

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Trump Admin Cancels \$2.1M Digital Equity Grant for USVI, Deeming it "Racist and Illegal; viNGN Projects Left in Limbo

A federal digital equity grant meant to fund public WiFi, tech buses, and senior outreach was shut down by President Trump, who called the initiative unconstitutional. viNGN now faces stalled projects and lost opportunities across the territory.

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Nelcia Charlemagne **May 15, 2025**



President Donald Trump's vow to eliminate programs and policies that promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (DEI) across society has resulted in the cancellation of several community projects conceptualized by the V.I. Next Generation Network. According to

viNGN Chief Executive Officer Stephan Adams, the president terminated the funding source for those projects, calling it “racist and illegal.”

Mr. Adams shared the sobering update during Wednesday’s meeting of the Senate Committee on Housing, Transportation, and Telecommunication. viNGN intended to use some \$2.1 million accessed through a [digital equity grant](#) from the National Technology and Information Administration for digital literacy and cybersecurity. President Trump has since decided that the “digital equity capacity program is unconstitutional, and grants issued pursuant to it were created with and administered using inadmissible and unconstitutional racial preferences,” Mr. Adams told lawmakers.

“We have since paused and redirected internal resources associated with this grant,” explained Mr. Adams. Should court action lead to the restoration of funding, “we are prepared to restart our activities,” he assured. The NTIA has also recommended that viNGN be awarded \$2.5 million for “public technology buses”, but Mr. Adams says that grant’s status is “highly uncertain” as it also falls within the digital equity program.

“This was going through the Children's Museum, ADA, dealing with the seniors...our farmers,” Mr. Adams noted. “There's a lot of money that we had teed up for our communities that we're now without...we hope there is a vigorous challenge by the courts.”

The loss to the territory is significant, as viNGN has only drawn down \$14,000 from the \$2.1 million that was available. According to Mr. Adams, it was not for a lack of action on his team’s part, however. “We do not have access to it until we meet certain milestones that the federal government sets out for us,” he explained. “We were in the process of meeting those milestones, and then the program was terminated.”

The rescinded funding also affects several states across the mainland, including Washington, which lost \$16 million and Maine, whose Connectivity Authority will have to cancel programs budgeted against its \$35 million allocation.

The termination of the grant has drawn concern from lawmakers. “It is unfortunate what we are dealing with,” lamented committee chair Senator Marvin Blyden. “It’s [a] very important lesson that when we do have grants, jump on them ASAP to try and utilize those funds expeditiously.”

viNGN had already expended money to facilitate the grant. “The community significance of the grant was important enough for viNGN to use its own resources to subsidize part of this grant” Mr. Adams told Senator Carla Joseph. These resources have now been directed towards expanding free public WiFi across the territory.