

VIRGIN ISLANDS PYS 2022-2023 (MOD)

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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.)) <sup>1</sup>
- Reintegration of Ex-Offenders program (programs authorized under section 212 of the Second Chance Act of 2007 (42 U.S.C. 17532))

[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.<sup>2</sup> States must develop strategies that look beyond strategies for the general population and develop approaches that also address the needs of target populations.

**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 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.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As the US Virgin Islands prepares to evolve to the next stage of existence, the sobering reality that hovers in all our minds is - "It can all change again tomorrow." The fact is workforce development is a moving target. As a community and a workforce development board, we must rapidly fire at times without a direct aim, taking on the adage: ready fire aim. With the rapid global evolution and the limited raw materials available in the workforce, if we aim first, by the time the target is in our sights, it has already shifted to a new direction. The objective is to create an agile pipeline of enhanced learning built for rapid evolution. Training and refinement will become the norm in our territory. You will notice in this State Plan we have developed a much leaner approach with targeted tangible goals. The intention is to provide a plan that is accessible to all current and future partners in the workforce development effort. Current partners consisting of the VI Department of Labor, VI Department of Education, and VI Department of Human Services each play a vital role in the development and momentum of the workforce. The aggregation of these entities and MOU's currently in place will pave the way to an actual talent pipeline with avenues for almost any situation. One Department that also needs to be brought to the table to begin collaboration is the Bureau of Corrections. While we focus heavily on Youth, Adult, and Dislocated workers, ex-offenders also play a part in our workforce development and community. If we can design a re-entry strategy to reduce recidivism by providing ex-offenders with a stake in society, we will be approaching workforce development now from all angles of the spectrum.

Tourism being the dominant industry, but vulnerable to natural disasters and pandemics, the prevailing notion often repeated is "We need to diversify from Tourism." While there is truth to that statement and strength in diversity, it should not be looked at as diversifying from Tourism...we should diversify with Tourism. Data shows that occupations in the tourism industry before 2018 had little to no-churn in employment. Any enterprise that is only disrupted by an act of God or Pandemic can be considered an "all-weather" industry. Tourism is also an industry prime for reinvention and retraining of individuals to move into other occupation verticals. These employees bring with them a high level of discipline and customer service from years in the tourism space. Sister industries such as Healthcare/ Homecare make for a smooth transition for these individuals. As the world's population ages, the destinations that seniors can travel to is limited. Not necessarily a limit on-desire or choice, but a limit on where a senior tourist can travel to and still receive assistance during their visit. Imagine a senior group being able to pre-arrange Homecare and Healthcare assistance in the Virgin Islands for their stay. From the time they arrive at the airport to the time they depart, professionals with years of experience in hospitality combined with new training in healthcare/ homecare would be available to provide a safe and monitored experience.

During the drafting of this state plan, the territory and the world at large were hit with the rapidly spreading Corona Virus. An unprecedented global pandemic that shifted our way of life now and forever moving forward. Schools and government agencies closed, and public gatherings limited if allowed at all. While working from home became necessary, the reality is not all workers have jobs that can be done remotely. Only knowledge-based workers have this luxury. Many blue-collar workers went without work until the lockdowns were lifted. Despite we will get past this; it is also known that things will never be the same again. This event shakes

the foundation of an entire class of workers and rapidly introduces thoughts of robotics and automation into the workplace at all levels. While a whole population of workers wait to go back to work, the question is – will they, and if they do for how long?

The Workforce Development Board will serve as the change agent, always sounding the alarm with our partners and the community alerting on the urgency of our situation and limited time pivot. While targeting growth sectors, our workforce requires quick learning and agility. Our current pipeline is clogged by individuals in the government, and the private sector stagnated in entry-level positions. This stagnation leads to frustrated employees who vent that frustration on the very public they serve.

This is often identified as “poor customer service”. While that is the simple answer, the deeper reality is the attitude being demonstrated is a symptom of lack of fulfillment which is a mental weight on anyone. A weight not from the difficulty of the job but the weight of time. Time reflecting the number of years being in the same position with no elevation and realization that there are even more years to go before retirement from that job. Due to a lack of skills and exposure to learning and personal development, these individuals feel lucky to just have a job even at the basic level as if they “snuck” into the workforce system by chance or prayed their way there. They remain quiet and under the radar as if not to be detected. They are living their employed life as if it were stolen and not earned. The thought of promotion or advancement nonexistent. With every administration change or economic correction that fear continues to compound.

The VI Workforce Development board will serve as an entity, ensuring these individuals that it is their right to work and their right to have a secure stake in society. The board will promote self-improvement and development by offering diversified training options by the board approved service providers and partners. With a strong partnership with the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education, the board can develop an aggregation of resources into one assembly line of talent for all Virgin Islanders, youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker, and even ex-offenders.

## 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.

### 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.

### II. Strategic Elements

#### **(a) Economic, Workforce, and Workforce Development Activities Analysis.**

##### (1) Economic and Workforce Analysis

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, designed in 2014, acts as a catalyst for providing the basis for the development of a dynamic and competent system that builds and maintains a career-driven, adaptable, and technologically literate workforce. As government leaders, our primary goal is to ensure that USVI transitions from a reactionary territory to one that is proactive and calculated in the promotion of financial stability, economic growth, job opportunities, and a higher standard of living for all Virgin Islanders.

After review of Economic and Workforce data, the following key challenges were identified:

Overarching key workforce issues include:

1.
  - a. Declining population and high median age
  - b. A Changing age profile
  - c. Low educational attainment of workforce

Additional economic factors include:

1.
  - a. Contracting output for close to a decade that is expected to rise
  - b. Growth volatility
  - c. Undiversified economy: extreme tourism dependence
  - d. Most jobs are low paying
  - e. We are amid economic recovery fueled by Federal assistance

## 1. Economic Analysis

The U.S. Virgin Islands has significant economic challenges facing it since the completion of this initial plan. They include a significant decline in population, a changing age profile, an aging workforce, and a low educational attainment.

The U.S. Virgin Islands continues to recover from the widespread devastation brought about by two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes that severely impacted the Territory in September 2017 and as recovery was progressing impacted by the recessionary pressures caused by the Covid-19 Coronavirus. Prior to the storms, the local economy was making gradual strides towards stability, with small businesses beginning to expand their product and workforce, with infrastructure projects on roadways and harbors projected to start within a few months, and with the anticipation of the oil refinery, once the top private employer in the Virgin Islands announcing its reopening.

The USVI's economy grew at a slightly higher rate in 2019 (most recent data), posting its strongest growth in over a decade. Real gross domestic product (GDP) expanded at an annual rate of 2.2 percent (\$3,925 billion), over 2018 annual growth of 1.6 percent (\$3,840 billion), according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (USBEA). The GDP growth was primarily negative or sluggish since 2008, and the 2019 growth was the second consecutive moderate upswing (Figure 1). The drag on growth in recent years was partly the result of three proximate causes: the Great Recession of 2008, the 2012 oil refinery shutdown in 2012, and the 2017 twin Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017.

The USBEA has not released the territorial GDP data for 2020 as of the date of this report. The expectations were that the economy would decline from the pandemic's effects and improve in the longer term.

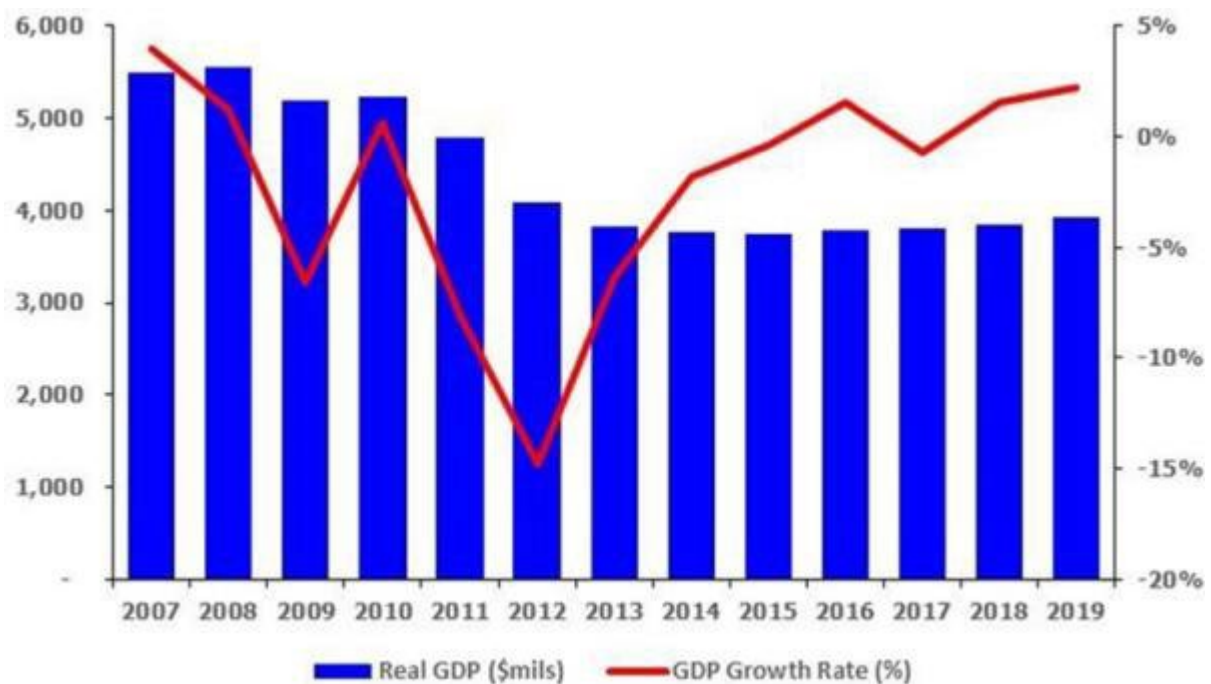


Figure 1: U.S. Virgin Islands Real GDP (\$ mils), and Annual Change (%), 2007-2019

## The Changing Age Profile

The U.S. Census will release complete demographic data of the 2020 census in the coming months that give detailed information on the population's age structure. Other available data revealed demographic trends that the decennial census should confirm. These trends include older people, who comprise most of the Territory's residents, and a smaller share of younger groups.

The population structure by age groups in 2010 and 2015 is shown in Figure 4 and compared with the U.S. in Figure 5. The USVI population is growing older, as reflected by an increasing proportion of persons aged 45-64 years who comprised 32.4 percent in 2015, more than in 2010 when it was 28.1 percent. The population under age 25 declined in absolute terms and as a percentage of the total population. Further, the USVI had more people aged 45 years and older and a lower proportion of people under 25 years when compared to the U.S. population (Figure 5).

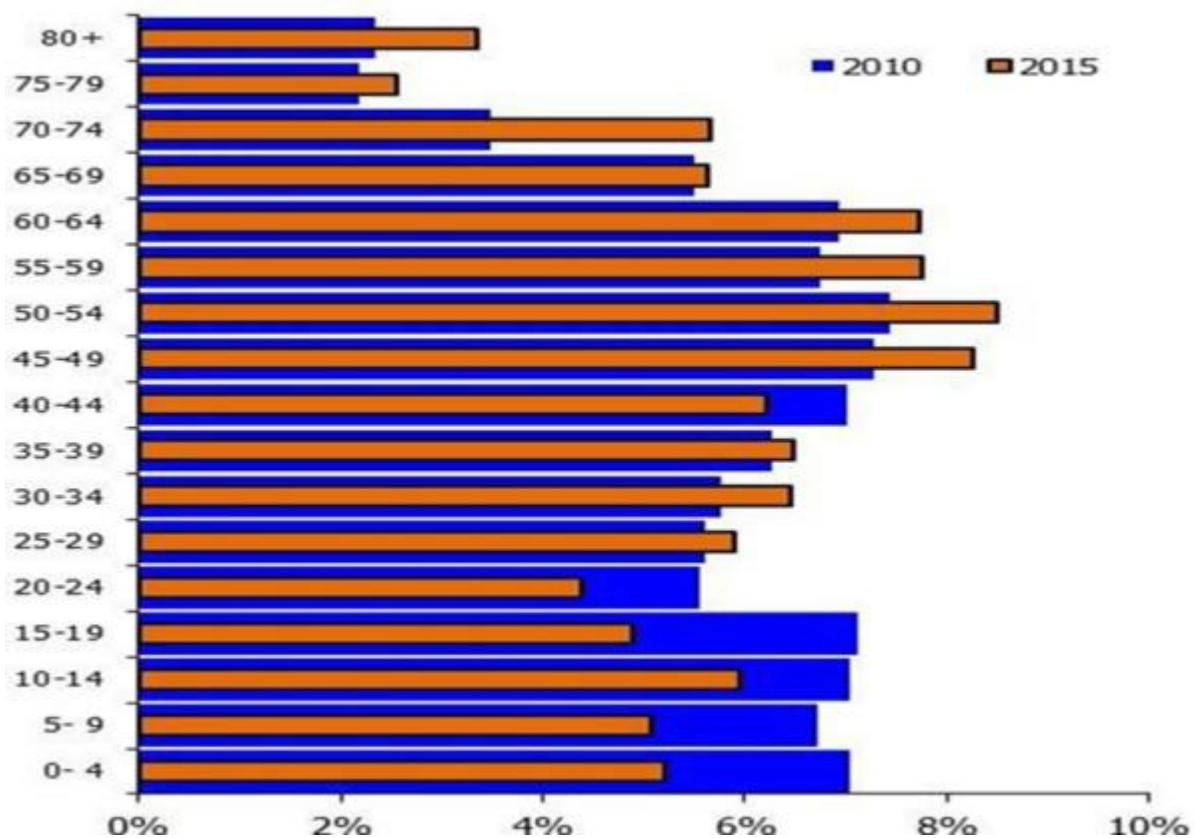


Figure 2. US Virgin Islands Population Share by Age Cohort, 2010 and 2015.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, VICS.

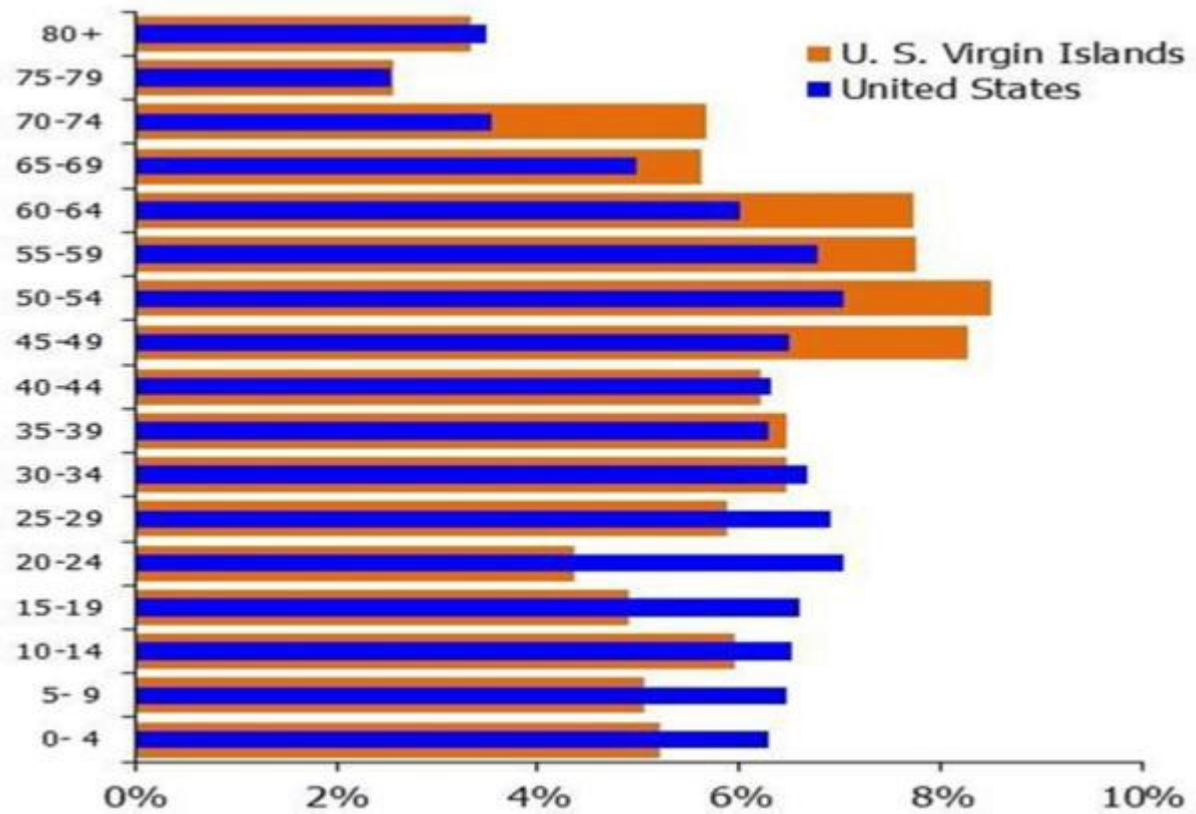


Figure 3. Population Share by Age Cohort, U.S. Virgin Islands and the United States, 2015.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, VICS

### Aging Workforce

Matching demographic changes affecting the larger population, the USVI workforce has been aging. The most significant demographic change will continue to be a rising number and share of older workers in the coming years. In 2015—the most recent year for which data are available—20 percent of people in the pre-retirement age group (those ages 55 to 64) were in the workforce, a number that will rise as baby boomers grow into older adulthood. The 25 to 54 age cohort, considered working prime-age adults, had the highest labor force participation rate, about 63 percent compared to 65 percent nationally.



Figure 4. Distribution of workers 16 year and older in the labor force, 2015.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; VICS

Population decline is likely to have a considerable impact on the labor force. Reflecting projections of low fertility rates and continued population aging, the labor force participation rate will decrease or, at most, remain flat over the next 10 years. Preparing for the economic and social shifts associated with an aging population is essential to ensure the Territory’s economic stability and progress.

#### Education

Alongside these overall economic and demographic trends, occupation patterns discussed later in this report suggest that employment opportunities are changing for workers with different education and skill levels. For example, the employment share gains for occupations in the fastest-growing health care and social assistance sector are concentrated among those with at least a bachelor’s degree. The most significant losses projected to occur are among office support staff—a group that essentially holds less than a bachelor’s degree.

Concerning education, one of the challenges facing the USVI’s workforce is the low educational attainment relative to the U.S. While nationwide, 30.1 percent of people age 25 and older had a bachelor’s degree or more, only 18 percent of USVI residents had a bachelor’s or higher. Nearly 26 percent of the population age 25 and higher had less than a high school diploma, twice as many nationally (Figure 7).

The USBLS 2020 to 2030 projections of which jobs will grow over the next decade have implications for people with a high school diploma or less. Job growth is about zero or negative for those without a college degree or a high school diploma. While most jobs in the USVI economy are low-skilled (those that require a high school diploma or less), it was the high-skill jobs that were projected to be the fastest occupations over the next 10 years.<sup>1</sup> These results suggest that the demand for higher education and skills will dominate employment opportunities in the economy.

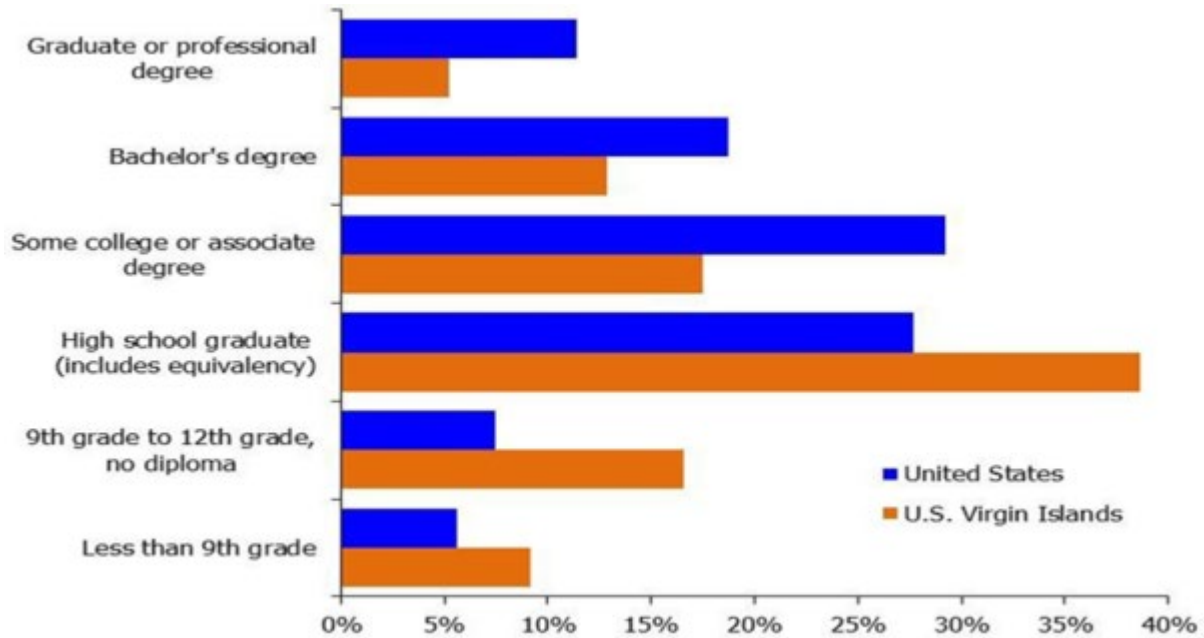


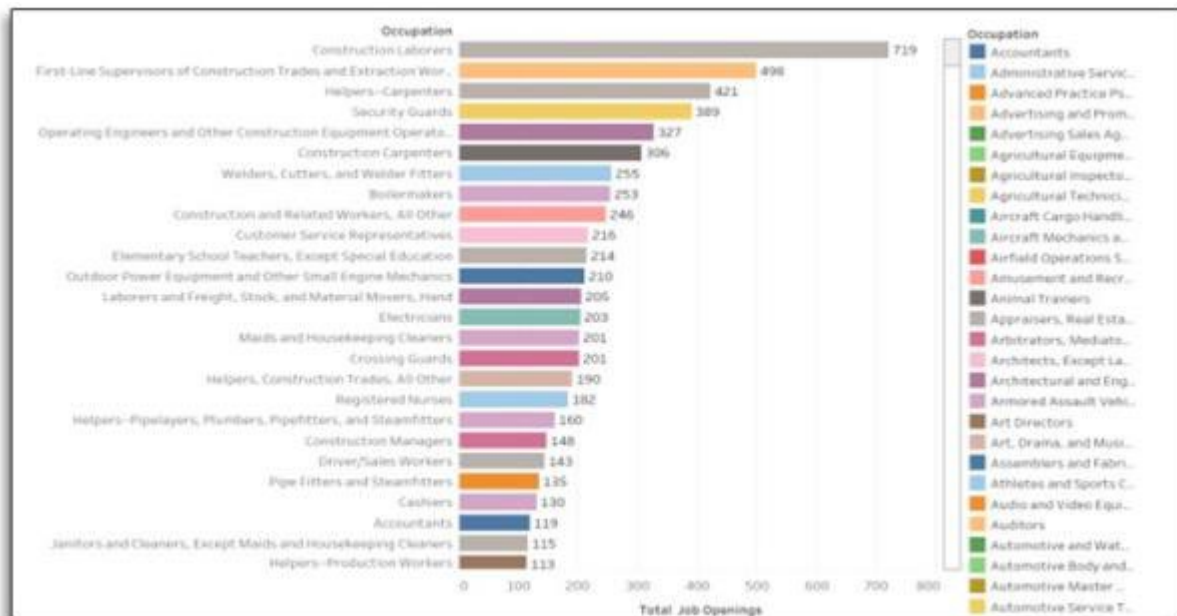
Figure 5. Educational Attainment of the Population, Aged 25+, 2015.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: VICS.

The labor market of the U.S. Virgin Islands certainly has significant challenges related to significant decline in population, a changing age profile, an aging workforce, and a less educated workforce.

### Existing Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

The industry demand demonstrates the increase in construction trades as the VI continues to rebuild from the 2017 Category 5 hurricanes. As noted, all the high demand positions are blue collar labor intensives positions. These short-term demand positions and jobs will provide the opportunity for the US Virgin Islands to build the balance of the infrastructure and emphasize longer term positions in health care, information technology, and marine industries while also maintaining the career path and occupational cluster/sector efforts in construction. Also, a large employer will continue to be government and government-related institutions. In addition to government employment, serving as the foundation of this growing economy will be the tourism and hospitality industry. While impacted by Coronavirus, the VI expects this to rebound during 2021 and onward providing for a diverse economy of quality occupations.



The data above as of 2019 shows that the existing job market demand occupation centers around construction. The top 3 demand occupations are all within the construction sector:

1.
  - a.
    - i.
      1. **Construction Laborers** – Total of 719 Job Openings
      2. **First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades** - Total of 498 Job Openings
      3. **Helpers—Carpenter** - Total of 421 Job Openings

The fourth highest demand occupation is Security Guards. The top ten demand occupations all center around physical, blue-collar work supported by recovery reconstruction supported by Federal funds. It is expected that these industries will be in demand from 2020 to 2026. While these occupations have a low barrier to entry and are employing many individuals, they only temporarily fill the employment gap. Once the Federal funds allocated to reconstruction are exhausted, the demand for these occupations will decline. At the same time, with these workers currently employed, limited time exists for training or preparation to pivot into another occupation.

The next demand occupation right after the top ten construction-related occupations is customer service. Supported primarily by the tourism industry, the Tourism/ Hospitality industry is an anchor sector for the US Virgin Islands. It is the goal of the territory to diversify the economy to be less reliant on tourism; however, to do so, all individuals across the hospitality industry and other entry-level carriers will need to be retrained and placed on a path to continuous training. Once aligned with emerging demand sectors, workers can gradually migrate to jobs in the knowledge-based demand sectors.

A detailed review of the USVI’s economic challenge identifies the need for a coherent policy structure that incorporates the USVI’s strategic assets to encourage business and innovation



through technology, which will lead us towards sustainable growth and new economic prosperity.

These priorities are to address the lack of economic diversity, low educational performance and workforce skills, in addition to inadequate public infrastructure investment. We are aligned to inclusion and economic growth to garner quality work opportunities, cultivate human capital, invest in infrastructure, and enhance natural resource management and conservation. Therefore, we must develop quality structures and improve entrepreneurship support systems.

### (ii) Emerging Demand Industry Sectors and Occupations

Industry employment aligns with the employment situation and reflects increases in the construction sector. This sector is expected to be sustained at this level throughout the year as well as calendar year 2021 and into the 1st quarter of 2022. The continued recovery from the hurricanes, ongoing infrastructure enhancement and the reestablishment of refining petroleum products are the main drivers in this sector.

The weak sectors continue to be leisure and hospitality, and retail which have been down from the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2017 into 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2018 as a direct result of tourism related establishments offline due to the impact of the storms. While this sector was expected to remain weak, straight through 2018 – 2019, it had shown signs of significant rebound with the reopening of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in September 2019 and the activity at the Frenchmen’s Reef and others. However, the Covid-19 impact caused an immediate shutdown of the Ritz-Carlton and other facilities. As the Covid-19 impact is addressed the leisure and hospitality and related restaurant and retail markets will grow in the upcoming year.

Occupation	Location Quotient /s	Hourly Wage (USD)	Mean Annual Salary (USD)
Computer User Support Specialists	0.49	22.34	46,470
Postal Service Mail Carriers	0.48	27.56	57,330
Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators	0.48	13.94	28,990
Management Analysts	0.46	34.45	71,660
Medical Assistants	0.43	15.25	31,730
Healthcare Support Occupations	0.42	15.06	31,330
Welders, Cutters, Solderers, and Brazers	0.42	23.85	49,610
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	0.41	20.26	42,130
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	0.36	29.02	60,360
Production Occupations	0.36	21.05	43,790
Human Resources Specialists	0.35	28.88	60,070
Computer Systems Analysts	0.34	25.74	53,550
Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists	0.33	16.01	33,310
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	0.32	28.30	58,860
Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing,	0.21	20.71	43,080
<b>Average</b>		<b>22.83</b>	<b>47484.67</b>

The most underrepresented occupations in the territory, however, are the highest paying as these jobs are knowledge-intensive, as detailed above.

