

Rural Broadband Task Force

Friday, June 23, 2022

1:30-3:30 p.m. CT

Varner Hall, Board Room--Lower Level, 3835 Holdrege St., Lincoln

Web streaming for up to 100 viewers will be available. Information for connecting via Zoom is at the bottom of the page. Links to agendas, minutes, and meeting materials are available at

ruralbroadband.nebraska.gov

Agenda

1:30	Opening Business — <i>Ed Toner, Office of the Chief Information Officer</i> Roll Call Notice of Posting of Agenda Notice of Nebraska Open Meetings Act Posting Approval of the September 13, 2022 minutes*
1:35	Welcome and Introductions of New Members
1:45	Updates <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Legislative Update<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ LB 683• Broadband Office Update<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Public Input meetings (press release)○ Mapping Update<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ NTIA: Three Takeaways from Version 2 of the FFC's National Broadband Map▪ State Allocation Estimates From Broadband Analyst Mike Conrow• Nebraska Public Service Commission Update<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Capital Projects Broadband Bridge Grants○ Other Updates• NITC/OCIO Digital Equity Planning Grant Update
2:30	Review 2021 Recommendations and Metrics
2:50	2023 Work Plan
3:30	Adjourn

* Denotes action items.

The task force will attempt to adhere to the sequence of the published agenda, but reserves the right to adjust the order and timing of items and may elect to take action on any of the items listed.

Meeting announcement was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting website on May 19, 2023 and Rural Broadband Task Force website on May 19, 2023. The agenda was posted on the Rural Broadband Task Force website on June 13, 2023.

[Nebraska Open Meetings Act](#)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/94585822871>

Meeting ID: 945 8582 2871

Dial by your location

• +1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

• +1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

• +1 669 444 9171 US

Meeting ID: 945 8582 2871

RURAL BROADBAND TASK FORCE
Tuesday, September 13, 2022, 1:30-3:00 p.m. CT
Nebraska Public Media
1800 N 33rd Street, Board Room, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEETING MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ed Toner, Nebraska Information Technology Commission
Mary Ridder, Nebraska Public Service Commission (video)
Senator Bruce Bostelman, Nebraska Legislature
Dan Curran, Nebraska Department of Economic Development
Tom Shoemaker, Pinpoint Communications
Andrew Whitney, Bryan Health
Andrew Buker, University of Nebraska
Ron Cone, ESU 10

Members on Video (Non-voting)

Senator Curt Friesen, Nebraska Legislature
Zachary Hunnicutt, Hunnicutt Farms
Gwen Kautz, Dawson Public Power District (video)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Daniel Spray, Precision Technology; Steve Wellman, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

OPENING BUSINESS, ROLL CALL NOTICE

The chair, Ed Toner, called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. There were eight members present at the time of roll call. A quorum existed to conduct official business. The meeting announcement was posted on the Nebraska Public Meeting website on Sept. 1, 2022 and the Rural Broadband Task Force website on Sept. 2, 2022. The agenda was posted on the Rural Broadband Task Force website on Sept. 6, 2022.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was posted on the wall.

APPROVAL OF THE [MARCH 18, 2022 MINUTES](#)*

Mr. Cone moved to approve the meeting minutes. Mr. Shoemaker seconded. Roll call vote: Toner-Yes, Ridder-Yes, Curran-Yes, Shoemaker-Yes, Whitney-Yes, Buker-Yes, and Cone-Yes. Results: Yes-7, No-0, Abstained-0. Motion carried.

UPDATES—FEDERAL BROADBAND FUNDING

Broadband Working Group. Cullen Robbins reported that the Connect Nebraska Working Group consists of representatives of the state budget office, governor's office, Nebraska Public Service Commission and the Nebraska Information Technology Commission/Office of the CIO. The working group is coordinating federal broadband funding programs. A new website with information on federally funded broadband programs is available at <https://broadband.nebraska.gov>.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Programs Administered by NTIA

Middle Mile Grant Program. The NTIA Middle Mile Grant program is a competitive grant program. Applications are due Sept. 30. Applicants from Nebraska are required to coordinate with the state

broadband coordinating entity. A form is available on the Nebraska Public Service Commission's website. Completed forms should be submitted by Sept. 23.

Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD). Nebraska submitted its application to receive BEAD planning funds. The NTIA is reviewing applications and is expected to award funding to most states in October. The Nebraska Public Service Commission will be administering the funds and plans to hire staff, begin outreach activities, and develop a new broadband map when planning funds are awarded. Nebraska will receive a minimum of \$100 million in BEAD funding. The NTIA is expected to determine the final allocations for states in the spring of 2023.

State Digital Equity Planning. Nebraska will receive \$600,000 to complete a state digital equity plan. After completing their plans, states will be able to apply for follow-on funding to establish a digital equity grant program. States will receive a minimum of \$7.2 million from this program.

American Rescue Plan Act

Nebraska will receive \$128.7 million in funding from the Capital Projects Fund administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury. LB 1024 allocated the funding by congressional district and determined how the funding would be used. Funding for \$87.7 million for broadband deployment projects in Congressional Districts 1 and 3 was approved by the Department of the Treasury in August. The Department of the Treasury is reviewing the state's application for the use of the remaining funds for multi-purpose community facilities which enable work, education and health monitoring remotely in Congressional District 2.

LB 1024 directed the Nebraska Department of Economic Development to administer the Capital Projects funding. The Department of Economic Development is finalizing an agreement to have the Public Service Commission administer the funding for broadband projects.

HOW CAN THE TASK FORCE AND MEMBERS SUPPORT THE BROADBAND WORKING GROUP AND FEDERALLY FUNDED STATE BROADBAND EFFORTS

Ms. Byers shared the following suggestions for how the Rural Broadband Task Force can support planning efforts:

- Getting updates on BEAD and Digital Equity planning efforts at meetings
- Providing feedback on BEAD and Digital Equity planning during meetings
- Help identify digital equity best practices and resources
- Submitting a letter of support/endorsement for the Digital Equity and BEAD plans during the 30-day comment period prior to submission of final plans

Individual members and their organizations can also:

- Help host/organize/publicize Digital Equity and/or BEAD listening sessions
- Help identify digital equity best practices and resources
- Participate in regional digital equity planning efforts
- Submit written comments during the 30-day comment period for BEAD and Digital Equity Plans

Commissioner Ridder asked if the task force's subcommittees would be a good source of information and recommendations. Members also suggested working with the Nebraska Library Association and Nebraska Hospital Association to spread the word at their meetings and conferences. Ron Cone shared information about a speed test for K-12 students.

BROADBAND UPDATES

- **Broadband Bridge Grant Program.** The Public Service commission received 115 applications requesting nearly \$57 million in the second round of the Broadband Bridge Grant Program. Grants are expected to be awarded in December.
- **NUSF Reverse Auction.** The Nebraska Public Service Commission established a framework to take funding not used by a carrier to have a reverse auction to assist other carriers. \$13.1 million was available from funding originally allocated to Frontier. However, only one bid was received for approximately \$23,000. The Commission will be examining ways to better distribute this funding.
- **RDOF Reverse Auction.** The FCC approved NextLink's application to receive \$25 million to provide broadband to 14,000 locations in Nebraska. After the FCC did not approve LTD's bids in Nebraska, NextLink is the largest winning bidder in Nebraska.
- **FCC Broadband Map.** The FCC is expected to release the first iteration of its new broadband map in November. The NTIA has announced that it expects to use the second iteration of the map to allocate BEAD funding.

RECOGNITION OF DEPARTING MEMBERS

Chair Ed Toner recognized Senator Curt Friesen and Commissioner Mary Ridder who will be leaving their elected positions in January. Both Senator Curt Friesen and Commissioner Mary Ridder have been actively involved in the Rural Broadband Task Force and have been instrumental in implementing many of the task force's recommendations.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ed Toner thanked Nebraska Public Media for hosting the meeting.

**Shoemaker moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded. All were in favor.
Chairperson Toner declared the meeting adjourned the meeting at 2:16pm CT.**

Meeting minutes were taken by Lori Lopez Urdiales and reviewed by Anne Byers, Office of the CIO.

Expanding Internet Access in Nebraska

Broadband Access and Digital Opportunities Listening Sessions
Kearney
June 8, 2023



NEBRASKA
Good Life. Great Journey.
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

1

Meeting Purpose

- Share statewide efforts to expand broadband access and digital opportunities
- Provide an opportunity for attendees to
 - » Learn more about the definition of high-speed internet
 - » Share their priorities related to internet service in their communities

2

Agenda

- What is broadband and why is it important?
- Digital opportunities
- Overview of Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)
- Broadband access
- Next steps
- Discussion

3

What is broadband?



- **Broadband:** high-speed internet access
- **Speed:** download and upload speeds in megabits per second (Mbps)
- **Unserved:** speeds below 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload
- **Underserved:** speeds at or greater than 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload but less than 100 Mbps download/20 Mbps upload

4

Why is broadband important?



