

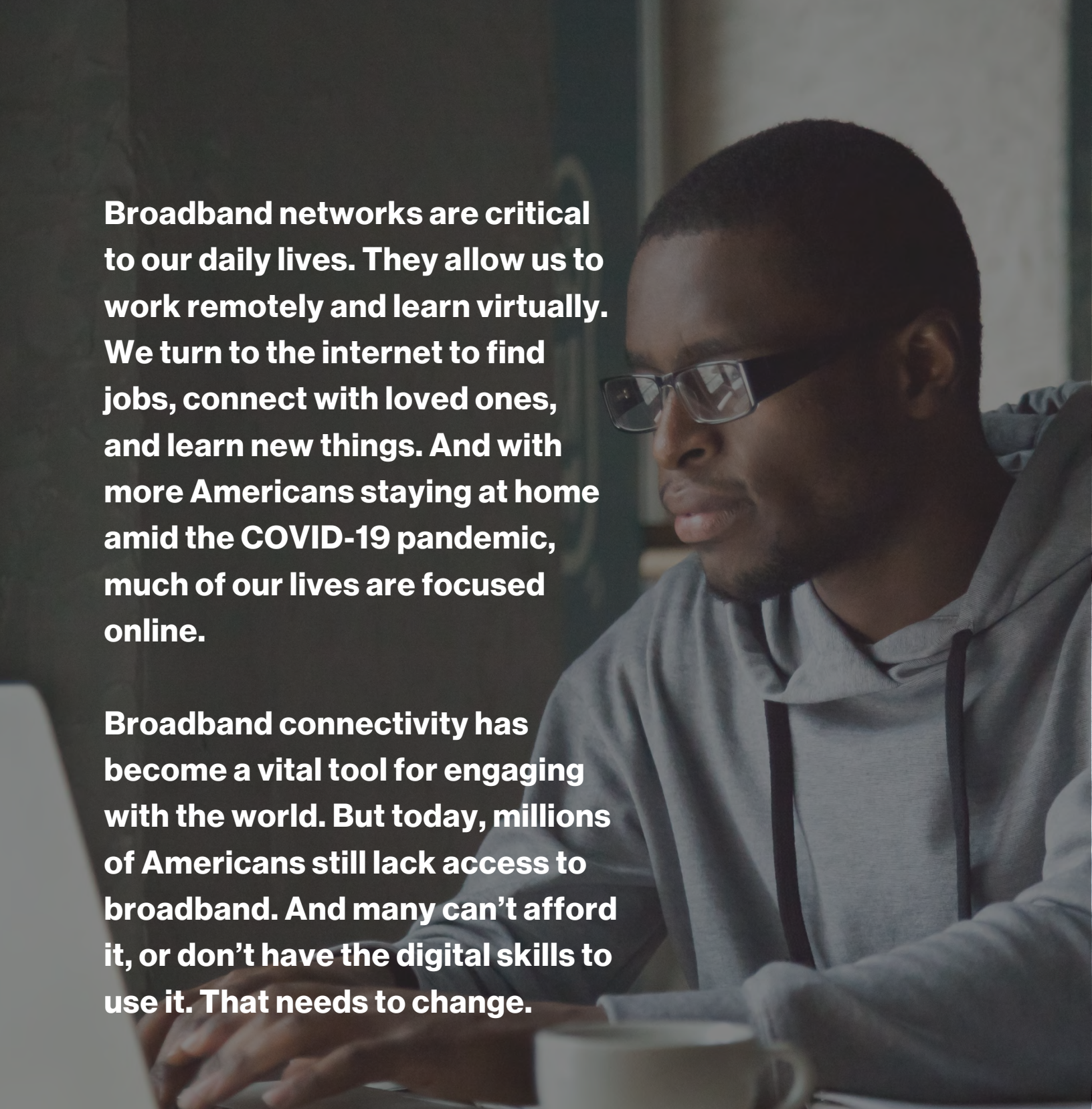
# Accelerating America

AFFORDABILITY | ADOPTION | ACCESS



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A man with short dark hair and glasses, wearing a grey hoodie, is sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. He is looking down at the screen with a focused expression. A white mug is visible on the desk in front of him. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a home office or living space.

**Broadband networks are critical to our daily lives. They allow us to work remotely and learn virtually. We turn to the internet to find jobs, connect with loved ones, and learn new things. And with more Americans staying at home amid the COVID-19 pandemic, much of our lives are focused online.**

**Broadband connectivity has become a vital tool for engaging with the world. But today, millions of Americans still lack access to broadband. And many can't afford it, or don't have the digital skills to use it. That needs to change.**

**Our country can and should do better.**



The public health crisis has underscored not only how important broadband connectivity is but also how lack of access can reinforce and widen educational and economic disparities. Low-income communities, rural populations, and working families who lack broadband risk falling further behind. As learning has shifted online, students without internet access at home may struggle to keep up. Adults in communities without internet access may not be able to search and apply for jobs; work remotely; start businesses; or access educational, social, and other resources needed to thrive in the digital economy.

