



NEBRASKA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION Internet Service for Educational Purposes

We need your help to eliminate the Homework Gap for thousands of learners!

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) requests the assistance of telecommunications providers to help bring digital equity to learners and teachers across the state.

PURPOSE

EQUITY and the HOMEWORK GAP

As COVID-19 continues to challenge our nation, the reality is clear: Schools and districts face a multi-pronged challenge in providing the instruction and the supports necessary to ensure that students can learn and grow despite the immense pressures surrounding them and their families.

As schools and districts move toward 1:1 and blended learning instructional models, access to digital content is essential for student success – but not all students have access to reliable Internet at home. The result is a growing problem known as the homework gap, where students without access to reliable Internet after school are unable to complete online assignments.

It's a problem that many educators have been grappling with for years, but one that has been exacerbated—and made more public—by COVID-19: Many students lack sufficient Internet connections at home to be able to complete their schoolwork. In a matter of days, the “homework gap” widened to a full-fledged learning gap, as computers and Internet connections soared to the top of the list of required school supplies and districts made hasty plans to roll out virtual learning.

As part of its Future Ready Nebraska initiative, the Nebraska Department of Education developed the *Hierarchy of Digital Learning Needs* to provide a framework and touchstone for delivering and sustaining the systems needed for equitable, digital learning.

STRATEGIES for DIGITAL LEARNING NEEDS

The *Hierarchy of Digital Learning Needs* model is based on systems theory thinking, in that for any of the elements to work effectively, each must be solidly implemented with fidelity starting with the bottom layer. In addition, assuring equity to every student, no matter the location or situation, is a high priority of this model.



This **Request for Information** focuses on the first layer:

INFRASTRUCTURE - Equity of Internet access to every home.

As the base of the model, infrastructure is vital to the success of the other strategies. There are many elements to consider, including but not limited to: Urban/ rural availability, cost and data limits, and travel from home to location(s) where wireless access is available.

Actions:

- Identify areas where access to Internet is weak or non-existent
- Identify methods for bringing Internet to these locations
- Implement appropriate solutions for each area

INVITATION TO RESPOND

NDE is initiating this Request for Information (RFI) and invites all qualified Nebraska service providers to submit availability and pricing of Internet service to residential customers who are un/under-served K-20 students and teachers. Internet services will be for educational purposes, through either month-to-month or annual contracts and will be available to any or all of the following potential customer(s):

- Individual student or teacher homes
- Local Schools and School Districts
- Educational Service Units
- Network Nebraska
- Nebraska Department of Education

There is no guarantee that any service will be purchased, or for what length of time. This is simply a pricing and availability clearinghouse between the vendor and prospective customers who may find the service offered adequate and affordable to meet the needs of the individual or entity.

The outcome will be a published catalog of providers and services on the Nebraska Department of Education website, accessible to any parent or teacher in search of home Internet service.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Service Provider must be certificated or permitted by, or registered with, the Public Service Commission (PSC) to provide the services outlined in this RFI (Neb.Rev.Stat. 81-1120.19).
- Provide connection to the Internet at service levels that meet or exceed the minimum speed per end user at 5Mbps (download) / 5 Mbps (upload)
 - NOTE: 5 Mbps (download) / 5 Mbps (upload) was selected as the absolute minimum required bandwidth to support a high definition interactive videoconferencing session (e.g. Zoom, Cisco Webex, Microsoft Teams, etc...).
- Provide modem and other connectivity equipment at no cost to the end-user

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

DUE DATE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2020

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RFI Contact: | SuAnn Witt, RFI Coordinator |
| Email: | suann.witt@nebraska.gov |
| RFI ONLINE submission URL: | https://www.education.ne.gov/internet-for-education/ |
| Providers are asked to submit all proposals via the online form listed at the URL above. | |

SCHEDULE OF RFI ACTIVITIES

| Item | Action | Date |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 | NDE issues RFI | Oct 8, 2020 |
| 2 | Question and Answer period: Q&A will be updated as needed throughout the RFI posting period. Q&As will be posted at: https://www.launchne.com/leadership-and-planning/technology/infrastructure/ | Date of issue through Oct 22, 2020 |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 3 | Due date for RFI | Oct 29, 2020 |
| 4 | Review and confirmation period | Oct 29-Nov 6, 2020 |
| 5 | NDE publishes pricing catalog to all educational entities | Nov 10, 2020 |
| 6 | Pricing from participating vendors will be available to interested customs on the LaunchNE website: https://www.launchne.com/leadership-and-planning/technology/infrastructure/ | Ongoing through June, 2022 |

SERVICES REQUESTED, TERMS and CONDITIONS, VENDOR INFORMATION

Services Requested:

Service Providers are invited to respond to any and all of the following:

1. **Month-to-month, Annual, or Multi-year contracts:** These options will be immediately available to customers.
 - Mobile Cellular / Mobile Wireless (mifi, etc)
 - Fixed Wireless Access
 - Wired Internet
 - Satellite Service

2. **Public Private Partnerships:** Partner with State and local educational entities for long-term, hybrid or innovative technology solution(s).