51%
of Nebraska farmers and ranchers use precision agriculture practices to manage crops or livestock

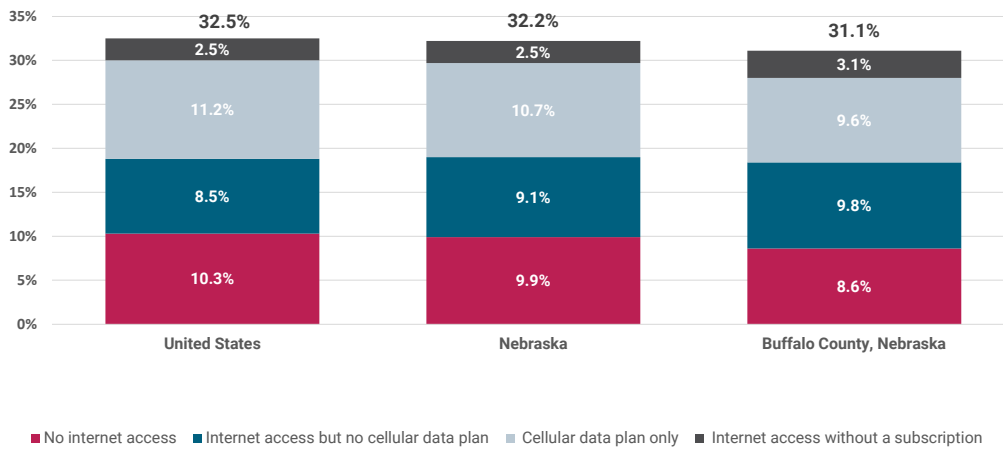
Source: 2021 Farm Computer Usage and Ownership

- Economic Growth
- Agriculture
- Health Access
- Educational Opportunities
- Workforce Participation
- Improve the Lives of Nebraskans

5

Why is broadband important?

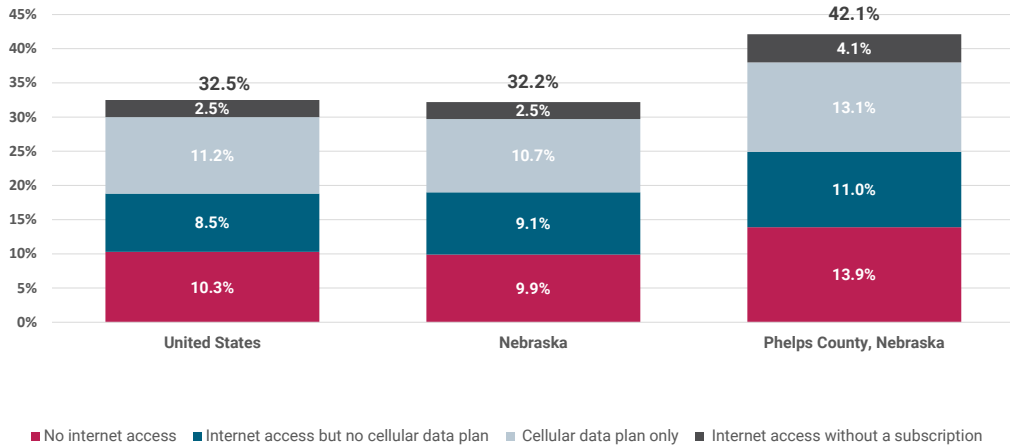
Percent Households without Internet Access or with Only Fixed or Mobile Access



6

Why is broadband important?

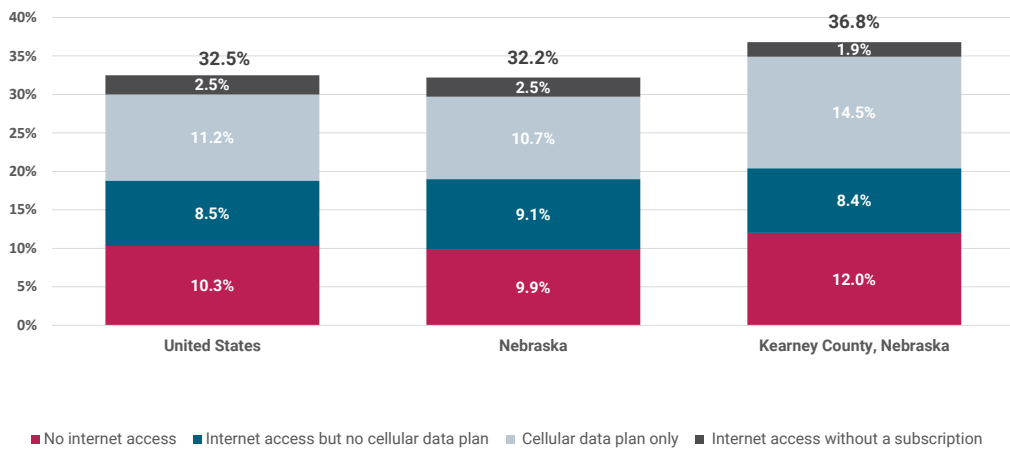
Percent Households without Internet Access or with Only Fixed or Mobile Access



7

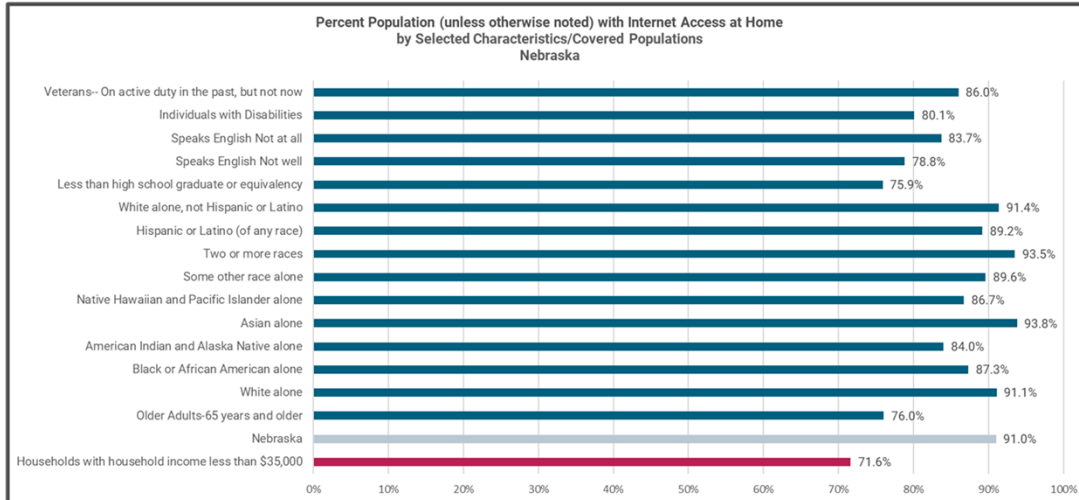
Why is broadband important?

Percent Households without Internet Access or with Only Fixed or Mobile Access



8

Why is broadband important?



9

Digital Opportunities

- Advancing digital opportunities includes:
 - » Increased availability of broadband
 - » Broadband affordability and subscription
 - » Access to digital devices
 - » Digital skills
 - » Knowledge of privacy and security practices

10

Overview: Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

- Purpose is to deploy broadband to unserved areas
- Will deploy in excess of \$100 million in grant funds across the state
- Funding priorities:
 - » Unserved locations
 - » Underserved locations

11

Overview: Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)

- Requires completion of a 5-year plan once Initial Planning Funds are awarded
- Initial proposal and final proposal required after notice of funding amounts are released

12

Broadband Mapping



FCC Broadband Map

Identifies serviceable locations with associated providers and speeds

(<https://broadbandmap.fcc.gov>)



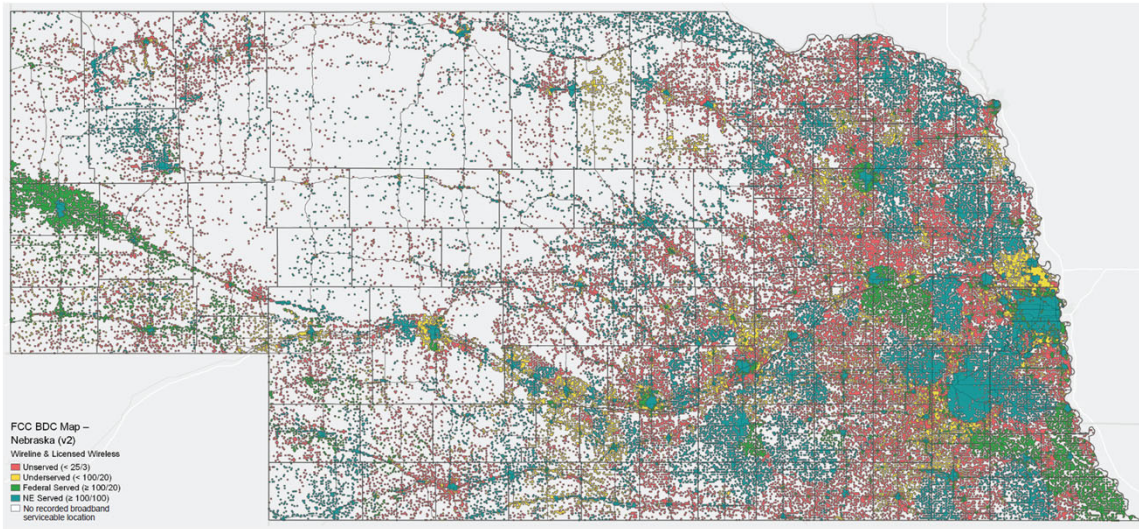
Nebraska Broadband Map

Pulls in FCC data as well as deployed state & federal funding to increase broadband access

(<https://broadbandmap.Nebraska.gov>)

13

Broadband Coverage in NE



14

Broadband Mapping

- Maps are used to determine federal funding allocation and inform state funding decision-making
- Data quality is important for funding opportunities
- Ongoing map challenge process to improve data

15

Next Steps

The State of Nebraska has received two federal grants to develop a digital equity plan and a statewide infrastructure plan to connect every household and business to high-speed internet. Input we receive from Nebraskans will assist in developing those plans



16

Challenge Process

- Challenges can be initiated once the:
 - » First version of Initial Proposal is approved, OR
 - » Second version of Initial Proposal is submitted
- Challenge process must be completed within 90 days
- 90 days must include:
 - » At least 14 days for challenge submissions, AND
 - » At least 14 days for rebuttals
- Final location classifications must be published at least 60 days before states can allocate grant funds
- Challenges can be proved by
 - » Local governments
 - » Nonprofits
 - » Broadband service providers

17

Discussion

- Use discussion to highlight priorities related to broadband
 - » Goal of identifying about 6 priorities
- Aim for ~15 – 20 minutes of discussion
- Staff will take notes and capture priorities on flip board
- As you leave, don't forget to place sticky dots to show which issues you believe are priorities
 - » Dots can be placed in any way you choose - dots spread out across multiple sheets, all dots on one sheet, etc.

