

Affordable Connectivity Program (United States)

Good practice: Reducing the digital divide through subsidised Internet access for low-income households

Relevant DFI commitment: Promote affordable, inclusive, and reliable access to the Internet for individuals and businesses where they need it and support efforts to close digital divides around the world to ensure all people of the world are able to benefit from the digital transformation.

Type of the initiative: Strategy

Stakeholder Group: Government

Launch/adoption: 2022 - Now

Goals

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) aims to reduce the digital divide in the United States by making broadband internet more accessible and affordable for low-income households. The program ensures that individuals and families can fully participate in essential online activities, such as remote learning, telehealth services, and workspaces, regardless of financial circumstances.

The primary goal of the ACP is to provide financial assistance for broadband services and connected devices, enabling equitable access to the digital economy. The initiative aspires to bridge long-standing disparities in internet connectivity by targeting underserved and economically disadvantaged communities. The program also seeks to promote competition among broadband providers, incentivising them to offer more affordable and reliable services while ensuring transparency and accountability.

Description

The Affordable Connectivity Program, established by the FCC, provides eligible households with monthly discounts of up to \$30 for broadband services or \$75 for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Additionally, the program offers a one-time discount of up to \$100 toward purchasing a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet, provided the household contributes at least \$10 but not more than \$50. The ACP focuses on accessibility and ease of participation. Eligibility criteria are straightforward, including households participating in federal assistance programs such as SNAP, Medicaid, or Federal Public Housing Assistance and those meeting certain income thresholds. A streamlined application process ensures households can quickly enrol and benefit from the program.

The initiative also emphasises collaboration with broadband providers and community organisations to maximise its reach and effectiveness. Over 1,000 broadband providers have committed to participating in the program, ensuring a wide range of choices for consumers nationwide. Providers must comply with transparency obligations, ensuring eligible participants are fully informed about options and rights.

The ACP builds on the success of the Emergency Broadband Benefit (EBB) program, reflecting a transition from emergency pandemic relief to a longer-term commitment to addressing digital inequities. The program represents a significant step toward achieving universal broadband access, empowering communities with the tools to thrive in a connected world. It embodies the FCC's mission to promote the availability and affordability of communication services as a cornerstone of economic opportunity and social equity.

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