

OFFICE OF STATEWIDE BROADBAND

Questions received by the Office of Statewide Broadband (OSB)

As of September 1, 2021

QUESTION: *Does federal eligibility automatically mean the individual is eligible for the state benefit?*

ANSWER: Yes, the customer is automatically qualified for MEBB if qualified under the Federal EBB program.

QUESTION: *Can ETCs that are already providing Lifeline & EBB in MD also participate? Or is this only for fixed broadband providers?*

ANSWER: An ETC that is providing EBB in Maryland (wired and/or wireless) can participate.

QUESTION: *If the EBB plan approved was only \$40, can the consumer choose a better plan?*

ANSWER: As long as the service plan is authorized for the EBB program, the consumer can choose a better service plan.

QUESTION: *Similar to federal program, the internet coverage is service and equipment, If a customer is getting \$50 already toward internet service/equip and the remainder is only \$8 more dollars to fully fund the internet, they get \$8 vs \$15, correct?*

ANSWER: Yes, the customer will only receive a subsidy up to the amount of the remaining bill after EBB funding is applied, not to exceed \$15.

QUESTION: *Our company wrote an API that directly interfaces with the federal EBB site. Can we do the same with the state's program?*

ANSWER: Yes, you can create an API for Maryland's EBB subsidy. For any additional information please reach out to the Program Manager (see contact information below).

QUESTION: *Does our EBB plan have to be approved by USAC?*

ANSWER: Yes, the EBB plan must be approved by USAC before MEBB subsidy is provided.

QUESTION: *Is there a penalty for not participating?*

ANSWER: There is no penalty for not participating in the MEBB. This is a voluntary program for service providers providing service to eligible households in Maryland.

QUESTION: *The spreadsheet submitted to USAC includes PII. If there is any PII info we will be unable to submit the spreadsheet via an email. Is that okay?*

ANSWER: Yes, there will be a secure portal for spreadsheet and other required information submission.

QUESTION: *How will qualified subscribers sign-up for the program?*

ANSWER: No sign-up is required. Customers who are already qualified and eligible for the federal EBB program are automatically eligible for the MEBB program.

QUESTION: *Where do we get the contract?*

ANSWER: The contract and application will be sent to the providers directly. We expect to transmit this information September 1, 2021. If you are an eligible provider who has not received an application and contract by this date, please reach out to the Program Manager (see contact information below).

QUESTION: *What is your estimated Due Date for the MDD EBB Claims to your office?*

ANSWER: According to USAC, service providers can only claim reimbursement for the previous data month and must certify their EBB Program claim by the 15th of the snapshot month (e.g. 15 days after the snapshot). MEBB claim submission must be provided no later than 3 business days after the USAC submission.

QUESTION: *So the subscriber doesn't have to do anything additional if enrolled in the Federal EBBP? We just add the \$15 credit to the customer?*

ANSWER: That is correct. If enrolled in the Federal EBB you as the ISP will need to submit the application and signed contract agreement to the Office. Once submitted, follow the claims reimbursement process.

QUESTION: *What is the name of the law/bill passed that allows MD to provide these additional funds?*

ANSWER: The Digital Connectivity Act of 2021 (HB97/SB66) created the Office of Statewide Broadband and assigned the responsibility of digital equity programs to the OSB. Maryland supplemental budget #5 for FY2022 provided the funding for the subsidy program.



QUESTION: *When is the MEBB service subsidy effective?*

ANSWER: The subsidy will be effective for the billing starting the month in which the agreement/contract is signed by the provider and approved by the Office.

QUESTION: *What is the total funding available and how long does the state expect it to last?*

ANSWER: There is \$45 Million dedicated to the MEBB program for 12 months or until funds are exhausted, whichever is earlier.

QUESTION: *Can the additional subsidy be used toward a one time hotspot cost (federal EBB cannot)?*

ANSWER: No, the MEBB subsidy can only be used for the broadband service of eligible households.

QUESTION: *Is there going to be a Maryland subsidy for the one time purchase of devices as there is in the federal program or only for the monthly service?*

ANSWER: Currently Maryland is providing subsidies for monthly service only. Information regarding device subsidies will be announced later this year.

QUESTION: *Can we make a claim for May & June?*

ANSWER: No, the claim reimbursements will be effective for the billing starting the month in which the agreement/contract is signed by the provider and approved by the Office.

