



Established in 2020 by H.966 Section 13b – A COVID-Response bill.

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2021 Line Extension
Customer Assistance Program
("LECAP")
Reimbursement Guidelines

June 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Bill H.966 (2020), 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”).¹ 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. LECAP is a federally funded COVID-19 relief program. All extensions funded through this program must be completed on or before December 30, 2021.²



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”³ for a cable provider or other ISP.⁴ 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.

For 2021, a satellite/wireless solution has been added to the LECAP Reimbursement Program. Consumers may be reimbursed for up to \$600 for a qualified 25/3 satellite/wireless broadband solution.

Consumer reimbursement is an expansion to the original Line Extension Consumer Assistance Program. LECAP Reimbursement will make grants available directly to consumers who have

¹ Section 13(b) directs the Department of Public Service (PSD or Department) 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](https://publicservice.vermont.gov/) periodically for any changes to this program by visiting <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/>.

² The Department may, in its sole discretion, grant extensions of time beyond December 30, 2021 in situations allowed by United States Department of Treasury guidance. See [Coronavirus Relief Fund Guidance for State, Local, and Tribal Governments \(January 15, 2021\)](#).

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

⁴ The PSD reserves the right to determine eligibility of the service location using its own broadband availability data. The PSD 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.

their primary residence in Vermont and purchased a qualified line extension in response to a COVID-related need after March 1, 2020, without other state or federal financial assistance. The line extension must have been purchased and completed before applying. Line extensions or satellite/wireless solutions already funded by a previous LECAP program are **not** eligible for reimbursement. Some line extensions that were not eligible for other versions of LECAP may be eligible for reimbursement.

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 2020. The consumer's Internet service, which 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 (a non-standard drop would also be eligible) was required to connect the consumer's home to the provider network. The consumer received a construction estimate from a service provider for \$2,000. 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 \$2,000 LECAP /Reimbursement grant.

LECAP Reimbursement contributions will not exceed \$3,000 per customer for line extensions or \$600 for satellite/wireless solutions, per primary residential address. LECAP Reimbursement funds can be applied to a line extension, non-standard drop, or qualified satellite/wireless solution. The service address must be a primary residence to qualify.

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

Service Drops: *Individual cables connecting each subscriber's 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 someone usually lives, 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 properties are generally not considered primary residences.*

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

Applications received under LECAP Reimbursement will be reviewed by the Department on a rolling basis. Awards will be granted until all the program funding has been awarded; December 3, 2021; or until federal and state legislation and/or Department guidance has been changed.

CONSUMER WIRELINE GUIDELINES (CABLE/FIBER/OTHER):

Consumers seeking a wireline extension must comply with the following:

1. To apply for LECAP Reimbursement consumers must have a **purchased and completed line extension/service drop.**
2. An invoice must be included with the application.
 - a. An acceptable estimate/invoice issued from a service provider must be dated, include the provider contact information, show the consumer's service address, show the extension distance, and/or provide a description of the satellite/wireless equipment, as well as the estimated or final cost.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED WITHOUT PROPER DOCUMENTATION WILL BE REJECTED

3. Proof of payment for the line extension must be provided, such as a canceled check or electronic statement, or a credit card receipt. In some cases, a paid invoice from the provider may be acceptable.
4. Proof of activation must be provided: examples include a monthly invoice from the provider and/or a scheduled activation/installation notice.
5. Consumers must provide all information required by the service provider, including a valid E911 service address and contact information.
6. The consumer must be a Vermont resident. The service address must be the consumer's primary residence.
7. The consumer must provide **both** a valid service address and mailing address on the LECAP Reimbursement application.
8. Consumers must complete the LECAP Reimbursement application online at the Department's website: <https://publicservice.vermont.gov/>
 - a. Consumers who are unable to access the application can send an email to psd.LECAP@vermont.gov or call 800-622-4496 for assistance.
9. Consumers must answer all questions on the application.
10. Consumers must indicate if they have received or will receive other state or federal aid for broadband between March 2020 and December 2021. Addresses that have received or may receive other federal or state funding may not be eligible, including addresses located in Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) and Connectivity Initiative (CI) Grant areas. (See the [interactive map of RDOF award areas](#) and the [2020 CI Grant Locations interactive map](#) to determine whether your address is located in one of these areas.)

