

Annual Minnesota Broadband Profiles | Cottonwood County

Rank: 59 (out of 87) for access to 100/20 broadband megabits per second (Mbps)

Background

Every year since 2017 Blandin Foundation has contracted with Ann Treacy of Treacy Information Services to synthesize data from the Minnesota Office of Broadband Development and broadband news from communities across the state to gauge progress toward the state broadband goals (2022: 25 Mbps down and 3 Mbps up and 2026: 100 Mbps down and 20 Mbps up).

Leaders can use this information to plan and act to improve broadband access and use in their communities.

Cottonwood County: data and community action

Cottonwood County is not poised to meet the 2022 or 2026 Minnesota state speed goals. Prior to 2018 they made great progress toward the 2026 goal, but they have seen little progress since then.

Percentage of Served Population by Speed and Date			
Cottonwood	2019	2018	2017
100/20 (2026 goal)	66.67	66.34	19.24
25/3 (2022 goal)	74.17	67.89	60.52

Windom, the county seat, participated in Blandin Foundation’s 2009-2012 Minnesota Intelligent Rural Communities Program. Frustrated with poor internet connectivity, in 2004 the residents of Windom voted in favor of a municipal network, and construction of the fiber-to-the-home system began in 2004. The Institute for Local Self Reliance has estimated a yearly community benefit from WindomNet of over \$400,000.

Cottonwood County has benefited from two state broadband grants:

- 2016 - WOODSTOCK TELEPHONE WESTBROOK – GRANT: \$412,391**
 Serving 368 unserved households, 29 unserved businesses, and 7 unserved community anchor institutions in the city of Westbrook in Cottonwood County in southwest Minnesota.
- 2015 - MVTV Wireless Middle Mile – Grant award: \$808,080**
 A Middle Mile broadband infrastructure buildout to upgrade backhaul capacity between site locations within 20 southwestern Minnesota counties that will improve services to state speed goal levels and above to 6,000 households and businesses that are current MVTV customers, with leverage possibility of 29,000 more. The counties are: Blue Earth, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Meeker, Murray, Nicollet, Nobles, Pipestone, Rock, Redwood, Renville, Sibley Swift, Watonwan, and Yellow Medicine.



In 2018 they also benefited from a partnership between [SDN Communications and the Southwest West Central \(SWWC\) Service Cooperative](#)¹ building a fiber-based internet service that will connect more than 30 school districts, including Cottonwood.

They will need to make a concerted effort to make the 2026 goal, but they have done it before so they may be able to succeed.

Checklist:

- 100/20 ranking: 59 (down 21 places)
- 25/3 ranking: 68
- Has worked with Blandin: yes
- Has received a MN Broadband grant: yes
- Household density: 7.5
- Number of providers: 13

Details:

- See MIRC project matrix for more details on Windom's broadband adoption efforts https://blandinfoundation.org/content/uploads/vy/DC_Project_Matrix_Nov_2012.pdf
- Find more articles on broadband in Cottonwood County. (<http://tinyurl.com/gnqcknv>)
- Districts: CD 1 / 22
- [Find your reps](#)²

Analysis: Code Red

- Red (action needed)
- Yellow (warning – ramp up efforts)
- Green (good shape)

¹ <https://blandinonbroadband.org/2018/04/30/southwest-mn-schools-will-soon-have-faster-broadband/>

² <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>