



In February 2021, the Nebraska Regional Officials Council launched a statewide broadband mapping initiative, encouraging every resident to take the one-minute speed test from any internet-enabled device. Results will be used to inform broadband infrastructure plans.

From sanctuaries where visitors can observe sandhill crane migrations to traditional homesteads that immerse guests into 1887, Nebraska invites “enlightened truth-seekers” to find out what makes it unique. Seeking truth is at the core of its broadband data collection efforts. A state tuned in for self-reflection can provide valuable insights on effective broadband strategies, particularly in the rural parts of the state that are the most expensive to serve.

The FCC evaluated 1.9 million people in Nebraska and found that 1.8 million (96.3%) had fixed broadband access at the 25/3 Mbps benchmark. In rural Nebraska, it found that 454,000 of 522,000 people (87%) had access to a fixed connection at minimum speeds. The Commission also evaluated 1.4 million people in urban areas and found that 97.1% had fixed broadband access.

Nebraska Broadband makes an interactive broadband map available, which uses data collected from service providers, anchor institutions, and Nebraska residents. The map also shows locations of projects targeted for the Nebraska Universal Service Fund.

Like many states with low population density, broadband prices are high, bringing connectivity out of reach for many people. BroadbandNow shows that just over 10% of residents have access to a wired plan priced at \$60 a month or lower. This may be one reason that Microsoft found that around 1.1 million people in Nebraska, over half the state’s population, do not use the Internet at broadband speeds.

In addition to a broadband map, in 2018 the state Legislature passed and

Governor Pete Ricketts signed into law a bill that established the Rural Broadband Task Force. The Task Force studies broadband access in Nebraska and neighboring states and makes policy recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on effective and efficient strategies for broadband deployment.

In October, Governor Ricketts announced that Nebraska was awarding \$29.5 in broadband grants through the Remote Access Rural Broadband Grant program to Nebraska companies. Governor Ricketts said

*These grants will lead to better broadband service in many areas of the state that are currently underserved. The enhanced service will equip more of our rural communities with the technology needed to conduct business online, make virtual health visits, and engage in distance learning opportunities.*

Department of Economic Development director Anthony L. Goins said

*COVID-19 has underscored the need for a more concentrated, collaborative effort to improve our state’s broadband infrastructure. This grant is an important first step toward ensuring all citizens of Nebraska have the opportunity to participate in the digital economy.*

#### **Additional Resources:**

- [Nebraska Broadband Mapping Project](#)
- [How a new broadband map could finally bring fast Internet to everyone in America](#)
- [Panhandle Area Development District](#)