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# Leveraging Technology for the Future of Nebraska: Creating a Statewide Broadband Plan

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# CORNHUSKER ECONOMICS

UNIVERSITY OF  
**Nebraska**  
Lincoln

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Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources  
Department of Agricultural Economics  
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Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	5/21/10
<b><u>Livestock and Products,</u></b>			
<b><u>Weekly Average</u></b>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight. . . . .	\$85.35	\$100.39	\$97.50
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb. . . . .	120.97	130.35	130.98
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb. . . . .	99.81	116.10	116.61
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass. . . . .	147.03	167.81	168.19
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated. . . . .	56.83	80.32	80.53
Feeder Pigs, National Direct 50 lbs, FOB. . . . .	*	*	*
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean. . . . .	59.70	88.51	88.45
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., Heavy, Woolled, South Dakota, Direct. . . . .	*	*	137.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB. . . . .	249.32	292.34	311.89
<b><u>Crops,</u></b>			
<b><u>Daily Spot Prices</u></b>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Imperial, bu. . . . .	5.80	3.93	3.66
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu. . . . .	4.13	3.44	3.52
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu. . . . .	11.71	9.94	9.47
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Dorchester, cwt. . . . .	6.52	5.41	5.64
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu. . . . .	2.49	2.05	1.94
<b><u>Feed</u></b>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton. . . . .	*	135.00	140.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton. . . . .	*	92.50	67.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Premium Nebraska, ton. . . . .	*	*	67.50
Dried Distillers Grains, 10% Moisture, Nebraska Average. . . . .	147.50	101.00	115.00
Wet Distillers Grains, 65-70% Moisture, Nebraska Average. . . . .	50.87	34.50	35.00
<b>*No Market</b>			

In Nebraska, some areas of the state – primarily in the most rural areas of the state – may be underserved or unserved in terms of broadband access. Rural areas of the state also lag in economic development and are experiencing population losses. Additionally, broadband adoption and Internet usage among certain income and population groups remains low. Increasing adoption of broadband and Information Technology (IT) services is one way to create economic opportunities, attract new residents to rural areas and address economic inequalities among population groups.

The University of Nebraska Agricultural Economics Department and the Panhandle Research and Extension Center are cooperatively working with the Nebraska Information Technology Commission Community Council (NITC) and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development (DED) to create a statewide broadband plan. This project, funded through the Nebraska Public Service Commission, is part of a larger Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) grant to increase broadband access and adoption through better data collection and broadband planning.

Project partners will identify barriers to the adoption of broadband and IT services, create and facilitate local technology planning teams and collaborate with broadband service providers to create statewide and regional plans for Nebraska. Focusing on leveraging technology for the future of Nebraska, a number of data collection methods and activities are being utilized. Designed to gather citizen input and feedback from a variety of sources, data collection has begun.

### Internet Connectivity and Use in Nebraska: A Household Survey

Nebraskans were surveyed about their computer and Internet usage, challenges and desires for the future through a mail survey conducted in February and March of 2010 by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Agricultural Economics Department and the Center for Applied Rural Innovation



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(CARI). The survey was mailed to approximately 6,200 households (6,174 deliverable households out of the 6,600 initial list), and 2,912 responses were received, for a 47 percent response rate. The high response rate and large sample will enable generalizations to regions as well as metropolitan areas. In addition to the regional comparisons, data will be analyzed by location of residence (outside city limits compared to those living in communities), education level, income level, age, gender, presence of children in the household, racial and ethnic groups, employment status and occupation.

The preliminary survey results revealed that 84.4 percent of those who responded to the survey use a desk top or lap top computer. The majority of Nebraskans (81.6 percent) indicated that they have internet access, and most of those who own a computer have access. In addition, four percent have dial-up service only, 76.6 percent have broadband service and one percent did not know what type of Internet service they are using. A 2010 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) nationwide survey found that 65 percent of persons responding had access to broadband. This finding would indicate that Nebraskans as a whole, are better connected. Persons over 65 and families with lower household incomes were less likely to have access to broadband, in both the nationwide and the statewide survey. Statewide, only 47.8 percent of persons age 65 and older have broadband service (compared to 35 percent nationwide). However, 92 percent of persons 19 to 39 have broadband service.

For those respondents with lower household incomes, the responses were very similar for the statewide and national survey. Only 44 percent of persons with household incomes under \$20,000 have broadband (40 percent nationwide), compared to 94 percent of persons with household incomes of \$75,000 or more (93 percent nationwide).

Survey results and an initial report will be presented to the Public Service Commission at the end of June. Results will be available to the public and at <http://cari.unl.edu> at this time.

### **Business Survey**

Businesses will be surveyed through DED's Business Retention and Expansion Program, to identify their strengths and challenges in utilizing technology. To develop the statewide plan, data from over 1,000 businesses will be gathered. The BR&E survey asks over ten specific questions related to technology and broadband utilization. The data will then be pulled together and themes will be developed, with initial results shared with the Public Service Commission in June.

### **Regional Forums**

Regional forums will be held to present broadband mapping and mail survey results, to solicit feedback and to kick off regional planning efforts. The initial forums will be held later in 2010, with a second forum held after the regional and statewide plans have been created. In addition, a train-

the-trainer program will be offered regionally to assist communities in developing community plans.

### **Focus Groups**

UNL Extension and CARI will conduct focus groups with community anchor institutions such as libraries, health care providers, schools and utility providers to gain a better understanding of results identified in the surveys and forums, and to gather ideas on how to increase adoption and usage. Additional focus groups will also be held to identify how to increase technology usage in populations with low usage rates, as well as specific industries such as farmers and small businesses. Focus groups will be held beginning in the Fall of 2010.

Regional technology plans, as well as a statewide report and recommendations will be developed to increase broadband adoption and usage, with a focus on leveraging technology for the future of Nebraska.

To follow the progress of this initiative, updates will soon be reported at <http://cari.unl.edu>. You also have the opportunity to be a part of this project by participating in regional forums. Efforts will be made to gather feedback as the plan is developed, and to address broadband adoption and utilization. Currently, you can go to the Public Service Commission website and test your internet speed at <http://www.psc.state.ne.us/>

Broadband planning team members include: Anne Byers, Nebraska Information and Technology Commission; Tim O'Brien, State of Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Charlotte Narjes and Becky Vogt, UNL Center for Applied Rural Innovation/Ag Economics; and Connie Hancock, UNL Extension-Cheyenne County.

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