

VPS Consulting Memo

FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program

OVERVIEW OF FCC REPORT AND ORDER

Summary

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) unanimously adopted an Order on February 25th establishing the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB). The \$3.2 Billion appropriated by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 will lower high-speed Internet costs for eligible households during the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help struggling families to access and use the Internet for telework, telemedicine and for continued virtual learning.

The full Report and Order can be found [here](#).

Key Information

How does the Emergency Broadband Program Help?

The program provides a monthly discount to qualifying eligible consumers on their Broadband Internet Access Service (BIAS) invoice. The program will continue until the funding is expended.

Service	Discount Amount
Broadband Services	\$50/Month Discount
Broadband Services- Tribal Lands	\$75/Month Discount
Laptop, Desktop Computer, or Tablet Discount	\$100 One-time Discount*

EBB support is for one monthly service discount and one device discount per household.

*If the charge to the consumer for the device is between \$10 and \$50. The device must be purchased through the BIAS provider.

Who Is Eligible for the Emergency Broadband Benefit?

The FCC expects the EBB program to be open to eligible consumers by the end of April 2021. A low-income consumer household must meet one of the five eligibility requirements:

1. Meets and qualifies for the Lifeline program, which includes those who are on Medicaid or receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
2. Anyone who has applied, and approved, to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price lunch program or the school breakfast program under the Reischauer B. Russell National School Lunch Act.
3. Anyone who has experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020 by layoff or furlough notice, applied for unemployment insurance benefits otherwise verifiable through the National Verifier.
4. Has received a Federal Pell Grant under section 401 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, in the current awarded year.
5. Meets the eligibility criteria for participating providers in the existing low-income or COVID-19 program, like the current Lifeline program.

When and How Eligible Households Sign Up?

- The FCC expects to start doling out funds for the EBB program within 60 days following the February 25th Report & Order.
- Eligible households will enroll in the program through participating broadband providers or directly through the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).
- We anticipate the FCC to release an additional Report providing further details on how eligible households can enroll.

What is Required for Participating Providers?

Service Providers interested in participating in the program must:

- Have been a provider of BIAS to households as of December 1, 2020.
- Be a “participating provider,” which is a provider with existing Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC) status or is approved by the Commission under an “expedited approval process”.
Expedited approval will offer providers an opportunity to participate in the program where the provider is not an ETC. This expedited approval process requires that providers with an “established program as of April 1, 2020” offering broadband services to eligible households with a verification process sufficient to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse shall be automatically approved.
 - The FCC has directed the Wireless Competition Bureau to announce the timeline for submission of the information to providers in seven days from the release of the order (February 25, 2021). This will include the required information from non-ETC’s to participate in the EBB Program for approval.
- Participating providers must be registered in the Lifeline system, which is administered by USAC. The Lifeline system will be associated with the National Verifier, NLAD, RAD, and Lifeline Claims System (LCS). The LCS will be where providers will receive their funds from the EBB Program for any discounts provided under the program.

What Can Providers Do Now?

Confirm your ETC Status

- Providers that have not already been designated as an ETC by a state or the Commission must file for automatic approval or seek expedited approval from the Commission.

Get Enrolled into the Lifeline System

- If you are not already, get enrolled in the Lifeline system. The Lifeline Claims System is where you will receive your funding from the EBB Program.

Additional Information

Vantage Point Solutions will be presenting a webinar going over the details and next steps for the EBB Program on Tuesday, March 16 at 1:00 PM CST. To register, please [click here](#).

For information on this issue or if you would like VPS guidance, please contact these members of the Vantage Point Solutions Consulting team:

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