

Cablefax Daily™

WHAT THE INDUSTRY READS FIRST

Another Day, Another Dollar: FCC Ready for ECF Launch

The FCC's \$7.17 billion Emergency Connectivity Fund is kicking off Tuesday, and the Commission hopes that it is wholly complementary to the Emergency Broadband Benefit program launched in May.

Senior FCC staff on a press call Monday wouldn't go into specific details on any lessons learned from the launch of the EBB program, but said there is the possibility for some overlap between the EBB and the ECF, and one family could benefit from both. For instance, a family that was able to connect to broadband through the EBB but still doesn't have an internet-connected device could acquire one via the ECF. Together, the FCC hopes the programs will go quite a way towards filling many of the existing affordability gaps.

The ECF will be accepting applications through August 13 from schools and libraries in need of financial support for laptops, tablets, WiFi hotspots, modems, routers and broadband connections for purchases made earlier in the pandemic.

There's still some uncertainty as to how long the ECF funding will last. This initial window will be solely devoted to compensating applicants for eligible purchases that have already been made. However, should demand be lower than expected, the Commission did allow for the possibility that a second window could be opened for prospective purchases. The **Universal Service Administration Company** is set to

publish an estimate of demand following the first window, and that will ultimately shape the Commission's next steps. The end goal of the program is to serve all unmet needs for off-campus use by students, school staff and library patrons.

The Commission has adopted some new application processing procedures to try to ensure funds are dispersed quickly, and time will tell how effective they are. USAC has been directed to process 50% of the applications within 60 days and 70% of the applications within 100 days. Funding commitment notifications will start being issued to schools and libraries in waves after the filing window closes on August 13, and they will then be able to submit invoices for eligible equipment and services.

While the FCC is expecting to see a number of E-Rate program participants applying for the ECF, it is hoping to see new names and faces submit for their chance at a piece of the pot. The Commission has been making an effort ahead of the program's launch to reach out to those not participating in E-Rate to raise awareness of the program and to explain how the two programs are different. While E-Rate is focused on providing connectivity to schools and libraries, the ECF is ultimately meant to connect patrons and staff when they're off premises.

The Commission is taking some lessons from the E-Rate program and putting them to use here. Similarly to how it does for E-Rate participants, the Commission will be publishing data tied to the distribution of the funds. The reason

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is two-fold: to make the process more transparent and to make it easier for consumers and other entities to see what equipment and services are available in a given area.

GOP TO RELEASE BIG TECH REGULATORY PLAN

House minority leader *Kevin McCarthy* (R-CA) is joining Reps *Cathy McMorris Rodgers* (R-WA) and *Jim Jordan* (R-OH) this week on the release of a framework to regulate Big Tech. The plan would see the rolling back of liability protections provided by Section 230 and would mandate any Big Tech content moderation decisions be specifically listed on a publicly available website. The GOP framework would also give more power to state attorneys general, allowing them to more easily take antitrust action against larger tech companies. It has already received the approval of **FCC** commissioner *Brendan Carr*, who has long said Big Tech has too much power over what is taken down on their platforms. “They now have more control over more speech than any institution in history. They are using their unchecked power to silence people and ideas. And they are abusing their dominant positions in the market to eliminate any potential threat to their gatekeeper power,” Carr said in a statement. “In short, there has never been a larger gap between power and accountability.”

ORGS ASK FEDS TO DIRECT FUNDING TO FIBER

Some 172 organizations including the **Fiber Broadband Association** and **NTCA-The Rural Broadband Association** signed and sent a letter to House and Senate leadership urging them to make fiber the foundation of any broadband infrastructure package signed in the near

future. In the message, the groups argue that in order to connect people and provide them with the service needed to perform digital tasks now and in the future, they’ll need to be connected via high-performing technologies that have an abundance of capacity. “The United States met the challenge of electrifying America in the last century with an audacious plan we take for granted today,” the orgs said in the letter. “A similarly bold approach is needed to build universally available broadband infrastructure fully capable of supporting all communications technology needs and meet ever rising demand for bandwidth.”

YOUTUBE TV OFFERING 4K (FOR A COST)

YouTube TV is making 4K streaming available to its subscribers, but it’ll cost them a little more on their monthly bill. The “4K Plus” add-on package introduced by the vMVPD Monday will come at an additional \$20 cost on top of the services \$64.99/month base price. The package will also allow subscribers to download content from YouTube TV’s cloud DVR for offline viewing and an unlimited number of simultaneous streams. New users will be able to test the package out for one month free and receive a discount of \$10 off the add-on for the first year should they choose to keep it. All YouTube TV members should see some new features roll out in the coming weeks, regardless of whether they opt in to the 4K Plus package. The vMVPD is adding 5.1 Dolby audio capabilities across select devices soon, giving viewers access to better surround-sound audio. Users will also be able to jump to specific moments, like highlights or key plays, in sporting



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events while catching up on a live match or when watching a recording from their DVR.

