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Broadband Equity in Focus as VIBO Launches Public Challenge Portal

\$27 million in federal funding powers initiatives to address underserved areas, with Virgin Islands residents and organizations urged to contribute to important broadband planning

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The V.I. Broadband Office (VIBO), a division of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), has launched the initial phase of the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) grant Challenge Portal. This portal, open from December 1 through December 30, 2024, invites community participation to refine the list of underserved Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs) identified in VIBO's Initial Proposal Volume II.

CAIs on this list are considered underserved if they lack download speeds of at least 100 megabits per second (Mbps) and upload speeds of 20 Mbps. These institutions include schools, community

centers, hospitals, public housing facilities, and other entities critical to serving the Virgin Islands community. The portal can be accessed at vibo.vi.gov, allowing nonprofit organizations, local governments, and broadband providers to provide feedback and submit challenges.

VIBO has stressed the importance of community involvement in this process. “We encourage residents to participate by contacting local government or nonprofit organizations to submit a challenge on their behalf,” the announcement stated. Community engagement is a key step in ensuring that BEAD funding effectively addresses the broadband needs of the territory.

The BEAD grant program, funded by \$27 million in federal resources, aims to greatly improve digital equity in the Virgin Islands. The funding will support programs focused on improving broadband affordability, advancing digital literacy, fostering workforce development, and transforming the digital economy. BEAD-funded initiatives will complement existing broadband investments made through the [FCC’s Connect USVI grant](#). However, BEAD funds cannot be used to construct new broadband infrastructure.

Following the CAI challenge process, VIBO will release funding opportunity notices for eligible programs and host informational webinars to guide potential subgrantees through the selection process. These efforts aim to ensure clarity and transparency while addressing critical community broadband needs.

Residents and organizations are encouraged to engage with the Challenge Portal to help refine the territory’s broadband equity plans. For updates, information, and to participate, visit vibo.vi.gov.