

# Gov. Evers, PSC: Urge consumers to apply for federal emergency broadband benefit program

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MADISON - Gov. Tony Evers today with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) heralded the important impact of the Federal Emergency Broadband Benefit Program for Wisconsin households struggling to pay for internet service during the pandemic. The benefit offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will provide a temporary discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on Tribal lands. The number of people in the state that could be eligible for the Emergency Broadband Benefit is about 1,500,000 people or 300,000 households.

"This pandemic has underscored how critically important it is for everyone to have access to reliable, affordable broadband. That's why I was proud to declare 2021 the Year of Broadband Access and that our Badger Bounceback agenda proposes the largest state investment in broadband in our state's history," said Governor Evers. "Every Wisconsinite should be able to afford the internet, and I encourage folks to take advantage of this benefit program to help get connected."

"Our state providers have worked very hard over the past year to expand broadband access across the state; however, we know that broadband expansion is not the only barrier preventing people to this essential service, sometimes it's affordability," said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. "This program is designed to help people who are struggling to make ends meet continue to be connected to the internet."

Participating broadband providers will receive the money directly from the program for providing service to an eligible household, and consumers will see the discount applied to their bills. Eligible households can also receive a one-time device benefit of a laptop, desktop, or tablet from participating providers for a co-pay of up to \$50. The program has an expected start date of April 26 and ends six months after the

public health emergency is lifted or when the money is depleted. This benefit program is funded with \$3.2 billion through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021.

Eligible households for the benefit include a household that meets any of the following criteria:

- A household's income is 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 attending a Community Eligibility Provision school);
- At least one person in the household has been laid off or furloughed since February 29, 2020 and the household has an income of less than \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers
- 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.

According to the FCC, 394,000 Wisconsinites lack access to high-speed internet service. The state ranks 36th nationwide in terms of accessibility in rural areas, which ranges widely across rural Wisconsin. Governor Evers' 2019-21 budget made the largest state investment in broadband in state history, providing \$48 million in funding for the Broadband Expansion Grant Program. The Governor's 2021-23 budget builds on the success of the last budget and again proposes the largest state investment in broadband access in state history, putting nearly \$150 million toward expanding broadband infrastructure in underserved areas and \$40 million toward helping low-income Wisconsinites afford internet services.

Broadband providers are not required to participate in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program. Their participation is voluntary and based on FCC approval.

Customers with arrears or behind on existing internet service payments are still able to receive this benefit.

Customers who may be eligible are encouraged to apply while this funding is available. Eligible households can enroll by contacting participating broadband providers or the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC).

Please check the FCC's website, [www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit](http://www.fcc.gov/broadbandbenefit), regularly for the latest information on the enrollment process. For customers who cannot locate a provider and who do not have access to the FCC's information online, the PSC's Internet and Phone Helpline is here to help, at 1 (608) 267-3595.

For more information on the Emergency Broadband Benefit visit [here](#).

For a list of providers participating in the FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit Program visit [here](#). The list will be updated as more providers enroll in the program.

For a customer fact sheet visit [here](#).