The above chart identifies the Emerging Demand Sectors. At the top of the list is Computer User Support Specialists, with an annual mean salary of \$46,470. This career is the highest paid on the chart and the least represented as of 2020. The second demand occupation on the list is Postal Service Mail Carriers, with a mean annual salary of \$57,330. Of the emerging demand



occupations, 80% of them are geared towards knowledge-based workers. Other emerging industries and their mean salaries consist of:

*Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators - \$28,990*

*Management Analysts - \$71,660*

*Medical Assistants - \$31,730*

*Healthcare Support Occupations - \$31,330*

*Welders, Cutters, and Brazers - \$49,610*

*Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations - \$42,130*

*Architecture and Engineering - \$60,360*

*Production Occupations - \$43,790*

*Human Resources Specialists - \$60,070*

*Computer Systems Analysts - \$53,550*

*Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists - \$33,310*

*Computer and Mathematical Occupations - \$58,860*

*Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing - \$43,080*

### **(iii) Employers - Employment needs**

With the demand for employees strong in the construction industry in the short-term and the additional sectors of health care, information technology, and marine industries, the employers face barriers in doing business in the Virgin Islands. Some of the barriers are listed and enumerated below.

The construction industry continues to lack the necessary supply of qualified workers to meet the demands of rebuilding infrastructure that was devastated during the twin hurricanes of 2017. The construction sector has around 130 occupations that account for all the employment in the sector, however the top 5 occupations include; Construction Laborers, Electricians, Carpenters, First-Line Supervisors an Heating, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers. With exception of Construction Laborers, these occupations require at least a High School Diploma and most would benefit from on-the-job training (OJT) or apprenticeship training. The Workforce Board should partner with local employers to prepare low skilled individuals with OJT or apprenticeship opportunities in construction.

In the construction sector, job posting data reveals that hard skills, including, construction, subcontracting, plumbing, accounting and customer service are most in-demand while communications, management, customer service, sales and leadership are the top soft skills. The Workforce Board can coordinate training services where both hard skills and soft skills are learned in combination rather than in isolation. Training through OJT or Apprenticeship models provides hands on skill building opportunities where skills are built in conjunction with on another rather than sequentially, which helps lower skilled individuals recognize how skills are interconnected.

Preparing for economic and social shifts associated with an aging population is essential to ensure the territory's economic stability. The fastest growing sectors in the USVI are Healthcare and Social Assistance. The top occupations within the healthcare sector include Home Health and Personal Care Aides, Registered Nurses, Nursing Assistants, Childcare Workers and Medical Assistants, which all require either a high school diploma or post-secondary degree. The Workforce Board can support employers by preparing workers for new opportunities through improved education and job skills training programs. The Workforce Board will take a skilled focused approach to tailor programs and training according to what employers are demanding. In the healthcare sector, we can find some specific skills that are currently in demand by reviewing job postings and the skills that are being looked for by employers overall. Top hard skills observed in job posting data include nursing, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, electronic medical records, medical records, acute care, nursing care, billing, treatment planning and caregiving. Top Soft Skills include skills such as communications, customer service, operations, leadership, management, planning, scheduling, detail oriented and multitasking. When looking at these skills, it's important to note that many of the soft skills mastered in low growth, low wage careers can easily transfer to the high wage, high demand healthcare and social assistance sector. The Workforce Board will partner with local training providers to create an institutional pipeline where job seekers can acquire some of the hard skills that are required by the occupation. Solidifying this training pipeline will help employers find a reliable talent pool of qualified employees that have the soft and hard skills necessary to succeed with little to no on-the-job training.

## B. WORKFORCE ANALYSIS

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include an analysis of the current workforce, including individuals with barriers to employment, as defined in section 3 of WIOA<sup>4</sup>. This population must include individuals with disabilities among other groups<sup>5</sup> in the State and across regions identified by the State. This includes—

[4] 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; 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.

[5] Veterans, unemployed workers, and youth, and others that the State may identify.

## 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.

#### IV. SKILL GAPS

Describe apparent 'skill gaps'.

#### **BARRIERS EMPLOYERS FACE DOING BUSINESS IN THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**

Despite a large skills gap between what employers need and what job seekers can do, the number one challenge reported by businesses in the Virgin Islands is the overall cost of living. A total of 66% of respondents indicated that the cost of living in the Virgin Islands was the top challenge in doing business which also translates over to a barrier to hiring. The next major barrier to employers, which would also be included in the high cost of living, is the cost of energy. A total of 58% of respondents indicate the high cost of energy is a major barrier to doing business. At 33%, employers indicated that finding qualified workers is their 5<sup>th</sup> major barrier. The data indicates that right after the major overhead comes along with doing business in the Virgin Islands, finding quality workers is a top barrier. A more in-depth study was done by the VI Bureau of Economic Research in 2015, indicating the following:

“...Essential hard skills deficits in reading, writing and verbal skills (40%); computer technical skills (27%) and math logical reasoning (22%) are most cited as lacking in candidates”. The often-stated lack of soft skills is primarily related to customer service (59%), punctuality and reliability (52%), and time management (42%).

Half of the businesses (53%) expressed that the main cause for hiring difficulties is lack of relevant work experience, or lack of technical or occupational skills (49%). Forty percent (40%) cited that there were not enough qualified applicants to choose from.

Based on this analysis, the workforce possesses a lack of general education skills to meet the needs of the employers, both current and long-term. Additionally, essential soft skills are also lacking. These will be priorities for the Workforce Development Board to address.

#### **1. Workforce Analysis**

An ongoing impact of the two category 5 hurricanes is the loss of private sector employment. This has been across the key high employment industries of hospitality and tourism and related retail and small business.

#### **1. Employment and Unemployment**

The demographic shifts are not the only drivers of change that will affect the economy and the labor force. Technological advances, including automation and digital disruption, will lead to new jobs, the restructuring and transformation of others, and the disappearance of some.<sup>2</sup> Researchers suggest that by 2030, about 8 to 9 percent of employment will be occupations that barely exist today.<sup>3</sup>

The USBLS' projections bolster the view that technology is disrupting the labor market. Technological adoption has propelled some industries and occupations while displacing others. For example, as indicated by USBLS' projection, the fastest-growing future jobs are information and healthcare occupations. Conversely, office and administrative support occupations, sales

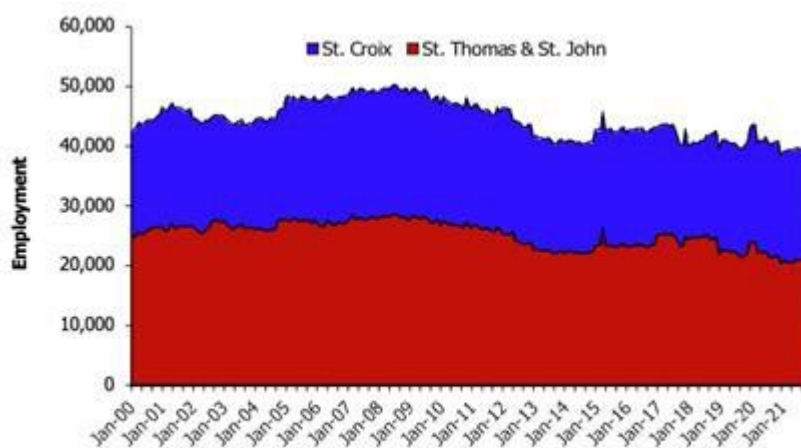
occupations, food preparation, serving-related occupations, and production occupations are projected to experience a long-term decline.

## Employment

Consider the employment changes that have occurred since 2000. Figure 8 shows cyclical variation in employment using the Local Employment Statistics (LAUS) level data. Just about 39,490 people were employed in civilian jobs in 2021, decreasing from 45,000 workers in 2000. Together, St. Thomas and St. John comprised just over half of the total USVI employment base (53 percent).

While several forces shaped labor market outcomes over the last decade as previously described, the impact of the pandemic was the most prominent. Employment growth had been slowing since 2008, before contracting about 1.4 percent annually from 2010 to 2019. Employment growth resumed in early 2020 with 43,609 workers in March before the pandemic.

The extensive shutdown in economic activity to contain the COVID-19 outbreak resulted in an abrupt decline in employment in April 2020. When examining month-to-month changes, more than 3,680 workers lost jobs in one month between March and April 2020, and for the entire period between March 2020 and December 2021, employment declined by 8.5 percent.



Source: U.S. Virgin Islands Bureau of Labor Statistics.

This pandemic recession is singular in its scope and swiftness. In recent downturns, employment declines occurred slowly. For instance, after the oil refinery shutdown, the job losses mounted in May 2012, four months after its February closing and employment only fell by 4.3 percent between February and May.

## Employment Share by Industry

When disaggregated into broad industry groups, different employment patterns emerged. Table 1 provides a decomposition of the average changes in employment in each sector over the 2010 to 2020 period. Employment was primarily concentrated in service-sector jobs, which comprised about 90 percent of jobs in 2010 and almost 88 percent in 2020. In the two periods shown, the most significant employment gains were construction, to a lesser degree, health and social assistance, and professional and business services. Leisure and hospitality held the highest share of employment in 2010 at 16.2 percent, while retail had a 13.7

percent share, and construction a 4.6 percent share. By 2020, retail trade's share of employment fell to 12.6 percent, leisure and hospitality's share fell to 13.2 percent, while construction's share grew to 10.3 percent share.

### Employment Gains and Losses by Industry

The loss of private-sector employment shares in service-providing establishments and a corresponding increase of employment share in goods-producing firms are illustrated in more detail in Figure 10, which shows industry job gains and losses. The construction industry stands out as having solid employment growth. Construction activity—including homes and commercial reconstruction after the hurricanes in 2017 and the oil refinery restart—led to strong job growth. The tourism industry also stands out for job shedding. Most jobs were lost in the leisure and hospitality and retail sectors.

All other industry sectors, including manufacture, suffered employment losses during this period. While employment levels in the education and health services sector showed losses, gains in health care and social services were offset by losses in the education services industry.

Industry Sector	Employment		Percent Change	Percent Distribution	
	2010	2020	2010-2020	2010	2020
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,267</b>	<b>36,115</b>	<b>-18.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Private</b>	<b>31,254</b>	<b>25,215</b>	<b>-19.3</b>	<b>70.6</b>	<b>69.8</b>
<b>Goods-producing</b>	<b>4,302</b>	<b>4,522</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>12.5</b>
Agriculture	40	11	-72.5	0.1	0.0
Natural Resources and Mining	42	37	-11.9	0.1	0.1
Construction	2,043	3,712	81.7	4.6	10.3
Manufacturing	2,177	809	-62.8	4.9	2.2
<b>Service-providing</b>	<b>39,965</b>	<b>31,594</b>	<b>-20.9</b>	<b>90.3</b>	<b>87.5</b>
Utilities	56	42	-25.0	0.1	0.1
Wholesale trade	662	549	-17.1	1.5	1.5
Retail trade	6,044	4,568	-24.4	13.7	12.6
Transportation and warehousing	1,458	1,226	-15.9	3.3	3.4
Information	768	524	-31.8	1.7	1.5
Financial activities	2,355	1,835	-22.1	5.3	5.1
Professional and business services	3,471	3,475	0.1	7.8	9.6
Educational services	1,061	605	-43.0	2.4	1.7
Health care and social assistance	1,545	1,568	1.5	3.5	4.3
Leisure and hospitality	7,178	4,754	-33.8	16.2	13.2
Other services	2,355	1,548	-34.3	5.3	4.3
<b>Public Administration</b>	<b>13,012</b>	<b>10,900</b>	<b>-16.2</b>	<b>29.4</b>	<b>30.2</b>
Federal government	954	921	-3.5	2.2	2.6
Local government	12,058	9,979	-17.2	27.2	27.6

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 1: Employment Change in the U.S. Virgin Islands by Major Industry, May 2020.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.



Figure 10. Net Employment Growth Rate by Industry Sector, 2010–2020.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### Occupation Specialization

Location quotients provide a more revealing measure of regional occupational specializations. An employment location quotient (LQ) quantifies which industries have a larger or smaller presence in the local economy compared to the nation. It provides insight into highly-concentrated industry clusters that a location can leverage for economic growth.

An LQ is calculated as a ratio of an industry's local share of total employment to that same industry's share of national employment. A value of 1.0 demonstrates that employment in a particular industry is at parity with the nation. An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates an industry with a concentration above the nation. An LQ less than 1.00 indicates that the industry's share of local employment was less than that industry's share of national employment.

In general, LQ values of 0.9 to 1.2 show a sector is meeting local needs for the products or services offered. Values greater than 1.2 indicate the industry or sector is a net exporter of goods and services.

In Table 2, among occupations with more than 400 workers in the USVI in 2020, when compared to the U.S., employment was more highly concentrated in 14 of the 30 occupational groups with LQ over 1.20, including protective service, management, construction and extraction, and security guards. Construction workers were three times more prevalent, and security guards were more than four times more prevalent in the USVI than they were in the

U.S. Other specialized occupations employing large numbers of people were janitors and cleaners, maids and housekeepers, waiters and waitresses, building and groundskeeping and maintenance workers, service clerks, managers of construction trades, executive secretaries, and administrative assistants, and elementary teachers.

Occupations with employment concentration significantly below the U.S. representation include healthcare practitioners and technical trades, registered nurses, and health support professions.

#### Earnings Compared to the Nation

The share of workers earning low wages is also linked to industry concentration. Industries such as health care, professional services, and information technology generate high-wage jobs. Conversely, regions heavily specialized in sectors with low wages such as food preparation and serving and hospitality generally have higher shares of low-wage workers.

In Table 3, the annual employment and wage data for 2020 are classified into 22 industrial sectors at the four-digit NAICS level. These data were obtained from the USBLS. The USVI is dominated by low-wage jobs—particularly those directly associated with the tourism and maintenance industries. Additionally, wages in most industries were far below U.S. levels.

Workers in the USVI had an average (mean) hourly wage of \$23.06, compared to the U.S. average of \$27.07. Fifteen of the 22 major occupational groups had average wages significantly lower than their respective U.S. averages, including management, protective service, and computer and mathematics. Only four groups had significantly higher wages than their respective national averages, including production and healthcare support.

Management operations and healthcare practitioners were the USVI's highest-paying industries. The average worker in management operations earned about \$84,000 per year, while healthcare practitioners earned \$73,000 on average yearly. Other high-paying industries were construction trades, registered nurses, professional and technical services, and specialty trade contractors.



**Table 2. U.S. Virgin Islands Employment Concentration for the 30 largest-emplying industries by four-digit NAICS codes.**

Occupations Code	Occupation	Employment	Location Quotient	Mean Hourly Wage	Annual Mean Wage
00-0000	All Occupations	35,650	1.00	\$23.06	\$47,960
43-0000	Office and Administrative Support Occupations	4,790	1.01	\$19.70	\$40,970
35-0000	Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	3,390	1.18	\$13.22	\$27,490
47-0000	Construction and Extraction Occupations	3,350	2.20	\$26.95	\$56,050
11-0000	Management Occupations	3,310	1.62	\$40.47	\$84,170
41-0000	Sales and Related Occupations	2,950	0.88	\$17.36	\$36,100
53-0000	Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	2,680	0.86	\$16.58	\$34,490
25-0000	Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	2,310	1.07	\$22.35	\$46,500
33-0000	Protective Service Occupations	2,300	2.68	\$19.34	\$40,230
49-0000	Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	1,830	1.30	\$22.12	\$46,010
37-0000	Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	1,660	1.59	\$14.10	\$29,320
13-0000	Business and Financial Operations Occupations	1,640	0.76	\$31.15	\$64,790
29-0000	Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	1,550	0.70	\$35.32	\$73,470
33-9032	Security Guards	1,160	4.30	\$13.74	\$28,580
51-0000	Production Occupations	1,110	0.51	\$24.38	\$50,710
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	970	1.04	\$14.83	\$30,840
11-1021	General and Operations Managers	880	1.46	NA	NA
47-2061	Construction Laborers	800	3.22	\$23.22	\$48,290
41-2011	Cashiers	740	0.86	\$12.65	\$26,320
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	720	1.41	\$13.58	\$28,240
43-6014	Secretaries and Administrative Assistants, Except Legal, Medical, and Executive	690	1.45	\$18.61	\$38,700
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	680	1.36	\$13.02	\$27,080
49-9071	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	660	1.90	\$18.48	\$38,440
43-9061	Office Clerks, General	660	0.92	\$16.86	\$35,060
53-7062	Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand	600	0.83	\$15.01	\$31,230
53-7065	Stackers and Order Fillers	590	1.04	\$13.00	\$27,030
35-3023	Fast Food and Counter Workers	590	0.67	\$11.88	\$24,720
25-2021	Elementary School Teachers, Except Special Education	560	1.60	NA	\$45,640
47-1011	First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	530	3.37	\$34.47	\$71,690
29-1141	Registered Nurses	520	0.68	\$33.74	\$70,190
31-0000	Healthcare Support Occupations	480	0.29	\$16.45	\$34,210

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).

Table 2. U.S. Virgin Islands Employment Concentration for the 30 largest-emplying industries by four-digit NAICS codes.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).

Table 3. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the U.S. Virgin Islands, May 2020.

Major occupational group	Employment share(percent of total)		Average (mean) hourly wage		
	United States	Virgin Islands	United States	Virgin Islands	Percent difference (1)
Total, all occupations	100.00%	100.00%	\$27.07	\$23.06*	-15
Management	5.7	9.3*	60.81	40.47*	-33
Business and financial operations	6.0	4.6*	38.79	31.15*	-20
Computer and mathematical	3.3	0.9*	46.53	29.41*	-37
Architecture and engineering	1.8	0.8*	43.41	33.74*	-22
Life, physical, and social science	0.9	1.1*	38.15	25.90*	-32
Community and social service	1.6	1.1*	25.09	23.06*	-8
Legal	0.8	0.7	54.00	52.16	-3
Education, training, and library	6.1	6.5*	28.75	22.35*	-22
Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media	1.3	0.4*	30.96	21.70*	-30
Healthcare practitioners and technical	6.2	4.3*	41.30	35.32*	-14
Healthcare support	4.6	1.3*	15.50	16.45*	6
Protective service	2.4	6.5*	25.11	19.34*	-23
Food preparation and serving related	8.1	9.5*	13.30	13.22	-1
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance	2.9	4.7*	15.75	14.10*	-10
Personal care and service	1.9	1.3*	15.68	13.52*	-14
Sales and related	9.4	8.3*	22.00	17.36*	-21
Office and administrative support	13.3	13.4	20.38	19.70	-3
Farming, fishing, and forestry	0.3	0.1*	16.02	16.99*	6
Construction and extraction	4.3	9.4*	25.93	26.95	4
Installation, maintenance, and repair	3.9	5.1	25.17	22.12*	-12
Production	6.1	3.1*	20.08	24.38*	21
Transportation and material moving	8.7	7.5*	19.08	16.58*	-13
Footnotes:					
(1) A positive percent difference measures how much the mean wage in the U.S. Virgin Islands is above the national mean wage, while a negative difference reflects a lower wage.					
* The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.					

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).

Table 3. Occupational employment and wages by major occupational group, United States and the

U.S. Virgin Islands, May 2020.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OEWS).

### Unemployment

Figure 9 shows cyclical variation in unemployment in the USVI and the U.S. since 2000, highlighting the peaks and troughs for each series. Comparing the USVI's unemployment growth trend to that of the nation's showed a similar pattern between 2000 and 2010. Note the increasing peaks in unemployment, coinciding with the slowdown in the U.S. economy, the steep incline in the unemployment rate that followed the oil refinery closure, and the Covid-19 pandemic. Except for the 2008 downturn, USVI aggregate unemployment rates rose above 13 percent.

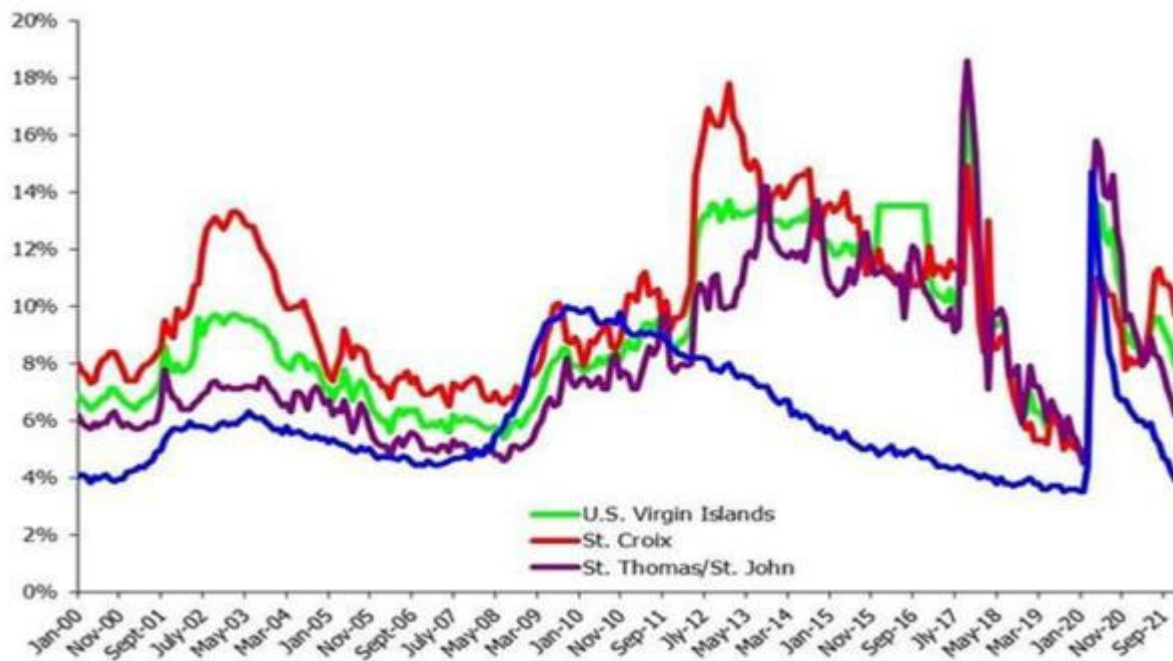
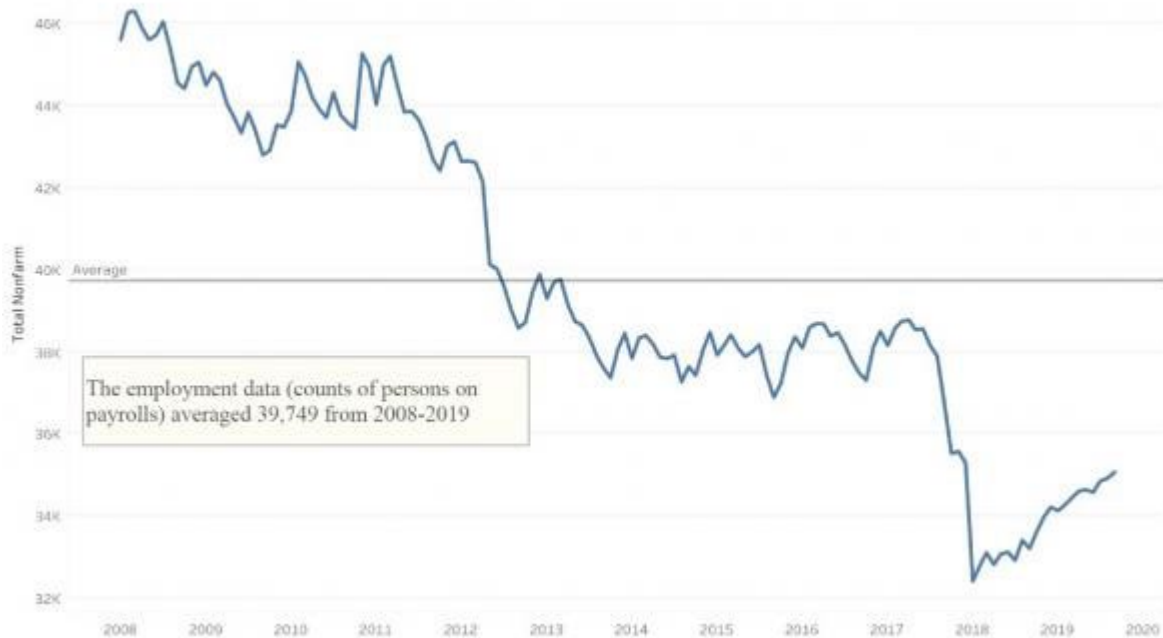


Figure 11. Monthly Unemployment Rates, January 2000–December 2021

Source: U.S. Virgin Islands Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

### PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYMENT 2008-2019



*Signs of recovery – declining unemployment*

Total Virgin Islands unemployed average for 2019: 2,701

St Croix average is 1,079

St Thomas average is 1,647

The data above details that between 2008 and 2019 that the Virgin Islands have never rebounded to 2008 levels of employment of 46,000 persons on payrolls. There was a gradual decline every year between 2008 and 2011 with some volatility in between, but the average remained above 43,000 employed individuals on payrolls. The sharpest drop occurs between 2012 and 2013, with a massive decline to 39,000 employed and has never returned to the early 2012 levels. However, in 2018 another sharp decline drops to a little over 32,000 people employed. The pattern mirrors the 2008 to 2013 pattern in decline and time. The alarming fact is that if this pattern remains, it suggests that the jobs lost will not return to prior levels.

Now in 2020, with the emergence of the COVID-19 Coronavirus, a forced recession across the globe brought on by quarantine and shelter in place mandates will cause another sharp decline in employment. Will businesses that are affected by this virus return to previous employment levels, or will they learn to get by with fewer employees?

**Direct Tourism Related Employment**



But not surprising is the fact that data shows the direct Tourism-related employment being steady with little to no loss from 2008 up until 2018.

