Webinar Goals

• Overview of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB)
• What is and is not eligible for the benefit?
• Who is eligible?
• How to determine eligibility
• Overview of the National Verifier tool
• Outreach ideas and strategies
• Consumer Protections
• Resources
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

• The PSC of Wisconsin is an outreach partner for the Emergency Broadband Benefit and one of many working to coordinate information and outreach.

• The Emergency Broadband Benefit is a Program of Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

• Much of the program is being administered by the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

• The information in this webinar represents our best understanding of the currently available information and FCC order.

• Additional guidance may be released that may change this information.
Emergency Broadband Benefit Overview

• This benefit program is funded with $3.2 billion through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

• The program offers temporary discounts of up to $50 per month ($75 on Tribal Land) off of eligible household’s internet access bills.

• Low-income households may also get discounts on a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer.

• The broadband provider will receive the money directly for providing service to an eligible household.

• Participation by providers is voluntary, but anticipated to be robust.
Which broadband services and devices?

Service

- Allowed
  - Any mass-market, retail internet service by wire or radio, regardless of speed, that was available on December 1, 2020 is allowed
  - Internet bundled with voice and text is allowed

- Not allowed
  - Internet bundled with video or conventional cable TV are not allowed
  - Dial-up service is mostly excluded from the benefit

Devices

- Allowed
  - If a provider chooses to offer the device benefit, it may be used for a laptop, desktop or tablet

- Not allowed
  - The device benefit may not be used for a mobile phone
Eligible Consumers

• Households are eligible if ONE member of the household:
  • Qualifies for the FCC’s Lifeline program;
  • Receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program or did so in the 2019-20 school year;
  • Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
  • Experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020; or
  • Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider’s low-income or COVID-19 program, or
  • If the household is on Tribal lands, at least one member of the household participates in certain Tribal-specific federal assistance programs.

Limited to one monthly service discount and one device discount per eligible household.
Definition of Household

• Wisconsin has *about* 300,000 eligible households

• As specified in Lifeline:

  Any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address as one economic unit. A household may include related and unrelated persons. An “economic unit” consists of all adult individuals contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household.

  An adult is any person eighteen years or older. If an adult has no or minimal income, and lives with someone who provides financial support to him/her, both people shall be considered part of the same household.

  Children under the age of eighteen living with their parents or guardians are considered to be part of the same household as their parents or guardians.
When Can Consumers Enroll?

• Enrollment is tentatively scheduled to be open April 26 (late April, early May)
• A uniform start date will be announced
• The program ends six months after the public health emergency or when the money is depleted.
How does a household apply for EBB Program?

Eligible households may apply in three ways:

1.) Through participating broadband Internet service providers directly.

2.) Through The National Verifier, the eligibility tool used by USAC for Lifeline.

3.) School-based eligibility verification: Schools may confirm for a provider that a student receives free or reduced-price meals.
Eligibility for the EBB: the National Verifier

- Eligibility determination: automated and non-automated
  - Web portal: https://www.checklifeline.org/lifeline
  - Paper application: currently under development

- Nationwide tool used for Lifeline eligibility determinations, and now for the EBB eligibility.

- Who can use the National Verifier?
  - Anyone interested in seeing if they are eligible for the program
  - Advocates or family member can assist the applicant
  - The person applying for the benefit must sign off on each of the qualifying program statements
# National Verifier: 1 Tool, 2 Eligibility Determinations

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<tr>
<th>SAME</th>
<th>Lifeline: provides low-income Wisconsin residents discounts of $5.25 - $18.50 on essential telecommunications</th>
<th>Emergency Broadband Benefit: temporary discounts of up to $50 per month ($75 on Tribal land) off of eligible household’s internet access bills</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Participate in Medicaid, FoodShare, SSI, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veterans and Survivor Pension Benefits</td>
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<td>• Household with income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines</td>
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<td>• Experienced a substantial loss of income (due to loss of job or furlough) since 2/29/2020</td>
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<td>DIFFERENT</td>
<td>• Requires the last 4-digits of Social Security Number</td>
<td>• Receives benefits under the Free and Reduced School Lunch program or School Breakfast program, including attending a CEP school district during the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school years.</td>
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<td>• Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year</td>
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<td>• Meets eligibility criteria for a provider’s existing (as of 4/1/2020) low-income or COVID 19 programs</td>
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<td>• Last four of SSN, passport, driver’s license, TIN, and other gov’t issued ID</td>
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Using the National Verifier

- The NV will automatically determine eligibility using existing, connected federal and state databases to identify those who:
  - Are currently receiving benefits through: Medicaid, FoodShare, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veterans Pension and Survivors Benefit and qualifying Tribal programs.
  - Have a household income at or below 135% of the federal poverty guidelines (Wisconsin only)