18

Thank you



Online

NDOT website at
<https://broadband.nebraska.gov/home>



Contacts

Digital Opportunities: Anne Byers
anne.byers@nebraska.gov | 402-471-3805
Broadband: Patrick Redmond
patrick.redmond@nebraska.gov | 402-471-4181



Comment Box

Leave feedback forms
with us tonight.



State Digital Equity Planning Grant Update

June 9, 2023

Benchmark Data

The State Digital Equity Manager has compiled benchmark information on:

- Internet access at home (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey)
- Device access at home (U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey)
- Affordable Connectivity Program enrollment (Education Superhighway ACP Enrollment Dashboard and Oliver Borchers-Williams)
- Broadband availability (FCC Broadband Map)

Regional Digital Equity Planning

The NITC/OCIOC has contracted with the state's eight economic development districts to develop regional digital equity plans. The districts have organized digital equity planning committees and are in the process of developing their regional plans. Economic development district staff have also promoted the outreach sessions. The State Digital Equity Manager has developed a plan template for the districts to use to simplify the planning process. The State Digital Equity Manager and economic development district staff meet twice a month to share progress, coordinate efforts and address any concerns.

Asset Inventory

The state's economic development districts have compiled regional digital equity asset inventories. The OCIO/NITC has also compiled information on statewide, multi-state and national resources for the asset inventory. Information on the state's libraries from the Nebraska Library Commission and senior centers from the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services State Unit on Aging was also included in the asset inventories.

Webinars

In order to develop a shared understanding of digital equity and to build capacity to address digital equity in Nebraska, the NITC/OCIO organized presented 8 webinars in January, February and March 2023. An additional six webinars are scheduled in June and July 2023.

Tribal Consultations

The State Digital Equity Manager participated in 4 tribal consultations with the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Santee Sioux Nation, and Omaha Tribe of Nebraska.

Outreach Sessions

The State Digital Equity Manager at the OCIO and Nebraska Library Commission Staff have attended 20 outreach sessions in conjunction with the BEAD planning initiative in April, May, and early June. Another six outreach sessions are scheduled in mid to late June and in July.

State Planning Workshop

The State Digital Equity Manager and representatives of the economic development districts met on June 8 to plan the agenda for the State Digital Equity Planning Workshop on August 8 in Kearney. The planning workshop will bring together representatives of the regional digital equity planning committees and other stakeholders to draft recommendations for the state digital equity plan.

Library Broadband

Holly Woldt from the Nebraska Library Commission has been working with Sam Shaw and Andrew Sherman on the following digital equity activities

- Surveying Nebraska libraries on their digital equity assets and training programs
- Developing strategies to better support libraries
- Supporting the use of E-Rate Special Construction Funding

Holly Woldt and the State Digital Equity Manager are planning to speak at annual regional library system meetings:

- Central Plains Library System, July 14, Cozad, Nebraska
- Western Library System, August 1, Bayard, Nebraska
- Three Rivers Library System, August 4, Genoa Nebraska

Webinars Held

<p>Libraries as Digital Equity Partners Wednesday, January 18 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holly Woldt, Nebraska Library Commission Sam Shaw, Nebraska Library Commission Denise Harders, Central Plains Library System Amanda Sweet, Nebraska Library Commission
<p>Digital Equity Needs of Older Adults & Resources Wednesday, January 25 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jina Ragland, AARP Nebraska Cynthia Brammeier, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services State Unit on Aging Carla Frase, Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging
<p>Digital Equity Benchmark Data and Precision Ag Wednesday, Feb. 1 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Don Linqvist, Linqvist Technologies <p>Anne Byers, Nebraska Information Technology Commission/OCIO</p>
<p>Access to Digital Devices Wednesday, Feb. 15 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brian Whitacre, Oklahoma State University <p>Beverly Lahlum Taylor, Digital Express, Metropolitan Community College</p>
<p>Broadband Availability, Funding & Mapping Wednesday, Feb. 22 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <p>Cullen Robbins, Nebraska Public Service Commission</p>
<p>Makerspaces and Digital Equity Organizations Wednesday, March 8 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michael Sauers, Do Space David Martin, Nebraska Innovation Studio <p>Kristine Flyinghawk, Center for Rural Affairs</p>
<p>STEM and Technology Workforce Development Wednesday, March. 15 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shonna Dorsey, Nebraska Tech Collaborative Alan Wang, Prairie STEM <p>Kandace Miller, AIM Institute</p>
<p>Affordable Connectivity Program Wednesday, March. 22 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anthony Butler, FCC <p>Jenny Miller, Education SuperHighway</p>

Webinars Scheduled

<p>Online Privacy and Security Thursday, June 22 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speaker: Ryan Sothan Nebraska Attorney General's Office</p>
<p>Individuals with Disabilities— Common Vision Conditions Wednesday, July 12 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speaker: Molly Wuebker, OTD, OTR/L, Professional Affiliate AIA - Iowa Iowa ADA Liaison Great Plains ADA Center</p>
<p>State Disability Organizations and Resources Thursday, July 13 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bradley A. Meurrens, Disability Rights Nebraska • Michael J. Elsken, Disability Rights Nebraska • Arlene Garcia Gunderson, Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing • Carlos Servan, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired • Tobias Orr, Assistive Technology Partnership
<p>Individuals with Disabilities— Digital Accessibility Practices for Hearing Wednesday, July 19 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speaker: Molly Wuebker, OTD, OTR/L, Professional Affiliate AIA - Iowa Iowa ADA Liaison Great Plains ADA Center</p>
<p>Individuals with Disabilities— Digital Accessibility Practices for Motor Wednesday, July 26 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speaker: Molly Wuebker, OTD, OTR/L, Professional Affiliate AIA - Iowa Iowa ADA Liaison Great Plains ADA Center</p>
<p>Individuals with Disabilities— General Digital Accessibility Thursday, July 27 11:00 a.m. CT</p>	<p>Speaker: Molly Wuebker, OTD, OTR/L, Professional Affiliate AIA - Iowa Iowa ADA Liaison Great Plains ADA Center</p>

Tribal Consultations

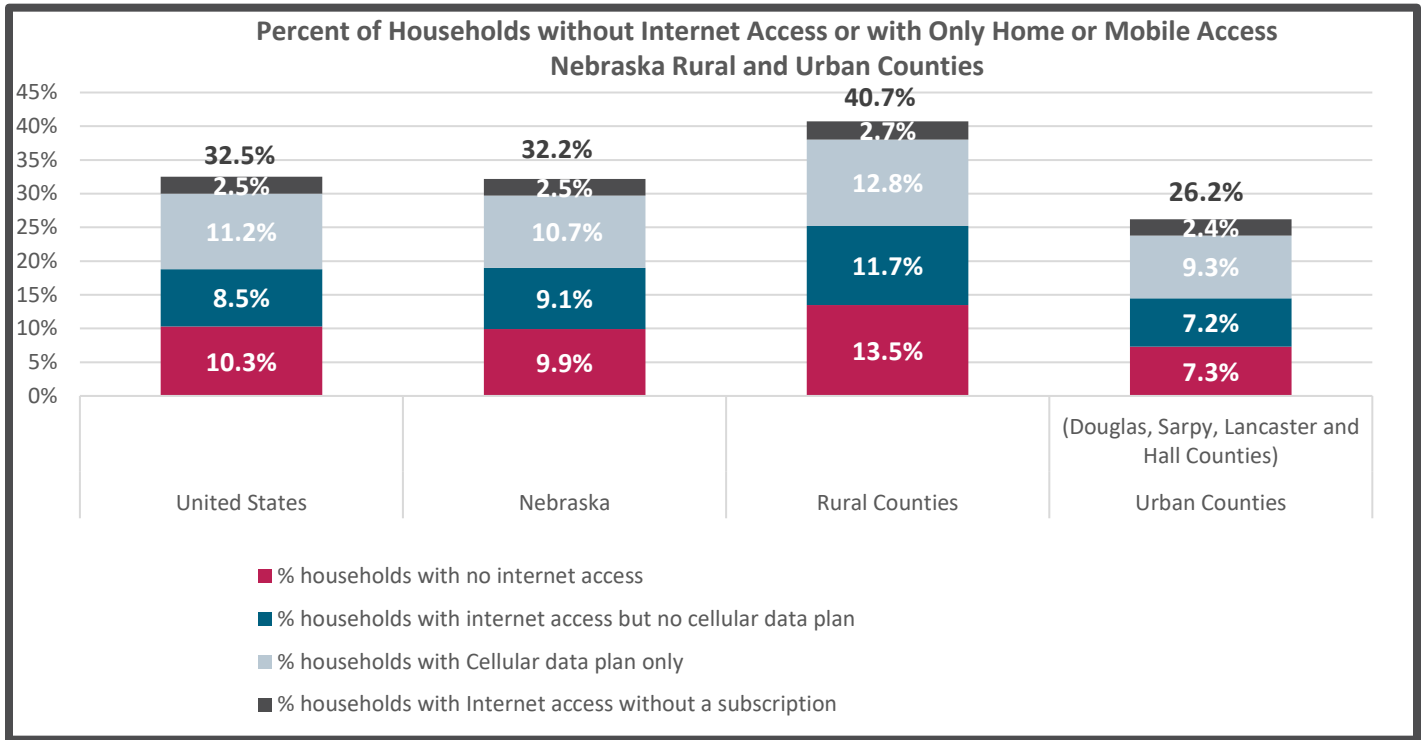
March 24	1:00	Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, Ponca Tribal Transit Facility, Norfolk
March 31	10:00	Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, Tribal Council Chambers, Winnebago
April 11	1:00	Santee Sioux Nation, Tribal Council Headquarters and Museum, Niobrara
April 21`	10:00	Omaha Tribe of Nebraska, Atrium 7 th floor, Lincoln

