



**2024 VI State Workforce  
Development Board Annual  
Statewide Performance Report**

**For the Period of July 1, 2023  
to June 30, 2024**

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## ***About the VI State Workforce Development Board***

The Virgin Islands State Workforce Development Board (VISWDB) serves as the cornerstone of workforce development policy and strategy for the US Virgin Islands. Its mission is to drive the Territory's workforce ecosystem forward by aligning efforts with educational institutions, economic development initiatives, and a diverse array of public and private sector partners.

### **Core Functions and Goals:**

1. **Policy and Strategic Oversight:** The VISWDB is the primary policy-making body that ensure the Territory's workforce initiatives align with both local and federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) mandates.
2. **Employer Engagement:** The Board plays a pivotal role in engaging employers to address labor market needs, ensuring training programs are tailored to high-demand career sectors.
3. **Program Oversight:** It oversees WIOA-funded programs for adults, dislocated workers and youth, ensuring these initiatives meet the evolving demands of the Virgin Islands' economy.
4. **Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL):** Maintaining and expanding the ETPL, the Board currently has 21 approved training providers offering programs aligned with in-demand skills, ensuring accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to labor market trends.

### **Workforce Ecosystem Leadership:**

Through collaboration with its core partners—the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL), the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, and other key stakeholders—the VISWDB facilitates a coordinated approach to workforce development. This includes:

- Promoting sector partnerships and strategies to address labor market challenges.
- Expanding training opportunities through innovative methods such as online learning, and apprenticeship programs.
- Supporting job seekers with barriers to employment through a unified outreach strategy and co-enrollment initiatives.

### **Commitment to the Territory's Workforce Future:**

With a focus on resilience and adaptability, the VIWDB aims to equip Virgin Islanders with the skills and training necessary for success in a global economy. Its ongoing initiatives, including promoting green energy and blue economy sectors, reflect its dedication to fostering economic growth and workforce readiness across the Territory.

The Governor's 2023 Workforce Development Summit was a significant event, gathering various stakeholders, including businesses, educators, and government agencies, to address workforce challenges and devise innovative solutions. The summit aimed to empower job seekers and businesses, sharing resources and best practices to create a skilled, well-prepared workforce. The attendees varied widely, including job seekers, veterans, educators, business leaders, and key stakeholders, focusing on creating a results-based workforce system and reaching vulnerable community members.

The Board continued to hold its meetings/communication via video conferencing, email, and phone. VISWDB retained Lightcast to conduct a labor market analysis of the territory while examining the workforce characteristics of its target industries. The report examines the overall labor market before examining Agriculture, Financial Services, Healthcare, Manufacturing, Professional and Technical Services, Tourism, and Utilities. The Board presented the findings to its members and appeared before the 35<sup>th</sup> Legislature’s Committee on Education and Workforce Development to discuss the findings with the senate.

**Compliance Monitoring**

The Planning Research & Monitoring Unit of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) conducted a review of several approved Eligible Training Providers. The monitoring report consisted of monitoring overview, eligibility checklist, classroom training, ADA Pre-Award Survey, ADA checklist, findings, corrective actions, areas of concern and on-site photos. All findings have been resolved.

**Waivers**

Waiver of WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720(b) to increase on-the-job training (OJT) employer reimbursement up to 90 percent for businesses with 50 or fewer employees. ETA approves the waiver for Program Year (PYs) 2024 and 2025.

**Summary of Performance Measures:**

To ensure accountability, the VISWDB tracks performance metrics aligned with WIOA requirements, including employment rates, median earnings, credential attainment rates, and measurable skill gains. These metrics guide the Board’s continuous improvement efforts, helping to fine-tune workforce strategies and maximize their impact.

Measure	NPG	FINAL RUN	<i>Numerator</i> <i>Denominator</i>
<b>PY 2024 Q1 - Rolling 4 Quarters</b>			
Adult Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	58.0%	70.9%	95 134
Adult Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	61.0%	71.6%	73 102
Adult Median Earnings	\$5,200.00	\$7,717.00	
Adult Credential Attainment	63.0%	61.9%	39 63
Adult Measurable Skill Gains	63.0%	79.2%	164 207
DW Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	63.5%	40.0%	6 15

DW Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	63.0%	70.8%	17 24
DW Median Earnings	\$6,300.00	\$7,045.00	
DW Credential Attainment	71.0%	80.0%	12 15
DW Measurable Skill Gains	61.5%	93.3%	14 15
Youth Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	67.5%	66.7%	42 63
Youth Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	61.5%	51.9%	27 52
Youth Median Earnings	\$5,000.00	\$5,139.00	
Youth Credential Attainment	50.5%	41.2%	7 17
Youth Measurable Skill Gains	58.0%	64.2%	61 95
WP Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	58.0%	54.9%	428 780
WP Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	51.0%	54.3%	499 919
WP Median Earnings	\$5,600.00	\$7,439.00	
JVSG Individualized Services Provision	90.0%	80.0%	16 20
JVSG Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	33.0%	54.8%	17 31
JVSG Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	25.0%	39.4%	13 33
JVSG Median Earnings	\$6,500.00	\$7,602.00	

Legend	
50.00%	Met or exceeded our Goal
50.00%	Did not meet goal but within 90%
50.00%	Did not meet goal

The above performance report for PY2024 Q1, which encompasses rolling data from four quarters, covers employment and skill development outcomes for various groups, including adults, dislocated workers (DW), youth, and veterans. It compares actual outcomes with target goals. Key points include:

#### Summary of Key Achievements:

##### 1. Exceeded Goals:

- Adults: Strong measurable skill gains (79.2%) and higher-than expected median earning (\$7,717).
- Dislocated Workers: Credential attainment (80%) and skill gains (93.3%) were significantly above targets.
- Youth: Surpassed skill gains target (64.2% vs. 58%)
- Veterans: Median earnings exceeded expectations (\$7,602 vs. \$6,500).

##### 2. Achieved Near Targets:

- Youth Employment (2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter): Achieved 66.7%, just below the 67.5% target.
- Adults Employment (4<sup>th</sup> Quarter): Performed close to the 61% target at 71.6%.
- Workforce Programs (WP): Both employment metrics (2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters) were close to targets.

