Next Century Cities

In 2020, Ohio doubled down on broadband efforts by appointing a state broadband officer and establishing BroadbandOhio, an office dedicated to improving high-speed Internet access statewide.

Innovation has always been at the heart of Ohio, housing research and development that led to the Wright brothers iconic takeoff being a prime example. Local leaders in Ohio are no exception to this innovative spirit and play a central role in expanding and improving broadband access in the state. Medina County Fiber Network's open access model serves as a key backbone to the local economy. Fairlawn's municipal network FairlawnGig keeps residents connected with work, school, and friends and family throughout the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The FCC evaluated 11.7 million residents and found that 11.4 million (97.2%) had access to a fixed broadband connection at 25/3 Mbps speeds. While nearly all urban residents had fixed broadband access (99.% of the 11 million residents evaluated), connectivity continues to lag behind in rural areas. In rural Ohio, the FCC found that 2.2 of 2.6 million residents (88.4%) have fixed broadband access.

In NCC member Medina County, the Commission evaluated approximately 178,000 people. The FCC found that, of those evaluated, 98.2% had access to a fixed connection at FCC minimum speeds.

In its Connecting Cuyahoga 2019 Insights report, Cuyahoga County took an in depth look at American Community Statistics data and found that *"Unsurprisingly, low-income, unconnected households are concentrated in various neighborhoods located in Cleveland, East Cleveland, Euclid, and a limited number of census tracts in other suburbs"* and that *"Unconnected senior citizens can be found in significant numbers throughout Cuyahoga County, including many economically advantaged suburban areas."* The report goes on to explain that while most Cuyahoga residents have access to infrastructure, there are still gaps in subscription rates, particularly for low-income and aging residents.

Still, despite what the FCC has found, InnovateOhio works with Connected Nation to improve broadband data collection in the state. InnovateOhio's broadband map is available through Connected Nation and shows availability at 10/1, 25/3, 50/5, and 100/10 Mbps speed tiers. The basis for the data is Form 477, but Connected Nation Ohio has partnered with broadband providers to improve the accuracy of the information. Residents can submit feedback about broadband availability.

2020 was a transformative year for broadband in Ohio. It created a state broadband office, BroadbandOhio, and appointed a state broadband officer. When introducing BroadbandOhio in March 2020, Governor Mike DeWine stated, "*You cannot have opportunities in the modern economy or access to the modern education system or healthcare system without having access to broadband Internet.*" The introduction of the state's broadband office follows the release of a broadband access plan released by InnovateOhio in December 2019.

Ohio's state government is not the only source of broadband data in the state. BroadbandNow's data show that less than half of Ohio residents have access to a wired plan that costs $60 or less a month. Microsoft's data show that over half the state, around 6.7 million Ohio residents do not use the Internet at broadband speeds.

Additional Resources:
- Connected Nation: Ohio
- 'Cautiously optimistic': Federal funding to expand rural broadband in Ohio
- Pandemic effects evident in Ohio Farm Bureau policy priorities
- 'Every day, we're falling behind in Appalachian Ohio': Lack of broadband hurts rural areas