

VIRGIN ISLANDS PYS 2024-2027

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OVERVIEW

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Governor of each State must submit a Unified or Combined State Plan to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor that outlines a four-year strategy for the State's workforce development system. The publicly-funded workforce development system is a national network of Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and organizations that provide a range of employment, education, training, and related services and supports to help all job-seekers secure good jobs while providing businesses with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. States must have approved Unified or Combined State Plans in place to receive funding for core programs. WIOA reforms planning requirements, previously governed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), to foster better alignment of Federal investments in job training, to integrate service delivery across programs and improve efficiency in service delivery, and to ensure that the workforce system is job-driven and matches employers with skilled individuals. One of WIOA's principal areas of reform is to require States to plan across core programs and include this planning process in the Unified or Combined State Plans. This reform promotes a shared understanding of the workforce needs within each State and fosters development of more comprehensive and integrated approaches, such as career pathways and sector strategies, for addressing the needs of businesses and workers. Successful implementation of many of these approaches called for within WIOA requires robust relationships across programs. WIOA requires States and local areas to enhance coordination and partnerships with local entities and supportive service agencies for strengthened service delivery, including through Unified or Combined State Plans.

OPTIONS FOR SUBMITTING A STATE PLAN

A State has two options for submitting a State Plan— a Unified State Plan or a Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for the core programs. The six core programs are—

- the Adult program (Title I of WIOA),
- the Dislocated Worker program (Title I),
- the Youth program (Title I),
- the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program (Title II), and
- the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program (authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III),
- the Vocational Rehabilitation program (authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV).

Alternatively, a State may submit a Combined State Plan that meets the requirements described in this document and outlines a four-year strategy for WIOA's core programs plus one or more of the Combined State Plan partner programs. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the "common planning elements" (Sections II-IV of this document) where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program where such planning requirements exist separately for the program. The Combined State Plan partner programs are—

- Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)
- Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))
- Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))
- Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (Activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))
- Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et seq.)
- Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)
- Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))
- Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))¹

[1] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development that are included would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

HOW STATE PLAN REQUIREMENTS ARE ORGANIZED

The major content areas of the Unified or Combined State Plan include strategic and operational planning elements. WIOA separates the strategic and operational elements to facilitate cross-program strategic planning.

- The **Strategic Planning Elements** section includes analyses of the State's economic conditions, workforce characteristics, and workforce development activities. These analyses drive the required vision and goals for the State's workforce development system and alignment strategies for workforce development programs to support economic growth.
- The **Operational Planning Elements** section identifies the State's efforts to support the State's strategic vision and goals as identified in the Strategic Planning Elements section. This section ensures that the State has the necessary infrastructure, policies, and activities to meet its strategic goals, implement its alignment strategy, and support

ongoing program development and coordination. Operational planning elements include:

- State Strategy Implementation,
- State Operating Systems and Policies,
- Assurances,
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Core Programs, and
- Program-Specific Requirements for the Combined State Plan partner programs. (These requirements are available in a separate supplemental document, Supplement to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Unified and Combined State Plan Requirements. The Departments are not seeking comments on these particular requirements).

When responding to Unified or Combined State Plan requirements, States must identify specific strategies for coordinating programs and services for target populations.² States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations. Use of links to external websites and documents is permitted within the State Plan narrative submission, if such links remain active and adhere to Section 508 accessibility requirements.

Paperwork Reduction Act: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA) provides that an agency may not conduct, and no person is required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. Public reporting burden for this information collection is estimated to be 86 hours per state; including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Responding to this collection is required to obtain or retain the Federal grant benefit. In addition, responses to this information collection are public, and the agencies offer no assurances of confidentiality. Send comments regarding the burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Workforce Investment, and reference OMB control number 1205-0522. Note: Please do not return the completed plan to this address.

[2] Target populations include individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in WIOA Sec. 3, as well as veterans, unemployed workers, and youth.

I. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. WIOA STATE PLAN TYPE

Unified or Combined State Plan. Select whether the State is submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan. At a minimum, a State must submit a Unified State Plan that covers the six core programs.

Unified State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs.

Combined State Plan. This plan includes the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser Act, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and Vocational Rehabilitation programs, as well as one or more of the optional Combined State Plan partner programs identified below.

This is a unified plan

COMBINED PLAN PARTNER PROGRAM(S)

Indicate which Combined Plan partner program(s) the state is electing to include in the plan.

Career and technical education programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006, as amended by the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.)

No

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.)

No

Employment and Training programs under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (programs authorized under section 6(d)(4) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(d)(4)))

No

Work programs authorized under section 6(o) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2015(o))

No

Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers programs (activities authorized under chapter 2 of title II of the Trade Act of 1974 (19 U.S.C. 2271 et seq.))

No

Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program (programs authorized under 38, U.S.C. 4100 et. seq.)

No

Unemployment Insurance programs (programs authorized under State unemployment compensation laws in accordance with applicable Federal law)

No

Senior Community Service Employment program (programs authorized under title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965 (42 U.S.C. 3056 et seq.))

No

Employment and training activities carried out by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

No

Community Services Block Grant (Employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.))

No

B. PLAN INTRODUCTION OR EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Unified or Combined State Plan may include an introduction or executive summary. This element is optional.

The US Virgin Islands is pleased to submit a unified plan that will guide our work together as we strive to empower our workforce, nurture a robust economy, and position the Territory for sustainable success for the next four years. Our core partners within the workforce ecosystem are committed to building on the resilient spirit and rich diversity of the US Virgin Islands. The WIOA Unified Plan is a strategic planning tool used to envision a future where all residents, regardless of background, have equitable access to the skills and training needed for success in in-demand career pathways. Our vision aligns with Governor Albert Bryan Junior's focus on rebuilding and embracing a spirit of prosperity.

The US Virgin Islands holds a unique advantage to other workforce systems. As a globally American Territory with a vibrant Caribbean soul, we leverage our cultural richness and empower our diverse workforce to fuel economic growth. The strategic plan outlined in this plan, which is supported by rich data and validated by the insights of our core leaders within the workforce system, highlights the areas we must focus on to ensure a prosperous economy. By ensuring accessibility to relevant training and education, we cultivate a skilled Territory prepared to thrive in a competitive global market.

The US Virgin Islands stands as a testament to human resilience. We overcome challenges and embrace opportunities with unwavering determination. This collective spirit, coupled with a commitment to equity and opportunity, paves the way for a brighter future where all Virgin Islanders can achieve economic prosperity.

II. STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a Strategic Planning Elements section that analyzes the State's current economic environment and identifies the State's overall vision for its workforce development system. The required elements in this section allow the State to develop data-driven goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce and to identify successful strategies for aligning workforce development programs to support economic growth. Unless otherwise noted, all Strategic Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. Where requirements identify the term "populations", these must include individuals with barriers to employment as defined at WIOA Section 3. This includes displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals. Additional populations include veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

A. ECONOMIC, WORKFORCE, AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions, economic development strategies, and labor market in which the State's workforce system and programs will operate.

1. ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

A. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the economic conditions and trends in the State, including sub-State regions and any specific economic areas identified by the State. This must include—

I. EXISTING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which there is existing demand.

II. EMERGING DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS

Provide an analysis of the industries and occupations for which demand is emerging.

III. EMPLOYERS' EMPLOYMENT NEEDS

With regard to the industry sectors and occupations identified in (A)(i) and (ii), provide an assessment of the employment needs of employers, including a description of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required, including credentials and licenses.

The US Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board retained Lightcast to conduct a labor market analysis of the Territory while examining the workforce characteristics of its target industries. These insights inform the strategies of the Unified Plan that will help workers, students, employers, and the education and workforce training ecosystem align and build for the future.

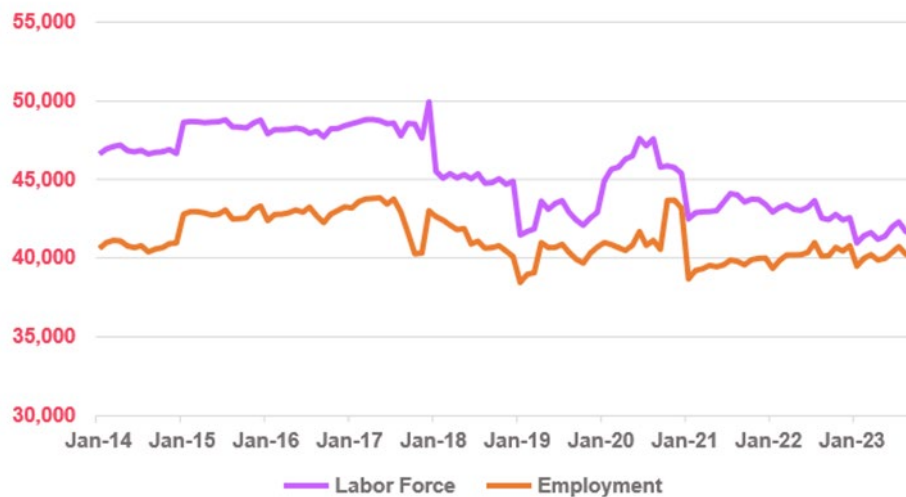
The US Virgin Islands' economy has faced a series of significant challenges over the past decade, resulting in a decline in job opportunities. The shocks began with the Great Recession of 2007 – 2008, which had a lasting impact on the region. In 2012, the Hovensa oil refinery dealt a severe blow to the local economy, leading to significant job losses. In 2017, the islands were hit by two devastating hurricanes, Irma and Maria, which not only caused substantial damage but also halved government revenues. The year 2019 saw the partial reopening of the oil refinery, offering a glimmer of recovery, but this was short-lived due to the facility closing again. Finally, the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 created additional economic challenges.

In addition to the challenges noted over the past decade, the US Virgin Islands has also faced a steady decline in population. The high unemployment, high cost of living, and declining job prospects were large contributing factors to this exodus of people. Demographically, the USVI was older than the United States, and it was experiencing an aging population with fewer young people as a share of the total population.

Now, the USVI faces a different challenge: one of labor market tightness. The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for both men and women in the USVI plummeted after the shutdown of the Hovensa refinery, far below that of the mainland United States. The lower education rates and the older population of the USVI contribute to this phenomenon. Many individuals who were out of the labor force in high-growth occupations were limited to jobs that required a high school diploma or less, such as carpenters, electricians, construction, laborers and cement masons. Nevertheless, these positions still necessitated training to fill the skills gap.

Further, the labor force has continued to shrink in line with population decline, yet overall employment has remained steady if not growing slightly since 2021 (figure1). The result is a decline in unemployment rates, reaching just 4.5% in September 2023, on par with that of the United States (Figure 2). While such a low unemployment rate in the USVI is something to celebrate, considering the years of high unemployment it faced up to this point, it also comes with drawbacks. There are simply less and less people available to hire to support economic recovery and growth.

Figure 1: USVI Labor Force and Employment Growth, 2014 – 2023



Source: USVI Department of Labor (VIDOL)

Figure 2: USVI Unemployment Rate, 2014 – 2023



Source: VIDOL

When comparing USVI industry employment share to that of the United States, the Territory has a high concentration of jobs in Tourism (Accommodation & Food Services and Arts, Entertainment & Recreation), Retail, Construction (related to recovery efforts), and Government (Table 1).

In terms of job growth, Construction was the only 2-digit industry that showed increases in jobs between 2012 and 2020, largely attributed to the post-hurricane rebuilding efforts. One study

highlighted the need for workers with specific skills in the Construction due to the recovery efforts. However, there was a shortage of local labor with the necessary skills, necessitating the recruitment of workers from outside the USVI. Yet, there is a lack of workforce housing for those incoming workers. Based on forecasts, the Construction was expected to experience the most significant labor market tightness due to the increased occupational demand linked to recovery expenditures, followed by Installation, Maintenance & Repair. At the same time, the number of unemployed workers in the USVI would be too low to meet this demand, as indicated by the very low unemployment rate and the need to bring in outside workers.

Table 1: USVI Industry Employment and Employment Share, 2022

Industry	Employment	Employment Share	US Share Benchmark
Agriculture	10	0.0%	1.0%
Mining	68	0.2%	0.3%
Utilities	35	0.1%	0.4%
Construction	1,994	5.9%	5.0%
Manufacturing	532	1.6%	8.1%
Wholesale Trade	590	1.8%	3.8%
Retail Trade	4,571	13.6%	10.1%
Transportation & Warehousing	1,159	3.5%	4.1%
Information	529	1.6%	1.9%
Finance & Insurance	945	2.8%	4.3%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	997	3.0%	1.5%
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	1,182	3.5%	6.6%
Management of Companies	48	0.1%	1.5%
Admin. Support & Waste Management & Remediation	1,733	5.2%	6.0%

Education Services	612	1.8%	2.4%
Health Care & Welfare Services	1,672	5.0%	13.3%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	704	2.1%	1.3%
Accommodation & Food Services	5,147	15.3%	8.1%
Other Services	1,385	4.1%	4.3%
Government	9,681	28.8%	15.8%
Total	33,594	100.0%	100.0%

Source: VIDOL Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) Q3 2022

Concerning wages, USVI remains below that of the mainland United States. This can be an advantage in terms of competitiveness for attracting employers, but a disadvantage for attracting talent when considering the high cost of living and lack of workforce housing. Combined with lower wages, this encourages talent to seek employment prospects outside of the Territory. For the USVI, wages break down as the following:

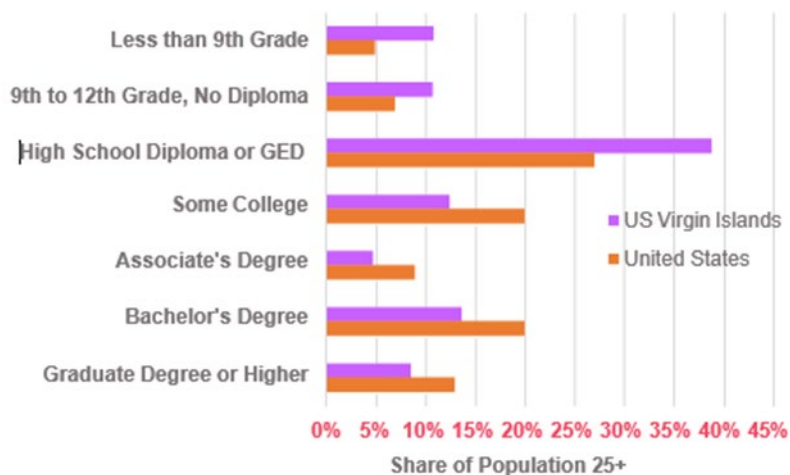
Entry-Level	Median	Average	Experienced
\$28,380	\$37,950	\$47,850	\$55,560

Source: VIDOL

The core partners of the Unified Plan play a pivotal role in preparing and supplying a skilled and adaptable labor force for USVI employers. The core partners offer a diverse menu of workforce training and support services, including basic career services such as resume development and interviewing skills, to basic literacy skills, vocational training, higher education, and continuous learning opportunities throughout one’s career.

Currently, the Territory’s educational attainment lags far behind the mainland United States (Figure 3). A much higher percentage of its population possesses a high school diploma or less. This lack of higher education limits the type of industries USVI can attract and grow in the Territory.

Figure 3: USVI & US Education Attainment



Source: US Census Bureau, 2020 Decennial Census of Island Areas - US Virgin Islands

The Core Partners of the Unified Plan have several services and initiatives in place to support skill development and uplift the supply of talent with resources to increase readiness for careers in in-demand pathways in the Territory.

In 2022, USVI WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs served 233 participants. Several programs on the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) are facing challenges with client interest and demand, while other programs maintain a steady level of interest from prospective job seekers, but several training programs have gained significant interest that are not on the ETPL. The VIWDB will work with training providers to gauge their interest in applying to have these training programs added to the ETPL. These include:

- Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN)
- Accounting
- Commercial Driver’s License (CDL)
- Heavy Equipment Training
- Graphic Design
- Medical Transcription
- Stenography

The US Virgin Islands has faced a population decline due to economic shocks and challenges, including high unemployment, a high cost of living, a lack of workforce housing, and declining job prospects. Labor market tightness is now a challenge, with a low Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR). The education and training pipeline is essential for supplying a skilled workforce and the Core Partners of the Unified Plan have several services and initiatives in place to address these challenges and prepare the Territory’s job seekers and incumbent workforce for careers that align with target sectors.

The target sectors identified by the Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) are experiencing varying degrees of challenges and success.

Agriculture

Agriculture and agribusiness (such as aquaponics, aquaculture, and hemp) are a strategic sector for the Territory. Detailed data on agricultural employment is very limited. According to the 2018 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture, the number of farms grew from 219 in 2007 to 565 in 2018 yet the acreage per farm shrank from 27 to 17.

The Territory's agriculture sector faces several workforce challenges. First, the labor force of farmers is aging quickly. Furthermore, according to the J&M Global Solutions, limited exposure to agriculture, in general, suppresses the potential for a new generation of students and workers in the agriculture and agri-business industries, and the lack of formal training programs or peer to peer training opportunities is a barrier to a viable career pathway in agriculture.

The VIWDB staff will explore potential partnerships to increase the capacity of the sector, entrepreneurship opportunities that may increase the attractiveness of the sector to USVI youth, while also creating formal training programs to develop a pipeline for the sector. The VIWDB has Board Members and partnerships with the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority and Virgin Islands Department of Tourism. Potential partnerships with these two entities could translate into entrepreneurship opportunities for local farmers that intersect with the USVI tourism industry. Cruise Industry News reported that St. Thomas and St. Croix welcomed more than 1,600,000 passengers on 495 cruise calls in 2023, representing a 13 percent increase compared to 2019. A partnership between the cruise terminal and surrounding shopping areas could facilitate opportunities for farmers to sell products unique to USVI to visiting tourists.

Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth Program (Title I of WIOA) staff will also explore partnerships with employers, local experts, and various training providers who specialize in delivering workshops, training courses, and training programs in entrepreneurship and urban manufacturing to diversify revenue for farmers and agribusiness employees. Increasing the capacity of local farmers and employees through entrepreneurship training will allow those groups the opportunity to maximize potential VIWDB partnerships with Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority and Virgin Islands Department of Tourism. Training can be focused on business promotion, digital and print marketing, and selling niche products at resorts or other tourism outlets. For example, specialty fruit such as dragon fruit and mesple (sapote), and value-added products such as jams, sauces, spice blends, coconut oil, aloe skin products, and fragrant soaps could increase revenue for farmers, wages for agribusiness employees, create entrepreneurship opportunities, increase the overall appeal of a career in agriculture, while bolstering the USVI economy.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) is exploring opportunities to support farmers and prospective job seekers entering the sector with workshops and classroom training on topics such as increasing yield (e.g. through techniques to resist drought or rotate crops) and commercializing the surplus for the local market.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will assess how it can improve coordination with other US Virgin Islands Department of Labor programs, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and Unemployment Insurance Programs, to better identify unemployed workers with the skills, aptitude and ability to transition into the Agriculture sector, and create a referral strategy with other Core Partner Programs.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services

with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Agriculture.

Financial Services

Trends in Financial Services employment reached their peak in 2018, decreasing until 2022, recovering to just around 950 workers. Employment is concentrated highest in St. John, with over 60% of employment occurring there. Top hiring employers represent a wide cross-section of the sector, including banking, capital investment, and insurance sales. Having diverse and actively hiring employers on the Virgin Islands provides a wider economic base in the sector and more opportunities for graduating students.

The sector is primarily staffed by customer-facing occupations, Sales Representatives, Customer Service Representatives, and Tellers are the leading occupations, and comprise 36% of all occupations in the sector. Other key occupations in the sector include mid-level finance data efforts, including management, processing claims, and underwriting. Traditionally, these occupations require some level of post-secondary education, such as an associate or bachelor's degree.

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States for January 2022 to September 2023 were used to identify the most common skills employers are requiring in these occupations. The table below lists the top five common, specialized, and software skills required by job postings for each key occupation.

Figure 4: Top Skills of Financial Services Occupations

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Sales Representatives, Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales Customer Service Communications Management Self-Motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales Prospecting Marketing Selling Techniques Financial Services Loans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Salesforce Spreadsheets Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software Zoom
Customer Service Representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call Center Experience Customer Inquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Salesforce Spreadsheets
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Tellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales Management Multitasking Customer Service Sales Communications Operations Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Merchandising Data Entry CRM Cash Handling Balancing Cash Register Loans Cross-Selling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAP Applications Operating Systems Microsoft Office Spreadsheets Banking Software Human Resources Information System (HRIS) Salesforce
Financial Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management Communications Leadership Operations Budgeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting Finance Financial Statements Auditing Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Accounting Software SAP Applications QuickBooks Spreadsheets
Insurance Claims & Policy Processing Clerks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Communications Detail Oriented Writing Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claims Processing Billing Data Entry Underwriting Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Spreadsheets Database Systems Epic EMR Dentrix
Insurance Underwriters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Management Sales Customer Service Detail-Oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underwriting Loans Marketing Mortgage Loans Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Encompass (Mortgage Software) Spreadsheets Desktop Underwriter Salesforce
Loan Interviewers & Clerks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Customer Service Detail-Oriented Operations Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loans Mortgage Loans Underwriting Loan Processing Loan Origination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Spreadsheets Desktop Underwriter Operating Systems Software Systems

Source: Lightcast

The VIWDB and Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs (Title I of WIOA) don't have any Financial Services workforce training programs on St. John, where employment in financial services is concentrated. The WIOA Program staff will begin developing a targeted strategy to engage with training providers who could help develop this sector on St. John. Additionally, the VIWDB will explore free, virtual and train the trainer training programs such as those offered by CareerWork\$ through their BankWork\$ training programs, <https://www.careerworks.org/programs/bankworks/>.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will explore strategies to develop talent at the entrypoint of the financial services career pathway. A possible apprenticeship partnership with the US Virgin Islands Department of Labor may be an option for creating a Financial Services Apprenticeships for students.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will work toward monitoring the ViEWS website to determine what occupations are in highest demand and partner with the

Core Partners of the Unified Plan to develop a strategy to support the in-demand pathway with an adequate supply of qualified talent.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Financial Services.

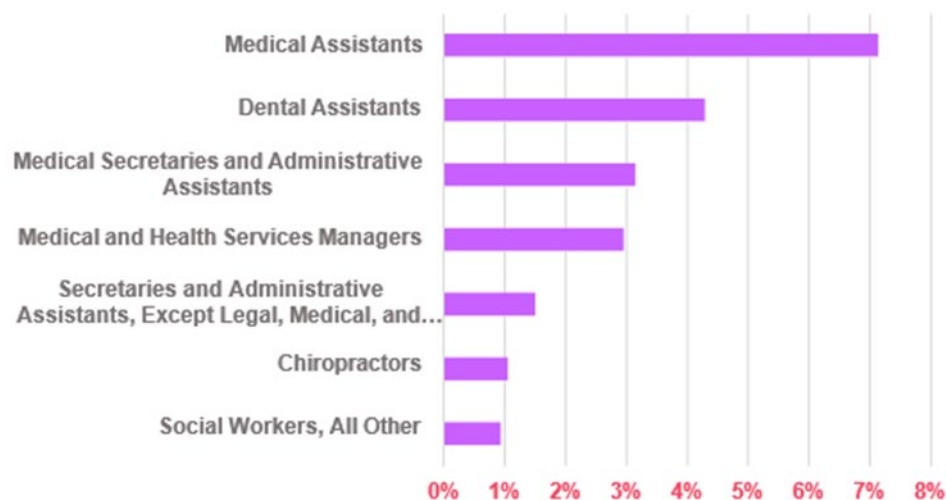
Healthcare

Healthcare employment declined sharply in late 2018, rising steadily since then to recently surpass 2018 levels of employment (Figure 14). Employment split evenly between St. Croix and St. Thomas, though in terms of employment concentration, it is much higher in St. Croix.

Reports have indicated that the growth in Healthcare is limited by the labor force and not necessarily demand. Even though Healthcare services rank among the top five employment sectors in the USVI, the region is officially designated as a medical professional shortage area by the US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Vacancy rates are notable, with over 40% of positions funded by the Territory and 30% of federally funded positions within the Department of Health remaining unfilled. The shortage of healthcare professionals is leading to poor quality and is the leading reason people leave the Territory.

Top hiring employers represent a mix of medical centers, services and therapy. Having diverse and actively hiring employers on the Virgin Islands provides a wider economic base in the sector, more opportunities for graduating or trained students. Staffing in this sector is led by Assistants (Medical, Dental, Secretaries) and Managers, indicating that in order to keep the Healthcare and Social Assistance sector thriving, not only are the highly trained doctors required, but also the support staff required to run the facilities.

Figure 5: Healthcare Staffing Patterns



Source: VIDOL

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions must understand the skills required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from January 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are requiring in

these occupations. The table below lists the five common, specialized, and software skills required by job postings for each key occupation.

Figure 6: Top Skills of Healthcare Occupations

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Chiropractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chiropractic • Medical History Documentation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Software Systems • Microsoft Office
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Administration • Management • Operations • Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Musculo-skeletal System • Marketing • Patient Evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient Management Software • Salesforce • Synchro (Traffic Simulation Software)
Dental Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Multitasking • Scheduling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sterilization • Dentistry • Dental Procedures • Infection Control • Oral Hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dentrix • Microsoft Office • Open Dental • Patient Management Software • Project Management Software
Medical Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Scheduling • Clerical Works • Computer Literacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Assistance • Vital Signs • Medical Records • Electronic Medical Record • Phlebotomy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Epic EMR • eClinicalWorks (ECW) • Spreadsheets • Patient Management Software
Medical Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Service • Communications • Scheduling • Multitasking • Clerical Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Records • Front Office • Medical Terminology • Setting Appointments • Billing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Dentrix • Epic EMR • Spreadsheets • eClinicalWorks (ECW)
Medical and Health Services Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management • Communications • Leadership • Operations • Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing • Auditing • Marketing • Project Management • Medical Records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Clinic Management Systems • Epic EMR • Microsoft Access
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Microsoft Excel • Detail Oriented • Clerical Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support • Data Entry • Invoicing • Office Supply Management • Office Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Microsoft Access • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • Microsoft Share-Point

The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs (Title I of WIOA) have ample workforce development training programs to prepare job seekers for the career pathway, but the volume of people served must increase to address the talent gap. The WIOA Title I programs will strategize with the VIWDB and core partners to develop a targeted outreach campaign to attract more job seekers to the in demand career pathway. The VIWDB will continue its efforts to

identify new training programs, ensure those programs meet the needs of the Territory's businesses, and solicit the training organization leadership to add those programs to the ETPL.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will explore integrated basic education and skills training (I-BEST) programming to integrate basic skills instruction with occupational skills training to assist in developing a talent pipeline for the Healthcare sector. Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programming will also be explored.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will assess how it can improve coordination with other US Virgin Islands Department of Labor programs, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and Unemployment Insurance Programs, to better identify unemployed workers with the skills, aptitude and ability to transition into the Healthcare sector, and create a referral strategy with other Core Partner Programs.

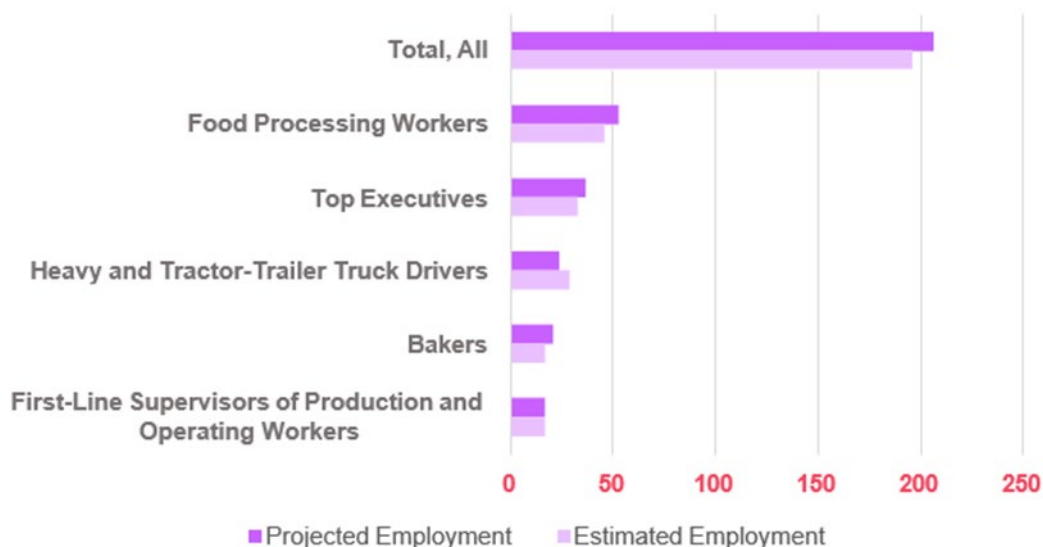
The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Healthcare.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing employment is almost exclusively in the island of St. Croix, with only a minimal presence on the other two islands. Over 60% of the manufacturing sector is comprised of beverage manufacturing and distillation, particularly in the realm of rum production. The USVI received substantial revenue from this industry through cover-over payments, which involve the transfer of excise tax payments from the United States to the Territory.

The manufacturing sector is staffed primarily by Food Production workers, followed by Executives, Drivers, and Supervisors (Figure 7). Educational requirements for these roles range from high school diploma and training for those in production and transportation, and up to a bachelor's or master's degree for traditional Supervisor or Executive roles.

Figure 7: Manufacturing Projected Employment, 2020-2030



Employment in the sector is projected to increase in 2030. Projected growth is driven by an increase in Food Processing Workers as well as growth in Executive roles. To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills

required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are requiring in these occupations. The table below lists the top five, common, specialized and software skills required by job postings for each key occupation.

Figure 8: Top Skills of Manufacturing Occupations

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Bakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Sanitation Communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baking Food Safety and Sanitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory Management System Microsoft Office
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sales Cleanliness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cake Decorating Merchandising Restaurant Operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Markdown Squeegee Web Browsers
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Leadership Operations Management Problem Solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean Manufacturing Continuous Improvement Process Housekeeping Good Manufacturing Practices Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office SAP Applications Spreadsheets Operating Systems Operational Databases
Heavy and Tractor-Trailer Truck Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good Driving Record Loading And Unloading Customer Service Communications Lifting Ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Truck Driving Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Vehicle Inspections Warehousing Flatbed Truck Operation Forklift Truck 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAP Applications Software Systems Microsoft Office Electronic Logbook Epic EMR
Food Processing Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Sanitation Communications Sales Packaging And Labeling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food Safety and Sanitation Baking Merchandising Cake Decorating Restaurant Operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory Management System Microsoft Office Markdown Web Browsers Squeegee
Other Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Troubleshooting (Problem Solving) Customer Service Management Lifting Ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HVAC Plumbing Carpentry Painting Preventive Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Inventory Control Systems Operating Systems SAP Applications Spreadsheets
Supervisors of Production Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Leadership Operations Management Problem Solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lean Manufacturing Continuous Improvement Process Housekeeping Good Manufacturing Practices Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office SAP Applications Spreadsheets Operating Systems Operational Databases
Top Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Management Communications Leadership Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Management Project Management Marketing Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Dashboard Salesforce Spreadsheets SQL (Programming Language)

A reliable source of graduates and trainees to fill occupations in the sector are vital to its continued growth, yet there are few programs available in the Territory that develop manufacturing talent. As it stands, if the refinery were to reopen, the current available talent development programming would be insufficient. The VIWDB will continue its efforts to identify new training programs, ensure those programs meet the needs of the Territory's businesses, and solicit the training organization leadership to add those programs to the ETPL.

The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program (Title I of WIOA) will develop a strategy to prepare job seekers with the interests and aptitudes for manufacturing, specifically for work at the refinery if it reopens.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will align with employers through targeted sector partnership work to prepare for the Utilities Sector's investment in green energy, and the blue economy. Additionally Title II will evaluate the durable and technical skills that can be developed in existing programs and transferred based on the demand of the industry.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will assess how it can improve coordination with other US Virgin Islands Department of Labor programs, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and Unemployment Insurance Programs, to better identify unemployed workers with the skills, aptitude and ability to transition into the Manufacturing sector, and create a referral strategy with other Core Partner Programs.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Manufacturing.

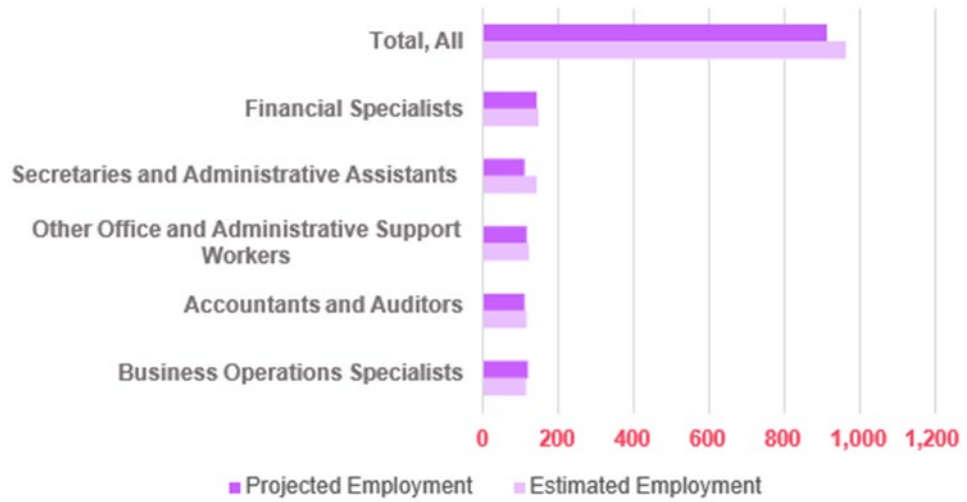
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services

Professional, Scientific & Technical Services declined by a worrying amount between 2012 and 2017, before beginning a brief rally, before it peaked in 2019 and has slowly declined since then. Reversing this trend of employment in the region should be a priority to support the Virgin Islands declared target sectors, including R&D and renewable energy, given its high wage profile.

The sector is primarily staffed by Financial Specialists, followed by Office Administrative Assistants and Support Workers, Accountants and Operations occupations (figure 25). Other top occupations include Secretaries and Other Management. Typically, the Financial Specialists, Accountants and Auditors, and Management require post-secondary education, while administrative roles may require a post-secondary education or sometimes a high school diploma.

Employment in the sector is projected to decrease by 2030 compared to 2020. Aside from Business Operations Specialists, this loss in employment is projected across all key occupations staffing the sector.

Figure 9: Professional Services Projected Growth, 2020 – 2030



Source: VIDOL

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from January 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are requiring in these occupations. Table 10 below lists the top five common, specialized, and software skills required by job postings for each key occupation.

Table 10: Top Skills of Professional Services Occupations

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Business Operations Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Management • Customer Service • Detail Oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Marketing • Auditing • Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Human Resources Information System (HRIS)
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant Tracking Systems • SQL (Programming Language) • SAP Applications
Financial Specialists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Management • Microsoft Excel • Detail Oriented • Operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Finance • Auditing • Financial Statements • Financial Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • SAP Applications • Accounting Software • SQL (Programming Language)
Other Management Occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Management • Leadership • Operations • Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Management • Marketing • Restaurant Operations • Auditing • Nursing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Microsoft Access • Salesforce • Microsoft Project
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Clerical Works • Microsoft Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Entry • Office Equipment • Administrative Support • Invoicing • Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • Microsoft Access • Database Systems
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Scheduling • Clerical Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support • Data Entry • Office Equipment • Invoicing • Office Supply Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Microsoft Access • Microsoft SharePoint • Google Workspace
Accountants and Auditors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Management • Microsoft Excel • Detail Oriented • Operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Auditing • Finance • Financial Statements • Generally Accepted Accounting Principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Accounting Software • Spreadsheets • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • SAP Applications

A reliable source of graduates and trainees to fill occupations in the sector are vital to the continued growth of Professional Services. There is a robust number of occupational training opportunities available in this sector, but the VIWDB will continue its efforts to identify new training programs, ensure those programs meet the needs of the Territory's businesses, and solicit the training organization leadership to add those programs to the ETPL.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will strategize to develop curricula to prepare job seekers interested in Professional, Scientific & Technical Services for remote work.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) should monitor the occupations currently in greatest demand in VIEWS, including the active job postings of the sector. Management occupations, followed by business and financial operations of office and administrative support occupations are currently in highest demand. The job openings on VIEWS should be monitored to determine if this trend continues, as well as communicate with employers to confirm these trends.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Professional, Scientific & Technical Services.

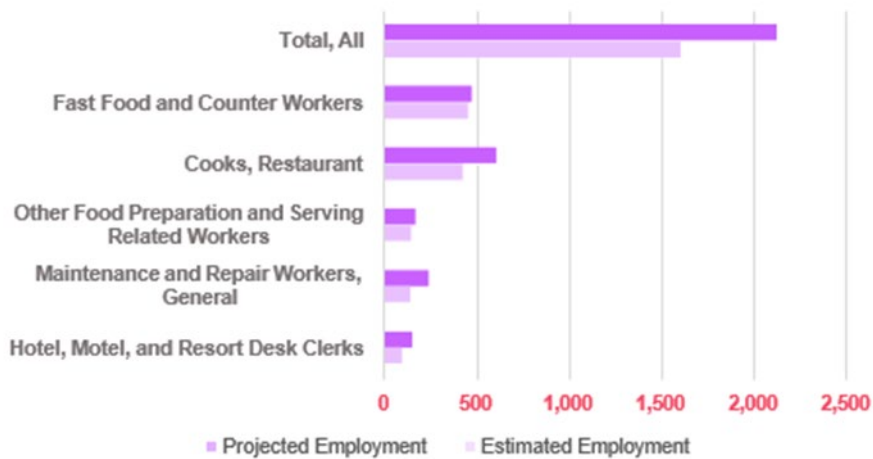
Tourism

In the wake of the 2017 hurricanes, the USVI experienced a drastic decline in the number of visitors, dealing a significant blow to its Tourism sector. Since then, and outside of the negative impacts of COVID-19, the sector has flourished. Coming out of the pandemic the USVI celebrated a projected increase of 39% for international arrivals, above 2019 levels in the fourth quarter of 2023, plus an increase of 25% for extended stay visitors. While tourists are returning to the USVI, the quest for qualified talent has been a challenge, impacting the sector's ability to meet its Tourism workforce demands. The constraint of workforce housing, particularly during peak seasons, adds another layer of complexity to the overarching goal of rejuvenating the tourism industry in the USVI. Despite the hurdles, there is a collective recognition of the need for strategic measures to enhance and revitalize the tourism landscape, ensuring its resilience against future challenges.

The sector is primarily staffed by Cooks and Food Preparation Workers in various restaurants, representing nearly 37% of employment in the sector. Other occupations in the sector include Maintenance Clerks, and Executives. Aside from Executives, these occupations require little to no educational attainment, with some requiring training or certification.

Employment in the sector is projected to increase significantly by 2030 (figure 11). Projected growth is spread across all key occupations. The projected employment assumes Tourism will return to normal as the recovery effort winds down.

Figure 11: Tourism Projected Growth, 2020 – 2030



Source: VIDOL

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are requiring in these occupations. Table 12 below lists the top five common, specialized, and software skills required by job posting for each key occupation.

Table 12: Top Skills of Tourism Occupation

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Chefs and Head Cooks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitation Operations Communications Management Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking Restaurant Operation Food Preparation Food Safety And Sanitation Food Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Spreadsheets DIGITAL Command Language Inventory Management System Apple IOS
Cooks, Restaurant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitation Communications Cleanliness Customer Service Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking Food Safety And Sanitation Food Preparation Restaurant Operation Food Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Software Systems Google Workspace Spreadsheets JavaScript (Programming Language)
Fast Food and Counter Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Communications Sanitation Cleanliness Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurant Operation Food Services Food Safety And Sanitation Food Preparation Cash Handling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Jersey (Java Framework) Protege Software Systems Spreadsheets
Hotel, Motel, and Resort Desk Clerks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Service Communications Reservations Management Operations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auditing Customer Complaint Resolution Front Office Housekeeping Cash Handling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Property Management Systems Spreadsheets Operating Systems Software Systems
Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Customer Service Troubleshooting (Problem Solving) Management Lifting Ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plumbing HVAC Painting Carpentry Preventive Maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Inventory Control Systems Operating Systems Spreadsheets SAP Applications
Other Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications Cleanliness Customer Service Sanitation Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restaurant Operation Mopping Food Safety And Sanitation Seating Guests Food Preparation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Software Systems Microsoft Office Project (MOPS) Operating Systems Adobe Audition
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Top Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Management Communications Leadership Customer Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operations Management Project Management Marketing Finance Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Office Dashboard Salesforce Spreadsheets SQL (Programming Language)

Source: Lightcast

A reliable source of graduates and trainees to fill occupations in the sector are vital to the continued growth of Tourism. Given the size of the Tourism sector share of employment in the USVI, the number of programs available is low and may serve as a constraint on producing skilled talent and career pathways. The VIWDB will continue its efforts to identify new training programs, ensure those programs meet the needs of the Territory's businesses, and solicit the training organization leadership to add those programs to the ETPL.

The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program (Title I of WIOA) will strategize to align itself with state agencies that are formulated to receive \$125 million from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for roads, bridges, and airports. These resources can be used in a targeted way to support access to tourism jobs for residents who are not prepared to work on those jobs but can support the movement of visitors on the islands.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will explore integrated basic education and skills training (I-BEST) programming to integrate basic skills instruction with occupational skills training to assist in developing a talent pipeline for the Tourism sector. Pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programming will also be explored.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will assess how it can improve coordination with other US Virgin Islands Department of Labor programs, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and Unemployment Insurance Programs, to better identify unemployed workers with the skills, aptitude and ability to transition into the Tourism sector, and create a referral strategy with other Core Partner Programs.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Tourism.

Utilities

Energy in the USVI is prohibitively expensive. Residential and commercial rates are significantly higher than the most expensive state (Hawaii) and up to four times the US average. These rates are also substantially more expensive than other island competitors. While poor infrastructure is one reason for the cost, a primary driver of high electricity rates is the over-reliance on the importation of fossil fuels such as fuel oil and propane gas.

In response to recent events and damage done to energy infrastructure due to natural disasters as well as the cost of oil fuels, the USVI is rebuilding its electric grid, this time with renewable energy sources as a stated goal. The USVI's goal is to achieve an energy output of 75% renewable energy. To date, solar energy has been the primary method towards reaching that goal.

Solar energy has been the Territory's primary stated goal and source of renewable energy, directing the focus of the work of the Core Partners to this area, specifically focusing on staffing needs, an analysis of sector growth outlook, quality jobs (wages) and developing the talent pipeline.

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills required for occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from January 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are required in these occupations. The table below lists the top five common, specialized, and software skills required by job postings for each key occupation.

