

Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Vermont COVID-19 Arrearage Assistance Program (VCAAP)?

The program was established by the Vermont General Assembly through Section 20 of House Bill 966 that was later signed into law on July 2, 2020 as Act 137. \$8 million was appropriated to provide utility ratepayer assistance for accumulating arrearages that could be linked to economic hardships precipitated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Funding comes from the Federal CARES Act.

Who may apply for a grant award?

Any utility ratepayer served by a Vermont electric, natural gas, fixed-line telephone service provider, or a private water company may apply. Both residential and non-residential (but not governmental entities) applicants may apply.

How much can a utility customer expect to receive as a grant award through the program?

Customers can expect to receive 100% of eligible outstanding arrearages that are more than 60 days overdue, up to the limits listed below.

	Residential	Non-Residential
Electric	\$ 880	\$ 2,240
Natural Gas	\$ 640	\$ 1,800
Telephone	\$ 300	\$ 2,240
Water	\$ 300	\$ 600

For example, a residential customer with \$1000 in overdue arrears in the electricity sector, with \$900 of the arrearage amount over 60 days, would receive the maximum benefit of the eligible amount -- \$880.

Applicants are eligible for and can apply for utility arrearage assistance on a single application for electricity, natural gas, private water, and landline telecommunications services.

Who is eligible to apply for VCAAP grant awards?

Both residential utility ratepayers, and non-residential (businesses and non-profits) may apply.

Government entities are not eligible.

Are second homes and camps eligible for grant awards under the program?

Only arrearages for primary residences qualify. Residential customers must attest that the grant award that they are seeking is only for arrearage relief related to their primary residence.

What certifications will be required of residential applicants?

Applicants must certify and attest to a COVID-19– related economic hardship. Hardships include unemployment, layoff, reduced hours, health (had COVID or cared for someone with COVID) and can't work because no childcare is available, or school was closed.

Other detailed certifications or attestations apply.

What certifications are required of non-residential applicants?

Applicants must attest to a loss of 50% of business revenues in a single month since the beginning of March 2020.

Other detailed certifications or attestations apply.

Can businesses with multiple utility service addresses apply for separate locations?

Yes. Each utility service location is eligible for a distinct grant award provided that it is a separate service location and utility account number.

What are the options for people who don't have access to the Internet?

Vermont Community Action Agencies can assist individuals that do not have access to the Internet.

How long will the program run?

Applications will be accepted through November 30, 2020, or when available funds have been exhausted through the awards program.

Can I apply more than once?

You may apply once for each utility type. Although you can apply on one application for all utility types.

Will everybody who is eligible get a grant?

Funds are limited and grants will be awarded as eligibility is determined and funds are available.

Will the grant pay off all of my past due bill?

Grant awards are limited to utility service with bills that are more than 60 days late. Awards are also capped at the limits provided above.

Do I have to file my taxes for 2019 before I can apply?

No, it is not required for residential applicants.

Yes, it is required for non-residential applicants.

Do I have to be low income to apply?

No, there is no income eligibility requirement. See eligibility specifics for non-residential applicants.

Is there any documentation that I have to submit with my application?

Yes, if you are applying for a grant for telephone wired/land line services, you will need to upload a copy of your most recent bill.

If you are not applying for telephone wired/land line services, you will not need to upload any bills.

On the VCAAP application dashboard, it references the terms “submitted,” “verified,” “incomplete,” “rejected,” “awarded” and “processed.” Please explain the meaning of each.

“Submitted” means that the application was successfully received. Subsequent review will change the status.

“Verified” means that the application for a particular utility type (like electric) was successfully received and has been reviewed for determination of the past due amount that is eligible for a grant (other utility types like telephone might still be pending).

“Incomplete” means that the application for a particular utility type (like electric) was successfully received, but that additional account or customer information is needed before the application can be verified or approved. Other utility types (like telephone) might still be pending.

“Rejected” means that the application for a particular utility type (like electric) was successfully received, and was reviewed but that the application was rejected for a reason provided in the email notice. If the application was rejected because the past due balance did not meet the program criteria, the applicant may apply again at a later time—if there is a past due balance from March 1 or later, that is more than 60 days old. Other utility types (like telephone) might still be pending.

“Awarded” means that the application for a particular utility type (like electric) was successfully received, that the reviewer found qualifying and eligible past due balances, and that the State of Vermont determined an award benefit. Other utility types (like telephone) might still be pending.

“Processed” means that an application for a particular utility type (like electric) that was approved for an award benefit has been processed by the State and that funds have either been sent to the utility on behalf of the customer or will be sent to the customer. Other utility types (like telephone) might still be pending.