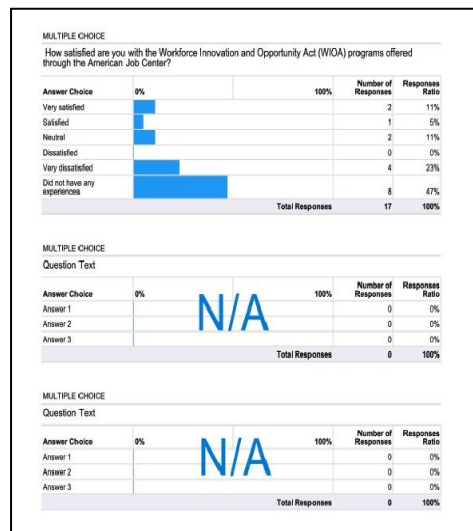
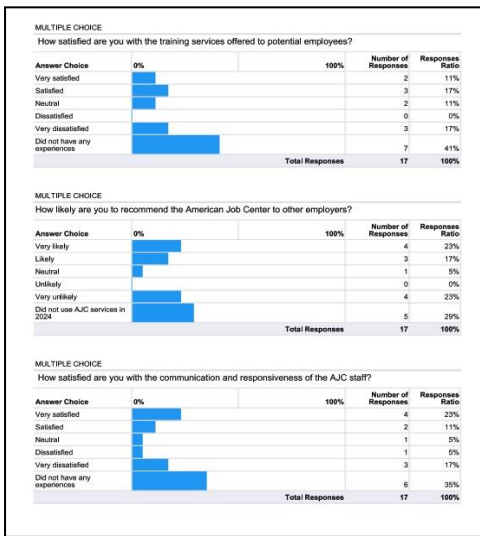
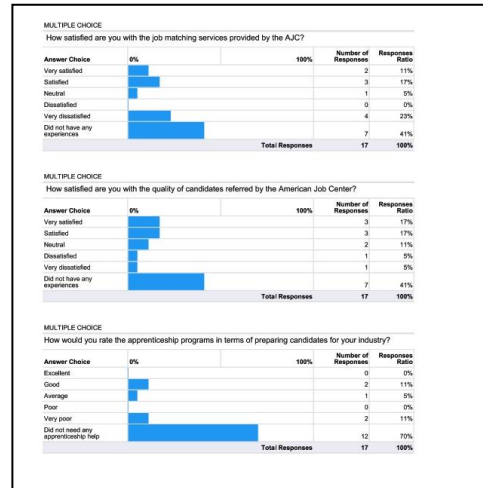
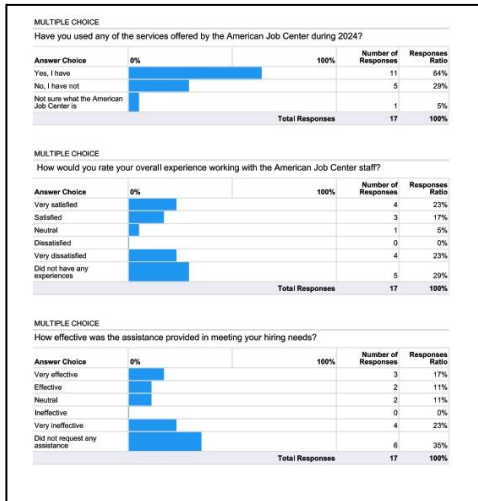
The following strategies will be implemented to address the underperforming areas leading to better employment outcomes for all participants: enhance support for credential attainment:

- Increase measurable skill gains across all groups
- Strengthen tracking systems.
- Expand marketing and outreach.
- Stakeholder collaboration.

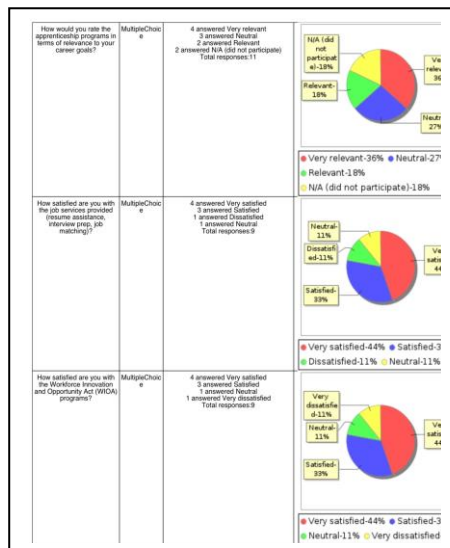
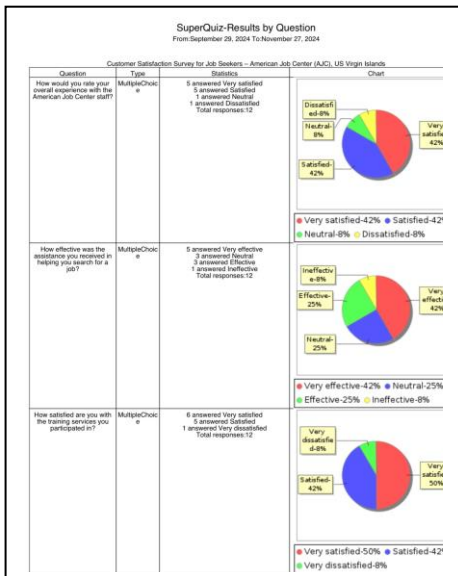
#### **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

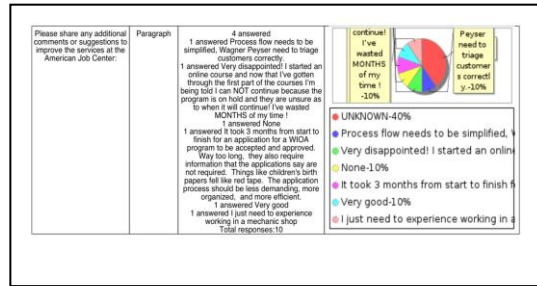
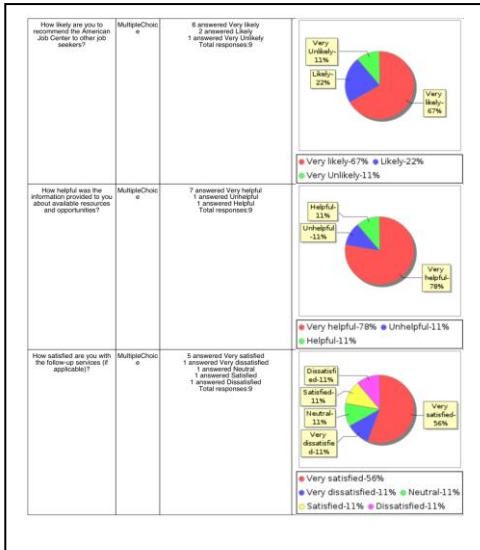
Surveys were conducted to assess customer satisfaction for businesses and job seekers. A total of 1175 job seekers and 370 employers were sent emails with a link to complete the customer satisfaction survey. Responses were provided by choosing from a list of choices.

The results of the survey are as follows: American Job Center Employer Satisfaction Survey



## American Job Center Customer Satisfaction Survey





## WIOA Statewide Implementation

**The Local One-Stop Delivery System:** Equus Workforce Solutions is the One-Stop Operator for the Territory. Equus is responsible for the management and operation of the One-Stop Center in all districts. Equus' highlights from June 30, 2023, to July 1, 2024:

American Job Center partners collaborated consistently and effectively in 2023 to bolster the development of workforce development initiatives in the Virgin Islands. In addition to attending the monthly partner meetings which are held on the last Tuesday of every month, partners joined forces to support their colleagues with activities.

### Second Chance Month

May 2024

The One Stop Operator collaborated with ALIGN Community and the Bureau of Corrections to coordinate Second Chance Month events across both districts of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Representatives from Equus actively participated in these weekly events, engaging with justice-involved individuals and providing guidance on steps toward gainful employment.

The month-long activities culminated in a panel discussion at the University of the Virgin Islands on St. Croix, led by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. The panel featured:

- Adryann Glenn, founder of ALIGN Community Inc., who discussed the organization's efforts in supporting reentry programs.
- Attorney Casey Payton, Executive Director and Founder of the VI Justice Initiative, who highlighted legal support and advocacy for formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Moleto Smith, Director of the Law Enforcement Planning Commission, who provided insights into policy and planning for effective reentry strategies.