Table 13: Top Skills & Certifications for Green Energy Occupations

Occupation Name	Certifications	Common Skills	Specialized Skills
General and Operations Managers	10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	Operations	Operations
	NABCEP Certified Energy Practitioner	Leadership	Leadership
	Master Of Business Administration (MBA)	Management	Management
	Project Management Professional Certification	Communications	Communications
	Certified Public Accountant	Customer Service	Customer Service
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	<i>Insufficient Data</i>	Sales	Marketing
		Communications	Project Management
		Detail Oriented	Salesforce
		Microsoft Excel	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
		Customer Service	Data Analysis
Solar Photovoltaic Installers	30-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	Customer Service	Roofing
	10-Hour OSHA General Industry Card	Lifting Ability	Solar Systems
	NABCEP Certified Energy Practitioner	Communications	Solar Energy Systems Installation
	OSHA Certification	Good Driving Record	Electrical Equipment
	DOT Certification	Detail Oriented	Construction
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	Commercial Driver's License (CDL)	Troubleshooting	Electrical Equipment
		Detail Oriented	Schematic Diagrams
		Microsoft Office	Wind Turbines
		Good Driving Record	Turbines
		Operations	Calibration
Logisticians	<i>Insufficient Data</i>	Operations	Supply Chain
		Communications	Purchasing
		Microsoft Excel	Key Performance Indicators
		Management	Procurement
		Planning	Warehousing
Web Developers	<i>Insufficient Data</i>	Communications	Cascading Style Sheets
		Safety Assurance	User Experience
		Leadership	HyperText Markup Language
		Innovation	Business Requirements
		Creativity	Agile Methodology

Source: Lightcast

To satisfy the occupational needs of the sector, workforce training institutions need to be aware of the skills required for the occupations staffing the sector. Job postings data of the United States from January 2022 to September 2023 were used to find what skills employers are requiring in these occupations. The table below lists the top five common, specialized, and software skills required by job posting for the Utilities sector.

Table 14: Top Skills of Utilities Occupations

Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Other Office and Administrative Support Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Clerical Works • Microsoft Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Entry • Office Equipment • Administrative Support • Invoicing • Accounting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • Microsoft Access • Database Systems
Plant and System Operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations • Communications • Troubleshooting (Problem Solving) • Management • Lifting Ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wastewater • Valves (Piping) • Boilers • Water Treatment • Machinery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • SAP Applications • Operating Systems • Operational Data Store
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Detail Oriented • Scheduling • Clerical Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support • Data Entry • Office Equipment • Invoicing • Office Supply Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Microsoft Access • Microsoft Share-Point • Google Workspace
Supervisors of Production Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Leadership • Operations • Management • Problem Solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean Manufacturing • Continuous Improvement Process • Housekeeping • Good Manufacturing Practices • Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • SAP Applications • Spreadsheets • Operating Systems • Operational Databases
First-Line Supervisors of Production and Operating Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Leadership • Operations • Management • Problem Solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lean Manufacturing • Continuous Improvement Process • Housekeeping • Good Manufacturing Practices • Auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • SAP Applications • Spreadsheets • Operating Systems • Operational Databases
Occupation	Common Skills	Specialized Skills	Software Skills
Office Clerks, General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Clerical Works • Detail Oriented • Filing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Entry • Office Equipment • Administrative Support • Invoicing • Office Supply Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • Microsoft Access • Google Workspace
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications • Customer Service • Microsoft Excel • Detail Oriented • Clerical Works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Support • Data Entry • Invoicing • Office Supply Management • Office Equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microsoft Office • Spreadsheets • Microsoft Access • QuickBooks (Accounting Software) • Microsoft Share-Point

Related educational training for the Utilities and green energy sector include fundamental skills in electronics, HVAC, and construction. Additional training providers and programs are needed to satisfy the anticipated growth and demand in this sector. The VIWDB will continue its efforts to identify new training programs, ensure those programs meet the needs of the Territory's businesses, and solicit the training organization leadership to add those programs to the ETPL.

The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Program (Title I of WIOA) will organize a sector partnership in Green Energy that convenes existing energy and utility companies to align and leverage resources and facilitate growth in the sector.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program (Title II of WIOA) will partner to develop curricula that prepares entry level job seekers with the knowledge and skills to succeed in the energy and electrical fields. There is a need to support, train and develop these skills and wage opportunities to keep talent in the USVI.

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service Program (Title III) will assess how it can improve coordination with other Virgin Islands Department of Labor programs, such as the Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program and Unemployment Insurance Programs, to better identify unemployed workers with the skills, aptitude and ability to transition into the Utilities sector, and create a referral strategy with other Core Partner Programs.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (Title IV) will explore leveraging Pre-Employment Transition Services partnership with public schools to possibly align Transition Services with WIOA Title I Youth programs to assist youth with disabilities to successfully transition from high school to employment or post-secondary training opportunities in Utilities.

B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce in the State and within various state regions. Provide key analytical conclusions in aggregate as well as disaggregated among populations to identify potential disparities in employment and educational attainment and understand labor force conditions for items (i)-(iii) below. Populations analyzed must include individuals with barriers to employment described in the first paragraph of Section II. Analysis must include—

I. EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Provide an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, including labor force participation rates, and trends in the State.

II. LABOR MARKET TRENDS

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

III. EDUCATION AND SKILL LEVELS OF THE WORKFORCE

Provide an analysis of the educational and skill levels of the workforce.

i. Employment and Unemployment

The US Virgin Islands' economy has faced a series of significant challenges over the past decade, resulting in a decline in job opportunities. Between 2007 and 2019, the USVI lost 8,700 jobs: a net loss of 19%. The USVI published Vision 2040 which serves as both an honest assessment of the challenges facing the Territory and a proposed path forward to best safeguard against economic catastrophe by diversifying the economy so that it is less dependent on any single industry base. More than ever, strengthening capacity at all levels is critical.

The USVI is currently facing the challenge of labor market tightness. The Labor Force Participation Rate for both men and women in the USVI plummeted after the shutdown of the Hovensa refinery, far below that of the United States. Further, the labor force has continued to shrink in line with population decline, yet overall employment has remained steady if not

growing slightly since 2021. The result is a decline in unemployment rates, reaching just 3.5% in 2023, on par with the United States. While such a low unemployment rate in the USVI is something to be celebrated considering the years of high unemployment it faced up to this point, it also comes with drawback: there is simply less and less people available to hire to support recovery and growth.

ii. Labor Market Trends

Provide an analysis of key labor market trends, including across existing industries and occupations.

Diversifying the economic base and moving away from service-driven economy where most jobs are in government, tourism and social services is important. According to Vision 2040, the USVI has an opportunity to become a center for renewable energy and Blue Economy research and development for the United States.

Although the Blue Economy may be an emerging industry to watch, the target sectors identified by the Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) are experiencing varying degrees of challenge and success. Key takeaways and recommendations for each target sector are as follows:

Agriculture: There is growing production in terms of number of farms and acreage but limited in higher value-add activities as evidence by low employee count.

Agriculture has poor training and education infrastructure for non-higher education talent. A growth in the number of farms coupled with a decrease in the size of farms suggests that subsistence farming is increasing. Relevant workforce development for these part-time farmers could include workshops on increasing yield and commercialize the surplus at local markets.

There is limited value-added agriculture and food manufacturing. One avenue for expansion is to develop value-added or niche products to sell to resorts or other tourism outlets. Workforce development training could identify these products, host workshops to introduce the production method and provide a forum to connect individuals who may be interested in commercializing products.

Financial Services: Employment in Financial Services has decreased since 2018 but is projected to grow modestly into 2030. Employment is concentrated in St. John yet no financial services workforce programs are advertised for resident on this island. This should be remedied in concert with the employers who are hiring financial services employees. Additionally, training and education for non-higher education, lower skilled talent is poor. The Core Partners within the workforce system should consider a sector partnership in Financial Services to build the talent pipeline, and define a career pathway for the Financial Services Industry in St. John.

Healthcare employment has increased since 2019 but growth is limited by the availability of talent, not lack of demand. There are ample workforce development training programs to serve the sector, but the volume of people served must increase in order to address the talent gap. The Core Partners would benefit from supporting a sector partnership in Healthcare, especially focusing on careers that specialize in elder care in aging and retirement communities. A sector partnership could also help increase the profile of the USVI as a destination for the aging population in need of care. The USVI could be home to independent living communities, assisted living facilities, and long-term skilled nursing facilities.

Manufacturing employment is largely limited to rum production since the closure of the oil refinery. The talent pipeline needs to be more organized and prepared in case the oil refinery

reopens. It's also important to prepare job seekers for opportunities in the utilities sector, such as green energy jobs and the blue economy.

Professional & Technical Services peaked at the end of 2019 and has declined since the pandemic. The Core Partners should focus on the remote-friendly nature of the sector to attract and develop talent.

Tourism employment has recovered to pre-pandemic levels and is projected to grow by hundreds of jobs into 2030. The USVI is formulated to receive \$125 million from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act for roads, bridges and airports. These resources can be used in a targeted way to support access to tourism jobs for residents who face difficulty accessing those opportunities and to support the movement of visitors on the islands.

Utilities, specifically green energy, has strong potential in the USVI but training opportunities that align with the career pathway are needed.

III. Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

The education and training pipeline plays a pivotal role in supplying a skilled and adaptable labor force for USVI's economy. This pipeline encompasses various stages, from early childhood education to vocational training, higher education, and continuous learning opportunities throughout one's career. Here are several reasons why the education and training pipeline is of the utmost importance:

Economic Competitiveness: A well-educated and trained workforce is a critical driver of economic competitiveness. It enables industries to innovate, adapt to changing market conditions, and compete effectively on a global scale. As technology and industries evolved, a highly skilled labor force is necessary to remain competitive.

Meeting Labor Market Demands: The education and training pipeline helps address labor market demands by supplying workers with the specific skills and knowledge required by industries. It ensures that there is as constant influx of talent into sectors experiencing growth or shortages in skilled workers.

Reducing Unemployment: Education and training opportunities help reduce unemployment by equipping individuals with the skills they need to secure jobs. A well-prepared labor force ensures that people are not left unemployed due to a mismatch between their skills and available job opportunities.

Generally, a more educated labor market is more adaptable due to the depth and breadth of skills possessed. This adaptability also creates greater labor market efficiency. Unfortunately, the Territory's educational attainment lags far behind the mainland United States. A much high percentage of the population possesses a high school diploma or less. This lack of higher education limits the types of industries USVI hopes to grow in the territory. Indeed, target industries like R&D, Professional Services, and other would required higher skilled workforce.

A more worrying trend is the impact that population decline is having upon the overall talent pipeline. While the number of graduates from the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) has remained fairly stable, both K-12 enrollment and high school graduate volume have declined significantly. This makes maintaining enrollment and graduate rates more difficult for UVI. Furthermore, it also means much of the lower-skilled jobs in the territory face a dwindling supply of talent.

The hurricanes not only impacted the K-12 education pipeline's numbers, but also quality. A RAND Study has notes that disasters negatively affect the student learning environment and reduce high school graduation rates. This highlights the need for continued efforts to support and improve the education system, particularly in the face of such challenges.

The USVI Department of Education has several initiatives and plans in place to support secondary graduates in the territory:

- **Free Education at UVI:** Currently, secondary graduates in the USVI have the opportunity to attend the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) for free, with some stipulations that may apply.
- **Funding for Post-Secondary CTE:** While there are no programs providing free tuition for post-secondary Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools, the Workforce Board offers funding to assist eligible students with tuition, uniforms, and books for specific CTE programs. The Government of the Virgin Islands is also moving towards a free tuition program for post-secondary offerings.
- **Alignment Programs:** To address CTE teacher shortages and enhance students' career readiness, alignment programs have been launched. These programs allow secondary students to complete courses towards a post-secondary certification while still in high school. These programs are offered at no cost to the students and involve collaboration between secondary and post-secondary educational institutions. For example, a pathway under the nursing program is being launched this semester.
- **Workforce Development:** The USVI Department of Education is actively working on developing programs that focus on skilling up the Virgin Islands workforce. These programs align with the VI Department of Labor's projected industry demand occupations and incorporate input from local VI businesses and agencies.

The University of the Virgin Islands has not conducted a formal study on the alignment of student interests with programs connected to the local job market. However, they have been working to support majors that cater to local needs. The most popular major is Nursing, followed by Accounting, Management, Computer Science and Biology. Other majors of interest include Psychology, Criminal Justice, Applied Mathematics (Engineering), and Hospitality Tourism Management.

UVI expressed a desire for more completions in Nursing due to high demand, but this would require additional faculty. They face challenges in faculty recruitment and retention due to salary disparities with other institutions. There is also a need for more graduates in Social Work and Education, although these programs have recruitment challenges, possibly due to perceived parity in those professions.

The WIOA Title I provider plays a crucial role in connecting job seekers with the training and skill development opportunities needed to qualify to enter or reenter the workforce. The WIOA Title I provider must serve as the bridge between job seekers and the skills demanded by employers. By offering relevant training and education programs, they enable individuals to acquire the qualifications needed to secure well-paying jobs. This contributes to reducing unemployment rates, improving economic stability, and enhancing the overall workforce in the US Virgin Islands.

The future of the USVI requires workers who have high levels of problem-solving and technical skills. Thus, improvements to education and workforce development are critical to achieving

aspirational goals. The education and training pipeline is essential for supplying a skilled workforce. Despite the challenges listed, initiatives are in place to address issues that impact academic achievement.

C. COMPARISON OF ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION. DESCRIBE AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR MEETING HIRING, EDUCATION, AND SKILLS NEEDS IDENTIFIED IN THE ECONOMY COMPARED TO THE ASSETS AVAILABLE IN THE LABOR FORCE IN THE STATE.

The USVI faces many challenges, stemming from a series of economic and environmental disasters, including the Great Recession, two devastating hurricanes and the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite these challenges, the people of the USVI leverage their vibrant Caribbean spirits to propel them towards a bright and prosperous future. Strategic interventions can lead to systemic changes that positively affect related issues. The key challenges to focus on are:

1. Enable Entrepreneurship: The USVI must streamline business start-up processes and create a friendly and encouraging environment for entrepreneurship. Creating a friendly operating environment for small business can be organized through a sector partnership framework. A group of small business owners can convene and prioritize topics such as:

- Initiate a top-to-bottom regulatory and permitting review, especially in sectors like tourism and construction.
- Simplify processes for starting a new business, reducing the numbers of forms, days, fees, and requirements.
- Adjust local worker requirements for incentives based on the unemployment rate. As the labor market declines in numbers, it is not good judgement to enforce a local worker requirement when talent needs to be important to fulfill the need.

2. Enable the Private Sector to Pull from the Public Sector: The government employs a far higher share of the USVI workforce than in similar regions such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico and other Caribbean islands. This further reduces the size of the talent pool for the private sector. There are several sectors that are hungry for growth but simply cannot find enough people and many of these growth-starved sectors have higher multiplier effects for job creation and income/revenue generation.

- Facilitate off-ramps from the public sector and on-ramps into the private sector for like jobs. The Core Partners will coordinate typical career services, such as helping with job seeking, resume development, and interview prep, as well as skills training for any bridge-skills that might be required by the private sector employer but not by the government (e.g. software programs).
- The government can support this initiative by reducing the rate of new hiring, such as by imposing a rule-of-thumb drawdown of only one new hire for every two workers who leave.

3. Become a Remote Work Destination: The USVI should embrace remote work by investing in a workforce capable of competing in the remote work environment, the claim that there are not enough jobs for USVI citizens is no longer relevant. This priority must be supported by significant and flexible investments in the following:

- Fiber/telecommunications infrastructure
- Overhaul of bureaucratic processes to be e-friendly (electronic signatures, electronic form submissions, etc.)
- Basic computer skills
- Investment in targeted training, certifications, and certificates which feature heavily as skills in the remote work job postings
- Expose job seekers and USVI residents to the possibilities of remote work through the Governor’s Workforce Summit

2. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the workforce development activities, including education and training in the State, to address the education and skill needs of the workforce, as identified in (a)(1)(B)(iii) above, and the employment needs of employers, as identified in (a)(1)(A)(iii) above. This must include an analysis of—

A. THE STATE’S WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the State’s workforce development activities, including education and training activities of the core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required ⁶ and optional one-stop delivery system partners.⁷

[6] Required one-stop partners: In addition to the core programs, the following partner programs are required to provide access through the one-stops: Career and Technical Education (Perkins), Community Services Block Grant, Indian and Native American programs, HUD Employment and Training programs, Job Corps, Local Veterans' Employment Representatives and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program, National Farmworker Jobs program, Senior Community Service Employment program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) (unless the Governor determines TANF will not be a required partner), Trade Adjustment Assistance programs, Unemployment Compensation programs, and YouthBuild.

[7] Workforce development activities may include a wide variety of programs and partners, including educational institutions, faith- and community-based organizations, and human services.

B. THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Provide an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce development activities identified in (A), directly above.

C. STATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

The USVI workforce development system is anchored by a shared vision and strategy to launch, support and promote workforce activities across St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas. The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) is the Governor’s chief governing, policy-making and strategic planning body for workforce development in the Territory. The VIWDB is a business led board that also includes representation from state agencies and elected officials.

The VIWDB coordinates the efforts of the American Job Centers, which provide comprehensive services to both jobseekers and businesses across the Territory, and the partners providing those comprehensive services. Jobseekers are offered a range of career and training services while businesses are supported by preparing talent for employment through program services. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) coordinates many workforce training activities in the center, including Wagner-Peyser, Rapid Response and Trade Program activities, Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA), leading the Business Services Team and operating the WIOA Title I Youth program.

The VIWDB ensures that the state workforce activities are aligned with the efforts of economic development, education, workforce development, government, and business stakeholders at the local, regional and Territory level. This multifaceted alignment of stakeholders creates a workforce system that is demand-driven and responsive to the needs of job seekers and employers in the Territory.

Program Responsibility:

Communication is vital to coordinate and align workforce services across the Territory. Core partner programs convene on a regular basis to partner on special initiatives and ongoing service delivery efforts. Core partners offer job seekers and underemployed individuals a full array of Career Services outlined in WIOA 134(c)(2).

Workforce services offered by each of the core partners are listed in detail in the table below.

The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIeWS) is the USVI's case management, data collection and reporting system used in the American Job Centers. This is a centralized system that tracks all WIOA, TAA, Veteran, Wagner-Peyser and state programs. The system is equipped with reporting functionality to track service delivery activities across the Territory.

Employer engagement is also a key ingredient in the success of the workforce system. Currently there are eleven employer services offered by the Business Services Team, led by VIDOL. These activities take place across the Territory.

Access to facilities: Employers have access to the American Job Center facilities for a variety of purposes, such as meetings, trainings, orientations, interviews, etc.

Assessments: Any tests or assessments used to measure the skills, interests, proficiencies and personality traits of an employee candidate or incumbent workers.

Business Education: Summits, roundtables and focus groups

Business Information: Information that will help businesses take advantage or tax incentives and programs that support the sustainability or growth of a business.

Hiring Events: Recruiting, interviewing and hiring support for businesses

Job Fairs: Supporting multiple employers with the recruiting, interviewing and general hiring needs for one or more positions.

Job Postings: Staff-entered job orders

Labor Market Information: Information on labor market conditions, industries, occupations and characteristics of the workforce and the analysis of short- and long-term industry and occupational trends and projections.

Rapid Response: Services to avert mass layoffs and dislocations

Screening: Any service that involves the initial evaluation of applications or resumes that assists the employer in the recruiting process

Training and Retraining: Training or retraining incumbent workers or prospective workers, including OJT, Work Experience and Incumbent Worker Training.

B. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities

The US Virgin Islands' economy faced a series of significant challenges over the past decade, resulting in a decline in job opportunities. Despite these challenges, the USVI workforce ecosystem embraces its cultural richness and diversity to propel forward and fuel economic growth. The strengths of the system include:

Experience and Passion for Service: Workforce professionals at the administrative and front line level representing the Core Partners have strong experience and institutional knowledge, which helps them relate to job seekers and employers. There is also a willingness to share information across partner organizations.

Accessibility: Services and activities for unemployed and underemployed job seekers and businesses are designed to meet these customers where they are. Workforce staff are mobile and they're deployed across the Territory to support customers at off-site job fairs, conduct information sessions and orient customers to the opportunities that exist for skill development along a career pathway.

Forward Thinking: The USVI is investing in new and emerging industries, including leveraging its coast and ocean access for "blue economy" or marine businesses, taking advantage of its natural resources for "green economy" or renewable energy businesses and promoting its history and culture for experiential tourism. Workforce development is paving the way for new talent to enter these sectors.

Goals to Enhance the Workforce System

Referral Process: Establish a common referral process to connect job seekers to appropriate agencies and to leverage resources through co-enrollment.

Stakeholder Collaboration: Coordinate across the workforce ecosystem can be improved to streamline activities across the workforce ecosystem. Stakeholders can coordinate more strategically to maximize human capital through a streamlined "one knock approach" where workforce partners have enough information about program services to represent each other in meetings with the business community, at outreach events and at events in the Territory.

Map Services: Catalog services offered across the workforce ecosystem and identify gaps that can be addressed, such as upskilling incumbent workers and coordinating work-based learning activities.

Sector Partnerships: Explore opportunities to serve businesses through sector solutions work.

Priority Populations: Develop plans to align and leverage resources to serve priority populations, such as justice involved job seekers, immigrants and English language learners, youth and older workers.

Business Services Team: Establish a cohesive Business Services Team that represents all core partners.

Fund Development: develop a plan to partner with state agencies to maximize the use of incoming resources from the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act

Modernizing Technology & Data Stewardship: Modernize the labor exchange system to increase its appeal to job seekers and businesses, including mobile functionality, and automate processes to reduce the burden of data entry. Increase data hygiene practices to ensure all data at the granular level is inputted accurately, timely and consistently.

C. State Workforce Development Capacity

Provide an analysis of the capacity of State entities to provide the workforce development activities identified in (A), above.

USVI maintains a workforce system that faces challenges with capacity due to the unique landscape and demographics that exist over the three-island Territory. The state agencies that represent the Core Partners within the workforce system are collaborative but a stronger emphasis on strategic coordination to maximize impact is needed. The core partners have agreed to consider a network mindset, where the partnership would work more strategically to meet system goals through sector partnerships, a coordinated business services team and a more streamlined approach for making referrals and coordinating outreach using a one knock approach.

B. STATE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State’s strategic vision and goals for developing its workforce and meeting employer needs in order to support economic growth and economic self-sufficiency. This must include—

1. VISION

Describe the State’s strategic vision for its workforce development system.

2. GOALS

Describe the goals for achieving this vision based on the analysis in (a) above of the State’s economic conditions, workforce, and workforce development activities. This must include—

(A) Goals for preparing an educated and skilled workforce, including preparing youth and individuals with barriers to employment⁸ and other populations.⁹

(B) Goals for meeting the skilled workforce needs of employers.

[8] Individuals with barriers to employment include displaced homemakers; low-income individuals; Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians; individuals with disabilities, including youth who are individuals with disabilities; older individuals; ex-offenders; homeless individuals, or homeless children and youths; youth who are in or have aged out of the foster care system; individuals who are English language learners, individuals who have low levels of literacy, and individuals facing substantial cultural barriers; eligible migrant and seasonal farmworkers (as defined at section 167(i) of WIOA and Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 35-14); individuals within 2 years of exhausting lifetime eligibility under the

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program; single parents (including single pregnant women); and long-term unemployed individuals.

[9] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth and any other populations identified by the State.

3. PERFORMANCE GOALS

Using the tables provided within each Core Program section, include the State's expected levels of performance relating to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance described in section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA. (This Strategic Planning element only applies to core programs.)

4. ASSESSMENT

Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment, which may include evaluation findings, and other feedback to make continuous or quality improvements.

1. Vision

Building on the resilient spirit and rich diversity of the US Virgin Islands, the WIOA Unified State Plan envisions a future where all residents, regardless of background, have equitable access to the skills and training needed for success in in-demand career pathways. This vision aligns with Governor Bryan Administration's focus on rebuilding and embracing a spirit of prosperity.

Our unique position as a globally American Territory with a vibrant Caribbean soul propels us forward. We leverage our cultural richness and empower our diverse workforce to fuel economic growth. By ensuring accessibility to relevant training and education, we cultivate a skilled Territory prepared to thrive in a competitive global market.

The US Virgin Islands stands as a testament to human resilience. We overcome challenges and embrace opportunities with unwavering determination. This collective spirit, coupled with a commitment to equity and opportunity, paves the way for a brighter future where all Virgin Islanders can achieve economic prosperity.

2. Goals

To achieve its vision, the VIWDB has developed the following goals to prepare and educate a skilled workforce:

- Promote Diversification of Post-Secondary Education and Training Opportunities, while also expanding the USVI Eligible Training Provider List. This will be achieved by completing the following:
 - Explore alternative and innovative training methods and methods to obtaining industry recognized credentials (this includes virtual reality training, credit for prior learning, digital badging, pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeships)
 - Identify and cultivate new opportunities for online and blended learning options - Many training provider may not be able to physically have a location in the USVI, but the USVI maybe able to solicit the training providers partnering with the University of the Virgin Islands and the Virgin Islands Department of

Education to open satellite campuses, virtual campuses, and/or virtual trainings for USVI residents.

- Work with various partners, review and study the impact and development of family-based workforce needs to ensure increased retention opportunities.

B) Goals for Meeting the Skills Workforce Needs of Employers

To achieve its vision, the VIWDB has developed the following goals to ensure the USVI workforce/labor force meeting the needs of local employers:

- **Develop and Increase Sector Partnerships** - The development of Sector Partnerships will include formal sector partnership meetings and convening by the VIWDB and American Job Center partners to jointly convene businesses, educators, and training providers in one room (virtually or physically) to discuss needs, identify intersecting priorities, confirm in-demand industries, confirm in-demand industry clusters, confirm high growth occupations, and economic trends impact the short term and long term success of the USVI. These partnerships will plant the seeds for future sector strategies.
- **Develop and Increase Sector Strategies** - The development of Sector Strategies will be a key focus for the VIWDB and the USVI Workforce System to ensure the system is in alignment with local employers. This effort will include the development of a collaborative approach to engage and collect qualitative employer data, combined with quantitative employer data collected via the sourcing of Labor Market Information (LMI), and identifying the overall needs of employers. This data, and the employers, will be engaged and included in presentations to USVI Workforce System stakeholders, including the University of the Virgin Islands, local education and training providers, labor representatives, economic development representatives, and workforce development partners/saff to identify and develop sector strategies and programs to meet those needs.

8) Individuals with Barriers to Employment

To achieve its vision, the VIWDB has developed the following goals to ensure job seekers with barriers and severe barriers (Sections B 8 and 9) to employment have equitable access to the USVI Workforce System and services that will lead to them meeting needs of local employers:

- **Create a Unified Outreach Strategy** - Job seekers with barriers and severe barriers to employment tend to be disconnected from workforce systems and potentially out of the labor force. To combat the decreasing USVI labor force and improve labor force participation rates, the VIWDB will need to create a unified outreach strategy for the USVI Workforce System that allows each partner to conduct outreach, while also magnifying the impact of each partners outreach for the greater good of the USVI Workforce System.
- **Development of a Support Service Asset Mapping** - Job seekers with barriers and severe barriers to employment will need various supportive services. To ensure staff are knowledge of the services available in the USVI Workforce System, who provides the services, and the eligibility to receive the services, an asset map of all USVI Workforce

System supportive services will need to be developed, followed by a training for all staff, and posting of the asset map on the VIWDB website.

- Develop a Co-Enrollment Strategy - When serving job seekers with barriers and severe barriers to employment, there will be a need for a multitude of services and supports to ensure their success and long term employment. Without a breadth of resources, the USVI Workforce System will need to strengthen partnerships to increase co-enrollments. As such a strategy to co-enroll job seekers across multiple core partners will need to be developed.

3. Performance Goals

4. Assessment

The VIWDB will develop a comprehensive tool to evaluate all components of the USVI Workforce System, inclusive of all the core programs, in alignment with the VIWDB's strategic vision and goals. This tool will be a formative evaluation tool that tracks activity throughout the program year and reports at quarterly intervals. The tool will be used to gauge:

- Overall functionality of the System
- Integration between core programs
- Interaction with non-core programs
- Use of Technology
- Customer satisfaction
- Employer satisfaction

The overall assessment will be based on the attainment of overarching goals set for the system.

C. STATE STRATEGY

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the State's strategies to achieve its strategic vision and goals. These strategies must take into account the State's economic, workforce, and workforce development, education and training activities and analysis provided in Section (a) above. Include discussion of specific strategies to address the needs of populations provided in Section (a).

1. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT, INCLUDING INDUSTRY OR SECTOR PARTNERSHIPS RELATED TO IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTORS AND OCCUPATIONS AND CAREER PATHWAYS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA SECTION 101(D)(3)(B), (D). "CAREER PATHWAY" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(7) AND INCLUDES REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP. "IN-DEMAND INDUSTRY SECTOR OR OCCUPATION" IS DEFINED AT WIOA SECTION 3(23)

2. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ALIGN THE CORE PROGRAMS, ANY COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN, REQUIRED AND OPTIONAL ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS, AND ANY OTHER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE STATE TO ACHIEVE FULLY INTEGRATED CUSTOMER SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THE STRATEGIC VISION AND GOALS DESCRIBED ABOVE. ALSO DESCRIBE STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN REGARD TO WEAKNESSES IDENTIFIED IN SECTION II(A)(2)

1. Sector Partnerships

Industry in the USVI is changing at an unprecedented pace. From automation and technological advancements to the territories aging population and labor market tightness, the USVI is facing challenges that no single business or state agency can overcome alone. **Sector Partnerships** are a collaborative approach that brings together local stakeholders, including employers, the University of the Virgin Islands, education and training providers, labor representatives and workforce development experts to identify a regions toughest challenges and develop a strategy to overcome those challenges, together.

Sector Partnerships will offer a offer a powerful solution by fostering collaboration between businesses, educators, and training providers within key industry clusters or occupations. Here's how sector partnerships in the USVI will make a difference:

- **Alignment:** Partnerships will identify common challenges across a sector or occupation and select challenges to tackle based on the groups collective input and their ability to solve the issue. This eliminates wasted time and resources, creating a more efficient system for developing a skilled workforce that aligns with local need.
- **Employer Engagement:** Businesses become active participants in shaping the workforce they need. This not only leads to more relevant training programs, but also creates a pipeline of qualified candidates ready to step into open positions.
- **Career Pathways:** Partnerships can design clear career pathways within an industry or occupation, outlining the skills and training needed for advancement. This transparency motivates workers and helps them plan their career development.
- **Shared Investment:** Partnerships leverage the expertise and resources of various stakeholders, maximizing the impact of workforce development initiatives.

In essence, Sector Partnerships create a win-win situation. Businesses gain access to a skilled workforce, while workers have clear paths to secure high-demand, good-paying jobs. This collaborative approach is essential for building a future-proof workforce that fuels the USVI's economic success.

The Challenge

USVI's economy is facing challenges that no single employer, Workforce Board or region can face alone. Opportunities are evolving, demanding a strong and skilled workforce but challenges exist across the territory that are making it increasingly difficult to align talent with demand. Collectively, the USVI is facing the following challenges:

Labor Force Participation:

- **Declining Rate:** The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for both men and women in the USVI plummeted after the shutdown of the Hovensa refinery, far below that of the United States. The lower education rates and older population of the USVI contribute to

this phenomenon. Further the labor force has continued to shrink in line with the population decline. While a low unemployment rate can be celebrated, it also comes with drawbacks. There are simply not enough people to support recovery and growth.

- **Job Openings vs. Qualified Workers:** Many businesses in the USVI struggle to find qualified workers for open positions. The skills gap creates a mismatch between available jobs and the skills of the workforce. Sector Partnerships can help close this gap by aligning training programs with employer needs.

Population Shifts:

- **Aging Population & Population Exodus:** USVI's population is aging, and there's a trend of people leaving the territory for the main land. This has led to workforce shortages across the territory. Sector Partnerships can address these challenges by developing targeted programs for specific areas.

Economic Transformation:

- **Automation & Technological Advancements:** Automation and evolving technologies are changing the job market. New skills are constantly in demand, requiring a flexible and adaptable workforce. Sector Partnerships can help identify emerging trends and ensure training programs keep pace with these changes.

By tackling these challenges head-on, Sector Partnerships can play a critical role in building a resilient and future-proof workforce for Iowa.

Sector Partnerships will succeed in the USVI because our Core Team has agreed to establish the supports necessary for them to thrive. Sector Strategies and Occupational Based Partnerships are most effective when they serve as the anchor of the local workforce ecosystem.

Effective Sector Partnerships

1. Put businesses at the middle of the conversation
2. Treat businesses as partners, not the end customer
3. Align partners based on identified goals
4. Require a credible third party "convener" to act as a neutral intermediary that can guide that partnership and align partners
5. Convene at a regional scale

It is necessary to acknowledge and address the unique challenges that remote communities in the USVI will have in forming and sustaining sector partnerships. Rural areas are encouraged to explore and develop partnerships that align with the unique economic and workforce conditions in their area. Occupation-based partnerships focus on the needs of participating employers and should focus their approach on the opportunities to advance in its service region, regardless of industry or sector.

In rural partnerships, the number of partners represented may be less, therefore, it may require partners to take on more than one role. It's important to evaluate the administrative capacity of each individual partner when assigning roles to try and limit over taxing partners with an unsustainable administrative burden. Initiatives intended to boost economic vitality and align

the workforce ecosystem in rural areas must carefully consider the unique landscape of the region, including its politics, culture and history. Failure to consider the unique challenges of rural communities will limit a successful launch and lessen the chance for a sustainable partnership long term.

Occupation based partnerships leverage the density of cross-sector occupations that exist in a rural area rather than specific industry occupations. Occupations that are well represented in a local area across a range of industries will bring together common challenges that no single business could overcome alone due to the scarcity of resources and administrative capacity that are usually present in small, rural community businesses.

It's important to note that sector partnerships and occupation-based partnerships do not need to be separate and distinct initiatives, with separate meetings and agendas if employers from the desired target industry or occupation are already convening. Explore a partnership with the existing convening body to share the vision of the partnership, including identifying the needs of employers, proposing solutions, and working towards collaborative solutions that address the needs of business.

Developing a Shared Vision

Regional sector partnerships and occupation-based partnerships must begin with the end in mind. Sector partnerships in the USVI will begin by defining a **shared vision**, which provides a clear sense of direction for the partnership. The shared vision will be developed by the education, economic development and workforce development partners supporting the effort. A shared vision includes the alignment of resources to accomplish the vision.

The partnership convener will be identified and should facilitate a session where the public partners/agencies work collectively to develop the shared vision which should be agreed upon and memorialized in a partnership agreement, such as an MOU. The convener should help the partnership define:

- A vision and mission statement
- Roles of your partnership
 - Convening Team
 - Larger Core Group
 - Champions (Businesses leading the effort)
 - Businesses (ideally represented by senior decision makers)
- Objectives, Strategy and Next Steps
- Outcomes

Once the public partners/agencies have defined their shared vision, they are ready to identify businesses and launch the partnership. Aligning the partnership to a shared vision from the start will help the USVI Workforce System anchor the partnership with a common purpose.

Launch Meeting

Once the shared vision is established for the sector partnership, the Core Group of partners will develop an invitation list of businesses that should be invited to the sector or occupation-based launch meeting. In a perfect world, the distribution list would be robust, and include at list 50

representatives from business that are at a decision-making level at the organization. The distribution list should represent all segments of an industry. For instance, in healthcare, consider large and small providers, primary care, acute, behavioral health, public health, long term care and emergency response providers. All the organizations that represent the diversity of the industry should be added to your invitation list, even if no one on the core team has a personal connection with the business. Often, it's the organizations that are not already well-connected to the workforce ecosystem that end up being the most engaged in sector partnerships. There are three things the USVI will keep in mind in building the list:

Numbers – Aim to have at least 15 businesses at the launch meeting. That means at least 50 invitations will be sent, accounting for normal attrition.

Diversity of Organizations – It's critical to have a balanced room of businesses, representing small, medium, and large business. The invitation list should also consider the diverse specialties that exist within an industry.

Senior, C-Suite Leaders- The goal is to have decision makers in the room, not representatives who cannot make commitments on behalf of the business. That means that the USVI will target the invitation list to C Suite Executives or Directors rather than HR or Business Development representatives.

The Core Group will review the distribution list and identify 1 – 4 individuals that will serve as the Champions, or Co-Chairs, of the sector partnership. Sector Partnerships are industry led, therefore, the partnership Champions will lead meetings and serve as the primary voice that drives the partnership forward. It's important to consider Champions that are well respected, innovative, positive and have the capacity to lead this work. The Core Group is behind the scenes supporting the Champions as they advance the partnership forward.

Meeting Structure and Facilitation

Effective sector partnership meetings should be facilitated by the industry/occupation champion or an unbiased intermediary who can frame compelling questions that create psychological safety amongst the group that promotes information sharing that leads to consensus. As the meeting progresses and goals are identified, the meeting facilitator should continue to validate the goals being developed to ensure the goals are directly addressing the challenges at hand.

Sample Questions:

- Does the data presented substantiate what you're seeing in the field? Are there any data points you'd like to challenge?
- What are 3 or 4 needs that are critical to the success of your operations over the next year?
- What challenges do you face when hiring employees?
- What changes are you seeing in your industry? How do the effect who you're hiring or how you're hiring?
- Do the positions you're hiring for require certifications, credentials, or degrees? How do your employees obtain those baseline requirements?
- Could your business benefit from upskilling existing staff? What type of training would benefit your company?

Measuring Sector Partnerships

What's measured gets managed. Sector partnerships will become sustainable solution to anchor the work in the USVI across the workforce ecosystem when progress is measured. Employers commit to this important work when they see that their investment of time and resources results in outcomes. Similarly, core partners will work more strategically and intentionally together when they see that aligning resources and services results in greater impact. Finally, tracking outcomes allows the partnership to share their success, which can be translated to grant applications that could help the partnership sustain its efforts.

The Business Champions should facilitate a discussion with the full membership of businesses to define the outcomes that they want to track. Long term goals should be identified to measure progress over time and the impact the work completed is having in the associated priority area. Short term goals can serve as an opportunity for progress check to ensure work is on track or to adjust the approach if outcomes are not being realized.

Sustainability

Building a successful sector partnership in the USVI is just the first step in making the framework a long-term viable economic and workforce development solution in the territory. Below are some key strategies to ensure sustainability and long-term success of the partnership.

Maintain Clear Value Proposition:

- Regularly communicate the partnership's accomplishments and impact on the workforce.
- Showcase success stories of employers who benefited from skilled hires and workers who secured good jobs.
- Conduct surveys to gather feedback from partners and adjust strategies based on their needs.

Foster Ongoing Engagement:

- Schedule regular meetings to keep partners informed, discuss ongoing challenges, and brainstorm new initiatives.
- Create opportunities for networking and collaboration among partner organizations.
- Establish committees or working groups focused on specific areas of interest (e.g., curriculum development, marketing, data analysis).

Diversify Funding Streams:

- Develop a multi-year funding strategy that goes beyond initial grants.
- Explore potential revenue streams such as co-developed training programs with employer tuition fees.
- Seek sponsorships from industry associations or foundations aligned with the partnership's goals.

Grant Application Strategy:

- Identify grant opportunities that align with the partnership's goals and target audience.

- Develop a compelling grant proposal highlighting the partnership's structure, track record, and long-term sustainability plan.
- Clearly demonstrate the impact of the partnership on regional workforce development and economic growth.
- Build strong relationships with grant program administrators and potential funders.

Additional Tips:

- Establish clear metrics to track the partnership's progress and measure its impact (see “Measuring Sector Partnerships” section).
- Promote the partnership's successes through various channels (e.g., media, social media, local events).
- Recruit new partners who bring diverse perspectives and resources to the table.
- Celebrate milestones and achievements to maintain partner morale and commitment.

By implementing these strategies in the USVI, Sector Partnerships can be a vital force in shaping a skilled and competitive workforce.

II. Core Program Alignment

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act focuses on providing opportunities for those individuals with barriers to employment. This includes out-of-school youth, adults/disengaged individuals without a high school diploma, individuals with basic skill deficiencies and individuals with disabilities, English language learners and the long-term unemployed.

The VIWDB has aggregate service strategies into three tracks of development to align the efforts of the core and non-core partners operating within the USVI Workforce System: **Ready for Work**, **Job Assist**, and **Intensive Career Preparation**.

Ready for Work – This group of individuals are ready for work. They may have already chosen their career path and are equipped with skills, credentials and some work experience, but are still having challenges connecting or reconnecting to employment. Through the American Job Center, job seekers have access to a variety of workshops that include, resume preparation, interviewing techniques and workplace etiquette. Self-directed programs that boost confidence and help an individual learn to “sell their skills” are also available. Current job listings are always available which facilitates the search process. Job seekers can participate in these activities either on their own or with the assistance of a career counselor. If support services are needed both workforce and partner agency representatives are available to provide assistance. These customers are ready for work and with a little guidance can land their dream job.

Job Assist – These job seekers may have work experience but no specific job interest or skill level. Career counselors and staff, across all partners, begin by assessing the job seekers and developing an individual career plan that includes initial career assessments, academic competency level testing, career exploration and matching. Referrals to core and non-core partner programs are made and noted on the career plan to coordinate activity intervals.

Some job seekers on this track may be seeking retraining to advance their skills and/or credential level. Local LMI information is provided so that job seekers can make informed decisions about their career areas of interest and determine the time and effort needed to achieve their goal. Education and training opportunities are made available and job seekers

choose the intensity of their path. Job seekers requiring this level of assistance may take 6-12 months to complete the foundational competencies and academic/training required to accomplish their goals. They will have access to job shadowing, on-the-job training, paid or unpaid work experience and transitional employment before they complete their regimen. Career counselors are available throughout their journey to assist and encourage. Once career credentials are earned, job seekers are assisted with finding unsubsidized employment.

Intensive Career Preparation – This track is taken by job seekers who face significant or multiple barriers to employment. They may need preparation for a high school diploma or GED. Some may be English language learners who have a skill but have challenges functioning in a new environment. Others may have visible or hidden disabilities that can be successfully managed with a longer development plan. Still other customers may experience difficulty maintaining employment due to poor social skills or work habits. Job seekers who are served in this track will work with career counselors to map out and follow the same foundational to training path as other job seekers and have access to the same tools and activities; however, in addition to that they will have mentors that work with them throughout their time in the workforce system to give them the added encouragement they need to complete their goals.

Integration with partners and partner programs will be achieved by aligning and classifying their services by track. Implementation will be achieved through the American Job Center, where partners share in the assessment of job seekers and delivery of workshops. Subject matter experts from both core and non-core partners, including TANF and SNAP, can offer workshops at the American Job Centers that are available to all customers. Further, several workshops may also be developed with the “hardest to serve” job seekers in mind. TANF, SNAP, Vocational Rehabilitation and Reemployment customers should all be required to participate in a “Getting Ready for Work” workshop series, something the VIWDB will need to assess and improve compliance with. Local Certificates of Completion will be given to those who complete the series. Business services staff which includes representatives from all program partners will educate employers about these certificates to identify which potential employees have benefitted from these workshops and have demonstrated the aptitude to be successful employees.

The VIWDB will engage stakeholders from multiple sectors, agencies and organizations to achieve the vision outlined in this plan. The VIWDB will serve as the anchor that coordinates communication across the workforce ecosystem and aligns a strategic plan that leverages new laws and policies, including the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. Leveraging the key strategies outlined in the state plan with new funding will have a positive economic impact for the USVI residents and businesses.

