



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Office of Public Relations

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Virgin Islands Department of Education Updates Community on Status of Tablet Distribution to USVI Students through Affordable Connectivity Program

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) is issuing an update to USVI families regarding the distribution of tablets by Heritage Wireless under the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). This federal initiative is a benefit program, established by the Federal Communications Commission, to help ensure that households can afford the internet they need for work, school, healthcare and more. If eligible, the benefit provides a discount of up to \$30 per month toward internet service; households may also receive a one-time discount of up to \$100 to purchase a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet. A household's income level would determine what, if any, discount they would be eligible for. The ACP stopped accepting new applications on February 7, 2024.

A number of Virgin Islanders applied and were found eligible to receive the internet service benefit and a computer tablet. According to data received from Heritage Wireless, a total of 1584 households in the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive tablets and internet service, with 889 in the St. Thomas-St. John District and 695 in the St. Croix District. Heritage Wireless is slated to notify all applicants on whether they were eligible or not.

Heritage Wireless has shipped the computer tablets to the Territory and the VIDE is currently sorting the devices for distribution. Distribution will be managed by the Virgin Islands Department of Education. A distribution schedule will be shared with the public. Parents will need to sign a confirmation of receipt form upon collection, which will include previously disclosed terms and provisions.

Each tablet from Heritage Wireless will come equipped with a SIM card powered by the T-Mobile cellular network, activated for internet use. These tablets will be the personal property of the students and will not need to be returned to Heritage Wireless or the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

Procurement of tablets and internet services by Heritage Wireless comes at no cost to families, as the Federal Government funds the ACP. This funding, totaling \$15 billion, provides up to a \$30 per month subsidy benefit to eligible families. Note that the VIDE does not own the devices, the households do. Additionally, VIDE does not pay for the devices or internet service; and, accordingly, is not responsible for the care or maintenance of either.

Families can continue to receive free internet service under this benefit if federal funding for the program remains intact and the \$30 subsidy benefit remains available. Heritage Wireless offers monthly internet and cellular service plans priced as low as \$30.

Heritage Wireless has attested that they are subject to FCC oversight and the use of information submitted during the application process will solely be used for its intended purpose and will not be utilized for any other reason.

The VIDE's support of the ACP aims to ensure that families have access to necessary technology to enhance educational experiences and foster equitable opportunities for students. The department remains committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students. For more information regarding the Affordable Connectivity Program, please visit the FCC's ACP website at <https://www.fcc.gov/acp>.

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