MWC NOTEBOOK

The **GSMA** kicked off Mobile World Congress Barcelona Monday with a keynote address from director general *Mats Granryd* that pushed the conference's theme, "Connected Impact." He touted the release of the organization's Global Mobile Economy Report, which set high expectations for the dominance of 5G over the next five years. Every region in the world now touts a live commercial 5G network, and availability is poised to keep growing. By the end of 2025, 5G will account for just over a fifth of total mobile connections, according to the GSMA, and more than two in five people globally will live within reach of a 5G network. – **Technicolor Connected Home** unveiled a new piece of consumer premises equipment that's built to deliver 5G services directly to the home. The 5G Omni Outdoor CPE allows operators to deliver broadband to residential and enterprise customers through 5G wireless connectivity. Deployed outdoors, the CPE delivers service into the home through any indoor residential router and is built primarily for densely populated urban and suburban locations.

BCAP WELCOMES NEW PRESIDENT

The **Broadband Cable Association of Pennsylvania** has a new president. The organization's board named industry veteran *Todd Eachus* to the position, effective immediately. He's only the fourth president in the association's 64-year history, and succeeds *Daniel Tunnel*, who retired June 4. Tunnel has led the group since 2001. Eachus has decades of experience representing the cable industry before local, state and federal policymakers, serving as director of government affairs for several cable operators. He also has experience as the chairman of the **Cable Television Association of Maryland, Delaware and the District of Columbia**.

AMC NETWORKS EMBRACES UNIFIED ID 2.0

AMC Networks is adopting Unified ID 2.0, an upgraded alternative to third-party cookies that prioritizes user control and privacy. Initially developed by The Trade Desk, the solution is interoperable and open-source with other ID solutions. For AMC Networks, Unified ID 2.0 is an important addition to the toolbox as it continues to sell more of its digital inventory programmatically.

VEXUS FIBER PLANS RIO GRANDE VALLEY BUILD

Texas-based service provider **Vexus Fiber** is bringing its 100% FTTH network to the Rio Grande Valley area. The provider is targeting the cities of Mission, McAllen, Edinburg, Harlingen and their surrounding areas for the network's Phase I construction. The fiber company plans to begin construction by the end of 2021, eventually connecting 175,000 households and businesses to the network. Vexus says they estimate the build will take 3 years and total investment in the project would be approximately

\$200 million.

AMAZON MUSIC OFFERING FREE DISNEY+

Amazon Music is the latest service to offer customers an extended free trial of **Disney+**. New Amazon Music Unlimited customers in the US and Canada can get 6 months of Disney+ for free while existing customers can receive 3 months of free Disney+ access. Current Disney+ customers are ineligible for the promotion.

CMT MOVES TO CBS IN 2022

ViacomCBS announced Monday that the **CMT Music Awards** will be exclusively on **CBS** starting in 2022. CMT will host its first Country Music Week leading up to the big night, hosting special programming and events in the week leading up to the awards, concluding with the exclusive director's cut airings of the CMT Music Awards later on CMT and various ViacomCBS platforms.

CALL FOR ENTRIES

NAMIC is now accepting applications for its September 2021 Leadership Program. The program, a series of professional development webinars, runs from Sept 27-Oct 1. The curriculum focuses on nine key elements, including dealing with conflict, power and influence, mentoring and networking, inclusive leadership and more. The application deadline for eligible NAMIC members is Aug 20, and the kickoff webinar for qualified registrants is Aug 25. More information can be found [here](#).

RATINGS

The Season 3 debut of "Celebrity IOU" on **HGTV** aired June 21 at 9pm. It garnered over 4.3 million viewers, a .77 L+3 rating among P25-54 and a rating of 1.05 L+3 among W25-54.

PROGRAMMING

The Second Season of "Gangs of London" is in production and will return to **AMC** and **AMC+** in 2022. – **WE tv** announced the premiere of "Brat Loves Judy," Aug 5 at 9pm ET. – Comedy special "Entre Nos Presents: Frankie Quiñones: Superhomies" drops July 9 on **HBO Max**. The streamer also renewed "Made for Love" for Season 2. – A new season of "Ghost Adventures" starts streaming exclusively on **discovery+** July 22. Meanwhile, linear net **Discovery** greenlit "Growing Belushi" for a second season, set to debut across Discovery platforms later this year. – Drama series "Heels" will premiere worldwide Aug 15 across all **STARZ** platforms. – **Fox Business Network** will air a special edition of "Kudlow" in honor of Independence Day Wednesday at 4pm ET. The one-hour live special, "Kudlow: America the Great" will bring together economic and political experts to discuss the American Dream and how viewers can continue the pursuit of prosperity.

PEOPLE

Laxman Narasimhan was elected to **Verizon's** board. His appointment is effective July 1. Narasimhan serves as CEO and director of multinational health, hygiene and nutrition company **Reckitt Benckiser Group**.