CHIPS and Science Act made a historic investment in American manufacturing, innovation, and supply chains. The Act focuses on boosting domestic semiconductor manufacturing within the mainland US but there is likely to be positive indirect impact on the Territory, including:

More Resilient Supply Chains: The Act aims to make US supply chains less reliant on foreign producers, potentially making businesses in the US Virgin Islands less vulnerable to disruptions in global trade, especially on essential goods, such as semiconductors.

Although the CHIPS and Science Act only indirectly impacts the USVI, the VIWDB understands that the success in technology is dependent upon a quality workforce and that workforce must be developed in order to respond to future needs in the Territory. Through sector partnerships, the VIWDB will encourage agencies and employers to consider developing the future workforce by promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education that position

the Territory to take advantage of the high-growth, high-wage sectors in manufacturing and clean energy technology.

Inflation Reduction Act will support more clean energy jobs and expand workforce training for these industries in the USVI. The law made \$15 million available in funding for climate technical assistance. This historic commitment will support the Territories efforts to build career pathways in the new clean energy economy, including solar energy. The VIWDB and workforce partners will prioritize a talent development strategy that will prepare individuals with the skills needed for success.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has delivered millions to the US Virgin Islands for various infrastructure projects. The breakdown of funding includes:

Transportation: \$277.7 million has been designated for transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, public transit, ports and airports.

Clean Water and Water Infrastructure: Over \$102 million has been allocated to improve water quality and access to clean drinking water.

Resilience Projects: \$58.6 million has been directed towards bolstering the US Virgin Islands' infrastructure against climate change, extreme weather events, and cyber threats.

The VIWDB will coordinate across stakeholders to create a multi-level progression of career pathways, including entry-level, mid-level and advanced positions that clearly identify the skills, academic credentials and experience required to progress along the career ladder. The career pathways development project will be championed as a priority of sector partnerships and will include the voices of core partners, employers and partner organizations.

The USVI is remote enough from the mainland United States that it must rely on strong communication and collaboration across the workforce ecosystem to advance priorities outlined in the strategic plan. Policies have been designed to align with the strategic direction and guidance of USDOL, the Governor and the VIWDB. The VIWDB will serve as the anchor of the core partners, launching the strategic priorities listed in the plan and supporting the implementation of these priorities across the Territory.

How will the VIWDB address weaknesses in the USVI Workforce System? Workforce partnerships among core and non-core partners have been formed during the planning phase of the previous plan, the meetings and convenings of the VIWDB, and the development of this plan. Challenges and grievances are routinely identified, along with cultural and service differences by island. The disconnects are the USVI Workforce System's greatest weakness, and long standing. The VIWDB will continue to facilitate periodic meetings, directly and through the One-Stop Operator, resolve these differences.

III. OPERATIONAL PLANNING ELEMENTS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an Operational Planning Elements section that supports the State's strategy and the system-wide vision described in Section II(c) above. Unless otherwise noted, all Operational Planning Elements apply to Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan as well as to core programs. This section must include—

A. STATE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include—

1. STATE BOARD FUNCTIONS

Describe how the State board will implement its functions under section 101(d) of WIOA (i.e., provide a description of Board operational structures and decision making processes to ensure such functions are carried out).

The United States Virgin Islands is a single State local area and has one Workforce Development Board that performs the duties of a State and Local Board. The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) is comprised of twenty-seven members to include the Governor, Commissioners of the three workforce agencies — Labor, Education, and Human Services, the State Administrator for Adult Education and Family Literacy, the Administrator of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, representatives from the University of the Virgin Islands, Economic Development Authority and Workforce Development; representatives of local labor unions and majority representation from local businesses. A complete roster of VIWDB members can be found on the VIWDB website.

The VIWDB has three standing committees: Executive, Strategic Planning, and Operations. There is a Youth committee that operates as a sub-group of the Operations committee. Board members select committee participation based on their own personal strengths and potential contribution to the respective committee.

Private sector board members are selected based on their affiliation to local in-demand occupations. As sector strategies are built out, these board members take the lead to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the workforce product delivered. Career pathways are developed in a similar manner, with the addition of the VIWDB contracting with Lightcast to assist with data collection and reporting.. The State Administrator of Adult Education and Literacy also oversees the State Career and Technical Education programs in the Territory and in conjunction with the Career and Technical Education Board, and local businesses have begun to align career pathway development with the local demand occupations to ensure a smooth transition from secondary school to post-secondary education or training.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Area consists of one region. Programs and activities developed for the delivery area are the same as that of the region. Tourism and hospitality is the overarching resource of the area and many businesses support it or feed into it thus creating one solid product. Through academic advancement, occupational skills training and workforce preparedness efforts, the Board seeks to align the Territory's workforce system with multifaceted requirements of meeting the regions' workforce demand.

The Direct Functions of the Board are as follows:

1. Development, Implementation & Modification of the State Plan

The VIWDB utilizes a committee approach to developing and modifying the state plan. A technical assistance contractor is onboarded to facilitate a minimum of bi-weekly state plan development and modification meetings where elements of the state plan are assigned to the Core Partners of a Unified State Plan, as dictated by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). Each Core Partner is tasked with responding to the prompts while the VIWDB staff and technical assistance contractor review submissions, ensuring they are following the strategy and direction of the VIWDB and Governor's Office, while also ensuring compliance with USDOL. Once a plan or draft plan is finalized, it is submitted to the VIWDB and Governor's Office for initial approval, followed by public comments, and a final approval for the final initial or updated state plan.

Due to the committee approach to writing the USVI state plan, a sense of sweat equity is deployed for implementation. All Core Partners are committed to performing what is written

and approved in the state plan. The VIWDB and its standing committee frequently monitor and discuss operations, and assist with ensuring all partners are compliant with WIOA and following the strategies outlined in the plan to best meet the needs of USVI job seekers, USVI businesses, and the USVI economy.

2. **The review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the State to align workforce development programs in the territory in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the territory, including the review and provision of comments on the State plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs.**

The VIWDB, and its standing committees, meet frequently to ensure the USVI workforce development system, its partners, and American Job Centers are operating in a streamlined and strategic manner to align with WIOA regulations and meet the needs of USVI job seekers, USVI businesses, and the USVI economy. VIWDB meetings frequently include public engagement, presentations from vendor, partners, employers and other workforce development system stakeholders to ensure Board Members are aware of the happenings of the system, continuously improving the system, drafting relevant policies, and achieving its goals.

3. **The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the territory, including:**
 - a. **The identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among the programs and activities carried out through the system.**
 - b. **The development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment;**

Sections (a) and (b) are achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

3. **The development of strategies for providing effective outreach to and improved access for individuals and employers who could benefit from services provided through the workforce development system.**

Along with traditional core partner and One-Stop Operator outreach, that is monitored and jointly strategized through VIWDB meetings, the VIWDB has engaged Workforce 180 to assist with developing and implementing effective outreach to USVI job seekers, businesses, and communities.

4. **The development and expansion of strategies for meeting the needs of employers, workers, and jobseekers, particularly through industry or sector partnerships related to in-demand industry sectors and occupations.**

Section (d) is achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and

workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

5. **The identification of regions, including planning regions, for the purposes of section 3121(a) of this title, and the designation of local areas under section 3121 of this title, after consultation with local boards and chief elected officials.**

The USVI operates as one region being a smaller geographic area as a United States Territory. Services are coordinated across three islands in the region, with service strategies that are specific to the cultures and needs of each island (St. Croix, St. John, and St. Thomas).

6. **The development and continuous improvement of the one-stop delivery system in local areas, including providing assistance to local boards, one-stop operators, one-stop partners, and providers with planning and delivering services, including training services and supportive services, to support effective delivery of services to workers, jobseekers, and employers.**
7. **The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system.**

Sections (f) and (g) are achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

4. **The development and updating of comprehensive State performance accountability measures, including State adjusted levels of performance, to assess the effectiveness of the core programs in the State.**

Section 4 is achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

5. **The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for-**
 - a. **The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment.**
 - b. **The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and**
 - c. **Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills, and**

competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;

Section 5 (a), (b), and (c) are achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

The VIWDB also achieves this by executing contracts for technical assistance, identifying free best practice training, disseminating information about and attending conferences and professional development trainings, and hosting the annual Governor's Workforce Development Summit.

- 6. the development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system described in section 121(e), including the development of—**
 - a. objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers described in such section;**
 - b. guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds under section 121(h); and**
 - c. policies relating to the appropriate roles and contributions of entities carrying out one-stop partner programs within the one-stop delivery system, including approaches to facilitating equitable and efficient cost allocation in such system;**

Section 6 (a), (b), and (c) are achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy. All policies are posted on the VIWDB website: <https://viwdb.vi.gov/publications/board-policies>.

- 7. The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to-**
 - a. Enhance digital literacy skills.**
 - b. Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.**
 - c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and**
 - d. Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.**

Section 7 (a), (b), (c), and (d) are achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from

relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

Additionally, all of the major workforce and service agencies are represented on the VIWDB, and strategies to assist those individuals with barriers, including those with disabilities, are brought to the forefront and included in any plan proffered to increase access to the workforce.

8. The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs);

Section 8 is achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

9. The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted.

Function 9 is achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy. This includes close collaboration with VIDOL, who manages WIOA Title I funds for the Territory.

10. The preparation of the annual reports.

Function 10 is achieved through the same collaborative process used to develop the State Plan. Annual reports are posted on the VIWDB website: <https://viwdb.vi.gov/publications/annual-reports>.

11. The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system.

Function 11 is achieved through the various VIWDB meetings previously referenced and encapsulated through data collection and reporting VIDOL's contracted Virtual One Stop, a product of Geographic Solutions, the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VieWS).

Additionally, various Labor Market Information (LMI) data is sourced from various free federal sources, such as the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) and the Census Bureau. Additionally data is collected from VIDOL and other agencies in the Territory, and in 2024 the VIWDB executed a contract with Lightcast to collect and report pertinent Territory wide LMI.

12. The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the territory.

Function 12 is achieved through the VIWDB's regularly scheduled meetings of the full board and individually scheduled standing committee meetings. Meetings include Board Members and workforce development stakeholders, and frequently include presentations from relevant parties on topics relevant to the VIWDB and USVI workforce development system meeting the needs of job seekers, businesses, and the overall economy.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGY

Describe how the lead State agency with responsibility for the administration of each core program or a Combined Plan partner program included in this plan will implement the State's Strategies identified in Section II(c). above. This must include a description of—

A. CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE STATE'S STRATEGY

Describe the activities the entities carrying out the respective core programs will fund to implement the State's strategies. Also, describe how such activities will be aligned across the core programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan and among the entities administering the programs, including using co-enrollment and other strategies, as appropriate.

The lead agencies in the territory responsible for WIOA core programs included in this Unified State Plan are the **Virgin Islands Department of Labor**, Equus Workforce Solutions, **Virgin Islands Department of Education**, and the **Virgin Islands Department of Human Services**. To realize the Territory's vision and goals, the partners of the Workforce System have executed an MOU which signifies and formalizes the cooperation and data sharing between each system partner.

Agency and areas of responsibility:

Virgin Islands Department of Labor (Title I and III)

- Title I: Youth
- Title III: Wagner Peyser

Equus Workforce Solutions

- Title I: Adult & Dislocated Workers

Virgin Islands Department of Education (Title II)

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (Title IV)

- Vocational Rehabilitation

The VIWDB will engage stakeholders from multiple sectors, agencies and organizations to achieve the vision outlined in this plan. The VIWDB will serve as the anchor that coordinates communication across the workforce ecosystem and aligns a strategic plan that leverages new

laws and policies, including the Infrastructure and Jobs Act, Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act. Leveraging the key strategies outlined in the state plan with new funding will have a positive economic impact for the USVI residents and businesses.

CHIPS and Science Act made a historic investment in American manufacturing, innovation, and supply chains. The Act focuses on boosting domestic semiconductor manufacturing within the mainland US but there is likely to be positive indirect impact on the Territory, including:

More Resilient Supply Chains: The Act aims to make US supply chains less reliant on foreign producers, potentially making businesses in the US Virgin Islands less vulnerable to disruptions in global trade, especially on essential goods, such as semiconductors.

Although the CHIPS and Science Act only indirectly impacts the USVI, the VIWDB understands that the success in technology is dependent upon a quality workforce and that workforce must be developed in order to respond to future needs in the Territory. Through sector partnerships, the VIWDB will encourage agencies and employers to consider developing the future workforce by promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education that position the Territory to take advantage of the high-growth, high-wage sectors in manufacturing and clean energy technology.

Inflation Reduction Act will support more clean energy jobs and expand workforce training for these industries in the USVI. The law made \$15 million available in funding for climate technical assistance. This historic commitment will support the Territories efforts to build career pathways in the new clean energy economy, including solar energy. The VIWDB and workforce partners will prioritize a talent development strategy that will prepare individuals with the skills needed for success.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) has delivered millions to the US Virgin Islands for various infrastructure projects. The breakdown of funding includes:

Transportation: \$277.7 million has been designated for transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, public transit, ports and airports.

Clean Water and Water Infrastructure: Over \$102 million has been allocated to improve water quality and access to clean drinking water.

Resilience Projects: \$58.6 million has been directed towards bolstering the US Virgin Islands' infrastructure against climate change, extreme weather events, and cyber threats.

The VIWDB will coordinate across stakeholders to create a multi-level progression of career pathways, including entry-level, mid-level and advanced positions that clearly identify the skills, academic credentials and experience required to progress along the career ladder. The career pathways development project will be championed as a priority of sector partnerships and will include the voices of core partners, employers and partner organizations.

The USVI is remote enough from the mainland United States that it must rely on strong communication and collaboration across the workforce ecosystem to advance priorities outlined in the strategic plan. Policies have been designed to align with the strategic direction and guidance of USDOL, the Governor and the VIWDB. The VIWDB will serve as the anchor of the core partners, launching the strategic priorities listed in the plan and supporting the implementation of these priorities across the Territory.

With current funding and future funding, the USVI is committed to the success of its American Job Centers. As such the American Job Centers will continue to operate as the hub of workforce

services in the USVI and in addition to providing information, all core partners will be able to deliver at least their initial assessment services at these centers. Various joint outreach materials have also been created, and will continue to be created, to provide a system-wide engagement approach to promote the activities of the workforce system, promoting “employment” as a joint goal across all partners.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE PLAN

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be aligned with programs and activities provided by required one-stop partners and other optional one-stop partners and activities provided under employment, training (including Registered Apprenticeships), education (including career and technical education), human services and other programs not covered by the plan, as appropriate, assuring coordination of, and avoiding duplication among these activities.

The VIWDB serves as the anchor of the communication strategy across the core partners and other workforce stakeholders within the ecosystem. The VIWDB will propose specific initiatives to support common goals and leverage resources to become more aligned across programs. With limited resources, and the hopes of major federal workforce development investments eventually flowing to the United States Virgin Islands, the VIWDB and its core partners understand that to implement a sustainable workforce development system, outside partnerships and aggregation of Non-WIOA program resources must be attached to the workforce pipeline.

Some of these partners/ programs include:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- Unemployment Insurance (UI);
- Career and Technical Education programs (CTE);
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) and
- Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs.

Having these outside resources integrated into the workforce pipeline helps to eliminate barriers to progress, such as limited access to housing, food and support services, are provided with options for addressing their most basic needs, as well as supplementing the needs that enable them to prepare for attaining unsubsidized employment. These resources help to break the cycle of an individual having what can be identified as much bigger issues than not being in the workforce, which are in fact a direct symptom of not being in the workforce.

C. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan, and required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-

centered services, including supportive services (e.g. transportation), to individuals, including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B), and individuals in remote areas. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Job seekers who access the public workforce system through the services and activities provided by Core Partners receive high-quality services designed to meet their specific needs. Within the parameters of each statutorily defined program, the USVI has customized and coordinated services to job seekers with barriers to employment. An individual service strategy will be developed for all customers seeking more than basic career services that include referrals to the core and one-stop partners for additional services. The referral connections are currently documented in the service strategy and followed up via points of contact in each agency and through email and telephone contact.

In addition to the core partners, One-Stop partners TANF and SNAP also maintain a presence at the American Job Centers facilitating the referral process to occur in real-time. Appointments can be set up on the spot, and customers benefit from making all their connections at one location. For those customers accessing the USVI workforce development system from a non-job Center location, a universal referral form will be used to ensure consistency and reduce duplication. Each core and partner program retains the integrity of its program requirements by having their staff perform the more involved services of their respective programs. Coordinated activity occurs at the onset and in the referral process.

D. COORDINATION, ALIGNMENT AND PROVISION OF SERVICES TO EMPLOYERS

Describe how the entities carrying out the respective core programs, any Combined State Plan partner program included in this plan, required and optional one-stop partner programs will coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality services to employers to meet their current and projected workforce needs and to achieve the goals of industry or sector partners in the state. The activities described shall conform to the statutory requirements of each program.

Along with the information provided above, regarding employer presentation on the VIWDB, partnerships with business engaging entities, and employer presentations to the VIWDB, the VIWDB will leverage the data provided through the contract with Lightcast to further improve its career pathways efforts and create sector strategies to ensure core partner workforce development programming, education and and training activities, and the overall USVI workforce system is aligned with the needs of local employers. This will be accomplished through focused sector strategy efforts in USVI. A plan of how the VIWDB will implement this effort is outlined below.

Sector Strategies

Industry in the USVI is changing at an unprecedented pace. From automation and technological advancements to the Territory's aging population and labor market tightness, the USVI is facing challenges that no single business or state agency can overcome alone. **Sector Partnerships** are a collaborative approach that brings together local stakeholders, including employers, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), education and training providers, labor representatives and workforce development experts to identify a regions toughest challenges and develop a strategy to overcome those challenges, together.

Sector Partnerships will offer a powerful solution by fostering collaboration between businesses, educators, and training providers within key industry clusters or occupations. Here's how sector partnerships in the USVI will make a difference:

- **Alignment:** Partnerships will identify common challenges across a sector or occupation and select challenges to tackle based on the groups collective input and their ability to solve the issue. This eliminates wasted time and resources, creating a more efficient system for developing a skilled workforce that aligns with local need.
- **Employer Engagement:** Businesses become active participants in shaping the workforce they need. This not only leads to more relevant training programs, but also creates a pipeline of qualified candidates ready to step into open positions.
- **Career Pathways:** Partnerships can design clear career pathways within an industry or occupation, outlining the skills and training needed for advancement. This transparency motivates workers and helps them plan their career development.
- **Shared Investment:** Partnerships leverage the expertise and resources of various stakeholders, maximizing the impact of workforce development initiatives.

In essence, Sector Partnerships create a win-win situation. Businesses gain access to a skilled workforce, while workers have clear paths to secure high-demand, good-paying jobs. This collaborative approach is essential for building a future-proof workforce that fuels the USVI's economic success.

The Challenge:

USVI's economy is facing challenges that no single employer, Workforce Board or region can face alone. Opportunities are evolving, demanding a strong and skilled workforce but challenges exist across the Territory that are making it increasingly difficult to align talent with demand. Collectively, the USVI is facing the following challenges:

Labor Force Participation:

Declining Rate: The Labor Force Participation Rate (LFPR) for both men and women in the USVI plummeted after the shutdown of the Hovensa refinery, far below that of the United States. The lower education rates and older population of the USVI contribute to this phenomenon. Further the labor force has continued to shrink in line with the population decline. While a low unemployment rate can be celebrated, it also comes with drawbacks. There are simply not enough people to support recovery and growth.

- **Job Openings vs. Qualified Workers:** Many businesses in the USVI struggle to find qualified workers for open positions. The skills gap creates a mismatch between available jobs and the skills of the workforce. Sector Partnerships can help close this gap by aligning training programs with employer needs.

Population Shifts:

- **Aging Population & Population Exodus:** USVI's population is aging, and there's a trend of people leaving the Territory for the main land. This has led to workforce shortages across the Territory. Sector Partnerships can address these challenges by developing targeted programs for specific areas.

Economic Transformation:

- **Automation & Technological Advancements:** Automation and evolving technologies are changing the job market. New skills are constantly in demand, requiring a flexible and adaptable workforce. Sector Partnerships can help identify emerging trends and ensure training programs keep pace with these changes.

By tackling these challenges head-on, Sector Partnerships can play a critical role in building a resilient and future-proof workforce for Iowa.

Sector Partnerships will succeed in the USVI because our Core Group have agreed to establish the support necessary for them to thrive. Sector Strategies and Occupational Based Partnerships are most effective when they serve as the anchor of the local workforce ecosystem.

Effective Sector Partnerships:

1. Put businesses at the middle of the conversation
2. Treat businesses as partners, not the end customer
3. Align partners based on identified goals
4. Require a credible third party “convener” to act as a neutral intermediary that can guide that partnership and align partners
5. Convene at a regional scale

It is necessary to acknowledge and address the unique challenges that remote communities in the USVI will have in forming and sustaining sector partnerships. Rural areas are encouraged to explore and develop partnerships that align with the unique economic and workforce conditions in their area. Occupation-based partnerships focus on the needs of participating employers and should focus their approach on the opportunities to advance in its service region, regardless of industry or sector.

In rural partnerships, the number of partners represented may be less, therefore, it may require partners to take on more than one role. It’s important to evaluate the administrative capacity of each individual partner when assigning roles to try and limit over taxing partners with an unsustainable administrative burden. Initiatives intended to boost economic vitality and align the workforce ecosystem in rural areas must carefully consider the unique landscape of the region, including its politics, culture and history. Failure to consider the unique challenges of rural communities will limit a successful launch and lessen the chance for a sustainable partnership long term.

Occupation based partnerships leverage the density of cross-sector occupations that exist in a rural area rather than specific industry occupations. Occupations that are well represented in a local area across a range of industries will bring together common challenges that no single business could overcome alone due to the scarcity of resources and administrative capacity that are usually present in small, rural community businesses.

It's important to note that sector partnerships and occupation-based partnerships do not need to be separate and distinct initiatives, with separate meetings and agendas if employers from the desired target industry or occupation are already convening. Explore a partnership with the existing convening body to share the vision of the partnership, including identifying the needs of employers, proposing solutions, and working towards collaborative solutions that address the needs of business.

Developing a Shared Vision

Regional sector partnerships and occupation-based partnerships must begin with the end in mind. Sector partnerships in the USVI will be defined by a **shared vision**, which provides a clear sense of direction for the partnership. The shared vision will be developed by the education, economic development and workforce development partners supporting the effort. A shared vision includes the alignment of resources to accomplish the vision.

The partnership convener will be identified and should facilitate a session where the public partners/agencies work collectively to develop the shared vision which should be agreed upon and memorialized in a partnership agreement, such as an MOU. The convener should help the partnership define:

- A vision and mission statement
- Roles of your partnership
 - Convening Team
 - Larger Core Group
 - Champions (Businesses leading the effort)
 - Businesses (ideally represented by senior decision makers)
- Objectives, Strategy and Next Steps
- Outcomes

Once the public partners/agencies have defined their shared vision, they are ready to identify businesses and launch the partnership. Aligning the partnership to a shared vision from the start will help the USVI Workforce System anchor the partnership with a common purpose.

Launch Meeting

Once the shared vision is established for the sector partnership, the Core Group of partners will develop an invitation list of businesses that should be invited to the sector or occupation-based launch meeting. In a perfect world, the distribution list would be robust, and include at list 50 representatives from business that are at a decision-making level at the organization. The distribution list should represent all segments of an industry. For instance, in healthcare, consider large and small providers, primary care, acute, behavioral health, public health, long term care and emergency response providers. All the organizations that represent the diversity of the industry should be added to your invitation list, even if no one on the core team has a personal connection with the business. Often, it's the organizations that are not already well-connected to the workforce ecosystem that end up being the most engaged in sector partnerships. There are three things the USVI will keep in mind in building the list:

Numbers – Aim to have at least 15 businesses at the launch meeting. That means at least 50 invitations will be sent, accounting for normal attrition.

Diversity of Organizations – It's critical to have a balanced room of businesses, representing small, medium, and large businesses. The invitation list should also consider the diverse specialties that exist within an industry.

Senior, C-Suite Leaders- The goal is to have decision makers in the room, not representatives who cannot make commitments on behalf of the business. That means that the USVI will target the invitation list to C Suite Executives or Directors rather than HR or Business Development representatives.

The Core Group will review the distribution list and identify 1 – 4 individuals that will serve as the Champions, or Co-Chairs, of the sector partnership. Sector Partnerships are industry led, therefore, the partnership Champions will lead meetings and serve as the primary voice that drives the partnership forward. It's important to consider Champions that are well respected, innovative, positive and have the capacity to lead this work. The Core Group is behind the scenes supporting the Champions as they advance the partnership forward.

Meeting Structure and Facilitation

Effective sector partnership meetings should be facilitated by the industry/occupation champion or an unbiased intermediary who can frame compelling questions that create psychological safety amongst the group that promotes information sharing that leads to consensus. As the meeting progresses and goals are identified, the meeting facilitator should continue to validate the goals being developed to ensure the goals are directly addressing the challenges at hand.

Sample Questions:

- Does the data presented substantiate what you're seeing in the field? Are there any data points you'd like to challenge?
- What are 3 or 4 needs that are critical to the success of your operations over the next year?
- What challenges do you face when hiring employees?
- What changes are you seeing in your industry? How do they impact who you're hiring or how you're hiring?
- Do the positions you're hiring for require certifications, credentials, or degrees? How do your employees obtain those baseline requirements?
- Could your business benefit from upskilling existing staff? What type of training would benefit your company?

Measuring Sector Partnerships

What's measured gets managed. Sector partnerships will become a sustainable solution to anchor the work in the USVI across the workforce ecosystem when progress is measured. Employers commit to this important work when they see that their investment of time and resources results in outcomes. Similarly, core partners will work more strategically and intentionally together when they see that aligning resources and services results in greater impact. Finally, tracking outcomes allows the partnership to share their success, which can be translated to grant applications that could help the partnership sustain its efforts.

The Business Champions should facilitate a discussion with the full membership of businesses to define the outcomes that they want to track. Long term goals should be identified to measure progress over time and the impact the work completed is having in the associated priority area. Short term goals can serve as an opportunity for progress check to ensure work is on track or to adjust the approach if outcomes are not being realized.

Sustainability

Building a successful sector partnership in the USVI is just the first step in making the framework a long-term viable economic and workforce development solution in the Territory.

Below are some key strategies to ensure sustainability and long-term success of the partnership.

Maintain Clear Value Proposition:

- Regularly communicate the partnership's accomplishments and impact on the workforce.
- Showcase success stories of employers who benefited from skilled hires and workers who secured good jobs.
- Conduct surveys to gather feedback from partners and adjust strategies based on their needs.

Foster Ongoing Engagement:

- Schedule regular meetings to keep partners informed, discuss ongoing challenges, and brainstorm new initiatives.
- Create opportunities for networking and collaboration among partner organizations.
- Establish committees or working groups focused on specific areas of interest (e.g., curriculum development, marketing, data analysis).

Diversify Funding Streams:

- Develop a multi-year funding strategy that goes beyond initial grants.
- Explore potential revenue streams such as co-developed training programs with employer tuition fees.
- Seek sponsorships from industry associations or foundations aligned with the partnership's goals.

Grant Application Strategy:

- Identify grant opportunities that align with the partnership's goals and target audience.
- Develop a compelling grant proposal highlighting the partnership's structure, track record, and long-term sustainability plan.
- Clearly demonstrate the impact of the partnership on regional workforce development and economic growth.
- Build strong relationships with grant program administrators and potential funders.

Additional Tips:

- Establish clear metrics to track the partnership's progress and measure its impact (see "Measuring Sector Partnerships" section).
- Promote the partnership's successes through various channels (e.g., media, social media, local events).
- Recruit new partners who bring diverse perspectives and resources to the table.
- Celebrate milestones and achievements to maintain partner morale and commitment.

By implementing these strategies in the USVI, Sector Partnerships can be a vital force in shaping a skilled and competitive workforce.

Two-Generational Approaches

Career Pathway Programs are also sustainable and effective for job seekers when a two-generation approach is taken and the entire family is served with relevant services, programming and resources. The USVI will explore a two-generation approach to service delivery and will align across the workforce ecosystem to create an asset map of resources that can meet the needs of the whole family.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS.

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges, adult education providers, area career and technical education schools, providers on the State's eligible training provider list, and other education and training providers, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv). Include how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments to enhance access to workforce development programs at these institutions.

The U.S. Virgin Islands does not have a community college; however, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) has campuses in both island districts has been and continues to be an integral partner to workforce development; both through its assistance with program and curricula development and through the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning or (UVI CELL), its community college unit that offers online and face to face courses developed specifically to fill the Territory's post-secondary skill gaps.

UVI CELL also maintains a physical location in each island district that border public housing communities; this has enabled them to act as access points for workforce delivery services outside of the American Job Centers. Information dissemination and skill training occur at these sites when necessary to facilitate attendance by those for whom access to transportation is a hardship. Several career pathways to include the construction trades, business administration, and nursing begin with career exposure and coursework in secondary school that contains foundational and early occupational skills training and ultimately results in entry-level certification at high school graduation. The training continues through post-secondary at UVI CELL with higher-level industry-recognized certifications and at the University of the Virgin Islands with Associate, Bachelor, Masters and PhD degrees.

Along with UVI and UVI CELL, the VIWDB also partners with numerous training providers who have expertise in training and development activities in in-demand sectors. These providers work primarily with the adult learner, including those with barriers to employment. All training providers are required to make available reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities. The VIWDB encourages all training providers, including UVI CELL, to add their programs to the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Through the ETPL, the VIWDB identifies training providers who qualify to receive WIOA funds to train adults, dislocated workers, and out-of-school youth. The ETPL, and its related eligibility procedures, ensure the accountability, quality, and labor-market relevance of programs of training services that receive funds through WIOA. The VIWDB follows WIOA regulations that sets forth the responsibilities of the Governor

and the designated state entity to create and maintain a list of qualified eligible training providers who offer programs that meet the needs of local employers.

Outside of post-secondary educational programs, the VIWDB is also developing relationships with programming offered through the USVI's high schools, and specifically their Career and Technical Education Programs (CTE) and the USVI's Jobs for America's Graduates Program. CTE programs of study to include allied health, construction trades, information technology, and administrative and support services highlight the local offerings and work in concert with the business community to ensure the integrity of the programs. The VIWDB is continuously communicating with CTE staff, ensuring outreach is being conducted for graduating seniors, and connecting the CTE staff and students with local employers.

USVI's Jobs for America's Graduates Program (JAG) is operated by VIDOL. VIDOL is also the WIOA Title I Youth program. This allows for the JAG participants to be directly connected to the VIWDB, the USVI workforce development system, and all the system has to offer. These connections are facilitated along with the JAG programming that is preparing high school students for life after high school, the world of work, and postsecondary success.

F. IMPROVING ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIALS

Describe how the State's strategies will improve access to activities leading to recognized postsecondary credentials, including Registered Apprenticeship certificates. This includes credentials that are industry-recognized certificates, licenses or certifications, and that are portable and stackable.

All of the efforts listed in Section D above ensure job seekers and learners in the USVI have access to occupational skills training, through either secondary or post-secondary educational opportunities. The VIWDB understand though that many of the adult job seekers accessing services through the American Job Centers have challenges with literacy or English being a second language. The first step to assisting these individuals, and others with severe barriers, is assessing them, providing connections to supportive services, and when they are ready, providing referrals to the Virgin Islands Department of the Education's adult education programs. The programs are offered through the Territory across three service delivery programs:

- Adult Education Night High School Diploma Program
- Adult Education Day Program
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) / GED Night Program

These community members contribute to the economy and are highly productive. However, to elevate beyond their current level of employment a higher level of literacy is required. As automation, artificial intelligence and the potential for impromptu pandemic quarantine, these basic jobs that do not require high levels of literacy will continue to deteriorate, in both number of jobs and level of pay.

The Board recognizes that the Virgin Islands Workforce Area has been historically challenged in meeting this credential attainment rate. As part of the VIWDB continuous improvement, we are continuously evaluating our processes and re-establishing the roster of providers on the ETPL. The VIWDB will continue to strengthen the requirements for achieving this goal, along with monitoring current ETPL training providers and programs.

Customers whose first point of entry to the USVI workforce system is through TANF, SNAP, VR, SCSEP, or HUD are all provided information on training services at the orientation given at any door. Case managers or career counselors advise them on the steps needed through the development of their service strategies, and referrals are made accordingly, ensuring that all barriers are addressed before embarking on a training regimen. Having access to different avenues of training increases the opportunities for more customers to find training in their area of interest at different locations throughout the Islands.

G. COORDINATING WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Describe how the activities identified in (A) will be coordinated with economic development entities, strategies, and activities in the State.

The VIWDB is consistently engaging with economic development representatives throughout the Territory's planning stages to align the workforce vision with the economic goals. The Chief Executive Officer of the United States Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (USVIEDA) and the Executive Director of the Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research (BER) have both been strong participants in the development of the State's strategy. These entities are developing a long term economic/workforce development strategy that encompasses the overarching goals and direction for rebuilding the Territory's infrastructure through strengthening its workforce and ability of the Territory to compete in the global economy.

The USVI workforce system is constantly seeking new tools and products to help bolster the viability of existing businesses, and new businesses are being recruited to the Territory that falls into the emerging occupations listing. The Board will continue to work with economic development and all other workforce development agencies and organizations to create varied and flexible opportunities in the local workforce area.

B. STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the State operating systems and policies that will support the implementation of the State strategy described in section **II Strategic Elements**. This includes—

1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE STRATEGIES (E.G., LABOR MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEMS, DATA SYSTEMS, COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS, CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, JOB BANKS, ETC.).

The USVI Workforce System uses the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIeWS) as the overall tool for disseminating labor market information, driving data systems, case management for Adult, Youth, Dislocated Workers, and Wagner-Peyser programs and job search and listings.

The Adult Education and Family Literacy program uses Literacy, Adult and Community Education System (LACES) as its data management tool and to collect information needed for federal reporting.

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is currently acquiring a VR portal powered by the company that hosts the VIeWS. This transition will offer optimum integration capabilities between Titles I, III, and IV, and allow for the facilitation of integrated case management.

All WIOA core and One-Stop required partners have “view-only” access of common (non-confidential) data to the VieWS operating system to align service strategies for customers. Partners will be trained to help customers with their initial registration on VieWS from any location, and all have access to labor market information and job listings. Policies for the joint use of the operating system are being crafted.

2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE’S STRATEGIES (FOR EXAMPLE, CO-ENROLLMENT POLICIES AND UNIVERSAL INTAKE PROCESSES WHERE APPROPRIATE). IN ADDITION, PROVIDE THE STATE’S GUIDELINES FOR STATE-ADMINISTERED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO A ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM AND ANY ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE FOR ONE-STOP PARTNER CONTRIBUTIONS.

The VIWDB has developed policies that support the foundational elements of the Territory’s strategy. Policies are disseminated as Workforce System Guidance (WSG) or Workforce Program Guidance (WPG). Policies include WIOA Title I Eligibility Requirements, Delivery of Services and Activities under WIOA, WIOA Training Provider Eligibility Process, and Removal from the Eligible Provider List, to name a few. The development of policies and procedures that include the joint operation of core partners is still in progress. A listing of WIOA policies can be found on the VIWDB website: <https://viwdb.vi.gov/publications/board-policies>.

3. STATE PROGRAM AND STATE BOARD OVERVIEW

A. STATE AGENCY ORGANIZATION

Describe the organization and delivery systems at the State and local levels for the programs covered in the plan, including the organizational structure. Include an organizational chart.

The Governor of the USVI is the Chief Elected Official in the Territory. There are no local layers to the government structure such as mayors, councilmen, district representatives, or the like. The Commissioners of Agencies comprise the Governor’s cabinet. The USVI is a Single Local Workforce Area and has one State Workforce Development Board that also assumes the duties of the Local Board. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) is the designated State Workforce Agency. There are two workforce centers in the Virgin Islands — one in the St. Thomas/St. John district and one in the district of St. Croix.

The agencies that comprise the USVI Workforce System include the Departments of Labor, Education, and Human Services. The Virgin Islands Housing Authority, the University of the Virgin Islands, and its community development arm UVI CELL, are semi autonomous but are integral partners of the USVI Workforce System. The Governor of the USVI provides the vision and the mission that the VIWDB, agencies, core partners and USVI Workforce System partners must then translate into viable activities that become the product to which the business community and the job seeker utilize.

The USVI Workforce System in the USVI comes together through the efforts of various government agencies. VIDOL administers WIOA Title I Youth programs and houses the Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and Unemployment Insurance programs. Equus Workforce Solutions administers IWIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. The USVI Department of Education administers the Adult Education and Family Literacy program as well as the Career

and Technical Education programs. The USVI Department of Human Services administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program. It also provides non-core programs:

- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP).

Additional non-core programs that fall under the Workforce Development banner include the Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) under the USVI Housing Authority and the Community Development Block Grant — Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program administered by the USVI Housing Finance Authority.

The Virgin Islands Division of Adult Education has established an agreement with the USVI Department of Human Services to deliver instruction and services to the clients of the Department of Human Services to facilitate Adult Basic Education (ABE) instruction. ABE instruction with HHS is provided to eligible USVI Department of Human Services recipients by Adult Education providers. These services are delivered by providers; however, USVI Department of Human Services fund their eligible USVI Department of Human Services recipient cohorts.

Each of these programs is staffed by agency personnel and adheres to agency-specific funding requirements but converge at the American Job Centers for joint pre-employment workshops and career development activities. Training services are offered by shared Eligible Training Providers and may be funded in whole or in part by partner agencies through a coordinated service strategy.

B. STATE BOARD

Provide a description of the State Board activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively. Also, provide a membership roster for the State Board consistent with 20 CFR 679.110-120, including members' organizational affiliations and position titles.

The VIWDB has regular scheduled meetings of the full board. Along with regularly scheduled meetings of the full membership of the VIWDB, the VIWDB all facilitates and hosts standing committee meetings. Through these meetings, communication, and efforts, the VIWDB coordinates, develops, and maintains the overall integrity of the USVI Workforce System. In this multifaceted system, board diversity, and alignment with WIOA board composition guidelines, ensures continuity by aligning goals among agencies and organizations. VIWDB members bring to the table expertise not only in their area of operation but also from their alliances with other organizations— for example, members of the VIWDB are also active members of the Career and Technical Education Board, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Group, Rotary Organizations, Chambers of Commerce and other community-based groups.

The VIWDB, in consultation with the Governor, develops the State Plan. The VIWDB is comprised of two major committees: Strategic Planning Committee and the Operations Committee. All activities relating to the operation of the One-Stop service delivery system, information management systems, performance reporting, and general oversight of the statewide employment statistics system is managed through the Operations Committee. All activities related to Youth services are also performed by the Operations Committee. Strategic

planning, policy development, and direction, community linkages, and cross-program alignment are under the purview of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Through its three primary committees, VIWDB contractors, the VIWDB performs all of the mandatory functions of a state workforce development board in alignment with WIOA Section 101 (d). Lastly, the VIWDB host the annual Governor's Workforce Development Summit to annually unite the USVI Workforce System, including job seekers and businesses.

4. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNERS

A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE AND ONE-STOP PROGRAM PARTNER PROGRAMS.

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. Describe how other one-stop delivery system partner program services and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the plan will be assessed each year. This State assessment must include the quality, effectiveness, and improvement of programs broken down by local area or provider. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

The four WIOA core programs will adhere to the Performance Measures described in Section 116(b) of WIOA for Adults, Dislocated Workers, Adult Education, and Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, and Vocational Rehabilitation, as applicable by program requirements. Specifically:

- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program;
- The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within (1) year after exit from program;
- The percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are receiving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

Similarly, the primary indicators of performance for Youth, also in accordance with Section 116(b) of WIOA, shall be adhered to. Specifically,

- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment, during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of program participants who are in education or training activities or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from program
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program

- The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within (1) year after exit from program
- The percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are receiving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers. The Virgin Islands is a single state local area and has no local jurisdictions. There are no additional measures that have been assigned to these programs.

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area and has no local jurisdictions. There are no additional measures that have been assigned to these programs.

B. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

For each four-year state plan and state plan modification, provide the results of assessments of the effectiveness of the core programs and other one-stop partner programs and Combined State Plan partner programs included in the Unified or Combined State plan during the preceding 2-year period (i.e. the 2-year period of the plan modification cycle), in accordance with methods described in 4(A). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

The VIWDB is committed to establishing a robust performance measurement system aligned with the WIOA guidelines. The VIWDB will be working with our partner at the University of the Virgin Islands to identify key performance indicators for core programs and establish data collection protocols for program activities. The partners will also work together to standardize assessment methodology to be used across all programs.

The VIWDB has not completed assessments to date but will outline a planned assessment strategy for the upcoming two years. This strategy will include:

1. Conducting baseline assessments of core programs and partner programs to establish a starting point for measuring future progress.
2. Administering client satisfaction surveys to gauge participant experiences with program services.
3. Tracking program participation rates, job placement outcomes, and employer satisfaction with WIOA services.

The VIWDB will utilize the data gathered from the planned assessments to adapt its strategies for continuous improvement. This will help prioritize funding allocations based on program effectiveness and labor market demands.

By taking these steps, VIWDB aims to build a strong performance measurement system that will guide future program development and ensure the effectiveness of WIOA services in the USVI.

C. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects of activities carried out in the State under WIOA core programs; how such projects will be coordinated with, and designed

in conjunction with, State and local boards and with State agencies responsible for the administration of all respective core programs; and, further, how the projects will be coordinated with the evaluations provided for by the Secretary of Labor and the Secretary of Education under WIOA (WIOA Section 116(e)).

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) recognizes the importance of conducting evaluations and research projects to assess the effectiveness of WIOA core programs and continuously improve service delivery. While VIWDB has not conducted such activities in the past, we are committed to establishing a robust evaluation and research framework.

The VIWDB is actively developing a strategic partnership with the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI). UVI's expertise in research methodology and evaluation design will be instrumental in achieving our goals. This partnership will involve:

- **Jointly Defining Evaluation Priorities:** VIWDB will collaborate with UVI faculty and researchers to identify key areas for evaluation within each core program. This may include program participation rates, job placement outcomes, cost-effectiveness, and participant satisfaction.
- **Developing Research Designs:** UVI researchers will work with VIWDB staff to design rigorous and data-driven evaluation plans. These plans will utilize appropriate methodologies, data collection strategies, and analysis techniques to ensure the validity and reliability of findings.
- **Data Collection and Analysis:** UVI will provide expertise in data collection and analysis. This may involve conducting surveys, analyzing program data, and interpreting research findings.
- **Dissemination and Utilization of Results:** VIWDB and UVI will work together to disseminate evaluation results to stakeholders, including state and local boards, program administrators, and the public. These findings will be used to inform adjustments to program design, resource allocation, and overall WIOA strategy.