- Antonio Emmanuel, Director of the Office of Gun Violence Prevention, who addressed initiatives aimed at reducing recidivism and promoting public safety.



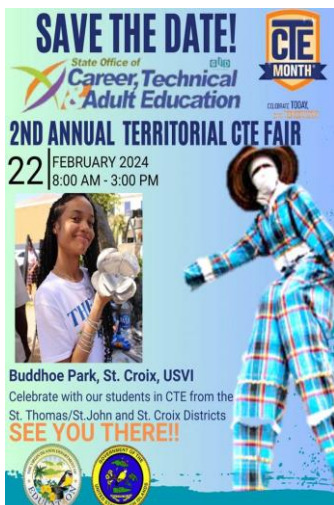
*Photo Credit: VI Consortium*

This panel discussion emphasized the importance of comprehensive reentry programs and community support in reducing recidivism and aiding the successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals into society.

### **Virgin Islands Department of Education**

Second Annual State Office Career and Technical Education Fair February 2024

The Virgin Islands Department of Education hosted its Second Annual State Office Career and Technical Education Fair at Buddhoe Park in Frederiksted, St. Croix. The event aimed to showcase career pathways and training opportunities for students and the general public from both districts. Representatives from the Equus team participated by setting up an informational table where they provided attendees with resources about training and career opportunities available through the American Job Center. This event fostered greater awareness of the programs that support workforce readiness and technical education in the Virgin Islands.



## Job Corps

### *September 2023*

The Job Corps Ramey/Arecibo Puerto Rico team, along with local VI representative Felicia Brown, provided an in-depth overview of Job Corps requirements and offerings to the Equus team and partner organizations.

### *November 2023 & April 2024*

In collaboration with Government House and the VI Department of Education, two student groups from St. Thomas (Charlotte Amalie and Eudora Kean) and St. Croix (Educational Complex) visited the Job Corps campus in Ramey, Puerto Rico.

These visits allowed students to explore career options within the Job Corps curriculum, particularly focusing on trades and vocational paths suited for those who may not be college-bound.

### **Current Job Corps Enrollment & Program Goals**

One female student from the VI is now enrolled in the Job Corps program. Job Corps aims to equip students with practical skills that lay a foundation for financial stability and independence. This curriculum is especially valuable for students looking to pursue trades rather than a traditional college path. The program is actively exploring the option of offering bilingual instruction (instructors and materials), enhancing accessibility for VI students and potentially allowing more students to attend campuses closer to home. This initiative seeks to help students return to the Virgin Islands equipped with marketable skills, thereby contributing to the local workforce.



### **Innovations and Best Practices**

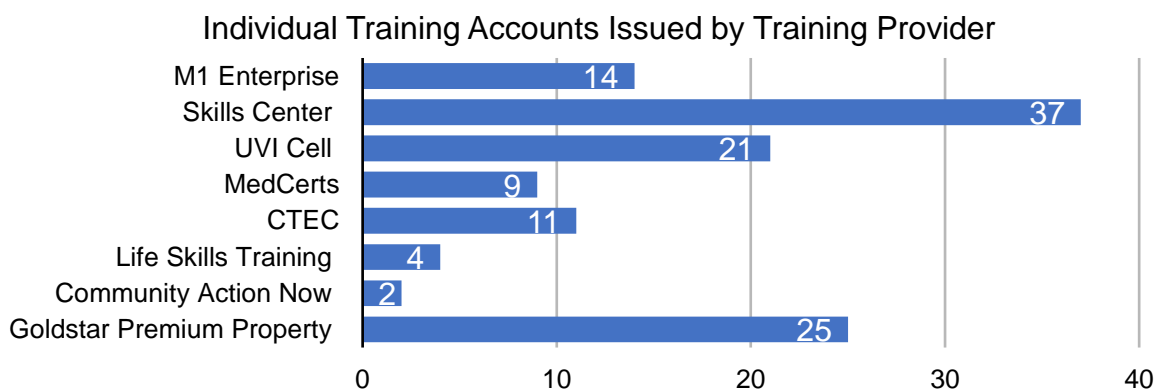
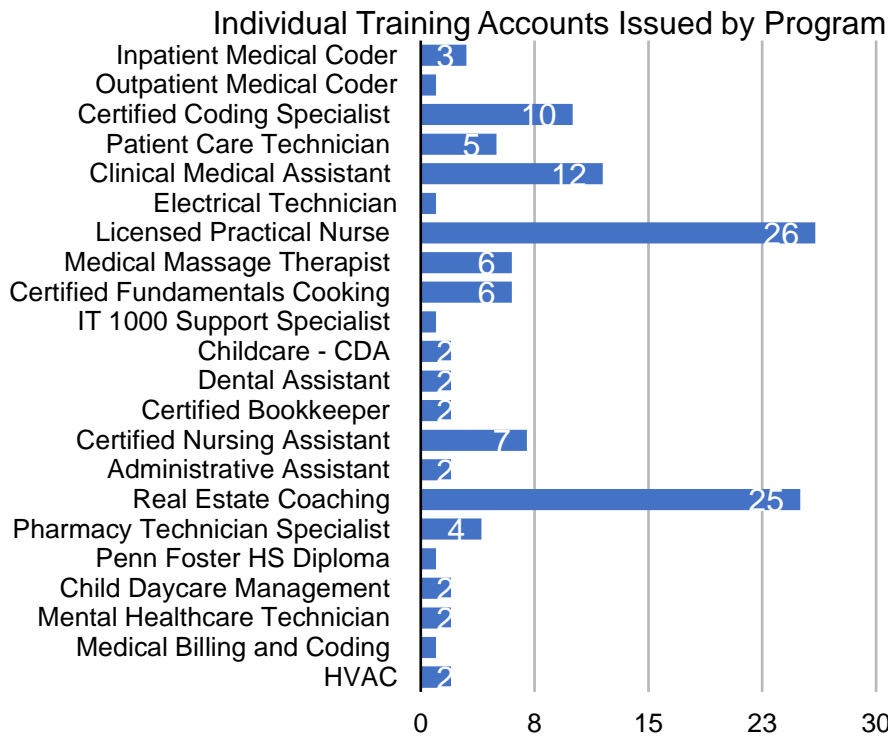
In PY2023, Equus implemented several forward-thinking strategies to enhance program delivery, outreach, and collaboration, making the AJC career and training services more accessible to our diverse communities. The approach combined traditional outreach

methods with innovative tech-based strategies, while prudently utilizing WIOA funds to accomplish this goal per stipulated in the Training & Employment Guidance Letter 03-23