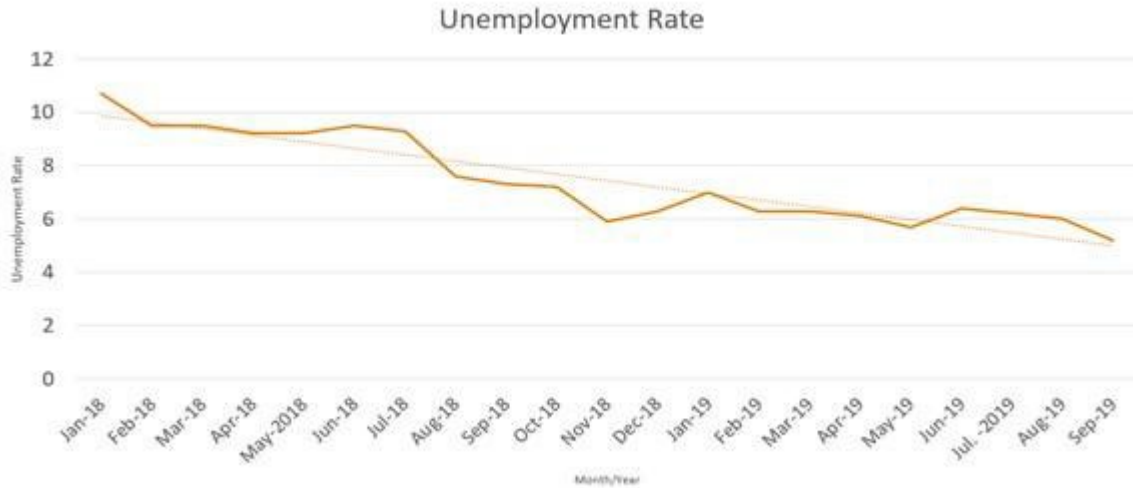
**Leisure and Hospitality** – a median of 8,000 employed dips to 4,000 in 2018

**Real Estate and Rental** – a median of 1,100 employed dips to 850 in 2018

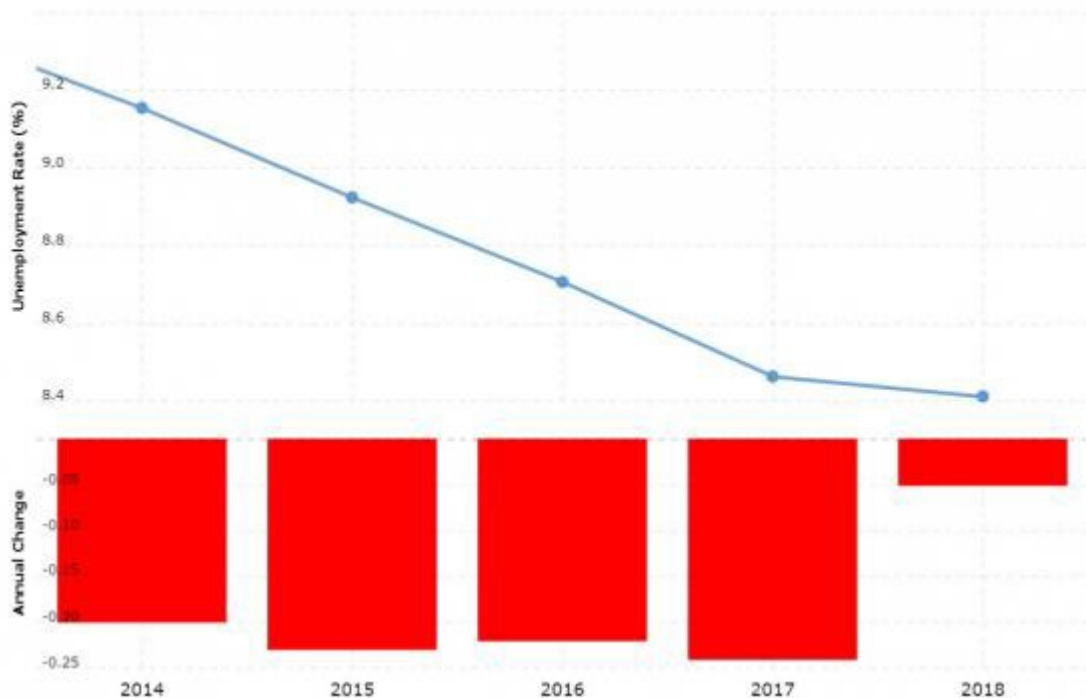
**Trade/ Transportation** – median of 8,000 employed dip 6,500 in 2018

**Retail Trade** – a median of 6,000 employed dips to 5,500 in 2018

While it is the common notion that we need to diversify from a tourism-based economy, the reality is we should diversify *from* tourism, and we should diversify *with* tourism. The biggest threats to tourism are natural disasters and/ or pandemics like we are experiencing in 2020. This suggests a steady demand in our tourism market, which has a seasoned workforce prime for retraining and refinement to springboard into other occupations like healthcare/ homecare for an aging population. The transition of a seasoned employee in the tourism/ hospitality occupation then creates space for a new entrant to the workforce. This is truly an example of a pipeline of talent which places seasoned workers in one industry with all the skills and discipline gained into a higher paying occupation. The only other occupation prime for the same transition strategy is government.



Signs of the labor market recovering from the sharp 2018 dip are apparent with the declining unemployment rate. This is fueled by federal funds and not overall sustained improvement but improvement, nonetheless. This period allows for preparation for the possible dip in the next five years.



The unemployment rate for 2018 was 8.41%, a 0.05% decline from 2017; unemployment rate for 2017 was 8.46%, a 0.24% decline from 2016; unemployment rate for 2016 was 8.71%, a 0.22% decline from 2015; unemployment rate for 2015 was 8.92%, a 0.23% decline from 2014.

### 1. Labor Market Trends



(i) Labor Market Trends

The most evident labor market trend in the Virgin Islands is that the most common jobs are low paying. The educational criteria for many of the openings are at the high school diploma or equivalent level and are occupations within the service industry such as cashiers, office clerks, and customer service representatives. Advanced degree occupations with the highest demand are operations managers, accountants, registered nurses, and financial occupations. Initial current demand positions such as the construction industry require a high school diploma and some basic educational reading and mathematics skills.

To measure the labor market trend occupations as compared to other states and territories, a location quotient was calculated. A location quotient is a way to calculate how saturated an occupation or group is compared to national numbers. It can reveal a unique strength or invisible weakness.

What our data shows is that the most common jobs are low, paying entry-level occupations. This is an invisible weakness of the territory as these low paying wages can easily create a churn in employees and make a wide range of occupations more

LQ Ranking	Occupation	Location Quotient/a	Hourly Wage (USD)	Mean Annual Salary (USD)
1	Captains, Mates Water Vessels	19.63	22.62	47,060
2	Ground Maintenance Workers	11.47	14.58	30,340
3	Transportation Security Screeners	10.60	18.71	38,910
4	Agricultural and Food Science Technicians	6.82	17.48	36,350
5	Couriers and Messengers	4.84	14.13	29,390
6	Reservation, Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks	4.77	12.79	26,590
7	Security Guards	4.54	12.56	26,120
8	Postal Service Clerks	4.49	26.20	54,500
9	Tour and Travel Guides	4.42	15.63	32,510
10	Switchboard Operators, Including Answering Service	4.06	14.10	29,330
11	Childcare Workers	3.91	11.50	23,920
12	Chief Executives	3.77	66.93	139,210
13	Cargo and Freight Agents	3.39	14.33	29,810
14	Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other	3.36	23.63	49,140
15	Brickmasons and Blockmasons	3.30	23.27	48,410
	Average Salary		20.56	42,772.67
	Average Salary if Chief Executives Excluded/b			35,884.29

attractive. This is seen in the number of Virgin Islanders that hold these jobs relocating to the mainland, where in some cases for jobs paying only slightly more. This process repeated hundreds of times makes for a silent leak in the workforce pipeline. The employees are transitioning to the same level of a job for slightly more money but giving the impression that they are better off due to a lower cost of living on the mainland.

If this process/ leak spreads to more knowledge-based workers, we will continue to erode the raw material in human capital available to “level-up” in the workforce. In addition, when an organization loses a knowledge-based worker in an entry-level position, that job may not return, or may be replaced by automation. Urgency and awareness need to be placed on

creating avenues for the professional development of current workers drifting in low paying jobs.

The location quotient data shows the overrepresentation by occupation:

1. Captains, Mates Water Vessels: **20X the national average**
2. Ground Maintenance Workers: **11X the national average**
3. Transportation Security Screeners: **10X the national average**
4. Agricultural and Food Science Technicians: **7X the national average**
5. Couriers and Messengers: **5X the national average**
6. Reservation, Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks: **5X the national average**
7. Security Guards: **5X the national average**
8. Postal Service Clerks: **5X the national average**
9. Tour and Travel Guides: **4X the national average**
10. Switchboard Operators, Including Answering Service: **4X the national average**
11. Childcare Workers: **4X the national average**
12. Chief Executives: **4X the national average**
13. Cargo and Freight Agents: **3X the national average**
14. Community and Social Service Specialists, All Other: **3X the national average**
15. Brickmasons and Blockmasons: **3X the national average**

In Contrast the Occupations in demand and with the lowest representation

1. Industrial Truck and Tractor Operators: **0.5X the national average**
2. Management Analysts - \$71,660: **0.5X the national average**
3. Medical Assistants - \$31,730: **0.4X the national average**
4. Healthcare Support Occupations - \$31,330: **0.4X the national average**
5. Welders, Cutters, and Brazers - \$49,610: **0.4X the national average**
6. Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations - \$42,130: **0.4X the national average**
7. Architecture and Engineering - \$60,360: **0.4X the national average**
8. Production Occupations - \$43,790: **0.4X the national average**
9. Human Resources Specialists - \$60,070: **0.4X the national average**
10. Computer Systems Analysts - \$53,550: **0.3X the national average**
11. Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists - \$33,310: **0.3X the national average**
12. Computer and Mathematical Occupations - \$58,860: **0.3X the national average**



13. Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing - \$43,080: **0.2X the national average**

These underrepresented occupations are the highest paying but knowledge intensive. More representation in these areas either through migration of existing workers into these areas through training or guiding new entrants in towards these areas – High School graduates, College graduates, GED recipients, etc.

(i) Education and Skill Levels of the Workforce

Education and skills levels are critical factors in workforce development continuity and expansion. The Virgin Islands workforce education levels reflect that the majority of the territory’s educational skill level is at the high school diploma level. The educational attainment level of employees can be seen in the table below.

Persons 25 and over	Number	Percent Share
Less the HS Diploma	2,2381	29.8
HS Diploma or GED	29,022	38.7
Some college no degree	8,656	11.5
Associate Degree	3,890	5.2
Bachelor’s degree	8,515	11.3
Post bachelor’s degree	2,572	3.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>75,036</b>	<b>100</b>

Data from a Virgin Islands Community survey in 2015 identified that the Virgin Islands has a low educational attainment level compared to high labor productivity countries including other areas in the United States mainland.

**Persons 25 and over:**

High School Diploma or GED: **29,022**

Some College no degree: **8,656**

Associate Degree: **3,890**

Bachelor’s Degree: **8,515**

Post bachelor’s degree: **2,572**

This low credential attainment also reflects in the low credential attainment in the workforce development boards WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funded training programs. The focus needs to be placed on where these candidates are deficient. Lack of credential attainment leads creates a barrier for these individuals transitioning into higher-paying knowledge-based occupations.

(i) Skill Gaps

The 2015 US Virgin Islands Business and Employer Survey conducted by the VI Bureau of

Economic Research states that “essential hard skills deficits in reading, writing and verbal skills (40%); computer technical skills (27%) and math logical reasoning (22%) are most cited as lacking in candidates”. The often-stated lack of soft skills is primarily related to customer service (59%), punctuality and reliability (52%), and time management (42%). While this survey was conducted in 2015, given the impact of the two category five hurricanes and the Covid-19 impact on slowing the economy, the WDB believes this data is still relevant.

Half of businesses (53%) have expressed that the main cause contributing to hiring difficulties in jobseekers is lack of relevant work experience; or lack of technical or occupational skills (49%). Forty percent (40%) have cited that there are not enough qualified applicants to choose from.

In summary, employers in the Territory have identified skill gaps in the workforce in three specific categories:

- *Soft Skills* – to include customer service, punctuality and time management
- *Basic Academic Foundational Skills* – specifically math, writing and verbal language efficiency
- *Low Technological Skills* – limited basic fluidity, limited knowledge of applications and web-based navigation

#### *Workforce Skills Assessment*

As stated earlier and based on the shift in the economy, the Virgin Islands is at a crossroads with a misaligned workforce population. This asymmetry is not entirely based on educational deficiency, but partially endemic to island economy, and many years of declining output capacity (depletion of the goods producing sector, and moving toward a single source sector economy, tourism), which when present, spurs entry level employment and results in an areas’ labor force gaining work experience and building upon skill sets necessary to meet employers’ job demand.

An independent survey conducted by the Virgin Islands Bureau of Economic Research on employment skills gaps in 2015, supports the Board’s analysis of the skewed infrastructure. Of the establishments that were respondents in the survey, 38% indicated having difficulties filling positions. Sectors that experienced difficulty were retail, scientific, professional, and accommodation services. Some of the difficulty is attributable to the seasonality component where the business cycles’ window of ramping up personnel for quarterly employment, or short-term projects, places pressure on the labor supply pool

The survey revealed that technical management, sales, administrative, and skilled trades are most difficult to fill. Shortfalls in the number of candidates with relevant work experience was a primary reason reported by 53% of the respondents. Forty-nine percent (49%) stated candidates lacked technical or occupational skills. Sixteen percent (16%) cited candidate’s unwillingness to accept offered wages. Other reasons were lack of soft skills, behavioral, and work ethics.

The survey demonstrated consensus on the impact of workforce skill gaps on the surveyed establishments. Overall, it touches each entities’ bottom line, workload, and competitiveness abroad and in the local market. Some of the impact factors are ranked in the chart below including delay in product development, loss of revenue, market share and/or niche, operating cost, and loss of customers.

Area	Rank
Increased workload on other staff	64%
Increased operating cost	26%
Revenue loss	26%
Eroded customer satisfaction	19%
Loss of market share	19%
Setback in product development	14%
Hindrance in meeting quality objectives	34%

Based on the information collected and looking at other external data from education test scores and candidate’s resumes, the Virgin Islands Workforce System has to focus its talent development in the short term around high school diploma attainment, workforce preparedness and work-based training activities, on the job training and apprenticeship opportunities to meet the work experience deficit and be able to source the labor market with dynamic candidates.

SWDB will prioritize addressing any missing data to include an analysis of current employment and unemployment data, an analysis of individuals with barriers to employment, information regarding the tourism industry and an analysis of the workforce following the pandemic. Data collection will be updated by June 2023.

## 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 <sup>6</sup> and optional one-stop delivery system partners.<sup>7</sup>

[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.

#### 1. **The State's Workforce Development Activities**

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is comprised of workforce and related programs from both WIOA core program partners and required one-stop delivery system partners. The agencies that make up the core program partners include: the **VI Department of Labor**, which administers the Youth, Adult, Dislocated Worker and Wagner-Peyser programs, the **VI Department of Education**, which administers Adult Education and Family Literacy programs and the **VI Department of Human Services** which administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board serves as the link between all interagency and partner organizations as well as employer-generated activities and programs. The Board is charged with system coordination, integrity and compliance, and continuous improvement. Each of the four core agencies is represented on, and is a voting member of, the Virgin Islands Workforce Board.

#### **One-Stop Job Centers (American Job Centers)**

The Virgin Islands One-Stop American Job Centers housed in each island district at the VI Department of Labor's offices serves as the hub of all employment and training activity. It is a job-driven system designed to simplify access to education, training and support services needed to attain employment. It is specifically designed to assist those with multiple barriers to attaining and maintaining employment by streamlining administrative functions and focusing on individual goal attainment. An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (Views) at [www.vidolviews.org](http://www.vidolviews.org) or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System operates on the premise that everyone who accesses the system is seeking employment – either a first-time job or an advanced work opportunity. To achieve these goals individuals must be equipped with knowledge of their career interest area, the skill levels to perform at their desired point of entry, an understanding of the local work environment and the discipline to be effective and productive on the job. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) provides the framework through which these services are delivered. Job seekers have access to career services that prepares them for the workforce and training services that help them attain credentials in varying skill areas and follow up services to ensure career goals are met.

The Virgin Islands American Job Centers also serve as a portal to the business community. The Employer Engagement Team assists businesses, small to large, with solutions to their workforce needs.

Employers can schedule access to the Job Centers' facilities for screening, interviewing or providing workshops for their current or potential employees, they may request assistance with the administration of testing or career assessments, work with business service representatives to develop job fairs or information dissemination, post their job vacancies; or schedule hiring events. Employers can also take advantage of a range of business training solutions that help their employees ascend the career ladder within their organization. Those solutions include incumbent worker training that allows current employees to upgrade their skills or customized training for new and current employees who need to master a specific skill set.

The Virgin Islands Workforce System is made up of multiple programs offered by WIOA core and non-core partners who coordinate services to reduce duplication and ensure that all potential barriers are addressed. The core partners include Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth programs); Title II (Adult Education programs); Title III (Wagner-Peyser programs) and Title IV (Vocational Rehabilitation programs).

### **Title I**

Job seeker customers have access to services to include job readiness workshops and seminars, individualized career counseling, and job search, matching and referrals. Those customers requiring additional assistance in securing employment work with case managers to develop an individual service strategy (ISS) which identifies their employment goals and sets a path through educational services, work experiences, occupational skills training and support services to help each individual achieve that goal. Job seekers who are new to the world of work can test their newly developed skills through short term work experience or on-the-job training. Current labor market information can be accessed through the virtual system [www.vidolviews.org](http://www.vidolviews.org) and is used to ensure that training is aligned with locally in-demand occupations.

Additionally, job seekers who have been, or are about to be, laid off from their current employment have access to all workforce preparedness and training services. Through the reemployment program they can rework their resume, hone their interviewing techniques and job search skills. If retraining is necessary, they are referred for occupational skills training in local demand occupation areas.

The Workforce Development Board and the Governor, through VIDOL, recently competitively procured a new One Stop Title I Operator, Equus, in order to improve the performance and better serve the job seekers with Title I WIOA services.

Youth customers have access to fourteen (14) program elements designed to develop the whole person with wrap around services that are connected to career development goals.

### **Title II**

Customers who seek to obtain their high school diploma or equivalent are referred to Adult Education services offered by the VI Department of Education. Students can achieve their secondary level credentials through the traditional route – attending subject specific classes to earn credits (20 required); or by taking preparatory courses for the General Educational Development (GED) diploma which consists of a set of five tests: Math, Reading, Writing, Social Studies and Science.

All Adult Education students are assessed with the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Students who score 6.9 or below on the TABE are enrolled in skills classes. Basic Skills Enhancement courses are available for students who need goal-specific elementary or secondary level basic skills such as work-related math, functional literacy and reading or

writing assistance. For English language learners, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes from the pre-literacy to the advanced level are available to help the adult learner develop speaking, listening, reading writing and grammar skills to communicate effectively and function successfully with their workplaces and community.

### **Title III**

Wagner-Peyser programs are also administered by the VI Department of Labor. The primary customers are job seekers who are skilled and ready for work or who have been in the workforce and are seeking employment change or advancement. These customers can either virtually or in person use the resources of the Job Centers to prepare/update their resumes; attend virtual or in- house workshops and seminars designed to enhance workplace etiquette; or attend short-term pre- vocational activities to enhance specific skill sets such as computer literacy, communication skills and interviewing techniques. Job search activities are generated through live labor market data and demand sector information.

Labor market information to include an analysis of workforce trends, economic indicators, labor market supply, income and wage data and occupation and industry profiles are a few of services available to employers using the Workforce System. Information is available either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System [www.vidolviews.org](http://www.vidolviews.org) or through the American Job Center.

### **Title IV**

Job seeker customers, who because of a disability may need additional assistance attaining employment, may be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services administered by the VI Department of Human Services. Once eligibility is determined through a comprehensive assessment, customers work with a VR counselor to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The services available include: vocational counseling, guidance and referral; vocational training; transition services from school to work; rehabilitation technology services; supported employment; and job search and placement.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Program serves persons with various types of disabilities. Financial eligibility may be required to receive some purchased services.

### **Youth Rehabilitation Center (YRC)**

#### **Required Partners**

Programs offered by the required partners of the One-Stop delivery system include: the *VI Department of Labor* – Unemployment Insurance program; the *VI Department of Education* – Career and Technical Education programs; the *VI Department of Human Services* – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Senior Community Service Employment program; and the *VI Housing Authority* – Youthbuild, and Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) programs.

An expansive offering of career readiness and training services are available and may be accessed either virtually through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) at [www.vidolviews.org](http://www.vidolviews.org) or in person at one of the two Job Center branches. Services are available to both job seeker customers and employer customers.

The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) also helps increase reach for customers who prefer a self-directed system navigation style. Besides job search, customers can

also post their resume, take advantage of numerous online work readiness courses, and access local research trends with real-time labor market information.

As with the job-seeking workforce, current agency workforce staff in each core, as well as non-core partner programs, have seen staff aging and retiring from employment. While new staff is being recruited, the ability to address both job seeker and employer customer needs remains challenging. The Workforce System seeks to address this by using customer service and employer engagement joint agency teams. To address customer training needs, local service providers offer a variety of approved training programs. Each program provides a nationally recognized certificate upon successful completion.

A New One Stop Operator was hired in 2021 by the Workforce Development Board and the Governor. The WDB competitively procured the national firm Arbor (Equus) to provide Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker services. This has resulted in enhanced service to the clients. This is well timed since in response to Covid-19, outreach to clients, need to have an exponential increase. Much of the current approved training providers are also being encouraged to develop digital content so that training can still be provided in the event of a future pandemic/ lockdown situation. Online training will also provide a method for 24X7 learning offered by the traditional brick and mortar training partners. The WDB has also expanded the roster of Eligible Training Providers to ensure fully informed choice is available for job seekers in addressing their workforce needs.

## **1. The Strengths and Weaknesses of Workforce Development Activities**

### Strengths

*Single point of Operations* – The base of operations for the Virgin Islands Workforce System has always been managed by a single entity – The Virgin Islands Department of Labor. It houses the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance programs. The recently hired Title I One Stop Operator, Equus, is also housed within the Virgin Islands Department of Labor offices. Program and fiscal staff interact consistently to align activities and services for both job seeker and employer customers. The LMI (Labor Market Information) unit is also in-house which facilitates access to real time data and analyses that drive decision making by the Board as well as Workforce Staff. The Department of Labor serves as the clearinghouse for all employment activities. By VI law (*Act 5174*) all employers must register their job vacancies with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

*Small Community* – The Virgin Islands is a small community; therefore, workforce agencies and programs share the same customer base thus providing additional opportunities for alignment of activities and services. Partnerships and interagency activities are more fluid and translated through living Memoranda of Understanding – ensuring that the customer receives holistic support services while they progress along their chosen career paths.

*Shared Common Goal* – The main strength of the current workforce board and system as a whole is a greater sense of understanding the common goal as it relates to workforce development. No one saves the world alone and, in the past, it seems that though all program partners were well-skilled there was not an orchestrated effort moving in the same direction – no aggregation of resources. With the new team and momentum our greatest strength is in real collaboration. Also, the board is comprised of individuals that understand the nature of the situation from both sides. Having come from the same environments of the most at-risk individuals that the board and the program partners are charged with serving, actual impact areas and strategies can be targeted.

## Weaknesses

*Lack of Clear Measures*—The biggest weakness has been not having a real-time measure on the effectiveness of workforce development activities. There is no single dashboard that exists detailing the measure of all program partners' progress and how many individuals are in the virtual workforce pipeline. To date, as a new Board there is a lack of understanding on the number of individuals with skills or strengths that are available to work, but just have not found a job. There is no way to know the best direction without knowing this data. As a traditional workforce development system, we are charged with developing new talents and strengthening the weaknesses of candidates. However, what if we have been doing this the wrong way? What if we need to somehow identify the individual strengths of each individual and steer them to the training and paths that align with those strengths? It costs more to eliminate a weakness than it does to enhance a strength.

*Limited Data Sharing* – The partnerships formed with both internal and external partners of the Workforce System have not yet reached the point where technology bridges the gap.

*Program Silos* – The Workforce System has made great strides in collaborating with programs and partners to streamline access to services; however, many programs still operate in a vacuum once the common intake process is completed.

*Better Utilization of Consulting Resources*—Another weakness that has been observed as a new Board is lack of full accountability as it relates to workforce contractors/ consultants. From initial observation “Workforce Development” as we know it is big business. There are droves of individuals who claim to be experts, but in fact amount to merely marketing and well wishes. Similar to the analog marketing days, it's hard to measure the effectiveness. These individuals know the lingo, programs, and processes of workforce development, but at times have no clue in placing someone in the right job, at the right time, with the right strengths. They themselves have probably never been unemployed (unless by choice). Most of the excuses these professionals provide in response to low results or not moving the needle, is that “the workforce is just not trained”, “we're trying our best to reach them”, “They just aren't responding”. Said and listened to long enough and you begin to realize there really is no expectation of change, just continuing the illusion of activity. But they get paid. Their employment is administering for the unemployed.

This year and in the coming years the USVI Workforce Development system will be reshaped to align and target where the need exists and focus on identifying and building strengths, rather than counting never ending weaknesses.

*Island economy* – The Virgin Islands is a single local delivery area; however, there are two districts in the Virgin Islands which are separated by forty miles of ocean. All services must be made available in each district in order for customers to have access to the full range of workforce services. This is true for the partner agencies and community organizations as well. This separation creates an inherent duplication in all services and activities proffered.

*Employment base is limited* – While job seeker customers may have career goals that are in keeping with the fast-moving global economy, those occupations are not often present or practical within an island economy where demand occupations are relatively static.

*Inconsistency of service delivery between island districts* – The flow of services and products offered between island districts, although expected to have some unique distinctions, are not consistent enough to create the image of a unified system. Customers are challenged to see the Workforce System as a single unit of operation.



*Undue demand on Employers* – The employer base in the Territory is comprised largely of small to medium sized business. Businesses in the VI have traditionally been good corporate partners, however, with multiple demands by multiple agencies and organizations on the same entities the element of fatigue takes its toll on even the most willing employer.

### **1. State Workforce Development Capacity**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act continues to present a new vantage point for serving all customers of the workforce system. Previously focused on talent development, the WIOA system is job driven and focuses on developing talent with specific employment outcomes in local demand sectors as the goal.

The process of creating a Unified State Plan demonstrates the capacity of the US Virgin Islands program partners to effectively collaborate toward the common goal of workforce development. With this collaboration we understand that with the limited resources each partner has at their disposal an aggregation of resources and sharing of data is the only path forward. No one saves the world alone and with the critical nature of the Virgin Islands workforce responding to cultural setbacks, natural disasters, and now a global pandemic, there is no choice but to work together.

The Virgin Islands has limited workforce capacity on these three main fronts:

1. There continues to be a crisis of skilled youth migrating from the territory either right after graduation or right after they have gained a marketable skill or trade.
2. With an aging population it can be difficult to retrain or re-energize someone to elevate in the workforce or enter the workforce.
3. There are not enough workforce development funds allocated to the territory, even with the aggregation of resources, commensurate with the level of impact that is needed to make actual change.

With these limiting factors, the Virgin Islands has a long road ahead. Unless more resources can be allocated to apply the proper pressure on our workforce pipeline, we will continue to move at a slow trickle – no matter how thirsty we are for change.

Many actions are ongoing, and the raw materials (potential workers) exist to develop a strong diverse workforce. However more needs to be done and those actions are driven by numbers, both financial and statistical. One of the features the workforce board hopes to develop with realization of the goals set forth in this plan, is the ability to state how many individuals are in our workforce development pipeline and at what stage they are. This will define what our capacity is at one level of the pipeline and provide tangible data to identify what is needed to move them through.

These critical issues must be addressed through the current system. At this time, the US Virgin Islands has two main One-Stop or American Job Centers (AJCs) located in each of the island districts. The AJCs are housed within the Virgin Islands Department of Labor offices with the core partner Vocational Rehabilitation and non-core partners SNAP and TANF maintaining a physical presence on a scheduled basis. Adult Education does not have a presence in the Job Center; coordinated referrals are done for literacy and GED training and testing. There are two Access Points, one in each island district, housed by the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning S (UVI CELL) which are in close proximity to public housing communities. The Access Points serve as a point of registration into the Workforce

System, point of access to information on career readiness, job opportunities and available training and a learning site for selected training.

The VI can address these issues by forging stronger partnerships with both core and non-core partners; the Workforce System has increased its capacity to reach more customers and provide them access to universal career readiness services at any location they first enter. System partners have created an orientation presentation that provides information on workforce preparedness in general and further broken down into each partner's role in the process. An accompanying handout with location and contact information for specific services will be available.