**Verizon is committed to ensuring that all Americans have access to affordable broadband and are equipped with the skills to use it.**

We're proud to provide the connectivity that's keeping tens of millions of Americans educated, employed, and informed. From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we've supported unprecedented levels of demand as businesses, schools, and other organizations transitioned to remote work and schooling. We've worked with other companies and nonprofits to help support discounted broadband plans that cover 38 million students in 40 states and the District of Columbia. We also created a discount on Verizon's Fios home broadband service for customers qualifying for the FCC's Lifeline program that allows those customers to purchase a 200/200 Mbps fiber service with no data caps for just \$19.99/month. And we just announced that we will continue to offer this discount in 2021. We've also expanded our education initiative targeting Title I schools, Verizon Innovative Learning, to more than 260 under-resourced middle schools and high schools, providing free internet access and free STEM education tools.



**But solving our nation's broadband challenges also requires a strong commitment from government.** Congress has taken some important steps by passing the Emergency Broadband Benefit as part of its recent COVID Relief Package. As encouraging as that support is, it's a temporary program that is set to expire after the end of the public health emergency. That's why Verizon supports coordinated government and private sector action to create a modern and permanent broadband benefit. Programs like Lifeline and the Connect America Fund (CAF) have delivered tremendous benefits, greatly expanding public access to technologies. But these programs on their own do not do enough to close the broadband gap.

**It's time to think differently. Verizon is proposing a new approach that we call "Accelerating America: Affordability - Adoption - Access."**

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Building on the work of many others in this space, the policies we propose will help ensure all Americans have access to affordable broadband. Congress and the administration can take important steps to address these challenges, working with state and local public officials, nonprofits, and industry.

## Affordability

To make broadband more affordable, as an alternative to Lifeline, Congress should create a permanent broadband benefit program of \$20-\$50 per month for low-income recipients that will maximize people's ability to choose the services that work best for them.

**Program Eligibility.** People who are eligible for Lifeline can elect to receive the new monthly benefit (or they may choose to remain in the existing Lifeline program).

**Broadband Benefit.** Eligible households would receive \$20-\$50 per month on an electronic benefit transfer card that they could use toward any qualifying wireline or wireless service or split between both. Participants would also be eligible for a biannual equipment benefit.

**Choice.** Recipients could choose whatever plans, services, or equipment meets their needs and would not be limited to predetermined narrow offerings. Customers using their benefit would pay for services using their card, just like any other customer uses a debit or credit card.

**Federal Funding.** Benefits would be funded directly by appropriations and automatically placed onto electronic benefit transfer cards similar to those that people already may have access to as part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or other government benefits.

**Enrollment.** Eligible participants who elect to use the new broadband benefit instead of the traditional Lifeline program would be automatically enrolled once they complete a simple registration process and are verified using the National Verifier database. Government agencies should coordinate so that recipients of SNAP or other qualifying programs automatically receive information about the broadband benefit.

**Maintaining Lifeline.** Eligible customers who feel more comfortable using the existing Lifeline program could continue with Lifeline instead of selecting the new benefit.



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## Adoption

To encourage broadband adoption, the federal government should support digital literacy education. In addition, local and municipal governments should encourage greater broadband use by making it easier for people to access the government services they need online.

**Digital Literacy.** Even people who have access to broadband may not have the digital skills necessary to learn, work, and communicate effectively online. The federal government should support local, state, and nonprofit organizations that provide digital literacy training and education.

**Modernizing Municipal Systems.** Governments, particularly local and municipal ones, should update their systems and websites to enable constituents to access information online and via mobile devices. Federal funds may be critical to help states and localities modernize their systems and technologies to enable constituents to interact electronically (as opposed to hand-filing, faxing, or mailing documents or forms).

## Access

To expand broadband deployment, Congress could provide new support to build broadband in areas where the economics fail to support private deployment.

**New Allocations.** Congress and possibly states should provide new appropriations to fund broadband expansion, particularly in rural or hard to reach areas.

**Municipal Broadband.** Municipalities should not be prohibited from building broadband in unserved and unlikely to be served areas. While it doesn't make sense for municipalities to overbuild areas where broadband providers are already offering or planning to offer service, there may be unserved areas where a targeted municipal approach is a useful tool. In some instances, public-private partnerships to build broadband facilities may also be a good option.



**It's time for  
a national  
effort to  
deliver  
affordable  
broadband  
to all  
Americans.**

**Closing the digital divide will drive innovation and productivity, lift communities, and strengthen our nation.**

Find out more at [Verizon.com/AcceleratingAmerica](https://www.verizon.com/acceleratingamerica)

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