Collaboration:

VIWDB is committed to collaborating with VIWDB throughout the evaluation and research process. This will ensure that:

- **Board Priorities are Addressed:** VIWDB will actively seek input regarding priorities for evaluation. The evaluation plan will be designed to address these priorities and provide valuable insights to inform board decision-making.
- **Board Members Participate in Design and Review:** Board members will be invited to participate in the design phase of evaluation projects and be briefed on the research findings. This fosters a collaborative environment where board expertise is utilized and evaluation results are effectively translated into actionable strategies.

Coordination with Federal Evaluations:

VIWDB acknowledges the ongoing evaluations conducted by the Department of Labor (DOL) and the Department of Education (ED) under WIOA. We will strive to:

- **Stay Informed of Federal Evaluation Activities:** VIWDB will maintain communication with DOL and ED to stay informed about their ongoing evaluations and research efforts. This will help identify potential areas for collaboration and avoid duplication of efforts.

- **Align Evaluations with Federal Priorities:** When developing our own evaluation plans, VIWDB will consider the national priorities identified by DOL and ED, ensuring alignment with broader WIOA goals and objectives.
- **Share Findings with Federal Agencies:** VIWDB will share the findings of its own evaluations with DOL and ED, contributing to the national knowledge base on WIOA program effectiveness.

By establishing a strong evaluation and research framework in partnership with UVI, and coordinating with federal agencies, VIWDB aims to build a comprehensive system for continuous improvement of WIOA programs in the Virgin Islands. This data-driven approach will ensure that our programs effectively meet the needs of unemployed residents and contribute to a skilled and competitive workforce.

5. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

Describe the methods and factors the State will use in distributing funds under the core programs in accordance with the provisions authorizing such distributions.

A. FOR TITLE I PROGRAMS

Provide a description of the written policies that establish the State's methods and factors used to distribute funds to local areas for—

I. YOUTH ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 128(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

II. ADULT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) OR (B)(3)

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker contractors are procured through a joint effort conducted by the VIWDB and VIDOL, as the fiscal agent.

III. DISLOCATED WORKER EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH WIOA SECTION 133(B)(2) AND BASED ON DATA AND WEIGHTS ASSIGNED

The Virgin Islands is a single state local area. There are no local areas as described in WIOA section 128 (b) or section 133 (b). WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker contractors are procured through a joint effort conducted by the VIWDB and VIDOL, as the fiscal agent.

B. FOR TITLE II

I. DESCRIBE THE METHODS AND FACTORS THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL USE TO DISTRIBUTE TITLE II FUNDS.

The VIWDB and its affiliated agencies will award multi-year contracts in accordance with the VI Property and Procurement or comparable standards as listed below.

Eligible providers awarded federal funds through this application process will be required to use the funds for the establishment or operation of one or more programs in the St. Thomas/St.

John district, the St. Croix district, or both that provide services or instruction in one or more of the following categories: Adult Education and Literacy services; and English literacy programs.

II. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE DIRECT AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS TO APPLY AND COMPETE FOR FUNDS AND HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL ENSURE THAT IT IS USING THE SAME GRANT OR CONTRACT ANNOUNCEMENT AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR ALL ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS.

General Procedure for Funding Eligible Providers

The VI Department of Education will run a fair and equitable competitive process to extend Title II Competitive Grant awards through multiyear contracts to eligible providers. All eligible providers will have fair and equitable opportunity to apply and compete for funding in accordance with 34 CFR § 463.20 subpart C. through the same competitive announcement with no deviation from the processes outlined within the competitive announcement.

Applications

There is no guarantee that submitting a proposal will result in funding or, funding at the requested level. The VIDE's State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (SOCTAE) will follow the Federal Secretary's guidance consistent with 34 CFR § 75.218 . Guidance set forth in the RFP will delineate that all application(s) must be completed using the direction set forth in the RFP. In addition to its own Procurement guidance, the VIDE will follow the Secretary's guidance outlined in 34 CFR § 75.216 *Applications not evaluated for funding* (Authority: 20 U.S.C. 1221e-3 and 3474. Applications that are representative of the following will not be evaluated.

- Hand-written applications
- Late applications may be accepted but they will not be evaluated.
- Ineligible applications
- Applications not complying with all of the procedural rules governing application submission
- Applications not containing information required under the program
- Proposed projects that cannot be funded under the authorizing statute, or implementing regulations for the program

VIDE's SOCTAE will verify all applications for eligibility. Ineligible applications will not be evaluated. Applicants who are deemed ineligible for funding will be notified via e-mail, by VIDE within three business days of applicant's verification of ineligibility, by VIDE's SOCTAE. If an applicant requests an explanation of the reason its application was not evaluated or selected, the VIDE's SOCTAE will provide that explanation within 14 business days via e-mail and mailed correspondence.

All Title II, 231 adult education applications are required to be aligned with the USVI's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) plan within the workforce development region. Prior to being evaluated and scored by a team of knowledgeable independent reviewers, all eligible applications will be reviewed by the LWDB to ascertain alignment with the LWDB plan and the 13 considerations as specified by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 231, 29 USC § 3321 and outlined in 34

CFR § 463.20 subpart C. , as well as how each eligible provider provides a written description of how they will carry out assurances as outlined in 34 CFR Subpart C § 463.22

The eligibility guidance for demonstrated effectiveness of an organization that has provided, or is providing adult education and literacy activities is expressly outlined in 34 CFR § 463.23. Effectiveness is demonstrated by providing two years of past performance data that show skills improvement. Per guidance in the CFR, eligible providers must demonstrate past effectiveness through the provision of performance data as demonstrated by its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, in the content domains of reading, writing, mathematics, English language acquisition, and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the Territory's application for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to postsecondary education and training.

Two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements of demonstrated effectiveness

- ***An eligible provider that has been funded under title II of the Act must*** provide performance data required under the WIOA Performance Indicator Measures outlined in section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness.
- ***An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under title II of the Act must*** provide performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed in paragraph (a) of 34 CFR § 463.24.

The VIDE will ensure that the competitive announcements clearly and concisely outline all required information, complete with sections for all eligible applicants to provide the necessary quantitative and qualitative data of demonstrated effectiveness. The LWDB's review and evaluation of all eligible applications will be considered as part of the overall review process.

Request for Proposal Readers (Grant Reviewers)

The VIDE will secure a team of qualified individuals who are professionals in adult education and literacy, solicited through a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP will be evaluated for legal sufficiency by the VIDE's Legal and Procurement divisions prior to being announced by the VIDE's Public Relations (PR) division through diverse media streams utilized by the VIDE, inclusive of print media such as the local newspaper for each island. Full access to the RFP will be posted online on the VIDE and the USVI Department of Property and Procurement sites. The RFP for readers will be reviewed by the VIDE SOCTAE and the LWDB. Qualified, independent readers in the field of Adult Education, with no noted affiliations, or biases will be selected to independently review and score all applications assigned to them using a rubric that incorporates the seven requirements, demonstrated effectiveness and the thirteen considerations of the WIOA Title II, Adult Education, and Family Literacy Act. All applications will be evaluated solely on the criteria identified in the competitive announcement. Readers from outside of the USVI will be eligible to apply.

C. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

In the case of a State that, under section 101(a)(2)(A)(i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are

blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The Virgin Islands has one designated State Agency that is responsible for serving all individuals with disabilities within the state. Funds are not distributed to two different agencies. Many states across the US have separate agencies for persons who are blind and in some instances individuals who are deaf. The Virgin Islands has a “Combined” agency and serve all disability types. Vocational Rehabilitation has sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services at this time.

6. PROGRAM DATA

A. DATA ALIGNMENT AND INTEGRATION

Describe the plans of the lead State agencies with responsibility for the administration of the core programs, along with the State Board, to align and integrate available workforce and education data systems for the core programs, unemployment insurance programs, and education through postsecondary education, and to the extent possible, the Combined State Plan partner programs included in this plan. The description of the State’s plan for integrating data systems should include the State’s goals for achieving integration and any progress to date.

Describe data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including the State’s process to collect and report data on co-enrollment, and for those present in the one-stop centers.

I. DESCRIBE THE STATE’S PLANS TO MAKE THE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR THE CORE PROGRAMS INTEROPERABLE TO MAXIMIZE THE EFFICIENT EXCHANGE OF COMMON DATA ELEMENTS TO SUPPORT ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

The VIWDB acknowledges the current limitations of our data infrastructure. While core partner programs utilize various data systems, full integration is not feasible at this time due to funding constraints. However, VIWDB remains committed to achieving greater data interoperability to enhance program assessment and evaluation.

Despite the lack of complete system integration, VIWDB is taking initial steps to ensure data exchange and collaboration between core partners. This includes:

- **Standardization of Data Elements:** VIWDB will work with core partners to identify and standardize key data elements collected across different programs. This common data dictionary will facilitate data sharing and aggregation efforts.
- **Data Sharing Agreements:** VIWDB will establish formal data sharing agreements with core partner agencies. These agreements will outline protocols for secure data exchange and define clear data ownership and usage guidelines.
- **Manual Data Exchange Mechanisms:** In the absence of fully integrated systems, VIWDB may utilize manual data exchange mechanisms such as regular data reports or secure file transfers. This allows for some level of data exchange even without complete system integration.

Exploring Funding Opportunities for a Unified Operating System:

VIWDB recognizes that a long-term solution lies in developing a unified operating system specifically designed to track common data elements across all core WIOA programs. While

current funding limitations prevent immediate system integration, VIWDB will explore the following opportunities to identify potential funding sources:

- **WIOA Grants:** Investigate the potential for utilizing WIOA program funds allocated for infrastructure development or data analysis activities. These funds could be used to conduct feasibility studies, develop system design specifications, or initiate pilot projects for data integration.
- **Federal Grants:** Explore relevant federal grant opportunities through agencies such as the Department of Labor or the Department of Education. These grants may target workforce information system development or data modernization initiatives.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** VIWDB will explore partnerships with private sector technology companies that may be interested in collaborating on the development of a unified operating system. Such partnerships could leverage private sector expertise and potentially offer cost-sharing arrangements.

Future Vision:

VIWDB remains committed to achieving a high level of data interoperability between core partner programs. We believe that a unified operating system will:

- **Enhance Program Assessment and Evaluation:** Seamless data exchange will allow for more comprehensive analysis of program performance, participant outcomes, and overall WIOA program effectiveness.
- **Improve Service Delivery:** Integrated data allows for a more holistic view of participant needs, enabling service providers to tailor interventions and resources more effectively.
- **Inform Strategic Decision-Making:** Data-driven insights will guide strategic decision-making at VIWDB and ensure WIOA programs remain responsive to the evolving needs of the workforce.

By utilizing the strategies outlined above, VIWDB aims to maximize data exchange capabilities within the current limitations. Additionally, VIWDB will actively pursue funding opportunities to develop a unified operating system in the future. This comprehensive approach will ultimately lead to a more robust data infrastructure that supports effective program evaluation, service delivery improvements, and informed decision-making within the VIWDB WIOA program ecosystem.

II. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO INTEGRATE DATA SYSTEMS TO FACILITATE STREAMLINED INTAKE AND SERVICE DELIVERY TO TRACK PARTICIPATION ACROSS ALL PROGRAMS INCLUDED IN THIS PLAN

The VIWDB acknowledges the challenges associated with data system integration due to funding constraints. While a fully integrated system would be ideal for streamlining intake and service delivery across WIOA core programs, VIWDB is committed to exploring alternative solutions to achieve this goal.

VIWDB will collaborate with core partner programs to develop a standardized intake form that captures all essential data elements required for program eligibility determination and service planning. This will minimize the need for participants to provide repetitive information across different programs. VIWDB will also establish formal data sharing agreements with core partner

agencies. These agreements will outline protocols for secure data exchange between programs, allowing for a more holistic view of participant needs and service history.

VIWDB will establish a centralized referral network to streamline the process of connecting participants with appropriate services across core programs. This may involve an online referral platform or a dedicated call center with trained personnel

The VIWDB will also implement cross-training programs for staff across core partner programs. This will equip staff with a broader understanding of the services offered by each program, allowing them to provide more informed guidance to participants and facilitate seamless referrals.

By implementing these alternative solutions, VIWDB aims to reduce participant burden and improve service coordination and delivery. While a fully integrated data system remains a long-term goal, VIWDB is confident that these alternative solutions can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of intake, service delivery, and participant experience within the WIOA program ecosystem in the Virgin Islands.

III. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL ASSIST THE GOVERNOR IN ALIGNING
TECHNOLOGY AND DATA SYSTEMS ACROSS REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS
(INCLUDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMON INTAKE, DATA COLLECTION, ETC.)
AND HOW SUCH ALIGNMENT WILL IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY TO INDIVIDUALS,
INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The VIWDB recognizes the critical role of aligned technology and data systems across required one-stop partner programs in enhancing service delivery to individuals, especially unemployed individuals. The VIWDB will act as a facilitator, convening one-stop partner programs for regular discussions on data and technology alignment. This collaborative approach will ensure all partners have a voice in the planning and decision-making process. The VIWDB will spearhead the development of a strategic roadmap outlining the goals, priorities, and implementation timeframe for technology and data system alignment. This roadmap will be informed by best practices, stakeholder input, and long-term vision for the workforce development system.

The VIWDB will lead the effort to establish a standardized set of data elements collected across all one-stop partner programs. This common data dictionary will facilitate data exchange and enable a more holistic view of participant needs and service history. While full system integration may not be feasible immediately, VIWDB will explore phased approaches. This could involve developing data exchange protocols or intermediary platforms to enable data sharing between existing systems.

By actively aligning technology and data systems, VIWDB aims to achieve significant benefits for service delivery to individuals, particularly unemployed individuals:

- **Improved Efficiency:** Streamlined intake processes and data sharing will reduce administrative burdens for staff and allow them to focus on providing quality services to participants.
- **Enhanced Service Coordination:** Unified data will enable service providers to develop more comprehensive service plans tailored to individual needs and avoid duplication of services.

- **Informed Decision-Making:** Data-driven insights will guide VIWDB and one-stop partners in allocating resources effectively and optimizing program design to better address workforce needs.
- **Improved Job Matching:** Standardized data on participant skills and qualifications will facilitate a more efficient job matching process, connecting unemployed individuals with suitable employment opportunities.
- **Enhanced Communication:** Technology platforms and data sharing agreements will foster better communication and collaboration among one-stop partners, leading to a more seamless client experience.

The VIWDB recognizes that aligning technology and data systems across partner programs is an ongoing process. However, by taking a proactive and collaborative approach, VIWDB is confident that this effort will significantly improve service delivery to all individuals seeking assistance, especially unemployed individuals navigating the workforce development system in the Virgin Islands. As technology continues to evolve, VIWDB remains committed to staying at the forefront of data innovation to ensure a future-proof system that effectively meets the needs of our workforce.

IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S DATA SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES TO PRODUCE THE REPORTS REQUIRED UNDER SECTION 116, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM. (WIOA SECTION 116(D)(2)).

All participants will traverse the Workforce System by means of a wholly developed service strategy that accounts for the linkages needed from all relevant partner agencies and programs prior to successfully exiting the system. Customers who choose to continue on to advanced post-secondary education and/or enter or remain in employment will be assessed using WIOA performance measures as described in section 116. The State lead agencies will meet to determine the needs and set any additional indicators of performance.

The Virgin Islands will meet all requirements pertaining to fiscal and management accountability information systems as specified in Section 116 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and based upon guidelines established by the Secretaries of Labor and Education.

The Virgin Island's data collection systems has been modified to align with the Participant Individual Record Layout (PIRL). Data collection system changes that impact performance reporting are prioritized over other planned system enhancements.

Workforce Board and contracted staff are able to run performance reports throughout the year to monitor progress toward target outcomes. These reports can be used to make mid-course adjustments to help providers achieve their performance goals.

B. ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPANTS' POST-PROGRAM SUCCESS

Describe how lead State agencies will use the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants who are exiting from core programs in entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education, or entering or remaining in employment. States may choose to set additional indicators of performance.

The VIWDB, in collaboration with lead state agencies, will utilize the workforce development system to assess the progress of participants exiting core programs in the following areas:

Entering, persisting in, and completing postsecondary education:

- **Participant Follow-Up Surveys:** VIWDB will conduct follow-up surveys with participants who expressed an interest in pursuing postsecondary education after exiting core programs. These surveys will gather information on enrollment status, program completion, and any challenges faced during their educational journey.
- **College Readiness Programs:** Collaborate with UVI to offer college readiness programs within core programs. These programs can assess participants' academic skills and provide support services to ensure a smooth transition to postsecondary education.

Entering or remaining in employment:

- **Labor Market Information System (LMIS) Data:** VIWDB will utilize LMIS data to track employment outcomes for program participants after exiting core programs. LMIS data provides insights into job placement rates, wages earned, and industry sectors where participants are employed.
- **Unemployment Insurance (UI) Data Sharing Agreements:** Establish data sharing agreements with the Department of Labor to access UI data. This data will allow VIWDB to track whether participants leaving core programs remain employed or re-enter the unemployment system.

The VIWDB will establish clear performance measures for assessing participant progress in postsecondary education and employment. These metrics will be used to generate regular reports for VIWDB and other stakeholders, informing program improvement efforts. Through continuous assessment and program improvement, VIWDB strives to ensure that the Virgin Islands workforce development system effectively supports individuals in achieving their education and career goals.

C. USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) WAGE RECORD DATA

Explain how the State will meet the requirements to utilize quarterly UI wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information, consistent with Federal and State law. (This Operational Planning element applies to core programs.)

The VIWDB recognizes the value of utilizing quarterly Unemployment Insurance (UI) wage records for performance accountability, evaluations, and as a source for workforce and labor market information. The VIWDB will ensure all data collection, use, and sharing activities comply with the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA) and relevant Virgin Islands UI laws. Data privacy and security will be a top priority, with strict adherence to established protocols for handling confidential information. VIWDB will also establish clear data sharing agreements with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL), outlining permissible uses of UI wage records for workforce development purposes.

VIWDB will collaborate with VIDOL to establish a secure and efficient process for accessing quarterly UI wage record data. This may involve developing data transfer protocols or exploring the feasibility of a data exchange platform.

VIWDB will Utilize UI wage records to track participant employment outcomes after exiting core programs. This will involve analyzing wage data to measure job placement rates, wages earned, and industry sectors where participants are employed. These metrics will contribute to performance accountability measures for core programs.

VIWDB will actively engage with stakeholders in utilizing UI wage record data responsibly. This includes collaborating with VIDOL to ensure data security and privacy, partnering with researchers to conduct data analysis, and disseminating workforce information to benefit businesses, educators, and the general public.

VIWDB is committed to utilizing UI wage records effectively and responsibly. This valuable data source will enhance our ability to hold WIOA programs accountable for performance, conduct rigorous program evaluations, and gain valuable insights into the Virgin Islands' workforce landscape. By prioritizing data security, collaborating with stakeholders, and adhering to all legal requirements, VIWDB will leverage UI wage records to strengthen the Virgin Islands workforce development system and ultimately improve outcomes for participants.

D. PRIVACY SAFEGUARDS

Describe the privacy safeguards incorporated in the State's workforce development system, including safeguards required by section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1232g) and other applicable Federal laws.

The Virgin Islands adheres to privacy issues as described in section 444 of the General Education Provisions Act. There are data sharing agreements between the agency partners. Internal policies will be put in place to safeguard the sharing of personal information among staff and customers.

Personally identifiable information at the individual record level is protected through systems security measures and by having all staff sign a confidentiality agreement and, as necessary, requiring customers to sign release of information forms. In terms of outside agencies personally identifiable information is protected by aggregating individual records and standardized confidentiality screening. Program results are aggregated to protect the confidentiality of participants being measured.

7. PRIORITY OF SERVICE FOR VETERANS.

A. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR COVERED PERSONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE JOBS FOR VETERANS ACT, CODIFIED AT SECTION 4215 OF 38 U.S.C., WHICH APPLIES TO ALL EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMS FUNDED IN WHOLE OR IN PART BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MONITOR PRIORITY OF SERVICE PROVISIONS FOR VETERANS.

C. DESCRIBE THE TRIAGE AND REFERRAL PROCESS FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS AND OTHER POPULATIONS DETERMINED ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE SERVICES FROM THE JOBS FOR VETERANS STATE GRANTS (JVSG) PROGRAM'S DISABLED VETERANS' OUTREACH PROGRAM (DVOP) SPECIALIST/CONSOLIDATED POSITION.

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, the USVI Workforce System offers covered Veterans and eligible spouses 'Priority of Service'. The designation requires that these individuals are given first consideration for program participation and they receive access to services ahead of "non-covered" persons or, if resources or space is limited.

In order to receive Veterans Priority of Service for a specific program, a Veteran or eligible spouse must meet the statutory definition of a "covered person" as well as any other statutory eligibility requirement applicable to the program. Additionally, 'Veterans Priority of Service'

designation shall take precedence before applying WIOA Priority of Service for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and those who are basic skills deficient. Further, it is also required that staff and partners inform Veterans and eligible spouses of the full array of employment training and placement services available; and, applicable eligibility requirements for other programs and services. Informational pamphlets and other methods of promoting the Priority of Service provision will also be utilized to ensure that this mandate is executed.

In an effort to ensure that the 'priority of service' as established by the Jobs for Veterans Act is provided to veterans, there is Priority of Service signage in the lobby of the American Job Centers. The question regarding each customer's veteran status is included on the initial registration form and the electronic registration system which is used by the American Job Center staff. Once the customer's status is confirmed American Job Center staff will extend the priority provision as follows:

- A sign is posted on one of the entrance doors to inform customers of "Priority of Service for Veterans" and indicates to the customers, if they are a veteran or spouse of a veteran, they should identify themselves to the greeter. All of our team members are aware that veterans and their spouses receive services over any non-eligible person when accessing One-Stop services.
- A sign is posted in the resource room designating a computer for veterans and eligible spouses granting rapid access to a printer and phone. Also, any new job announcement added to the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIeWS) is placed on a 24-hour veteran hold. This grants the veterans exclusive access to views in order to apply for positions before the job announcement is released to the general public. Job postings are emailed to vets as soon as they are posted.
- The VIDOL website has been updated to display a Veteran Services banner and Veterans' Employment Services quick access link on the main page. Facilitating the website's navigation by providing a viewable and easily accessible banner. The Veterans Employment Services page was updated to indicate the new guidelines imposed by the Veterans Employment & Training Services to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program. These changes allow Veterans to easily navigate the Virgin Islands Department of Labor's website and swiftly locate a synopsis of the Veterans Employment Services and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program prerequisites.

DVOP Program

Veterans who meet the eligibility criteria as defined in 38U.S.C. Sub Section 4211(1) and (3) are identified and referred to Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialists for intensive services. These specialists provide case management services to veterans and eligible spouses of Veterans with 'significant barriers to employment'. Veterans' eligibility for these services includes:

- A special disabled or disabled veteran, as those terms are defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(1) and (3);
- Homeless person, as defined in Section 103(a) and (b) of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11302(a) and (b)), as amended;

- A recently separated service member, as defined in 38 U.S.C § 4211(6), who has been unemployed for 27 or more weeks in the previous 12 months;
- An offender, as defined by WIOA Section 3 (38), who is currently incarcerated or who has been released from incarceration;
- Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate;
- Low-income individual (as defined by WIOA at Section 3 (36))
- Veterans 18 – 24; and
- Vietnam era Veterans.

Eligible spouses' eligibility includes:

The spouse of a veteran who has a total service-connected disability,

- Is Missing In Action,
- Captured in the line of duty by a hostile force,
- Is a Prisoner of War or
- Who died from a service-connected disability

In accordance with the authorization provided in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2014, the following populations are eligible to receive DVOP services.

- Transitioning members of the Armed Forces who have been identified as in need of intensive services;
- Members of the Armed Forces who are wounded, ill, or injured and receiving treatment in military treatment facilities or warrior transition units; and
- The spouse or other family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured members.

Partnerships

In an effort to assist veterans to overcome their Significant Barriers to Employment, the Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialist will collaborate with Veterans Organizations and community-based organizations such as:

- The Methodist Training & Outreach Center
- Catholic Charities
- Bethlehem Shelter
- Eagle's Nest Shelter
- My Brother's Table Soup Kitchen
- Veterans Affairs Clinic
- Salvation Army
- Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation
- Local Office of Veterans Affairs

- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)
- Virgin Island National Guard State Family Program Office
- Women/Men's Coalition
- University of the Virgin Islands and the UVI Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning

One Stop Career Center staff and partners are aware of the policy and procedures addressing priority of service for veterans. This notification is also posted in our Center lobbies and the process is monitored by the Program Administrators through periodic on-site reviews and evaluation of our quarterly ETA 9002 reports.

Under the Wagner Peyser program veterans receive preference for all new job postings received within the System and are afforded preferred access to a range of other services. Application of this designation and requirement is monitored through the VIEWS database and is evidenced by the established 72 hour "vet hold" on each job order.

All staff are provided with a range of comprehensive information on the services available through the WIOA program and are prepared to disperse to the veterans they serve. Additionally, the DVOP specialists are fully integrated into the American Job Center and all staff are aware that veterans identified or self-attesting to meeting one or more of the criteria defined to signify a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE), are eligible to receive individualized services from the DVOP. Once eligibility is established, the veteran is referred to the DVOP and this activity is also recorded in the database.

The VIDOL will dedicate staff to implement this effort. In addition to cross-training to all staff (and other partner staff), VIDOL will prioritize the hiring of appropriate staff and/or prioritize staff capacity to address the needs of all veterans with emphasis on disabled veterans.

B. Describe how the State will monitor priority of service provisions for veterans.

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, the Virgin Islands Workforce Development System offers covered Veterans and eligible spouses 'Priority of Service'. The designation requires that these individuals are given first consideration for program participation and they receive access to services ahead of "non-covered" persons or, if resources or space is limited.

In order to receive Veterans Priority of Service for a specific program, a Veteran or eligible spouse must meet the statutory definition of a "covered person" as well as any other statutory eligibility requirement applicable to the program. Additionally, 'Veterans Priority of Service' designation shall take precedence before applying WIOA Priority of Service for recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and those who are basic skills deficient. Further, it is also required that staff and partners inform Veterans and eligible spouses of the full array of employment training and placement services available; and, applicable eligibility requirements for other programs and services. Informational pamphlets and other methods of promoting the Priority of Service provision will also be utilized to ensure that this mandate is executed.

In an effort to ensure that the 'priority of service' as established by the Jobs for Veterans Act is provided to veterans, there is Priority of Service signage in the lobby of the AJC. The question regarding each customer's veteran status is included on the initial registration form and the electronic registration system which is used by the WDS.

C. Describe the triage and referral process for eligible veterans and other populations determined eligible to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG)

program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist/Consolidated Position.

Veterans Referral Protocol

The Military Veterans' Customer Flow chart provides a visual representation to JVSG and non-JVSG staff about the veterans' referral process.

Veterans who walk-in and require staff assistance are registered and provided with an orientation on the Workforce System. The veterans are also provided with an intake form which indicates the various Significant Barriers to Employment. According to the responses on the intake form, veterans are either served by the AJC staff or referred to the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist for service. Only veterans with SBE are referred to and are served by the DVOP.

DVOP also receive referrals from other community partners who are serving veterans with SBE. Eligibility is determined through assessments.

Veterans who apply for Unemployment Insurance have to register with the Workforce System. If the veteran self-registers, he or she will be asked a series of questions through the online registration that will determine if he or she possesses a Significant Barrier to Employment (SBE). If the veteran does possess an SBE, the DVOP Specialists will receive an email alert indicating that a qualifying veteran registered on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System. Follow-up action will then be initiated by the DVOP.

8. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners), will comply with section 188 of WIOA (if applicable) and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs, services, technology, and materials for individuals with disabilities. This also must include a description of compliance through providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities. Describe the State's one-stop center certification policy, particularly the accessibility criteria.

5) Address the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for individuals with disabilities.

The Department will provide whatever reasonable assistance may be deemed necessary to assure programmatic and architectural accessibility including, but not limited to ensuring that:

- Customers and staff with disabilities will be provided access to assistance deemed necessary to accommodate their needs, including assistive technology and alternate barrier-free work locations
- Assistance to disabled customers to include testing (if applicable) and placement support is reasonably accessible. Such services and support may include providing interpreters, readers and other accommodations deemed necessary.

The Virgin Islands is committed to ensuring both programmatic and physical accessibility to the one-stop delivery system by maintaining compliance with WIOA Section 188, the Americans

with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and all other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. Compliance monitoring will be conducted to make certain that all comprehensive one-stop facilities, programs, services, technology and materials are accessible and available. These services will be provided “on-demand” and in “near real time” in the physical comprehensive one-stop center location or via technology consistent with the “direct linkage” requirement defined in WIOA.

With increased provisions to provide universal access throughout the workforce system, annual monitoring of all recipients will be enacted under the one stop certification process to give assurances that recipients are complying with all nondiscriminatory requirements of the law. Nondiscrimination Plans will be requested by each of the WIOA funded partners and subrecipients and monitoring of the plan will be reviewed annually. These reports will consist of findings, as well as corrective actions taken to ensure recipients of WIOA funding adhere to the assurance clauses of their contracts.

Finally, staff training is integral to making sure all services are programmatically and physically accessible. The Workforce Development Board, in partnership with the One Stop Operator, will host a webinar that includes updated provisions on WIOA Section 188, technical assistance on leveraging business relations to benefit job seekers with disabilities, and the requirements of Comprehensive One-Stop Center certification. Additionally, the Virgin Islands has and will continue to conduct summits that provide best practices for serving individuals with barriers, including individuals with disabilities.

9. ADDRESSING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Describe how the one-stop delivery system (including one-stop center operators and the one-stop delivery system partners) will ensure that each one-stop center is able to meet the needs of English language learners, such as through established procedures, staff training, resources, and other materials. Describe how English language learners will be made aware of the opportunity to enroll and/or co-enroll in all the core programs for which they are eligible.

The Virgin Islands has a diverse population with a high concentration of individuals whose first language is Spanish or French Creole. The Adult Education program has program locations in both districts that address language learning. Through an agreement with Vocational Rehabilitation many of these programs are made accessible for individuals with learning and other disabilities. As core partners, these programs will be included in the menu of services when preparing individual career plans for each customer.

IV. COORDINATION WITH STATE PLAN PROGRAMS

Describe the methods used for joint planning and coordination among the core programs, and with the required one-stop partner programs and other programs and activities included in the Unified or Combined State Plan.

The Virgin Islands will employ a multi-faceted approach to ensure joint planning and coordination among core programs, required one-stop partner programs, and other programs and activities included in the Unified State Plan. Here's an overview of the key strategies:

Governance Structure:

- **VI Workforce Development Board (VIWDB):** The VIWDB serves as the governing body for the WIOA State Plan. It is composed of representatives from business, labor, education, and community-based organizations. The VIWDB will oversee the

development, implementation, and monitoring of the plan through regular meetings and committee work.

- **One-Stop Career Center System:** The Virgin Islands operates one-stop career centers that provide a unified point of access to WIOA services and programs offered by various partners.

Planning and Collaboration Mechanisms:

- **Joint Needs Assessment:** VIWDB will facilitate a collaborative process to conduct a comprehensive workforce needs assessment. This will involve using the data analysis that was done by Lightcast and combining it with industry consultations, and stakeholder meetings to identify skill gaps and emerging workforce trends.
- **Unified State Plan Development:** Core program leads, one-stop partners, and other stakeholders will participate in drafting the Unified State Plan. This collaborative approach ensures all programs and activities are aligned with identified workforce needs and priorities. The development team met weekly to organize the response and strategically plan for the next four years.
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs):** VIWDB will establish MOUs with required one-stop partner programs and other key stakeholders. These MOUs will outline joint planning and coordination activities, referral processes, and data sharing protocols.
- **Technical Assistance and Training:** VIWDB will provide technical assistance and training opportunities for staff across all WIOA programs and one-stop partner organizations. This will foster a shared understanding of program goals, eligibility requirements, and referral procedures.

Communication and Information Sharing:

- **Regular Meetings:** VIWDB will convene regular meetings with core program leads, one-stop partners, and other stakeholders to discuss program implementation, performance challenges, and best practices.
- **Data Sharing Agreements:** VIWDB will establish data sharing agreements with key partners to facilitate the exchange of relevant workforce data. This data will be used for performance monitoring and continuous improvement of WIOA programs.

While not directly related to ongoing planning and coordination, it's worth mentioning the weekly meetings facilitated by the VIWDB Director in preparation for the Governor's Workforce Summit. These meetings can serve as valuable opportunities for brainstorming new initiatives, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and aligning planning efforts with the Governor's vision for workforce development.

By implementing these strategies, the Virgin Islands will ensure all WIOA resources and activities are coordinated effectively, leading to a more cohesive and impactful workforce development system that benefits job seekers, employers, and the overall economy.

V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

VI. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR CORE PROGRAMS

The State must address all program-specific requirements in this section for the WIOA core programs regardless of whether the State submits either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE I-B

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following with respect to activities carried out under subtitle B—

A. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

1. REGIONS AND LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS

A. IDENTIFY THE REGIONS AND THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREAS DESIGNATED IN THE STATE

The US Virgin Islands is a single state local workforce development area. Its population is approximately 87,146. There are two major Island districts that house two physical One-Stop Centers in order to accommodate access for all individuals. Services in each district including with all core and non-core partners mirror each other. The Virgin Islands operates as a single Region.

B. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS AND POLICY USED FOR DESIGNATING LOCAL AREAS, INCLUDING PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING WHETHER THE LOCAL AREA MET THE CRITERIA FOR “PERFORMED SUCCESSFULLY” AND “SUSTAINED FISCAL INTEGRITY” IN ACCORDANCE WITH 106(B)(2) AND (3) OF WIOA. DESCRIBE THE PROCESS USED FOR IDENTIFYING REGIONS AND PLANNING REGIONS UNDER SECTION 106(A) OF WIOA. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE CONSULTED WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN IDENTIFYING THE REGIONS

As a single state local workforce development area there are no local areas or separate regions designated.

C. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS

As a single state local workforce development area there are no local areas or separate regions designated therefore, there is no need for an appeals process or policy.

D. PROVIDE THE APPEALS PROCESS AND POLICY REFERRED TO IN SECTION 121(H)(2)(E) OF WIOA RELATING TO DETERMINATIONS FOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

The VIWDB has not coordinated the infrastructure funding process to date. Therefore, there isn't an appeals process available as outlined in section 121(h)(2)(E) of the Workforce Investment Act (WIOA) for infrastructure funding determinations.

We are actively working to develop an infrastructure funding process that adheres to WIOA guidelines. This process will include a clearly defined appeals mechanism to ensure transparency and fairness. We will keep USDOL informed on the progress of this initiative.

2. STATEWIDE ACTIVITIES

A. PROVIDE STATE POLICIES OR GUIDANCE FOR THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND FOR USE OF STATE FUNDS FOR WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES

The policies and guidance for the workforce development system can be found on the Virgin Islands Workforce Board website at www.viwib.org.

B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR'S SET ASIDE FUNDING FOR MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING HOW THE STATE WILL CONDUCT EVALUATIONS OF TITLE I ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

The USVI will utilize a portion of the Governor's set-aside funding to work towards achieving greater alignment, collective impact and innovation across the workforce ecosystem. The Core Partners identified seven common goals that they intend to prioritize over the next four years. Those goals may require additional funding from the Governor's set-aside funding. The

1. **Outreach:** Common approach to outreach, establishing a "one knock approach"
2. **Sector Partnership:** Explore opportunities to serve businesses through sector solutions work
3. **Priority Populations:** Develop plans to align and leverage resources to serve priority populations, such as justice involved, immigrants, refugees and asylees, and older workers
4. **Business Services Team:** Establish a cohesive Business Services Team that represents all core partners.
5. **The Governor's Workforce Summit:** Showcase the innovation, expertise and collaboration in the workforce development space to youth and the community at large at the annual Governor's Workforce Summit.
6. **Technology Infrastructure Upgrade:** Invest in upgrading the IT infrastructure to improve data collection, map services offered to identify gaps that can be addressed, participant tracking and referrals, and efficient service delivery during rapid response situations.
7. **Rapid Response Team (RRT) Development:** Establish a well-trained and resourced RRT specifically designed to respond to layoffs and plant closings. This team will comprise of representatives of the Core Partners

Rapid Response Funds:

The USVI will leverage Rapid Response funds to directly assist companies and affected workers during layoffs and plant closings:

- **Rapid Response Activation:** Establish clear criteria for triggering a Rapid Response deployment. This could involve a specific number of planned layoffs or a plant closure announcement.
- **On-Site Assistance:** Upon activation, the RRT will deploy to the affected worksite to meet with company officials and workers. This will allow for a quick assessment of the situation and identification of needs.
- **Services for Workers:** Dislocated workers will be offered a comprehensive suite of services including:
 - **Career counseling and job search assistance**
 - **Skills gap analysis and retraining opportunities**

- **Financial assistance and supportive services** (e.g., resume writing workshops, interview skills training)
- **Services for Companies:** The RRT will work with companies undergoing restructuring to explore layoff aversion strategies such as:
 - **Work sharing programs**
 - **Temporary wage subsidies**
 - **On-the-job training programs**

Layoff Aversion Strategies:

The USVI recognizes the importance of preventing layoffs whenever possible. Here are some strategies that will be pursued:

- **Early Warning System:** Establish a system for companies to notify the state about potential layoffs well in advance. This allows for proactive intervention and exploration of layoff aversion strategies.
- **Industry Partnerships:** Build strong relationships with key industries in the USVI. This will allow for better understanding of their needs and potential challenges, enabling targeted workforce development initiatives to prevent skills gaps and potential layoffs.
- **Business Retention and Expansion Programs:** Partner with existing businesses to offer support services like export assistance or loan programs. This can help strengthen businesses and reduce the risk of future closures.

By implementing these strategies, the USVI aims to effectively utilize the Governor's set-aside and Rapid Response funds to minimize the impact of layoffs and plant closings on both businesses and workers. This will ensure a more responsive and supportive workforce development system in the USVI.

C. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE RAPID RESPONSE FUNDS TO RESPOND TO LAYOFFS AND PLANT CLOSINGS AND COORDINATE SERVICES TO QUICKLY AID COMPANIES AND THEIR AFFECTED WORKERS. STATES ALSO SHOULD DESCRIBE ANY LAYOFF AVERSION STRATEGIES THEY HAVE IMPLEMENTED TO ADDRESS AT RISK COMPANIES AND WORKERS.

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D. DESCRIBE THE STATE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSES IN CASES OF NATURAL DISASTERS INCLUDING COORDINATION WITH FEMA AND OTHER ENTITIES.

The VIWDB and Core Partners prioritizes close coordination with FEMA and other entities to ensure an efficient and effective response that meets the needs of our citizens.

Key Elements of the Rapid Response Strategy:

- **Pre-Disaster Mitigation:** We work collaboratively with FEMA to identify potential hazards and implement mitigation strategies. Staff are available to participate in joint training exercises and maintaining open communication channels.
- **Activation and Assessment:** Upon the declaration of a disaster, we immediately initiate a needs assessment in cooperation with local emergency management offices and FEMA to determine the extent of damage and resource requirements.
- **Deployment of Resources:** Based on the needs assessment, we deploy our Workforce Recovery Team to support residents impacted by the natural disaster. The VIWDB will work with the Governor and FEMA to leverage federal resources to supplement our own capabilities.

- **Coordination with Other Entities:** Beyond FEMA, we actively engage with other entities during a rapid response. This includes the WIOA Core Partners, faith-based organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and volunteer groups to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response that addresses diverse needs.

Communication and Public Information:

The WIOA Core Partners, including WIOA title I will emphasize clear communication throughout the response process. We utilize various channels, including mass media and social media, to keep the public informed about the situation, and available resources.

By maintaining a proactive approach to disaster preparedness, fostering close collaboration with the Governor, FEMA and other entities, and prioritizing clear communication, the USVI is committed to providing a rapid and effective response to natural disasters.

E. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) AND ENSURES THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A) AND TAA SECTION 221(A)(2)(A) .) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE TAA PETITIONS WITH AN ACCURATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROVISION OF TAA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY ARE TRANSPARENT TO THE DISLOCATED WORKER APPLYING FOR THEM (TRADE ACT SEC. 221(A)(2)(A) AND SEC. 225; GOVERNOR-SECRETARY AGREEMENT). DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE FUNDS THAT HAVE BEEN RESERVED FOR RAPID RESPONSE TO PROVIDE SERVICES FOR EVERY WORKER GROUP THAT FILES A TAA PETITION AND HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THE PROVISION OF APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICE TO WORKERS IN THE GROUPS IDENTIFIED IN THE PETITION (TAA SEC. 221(A)(2)(A)).NOTE: UNTIL THE TAA PROGRAM IS REAUTHORIZED, THE REQUIREMENTS TO PROVIDE RAPID RESPONSE AND APPROPRIATE CAREER SERVICES TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A PETITION HAS BEEN FILED IS NOT APPLICABLE.

The Virgin Islands does not have a Trade Adjustment Assistance program.

Rapid Response funds will be used to supplement employer engagement efforts in response to lay-off aversion strategies. Employers will be made aware of this option through public service campaigns by literature or media or in general orientation to workforce services either by visiting the VIDOL website or through informal interaction with a business service representative. A business service representative may contact an employer known to be going through a hardship to initiate this discussion or such employer may make contact through the One-Stop Centers.

B. ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

1. WORK-BASED TRAINING MODELS

If the State is utilizing work-based training models (e.g. on-the-job training, incumbent worker training, transitional jobs, and customized training) as part of its training strategy and these strategies are not already discussed in other sections of the plan, describe the State’s strategies for how these models ensure high quality training for both the participant and the employer.

The U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) recognizes the value of work-based training models in equipping individuals with the skills needed for success in the workforce and meeting the evolving needs of our businesses. Here's how we utilize these models and ensure high quality training for both participants and employers:

Work-Based Training Models:

- **On-the-Job Training (OJT):** OJT allows participants to learn new skills directly under the supervision of experienced workers within a company setting. The WIOA Title I provider works with employers to develop structured OJT plans that combine paid work experience with classroom instruction if needed.
- **Incumbent Worker Training:** This model focuses on upgrading the skills of existing employees to keep pace with industry advancements. The WIOA Title I provider assists businesses in identifying training needs and connects them with resources to deliver customized training programs for their workforce.
- **Transitional Jobs:** Transitional jobs provide participants with work experience in high-demand fields while they receive complementary training and supportive services. This model helps individuals gain valuable experience and build a work history while earning an income as they transition to unsubsidized employment.
- **Customized Training:** This approach tailors training programs to address the specific skill needs of a particular employer or industry sector. The WIOA Title I provider can collaborate with businesses and training providers to develop curriculum and training plans that directly address identified skill gaps and prepare participants for immediate job placement.