## 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 employment<sup>8</sup> and other populations.<sup>9</sup>

(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

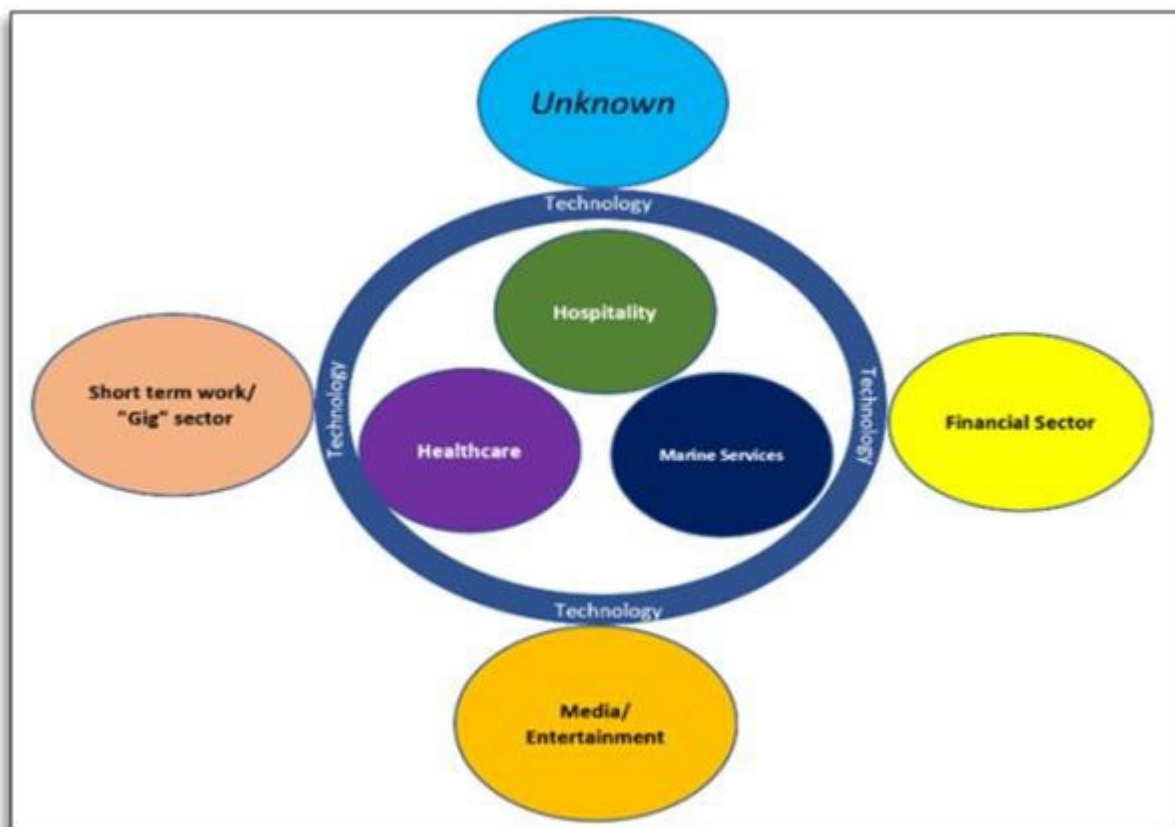
Describe how the State will assess the overall effectiveness of the workforce development system in the State in relation to the strategic vision and goals stated above in sections (b)(1), (2), and (3) and how it will use the results of this assessment and other feedback to make continuous or quality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

The U.S. Virgin Islands' recovery is tied to a strong economy and a flexible workforce that supports its continued growth. Employment opportunities must be accessible for all job seekers, and available in industry sectors that promise a rewarding return for both the job seeker and the employer.

### 1. Vision

The VI Workforce Development Board vision for the next four years is to create an unshakeable pipeline of talent and employment built to evolve with change and demand.

The vision seeks to create a Workforce Delivery System that promotes a dynamic collaborative between workforce agencies and business that is responsive to the growth and stability of the local economy. The System will connect to businesses by providing a full range of career development services that begins with building foundational and personal development goals, enhancing basic academic skills, and occupational skill proficiency that leads to the attainment of a post-secondary certificate or degree in order to find meaningful and progressive employment.



### CORE INDUSTRIES

- a. Hospitality
- b. Healthcare
- c. Maritime

d. Technology

**SUPPORT INDUSTRIES**

e. Media/ Entertainment

f. Short term/ Gig economy

g. Financial Services

h. Unknown

Possible Unknown/ undefined occupation would be a cross between data analyst, customer service, and health care. \*

(1) Goals

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

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

To achieve this vision, the Virgin Islands Workforce Board has developed the following go

<p><b>Goal 1 – Enhance Business Engagement through a Sector-based approach to Workforce Training</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop program design in conjunction with the business sector needs.</li> <li>• Establish on-going work-based learning opportunities based on real time skills gaps expressed by employers.</li> <li>• In this age of diversity, through the Empowerment Initiative encourage and expand minority and diversity in business and employer engagement.</li> <li>• Create a USVI accepted skill validation certificate.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 2 – Align Work-Readiness and Workforce Training Programs with Economic Development Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively prepare for new employers and emerging occupational opportunities.</li> <li>• Develop a signature work readiness product that stamps customer as "ready to work" through the workforce system.</li> <li>• Through the Siren Initiative expand communications among the workforce system to ensure response to worker and employer needs.</li> <li>• Through work-based training assist in developing Employer Permitted Training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 3 – Promote Diversification of Post-Secondary Education and Training Opportunities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore alternative and innovative methods of attaining credentials.</li> <li>• Foster new opportunities for online and blended learning options.</li> <li>• Through the +1 Initiative work with training providers to expand opportunities in the labor market.</li> <li>• Working with various partners, review and study the impact and development of family-based workforce needs to ensure increased retention opportunities.</li> <li>• Increase outreach to those with barriers including re-entry and others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 4 – Develop Focus Driven Sector Strategies</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reengineer the workforce system from the "street level".</li> <li>• Engage with hiring agents who assess job applicants for competency.</li> <li>• Encourage sector <i>expose</i> where employers present their business process and core occupations</li> <li>• Develop great awareness and response among job seekers through the Continual Movement Initiative to develop common career pathways aligned with sector strategies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 5 – Develop network for temp or "gig" economy workers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Append current system and use AJC as central repository for bridging employer seeking day labor, short term projects, or intermediary jobs that will sunset in less than one year;</li> <li>• Encourage jobseekers to unify as talent groups in related occupations</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal 6 - Develop an Integrated Data System</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate agency operations through technology</li> <li>• Design electronic common intake tools</li> <li>• Manage customers through shared profiles</li> <li>• Partner with private sector entities</li> <li>• Promote employer services and consultations</li> <li>• Implement "The Pulse Initiative" and collect information comprehensively and regularly to ensure business information is complete.</li> <li>• Consider as part of the One Stop AJC system a referral or work crisis line for response.</li> </ul>

(3) Performance Goals

Preliminary goals were determined for Title I, the Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Title III Wagner-Peyser measures. Goals were set using data from the workforce and economic analysis previously described in this document, as well as past performance for the previous two program years. Performance goals were subsequently negotiated with the US Department of Labor and are reflected in Appendix 1.

Goals for Title II – Adult Education and Literacy - According to the Adult Education National Reporting System (NRS), the current baseline level for the VI Measurable Skill Gains of Title II AEFLA programs are 48% and 48% respectively.

The negotiated adjusted levels for the following categories:

Performance indicators table				
This is the last section Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	29.0	29.0	30.0	30.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	29.0	29.0	30.0	30.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	15.0	15.0	16.0	16.0
Measurable Skill Gains	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

Adult Education Family Literacy Act funded programs and participant activities will be recorded using a WIOA approved MIS System to capture Territorial Adult Education data.

According the VI State Assessment Policy for Measuring Educational Gains, evaluations will be based on level completions on standardized pre and post test results with evidence of literacy gains resulting from hours of instruction. Educational Functioning Levels have been adopted from the NRS and outcome measurements have been identified and defined in the State Assessment Policy for each level. [Measuring Educational Gains in the National Reporting System for Adult Education (34 CFR Part 462)].

The VI WDB is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation services are made available on a statewide basis to individuals with disabilities who have not traditionally been competitively employed or for whom competitive employment has been interrupted or intermittent.

VI Measurable skills gains are Baseline

Performance indicators table				
This is the last section	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Performance Indicators				
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	39.1%		42.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	39.1%		42.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6,500.00		\$6,500.00	
Credential Attainment Rate	32.4%		35.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	Baseline		Baseline	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable †	Not Applicable †	Not Applicable †	Not Applicable †

#### (4) Assessment

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board will develop a comprehensive tool to evaluate all components of the WIOA workforce system, inclusive of all the core programs. 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 with workforce services
- Employer satisfaction with workforce services

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)

**(C) State Strategy**

The analysis of the components of the Virgin Islands Workforce System, to include the Economic and Workforce Analysis; and the Territory's Strategic Vision and Goals led to the development of the following strategies.

*(1) 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)*

Workforce development activities revolve around the build out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are:



## VIRGIN ISLANDS DEMAND OCCUPATION LIST

### Administrative and support services

- Administrative Staff
- Program Managers/Administrators
- Security Guards
- Project Managers
- Grant Writers
- Grant Managers

### Allied Health

- Nurses
- Home Health Attendants
- Child Day Care Attendants
- Healthcare Technicians
- Medical Records Technicians
- Healthcare Information Technicians

### Architecture and Construction Trades

- Architects
- Electricians
- Construction Project Managers
- Carpenters
- Masons
- Welders
- Plumbers

### Information Technology

- Computer Information System Managers
- Program Analysts
- Information Systems Operators
- Fiber Optic Installers/Technicians
- Network/Computer System Administrators
- Cybersecurity Technicians

### Leisure and Hospitality

- Office Managers
- Front Desk Clerks
- Food & Beverage Service Workers
- Marine Service Workers

## VIRGIN ISLANDS DEMAND OCCUPATION LIST

### Retail

- Retail Clerks & Managers

### Transportation and Logistics

- Heavy Equipment Operators
- Warehouse Clerks & Logisticians
- Truck Drivers

### Engineering and Mathematics

- Engineers
- Electrical Engineers
- Structural Engineers
- Civil Engineers
- Forensic Accountants
- Accountants
- Data Scientists

### Agribusiness

- Farmers and Farm Assistants
- Agricultural Engineers
- Agronomists

### Health Sciences

- Behavior Analysts
- Mental Health Counselors
- Patient Care Advocates
- Community Health/Public Health Workers

### Renewable Energy and Maritime Industry

- Environmental Engineers
- Civil Engineers
- Solar Photovoltaic Installers
- Solar Thermal Installers and Technicians
- Wind Turbine Service Technicians
- Marine Technicians
- Marine Engineers

The sectors with the greatest local employment opportunities prior to the storms have not changed; rather, the shift occurred in the priority of demand. Whereas, the last few years offered more employment in leisure and hospitality sector and related areas, now the immediate needs of the construction industry in all trade areas has notably surged.

An immediately available and skilled workforce is needed for the rebuilding of homes and businesses, roads and ports, schools and hospitals. A working partnership has been established with the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR grant recipient), to provide training for job seekers, including Section 3 residents on rebuilding residential and business establishments. The Workforce System will address this need with a two-pronged strategy:

1. An employment triage that gives the least skilled workers short-term introduction to construction training that allows them sufficient knowledge and skills for entry-level positions.

Approximately, seven hundred individuals will be trained within the year. They will be equipped with general soft skills and safety training, basic knowledge of the construction industry and Level 1 training in a trade of choice – carpentry, masonry, electrical or plumbing.

Prior to entering the workforce, training participants will spend at least two-weeks either job shadowing or engaged in a work experience that gives them a practical foundation

1. Longer termed work-based training opportunities that allow for higher level training while employed

Participants who have had prior exposure to the construction trades or who have completed entry level training and are interested in continuing on this pathway will be able to do so while working. Through employer-based partnerships, job seekers can engage in on-the-job training or customized training where employers can use their preferred curriculum to train for the specific skills needed for their area of service. Pre-apprenticeship training will be available for those participants not aligned with a specific employer during the training but, which is acceptable throughout the industry; and then segue into industry-based apprenticeships that strengthen the employers' team. This type of training will last from six months to a year or more depending on the trade. Approximately three hundred and fifty participants are scheduled to be trained within the first year with additional training becoming available as the demand rises.

Benefitting from widespread training in the construction trades is the Territory's oil refinery which closed in 2012 but is scheduled to come back online within the next two years. The basic skill set remains the same but is buoyed by skills in welding, pipefitting and scaffolding. This level of training requires significant classroom training prior to OJT's and/or apprenticeships.

Also, in preparation for the return of oil refining, advanced level training in information technology and process technology will be required. Training will be long-term and on-going. The workforce system continues to work with refinery employers and sub-contractors to ensure that training is industry appropriate, locally relevant, and timely.

The hospitality and retail sectors were hard hit by the 2017 hurricanes with 80% of the

Territory's hotels seriously damaged or destroyed. Most are scheduled to remain off-line until late 2019 and into 2020. Typically, training in the hospitality area can be accomplished with a quick turnaround period. A short-term career pathway plan that spans 4-6 months enables customers seeking employment in these sectors to engage in workforce activities that develop basic foundational competencies – *personal, academic and workplace* – while simultaneously

receiving occupational skills training to acquire industry-recognized credentials in their desired field. A short-term work experience becomes an intrinsic part of this strategy, as does on-the-job training to assist participants in relearning their skills, and to support employers with soft openings as they strive to bring their establishments fully back online.

After the passage of the storms the majority of hotel and restaurant workers were displaced. The economy was coming back, then the Covid-19 Coronavirus impacted the hospitality and tourism industries. Many displaced workers sought employment in “non-traditional” occupations, with line cooks becoming brick layers and front desk clerks becoming traffic controllers. The interval between losing employment and regaining employment in the hospitality area will span more than eighteen months for most. The loss of time, plus the need for alternate employment, prevents individuals from honing their preferred skills; therefore, the Workforce System seeks to address this sector’s development, not simply through basic courses for skills upgrading, but for skills refining – providing the opportunity to train for advanced skills and new certifications needed in tomorrow’s workplace, thus giving job seekers a competitive advantage to recapture their place in the hospitality industry. Further, the University of the Virgin Islands offers a BA in Hospitality and Tourism Management for those job seekers who seek credentials in management and administration. Eligible participants can access this degreed program through the workforce system.

The career pathway to attaining industry recognized credentials in the administrative and support services and careers in the transportation and logistics sector requires a 6-12-month training period that allows for more intensive training coupled with on-the-job learning. Allied health and information technology sectors will see a training path that spans 9-18 months. All training offered starts with the basic foundational competencies to ensure a job seeker is equipped with life skills needed to perform on any worksite. On-the-job training, pre-apprenticeships and Registered Apprenticeship options factor into the training offerings. Customers who embark on long-term strategies will have several off-ramps to seek full time employment at varying levels of competency – specifically, entry-level, intermediate or advanced.

The training strategies for each career path will be developed jointly by workforce professionals, educator/trainers and industry-specific experts to ensure that the training is timely, relevant and leads to portable industry recognized credentials.

The rise of the gig economy was increased by the current pandemic. From individuals who have lost steady employment to those who see gaps in the “normal” functioning of daily activities, those with employable skills/talents can and do create new work opportunities for themselves. However, to be successful and turn their talents into lucrative ventures, additional training and sometimes certification is needed. The workforce system is enhancing its entrepreneurial training options to support this growing avenue of work.

The gig economy coupled with advances in technology has changed the way we work. It also changes the way we prepare for the workforce. The brick and mortar establishments are institutionalized and will always have a role in workforce preparation; however, as the millennial generation followed closely by i-Gen or Generation Z becomes more prolific in the workforce, the tools needed to help them chart their path to success must include modern technology, as well as flexibility in learning.

Recognizing that the new workplace may exist in an environment previously unknown, it becomes apparent that training providers can no longer survive as stand-alone entities with a

rigid curriculum. It is further recognized that it may take a network of providers to equip the new workforce with all the tools needed to be successful within an industry.

As the Virgin Islands Workforce System redefines and establishes itself as a contender in workforce preparation, evaluating the way training providers prepare the workforce will be revisited. A team approach consisting of industry experts, employers, trainers and workforce specialists will be tested in the development of new program designs with the intent of ensuring industry appropriate and relevant training for all.

*(1) Strategies the State will use to align the core programs, 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.*

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act focuses on providing opportunities for those individuals with multiple challenges that prevent them from entering the workforce. 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 service strategies are broken into three tracks of development: 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 Job Center customers have access to a variety of workshops that include, resume preparation, interviewing techniques and workplace etiquette. Self-directed programs that boost confidence and helps an individual learn to “sell their skills” are also available. Current job listings are always available which facilitates the search process. Customers 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 customers may have work experience but no specific job interest or skill level. Career counselors begin by developing an individual career plan that includes career assessments, academic competency level testing and 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 customers on this track may be seeking retraining to advance their skills and/or credential level. Local LMI information is provided so that customers 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 customers choose the intensity of their path. Customers 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, customers are assisted with finding unsubsidized employment.

*Intensive Career Preparation* – This track is taken by individuals 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. Customers who are served in this track will work with career counselors to map out and follow the same foundational to training path as other customers 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 Partner Programs* – All tracks are available to core and non-core partner participants either through referral to the Job Center for services or through development of shared Individual Employment Plans.

Partners share in the provision of workshops in the *Ready for Work* track. Subject matter experts from both core and non-core partners to include TANF and SNAP offer workshops at the Job Centers that are available to all customers and may be scheduled through their IEP. Further, several workshops are developed with the “hardest to serve” customer in mind. TANF, SNAP, Vocational Rehabilitation and Reemployment customers are all required to participate in a “Getting Ready for Work” workshop series. Local Certificates of Completion are given to those who complete the series. The Business Services Unit which includes representatives from all program agencies advises employers to be on the lookout for these certificates to show which potential employees have benefitted from these workshops.

By offering a general orientation at which all partners provide information about the services available at both the Job Centers and at various entry points, customers are able to work with their case managers to develop a schedule that fits their individual needs. A common intake form that is shared among referred partners documents Basic Career Services to include eligibility determination, registration and initial assessments. This may be done by any partner

And includes a referral between partner programs; however, the System is working towards having all training opportunities listed in one service menu and available to all customers eligible to access training.

While some services are program specific such as GED testing which may only be provided by Adult Education staff, GED preparation programs are available at the Job Centers and through other eligible providers. Successful completers of the preparation programs may now sign up for testing through the Job Centers.

*Addressing Weaknesses* – Workforce partnerships among core and non-core partners have been formed during the planning phase of this document. Many of the discussions have focused on the challenges found and the solutions possible in building a unified system that is readily identifiable in each district because the services, activities and outcomes are similar. Partners will continue to meet periodically to review services and activities offered in the Job Center to ensure consistency of services. Core partners will have access to *VIEWS* to facilitate case management of joint customers. Through an improved referral process pertinent data will be shared between partners to reduce duplication of intake information.

The employer engagement team now consists of representatives from all core partners in order to create a coordinated approach to working with businesses on projects and activities.

### 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).

### III. Operational Planning Elements

#### **(A) State Strategy Implementation**

##### **(1) State Board Functions**

#### **State Board Functions**

The U.S. Virgin Islands is a single State local area and has one Workforce Board that performs the duties of the State and Local Boards. The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board (WDB) 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 at the Workforce Board's website - <https://viwdb.vi.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/VI-State-Workforce-Development-Board-2021-Members-Oct2021.pdf>

The Board 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 were selected based on their affiliation with local in-demand occupations. As sector strategies are built out, these board members will take the lead to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the workforce product delivered. Career pathways will be developed in a similar manner. 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:

The State board shall assist the Governor in:

1. The development, implementation, and modification of the State plan.

1. 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.
  
1. 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;
  - c. 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.
  - d. 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.
  - e. 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.
  - f. 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.
  - g. The development of strategies to support staff training and awareness across programs supported under the workforce development system.
  
1. 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.
  
1. The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for-



1.
  - 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;
  
1. The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system.
  
1. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers.
  
1. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds.
  
1. 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.
  
1. 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-
  
1.
  - 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.
1. 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);
  1. 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.
  1. The preparation of the annual reports.
  1. The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system.
  1. The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the territory.

The major workforce agencies are represented on the Workforce Board, 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.

## 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.

#### **(2) Implementation of State strategy**

The lead agencies in the territory responsible for WIOA core programs included in this Unified State Plan are the **Virgin Islands Department of Labor, 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. Beyond the MOU a key portion of this integration amongst partners is the common intake standard.

This common intake will allow a client that is receiving or applying for services at any of the partner agencies to easily be referred or transition to another system partner without duplicate entry or time spent physically moving case data from place to place.

Agency and areas of responsibility:

**Virgin Islands Department of Labor (Title I)**

- Youth

**One Stop Operator (Title I and III)**

- Title I: Adult, Dislocated Workers
- Title III: Wagner Peyser

**Virgin Islands Department of Education (Title II)**

- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

**Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (Title IV)**

- Vocational Rehabilitation

In order to realize the Territory's vision and goals the partners of the Workforce System have formed a "core-partner's workgroup" led by the SWDB director and made up of core agency program directors, non-core program directors, administrators and front-line managers. The group meets monthly to discuss areas of possible collaboration and streamlining of services, programs' current operations and features of their individual system in order for each group to gain a better understanding of what each agency duties entailed.

**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.

**(A) Alignment with activities outside the plan**

With limited resources, the Virgin Islands understands 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.

Another point of collaboration between core partners and outside partners and programs is the apprenticeship program. The program offers businesses customized training through the development of career pathways. While being new to the apprenticeship program the Virgin Islands realizes the benefits, it has to offer once collaboration reaches a level of having multiple approved apprenticeship entities. With a vast number of apprenticeship programs, the territory will place particular focus on developing apprenticeships in areas with exponential growth with the possibility participants after the program being able to earn a living within the territory while delivering services beyond our borders.

Once such occupation with an approved apprenticeship pathway is Cyber Security. The Covid-19 pandemic has further exposed the shortcomings of an economy that has little representation of knowledge-based workers. With much of our workforce having occupations in the physical face-to-face economy during the pandemic, non-essential workers were unable to make a living. This is particularly true in the tourism and hospitality area. Driving apprenticeship in the Cyber Security occupation will allow for high paying jobs in a demand sector which is immune to quarantine and encourages remote tele-work. This occupation also drives development in other vertical markets such as Artificial Intelligence, Deep learning and other automations that can be paired with remote human representation. In addition, with a low barrier to entry almost any enterprise organization or public sector agency can develop a Cyber Security apprenticeship under guidance from nationally approved curriculum and delivery partners. There is no need to invest large sums of capital to get started. These organizations with existing infrastructure can respond and prepare for this global need.

#### 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.

##### (A) Coordination, alignment, and provision of services to individuals

Departments and agencies that provide WIOA Core Partner programs coordinate activities and resources to provide comprehensive, high-quality, customer-centered services, including supportive services to individuals including those populations identified in section II(a)(1)(B). Partnerships between WIOA Core and Required partner programs as well as other workforce system partners assist in providing seamless services to eligible customers.

The Workforce Development Board provides access to training services, access to programs and activities carried out by one-stop partners, access to the data, information, and analysis. The Board coordinates and aligns partner program services through an innovative and integrated One-Stop system, capitalizing on opportunities for success through a robust, multi-partner referral system serving multiple populations that include those requiring vocational rehabilitative services, Veterans, second chance individuals, and others who have barriers to employment. Each One-Stop partner (required and additional) will sign an MOU outlining the rules governing the transition of clients between programs.

An individual service strategy for all customers seeking more than basic career services that include referrals to the core and one-stop partners for additional services will be implemented. 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 Job Centers facilitating the referral process to occur in real-time. Appointments are set up on the spot, and customers benefit from making all their connections at one location. For those customers accessing the System from a non-job Center location, the universal referral form is 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. The Virgin Islands is working on an electronic solution to this connectivity to ensure a faster, more accurate response to customer needs. The Department of Human Services is currently in the contract negotiation process for an electronic case management system built from a platform that will directly interact and exchange data with the current VIDOL VIEWS system. This step will create automated sharing between the agencies. The Department of Education is currently investigating options to move their Adult Education and Career and Technical education data to a similar application, but there are some compatibility challenges with the current software platform. This is being managed accordingly.

Clients from all One-Stop partner programs will be referred to career or training services when they are job or training ready. The One-Stop agreements will stipulate that partners will carry out their respective core programs, making them available to customers through the One-Stop delivery system. Each partner will cover the costs of their individual programs and be responsible for maintaining compliance with the program's statutory requirements. Each partner will provide the necessary support services related to their core services. All core partners will meet regularly and consistently, either in person or electronically, to share data, monitor job seekers' progress toward State performance goals and analyze client outcomes to determine if resources are being coordinated efficiently and providing maximum benefit to job seekers and employers. Accelerated placement, elimination of duplicative services, and provision of support services will be monitored to ensure that high-quality, customer-centered services are being provided.

#### 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.

(A) Coordination, alignment, and provision of services to employers

With the implementation of Board goals in this State Plan data, data collection from employers will be enhanced exponentially and have a predictive refresh period. Once the data is collected communication can be curated which aligns with the employer responses and resources that are available via the core programs. This information will be disseminated quarterly via email and/or SMS, Employer Educational Forums/Seminars, Workforce newsletters, and on-site visits that will occur on a rotating basis to ensure coverage to all employers during a set timeframe. Having this level of interaction and feedback will allow for a constantly evolving strategy as it relates to workforce development. Some foundational information to be shared will cover topics such as Developing Sector Strategies, acquiring a Skilled Workforce; Hiring Workers with Disabilities; Recruiting through Job Fairs, and Workforce Expansion Strategies, to name a few.

Similar to the Partners Group noted previously, the Board will require the Title I Operator to enhance the current Business Engagement Team. The current Business Engagement team now consists of representatives from the core programs and some of the One-Stop partner programs. The joint agency team will conduct outreach to employers to provide information on the services and programs available to them through the Workforce System. A calendar of Employer Workforce events will be developed and posted at the Virgin Islands Department of Labor website [www.vidol.gov](http://www.vidol.gov) with a link established at each core and partner agencies' website for easy access. Additionally, an interactive feature will be added to the website so that employers can voice their suggestions and concerns.

E. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's community colleges and area career and technical education schools, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system. WIOA section 102(b)(2)(B)(iv).

(A) Partner engagement with educational institutions

The U.S. Virgin Islands does not have a community college; however, the University of the Virgin Islands with 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's Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning or (UVI CELL), it's 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 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.

F. PARTNER ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS

Describe how the State's Strategies will engage the State's other education and training providers, including providers on the state's eligible training provider list, as partners in the workforce development system to create a job-driven education and training system.

## Partner engagement with other education and training providers

The Workforce Board has also partnered 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. Career and Technical Education 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. Adding to this list likely through registered apprenticeship will be the Cyber Security occupation. The providers are an important part of the career pathway for local demand occupations, specifically for the adult learner who is attempting to advance their education and skill levels while holding down a job. The providers offer flexible schedules and relevant training developed in concert with employer partners to ensure training is up-to-date and can result in industry-recognized credentials.

The opportunity for individuals who are underemployed will be enhanced with our goals related to improving work-based learning. The work-based learning training time will provide the opportunity for individuals working in the private or public sector but under employed, the ability to participate in training that will level-up their skill sets and capabilities.

All providers listed on the Territory's Eligible Training Provider List are available to customers from all partner eligible funding streams. The University of the Virgin Islands community arm UVI-CELL offers program certificate courses and related program certification for many of the demand occupations listed. Participants from all partner agencies take advantage of these opportunities as they are available Territory-wide. The services from private or community-based providers are available to partner agencies district-wide since many providers offer programming specific to the island where they are located.

## G. LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL ACCESS

Describe how the State's strategies will enable the State to leverage other Federal, State, and local investments that have enhanced access to workforce development programs at the above institutions, described in section (E).

