



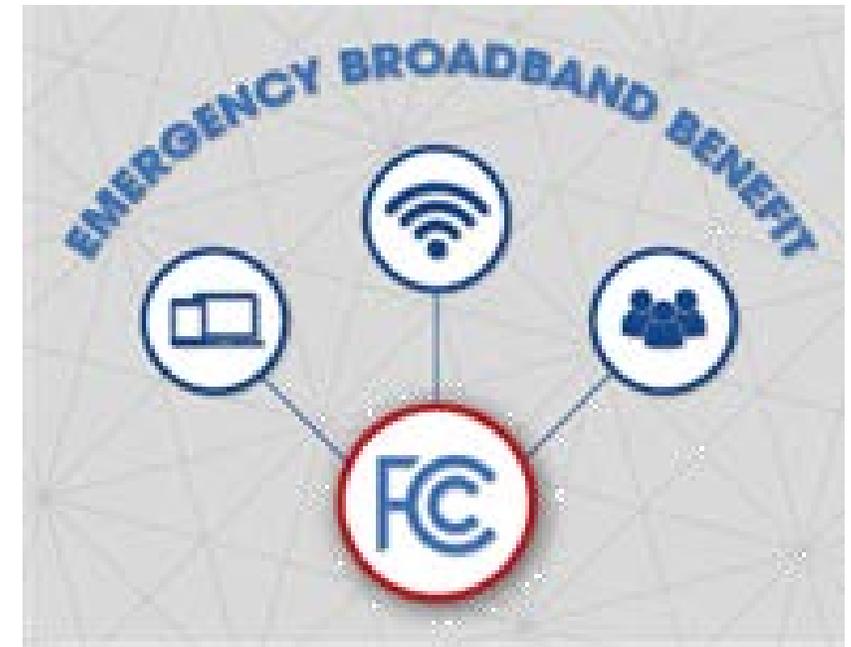
Emergency Broadband Benefit

March, 2021

**Presented by the Office of Broadband and
Telecommunications Access**

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
- Participation by Internet Service Providers
- 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

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

Devices

- If a provider chooses, to offer the device benefit may be used for a laptop, desktop or tablet
- 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 expected to be open by the end of April or early May 2021
- 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

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.

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

Provider Milestone Dates

EBB Program Milestone	Filing Location	Date
Non-ETC Provider Application & Alternative Eligibility Verification Process Portal Opens	Bureau	March 8, 2021
Provider Election Notice Inbox Opens	USAC	March 11, 2021
Non-ETC Provider Priority Application & Alternative Eligibility Verification Process Deadline	Bureau	March 22, 2021

Connecting Providers and Devices

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 must affirmatively opt-in to continue service

More Information, Resources and Links

- **FCC** <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program>
- **FCC EBB Outreach** <https://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit>
- **USAC** <https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/>
 - By Phone: (800) 234-9473
- **National Verifier** <https://www.checklifeline.org/>
- **List of C.E.P. Schools** <https://frac.org/community-eligibility-database/>
- **PSC Emergency Internet Resources**
<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

Questions?