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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION ADOPTS EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM FOR THE NAVAJO NATION

Information on the program to be run by the FCC

The United States Congress introduced the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program in late 2020 as part of the efforts to help people get through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The program, which will be run by the Federal Communications Commission starting in spring 2021, offers discounts on people's monthly internet access bills as well as a computer or tablet to help connect households that find it hard to afford broadband service.

How the benefit works

Broadband providers will receive up to \$50 per month, or \$75 per month if the household is on Tribal land, for providing service to low-income households, passing that savings onto low-income subscribers. If the provider offers and the consumer picks a plan that regularly costs \$50 per month or less, the consumer will receive that service for free at least up until the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program's last month of support.

The service can include standalone broadband or a bundle of services including broadband, telephone, texting, and the rental fee on the equipment that makes the service possible, such as an internet modem.

The U.S. government will also give a broadband provider up to \$100 if a household purchases one of the provider's connected device, such as a laptop, desktop, or tablet computer, for no less than \$10 and no more than \$50.

Who can receive the benefit?

The program is set up to help people with low incomes or who have been laid off in the last year. To get the discount, subscribers must meet one of the following criteria:

- A household's income must be at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines for a household of that size;
- At least one person in the household must receive benefits from one of the following federal assistance programs: Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit;
- At least one person in the household is in the free and reduced-price lunch program or the school breakfast program (including the Community Eligibility Provision);
- At least one person in the household has been laid off or furloughed since February 29, 2020;

- At least one person in the household has received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year; or
- At least one person in the household can participate in their broadband provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.
- If a household is located on Tribal lands, it is eligible if at least one person in the household participates in Bureau of Indian Affairs general assistance, Tribally administered Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Head Start (only those households meeting its income qualifying standard), or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.

Any customer who already participates in the FCC's Lifeline program will not need to apply for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program or provide any new documents to prove they are eligible. They will need to opt into a plan provided by their current broadband company or request enrollment in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

Nearly any broadband internet access service provider can offer Emergency Broadband Benefit Program supported services including telephone companies, cable operators, wireless carriers, community-owned networks, electric cooperatives, and municipal governments.

The FCC created a fact sheet for consumers that can be viewed at:

<https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-370355A1.pdf>

Information for broadband providers

To become part of the program, broadband providers must agree to inform low-income people about the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program in easily understood language, including languages other than English if they are the dominant languages of the communities the provider serves.

The provider is expected to give information regarding:

- The eligibility requirements for consumer participation;
- That the Emergency Broadband Benefit is non-transferable and is limited to one discount per household;
- Any charges to the customer;
- The available upload/download speeds and data caps for the covered services, and a list of connected devices that are available, if any, with descriptions;
- The provider's customer service telephone number prominently displayed on all promotional materials and adequately staffed by customer service representatives; and
- The name of the provider on all materials describing the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, including all print, audio, video, and web materials used to describe or enroll in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program.

The provider must also inform the customer the program is temporary and once it is ended, customers will be subject to the provider's regular rates, terms, and conditions.

The program is expected to be open to the public before the end of April 2021.