Ensuring High-Quality Training:

To ensure high-quality training for both participants and employers, the WIOA Title I provider implements the following strategies:

- **Strong Partnerships:** We forge strong partnerships with employers, training providers, and community organizations to develop and deliver effective training programs that meet industry standards.
- **Needs Assessments:** We can conduct thorough needs assessments to identify the specific skills and knowledge required by employers and participants. This ensures that training programs are targeted and relevant.
- **Competency-Based Curriculum:** We promote the use of competency-based curriculum that focuses on measurable skills and knowledge acquisition, guaranteeing participants attain proficiency before placement.
- **Qualified Instructors:** We emphasize the importance of qualified instructors who possess industry expertise and strong pedagogical skills.
- **Performance Monitoring:** We monitor training programs to ensure they are meeting established benchmarks and delivering the desired outcomes for both participants and employers.

Benefits for Participants:

- **Hands-on Learning:** Work-based programs provide participants with hands-on experience and develop essential job skills in a real-world work environment.
- **Increased Employability:** Participants gain valuable experience, industry-recognized certifications, and enhance their resumes, improving their job prospects.
- **Earning Potential:** Some programs offer paid work experience, allowing participants to earn an income while acquiring new skills.

Benefits for Employers:

- **Skilled Workforce:** Work-based training helps employers build a skilled and qualified workforce that meets their specific needs.
- **Reduced Recruitment Costs:** By investing in training existing employees, employers can reduce recruitment costs associated with filling open positions.
- **Increased Productivity:** A skilled workforce contributes to increased productivity and overall business growth.

The VIWDB remains committed to continuously improving the delivery and effectiveness of work-based training programs, ensuring they are a valuable tool for empowering individuals and strengthening the USVI economy.

2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., outreach to sponsors and prospective sponsors, identifying potential participants and connecting them to apprenticeship opportunities).

America’s public workforce system for registered apprenticeships is led by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL). The USDOL has two types of entities responsible for registering and overseeing Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs). These entities include the USDOL’s Office of Apprenticeship (OA), and its OA states, states that have USDOL recognized State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA). The USVI is now a Recognized State Apprenticeship Agency State. VIDOL is the USVI USDOL recognized State Apprenticeship Agency.

VIDOL has created an Apprenticeship Office and hired staff, who partner with the American Job Center partners, to integrate apprenticeship outreach and programming into the daily operations of the USVI Workforce Development System. Apprenticeship staff work with WIOA Title I contractors to conduct business engagement and have the following apprenticeship programs:

- Medical Assistance/Patient Care Coordinator
- Surgical Technician
- Life Safety Coordinator
- Massage Therapist
- Able Seaman (Water Transportation)
- Pipefitter (Construction)
- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) - Restorative Care Specialty

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) - Dementia Specialty
- Cook
- Marine Services Technician
- Boat Builder

VIDOL is working with American Job Center partners to recruit, and co-enroll participants, to be employed via registered apprenticeships. It is the eventual goal to have a pipeline of WIOA Title I participants employed via registered apprenticeships.

3. TRAINING PROVIDER ELIGIBILITY PROCEDURE

Provide the procedure, eligibility criteria, and information requirements for determining training provider initial and continued eligibility, including Registered Apprenticeship programs (WIOA Section 122).

The VIWDB follows Board Policy Document 410-23 “WIOA Eligible Training Providers List Policy” which defines the role of the Workforce Development Board in overseeing the quality and selection of providers and programs of training services to achieve the core principles of WIOA. WIOA emphasizes informed consumer choice, job-driven training, provider performance, career pathways and continuous improvement. Training providers, including Registered Apprenticeship programs, have an initial eligibility period of 12 months once approved by the state. After the initial period of eligibility, the training provider is subject to the application procedure for continuing eligibility when their initial year of eligibility expires. During this period, the state considers specific criteria for continued eligibility on the eligibility training provider list. It’s the responsibility of the board to review these factors to determine if the program should maintain eligibility. The USVI Workforce Development Board collects performance data from the provider for all participants, including WIOA participants in ETPL eligible training programs. Providers who are not meeting continued eligibility are invited to complete a corrective action plan (CAP) to explain how they will correct training and/or performance related concerns. The process is designed to be fair, accurate and consistent. The VIWDB is very active and vocal about the training provider policy, to ensure that training completed is relevant and leads to employment in quality jobs.

4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR FOR THE ADULT PRIORITY OF SERVICE REQUIREMENT IN WIOA SECTION 134 (C)(3)(E) THAT REQUIRES AMERICAN JOB CENTER STAFF, WHEN USING WIOA ADULT PROGRAM FUNDS TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES, TO GIVE PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO RECIPIENTS OF PUBLIC ASSISTANCE, LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT (INCLUDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS).

The VIWDB and associated contractors prioritize public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals with basic skills deficiencies (BSD) for individualized career services and training services funded by the Adult Formula Program under WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E). Here's how we'll achieve this:

Implementation:

- **Outreach and Identification:** We will conduct targeted outreach campaigns to connect with the priority populations. Equus has a current partnership where they conduct outreach in low income housing areas in partnership with the Housing Authority. Additional partnerships may include, public assistance agencies, community organizations, and adult education.
- **Assessment and Service Planning:** All participants will undergo a comprehensive assessment to determine their career goals, skills, and basic skills needs. Individuals identified as part of the priority groups will receive priority for in-depth career exploration and the development of individualized service plans that address their specific needs and barriers to employment.
- **Prioritized Services:** Priority populations will receive priority access to:
 - **Individualized Career Services:** This includes career counseling, labor market information, job search workshops, resume development, and interview preparation.
 - **Training Services:** Individuals will be referred to training programs that align with their career goals and address any identified basic skills deficiencies.
 - **Supportive Services:** Supportive services, such as child care assistance and transportation assistance, may also be offered to help these individuals overcome barriers to participation in training and employment.

Monitoring:

- **Data Collection:** We will collect data on the number of individuals served within each priority group, including the types of services provided and their employment outcomes. This data will be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, and disability status.
- **Performance Measures:** We will establish performance measures to track our progress in serving the priority populations. These measures may include:
 - The percentage of public assistance recipients, low-income individuals, and individuals with BSD who participate in ICS and training services.
 - The percentage of these individuals who obtain employment after receiving services.
 - The increase in basic skills levels for individuals with BSD who participate in training.
- **Regular Reviews:** We will conduct regular reviews of our outreach, service delivery, and monitoring practices to ensure they are effective in reaching and serving the priority populations. This may involve surveys of participants and feedback from one-stop staff.

Transparency and Public Input:

- **Public Awareness:** We will develop public awareness materials to inform the priority populations about the services available to them.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:** We will collaborate with stakeholders, such as workforce development boards, community-based organizations, and advocacy groups, to ensure our strategies are effective in serving the priority populations.

By implementing these strategies, the Virgin Islands will ensure that public assistance recipients, other low-income individuals, and individuals with basic skills deficiencies have equitable access to the WIOA Adult Program and the opportunity to achieve successful employment outcomes.

5. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S CRITERIA REGARDING LOCAL AREA TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN THE ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAMS

The VIWDB accepts requests from the WIOA Title I provider to transfer funds between adult and dislocated workers based on need. Historically, the US Virgin Islands has a greater need to serve Adults as Dislocated Workers can often become reemployed without the intervention of WIOA Title I. The WIOA Title I provider makes a formal request to transfer funds to the Director, VIWDB. The Director takes the request to The Board to consideration and vote. If the vote is approved, the transfer is made.

6. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S POLICY ON WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLMENT AND WHETHER AND HOW OFTEN THIS POLICY IS DISSEMINATED TO THE LOCAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARDS AND REQUIRED ONE-STOP PARTNERS. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.325, 20 CFR 618.824(A)(3)(I).

The Virgin Islands does not have a TAA program, therefore, co-enrollment is not required.

7. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S FORMAL STRATEGY TO ENSURE THAT WIOA AND TAA CO-ENROLLED PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE NECESSARY FUNDED BENEFITS AND SERVICES. TRADE ACT SEC. 239(F), SEC. 235, 20 CFR 618.816(C)

There is not a TAA Program in the US Virgin Islands. Therefore, this is not applicable.

8. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PROCESS FOR FAMILIARIZING ONE-STOP STAFF WITH THE TAA PROGRAM. 20 CFR 618.804(J), 20 CFR 618.305

The TAA Program is not offered in the US Virgin Islands, therefore, this is not applicable.

C. YOUTH PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA, States should describe their strategies that will support the implementation of youth activities under WIOA. State's must-

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDED GRANTS OR CONTRACTS FOR YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AND DESCRIBE HOW THE LOCAL BOARDS WILL TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THE ABILITY OF THE PROVIDERS TO MEET PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES BASED ON PRIMARY INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE FOR THE YOUTH PROGRAM AS DESCRIBED IN SECTION 116(B)(2)(A)(II) OF WIOA.¹¹ FURTHER, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL AREAS IN DETERMINING WHETHER TO CONTRACT FOR SERVICES OR TO PROVIDE SOME OR ALL OF THE PROGRAM ELEMENTS DIRECTLY.

¹¹ Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

Providers of youth activities are not subject to the Individual Training Accounts policy or the Eligible Providers Certification system. Eligible providers of youth activities will be determined

by contracts awarded through a competitive process, based on the recommendation of the Youth Committee of the Workforce Board and on the criteria as described in the Youth Transition Plan. An eligible provider list for youth activities will be developed and disseminated throughout the One-Stop system for providers of youth services approved through the competitive bidding process.

Proposals will be required to make assurances that the following are in place:

- Adequate technical and financial resources;
- A well defined program design that relates to the needs of the local economy;
- The ability to meet program design specifications at a reasonable cost;
- A satisfactory record of past performance; and
- A satisfactory record of fiscal accountability, organization and operational controls.

The *disqualifying factors* for bidders under the competitive process include:

- Providers with a history of poor past performance;
- Providers that fail to establish linkages to local market demands;
- Providers that fail to demonstrate adequate goals and structure in youth program design.

Evaluation factors are based on a hundred point scale and include:

Labor Market Status – The strength of the occupational area in terms of employment opportunities available, entry-level wages, upward mobility and stability of the industry – is occupational area demand driven? (15 points)

Program Design – The relevancy of the program design to the promised outcomes; type and mix of services as compared with the population to be served (30 points)

Reasonableness of cost – Reasonableness of the single unit charge in relation to the program goals and outcomes. (25 points)

Organization Capability – The organization’s overall capability including experience with serving at-risk youth; administrative capacity, available resources, and demonstrated effectiveness in past training (10 points)

Facilities, staffing, equipment – Accessibility of the training site to participants, the availability of appropriate equipment and the adequacy of the facility and the experience of staff. (10 points)

Youth Services – Ability of program to provide services to youth. Does provider regularly work with youth or is program a subset of Adult training? (10 points)

2. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN ACHIEVING EQUITABLE RESULTS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND IN-SCHOOL YOUTH. DESCRIBE PROMISING PRACTICES OR PARTNERSHIP MODELS THAT LOCAL AREAS ARE IMPLEMENTING AND THE STATE’S ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND SCALING THOSE MODELS WITHIN THE STATE FOR BOTH IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH.

The VIWDB recognizes the importance of supporting both in-school and out-of-school youth in their career development journeys. Currently, the USVI serves a greater number of Out-of-School Youth compared to In-School-Youth. We will work towards achieving equitable results for this population through a multi-pronged approach:

Collaboration and Resource Sharing:

- **Statewide Strategies:** We will develop and share best practices, data analysis tools, and performance measures focused on youth employment outcomes.
- **Technical Assistance:** The VIWDB will provide technical assistance to our WIOA Title I Youth Provider on program design, outreach strategies, and effective partnerships with schools, community organizations, and youth-serving agencies.
- **Funding Opportunities:** We will explore opportunities to dedicate a portion of WIOA Youth Formula Grants to support evidence-based programs targeting both in-school and out-of-school youth.

Promising Practices and Partnerships:

For In-School Youth:

- **Career Coaching and Work-Based Learning:** We will encourage the WIOA Title I Youth Provider to partner with schools to implement career coaching programs that connect students with career exploration activities and work-based learning opportunities. This could involve internships, apprenticeships, or job shadowing experiences.
- **Dual Enrollment Programs:** The state will explore opportunities for promoting dual enrollment programs that allow high school students to earn college credit while still in school. This can provide them with a head start on their post-secondary education and career pathways.

For Out-of-School Youth:

- **Reengagement Programs:** We will support our WIOA Title I Youth Provider in collaborating with community organizations to design reengagement programs that help out-of-school youth obtain their GED, develop job skills, and connect to employment opportunities.
- **Summer Youth Employment Programs:** We will continue to support our WIOA Title I Youth Provider in administering summer youth employment programs that provide work experience and career exploration opportunities for out-of-school youth.

By fostering collaboration, promoting promising practices, and supporting scalability, the Virgin Islands will support high-quality services that prepare all youth for success in the workforce, regardless of their current educational attainment.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE ASSISTS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS IN IMPLEMENTING INNOVATIVE MODELS FOR DELIVERING YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING EFFECTIVE WAYS LOCAL WORKFORCE BOARDS CAN MAKE AVAILABLE THE 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2); AND EXPLAIN HOW LOCAL AREAS CAN ENSURE WORK EXPERIENCE, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP, IS PRIORITIZED AS A KEY ELEMENT WITHIN A BROADER CAREER PATHWAYS STRATEGY.

The VIWDB and its WIOA Title I Youth Provider are committed to fostering innovative approaches for youth workforce development. We will work strategically to implement models that ensure all 14 program elements outlined in WIOA Section 129(c)(2) are readily available to youth participants.

Making the 14 WIOA Program Elements Accessible:

- **Comprehensive Service Delivery:** a coordinated service delivery system that ensures all 14 WIOA program elements are readily available to youth participants. These elements include: career counseling, occupational information, skills assessments, basic academic skills development, financial literacy education, and work-based learning opportunities.
- **Data-Driven Strategies:** We will use data analysis to identify gaps in service delivery and tailor program offerings to meet the specific needs of youth.
- **Partnership Development:** The WIOA Title I Youth Provider will collaborate with schools, community organizations, and employers to leverage existing resources and expertise in delivering the 14 WIOA program elements.

Prioritizing Work Experience:

We recognize the critical role work experience plays in career development. We will prioritize work experience within career pathways strategies:

- **Pre-apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Programs:** Develop and expand pre-apprenticeship and registered apprenticeship programs that align with high-demand industries.
- **Work-Based Learning Partnerships:** Establish partnerships with employers to offer internships, job shadowing experiences, and other work-based learning opportunities that provide valuable hands-on experience for youth participants.

By providing support for innovation, promoting access to all WIOA program elements, and prioritizing work experiences, the Virgin Islands will equip young people with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in the workforce.

4. PROVIDE THE LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE STATE POLICY FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO ENTER OR COMPLETE AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(III)(VIII) AND FOR “REQUIRING ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE TO COMPLETE AN EDUCATION PROGRAM, OR TO SECURE AND HOLD EMPLOYMENT” CRITERION FOR IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(IV)(VII). IF THE STATE DOES NOT HAVE A POLICY, DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT LOCAL AREAS WILL HAVE A POLICY FOR THESE CRITERIA.

The Virgin Islands definition for “requires additional assistance” developed by the Workforce Board for both in-school and out of school youth provides additional eligibility factors that enables the provision of services to at-risk youth.

In-school Youth, and

- Has exhibited poor attendance in an educational program during the last 12 calendar months; or

- Has been suspended from school during the last 12 calendar months; or
- Has been placed on academic probation during the current school year Out of School Youth, and
- Has dropped out of a post-secondary educational program during the past 12 calendar months; or
- Has limited work history or no work history; or
- Has repeatedly been terminated from employment during the past 12 calendar months

WIOA section 129(a)(1)(B)(iii)(VIII) Policy will be created to define “in-school youth”, and to establish local guidelines for validating an individual’s status as an eligible in-school youth, consistent with federal guidance and state policy. 129(a)(1)(C)(iv)(VII) policy will be created to provide guidance) on WIOA Title I youth program eligibility requirements so Youth can meet eligibility requirements to participate in the WIOA Title I youth program.

D. SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

In States where there is only one local workforce investment area, the governor serves as both the State and local chief elected official. In such cases, the State must submit any information required in the local plan (WIOA section 106(d)(2)). States with a single workforce area must include—

1. ANY COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD THAT REPRESENT DISAGREEMENT WITH THE PLAN. (WIOA SECTION 108(D)(3).)
2. THE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISBURSAL OF GRANT FUNDS, AS DETERMINED BY THE GOVERNOR, IF DIFFERENT FROM THAT FOR THE STATE. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(15).)
3. A DESCRIPTION OF THE TYPE AND AVAILABILITY OF WIOA TITLE I YOUTH ACTIVITIES AND SUCCESSFUL MODELS, INCLUDING FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES. (WIOA SECTION 108(B)(9).)

(1) There were no public comments during the comment period that represent disagreement with the Plan. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is the entity responsible for the disbursement of grant funds as determined by the Governor of the Territory.

(2) Youth activity is available for both in-school and out-of-school youth who are eligible as per the requirements of WIOA 129 (a) (1) (B) and 129 (a) (1) (C) (iv). Programs are solicited through a competitive bidding process and are based on the fourteen program elements. A list of WIOA youth providers can be found at the VI Department of Labor’s website (www.vidol.gov).

(3) The roles and resources contributed by One-Stop partners are outlined in the AJC Memorandum of Understanding, which at a minimum includes the basic services of each program. American Job Centers (AJC) are designed to provide a wide array of workforce development services to all customers of the system to include job seekers, career workers, employers, and businesses. Equus Workforce Solutions is the One Stop Operator in the Territory of the US Virgin Islands. They are responsible for the management and operations of the One Stop Centers in both districts. In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) One-Stop Centers and their partners are tasked with:

- Providing job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages;
- Providing access and opportunity to all job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain and advance in high-quality jobs and high-demand careers;
- Enabling business and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current workforce;
- Participating in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of one-stop centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations;
- Ensuring that high-quality integrated data inform decisions made by policy makers, employers and job seekers.

4. A DESCRIPTION OF THE ROLES AND RESOURCE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE ONE-STOP PARTNERS.

Equus Workforce Solutions is the One Stop Operator in the Territory of the US Virgin Islands. Equus is responsible for the management and operations of the One Stop Centers in all districts. In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) One Stop Centers and their partners are tasked with:

- Providing job seekers with the skills and credentials necessary to secure and advance in employment with family-sustaining wages;
- Providing access and opportunity to all job seekers, including individuals with barriers to employment, such as individuals with disabilities, to prepare for, obtain, retain and advance in high-quality jobs and high demand careers;
- Enabling business and employers to easily identify and hire skilled workers and access other supports, including education and training for their current and evolving workforce;
- Participating in rigorous evaluations that support continuous improvement of one stop centers by identifying which strategies work better for different populations;
- Ensuring that high-quality integration data is available to make informed decisions by policy makers, employers, and job seekers.

General One-Stop Partners Services

To ensure the effectiveness of the Virgin Islands One-Stop Centers general services provided by respective partner programs include:

- Initial intake;
- Eligibility determination (program specific);
- Initial skills assessment (aptitude);
- Individual or group career counseling;
- Access to local labor market information;
- Referrals to other programs/services;

- Services to employers;
- Services to local area businesses;
- Program-specific performance information;
- Assessment of skills needed to anticipate evolving businesses and employment.

5. THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS USED TO AWARD THE SUBGRANTS AND CONTRACTS FOR TITLE I ACTIVITIES.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (VIWDB) follows a competitive process to award subgrants and contracts for Title I activities, adhering to VIWDB procurement policies. Here's a breakdown of the typical process:

Needs Assessment and Solicitation Development:

1. **Needs Identification:** VIWDB will identify workforce development needs based on labor market data, industry trends, and stakeholder input.
2. **Funding Availability:** Once needs are identified, VIWDB will determine the available funding for Title I activities through the WIOA grant.
3. **Solicitation Development:** A Request for Proposal (RFP) or Request for Quote (RFQ) will be developed outlining the specific needs, target population, desired services, and evaluation criteria.

Open and Competitive Selection:

1. **Public Announcement:** The RFP/RFQ will be widely disseminated through various channels, such as VIWDB website, government portals, and industry publications.
2. **Proposal Submission:** Interested organizations will be invited to submit proposals that detail their qualifications, experience, and approach to delivering the required services.
3. **Proposal Review:** A competitive review process will be conducted by a qualified panel following established VIWDB procurement policies. The panel will evaluate proposals based on pre-defined criteria outlined in the RFP/RFQ, ensuring a fair and objective selection process.

Award Notification and Contract Negotiation:

1. **Top-Ranked Proposals:** The panel will recommend the top-ranked proposals that best meet the program requirements and demonstrate a strong track record of successful service delivery.
2. **Negotiation and Award:** VIWDB will negotiate contract terms with the selected organization(s) to finalize the scope of work, budget, and performance expectations.
3. **Contract Signing:** Upon successful negotiation, a formal contract will be signed between VIWDB and the selected provider(s), outlining the specific obligations and deliverables.

Transparency and Accountability:

- The entire process will be conducted transparently, with clear deadlines and communication procedures outlined in the RFP/RFQ.

- VIWDB will adhere to all applicable VIWDB procurement policies and federal regulations governing WIOA funding.
- All proposals will be reviewed and evaluated objectively, with clear selection criteria established in advance.

Alignment with VIWDB Procurement Policy:

It's important to note that this is a general overview, and the specific details of the competitive process may vary depending on the nature of the Title I activity and the size of the funding award. However, the entire process will be aligned with VIWDB's established procurement policies to ensure a fair, transparent, and accountable approach to selecting qualified training providers for Title I activities.

6. HOW TRAINING SERVICES OUTLINED IN SECTION 134 WILL BE PROVIDED THROUGH INDIVIDUAL TRAINING ACCOUNTS AND/OR THROUGH CONTRACTS, AND HOW SUCH TRAINING APPROACHES WILL BE COORDINATED. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL MEET INFORMED CUSTOMER CHOICE REQUIREMENTS REGARDLESS OF TRAINING APPROACH.

The Virgin Islands will utilize a two-pronged approach to deliver training services funded by WIOA Sec. 134: Individual Training Accounts (ITAs) and Contracts. We will ensure both approaches are coordinated and provide participants with informed customer choice.

Training Delivery Methods:

- **Individual Training Accounts (ITAs):**
 - Eligible participants will receive an ITA voucher with a funding cap of \$3800. This allows them to choose their training provider from a list of VIWDB-approved providers.
 - The \$3800 cap and 12-month training duration limit will be clearly communicated to participants during program orientation.
 - VIWDB will maintain a comprehensive online registry of approved training providers offering a variety of programs aligned with in-demand occupations.
- **Contracts with Training Providers:**
 - VIWDB may utilize contracts with training providers for specific situations outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(h), such as on-the-job training (OJT), customized training, or incumbent worker training.
 - Contracted training programs may exceed the \$3800 and 12-month limitations if justified by the specific training needs.

Coordination and Informed Customer Choice:

To ensure a coordinated system and informed customer choice, VIWDB will implement the following strategies:

- **Pre-Training Counseling:** All participants will receive comprehensive pre-training counseling to:
 - Understand the strengths and limitations of both ITAs and contracted training programs.

- Explore training options aligned with their career goals and assess their financial limitations.
- Develop an individualized training plan that considers the \$3800 cap and 12-month limit for ITAs.
- **Training Provider Registry:** The online registry of VIWDB-approved training providers will include clear information about each program, including cost, duration, and career outcomes data. This allows participants to make informed choices within the ITA framework.
- **Performance Monitoring:** VIWDB will monitor the performance of both contracted training providers and those participating in the ITA program. This data will be used to inform future program development and ensure quality training options are available to all participants.

Ensuring Informed Customer Choice:

Regardless of the training approach, VIWDB is committed to ensuring informed customer choice:

- **Consumer Rights Training:** Participants will receive training on their rights and responsibilities as consumers of training services. This includes understanding the terms and conditions of ITAs and how to select a qualified training provider.
- **Grievance Procedures:** VIWDB will establish clear grievance procedures for participants who encounter issues with training providers or the ITA program.
- **Ongoing Support:** Program staff will be available to provide ongoing support and guidance to participants throughout their training journey.

By offering a combination of ITAs and contracted training programs, coupled with strong coordination and support mechanisms, VIWDB will empower participants to make informed choices about their training and achieve successful career outcomes.

7. HOW THE STATE BOARD, IN FULFILLING LOCAL BOARD FUNCTIONS, WILL COORDINATE TITLE I ACTIVITIES WITH THOSE ACTIVITIES UNDER TITLE II. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE BOARD WILL CARRY OUT THE REVIEW OF LOCAL APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED UNDER TITLE II CONSISTENT WITH WIOA SECS. 107(D)(11)(A) AND (B)(I) AND WIOA SEC. 232.

- General Procedure for Funding Eligible Providers

The Virgin Islands, will provide successful agencies with a 25% starting of their respective funding awards during the initial quarter of service and continue with quarterly draws in increments of 25% upon receipts of expenditures and verifications of services rendered.

- Applications

The VI Department of Education will run an open and competitive grant process for funding with the adult education services. Eighty-two-point five percent (82.5%) of the federal allocation for grants will go to local entities providing adult education services. Eligible Applicants Eligible applicants for these funds include (1) local educational agencies; (2) community-based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (3) volunteer literacy organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; (4) institutions of higher education; (5) public or private nonprofit agencies; (6) libraries; (7) public housing authorities; (8) nonprofit

institutions that are not described in any of these descriptions and have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families; and a consortium of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described in items (1) through (8). Community-based organizations and nonprofit institutions include nonprofit faith-based organizations. Public Notice of Availability and A Public Notice of Process will be distributed and advertised in the local media and related agencies. Eligible providers will also be verified against SAM.gov listing.

- Request for Proposal Readers (Grant Reviewers)

A Public Notice to solicit the services for Grant Reviewers will be published in local media. Objective and Qualifications, Compensation, Scope of Work will be listed in advertisements.

The VI Department of Education, under the provisions of the Adult Education Family and Literacy Act, will consider eligible providers seeking grant funding within the guidelines set forth in the Workforce Investment and Opportunity Act.

Applicants will include a descriptive narrative of the use of funds, which will be consistent with Title II of AEFLA. Particular attention will be given to details of program and service alignment and how they will achieve measurable outcomes. Successful Agency providers must agree to attain State set levels for the performance of primary core indicators set by Federal and State Plans. Provider activities will be carried out through the One-Stop Delivery System with recommendations from the Workforce Investment Board.

Eligible providers will be assessed on past demonstrated effectiveness to deliver services and effect significant educational student gains. Applicable local laws governing commerce, licensing of sub-grantees, and reporting will be in effect throughout the duration of the multiyear grant.

A request for Proposal (RFP), including an application packet, will be prepared and a public notice will be given to the general public to further assure equity among applicants and interested parties. All submitted entries post marked or submitted in person and time stamped within the appointed date, will be reviewed and sent to the Virgin Islands Workforce Board for additional review. The RFP process will be subject to the Procedures outlined for the Virgin Islands Department of Procurement as well as the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

All interested responsive parties will receive an application packet with instructions for preparation of the application and procedures for submittal to the designated Division of Purchases. The deadline will be advertised to all as prescribed. All grants are date stamped at the Division of Purchases and logged in by the Purchases Staff. The grants are then picked up by a VIDE designated staff member and teams or readers are assembled to read and rate the proposals based on a common evaluation tool which assigns numerical values to essential elements of the proposal. Grants reading teams are made up of representatives from the Virgin Islands Department of Education, educational consultants, and other stakeholders.

- Evaluation of Application

Teams use an evaluation tool with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed applications will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed application will meet Virgin Islands Department of Education quality program standards as well as the USDOE requirements set forth in Section 231 of Title II of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act. All proposals must also submit a reasonable budget with at least a 10% local match. Applications will be read and rated a minimum of three times by trained grant readers. No grant will be funded unless it has met a minimum score of 70 points.

The Virgin Islands State Office for Adult Education will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers by reinstating its policy for the selection of prospective applicants as defined in WIOA guidelines. Additional guidance as outlined in (VI.b.)

All proposals must be returned to the VI State Office for Adult Education with WIB recommendations for final review and selection of providers.

The Eligible providers will be selected through a review process of the State Office for Career, Technical and Adult Education and the Virgin Islands Workforce Board. Assurances must be given by the successful applicant that receives the grant funding that they will conduct classes that provide adult education and literacy activities including programs that provide such activities concurrently. Reference [Section 463.20(b)]

Additionally, successful applicants will be apprised of the Target Performance categories and data as well as NRS Tables which outline areas of concentration.

Efforts will be made to strengthen information gathering of student goals for education and employment and Exit Data and follow up to facilitate the ultimate goal of client employment.

The same announcement, application and process will be used for all applicants for each RFP that is issued.

8. COPIES OF EXECUTED COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WHICH DEFINE HOW ALL LOCAL SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL CARRY OUT THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTEGRATION OF AND ACCESS TO THE ENTIRE SET OF SERVICES AVAILABLE IN THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM, INCLUDING COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES ADMINISTERING REHABILITATION ACT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES.

1. Vocational Rehabilitation Program

In the case of a State that, under Section 101 (a) (2) (A) (i) of the Rehabilitation Act designates a State agency to administer the part of the Vocational Rehabilitation services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under which VR services are provided for individuals who are blind, describe the process and the factors used by the State to determine the distribution of funds among the two VR agencies in the State.

The Virgin Islands has one designated State Agency that is responsible for serving all individuals with disabilities within the state. Funds are not distributed to two different agencies. Many states across the US have separate agencies for persons who are blind and in some instances individuals who are deaf. The Virgin Islands has a "Combined" agency and serve all disability types. Vocational Rehabilitation has sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals who apply for services at this time.

E. WAIVER REQUESTS (OPTIONAL)

States wanting to request waivers as part of their title I-B Operational Plan must include a waiver plan that includes the following information for each waiver requested:

1. IDENTIFIES THE STATUTORY OR REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS FOR WHICH A WAIVER IS REQUESTED AND THE GOALS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, INTENDS TO ACHIEVE AS A RESULT OF THE WAIVER AND HOW THOSE GOALS RELATE TO THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

2. DESCRIBES THE ACTIONS THAT THE STATE OR LOCAL AREA, AS APPROPRIATE, HAS UNDERTAKEN TO REMOVE STATE OR LOCAL STATUTORY OR REGULATORY BARRIERS;

3. DESCRIBES THE GOALS OF THE WAIVER AND THE EXPECTED PROGRAMMATIC OUTCOMES IF THE REQUEST IS GRANTED;
4. DESCRIBES HOW THE WAIVER WILL ALIGN WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S POLICY PRIORITIES, SUCH AS:
 - A. SUPPORTING EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT;
 - B. CONNECTING EDUCATION AND TRAINING STRATEGIES;
 - C. SUPPORTING WORK-BASED LEARNING;
 - D. IMPROVING JOB AND CAREER RESULTS, AND
 - E. OTHER GUIDANCE ISSUED BY THE DEPARTMENT.
5. DESCRIBES THE INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER, INCLUDING HOW THE WAIVER WILL IMPACT SERVICES FOR DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS WITH MULTIPLE BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT; AND
6. DESCRIBES THE PROCESSES USED TO:
 - A. MONITOR THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING THE WAIVER;
 - B. PROVIDE NOTICE TO ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER;
 - C. PROVIDE ANY LOCAL BOARD AFFECTED BY THE WAIVER AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE REQUEST;
 - D. ENSURE MEANINGFUL PUBLIC COMMENT, INCLUDING COMMENT BY BUSINESS AND ORGANIZED LABOR, ON THE WAIVER.
 - E. COLLECT AND REPORT INFORMATION ABOUT WAIVER OUTCOMES IN THE STATE'S WIOA ANNUAL REPORT.
7. THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE REGARDING THE RESULTS AND OUTCOMES OBSERVED THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXISTING WAIVER, IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

US VIRGIN ISLANDS WAVIER REQUEST

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

WAIVER TO INCREASE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING (OJT) REIMBURSEMENT FOR EMPLOYERS

Statutory and/or Regulatory Requirement to be Waived

WIOA Section 134 (c)(3)(H)(i) and 20 CFR 680.720 (b)

Actions Taken to Remove State and Local Barriers

There are no State or Local statutory barriers for the implementation of the proposed waiver.

State Strategic Goals(s) and Department of Labor Priorities Supported by the Waiver

The Virgin Islands Workforce System seeks to enhance business engagement through a sector-based approach to workforce training. On-the-Job training is a tried-and-true method of work-based training especially in times of recovery from natural or other disasters. Employers need a

strong workforce, but when one is not readily available, quick but effective turn around training is needed. The VI has seen a need for such activity especially in the construction industry. While general theoretical knowledge is necessary, learning through performance allows for a quick ramp up of the local workforce. Employers can meet their objectives and job seekers are introduced to and learn to perform (by doing) in an actual work environment. For smaller companies who do not regularly have a large workforce on standby, this waiver allows them the opportunity to employ individuals who may still be dislocated from other employment, while still being able to use their limited resources for other critical aspects of job performance.

COVID-19 has restructured the workplace and learning. Modernization of the workplace and the methods used for learning must be prioritized to meet today's job demands. Employers have new challenges such as providing on the job medical screenings in the form of temperature checks, flexibility with the standard 9-5 office/business hours, fully automating their businesses to allow for virtual operational hours. Greater emphasis will be placed on closing the digital divide. Assisting current and new businessowners with sharpen their focus will be provided with partnerships with the Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

USDOL also prioritizes the need for work-based learning situations. It connects education and training strategies and fulfills the gaps in sector-driven demand areas.

Restoring Futures successfully places 339 dislocated workers in OJT because of dislocation from the two category 5 hurricanes and Covid 19 impact. While the waiver was in effect during that time, Restoring Futures did not find it necessary to utilize that waiver opportunity. Currently, Skills for Today has limited OJT (under CDBG D/R funds) maintaining employer interest in OJT. Now to successfully implement OJT, the incentive of this waiver is necessary.

Projected Programmatic Outcomes Resulting from Implementation of the Waiver

This waiver allows for smaller businesses to be more flexible with the use of their resources and increase their labor force thus making them more competitive for jobs often afforded to larger companies who are able to absorb the cost of a larger workforce. It also builds capacity for smaller companies by allowing for the use of local talent rather than having to undergo costly recruitment from off-island. It increases the opportunities for businesses to employ, assist and support individuals with significant barriers to employment. Those they were unlikely to take a risk. This waiver allows the WDB to focus on priority occupations and sectors and target hard to serve individuals that historically have not had a high labor market participation. With the recent lifting of the COVID barriers many employers in the Virgin Islands are now hiring and this waiver will permit them to reduce their risk significantly in hiring WIOA hard-to-serve individuals.

The WDB expects to have at least seven (7) OJT's.

Restoring Futures proved the concept and desire of employers to participant and utilized OJT as a valuable and important training tool. Equus started as the new Operator last September and the focus was to get them established and fill the backlog of ITA's and expand the availability of providers as desired by the Governor and the Board.

Individuals, Groups or Populations Benefitting from the Waiver

This waiver benefits both employers and job seekers. With an increased reimbursement percentage of 90%, employers are more willing to accept individuals with significant barriers to employment including those that lack significant skills (and may be significantly changing careers paths due to the Covid 19 impact), those with significant barriers including those not completing post-secondary education, those lacking appropriate skills and/or successful work

history, individuals with disabilities, individuals engaged with the justice system, and those that may be long-term unemployed.

The Workforce Development Board (WDB) anticipates this waiver will assist our newly hired One Stop Operator/WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker operator, Equus, with the opportunity to quickly reach out to employers and implement On the Job Training. The WDB also experienced complementary programs through other non WIOA funds that have focused on skill training and reduced the WIOA engagement for OJT. The 90% waiver will be a catalyst in engaging and involving employers through hiring and on the job training of hard to serve individuals. However, the contracting process and final start up for Equus took longer than expected and they (and other partners in the Virgin Islands) are just now expanding their work-based learning. We want to maintain this 90% reimbursement for both the OJT under Title I and the related braiding of funds with our expanding Registered Apprenticeship efforts.

How the State Plans to Monitor Waiver Implementation, Including Collection of Waiver Outcomes

The Planning, Research and Monitoring Unit at the VI Department of Labor will conduct regularly scheduled reviews of the effectiveness of this waiver. Also, performance data collection through the State’s MIS system will be analyzed to determine any patterns that result from usage.

Equus will provide a report monthly specific to the OJT’s contracted and placed. VIDOL Monitoring will review these initial OJT’s to confirm successful startup and implementation. VIDOL will also monitor the progress and outcomes of Equus’ case management and support. All OJT contracts will invoice monthly with appropriate back up that will be reviewed by VIDOL for payment and monitored by VIDOL monitoring unit. Based on the plan numbers agreed upon with Equus, the Board will monitor the programs according to plan.

Assurance of State Posting of the Request for Public Comment and Notification to Affected Local Workforce Development Boards

The waivers will be posted for review and comment on the VI Workforce Development Board and VI Department of Labor’s websites.

TITLE I-B ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has implemented a policy to ensure Adult program funds provide a priority in the delivery of training services and individualized career services to individuals who are low income, public assistance recipients and basic skills deficient;	Yes
2. The State has implemented a policy to ensure local areas have a process in place for referring veterans with significant barriers to employment to career services provided by the JVSG	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	
3. The State established a written policy and procedure that set forth criteria to be used by chief elected officials for the appointment of local workforce investment board members;	Yes
4. The State established written policy and procedures to ensure local workforce investment boards are certified by the governor every two years in accordance with WIOA section 107(c)(2);	Yes
5. Where an alternative entity takes the place of a State Board, the State has written policy and procedures to ensure the alternative entity meets the definition under WIOA section 101(e) and the legal requirements for membership;	Yes
6. The State established a written policy and procedure for how the individuals and entities represented on the State Workforce Development Board help to determine the methods and factors of distribution, and how the State consults with chief elected officials in local areas throughout the State in determining the distributions;	Yes
7. The State will not use funds received under WIOA Title I to assist, promote, or deter union organizing in accordance with WIOA section 181(b)(7);	Yes
8. The State distributes adult and youth funds received under WIOA equitably throughout the State, and no local area suffers significant shifts in funding from year-to-year during the period covered by this plan;	Yes
9. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
10. The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.	Yes
11. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance at 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 2900, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the Uniform Guidance under section WIOA 184(a)(3);	Yes

ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	59.0%	59.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	61.5%	61.5%	62.0%	62.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5300.00	\$5300.00	\$5300.00	\$5300.00
Credential Attainment Rate	50.5%	50.5%	51.0%	51.0%
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

DISLOCATED PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available

to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.5%	63.5%	63.6%	63.6%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	63.6%	63.6%	63.7%	63.7%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6400.0	\$6400.0	\$6400.0	\$6400.0
Credential Attainment Rate	71.1%	71.1%	71.2%	71.2%
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment

Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021

will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	68.0%	68.0%	69.0%	69.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	68.1%	68.1%	68.2%	68.2%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5100.0	\$5100.0	\$5100.0	\$5100.0
Credential Attainment Rate	50.6%	50.6%	50.7%	50.7%
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR WAGNER-PEYSER PROGRAM
(EMPLOYMENT SERVICES)**

All Program-Specific Requirements provided for the WIOA core programs in this section must be addressed for either a Unified or Combined State Plan.

A. EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL STAFF THE PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES UNDER THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT, SUCH AS THROUGH STATE EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO STATE MERIT STAFF EMPLOYEES, STAFF OF A SUBRECIPIENT, OR SOME COMBINATION THEREOF.

The Virgin Islands and the Virgin Islands Department of Labor will continue to utilize state merit staff to implement required services, including labor exchange services, under the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Staff will continue to receive ongoing training on all Wagner-Peyser program services. Training will be provided face-to-face, via webinar and/or recorded and stored online for staff to view at their convenience. Staff are cross-trained on all programs to maximize staff availability and ensure that job seekers and employers receive the best possible services. Staff understands WIOA Title I, Title II and Title IV basic program eligibility criteria and how to make referrals to partner programs. Online tools available for use by staff during job seeker intakes and assist staff in identifying possible referral options including those to WIOA required partners.

The following training sessions will be made available to staff at least annually:

- Business Services;
- WIOA Technical Assistance (monthly);
- Veteran Services; and

DVOP required Training completed.

1. A Day in the Life of JVSG Staff in an American Job Center
2. Legal Guidance Affecting Veterans' Employment Service
3. Removing the Employability Gap for Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment
4. Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) Specialist Core Competency Development

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) host weekly/monthly webinars which are attended by a wide range of participants to include VIDOL staff. Recordings can be found at: <https://bit.ly/VIDOLwebinars> A new live webinar is hosted every 4-6 weeks on various topics related to employees and employers.

Through consultation with Workforce180, LLC (www.workofrc180.com) established in 2014 and provides Podcasting, Training and Consulting services in the workforce development industry to government agencies, educational entities, non-profits, private industry and other similar organizations , VIWDB and VIDOL provides access to online courses. Workforce180 has licenses to conduct business in the United States and US Virgin Islands. Overall, they have contracted and served more than 700 organizations and 20,000 workforce professionals. As such, the following online courses are also available for the VIDOL staff to access upon request:

- Business for Women
- Business Services

- Case Management
- Leadership Development
- Motivational Interviewing
- Racial Equity
- Time Management
- Youth Navigator

Metrix Learning, is also available to allow all staff to access some or all of their 6000 online SkillUp courses. Incumbent worker training for workforce organizations is a large part of their platform.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL UTILIZE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICE STAFF TO ENSURE STAFF IS ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

The VIWDB is committed to investing in professional development activities for all staff by utilizing resources and toolkits available through Workforce GPS, webinars, other online tools, training programs and reskilling opportunities using Metrix Learning. Professional development activities for Employment Service staff are an on- going process. New staff undergoes orientation that describes the workforce system and employment services role in it. They learn how to use job search and matching techniques based upon demand occupation and local labor market information. Work readiness products and resources used to conduct workshops and seminars is shared with staff so that they can better assist their customers with choosing services and strategies that benefit them in a job search. Additionally, online training, webinars and direct training from industry experts is utilized to enforce trends, products or tools with demonstrated performance or new to the workforce system. The Territory's goal is to have at least one third of the staff acquire industry credentials in workforce development during each program year until all staff are credentialed. This plan will be ongoing. All core program staff will be invited to participate in these professional training endeavors.

Additionally, the local Workforce Development Summit brings together core partners, new and seasoned staff, public and private sectors, community organization and the general public to reinvigorate the workforce systems in the territory. The Core Partners plan, coordinate and host the Governor's Workforce Development Summit. The summit offers jobseekers and employers opportunities to attend and participate in several workshops provided by national and local trainers. The theme, workshop topics, and networking activities are planned by a working committee from within the Core Partners who work over an eight month period. The Summit's agenda is tailored to the needs of each district, with an audience of businesses, job seekers, educators, students, government departments and agencies, TANF/SNAP recipients, veterans, and community organizations.

The One-Stop core partners are responsible for appropriate training to ensure all staff housed at the AJC can accurately provide information to customers about the programs, services and activities available through partner programs and to also make appropriate referrals.

The ongoing One-Stop partners monthly meeting will help to develop a working knowledge of partner program offerings and activities, maintain working connections and create smooth and effective referral processes.