Outreach Sessions

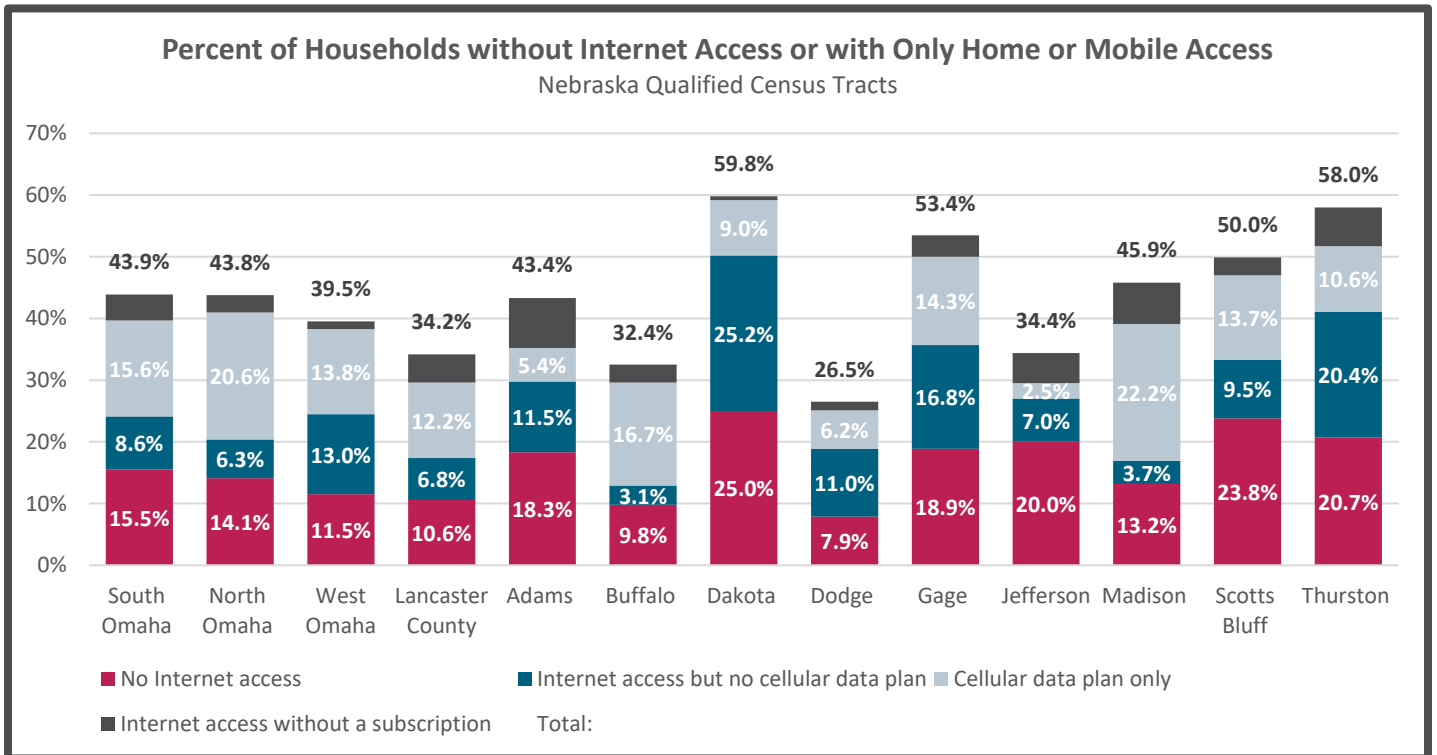
1.	April 19	5:30	Grand Island, Nebraska Extension in Hall County
2.	April 26	noon	Niobrara, Niobrara Village Fire Hall
3.	April 26	5:00	Norfolk, Norfolk Public Library
4.	May 1	5:00	Valentine, Mid Plains Community College
5.	May 2	noon	Ainsworth, the Connection
6.	May 2	5:00	Stuart, Stuart Auditorium
7.	May 3	noon	O'Neill, Evergreen Assisted Living
8.	May 3	5:30	Columbus, Central Community College
9.	May 8	5:00	Sidney, Cheyenne County Community Center
10.	May 9	noon	Scottsbluff, Guadalupe Center, 1200 East 9 th Street
11.	May 9	5:00	Chadron, Chadron State College, Scottsbluff Room
12.	May 10	5:00	Alliance, Knight Museum and Sandhills
13.	May 11	5:00	Ord, Ord Learning Center
14.	May 15	5:00	Albion, Cornerstone Bank
15.	May 16	5:00	Auburn, Auburn Council Chambers
16.	May 17	5:00	Wayne, Community Activity Center
17.	May 24	5:00	Hastings, Hastings Public Library
18.	May 30	5:00	Beatrice, Southeast Community College
19.	May 31	5:00	Waverly, Waverly Community Foundation Community Center
20.	June 8	6:30	Kearney Public Library, 2020 1st St
21.	June 13	5:30	North Platte, Harvest Christian Fellowship, 1501 S Dewey St
22.	June 14	5:30	McCook, Public Safety Center, 505 W C St
23.	June 21	5:30	Broken Bow Public Library, 626 D St
24.	June 29	5:30	South Sioux City Marriott Riverfront, 385 E 4th St
25.	July 11	5:30	Lincoln, NDOT Auditorium, 1500 Nebraska Pkwy
26.	July 12	5:30	Omaha, NDOT State Operations Center, 4425 S 108th St

[A form to provide your feedback on recent broadband listening sessions is now live.](#)
[Click here to fill out the feedback form regarding Broadband Access and Digital Opportunities.](#)

Nebraska Connectivity and Device Gap

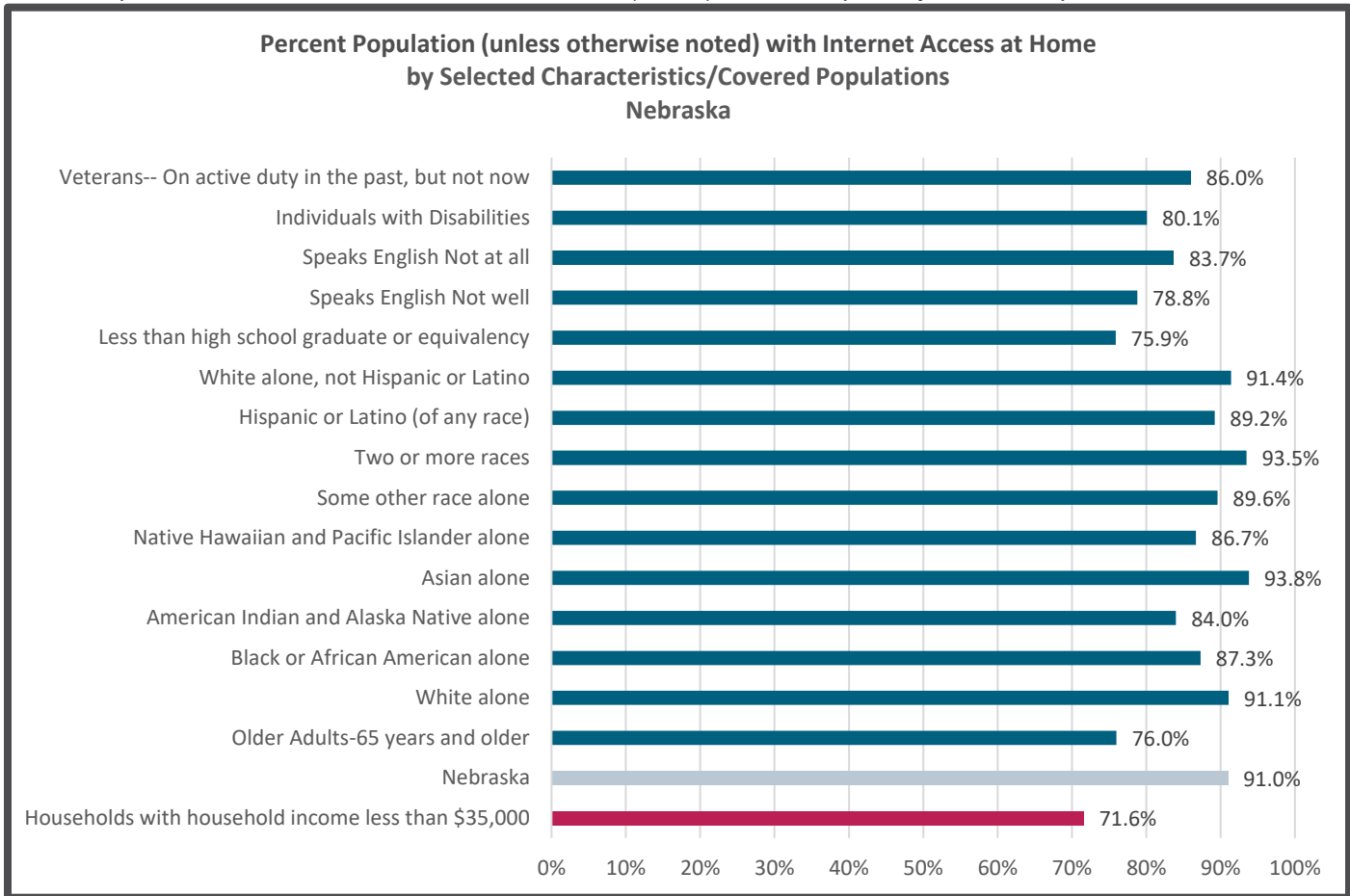


Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year (Table B28002)



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year (Table B28002)

