's territory is broadband available and what is the current penetration rate?**

A. Broadband is available throughout the TRT service area. Our broadband penetration rate is approximately 70%.

**Q. What proportion of the population located in your service area are considered elderly and what proportion are low income?**

A. Approximately 25% of the population in our service area is 65 and older and approximately 15% of our population are low income.

**Q. Where and when will your training sessions take place?**

A. Our training will take place at community centers or public facilities where low-income and elderly consumers can obtain public access to free broadband service and digital literacy training. Training will occur in the evenings at the Lynch Community Hall, the Multi-Purpose room at Keya Paha High School in Springview, and at Ainsworth High School. The sessions will most likely occur in the Fall of 2016, probably over a three to four months time frame. Additional sessions could occur outside of the grant based upon the outcome of the training sessions.

**Q. How many training sessions are you planning to have?**

A. TRT plans to conduct five or six training classes with individuals from our company providing the training to the public. Our goal is to train around 10 individuals in each course. This is about the right number given size constraints as well as the ability of the trainers to adequately train those in attendance.

**Q. Will those attending the training be expected to bring their own device?**

A. No. TRT will have devices available for training purposes for those individuals who do not have their own device, choose not to bring their own device, or are unable to bring their own device.

**Q. How will you inform the public of your training sessions?**

A. TRT plans to advertise the availability of the training sessions through the use of the newspaper, bill inserts, radio, and TV.

**Q. Will you offer incentives to current non-adopters?**

A. TRT will consider having a free install and a special introductory rate for new customers that have attended the broadband classes. In addition, we will offer lifeline for broadband in accordance with the FCC's Lifeline Modernization Order.

**Q. Are there additional details and supporting information in the Application?**

A. Yes. The Application filed with the Commission contains a more detailed description of the proposed TRT training program project, along with all required supporting information.

**Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

A. Yes.

**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

The undersigned hereby certifies that on this 9th day of August, 2016, the original, five copies and an electronic copy of the foregoing pleading was delivered to:

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Dan Davis