



## **Hans Vestberg, CEO, Verizon**

Verizon's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been guided at all times by our core corporate values. As set forth in the Verizon Credo, we strive for integrity, performance excellence, and social responsibility in everything we do. These values guide us as we continually assess and respond to the COVID-19 crisis and the related needs of our four key stakeholders: employees, customers, society, and shareholders.

Verizon's purpose is to create the networks that move the world forward. We recognize that our networks are instrumental in helping society respond to and overcome the effects of the pandemic. Consistent with the UN Broadband Commission's Agenda for Action, we have worked to: (1) sustain and extend resilient and secure network infrastructure, including for emergency responders; (2) increase affordability, availability and accessibility of services and devices; and (3) support safe use of online services for informed and educated societies.

### **First Pillar of the Agenda for Action: Resilient Connectivity**

Resilient connectivity is vital to the capacity of individuals and communities to respond to times of crisis. As individuals, we all need ways of connecting with our loved ones, with economic opportunities, and with reliable information sources. Within communities both local and global, communications networks play a critical role in ensuring the capacity of governments, healthcare institutions, and schools to respond effectively and quickly to the immense challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Verizon, we have focused particular attention on the connectivity needs of those on the frontlines in addressing the pandemic, including first responders and healthcare providers. Since the crisis began, we have deployed portable cell sites to add network capacity at Emergency Operations Centers, mobile testing sites, and quarantine areas across the United States. To date, our Verizon Response Team has supported more than 270 such engagements nationwide. In just one example of

these efforts, we delivered a mobile cell site and landline connectivity to Fort Totten Park in Queens, New York, which has been used as a base of operations for the military, fire department, and ambulances. We also provided the necessary connectivity when the U.S. Navy hospital ship, USNS Comfort, was deployed to New York City as a backup treatment facility. Finally, consistent with our practice before the pandemic, we have offered priority access to our networks for first responders and EMTs.

We know that connectivity helps to promote not just institutional, but also individual resilience. In another example of our efforts, we helped residents at nursing facilities across New Mexico to stay connected with their friends and families, by working with the state's Aging and Long-Term Services Department to distribute hundreds of tablets to facilities across the state.

### **Second Pillar of the Agenda for Action: Affordable Access**

Verizon recognizes that the unprecedented public health crisis we are experiencing has also created a severe economic crisis for many people across the world. In response to the economic hardship that many of our customers are facing, we have offered new pricing plans, provided customers additional data, and offered flexibility in payments and late fees.

Early on in the crisis, we joined other broadband providers in the United States in responding to the Federal Communications Commission's call to Keep Americans Connected. By pledging our support for this initiative, we affirmed that we would not terminate service nor charge late fees to any residential or small business customers through June 30 as a result of their inability to pay their bills due to disruptions caused by the pandemic. In addition, we waived two months' internet and voice service charges for customers who participate in the U.S. Government's Lifeline program for low-income customers, and we provided a new affordable internet option for low-income households in our fiber wireline footprint.

Verizon has historically offered special pricing plans to first responders, active military service members, and veterans. Since the COVID-19 crisis began, we have extended these pricing plans to nurses and teachers. We have also offered free international calling to CDC level 3 countries and added 15GB of high speed data for wireless consumer and small business customers.

Verizon recognizes that small businesses are at the heart of many communities. During the COVID-19 crisis, we launched Pay it Forward Live, a weekly streaming entertainment series that includes music, gaming, comedy and more in support of small businesses affected by COVID-19. Through this initiative, the Verizon Foundation pledged to donate up to \$7.5 million to the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), a non-profit that will use the funding to provide grants of up to \$10,000 to businesses facing immediate financial pressure because of COVID-19. We have also joined American Express's "Stand for Small" program to provide support to small businesses as they navigate the impact of COVID-19.

## **Third Pillar of the Agenda for Action: Safe Use of Online Services for Informed and Educated Societies**

### *Access for Students*

At the height of COVID-19 crisis, school closures in the United States were estimated to have affected at least 55.1 million students in 124,000 U.S. public and private schools. This created a critical need for online access and services for America's students. Verizon has responded to this need in multiple ways.

We tripled the normal data allowances, to 30GB per month, for schools that are part of Verizon Innovative Learning, the company's philanthropic initiative targeting Title 1 middle schools in the United States. Launched in 2014, Verizon Innovative Learning addresses barriers to digital inclusion by providing some of the country's most under-resourced children and their teachers with free devices , free internet access and a technology-driven curriculum. We expect the data increase to benefit up to 116,000 students and teachers. As the crisis continues to affect school operations, Verizon will continue to support schools in the Verizon Innovative Learning program and will help to provide increased access to remote instruction.

Across the country, we also worked with school systems to enable remote learning through the provision of MiFi devices, connectivity, or both. We partnered with Los Angeles Unified School District to provide internet connectivity for students who don't have Internet access at home. In addition, working with the State of California, we agreed to provide unlimited internet connectivity to the state at a discounted rate for the benefit of up to 250,000 underserved students.

