

**NEBRASKA
COMMUNICATION
ACCESS FUND**

(Revised 4.19.2024)

**GUIDE TO
SUBMITTING
A REQUEST FOR
REIMBURSEMENT**



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Nebraska Communication Access Fund

Guide to Submitting a Request for Reimbursement

UPDATED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA – APRIL 2024

In April 2024, Gov. Jim Pillen approved LB1412: A bill to change appropriations for operation of federal funds allocated to the State of Nebraska from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021.

Included in LB1412 were updated eligibility criteria for the federal funding NCDHH received through ARPA. The updated criteria include reimbursement for communication access support involving **in-person or virtual interpreting and communication access that includes auxiliary aids and services as defined with the Americans with Disabilities Act, for both rural and urban areas.**

The program was previously known as the *Rural Communication Access Fund*. The program has now expanded the service area allowing communication access reimbursements to all of Nebraska – rural and urban areas – including the Lincoln and Omaha metro areas. Due to this expansion, the program will be referred to as the **Nebraska Communication Access Fund.**

Criteria for the Legal Communication Access Fund remains unchanged.

To reflect these changes, you will find highlighted, updated information throughout this guide document.

All questions, please contact NCDHH at 402-471-3593 or ncdhh@nebraska.gov.

INTRODUCTION

LB1014e, Section 49: This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document.

Pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. 84-901.03

Reimbursements for both Rural and Urban areas available as of April 2, 2024

Navigating the pandemic has been incredibly difficult on everyone, placing an immense strain on our physical and emotional health, and completely disrupting what we know to be a “normal life.” The pandemic and its restrictions also changed the way people who are deaf and hard of hearing receive access to effective communication.

To address this need, the Nebraska Legislature, under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 and LB1014, set aside \$500,000 in federal funds for Fiscal Years 2022-23 and 2023-24 to reimburse expenses incurred in the provision of qualified, licensed sign language interpreters (whether on-site or remote), auxiliary aids and services as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act, in **Rural or Urban areas of Nebraska** for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

NEBRASKA COMMUNICATION ACCESS FUND – REQUEST FOR REIMBURSEMENT

Funding is being appropriated to provide effective communication access for Nebraskans who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing across the state. This includes Lincoln and Omaha metro areas.

How is this eligible under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)? As referenced in SLFRP final rule, pages 6-7, “an expanded set of households and communities are “impacted” or “disproportionately impacted” by the pandemic, thereby allowing recipients to provide responses to a broad set of households and entities without requiring additional analysis. Further, the final rule provides a broader set of enumerated eligible uses available for these communities as part of COVID-19 public health and economic response, including making affordable housing, childcare, and early learning services eligible in all impacted communities...”

PROGRAM BASICS

The **Nebraska Communication Access Fund (NCAF)** provides for the reimbursement of reasonably incurred costs.* Expenses eligible for coverage include providing on-site qualified licensed sign language interpreters or licensed video remote interpreting (VRI) services and communication access that includes auxiliary aids and services as defined in the Americans with Disabilities Act, to ensure access to effective communication **in Nebraska.**

Examples of reimbursement requests that **ARE** covered by the RCAF:

- ✓ Medical Appointments: Hospitals, Medical Offices, Doctors, Dentists, and Mental Health Services
- ✓ Work Settings: Job Interviews, Job Site and Staff Meetings, Employee Training, etc.
- ✓ Community Settings: Events, Meetings, Presentations, Classes, or Training Programs that are open to the public
- ✓ Local Government: Appointments, Meetings, or Events that are open to the public
- ✓ State agency appointments, events, or programs
- ✓ Pre-K to 12th Grade School Related Events: Parent and teacher/principal meetings, school events
- ✓ Church Services and Funerals

Examples of requests that are **NOT** covered by the RLCAF:

- ◆ Educational auxiliary aids and services for students (pre-K to grade 12; college/university settings)
- ◆ Federal agency appointments, events, or programs (contact the federal agency to make ADA requests)
- ◆ Private events that are not open to the public (for example, weddings, baby showers)

Examples of reasonable expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Paid travel time to and from the interpreting assignment (portal-to-portal)
- Mileage
- Per diem for meals, incidentals (state of Nebraska rate)
- Lodging (if deemed necessary) at or near government rate
- Actual interpreting time for assignment (includes possible 2-hour minimum requirements and period for notice of cancellation)
- Real-time captioning (CART) fees

**Expenses that are deemed reasonable and standard within this industry.*

REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS - INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete Rural Communication Access Fund (RCAF) Reimbursement Request Form and Itemized Cost Worksheet.
- Include all required supporting documentation, ex. invoice from licensed on-site sign language interpreter or interpreter referral agency, or licensed video remote interpreting (VRI) business, or other communication access involving auxiliary aid and services, and receipts for all other incurred expenses.
- If you have any questions, please call NCDHH at (402) 471-3593.