- **Text-Based Solutions:** We launched a text-based outreach platform through Engage by Cell, which has proven to be highly effective. This platform allows case managers to efficiently inform the public of updates and program information, leveraging high open rates to maximize engagement. Studies show that SMS messaging achieves a 97% open rate, with 90% of messages read within 3 minutes. (Compared to email's 20-30% open rates). Utilizing this technology as a part of our strategy allowed for guaranteed distribution of information and calls to action. This practice has led to an increase in marketing impressions and reach. We also utilize this Text-Based platform to directly communicate with individual participants, keeping them informed of individualized updates, required documentation, training opportunities, and upcoming events specific to their career needs.
- **Targeted Housing Community Outreach:** Through our partnership with the Virgin Islands Housing Authority, we've focused on expanding services to residents in low-income housing. With an estimated 50% unemployment rate across 16 communities (Based on data provided by VIHA 2023 Community Profile Report), our strategy included distributing tailored marketing materials, conducting needs assessments, and establishing a schedule of bi-weekly workshops within these communities. This dedicated approach is aimed at increasing AJC visibility and meeting the specific needs of low-income residents, especially those facing employment barriers.
- **Faith-Based Partnerships:** Recognizing the pivotal role faith-based centers play in the community, Equus developed a targeted initiative to engage with this community. This strategic outreach was aimed to increase awareness of WIOA services, while leveraging the established credibility of these faith centers to connect with a broader and more diverse population through community engagement.
- **Established Partnership with Bureau of Corrections (BOC):** Our partnership with the BOC will provide justice-involved individuals with a pathway to reentry through workforce training. This partnership will also allow us to reach a previously underserved population and connect them with tools, career workshops and meaningful career opportunities.
- **Eligible Training Provider (ETP) Events:** By hosting informative ETP events at the American Job Center, we provide job seekers with direct access to training providers, allowing them to explore programs and make informed decisions. This initiative has encouraged participation and engagement with available training pathways
- **Collaborative Outreach with Employers and Agencies:** By aligning outreach efforts with organizations like Viya's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), we reach more WIOA-eligible individuals. This collaborative approach has extended AJC's reach and created synergies with community organizations. Additionally, these partnerships lessen the AJC's financial burden to market and promote events.

## Individual Training Account (ITA) Demand

The demand for Individual Training Accounts in PY2023 was largely driven by the evolving labor market needs of the Virgin Islands. The healthcare sector emerged as a focal point for workforce development in the territory, with many participants pursuing training in fields like Licensed Practical Nursing, Clinical Medical Assistance, and Patient Care Technician programs. This trend highlights the need to expand occupational training in the healthcare sector and address the demand for skilled healthcare professionals.



Effective outreach efforts also played a significant role in driving program demand. The increased visibility of the AJC through targeted campaigns and community partnerships successfully attracted participants seeking opportunities to up-skill and secure meaningful employment. This approach to engaging the community has helped connect individuals with training providers offering programs aligned with high-demand occupations, ensuring a strong pipeline of talent for the local labor market.

By focusing on high-demand sectors and maintaining strong community engagement, the AJC is successfully addressing skill gaps and empowering individuals to contribute to the Territory's growth and resilience.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

As the Virgin Islands American Job Center (AJC) expanded services and strengthened outreach efforts in the community, we encountered some challenges that continue to inform future strategies.

The Virgin Islands' unique demographic and economic landscape necessitates a strategic outreach model. Through ongoing assessments, we refined our outreach approach by combining traditional outreach methods with innovative tech-based strategies. These adjustments have helped us connect with underserved populations. However, due to the effectiveness of our revamped outreach strategies and enhanced visibility, the AJC experienced a larger than expected surge in service demand. This rapid growth required strategic resource allocation to ensure support for all participants.

Going forward, we aim to strengthen our capacity planning to better accommodate growing service needs.

### **Program Success**

#### **Supportive Services**

\* Ms. Lynnesha Knight completed her WIOA funded Patient Care Technician (PCT) course and returned to the American Job Center seeking assistance to secure her national certification. Unemployed and unable to afford the exam costs, she was provided with financial assistance to cover the National Healthcare Association exam fees. She successfully passed the Exam and earned her certification. Equus also connected Lynnesha with interview preparation workshops and other career services, ensuring she was fully equipped for her next steps. Today, thanks to her dedication and the services provided by the AJC team, Lynnesha is thriving as a Patient Care Technician at Schneider Regional Medical Center, a testament to the impact of supportive services in helping participants reach their career goals.

#### **Individual Training Account (ITA)**

\* Bri-Yanah Freeman faced unexpected financial hardship after a tragic fire destroyed her workplace. As a result, she lost her sole source of income and her ability to continue paying for medical massage therapy classes, making her dream of becoming a massage therapist uncertain. In desperation, she turned to the American Job Center (AJC) for financial support. Bri-Yanah received funding, successfully completed her training, and passed the MBLEX exam, demonstrating her skill and commitment. Today, she is gainfully employed as a therapist at Tropical Bliss Spa and awaiting her official Medical Massage Therapist certification. Her resilience and determination, paired with AJC's support, transformed her challenges into steppingstones toward a bright and rewarding future.

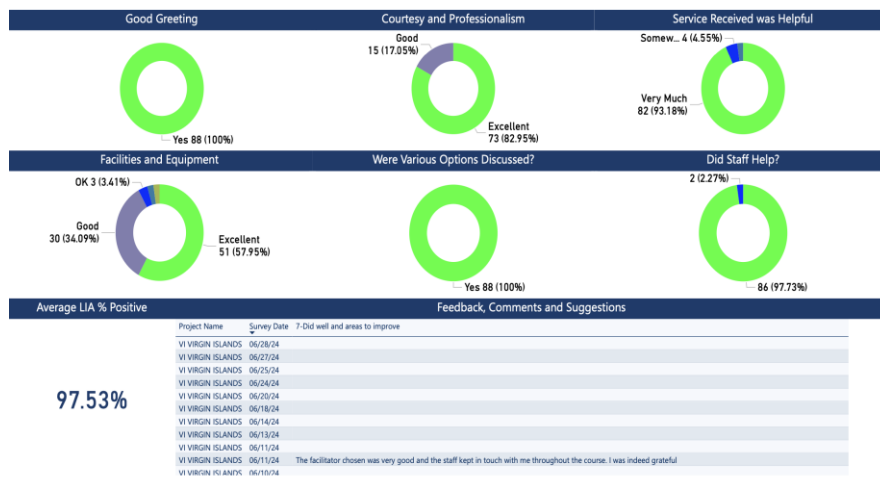
\* After months of job searching and struggling to secure employment, Tatiana Bertrand was beginning to lose hope of career advancement. Her lack of experience made it difficult for her to stand out in a competitive job market. Determined to turn things around, she reached out to the American Job Center (AJC) for guidance. With the support of the AJC team and WIOA funding, Tatiana enrolled in CAN Academy’s Bookkeeping Course. She successfully earned her certificate of completion which equipped her with the tools to confidently re-enter the workforce. Today, she is thriving in her new role as a Bookkeeper at Sapphire Beach Resort. Tatiana’s story highlights the impact our Individual Training Account (ITA) program has in enabling job seekers to transition from financial insecurity to stable employment.

### On-the-Job Training (OJT)

\* Equus partnered with the Westin Hotel to provide OJT experience to 21 job seekers. This partnership provided them with career guidance from Equus case managers and valuable work experience in the thriving hospitality industry.

### Customer Satisfaction

The **Legacy in Action** model defines Equus Workforce Solutions’ operational quality standards and behaviors that ensure an exceptional customer experience. Through the Legacy in Action surveys, which are accessible both online and throughout the AJC, we actively gather feedback to assess customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. The VI AJC has achieved an outstanding 97.53% customer satisfaction rate from November 19, 2023 to June 30, 2024. This score underscores the impact of our participant centered approach on job seekers. Maintaining such high satisfaction rates strengthens the AJC’s reputation as a key resource for empowering individuals to achieve their career goals.