### Leveraging resources to increase education access

The Workforce Board, as well as the interagency partners will leverage existing Federal, State, and local investments by first aggregating the resources into one pipeline of training and development. Alone each program or resource does not completely drive scalable workforce development. However, when all resources are aggregated into one comprehensive program the impact is much greater. Once a pipeline is maintained and the proper pressure (funding) no matter the source whether Federal, private, or otherwise, will serve the purpose of developing the workforce. In addition, implementation of the Board's goals is a way of compounding additional resources to develop a more impactful result. In the Territory, workforce development activity across the agencies is funded primarily through federal sources. With the limited WIOA lead resources, the replication of services to accommodate separate island districts presents a challenge. Maintaining a consistent quality of service is critical and needs to be closely monitored. This is an issue that will continue to be addressed at the Board and agency levels. Currently, all core partners utilize the services of the University of the Virgin Islands and UVI-CELL by funding eligible customers in programs of study (either degree or certificate) that meet their Individual Employment Plan and unique innate talents.

The Workforce Development Board will develop, in cooperation with the Governor and the Virgin Islands Department of Labor a process through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and related Resource Sharing Agreement or Operating Budget to ensure that funds are allocated accordingly.

#### H. 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.

##### (A) Improving access to post-secondary education

Realizing that our community has many individuals that have challenges with literacy or English being a second language the first step to promoting these individuals with the most need is to refer them to the Adult Education 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 Workforce Board, charged with reviewing and approving training providers and their course offerings, requires that all training has an approved industry curriculum and delivers content sufficient for a student to take and pass a national credentialing exam. The Department of Education, through their Adult based Career and Technical Education program, offers a wide variety of post-secondary occupational skills training programs - many of which are on the Demand Occupation List and are available in both island districts to the general public. The road to literacy and advancement is not an overnight process and participants still need to earn a living while evolving. This works in conjunction with the Board's goal around the Development of a Labor and Skillset performance validation certificate (LSP Certificate). This goal seeks to offer a locally recognized certificate that recognizes an individual for years of work experience in cleaning, basic construction, mechanics other services.

The Board recognizes that the Virgin Islands Workforce Area has been historically challenged in meeting this credential attainment rate. As part of the evaluation process and re-establishing the roster of providers on the Eligible Training Provider List, the Board will strengthen the requirements for achieving this goal. With the hiring of the new Title I Provider, the Board will also place significant outcome requirements on the contract to help ensure success in this measure. The Board also appreciates Technical Assistance from the US Department of Labor and identification of effective practices from other areas to help meet and exceed this goal.

Customers whose first point of entry to the 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.

#### I. 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.

(A) Coordinating with economic development strategies

The Workforce Board has engaged 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 Economic Development Authority and the Executive Director of the Bureau of Economic Research 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. This planning group advocates a twenty-year strategy that allows for continuous learning, and advanced training in each of the current and emerging sectors. The 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—

### **State Operating System and Policies**

(1) The State operating systems that will support coordinated implementation of the State's strategies.

The Virgin Islands 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 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 Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (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 will 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.

### 1. THE STATE OPERATING SYSTEMS THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE'S STRATEGIES. THIS MUST INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION OF—

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

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board 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, Removal from the Eligible Provider List, and pg. 35 Grievance, 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 WIB website at <https://viwdb.vi.gov/board-policies/>

An additional list of joint system policies being developed may be found in the Action Plan. The format for Joint Policies to be developed is as follows:

- Interagency program directors and managers determine that a joint process needs to be in place for a given service or function
- An interagency workgroup is formed to secure data and best practices
- The group develops recommendations to be considered by the Board
- The Operations committee of the SWDB meet to consider recommendations and finalize policy
- The SWDB issues a joint policy

Note: The completion of the joint policies was delayed due to the interruption of the 2017 storms and ensuing challenges. However, the Action Plan continues on track, and policy discussions will continue through the calendar year.

Since the Virgin Islands is a single state local area, the SWDB issues policy directly to the One-Stop delivery system.

All partner programs participate in the joint policy development process to ensure the integrity of the system. Core programs in Titles I - IV take the lead in these discussions to ensure an accurate representation of agency/program-specific requirements.

The Adult Education programs are supported in part by the local Government of the Virgin Islands, which allows the Division to conduct a number of higher-level activities to help bridge the divide and allow learners within reach of their goals to achieve completion. An annual amount determined by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands is allotted to assist this effort.

**B. DATA-COLLECTION AND REPORTING PROCESSES USED FOR ALL PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE PRESENT IN ONE-STOP CENTERS**

Data-collection and reporting processes used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.<sup>10</sup>

[10] For the PY 2016 state plan, descriptions of data collection and reporting processes need only include currently known indicators.

The State operating systems that will support the implementation of the State's strategies pg. 34 The Virgin Islands 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 LACES as their 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 Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (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 will 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.

Input –

- There are four topics on data collection that is common in state plans
  - Physical process for collecting information from participants
  - What information is being collected
  - Who uses the system and for what purposes
  - Actual reporting process
- Physical process for collecting information from participants
  - Initial process for customers to register for and enroll in programs and services
  - Information is populated through an online application
  - Some qualifying data may require manual entry by staff online
  - Title I program – ADW and Youth
    - Job seekers enter their information in VIEWS by completing the online registration
    - Job seekers will have access to labor market information and job search functions
    - Career planners retrieve the online registration to convert to a WIOA application if the customer is deemed eligible for services
    - Career planners will verify information entered into the MIS and collect any required documentation as needed to support program enrollment
      - Manual entry may be necessary for certain data elements
    - Career planners will continuously enter information in VIEWS for case management purposes as needed
  - Title III Wagner-Peyser

- Job seekers enter their information in VIEWS by completing the online registration in VIEWS
- Job seekers will have access to labor market information and job search functions in VIEWS
- Employment service staff retrieve the online registration and convert to Wagner-Peyser enrollment for labor exchange services
- Title II Adult Education Family Literacy Act (Taken from LACES manual)
  - Teachers create student records by entering student, education, employment, and barrier data elements
  - LACES stores student data, assessment information, track attendance, and progress during credential attainment
  - LACES has reporting capabilities that align to NRS requirements and WIOA key performance indicators
- Title IV Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
  - Need information on VR processes and data captured
  - Note practices as a case management tool
- 1. Data-collection and reporting process used for all programs and activities, including those present in one-stop centers.
  - The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) is the tool used for data collection to produce quarterly and annual reports for Titles I and III. With the addition of Vocational Rehabilitation three of the four core programs will be able to generate joint and agency specific reports through this system.

The VI Department of Education AEFLA program purchased an MIS System that is WIOA compliant called LACES. The company, Literacy Pro, uses LACES for Agency data and the much larger Community Pro for interfacing with various departments that have existing MIS Systems. Community Pro is able to accept information from several commonly used MIS Systems and convert it to where it is compatible and WIOA compliant. Conversely, the information may interface with VI Department of Labor's VIEWS MIS software. Additional time will be required to finalize MIS System coordination plans and efforts between Adult Education and other Partner agencies.

Input –

- Information collected by the core WIOA programs during intake consist of comment elements across VIEWS, LACES and VR portal include demographics, identifiable information, employment status, educational attainment, disability, incarceration/justice involved status, referral information.
- Programs may identify additional unique elements for eligibility and placement such as:
  - Title I-B and Title III Employment Services – eligibility to work, occupation, grant funded programs MSFW, SCSECP or other, veteran's information

- Title II Adult Education – Educational Functioning Level, educational background, and goals
- Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation – Disability type and medical background and records
- Reporting
  - Identify the frequency of data pulls – weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annual and annual
  - Title I-B and Title III – data reporting consists of information collected through self-registrations, program enrollments to include demographics, employment and education information, service activity codes, services provided, cost-per participant, training activities to include work-experiences, transitional jobs, and on-the-job training
  - Reporting may be pulled from career planners, program managers, leadership from the project, local workforce development board and state levels.
  - Data information collected by core programs is used to determine eligibility, program placement, measure participant’s progress, evaluating program effectiveness, case management, program planning and state and federal reporting
  - Reporting may be pulled to review and assess progress in the local area and state achievement in meeting key performance indicators up to the federal reporting agency
  - Include a process for data-collection and reporting processes for all programs and activities –
    - Requirement that includes presenting to the governing board of the LWDB?
    - State agencies to report to the federal agency
    - What is the time frame for reporting across programs to the state and federal agency

Training of systems

Input –

1. Identify the entity who is responsible for VIEWS training for local Title I-B and Employment Service staff and program manager
2. What is the frequency of training for staff and program managers?

**2. THE STATE POLICIES THAT WILL SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STATE’S STRATEGIES (E.G., 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**

The State Policies that will support the implementation of the State’s strategies

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board 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, Removal from the Eligible Provider List, and pg. 35 Grievance, to name a few. The development of policies and procedures that include the joint operation of core partners is still in progress.

The format for Joint Policies currently being developed is as follows:

- Interagency program directors and managers determine that a joint process needs to be in place for a given service or function
- An interagency workgroup is formed to secure data and best practices
- The group develops recommendations to be considered by the Board
- The Operations committee of the SWDB meet to consider recommendations and finalize policy
- The SWDB issues a joint policy

Since the Virgin Islands is a single state local area, the SWDB issues policy directly to the One-Stop delivery system.

All partner programs participate in the joint policy development process to ensure the integrity of the system. Core programs in Titles I - IV take the lead in these discussions to ensure an accurate representation of agency/program-specific requirements.

The Adult Education programs are supported in part by the local Government of the Virgin Islands, which allows the Division to conduct a number of higher-level activities to help bridge the divide and allow learners within reach of their goals to achieve completion. An annual amount determined by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands is allotted to assist this effort.

Additional policies are being created to supplement guidance outlined in Workforce Board Policy WIOA 203-15 “Universal Access and Consistency of Services- One Stop Delivery System” to include co-enrollment policies and to define a universal intake process. An additional policy will be created in 2022 to guide the infrastructure funding agreement and statutory caps process.

### 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.

##### State Agency Organization

The Governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands is the chief executive officer 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 Virgin Islands 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

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 public workforce investment system include the Departments of Labor, Education, and Human Services. The Virgin Islands Housing Authority, the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI), and its community development arm UVI Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning (UVI CELL) are semiautonomous but are integral partners of the public workforce system. The Virgin Islands Workforce Board and the Economic Development Authority comprise the advisory and policy development segment of the Workforce system. The Governor of the Virgin Islands provides the vision and the mission that the agencies and advisory boards must then translate into viable activities that become the product to which the business community and the jobseeker public avails itself.

The Workforce Development System in the US Virgin Islands comes together through the efforts of various government agencies. The VI Department of Labor administers the WIOA Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs. It also houses the Wagner-Peyser, Veterans, and Unemployment Insurance programs. The VI Department of Education administers the Adult Education and Literacy program as well as the Career and Technical Education program. The VI Department of Human Services administers the Vocational Rehabilitation program. It also provides non-core programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP). Additional non-core programs that fall under the Workforce Development banner include the Family Self Sufficiency (FSS) program under the VI Housing Authority and the Community Development Block Grant — Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program administered by the VI Housing Finance Authority.

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

Each of these programs is staffed by agency personnel and adheres to agency-specific funding requirements but converge at the 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, including—

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### State Agency Organization

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## I. MEMBERSHIP ROSTER



Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations.

1. Membership Roster. Provide a membership roster for the State Board, including members' organizational affiliations

## State Workforce Development Board

### Business

Name	Trade		Board Position
1 Michael P. Hand	Construction	Business	Vice Chair
2 Moleto Smith	Health-Primary Care	Business	
3 Michael Carty	Information Technology	Business	Chairman
4 Mario Austin	Retail/Restaurateur	Business	
5 Keith O'Neale	Transportation	Business	
6 Oriel Blake	Marine	Business	
7 Sam Rey	Hospitality		Chair, Operations Committee
8 Brendan Anzalone	Allied Health		
9 Tracey Sanders	Home Health	Business	
10 Nancy Torres	Retail	Business	
11 Natalie Knight	Administrative Support	Business	
12 Flamon Lewis	Security	Business	
13 Leon Hughes	Information Technology	Business	Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

### Workforce

14 Ricky Brown	Organized Labor	Labor	Chair, Sub-Committee on Youth
15 Sheryl Parris	Organized Labor	Labor	
16 Gary Molloy	Commissioner of Labor	Labor	

### Education & Training Representatives

17 Shirley Lake-King	UVI Representative	Education	
18 Racquel Berry-Benjamin	Commissioner of Education	Education	
19 Nancy Callwood	Director of Adult Education & Career Technical Education	Education	

### Government & Economic Development

20 Sharia Green	Vocational Rehabilitation, Director Economic Development,	Human Services	
21 Wayne Biggs	Asst. Exec. Director	Economic Development	
22 Suzanne Darrow-Magras	UVI -CELL, Director	Education	
23 Asiah Clendinen	GERS	Local Government	
24 Peter Chapman	UVI RTPark, Executive Director	Economic Development	

### Other Members

25 Kimberly Causey-Gomez	Commissioner of Human Services	Human Services	
26 Senator Javan James, Sr.	Legislature Representative	Elected Official	
27 Sana Joseph-Smith	Governor Representative (OOG)	Local Government	

The Commissioners of the three lead agencies with workforce programs sit on the Board. The Commissioner of Labor represents the Virgin Islands Department of Labor whose oversight authority extends to programs authorized under WIOA Title I including Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth programs, and Title III the Wagner—Peyser program, and also the Unemployment Insurance and Veterans employment programs. The Administrator of

Vocational Rehabilitation represents WIOA Title IV programs under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 — Vocational Rehabilitation. The Commissioner of Human Services represents Temporary Assistant for Needy Families (TANF), employment and training programs under Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965.

A board policy will be drafted and adopted in 2022 to clearly define WIOA board composition requirements and how the Virgin Islands will align with these requirements.

\*\* Board Chairman

\* Vice-Chair

+ Apprenticeship representation

The Commissioner of Education and the State Director of Adult Education and Career and Technical Education represent adult education and literacy activities authorized under Title II of WIOA; they also represent career and technical programs and literacy services for youth and programs authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act in the Territory. All entities described have and will continue to be involved in the Workforce Development System.

## II. BOARD ACTIVITIES

Provide a description of the activities that will assist State Board members and staff in carrying out State Board functions effectively.

(i) Board Activities.

Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning The Virgin Islands Division of Adult Education has established an agreement with the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services to deliver instruction and services to the clients of the Department of Human Services to facilitate Adult Basic Education instruction. ABE instruction with HHS is provided to eligible HHS recipients by Adult Education providers. These services are delivered by providers; however, HHS fund their eligible HHS recipient cohorts. Each of these programs is staffed by agency personnel and adheres to agency-specific funding requirements but converge at the 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. ---

--The State Workforce Development Board (VI Workforce Board) coordinates, develops, and maintains the overall workforce system integrity. In this multi-faceted system, Board diversity will provide continuity by aligning goals among agencies and organizations. Board 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 State Workforce Board are active members of the Career and Technical Education Board, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Group, Rotary Organizations, Chambers of Commerce and other community-based groups.

The VI Workforce Board, in consultation with the Governor, develops the State Plan. The Board is comprised of two major committees: The 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.

The Board will work through its three primary committees to implement the functions of the Board. The Board and Governor are also planning to add additional subcommittees including Workforce Planning, Training & Resources and Planning & Compliance. Through the expanded committees and leadership from the Governor, the Board will engage both Board members, staff and associates to implement and carry out these functions.

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

##### A. ASSESSMENT OF CORE PROGRAMS

Describe how the core programs will be assessed each year based on State performance accountability measures described in section 116(b) of WIOA. 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.

###### (A) Assessment of Core Programs

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 will provide tools to each local core program that enables them to track their performance on common measures to track the impact on performance of each of their participants. Assessment tools will evaluate and track program effectiveness to promote a culture of continuous improvement.

#### Adult Education and Family Literacy

The monitoring and oversight of adult education and family literacy programs in the Virgin Islands will help to ensure that programs will continue to demonstrate their effectiveness. This will include review of performance against the federally negotiated performance targets and program implementation and success metrics outline in the grant request for proposal and subsequent continuation applications.

Adult education and family literacy providers funded through Title II will be required to file comprehensive annual performance reports detailing both quantitative and qualitative results. Annual statistical reports from the information management system will track numbers of adult learners, demographic data such as sex and race/ethnicity, level of education, educational functioning level, and most importantly, progress at the local provider level.

### B. ASSESSMENT OF ONE-STOP PARTNER PROGRAMS

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. Such state assessments should take into account local and regional planning goals.

#### (A) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

##### Assessment of One-Stop Partner Programs

How will other one-stop delivery partner program services be assessed each year?

Input –

1. One-stop delivery system partner program services will be assessed each year and will be facilitated by the VI Local Workforce Development Board in collaboration with VIDOL and MOU partners.
2. Assessment will be based on a standardized self-assessment form addressing the following:
  - a. Operational and program coordination
  - b. Availability of service hours
  - c. Compliance with Equal Opportunity requirements including physical and programmatic accessibility
  - d. Responsiveness to meet the needs of the one-stop delivery system customers

- e. Applicable compliance with common identifier requirements
- f. Provision of program services including career services and youth elements as applicable
- g. Priority of service including Veteran and Adult priority
- h. Professional development and cross-training of all staff
- i. Measuring customer satisfaction
- j. Evaluations of internal operations
- k. Compliance with HIPAA, Confidentiality and other privacy laws and regulations
- l. Local and regional planning goals defined to meet the needs of the communities within the workforce development area

### C. PREVIOUS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Beginning with the state plan modification in 2018 and for subsequent state plans and state plan modifications, 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). Describe how the State is adapting its strategies based on these assessments.

#### (A) Previous Assessment Results

SWDB conducts yearly satisfaction surveys for both customers and businesses. Future surveys will focus on heightening skills and interests to gauge skills levels. More assessment data will be provided. Additionally, the WIOA core partners will design a WIOA Partner Satisfaction Survey to determine cross-agency satisfaction, delivery of services to participants, and the level of engagement and collaboration amongst partners. The results of the survey will be used to further improve the services being provided, resources, and capacity of individual agencies as well as of the system.

### D. EVALUATION

Describe how the State will conduct evaluations and research projects on activities 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.

#### (A) Evaluation.

The Virgin Islands Workforce Board, in conjunction with the WIOA core agencies, will revisit the process for evaluating the effectiveness of core programs. The focus will be continuous improvement activities. This evaluation will be facilitated by regular data collection by way of evaluations and surveys of clients and employers. Annual reviews of the one-stop service centers will also be implemented. Evaluation process will take into consideration the overall activity of the Workforce System; the integration of core agency programs, on-site One-Stop partner programs, the referral process for partner programs that are not on-site, the

effectiveness of service delivery to the job seeker customer, the effectiveness of service to employers and the overall return on investment to the System.

The WIOA core agencies will analyze data to include the collection of employer data so partners could work collaboratively on data sharing for customer information to meet performance measure goals. Core agencies will implement data sharing agreements, program outcome reporting and ways to create and provide a more comprehensive service delivery system.

## 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)

##### Title I Programs

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). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

#### 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). Funding is not distributed beyond the State Agency – Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

### B. FOR TITLE II

#### I. DESCRIBE HOW THE ELIGIBLE AGENCY WILL AWARD MULTI-YEAR GRANTS OR CONTRACTS ON A COMPETITIVE BASIS TO ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS IN THE STATE, INCLUDING HOW ELIGIBLE AGENCIES WILL ESTABLISH THAT ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS ARE ORGANIZATIONS OF DEMONSTRATED EFFECTIVENESS

In accordance with Section 231 under Title II Adult Education and Family Literacy Act of WIOA, the VIDE provided funding to eligible local entities to provide adult education services through a competitive process for 2021-2022 with a continuation year to occur in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024. This includes grant projects funded under Section 225 – Corrections and Other Institutionalized.

A competitive bidding process was conducted in the summer of 2021. VIDE identified, assessed, and awarded multi-year grants to eligible providers throughout the territory. An eligible provider is an

organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities that may

include a/an:

- Local education agency;
- Community-based or faith-based organization;
- Volunteer literacy organization;
- Institution of higher education;
- Public or private nonprofit agency;
- Public library;
- Public housing authority;
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services;
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above; and
- Partnerships between an employer and an entity described above.

In the grant and contract awarding process, the required 13 considerations identified in Section 231 are included in the evaluation and selection process. Other 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 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.

## 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

VIDE ensures all eligible providers have direct and equitable access to apply and compete for grants. The Request for Proposal (RFP) announcement for the 2021-2022 competition was distributed through various communication outlets including the Virgin Islands Daily News, the VIDE website, St. Croix Avis, VI Consortium and the Virgin Islands Procurement and Bids website as a formal press release to ensure all prospective eligible providers had access to the same standardized information.

The Virgin Islands Procurement Department was available to field any questions from prospective eligible providers. The grant application procedures were the same for all eligible providers and they had access to the same announcements and application.

## 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.

**B) 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.

**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.

**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 VI Department of Labor administers all programs in Titles I and III as well as Unemployment Insurance and Veterans programs. The Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) manages the program and performance data for Titles I and III. Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation is in the process of acquiring a management information system and considering the option of adding onto the VIEWS system.

**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**

This integrated data system would benefit both customers and staff by streamlining redundant operations such as intake and creating more effective customer service strategies. Title II – Adult Education and Family Literacy uses the Power School system to gather data and customer information. It does not currently align with VIEWS but options to do so are being explored. Until then, Adult Education customers are generally also customers of Title I, III or IV and information will be picked up as customers touch these other programs. Common intake and basic data collection occur through an updated referral system. This ensures that staff of all programs know where a customer’s journey begins, why referrals are made, how they are made and what services are expected by means of the referral. There are plans to acquire a universal tracking system through VIEWS that customers access upon entry into the Workforce Centers,



which automatically documents the purpose for the visit, and outcomes achieved during each visit. Final outcomes can be traced back to the point of entry into the workforce system and all programs that touch an individual will receive the benefit.

**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 Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board will continue the coordination with other state plans consistent with the previous plan as they explore and establish an improved effort as noted in the paragraph below.

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Virgin Islands Workforce Board in conjunction with representatives from the Office of the Governor will hold a series of planning sessions to update the State Strategic Vision and Goals. The Virgin Islands Planning Workgroup will comprise of directors and managers of the Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP, TANF and Paternity and Child Support programs. The group will meet weekly beginning in March of 2021 to operationalize the vision and goals described by the State Board. Past partners planned activities have led to the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP and Child Support programs in the One-Stop to the development of common intake processes and data integration. Programs from Titles I and III are now co-located at the One-Stop centers. The group will meet to further develop, resolve and improve any joint initiatives.

**IV. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S PLANS TO DEVELOP AND 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.

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 need for or set any additional indicators of performance in March 2021.

On-going evaluation and analysis of performance achievement occurs at federal, state and local levels. The local Workforce Development Board receives a quarterly assessment of performance and expenditure levels, and this information is used for comparative and analytical purposes and is shared with local service providers. Regional representatives compile data on each island, to include enrollment levels, expenditure rates, and performance achievement. This information is shared with the board and service providers.

An effective performance management and accountability system depends upon several important factors:

- Clearly defined performance goals and measures;
- A data tracking system that provides timely and accurate information, which can be queried or reported in formats that permit close analysis;
- An on-going evaluation process that not only reviews the current level of performance, but also includes historical and projected performance;
- Flexible program policies that allow rapid adjustment to issues of economic and workforce impact; and
- A system of incentive and sanctions.

The State of Iowa has these elements in place for performance accountability of the workforce system. The primary goals featured in the system are the mandated program goals for WIOA Title I (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) and Title III (Wagner-Peyser). While some of these measures (placement rates and earnings at placement) are elevated to an enterprise-wide or broader system level for purposes of gubernatorial reports or the Results Iowa website, there are no additional state-established goals for the employment and training system. Regional boards also have the option of establishing additional goals for their workforce areas. In practicality, extensive statutory program goals and reporting requirements that exist in the system mitigates local areas with limited resources to establish any additional goals, however. For this reason, Iowa welcomes federal initiatives to establish measures that are most representative of system success.

The data tracking system in Iowa is extremely valuable to the efforts to improve system performance. Because the state provides a comprehensive tracking system for its programs, the network of One-Stop Centers is supported by coordinated data tracking. The comprehensive reports and query capabilities provided by this system are essential to program analysis at both the state and local levels, leading to data-driven decisions that improve system quality and efficiency.

Labor supply and demand data will be analyzed in order to determine the impact from the education and training provided to participants in Title II, By utilizing graduate data from the

training providers for the supply, and economic data for the demand, occupation-specific data will be analyzed using the following criteria:

- Type of award (certificate, diploma or degree)
- Program of study
- Projected job openings (both replacement and new)
- Wages
- Education/Training
- Experience
- Skills
- Projected job growth

The occupations can be aggregated into occupational categories for analysis, where necessary. For each training program offered by the community college, the corresponding classification of instructional programs (CIP) can be used to track area of study. Occupational projections will be used as the primary source for the demand representation. Future occupational demand will be defined using the annual growth rate. These projections use the standard occupational classification (SOC) system and can be categorized at different levels (two-, three-, five-, and six-digit), where moving from a lower to higher level indicates more disaggregation in the occupational structure.

By linking occupations (SOC codes) to education programs (CIP codes) a crosswalk is created, such as the one available from the National Crosswalk Center®. Additionally, the National Career Clusters® Framework links every CIP code to one of the 16 career clusters, and the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education (NRCCTE), assigned one of the 79 career pathways (where each pathway was associated to a unique career cluster) to each of the SOC Codes. While there might be some discrepancies this data will be used to determine the match between educational training needs and occupational demand. With the crosswalk, analysis can be done for each of the occupational categories with the corresponding projected employment demand. Levels for determining high/low wage and high/low demand are based on an average occupational growth rate for all occupations. Regionally this process can help determine the effectiveness of sector partnerships, career pathway development and programs related to workforce delivery services.

### 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.)

#### (A) Use of Unemployment Insurance (UI) Wage Record Data

The Virgin Islands Unemployment Insurance program is housed at the VI Department of Labor along with WIOA Title I and III programs. This information has been historically collected quarterly and managed through the MIS unit to determine performance and conduct LMI analyses that are consistent with Federal and State law. The information is used for making assessments of current workforce for planning purposes, structuring programs and analyzing

the demographics of UI claimants. It is also used to improved re-employment strategies for claimants – determining how long and/or often they receive benefits and return to seek other employment options. On the LMI side, wage record data is used in analysis of industries and sectors as they expand or contract, used for more in-depth look at occupational staffing patterns and for analysis of workforce development for economic growth and development

AEFLA and Vocational Rehabilitation programs are receiving technical assistance from their respective federal agencies. Accommodations have been made for both programs to submit wage record inquiries to the VI Department of Labor which houses the UI program. The VI Department of Labor will provide responses to the respective programs within a 7-day period.

#### 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

Describe how the State will implement and monitor the priority of service provisions for veterans 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. States should also describe the referral process for veterans determined to have a significant barrier to employment to receive services from the Jobs for Veterans State Grants (JVSG) program’s Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist.

##### (5) Priority of Service for Veterans

In accordance with the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002, the VI 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 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. Once the customer's status is confirmed the AJC 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 Virgin Islands Department of Labor's 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.

#### *Veteran's 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.) with regard to 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.

(5) Addressing the Accessibility of the One-Stop Delivery System for individuals who are English Language Learners.

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.

##### Coordination with State Plan Programs

The Virgin Islands Workforce Development Board will continue the coordination with other state plans consistent with the previous plan as they explore and establish an improved effort.

The Strategic Planning Committee of the Virgin Islands Workforce Board in conjunction with representatives from the Office of the Governor will hold a series of planning sessions to develop the State Strategic Vision and Goals. The Virgin Islands Planning Workgroup will comprise of directors and managers of the Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP, TANF and Paternity and Child Support programs and will meet weekly beginning in March 2021 to operationalize the vision and goals described by the State Board. The partners planned activities have led to the co-location of Vocational Rehabilitation, SNAP and Child Support programs in the One-Stop to the development of common intake processes and data integration. Programs from Titles I and III have been co-located at the One-Stop centers. The group will continue to meet until all details on joint implementation have been resolved and then will continue to meet thereafter on a monthly basis to ensure continuous improvement.

