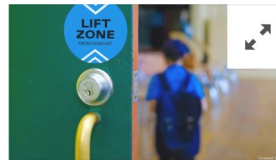


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Technology

Comcast commits \$1B to low-income Internet Essentials program



RECOMMENDED

The \$1 billion will go toward expanding the number of Lift Zones, community centers where students and adults can use the internet for free, and other parts of the Internet Essentials program.

JEFF FUSCO



By Kennedy
Rose –
Digital
Producer,
Philadelphia

COMPANIES

IN THIS ARTICLE

Comcast Corp.

Philadelphia, PA
Broadcast Media

\$108.9B **190K**
Revenue Employees

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Business
Journal

Mar 24,
2021,
10:00am
EDT

Comcast said Wednesday it will commit \$1 billion to its Internet Essentials program, focusing on community initiatives to expand internet access.

The investment will be spread across 10 years to add Wi-Fi hotspots in community centers, donate

laptops and
computers,
support grants
for nonprofit
organizations
and to invest in
the Internet
Essentials
program.

Nationally,
Comcast said
Internet
Essentials has
connected 10
million people
to broadband
internet. More
than 520,000
Philadelphia
residents and
840,000 people
in the region
have used
Internet

Essentials. More than 9,000 of those local customers are part of PHLConnectED, a program for low-income families of students in the city's school district to receive free internet services.

By the end of 2021, Comcast (NASDAQ: CMCSA) anticipates opening 1,000 Lift Zones – community centers where

students and adults can use the internet for free. More than 40 have opened in Philadelphia proper and 100 Lift Zones have opened in Greater Philadelphia and New Jersey, the company said in a statement.

The Philadelphia-based cable and media giant started the low-cost program in 2011, offering internet connection for

\$9.95 a month.

The program is primarily for people who qualify for federal public assistance programs.

Internet Essentials was criticized last year when communities like Philadelphia zeroed in on digital inequity as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Internet Essentials had internet speeds at 25 megabits

per second at
the start of the
pandemic, the
minimum
threshold to
meet the
Federal
Communication
Commission's
definition of
broadband.
Critics argued
that the speed
wasn't enough
for students to
participate in
virtual classes
or for families
to make
telehealth
appointments
and take video
calls for work,
all of which

became the
norm during the
pandemic.

Last month,
Comcast
announced it
would double
Internet
Essentials
download
speeds to 50
Mbps, increase
upload speeds
and speed up
the opening of
Lift Zones
following the
criticism.
Comcast also
gives 60 days of
free internet to
people who
signed up for
the program

during the
pandemic.

Philadelphia
Councilmember
At-Large Helen
Gym has
continued her
crusade to have
companies
Comcast boost
internet speeds
for low-income
customers. She
joined officials
from across the
country in
signing a letter
to acting FCC
Chairwoman
Jessica
Rosenworcel to
end “digital
redlining” of
low-income

communities
and
communities of
color.

“In short, more
oversight
through
hearings on
digital
redlining,
coupled with
net neutrality
protections, will
ensure that
communities
like ours will
have the
freedom to

thrive.” city
officials wrote.
Comcast
as
founding
partner
of LA28
Olympics



**Comcast
offering
\$1M in
grants to
BIPOC-
owned
businesses
in Philly**



**Comcast
CEO Brian
Roberts
betting
big on
theme
parks,
streaming
growth**



**Philadelphia-
area stocks
have soared
in year since
Covid-19
sell-off**





**This
company
is now
the top
seller of
apparel
in U.S.**





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