## Maqueeda Noorhassan

Building a Path to Success in Child Development

“

I am so grateful to the team at Equus for their incredible support throughout my journey. Their encouragement and belief in me kept me going, even during tough times.

Thanks to them, I successfully completed my CDA Post-Secondary program and gained hands-on experience at a early head start center. I couldn't have done it without their guidance.

Thank you all for making this possible!

”



## Glynis Isles

Creating a Path to Sustainable Employment

“

I'm extremely grateful for the support from Ms. Willie and the Equus team. She helped me with everything from interview prep and resume building to connecting me with resources like the Department of Human Services and the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. With their guidance, I was able to get my health card and secure employment. The entire staff was attentive and always quick to respond.

I highly recommend this program to anyone facing challenges or obstacles in securing stable, fulfilling employment. It truly makes a difference!

”



### The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) Highlights from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Employment Services Team has been actively working to advance opportunities for all workers and job seekers in high-growth industries. They have collaborated with stakeholders, employers, job seekers, and the community to achieve several key initiatives:

- **Employer Recognition:** Acknowledging employers for posting job openings and hiring skilled employees.
- **Employer Webinars and Spotlight:** We host monthly webinars on various topics to support employers. We also feature employer through our web-based series called Connect 2 Business.
- **Skills for Today Certification Ceremony:** Celebrating over 600 participants who completed courses in plumbing, construction, welding, and electricity.
- **Networking Events:** Facilitating connections between employers and job seekers through Business After Hours events and career fairs.
- **Mini Career Fairs:** Hosting on-site career fairs at employer locations to generate referrals and interviews.
- **Hot Jobs List:** Continuously releasing weekly lists of high-demand job openings.
- **Workforce Development Promotion:** Raising awareness of workforce development programs and services through outreach, events, and partnerships.

The Workforce Development Department has hosted an array of free events for the public with activities in both districts. The team continues to excel and change the narrative of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor while working with our partners and employers. Tasked with assisting businesses to find quality candidates, from entry level to skilled workers, the team offers services through no-fee screening, hiring and recruitment services.

The team is effortlessly staying focused on providing and sharing services through the American Job Center where our Partners, Employers and Workforce candidates can participate in Employer Job Fairs, Screening Applicants, Assessment of Job Skills and Aptitude, Scheduling Applicants, Available Interview Facilities, Training Programs, Tax and Hiring Incentives and Labor Market Information.

This year's annual report will focus on the hiring event and career fairs held by the Workforce Development Team starting July 01, 2023 to June 30, 2024. The energetic team conducted a total of 20 events servicing more than 500 career seekers that took the initiative to search for work.

In 2023, the team made close partnerships with employers to include Travel Traders, US Security and the Virgin Islands Waste Management through hiring events held at the American Job Center. The team started out with hosting Travel Traders of St. Thomas hiring event on August 02, 2023 with a total of 20 participants. We were happy to receive confirmation that seven (7) individuals were hired. The next event was hosted on August 04, 2023 with US Security where 25 participants were in attendance. While we were unable to capture hires, Virgin Islands Waste Management reached out for assistance to conduct a hiring event in both districts. On August 14, 2023, the St. Thomas team was able to secure five (5) interviews while on St. Croix, the teams was able to secure six (6) interviews. For the month of September, the highlight was the Joining Forces Career Fair held on September 13, 2023 at Tutu Park Mall and September 20, 2023 at UVI Great Hall. We had a great turnout with more than 50 employers and 143 career seekers.

Highlighted as an Achievement would be the Ceremonies for the Skills for Today Program that were held on September 22, 2023 on St. Croix and September 29, 2023 on St. Thomas.

Skills for Today program has emerged as a vital resource for Virgin Islands residents. By delivering essential training and certifications, the program has empowered individuals to play a crucial role in our territory's recovery, development, and transformation. The program's impact is evident in the overwhelming response it received, with 1,378 applications. Of these, 961 individuals actively engaged in the program, showcasing their commitment to personal growth and contributing positively to the Territory. Highlighting its effectiveness, over 70% of participants successfully completed the rigorous construction skills and core program.

In 2024, we increased our hiring events to include other employers that were able to reach out for assistance in filling their positions. In February, the team hosted R&T Unlimited (St.Croix) on February 15, 2024, Buccaneer on February 23,2024 and OTL on February 28, 2024. Meanwhile, on St. Thomas, Gottlieb's Quick Way hiring event was held on February



15,2024. The WD team contacted and referred individuals through our Virgin Islands electronic Workforce System (VIEWS). Overall we served 50 participants and 5 hires between Gottlieb (2 hired) and Buccaneer (3 hires). In May, we assisted Clean Air Contractors of St. Croix and served 20 individuals where seven (7) were interviewed and five (5) individuals were able to secure a job. In June, the St. Thomas team assisted PriceSmart, Margaritaville, and Concessions International where five (5) individuals were employed at Margaritaville.

The Workforce Team have created momentum around the Career Fair Fete Done, Time Fi Work! It was such a great success in 2023 that the team decided to host the second edition of Fete Done, Time Fi Work on January 23, 2024 on St. Croix at the Canegata Multi-Purpose Center and January 25, 2024 on St. Thomas at Windward Passage Hotel. Combined we were able to capture 163 participants and served more than 47 employers. With great reviews from the employers, the team then hosted the Carnival Over, Work Take Over Career Fair on St. Croix at the UVI Great Hall on May 15, 2024 with 12 employers and 59 registered individuals. The team was also accompanied by Auto Zone who hired 28 individuals. Finally, the St. Thomas team Carnival Over, Work Take over Career Fair was held on June 12, 2024 servicing 21 employers and 33 participants.

### Here's what an employer had to say:

*"It was such a pleasure working with and meeting you both last week! Thank you for hosting such a successful Career Fair. In speaking with other organizations that have participated in not only previous fairs through DOL, but others as well, they all agreed that this was one of their top events partnering with. Kudos to you both on that! I am happy to report that we identified some great candidates from both islands to offer employment with Marshall & Sterling. Thank you both again for all the work you do to ensure great employment for the people in our community. I look forward to future collaborations with the Department."*



### Success Story:

*In April 2023, we met a client who expressed interest in our training program. However, he faced significant challenges, including the recent loss of his home in a fire. This devastating event resulted in the loss of essential belongings, such as his DJ equipment, and clothing. Despite these setbacks, our client remained determined. With the support of his dedicated case manager, he attended our Joining Forces career fair in September and identified a*

*company of interest. The case manager proactively submitted a letter of recommendation to the company on the client's behalf.*

*To enhance the client's job prospects, the case manager enrolled him in OSHA 30 online courses. He visited the AJC everyday from 1pm to 5pm, walking over a mile and eventually losing his glasses. The client diligently completed these courses, often working without his glasses.*

*As the client secured an interview with his dream company, the employment service team collaborated with him to prepare for the interview, including assistance with appropriate attire. This involved sourcing larger-sized shoes to ensure he presented himself professionally.*

*The client's perseverance, combined with the unwavering support of his case manager and the employment service team, ultimately led to his success. In December 2023, on the same day, he received two job offers, one of which was his dream position.*

*Happy to say almost a year later, client is still employed with the company. He now has reliable transportation and was able to replace his glasses."*

### **Special Statistics**

The below statistics give a count of the number of services recorded in the VIEWS System that the Workforce Development Department has given to both employers and job/skill seekers within the program year of July 1, 2023- June 30, 2024.

