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PSC PREPARES FIRST NIEF GRANT APPLICATION PROGRAM

LINCOLN – Preparations for the first round of grants from the Nebraska Internet Enhancement Fund (NIEF) are underway at the Nebraska Public Service Commission.

The NIEF was created by the Legislature in 2001 to provide financial assistance to counties and other municipalities for the installation and delivery of broadband or other advanced telecommunications infrastructure and service.

The fund combines seed money from the Nebraska Legislature with proceeds from leases by agencies and political subdivisions of dark fiber optic lines to certificated telephone companies. The Commission will accept pre-applications and applications later this year, probably beginning in the summer, the Commission noted April 27 at its weekly meeting in Lincoln.

The money will be available to counties and municipalities for improvements to Internet and telecommunications services such as broadband.

In awarding grants the Commission is required by state law to consider high-cost factors such as population density and location of the community. An advisory panel is assisting the Public Service Commission with development of the application process.

The Commission said it will announce dates and deadlines for NIEF applications when plans are finalized.

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