#### V. COMMON ASSURANCES (FOR ALL CORE PROGRAMS)

The Unified or Combined State Plan must include assurances that:

The State Plan must include	Include
1. The State has established a policy identifying circumstances that may present a conflict of interest for a State Board or local board member, or the entity or class of officials that the member represents, and procedures to resolve such conflicts;	Yes
2. The State has established a policy to provide to the public (including individuals with disabilities) access to meetings of State Boards and local boards, and information regarding activities of State Boards and local boards, such as data on board membership and minutes;	Yes
3. The lead State agencies with optimal policy-making authority and responsibility for the administration of core programs reviewed and commented on the appropriate operational planning elements of the Unified or Combined State Plan, and approved the elements as serving the needs of the populations served by such programs;	Yes
4. (a) The State obtained input into the development of the Unified or Combined State Plan and provided an opportunity for comment on the plan by representatives of local boards and chief elected officials, businesses, labor organizations, institutions of higher education, the entities responsible for planning or administering the core programs, required one-stop partners and the other Combined Plan programs (if included in the State Plan), other primary stakeholders, including other organizations that provide services to individuals with barriers to employment, and the general public, and that the Unified or Combined State Plan is available and accessible to the general public;	Yes

The State Plan must include	Include
(b) The State provided an opportunity for review and comment on the plan by the State Board, including State agency official(s) for the Unemployment Insurance Agency if such official(s) is a member of the State Board;	
5. The State has established, in accordance with WIOA section 116(i), fiscal control and fund accounting procedures that may be necessary to ensure the proper disbursement of, and accounting for, funds paid to the State through allotments made for the core programs to carry out workforce development activities;	Yes
6. The State has taken appropriate action to secure compliance with uniform administrative requirements in this Act, including that the State will annually monitor local areas to ensure compliance and otherwise take appropriate action to secure compliance with the uniform administrative requirements under WIOA section 184(a)(3);	Yes
7. The State has taken the appropriate action to be in compliance with WIOA section 188, Nondiscrimination, as applicable;	Yes
8. The Federal funds received to carry out a core program will not be expended for any purpose other than for activities authorized with respect to such funds under that core program;	Yes
9. The State will pay an appropriate share (as defined by the State board) of the costs of carrying out section 116, from funds made available through each of the core programs;	Yes
10. The State has a one-stop certification policy that ensures the physical and programmatic accessibility of all one-stop centers with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA);	Yes
11. Service providers have a referral process in place for directing Veterans with Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) to DVOP services, when appropriate; and	Yes
12. Priority of service for veterans and eligible spouses is provided in accordance with 38 USC 4215 in all workforce preparation, development or delivery of programs or services funded directly, in whole or in part, by the Department of Labor.	Yes

## 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

Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

*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 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 REFERRED TO IN SECTION 106(B)(5) OF WIOA RELATING TO DESIGNATION OF LOCAL AREAS**

There is no process required.

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

As a single state local workforce development area there are no local areas or separate regions designated. There is no process at this time. State is drafting policies to address all infrastructure funding matters.

## **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**

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](http://www.viwib.org).

**B. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE INTENDS TO USE GOVERNOR’S SET ASIDE FUNDING. 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**

The set-aside funding will be broken into two categories – system evaluation and innovative programming. The system evaluation piece will assess the entire system for effectiveness and be used to gauge continuous improvement. The evaluation is still being developed but will be available for use by the end of the first year of implementation. Several options for innovative activity are being explored by the Workforce Board at this time to include alternative methods of providing foundational workplace skills with credentials.

### Layoff Aversion Strategies

The SWDB should utilize innovative strategies to address worker skill deficiencies to promote middle and high-skills employment in the Virgin Islands. In doing so, the Rapid Response Plan shall identify layoff aversion strategies and activities to be undertaken during the program year.

As layoff aversion opportunities are identified, the SWDB may prioritize and designate funding to undertake layoff aversion strategies. The funding guidelines shall include the following:

1. Amount of the funding request and budget narrative.
2. Identification of the population to be served and justification for serving said population.
3. Types of services and proposed outcomes.
4. Demonstration of employer support for proposed activities and services, including the business's financial support of the activities as applicable.
5. Relation to economic development initiatives in the local area.
6. Demonstration of leveraged resources, including, but not limited to, use of formula WIOA funds, other related workforce development funds, as well as private funds.

The WIOA Title I Administrator will monitor initiatives and projects for outcomes and compliance.

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

The VI Department of Labor and other agencies in the Virgin Islands central government partner with the local Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) to coordinate responses to natural disasters. The VI Department of Labor is currently updating its policies for addressing natural disasters and will include the role of Rapid Response in its development. This policy will be forwarded to the US Department of Labor for review as soon as it is approved.

D. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE PROVIDES EARLY INTERVENTION (E.G., RAPID RESPONSE) TO WORKER GROUPS ON WHOSE BEHALF A TRADE ADJUSTMENT ASSISTANCE (TAA) PETITION HAS BEEN FILED. (SECTION 134(A)(2)(A).) THIS DESCRIPTION MUST INCLUDE HOW THE STATE DISSEMINATES BENEFIT INFORMATION TO PROVIDE TRADE-AFFECTED 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 TRADE-AFFECTED 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.

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.

An employer or group of employers may request funds for Incumbent Worker Training as part of a layoff aversion strategy caused by undue economic hardships within a given sector or because of significant changes in the nature of an industry. Incumbent worker funds are solely for the purposes of providing training that upgrades employee skills levels or introduces new occupational skills required for an employee to remain effective in his/her position.

The training involved may include a mix of classroom training, technology-based learning and on-site training. Since the audience is already employed training will be industry specific and may occur wholly at the workplace. Training should be on an advanced level and result in either employer and /or industry recognized credentials. Professional level certification (where applicable) resulting in degree attainment is sought for professional services.

Incumbent workers may be eligible to receive additional One-Stop services consistent with possible job disconnection. Since training will take place as a layoff aversion strategy, it is possible that a lay-off or partial lay-off may still occur. To ensure that workers are prepared for any type of transition, they may have access to workshops on Resume Enhancement, Budgeting, and Time Management.

Incumbent worker customers may also have access to career counseling to help them identify 'next steps' in building careers. This will allow them to define skill sets, especially those that may be transferable to other occupations, and restructure their career goals to include additional/advanced academic or occupational skills training.

Additionally, incumbent workers have access to general One-Stop services to include information on Unemployment Insurance, Job Search and Training activities.

### 2. REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP

Describe how the State will incorporate Registered Apprenticeship into its strategy for service design and delivery (e.g., job center staff taking applications and conducting assessments).

## **ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKER PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### (1) Work-Based Training Models

The use of work-based training is integral to the Virgin Islands' workforce development strategy. As the local workforce system continues to determine sector strategies and build career pathways a work based learning experience will be required for most participants specifically those who have had little to no previous experience in the workforce – out-of-school youth and adults with barriers. These customers can expect to have a six to twelve week work

experience built into their career plan that allows them to put into practice the foundational workplace skills and/or occupational training that they have just acquired. Customers who have had some exposure to the workplace already such as older youth and dislocated workers are prime candidates for on-the-job training. These strategies allow both job seeker and employer customer the opportunity to provide hands on training in specific occupational areas which facilitates the long term commitment of both to advance on the job. It is expected that those who participate in on-the-job training will remain in that sector, possibly with the same employer for a time.

#### (2) Registered Apprenticeship

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is now a registered apprenticeship Agency.

#### (3) Training Provider Eligibility Procedures

The policy and procedures for Training Provider Eligibility (Initial and Continued) can be found at the Workforce Board's website [www.viwib.org](http://www.viwib.org) under the tab – Plans, Performance and Reports.

#### (4) Priority of Services for Public Assistance and Low-income individuals

WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E) establishes priority to recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services. The policy and procedures for the delivery of services and activities can also be found at the Workforce Board's website.

#### *Adult Priority*

Priority of services shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services.

The Virgin Islands has always given priority to individuals who fit this definition. The electronic case management system defaults to this target group for determining eligibility. In addition, the VIDOL's monitoring team reviews all contracts, ITA's and agreements to ensure priority is given to this target group.

### 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).

#### Training Provider Eligibility Procedures

The policy and procedures for Training Provider Eligibility (Initial and Continued) can be found at the Workforce Board's website <https://viwdb.vi.gov/board-policies/>.

The Board will collect all data related to the Training Provider Eligibility. The Board has increased the number of providers, both traditional and virtual as well as Apprenticeship Programs.

#### **Initial and Continued Eligibility for Providers of Training Services Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act**

#### *Initial Eligibility*

Providers may seek initial eligibility as a new provider under WIOA as a provider of training services and may receive that initial eligibility for only one (1) year for a particular program.

The provider shall provide verifiable program-specific performance information based on criteria established by the Workforce Board.

The criteria shall include at least:

- (a) A description of each program of training services to be offered;
- (b) Information addressing factors related to indicators of performance;
- (c) Information concerning whether the provider is in a partnership with business;
- (d) Other factors that indicate high-quality training services, such as resulting with a recognized postsecondary credential;
- (e) Information concerning alignment of the training services with in-demand industry sectors and occupations, to the extent practicable; and
- (f) Program cost information, including tuition and fees for WIOA participants in the program.

This information, in an application along with verifiable organizational documents shall be submitted to the Workforce Board for review.

After the Workforce Board has reviewed the application and eligibility has been determined, a list of eligible applicants will be created and submitted to the designated State Agency – VI Department of Labor (VIDOL). The list will include performance and program costs information for each eligible applicant.

Ø All information will be verified by the State Agency for accuracy.

Ø The State Agency shall compile a single list of eligible providers and disseminate such list with performance and program cost information to the one-stop delivery system.

Ø The State Agency will maintain the provider list.

Ø The list and the accompanying information shall be made available to participants and members of the public through the One-Stop delivery system in a manner that does not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual participant;

Ø The list may be made available electronically through a searchable database and/or through print media.

#### Continued Eligibility

In order for a provider of training services to maintain their eligibility and the eligibility of their programs, such provider shall submit an Application for Continued Eligibility. Continued Eligibility requirements apply to training providers transitioning to WIOA title I-B who were

previously eligible under WIA title I and newly eligible providers that were determined to be initially eligible under WIOA.

Each provider seeking continued eligibility shall submit an application to the Workforce Board with the following criteria:

- (a) Program description;
- (b) Performance outcome information for the indicators described in accompanying criteria;
- (c) Information identifying the recognized post-secondary credentials received by WIOA participants;
- (d) Program cost information, including tuition and fees for WIOA participants in the program; and
- (e) Information on the program completion rate for WIOA participants.

After the Workforce Board has reviewed the application and eligibility has been determined, a list of eligible applicants will be submitted to the designated State Agency – the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL). The list will include all verifiable performance and program costs information for each eligible applicant.

Ø All information will be verified by the VIDOL for accuracy.

Ø The State agency shall maintain the list of the providers identified and disseminate such list with performance and program cost information to the one-stop delivery system.

Ø The list and the accompanying information shall be made available to participants and members of the public through the One-Stop delivery system in a manner that does not reveal personally identifiable information about an individual participant;

Ø The list may be made available electronically through a searchable database and/or through print media.

Providers of Continued Eligibility must renew their application every two (2) years.

Applications for Continued Eligibility shall be submitted at least thirty (30) days before the end of the eligibility period for review by the Board.

In addition, the Workforce Board will annually review the status of the Eligible Training Providers to ensure up-to-date information on the training provided, performance outcomes and placement rates of the provider.

#### Registered Apprenticeships

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act title I-B, Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors that request to be ETP's are automatically included on the list and will remain as long as the program is registered or until the program sponsor notifies the State that it no longer wants to be included on the list.



Registered Apprenticeship programs are not subject to the same application and performance information requirements or to a period of initial eligibility or initial eligibility procedures as other providers because they go through a detailed application and vetting procedure to become a

Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor with the US Department of Labor or the State Apprenticeship Agency (SAA).

Registered Apprenticeship can take many forms and the sponsors are diverse, including:

1. Employers who provide related instruction
2. Employers who use an outside educational provider
3. Joint Apprenticeship Training programs
4. Intermediaries

Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors must indicate their interest in being placed on the Eligible Training Provider list to the Workforce Board in writing. Additionally, the following information should be included on the request:

- o Occupations included within the Registered Apprenticeship program;
- o The name and address of the Registered Apprenticeship program sponsor;
- o The name and address of the Related Technical Instruction provider, and the location of instruction if different from the program sponsor's address;
- o The method and length of instruction; and
- o The number of active apprentices.

The State Board will review the list Registered Apprenticeship programs as part of the review of the list of eligible training providers at least every two years. The Board will coordinate with the federal OA or the local SAA to obtain a list of all Registered Apprenticeship programs that are either voluntarily or involuntarily deregistered.

The list of Registered Apprenticeship program sponsors must also be maintained by the State Agency. This includes updating new Registered Apprenticeship Program ETP's, removing programs that no longer want to remain on the list and eliminating deregistered programs.

**4. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR THE PRIORITY FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS, OTHER LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF WIOA SEC. 134(C)(3)(E), WHICH APPLIES TO INDIVIDUALIZED CAREER SERVICES AND TRAINING SERVICES FUNDED BY THE ADULT FORMULA PROGRAM**

) Priority of Services for Public Assistance and Low-income individuals

WIOA Section 134(c)(3)(E) establishes priority to recipients of public assistance, other low income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services. The policy and procedures for the delivery of services and activities can also be found at the Workforce Board's website.

### *Adult Priority*

Priority of services shall be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient for receipt of career services and training services.

The Virgin Islands has always given priority to individuals who fit this definition. The electronic case management system defaults to this target group for determining eligibility. In addition, the VIDOL's monitoring team reviews all contracts, ITA's and agreements to ensure priority is given to this target group.

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

##### (5) Transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker programs

The Territory will continue to utilize the transfer of funds between Adult and Dislocated Programs as it has in the past. Historically, the VI Workforce System has served more adult funded individuals than dislocated individuals and funds have been transferred as needed. The Territory will establish a policy on the transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker programs.

#### C. WITH RESPECT TO YOUTH WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES AUTHORIZED IN SECTION 129 OF WIOA—

With respect to youth workforce investment activities authorized in section 129 of WIOA—

1. IDENTIFY THE STATE-DEVELOPED CRITERIA TO BE USED BY LOCAL BOARDS IN AWARDING 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 IN AWARDING SUCH GRANTS OR CONTRACTS.[11]

[11] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(V)

##### 1. Criteria for Awarding grants for youth workforce investment activities

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. DESCRIBE THE STRATEGIES THE STATE WILL USE TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED OUTCOMES FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS DESCRIBED IN 129(A)(1)(B), INCLUDING HOW IT WILL LEVERAGE AND 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.

1. Describe the strategies the State will use to achieve improved outcomes for out-of-school Youth

By leveraging resources and expertise in core programs. An inventory will be made of services currently being provided to out-of-school youth and align them in its system integration strategy. The Board will ensure that all 14 program elements are made available by identifying successful models and best practices for youth workforce activities relevant to the US Virgin Islands.

3. DESCRIBE HOW THE STATE WILL ENSURE THAT ALL 14 PROGRAM ELEMENTS DESCRIBED IN WIOA SECTION 129(C)(2) ARE MADE AVAILABLE AND EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, INCLUDING QUALITY PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS UNDER THE WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM ELEMENT. [12]

[12] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(i)(I)

1. Describe how the State will ensure that all 14 program elements described in WIOA are made available and effectively implemented.

The system will utilize a multi-dimensional strategic approach to provide youth with workforce investment activities and services which align with the fourteen (14) program elements. Youth programs and activity will focus on ensuring that the WIOA provisions focusing 75 percent of program funds on out-of-school youth is met and achieved. Similarly, paid work experiences, pre-apprenticeships and on-the job training programs will highlight the approach taken by the system to achieve this desired outcome. Specific emphasis will be placed on services to low-income, basic skills deficient or an English language learner; homeless; connections with the juvenile system or adult justice system; pregnant or parenting, person with a disability; low income in need of assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment.

The Youth team provides in-house academic and career assessments for WIOA Youth to determine the services and activities needed for each young person. Individual Employment Plans or Service Strategies are developed and referrals made to the service providers linked to the program elements. The Youth team maintains a listing of Youth providers that specialize in the provision of one or more Youth element. An RFP is released each year requesting proposals from providers in the areas most in need. Due to the size of the Territory, many providers have been with the Workforce System for many years and have adapted programming to accommodate and/or expand the offerings based on the changes in WIOA.

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.

1. 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 and for in-school youth.

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.

5. INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION, AS DEFINED IN LAW, FOR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL AND ATTENDING SCHOOL AS SPECIFIED IN WIOA SECTION 129(A)(1)(B)(I) AND SECTION 129(A)(1)(C)(I). IF STATE LAW DOES NOT DEFINE “NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL” OR “ATTENDING SCHOOL,” INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE AND PROVIDE THE STATE POLICY FOR DETERMINING WHETHER A YOUTH IS ATTENDING OR NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL.

1. Include the State definition, as defined in law, for not attending school and attending school as specified in WIOA section 129(a) (1) (B) (i) and 129 (a) (1) (C) (i)

In accordance with the Virgin Islands Code the Territory’s policy for attending and not attending school is:

17 V.I.C. § 82. Compulsory school attendance; age of pupils; exceptions

1. *All children shall commence their school education by attending an approved kindergarten from the beginning of the school year in the calendar year in which they reach their fifth birthday, and they shall continue to attend school regularly until the expiration of the school year nearest their eighteenth birthday, except as provided in section 287 of this title; provided, however, those who graduate from high school before the age of 18 are excepted and students attending the National Guard Youth Challenge*

*Program or any other program approved by the Virgin Islands Board of Education which has the equivalency of a high school diploma are also excepted.*

1. *The Commissioner of Education, in conjunction with the Virgin Islands Board of Education shall promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this section no later than 12 months after the enactment of this section*

1. If not using basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA section 3 (5) (B), include the State definition.

The Virgin Islands recognizes the definition as described in WIOA section 3 (5) (B) and adopts as follows:

The term “basic skills deficient” means, with respect to an individual-

1.
  - a. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or

- b. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.

6. IF USING THE BASIC SKILLS DEFICIENT DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INCLUDE THE STATE DEFINITION WHICH MUST FURTHER DEFINE HOW TO DETERMINE IF AN INDIVIDUAL IS UNABLE TO COMPUTE OR SOLVE PROBLEMS, OR READ, WRITE, OR SPEAK ENGLISH, AT A LEVEL NECESSARY TO FUNCTION ON THE JOB, IN THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAMILY, OR IN SOCIETY. IF NOT USING THE PORTION OF THE DEFINITION CONTAINED IN WIOA SECTION 3(5)(B), INDICATE THAT IS THE CASE.

1. If not using basic skills deficient definition contained in WIOA section 3 (5) (B), include the State definition.

The Virgin Islands recognizes the definition as described in WIOA section 3 (5) (B) and adopts as follows:

The term "basic skills deficient" means, with respect to an individual-

1.
  - a. who is a youth, that the individual has English reading, writing, or computing skills at or below the 8th grade level on a generally accepted standardized test; or
  - b. who is a youth or adult, that the individual is unable to compute or solve problems, or read, write, or speak English, at a level necessary to function on the job, in the individual's family, or in society.
  - c. Lack a high school diploma or high school equivalency and is not enrolled in secondary education.
  - d. Enrolled in a Title II Adult Education/Literacy Program.
  - e. English, reading, writing, or computing skills are at am 8.9 or below grade level.
  - f. Determined to be Limited English Skills proficient through staff documented observations.
  - g. Other objective criteria determined to be appropriate by the Local Area and documented in its required policy.

#### 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).)

**SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS**

(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 disbursal 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](http://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.

(1) The One-Stop system is the basic delivery system for adult and dislocated worker services. Through the One-Stop system adults and dislocated workers in need of training will be provided an Individual Training Account and access to lists of eligible providers of training. Participants may purchase training services from eligible service providers they select in consultation with their case managers.

WIOA guidelines for adults, dislocated workers, and youth will be created to provide the necessary criteria and documentation sources for establishing WIOA Title 1 program eligibility. These guidelines will describe each WIOA job seeker population and will provide information and procedures for documenting and verifying eligibility for each one.

#### 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.

Customer Choice: Individual Training Accounts allow customers to choose the provider of training service based on the specific information (prerequisites, costs, location, duration, certification received) listed by the provider.



- The *amount* of the Individual Training voucher shall not exceed **\$3,800.00**, except in the instance of an approved specialized or technical program.
- The *duration* of an Individual Training voucher shall not exceed twelve (12) months, except in the instance of an approved specialized or technical program

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 SECRETARY MAY REQUIRE THAT STATES PROVIDE THE MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE ABOUT THE OUTCOMES OF THE EXISTING WAIVER IN CASES WHERE THE STATE SEEKS RENEWAL OF A PREVIOUSLY APPROVED WAIVER.

The US Virgin Islands is requesting one (1) waiver:

- Waiver of section 134 (c)(3)(H)(i) to allow the wage reimbursement to employers participating in on-the-job training to up to 90% for businesses with 50 or fewer employees.

**US VIRGIN ISLANDS WAIVER 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 program's Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist;	Yes
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

The State Plan must include	Include
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
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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	38.0%	57.0%	43.0%	58.0%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	38.0%	60.0%	40.0%	61.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$4,900.00	\$5,100.00	\$4,900.00	\$5,200.00
Credential Attainment Rate	62.0%	62.0%	63.0%	63.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	Baseline	62.5	Baseline	63.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

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*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### 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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	55.0%	63.0%	58.0%	63.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	50.0%	62.5%	52.0%	63.0%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,700.00	\$6,200.00	\$5,700.00	\$6,300.00
Credential Attainment Rate	48.0%	70.5%	50.0%	71.0%
Measurable Skill Gains	Baseline	61.0%	Baseline	61.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### 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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	38.0%	67.0%	43.0%	67.5%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	40.0%	61.0%	43.0%	61.5%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	Baseline	\$4,900.00	Baseline	\$5,000.00
Credential Attainment Rate	40.0%	50.0%	43.0%	50.5%
Measurable Skill Gains	Baseline	57.5%	Baseline	58.0%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### 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.

##### Employment Service Professional Staff Development

1. 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 implementation of WIOA is the goal of having 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.

## 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

Program leads periodically conduct an assessment of staff's knowledge and skill levels of UI and W-P programs. Quarterly sessions that update the respective staff of the others product, including any changes or upgrades are conducted. Both Unemployment Insurance and Wagner Peyser staff are co- located at the Workforce Center thus facilitating the interactivity between them. Front line staffs are trained to know eligibility requirements and basic information of both programs.

All UI claimants register for services with Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry to the Workforce System. Since UI staff is housed at the Job Center in both island districts, all customer eligibility determination is done by UI staff therefore any need for adjudication is done either at the time of application or by appointment at a later date.

All new hires will receive UI training, specifically in the unemployment claims taking process. Training will include the following: learning the initial application, issuing identification that leads to the adjudication process, reviewing a claimant's benefit payment history and releasing payments when appropriate.

## 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

### Employment Service Professional Staff Development

1) 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. New for the Territory's implementation of WIOA is the goal 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 launched during program year 2016. All core program staff will be invited to participate in this professional training endeavor.

1) Program leads periodically conduct an assessment of staff's knowledge and skill levels of UI and W-P programs. Quarterly sessions that update the respective staff of the others product, including any changes or upgrades are conducted. Both Unemployment Insurance and Wagner Peyser staff are co- located at the Workforce Center thus facilitating the interactivity between

them. Front line staffs are trained to know eligibility requirements and basic information of both programs.

All UI claimants register for services with Wagner-Peyser at the time of entry to the Workforce System. Since UI staff is housed at the Job Center in both island districts, all customer eligibility determination is done by UI staff therefore any need for adjudication is done either at the time of application or by appointment at a later date.

**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**

Wagner-Peyser funds are used to support UI claimants and the communication process between UI and W-P through the provision of access to labor market information on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS).

UI claimants attend an orientation session that provides an overview of Wagner- Peyser, WIOA and other services available at the Job Center. Claimants are encouraged to begin the job search process right away and utilize the resources funded through W-P (job club, short-term prevocational training, career exploration tools, etc.) to enhance their job preparation and search.

1. The flow of services at the Territory's Workforce Centers have all customers registering with W-P to search for jobs prior to filing a UI claim; therefore all customers have knowledge of and access to jobs available in local demand occupations as well as other jobs that are listed with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor that they may have interest in pursuing.
2. Customers are determined "able and available" to work as established by the requirement to register with W-P before they file a UI claim. W-P staff initiates the UI claim process and claimants are later called back by a UI staff person for further processing of their claim.

An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor's website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

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.

## 1. Agricultural Outreach Plan

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

### C. DESCRIBE THE STATE'S STRATEGY FOR PROVIDING REEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE TO UI CLAIMANTS AND OTHER UNEMPLOYED INDIVIDUALS

Reemployment assistance is provided to UI claimants who have been profiled by UI staff. Claimants are referred to W-P staff for services which begin with an orientation to workforce services. Additional services include access to labor market information, career assessments and structured workshops such as job search techniques and resume building. Other unemployed individuals also have access to these and other services available at the Workforce Centers to include basic career services.

### 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;

Wagner-Peyser funds are used to support UI claimants and the communication process between UI and W-P through the provision of access to labor market information on Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS).

UI claimants attend an orientation session that provides an overview of Wagner- Peyser, WIOA and other services available at the Job Center. Claimants are encouraged to begin the job search process right away and utilize the resources funded through W-P (job club, short-term prevocational training, career exploration tools, etc.) to enhance their job preparation and search.

1. The flow of services at the Territory's Workforce Centers have all customers registering with W-P to search for jobs prior to filing a UI claim; therefore all customers have knowledge of and access to jobs available in local demand occupations as well as other jobs that are listed with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor that they may have interest in pursuing.
2. Customers are determined "able and available" to work as established by the requirement to register with W-P before they file a UI claim. W-P staff initiates the UI claim process and claimants are later called back by a UI staff person for further processing of their claim.

An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor's website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

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.

## 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

1. Customers are determined "able and available" to work as established by the requirement to register with W-P before they file a UI claim. W-P staff initiates the UI claim process and claimants are later called back by a UI staff person for further processing of their claim.

An initial assessment which is comprised of a review of job skills and qualifications, work experience and employment availability in requested occupational field is conducted to determine job readiness and availability.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor's website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

## 4. PROVISION OF REFERRALS TO AND APPLICATION ASSISTANCE FOR TRAINING AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES.

1. The Eligible Training Provider list is available at all Workforce Center locations and on the VI Department of Labor's website. Customers who are interested in attending training either as a refresher or to acquire new skills work with workforce career counselors to develop a training plan and schedule training and other services that may be needed to attain employment.

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.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### 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:

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

A. CONTACTING FARMWORKERS WHO ARE NOT BEING REACHED BY THE NORMAL INTAKE ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE OFFICES

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

E. COORDINATING OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH NFJP GRANTEES AS WELL AS WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES AND MSFW GROUPS

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

B. MARKETING THE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE COMPLAINT SYSTEM TO FARMWORKERS AND OTHER FARMWORKER ADVOCACY GROUPS

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

C. MARKETING THE AGRICULTURAL RECRUITMENT SYSTEM FOR U.S. WORKERS (ARS) TO AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYERS AND HOW IT INTENDS TO IMPROVE SUCH PUBLICITY.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

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).

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### 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.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### 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.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### 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.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### E. STATE MONITOR ADVOCATE

The plan must contain a statement confirming the State Monitor Advocate has reviewed and approved the AOP.

