

Emergency Broadband Benefit Program Report

NOVEMBER 30, 2021

I. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic emphasized the need for greater access to broadband connectivity. Across the country, many turned to virtual learning, telemedicine, and telework, increasing the demand for broadband services. However, it can be difficult for low-income households and those who have experienced financial strains during the pandemic to afford the cost of broadband services.

In February 2021, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) adopted [Report and Order 21-29](#), officially establishing the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) Program (“the Program”), which allows eligible households to receive a discount on the cost of monthly broadband service and certain connected devices during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency period. The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 allocated \$3.2 billion to this effort and directed the FCC to use this fund to establish the Program. Consumers began applying for and enrolling in the EBB Program in May 2021, and as of November 1, 2021, the EBB Program has reached more than 7 million households.

Through release of the *EBB Program Order*, the FCC directed the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to administer this emergency program.¹ In the *EBB Program Order*, the FCC directed USAC to submit a report that provides information about participation in the EBB Program that could be used to evaluate the success of the Program and could inform future broadband-related initiatives no more than six months after the initiation of the Program.² In response, USAC has compiled information in this Report regarding the households participating in the Program, including types of services received, support amounts claimed, and demographic details such as geographic locations and Tribal status. Additionally, USAC has also included an appendix (Appendix A) to highlight improvements made to the key EBB processes benefitting both providers and subscribers.

¹ “Congress directed the Commission to utilize existing regulatory tools in support of the EBB Program, such as the National Verifier and the National Lifeline Accountability Database, originally designed to support the existing Lifeline program, which helps ensure low-income consumers have access to affordable voice or broadband Internet access service, though the EBB Program is funded through a separate appropriation from the Universal Service Fund.” *Emergency Broadband Benefit Program*, WC Docket No. 20-445, Report and Order, 36 FCC Rcd 4612, 4613, para. 3 (2021) (*EBB Program Order*).

² *EBB Program Order*, 36 FCC Rcd at 4666, para. 113.

II. PROGRAM METRICS

This section of the Report provides a visualization of the various metrics that USAC has used to quantify the reach of the EBB Program.

Figure 1. National Verifier (NV) Qualification Types: Consumers can qualify for the EBB Program through one or more of the following criteria:

- Household income is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines;
- Participation in the Lifeline program or a Lifeline-qualifying program (i.e. Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), income, etc.);
- Participation in the free and reduced price lunch program under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the school breakfast program under section 4 of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966;
- Award of a federal Pell Grant in the current award year;
- A substantial loss of income since February 29, 2020; or
- Participation in an approved service provider's low-income or COVID-19 program.

When applying for the EBB Program through the National Verifier, applicants can select all applicable categories that would qualify the household. As a result, the table below reports all eligibility categories identified on all EBB National Verifier applications, and the total categories selected by applicants exceeds the number of National Verifier applications received. Additionally, the criteria incidence rate or how often the criteria was selected on an application is shown by the third column and does not equal 100% since multiple categories can be selected on an application.³

Eligibility Category	Total National Verifier Application Categories	Percentage of Total Applications
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)	1,971,849	48.53%
Medicaid	1,613,246	39.70%
National School Lunch or Breakfast Program	813,468	20.02%
Household Income Less Than 135% of Federal Poverty level	467,547	11.51%
Substantial Loss of Income	446,946	11.00%
Supplemental Security Income	425,421	10.47%
Federal Pell Grant	216,249	5.32%
Federal Public Housing Assistance	174,632	4.30%
Veterans and Survivors Pension Benefit	36,739	0.90%
Tribal Food Distribution	2,630	0.06%
Tribal General Assistance	2,570	0.06%
Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	1,355	0.03%
Tribal Head Start	1,005	0.02%

³ Data in Figure 1 is as of November 1, 2021.

Figure 2. Enrollment Methods: Subscribers enroll in the EBB Program through various methods. First, consumers can submit applications via the National Verifier. (See Figure 1 for the qualification types of NV applications.) Second, Lifeline subscribers are automatically eligible to participate in the EBB Program and therefore do not need to submit an NV application. Next, participating providers may obtain FCC approval for an Alternative Verification Process (AVP) that they can use in addition to, or instead of, the National Verifier. Finally, providers may also rely on schools for eligibility verification with respect to households with students who participate in the free and reduced-price school lunch or school breakfast programs. The chart below shows that the EBB Program had over 7 million households enrolled as of November 1, 2021, with over half enrolling as existing Lifeline subscribers who were automatically eligible for the EBB Program.

