

USF Tracker - April 2021

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Commentary

After nearly four months of work, the FCC's Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP) is poised to launch. Nearly 750 providers are qualified to offer EBB-supported services, with discounts of up to \$50 per subscriber (\$75 in tribal areas) and equipment reimbursement of up to \$100 available. The FCC recently conducted a webinar for consumer groups and outreach partners about the program, and USAC has been testing connectivity with eligible providers for the past couple of weeks. Earlier today, the FCC announced that the EBBP will launch on Wednesday, May 12, 2021. Providers participating in the EBBP can begin enrolling eligible households into the program to receive supported service. Is the program ready? We soon will know.

Recent News

General

- On April 28, the FCC's Wireline Competition Bureau (WCB) [announced](#) the selection of Ernst & Young as the administrator for the reimbursement program under its Supply Chain Reimbursement Program (aka the "rip and replace" program).
- On April 27, the FCC held a webinar to provide consumers and outreach partners with an overview of the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP), eligibility information, and enrollment procedures. Video of the webinar is available [here](#).
- On April 20, the WCB released an [Order](#) (DA 21-455) granting a Verizon petition that requested waiver of the requirement that providers file reimbursement claims by the 15th of each month, for the first reimbursement claim for each subscriber that has newly enrolled in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program (EBBP) with Verizon.

Lifeline

- On April 19, USAC posted a [reminder](#) that the FCC's COVID-19 non-usage waiver will expire on May 1, 2021, per an FCC [Order](#) (DA 21-229), released February 24. Subscribers who, as of May 1, 2021, have not used their service in the previous 30 days will enter their 15-day cure period on May 1. Service providers must send notice to provide impacted subscribers the opportunity

to cure their non-usage. The cure period will end on May 15, and subscribers that do not cure must be de-enrolled on May 16. No de-enrollments for non-usage may occur prior to May 16.

- In its [March 2021 Lifeline Newsletter](#), USAC reminded Lifeline service providers that the FCC's supply chain rules prohibit the use of USF funds to purchase new equipment or to support or maintain equipment already in inventory, from certain companies designated as posing a national security threat. USAC will implement new certifications of compliance with these rules. "This spring or summer," according to USAC, USF recipients will certify that they are in compliance with the supply chain rules on universal service program forms.

High Cost/Connect America Fund (CAF)

- On April 23, the WCB issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 21-466) authorizing the transfer of CAF Phase II support from Crystal Automation Systems, Inc d/b/a Casair to Point Broadband Fiber Holdings, LLC's.
- On April 13, the WCB issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 21-418) seeking comment on several petitions for designation as an Eligible Telecommunications Carrier (ETC). The petitioners are winning bidders, or those assigned support through the division of winning bids, in [Auction 904](#) for RDOF support.
- On March 30, USAC posted an [announcement](#) that it will conduct a webinar on May 13, 2021 at 2:30 PM ET for High Cost Program carriers about the program year 2022 updates to the FCC Form 481, the Carrier Annual Reporting Data Collection Form. The webinar will focus on relevant changes to the FCC Form 481 for program year 2022 (due July 1, 2021).

Schools and Libraries (E-Rate)

- On April 2, USAC [announced](#) that two new certifications of compliance related to supply chain rules have been added to the FCC Form 473. Form 473 is the Service Provider Annual Certification (SPAC) Form for E-rate service providers.

Rural Health Care

- On Beginning April 30, 2021, USAC will add two new supply chain certifications to the FCC Form 463 and Telecom invoice. The first certification affirms compliance with the Section 54.9 prohibition on USF support to purchase, obtain, maintain, improve, modify, operate, manage, or otherwise support equipment or services produced or provided by the covered companies. The second certification affirms compliance with Section 54.10, which prohibits the use of any Federal subsidies on any communications equipment and services on the Covered List.
- On April 15, the WCB issued a [Public Notice](#) (DA 21-431) announcing that the application filing

window for the second round of the [COVID-19 Telehealth Program](#) will open on Thursday, April 29, 2021 at 12:00 PM ET. The filing window will last seven calendar days and close on Thursday, May 6, 2021 at 12:00 PM ET.

- On April 8, the WCB released an [Order](#) (DA 21-394) waiving the requirement to use the database of rates and other administrative rules in order to ensure that telecommunications service providers nationwide will receive sufficient Telecom Program support for funding years 2021 and 2022 and that health care providers can focus their attention on care for patients impacted by COVID-19 and administering COVID-19 vaccine.
- On March 31, USAC held a webinar for service providers participating in the RHC program covering tips and best practices at every stage of the process. [Watch the webinar and download the slides.](#)

Telehealth Q&A

In a [Phreesia Q&A](#) ahead of the COVID-19 Telehealth Program's second round application filing window. To help healthcare organizations prepare for this funding opportunity, their conversation covered the basics of the Program and tips for taking advantage of the opportunity within a short application window. Read the full transcript below.

[COVID-19 Telehealth Funding, Round 2: What You Need to Know](#)