

Broadband Data Findings and Recommendations

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Determine other issues that may be pertinent to the purpose of the task force.

—Nebraska Revised Statutes 86-1102(3)(g)

Findings

- Current state and federal broadband mapping efforts likely overstate broadband coverage and need to be improved.¹
 - Nebraska’s [broadband map](#) currently utilizes Form 477 data released by the FCC. Providers of fixed broadband (which includes providers of services via DSL, coaxial cable, fiber optic cable, fixed wireless, and satellite) report the type of technology, maximum advertised speeds in Mbps up and down, and whether the service is residential, business, or both by census block to the FCC. Providers must report every census block where service is provided or could be provided within a reasonable amount of time without an extraordinary commitment of resources.
 - The use of census block reporting can overstate broadband availability in large census blocks. Census blocks are statistical areas that can be as small as 1/1,000 of a square mile up to 200 square miles. Census blocks which are greater than two square miles cover about 50% of Nebraska geographically.
 - Mobile wireless providers provide polygons of their service area and the minimum speeds that are publicly available. The FCC is currently investigating at least one national mobile wireless provider for overstating coverage.
 - The FCC collects the data twice per year (March 1 for broadband availability as of Dec. 30 and September 1 for broadband availability as of June 30). There is not a set schedule for data releases, but data is usually released a year or more after the reporting date.
 - Supplementing data from providers with speed test data or other sources of data can help verify data submitted by providers.
- Because states are limited in their authority to compel providers to submit broadband coverage data, federal data collection efforts should be leveraged if feasible. Leveraging federal data collection efforts will also minimize state costs for data collection.

Key Recommendations

- Leverage the FCC’s Digital Opportunity Data Collection program or an alternate broadband mapping program created through federal legislation to improve Nebraska’s broadband map.
- To the extent possible, encourage the FCC and/or Congress to improve data collection of mobile wireless coverage data.
- Encourage Nebraskans to participate in crowdsourcing efforts developed to enhance federal broadband mapping.

¹ For additional information, see [Appendix 4 Supplemental Information--Broadband Data and Mapping](#).

- The FCC's Digital Opportunity Data Collection² program which was approved on August 1, 2019 and federal legislation being considered, including the Broadband DATA Act (SB 1822),³ would largely address the shortcomings of the current fixed broadband data collection method.
- Mobile wireless coverage data submitted through the Form 477 is insufficient to support sound policymaking and funding decisions, and needs to be improved either through further rulemaking by the FCC or federal legislation such as the Broadband DATA Act (SB 1822).

Recommendations

- Leverage the FCC's Digital Opportunity Data Collection program or an alternate broadband mapping program created through federal legislation to improve Nebraska's broadband map.
- To the extent possible, encourage the FCC and/or Congress to improve data collection of mobile wireless coverage data.
- Urge FCC and Congressional policy to support efforts to improve broadband data collection for both fixed and mobile broadband technologies.
- The Nebraska Information Technology Commission, Nebraska Public Service Commission and other stakeholders should explore strategies to encourage Nebraskans to participate in crowdsourcing efforts developed to enhance federal broadband mapping.

² The Report and Order and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on establishing the Digital Opportunity Data Collection is available at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-19-79A1.pdf>

³ Information on S. 1822 is available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1822/>