LECAP Reimbursement applications will be approved based on:

- **A purchased, installed, and activated line extension.**
- Completeness of the application.
- Inclusion of required documents, such as a line extension invoice/estimate, proof of purchase, and proof of residency.
- COVID-19–related need(s).
- The cost-effectiveness/site-appropriateness of the line extension.
- Primary residency at the Vermont service address between March 2020 and the time of application.
- Available funds.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED WITHOUT PROOF OF A COMPLETED/ACTIVATED LINE EXTENSION WILL BE REJECTED

Detailed Wireline Qualifications:

- LECAP Reimbursement can only be applied to purchased and completed line extensions.
- LECAP Reimbursement funds can only be applied to a residential address (addresses that are both home and business, such as a Bed and Breakfast or a working farm, may apply for funding for service to the residence).
- To qualify for a LECAP Reimbursement grant a consumer must establish a connectivity need related to remote learning, telehealth, or telework that has arisen as a result of the COVID-19 Emergency.⁵
- An address is only eligible if it lacks access to 25/3 Mbps broadband at the service location.
 - Address eligibility will be determined by Department map data.
- One LECAP Reimbursement grant will be awarded per qualified address/per qualified Vermont resident.
- The applicant and account holder for the service must be the same person.
- The applicant must indicate if they have received or will receive other state or federal financial aid for broadband between March 2020 and December 2021.
 - Addresses that may receive other federal or state funding (such as RDOF and Connectivity Initiative Grants awarded to service providers) may be excluded from LECAP Reimbursement.
- The service address must be the applicant's primary Vermont residence between March 2020 and the time of application.
 - Consumers who did not or will not reside at the service address for this entire period can submit proof of current residency, such as a voter registration card, which can be downloaded from the [Vermont Secretary of State's website](#).

CONSUMER WIRELESS CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

In areas where 25/3 wireline broadband service is unavailable, a wireless 25/3 broadband solution may qualify for a LECAP Reimbursement grant. LECAP Reimbursement funds may apply to

⁵ LECAP applicants must show a COVID-19–related broadband need as defined by the U.S. Department of Treasury guidance (e.g., telework, telehealth, remote education).

customer-premise equipment (“CPE”) purchased from a satellite company such as HughesNet or Starlink, or fixed wireless providers, such as AT&T, Verizon, or VTel. The amount of equipment charges that may qualify for a LECAP Reimbursement grant can range from \$400 to \$1,600 and must be used to pay for an outdoor satellite/fixed wireless transceiver (antenna, dish, etc.). The satellite/wireless solution must meet the federal [RDOF](#) (Rural Digital Opportunity Fund) low latency standard (currently ≤ 100 ms).

Addresses near an existing wireline provider may not be eligible for a wireless grant. Addresses that are/will be funded by other state or federal broadband programs may not be eligible⁶, including [RDOF award areas](#) and [Connectivity Initiative grant areas](#). Consumers are only eligible for one LECAP Reimbursement grant, for fixed wireless/satellite, or wireline broadband.

Consumers seeking LECAP Reimbursement funding for a wireless solution must comply with the following:

1. To apply for LECAP Reimbursement the consumer must have a **purchased, installed, and activated satellite/wireless customer premises equipment (“CPE”) solution**.
2. An invoice must be included with the application.
 - a. An acceptable estimate/invoice issued from a service provider must be dated, include the provider contact information, show the consumer’s service address, include a description of the satellite/wireless equipment, and the estimated or final cost.
3. The satellite/wireless solution must meet the federal RDOF low latency standard (currently ≤ 100 ms).
4. A speed test must be uploaded at the time of application (screen capture or PDF).
5. The consumer must provide all information required by the service provider, including a valid service address, permissions, and contact information.
6. The consumer must be a Vermont resident. The service address must be the consumer's primary residence.
7. The consumer must provide **both** a valid service address and mailing address on the LECAP Reimbursement application.
8. Consumers must complete the LECAP Reimbursement application online at the [Department’s website: https://publicservice.vermont.gov/](#).
 - o Consumers who are unable to access the application can send an email to psd.LECAP@vermont.gov or call 800-622-4496 for assistance.
9. The consumer must answer all questions on the application.
10. The consumer must indicate if they have received or will receive other state or federal aid for broadband between March 2020 and December 2021. Addresses that have already received or may receive other federal or state funding may not be eligible. This may include addresses located in [RDOF award areas](#) and [Connectivity Initiative Grant areas](#).

⁶ The Department 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 Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, Vermont Connectivity Initiative, and the Get Vermonters Connected Now Initiative – in its determination of eligibility.

LECAP Reimbursement applications will be approved based on:

- **A purchased, installed and activated satellite/wireless CPE solution.**
- Completeness of the application.
- Inclusion of required documents such as an invoice/estimate, proof of purchase, and proof of residency.
- COVID-19–related need(s).
- The cost-effectiveness/site-appropriateness of the customer-premise equipment.
- Primary residency at the Vermont service address between March 2020 and the time of application.
- Available funds.

APPLICATIONS RECEIVED WITHOUT PROOF OF A COMPLETED/ACTIVATED SATELLITE/WIRELESS SOLUTION WILL BE REJECTED

Detailed Wireless Qualifications:

- Customer-premise equipment eligible for LECAP Reimbursement funding will cost between \$400 and \$1,600.
- LECAP Reimbursement funds can only be applied to equipment already purchased, installed, and activated.
- LECAP Reimbursement can only be applied to a residential address (addresses that are both home and business, such as a Bed and Breakfast or working farm, may apply for service to the residence).
- To qualify for a LECAP Reimbursement grant a consumer must establish a connectivity need related to remote learning, telehealth, or telework that has arisen as a result of the COVID-19 Emergency.⁷
- An address is only eligible if it lacks access to 25/3 Mbps wireline broadband at the service location.
 - Address eligibility will be determined by Department map data.
- One LECAP Reimbursement grant will be awarded per qualified address/per qualified Vermont resident.
- The applicant and account holder for the service must be the same person.
- The applicant must indicate if they have received or will receive other state or federal aid for broadband between March 2020 and December 2021.
 - Addresses that may receive other federal or state funding – such as RDOF and Connectivity Initiative Grants – may be excluded from LECAP Reimbursement.
- The service address must be the applicant's primary Vermont residence between March 2020 and the time of application.
 - If Consumers did not or will not reside at the service address for this entire period can submit proof of current residency, such as a voter registration card, which can be downloaded from the [Vermont Secretary of State's website](#). Proof of residency may be required.

⁷ LECAP Reimbursement applicants must show a COVID-19–related broadband need as defined by the U.S. Department of Treasury guidance (.e.g., telework, telehealth, remote education).

- The applicant must submit a speed test to the Department with the application.

PARTICIPATING PROVIDERS:

LECAP Reimbursement does not require a participating provider. LECAP Reimbursement grants will be sent directly to qualified applicants. LECAP Reimbursement *does* require specific documents to be submitted, including a detailed invoice/estimate and proof of purchase, installation, and activation. Your provider may be able to assist with documentation but is not required to do so. Providing the supporting documents is the responsibility of the consumer.

APPLICATION STATUS

Consumers can apply for LECAP Reimbursement funds until December 3, 2021, or until federal and state legislation and/or Department guidance has been changed

Consumers will receive application status updates via email. It may take 5-6 weeks for applications to be reviewed and approved. Applications approved *before* October 1, 2021, should receive grant awards in October. Applications approved *after* October 1, 2021, should receive grant awards in December. All applications *must* be received by **December 3, 2021**.

Consumers can check the receipt and status of their application by emailing PSD.Consumer@vermont.gov or calling 800-622-4496.

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

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