

Emergency Broadband Benefit FAQ

NDIA offers this FAQ to digital inclusion practitioners and others supporting outreach of EBB. The sections referred to are in the FCC's [Emergency Broadband Benefit Report and Order](#). If you have additional questions not covered in this FAQ, [fill out this form](#).

The Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) is a federal program to help eligible households pay for internet service. www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit

The Basics

1. What's the Benefit?
 - Under the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program, eligible households can get a subsidy of up to \$50 per month on internet service, or \$75 per month for those living on Tribal lands.
2. How does the EBB program define tribal lands for the purpose of receiving the \$75 per month subsidy? (section 83, footnote 283)
 - Individuals who live on federally recognized Tribal reservations (including Indian Allotment, Pueblo, Colony, former reservations in Oklahoma, Alaska Native regions, or Hawaiian Homelands) may be eligible for a monthly discount on internet service of up to \$75
3. What level of internet service is covered?
 - Anything above dial up (and dial up if that is the only service available). Per GB data plans are excluded. (section 70)
4. Can the subsidy cover modem or router fees?
 - It can apply to modem/router fees but the monthly maximum subsidy does not change.
5. Who is responsible for program administration?
 - The Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) is managing this program.
6. When does the program begin?

- EBB is expected to be available near the end of April 2021. Once the program begins, applications can be completed online or via mail.

7. When does the program end?

- The program ends when the funding runs out. USAC will maintain a tracker updated monthly with the amount of funds expended. Once the program expires, customers must affirmatively “opt-in” to continue service before being charged at the full, non-discounted rate.

8. Can a household participate in both Lifeline and EBB?

- Yes.

Eligibility

9. Who is eligible for the benefit?

- A household is eligible if one member of the household:
 - experienced a substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020, shown for example by:
 - layoff or furlough notice
 - applying for/receiving unemployment benefits
 - And the household had a total income in 2020 below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers.
 - received a Federal Pell Grant in the current award year
 - receives benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision, or did so in the 2019- 2020 school year
 - meets the eligibility criteria for a participating broadband Internet service provider’s EXISTING low-income or COVID-19 program
 - qualifies for the Lifeline program, typically by participating in one of the following benefits:
 - Medicaid
 - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
 - Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
 - Federal Public Housing Assistance (FPHA)
 - Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit



- Or has an income at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (currently calculated at \$17,388.00 per year)
- Or lives on Tribal lands qualifying for Tribal-specific federal assistance program (Section 7)
- How is eligibility verified?

Through the National Verifier, through a school or through the ISP. (section. 31) Upon completion, an applicant can immediately find out whether they qualify. If the National Verifier cannot automatically confirm eligibility, applicants may need to upload additional documents. A service provider may also help with the application process.

10. Can households be signed up by the ISP, a school, a housing provider (or anyone else)?

- No. ISPs must obtain an affirmative opt-in from households.

11. If a school certifies eligibility, how do they do so?

- The school must provide the following documentation to the ISP:
 - the program(s) that the school participates in
 - the household that qualifies (and qualifying student(s))
 - the program(s) the household participates in. (Section 68)

12. Must households provide their social security number to sign up?

- No. If households are unable or uncomfortable using their SSN, they can use a government-issued ID, passport, driver's license, Tribal identification number or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number documentation. (section 53)

13. If a household signs up through an ISP, what information must they provide to the ISP?

- full name,
- phone number,
- date of birth,
- e-mail address,
- home and mailing addresses,
- name and date of birth of the benefit qualifying person if different than applicant,
- basis for inclusion in program (e.g., SNAP, SSI, Medicaid, school lunch, Pell Grant, income, provider's existing program, etc.) and documentation supporting verification of eligibility, and



- certifications from the household that the information included in the application is true. (section 66)

Internet Service & Devices

14. What devices are covered?

- If the ISP chooses to also provide devices, eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers, if they contribute \$10-\$50 toward the purchase price. The device will need to be Wi-Fi enabled and support video conferencing (meaning it has video and camera functions). Mobile phones are not covered for device reimbursement. (section. 79 & 82)

15. Must participating ISPs also make devices available?

- No.

16. Can a household receive more than one device reimbursement?

- No. Each household may only receive one device reimbursement through EBB.

17. Which ISPs will participate?

- Participation is voluntary. Not all ISPs have declared their intent.

18. What kinds of internet services will be included?

- Everything but dial up (section 12)
- Voice bundles are included. Video bundles are not included. (section 76)
- The specific plan the subsidy will be applied to must have been available as a retail offer on Dec 1, 2020 (section. 72)

19. Can the ISP change an offer that they had available on Dec 1, 2020?

- ISPs can make the offer better but not worse (section 72)

20. Are sponsored agreements / bulk agreements / single payer agreements eligible for reimbursement?

- Only if the household had been paying for the service. In cases where the household does not pay a fee for the service (because a sponsor such as a school,



local government or community organization has been paying the service cost) the subsidy cannot be applied. If the cost is paid by the household, such as when broadband service is included in rent, the subsidy can apply. (section 45)

21. Can an ISP choose which portions of their service territory will participate?

- No. Approved ISPs must provide at least one offer everywhere geographically that their service is available. (section 37)

22. Can participating ISPs deny participation on account of debt?

- No. Previous debt with the ISP cannot keep a household from participating. (section 37)

23. Can participating providers charge early termination fees?

- No. Participating ISPs may not charge an early termination fee while the household is receiving EBB, even if the household agreed to a contract. (section 37)

24. What is considered a household?

- A “household” is broadly defined as “any individual or group of individuals who are living together at the same address as one economic unit. An “economic unit” consists of all adult individuals contributing to and sharing in the income and expenses of a household. A household may include related and unrelated persons. 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. For multiple qualifying households at the same address (such as a homeless shelter or assisted living facility), each household qualifies for EBB. (section. 44)

25. What must the ISP tell the potential participant?

- The provider must disclose to the potential participant:
 - clearly disclosed to the household that the EBB Program is a government program that reduces the customer’s broadband Internet access service bill,
 - is temporary in nature,



- that the household will be subject to the provider's undiscounted rates and general terms and conditions at the end of the program if they continue to receive service,
- that the household may obtain broadband service supported by the EBB Program from any participating provider of their choosing,
- that the household may transfer their EBB Program benefit to another provider at any time. (section 38)

26. What must the ISP tell the participating households?

- The provider must disclose to the participating household:
 - the time of enrollment and on a monthly basis, either in the form of a monthly bill, or other monthly communication if the benefit covers the entire rate of the qualified plan,
 - documentation that prominently and clearly states in easy to understand terms that the EBB Program is a temporary subsidy that reduces the customer's broadband Internet access service bill.
 - at the conclusion of the benefit, the customer will be subject to the provider's general rates, terms, and conditions if the customer continues to subscribe to that broadband service (section 128)

27. Will USAC be reporting geographic level data of EBB activity?

- USAC will issue a report no later than six months after the initiation of EBB with information about how many households participated at the county level. (section 113)