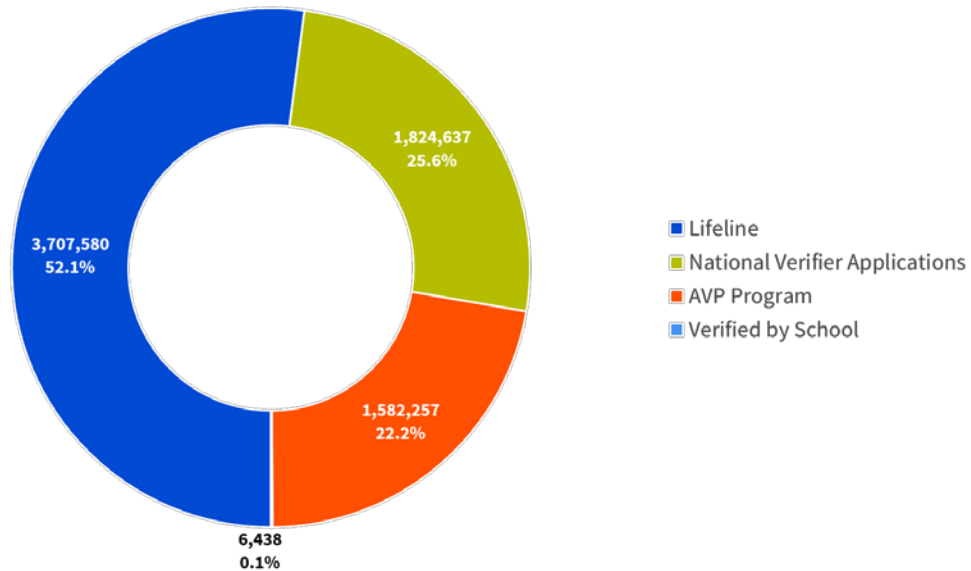
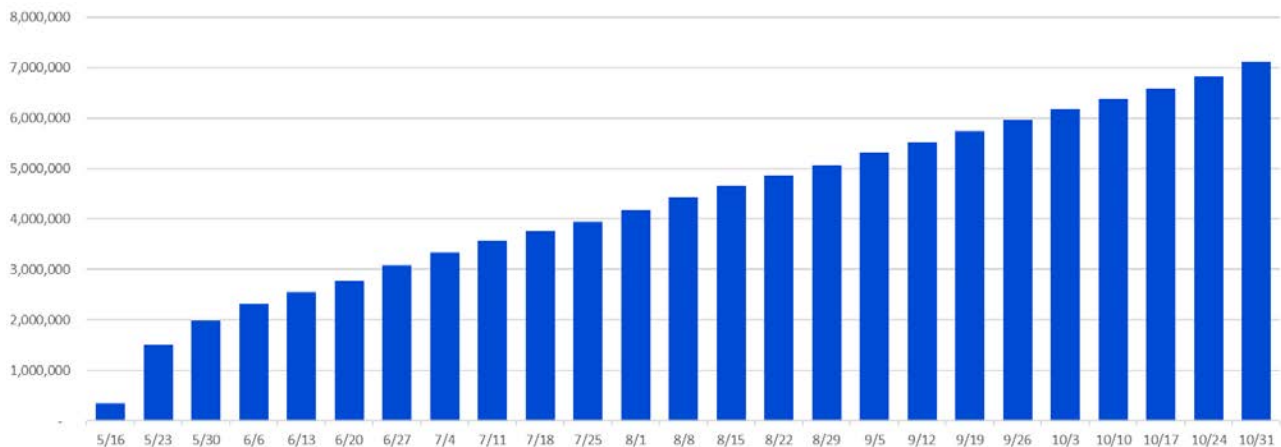


Figure 3. Enrollment Trends Over Time: Enrollment has increased at a relatively steady rate, reaching 7.12 million households on November 1, 2021. In October 2021, enrollment grew at an average rate of 4% each week.⁴



⁴ Data in Figures 2 and 3 is as of November 1, 2021.