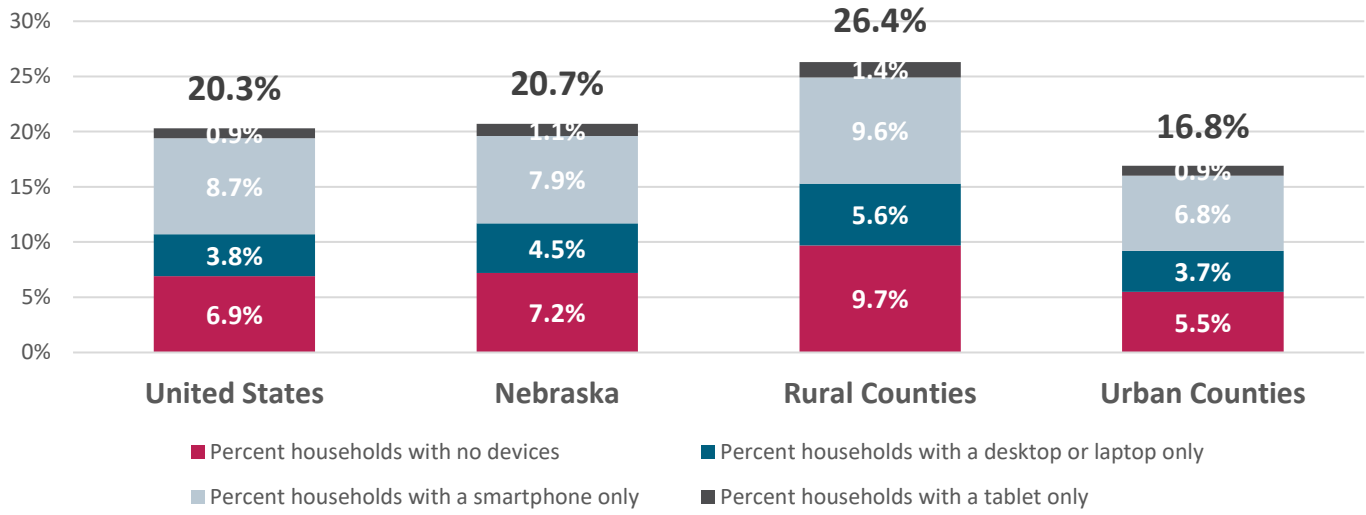
Note: Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Census Tracts must have 50 percent of households with incomes below 60 percent of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of 25 percent or more.



Sources: 2021 ACS 5-year estimates 2021 (Table S 2802); 2020 Micro--ACS 5-year estimates Public Use Microdata; 2021 ACS Five-year estimates Table B28004

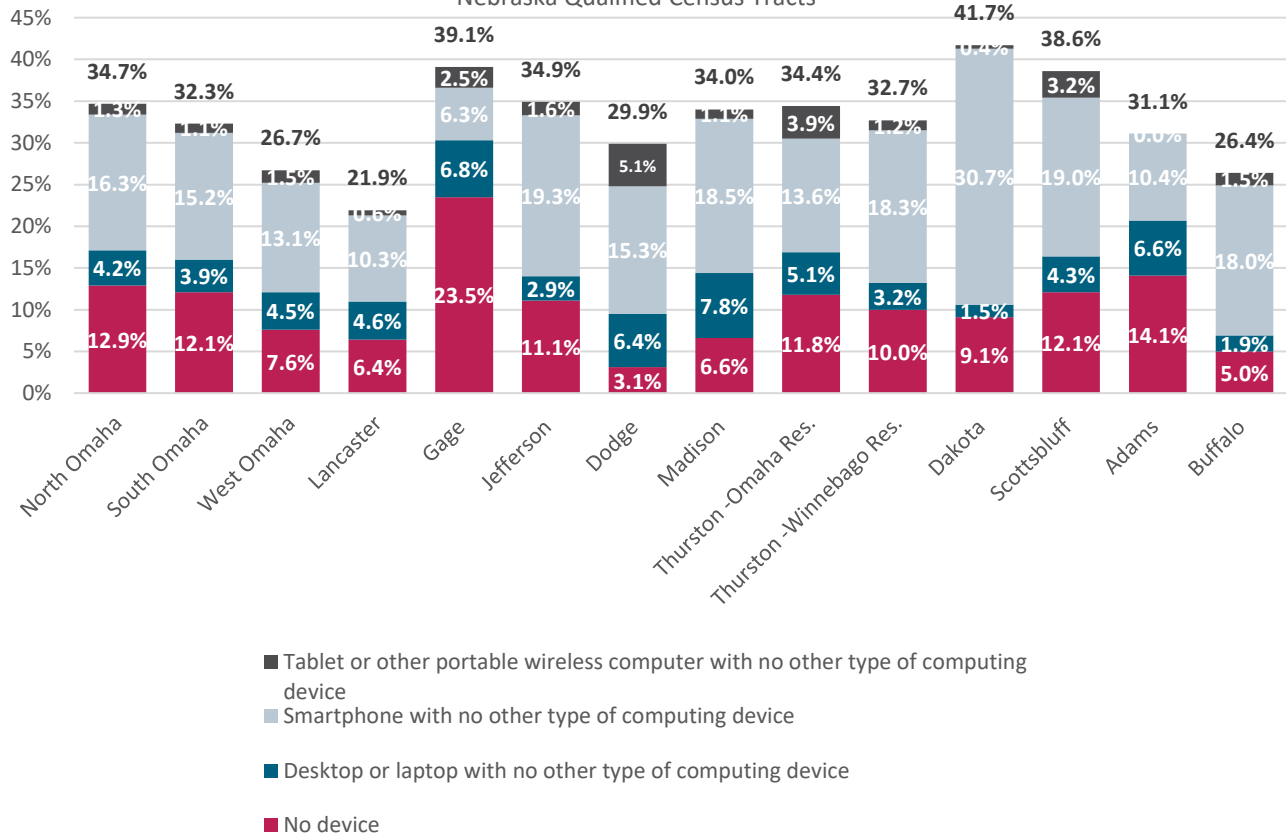
Percent Nebraska Population (unless otherwise noted) with Internet Access at Home by Selected Characteristics/Covered Populations	
ACS 5-year 2021 (Table S 2802) unless otherwise noted	
Nebraska	91.0%
Older Adults 65 years and older	76.0%
Minority Populations	
White alone	91.1%
Black or African American alone	87.3%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	84.0%
Asian alone	93.8%
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander alone	86.7%
Some other race alone	89.6%
Two or more races	93.5%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	89.2%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	91.4%
Language Barriers	
Less than high school graduate or equivalency	75.9%
Speaks English Not well (2020 ACS Micro)	78.8%
Speaks English Not at all (2020 ACS Micro)	83.7%
Individuals with Disabilities (2020 ACS Micro)	80.1%
Veterans - On active duty in the past, but not now (2020 ACS Micro)	86.0%
% Households with Internet at Home/ Subscription	
2021 ACS Five-year estimate Table B28004	
Lower Incomes--Households with household income less than \$35,000	71.6%

Percent Households with No Digital Device Or Only One Kind of Device



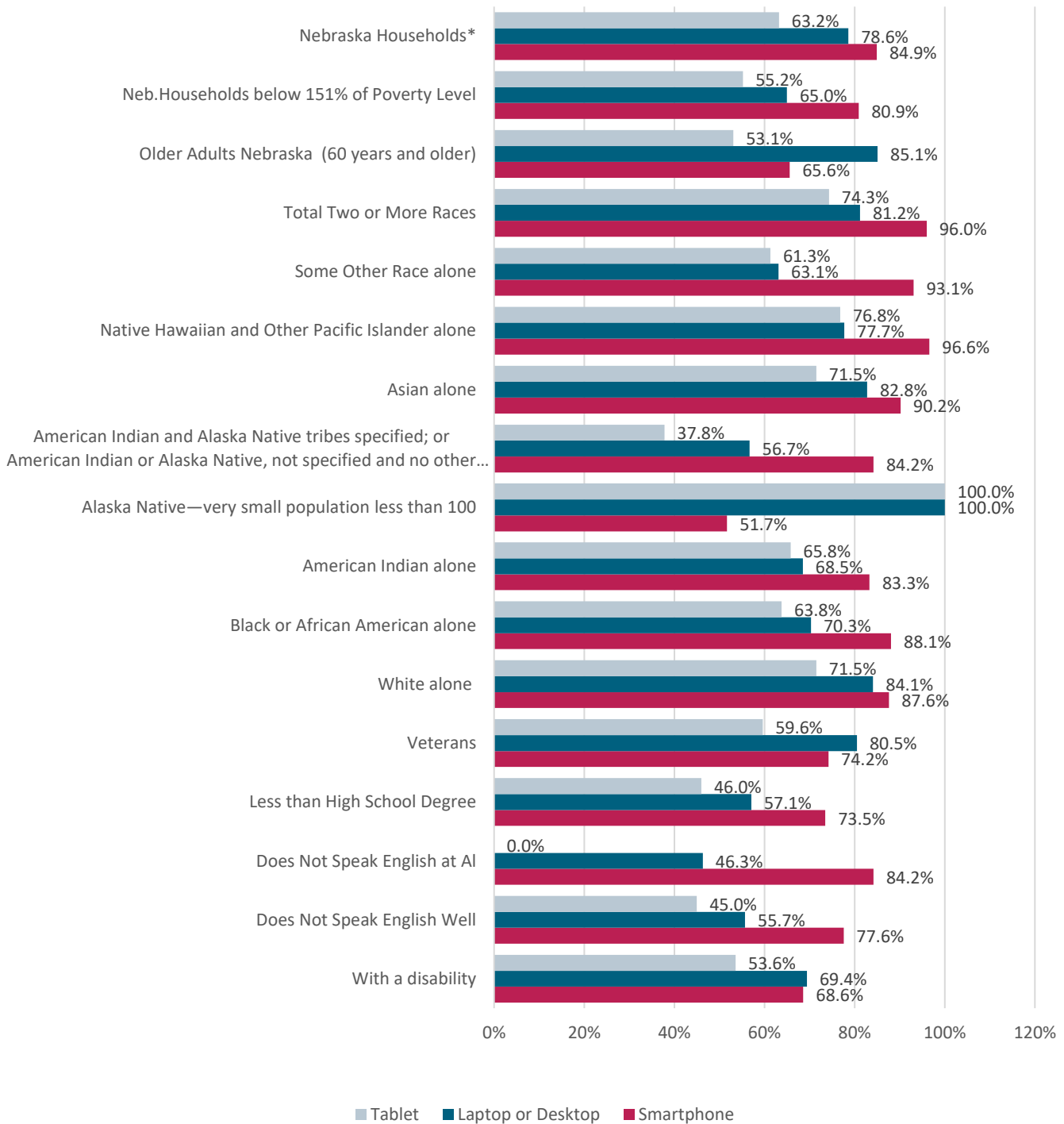
Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B28001

