

Gov. Evers, PSC: Urge customers to apply for Affordable Connectivity Program

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MADISON — Gov. Tony Evers today, together with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC), encouraged Wisconsin households struggling to pay for internet service to enroll in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), a replacement of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB). The Program offered through the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for homes on qualifying Tribal lands. The number of people in Wisconsin eligible to enroll is about 1,580,000 people or 650,000 households.

“We know that the digital divide in our state is holding our communities back, as high-speed internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity to learn, work, and access critical resources in our state and country today,” said Gov. Evers. “Every Wisconsinite should be able to afford internet without having to choose between other essential needs such as food or rent, and getting everyone connected to broadband remains a top priority for me and my administration. This program ensures low-income households across the state have the opportunity and resources to get connected.”

On Nov. 15, 2021, President Biden signed into law a \$1 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that provided \$14.2 billion in permanent funding for ACP. As a result, the EBB Program was transitioned to the ACP on Dec. 31, 2021. Current EBB recipients fully enrolled as of Dec. 31, 2021, will automatically continue to receive their monthly benefit until March 1, 2022. Some households may need to requalify for the ACP in order to continue receiving the benefit beyond March 1, 2022. These households will receive additional details about the steps they need to

take from the program administrator, Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC), or their internet service provider, in January 2022.

“As Wisconsin continues to build more reliable and accessible broadband infrastructure to reach our goal of universal connectivity, it is equally important that these services are affordable for everyone,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “Affordable broadband is a critical component of everyday life and we will continue to work with our partners to make sure qualified customers are aware of this program.”

Participating broadband providers receive the money directly from the program for providing service to an eligible household, and customers will see the discount applied to their bills. In addition, 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 more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price.

A household is eligible if a member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

Has an income that is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines; or
Participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline;
Participates in Tribal specific programs, such as Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations;
Is approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision in the 2019-2020, 2020-2021, or 2021-2022 school year;
Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year; or
Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider’s existing low-income program.

Broadband providers are not required to participate in the ACP. Their participation is voluntary and based on FCC approval. The ACP includes additional pro-consumer initiatives including protections against the use of credit checks or existing debt to prohibit enrollment in the program.

Eligible households can enroll by visiting <https://acpbenefit.org/> or by contacting participating broadband providers. For customers that need additional assistance,

call the FCC's information line at 877-384-2575.

On Wed., Jan. 26, 2022, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m., the PSC and the Department of Public Instruction will host a webinar on the transition to the ACP. Individuals associated with schools, libraries, nonprofit, and government organizations are encouraged to participate. Registration for the webinar is available [here](#).

For more information on the Affordable Connectivity Program, visit [here](#).