Figure 4. Tribal Enrollment Trends: Tribal enrollment in the EBB Program continues to see increases week over week similar to overall enrollment.⁵

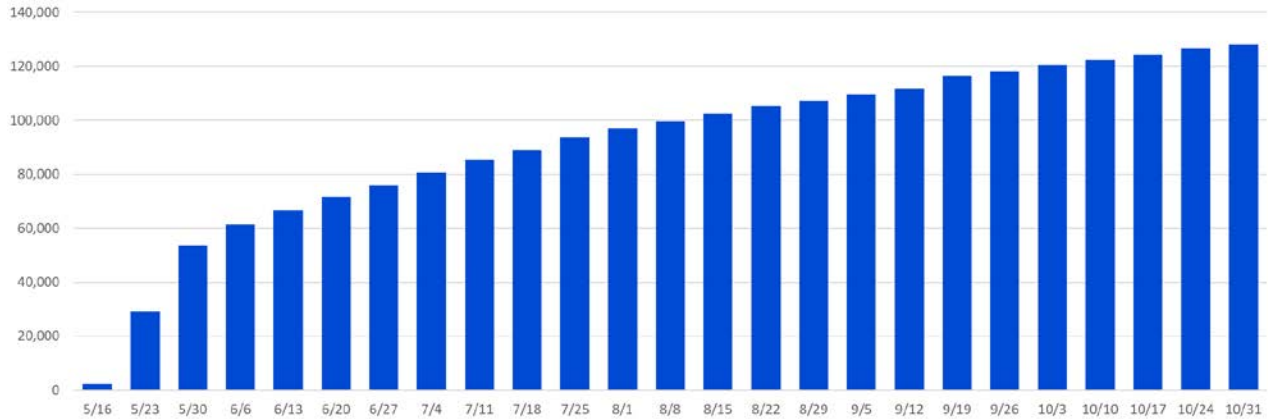
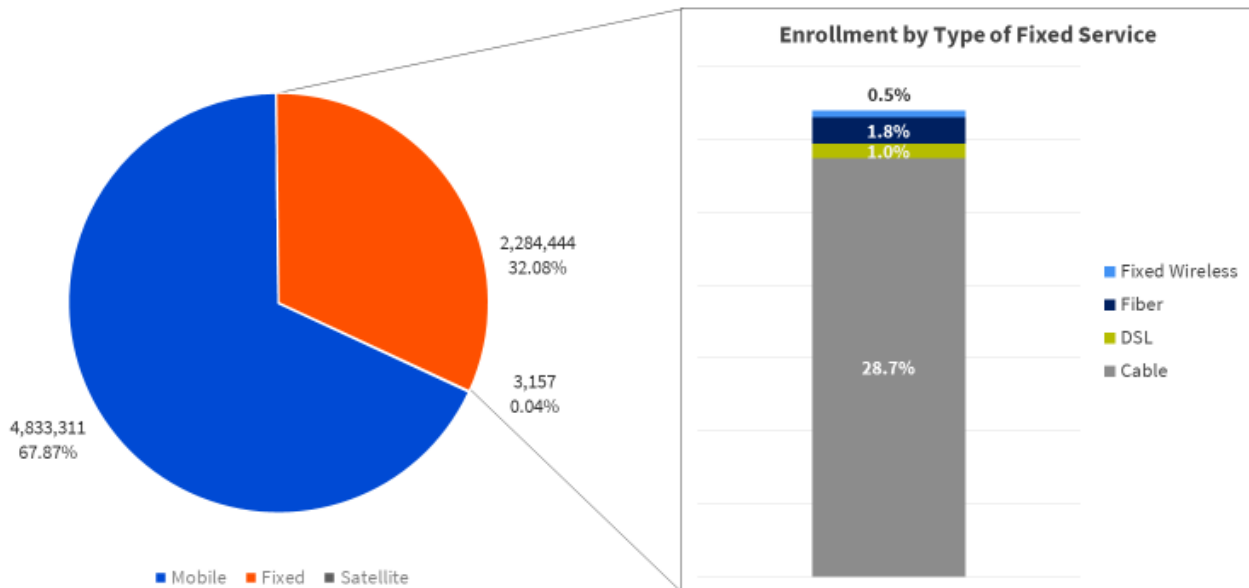
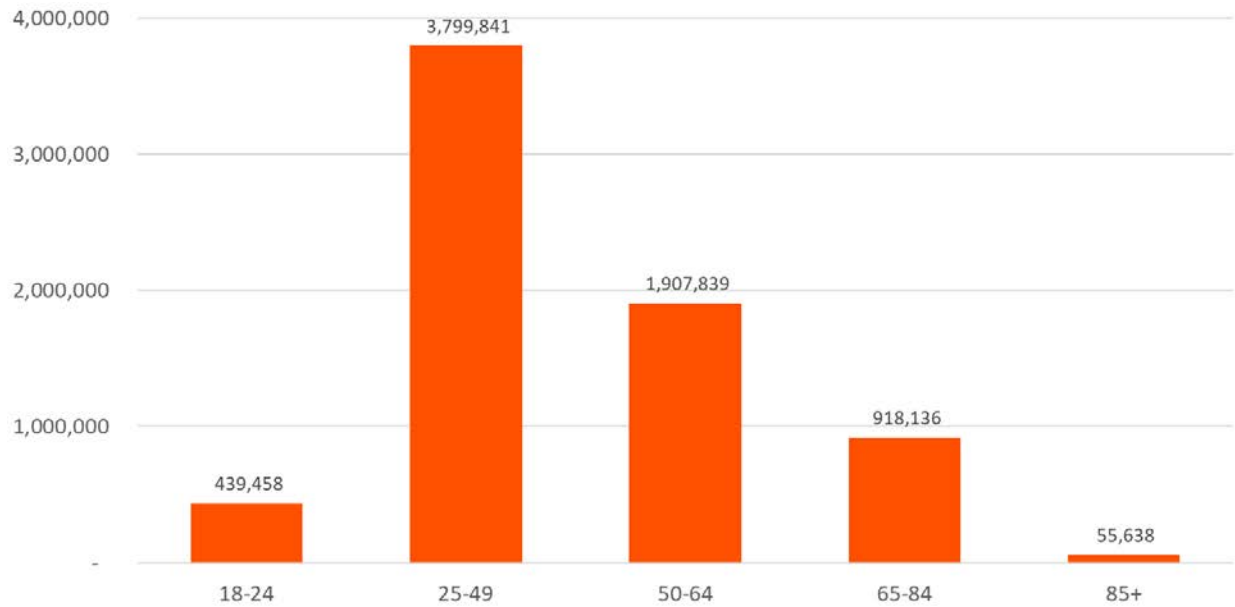