- Wagner Peyser enrollment- 748
- Wagner Peyser Services Offered- 21,094
- Number of Employers Service- 405
- Number of Services Provided to Employers- 8,390
- Number of individuals enrolled in training programs- 456
- Number of Individual hired through AJC assistance- 66

The below statistics give a count of another initiative that the Workforce Development Department provided that was free of charge to the public. This "Grow with Google" program provided the public with free training in specialized programs, such as, Data Analytics, Digital Marketing & E-commerce, IT Support, Project Management, Cybersecurity, etc. Once enrolled, there was no limit to how many classes any one person desired to take.

- 500 scholarships allocated
- 85 live learners
- 71 learners enrolled
- 16 completers (earned certificate)

## Virgin Islands Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) For the Period July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024

### VI SAA | PY23 OVERVIEW

The mission to advance registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) as a strategic workforce solution has gained significant traction in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI), reflecting a broader trend among states to address labor market challenges through innovative training models. Registered apprenticeships represent a comprehensive work-based learning approach that integrates on-the-job training, paid work experience, classroom instruction, and mentorship. This model not only equips apprentices with formal training in specific occupations but also allows them to earn wages while gaining valuable work experience.

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor's State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA) plays a pivotal role in promoting and facilitating the apprenticeship process. The agency simplifies the registration of apprenticeship programs by providing direct support to employers and stakeholders. This includes approving program standards, monitoring compliance, maintaining essential records such as apprenticeship agreements, issuing certificates of completion, and addressing any issues that may arise during program implementation. By ensuring that employers have the necessary resources and guidance, the SAA fosters an environment conducive to creating successful RAPs.

Despite notable growth in the registered apprentice population since the first program was established in 2020, PY 23 brought both challenges and achievements. Various limitations remain including a general lack of awareness & understanding among both employers and prospective participants. Additionally, early up-front costs and staffing limitations of implementing programs - such as mentor stipends and classroom-related expenses—pose financial challenges for both new and existing program sponsors.

Despite these obstacles, the Virgin Islands recorded notable milestones:

- **New Occupation and Program Sponsor:** Human Resources Specialist | SHRM Foundation.  
SHRM Foundation Human Resources Specialist apprenticeship program is registered nationally with the Office of Apprentice.
- **Progression and Completion:** 14 apprentices are approaching the completion of their programs, with 85% on track to graduate successfully.
- **Community Engagement:** The VI celebrated its third annual National Apprenticeship Week in November 2023, showcasing the impact of apprenticeships and recognizing current apprentices and program sponsors. In addition, the launch of the new VI apprenticeship webpage offered a centralized hub for information and resources, making it easier for both employers and prospective apprentices to access program details, success stories, and other relevant content to support their involvement in the apprenticeship system.

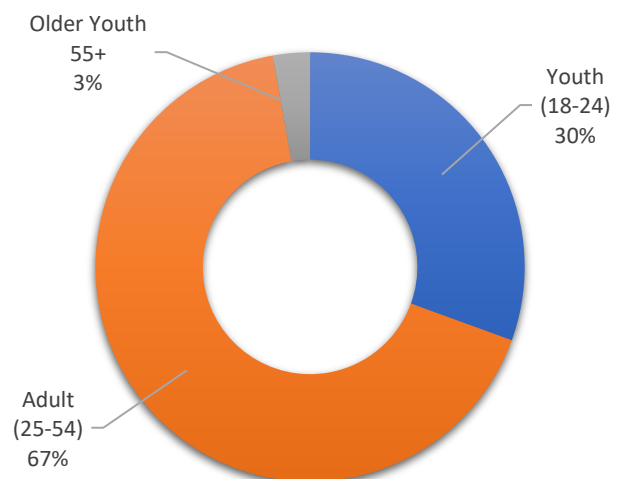
### APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS | OCCUPATIONS |

Industry	Occupations	Sponsors
<b>Marine/Maritime</b>	Boat Builder	Gold Coast Yachts, Inc.
	Marine Services Technician	Gold Coast Yachts, Inc.
	Able Seaman	VI Professional Charter Association
<b>Healthcare</b>	Certified Massage Therapist (CMT)	Peace of St Croix Inc.
		Therapeutic Massage Center
	Medical Assistant/Patient Care Coordinator	Plessen Healthcare
	Life Safety Coordinator	Plessen Healthcare
	Surgical Technologist	Plessen Healthcare
	Certified Nursing Asst.-Restorative Care Specialty	The Turning Point Senior Care
	Certified Nursing Asst.-Dementia Specialty	The Turning Point Senior Care
<b>Construction</b>	Pipefitter	Island Seafire, LLC
	Construction Craft Laborer	340 Integrated Project Team
<b>Hospitality</b>	Recreation Assistant	Tropical Treasure Hunt Company, LLC
	Cook	U.S. Bureau of Corrections
<b>IT</b>	Cyber Security Technician	CommHIT-USVI
<b>Professional Services</b>	Human Resource Specialist <small>NEW!</small>	SHRM Foundation

## APPRENTICES

Total Active Apprentices PY 22
<b>36</b>
<i>Able Seaman (8)</i> <i>Massage Therapist (16)</i> <i>Medical Asst./Patient Care (3)</i> <i>Pipefitter (6)</i> <i>HR Specialist (1)</i>

### Apprentice Demographics



## VIRGIN ISLANDS APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL (VISAC)

The Virgin Islands Apprenticeship Council (VISAC) plays an essential role in supporting and advising the VI State Apprenticeship Agency on the administration and expansion of registered apprenticeship programs across the territory. Established under Title 24, Chapter 10 of the

Virgin Islands Code, VISAC is composed of nine members who are appointed by the Commissioner of Labor. This structure ensures diverse representation, bringing together experts from various sectors, including legal, educational, labor, and employer perspectives. By doing so, the Council helps create apprenticeship programs that are responsive to the needs of both workers and employers, while also ensuring alignment with national standards and best practices.

VISAC convenes quarterly public meetings to address any issues that may affect apprenticeship programs in the Virgin Islands. These meetings serve as a platform for discussing the current state of apprenticeship initiatives, identifying challenges, and exploring solutions. In addition to providing a forum for public input, these meetings are vital in fulfilling the statutory requirement that the Council offers expert advice and guidance to the Director of the Virgin Islands State Apprenticeship Agency (VI SAA) on matters related to the establishment, operation, and improvement of apprenticeship programs in the territory.

To prepare members for their roles and responsibilities, a specialized training session was conducted by Charles McNeil III, Deputy Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship. This training session served as an important re-orientation for the members, offering a detailed overview of the purpose and scope of the Council's work. Topics covered during the session included the structure and benefits of Registered Apprenticeships (RA), strategies for marketing and promoting apprenticeship programs, available resources and funding opportunities, and the critical role that apprenticeship plays in workforce development. This training is essential for ensuring that Council members are well-informed and able to contribute effectively to the development and enhancement of apprenticeship programs in the Virgin Islands.

