Applicant Name: NEBRASKALINK, LLC

Project Title: Connecting Nebraska Communities -- A High-Speed Broadband Network for All of Nebraska

Project Type: Comprehensive Community Infrastructure

_______________________ Executive Summary _____________________

The State of Nebraska faces substantial challenges in upgrading its broadband infrastructure for participation in a world that is increasingly migrating to online civic, social, and economic interactions. Communities within Nebraska are spread across vast distances, and the population densities in most serving areas are dramatically low -- meaning communities are often isolated from one another and service providers can find it difficult, if not impossible, to justify the deployment of broadband over such great distances to serve relatively few customers. To overcome this barrier to connections within and between communities, NebraskaLink, LLC proposes to deploy a high-speed fiber network across Nebraska. The NebraskaLink fiber network will benefit schools, community colleges, healthcare providers, public safety, and other government facilities across Nebraska. The network will connect directly to 101 community anchor institutions in nine Nebraska communities. NebraskaLink will also have the ability to interconnect with 3rd party last mile providers in these nine communities. Furthermore, NebraskaLink plans to interconnect with 3rd party last mile providers in 28 additional communities defined as Middle Mile Service Areas where they will not directly connect to community anchor institutions. These last mile connections will improve broadband services for businesses, residents, and 425 other anchor institutions. NebraskaLink also plans to interconnect with the SDN Communications statewide fiber network in South Dakota in the near future. This will provide access to an additional 500 community anchor institutions on the SDN network. These interconnections will provide an even greater scale of further beneficial impacts to anchor institutions and end users within Nebraska and South Dakota. Many of the tribal institutions in Nebraska have been searching for ways to address their lack of access to viable broadband services. For instance, the Omaha and Winnebago Reservations in northeastern Nebraska are served via a fiber ring. NebraskaLink will interconnect with this fiber ring providing more robust broadband access. NebraskaLink will enable end users in the service areas to overcome the significant geographical distances that often act as barriers to access to the valuable information and resources available through the Internet. Without funding for NebraskaLink's network, it is unlikely a network of this size, scale, redundancy, and reliability could be built. This is due to the significant costs involved in building a fiber ring in rural areas, where facilities must be built and connected over long distances. Moreover, economic conditions throughout Nebraska have stymied the necessary private investment to build a high capacity middle mile broadband network. Accordingly, the only reasonable way to bring the significant benefits of broadband to Nebraska in the foreseeable future is through funding assistance to construct NebraskaLink's proposed network. A General Description of the Proposed Funded Service Areas NebraskaLink will connect directly to
community anchor institutions in the nine communities of Alliance, Chadron, Grand Island, Kearney, McCook, North Platte, O’Neill, Sidney, and Valentine. Additionally, NebraskaLink will interconnect with numerous providers who offer last-mile broadband services. These additional service areas include Arlington, Arnold, Aurora, Blair, Bloomfield, Brady, Broken Bow, Clarks, Clearwater, Crofton, Dalton, Gordon, Grant, Herman, Hemingford, Jackson, Merna, Norfolk, Osmond, Paxton, Ponca, Ravenna, Sargent, Snyder, Tekamah, Walthill, Wausa, and Wauneta. Number of Households and Businesses Passed The following is a summary of the number of households and businesses passed by the proposed project. Household Quantity Passed: 85,260 Business Quantity Passed: 8,049 Number of Community Anchor Institutions, Public Safety Entities, and Critical Community Organizations Passed and/or Involved with Project NebraskaLink will directly connect to 101 institutions. The network will also interconnect with last mile providers, improving broadband for an additional 425 other anchor institutions located within the Middle Mile Proposed Funded Service Areas. Proposed Services and Applications for the Proposed Funded Service Areas and Users The project will allow critical anchor institutions such as community colleges, public safety, libraries, medical and healthcare facilities, K-12 schools, other higher education, other government offices, and other community support organization to have choice of provider, increase in broadband speeds, ability to connect to other critical anchor institutions, and ability to use a redundant reliable broadband middle mile network. At the directly connected CAIs, NebraskaLink will deploy CPE with the ability to interface to the customer on a DS-1 or an Ethernet basis and to connect to the electronics for that community via a 1 GbE connection. Essentially, this allows each CAI to receive services with up to 1 Gbps data rates. The interconnections with existing last mile service providers will be conducted via 10 GbE or 1 GbE interfaces. Moreover, NebraskaLink can cost-effectively add 1 GbE interfaces at the interconnection point to increase the bandwidth being provided to the last mile service provider to greater than 1 Gbps. Approach to Addressing the Non-discrimination and Interconnection Obligations The network would adhere to the principles contained in the FCC’s Broadband policy statement (FCC 05-151 adopted August 5, 2005) as well as any subsequent rulings or statement(s). NebraskaLink will display its network management policies in a prominent location on its website and provide notice to customers about changes to such practices for the proposed funded facilities. NebraskaLink will also interconnect to the funded network where technically feasible without exceeding current or reasonably anticipated capacity limitations on reasonable rates and terms to be negotiated with requesting parties. Type of Broadband System that will be Deployed The proposed middle mile will provide a carrier-grade fiber network that will allow for a variety of interactive two-way broadband services and digital multimedia. The proposed system is a wireline fiber optic cable backbone that contains numerous components. These range from the fiber optic cable to the Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM) electronics used to 'light' the backbone fiber infrastructure. With regards to the fiber optic cable infrastructure, NebraskaLink will utilize a combination of newly constructed fiber optical cable that will be funded as part of this project, wavelength leases on existing DWDM routes, and leases for the 1550nm window on existing fiber optic cable plant. In addition to the equipment needed to light the fiber, NebraskaLink will provision add/drop equipment on these fiber components to enable interconnection and laterals into specific service areas. Of the 37 Middle Mile Service Areas identified in this application, NebraskaLink will construct fiber laterals in nine communities to directly connect to community anchor institutions and interconnect with last-mile service providers in an additional 28 service areas. Qualifications of the Applicant that Demonstrate the Ability to Implement and Operate a
Broadband Infrastructure, and/or be a Sustainable Broadband Services Provider NebraskaLink has been formed by 7 last mile telecommunications service providers that have been successfully operating for many years in Nebraska. These companies have a proven reputation of deploying applications that can reduce operating costs, increase services, improve customer satisfaction and increase revenue generation. NebraskaLink is led by experienced key staff that can manage their organization to successfully implement and operate the proposed broadband infrastructure. The overall infrastructure cost of the broadband system is $16,496,952. The following is a summary of the Year 8 subscriber projections. Community Anchor Institutions: 52 Third Party Service Providers: 20 Other Customers Served by Third Party Service Providers: 56,301 The NebraskaLink project is estimated to create and save a significant number of jobs. These include "direct" jobs required for the construction of the outside plant network and installation of the network electronics. Moreover, based on the methodology prescribed by the Application Guide, it is estimated that this project would create a substantial amount of "indirect" and "induced" jobs. Direct: 60 Indirect: 44 Induced: 58 Total: 162