3. DESCRIBE STRATEGIES DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS AND THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING PROVIDED FOR EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND WIOA STAFF ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES AND REFERRAL TO UI STAFF FOR ADJUDICATION

The VIWDB is committed to fostering collaboration between core WIOA programs and the UI program. To achieve this, we will implement the following strategies:

- **Cross-Training Workshops:** Develop and deliver workshops for WIOA and UI staff to enhance their understanding of UI eligibility requirements and referral procedures. This will allow WIOA staff to effectively identify potential UI claimants among their clientele and streamline the referral process.
- **Joint Outreach Events:** Organize joint outreach events with UI representatives at career centers and community hubs. This will allow job seekers to seamlessly access information on UI benefits and eligibility while exploring employment opportunities.
- **Development of Referral Protocols:** Establish clear and standardized referral protocols for WIOA staff. These protocols will outline the criteria for identifying potential UI claimants, the information to be collected during referral, and the appropriate method for contacting UI staff for adjudication.
- **Online Training Modules:** Create online training modules accessible to both WIOA and UI staff. These modules will provide ongoing education on UI eligibility rules, recent program updates, and best practices for collaboration.
- **Data Sharing Agreements:** Establish data sharing agreements between WIOA programs and the UI program. This will facilitate efficient information exchange and ensure WIOA staff have access to up-to-date UI eligibility criteria.

Training Provided for Employment Services and WIOA Staff on Identification of UI Eligibility Issues and Referral to UI Staff for Adjudication

WIOA and Employment Services staff will receive training focused on the following key areas:

- **Understanding UI Eligibility:** Training will cover the core requirements for UI eligibility, including separation from employment, wage history, and work search activities.
- **Identifying Potential UI Claimants:** Staff will learn to identify individuals who may be eligible for UI benefits based on their circumstances and reasons for job search.
- **Gathering Necessary Information:** The training will emphasize collecting relevant information from potential claimants, such as separation documentation and employment history, to facilitate a smooth UI eligibility adjudication process.
- **Referral Procedures:** Staff will be trained on the proper protocol for referring potential UI claimants to UI program staff for formal adjudication. This will include clear communication channels and referral forms.
- **Ongoing Support:** We will establish a system for ongoing support for WIOA and Employment Services staff. This may include access to subject matter experts within the UI program, Q&A sessions, and refresher training modules.

By implementing these strategies, the VIWDB aims to ensure that WIOA staff can effectively identify and refer potential UI claimants while continuing to provide comprehensive workforce development services. This collaborative approach will optimize the support system for Virgin Islanders seeking employment and unemployment benefits.

B. EXPLAIN HOW THE STATE WILL PROVIDE INFORMATION AND MEANINGFUL ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUALS REQUESTING ASSISTANCE IN FILING A CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION THROUGH ONE-STOP CENTERS, AS REQUIRED BY WIOA AS A CAREER SERVICE

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) will provide readily accessible information and meaningful assistance to individuals seeking help filing for unemployment compensation (UC) claims. We will achieve this by having dedicated UI staff available at the American Job Center to assist with UI claims. These staff have been trained in customer service skills and will be ready to serve customers seeking assistance.

The UI staff will also ensure that clear and concise informational materials are available. Materials will include an outline of UI eligibility requirements, application process, and contact information for UI program staff.

In addition to supporting customers with their UI claims, staff will also serve as resource navigators, directing customers to relevant resources within the one-stop center, including career counseling, job search workshops, and resume writing assistance. The holistic approach can help individuals find employment while receiving UI benefits.

VIDOL will regularly collect feedback from individuals who have utilized UI claim assistance. The feedback received will be used to identify areas for improvement and enhance the quality of service delivery. Staff will also receive ongoing training to ensure they are adapting protocol and approach based on the feedback received.

By implementing these strategies, VIDOL is committed to making one-stop centers a valuable resource for Virgin Islanders seeking assistance with UI claims. This will ensure a seamless integration of UI services with career development resources, promoting a comprehensive support system for unemployed residents.

C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

The VIWDB recognizes the importance of providing comprehensive reemployment assistance to UI claimants and all unemployed individuals. We will implement a multi-faceted strategy to empower individuals with the skills and resources necessary to secure new employment opportunities.

Reemployment Workshops will be provided and cover topics such as resume writing, effective job search techniques, interview skills and navigating online job searching. Targeted job search assistance will also be offered to UI claimants to intentionally connect them with relevant job openings, providing interview coaching and offering guidance on networking strategies.

VIWDB invites community organizations to provide unemployed individuals with access to supportive services, including transportation, and mental health counseling. These services can help unemployed individuals overcome barriers to employment and increase job search success. VIWDB also encourages VIDOL to actively engage with private sector employers to

promote job training and apprenticeship for unemployed individuals This can provide valuable on-the-job experience and enhance their workforce readiness.

By implementing this comprehensive approach, VIWDB aims to equip UI claimants and all unemployed individuals with the tools and resources necessary to find new employment opportunities and achieve long-term career success.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE W-P FUNDS TO SUPPORT UI CLAIMANTS, AND THE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN W-P AND UI, AS APPROPRIATE INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

1. COORDINATION OF AND PROVISION OF LABOR EXCHANGE SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS AS REQUIRED BY THE WAGNER-PEYSER ACT;

The VIWDB is committed to fulfilling the Wagner-Peyser Act's requirement to coordinate and provide effective labor exchange services for UI claimants. We will achieve this through the following strategies:

- **Shared Data Systems:** Share data in VieWS between the UI program and WIOA programs. This will allow for the efficient identification of UI claimants in need of reemployment services and facilitate a smooth transition from UI benefits to job search assistance.
- **Cross-Training of Staff:** Implement cross-training programs for UI and WIOA staff. UI staff will gain knowledge of WIOA services, and WIOA staff will understand UI eligibility requirements. This fosters better communication and ensures UI claimants receive accurate information on available resources.

Targeted Reemployment Services for UI Claimants:

- **Early Intervention:** Reach out to UI claimants early in their claim period to connect them with reemployment services. This proactive approach can expedite the job search process and reduce the duration of unemployment.
- **Labor Market Information (LMI) Integration:** Integrate LMI into reemployment services offered to UI claimants. This will provide them with real-time data on in-demand occupations, salary trends, and job growth projections, allowing them to tailor their job search strategies effectively.
- **Job Matching and Referral Services:** Utilize the state's labor market information system to match UI claimant skills and experience with suitable job openings. WIOA staff can then refer qualified claimants to potential employers or connect them with relevant training programs to bridge any skill gaps.

Communication and Outreach:

- **Clear Information Dissemination:** Provide clear and concise information to UI claimants about available reemployment services at the time of filing their initial claim. This can be achieved through informational brochures, website integration, and presentations during mandatory reemployment workshops.
- **Dedicated UI Claimant Outreach:** Conduct targeted outreach campaigns to UI claimants to raise awareness of the benefits of participating in reemployment services. This may involve personalized phone calls, email communication, and utilizing social media platforms.

- **Performance Monitoring and Improvement:** Regularly monitor the effectiveness of labor exchange services for UI claimants. We will track participation rates, job placement outcomes, and claimant satisfaction. This data will be used to identify areas for improvement and ensure our strategies remain aligned with the evolving needs of the workforce.

By implementing these coordinated efforts, VIWDB strives to bridge the gap between UI benefits and successful reemployment for UI claimants. This will not only shorten their unemployment period but also equip them with the skills and resources to secure long-term career opportunities and contribute meaningfully to the Virgin Islands workforce.

2. REGISTRATION OF UI CLAIMANTS WITH THE STATE'S EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IF REQUIRED BY STATE LAW;

Customers seeking UI benefits register under Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry into the Workforce System. Job search activities begin immediately and are done concurrently with application for UI benefits. Wagner-Peyser staff tries to match customers with available jobs based on their work history and qualifications. If it is determined that additional training will be required for employment sought, customers are referred to a Workforce career representative who works with the individual on developing an Individual Employment Plan or Service Strategy.

Training may be selected by the customer and referrals are made by the career representative once prerequisites are met.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF THE WORK TEST FOR THE STATE UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION SYSTEM, INCLUDING MAKING ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENTS (FOR REFERRAL TO UI ADJUDICATION, IF NEEDED), AND PROVIDING JOB FINDING AND PLACEMENT SERVICES FOR UI CLAIMANTS; AND

VIDOL will ensure efficient administration of the work test for UI claimants while providing them with comprehensive job finding and placement services. VIDOL will disseminate concise guidelines outlining the work search requirements for UI claimants. This will include frequency of job contacts, acceptable search methods and documentation required for verification. VIDOL will have trained staff dedicated to reviewing work search activities reported by UI claimants. These staff members will be able to identify potential eligibility issues and conduct assessments to determine if a referral to UI adjudication is necessary. This may involve contacting employers or verifying job search attempts. In addition to supporting UI claimants file their claims, they will also be referred to workshops in an attempt to refresh their skills enough to become reemployed as quickly and cost effectively as possible. All UI claimants will be offered workshops that equip them with effective job search techniques, resume writing and job searching. Each UI claimant will also have the opportunity to create an individualized plan that illustrates the customer's skills, experience, career goals and barriers to employment. The plan will outline a plan to target relevant job boards and attending industry relevant events like job fairs or networking events.

VIDOL will collect feedback from UI claimants regarding their experience with the work test and job search assistance services. This feedback will be used to refine program delivery and ensure it remains relevant to the needs of the workforce.

By implementing these strategies, VIDOL aims to strike a balance between ensuring UI claimants actively seek employment while providing them with the necessary support to secure

new jobs. This will expedite their return to work, reduce the burden on the unemployment insurance system, and contribute to a thriving Virgin Islands workforce.

- outcomes, and claimant satisfaction. This data will be used to identify areas for improvement and ensure our strategies remain aligned with the evolving needs of the workforce.

By implementing these coordinated efforts, VIWDB strives to bridge the gap between UI benefits and successful reemployment for UI claimants. This will not only shorten their unemployment period but also equip them with the skills and resources to secure long-term career opportunities and contribute meaningfully to the Virgin Islands workforce.

4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

The VIWDB recognizes the critical role Wagner-Peyser funds play in supporting UI claimants during their job search. We will strategically utilize these funds to enhance services, improve communication with the UI program, and empower UI claimants to pursue career advancement opportunities.

VIDOL will support targeted services for UI Claimants with Wagner-Peyser Funds, including specialized job search workshops, on-site career counseling, skills training and financial assistance with costs associated with training and certification. Additionally, Wagner-Peyser and UI will continue to strengthen communication and collaboration by meeting regularly to ensure smooth referrals between programs and reviewing data regarding the status of customers using VIeWs, the shared data system.

By implementing these strategies, VIWDB aims to maximize the impact of Wagner-Peyser funds on UI claimants. Strengthened communication with the UI program will ensure a seamless transition for claimants seeking reemployment services. Together, these efforts will equip UI claimants with the skills and resources necessary to secure long-term career opportunities and contribute to the Virgin Islands' economic development.

E. AGRICULTURAL OUTREACH PLAN (AOP). EACH STATE AGENCY MUST DEVELOP AN AOP EVERY FOUR YEARS AS PART OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN REQUIRED UNDER SECTIONS 102 OR 103 OF WIOA. THE AOP MUST INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF NEED. AN ASSESSMENT NEED DESCRIBES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

1. ASSESSMENT OF NEED. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS IN THE AREA BASED ON PAST AND PROJECTED AGRICULTURAL AND FARMWORKER ACTIVITY IN THE STATE. SUCH NEEDS MAY INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO: EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, AND HOUSING.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN THE STATE MEANS: 1) IDENTIFYING THE TOP FIVE LABOR-INTENSIVE CROPS, THE MONTHS OF HEAVY ACTIVITY, AND THE GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF PRIME ACTIVITY; 2) SUMMARIZE THE AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS' NEEDS IN THE STATE (I.E. ARE THEY PREDOMINANTLY HIRING LOCAL OR FOREIGN WORKERS, ARE THEY EXPRESSING THAT THERE IS A SCARCITY IN THE AGRICULTURAL WORKFORCE); AND 3) IDENTIFYING ANY ECONOMIC, NATURAL, OR OTHER FACTORS THAT

ARE AFFECTING AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE OR ANY PROJECTED FACTORS THAT WILL AFFECT AGRICULTURE IN THE STATE

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

3. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF FARMWORKERS MEANS SUMMARIZING MIGRANT AND SEASONAL FARM WORKER (MSFW) CHARACTERISTICS (INCLUDING IF THEY ARE PREDOMINANTLY FROM CERTAIN COUNTRIES, WHAT LANGUAGE(S) THEY SPEAK, THE APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF MSFWS IN THE STATE DURING PEAK SEASON AND DURING LOW SEASON, AND WHETHER THEY TEND TO BE MIGRANT, SEASONAL, OR YEAR-ROUND FARMWORKERS). THIS INFORMATION MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT DATA SUPPLIED BY WIOA SECTION 167 NATIONAL FARMWORKER JOBS PROGRAM (NFJP) GRANTEES, OTHER MSFW ORGANIZATIONS, EMPLOYER ORGANIZATIONS, AND STATE AND/OR FEDERAL AGENCY DATA SOURCES SUCH AS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR (DOL) EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING ADMINISTRATION

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

4. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

The local offices outreach activities must be designed to meet the needs of MSFWs in the State and to locate and contact MSFWs who are not being reached through normal intake activities. Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

B. PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO OUTREACH STAFF. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MUST INCLUDE TRAININGS, CONFERENCES, ADDITIONAL RESOURCES, AND INCREASED COLLABORATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ON TOPICS SUCH AS ONE-STOP CENTER SERVICES (I.E. AVAILABILITY OF REFERRALS TO TRAINING, SUPPORTIVE SERVICES, AND CAREER SERVICES, AS WELL AS SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES), THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE AND EMPLOYMENT-RELATED LAW COMPLAINT SYSTEM ("COMPLAINT SYSTEM" DESCRIBED AT 20 CFR 658 SUBPART E), INFORMATION ON THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS SERVING MSFWS IN THE AREA, AND A BASIC SUMMARY OF FARMWORKER RIGHTS, INCLUDING THEIR RIGHTS WITH RESPECT TO THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

C. INCREASING OUTREACH WORKER TRAINING AND AWARENESS ACROSS CORE PROGRAMS INCLUDING THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) PROGRAM AND THE TRAINING ON IDENTIFICATION OF UI ELIGIBILITY ISSUES

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

D. PROVIDING STATE MERIT STAFF OUTREACH WORKERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES TO ENSURE THEY ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY SERVICES TO BOTH JOBSEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

5. SERVICES PROVIDED TO FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM

Describe the State agency's proposed strategies for:

A. PROVIDING THE FULL RANGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES TO THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY, BOTH FARMWORKERS AND AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS, THROUGH THE ONE-STOP DELIVERY SYSTEM. THIS INCLUDES:

I. HOW CAREER AND TRAINING SERVICES REQUIRED UNDER WIOA TITLE I WILL BE PROVIDED TO MSFWS THROUGH THE ONE-STOP CENTERS

II. HOW THE STATE SERVES AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH SERVICES

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

6. OTHER REQUIREMENTS

A. COLLABORATION

Describe any collaborative agreements the state workforce agency (SWA) has with other MSFW service providers including NFJP grantees and other service providers. Describe how the SWA intends to build upon/increase collaboration with existing partners and in establishing new partners over the next four years (including any approximate timelines for establishing agreements or building upon existing agreements).

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

B. REVIEW AND PUBLIC COMMENT

In developing the AOP, the SWA must solicit information and suggestions from NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other interested organizations. In addition, at least 45 calendar days before submitting its final AOP, the SWA must provide a proposed plan to NFJP grantees, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations, and other organizations expressing an interest and allow at least 30 days for review and comment. The SWA must: 1) Consider any comments received in formulating its final proposed AOP; 2) Inform all commenting parties in writing whether their comments have been incorporated and, if not, the reasons therefore; and 3) Transmit the comments and recommendations received and its responses with the submission of the AOP.

The AOP must include a statement confirming NFJP grantees, other appropriate MSFW groups, public agencies, agricultural employer organizations and other interested employer organizations have been given an opportunity to comment on the AOP. Include the list of organizations from which information and suggestions were solicited, any comments received, and responses to those comments.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

C. DATA ASSESSMENT

Review the previous four years Wagner-Peyser data reports on performance. Note whether the State has been meeting its goals to provide MSFWs quantitatively proportionate services as compared to non-MSFWs. If it has not met these goals, explain why the State believes such goals were not met and how the State intends to improve its provision of services in order to meet such goals.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

D. ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The plan must include an explanation of what was achieved based on the previous AOP, what was not achieved and an explanation as to why the State believes the goals were not achieved, and how the State intends to remedy the gaps of achievement in the coming year.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

This is not applicable, the Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP.

WAGNER-PEYSER ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service is co-located with one-stop centers or a plan and timeline has been developed to comply with this requirement within a reasonable amount of time (sec 121(e)(3));	Yes
2. If the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers, the State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111, State Workforce Agency staffing requirements;	No

The State Plan must include	Include
3. If a State Workforce Development Board, department, or agency administers State laws for vocational rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, that board, department, or agency cooperates with the agency that administers Wagner-Peyser Act services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and	Yes
4. SWA officials: 1) Initiate the discontinuation of services; 2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued; 3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued; 4) Approve corrective action plans; 5) Approve the removal of an employer's clearance orders from interstate or intrastate clearance if the employer was granted conditional access to ARS and did not come into compliance within 5 calendar days; 6) Enter into agreements with State and Federal enforcement agencies for enforcement-agency staff to conduct field checks on the SWAs' behalf (if the SWA so chooses); and 7) Decide whether to consent to the withdrawal of complaints if a party who requested a hearing wishes to withdraw its request for hearing in writing before the hearing.	Yes
5. The SWA has established and maintains a self-appraisal system for ES operations to determine success in reaching goals and to correct deficiencies in performance (20 CFR 658.601).	Yes

WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments

on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.1	58.1	58.2	58.2
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	55.0	55.0	55.1	55.1
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5,700.0	5,700.0	5,700.0	5,700.0
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAMS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include a description of the following as it pertains to adult education and literacy programs and activities under title II of WIOA, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA).

A. ALIGNING OF CONTENT STANDARDS

Describe how the eligible agency has aligned its content standards for adult education with State-adopted challenging academic content standards, as adopted under section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 U.S.C. 6311(b)(1)).

In alignment with the requirements of section 1111(b)(1) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 which requires a State to provide assurance that the State has adopted challenging academic content standards and aligned academic achievement standards to include not less than three levels of achievement, the Virgin Islands Department of Education's Adult Education's content standards align with the Virgin Islands Common Core Standards, the College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards for Adult Education that were dispersed through USDOE, as well as with incorporation of the Virgin Islands Cultural Standards. This alignment creates a seamless transition for students between adult education, postsecondary education and the workforce through incorporation of reading, math and language arts with the relevance of occupational and industry aligned skills for students at lower levels of competency through exploratory teaching and learning and for students at higher levels of competency through integrated basic education and skills teaching and learning. Instructional practices include the same academic rigor and relevance that are expected for all students to be successful in school, work and life in the Nation's competitive workforce.

The CCR standards are the result of a practice that examined the CCSS from the viewpoint of adult education. The CCR standards reflect a broad agreement among subject matter experts in adult education about what is required for adult students to be prepared for the rigors of post-secondary education and training. Providers are required to include these standards to maximize the effectiveness of curricula and instruction, and to prepare students for transition to post-secondary education and/or the workforce.

In order to ensure that all instructors are knowledgeable of CCR Standards, and that they understand how to use them effectively to guide classroom instruction, the State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education provides professional development to all instructional staff. At the adult secondary level, adult high school credit programs implement the same course descriptions and standards as those used in the K-12 educational system. Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Adult Secondary Education (ASE) preparation courses are a component of the Virgin Islands nontraditional adult secondary level programming a. A high school equivalency diploma is issued in the Virgin Islands to all candidates who successfully demonstrate competency in language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies in our ASE and Adult High School credit programs.

B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund each eligible provider to establish or operate programs that provide any of the following adult education and literacy activities identified in section 203 of WIOA, including programs that provide such activities concurrently. The Unified or Combined State Plan must include at a minimum the scope, content, and organization of these local activities.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY ACTIVITIES (SECTION 203 OF WIOA)

- Adult education;
- Literacy;
- Workplace adult education and literacy activities;
- Family literacy activities;
- English language acquisition activities;
- Integrated English literacy and civics education;
- Workforce preparation activities; or
- Integrated education and training that—
 1. Provides adult education and literacy activities, concurrently and contextually with both, workforce preparation activities, and workforce training for a specific occupation or occupational cluster, and
 2. Is for the purpose of educational and career advancement.

Special Rule. Each eligible agency awarding a grant or contract under this section shall not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that such agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities. In providing family literacy activities under this title, an eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with programs and services that are not assisted under this title prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities under this title for activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education is responsible for administering funds to suitable providers, and providing program performance oversight to sub-grantees. Funds are provided to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services which include the following:

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES

Adult Basic Education (language arts, mathematics, and reading) Program - The courses included in this program are designed for a student to obtain a level of educational instruction intended to improve the employability of the State's workforce through instruction in mathematics, reading, language, and workforce preparation skills at grade level equivalency of 0-8.9. These courses are based on the College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education. **Adult High School Program** - is designed for students to receive high school credit in one or more courses leading to a standard high school diploma. Students obtain credits upon completion of courses and passing state mandated assessments necessary to qualify for a high school diploma as certified through the Virgin Islands Board of Education. **Adult Secondary Education Program** - prepares adults who desire to sit for the GED to successfully complete the four subject area tests leading to qualification for a United States Virgin Islands High School Diploma. There are four courses: Reasoning through Language Arts, Mathematical Reasoning, Science and Social Studies. These courses have been aligned with the College and Career Readiness Standards. The U.S. Virgin Islands has approved the GED® as the only high school equivalency test. **Adult ESL Course**- The adult ESL course is designed to improve skills of adults

who desire to enter the state's workforce through acquisition of communication skills and cultural competencies which enhance the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in English.

Citizenship studies are integrated into the Social Studies curriculum. General topics include elements of U.S. History, Government, culture and symbols, with specific emphasis on rights and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States of America.

Funding Opportunities

The Virgin Islands Department of Education will accept applications for all eligible applicants to fund Adult Education and Family Literacy services in the St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix Districts in accordance with applicable Public Law Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) for an established period designated by the VIDE State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education.

Purpose

The purpose of the sub grant award is to provide Adult Education and Literacy programs in the US Virgin Islands that will assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; assist adults who are parents to obtain the skills necessary to be partners in the education of their children; assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education. Title II, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provides funding for Adult Basic Education and Literacy services programs that will help break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy by improving educational opportunities of low-income families.

Each eligible provider receiving a sub grant from the Virgin Islands Department of Education shall use the funding to operate one or more programs in the St. Thomas/St. John District, St. Croix District, or both, that provide services or instruction in one or more of the following categories; Adult Education and Literacy services including workplace literacy services; family literacy services; and or English Literacy programs; for individuals interested in improving their education and employment skills. AEFLA, Section 231 (b). Awards are subject to availability of funding from the US Department of Education. The funding period will be assigned for the period of (3) three years.

Eligible Participants

An eligible provider must demonstrate past effectiveness by providing performance data on its record of improving the skills of eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals who have low levels of literacy, adult education; Literacy; workplace adult education & literacy activities and workforce preparation activities and other subject areas relevant to the services contained in the State's application for funds. An eligible provider must also provide information regarding its outcomes for participants related to employment, attainment of secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and transition to post-secondary education and training.

The Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education will determine if an applicant is an organization of demonstrated effectiveness in one of the two ways in which an eligible provider may meet the requirements:

- An eligible provider that has been funded under Title II of the Act that as provided performance data required under section 116 to demonstrate past effectiveness. Or
- An eligible provider that has not been previously funded under Title II of the Act and has provided performance data to demonstrate its past effectiveness in serving basic skills

deficient eligible individuals, including evidence of its success in achieving outcomes listed above.

An organization of demonstrated effectiveness may include:

- local educational agencies;
- community based organizations;
- volunteer literacy organization of demonstrated effectiveness;
- institutions of higher education;
- public or private non-profit agencies; libraries;
- public housing authorities;
- non-profit institutions that are not described in any of these descriptions and have the ability to provide literacy services to adults and families;
- and a consortium of the agencies; organizations and non-profit institutions to include non-profit faith based organizations as well as profit entities will be eligible.

Successful providers receiving sub grants under AEFLA are required to obtain the approved MIS System being used by the VIDE State Office for Career, Technical & Adult Education. Annual MIS System professional development will be provided to eligible providers.

Number of Sub Grants - The number of sub grants funded will depend on the number of applicants, number of centers and availability of funds. Statutory Considerations Literacy Act, AEFLA Section 231 (e), In awarding sub grants under this section, the Virgin Islands Department of Education shall consider the following factors:

- Based on recent previous, reliable evidence of past performance, eligible provider shall demonstrate the ability to align with negotiated and established measurable performance goals for participant outcomes.
- The past effectiveness of an eligible provider in assisting adults, especially those with the lowest levels of competencies, to meet and or exceed in learning commonly established level literacy skills for within a 1-year period beginning with the adoption of an eligible agency's performance measures
- The commitment of the eligible provider to serve individuals in the community who are most in need of literacy services, including individuals who are low income or have minimal literacy skills

Literacy Act, AEFLA Section 231 (e) Adult Education - State Administration Purpose- To implement all facets of the Virgin Islands Adult Education State Plan based on the extension of the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, inclusive of the responsibilities of the State Office to ensure that performance levels of adult education programs are competitive grants for community agencies, monitoring and providing of technical assistance to designated personnel. The State Office responsibilities encompass overseeing all aspects of Adult Education programs such as workplace literacy, family literacy, and English literacy programs. Additionally, the State would be responsible for the evaluation and review of outcomes achieved by each local program based on the prescribed Adult Education Monitoring tool for evaluation and WIOA Performance measurements. Assessments of progress made in achieving State goals for Adult Education will be handled by reporting of findings at the National level. Special Rule: The Virgin Islands State

Office of Career, Technical, & Adult Education will not use any funds made available under this title for adult education and literacy activities for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are under the age of 16 and are enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law, except that the agency may use such funds for such purpose if such programs, services, or activities are related to family literacy activities.

If family literacy activities are provided, the eligible provider shall attempt to coordinate with other agencies that provide program and services that are not included in Title II funds. This should occur prior to using funds for adult education and literacy activities other than activities for eligible individuals.

Workforce preparation activities means activities, programs, or services designed to help an individual acquire a combination of basic academic skills, critical thinking skills, digital literacy skills, and self-management skills, including competencies in utilizing resources, using information, working with others, understanding systems, and obtaining skills necessary for successful transition into and completion of post-secondary education or training, or employment.

The VIDE will develop a career pathway initiative with the Workforce Board. This will be an incentive for students enrolled in Adult Secondary Education Literacy programs. The model will be designed to integrate academic rigor with the relevance of trade program(s) for USVI identified labor market demand occupations for which training is provided at the Adult post-secondary technical training schools. Students will have the opportunity to engage in dual enrollment which provides them an opportunity to graduate with dual credentialing of a High School Diploma and an industry recognized certification. The alignment of education, training, and support services will be an added incentive to assist disenfranchised adult learners in re-entering the workforce with skillsets that will afford them a sustainable wage earning, leading to economic self-sufficiency. Eligible providers will demonstrate a commitment to provide wraparound and follow-up services for dually enrolled students. Such services may be offered at the local program but must be offered in conjunction with support from WIOA partners at the VI Department of Labor.

Each eligible provider desiring a grant or contract from VIDE shall submit an application to VIDE containing such information and assurances as VIDE may require, including:

- A description of how funds awarded under Title II will be spent consistent with the requirements of the title;
- A description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organizations for the delivery of adult education and literacy activities;
- A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in alignment with the State Plan, including how such provider will promote concurrent enrollment in programs and activities under Title II, as appropriate;
- A description of how the eligible provider will meet the State adjusted levels of performance described in 116(b)(3), including how such provider will collect data on such performance indicators;
- A description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate;

- A description of how the eligible provider will provide services in a manner that meets the needs of eligible individuals; and G. Any information that addresses the 13 considerations.

Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to meet literacy needs of the area, their ability to comply with WIOA expectations, and the provider's past performance in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals. Decisions about course offerings are made depending on local needs. In the grant and contract awarding process, the VIDE shall utilize the 13 Considerations for Funding, identified in Section 231(e), to be included in the evaluation and selection process. Some of the factors considered include the ability of the eligible provider to meet the literacy needs of the area, the ability to comply with WIOA expectations, the demonstrated effectiveness and past performance of the entity in providing literacy instruction and meeting programmatic goals, and the overall qualifications and expertise of the provider's personnel.

Local Plan Alignment

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will establish, within the competition, a time-frame that provides for the submission of all applications for funds under AEFLA to the Virgin Islands Local Workforce Development Board.

Within the appropriate timeframe, the submission of the applications to the Local Board for its review for consistency with the local plan and an opportunity for the local board to make recommendations to the State Office to promote alignment with the local plan will be conducted. The State Office will consider the results of the review by the Local Board in determining the extent to which the application addresses the required considerations in § 463.20.

Local Administrative Costs

An eligible provider receiving a grant or contract under this part may consider costs incurred in connection with the following activities to be administrative costs:

1. Planning;
2. Administration, including carrying out performance accountability requirements;
3. Professional development;
4. Providing adult education and literacy services in alignment with local workforce plans, including promoting co-enrollment in programs and activities under Title I, as appropriate; and
5. Carrying out the one-stop partner responsibilities described in § 678.420, including contributing to the infrastructure costs of the one-stop delivery system.

C. CORRECTIONS EDUCATION AND OTHER EDUCATION OF INSTITUTIONALIZED INDIVIDUALS

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or

operate programs that provide any of the following correctional educational programs identified in section 225 of WIOA:

- Adult education and literacy activities;
- Special education, as determined by the eligible agency;
- Secondary school credit;
- Integrated education and training;
- Career pathways;
- Concurrent enrollment;
- Peer tutoring; and
- Transition to re-entry initiatives and other post release services with the goal of reducing recidivism.

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The VIDE is committed to providing high-quality educational programs in our local correctional facilities. As specified in section 225 of WIOA, up to 20% of the 82.5% of the state grant allotted to local programs may be used for correctional education activities. Eligible providers awarded through the local subgrant will be required to use the funds for the establishment or operation of corrections and/or re-entry programs in the St. Thomas/St. John District and St. Croix Districts. Priority for Adult Education services in Correctional facilities will be given to individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Individuals in funded corrections education program(s) will be required to participate in career exploration and planning activities to develop a re-entry plan based on career goals. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and workforce development opportunities to include soft skills, and dual CTE enrollment for individuals in CTE Technical training components who are within five years of release.

For the Corrections and Other Institutionalized Individuals grant 225, applicants will be required to submit the following materials as separate PDF's:

- 225 Narrative - Supplemental Questions
- 225 Budget Document
- 225 Budget Narrative

Pursuant to 34 CFR § 463.63 Funds under Programs for Corrections Education and the Education of Other Institutionalized Individuals may be used to support educational programs for transition to re-entry initiatives and other post-release services with the goal of reducing recidivism. Such use of funds may include educational counseling, or case work to support incarcerated individuals' transition to re-entry and other post-release services. Examples include assisting incarcerated individuals to develop plans for post-release education program participation, assisting students in identifying and applying for participation in post-release

programs, and performing direct outreach to community-based program providers on behalf of re-entering students. Such ***funds may not be used for costs for participation in post-release programs or services.***

Adult Basic Education (ABE), Adult Secondary Education (ASE), and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes will be offered through the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections, or any other entity that is awarded to run a Correctional Education program using funds made available under Section 222(a)(1). Such funded program(S) must be either the local Corrections Bureau, or have an articulation Agreement with the USVI Bureau of Corrections to provide services for incarcerated individuals. Priorities are as follows:

- Increasing access to Adult Education services for incarcerated adults for completing a secondary school credential to facilitate entry into, or completion of post-secondary education and training (for those who are dually enrolled in AE and technical training programs).
- Students scoring at Educational Functioning Levels 1-3 in Reading, Math and Language Arts will be required to be enrolled in classes that focus targeted instructions on their areas of deficiency.
- Students scoring at Educational Functioning Levels 4, or greater, or EFL 3 in one content area and EFL 4 in two areas or more will be eligible to participate in dual enrollment opportunities of High School Equivalency preparation courses and technical certification.
- English as a Second Language (ESL) courses will provide instruction in speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing skills for individuals whose primary language is a language other than English.
- Identification of partnerships to assist in the development of transition plans that support re-entry services that will reduce recidivism for inmates (including counseling , identification programs and services –post-release, follow up, tracking and job placement for those inmates who are released having completed their secondary credential and/or Technical certification)

Adult Education State Staff will engage with funded Correctional programs to provide professional development and training to foster continuous improvement and improve elimination of barriers to successful re-entry.

D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the eligible agency will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA and in accordance with 34 CFR 463 subpart C, fund eligible providers to establish or operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) programs under section 243 of WIOA. Describe how adult English language learners, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, are served in IELCE programs.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be offered in combination with integrated education and training activities found in 34 CFR section 463.36.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will include instruction in literacy and English language acquisition and instruction on the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and civic participation.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to prepare adults who are English language learners for, and place such adults in, unsubsidized employment in in-demand industries and occupations that lead to economic self-sufficiency.

Describe how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program.

This IELCE section does not apply to the USVI

E. STATE LEADERSHIP

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT THE REQUIRED STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA

Section 223(a)(1)(A) requires: The alignment of adult education and literacy activities with other core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, to implement the strategy identified in the unified State plan under section 102 or the combined State plan under section 103, including the development of career pathways to provide access to employment and training services for individuals in adult education and literacy activities.

The State Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education will use 12.5% of awarded funds to carry out State leadership activities in compliance with section 223 of WIOA. Such activities include:

1. Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with core programs that provide work based and technical certification trainings for adults, as well as with one-stop partners to reduce barriers that impact the adult students' completion and transition into the workforce and/or post-secondary opportunities.

In partnership with the Workforce Development Board and the One Stop, the State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will work with our Subgrantees to ensure that they are making the necessary referrals and leveraging partner resources to provide comprehensive wraparound services to program participants. Our One Stop provider, State Entity and Subgrantees also collaborate for AE intake office hours to provide information on Adult Education services, and transition resources.

2. The establishment or operation of high quality professional development programs (section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA)

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (SOCTAE) provides professional development to our subgrantees based upon the latest industry trends, NRS research regarding best practices, and federal recommendations. We rely on our feedback surveys from attendees at each training to ensure that we capture areas of greatest need and leverage industry experts to present the highest quality of PD to our programs complete with tools and resources that they can utilize in their respective programs. The College and Career Readiness Standards are a major focal point of training and professional development for adult educators. We focus on:

- topics that help our programs understand how to effectively transition adult learners to post-secondary education and employment
- research based instructional practices on teaching the adult learner across all subjects

- the effective use of technology in the Adult Ed classroom at all levels.
- an annual refresher of the adult education policy manual, Fiscal Administrative and NRS changes
- monthly webinars from National partners

Utilization of the LINCS resources will be integrated as a major ongoing PD. The State is moving towards recording and posting of some PD offerings on a VIDE Adult Education platform that will be accessible to new and existing subgrantees and their employees and well as State employees and partners in Adult Education.

3. Technical Assistance

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education delivers technical assistance to eligible providers to enhance program effectiveness, increase the ability of providers to meet established performance standards, and fulfill obligations associated with being a One-Stop partner. SOCTAE provides professional development/technical assistance via phone, webinar, teleconference, on-site training, and seminars. Targeted technical assistance focuses on areas of national interest such as recruitment and intake, student engagement, data management and reporting, testing procedures, and transition to post-secondary education and employment. To ensure that local providers are adequately equipped to foster continuous improvement and maintain an ability to meet the needs of the Virgin Islands workforce, SOCTAE

- - Delivers technical assistance to increase the ability of instructors to provide impactful instruction and obtain desired results in key areas.
 - Provide State and local level information regarding the role of adult education as a key component in the delivery of one-stop center services.
 - Provide training related to the use of technology to improve classroom effectiveness and program outcomes.

2. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL USE THE FUNDS TO CARRY OUT PERMISSIBLE STATE LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES UNDER SECTION 223 OF WIOA, IF APPLICABLE

The State Office for Career, Technical and Adult Education may elect to implement varied measures that are classified as Permissible Leadership Activities. Of most relevance to the territory is the enhancement of an Adult Education curriculum framework that "Virginislandizes" the unique needs of adult learners in the territory by incorporating the USVI cultural standards with the college and career readiness and common core standards that are broken out at specific EFLs and cross walked with the approved assessments, IETs and aligned with career pathways (level relatable). In conjunction with partner programs and recommendations from the Workforce Development Board, we will continue to develop a more complete model that offers exposure to career pathways for learners at each level.

F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II. Describe how the eligible agency will take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA. Describe how the eligible agency will use evaluations, data analysis, program monitoring, or other methods to improve the quality of adult education activities in the State.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education (SOCTAE) assess the quality of providers through evaluations that take place quarterly. At the onset of each performance period the State distributes and conducts Assessment Policy Manual trainings. The State's *AEFLA Assessment Policy* and *Distance Education Policy* includes the objectives of the AEFLA program and outlines clear, concise and specific guidance that programs must adhere to. We also host monthly check in calls with our providers to ensure that they understand the expectations of what is required in meeting the negotiated levels of performance. The SOCTAE contracts with the Management Information System provider, Literacy Pro to work with the State and local providers in an annual training and then in individual sessions with each provider to evaluate the effectiveness of the data that is captured and entered, whether the data is being disaggregated to meet the indicated levels of performance, whether the programs are utilizing the MIS to build their classes and effectively manage their programs and students. The MIS provider trainers are independent evaluators who are trained and qualified to provide hands on technical assistance, using each program's individual data, on how to effectively manage each programs' MIS to correctly. Additionally, the SOCTAE incorporates effective program management strategies in our Adult Education Assessment Policy Manual to facilitate the implementation of quality Adult Education programs. This data is what drives future professional development initiatives.

The SOCTAE's monitoring tool was developed to assesses each component of the Adult Education program (i.e. curriculum, program performance, enrollment, expected outcomes, student feedback and reporting, inventory tracking and use, etc...). The State team includes a dedicated AEFLA Program Manager who will be at 100% FTE and and a Program Monitor at 50% FTE who will assist with the evaluation and monitoring. Both the Program Manager and Program Monitor will be trained to monitor all AEFLA programs to ensure compliance. Data collected from training feedback surveys and monitoring are reviewed by the SOCTAE to identify current, or potential barriers that impact performance and outcomes, limit gain attainment of students and restrict fair and equitable reach to the entire USVI population in need of services. This data is what drives future professional development initiatives. Additionally, annual reports are collected from programs that inform the State as to the challenges that may have not been communicated, or newly surfaced. The VI Department of Education's new website will include a site for the State Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education. All forms, Assessment policies, reports and program information will be available on that site for accessibility by stakeholders, WIOA partners and students.

Technical assistance feedback plans and grant performance reviews with more comprehensive strategies such as an onsite visits are designated for providers. Actions taken to improve quality of non-compliance finding(s) are identified, and a working action plan is shared with subgrantees within five business days of the evaluation. Such plan identifies the findings, align the associated regulation and through discussion with the Subgrantee, outlines a timeline of specific strategies the provider will implement to ensure compliance. The final outcome that shows a compliant site will also be housed on the State's page for stakeholders and students to be able to make informed decisions. Not every provider may have identical offerings and it is important for a diverse reach to be available (i.e. distance learning platforms, a provider's success rate of student achievement, successful completion and placement, etc...).

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;	Yes
2. The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;	Yes
3. The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;	Yes
4. All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;	Yes
5. A State officer, specified by title in the certification, has authority under State law to receive, hold, and disburse Federal funds made available under the plan;	Yes
6. The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;	Yes
7. The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and	Yes
8. The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program;	Yes

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM ASSURANCES

The State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The eligible agency will expend funds appropriated to carry out title II of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) only in a manner consistent with fiscal requirements under section 241(a) of WIOA (regarding the supplement-not-supplant requirement);	Yes
2. The eligible agency will ensure that there is at least one eligible provider serving each local area, as defined in section 3(32) of WIOA;	Yes
3. The eligible agency will not use any funds made available under title II of WIOA for the purpose of supporting or providing programs, services, or activities for individuals who are not "eligible individuals" within the meaning of section 203(4) of WIOA, unless it is providing programs, services or activities related to family	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	
4. Using funds made available under title II of WIOA to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution, the eligible agency will give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program.	Yes
5. The eligible agency agrees that in expending funds made available under Title II of WIOA, the eligible agency will comply with sections 8301 through 8303 of the Buy American Act (41 U.S.C. 8301-8303).	Yes

AUTHORIZING OR CERTIFYING REPRESENTATIVE

CERTIFICATION REGARDING LOBBYING

Certification for Contracts, Grants, Loans, and Cooperative Agreements

The undersigned certifies, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

(1) No Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid, by or on behalf of the undersigned, to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of an agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with the awarding of any Federal contract, the making of any Federal grant, the making of any Federal loan, the entering into of any cooperative agreement, and the extension, continuation, renewal, amendment, or modification of any Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement.

(2) If any funds other than Federal appropriated funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this Federal contract, grant, loan, or cooperative agreement, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions.

(3) The undersigned shall require that the language of this certification be included in the award documents for all subawards at all tiers (including subcontracts, subgrants, and contracts under grants, loans, and cooperative agreements) and that all subrecipients shall certify and disclose accordingly. This certification is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was made or entered into. Submission of this certification is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required certification shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Statement for Loan Guarantees and Loan Insurance

The undersigned states, to the best of his or her knowledge and belief, that:

If any funds have been paid or will be paid to any person for influencing or attempting to influence an officer or employee of any agency, a Member of Congress, an officer or employee of Congress, or an employee of a Member of Congress in connection with this commitment providing for the United States to insure or guarantee a loan, the undersigned shall complete and submit Standard Form-LLL, "Disclosure of Lobbying Activities," in accordance with its instructions. Submission of this statement is a prerequisite for making or entering into this transaction imposed by section 1352, title 31, U.S. Code. Any person who fails to file the required statement shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than \$10,000 and not more than \$100,000 for each such failure.

Please download and sign the forms below. Please scan and return the forms to wioa@ed.gov at the same time you submit your State Plan via the portal.