Percent Households with No Digital Device or Only One Kind of Device Nebraska Qualified Census Tracts



Source: 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates Table B28001

Device Access by Covered Populations



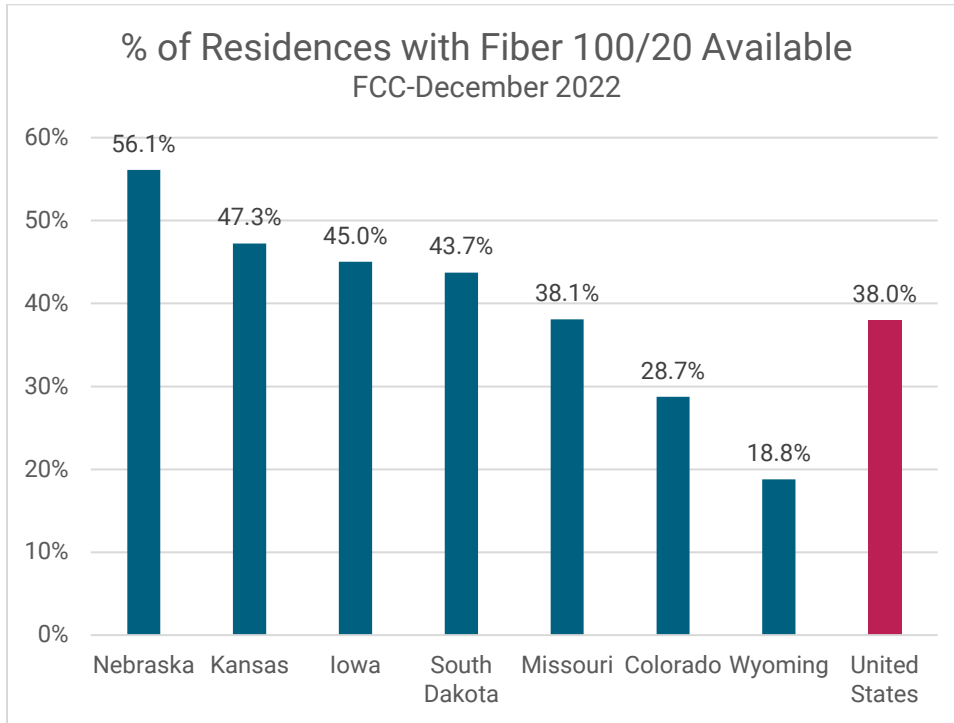
Source: 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates Public Use Microdata except data for Nebraska households.

*Nebraska Households--2021 ACS 5-Year Estimates from Table B2801

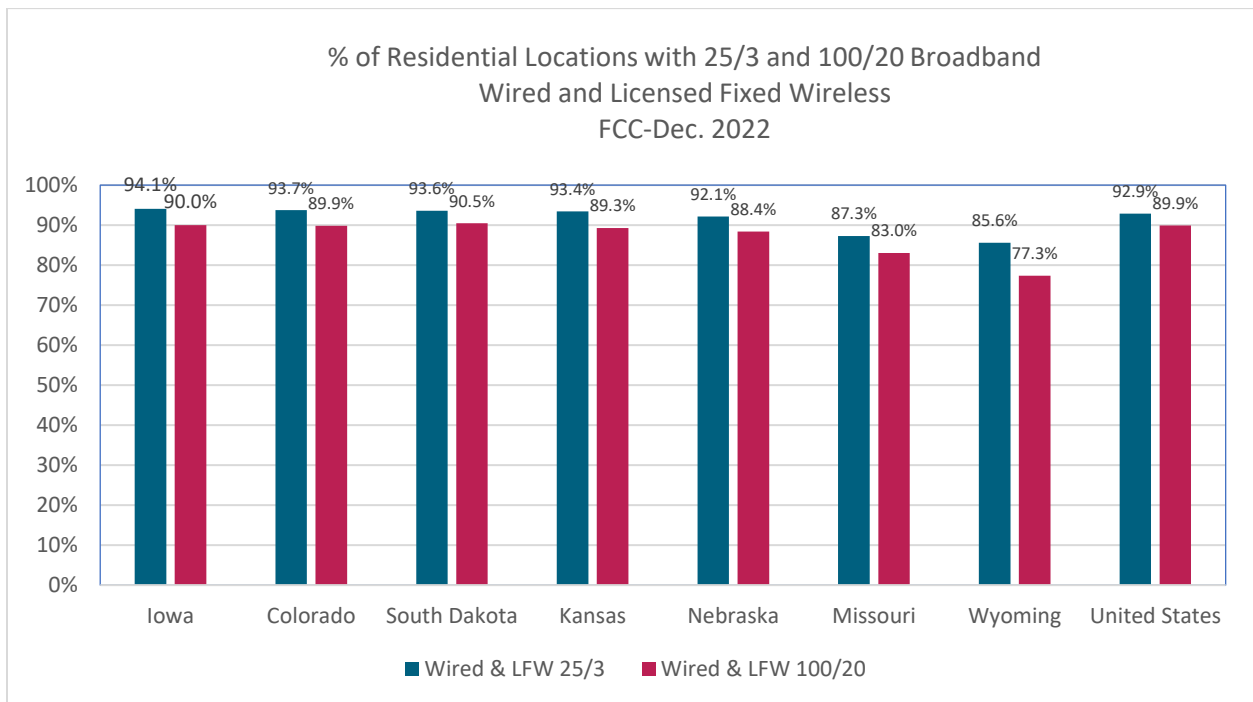
Nebraska Broadband Availability Data

June 2023

Nebraska ranks 5th in the percent of residences with fiber at 100/20 Mbps or greater available.



Nebraska ranks 31st in the percent of residences with 25/3 wireline and licensed fixed broadband available.



Rural Broadband Task Force

2021 Recommendations and Metrics

Broadband Mapping Recommendations

- Initiate a program to map broadband availability for serviceable locations in the state augmented by speed test data.
- To the extent possible, encourage the FCC and/or Congress to continue to improve more accurate data collection of mobile wireless coverage data.
- Urge the FCC to accelerate the implementation of the Digital Opportunity Data Collection program to improve the accuracy of the broadband availability collected. Once the improved data is available, the State of Nebraska may be able to leverage this data.

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 and state broadband mapping

Nebraska Universal Service Fund and Reverse Auction Recommendations

- Monitor the Nebraska Public Service Commission's efforts to stabilize the Nebraska Universal Service Fund by modernizing the contribution system.
- Monitor the Nebraska Public Service Commission's efforts to modernize the distribution method and improve provider accountability through the system of grant-like awards for broadband infrastructure projects.
- Evaluate the results of the Nebraska Public Service Commission's expected reverse auction of NUSF support.
- Coordinate the distribution of NUSF support with other funding sources to avoid duplication of funding and to target funding to areas most in need of support.
- Monitor the implementation of the FCC's Connect America Fund II and Rural Digital Opportunity Fund reverse auctions to evaluate the success of the program and to identify any key lessons learned.
- As funding from multiple sources is being utilized for broadband deployment projects, state and federal policymakers will need to develop mechanisms to ensure that the costs of maintaining these networks are supported.

NUSF Metrics

NUSF			
Measure	2019 Most Recent Data Nebraska Public Service Commission	2021 Most Recent Data Nebraska Public Service Commission	2023 Most Recent Data
Annual contributions to the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (By Calendar Year)	2017 - \$35,321,380 2018 - \$32,796,228 2019 - \$18,333,749 (Through 1 st Half, 2019)	2019 - \$43,915,240 2020 - \$46,815,139	2021 - \$45,654,289 2022 - 50,828,818 2023 - \$17,154,345 (Through April, 2023)
Annual allocations from the Nebraska Universal Service Fund (By Calendar Year)	2017 - \$40,087,483 2018 - \$33,139,591	2019 - \$42,040,143 2020 - \$45,674,733 2021 - \$45,300,854	2022 - \$50,291,888 2023 - \$45,606,939
NUSF-108 (Rate of Return Carrier) project-specific households covered, by year		2019 - 500 2020 - 1,020	2021 - 558 2022 - 165 2023 - 107 (Through May, 2023)
NUSF-99 (Price Cap Carrier) project-specific households covered, by year	2017 - 643 2018 - 1,981	2019 - 7,769 2020 - 6,833 2021 - 3,094	2022 - 2,451 2023 - TBD

