



H.966 Section 13b - COVID-Response

Line Extension  
Customer Assistance Program  
("LECAP")  
Reimbursement Guidelines  
October 2020

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Introduction .....              | 3 |
| General Program Guidelines..... | 3 |
| Guidelines:.....                | 5 |
| Qualifications: .....           | 6 |
| Application Status.....         | 6 |

## INTRODUCTION

Bill H.966, Section 13(b), created the COVID-19 Response Line Extension Customer Assistance Program (“LECAP”) to be administered by the Vermont Department of Public Service (“Department”).<sup>1</sup> Hundreds of Vermonters without 25/3 Mbps broadband service live just beyond the reach of current cable and Internet Service Providers (“ISP”) networks. This program was established in response to the COVID-19 Emergency because broadband access is a necessity during a global pandemic, especially for students, patients, and teleworkers such as teachers and medical personnel. Extending cable and ISP networks to unserved/underserved areas can be expensive. Consumers can request that service providers extend networks to their homes, but the consumer is often asked to pay a portion (or all) of the cost to extend a network. This program was created to offer up to \$3,000 in financial assistance to offset the eligible consumer portion of the line extension cost. Funding from this program comes from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. All extensions funded through this program must be completed on or before December 30, 2020.<sup>2</sup>



## GENERAL PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The initial LECAP program was available to Vermonters who: could demonstrate a COVID-19–related need, such as remote learning/telehealth/telework; lacked a minimum of 25/3 broadband internet service; and were “near net”<sup>3</sup> for a cable provider or other ISP.<sup>4</sup> Consumers needed to request the line extension from the appropriate service provider and apply for the line extension financial assistance. The intent was to lower the financial burden for Vermonters who could not afford the cost of a line extension. Line extensions already purchased did not qualify for the initial LECAP program.

This expansion to LECAP makes funding available as a reimbursement to consumers who reside in Vermont and purchased a line extension in response to a COVID-related need after March 1, 2020, without State or Federal financial assistance. The line extension must be completed in 2020 to be eligible. Line extensions already funded by the initial LECAP program are **not** eligible for reimbursement. Line extensions that were not eligible for the initial LECAP program may be

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<sup>1</sup> Section 13(b) directs the Department of Public Service (PSD) to issue guidelines and procedures to administer this program. This document constitutes the guidelines and procedures. The Department may, without advance notice, change these guidelines to ensure consistency with United States Department of Treasury Coronavirus Relief Fund guidance, Federal and state laws pertaining to the administration of this program, or to better effectuate the public purpose for which this program was created. Please check the Department’s website during your application for any changes to this program by visiting <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/>.

<sup>2</sup> The Department may, in its sole discretion, grant extensions of time beyond December 30, 2020 in situations allowed by United States Department of Treasury guidance. See [Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for State, Local, and tribal government \(June 30, 2020\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> In this case usually less than one mile from existing cable/ISP infrastructure.

<sup>4</sup> The PSD reserves the right to determine eligibility of the service location using its own broadband availability data. The Department may consider projects approved or in process under other federal and state grant programs, such as the Vermont Connectivity Initiative and the Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative, in its determination of eligibility.

eligible for reimbursement under the revised program. Previously approved line extensions that could not be funded, but have been or will be completed in 2020, may qualify.

Application approval will be based on need, residency, cost-effectiveness, site-appropriateness, available funding, a completed application, and submission of all required qualifying documents.

Payments from this program will be made by the Department directly to consumers.

Example. A consumer has school-age children who were required to switch to remote learning in March. The consumer's internet service that was less than 25/3 (25 Mbs download/3 Mbs upload) was inadequate for the learning requirements. The consumer tried to subscribe to a cable or internet provider that offers 25/3 or better service and found that a line extension or non-standard drop was required to connect the consumer's home to the provider network. The consumer received a construction estimate from a service provider for \$2000. The consumer purchased the extension/non-standard drop, after March 1, 2020, and the line extension was completed by July 1, 2020. With proof of purchase and proof of activation, this consumer would be eligible for a \$2000 LECAP reimbursement.

LECAP contributions will not exceed \$3000 per primary residential address. LECAP funds can be applied to a line extension or non-standard service drop. You must reside at the service address to qualify, and the service address must be your primary residence.