Figure 5. Service type (Mobile/Fixed): Participating providers offer fixed and/or mobile broadband service through the EBB Program. Most households receive discounted mobile broadband services from their EBB Program participating provider. As of November 1, 2021, 68% of households enrolled in the EBB Program received mobile broadband services, with the remainder receiving fixed broadband services. Of those receiving fixed broadband services, a large majority receive cable, with a small minority coming from fiber, fixed wireless, and DSL.



⁵ Data in Figures 4 and 5 is as of November 1, 2021.

Figure 6. Age: Subscribers in the EBB Program span all age groups, with the majority of subscribers (53.4%) falling within the 25-49 age range.⁶



⁶ Data in Figure 6 is as of November 1, 2021.

Figure 7. Enrollment By State: The state/territory level map below provides insight into subscriber populations across the country on a per capita basis. Puerto Rico, Northern Mariana Islands, Kentucky, and Louisiana have the four highest subscriber rates per capita, at 9.1%, 4.8%, 3.9% and 3.7%, respectively. The Program’s broad reach is further illustrated by its impact in all fifty states and five territories. A sampling of county level data is shown in Figure 8, however a complete list will be available to download as a supplemental spreadsheet.

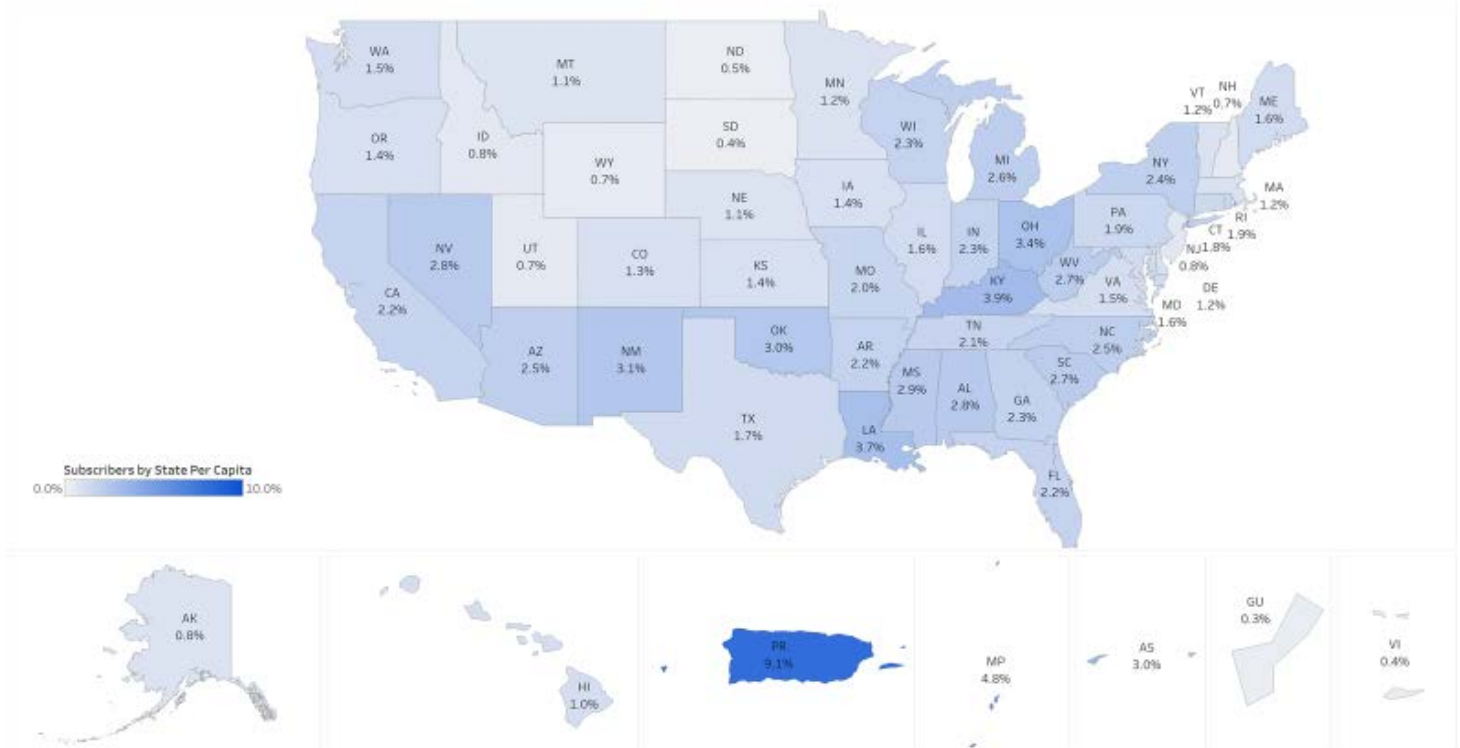


Figure 8. Enrollment By County: A sampling of county level data is shown below highlighting the counties with the ten highest subscriber counts. Additionally, a complete list will be available for downloading as a supplemental spreadsheet.⁷

State Full Name	County Name	Total Subscribers
California	Los Angeles County	279,762
Illinois	Cook County	100,055
Arizona	Maricopa County	90,053
Michigan	Wayne County	87,671
Texas	Harris County	74,100
New York	Kings County	73,059
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia County	72,547
New York	Bronx County	71,803
Nevada	Clark County	71,177

⁷ Data in Figures 7 and 8 is as of November 1, 2021.

Figures 9 & 10. Provider Claims: The total amount of reimbursement claims submitted by providers for discounted service and connected devices provided to households continues to grow each month. The total claims amount for the October 2021 service month was \$259.43 million with approximately 9.6% of claims for the one-time connected device discount and 90.4% for monthly broadband support.⁸ As of November 15, 2021, providers had claimed reimbursement for 985,600 one-time connected devices. Approximately 98% of these device claims were for tablets, approximately 1% were for laptops, and 1% were for desktop computers.

