

TO: NITC Commissioners  
FROM: Tom Rolfes, Education I.T. Manager  
DATE: 3/11/2020  
RE: Network Nebraska and Digital Education Initiative Reports

**Education Council update:** The Education Council met on December 16 over Zoom but opted to cancel their February 17 meeting. Progress is still being made on the NITC Action Items, even as schools and colleges grapple with the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Network Nebraska Update:**

- 1. Prepare for the future of Network Nebraska as a statewide, multipurpose, high capacity, scalable telecommunications network**
  - a. The RFP 6454 circuit bids were opened on 2/19/2021 and are in the process of being evaluated.
  - b. An estimated seven public libraries will be able to take advantage of the Public Service Commission's Special Construction Matching E-rate funds for new fiber for 2021-22.
  - c. Network Nebraska internet and backbone have been "holding steady" during this year with no significant increase in demand for bandwidth capacity.
  - d. Internet orders for 2021-22 are expected to increase about 8% for K-12 entities and about 9% for Higher Ed and non-E-rate eligible entities.
  
- 2. Effectively communicate to current and potential Network Nebraska Participants**
  - a. The Office of the CIO has been involved in the Nebraska statewide eduroam pilot project for 2021-23 and is collaborating on the eduroam website and content to be shared with eligible K-12 entities. Soft launch: <https://connectednebraska.com/>
  - b. The Network Nebraska status page (<https://status.networknebraska.net/>) has had favorable reviews, and the University of Nebraska just recently converted their One Call Now alert system to AlertSense.
  
- 3. Identify needs and deliver advanced services to meet the growing needs of its membership**
  - a. The Network Nebraska cybersecurity needs survey has had over a 50% response rate but the goal is to get to 100%.
  - b. Zoom licensing has exceeded 35,000 licenses in 2020-21 and the orders for 2021-22 are about to be submitted.

### **Digital Education Update:**

- 1. Disseminate informational reports to insure the success of Nebraska digital education**
  - a. Work is continuing with the Nebraska Department of Education CARES Act Action Planning. Next steps include reaching out to interested providers about public private internet partnerships, and gathering additional Digital Equity data from school districts, particularly the student households that are unserved or woefully underserved with internet.
  
- 2. Expand awareness and address the need for equity of access**
  - a. The Nebraska Rural Community Schools Association distributed the "playbook" for superintendents to encourage the collection and mapping of student address data, and then increase the level of student home internet to help mitigate the Homework Gap.
  - b. Office of the CIO staff have continued to monitor the development of wireless and satellite technologies to gauge their potential in narrowing the Homework Gap in areas where students households are unserved or underserved.