

## Emergency Broadband Benefit Program: A Quick Look

# The Emergency Broadband Benefit

### Explainer for Consumers



### What is the program?

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to necessitate distance learning, telework, and reliance on telehealth, broadband connectivity is essential. For those in low-income households, maintaining an Internet connection means choosing between other necessities. Congress created the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program ("EBBP") to address affordability, one of the main barriers to adoption.

This program, run by the Federal Communications Commission ("FCC"), offers a monthly discount to offset the cost of broadband Internet subscriptions, helping those that are struggling with connectivity with pathways to stay connected. In addition, the program provides a one-time discount on a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer.

## What does the discount cover?

The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a monthly discount of up to \$50 on broadband service, which increases to \$75/month on tribal lands. Eligible households can sign up for service with an approved provider. If the consumer chooses an eligible plan that regularly costs \$50/month or less, the consumer will receive that service for free, at least until the EBBP's last month of support.

Eligible services are not limited to standalone Internet services. Discounts may also apply to bundled services that include voice, text, and service packages that include devices such as routers, modems, or hotspots. However, eligible bundled services may not include video services and conventional cable TV service.

The Program also provides a discount of up to \$100 to a provider if a household purchases a connected device offered by the provider. These devices are limited to laptops, desktops, or tablet computers. The program requires that participants contribute \$10 to \$50 towards the cost of the device.

Applicants should know that existing outstanding payments to a broadband provider do not disqualify a household from eligibility under the EBBP. Also, participation in EBBP does not impact participation in the Lifeline program. Conversely, being a Lifeline subscriber does not disqualify a household from participation in the EBBP.

## Am I eligible?

There are several ways in which a household can qualify for EBBP discounts.

An household is eligible when it has experienced one of the following conditions:

- Substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020, due to layoff or furlough;
- Applying for or receiving unemployment benefits;
- One household member received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year;
- One household member receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program, or breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019 - 2020 school year;
- One household member meets the eligibility requirements for an Internet service provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program;
- One household member qualifies for the Lifeline program, or participates in one of the following federal assistance programs:
  - Medicaid
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
  - Federal Public Housing Assistance
  - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit; or
  - A household's income is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of that size.





## How do I enroll?

If a household is already a Lifeline participant, they will not need to apply for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program or provide any new documents to prove eligibility. Applicants only need to opt-in to a plan provided by their current broadband provider or request enrollment in the program. Current Lifeline subscribers can keep their current Lifeline benefit while also adding a plan that is offered through the EBBP.

People who are not currently participating in Lifeline must apply for the EBBP through the [National Lifeline Verifier](#). Applications can be completed online or via mail. Applicants must provide a full name, date of birth, address, and one of the following identification documents: Social Security Number, Tribal identification number, government-issued ID, passport, driver's license, or Taxpayer Identification Number.

Upon completion, an applicant can immediately find out whether they qualify for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. If the national Verifier cannot automatically confirm eligibility, applicants may need to upload additional documents. A broadband provider may also help with the application process.

## When can I apply?

The FCC has not set a date for enrollment to begin. However, enrollment is expected to start by May 2021. The enrollment period is required to close six months after the Secretary of Health and Human Services determines that the pandemic emergency is over, or when the \$3.2 billion appropriated by Congress has been exhausted, whichever occurs first. At least 30 days before the termination of EBBP discounts, providers must give participants explicit notice that the program is coming to an end. Once the program expires, customers must affirmatively "opt-in" to continuing service before being charged at the full, non-discounted rate.