Figure 9

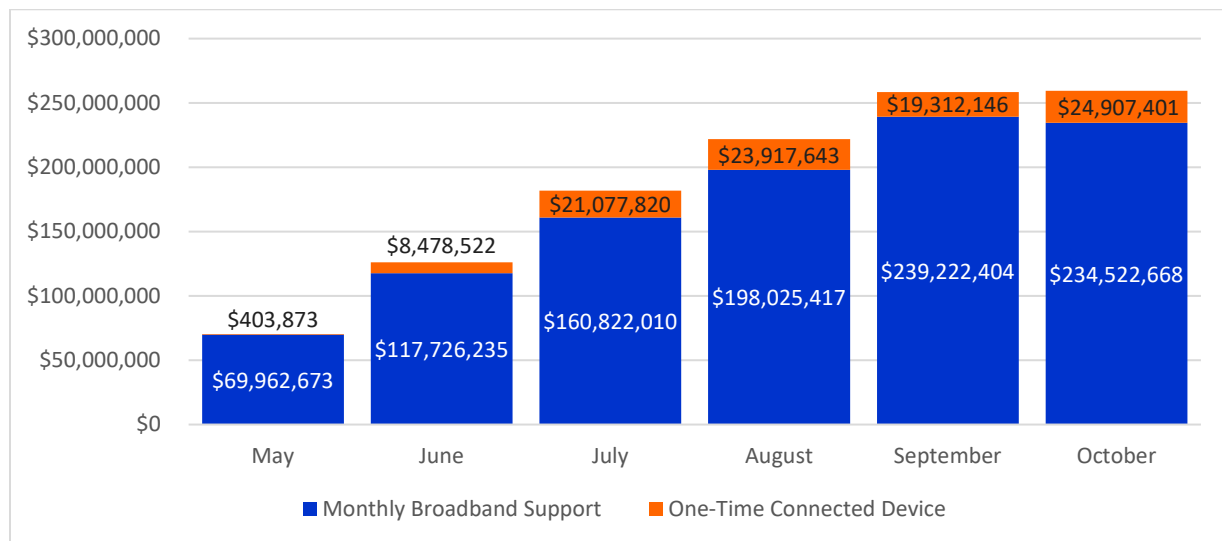


Figure 10

Month	Monthly Broadband Support	One-Time Connected Device	Total Claims Amount
May	\$69,962,673	\$403,873	\$70,366,546
June	\$117,726,235	\$8,478,522	\$126,204,757
July	\$160,822,010	\$21,077,820	\$181,899,830
August	\$198,025,417	\$23,917,643	\$221,943,060
September	\$239,222,404	\$19,312,146	\$258,534,550
October	\$234,522,668	\$24,907,401	\$259,430,069
Total	\$1,020,281,407	\$98,097,405	\$1,118,378,812

⁸ Data in Figures 9 and 10 is as of November 15, 2021.

III. LOOKING AHEAD

Since its launch on May 12, 2021, the EBB Program has provided discounted access to broadband for more than 7 million households across the United States and its territories. As the EBB Program progresses, USAC, in consultation with the FCC, posts weekly enrollment figures on the USAC website.⁹ Claims data is updated monthly, and the tracker currently indicates that as of November 15, 2021, \$1,118,378,812 has been claimed by EBB Program providers, leaving \$2,017,621,188 remaining in the Emergency Broadband Connectivity Fund. The tracker will be refreshed with updated claims data through the November data month for claims certified by December 15, 2021. We highlight that the Enrollment Tracker and this Report shows that a steady number of subscribers are newly enrolling in the EBB Program each week and providers continue to elect to participate in the EBB Program.

Additionally, each week, USAC posts enrollments by three-digit ZIP code and a spreadsheet showing enrollments by full five-digit ZIP code is posted monthly. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the enrollment data that USAC and the FCC have made available for different geographic levels, including the county-level information available with this Report, and to share their observations with the FCC. Moreover, each month, USAC refreshes demographic information regarding the age and ZIP code of EBB Program subscribers, as well as the services they receive, the method by which subscribers are enrolling in the EBB Program and the eligibility criteria applicants are self-selecting on the National Verifier Application.