1. SF424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Programs
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
2. Grants.gov - Certification Regarding Lobbying
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)
3. SF LLL Form – Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (required, only if applicable)
(<http://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/appforms.html>)

APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION	Enter information in this column
Applicant's Organization	Virgin Islands Department of Education
PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE	Enter information in this column
First Name	Monique
Last Name	Faulkner
Title	State Director, Career, Technical and Adult Education
Email	Monique.Faulkner@vide.vi

SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity’s existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

GEPA Section 427 Instructions to State Applicants for their Subrecipient Applicants

The State grantee provides a subrecipient applicant seeking Federal assistance instructions and guidance for how it must comply with the GEPA Section 427 requirement. The State grantee determines the form and content of the information a subrecipient applicant must include in its application regarding the steps it proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, its local-level project or activity. For example:

- The State grantee may require its subrecipient applicant to use and submit the GEPA Section 427 form that it is required to submit to the Department; or
- The State grantee may use a State-developed form that is sufficient to meet the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- The State grantee maintains the subrecipient applicants’ responses in the State office.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) does not discriminate against any person on the basis of gender, age, race, religion creed, color, sexual orientation, marital status, lack of English language skills, national origin, disability or pregnancy in violation of applicable State or federal law in our educational programs or activities (including Adult Education (AE), nor in the employment of personnel. The VIDE provides equal access of its facilities to all groups. The AEFLA subgrantees are required to follow the VIDE's GEPA policies. Questions, requests for information, or complaints alleging violation of this policy shall be made to the VIDE's Labor Relations Officer.

The diverse faculty, staff and students working for and enrolled in VIDE's AEFLA funded programs are representative of a crucible of cultures, intellectual positions, abilities and unified commitments to ensure that there is promotion of fair and equitable access to all programs and services for our students, teachers and program beneficiaries with special needs, in compliance with Section 427. The VIDE's State Office of Special Education (VIDE/SOSE) *Notice of Procedural Safeguard* provides individuals with a disability a full description of their rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which also ensures all youth and adults with disabilities through age twenty one, once identified, full access to the general education curriculum to the greatest extent possible.

Services will be rendered to our diverse populations, including those with limited English proficiency in accordance with all applicable federal and State laws. The VIDE also partners with a consortium of agencies under our local One Stop to ensure fair and equitable reach to free support services available to all of our stakeholders in education. Program advertising, information and related materials will be distributed via diverse means such as print, audio (i.e. radio, television, or recording) and interpretation services provided.

Additionally, the VIDE promotes fair and equitable reach to include an emphasis on dual enrollment of AE students. Specific brochures highlighting gender equality, enrollment and counseling services for Adult Education non-traditional students who wish to dual enroll in a career path, including career paths that are traditionally gender specific for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of individuals employed in that field. In the

USVI, an example of a non-traditional student is a female in automotive or a male in cosmetology as these career paths are not traditional for their genders. The term "non-traditional fields" means occupations or fields of work, such as careers in computer science, technology, and other current and emerging high skill occupations, for which individuals from one gender comprise less than 25 percent of the individuals employed in each such occupation or field of work.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE
EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER
BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

The United States Virgin Islands is an unincorporated territory of the United States which consist of St. Thomas, St. John (STTJ), St. Croix (STX)and the newest Virgin Island is Water Island (which is a part of the STTJ District). The Virgin Islands Department of Education is one State Education Agency with two Local Education Agencies (one in the STTJ District and the other in the STX District).

As Caribbean islands, we are prone to tropical storms and hurricanes that affect accessibility to programs. The more recent two category five hurricanes, Irma and Maria, left the Virgin Islands with a shattered infrastructure that consisted of significant damages to most of the schools in the territory and a great loss of human resources in staff (i.e. teachers), as many people relocated to the US mainland. Presently, the Territory is undergoing a major rebuilding and rebranding of its educational infrastructure and systems.

Distance education is a significant resource for AEFLA programs as it opens the field of accessibility to services. However, there are barriers that may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries such as slow, or no internet service in certain locations that are mountainous, or remote on each island; lack of access to technology (hardware and software) for many of the residents who are most in need of services due to high instances of poverty; lack of transportation; lack of readily available resources to assist with family impeding factors such as childcare, housing and work. For some eligible programs, there may be lack of financial resources to pay staff and teachers needed to conduct a viable program, or to pay for the exorbitant cost of utility and rent.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

***Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)** (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.*

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

In compliance with section 427 of the U.S. Department of Education's General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), the plan for identifying, selecting, retaining and providing services to participants will ensure to the fullest extent possible equitable access to and participation in projects funded under Title II, Adult Education Family Literacy Act. The barriers of gender, race, national origin, color, disability, and age will be overcome through continuous and comprehensive planning.

The Virgin Island Department of Education (VIDE) is committed to ensuring that federally funded activities, programs, and services will be made accessible to all teachers, students, and other program beneficiaries allowing them to participate fully in the AEFLA program. This includes students and families from diverse backgrounds, to include, low literacy, low income, English Language Learners and the special needs population.

All stakeholders have ready access to program materials and applications. Materials used with students, families, or as part of professional development activities are examined to ensure fairness and appropriateness for diverse audiences in terms of ethnic/cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, sex, disabling conditions, language minority status, age, etc. The

department/districts translate materials for students/family members as necessary to ensure access for language-minority students/families and those with hearing impairments. The VIDE has a longstanding commitment to educational excellence and equity. The AEFLA programs are open to students 16 years on age, or older and can show viable proof they are not required to be enrolled in a secondary education. Adult Ed is also available to adults in the territory who are in need of AEFLA services. AEFLA funded Subgrantees will be required to follow Comprehensive Plans to provide integrated educational programs that meet individual student needs, talents, interests, and aspirations. All programs are required to be provided in accessible locations. Students requiring Special Education services and English as a Second language (ESL) services are provided with individual educational plans (IEP's) and included in the regular classrooms where possible. AEFLA Subgrantees and staff are required to participate in training designed to ensure that students, teachers, family members, etc., have equitable access to and opportunities to participate in VIDE programs without regard to age, color, creed, disability, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation and a statement regarding equitable access and opportunities is included in extended learning program applications.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity. The State applicant is also responsible for ensuring that its subrecipient applicants complete the GEPA Section 427 form or a State developed form that sufficiently meets the GEPA Section 427 requirement for any local-level-project and activity and maintains the subrecipients' responses in the State office.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for AEFLA Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Within six months of plan approval, the State and AEFLA funded subgrantees will be responsible for ensuring the following steps will be implemented as necessary with the intent to reduce barriers and to maximize accessibility and program participation. Unless otherwise specified, numbered items will be developed within a six month timeline of plan approval:

1. Develop and implement a plan that will address the identified special access needs indicated by students at orientation and prior to program enrollment and events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, focus groups, etc. VIDE currently hosts all program-related events in accessible facilities.
2. Enable equitable access of participants by making accessible to those using assistive technology due to disability: posted information curriculum, materials, schedules of events, and program assessments on the internet.

3. Subgrantees will be monitored for effectiveness quarterly to ensure that the proposed strategies are met, target audience(s) are reached, and goals and objectives are achieved. If necessary, corrective steps will be taken to address deficiencies and maximize participation.
4. Development of a shared workspace/community lab for all Subgrantees and students utilization to create a support system for teachers in AEFLA funded programs to collaborate on instructional practices, share resources and allow the AEFLA subrecipients in need access to internet and computers. This will help to reduce barriers for programs with a teacher shortage and for students who are remote with slow, or no internet, or computer hardware..
5. Within one week of being funded, in addition to the MOA entered into by the VIDE, every Subgrantee will be required to enter into an MOA with the One Stop and to have an assigned representative present at the One Stop on designated days to ensure that prospective and current students have fair and equitable reach to barrier breaking services, as well as to program information to facilitate enrollment.
6. Programs will be required to register with and utilize free online educational resources. those resources will be required to be submitted to the State for inclusion into the Distance Education Policy Manual (this is an ongoing initiative).
7. Within one week of being funded, all AEFLA funded programs will be required to provide the State with proof of registration with LINCS and utilize the free online resources and trainings housed in the LINCS engine to strengthen programs and bolster program outcomes. Programs will be monitored for effective use of the free online resources in their program and instructional environments.

ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation

process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	31.0		32.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	30.0		31.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	7,000.00		7,000.00	
Credential Attainment Rate	16.0		17.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	49.0		50.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
(COMBINED OR GENERAL)**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

A. STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.

1. ALL VR AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INDEPENDENT CONSUMER-CONTROLLED COMMISSION, MUST HAVE A STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (COUNCIL OR SRC) THAT MEETS THE CRITERIA IN SECTION 105 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPLICABLE, HAS:

Select A or B:

(A) is an independent State commission

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

(B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ASSURANCE (A)(1)(B), IF SELECTED, PLEASE PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT COMPOSITION OF THE COUNCIL BY REPRESENTATIVE TYPE, INCLUDING THE TERM NUMBER OF THE REPRESENTATIVE, AS APPLICABLE, AND ANY VACANCIES, AS WELL AS THE BEGINNING DATES OF EACH REPRESENTATIVE'S TERM.

Select 'Edit' to edit the narrative.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)	Temporarily Vacant	
Parent Training and Information Center	term 1	2022
Client Assistance Program	term 2	2020
Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency)	term 1	2022
Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider	term 1	2022
Business, Industry, and Labor	term 1	2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	term 1	2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	term 1	2024
Business, Industry, and Labor	Temporarily Vacant	
Disability Advocacy Groups	term 1	2022
Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services	term 1	2022
Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable)	N/A	N/A
State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the	term 1	2022

Council Representative	Current Term Number/Vacant	Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.
Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)		
State Workforce Development Board	term 1	2022
VR Agency Director (Ex Officio)	term 1	2022

3. IF THE SRC IS NOT MEETING THE COMPOSITION REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 105(B) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT AND/OR IS NOT MEETING QUARTERLY AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 105(F) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, PROVIDE THE STEPS THAT THE VR AGENCY IS TAKING TO ENSURE IT MEETS THOSE REQUIREMENTS.

The VISRC meets on a bi-weekly basis to address delinquent items. The VI SRC 's priority is to function as a fully constituted council, according to Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 C.F.R. 361.16, 17. The VISRC continues to engage in opportunities to share the goals and responsibilities with local businesses, labor and agency leaders. VISRC members attend Chamber of Commerce meetings and community events to garner interest in joining the SRC. In addition, members of the SRC created an active list of business within the territories to conduct outreach in our endeavor to fill the remaining vacancies. The SILC position most recently became vacant at the members request to be removed from the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). The SRC mandates at least one representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) must be either the chairperson or another designee of the SILC. The SILC and the SRC are working collaboratively to solicit interest in joining the SRC and filling the SILC vacancy. The goal is a fully constituted SRC confirmed prior to end of 4th Quarter.

4. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS IN SECTION 101(A)(21)(A)(II)(III) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, INCLUDE A SUMMARY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT (INCLUDING HOW IT WAS OBTAINED) INTO THE STATE PLAN AND ANY STATE PLAN REVISIONS, INCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S ANNUAL REPORTS, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS.

Input into the SRC State Plan was determined by review of the 2021 Monitoring Report, Rehabilitation Service Administration Quarterly CAP Updates, the 2007 Disability Assessment Survey and the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and consultation with Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The State Rehabilitation Council's summary targets areas demonstrating concern and provides recommendations. The SRC aim is improving the Vocational Rehabilitation Program through dedicated review, analysis, and advisement of the program and fiscal concerns: focusing on policies, procedures, implementation, and the consumer experience.

In PY23' VIDDRS shared concerns regarding number of referrals and the need to develop a marketing strategy to increase Program visibility. The SRC is working toward executing the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) which VIDDRS will use as a tool for developing services from consumer feedback and data. The CSNA is currently outstanding; however, the SRC is pursuing the beginning of a comprehensive data gathering initiative. Once fully executed and information gathered from the CSNA is complete, VIDDRS will have current

territorial data. The SRC goal is to assist VR develop a strong marketing and service delivery strategy that will increase Program visibility and strengthen services to individuals with disabilities; to include those who are underserved or unserved. The SRC Chair has encouraged VR to participate in various community activities to maintain and garner stakeholder interest. VIDDRS participated in community outreach events hosted by the Virgin Islands Department of Housing Authority, Virgin Islands Police Department, and the Virgin Islands Department of Health. A monthly advertising schedule has been established by VIDDRS with the Department of Human Services Public Relations and Marketing Team and with a local online/newspaper company that will rotate VIDDRS ads on several social media platforms to the community at large. The SRC will develop a task group that will focus on the VR Program needs to include marketing, (print and radio advertising, inter-agency announcements and Requests for Proposals (RFP)).

The onboarding of a Case Management System has been a long-standing goal of previous State Rehabilitation Council and VIDDRS Program Administrator. A case management system will streamline record-keeping, decrease paperwork, and centralize data for better management and remote access. The onboarding of a case management system will enhance accessibility and efficiency of vocational rehabilitation services. VISRC and VIDDRS are both in support of onboarding the case management system and the positive impact it will have on the speed of case resolution, readily accessible case information, and the automation of technical procedures. The overarching benefit of a case management system will move the VIDDRS Program in a direction that will improve the delivery of services. The Geographic Solutions Inc. (GSI), Contract for Professional Services was executed FY2022 (P116DHST22) and includes the following case management programs: eligibility determination, individualized plans for employment (IEP), job ready documentation, service authorization and tracking, referral tracking, case closure, post-employment services and follow-up, etc. Regarding federal reporting, access to WIOA portals for federal reporting, RSA-2, schedule II cost report, RSA-911, RSA-70B, etc. Troubleshooting continues in the onboarding phase before being fully implemented.

The SRC is aware of the financial regulations placed on VIDDRS by USDOE/RSA in connection to the Special Condition, Corrective Action Plan and fiscal concerns. VIDDRS shared the FY23' Special Condition Letter along with the CAP for reference and advisement. The SRC is aware that VIDDRS is working under Third-Party Fiduciary oversight while addressing RSA performance findings. The SRC will continue to provide support and advisement in response to USDOE/RSA, in part, to outstanding vendor payments held in Special Condition review. Access to funding once released by USDOE/RSA continues to impact the delivery of services to vendors along with lengthy review of reimbursements for consumers. The SRC has recommended that VIDDRS provide standard letters to vendors and consumer providing subtle explanation for receiving late payments. VISRC will continue to support smart fiscal choices that are based on strong regulatory practices.

Effective service delivery also means investing in a strong professional workforce of trained VR staff. The SRC recommends training opportunities be provided to VIDDRS Staff to gain exposure to VR changes and to create a network with VR counterparts. The SRC shared websites (National Clearinghouse, CSAVR) with Acting Administrator and will continue to provide support. In PY23' VR staff participated in the Department of Mental Health, Mental Health First-Aid training course which holds a 3-year certification as a Mental Health First Aide Responder. The Dept. of Mental Health offered an additional training to cover Adults and Adolescent which VIDDRS staff also took advantage of. Support Staff have the opportunity for training as well. Support Staff have enrolled in self-paced Administrative Training courses offered through the

University of the Virgin Island CELL Program. VISRC has encouraged program leadership to provide training opportunities to VR Counselors, administrative staff, and core partners on vocational rehabilitation.

5. PROVIDE THE VR AGENCY'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, INCLUDING AN EXPLANATION FOR THE REJECTION OF ANY INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

List each recommendation/input followed by the VR agency response

VIDDRS agrees with the key initiatives shared by the SRC according to the SRC portion of the State Plan. VIDDRS expressed concerns regarding the outstanding completion of the CSNA, which the SRC is currently addressing. Vocational Rehabilitation Services is looking to establish a marketing plan that will consistently engage the community and increase awareness of VR resources. VIDDRS marketing plan has an associated cost that to complete the advertising demands. However, the SRC has provided recommendations to participate in community partnership activities, for example, attending Chamber of Commerce monthly meetings to solicit stakeholders and community outreach events, where VR has been successful in receiving 2-4 interests per event.

VIDDRS Program looks forward to the complete onboarding of a VIDDRS case management system that is integrated into the Department of Labor VI Electronic Workforce System (VieWS). A fully integrated case management system will streamline record-keeping, enhance accessibility and efficiency of vocational rehabilitation services and centralize data for better management and remote access. VIDDRS agrees with the SRC that the overarching adoption of a case management system will move the VIDDRS Program in a direction that will improve the delivery of services.

VIDDRS Program is addressing professional development for all VIDDRS staff and understand the importance of staying abreast of trends and changing deliverables for services to people with disabilities. Not only in service provision but also employer relationship and consumer advocacy. VIDDRS leadership has looked into training opportunities both virtual or in-person that will support the continued learning for VIDDRS and Transition Staff. The VIDDRS Program has no rejections from the SRC portion of the State Plan and looks forward to continuing the collaboration.

B. COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA).

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

1. THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, INCLUDING:

A. INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT;

VIDDRS is focusing heavily on providing supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VIDDRS has a pending Contract of Professional Services with Island Therapy Solutions (ITS) (RFP No. BD-23-720-7202-227). Once executed, VIDDRS will implement supported employment services in a comprehensive detailed approach. The following areas were identified as needs to assist in the effective provision of supported employment services: social skill training, self- advocacy and full participation in daily activities of daily living.

In 2013 VIDDRS and VISRC completed the Combined Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). Since that time, the CSNA is past due; however, recent progress has been made toward regaining compliance. The Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) is a Social Research Institute that conducts scientific surveys, compiles, analyzes and disseminates demographic and socioeconomic data. The ECC has worked with VI Governmental Departments conducting annual population and housing surveys of Virgin Island households (VI Community Survey). The ECC also serves as the Virgin Islands Census Data Center. Utilizing results from the CSNA, will provide outstanding critical data that will be used to develop robust SE program.

B. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES AND INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) will address the service gaps reflected within VIDDRS delivery. The CSNA results will be helpful in identifying the VR service needs of those who are minorities with disabilities. The results of the CSNA will be used to strategically build partnerships to strengthen the service network for VIDHS participants, in particular, underserved or unserved minorities with disabilities. The minority group identified previously by the 2013 CSNA data showed underserved or unserved are Caucasians and Hispanics particularly individuals with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities, the homeless and or indigent, individuals needing interpreters, and individuals with disabilities with prior criminal convictions that are under skilled. VIDDRS has partnered with VI Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) in gathering data for the 2024 SILC Virgin Island Statewide Disability Community Needs Assessment. The SILC survey results will be supportive in conducting the VISRC CSNA. The SRC has created a partner list of approximately 60+ partners for ECC to access for agency data gathering. Outreach materials are being prepared by the SRC and ECC in various languages to be inclusive of the Virgin Islands rapidly growing demographic.

C. INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The State Workforce Development System was formerly the State Workforce Investment Board. The newly functioning State Workforce Board is comprised of individuals representing government, business, economic development and education. The Workforce Board “is challenged with developing local sector strategies in high growth industries and designing career pathways that advance opportunities for all workers and job seekers, including low-skilled adults, youth, dislocated workers and individuals with disabilities” (About the Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board). VIDDRS and American Job Center (AJC) have regained partnership and VR Counselors have a weekly presence at the American Job Centers since ceasing visits due to COVID-19. VIDDRS and the Department of Labor have mutually benefited from referring candidates to occupational training and summer employment programs offered between the agencies. Dept. of Labor will refer dislocated workers and out-of-school youths to VIDDRS. Referrals can also be made to the Department of Education Adult Education diploma and certification program. A concern currently being addressed by the Workforce Board is the limited certified trainers and instructors for vocational training programs at the adult education level.

D. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. INCLUDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES FOR TRANSITION CAREER SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH SUCH SERVICES ARE COORDINATED WITH TRANSITION SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER IDEA.

Services for Youths with disabilities include youth ages 14 to 24 years of age. Services for students with disabilities are students age, 14 and not older than 21 years of age. VIDDRS has executed the State Education Agency (SEA) Agreement (General Contract No. G036DHST23). The MOU describes how designated parties will collaboratively plan and coordinate pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) which include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Pre-employment transition services and transition services are structured to support students with disabilities ages 14-21, needing those services (Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.22(b)). Virgin Islands Department of Education's State Office of Special Education (VIDE/SOSE) is charged with providing special education services for eligible students and potentially eligible students with disabilities which includes ensuring a free appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. Additionally, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires VIDE/SOSE to ensure that transition planning /services are included in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) and students' career goals are noted as a means to facilitate the movement from school to post-school life as referred in the 34 CFR 300.1(a); 20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A). These services promise to promote participants in their engagement in the workforce system while identifying career opportunities. VIDDRS has worked intensively with RSA in the revision of VIDDRS Program Pre-ETS Policy and Procedures and in the developed a Pre-ETS Tracking Form to accurately capture and record all staff time spent in providing and arranging for the provision of pre-ETS services.

2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE.

The need for functional community rehabilitation programs in the US. Virgin Islands territory remains critical. VIDDRS has a limited vendors that provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities. VIDDRS has a pending contract with a CRP to provide supported employment services. Historically, this partnership has produced positive outcomes and with the execution of our pending contract, an increase in employment and successful outcomes is anticipated. Also, VIDDRS is actively working with the Center for Independent Living developing a proposal that will provide mobility and independent living skills training for individuals with low vision, and/or vision impairments. Additionally, VIDDRS is also working with My Brothers Workshop (MBW) to explore and expand training/apprenticeship/internship opportunities for VIDDRS participants and students with disabilities. Community Rehabilitation Programs serve a great need for the support services provided to Vocational Rehabilitation participants. Community Rehabilitation Programs serve a beneficial role and helps build the initial framework for the consumer to build on. The CSNA will help to identify the need and successes of CRPs.

C. GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND STRATEGIES

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of Section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program,

including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under Section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must—

1. DESCRIBE HOW THE SRC AND THE VR AGENCY JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES AND ANY REVISIONS; AND

Targeted tasks were jointly established by VIDDRS and the SRC. The SRC Chair and Acting Administrator had opportunities to speak to District Managers who received feedback from VR Counselors concerning the goals and priorities of VR. The SRC Chairman, Acting Administrator and District Managers met prior to the submission of the SRC State Plan to discuss targeted goals. VIDDRS and the SRC reviewed the 2021 Monitoring Report, 2021 Rehabilitation Service Administration CAP, and the 2013 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) which assisted in the development of targeted goals. The SRC's aim is improving the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. The SRC is dedicated to conducting a thorough analysis and review focusing on the projected success of VIDDRS.

2. IDENTIFY MEASURABLE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS AND THE BASIS FOR SELECTING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES (E.G., CSNA, PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES, SRC RECOMMENDATIONS, MONITORING, OTHER INFORMATION). AS REQUIRED IN SECTION 101(A)(15)(D), (18), AND (23), DESCRIBE UNDER EACH GOAL OR PRIORITY, THE STRATEGIES OR METHODS USED TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OR PRIORITY, INCLUDING AS APPLICABLE, DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIES OR METHODS THAT—

A. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES;

B. OVERCOME BARRIERS TO ACCESSING VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

C. IMPROVE AND EXPAND VR SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE COORDINATION OF SERVICES DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF SUCH STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL TO POSTSECONDARY LIFE (INCLUDING THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES); AND

D. IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE QUALITY EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES.

List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority

A. Support innovation and expansion activities. VIDDRS believes that innovation and expansion activities will empower individuals and provide inclusive spaces that may not be accessible for individuals with disabilities. For example, assistive technology and artificial intelligence innovation can lead to opportunities that increase access to higher paying employment, higher educational attainment and for some a better quality of independent living. This is why VIDDRS has the following initiative and goals.

Goal 1. Increase technology services. VIDDRS has partnered with Collaborative Technologies Solution (CTS) which is the newest technology related vendor that provides virtual Rehabilitation Technology evaluations, Assistive Technology Assessment, Training and Support. CTS provides Blind Services and offers Rehabilitation Teaching, Orientation & Mobility, Orientation & Adjustment to Disabilities services. VIDDRS is also in partnership with VIUCEDD

(Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities) VIUCEDD is funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Developmental Disabilities and the United States Department of Education, Office of National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. The VIUCEDD mission is to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities and their families and to provide them with tools necessary for independence, productivity and full inclusion. Through these partnerships VIDDRS is building a diverse pool of vendors to meet the changing needs of individuals with disabilities and the technology and innovation development that can provide access. VIDDRS is also exploring how we can support grant-funded innovation in technology opportunities through our partnership with VIUCEDD.

B. Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services:

VIDDRS along with the SRC has started to look more closely at barriers consumers may face when accessing VIDDRS and supported employment services. VIDDRS is also keeping in mind the experiences and awareness of VIDDRS from the community, partners, and employers. VIDDRS is attempting to approach outreach and marketing strategically by dismantling each barrier with strategic resolutions. For example, VIDDRS is looking into the expansion of services through Requests for Proposals (RFP is a solicitation by a government or agency for products and services from public contractors) to increase the network of vendors that provide services and supports to VR consumers. Additionally, one of the SRC goals is to analyze Program barriers both internal, external and access. The SRC has outlined a robust marketing and outreach initiative that focuses on connecting with the community, supporting employers, and understanding the needs and concerns of the VR consumer. The completion of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) is a SRC priority for capturing this data. VIDDRS is actively reviewing opportunities to implement long-term consumer satisfaction surveys that will be implemented after the completion of the CSNA in an effort to continue valid data collection. The pending Supported Employment Contract will guide the efficient and successful provision of quality supported employment services. This, in turn, will help guide efforts toward improving employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities who are entering the VI workforce. The goal and scope of services for supported employment is to assist the target population in locating jobs within their areas of interest, applying for, securing and maintaining competitive employment in an integrated setting.

The following Scope of Services and Service Activities have been developed by VIDDRS District Managers and Administrator Designee.

Supported Employment Service Activities

- Assess and enhance the consumer's job readiness knowledge, habits, and skills
- Support and guide in various skills such as money management, transportation, etc., which will support successful employment.
- Ongoing behavior management, as necessary, to deal with behavioral deficits and inappropriate behavior.
- Develop an individual placement plan with the participation and informed choice of the consumer and with the concurrence of the VR Counselor and extended service provider.
- Coordination with other agencies, families, advocates, etc., as necessary, and referral for other services.
- Job analysis

- Assist the consumer in the development of a resume
- Assess and enhance the consumers ability to complete job applications and participation in interviews
- Negotiating for necessary job accommodations with employer.
- Continuous assessment of the need for an ability to benefit from assistive technology, in terms of employment.
- Job training at the worksite to ensure the consumer is able to perform the duties required.
- Ongoing supervision, coaching, and teaching social and technical skills necessary to adjust to the work situation and environment.
- Ongoing case management.

Supported Employment Scope of Services:

- Vendor must organize services, singly or in combination, in such a way as to assist an eligible individual to achieve competitive integrated employment outcome;
- Based on a determination of the needs of eligible individual, as specified in an individualized plan for Supported Employment services;
- An individual with the most significant disability, whose Supported Employment in an integrated setting does not satisfy the criteria of competitive integrated employment, is considered to be working on a short-term (six months of achieving a supported employment outcome; or within a period not to exceed twelve month of achieving a supported employment outcome) basis toward competitive integrated employment so long as the individual can reasonably anticipate achieving competitive integrated employment;
- Vendor shall provide community-based work assessment services to evaluate the needs, strengths, skills and abilities, and job preferences of consumer to be served. The assessment will include at minimum two (2) community-based work assessments, lasting a minimum of six (6) hours each, and totaling at least twelve (12) hours of assessment;
- Vendor shall provide SE Job Development and Job Placement services to lead the consumer in job search and in obtaining and retaining employment; to follow-up on jobs leads; and to assist consumer with scheduling, attending job interviews, and navigating the hiring process. Consumers will be placed in jobs that offer a minimum of twenty (20) hours of employment each week, unless VIDDRS approves a lesser number of hours for reasons related to the individual's disability;
- Vendor shall provide on-site support and assistance toward SE stabilization on the job. SE stabilization occurs when the individual can successfully retain employment with on-site assistance for six (6) hours a week as worked by the client. On-site support for SE stabilization shall be at least 4 weeks in length and conclude with vendor documentation of stabilization at the end of completion;
- Vendor shall provide VR Counselor with monthly progress reports according to VIDDRS documentation standards.

C. Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post-secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and

Improving and expanding services for students with disabilities is a priority of VIDDRS. VIDDRS is entering into a partnership with the Virgin Island University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) to improve student's exposure to post-secondary training and access. The University of the Virgin Islands is the only higher educational institution within the territory and so it is imperative that healthy, long-lasting relationship is established. VIDDRS is reviewing a 2018 Contract between VIUCEDD and VIDDRS. Although the Contract was not executed, it serves as a template to bring to date what the VIDDRS Program is establishing with VIUCEDD. VIDDRS proposal to VIUCEDD will cover post-secondary training which will assist the student create educational and career goals during high school and explore various types of colleges via virtual tours and local job training programs. The following is list of some focus areas each student will participate in which is detailed further within the pending Contract.

- a. The review and discussion of academic skills, strengths, and accommodations needed in college.
- b. The review of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disability Act to include the student's family (if possible) for the student's empowerment and preparation for college.
- c. Schedule individual student meeting with the UVI Student Guidance Counselors to talk about campus life, options for job training w/in the Territory and life after college.
- d. Introduction to Assistive technology and A.I. innovation.
- e. Review and discuss classroom accommodations, accommodations for college entrance exams and employment accommodations.
- f. Discuss UVI and general college requirements with students (family).
- g. Share and discuss disability documentation needed for college with student (family).
- h. Financial aid review for students (family).
- I. Support student participation in Adult/Continuing Education Courses

Due to limited higher educational systems and CRP's within the Virgin Island territory, VIDDRS must be strategic in establishing a Contract with VIUCEDD that represents continuous, comprehensive and meaningful outcomes for students with disabilities.

Improvement and expansion in areas of employment require a comprehensive approach towards partnerships with community employers and governmental agencies. VIDDRS has developed a strong partnership with Disability Rights and Resource of the Virgin Islands (DRCVI), the Department of Labor and Island Therapy Solutions. VIDDRS has also collaborated with the Governor's ADA Territorial Office and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Miami Office. VIDDRS helped facilitate four Employer Roundtables, and Job Seeker Webinars, and presented in an annual EEOC ADA annual training. Through VIDDRS partnership efforts, Collaborative Technologies Solutions, an Assistive Technology and Assessments agency providing a broad range of virtual-based assessments, programs and assistive technology tools, was added along with My Brothers Workshop, a local non- profit agency that provides certified

vocational training in various trades in territory demand. Employment and training opportunities are often shared during these activities which is funneled to VIDDRS Team. Solidifying interagency and community partnerships are the goal for VIDDRS. Looking toward future program years, VIDDRS leadership is developing Agreements that demonstrate services and builds on the student experience. Transition Coordination of services start as soon as the student with a disability becomes eligible to receive services, age 14. In order to grow capacity for understanding and implementing strong pre-ETS services, VIDDRS Transition Team will participate in annual NTACTION trainings, webinars and conferences and work in collaboration with VI Department of Education, Office of Special Education through the executed SEA Agreement to support advancing services and coordination activities.

D. Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.

VR is currently experiencing oversight that is challenging the Program to review current practices and implement changes ensuring program improvement. The goal of VIDDRS is to focus on expanding services and improving access in a rapid and timely fashion. VIDDRS, the Virgin Island Governor's Workforce Board and American Job Centers meet on a monthly basis to discuss island-wide concerns dealing with employment, access, housing, infrastructure, etc. Core Partner meetings provide a constant flow of vendor information, changes in government policy, training opportunities, and planning of territorial events, etc. VIDDRS has the opportunity to share the needs of the VR Program, for example, expanding Community Rehabilitation Services (CRP's) and gain quality feedback.

D. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe—

1. PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED FOR THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS;

List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies

VIDDRS goal continues to be the growth of Supported Employment services within the USVI territories. Supported Employment services were placed on pause due to VIDHS Third Party Fiduciary determining the development of a Supported Employment Contract. Subsequently, VIDDRS completed the contract process and now in the finalization. Expanding Supported Employment Services to those with the most significant disabilities and enlarging/recruiting agencies within the Virgin Islands that can meet the training and competitive integrative employment needs of consumers, continues as a goal. Through the coordination of services with Core Partners (Governors Workforce Board, Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Virgin Islands Department of Education, VIUCEED, Center for Independent Living, and the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands), Supported Employment services will be provided from a well-rounded consumer-centered approach.

Goal 1: Increase supported employment services in the Territory that will improve employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities entering the workforce. VIDDRS will accomplish this by prioritizing the following: final execution of the contract with Island

Therapy Solution that will establish a direct pipeline of SE services. Additionally, VIDDRS will look to solicit interest from the community through an RFP. VIDDRS is looking to increase the pool of Job Coaches available in the territory by soliciting interested candidates in job coaching.

Goal 2: VIDDRS looks to increase the ability to serve jobseekers with the most significant disabilities. VIDDRS is creating the ability to work seamlessly with the consumer and support agencies that will "blend and braid" services so the jobseeker will have favorable employment outcomes. VIDDRS will prioritize Service Agreements detailing extended services to agencies that will assist in providing supported employment services. Another priority within this goal is to continue to strengthen ongoing partnerships with Core partners, visa vie, USVI Department of Labor, Disability Rights Center of the VI Employer Partnership Group and USVI Governor's Workforce Board. These priorities allow VIDDRS to retain clients without them prematurely exiting because of barriers.

Goal 3: Increase employment outcomes for those with the most significant disabilities. This goal has two priorities to address; the first is to recruit and retain employers that will support the diverse, job-ready talent pool. The DRCVI Employer Partnership Group gives VIDDRS the opportunity to partner with USVI Economic Development Center and USVI Small Business Development who have relationships with nearly all 2,500 businesses in the Territory that outreach efforts can capture. The second priority is to participate in traditional and non-traditional recruitment events. As an example, during the Pandemic, the DRCVI Employer Partnership Group started virtual Recruitment Roundtable which VIDDRS has participated in many times. Considering the Virgin Islands labor shortage, the goal of increasing the employment of individuals with significant disabilities will be favorable for the consumer as well as the local community at large.

2. PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR, REFLECTING ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS OF PERFORMANCE. EXPLAIN ANY DISCREPANCIES IN THE ACTUAL AND NEGOTIATED LEVELS; AND

Not applicable.

3. THE USE OF FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES (SECTIONS 101(A)(18) AND 101(A)(23) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT) (E.G., SRC, SILC).

The expending of funds reserved for innovation and expansion was greatly impacted by COVID-19. At that time, partnering agencies along with VIDHS were restricted in activities which caused a delay leading to a stall in progress. The VI State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) ceased meeting due to mandates imposed by the CDC and local government. The current SRC has onboarded new Council members who are learning and navigating the responsibilities of the SRC. Since onboarding, the SRC has taken an active role in addressing Program concerns by first tackling the CSNA, as priority. The VI Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) also ceased meetings; however, has since reorganized with a newly onboarded Council, and a new Center for Independent Living (CIL) Director. The CIL Director and VIDDRS Acting Administrator have met to review previous projects and Agreements that were not executed due to COVID-19. The plan moving forward in PY24' is to complete the CSNA, review expenditure requirements for the reserved fund and seek technical assistance, when needed to ensure effective spending.

E. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS, AND ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF TITLE VI FUNDS:

(A) VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

2. IF THE VR AGENCY HAS ELECTED TO RECEIVE TITLE VI FUNDS, SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRES VR AGENCIES TO INCLUDE SPECIFIC GOALS AND PRIORITIES WITH RESPECT TO THE DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. DESCRIBE THE USE OF TITLE VI FUNDS AND HOW THEY WILL BE USED IN MEETING THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

VIDDRS has elected to receive title VI funds for the provision of Supported Employment Services. In PY23, VIDDRS Supported Employment services was monitored for absence of a contract to execute services. At that time, VIDDRS procured a contract with Island Therapy Solution as mandated by the GVI through the Department of Property and Procurement (DPP) and the Third-Party Fiduciary.

VIDDRS has developed specific goals and priorities toward increasing supported employment services within the territory and how Title VI funds will be utilized to meet the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

Goal 1: Increase supported employment services in the Territory that will improve employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities entering the workforce. VIDDRS will accomplish this by prioritizing the following: finalizing the contract with Island Therapy Solution that will establish a direct pipeline of SE services. Additionally, VIDDRS will look to solicit interest from the community regarding community rehabilitation programs (CRP) services throughout the territory. Solicitation may be in the form of an RFP, and SE funding source to support the program proposal. VIDDRS is looking to increase the pool of Job Coaches available in the territory by contracting with CRPs and soliciting and recruiting interested community members about job coaching. Funding the use of Job Coaches due to limited and qualified CRP will also support Supported Employment expenditures.

Goal 2: VIDDRS looks to increase the ability to serve jobseekers with the most significant disabilities. VIDDRS is creating the ability to work seamlessly with the consumer and support agencies that will "blend and braid" services so the jobseeker will have favorable employment outcomes. VIDDRS will prioritize Service Agreements detailing extended services to agencies that will assist in providing supported employment services. Another priority within this goal is to continue to strengthen ongoing partnerships with Core partners, visa vie, USVI Department of Labor, Disability Rights Center of the VI Employer Partnership Group and USVI Governor's Workforce Board. These priorities allow VIDDRS to retain clients without them prematurely exiting because of barriers.

Goal 3: Increase employment outcomes for those with the most significant disabilities. This goal has two priorities to address; the first is to recruit and retain employers that will support the diverse, job-ready talent pool. The DRCVI Employer Partnership Group gives VIDDRS the opportunity to partner with USVI Economic Development Center and USVI Small Business Development who have relationships with nearly all 2,500 businesses in the Territory that outreach efforts can capture. The second priority is to participate in traditional and non-traditional recruitment events. As an example, during the Pandemic, the DRCVI Employer Partnership Group started virtual Recruitment Roundtable which VIDDRS has participated in many times. Considering the Virgin Islands labor shortage, the goal of increasing the

employment of individuals with significant disabilities will be favorable for the consumer as well as the local community at large.

3. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES MAY BE PROVIDED WITH TITLE 1 OR TITLE VI FUNDS FOLLOWING PLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN EMPLOYMENT. IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(22) AND SECTION 606(B)(3) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, DESCRIBE THE QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES; AND THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES.

VIDDRS created a comprehensive scope of supported employment services that detail the quality and extent of services to include youth with the most significant disabilities. Supported Employment services are monitored by the VR Counselor and District Manager(s). VIDDRS and the Vendor providing the service will work closely to ensure that the services align with goals stated in the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and based on the consumers abilities, interests, and assessment that support their employment goals.

The following Purpose and Deliverables are taken from the VIDDRS Scope of Work. The Scope was developed to accompany RFP's, Agreements, Contract, etc. and outlines services provided under the Supported Employment Program.

Purpose: The Virgin Islands Department of Human Services- Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services (VIDDRS) seeks a contractor to provide quality Supported Employment services to improve outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities entering the workforce. Supported Employment (SE) is competitive integrated employment, including customized employment, job development, or employment in an integrated work setting in which an individual with a most significant disability, including a youth with a most significant disability, is working on a short-term basis toward competitive integrated employment that is individualized and customized, consistent with the unique strengths, abilities, interests, and informed choice of the individual with ongoing support services (34 C.F.R 363.1(b)).

Deliverables:

The selected vendor must provide individualized services, which are tailored to the needs of the consumer. The following services shall be provided based on an initial and ongoing assessment of the services required to advance each consumer into competitive integrated employment.

- Initial interviews and assessments of level of competencies should be completed within 30 days of receipt of the referral package.
- All employment must be individualized and customized consistent with strengths, skills, abilities, interests and informed choice of the consumer.
- At least (2) two community-based work assessment sites should be selected, lasting a minimum of six (6) hours each.
- Individualized placement plans will be developed with the participation of the consumer/guardian, the VR Counselor, and the vendor.
- Job development and job placement services should include, job search, follow up on job leads, scheduling, attending interviews, and securing employment.

- Consumers will be placed in jobs that offer a minimum of twenty (20) hours of employment each week, unless VIDDRS approves a lesser number of hours for reasons related to the individual's disability.
- On-site support and assistance toward SE stabilization on the job to include job training, ongoing supervision, coaching, teaching social and technical skills necessary to adjust to the work environment.
- SE stabilization occurs when the consumer can successfully retain employment with on-site assistance for six (6) hours a week.
- On-site support for SE stabilization shall be at least 4 weeks in length and conclude with vendor documentation of stabilization at completion.
- In compliance with the ADA the employer should provide the necessary accommodations.
- Vendor should provide support and guidance in various skills such as money management, and transportation to aid in the achievement of successful employment.
- Ongoing behavioral management will be provided as necessary to combat inappropriate behaviors.
- Assessments to determine the need for assistive technology.
- Information and referral services will be provided as needed.
- The vendor is required to provide monthly progress reports on all activities.

4. SECTIONS 101(A)(22) AND 606(B)(4) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT REQUIRE THE VR AGENCY TO DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY AND ARRANGE, INCLUDING ENTERING INTO COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS, WITH OTHER STATE AGENCIES AND OTHER APPROPRIATE ENTITIES IN ORDER TO PROVIDE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES. THE DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE EXTENDED SERVICES, AS APPLICABLE, TO INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES TO YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 363.4(A) AND 34 C.F.R. § 361.5(C)(19)(V).

Supported Employment services are offered to individuals with the most significant disabilities who demonstrate readiness to enter competitive integrated employment. The VR Program has entered into a contract with a CRP to provide Supported Employment services. VIDDRS Program has identified and ready to arrange Supported Employment services that include extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities. The Department of Property and Procurement contract execution process to review and execute the Supported Employment contract has significantly impacted the VR Programs ability to provide services in PY23.

The State Rehabilitation Council and the Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) have reviewed the need for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). When complete, VIDDRS will use data from the CSNA to address barriers and areas of need of individuals with the most significant disabilities living within the territories. Previous data collected in 2013 suggested, 71.6 percent are unaware of VR services, an overall lack of on-the-job accommodations and/or type of available jobs, access to training, etc.

In past Program years, VIDDRS worked the university-affiliated program, Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), to train job coaches and facilitate supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The job coaches were trained to conduct assessments, assist with job development, job placements, career coaching, and extended support services. VIDDRS is identifying avenues of potential interest and ensuring qualified trainers are available. VIDDRS will continue to concentrate efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a provider of supported employment services.

F. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

1. ESTIMATES FOR NEXT FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR—

A. VR PROGRAM; AND

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Costs of Services using Title I Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	269	256		31 (Supported Employment)

B. SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.

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Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title I and Title VI Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
N/A	33	33		33

G. ORDER OF SELECTION

1. PURSUANT TO SECTION 101(A)(5) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, THIS DESCRIPTION MUST BE AMENDED WHEN THE VR AGENCY DETERMINES, BASED ON THE ANNUAL ESTIMATES DESCRIBED IN DESCRIPTION (F), THAT VR SERVICES CANNOT BE PROVIDED TO ALL ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE WHO APPLY FOR AND ARE DETERMINED ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES.

* VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection.

The VR agency is not implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

2. FOR VR AGENCIES THAT HAVE DEFINED PRIORITY CATEGORIES DESCRIBE—

A. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Order of Selection not applicable at this time.

B. THE ORDER (PRIORITY CATEGORIES) TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES ENSURING THAT INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES; AND

VIDDRS will not implement an order of selection for VR services.