To provide students with more educational opportunities, we provided free access to New York Times digital content to every high school in the United States (reaching approximately 14 million students). In addition, we provided free access to online learning and interactive study tools as part of our "More at Home...on Us" program, which provides no-cost access to a number of TV channels.

### *Promoting Safety Online*

As more and more children have shifted to remote learning platforms, Verizon has been committed to serving parents through products and services that empower them to help keep their children safe online. To help parents curate these online experiences, we have been working hard to get the message out about parental controls. Studies have told us that fewer than 25% of parents are consistently using the parental controls on the apps and devices that their children are using to connect to the internet. We are working to increase the adoption of parental controls through public outreach and guidance on our dedicated parental education portal, "Parenting in a Digital World."

We have also increased our parental education efforts in other areas. Recently published articles on our Parenting in a Digital World Portal include how to protect children from cyberbullying during COVID-19, how to help kids who struggle with online learning, and how to approach screen time limits during the pandemic.

### *Providing Access to Information*

Verizon recognizes that it is not just children who are seeking access to information and resources online. Approximately 900 million users across the globe rely on Verizon Media platforms to deliver accurate, reliable news and information. Verizon Media has created a coronavirus hub, covid19.yahoo.com, across the Yahoo ecosystem (News, Finance, Sports, Lifestyle & Entertainment), that includes news in real-time about the pandemic, including specific content for specific markets. In addition, Yahoo Search has dedicated content for COVID-19-related search terms and elevates authoritative content.

Through Verizon Media, we also recently donated \$10 million in advertising inventory to support mental and public health response efforts to the Child Mind Institute, Crisis Text Line, Empower Work, Mental Health Foundation, and the Trevor Project.

### **Lessons Learned**

I am proud of our efforts to date in addressing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Verizon and the Verizon Foundation, to date, have together made contributions and donations totaling more than \$55 million to nonprofits working around the globe to address the effects of the pandemic. I am particularly honored that Verizon was ranked #1 on the Forbes Corporate Responders list, which assessed how well 100 of the largest employers among U.S. public companies have responded to the public health crisis.

The pandemic is ongoing and there will likely be many lessons to learn as we all grapple with its effects. That said, in reflecting on our lessons learned to date, here are a few that I would like to highlight:

- *Values matter.* Verizon's Credo states that "everything we do is built on the strong foundation of our corporate values." The Verizon leadership team, and all Verizon employees, know that we must seek to address the needs of our employees, customers, and society, in addition to the needs of our shareholders. By leaning into our values, we have been able to be nimble in making decisions at a time when our business has faced unprecedented challenges. It is easier to make quick decisions to assume short-term costs when we are all guided by a long-term commitment to responsible business conduct.
- *Build for a Crisis.* As a vital provider of critical network infrastructure, Verizon's primary goal has always been to keep our employees, customers, and society connected to the people and resources that are important to them. Our infrastructure has withstood a significant surge in network demand since the beginning of the pandemic. The resilience of our network reflects many years of investment intended to ensure that we can serve our customers even in times of crisis. We know that even as we will continue to meet the increased network demands caused by the pandemic, we must also be preparing to provide connectivity in the wake of future hurricanes, floods, and other foreseeable, and unforeseeable, events. In the early days of the pandemic, and in order to maintain the performance of our networks going forward, we

increased our guidance with respect to 2020 capital expenditures from \$17 - \$18 billion to \$17.5 - \$18.5 billion. We are committed to investing in our networks so that we are prepared to address not only the challenges of today, but also of tomorrow.

- *Recognize the Opportunity to Innovate.* Times of crisis force new ways of thinking. At Verizon, we have had to confront traditional orthodoxies and to be creative in approaching unforeseen challenges. By thinking in new ways, we have been able to rapidly develop and deploy innovative approaches in order to address the needs of our customers and our employees. We have virtualized many command center functions to make it easier for our engineers working on network repairs and the deployment of mobile assets to remain socially distanced. We have also arranged for individual portable housing units for mission critical network engineers in the field. In addition, we have developed new delivery methods to allow our technicians to help customers with in-home installations without actually entering homes and enabled home garaging for our technicians to minimize unnecessary contact at central garaging facilities. Finally, we have relaxed standard work-from-home policies and quickly expanded our work-from-home strategies and tools to enable more than 100,000 of our employees to work remotely. Each of these changes required people to approach new challenges with a problem-solving mindset and a willingness to adapt to new ways of working. These experiences have taught us to be mindful of the need to question preconceived notions of “the right way” to do things and to recognize that, even in times of crisis, we can, and should, be looking for ways to improve our long-term operational approaches.

As noted above, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic will be with us for some time to come. At Verizon, we will continue to approach these challenges in a manner guided by our values and our commitment to the needs of our stakeholders. For the most up-to-date information on Verizon’s efforts, please visit [verizon.com/about/news/our-response-coronavirus](http://verizon.com/about/news/our-response-coronavirus).