Public-Private Partnership Recommendations

- **Express appreciation to Governor Ricketts and the Legislature for recognizing the importance of broadband to Nebraska and for providing funding for broadband through the Nebraska Broadband Bridge grant program and the Remote Access Rural Broadband grant program.**
- **Review the initial round of awards from the Broadband Bridge grant program to determine the impact of the program.**
- **Encourage local and regional broadband planning.** Each community, county or region is different and will likely require a unique solution. Bringing stakeholders together to develop a local, county or regional plan can lay the groundwork for public-private partnerships.
- **Encourage each county or region to have a broadband coordinator to facilitate broadband planning and coordination.**
- **Encourage each county or region to leverage programs and resources such as the local economic development districts, the Rural Impact Hub's Lead for Nebraska fellows, and the state broadband coordinator expected to be staffed by July 1, 2022.**
- **Encourage communications planning between telecommunications providers and public entities, such as public power districts and other private entities, such as cooperatives.** This could be done in a number of ways, including:
 - Convening local or regional meetings of telecommunications providers and public power districts to explore how the communications needs of public power could be leveraged to improve broadband availability in rural areas;
 - Developing a joint RFP for public power districts which could be put out for bid by Network Nebraska or the Nebraska Office of the CIO.
- **Explore the creation of broadband cooperatives in unserved and underserved localities.**
- **Explore the creation of a statewide broadband association.** The association could include telecommunications providers, public power districts, schools, hospitals, municipalities, counties, and other stakeholders interested in advancing broadband in Nebraska. The association could convene regional and statewide discussions and develop and distribute resources such as model or sample agreements.
- **Retain the existing prohibition on retail provision of broadband service by public entities.** The public power industry has stated that it is not interested in retail provision of broadband services. In some states, municipalities are providing retail broadband service. Public provision of broadband without regional planning may erode the business case for providing broadband in surrounding rural areas.
- **Encourage local governments to review their rights of way and permitting processes and take steps if necessary to make the processes less burdensome for telecommunications providers.**

Public-Private Partnership Metrics

Measure	2019 Most Recent Data	2021 Most Recent Data	2023 Most Recent Data
Number of leases of dark fiber from public entities	1 July 2019, Nebraska Public Service Commission	1 August 2021, Nebraska Public Service Commission	
Number of projects funded through state grant programs*	N/A	60 Remote Access Rural Broadband Grant Program 2020	
Number of households and businesses connected through state grant programs*	N/A	17,600 households Remote Access Rural Broadband Grant Program 2020	2021--12,640 households 2022—2,438 households
Total amount of grant funding awarded*	N/A	\$29.5 million Remote Access Rural Broadband Grant Program 2020	2021 \$19.2 million awarded state general funds 2022 \$20.37 million awarded

- **New Metric for 2021*

Year	Funding Source	Funding Amount	Unserviced Households	Underserved Households
2021	State General Funds	\$19,217,657.00	1,765	10,875
2022	State General Funds	\$ 20,370,449.00	2,178	260

Agriculture Recommendations

- Establish a state goal of having broadband access to every farm or ranch headquarters.
- Focus a portion of broadband funding on the highest cost areas.
- Review the initial round of awards from the Broadband Bridge grant program to determine if adjustments to program requirements could aid in funding extremely high cost rural areas.
- Survey Nebraska farmers and ranchers on their broadband needs and broadband availability to their farms and ranches, including what percentage of their operations are covered by broadband and where broadband coverage is still needed.

Nebraska’s high ranking in fiber availability and relatively low ranking in 25/3 broadband via wired or license fixed wireless technologies may indicate a greater disparity between well-connected and unserved areas than many other states. The following are the state rankings for fiber (100/20 Mbps) and wired and licensed fixed wireless (25/3) broadband availability.

State Rankings		
	Fiber 100/20	Wired & LFW 25/3
Nebraska	5	31
Kansas	13	24
Iowa	15	19
South Dakota	18	23
Missouri	28	42
Colorado	39	22
Wyoming	46	44

Nebraska ranks 33rd in fixed broadband speed test results (up from #34 in 2021) and third among neighboring states. Nebraska ranks 39th in mobile broadband speed test results (up from 47th in 2021) and sixth among neighboring states. See the following tables.

**Ookla Fixed Median Download and Upload Speeds
Q1 2023**

Area and Ranking	Down (Mbps)	Up (Mbps)
Colorado (23 th)	181.07	19.55
Kansas (27 st)	174.59	35.48
Nebraska (33 rd)	170.12	26.2
Missouri (34 th)	168.60	22.34
South Dakota (36 th)	84.8	16.7
Iowa (43 rd)	139.80	36.84
Wyoming (50 th)	50.8	10.6

[Ookla United States Fixed Broadband Internet Speed Tests Q1 2023](#)

**Ookla Mobile Median Download and Upload Speeds
Q1 2023**

Area and Ranking	Down (Mbps)	Up (Mbps)
Kansas (16 th)	86.64	9.08
Missouri (17 th)	81.85	8.34
Colorado (24 th)	79.18	8.85
Iowa (36 th)	63.88	10.0
South Dakota (38 th)	62.62	10.91
Nebraska (39 th)	61.71	10.55
Wyoming (49 th)	41.24	6.8

[Ookla United States Mobile Internet Speed Tests Q1 2023](#)

% Nebraska Residences with Broadband via Wired or Licensed Fixed Wireless Technologies
Nebraska Counties Ranked by % Residences with 25/3 Mbps Available
FCC-Dec. 2022

	Wired & LFW 25/3 Res	Wired & LFW 100/20 Res	Wired & LFW 250/25 Res	Wired & LFW 1000/100 Res
Boyd County	100.0%	100.0%	40.2%	0.0%
Scotts Bluff County	99.6%	99.5%	79.5%	67.6%
Adams County	99.5%	98.8%	96.5%	80.3%
Douglas County	99.4%	98.9%	98.8%	21.1%
Sarpy County	98.9%	97.5%	97.4%	14.3%
Lancaster County	98.8%	98.0%	97.2%	92.8%
Phelps County	96.9%	80.3%	79.8%	19.7%
Box Butte County	96.0%	95.8%	93.9%	73.5%
Dundy County	95.3%	94.8%	94.5%	94.5%
Keith County	94.9%	84.8%	82.6%	69.4%
Hamilton County	94.6%	88.9%	88.9%	85.1%
Dawson County	94.6%	82.9%	77.7%	43.7%
Butler County	94.3%	92.2%	36.7%	20.7%
Clay County	94.2%	93.3%	86.6%	37.8%
Richardson County	94.1%	93.5%	87.7%	0.0%
Furnas County	94.0%	73.1%	60.3%	60.3%
Madison County	93.8%	90.3%	86.5%	73.2%
Keya Paha County	93.3%	93.3%	93.3%	0.0%
Buffalo County	93.2%	85.0%	84.2%	32.3%
Dakota County	92.5%	91.2%	83.3%	46.2%
Hall County	92.5%	88.4%	88.3%	38.5%
Lincoln County	92.1%	85.9%	80.6%	72.9%
Pawnee County	91.7%	90.1%	85.2%	4.1%
Washington County	91.4%	65.0%	64.9%	53.5%
Johnson County	91.1%	90.5%	46.2%	26.7%
Otoe County	90.9%	89.9%	76.9%	44.9%
Gosper County	90.6%	58.1%	57.4%	28.6%
Garfield County	90.3%	66.5%	66.5%	66.5%
Deuel County	90.2%	73.8%	16.0%	0.2%
Kimball County	90.2%	86.7%	51.5%	0.9%
Dodge County	89.6%	87.7%	87.6%	79.9%
Red Willow County	89.1%	78.4%	78.4%	45.3%
Arthur County	89.0%	36.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Jefferson County	87.9%	70.0%	58.6%	52.2%
Gage County	87.4%	82.1%	63.0%	50.3%
Cheyenne County	87.0%	82.6%	56.7%	12.6%
Platte County	86.8%	84.5%	82.1%	73.2%
Nemaha County	86.8%	84.6%	45.6%	43.7%

Cass County	86.7%	82.8%	72.6%	44.5%
Webster County	86.3%	82.9%	76.5%	76.5%
Chase County	86.1%	85.9%	72.6%	69.8%
Morrill County	86.1%	85.0%	50.6%	29.2%
Stanton County	86.0%	85.3%	76.6%	46.8%
Cuming County	84.6%	83.5%	79.9%	47.7%
Seward County	84.5%	78.9%	66.8%	40.3%
Merrick County	84.0%	68.5%	55.2%	39.8%
Wayne County	83.6%	80.2%	70.6%	61.7%
Dixon County	83.2%	81.5%	37.0%	5.6%
Colfax County	82.6%	66.7%	49.0%	0.8%
Saunders County	82.5%	77.5%	54.5%	28.7%
Logan County	82.0%	37.6%	36.5%	36.5%
Harlan County	81.9%	71.0%	70.9%	70.9%
Fillmore County	81.4%	78.2%	55.2%	50.8%
Brown County	81.0%	78.7%	57.0%	48.9%
Saline County	80.8%	73.8%	62.9%	45.3%
York County	79.7%	73.1%	66.2%	49.6%
Thurston County	79.1%	45.1%	16.8%	0.2%
Loup County	78.6%	44.5%	43.0%	43.0%
Dawes County	78.6%	74.0%	74.0%	0.5%
Perkins County	78.3%	75.6%	39.2%	2.8%
Kearney County	77.7%	72.6%	72.2%	55.5%
Frontier County	77.2%	53.9%	45.9%	13.4%
Burt County	75.8%	69.2%	49.0%	17.9%
Pierce County	75.1%	68.0%	64.9%	30.3%
Hooker County	75.0%	12.8%	2.4%	0.0%
Nuckolls County	74.9%	71.0%	57.8%	52.7%
Howard County	74.8%	45.7%	45.7%	15.4%
Rock County	71.9%	5.8%	1.3%	1.3%
Valley County	70.5%	50.7%	50.5%	9.0%
Cedar County	69.8%	67.3%	24.5%	2.7%
Banner County	69.7%	64.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Cherry County	69.6%	65.4%	61.5%	55.6%
Grant County	67.2%	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Polk County	66.8%	61.4%	49.7%	32.3%
Thayer County	66.5%	63.2%	52.6%	45.6%
Wheeler County	65.7%	52.1%	18.7%	18.7%
Antelope County	65.7%	59.9%	47.4%	42.5%
Custer County	65.5%	50.4%	46.4%	34.6%
Holt County	65.5%	53.3%	42.1%	41.2%
Franklin County	65.3%	61.5%	60.7%	51.5%
Blaine County	61.8%	38.2%	1.4%	1.4%
Sioux County	61.6%	59.7%	30.7%	0.0%
Nance County	59.8%	55.4%	54.8%	3.3%