**Line Extensions:** *Extension of the provider network into an unserved neighborhood/street, usually via utility poles.*

**Service Drops:** *Individual cables connecting each subscriber home to the provider network. A typical service drop is from a utility pole to the home via an aerial or underground cable.*

**Service Address:** *An E911 locatable address.*

**Primary Residence:** *The main dwelling where you usually live, typically a house or an apartment. A person can only have one primary residence at any given time. Second homes, vacation homes, camps, cottages, barns, sheds, empty lots, campers/campgrounds, and other secondary property are generally not considered primary residences.*

Recurring monthly charges, equipment, and other charges or fees are not eligible for LECAP reimbursement. LECAP cannot be used for reimbursement of the service provider's share of the line extension.

**Applications received under LECAP will be reviewed by the Department on a rolling basis until all the program funding has been awarded or December 5, 2020, whichever comes first.**

GUIDELINES:

1. To apply, the consumer **must** have purchased a line extension or service drop after March 1, 2020.
2. **The line extension must be completed in 2020.**
3. The line extension must support 25/3 broadband (typically coaxial cable or fiber).
4. Applicants are limited to one line extension or service drop reimbursement.
5. **A business-class service line extension does not qualify.**
6. Applicants may only apply for their **primary residence in Vermont**.
  - a. They must provide the E911 locatable service address for the residence.
  - b. The applicant **must reside** at the primary residence in 2020.
  - c. The service address must be in Vermont.
7. A LECAP reimbursement cannot be combined with other State or Federal broadband assistance program/financial support.
8. **The consumer must apply online via the [Department's website](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-covid-19-line-extension-customer-assistance-program) at <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/content/vermont-covid-19-line-extension-customer-assistance-program>**
  - a. The consumer **must provide all information requested by the Department** including:
    - i. service provider
    - ii. account information
    - iii. service address
    - iv. mailing address
    - v. contact information (phone/email)
    - vi. proof of residency (if required).
    - vii. COVID-related need
    - viii. whether other State or Federal broadband assistance has been or will be received.
    - ix. other clarifying information as requested
9. A complete application will:
  - a. Answer all questions on the contact form
  - b. Include the following:
    - i. Itemized estimate, invoice, or signed service order for the extension or drop.
    - ii. A dated proof of purchase: a receipt, canceled check, or credit card statement
    - iii. Proof of service activation: the first bill, activation notice, or other proof of service
    - iv. Proof of residency in 2020 (as needed)
      1. If you did not occupy the service address on March 1, 2020, please include proof of primary residency for 2020. This applies to new home purchases and new home construction.
10. Applications will be considered based on:
  - a. Completeness of the application/contact form
  - b. Inclusion of required documents
  - c. Disclosure of Covid-19-related need(s)
  - d. Cost-effectiveness of the extension

- e. Primary residency at the service address in 2020
- f. Available funding
- g. Completion of the line extension in 2020

**The contact form will be available until December 5, 2020, or until Federal and State legislation and/or Department guidance has been changed.**

QUALIFICATION:

To qualify for **up to** a \$3000 LECAP reimbursement:

1. The line extension must be purchased after March 1, 2020, and completed during 2020.
2. The applicant must establish a connectivity need related to remote learning, telehealth, or telework that has arisen as a result of the COVID-19 Emergency.<sup>5</sup>
3. The applicant lacked access to 25/3 Mbps broadband at the service location before the purchase of the line extension.
4. The applicant will need to indicate if they will receive or have received other government aid to afford the broadband connection. (Line extensions previously awarded LECAP grants are **not** eligible for reimbursement).
5. The service address must be a valid E911 locatable address.
6. The applicant must reside at the service address in Vermont. The service address is/was the consumer's primary residence in 2020.
  - a. Locations that are considered both a business location and a residential home, such as a home business, may qualify as a residence for this program.

APPLICATION STATUS

It may take **2-3** weeks for your application to be reviewed and approved. Approved reimbursements will be mailed in December 2020 or sooner if possible.

Notifications, updates, questions, and approvals will be sent to applicants via email. **Please make sure to provide a valid email address.**

If you have problems completing the online contact form or attaching the supporting documents, you may contact [psd.lecap@vermont.gov](mailto:psd.lecap@vermont.gov) for assistance. Please include your first and last name and application date, and your case number (if available).

If you have questions about the status of your application please email [psd.consumer@vermont.gov](mailto:psd.consumer@vermont.gov) or call the Department's Consumer Affairs hotline at 800-622-4496.

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<sup>5</sup> LECAP applicants must show a COVID-19–related broadband need as defined by the U.S. Department of Treasury guidance.