REIMBURSEMENT FORMS CAN BE FOUND...

- On the NCDHH website, ncdhh.nebraska.gov/arpa
 - **Nebraska** Communication Access Fund Reimbursement Request Form
- By contacting NCDHH at ncdhh.arpa@nebraska.gov to request that a form be sent to your agency via email.

REIMBURSEMENT FORMS CAN BE SUBMITTED...

- In paper form by mail to:
Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
4600 Valley Road, Suite 420
Lincoln, NE 68510
ATTN: NCAF

OR...

- Via email to:
 - ncdhh.arpa@nebraska.gov
 - Attach form and all supporting documentation as a pdf

AFTER SUBMITTING REIMBURSEMENT FORMS, AGENCIES CAN EXPECT...

Reimbursement Process: The requested reimbursement funds should be received up to two weeks from the date of receipt **IF** all forms are properly completed.

The process is as follows:

- Reimbursement forms and supporting documents received (via email or in paper form) will be logged and passed along to the Business Manager.
- Business Manager will review the reimbursement forms to ensure they are complete and correct. If there are any issues, the requesting agency will be contacted for clarification. If there are no issues, the Business Manager will forward all complete and correct reimbursement forms to the Executive Director for approval.
- Reimbursement requests will then be entered into our system for payment.
- Payments will go through a pre-audit and then be posted.
- Payments will be disbursed and may take 2-3 business days to be processed.

IF REIMBURSEMENT FORMS ARE NOT PROPERLY COMPLETED...

- The NCDHH staff will contact the requesting agency to ask that the form(s) be corrected and resent via mail or email. Days spent waiting on the requesting agency to resolve the issue will not count toward the up to 2 weeks' timeline.
- The billing process will revert to Business Day 1 or 2 when corrected billing(s) are received, depending on which day of the process NCDHH returned them to the requesting agency.
- NCDHH staff will not make changes to reimbursement forms.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND APPEALS...

The Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) reserves the right to audit, approve and review requests for reimbursement. Disputes regarding any disallowed costs will be resolved by the Executive Director. If the disallowed cost is upheld by the Executive Director, appeals may be filed with NCDHH's Full Board for final disposition.

Nebraska Communication Access Fund (NCAF)

Reimbursement Request Form



The Nebraska Communication Access Fund (NCAF) provides for the reimbursement of reasonable costs incurred for the provision of access to effective communication to rural areas of the state.

*Requestor's Name: _____

*Organization Name: _____

*Email: _____

*Address: _____

*City: _____ *State: _____ *Zip Code: _____

*County: _____

*Phone number: _____

*Amount of Reimbursement Request: \$ _____ (must submit Itemized Cost Worksheet)

*Date(s) of Service: _____

*Begin Time of Service: _____ AM / PM

*End Time of Service: _____ AM / PM

*Number of Individuals Served: _____

*Type of Auxiliary Aid or Service Used: _____

***(If Interpreting Service)** Name of Contracted Licensed Sign Language Interpreter or Licensed VRI Service Provider:

***Required fields**

***Type of Situation or Assignment** – Please specify details in the field listed below

- Medical
 - Hospital / Emergency Department
 - Clinic Visit
- Dental
- Mental Health
- Employment Related
- Community Event
- Presentation / Training
- Other

***Details of Assignment:**

****Required fields***

Certification

I/we certify, under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America, that all information provided on this form are true, accurate and complete. I/we also acknowledge that any deliberate omission, misrepresentation, or falsification of any information contained on this form may be punishable by criminal, civil, or administrative penalties, including but not limited to the imposition of fines, civil damages, and/or imprisonment.

* _____
 Printed Name and Title

* _____
 Name of Company/Organization

* _____ * _____
 Signature Date

****Required***

FOR NCDHH STAFF USE ONLY

Date Received:	Received by:
W-9 Received: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	AB # assigned:
Itemized Worksheet Received: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Date Posted:

Nebraska Communication Access Fund (NCAF)

Itemized Cost Worksheet



You **MUST** provide itemized receipts and an invoice from the service provider (if applicable) with protected information redacted, if necessary. This form must be submitted with the NCAF Reimbursement Request form.

*Requestor's Name: _____

*Organization Name: _____

*Date(s) of Service: _____

CATEGORY	Dollar Amount
Portal to Portal Expenses (travel time)	
Mileage Reimbursement	
Per Diem for meals, incidentals	
Lodging	
Actual Communication Access Service Time for Assignment	
Other (specify below)	
TOTAL	

Other:

***Required fields**