In order to provide equity in access to the Internet to households of K-20 students and teachers, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in partnership with Educational Service Units Coordinating Council (ESUCC), Network Nebraska (NN) and others (the NDE Team), desires to work with vendors to explore technologies that may involve public infrastructure, Internet, or property.

Some examples of public-private educational partnerships from other states include:

- A. A mobile cellular provider offers a discounted monthly rate to perform wireless backhaul from their wireless hotspots tethered to school district devices and mounted on school district buses to the statewide network, where the state network Internet does not involve data limits;
- B. A fixed wireless provider proposes partnering with a public school district to erect a tower on school district property in order to provide commercially available fixed wireless service to customer homes, while at the same time making available a special educational service level and rate for student access;
- C. A public school district partners with a wireless company to deploy private LTE over EBS (2.5GHz) or CBRS (3.5GHz) using newly available FCC licenses for students who are unserved and/or economically challenged;

- D. A Low Earth Orbiting satellite service provider proposes a special subscription rate for school districts to reach their most unreachable students and staff in extremely rural, sparsely populated areas.

These are just a few examples of solutions and the NDE Team looks forward to working with interested vendors in local, regional, or statewide projects. A member of the team will reach out to you in the coming weeks after your submission.

Terms and Conditions:

By affirming each condition, the vendor has read and agrees to the service terms and conditions listed and may include additional terms and conditions of its own. In case of conflict, those listed herein will take precedence.

- Minimum service level of 5 Mbps download / 5 Mbps upload speeds per end user. In cases where multiple users share this bandwidth, additional bandwidth speeds can be included in the pricing catalog.
- Indicate the monthly recurring cost (MRC) including any taxes and fees applicable to reflect the actual monthly fee.
- Include one-time non-recurring cost (NRC) if applicable.
- Indicate if this option is month-to-month, annual, or multi-year contracts. Provider may list several service options.
- Indicate bulk pricing when applicable and the cost savings included with that option.
- Prices listed as “annual” or “multi-year” will be honored for calendar year(s) beginning with the first date of new service. Customer has the right to renew or discontinue at the end of the initial contract term, but understands that new pricing may be applied. Customer will receive notice of new pricing no less than 4-weeks prior to the end of the initial contacted term.
- Month-to-month service may be discontinued at any time with 30-days notice.
- No data caps or monthly limits on the amount of *data will be applied during the term of the contract*, and the service must be available 24 hours a day/7 days a week.
- Vendor shall include a PDF or link to its service coverage map(s) for Nebraska.

The name and signature below is an authorized representative of the vendor responding to this Request and agrees to the Terms and Conditions as described in this RFI.

Authorized Representative:

I certify under penalty of perjury of the laws of the State of Nebraska that I am an authorized representative of the vendor responding to this Request for Information and agree to the Terms and Conditions described above.

All pricing quoted in this response will be honored from the time of contract with the customer through June 30, 2022, unless cancelled as per Service Terms and Conditions. Extensions may be granted at Vendor’s discretion.

Signature:

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Printed Name of Authorized Representative: | Date signed: |
| Contact Email: | Phone: |

Vendor contact information to be listed in the Service Catalog:

Please list the points of contact for customers who have questions or wish to order service. Identify regional contacts if applicable:

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|--|
| Company: | | | |
| Address City/State/Zip: | | | |
| Primary Contact Name: | | Title: | |
| Email: | | | |
| Phone: | | Other: | |
| Additional Contact Name: | | Title: | |
| Email: | | | |
| Phone: | | Other: | |

SAMPLE of ONLINE FORM DATA COLLECTION

Each service option listed below will seek the following input via the Online Form:

Month-to-month, Annual, or Multi-year contracts:

- Mobile Cellular / Mobile Wireless (mifi, etc)
- Fixed Wireless Access
- Wired Internet to the Home
- Satellite Service

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Service Description: | |
| Upload/Download Bandwidth Speeds | |
| Service Term Options: | |
| One-time Non-recurring cost (NRC) | |
| Monthly recurring cost (MRC) | |
| MRC taxes/fees | |

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Total Monthly cost | |
| Bulk Pricing options: | |
| Additional Comments: | |

Public Private Partnerships

Partner with State and local educational entities for a long-term, hybrid or innovative technology solution(s). In order to provide equity of access to the Internet to households of K-20 students and teachers, the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in partnership with Educational Service Units Coordinating Council (ESUCC), Network Nebraska (NN) and others (the NDE Team), desires to work with vendors to explore technologies that may involve public infrastructure, Internet, or property.

The following input will be entered via the Online Form:

| |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>This Service Provider wishes to partner and explore solutions that will provide equity of access to Internet services to all residences of K-20 students and teachers locally, regionally, or statewide.</p> <p>Description: Provide a general description of the long-term, hybrid, and innovative project(s). Include contact information for each opportunity if different from the Authorized Representative submitting this RFI.</p> <p>A member of the NDE Team will reach out to you shortly after submitting this RFI.</p> |
| |

Thank you for providing the students and teachers in the State of Nebraska with high quality Internet service to the home. The Nebraska Department of Education, along with its partners in this effort, look forward to working with you on this and future projects. If you have any questions, please contact:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| RFI Contact: | SuAnn Witt, RFI Coordinator |
| Email: | suann.witt@nebraska.gov |