Over the past few months, USAC has streamlined the enrollment process and made adjustments to improve the applicant experience. A sample of these enhancements are described below. USAC and the FCC are committed to exploring ways to improve the provider and consumer experience with USAC systems and welcomes feedback from stakeholders.

IV. APPENDIX A

Enhancements to Accessibility and User Friendliness of USAC Systems

Enhancement	Summary	Impact
Check Application Status Tool	This update allows service providers with National Verifier (NV) accounts to enter a consumer's NV application ID, full name, and date of birth to obtain a customer's application status.	This tool returns information about the status of that consumer's application, as well as information to help the service provider successfully enroll the consumer in National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD).
Enroll, Transfer, and Verify Consumers Using App ID	This enhancement allows service providers to perform enroll, verify, and transfer functions using a consumer's National Verifier Application ID, full name, and date of birth.	Application ID Enrollment limits the amount of Personal Identifiable Information (PII) the provider needs to input into the batch template which leads to a reduction in enrollment errors received by the provider.

⁹ USAC, EBB Program Enrollment and Claims Tracker: <https://www.usac.org/about/emergency-broadband-benefit-program/emergency-broadband-benefit-program-enrollments-and-claims-tracker/>.

Enhancement	Summary	Impact
NLAD User Interface	Service providers now have the option to conduct NLAD consumer transactions through the NLAD user interface (UI), in addition to the bulk upload process and the API process.	This change allows service providers to perform transactions for a single consumer while logged into the NLAD system.
Streamlined Update Function	Service providers can opt to perform updates using just the consumer's telephone number or subscriber ID number and the consumer's last name.	Providers are no longer required to provide a complete set of subscriber identifying information to perform update transactions. Providers do not need to collect a consumer's complete identifying information to enroll and maintain their subscribership information in the EBB Program.
National Verifier API	USAC released the National Verifier API for EBB Program in the National Verifier production environment. This update allows service providers to connect their systems to the National Verifier.	The National Verifier API further streamlines the EBB Program enrollment process by allowing service providers to submit consumer EBB program applications and check consumers' eligibility without using the service provider portal.
Modal Pop-Up after Account Creation	A new pop-up now appears after a successful account creation to inform the consumer they will still need to sign-in to submit an application.	This change allows consumers to understand the NV account creation and application process more clearly.
Password Field Placement	The new update moved the password entry field to the right side of the screen to allow better visibility on mobile devices.	This change allows the consumer to have a clearer view of the password requirements.
Identity Verification Section	The Identity Verification section (SSN4, Tribal ID, and alternate ID) has been reformatted to be more user friendly and to only collect information based on the option the user has selected.	This change helps consumers by providing only the information they need and hides other information to create a more fluid experience.
National Verifier Vanity Emails	Consumers applying through the National Verifier now receive email notifications from a USAC email distribution (DoNotReply@usac.org) as opposed to a ServiceNow email distribution. (nationalverifier@servicenowservices.com).	An email domain from USAC reduces confusion regarding the email sender as well as minimizing concerns about the legitimacy of the correspondence.
BQP Modal	A pop-up modal was added to the EBB Program application workflow to remind applicants that when selecting the School Lunch or Pell Grant as a qualifying program, a benefit qualifying person (BQP) may likely be required to verify eligibility. The consumer can either continue with the workflow or return to the application to add their BQP if they had forgotten to do so.	The modal helps ensure that applicants enter in all required information to optimize the application experience, and ability to be qualified for the benefit. Consumers who previously did not provide a BQP on their application, but submitted documentation verifying their participation through their child/dependent, would not be able to qualify due to missing information.

Enhancement	Summary	Impact
National Verifier Portal Split Workflow	The National Verifier supports the application process for both Lifeline and the EBB Programs through individual application workflows. Although there are two separated workflows, many of the pages/steps in the process use shared pages/screens that reference both programs. These workflows have since been updated to create a unique experience when applying for the program of the consumer's choice.	The split workflows help create a single, unique experience targeted to the specific program the applicant is applying for. This further improves the user experience and minimizes confusion in the application process.