Through these ongoing training efforts and quarterly meetings, VISAC remains a crucial partner in advancing apprenticeship opportunities in the territory. The Council's diverse composition and active engagement with stakeholders play a vital role in shaping the future of workforce development in the Virgin Islands.

#### **Members of the Council:**

- Atty. Nesha Christian-Hendrickson, Department of Labor, *Asst. Commissioner/Legal Counsel*
- Shenika Sebastien, Department of Labor, *Director of Youth and Apprenticeship*
- Dr. Michael Francois, Virgin Islands Board of Career and Technical *Board Member (STX)*
- JoAnn Murphy, Virgin Islands Board of Career and Technical *Board Member (STJ)*
- Lindsay Askew, Employee Representative
- Tarah Graham-Hodge, Employee Representative
- Chris Richardson, Employer Representative
- **VACANT, Employer Representative**
- Carla Scott, Chairperson of VISAC

#### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR GROWTH**

To sustain momentum and expand apprenticeship initiatives, VI SAA remains committed to expanding and enhancing registered apprenticeships, focusing on the following priorities:

- **Increasing public awareness**, ensuring more individuals and businesses understand the benefits of apprenticeships.
- **Building Relationships** with employers, training providers, workforce board, and higher education institutions to create more opportunities.
- **Continue to engage the VI State Apprenticeship Council**, fostering collaboration and strategic oversight.
- **Fostering Collaboration** among various stakeholders, including government agencies, educational institutions, and private sector employers. Building these partnerships takes time and effort but is essential for aligning training programs with industry needs

Looking ahead, VI SAA aims to evolve the apprenticeship community over the next two years into a pathway for skills development that is attractive, accessible, and responsive to both apprentice and employer needs. As part of this initiative, the VI SAA will conduct its first monitoring and evaluation of programs, ensuring high standards and identifying opportunities for improvement.

## CHALLENGES/LEASON LEARNED

The experience of implementing registered apprenticeship programs (RAPs) in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) has provided valuable insights into overcoming challenges related to workforce development. Here are key lessons learned from the identified challenges:

### **Challenge 1:**

The Virgin Islands State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA), WIOA Youth programs, and WIOA Adult/Dislocated Worker programs play critical roles in workforce development. However, these initiatives often function independently, making it difficult for participants to navigate the programs and for agencies to ensure their efforts complement rather than duplicate each other.

### **Lesson Learned:**

Fostering stronger partnerships and maintaining regular communication among programs is essential. Aligning goals, sharing resources, and coordinating services can help create a cohesive system that supports participants more effectively and minimizes duplication of efforts. This approach simplifies access to resources and enhances program efficiency.

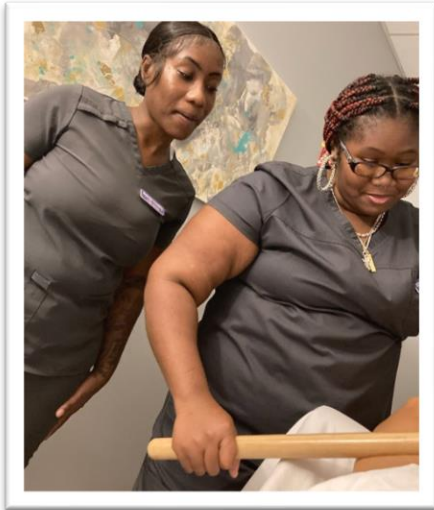
### **Challenge 2:**

Securing funding for apprenticeship programs from multiple sources presents significant challenges. Limited resources can create competition among programs, while employers are often reluctant to invest without adequate incentives or clear evidence of long-term benefits.

### **Lesson Learned:**

Providing financial incentives such as wage subsidies, tax breaks, or training grants encourages employers to adopt apprenticeship models. These measures reduce perceived risks and drive participation, as reflected in the Program Year 2022 (PY22) growth in new apprenticeship programs and participants.

## TESTIMONIES (Apprentices and Program Sponsors)



**Massage Therapist Apprentice: Channik Carr**

“Starting the massage academy in October was the best decision I have ever made in my life. As a therapist in training, I’ve learned more and more each day as the youngest training therapist on St. Croix. I am very honored and excited for the rest of my massage journey. I am elated to grow and learn more.”

**Able Seaman Apprentice: Kasheem Sexious**

“This is the best thing to do right now; if you love the sea, this is the best place to be... I had many opportunities to work with different marine companies and maintain good relationships with employers to increase the chance of employment after completion of the program.”



**Sponsor/Employer: Vicki Hicks, Peace of STX**

“I am grateful and when I look back, it is a bit surreal. Now that I have been able to recruit Virgin Islanders to help them work toward their dream of becoming a massage therapist it is so rewarding. It has not, and still is not easy, but I know it changes many lives and for the better.”

**Sponsor/Employer: Dr. Jan Tawakol, Plessen Healthcare**

“We were able to train more certified medical assistants than we have or had a need for; an because we were able to do the certification, every single apprentice has a job either with us or with somebody else. They all got jobs right away.”

**WIOA Youth**

Virgin Islands Department of Labor Youth Services is committed to providing high-quality services for youth and young adults, including:

- a) career exploration and guidance;
- b) continuing support for educational attainment,
- c) opportunities for skills training in in-demand industries and occupations; and

- d) finding a good job along a career pathway or enrollment in post-secondary education while providing intensive case management to ensure success.

### Performance Highlights

In PY23, VIDOL Youth Services saw a mix of successes and areas for growth. The following key metrics reflect the program's impact on youth participants, highlighting both the program's strengths and opportunities for improvement:

- **Youth Entered Employment (2nd Quarter):** The program achieved 66.1% of the target goal of 67.5%. This performance indicates that a substantial number of youth who received services were able to transition into employment within the second quarter after completing the program. While just below the target, this result still reflects the effectiveness of the program in preparing youth for the workforce and connecting them with job opportunities. Continued engagement with employers and expansion of partnership opportunities will help improve this metric further.
- **Youth Entered Employment (4th Quarter):** The program's performance was slightly below the target of 61.5%, with an actual result of 61.0%. This is still a solid outcome, reflecting that most of the youth were able to secure stable employment post-program. This continued success underscores the department's focus on providing youth with both job readiness training and real-world work experience to ensure a smooth transition into the labor market.
- **Youth Median Earnings:** The program exceeded its goal for youth earnings, with participants earning a median of \$5,590, surpassing the goal of \$5,000. This achievement highlights the program's ability to connect youth to meaningful, higher-paying employment opportunities that offer long-term career potential. It also reflects the quality of job placements and the effective skill-building strategies employed by the program.
- **Youth Credential Attainment:** While the program did not fully meet its goal for credential attainment (42.1% vs. the target of 50.5%), this area remains a key focus for improvement in the coming year. Credential attainment is a critical outcome for youth as it ensures they gain recognized qualifications that enhance their competitiveness in the job market. Moving forward, VIDOL Youth Services will focus on increasing support for youth pursuing certifications, such as offering additional academic tutoring and partnering with institutions to streamline the credentialing process.
- **Youth Measurable Skill Gains:** The program significantly exceeded its goal for measurable skill gains, achieving 65.4% compared to the target of 58.0%. This outcome is particularly noteworthy, as it demonstrates the effectiveness of the training programs offered by VIDOL Youth Services. Participants showed substantial improvements in key skill areas, including occupational knowledge, workplace communication, and problem-solving. This success highlights the department's focus on providing practical, hands-on training that aligns with the needs of employers in high-demand sectors.
- **Workplace Entered Employment (2nd Quarter):** The performance in this metric was 57.8%, which was just slightly below the goal of 58.0%. This result indicates that a high percentage of youth entering work-based learning experiences, such as internships and apprenticeships, successfully transitioned into employment. As work-



based learning remains a critical component of workforce development, VIDOL Youth Services will continue to expand these opportunities, ensuring that youth are gaining the skills and experiences that make them more employable.

