

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Partnership Launched to Help Close Homework Gap for Rural Students

MAY 9, 2018 (LINCOLN, NEB.) —The Nebraska Library Commission announced Monday, it received a National Leadership Sparks Grant of \$25,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) for a partnership project with the Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and five local school districts and public libraries. Nebraska communities participating in this one-year project beginning June 1 include Bancroft, Genoa, Imperial, Verdigre, and Wymore. The **Nebraska Schools and Libraries—Breaking the Ice and Igniting Internet Relationships** grant is one of 26 projects out of 117 applications to receive funding totaling \$5,770,682 to support libraries across the nation.

Five partnering school districts and public libraries will increase Internet speeds at the public library using fixed wireless technology. Up to one gigabit (1,000Mbps) of Internet speed will be provided for a designated homework hotspot. The project is targeting rural areas to help close the “homework gap” that these students face when attempting to complete homework assignments and school projects without a reliable Internet source at home. The libraries will use the school districts’ network to augment existing Internet service, supplementing it with high-speed Internet access for K-12 students and staff in these school districts.

“[2018 Awarded] grants leveraged over \$2.7 million in matching funds from local partners and community collaborators, helping to ensure the sustainability of these projects and to enhance their reach and impact,” said IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew.

“As Nebraska students and teachers embrace digital learning, public libraries look for new models ... to ensure equal access to digital learning resources for all students. Students need broadband services outside of school and after school hours. Libraries fill the gap and contribute to educational achievement. This project demonstrates the commitment of Nebraska’s public libraries to provide high-speed Internet service through ... partnerships with schools.” said Nebraska Library Commission Director Rod Wagner.

“The Office of the CIO is pleased to partner with the Nebraska Library Commission on this project to improve Internet access in rural public libraries and to leverage the investments made in the state education network, Network Nebraska,” said Ed Toner, the State Chief Information Officer.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS grant: LG-99-18-0018-18]. The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation’s approximately 120,000 libraries and 35,000 museums. IMLS’ mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov.

The Nebraska Library Commission is an advocate for the library and information needs of all Nebraskans. The mission of the Library Commission is statewide promotion, development, and coordination of library and information services—“bringing together people and information.” News releases from the Nebraska Library Commission are available on the Library Commission website, <http://nlc.nebraska.gov/publications/newsreleases>.

The Nebraska Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) provides coordinated IT management, enterprise oversight, and reliable

solutions to support the business needs of the state agencies, boards, commissions, and political subdivisions serving Nebraska. Its staff helps manage Network Nebraska, the statewide telecommunications network serving public and private K-12 schools and higher education entities. Network Nebraska is uniquely positioned to assist public libraries with faster and lower cost commodity Internet achieved through statewide aggregation and consortium E-rate expertise.



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