Greeley County	59.6%	47.0%	29.4%	12.2%
Garden County	59.4%	49.8%	0.3%	0.3%
Boone County	57.7%	54.9%	54.8%	10.1%
Thomas County	57.7%	34.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Sherman County	57.0%	34.2%	34.2%	9.4%
Sheridan County	51.3%	47.6%	47.4%	33.8%
Knox County	47.2%	44.4%	44.4%	28.7%
Hitchcock County	39.7%	34.2%	4.7%	4.7%
Hayes County	27.4%	24.2%	9.4%	9.4%
McPherson County	16.2%	15.7%	13.9%	13.9%
Omaha Reservation	79.0%	59.4%	22.6%	0.9%
Santee Reservation	12.9%	12.4%	12.4%	12.4%
Winnebago Reservation	78.9%	26.9%	8.1%	0.0%
Winnebago Off-Reservation Trust Land	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

% Nebraska Residences with Fiber Broadband Available
Nebraska Counties Ranked by % Residences with Fiber 100/20 Mbps Available
FCC-Dec. 2022

	Fiber 100/20 Res	Fiber 250/50 Res	Fiber 1001/100 Res
Boyd County	100.0%	40.2%	0.0%
Dundy County	94.5%	94.5%	94.5%
Box Butte County	93.9%	93.9%	73.5%
Keya Paha County	93.3%	93.3%	0.0%
Lancaster County	92.8%	92.8%	92.8%
Hamilton County	85.3%	85.2%	85.1%
Lincoln County	80.7%	75.4%	72.9%
Adams County	80.3%	80.3%	80.3%
Dodge County	80.1%	80.1%	79.9%
Brown County	78.7%	57.0%	48.9%
Richardson County	77.8%	77.8%	0.0%
Webster County	76.5%	76.5%	76.5%
Platte County	74.7%	74.7%	73.2%
Madison County	73.2%	73.2%	73.2%
Keith County	73.1%	73.1%	69.4%
Wayne County	71.3%	61.7%	61.7%
Harlan County	70.9%	70.9%	70.9%
Chase County	69.8%	69.8%	69.8%
Scotts Bluff County	67.7%	67.7%	67.6%
Garfield County	66.5%	66.5%	66.5%
Cherry County	65.4%	61.5%	55.6%
Washington County	65.0%	64.9%	53.5%
Dawson County	64.7%	43.8%	43.7%
Furnas County	60.3%	60.3%	60.3%
Kearney County	55.6%	55.6%	55.5%
Antelope County	54.7%	42.5%	42.5%
Douglas County	54.3%	54.2%	21.1%
Dakota County	54.2%	46.3%	46.2%
Frontier County	53.9%	45.9%	13.4%
Holt County	53.3%	42.1%	41.2%
Merrick County	53.1%	39.8%	39.8%
Nuckolls County	52.7%	52.7%	52.7%
Jefferson County	52.2%	52.2%	52.2%
Wheeler County	52.1%	18.7%	18.7%
Franklin County	51.5%	51.5%	51.5%
Fillmore County	50.8%	50.8%	50.8%
Gage County	50.3%	50.3%	50.3%
Dixon County	50.2%	5.6%	5.6%
York County	49.6%	49.6%	49.6%

Cass County	48.5%	48.5%	44.5%
Cuming County	47.7%	47.7%	47.7%
Stanton County	46.9%	46.8%	46.8%
Thayer County	45.6%	45.6%	45.6%
Nemaha County	45.5%	45.5%	43.7%
Seward County	45.5%	40.6%	40.3%
Cedar County	45.5%	2.7%	2.7%
Saline County	45.3%	45.3%	45.3%
Red Willow County	45.3%	45.3%	45.3%
Otoe County	45.0%	45.0%	44.9%
Loup County	44.5%	43.0%	43.0%
Saunders County	43.2%	28.8%	28.7%
Custer County	38.6%	34.6%	34.6%
Hall County	38.5%	38.5%	38.5%
Blaine County	38.2%	1.4%	1.4%
Burt County	37.9%	17.9%	17.9%
Clay County	37.8%	37.8%	37.8%
Logan County	37.6%	36.5%	36.5%
Sheridan County	36.6%	36.4%	33.8%
Arthur County	36.0%	7.0%	7.0%
Thomas County	34.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Polk County	33.6%	32.3%	32.3%
Knox County	33.3%	33.3%	28.7%
Buffalo County	32.7%	32.4%	32.3%
Butler County	30.7%	21.2%	20.7%
Pierce County	30.3%	30.3%	30.3%
Morrill County	29.6%	29.6%	29.2%
Gosper County	29.3%	28.8%	28.6%
Sarpy County	27.0%	27.0%	14.3%
Johnson County	26.9%	26.9%	26.7%
Dawes County	21.8%	21.8%	0.5%
Phelps County	19.7%	19.7%	19.7%
McPherson County	15.7%	13.9%	13.9%
Howard County	15.4%	15.4%	15.4%
Hooker County	12.8%	2.4%	0.0%
Cheyenne County	12.8%	12.6%	12.6%
Greeley County	12.2%	12.2%	12.2%
Perkins County	10.8%	3.4%	2.8%
Grant County	10.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Boone County	10.1%	10.1%	10.1%
Sherman County	9.6%	9.6%	9.4%
Hayes County	9.4%	9.4%	9.4%
Valley County	9.0%	9.0%	9.0%
Sioux County	8.2%	8.2%	0.0%
Rock County	5.8%	1.3%	1.3%

Hitchcock County	4.7%	4.7%	4.7%
Pawnee County	4.4%	4.4%	4.1%
Nance County	3.8%	3.3%	3.3%
Thurston County	3.0%	0.2%	0.2%
Kimball County	1.6%	1.6%	0.9%
Garden County	1.0%	0.3%	0.3%
Colfax County	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Deuel County	0.3%	0.3%	0.2%
Banner County	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Omaha Reservation	5.8%	0.9%	0.9%
Santee Reservation	12.4%	12.4%	12.4%
Winnebago Reservation	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Winnebago Off-Reservation Trust Land	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%

86-1102

Rural Broadband Task Force; created; members; advisory groups; staff assistance; powers; duties; expenses; meetings; report.

(1) The Rural Broadband Task Force is hereby created. Task force members shall include the chairperson of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Legislature and a member of the Legislature selected by the Executive Board of the Legislative Council who shall both serve as nonvoting, ex officio members, a member of the Public Service Commission who shall be selected by the chairperson of such commission, the chairperson of the Nebraska Information Technology Commission or his or her designee who shall act as chairperson of the task force, the Director of Economic Development or his or her designee, the Director of Agriculture or his or her designee, and the following members to be appointed by the Governor: A representative of the agribusiness community, a representative of the Nebraska business community, a representative of the regulated wireline telecommunications industry, a representative of the wireless telecommunications industry, a representative of the public power industry, a representative of health care providers, a representative of Nebraska postsecondary educational institutions, and a representative of rural schools offering kindergarten through grade twelve.

(2) The task force may appoint advisory groups to assist the task force in providing technical expertise and advice on any issue. The advisory groups may be composed of representatives of stakeholder groups which may include, but not necessarily be limited to, representatives from small and large wireline companies, wireless companies, public power districts, electric cooperative corporations, cable television companies, Internet service providers, low-income telecommunications and electric utility customers, health care providers, and representatives of educational sectors. No compensation or expense reimbursement shall be provided to any member of any advisory group appointed by the task force.

(3) The Nebraska Information Technology Commission shall provide staff assistance to the task force in consultation with staff from the Public Service Commission and other interested parties. The task force may hire consultants to assist in carrying out its duties. The task force shall review issues relating to availability, adoption, and affordability of broadband services in rural areas of Nebraska. In particular, the task force shall:

(a) Determine how Nebraska rural areas compare to neighboring states and the rest of the nation in average download and upload speeds and in subscription rates to higher speed tiers, when available;

(b) Examine the role of the Nebraska Telecommunications Universal Service Fund in bringing comparable and affordable broadband services to rural residents and any effect of the fund in deterring or delaying capital formation, broadband competition, and broadband deployment;

(c) Review the feasibility of alternative technologies and providers in accelerating access to faster and more reliable broadband service for rural residents;

(d) Examine alternatives for deployment of broadband services to areas that remain unserved or underserved, such as reverse auction programs described in section [86-330](#), public-private partnerships, funding for competitive deployment, and other measures, and make recommendations to the Public Service Commission to encourage deployment in such areas;

(e) Recommend state policies to effectively utilize state universal service fund dollars to leverage federal universal service fund support and other federal funding;

(f) Make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature as to the most effective and efficient ways that federal broadband rural infrastructure funds received after July 1, 2018, should be expended if such funds become available; and

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

(4) Task force members shall serve on the task force without compensation but shall be entitled to receive reimbursement for any actual expenses incurred for such service as provided in sections [81-1174](#) to [81-1177](#).

(5) The task force shall meet at the call of the chairperson and shall present its findings in a report to the Executive Board of the Legislative Council no later than November 1, 2019, and by November 1 every odd-numbered year thereafter. The report shall be submitted electronically.

(6) For purposes of this section, broadband services means high-speed telecommunications capability at a minimum download speed of twenty-five megabits per second and a minimum upload speed of three megabits per second, and that enables users to originate and receive high-quality voice, data, and video telecommunications using any technology