### Work Experience and Occupational Skills Training

The **work experience** program remains a cornerstone of VIDOL Youth Services, offering youth the opportunity to participate in both paid and unpaid internships across a variety of industries. These experiences are invaluable for building practical job skills, enhancing workplace readiness, and creating professional networks. Work-based learning opportunities allow youth to gain real-world experience in specific occupations, which significantly boosts their employability and readiness for permanent, unsubsidized employment.

Additionally, Occupational skills training continues to be one of the most highly sought-after services among youth participants. This training has equipped numerous youth with certifications and qualifications that have directly enhanced their employability. From certifications in healthcare and IT to skills in construction and manufacturing, these training programs provide participants with the tools they need to secure stable, well-paying jobs in fields with high demand.

### Moving Forward

While the program achieved positive outcomes in several key areas, such as **youth earnings** and **measurable skill gains**, further focus is needed on enhancing **credential attainment**. This will be a primary area of emphasis in the coming year, as the successful completion of recognized certifications and educational milestones plays a crucial role in ensuring that youth are fully prepared to enter competitive and sustainable career pathways. To address this, VIDOL Youth Services will focus on implementing additional strategies to support credential completion, including enhanced academic support and provided continued personalized case management.

Alongside credential attainment, expanding **work experience** opportunities will remain a priority to ensure that youth gain the hands-on skills necessary to thrive in the workforce. By building stronger partnerships with local employers and providing more diverse opportunities, VIDOL Youth Services will continue to strengthen its role in preparing youth for successful careers.

### SUCCESS STORIES

#### ***Success Story #1: (St. Thomas Participant)***

In 2022, Jahiem Sasso, a 17-year-old high school graduate, came to our office seeking employment assistance. He had recently completed a summer job at the Judiciary of the Virgin Islands and was eager to pursue a career in auto mechanics. However, Jahiem also needed to work to support himself while living with his mother.

Recognizing his potential and commitment, Jahiem's Workforce Development (WD) Specialist, Tamera Gumbs, quickly assessed his needs and guided him toward the best opportunities. Jahiem enrolled in the two-year Auto Mechanics Program at the Ralph O. Wheatley Skills Center (ROWSC). Understanding his need for financial independence, Tamera recommended a work experience opportunity that would allow Jahiem to gain valuable on-the-job training while still attending school. This dual approach would help Jahiem stay financially stable while working toward his career goal.

Shortly after beginning his training, Jahiem was placed in a three-month paid work experience as an Auto Mechanic Assistant with the Department of Property & Procurement. Jahiem took full advantage of this opportunity, consistently demonstrating his strong work ethic, problem-solving skills, and enthusiasm for learning. His performance stood out, leading the agency to request his work experience be extended for an additional three months, giving him more time to refine his skills.

By the time he entered his second semester of training in 2023, Jahiem's progress had been exceptional. His growth both in the classroom and in the field did not go unnoticed. Recognizing his dedication and the value he brought to the team, the Department of Property & Procurement offered Jahiem a full-time position as an Auto Mechanic.

In May 2024, Jahiem successfully graduated from the Auto Mechanics program and is currently employed with the Department of Property & Procurement at a salary of \$37,179.35.

Jahiem's journey is a powerful testament to the impact of combining education, hands-on training, and real-world work experience. Through the personalized guidance and support provided by Tamera Gumbs and the Workforce Development program, Jahiem was able to achieve both financial independence and career success, all while pursuing his passion for auto mechanics. His story highlights how the right combination of training, work experience, and mentorship can empower young individuals to reach their full potential and build a successful career.

### ***Success Story #2: (St. Croix Participant)***

Youth customer, Jahonyah Flavius and her mother visited our office with clear vision for her future: she wanted to become a Marshal. Despite having no prior experience or exposure to the field, she was determined that this was the only law enforcement position she wished to pursue. Unfortunately, there were no available marshal positions at the time.

Jahonyah, a recent high school graduate, had been unemployed for the past three months, with her most recent job being a cashier. Determined to help her gain relevant exposure, her Workforce Development Specialist, Meryl Samuel, contacted several agencies, including the District Court and the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD). However, she received no responses. Undeterred, the Workforce Development Specialist reached out to the Superior Court's Marshal's Office, where the initial response was skeptical. As a final effort, she contacted the Superior Court's Human Resources (HR) office.

Merlyn explained Jahonyah's determination and proposed that she participate in the Work, Learn, and Earn (WLE) program funded by the Department of Labor. She assured HR that Jahonyah's wages would be covered by the program and offered to sign any required

confidentiality agreements. After careful consideration, HR agreed to give Jahonyah a chance.

Soon after, Jahonyah began her placement at the Superior Court as a receptionist through the WLE program. This role allowed her to gain firsthand exposure to her field of interest. Regular check-ins with both Jahonyah and the HR team ensured her progress was monitored closely. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive: HR commended Jahonyah for her professionalism, diligence, respectful demeanor, and ability to fulfill her duties without issue. She also built strong relationships with her colleagues.

As the WLE program neared its conclusion, the receptionist position at the Superior Court was officially advertised. Jahonyah applied for the role and was interviewed after she completed the WLE program. After a lengthy hiring process, Ms. Flavius's persistence and hard work paid off. She was officially hired as full-time receptionist at the Superior Court and began her new role as a receptionist.

All of this happened within just 6 months. Her journey is a testament to the power of determination and opportunity. Her story highlights how tailored support, proactive advocacy, and the willingness to step outside one's comfort zone can lead to meaningful career achievements. Today, Ms. Flavius is on a path aligned with her aspirations, gaining valuable experience that moves her closer to her ultimate goal of becoming a Marshal.

## **The Future of WIOA in the United States Virgin Islands**

### *Strengthening Workforce Strategies in the Virgin Islands:*

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) is intensifying efforts to integrate employers directly into the workforce development framework. The aim is to address talent shortages through sector-specific strategies and a comprehensive career pathways system that bridges education, training, and employment. This approach ensures skilled job seekers align with the needs of growing industries.

Key initiatives focus on increasing high school completion rates, expanding access to post-secondary credentials—such as industry-recognized certifications, apprenticeships, and degrees—and connecting job seekers to employment opportunities in high-demand fields. Special attention is given to Virgin Islanders facing employment barriers to ensure equitable access to workforce opportunities.

The VIWDB is also working to broaden labor force participation by assisting residents in overcoming employment barriers. This approach not only strengthens the local economy but also aligns workforce development efforts with the unique needs and opportunities within the Virgin Islands community. By emphasizing employer-driven strategies and prioritizing talent development, the future of workforce development in the Virgin Islands promises enhanced economic resilience and prosperity.