

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Katie J. Sieben	Chair
Dan Lipschultz	Commissioner
Valerie Means	Commissioner
Matthew Schuenger	Commissioner
John A. Tuma	Commissioner

In the Matter of Telephone Assistance Plan
Review

ISSUE DATE: August 6, 2019

DOCKET NO. P-999/CI-18-112

ORDER ACCEPTING TAP FUND
REVIEW AND APPROVING
OUTREACH EXPENDITURE

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Under Minn. Stat. §§ 237.69–71, the Commission is the coordinator of the Telephone Assistance Plan (TAP), a program that provides monthly bill credits to low-income telephone subscribers. The bill credits are funded by a monthly surcharge on every access line in the state.

On March 18, 2019, the TAP Administrator filed the TAP Fund Six-Month Review for the period ending December 31, 2018.

On June 13, 2019, The Commission met to consider the filing.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The TAP Administrator reports a fund balance of \$1,139,960 as of December 30, 2018. According to the filing the rate of decline of fund balance has been slowing, and at the end of 2018 showed a slight increase.

In its most recent order accepting TAP six-month reviews,¹ the Commission indicated that Commission staff would work with interested organizations and the TAP/Lifeline Advisory Group to develop an outreach program.

The Commission’s Consumer Affairs Office developed a proposal that it presented to the TAP/Lifeline Advisory Group. The Advisory Group affirmed the direction of the outreach plan as well as a \$50,000 budget to implement the proposal.

¹ *In the Matter of Telephone Assistance Plan Review*, Docket No. P-999/CI-17-677, Order Setting TAP Credit Amount and Surcharge Level and Requiring Local Service Providers to Include TAP Information on Their Websites (January 15, 2019).

The proposal would improve public awareness of the TAP and Lifeline programs through two broad approaches, one focusing on contact with key government agencies to reach qualified Minnesota residents, and the other focusing on contact with telecom providers. The proposal would require development of training materials as well as communication materials.

To evaluate the program's effectiveness, Commission staff will track TAP/Lifeline participation rates and relevant inquiries to the Commission's Consumer Affairs Office.

ORDER

The Commission will accept the 6-month review for the period ending December 31, 2018.

The Commission continues to believe that effective outreach methods are essential to maximize the public benefit of these programs. The Commission has reviewed the proposed outreach budget and proposal and will approve a \$50,000 expenditure from the TAP Fund to implement the outreach proposal.

1. Accept the TAP Fund 6-month review submitted on March 18, 2019 for the period July–December, 2018.
2. Accept the CAO proposed outreach program plan update as described in Attachment A and the \$50,000 expenditure from the TAP Fund for CAO's outreach expenses during the upcoming fiscal year.
3. This order shall become effective immediately.

BY ORDER OF THE COMMISSION

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary



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