C. THE VR AGENCY'S GOALS FOR SERVING INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, INCLUDING HOW THE AGENCY WILL ASSIST ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS ASSIGNED TO CLOSED PRIORITY CATEGORIES WITH INFORMATION AND REFERRAL, THE METHOD IN WHICH THE VR AGENCY WILL MANAGE WAITING LISTS, AND THE PROJECTED TIMELINES FOR OPENING PRIORITY CATEGORIES. NOTE: PRIORITY CATEGORIES ARE CONSIDERED OPEN WHEN ALL INDIVIDUALS IN THE PRIORITY CATEGORY MAY BE SERVED.

Not applicable.

3. HAS THE VR AGENCY ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE OF THE ORDER OF SELECTION WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT?

Not applicable.

H. WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS.

The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive

compliance with this requirement in accordance with Section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the implementing regulations in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is requesting a waiver of statewidness or has a previously approved waiver of statewidness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewidness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 C.F.R. § 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewidness, please indicate “not applicable.”

The Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a waiver of statewidness.

I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purposes of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency’s comprehensive system of personnel development, which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the State VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

1. ANALYSIS OF CURRENT PERSONNEL AND PROJECTED PERSONNEL NEEDS INCLUDING—

A. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

B. THE NUMBER AND TYPE OF PERSONNEL THAT ARE EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING RATIOS OF QUALIFIED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS;

C. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE VR AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES IN 5 YEARS BASED ON PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED, INCLUDING INDIVIDUALS WITH SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL EXPECTED TO RETIRE OR LEAVE THE FIELD, AND OTHER RELEVANT FACTORS.

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Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
Administrator	1 (Currently Acting)	0	0
Assistant Administrator	0	1	0
District Manager	2	1 (position retired in 2024)	0
Accounts Payable	0	1	1

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 Years
VR Counselors	5	3	2
Rehab Aide	2	1	1
Transition Coordinator	1	0	0
Transition Assistant	1	0	1

D. RATIO OF QUALIFIED VR COUNSELORS TO CLIENTS:

The Ratio of qualified VR counselors to clients is 1:54.6

E. PROJECTED NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS TO BE SERVED IN 5 YEARS:

It is expected with the existing vacancies filled, the VIDDRS staff will be able to serve the projected individuals that are eligible for VR services. The Division has hired one VR Counselor and has another vacancy to fill. In addition, the hiring of an Administrator, Administrative Officer, and Federal Grant Monitor will accommodate the growing population in the next 5 years based on the projections. The VIDDRS has to recruit personnel and have continue committed working with our new Deputy Commissioner of Human Resources to ensure that succession planning is implemented. Securing the appropriate personnel in the next five years is extremely crucial to the success and survival of the program. Based on projections of individuals requesting service in the next 5 years and staff approaching retirement, the VIDDRS will need the following personnel:

- 1 District Manager
- 1 Federal Grant Monitor
- 1 Executive Administrative Assistant
- 1 Administrator
- 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

2. DATA AND INFORMATION ON PERSONNEL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

A. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED DURING THE PRIOR YEAR FROM EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS WITH CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, OR WITH THE CREDENTIALS FOR CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE, BROKEN DOWN BY THE PERSONNEL CATEGORY FOR WHICH THEY HAVE RECEIVED, OR HAVE THE CREDENTIALS TO RECEIVE, CERTIFICATION OR LICENSURE.

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There is currently one institution of higher education within the territory; the University of the Virgin Islands offers certified undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Some of these programs are in the field of Accounting, Social Work, Psychology, and Education, etc. Unfortunately, the university does not provide a degree program or courses in Rehabilitation Counseling. The VR Counselors are encouraged to pursue their CRC; information and resources is shared pertaining to trainings.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
University of the Virgin Islands	Business	N/A	83
	Liberal Arts & Social Services	N/A	51
	Education	N/A	35

B. THE VR AGENCY’S PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL, WHICH ADDRESSES THE CURRENT AND PROJECTED NEEDS FOR QUALIFIED PERSONNEL; AND THE COORDINATION AND FACILITATION OF EFFORTS BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS TO RECRUIT, PREPARE, AND RETAIN PERSONNEL WHO ARE QUALIFIED, INCLUDING PERSONNEL FROM MINORITY BACKGROUNDS AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

VIDDRS complies with the requirement to hire and recruit personnel from minority backgrounds and persons with disabilities. VIDDRS plan to address the current projected needs include a strategic plan that will assist with the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel. In PY23' three integral vacancies were filled, the Transition Assistant, Rehabilitation Aide II, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I. VIDDRS projects growth in consumer services due to steady increase in primary school numbers. Recruitment of qualified personnel will remain open to applicants from the mainland and other neighboring Caribbean islands. The University of the Virgin Islands does not offer Rehabilitation Counseling degrees or certifications; however, UVI has degrees in closely related fields such as Psychology, Social Sciences and Counseling. The University can assist with ensuring that personnel remain current and engaged in the field. The community partners that serve various populations continues to make recommendations and provide referrals to the program for prospective hires. VIDDRS will analyze current hiring strategies and implement new techniques to improve recruitment and retention efforts.

C. DESCRIPTION OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES, PROCEDURES, AND ACTIVITIES THAT ENSURE ALL PERSONNEL EMPLOYED BY THE VR AGENCY RECEIVE APPROPRIATE AND ADEQUATE TRAINING AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS:

I. PARTICULARLY WITH RESPECT TO ASSESSMENT, VOCATIONAL COUNSELING, JOB PLACEMENT, AND REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING TRAINING IMPLEMENTED IN COORDINATION WITH ENTITIES CARRYING OUT STATE PROGRAMS UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998; AND

II. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO VR AGENCY PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS AND FOR PROVIDING TRAINING REGARDING THE AMENDMENTS TO THE REHABILITATION ACT MADE BY THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

VIDDRS has prioritized professional development for Program Staff within their specialized areas. Training will enhance personnel's skill set, and knowledge base and ensure staff remain abreast on changing VR information. In previous Program years, VIDDRS Leadership discussed developing training modules with focus on the following areas: new employee orientation, assistive technology, supported employment, case management, pre-ETS and leadership. Once VIDDRS finalizes onboarding the case management system, comprehensive staff training will be addressed. VIDDRS staff have opportunities to engage in a number of webinars and workshops provided by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative (NTACT:C) and the Virgin Island University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), and the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VR-TAC). VIDDRS participates in various monthly calls with Council for State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) VR Professional Networks. VIDDRS also utilizes the guidance and revised policy and procedures and RSA data dashboards to aid in the development of training areas.

3. DESCRIPTION OF VR AGENCY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF PERSONNEL STANDARDS CONSISTENT WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B) TO ENSURE THAT VR AGENCY PROFESSIONAL AND PARAPROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL ARE ADEQUATELY TRAINED AND PREPARED, INCLUDING—

A. STANDARDS THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH ANY NATIONAL OR STATE-APPROVED OR -RECOGNIZED CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, REGISTRATION, OR OTHER COMPARABLE REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO THE PROFESSION OR DISCIPLINE IN WHICH SUCH PERSONNEL ARE PROVIDING VR SERVICES; AND

B. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 101(A)(7)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT, TO ENSURE THAT THE PERSONNEL HAVE A 21ST CENTURY UNDERSTANDING OF THE EVOLVING LABOR FORCE AND THE NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES.

Traditionally, VIDDRS has adhered to standards set by the State Civil Service System which are consistent with the highest entry-level academic degree of a B.S. in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling or a related field, needed for professions in this category. There are no State approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements for rehabilitation counselors within the U.S. Territories; however, VIDDRS personnel are encouraged to sit for the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) requirement and/or participate in CEU-type training to ensure understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

In previous years, the job specifications for Rehabilitation Counselors were revised to reflect a graduate degree as the minimum entry-level requirement. This revision has increased the entry-level salary and hopefully increases the pool of interested candidates. VIDHS posts vacancies on multiple social media platforms, throughout various government offices, and with online recruitment resources.

4. METHOD(S) THE VR AGENCY USES TO ENSURE THAT PERSONNEL ARE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE IN APPROPRIATE MODES OF COMMUNICATION WITH OR IN THE NATIVE

LANGUAGE OF APPLICANTS OR ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LIMITED ENGLISH SPEAKING ABILITY.

VIDDRS obtains services of other individuals who are able to communicate in other modes of communication on behalf of the consumer. Sign language interpreters are retained for those persons that require that service. Spanish speaking personnel are also utilized as translators to relay information from the program to the applicant; consumers are allowed to include a trusted family member or friend as part of the application process. VIDDRS supports staff interested in acquiring skills to aid in the provision of services can enroll in courses offered at cost through UVICELL; for example, American Sign Language.

5. AS APPROPRIATE, DESCRIBE THE PROCEDURES AND ACTIVITIES TO COORDINATE THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT WITH PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT.

The designated States unit collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Education and State Office Special Education in its capacity building initiatives. Counselors are involved in the transition planning process for students with disabilities and attend IEP meetings on a regular basis. Personnel from the VIDDRS, VIDOE and VIDOL participate in events sponsored by all the partner agencies. The projected plan is continuing enhancement of communication and collaboration with VIDOE and VIDOL to ensure that information shared timely across agencies, services provided improve successful outcomes and relationships are strengthened. In 2021 a MOU was established between VIDDRS and VIDOL; the agreement outlines the responsibilities and joint goals that will facilitate the coordination of personnel under the IDEA. The MOU is in review by the designated State unit and VIDOL to determine if amendments are needed for continued improvement in communication and data-sharing.

J. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS.

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act—

1. DESCRIBE PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION BETWEEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATION OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PUBLIC EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, THAT ARE DESIGNED TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF THE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM THE RECEIPT OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES IN SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES.

The Designated State Agency has executed a MOU in collaboration with SOSE/VIDE education officials. VIDDRS and the Virgin Islands Department of Education officials collaboratively developed an Interagency Agreement with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for both agencies. The MOU was finalized and approved in July 2023 (G036DHST23). The MOU is a formal interagency agreement with the State Education Agency (SEA) describing the collaborative plan to coordinate preemployment transition services (Pre-ETS) which include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling opportunities for enrollment in postsecondary educational programs, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Pre-employment transition services and transition services are structured to support students with disabilities ages 14-21.

Virgin Islands Department of Education's State Office of Special Education (VIDE/SOSE) is charged with providing special education services for eligible students and potentially eligible students with disabilities which includes ensuring a free appropriate public education in

accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 USC § 1400. The MOU will be executed from June 9, 2023, through June 8, 2027.

It is the overarching goal of the Agreement that, to the maximum extent possible, all eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities exit high school prepared to go directly into employment and/or post-secondary training programs. VIDE/SOSE and VR will work collaboratively to accomplish the following:

A. Implement practices in secondary school programs that include pre-employment transition services for eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities, when appropriate, and individualized services, including VR and transition services, under an individualized plan for employment for VR-eligible students. B. Ensure that all potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities and their parents/guardians are provided the necessary tools and resources to be actively engaged in the transition planning process and informed and educated about the dispute resolution process and the Client Assistance Program. C. Consult and provide technical assistance to assist in the coordination of activities among all involved segments of the community toward the purposes stated in this Agreement.

Due to Covid-19, VIDDRS and VIDOE shifted to services to an online platform. Subsequently, pre-employment transition services were offered virtually through Microsoft Teams. Currently, SOSE/VIDE and VIDDRS are resuming in-person services. Based on the agreement, both the VIDDRS and VIDOE, Special Education Services are equally responsible for ensuring that the student body receives these services.

2. DESCRIBE THE CURRENT STATUS AND SCOPE OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY. CONSISTENT WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT PURSUANT TO 34 C.F.R. § 361.22(B), PROVIDE, AT A MINIMUM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ABOUT THE AGREEMENT:

A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE, WHICH MAY BE PROVIDED USING ALTERNATIVE MEANS FOR MEETING PARTICIPATION (SUCH AS VIDEO CONFERENCES AND CONFERENCE CALLS), TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES AND OTHER VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES;

B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PERSONNEL FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS (IEPS) UNDER SECTION 614(D) OF THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT;

C. THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES;

D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES. OUTREACH TO THESE STUDENTS SHOULD OCCUR AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE DURING THE TRANSITION PLANNING PROCESS AND MUST INCLUDE, AT A MINIMUM, A DESCRIPTION OF

THE PURPOSE OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM, ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS, APPLICATION PROCEDURES, AND SCOPE OF SERVICES THAT MAY BE PROVIDED TO ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS;

E. COORDINATION NECESSARY TO SATISFY DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS SET FORTH IN 34 C.F.R. PART 397 REGARDING STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE SEEKING SUBMINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT; AND

F. ASSURANCE THAT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, NEITHER THE SEA NOR THE LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WILL ENTER INTO A CONTRACT OR OTHER ARRANGEMENT WITH AN ENTITY, AS DEFINED IN 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(D), FOR THE PURPOSE OF OPERATING A PROGRAM UNDER WHICH YOUTH WITH A DISABILITY IS ENGAGED IN WORK COMPENSATED AT A SUBMINIMUM WAGE.

The State Education Agency (SEA) Agreement is between the Virgin Island Department of Human Services, Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services and the Virgin Islands Department of Education, which describes how VIDDRS and VIDE will collaboratively plan and coordinate pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) which include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Pre-employment transition services and transition services are structured to support students with disabilities ages 14-21, needing those services. Virgin Islands Department of Education's State Office of Special Education (VIDE/SOSE) is charged with providing special education services for eligible students and potentially eligible students with disabilities which includes ensuring a free appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

The SEA Agreement states that VIDE/SOSE and VIDDRS have a common interest in ensuring eligible students and potentially eligible students with disabilities in the territory who need special education and/or vocational rehabilitation services are promptly identified, and the appropriate transition services and or resources are made available in accordance with Section 612 (a)(12) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and sections 113 and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act amended by the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, and implementing regulations. In addition, VIDE/SOSE and VIDDRS will work to coordinate efforts in ensuring a seamless delivery of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) and transition services, and other available services and resources, to potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities in order to facilitate their transfer from secondary education into the workforce or postsecondary opportunities, by entering into the MOU.

It is the overarching goal of this Agreement that, to the maximum extent possible, all eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities exit high school prepared to go directly into employment and/or post-secondary training programs and independent living. In furtherance of this, VIDE/SOSE and DHS/VR shall work collaboratively to: (A) Implement practices in secondary school programs that include pre-employment transition services for eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities, when appropriate, and individualized services, including VR and transition services, under an individualized plan for employment for VR-eligible students. (B) Ensure that all potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities and their parents/guardians are provided the necessary tools and resources to be actively engaged in the transition planning process and informed and educated about the dispute resolution process and the Client Assistance Program. (C) Consult and provide

technical assistance to assist in the coordination of activities among all involved segments of the community toward the purposes stated in this Agreement.

A. Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

- VIDDRS has active participation in the planning for transition services for students with disabilities from school to post-school activities. These activities may include but not limited quarterly scheduled Pre-ETS sessions that cover the 5-key areas by grade level, attending regularly scheduled IEP meetings, and arranging for the necessary referrals for training and/or support services, for example, DRCVI for advocacy training. The inter-collaboration between agencies, both governmental and non-profit are a valuable resource that supports VIDDRS and its mission.
- Consultation and technical assistance is provided, (through all forms of communication including conference calls and video conferencing) to assist LEAs and service providers addressing the needs of people with disabilities, in planning of pre-employment transition services for potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, and all other vocational rehabilitation services, including transition services.

B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under Section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

- The designated State agency and the educational agency facilitate quarterly meetings to review, and/or update the individualized education programs for students with disabilities. Planning and implementation of the individualized education programs is carried out by VIDDRS, SOSE/VIDE and/or community agency. Collaboration between agencies provides an increase in successful outcomes due to the webbing of services.

C. The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services.

- The SEA Agreement (*G036DHST23*) outlines the roles and responsibilities, to include financial responsibilities, of each agency. VIDE/SOSE serves as the lead agency in the development, revision and maintenance of cooperative efforts between collaborating agencies to facilitate the successful transition of students with disabilities.

D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during the transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the vocational rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals.

- VIDDRS conducts outreach activities by engaging in school-based meeting, utilizing social media platforms, radio and newspaper blurbs, and dissemination of written

materials) to build a pool of qualified vendors who can provide transition services. Identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services begins as soon as possible, age 14, to start the student in their preparation to support the transition process.

- Outreach to and identify potentially eligible and eligible students to participate in preemployment transition services and students in need of VR services, including transition services continue through the execution of the SEA Agreement and SOSE/VIDE, VIDDRS partnership. Identification of potentially eligible and eligible students with disabilities in need of pre-employment transition services shall be identified by qualifying standards based on State Vocational Rehabilitation requirements and WIOA Pre-ETS qualifiers. Outreach and engagement will occur as early as possible, to secure the informed choice of the consumer. VR program: brochures, pamphlets, flyers, and fact sheet that detail qualifying factors for VR Services, qualifying factors for pre-employment transition services, VR and transition services, scope of services available through the VR program, application procedures, eligibility requirements, and contact information (phone number, address, website, etc.) is provided to SOSE/VIDE and community at large.

E. Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 C.F.R. part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

- VIDDRS, SOSE/VIDE coordinate with the Department of Labor for the verification of wages that satisfy requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding to students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment.

F. Assurance that, in accordance with 34 C.F.R. § 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 C.F.R. § 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

- The Assurance is noted as such within the SEA.

K. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(E) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe how the VR agency will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of VR services; and transition services for youth and students with disabilities, including pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities.

VIDDRS partner with a variety of employers and advocacy groups to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Employers are solicited by the VIDDRS based on the employment goals set by individuals. Employers provide on the job training, apprenticeship training, internships, and a host of internal supports to ensure success in the workplace. The Designated State Agency maintains healthy relationships with employers to create job placements opportunities and provide information about available employer tax credits.

In PY23, VIDDRS partnered with DRCVI, Island Therapy Solutions, DOL, Small Business Development Center (SBDC), and the EEOC Miami-Office. This advocacy group was formed to support partnering agency mission and goals in addressing employment pathways for

individuals with disabilities. Through this partnership, VIDDRS participated in Virtual Employer Recruitment Roundtable for all employers located in the territories. Four local employers facilitated the discussion regarding available positions and the screening process. VIDDRS also facilitated training during NDEAM Employer Support Roundtable. This Roundtable provided a platform to employers to advertise and pursue qualified candidates. VIDDRS also partnered in facilitating NDEAM Employee Rights workshop. This workshop concentrated on civil rights in the workplace and employment supports. Co-facilitating workshops throughout PY23 has provided the VIDDRS with access to over 120 individuals with disabilities within the territory. VIDDRS and the American Job Center works collaboratively to enhance our approach to within the community and in adherence with WIOA.

In past years, VIDDRS held recognition ceremonies for employers and participants that participated in the Annual Summer Youth Employment Training Program. The summer work training experience is paid 6-week apprenticeship program, where students are placed in various job opportunities based on their career interests and skills. Due to COVID-19, VIDDRS held-off on hosting events; however, as CDC and Government restrictions have been lifted, VIDDRS looks forward to honoring students and employers during the Octobers NDEAM month. VIDDRS also looks forward to participating in and facilitating job and career fairs in both districts. VIDDRS ensures that job and career fairs have an advocacy component that caters to individuals with disabilities.

L. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

In accordance with the requirements in Section 101(a)(11)(C) and (K), describe interagency cooperation with and utilization of the services and facilities of agencies and programs that are not carrying out activities through the statewide workforce development system to develop opportunities for community-based employment in integrated settings, to the greatest extent practicable for the following:

1. STATE PROGRAMS (DESIGNATE LEAD AGENCY(IES) AND IMPLEMENTING ENTITY(IES)) CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

VIDDRS does not have a formal written agreement with the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) who is the lead agency carrying out activities under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. Currently, VIDDRS is conducting discussions with VIUCEDD on the amending a 2018 Agreement that will provide post-secondary services to include the use of various types of Assistive Technologies services. The AT Program in the U.S. Virgin Islands is called the Virgin Islands Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (VITRAID). VITRAID continues to provide access to, and funding for assistive technology for residents of all ages and of all disabilities through a variety of comprehensive activities and services available across the territory. VIUCEDD also has the Virgin Islands Assistive Technology Foundation (VIATF). VIATF offers individuals with disabilities access to low-interest bank loans to purchase assistive technology devices and services. Through the partnership with VIATF and Popular Bank; the interest cost of the loan is reduced through interest buy-down to a rate of 4 percent. Virgin Islands residents with disabilities and/or family members with disabilities are eligible for a loan; with expectation that all standard bank loan requirements, including the ability to repay the loan are met. VIATF review rejected loan applications and based on the reason(s) for rejection, bank loans may be guaranteed by VIATF for applicants. VIDDRS hopes to submit an amended Agreement to the Department of Property and Procurement for execution within PY24.

VIDDRS has onboarded a new vendor, Collaborative Technologies Inc. who provides virtual Assistive Technology services through their delivery of AT evaluation and training for adults and Blind AT services. Collaborative is a newly onboarded vendor as VIDDRS address the need to increase qualified vendors.

VIDDRS consumers have access to assistive technology services, and consultations on a referral basis. As part of the vocational assessment process, VIDDRS counselors assess whether assistive technology (AT) services and/or devices are needed to address participants' barriers to employment. VIUCEDD Director was invited to a VR Team Meeting and shared with VIDDRS Staff coordinate AT services delivery and specialized AT assessments, AT services and products.

2. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

In the past, VIDDRS partnered with the Department of Agriculture to provide training opportunities for transitioning students that focused on the education, training and the promotion of Agricultural Science. Post-COVID, discussions on the continuation of such programs are warranted to ensure that this industry flourishes within the territory as well create opportunities for individuals with disabilities.

3. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH;

VIDDRS has not yet entered into a formal cooperative agreement with non-educational agencies that serve out-of-school youths; however, VIDDRS has met with the Executive Director at My Brother's Workshop (MBW) and the executive team in St. Croix and St. Thomas/St. John to discuss development of an Agreement that will grow our current partnership. MBW is a nonprofit agency that caters to at-risk youths; as well as youths that are not enrolled in school. The program provides youths the opportunity for mentorship, on-demand vocational trade training, GED or High School Equivalency training, and job placement assistance. Growing collaborations with programs like My Brothers Workshop, VIDDRS envisions developing a framework for a comprehensive delivery of services that fosters a continuum of care and results in successful outcomes.

4. STATE USE CONTRACTING PROGRAMS;

The U.S. Virgin Islands Government requires a competitive bidding process for the purchasing of goods and services; some operating items are supplied through the Department of Property and Procurement, Central Stores.

5. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR ADMINISTERING THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT (42 U.S.C. 1396 ET SEQ.);

Both VIDDRS and the Medicaid Assistance Program (MAP) are under the same Designated State Agent (VIDHS). Existing information such as medical reports and other financial data are shared as necessary. The staff is required to collaborate with MAP to ensure that consumers are following through with the appropriate requirements for services. The VIDDRS continues to refer participants who are unable to obtain health insurance through employment and other means to the MAP for coverage. More individuals in the Virgin Islands are now qualified to receive these services as a result of the Medicaid expansion.

6. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES;

VIDDRS services are offered to all individuals with disabilities including those with developmental disabilities through our VIDDRS program. In past years, the Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council (VIDDC) partnered with VIDDRS to offer coordinated services in areas such as accessibility, transportation, employment, recreation, housing, and inclusion. However, at this time, due to change in leadership, meetings have ceased and there is no known active Council.

VIUCEDD, carry's-out partnerships with SOSE/VIDE and VIDDRS in serving individuals with developmental disabilities. An amended Agreement is currently pending.

7. STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES; AND

VIDDRS collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Health, Division of Mental Health, VIDOH in providing referrals to consumers as needed. This includes Psychosocial evaluations, and out-patient therapeutic services. Mental Health services in the territory remain extremely limited; therefore, in many cases private providers are utilized to ensure the delivery of these services. The agencies interact on a consistent basis to facilitate the required services.

8. OTHER FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS OUTSIDE THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM.

The Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, VIDDRS collaborates with federal, state, and local agencies. The Designated State Agency partners with the General Service Administration, GSA to facilitate the Randolph Sheppard Business Enterprise Program, where visually impaired consumers are trained and certified as business owners. VIDDRS is looking to execute the Randolph-Sheppard Program to cover all US V.I. Territories in upcoming Program years.

Other local partnership includes the Virgin Islands Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), the Virgin Islands Center for Independent Living, and My Brothers Workshop (MBW).

The designated State Unit maintains a close working relationship with the Client Assistance Program locally known as the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. DRCVI and VIDDRS partner in various workshops and events. VIDDRS acknowledges the importance of partnerships with other Federal, State and local agencies and program outside of the workforce development system that support the mission and aligns with services administered by the Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

9. OTHER PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

VIDDRS is working with private non-profit organizations, in accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. VIDDRS is partnering with Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) in revising a 2018 Agreement providing key services in the area of post-secondary training.

The Virgin Islands Center for Independent Living (CIL) plays a vital role in teaching independent living skills to Vocational Rehabilitation participants who are blind, low vision and interested in the coordination of independent living services, mobility training and integration in community affairs. Currently, VIDDRS and VICIL is under review of a pending proposal to offer mobility training to participants under Vocational Rehabilitation and Older-Blind participants.

The Disability Rights Center/CAP of the Virgin Islands provides advocacy and referral services. This ensures accessibility to services and cross-reference for community resources. They also conduct workshops for parents of students with disabilities and education officials. DRCVI and

VIDDRS partners to facilitate presentations on eligibility and information in relation to Transition Services.

ASSURANCES

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate and identified in the State certifications included with this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, through signature of the authorized individual, assures the Commissioner, that it will comply with all of the requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement, as set forth in sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act. The individual authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement makes the following assurances:

The VR agency must select the “Edit” button to review and agree to the VR State plan Assurances.

The State Plan must include
1. Public Comment on Policies and Procedures: The designated State agency assures it will comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements for public participation in the VR Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, as required by section 101(a)(16)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
2. Submission of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and Its Supplement: The designated State unit assures it will comply with all requirements pertaining to the submission and revisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement for the State Supported Employment Services program, as required by sections 101(a)(1), (22), (23), and 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act; section 102 of WIOA in the case of the submission of a Unified State plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.
3. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan: The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:
3.a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit, as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.b. either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.c. consultations regarding the administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(16)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.d. the financial participation by the State, or if the State so elects, by the State and local agencies, to provide the amount of the non-Federal share of the cost of carrying out the VR program in accordance with section 101(a)(3).
3.e. as applicable, the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.f. as applicable, the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The State Plan must include
3.g. statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.h. the requirements for cooperation, collaboration, and coordination, as required by sections 101(a)(11) and (24)(B); and 606(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.k. the compilation and submission to the Commissioner of statewide assessments, estimates, State goals and priorities, strategies, and progress reports, as appropriate, and as required by sections 101(a)(15), 105(c)(2), and 606(b)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
3.l. the reservation and use of a portion of the funds allotted to the State under section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act for the development and implementation of innovative approaches to expand and improve the provision of VR services to individuals with disabilities, particularly individuals with the most significant disabilities as set forth in section 101(a)(18)(A).
3.m. the submission of reports as required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4. Administration of the Provision of VR Services: The designated State agency, or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures that it will:
4.a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(E) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.b. impose no duration of residence requirement as part of determining an individual's eligibility for VR services or that excludes from services under the plan any individual who is present in the State in accordance with section 101(a)(12) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.c. provide the full range of services listed in section 103(a) of the Rehabilitation Act as appropriate, to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for services or, if implementing an order of selection, in accordance with criteria established by the State for the order of selection as set out in section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.f. Comply with requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) of the Rehabilitation Act
4.g. provide vocational rehabilitation services to American Indians who are individuals with disabilities residing in the State, in accordance with section 101(a)(13) of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.h. comply with the requirements for the conduct of semiannual or annual reviews, as appropriate, for individuals employed either in an extended employment setting in a

The State Plan must include
community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by sections 101(a)(14) and 511 of the Rehabilitation Act.
4.i. meet the requirements in sections 101(a)(17) and 103(b)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act if the State elects to construct, under special circumstances, facilities for community rehabilitation programs.
4.j. With respect to students with disabilities, the State,
4.j.i. has developed and will implement,
4.j.i.A. strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and
4.j.i.B. strategies to achieve the goals and priorities identified by the State, to improve and expand vocational rehabilitation services for students with disabilities on a statewide basis; and
4.j.ii. has developed and will implement strategies to provide pre-employment transition services (sections 101(a)(15), 101(a)(25) and 113).
4.j.iii. shall reserve not less than 15 percent of the allocated funds for the provision of pre-employment transition services; such funds shall not be used to pay for the administrative costs of providing pre-employment transition services.
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement to the State plan:
5.a. The designated State unit assures that it will include in the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan all information required by section 606 of the Rehabilitation Act.
5.b. The designated State agency assures that it will submit reports in such form and in accordance with such procedures as the Commissioner may require and collects the information required by section 101(a)(10) of the Rehabilitation Act separately for individuals receiving supported employment services under title I and individuals receiving supported employment services under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program (Title VI):
6.a. The designated State agency assures that it will expend no more than 2.5 percent of the State's allotment under title VI for administrative costs of carrying out this program; and, the designated State agency or agencies will provide, directly or indirectly through public or private entities, non-Federal contributions in an amount that is not less than 10 percent of the costs of carrying out supported employment services provided to youth with the most significant disabilities with the funds reserved for such purpose under section 603(d) of the Rehabilitation Act, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(H) and (I) of the Rehabilitation Act.
6.b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when

The State Plan must include
providing supported employment services specified in the individualized plan for employment, in accordance with section 606(b)(7)(A) and (D), of the Rehabilitation Act.
7. Provision of Supported Employment Services:
7.a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.
7.b. The designated State agency assures that the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act, which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(7)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Do you attest that these assurances will be met?

Yes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL) CERTIFICATIONS

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE,) IS AUTHORIZED TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT OF 1973 (REHABILITATION ACT), AS AMENDED BY TITLE IV OF WIOA[1], AND ITS STATE PLAN SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT;

[1] Public Law 113-128.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services

2. IN THE EVENT THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY IS NOT PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH VOCATIONAL AND OTHER REHABILITATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY MUST INCLUDE A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT FOR THE VR PROGRAM (SECTION 101(A)(2)(B)(II) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT). AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT)[2] AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[3], THE REHABILITATION ACT, 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C), AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[4], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE TO STATES UNDER SECTION 111(A) OF THE REHABILITATION ACT ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Virgin Island Department of Human Services

3. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY, OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WHEN THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS A DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AGREES TO OPERATE AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[5], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[6], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER TITLE VI ARE USED SOLELY FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN;

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT OR, IF NOT APPLICABLE, THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO PERFORM THE FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE REGARDING THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT AND IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VR PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH 34 CFR 361.13(B) AND (C);

5. THE STATE LEGALLY MAY CARRY OUT EACH PROVISION OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

6. ALL PROVISIONS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT ARE CONSISTENT WITH STATE LAW.

7. THE (ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY UNDER STATE LAW TO RECEIVE, HOLD, AND DISBURSE FEDERAL FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT;

ENTER THE NAME OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Averil George

8. THE (ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW) HAS THE AUTHORITY TO SUBMIT THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND THE SUPPLEMENT FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

ENTER THE TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE BELOW

Commissioner, Virgin Islands Department of Human Services

9. THE AGENCY THAT SUBMITS THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT HAS ADOPTED OR OTHERWISE FORMALLY APPROVED THE PLAN AND ITS SUPPLEMENT.

FOOTNOTES

[1] Public Law 113-128.

[2] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[3] No funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[4] Applicable regulations, in part, include the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (EDGAR) in 34 CFR parts 76, 77, 79, 81, and 82; 2 CFR part 200 as adopted by 2 CFR part 3474; and the State VR Services program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 361.

[5] No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supported employment supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

[6] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 4, as well as Supported Employment program regulations at 34 C.F.R. part 363.

CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

To review and complete the Certification section of the VR portion of the State plan, please select the "Edit" button.

Note, please do not edit the table header or formatting. Only edit the table contents.

If you accidentally edit the table headers and structure, open this link to the blank table. You can copy and paste the table into the narrative field, and start over if needed.

Signatory information	Enter Signatory information in this column
Name of Signatory	Averil George
Title of Signatory	Virgin Island Department of Human Services
Date Signed	03/25/2024

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for

years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Not Applicable at this time.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Not applicable.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Not applicable at this time.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Not applicable at this time.

GEPA 427 FORM INSTRUCTIONS FOR APPLICATION PACKAGE - SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, AND OTHER PROGRAM BENEFICIARIES

OMB Control Number 1894-0005 Expiration 02/28/2026

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA Section 427 Form Instructions for State Applicants

State applicants must respond to the following four questions:

1. Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.
2. Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?
3. Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?
4. What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

- Applicants identify any barriers that may impede equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity, including, but not limited to, barriers based on economic disadvantage, gender, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, disability, age, language, migrant status, rural status, homeless status or housing insecurity, pregnancy, parenting, or caregiving status, and sexual orientation.
- Applicants use the associated text box to respond to each question. However, applicants might have already included some or all this required information in the narrative sections of their applications or their State Plans. In responding to this requirement, for each question, applicants may provide a cross-reference to the section(s) in their State Plans that includes the information responsive to that question on this form or may restate that information on this form.
- Applicants are not required to have mission statements or policies that align with equity to apply.
- Applicants that have already undertaken steps to address barriers must still provide an explanation and/or description of the steps already taken in each text box, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.
- Applicants that believe no barriers exist must still provide an explanation and/or description to each question to validate that perception, as appropriate, to satisfy the GEPA Section 427 requirement.

Please refer to GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

1. DESCRIBE HOW YOUR ENTITY'S EXISTING MISSION, POLICIES, OR COMMITMENTS ENSURE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO, AND EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION IN, THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY.

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The first of four questions is:

Describe how your entity's existing mission, policies, or commitments ensure equitable access to, and equitable participation in, the proposed project or activity.

Not applicable at this time.

2. BASED ON YOUR PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY, WHAT BARRIERS MAY IMPEDE EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS, EDUCATORS, OR OTHER BENEFICIARIES?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The second of four questions is:

Based on your proposed project or activity, what barriers may impede equitable access and participation of students, educators, or other beneficiaries?

Not applicable at this time.

3. BASED ON THE BARRIERS IDENTIFIED, WHAT STEPS WILL YOU TAKE TO ADDRESS SUCH BARRIERS TO EQUITABLE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION IN THE PROPOSED PROJECT OR ACTIVITY?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The third of four questions is:

Based on the barriers identified, what steps will you take to address such barriers to equitable access and participation in the proposed project or activity?

Not applicable at this time.

4. WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE, INCLUDING TARGETED MILESTONES, FOR ADDRESSING THESE IDENTIFIED BARRIERS?

Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA) (20 U.S.C. 1228a) applies to a State applicant submitting a state plan for a formula grant from the US Department of Education. The State applicant is responsible for completing the GEPA Section 427 form that provides a description of the steps the State proposes to take to ensure all program beneficiaries have equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally funded, State-level project or activity.

GEPA 427 - Form Instructions for Application Package

State applicants must respond to four questions.

The final of four questions is:

What is your timeline, including targeted milestones, for addressing these identified barriers?

Not applicable at this time.

VII. PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMBINED STATE PLAN PARTNER PROGRAMS

States choosing to submit a Combined State Plan must provide information concerning the six core programs—the Adult program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Wagner-Peyser Act program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program— and also submit relevant information for any of the eleven partner

programs it elects to include in its Combined State Plan. When a State includes a Combined State Plan partner program in its Combined State Plan, it need not submit a separate plan or application for that particular program. 24 If included, Combined State Plan partner programs are subject to the “common planning elements” in Sections II-IV of this document, where specified, as well as the program-specific requirements for that program.

[24] States that elect to include employment and training activities carried out under the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) Act (42 U.S.C. 9901 et seq.) under a Combined State Plan would submit all other required elements of a complete CSBG State Plan directly to the Federal agency that administers the program. Similarly, States that elect to include employment and training activities carried by the Department of Housing and Urban Development would submit all other required elements of a complete State Plan for those programs directly to the Federal agency that administers the program.

PERFORMANCE INDICATOR APPENDIX

ALL WIOA CORE PROGRAMS

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - ADULT PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation

process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	59.0%	59.0%	60.0%	60.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	61.5%	61.5%	62.0%	62.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5300.00	\$5300.00	\$5300.00	\$5300.00
Credential Attainment Rate	50.5%	50.5%	51.0%	51.0%
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

**ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - DISLOCATED PROGRAM
PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments

on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	63.5%	63.5%	63.6%	63.6%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	63.6%	63.6%	63.7%	63.7%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6400.0	\$6400.0	\$6400.0	\$6400.0
Credential Attainment Rate	71.1%	71.1%	71.2%	71.2%
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT, DISLOCATED WORKER, AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES - YOUTH PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	68.0%	68.0%	69.0%	69.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	68.1%	68.1%	68.2%	68.2%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5100.0	\$5100.0	\$5100.0	\$5100.0
Credential Attainment Rate	50.6%	50.6%	50.7%	50.7%
Measurable Skill Gains				

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

WAGNER-PEYSER ACT - WAGNER PEYSER PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	58.1	58.1	58.2	58.2

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	55.0	55.0	55.1	55.1
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	5,700.0	5,700.0	5,700.0	5,700.0
Credential Attainment Rate	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Measurable Skill Gains	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

1

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADULT EDUCATION AND FAMILY LITERACY ACT PROGRAM - ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Performance Goals for the Core Programs

Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan.

For Program Year (PY) 2016-2019 plans, the Departments used the transition authority under section 503(a) of WIOA to designate certain primary indicators of performance as “baseline” indicators to ensure an orderly transition from the requirements of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to those under WIOA. A “baseline” indicator was one for which states did not propose an expected level of performance and did not come to agreement with the Departments on negotiated levels of performance because sufficient data was not available to establish such performance levels. As a result, “baseline” indicators were not used in the end of the year adjustment of performance levels and were not used to determine failure to meet adjusted levels of performance for purposes of sanctions. The Departments designated indicators as “baseline” based on the likelihood of a State having insufficient data with which to make a reasonable determination of an expected level of performance.

For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) will have two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);

- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Credential Attainment Rate; and
- Measurable Skill Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, will have two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skill Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program will not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, will have two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments will designate the following indicators as “baseline” for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies must continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that have been designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA.” The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 will serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments will require VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator will be measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments will continue piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states are not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs are expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program must submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments will work with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance for each of the primary indicators for the

core programs not listed as “baseline.” Each state must update its plan to include the agreed-upon negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approve a state’s plan.

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	31.0		32.0	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	30.0		31.0	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	7,000.00		7,000.00	
Credential Attainment Rate	16.0		17.0	
Measurable Skill Gains	49.0		50.0	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (COMBINED OR GENERAL) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the

Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan’s approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM (BLIND) - VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Each State VR program must submit expected levels of performance in its Unified or Combined State Plan and in the two-year modification of that plan. Expected levels of performance for the first two years of a state plan must be submitted in the initial submission of the Unified or

Combined State Plan and in the initial submission of the two-year modification of that Plan, for years three and four, as described in 34 CFR § 361.170(a). Expected levels of performance must be stated to the nearest tenth of a percent (XX.X %) or to the nearest whole dollar for median earnings. State VR programs are reminded that the expected levels of performance must be published for public comment prior to plan submission in accordance with state law, regulation, and policy.

After the Unified or Combined State Plan submission, each State VR program must reach agreement with RSA on the negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the Unified or Combined State Plan (or for the third and fourth years of the Unified or Combined State Plan during the required two-year modification process) in accordance with WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv).

RSA will use its statistical adjustment model to derive pre-program year estimated levels of performance for each indicator. Each State VR program and RSA will consider the negotiation factors outlined in WIOA section 116(b)(3)(A)(v) during the negotiation process. Once negotiated levels of performance are agreed upon, each State VR program must incorporate the negotiated levels of performance into the Unified or Combined State Plan and the two-year modification of that plan prior to the plan's approval (section 116(b)(3)(A)(iv) of WIOA).

Effectiveness in Serving Employers

In the final rule implementing WIOA, the Departments indicated that they would initially implement this indicator in the form of a pilot to test the feasibility and rigor of three proposed approaches. During Program Year (PY) 2022, the Departments initiated the rulemaking process to establish a standard definition of Effectiveness in Serving Employers. States will continue to report two of three proposed approaches until the Departments issue the final rule and implement the indicator.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)				
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)				
Credential Attainment Rate				
Measurable Skill Gains				
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹	Not Applicable ¹

¹

The Departments have not issued the final rule defining Effectiveness in Serving Employers. As a result, states will not submit expected levels of performance for this indicator and the Departments will not establish negotiated levels of performance for PYs 2024 and 2025.

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF PERFORMANCE

States may identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and may establish levels of performance for each of the state indicators. Please identify any such state indicators under Additional Indicators of Performance.

Additional Indicators of Performance
The USVI does not have any additional performance indicators.

OTHER APPENDICES

Acronyms

Term	Acronym
Adult Basic Education	ABE
Adult Education and Family Literacy Act	AEFLA
American Job Center	AJC
Career and Technical Education Programs	CTE
Commercial Driver’s License	CDL
Community Development Block Grant	CDBG
Community Development Block Grant — Disaster Recovery	CDBG-DR
Community Service Block Grant	CSBG
Disabled Veterans Outreach Program	DVOP
Eligible Training Provider List	ETPL
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve	ESGR
Family Self Sufficiency Program	FSS
General Education Diploma	GED
Jobs for America’s Graduates Program	JAG

Term	Acronym
Jobs for Veterans State Grant	JVSG
Labor and Skillset Performance Validation Certificate	LSP Certificate
Labor Force Participation Rate	LFPR
Labor Market Information	LMI
Licensed Practical Nursing	LPN
Literacy, Adult and Community Education System	LACES
Office of Apprenticeship	OA
One-Stop Operator	OSO
Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995	PRA
Registered Apprenticeship Program	RAP
Senior Community Service Employment	SCSEP
Significant Barriers to Employment	SBE
State Apprenticeship Agencies (SAA)	SAA
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program	SNAP
Temporary Assistance for Needy Families	TANF
Trade Adjustment Assistance for Workers	TAA
Unemployment Insurance	UI
United States Department of Agriculture	USDA
United States Department of Education	USDE
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development	HUD
United States Department of Labor	USDOL
United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor and Statistics	BLS
United States Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration	ETA
United States Health Resources and Services Administration	HRSA
United States Virgin Islands	USVI

Term	Acronym
United States Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research	BER
United States Virgin Islands Department of Education	VIDE
United States Virgin Islands Department of Human Services	VIDHS
United States Virgin Islands Department of Labor	VIDOL
United States Virgin Islands Department of Tourism	DOT
United States Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority	USVIEDA
United States Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency	VITEMA
University of the Virgin Islands	UVI
University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership & Learning	UVI CELL
Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System	VIeWS
Virgin Islands Workforce Area	VIWA
Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board	VIWDB
Vocational Rehabilitation	VR
Workforce Development Specialist	WDS
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act	WIOA
Workforce Investment Act	WIA
Workforce Program Guidance	WPG
Workforce System Guidance	WSG