

COVID-Response Temporary Broadband Subsidy

Overview

- CRF Funded: “the Department may establish a COVID-Response Temporary Broadband Lifeline Program to provide subsidies for customer broadband monthly subscriptions to increase broadband adoption rates in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.”
- CRF funding limitations allowed for the program to run March 1 – December 30, 2020
- Program Development began in July and was finished in October.
- 2,964 unique applicants received the benefit
- \$1 Million in subsidies dispersed
- ISP participation: Cable companies, ILECs, some CLECs
- Developed parallel to VCAAP arrears program
- **MISSION: to *Keep* Vermonters connected**

Program Parameters

- \$40/month subsidy
- Applicable to any broadband subscription
- Subsidy active for 10 months: March- December
- Subsidy Retroactive to March

Eligibility

- Financial Hardship
 - Loss of job/unemployment
 - 20% + reduction in hours
 - 20% + loss of income
- CRF eligible need: Education, remote work, or healthcare
- Need related to pandemic
- Applicant is not receiving funding for the same purpose

Lessons Learned

- Creating a broadband subsidy program on the fly is a really bad idea
- Outreach and marketing was trial and error
- Application process could be a deterrent to enrollment
- Temporary nature of program not suitable for permanent subsidy program
- Participation by smaller ISPs was difficult and required application verification by a 3rd party contractor

TBS 2.0

- H.315 provides funding to keep TBS going through December 2021.
- Credits will cover January 2021 – December 2021 (or until funding is exhausted).