

PSC DEPARTMENT DIGEST

Nebraska Public Service Commission
December 2021
Edition 10, Volume 10

Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program Application/Challenge Process Completed

Seventy-six applications for funding through the Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program (NBBP) were received by the Commission during the 2021 grant cycle. As a result, challenges were subsequently submitted by parties claiming that they either already serve an area covered by a grant application, or they plan to provide service to the area in the near future.

Created under the Broadband Bridge Act (LB388) the NBBP will provide grants for the deployment of broadband networks capable of at least 100/100 Mbps (up/down) in unserved and underserved areas of the state.

Per the [procedural schedule](#), applicants receiving challenges were notified by the Commission as was any applicant whose submission needed to be supplemented or modified.

Applications are now under review by the Commission with final grant awards scheduled to be announced on or before Tuesday, January 4. Results of the challenge process will also be released at that time.

“The application process for this first year of grants has worked well,” said Cullen Robbins, Director PSC Telecommunications Department. “We want to thank everyone who participated in this initial process and we would encourage interested parties to participate in the future as the program continues to work to bring broadband to unserved and underserved Nebraskans.”

A listing of all the applications and challenge notices can be found on the [Nebraska Broadband Bridge Program page](#) of the PSC website under the Telecommunications tab.



SECRETARY'S RECORD, PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION	
Application No. C-5272	Attachment A: Procedural Schedule (Corrected)
Event	Date
Commission enters order setting out application and scoring criteria	Tuesday, August 10, 2021
Application period begins Challenge forms released	Thursday, September 9, 2021
Deadline to submit applications	Friday, October 1, 2021
Applications posted to Commission website	Wednesday, October 6, 2021
Notices of intent to challenge due to Commission and to Applicant	Wednesday, October 13, 2021
Challenges due	Friday, November 5, 2021
Commission to notify applicants of defects that must be cured and of areas of overlap with other applications	Wednesday, November 10, 2021
Commission to notify applicants of challenges received	3 business days after challenge filed. Last notification to be sent Wednesday, November 10, 2021
Deadline for applicants to supplement or modify challenged applications	Wednesday, November 24, 2021
Deadline for applicants to cure defects in applications	10 business days after notification of challenge. Last submission due Wednesday, November 24, 2021
Grant awards released	Tuesday, January 4, 2022
Results of challenges released	Tuesday, January 4, 2022
State of Nebraska W-9 and ACH enrollment form due from successful applicants	Monday, January 10, 2022

PSC EMPLOYEES HONORED DURING STATE RECOGNITION PROGRAM

Each fall the state of Nebraska takes the opportunity to show appreciation to its employees for their loyalty and professional excellence.

Coordinated by the Administrative Services State Personnel Division on behalf of the Governor's office, the Team Nebraska Excellence in Recognition awards focus on both exceptional performance and career tenure of state employees.

In 2021, the Nebraska Public Service Commission honored Administrative Secretary/Receptionist Deborah Bertram as its Excellence in Leadership award recipient.

A longtime state employee Deborah has greeted PSC visitors since 2019. During the height of the pandemic, she was steadfast in her responsibilities assisting Commission departments with administrative duties and was instrumental in helping to develop and implement paperless processes on the fly, aiding the agency in its transition to a remote working environment.

Remarkably reliable and diligent Deborah exhibits a true eagerness to learn and is always willing to devote time and attention to special projects.

A great asset to the agency she maintains a positive, friendly and helpful attitude.

Four current PSC employees and two now retired teammates were honored with Excellence in State Service Awards.

30 years of service:

Susan Horn, Telecommunications Department Administrative Assistant

15 years of service:

Laurie Casados, Budget and Finance Manager

Andrea Grell, NTAP Manager

10 years of service:

Jacki Synhorst, State 911 Department Administrative Assistant

Retired teammates honored: Mark Luttich, 45-years and Mike Bartels, 35-years of service.

Congratulations to all PSC award recipients and thank you for all you do and have done for the agency.



Deborah Bertram-Excellence in Leadership Award Recipient



Susan Horn



Laurie Casados



Andrea Grell



Jacki Synhorst



PSC's Cold Weather Rule Applies to Jurisdictional Natural Gas Utilities

Implemented in 2003 when the PSC was given regulatory authority over the state's jurisdictional natural gas utilities, (Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy), the Cold Weather Rule helps to ensure consumers stay connected during the typically frigid winter months.

"Our jurisdictional natural gas providers work hard to provide a variety of services aimed at ensuring their customers remain connected," said Nichole Mulcahy, Director PSC Natural Gas Department. "The Cold Weather Rule is an established way to aid consumers with winter heating bills."

From November 1 through March 31, Black Hills Energy and NorthWestern Energy cannot shut off service to customers without allowing an additional 30-days to pay their bill beyond their normal billing due date. Customers who are having difficulty meeting their obligations should contact their natural gas provider to arrange payment.

It is important to note the Cold Weather Rule does not apply to Nebraska Communities served by municipally owned natural gas utilities. Additional public assistance programs such as the [Low Income Home Energy Assistance program or LIHEAP](#) run by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services provides assistance to qualified participants having difficulty with home heating or cooling bills.

Information to aid consumers in conserving energy and helping to lower costs can be found on both the [Black Hills Energy](#) and [NorthWestern Energy](#) websites.



