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New Federal Program Offering \$50 Internet Service to Virgin Islanders, Other Jurisdictions

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AARP VI is encouraging Virgin Islanders who are struggling to afford their existing high-speed internet service, as well as those who cannot afford to subscribe to high-speed internet to sign up for the new [Emergency Broadband Benefit Program](#) (EBB) launched last week by the Federal Communications Commission.

According to the FCC, the EBB "will provide a discount of up to \$50 per month towards broadband service for eligible households and up to \$75 per month for households on qualifying Tribal lands. Eligible households can also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet from participating providers if they contribute more than \$10 and less than \$50 toward the purchase price."

A household is eligible if a member of the household meets one of the criteria below:

- Has an income that is at or below 135% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or participates in certain assistance programs, such as SNAP, Medicaid, or Lifeline;
- Approved to receive benefits under the free and reduced-price school lunch program or the school breakfast program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision in the 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 school year;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year;
- Experienced a substantial loss of income due to job loss or furlough since February 29, 2020 and the household had a total income in 2020 at or below \$99,000 for single filers and \$198,000 for joint filers; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating provider's existing low-income or COVID-19 program.

There are three ways for eligible households to apply:

1. Contact your preferred participating broadband provider directly to learn about their application process.
2. Go to [GetEmergencyBroadband.org](https://www.getemergencybroadband.org) to apply online and to find participating providers near you.
3. Call 833-511-0311 for a mail-in application, and return it along with copies of documents showing proof of eligibility to:

Emergency Broadband Support Center

P.O. Box 7081

London, KY 40742

After receiving an eligibility determination, households can contact their preferred service provider to select an Emergency Broadband Benefit eligible service plan, the FCC said.

Viya on Tuesday told the Consortium that its EBB offerings are vast and goes beyond the \$50 internet service, which the company said provides 25 mbps download speeds. Viya is also offering \$100 discounts on certain laptops for those who qualify in what the company described as the largest lifeline program in the territory.

Broadband VI is also offering the service and has received "hundreds of calls" from interested persons, the company told VIC this morning.

A recent survey performed by [AARP](#) found that many Americans age 50+ struggle to access and afford high-speed internet. According to the study, 15 percent of adults 50+ do not have access to any type of internet and 60 percent say the cost of high-speed internet is a problem.

The EBB program should also be available at other internet service providers locally.

“The pandemic has shown that access to high-speed internet is not a luxury; it’s a necessity. People without high-speed internet service are being left behind when it comes to health care,

work, connecting with family and friends and education,” said Nancy A. LeaMond, AARP executive vice president and chief advocacy & engagement officer. “AARP strongly supports the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program and will continue to advocate for policies that help close the digital divide that has left millions of older adults without internet access.”

According to [a recent report](#) from Older Adults Technology Services (OATS) from AARP’s [Aging Connected initiative](#), in partnership with the Humana Foundation, more than 22 million Americans 65+ still lack broadband at home.

For resources and more information about EBB, visit aarp.org/EBB, call 1-833-511-0311 or text “internet” to 22777. For information in Spanish, visit aarp.org/FCCSubsidioInternet or call 1-833-511-0311.

AARP said it has a long history of providing personal technology resources. As part of our digital literacy work, [OATS](#) offers digital literacy courses, resources, and events through its flagship program [Senior Planet](#), which are a key part of the [AARP Virtual Community Center](#), an online destination for AARP members and non-members alike. OATS empowers older adults to overcome barriers to digital engagement by fostering skills and giving them the confidence they need to use technology and stay connected.