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

#### 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;	Yes
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: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Initiate the discontinuation of services;</li> <li>2) Make the determination that services need to be discontinued;</li> <li>3) Make the determination to reinstate services after the services have been discontinued;</li> <li>4) Approve corrective action plans;</li> <li>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;</li> <li>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</li> <li>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.</li> </ol>	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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	55.0%		58.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	48.0%		51.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$5,600.00		\$5,600.00	
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 <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

## 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)).

The Virgin Islands Department of Education Division of Adult Education will align adult education content standards with the territory adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS), through the adoption and implementation of the College and Career Ready (CCR) Standards for Adult Education that were dispersed through USDOE. 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 know to be prepared for the rigors of post-secondary education and training. Qualified providers will be 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 will provide professional development to all instructional staff in presently funded programs, and to any prospective adult education grantees. 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. GED® preparation courses are also a component of the Virgin Islands adult secondary level programming and are also aligned to the Common Core Standards. A high school equivalency diploma is issued in the Virgin Islands to candidates who successfully demonstrate competency in language arts (reading and writing), mathematics, science, and social studies. The assessment used for the diploma program is the 2014 GED® Test.

#### B. LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Describe how the State will, using the considerations specified in section 231(e) of WIOA, 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 will be provided to eligible local entities for the provision of adult education services which include: Adult Education; Literacy; Workplace adult education & literacy activities and Workforce preparation activities.

An eligible provider is an organization that has demonstrated effectiveness in providing adult education activities to eligible individuals and may include:

- Local education agency.
- Community-based or faith-based organization.
- Volunteer literacy organization.
- Institution of higher education.
- Public or private nonprofit agency.
- Library.
- Public housing authority.
- Nonprofit institution with the ability to provide adult education and literacy services.
- Consortium or coalition of agencies, organizations, institutions, libraries, or authorities described above.
- Partnership between an employer and an entity described above.

#### ADULT GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND COURSES

**Adult Basic Education (language arts, mathematics, and reading) Program** - The courses included in this program are designed for the 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** - This 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. **GED® Preparation Program** - This program prepares adults 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 will be integrated into the Social Studies curriculum. General topics will 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 will be 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:

- (1) 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
- (2) 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 provider receiving sub grants under AEFLA are required to obtain the corresponding 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 funds available. 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: 1. 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. 2. 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 3. 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 State responsibilities of the State Office is 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.

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. A description of how funds awarded under Title II will be spent consistent with the requirements of the title; B. 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; C. 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; D. 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; E. A description of how the eligible provider will fulfill one stop partner responsibilities as described in section 121(b)(1)(A), as appropriate; F. 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 are 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 time-frame, 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:

(a) Planning; (b) Administration, including carrying out performance accountability requirements; (c) Professional development; (d) 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 (e) 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 State will establish and operate programs under section 225 of WIOA for corrections education and education of other institutionalized individuals, including how it will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II subtitle C, any of the following academic programs for:

- 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.

As specified in section 225 of WIOA, the the Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education spends no more than 20 percent of the 82.5 percent of the state grant allotted to local programs for correctional education activities. Funding allocations are determined as part of the planning process for the implementation of WIOA. Priority must be given to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and high school diploma programs such as Penn Foster. Individuals participate in career exploration and planning activities to develop a career and education plan based on career goals. The VIDE is committed to providing high-quality educational programs in local correctional facilities and intends to continue its partnership with the Virgin Islands Police Department Correction Division to ensure inmates have access to Adult Education and CTE programs to prepare them for current and emerging employment in high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand occupations. These instructional services are critical to ensuring the ease of transition for incarcerated individuals and ideally reduce the rate of recidivism once they are released.

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, St. Croix District that provide services or instruction in one or more of the following of the categories listed above.

Using funds made available under Section 222(a)(1), priorities will be focused on increasing the number of incarcerated adults completing a secondary school credential, entering post-secondary education and training. Adult Basic Skills programs will be offered through the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections and include classes in Adult Basic Education (ABE), High School

Equivalency preparation, and English as a Second Language. 1. Adult Basic Education courses will be provided to students who score below the 9th grade level on a standardized assessment. Reading comprehension, writing, and math skills are emphasized in these classes. 2. High School Equivalency preparation courses will be provided to students who have not attained a high school diploma or the equivalent and score at least at the 9th grade level, but less than the 12th grade level on a standardized assessment. 3. English as a Second Language courses will provide instruction in speaking, listening comprehension, reading and writing skills for offenders whose primary language is a language other than English. 4. Participating offenders will be assessed through pre- and post testing assessments and placed according to scoring level and general ability.

Adult Education State Staff will continue to engage with Adult Education Administration Staff of the Bureau of Corrections with the goal of continuous improvement of the Adult Education program and improve how elimination of barriers to successful re-entry. Funding allocations will be determined as part of the planning process for implementation of WIOA. Adult education programs offered in correctional institutions include ABE, GED® Preparation, and ESL.

A correctional institution includes any prison; jail; reformatory; detention center; or halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or any other similar institution designed for the confinement or rehabilitation of criminal offenders. A criminal offender is any individual who is charged with or convicted of any criminal offense.

#### D. INTEGRATED ENGLISH LITERACY AND CIVICS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Describe how the State will establish and operate Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education programs under Section 243 of WIOA, for English language learners who are adults, including professionals with degrees and credentials in their native countries, including how the Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be delivered in combination with integrated education and training activities.

Describe how the State will fund, in accordance with the requirements of title II, subtitle C, an Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program and how the funds will be used for the program.

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.

(Does not apply to the Virgin Islands)

#### 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

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will use funds made available under section 222(a)(2) for the following adult education and literacy activities to develop or enhance the adult education system of the State. Not more than 12.5 percent of the grant funds made

available will be used to carry out State leadership activities under section 223. The mandatory leadership activities are:

1. Alignment of adult education and literacy activities with core programs and one-stop partners, including eligible providers, 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 & Adult Education will continue to work collaboratively with other core programs and partner agencies to provide comprehensive and wraparound services to program participants. State-level policy and planning bodies provide an opportunity for Adult Education to work with Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) and other key agencies defined in the law. Adult Education will provide resources and services through One-Stop Centers (including intake/orientation for Adult Education services, and transition resources), referral processes, and other joint mechanisms developed through agency partnerships.

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) will provide targeted professional development based upon a statewide needs assessment, research regarding best practices, and federal recommendations. SOCTAE will survey local providers to ascertain areas in which there may be a gap in knowledge or a need for improvement. From these results, SOCTAE will coordinate and execute broad-based training through a variety of modalities to assist program leaders and teachers in areas such as program improvement, instructional techniques, integrated education and training, CCR standards, transition to post-secondary education and employment, and the infusion of technology into instruction. Professional Development may include: • An annual operations meeting, wherein local program administrators are given an overview of changes in policy and related practices, budget management, and reporting requirements; • An annual statewide professional development conference for a variety of adult education personnel; and Webinars/Teleconferences.

3. Technical Assistance

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will deliver 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 will provide professional development/technical assistance via phone, webinar, teleconference, on-site training, and seminars. Targeted technical assistance will focus 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 will: • Deliver 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. 4. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the State.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education will engage in island-wide program monitoring procedures to maintain sufficient knowledge and oversight of local adult education providers. Oversight will include continuous data monitoring, in addition to site visits and on-site reviews. Specific attention will be given to programs with low performance. OAE will develop targeted technical assistance to meet the specific needs of the program in need of improvement.

## 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 Adult Education will continue to assist with the development of curricula in order to incorporate the essential components of reading that relate to adult activities such as family literacy and civic education. In conjunction with Partner programs and recommendations from the Workforce Development Board, we will continue to develop a more complete model of careers pathways programs for each level. Memorandums of Agreements will continue to be implemented under existing and new Partnership agreements to continue the facilitation of the completion of Adult Basic and Adult Secondary level courses to Post Secondary programs.

Additionally, with the inclusion of Bureau of Corrections as sub-recipients, the State Office will assist in offering a variety of technical assistance activities to help state staff and Bureau of Corrections develop literacy programs in correctional facilities.

## F. ASSESSING QUALITY

Describe how the eligible agency will assess the quality of providers of adult education and literacy activities under title II and take actions to improve such quality, including providing the activities described in section 223(a)(1)(B) of WIOA.

The State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education surveys VI attendees after all workshops, conference, and webinars to evaluate and provide feedback on the activity or event. SOCTAE tries to ensure all workshop objectives are met and tries to make changes future workshops based on feedback. Additionally, all programs review student data to determine if their training impacted student outcomes and to determine areas where additional training may be required. Annual training plans and goals include local priorities and input from surveys about training needs. Survey results are reviewed with the programs to determine how future trainings should be delivered, whether face-to-face or through online webinars.

The State Office also uses various means of assessment in its annual and ongoing evaluation process, including site monitoring visits, desk monitoring, program improvement processes, and performance and financial audits. Monthly monitoring will be performed and additional random verification audits will be performed for verification purposes. Instructional Observations are performed twice per year. Additional observations may be performed for verification purposes. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

The State Office will implement a Quality Assurance System that will assure student performance improvement, financial accountability, program quality, and regulatory compliance of local providers in accordance with federal laws and regulations, state statutes and rules, and the provisions of an approved grant award. The monitoring component of the Quality Assurance System is risk-based. Risk assessment is a process used to evaluate variables associated with workforce education grants and assign a rating for the level of risk to the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) and SOCTAE associated with each provider. In order to



complete a risk assessment, certain risk factors have been identified which may affect the level of risk for each agency. A risk matrix is completed for each provider. The annual risk assessment is conducted by the quality assurance team to determine the monitoring strategy appropriate for each provider. A range of monitoring strategies includes conference calls, improvement plans, grant reviews, etc., with the more comprehensive strategy such as an onsite visit, designated for providers deemed to be at higher risk.

Actions taken to improve quality of non-compliance finding(s) are identified, a corrective action plan will be implemented. The corrective action plan must identify the findings and specific strategies the provider will implement to ensure finding(s) have been resolved.

In addition to program improvement plans and other actions taken to improve quality, the following activities are available: New Director Training Provides new directors with information such as federal and state guidelines, data collection and NRS reporting, and resources needed to administer their programs. MIS System training will be afforded to providers on an annual basis and technical support will be available through both the MIS provider and the VIDE State Office for Adult Education. Additionally, each provider will be afforded the opportunity to have a program training/technical assistance webinar.

TABE and Training/Trainers through ongoing training, a network of trained professionals ensures the uniform administration and reporting of assessments used for determining federal level gains.

Data Reporting and Program Improvement Training provides training on the fundamentals of the NRS. Topics include monitoring, data analysis and collection, types of data and measures, assessments, data quality, and related information.

Technical Assistance Adult Education calls to inform adult educators of program changes, reporting announcements, and opportunities to ask questions of the SOCTAE staff.

Teacher Training provides information and resources to support instruction in the areas of GED preparation, college and career readiness, career awareness and planning, career pathways, reading and math instructional strategies.

The State Office of Adult Education has in place a monitoring tool that assess each component of the Adult Education program. Curriculum, Program performance, Enrollment, expected Outcomes, and reporting are all assessed through the Monitoring tool. Professional Development services have been identified both locally and nationally to enhance performance levels in each area. (1) Instruction in the essential components of reading instruction will be guided by National Common Core Standards for Adult Education as well as traditional Common Core Standards. (2) Instruction related to the specific needs of adult learners will be guided by Placement Tests results and Common Core State Standards for Adult Education. Partner Agencies will be consulted especially when Memorandum of Agreements are in place to serve a particular population. (3) Instruction provided by volunteers or paid personnel will be guided by designated Principals, Administrators or Directors of the noted Local Educational Agency and will be part of monitoring and performance assessments. (4) The dissemination of information about models and promising practices will continue through recommended Partnerships and available services both locally and nationally to enhance teaching techniques and quality of instructional material. All persons associated with the program will be included in mass emails with information on promising practices and links for educational improvements.

Program Evaluation (2 pages max) 1. The extent to which the methods of evaluation include the use of objective performance measures that are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and will produce quantitative and qualitative data to the extent possible.

Guidance for applicants: Submit a strong evaluation plan that will shape the development of the project from the beginning of the grant period. The plan should include the program objectives and performance indicators, clear benchmarks to monitor progress toward specific objectives and outcome measures to assess impact on adult student learning. The plan should identify the individual(s) and or organization(s) that have agreed to serve as the evaluator for the project and describe his/her/its qualifications. The plan should describe the evaluation design, indicating : (1) types of data that will be collected; (2) when various types of data will be collected; (3) what designs and methods will be used; (4) what instruments will be developed and when; (5) how the data will be analyzed; (6) when reports of results and outcomes will become available; and (7) how information will be used by the project to monitor progress and to provide accountability information to stakeholders about success at the project site(s).

The State Office will assess the quality of its professional development programs designed to improve: 1. monitoring of programs; 2. inputting of data for measurable student gains; 3. TABE train the trainer; and 4. GED preparation practices in the following ways: a. Multiple professional development sessions have been conducted for program staff and administrators data quality and input of data for NRS reporting. Clean data input to which they incorporate the strategies discussed during the professional development sessions; 2. pre-post assessments of conference participants on the key concepts and methods addressed during the training sessions; 3. the State’s review of the key indicators of effective ABE program operations, such as learner attendance, educational functional level gain, completion of GED® academic tests and GED® attainment, and ABE learners’ transition to next steps; and 4. conference participants’ evaluation forms.

The State Office along with the Leadership Team will conduct systematic site visits and desktop/onsite monitoring. Through these visits and monitoring activities, the State Office will monitor and evaluate the quality of, and the improvement in, adult education and literacy activities and the dissemination of information about models and proven or promising practices within the Districts. Each eligible provider will be monitored for compliance and appropriate technical assistance will be provided as needed.

#### 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

The State Plan must include	Include
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 literacy activities, as defined in section 203(9) of WIOA;	Yes
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](mailto: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>)

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
State Office of Career, Technical & Adult Education	
<b>PRINTED NAME AND TITLE OF AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
Nancy	
Callwood	

<b>APPLICANT'S ORGANIZATION</b>	<b>Enter information in this column</b>
State Director	
nancy.callwood@vide.vi	

**SECTION 427 OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION PROVISIONS ACT (GEPA)**

In the text box below, describe the steps the applicant proposes to take to ensure equitable access to, and participation in, its Federally-assisted program for students, teachers, and other program beneficiaries with special needs provide the information to meet the requirements of Section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA), consistent with the following instructions posted at <https://www2.ed.gov/fund/grant/apply/appforms/gepa427.doc>.

The State Office meets GEPA requirements when using State Administration and State Leadership funds when providing access to and participation in professional development workshops for administrators, teachers and staff who are AEFLA recipients working with low scoring or disabled students. Most recently, workshops were provided to these groups in the following areas: Teaching Skills that Matter in Adult Education: Instructional Approaches that Work. The State Office was able to provide a presenter on this topic to administrators, counselors and teachers on how to teach their students the skills needed for academic and career success through utilizing a toolkit. Additionally, they were given an opportunity to explore the critical contexts that play a role in the lives of their students, including civics education, digital literacy, financial literacy, health literacy, and workforce preparation.

The State was also able to provide presenters on Employability Soft Skills for Adult Learners. Here participants were able to learn more about § Interpersonal Skills § Employment Basics § Communication Skills § Teamwork § Conflict Resolution § Dependability / Reliability § Flexibility / Adaptability § Planning and Organization § Productivity § Initiative • Establishing SMART Goals with Adult Learners to increase their business and life success rate Goal Focused Coaching for Adult participants.

The idea is that through this various strategy, students will learn more and perform better on assessments and in the workplace. We will ensure that no student or teacher will be denied participation based on gender, race, national origin, disability or age.

**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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	29.0	30.5	30.0	31.0
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	29.0	30.5	30.0	31.0
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00	\$6,500.00
Credential Attainment Rate	15.0	15.0	16.0	16.0
Measurable Skill Gains	48.0%	48.0%	48.0%	48.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

#### PROGRAM-SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (COMBINED OR GENERAL)

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan [13] must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA:

\_\_\_\_\_

[13] Sec. 102(b)(2)(D)(iii) of WIOA

## A. INPUT OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

All agencies, except for those that are independent consumer-controlled commissions, must describe the following:

1. INPUT PROVIDED BY THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, INCLUDING INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN, RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COUNCIL'S REPORT, THE REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF CONSUMER SATISFACTION, AND OTHER COUNCIL REPORTS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AS PART OF THE COUNCIL'S FUNCTIONS;

The designated state agency, the Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, VIDDRS formulates the State Plan based on the recommendations and input from the Virgin Islands State Rehabilitation Council, VISRC. Based on reports from the VISRC, restructuring and reorganizing membership is the current focus of the SRC. The VISRC combated the resignation of three of its voting members while encountering concerns with members in "good standing" not attending monthly and quarterly meetings. Additionally, quorum has not been able to be met due to the lack of member participation. The proposed timeline to finalize the recruitment process and submit membership recommendations to the Office of the Governor is before the end of the month, June 30, 2022. Once approved, the new appointees will receive documentation confirming the same. The SRC highly recommends that VIDDRS follow through with the implementation of an electronic case management system that will allow consumers, vendors, providers, and staff access to case status information and available services. The SRC supports the VIDRS efforts to strengthen and build capacity within the agency. Succession planning and completion of the combined statewide needs assessment, CSNA were discussed as priorities. VISRC recommended that the University of the Virgin Islands, UVI Cell be engaged to assist in recruiting qualified staff, providing assistance with the CSNA and subsequent training. VIDRS will work closely with VISRC to ensure that this assessment is completed in order to glean additional areas of improvement. Another focus area that was identified by the VISRC is employer engagement. With limited employers and subsequent to Covid-19, it is important to build those relationships that will result in opportunities. This exchange will also allow VIDDRS to educate employers about the skills and talent pool. VISRC emphasized that the public should be constantly reminded about available services for Virgin Islanders living with a disability.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S RESPONSE TO THE COUNCIL'S INPUT AND RECOMMENDATIONS; AND

**The implementation of an electronic case management system will allow consumers, vendors, providers and staff access to services. The program needs to make this a priority item as it will advance the state agency and promote efficiency.**

The VIDDRS has made significant process towards the implementation of an electronic case management system. As mandated by WIOA to improve infrastructure, align workforce



development program and streamline services, the state agency has been working diligently to execute the professional services contract that will be portal of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System, VIEWS. This partnership will aid in tracking performance measures, measurable skill gains and employment rates as well as promote transparency and enhance the program efficiency. This action will also provide a mechanism for the collection of statistical data. VISRC will be kept apprised as the contractual agreement is finalized.

**Regular staff training that focuses on current trends and relevant subject areas such as transition services, credential attainment and competitive integrated employment will improve employment outcomes for consumers.**

VIDDRS continues to grow and advance training opportunities and professional development for all VIDRS personnel. The policy directives are shared with staff and included in client service policy updates. The agency recently engaged in a series of monitoring sessions which assisted to streamline the required updates as stipulated by WIOA.

**Employer engagement will help to build new relationships and educate employers about the skills and talent pool.**

Over time, the VIDRS has developed working relationships with local employers and through involvement with the Workforce Development Board these efforts are constantly expanding. In addition the state agency continues to partners with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor and is working to engage other business entities to include the Virgin Islands Chamber of Commerce. VIDRS continues to pursue new partnerships and massage the business community. There are plans to onboard personnel that will assist with surveying and educating employers about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Designated staff will identify the needs of employers in an attempt to match the consumers with available employment opportunities.

**Strengthen outreach efforts and WIOA partnerships to inform the public about available services for Virgin Islanders living with a disability.**

As indicated prior, through the WIOA partnership, internal and external community partners the VIDRS continues to build and expand efforts. The agency has been utilizing various platforms such as social media, radio, and the newspaper to advertise services and thank employers for their commitment. VIDRS will continue to collaborate with VISRC and other councils to promote services.

**Succession planning should include collaboration with the University of the Virgin Islands to assist in recruiting qualified staff and improve overall performance.**

Several meetings were held to continue building the working relationship with the University not only to foster successful employment outcomes for consumers but to recruit highly qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. VIDDRS shares the agency's vacancy listing with the schools and disciplines. The university afforded three staff members to acquire advance degrees, become certified managers, and the program collaborates with the university to improve outcomes to individuals with disabilities. The program is currently understaffed. As staff retires or leaves, the goal is retention and to quickly fill the vacancies as well as provide new opportunities to make available promotion.

**3. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S EXPLANATIONS FOR REJECTING ANY OF THE COUNCIL'S INPUT OR RECOMMENDATIONS.**

The recommendations and input from the council was not rejected. VIDRS offered a response to further clarify the agency's status, efforts and progress achieved in the identified areas.

#### B. REQUEST FOR WAIVER OF STATEWIDENESS

When requesting a waiver of the statewideness requirement, the designated State unit must identify the types of services to be provided by the program on a non-statewide basis. The waiver request must also include written assurances that:

1. A LOCAL PUBLIC AGENCY WILL PROVIDE THE NON-FEDERAL SHARE OF COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE WAIVER REQUEST;

The Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

2. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL APPROVE EACH PROPOSED SERVICE BEFORE IT IS PUT INTO EFFECT; AND

No waiver requested.

3. REQUIREMENTS OF THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN WILL APPLY TO THE SERVICES APPROVED UNDER THE WAIVER.

No waiver requested.

#### C. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH AGENCIES NOT CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES UNDER THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM

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 with respect to:

1. FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL AGENCIES AND PROGRAMS;

The Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, VIDDRS continues to collaborate 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.

The VIDDRS continues to collaborate with the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, VIUCEDD, the Virgin Islands Department of Education Office of Special Services & District Office, the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, and the Virgin Islands Department of Health.

Other local partnership includes the Virgin Islands Statewide Independent Living Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, the Virgin Islands Public Transit System, and the Association for Independent Living Center.

The designated State Unit strives to maintain a working relationship with the Client Assistance Program locally known as the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. They are invited to participate in various workshops and VR-sponsored events, VIDDRS has been invited to participate in parent forums and other activities as appropriate. The VIDDRS also collaborates with several private providers and practitioners including Island Therapy Solutions, Inc., Ear,

Throat and Nose Allergy Specialists, Hear Again Audiological Services, Beautiful Dreamers, Inc. and Insight Psychological Services.

## 2. STATE PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT UNDER SECTION 4 OF THE ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ACT OF 1998;

VIDDVR does not have a formal written agreement with the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD); the lead agency carrying out activities under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. However, VIDDRS does maintain a close collaborative relationship with VIUCEDD, which includes VIDDRS representation on VIUCEDD's Advisory Council.

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 increase the provision of, 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 includes 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 maybe guaranteed by VIATF for applicants.

VIDDRS participants continues to have access to assistive technology devices, services, and consultations. 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. VIDDRS counselors continue to collaborate and coordinate service delivery with AT vendors on specialized AT assessments, AT services and products for VR participants. The requirements for the loan programs are based on the specific provider and may vary based on the device or services required. The VIDDRS does not have authority over the various loan programs as they are separate from the operations of the VIDDRS.

## 3. PROGRAMS CARRIED OUT BY THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

There are no programs carried out by the Secretary for Rural Development under the Department of Agriculture that caters to individuals with disabilities in the U. S. Virgin Islands. 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. Future discussions on the continuation of such programs are warranted to ensure that this industry flourishes within the territory as well create opportunities for interested individuals. VIDDRS continues to work with several local farmers to engage students in developing their interests in Agricultural Science and to promote the farm to table lifestyle.

## 4. NON-EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES SERVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH; AND

VIDDRS has not entered into any formal cooperative agreements with non-educational agencies that serve out-of-school youths. VIDDRS collaborates with and refers VR participants to My Brother's Workshop (MBW) which 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, vocational training, GED or High School Equivalency training, and job placement assistance. Additionally, VIDDRS refers VR participants and regularly interact with Job Corps to include participation and facilitation of VR participants with Job Corps admission process. Job Corps continues to communicate with VIDDRS in providing status updates and outcomes on VR participants. The VIDDRS works closely with the Divisions of Juvenile Justice, Protective and Foster Care Systems to ensure that children and youths in the judicial system receive the appropriate transition services. The collaboration with these various programs and agencies provides a framework for a comprehensive delivery of services that fosters a continuum of care and results in successful outcomes.

#### 5. 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.

#### D. COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS

Describe:

##### 1. THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT'S PLANS, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES FOR COORDINATION WITH EDUCATION OFFICIALS TO FACILITATE THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO THE RECEIPT OF VR SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, AS WELL AS PROCEDURES FOR THE TIMELY DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL OF INDIVIDUALIZED PLANS FOR EMPLOYMENT FOR THE STUDENTS

The Designated State Agency continues to collaborate with education officials. The Administrator of the Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services, VIDDRS serves as a member of the Virgin Islands Advisory Panel for students with disabilities. VIDDRS and the Virgin Islands Department of Education officials have met and continue to meet and discuss the development of transition plans for students from school. An Interagency Agreement has been drafted with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for both agencies. The official agreement needs to be finalized and approved. The purpose for the agreement is to facilitate a seamless transition from high school for students with disabilities. The agency's goal is to formally execute the agreement prior to the start of the 2022-2023 school year.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the VIDDRS and VIDOE agreed to shift these services to an online platform. Subsequently, pre-employment transition services were offered virtually through Microsoft Teams. Referrals and applications were completed and submitted electronically. Work readiness and job exploration training were provided (In-house) by VIDDRS to eligible and potentially eligible students. VIDOE has been intricately involved in the referral process for said services. Information about VR services is made available at the local high schools. VIDDRS continues to provide presentations to students and school officials about the pre-employment transition 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. Several team meetings were held to address concerns with the agreement as well as finalize on the provision of services. Students may apply for services or can be referred to the

program and an individualized transition plan will be developed for each student before they graduate from school. The offerings were open to students with disabilities regardless of disability. Fact Sheets were jointly developed to disseminate information about the available services. The main objective of pre-employment transition services is to provide an overview of the five core subject areas, such as work-place readiness training, self-advocacy instruction, post-secondary education counseling, work-based learning, and career exploration. The trainings were held virtually ensured the students' safety while participating in the services. The students are recognized for their achievements and received certificates to add to their career portfolios. The training sessions exposed students to assistive technology, community integration, and various strategies for securing employment and maintaining independence.

## 2. INFORMATION ON THE FORMAL INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE EDUCATIONAL AGENCY WITH RESPECT TO:

### A. CONSULTATION AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ASSIST EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES IN PLANNING FOR THE TRANSITION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES FROM SCHOOL TO POST-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING VR SERVICES;

The objective of the agreement between the agencies is to assist in identifying students who may be in need of transition services. The state agency and the education agency are mandated to support students with disabilities through this transitional period. Therefore, meetings are held regularly to discuss the needs of the student population. VIDDRS provides assistance with the development of plans and provides counseling as needed. The financial responsibility rest on both agencies and the cost will be split depending on the service. The following includes some of the terms of the mutual agreement.

1. The Designated State provides training to Special Education officials and school counselors so that students can be identified and referred for transition services.
2. VR Counselors are invited to attend IEP meetings for eligible students with disabilities as appropriate and anticipate service needs;
3. VIDDRS work with the local workforce development board, One-Stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities;
4. VIDDRS develops guidelines and provides technical assistance on the implementation of this Agreement to LEA personnel, parents, and students;
5. Counselors notify relevant transition team participants including education officials of student eligibility determination and appeal process;
6. VIDDRS assist in the development of an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible students before the student leaves the high school setting and within 90 days of their eligibility determination;
7. There are several meetings held with students and teachers to provide an overview of the transition services and the offerings provided by VR including transition planning, counseling, training, and career exploration. The VIDDRS provides flyers and additional resources about transition services.

