



February 22, 2023

RE: Nebraska Capital Projects Fund Broadband Grant Program, Nextlink (Pickrell) Application

To Whom it May Concern:

The Southeast Nebraska Development District (SEND D) is pleased to extend its support to Nextlink's Capital Projects Fund application to deploy fiber optic broadband in Pickrell.

Nextlink's Pickrell application exemplifies SEND D's continued commitment to ensuring the District's member communities and counties are involved in the broadband expansion process. The Gage County Board of Supervisors and the Village of Pickrell have identified a need for significant additional broadband investment in the community and the Capital Projects Fund presents a valuable opportunity to finally bring future-proof connectivity to the community.

Nextlink has designed this project and others to be receptive to the connectivity needs of residents and businesses in Pickrell, nearby communities, and rural Gage County. Moreover, their partnership with the County ensures Nextlink will be extraordinarily well-positioned to deploy fiber in a cost- and time-effective manner upon award of this grant. The company's participation in and promotion of the Affordable Connectivity Program also ensures the constructed network will be accessible to residents of all income levels.

Pickrell, like many rural communities within SEND D's membership area, lacks access to wireline broadband infrastructure that delivers the speed and reliability residents need to work from home, learn online, receive quality telehealthcare, and start or grow small businesses. User-generated speed tests submitted by residents of Pickrell through the SEND D & NROC Nebraska Broadband Speed Test initiative as well as open-source Ookla results indicate experienced speeds in the community are far below both 25/3 and 100/20 standards of service. Analysis of the most current FCC BDC coverage reports further evidences underservice in Pickrell. Fiber connectivity deployed with the support of the Nebraska Capital Projects Fund would make an immediate difference in Pickrell by improving resident quality of life and advancing the community's progress toward its economic development goals.

Sincerely,

Tom Bliss

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Bliss", is positioned below the typed name.

Executive Director

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