- Some applicants may need to upload information or documentation for eligibility through non-automated sources.
  - Documentation may be needed for Pell Grant recipients, for households that attend a Community Eligibility Provision School, for households that experienced a recent substantial loss of income and for household that receive benefits under the free and reduced price school lunch or breakfast program.
Districts across Wisconsin are leveraging the Digital Learning Bridge to purchase service in bulk for eligible households:

- DPI is engaging with the PSC on ways to leverage DLB process to simplify eligibility verification
  - Parent Consent to Share Data for Broadband Programs, Updated DUA with Districts (WISEadmin) & Updated DUA with Vendors
- EBB Order is not clear on if it will be allowable for districts to receive the EBB discount for the services they are purchasing for eligible families.
  - Waiting for further clarification from the FCC.
- New Emergency Connectivity Fund (E-rate support for off-campus broadband services).
  - Waiting for further clarification from the FCC.
- Schools have access to broad funding mechanisms to purchase broadband for eligible families including Voucher Funds, ESSER I, ESSER II, and ESSER III
Outreach & Assisting with Eligibility Enrollment

(EBB = Business to Consumer)

Schools, libraries, counselors, social workers, and other community partners are vital for building awareness so that eligible families participate:

• Use USAC and PSC created materials to build program awareness
  • i.e. website, communication toolkit, email templates, print materials, backpack mail, etc.

• Assist households with any documentation that they might to submit to the National Verifier to document program eligibility
  • At this time, we’re still waiting for program requirements to clarify the exact documentation that will be required as proof of attending CEP school or qualifying for F/R
  • DPI is continuing to pursue with other stakeholders streamlined methods of eligibility verification using existing income qualification protocols.

• Host an Internet enrollment event

• Refer Families to the Public Service Commission Internet & Phone Helpline (608)267-3595
Participation by Providers

To participate in the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program, a service provider must:

• Register with SAM.gov
• Obtain a Federal Communications Commission Registration Number (FRN)
• Obtain FCC approval to participate in the program (Non-ETCs must submit an application to the FCC; ETCs can submit their ETC designation directly to USAC with their election)
• Obtain FCC approval to use an alternative eligibility verification process (only applicable to service providers that will not use the National Verifier)
  • Providers with existing low income or COVID-19 programs (as of April 1, 2020) can seek FCC approval to use an alternative eligibility verification process
• Submit an election notice to USAC
• Priority application period ends March 22
Resources for devices for low-income households

• E-Stewards Digital Equity Program
  • http://e-stewards.org/learn-more/digital-equity/

• Alliance for Technology Refurbishing and Reuse
  • https://www.aftrr.org/

• PCs for People
  • https://www.pcsforpeople.org/
Consumer Protections and Information

• Being behind in payment of existing service will not disqualify a household from receiving discounts through the EBB Program.

• Households receiving the Lifeline benefit can apply for and receive discounts through the EBB Program in addition to the Lifeline benefit.

• No early termination fee.

• No waiting period to access the benefit.

• The discount is the consumer’s and is portable between available plans.

• At the end of the benefit consumer receive 30 days notice regarding the end of the benefit and must affirmatively opt-in to continue service.
Two Open PSC Grant Opportunities

Lifeline Outreach Grant Program
To assist low-income customers to obtain affordable access to essential telecommunications through the Lifeline program. The application materials may be found here. Applications are due by 4 p.m. CT, April 5, 2021 (docket 5-UF-2021). Questions to holly.ohiggins@wisconsin.gov.

Nonprofit Access Grant Program
For programs and projects that facilitate affordable access to telecommunications for low-income customers and customers with disabilities. The application materials may be found here. Applications are due by 4 p.m. CT, April 5, 2021 (docket 5-NF-2021). Send questions to PSCUSFNonProfitGrants@wisconsin.gov.
More Information, Resources and Links

- NDIA [https://www.digitalinclusion.org/emergency-broadband-benefit/](https://www.digitalinclusion.org/emergency-broadband-benefit/)
- FCC [https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program](https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program)
- FCC EBB Outreach [https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit)
- USAC [https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/](https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/)
  - By Phone: (800) 234-9473
- National Verifier [https://www.checklifeline.org/](https://www.checklifeline.org/)
- List of C.E.P. Schools [https://frac.org/community-eligibility-database/](https://frac.org/community-eligibility-database/)
- PSC Emergency Internet Resources [https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandEmergencyInternetResources.aspx](https://psc.wi.gov/Pages/Programs/BroadbandEmergencyInternetResources.aspx)
- Wisconsin’s Internet & Phone Helpline (608) 267-3595
  Open Monday through Friday, from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
  Assistance available in languages other than English
  Encourage calls after April 26th
Questions?