

Vermont  
Community  
Broadband  
Board

April 11, 2024

# SENATE FINANCE H657





# UNIVERSAL SERVICE CHARGE

- ▶ VCBB supports the readjustment to the Vermont Universal Service Fund which will result in a slight increase in the allocation to the VCBB.
- ▶ This flexible funding has allowed us to use NEARLY ALL of the ARPA funds for infrastructure and will continue to help us avoid asking for operational funding from the General Fund.
  - ▶ VCBB had up to \$1.5M/YR in ARPA and \$4M from ARPA Capital available for Admin
  - ▶ Expenses to Date billed/obligated to ARPA SFR/ARPA CP = \$261,890
  - ▶ Total Reserved Admin/Contingency - \$2 Million
  - ▶ Remaining of Admin Reserve - \$1,738,110.
  - ▶ Expect much of this will also go toward infrastructure.
  - ▶ Even more important as we move toward BEADs to ensure continued support of the CUDs
- ▶ Not enough funding to address other priorities such as affordability



## RIGHT OF WAY CHARGES

- ▶ Maintain exceptions and appreciate data protections
- ▶ (f) The inventories required by subsection (e) of this section are exempt from public inspection and copying under the Public Records Act and shall be kept confidential. However, they may be shared with other State agencies, boards, or departments, such as the Department of Taxes, the Agency of Digital Services, the Department of Public Service, the Vermont Community Broadband Board, the Public Utility Commission, the Department of Public Safety, and the Vermont State Auditor for regulatory, measuring grant compliance, and planning.

# AFFORDABILITY

- ▶ Affordability language was removed from S.181. Before it was removed, we began developing refined language for the program.
- ▶ Understand this may have to wait until next year, but if there is an opportunity, we encourage action
- ▶ We can't replace the ACP, but we can triage the problem in the short term and study the issue
- ▶ Address other affordability issues in the interim with the limited funds available.
- ▶ One-time appropriation to Connectivity Fund earmarked to Affordability Programs

## Sample Draft Language

- (a) The PSD with the full assistance of the VCBB and AHS shall perform a study of the best way to implement a state-wide subsidy for fixed broadband. The study shall examine eligibility, overcoming barriers to enrollment – including the potential to develop an opt-out program, optimum rate of subsidy, additional funding sources necessary to implement a statewide program, and where such a program would be housed. These recommendations will be presented to the legislature with recommendations by \_\_\_\_\_.
- (c) The VCBB shall create the following programs
  - The VCBB Shall provide block grants to Communications Union Districts for pilot projects to increase access to publicly owned network and expand affordability in their district. These projects can provide support for a subsidy program, pilot projects, and grants to reduce the initial cost to connect to a network (drops and underground) with a priority given to manufactured home communities that require infrastructure to be underground.
  - As funding allows, the VCBB shall implement a program to Reimburse Small Telecommunication Providers (as defined via Act 71) that continue to provide the equivalent of the Affordable Connectivity Program subsidy to subscribers who signed up before the date the FCC prohibited new enrollments.
- (d) Notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), on or January 15 of each year, the Board (or Public Service Department) shall submit a written report to the General Assembly describing Program expenditures, the number of participants in the Program, and any recommendations related to the administration and purposes of the Program.



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