

The fourth webinar focusing on broadband adaptation and use in Nebraska, scheduled Dec. 21, is titled “Network Nebraska—Connecting Community Anchor Institutions.”

The webinar will be available at 10 a.m. CT (9 a.m. MT), at <https://connect.unl.edu/broadband>.

Presenter of the Dec. 21 session will be Tom Rolfes, education IT manager in the office of the chief information officer and Nebraska Information Technology Commission.

Network Nebraska aims to meet the telecommunications demands of local government, state government and education. So far, 214 school districts, 15 educational service units, 17 public and private colleges and one public library are participating in the venture.

The group has reduced the state contract unit price for Internet service by 93 percent over the last five years; exchanges more than 350 semester high school courses between K-12 districts annually over Network Nebraska; and provides enrichment and training through videoconferencing.

Other webinars are set for Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 21 and April 18. The previous sessions are archived at <https://connect.unl.edu/broadband>.

The initiative is funded by a grant to the Nebraska Public Service Commission by the U.S. Department of Commerce’s National Telecommunications and Information Administration.

The Broadband Mapping and Planning Initiative has been conducted by a coalition of Nebraska partners, including the PSC, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension, the UNL Center for Applied Rural Innovation, the Nebraska Information Technology Commission’s Communication Council, the AIM Institute and the Nebraska Department of Economic Development.

Previously, the coalition conducted a survey of Nebraskans’ access to Internet and, more specifically, broadband. It found that 81 percent of Nebraskans had Internet access, and 76 percent of those had broadband. But the survey also revealed some gaps in Internet service among certain groups, including lower-income residents, people over 65, people without a college degree and residents of nonmetropolitan Nebraska.