



PUBLIC NOTICE

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WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES INITIAL MILESTONES FOR THE EMERGENCY BROADBAND BENEFIT PROGRAM

WC Docket No. 20-445

By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces upcoming milestone dates for the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBB Program), a \$3.2 billion federal initiative created by Congress in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021,¹ to help lower the cost of high-speed internet for eligible households during the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.²

On February 25th, the Federal Communications Commission (Commission) unanimously adopted a Report and Order that established the EBB Program. The *EBB Program Order* directed the Bureau within seven days of adoption to announce a timeline for submission of information by broadband providers required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act to participate in the EBB Program.³

As adopted in the *EBB Program Order* and required by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, to participate in the EBB Program, broadband providers must submit information to the Bureau and the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) depending on the regulatory status of the broadband provider.⁴ Eligible telecommunications carriers (ETCs) and their affiliates in the states or territories where the ETC is designated can elect to participate in the EBB Program by filing the appropriate information with USAC and do not need to seek approval from the Bureau in those states.⁵ All other broadband providers need to seek approval from the Bureau to participate in the EBB Program.⁶ Additionally, any provider seeking to use an alternative verification process to make household eligibility determinations in the EBB Program must seek approval from the Bureau.⁷

In establishing these review processes, the Commission directed the Bureau to designate a priority application deadline by which non-ETC providers seeking approval to participate in the EBB Program will have the opportunity to obtain that approval prior to commencement of household enrollments.⁸ Applications received after the priority application deadline will be expeditiously reviewed

¹ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Pub. L. No. 116-260, div. N, tit. IX, § 904, 134 Stat. 1182, 2130 (2020), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/133/text> (Consolidated Appropriations Act).

² See *Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, WC Docket No. 20-445, Report and Order, FCC 21-29 (2021) (*EBB Program Order*).

³ *EBB Program Order*, at para. 11.

⁴ *Id.* at para. 15.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at para. 25.

⁷ *Id.* at para. 62.

⁸ *Id.* at para. 15.

on a rolling basis.⁹ Accordingly, the Bureau announces the following milestone dates for the provider application and election processes.

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

As discussed in the *EBB Program Order*, the priority application deadline allows time for prospective providers to evaluate the rules of the EBB Program and prepare applications while at the same time also encouraging providers “to accelerate their consideration consistent with the need to quickly begin providing these supported broadband services.”¹⁰ The Bureau anticipates a large number of provider applications and elections, and these deadlines reflect the time needed for the Bureau and USAC to review the filings and provide sufficient notice to providers prior to the start of the EBB Program. The Commission also directed the Bureau to announce at a later date other administrative deadlines or milestones, such as when the EBB Program will begin and when providers may begin enrolling households in the program. The Commission expects that the EBB Program and enrollment process will begin in less than 60 days after the adoption of the *EBB Program Order*.¹¹ The Bureau will announce in a future public notice the official commencement.

Providers seeking to participate in the EBB Program or receive approval of an alternative eligibility verification process must review all applicable program requirements and procedures as set forth in the *EBB Program Order* and any subsequent guidance for compliance with the EBB Program’s requirements. To assist, the Bureau has created a webpage providing additional information about these approval processes and how to submit an application: <https://www.fcc.gov/emergency-broadband-benefit-program>. Providers should use the same online application portal for non-ETC provider applications and requests for approval of an alternative eligibility verification process. This online application portal will be available on the Bureau’s webpage under the “Provider FCC Approvals” section beginning March 8, 2021. Non-ETCs that file complete applications for approval meeting the necessary criteria by the priority application deadline will know of their status prior to the start date for the EBB Program.¹² These providers should obtain Bureau approval prior to filing their elections with USAC.¹³

Further information about the EBB Program, USAC’s role, and the provider election process can be found on the USAC webpage: <https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/>. Providers seeking to file election notices should review the instructional information found on the USAC webpage for details about required information and how to submit the election. Beginning March 11, providers can submit their forms and required attachments via email to EBBElection@usac.org. The form and directions will be available soon at <https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/system-resources/get-started>.

- FCC -

⁹ *Id.* at para. 25.

¹⁰ *Id.* at para. 15.

¹¹ *Id.* at para. 11.

¹² *Id.* at para. 15.

¹³ *Id.*