QUESTION: *Does federal eligibility automatically mean the individual is eligible for the state benefit?*

ANSWER: Yes, if the customer is qualified for the Federal EBB program they are automatically qualified for the Maryland EBB subsidy.

QUESTION: *Will the state of Maryland be advertising this program or do they expect ISP's to email eligible consumers or include in a bill message?*

ANSWER: Within thirty (30) days of the executed agreement, the provider must notify all subscribing EBB households of the relief being provided by MEBB Program. Utilization of the notice provided in Exhibit B of the agreement or similar is required.



QUESTION: *When will the application form for ISP's to register with OSB be available?*

ANSWER: *Application and contract will be available September 1, 2021.*

QUESTION: *When will the contract be provided to ISP's to execute?*

ANSWER: *Application and contract will be available September 1, 2021.*

QUESTION: *Will customers need to enroll separately in MEBB or are they automatically enrolled if they are in EBB?*

ANSWER: *Customers are automatically enrolled if participating in EBB.*

QUESTION: *Does MD expect ISP's to simply submit a file with all MD customers enrolled in EBB to receive the credit?*

ANSWER: *ISP's will only need to submit the report provided to USAC as disclosed in the webinar for reimbursement claims.*

QUESTION: *If so, when is consent language captured from the customer so as not to violate privacy practices.*

ANSWER: *Subject to the Maryland Public Information Act and any other applicable laws, all confidential information and documentation provided by ISP, including but not limited to household-specific information or confidential commercial/financial information of ISP shall be held in confidence by the Department. A secure portal will be provided for the upload of subsidy requests in order to protect private information.*

QUESTION: *What happens when a customer un-enrolls in EBB? How do we communicate that to the state?*

ANSWER: *If a customer un-enrolls in EBB you will no longer be including their information on your reimbursement claim report submitted to USAC, such will be the case with the report submission to OSB.*

QUESTION: *Do we need to notify customers before MEBB ends? How does that get communicated to ISP's?*

ANSWER: *ISP's should notify customers of impending program end as early as possible. OSB will do its best to provide 90 days notification to the MEBB ISP participants if the program will end before the 12 month planned duration.*



QUESTION: How much notice will the ISP's receive before MEBB ends?

ANSWER: OSB will do its best to provide 90 days notification to the MEBB ISP participants if the program will end before the 12 month planned duration.

QUESTION: When is the earliest we can start submitting, assuming after the contract is signed, maybe sometime in September?

ANSWER: You can begin submitting for claim reimbursement in the month in which the contract is signed and approved by OSB, but not to precede the billing month of September.

QUESTION: How often will we submit for the credit? Weekly/monthly?

ANSWER: You will submit for the credit after your submission to USAC. This should be on a monthly basis as you would with USAC.

QUESTION: Any requirements around how the credit shows up on the customer statement? "MEBB credit"

ANSWER: The billing notice is provided as exhibit B in the agreement. This notice or similar must be provided on the customer's bill.

QUESTION: Are there additional /different rules in MEBB vs. EBB, i.e. usage rule, absence of consent?

ANSWER: Outside of what is disclosed in the agreement the MEBB program holds no differentiating rules than that of the Federal EBB program.

QUESTION: What happens if a customer receives a credit for the month, but then unenrolls halfway through, will ISP's need to debit the customer and send the money back to the state?

ANSWER: This depends on the customer's billing period and could vary per ISP. It is suggested that you reach out to the Program Manager for any specific situations.

QUESTION: What will happen to MEBB if EBB ends prior to 6/2022?

ANSWER: MEBB service subsidy will continue to be disbursed until the 12 months has been reached or funds have been exhausted. Should EBB end prior to the 12 month MEBB program, we will provide additional information on how to continue to claim the subsidy.



QUESTION: Will/could the MEBB subsidy also apply to another program (ie, ACP) if another federal program is launched?

ANSWER: Currently the MEBB subsidy is only applied to the Federal EBB program. OSB will notify participatory ISP's of any new updates to the program.

QUESTION: Can a customer's MEBB credit be with Comcast if the EBB credit is with a different provider? For instance – Internet Essentials customer has EBB credit with Cricket for the full amount of their monthly bill (\$40/mo), but they want the MEBB credit with Comcast to subsidize their Internet Essentials service.

ANSWER: The MEBB subsidy is provided to the provider which received the EBB billing credit.

QUESTION: What is the escalation path if a customer disputes their adjustment amount, or eligibility?

ANSWER: *Customer disputes should be handled directly with the ISP.*

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