Home Heating Energy Saving Tips

According to [Energy.gov](#), heating your home uses more energy and costs more money than any other system in your home -- typically making up about 29% of your utility bill. No matter what form of energy you use to heat your home or apartment, here are tips and strategies that can help you can save money and be more comfortable in the winter:

- If you don't have a programmable thermostat, install one or talk to your landlord about having one installed.
- Set your programmable thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter and lower the setting when you're sleeping or away from home.
- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as recommended.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Eliminate trapped air from hot-water radiators once or twice a season; if unsure about how to perform this task, contact a professional.
- Place heat-resistant radiator reflectors between exterior walls and the radiators.
- Turn off kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing; when replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.
- During winter, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

The Nebraska Energy Office offers energy savings loans and weatherization assistance to help property owners cover the cost to make homes, apartments, businesses, agriculture operations, and local governments in Nebraska more efficient. Please visit the Energy Office website at www.neo.ne.gov for more information.

Transitioning to Next Generation 911

It has been an all-hands-on deck effort over the past year as work building the vast array of components required to implement a Next Generation 911 Emergency Service Network (ESInet) hit its full stride.

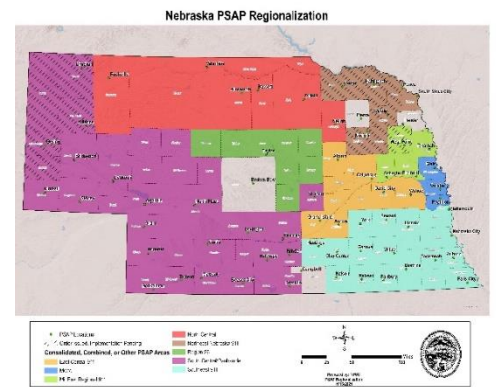
The PSC 911 Department, state vendor Lumen, consultant Mission Critical Partners (MCP), the 911 Service System Advisory Committee (911SSAC) and the Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs) across the state have all contributed to the process that once implemented, will provide end-to-end emergency service management and improved call routing, while working to meet National i3 standards established by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA).

Following a phased in approach, the state is currently in the process of transitioning the first region, the South Central/Panhandle Region to the statewide Emergency Services Internet Protocol Network (ESInet).

The region's two hosts have been connected and testing is under way. It is our expectation that all 22 PSAPs of the South Central/Panhandle Region will be brought onto the ESInet early in the new year.

The state has also put a priority on ensuring PSAPs are taking the necessary steps to safeguard their facilities from security threats. To do so, PSC consultant Mission Critical Partners (MCP) is conducting cybersecurity and physical security assessments for all of the 68 PSAPs.

2022 promises to be an exciting year for public safety communications in Nebraska and we look forward to the sharing even more milestones on the NG911 implementation process in the months ahead.



NG911 Project Deployment

TASK	Start	Finish
South Central Region	Thursday 2/18/21	Thursday 2/15/22
Metro Region	Friday 4/30/21	Monday 3/31/22
North Central Region	Wednesday 6/30/21	Thursday 4/31/22
East Central Region	Monday 8/30/2021	Tuesday 5/31/2022
Mid East 911 Region	Saturday 10/30/2021	Monday 8/1/2022
North Eastern Region	Monday 1/3/2022	Tuesday 10/4/2022
South Eastern Region	Tuesday 3/30/2021	Sunday 12/4/2022

*****Project deployment is estimated and subject to change*****

PSC Promotes Fritz to Grain Department Director

A familiar face is taking over the reins of the PSC Grain Department. The Commission has named Terri Fritz as the Director of the Grain Warehouses and Grain Dealer Department.

Fritz has been with the PSC for seven-years. She started as an administrative assistant in the grain department and was most recently named the Grain Program Manager. Fritz replaces Mike Bartels who recently retired as the department director. She begins her duties immediately.

In her new role, Fritz says she will work to better educate Warehouse owners/operators and producers on the regulatory process and raise awareness of the responsibilities of those who do business in the state of Nebraska.

The Department is responsible for the licensing and enforcement of the Grain Warehouse Act, the Grain Dealer Act, the Grain Moisture Meter and Mechanical Probe Inspection Program. Department members also conduct soybean audits for the Nebraska Soybean Board.



Terri Fritz
Director, PSC
Grain Department

Federal Directed Health Measures Remain in Effect For Transportation Providers

The PSC Transportation Department wants to remind all carriers that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) [Order](#) requiring persons to wear masks while on conveyances and at transportation hubs remains in effect.

Public Transportation Conveyance is any mode of transport other than private vehicle. Among the types of conveyances included are taxis, limousines, buses and ride-shares.

Per the [Order](#) which took effect February 1, 2021, conveyance operators must require all people onboard to wear masks for the duration of travel, unless they are located in outdoor areas of the conveyance or transportation hub.

Transportation providers are also reminded to follow any state or local Health Directives that might be in place.

Questions? Contact the PSC Transportation Department @ psc.motorfilings@nebraska.gov



*Happy Holidays from the
Nebraska Public Service Commission*

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.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION
1200 N STREET, SUITE 300
LINCOLN, NE 687508
www.psc.nebraska.gov
1.800.526.0017 (NE only)
402.471.3101

