

Goal 3: Nebraska libraries will have appropriate technology to access and deliver online library and information services.

Need: Many communities are attempting to provide new types of library and information services in inadequate facilities due to a lack of space, poor wiring, and the inefficient use of existing space. Technology equipment is often added to the library without benefit of space planning, appropriate ergonomic furnishings or electrical and data connections. The use of DSL, T1 and wireless connections is growing statewide, however speed and reliability of connectivity continue to be issues for many libraries.

Libraries also report difficulty in recruiting and retaining staff with computer knowledge and experience. Positions tend to remain vacant for long periods and when filled are staffed with individuals who require extensive training. There is also a need for ongoing technology training and technical support for existing library personnel. Public libraries, particularly in smaller communities, often have no local technology support and must contract with a provider many miles away. Some libraries choose to purchase computers through their local computer stores and business supply offices, even though the cost may be higher, in order to have convenient service and support.

Sustainability, or the need to build in ongoing local funding for technology replacement as well as for new technologies, is an issue of concern on the local as well as state level. A fair number of Nebraska public libraries have acquired much of their technology through grant programs (LSTA, State Aid, NITC, etc.) and have yet to develop a plan for supporting and maintaining hardware and connectivity.

The U.S. Library Program of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation¹¹ is in the early stage of implementation in Nebraska and this initiative will equip smaller, non accredited public libraries with computers, software and improved Internet access. The issue of sustainability, emphasized in Gates Foundation projects, will help address this need. Library personnel will benefit from the training made available as part of the Gates Foundation project.

Activities:

3A. Administer grants to public libraries and library consortia for planning, selection, and implementation of technology tools for access to library and information services.

Intended Outcomes:

1. Local support will continue to be generated through the requirement of matching funds for awarded grants.

¹¹ www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/uslibraryprogram/default.htm

2. Libraries will increase the number and types of technologies available to provide access to materials and other resources.
3. Nebraskans will have improved access to online library and information services.

3B. Review and adopt appropriate standards and protocols for hardware, software, Internet connectivity, and access to broadband services.

Intended Outcomes:

1. Grant criteria and guidelines will be developed that apply these standards and protocols.
2. NLC staff and local library personnel will have enhanced ability to provide training and consultation.
3. Nebraska libraries will have an improved infrastructure for resource sharing.

3C. Identify and implement statewide digitization initiatives, including the Western Trails Project¹², access to genealogical resources, and other appropriate enterprises.

Intended Outcomes:

1. Nebraskans will have access to a virtual collection of digital primary source materials through the Western Trails Project.
2. Local and remote access to local genealogy resources and services will be enhanced.
3. NLC staff will have knowledge of potential statewide digitization initiatives for planning, coordination, and funding.

3D. Facilitate library participation in the U.S. Library Program and the Staying Connected¹³ initiative funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Intended Outcomes:

1. Libraries will acquire additional computers, networking equipment, and telecommunications services for Internet access.
2. Library personnel will benefit from training and technical support on network administration, computer and Internet applications, and computer systems management.
3. Nebraskans will have enhanced access to information resources.

¹² www.nlc.state.ne.us/westerntrails/

¹³ www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/uslibraryprogram/stayingconnected/default1.htm

3E. Promote participation in the Universal Service Fund's E-rate¹⁴ program through training and consultation.

Intended Outcomes:

1. The number of public libraries participating in the Universal Service Fund's E-rate program will increase.
2. Public libraries will apply for funding for a broader base of eligible E-rate services.
3. Library personnel will have increased knowledge of telecommunication costs and issues.

3F. Participate in statewide information technology strategic planning and management initiatives, including the Nebraska Information Technology Commission's Nebraska Network initiative, Community and State Government Councils, and Technologies Across Nebraska¹⁵.

Intended Outcomes:

1. Libraries will have access to and participate in a unified statewide telecommunications infrastructure.
2. Grant funds will be available for library technology projects through the Nebraska Information Technology Commission.
3. Libraries will participate in statewide telecommunications collaborative efforts.
4. Libraries will be represented in state level information technology planning and policy organizations.

¹⁴ www.nlc.state.ne.us/libdev/erate/intro.html#intro

¹⁵ www.nitc.state.ne.us/toolkit/minigrants.htm