

## Ensuring Affordable Broadband Connectivity for All

Entry-level  
broadband prices  
declined

**9.1%**

in the past year.

**A**ffordable broadband for all has never been more within our grasp. America's broadband providers have been doing their part to make the service more affordable than ever before, at higher speeds, including at entry level price points. But for some low-income households, broadband remains unaffordable. This is changing.

### DIRECT HELP NOW AVAILABLE

Through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Congress created the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) a long-term successor program to the Emergency Broadband Benefit. Launched on December 31, 2021, the ACP enables low-income Americans to get—and stay—online with a monthly credit of up to \$30 off their broadband bill. Here are the key details:

- **Funding:** Congress has devoted \$14.2 billion to the ACP, which will allow the funding to continue many years into the future.
- **Service Discount:** Up to \$30/month per household. \$75/month is available in Tribal areas.
- **Device Discount:** Eligible households can receive a subsidy of up to \$100 for a connected device (e.g., laptop, tablet but not including smartphones) from their service provider.
- **Household Eligibility:** Households are eligible if they qualify under any of these metrics:
  - *Income level at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines*
  - *At least one person in the household receives assistance under one of these federal programs: Lifeline, Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income, Federal Public Housing Assistance, or Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit*
  - *Participation in the free and reduced-price National School Lunch Program (NSLP)*
  - *Participation in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)*
  - *At least one person in the household has received a Federal Pell Grant in the past year*
- **Plans Available:** Participation in the ACP is voluntary. Participating providers are making ACP available on most rate plans.
- **Lifeline Households:** The FCC's existing Lifeline program remains available for a discount of up to \$9.25/month, which can be combined with the ACP for a total maximum discount of \$39.25, or used on a separate qualifying service.

Setting a minimum price and speed tier of service would restrict the availability of the ACP and would be harmful to eligible households.

---

### **STATES ACTION TO PROMOTE AFFORDABILITY**

In addition to the direct subsidies available for low-income households under the Affordable Connectivity Program, the IIJA enable states to take other steps to promote affordability.

First, it requires states to ensure that all projects under the \$42 billion broadband deployment program ensure broadband affordability. States would be well-served to require participation in the ACP in order to achieve this requirement. The ACP is already in place and has comprehensive rules and the infrastructure in place to manage the process for verifying consumer eligibility. Relying on the ACP is the best outcome for states (which will not have to establish and administer their own programs), consumers (who will have the choice of multiple product offerings to apply the discount given ACP applicability to all plans), and providers (who will have consistency across states).

States also have the option of creating their own affordability programs, either through state funding or federal funding. In the IIJA, once states have fully funded unserved and underserved areas, they may use available funds to create their own funds for either service or device availability, as well as providing Wi-Fi hotspots in low-income multi-family housing areas.