VIDDRS consults regularly in person, via telephone, and/or virtually with secondary schools and local educational agencies to provide technical assistance on transition planning for students with disabilities from school to post-secondary activities. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, the VIDDRS shifted to an online platform. Subsequently, pre-employment transition services were offered virtually through Microsoft Teams. Referrals and applications for the same were completed and submitted electronically. Work readiness and job exploration training were provided (In-house) by VIDDRS to eligible and potentially eligible students.

**B. TRANSITION PLANNING BY PERSONNEL OF THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND EDUCATIONAL AGENCY THAT FACILITATES THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAMS;**

U. S. Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDOE) and VIDDRS continue to work collaboratively to facilitate interagency planning as well as collaboration with other agencies to assist in the referral of students to appropriate pre-employment transition services and develop strategies that support the career development pathways of students with disabilities leading to career and college readiness.

Transition services are available to students with disabilities beginning at age 14 and there are no age requirements for transition or VR services. A plan is developed between the State Agency and the Virgin Islands Department of Education to facilitate said services annually. The agencies meet on a regular basis to discuss and coordinate services as needed. The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are invited to attend IEP meetings on a regular basis. Education officials are notified of transitioning services for students with disabilities. All eligible or potentially eligible students, their parents and education officials receive written information regarding how to access services. The counselors are directly involved in securing employment sites for students to complete work-based learning activities. There is ongoing communication between VR and the state education agency to address concerns and/or changes in services. Prior to the start of the new school year, the agreement is reviewed and updated with the Virgin Islands Department of Education to reflect changes as it relates to transition planning and required precautions. VIDOE assist in providing on the job training to students which includes the five core areas. VIDDRS facilitates job placement and provide support in developing transition plans in coordination with the student's IEP.

**C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, OF EACH AGENCY, INCLUDING PROVISIONS FOR DETERMINING STATE LEAD AGENCIES AND QUALIFIED PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR TRANSITION SERVICES;**

The VIDDRS staff is actively engaged in the implementation of the student's IEP, collaborating in the planning, referral and identification of students with disabilities who may benefit from VR services as early as possible in the transition process. This ensures that transition services and pre-employment services goals on a student's IPE are aligned. VR services should complement services provided by schools but not replace those services. Once a student is accepted for placement, the designated state agency assumes the financial responsibility and compensates students in accordance with the Virgin Islands minimum wage. Both agencies are required to maintain an open line of communication in regard to the student's success and/or lack thereof. VIDE will be responsible for Special Education services under free and appropriate public education; VIDDRS is responsible for providing VR Services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act.

The local education agency, LEA will provide the general supervision of the IDEA in the Virgin Islands for special education and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education for students with disabilities. Serve as the lead agency in the development, revision, and maintenance of cooperative efforts among the collaborating agencies to facilitate the successful transition of students with disabilities. The LEA will convene quarterly meetings, or as needed, to evaluate the transition process and recommend system changes; Coordinate with VR for the dissemination of information to local education agencies (LEAs) regarding effective, results-based practices for students with disabilities to be prepared for postsecondary education/training, employment and independent living. The VIDDRS distributes the "VR Information Packet" to LEAs, students and parents to ensure that all students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services have the opportunity to participate. Pre-employment transition services begin at age 14; the student may or may not have IEP to qualify for transition services.

The State agency will provide the following five activities to students with disabilities (i) job exploration counseling; (ii) work-based learning opportunities; (iii) counseling on post-secondary educational opportunities; (iv) workplace readiness training; and (v) instruction in self-advocacy. The VIDDRS will attend IEP meetings for students with disabilities when invited and anticipate service needs. The VIDDRS will work in collaboration with local workforce development boards, One-Stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities. Develop guidelines and provide technical assistance on the implementation of this Agreement to LEA personnel, parents, and students. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process. Develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible students, before the student leaves the school setting and within 90 days of eligibility determination.

#### D. PROCEDURES FOR OUTREACH TO AND IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES WHO NEED TRANSITION SERVICES.

VIDDRS collaborates with the State Education Agency on outreach activities aimed at increasing the number of students with disabilities that participate in transition services. VIDDRS makes Pre-ETS services available to all students with disabilities that have IEPs, including those with a 504 plan, beginning at age 14, and prior to the student exiting secondary education. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, these services were delivered virtually and the procedures for outreach also shifted to a hybrid approach where some activities were conducted in-person and virtually utilizing social media platforms, and the internet.

Outreach activities and strategies for identifying students included the following:

- VIDDRS counselors participate in IEP meetings and provide information on VIDDRS services, including information regarding available Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- The program's fact sheet, referral form, and flyer advertising services are provided to students and their families.
- VIDDRS has representation on the SEA/LEA Capacity Building team to develop a territorial plan for transitioning students that will be inclusive of Pre-ETS requirements. The plan includes action steps that each agency's responsibility to promote the core principles for transition.
- Education officials share with VIDDRS referrals for services along with supporting documentation for potential students.

- VIDDRS and SEA/LEA share training and information materials for cross-training and professional development. Transition planning for students requires ongoing multi-agency collaboration with dialog between the student with their families and other stakeholders, such as the Virgin Islands Department of Labor and Virgin Islands Department of Education. This coordination between the partner agencies and stakeholders will ensure accurate information is shared and services are made available.
- VIDDRS continues to educate the student body and the public through regular TV and radio presentations, social media, and public service announcements.
- VIDDRS conducts individual informative meetings with students and parents to educate and promote services.
- VIDDRS is working to incorporate a request for services or denial form to ensure no student is overlooked for these services.

#### E. COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PRIVATE NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Describe the manner in which the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

The VIDDRS has several cooperative agreements with private non-profit organizations. In accordance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the designated state unit continues to strengthen agreements with Private Non-Profit Agencies. These agreements allow students and adults with significant disabilities to develop skills which result in employment sustainability and stabilization. The designated state agency continues to collaborate with other agencies and organizations that focus on students with disabilities such as the Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council, Inc. (VIDDC). The VIDDC in collaboration with VIDDRS provided Pre-ets services to in-school transitioning students. The services exposed the interested students to career exploration, self-advocacy, and independent living skills training. These services were provided to educate and enhance the student's ability to access/navigate post-secondary services. Those services were provided on a fee for service basis.

The VIDDRS also partners with the University affiliated program, Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) to provide Supported Employment services. This allowed interested persons in the community to receive training in job coaching. Individuals were selected to work with the participants who needs this vital services. They conducted assessment, job placement and provided long term support. These services were paid for based on a milestone basis.

The Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living (IL) plays a vital role in teaching independent Living skills to Vocational Rehabilitation participants who are visually impaired and interested in the coordination of attendant care services, mobility training and integration in community affairs. The Independent Living program was paid a fee for services provided.

The Disability Rights Center/CAP of the Virgin Islands provides advocacy and referral services. This ensures accessibility to services and community resources. They also conduct workshops for parents of students with disabilities and education officials. They facilitate presentations on various disabling conditions; and information relation to transitioning. The VIDDRS staff has been invited to make in-person presentations at these workshops, and also participated on radio talk shows that focus on the needs of persons living with a disability.

#### F. ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES



Describe the designated State agency's efforts to identify and make arrangements, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services and extended employment services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities.

To be deemed eligible for Supported Employment Services, an individual must have a severe impairment that substantially limits their ability to secure employment. This population of individuals will most likely require extended support from the VR agency to prepare for, secure, and maintain employment. Extended services are only available to youths with the most significant disabilities for a period of up to four years or until the youth attains the age of 25, whichever comes first. In accordance with 34 CFR 363.1, subsection (b)(2) extended services are provided to individuals following two years of receiving supported employment services and based on assessment and in agreement with the consumer.

In the past, the VIDDRS previously 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. This collaboration yielded results however, it became difficult to maintain the job coaches. The VIDDRS continues to dialog with private service providers who have the capacity to provide supported employment services and job coaches are part of the team of professionals. VIDDRS will continue to concentrate its efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a provider of supported employment services. A local service provider, Island Therapy Solutions Inc. recently began providing these services on an individual basis and the state agency is working to finalize the formal agreement. The scope of services include the requirements for supported employment as describes in 34 CFR 361.5 (c)(54).

## G. COORDINATION WITH EMPLOYERS

Describe how the designated State unit will work with employers to identify competitive integrated employment and career exploration opportunities in order to facilitate the provision of:

### 1. VR SERVICES; AND

The VIDDRS partner with a variety of employers in the community to provide employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Employers are solicited by the VIDDRS based on the employment goals set by individuals. The employers provide on the job training, apprenticeship training, internships, and a host of internal supports to ensure success in the workplace. The VIDDRS recognize the employers as community partners for hiring individuals with disabilities.

VIDDRS also works collaboratively with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Employment and Training Division to implement a seamless system for employer engagement to facilitate career opportunities in the demand occupations within the territory which include Administrative and support services, Allied health, construction trades, information technology, leisure and hospitality, retail and transportation and logistics. The Designated State Agency maintains healthy relationships with employers to ensure seem less job placements and

transfer current information about available tax credits and benefits. The program continues to recognize employers that have made significant contributions to the program through the presentations of awards, letters of recognition, and/ or acknowledgment on different media platforms. This will encourage employers to continue working with the program and its consumers. State Agency will continue to engage in similar initiatives to engage employers in the upcoming program years.

The VIDDRS held recognition ceremonies for employers and participants that successfully completed the Annual Summer Youth Employment Training Program. Employers received awards for their willingness to partner with the program and carry out the requirements. The annual summer work training experience is paid 6-week apprenticeship program. Students were placed in various job opportunities based on their career interests and skills. The program proved to be extremely successful as some participants were offered full-time employment based on their performances.

VIDDRS held employment fairs in both districts where employers were able to meet with prospective candidates. Attendees were provided with an opportunity to learn about the job market, current vacancies, and possibilities for training. The job fair catered to persons with disabilities and the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were on hand to assist individuals with completing applications and working through the pre-screening process. The VIDDRS works closely with the American Job Center to enhance our approach to business engagement. The agency meets with potential employers to secure and place participants in employment opportunities. Continued collaboration with local employers will be a priority for the VIDDRS and plans to host interest meetings with employers that would like to become community partners.

## 2. TRANSITION SERVICES, INCLUDING PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES, FOR STUDENTS AND YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES.

The VIDDRS Coordinates with the Local Education Agency (LEA) officials and the Virgin Islands Department of Education as the State Educational Agency (“SEA”), and through its State Office of Special Education (“SOSE”) to ensure that each eligible student with a disability is provided with a free and appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”), 20 USC § 1400(d). The purpose of this agreement is to support the transition of eligible students with disabilities from secondary to post-secondary activities. The VIDDRS team attends Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings when invited. This ensure that students with disabilities and their families are informed about the services provided by the VIDDRS. Eligibility for services are determined within 30 days, and Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) are developed and approved within 90 days. As mandated by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act, the VIDDRS partner with the LEA, through the SOSE to provide Work-based Learning Experiences to students. This Pre-ets activity is provided in conjunction with the teachers and private providers.

The VIDDRS shall ensure that an inter-agency agreement, or another mechanism for inter-agency coordination is in effect between each non-educational public agency and the VIDOE, as required by the IDEA, and its provision of a free appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities. The VIDDRS disseminate information to the LEA regarding effective, results-based practices for students with disabilities to be prepared for post-secondary education, vocational training, integrated employment including supported employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation; Ensure that the collaborating parties to this Agreement meet quarterly or as needed to evaluate the transition process and recommend system changes. VIDDRS will provide professional

development and technical assistance activities for the LEA, and other public and private agencies, parents/guardians/students/ surrogates on topics related to transition planning and adult service activities. Provide training in conjunction with the VIDDRS regarding Pre-employment Transition Services and inter-agency service linkages, and distribute the "VIDDRS Information Packet" for LEAs to provide to students with disabilities age 14 and older. The Information Packet will include the VIDDRS services and contact information. The VIDDRS as a State Agency federally mandated to collaborate with the SOSE agrees to designate at least one member from its respective divisions to attend conference/meetings pertaining to the implementation of this Interagency Agreement, and for planning and implementing the services required by the student's IEP. The VIDDRS develop guidelines on the implementation of this agreement and train state and local-level staff regarding those guidelines; provide services to students who meet the eligibility criteria, attend IEP meetings for students beginning at age 14, provide consultation and technical assistance to aid LEA in planning for the transition of eligible students as needed; conduct educational/informational workshops to interested students, parents/advocates on the VIDDRS process and where referrals may be accepted; develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible participants prior to the student leaving the school setting. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process; Provide Pre-employment Transition Services to interested students as outlined by the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act. VIDDRS will provide services that are legally their responsibility for those transitioning youth who are of working age and those who are determined to be eligible for services by VIDDRS. The VIDDRS provides transitioning students with the opportunity to engage in Work-based Learning Experiences based on their career interests. In house services are provided directly to youths with disabilities and the state Agency partners with the Department of labor to provide employment readiness services to out of school youths.

The VIDDRS is a untapped resource for employers that are seeking to hire qualified and educated individuals. Employers are beginning to realize that they can rely on the VIDDRS to assist with providing the necessary supports for individuals with disabilities. The plan is to expand the program's ability to engage more employers by hiring Employment Related Specialists that will focus on marketing and building a relationship with the business communities. It is really joint effort between VIDDRS and its private, core, and community partners. With the help of the Workforce Investment Board, the VIDDRS has begun creating these relationships and the VR Counselors play a key role in connecting our population with employers. As we continue to grow these relationships, it will be a win win situation for all involved as it will lead to more successful employment outcomes and encourage a robust economy while assisting employers with filling their vacancies.

#### H. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION

Describe how the designated State unit will collaborate with the State agency responsible for administering each of the following programs to develop opportunities for competitive integrated employment, to the greatest extent practicable:

##### 1. THE STATE MEDICAID PLAN UNDER TITLE XIX OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT;

Both VIDDRS and the Medicaid Assistance Program (MAP) are under the same DSA. The programs have a collaborative relationship as it relates to shared clients and referral of clients. 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.

## 2. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES; AND

The VIDDRS sits on the board for the Virgin Islands Developmental Disabilities Council and actively participates in making decisions that will affect change and promote inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities living in the territory. The VIDDRS partners with VIDDC to coordinate services for this specific population in areas such as accessibility to transportation, employment, recreation, housing, and inclusion. State Agency has partnered with VIDDC on a Pre-Employment Transition Summer initiative. However, this partnership did not result in improved competitive integrated employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. The VIDDRS is currently engaged in a nationwide study with the State of States of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities that will provide results to assist in identifying the territory's resources and available services to this population.

## 3. THE STATE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES.

The VIDDRS collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Health, Division of Mental Health, VIDOH to provide mental health services to its consumers. This includes Psychiatric Evaluation assessments, and out-patient medication and therapeutic services. Through the VIDDRS partnership with the Department of Education to deliver Pre-employment Transition Services, the Division of Mental Health collaborates in the delivery of health information to the transitioning youth. Mental Health services in the territory are extremely limited. Therefore, 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.

## I. COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT; DATA SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the designated State agency's procedures and activities to establish and maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development designed to ensure an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professional and paraprofessional personnel for the designated State unit, including the following:

### 1. SYSTEM ON PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

#### A. QUALIFIED PERSONNEL NEEDS

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on qualified personnel needs with respect to:

#### I. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL WHO ARE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE AGENCY IN THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS SERVED, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY;

The Designated State Agency is comprised of fourteen (14) full-time employees, (11) Classified, and (3) Exempt positions:

(1) Territorial Program Administrator

(1) Territorial Assistant Administrator

(2) District Managers, one in each district-St. Thomas/St. John District and St. Croix District.

(6) Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors-(1) III, (2) II & (3) I-Currently, there are 3 VR Counselors in each district.

(3) Support and Administrative Staff- (1) Administrative Assistant, (1) Vocational Rehab Aide, (1) Computer Support Specialist.

(1) Transitional Program Coordinator (Territorial)

The deficiency in the personnel places an extreme burden on the current staff members. The Designated State unit continues to advocate for the needs of the staff. In the past several years, the agency experienced a significant turnover in the Management of the Human Resources division. Thus, creating a delay in the hiring and on-boarding of new staff members. The current combined caseload from both the St. Thomas/St. John District and St. Croix District are approximately 345 active cases. The division served over 400 individuals with disabilities in the past program year. Considering that the population faced significant challenges to include job displacement in the aftermath of the hurricanes and now as a result of the pandemic, it is projected that the number of individuals served will continue to increase by at least 50 within the coming years. Adequate staffing will be key factor in accommodating the increased number of consumers.

Exempt positions are created by statute or executive order of the Governor. These positions are not covered by a collective bargaining unit or agreement. They do not receive overtime pay or benefit from salary negotiations. Classified employees are members of a local union and benefit from all the terms within the contractual agreement.

## II. THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL CURRENTLY NEEDED BY THE STATE AGENCY TO PROVIDE VR SERVICES, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY; AND

Approximately eight (8) personnel are currently needed by State agency to provide VR Services and they are as follows: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (2, one in each district), Administrative Assistant (1-STX district), Federal Grant Monitor (1-Territorial) Transition Program Assistant (2, one in each district), Executive Administrative Assist (1-Territorial) and Rehabilitation Aide (1-STX district). Through our affiliation with the University of the Virgin Islands and the recent influx of professionals relocating to the territory, VIDDRS does not anticipate difficulty in recruiting qualified individuals.

## III. PROJECTIONS OF THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL, BROKEN DOWN BY PERSONNEL CATEGORY, WHO WILL BE NEEDED BY THE STATE 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.

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. Currently, there are three staff members that are less than 5 years away from retirement. The Assistant Administrator and Federal Grant Monitor retired several years back and one of the VR Counselors relocated shortly after the storms. The Division needs at least two additional VR Counselors, a Federal Grant Monitor, Assistant Administrator, Administrative Officer, and Program Coordinator to accommodate the growing population in the next 5 years based on the projections. The VIDDRS has to aggressively recruit personnel and is committed to 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 Computer Support Specialist
- 1 Executive Administrative Assistant
- 1 Assistant Administrator
- 1 Program Coordinator
- 1 Administrative Assistant
- 2 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, one in each district.

#### B. PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT

Describe the development and maintenance of a system for collecting and analyzing on an annual basis data on personnel development with respect to:

##### I. A LIST OF THE INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE THAT ARE PREPARING VR PROFESSIONALS, BY TYPE OF PROGRAM;

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, Education, Nursing, Marine Science, Public and Business Administration. Unfortunately, the university does not provide a degree program or courses in Rehabilitation Counseling. The are options available online. Staff interested in a graduate program must enroll in an institution on the U.S. mainland or online learning. Currently, two VR staff/ counselors have acquired their master degrees at the University and one staff is enrolled in the Masters Psychology Program. The counselors are encouraged to secure their CRC; information and resources have been shared pertaining to acquiring the required certification.

##### II. THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS ENROLLED AT EACH OF THOSE INSTITUTIONS, BROKEN DOWN BY TYPE OF PROGRAM; AND

Currently, two of the six counselors have Masters Degrees from the University of the Virgin Islands and one staff is pursuing a Master's Degree in Psychology with an expected graduation date of May this year.

##### III. 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.

At this time, there are no staff members that recently received said certification and or licensure. However, one VR Counselor enrolled in a training course in preparation for certification.

##### 2. PLAN FOR RECRUITMENT, PREPARATION AND RETENTION OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL

Describe the development and implementation of a plan to address the current and projected needs for qualified personnel including, the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the designated State unit 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. The VIDDRS plan to address the current projected needs include a five-year strategic plan that will assist with the recruitment and retention of qualified personnel. The plan outlines the collaborative relationship between the state agency, community partners, and the University of the Virgin Islands to develop a pipeline for prospective candidates. The University will also assist with professional development training of current personnel and VIDDRS will provide ongoing training opportunities. 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, they have degrees in closely related fields such as Psychology, Social Sciences and Counseling. The University can assist with ensuring that personnel remain current and relevant 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.

Regarding the VIDDRS Staff, concerns appear to be in the limited access to promotions and comparative compensation in regards to the cost of living.

### 3. PERSONNEL STANDARDS

Describe the State agency's policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B) to ensure that designated State unit 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

Traditionally, the Designated State Unit has adhered to standards set by the State Civil Service System which are consistent with the highest entry-level academic degree of a B.A. in Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling or a related field, needed for professions in this category. As there are no State approved or recognized certification, licensing or registration requirements for rehabilitation counselors; the Designated State Unit has based its personnel standards for counselors on those needed to meet the national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) requirement which is a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling or a related field or other master's degree that meets the CRC specifications. Deadlines and a written plan for personnel to meet the CRC requirements have been established. The Head of the designated State Agency is very supportive of the State Unit's recruitment efforts. 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. The State Agency posts it's vacancies online with the Human Relations Division and throughout various government offices, The agency often attends college fairs at the local high schools and college campuses to recruit and promote services.

**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.**

VIDDRS is working collaboratively with State Workforce Board and other stakeholders to ensure that ongoing training is available to VR personnel. VIUCEDD, LEA, and other training providers have provided technical assistance in this area to ensure that VR personnel is equipped with the tools required to address the complex challenges that confront VR consumers. The staff is stationed at various times in the American Job Center and are exposed to the evolving labor force and are on the front line with addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities.

**4. STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Describe the State agency's policies, procedures, and activities to ensure that, consistent with section 101(a)(7)(C) of the Rehabilitation Act, all personnel employed by the designated State unit receive appropriate and adequate training in terms of:

**A. A SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS WITHIN THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, 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**

VIDDRS has prioritized professional development and subsequently is working to develop a robust training schedule that will focus on all areas of vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs. The purpose of the training is to enhance the personnel's skill set, and knowledge base and ensure that they are highly qualified. The training modules will place special focus on the following areas: new employee orientation, effective communication, assistive technology, customized employment, case management, customer service, and leadership. Additionally, the staff is engaged in a number of webinars and workshops provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment, VR-TAC, and the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative, NTACT:C. The state agency fiscal and managerial team participates in the monthly conference calls and attends the annual spring and fall conferences held by the Council for State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation. The state agency also utilizes the guidance and policy directives to aid in the development of training areas. Information is shared with the staff about current trends, service changes, and resources available.

**B. PROCEDURES FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISSEMINATION OF SIGNIFICANT KNOWLEDGE FROM RESEARCH AND OTHER SOURCES TO DESIGNATED STATE UNIT PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS.**

Information and resources are shared amongst staff via email, flyers, and handouts. Staff is encouraged to register with technical assistance entities to receive relevant and current data that will benefit the clientele. Through the national websites, staff can access information and participate in online sessions that enhance their professional development. Case conferences, reviews, and meetings are held monthly to give staff an opportunity to share knowledge and available resources.

**5. PERSONNEL TO ADDRESS INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS**



Describe how the designated State unit has personnel or obtains the services of other individuals who 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 is interested in acquiring these skills to aid in the provision of services.

#### 6. COORDINATION OF PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

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 VIDDRS actively 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, VIDOL and VIDOE participates in trainings and events sponsored by all the partner agencies. There are plans to develop a WIOA work plan that forge a closer relationship with the educational and labor officials; the plan will support efforts already established and provide more opportunities to work together. Currently, we are in the process of updating the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partner agencies. The agreement outlines the responsibilities and joint goals that will facilitate the coordination of personnel under the IDEA. The plan for the upcoming program years is to enhance communication and collaboration with VIDOE and VIDOL to ensure that information shared across agencies, services are provided to improve successful outcomes and relationships are strengthened.

#### J. STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

##### 1. PROVIDE AN ASSESSMENT OF THE REHABILITATION NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES RESIDING WITHIN THE STATE, PARTICULARLY THE VR SERVICES NEEDS OF THOSE:

##### A. WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES;

The VIDDRS in partnership with VISRC completed the Combined Statewide Needs Assessment in 2016 prior to the twin storms and the nationwide pandemic. The assessment is past due. The goal is to complete the CSNA by December of 2022. Once complete, it will reflect any service gaps within VIDDRS outreach and community partnership goals. CSNA results will also support the forming of a strategic plan to build relationships across departments over the next three years ensuring that those individuals who are homeless, veterans, those with psychiatric and cognitive disabilities, receive timely Vocational Rehabilitation Services. There have been discussions to engage the University of the Virgin Islands, CELL to assist in collecting data in hopes of arriving at a comprehensive response. The following areas were previously identified as specific needs to assist in the effective provision of the supported employment services: social skill training for consumers to be able to advocate for their rights and actively participate in daily activities. Sensitivity training for employers and the community is crucial to assist in

alleviating barriers to independence and employment. Certified job coaches and trained mental health professionals are needed to assist with counseling services to the growing population of individuals with mental health disabilities. The state agency has leveraged this need through a local service provider and will continue to develop and expand supported employment services in the territory to ensure these services are available across the districts.

#### B. WHO ARE MINORITIES;

The minority groups that have commonly been identified as underserved are Caucasians and Hispanics particularly individuals with cognitive and psychiatric disabilities, the homeless and or indigent, persons with language barriers, and individuals with prior criminal convictions that are under skilled. The need for education, training and preparatory skills are key to the facilitation of employment. VIDDRS projected plan is to collaborate with agencies (Department of Labor, Veteran Affairs, Department of Mental Health, etc.) to meet the need of the minority population. Outreach materials are prepared in various languages to assist in this need. The updated CSNA will further reveal the specific ethnic groups that are unserved or underserved by the VIDDRS.

#### C. WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM;

The underserved and unserved are those individuals that require supported employment services; the program experienced challenges in retaining certified job coaches to work said population. Therefore, the VIDDRS is exploring other viable options of providing this service. Additionally, individuals with prior a criminal history or recently released from incarceration may be considered as underserved by the program due to limited supports and resources.

#### D. WHO HAVE BEEN SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM; AND

The State Workforce Development System is comprised of various professionals from different sectors of government and private businesses and organizations. The VIDDRS counselors have a regular presence in the VI Job Centers and as such, all workforce services which are beneficial to VR consumers are utilized such as job readiness workshops and seminars, individualized career counseling, job search, training, and referrals. Dislocated workers and out-of-school youths are serviced by other partner agencies affiliated with the Workforce Board. The VIDDRS has referred participants to the Department of Labor occupational training and summer employment programs. Some participants are also referred to the Department of Education Adult Education diploma and certification programs. Among some of the emerging concerns of the individuals being served through other components were that they lack training in assisting persons with disabilities and usually refer the individual to VIDDRS for services. Therefore, consistent cross-training is very much needed. Another concern was the unavailability of certified trainers and instructors for vocational training programs at the adult education level. Recently, the workforce development system has seen an increase in applications from training providers which expands opportunities for consumers.

#### E. WHO ARE YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES AND STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, INCLUDING, AS APPROPRIATE, THEIR NEED FOR PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES OR OTHER TRANSITION SERVICES.

Youths with disabilities are those individuals not younger than age 14 but older than 24 years of age. Students with disabilities are individuals not younger than age 14 and not older than 21 years of age. VIDDRS aims to work closely with education officials to enhance the delivery of

these services. These services promise to promote job readiness and engagement of the workforce system while identifying potential career opportunities for this population. Transition services also act as a deterrent for those students that are at risk for drop out. The need for pre-employment transition services is essential to facilitate a successful transfer to post-secondary opportunities and or the workforce. While delivering these services, VIDDRS discovered that transportation was a barrier for the students and soft skills training were essential to facilitate a successful transition.

## 2. IDENTIFY THE NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP, OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE; AND

The need for functional community rehabilitation programs in the territory remains critical. Currently, they are limited but VIDDRS hopes to build capacity through its partnership with the Association of Independent Living Center and Island Therapy Solutions, Inc. VIDDRS plans to partner with the Center for Independent Living to develop a curriculum and training program for individuals with disabilities that would benefit from this type of setting. The community rehabilitation program will facilitate adjustment and mobility training as well as the development of independent living skills. Currently, there is a great need for the support services provided by service providers through the CRPs. Recently, the VIDDRS forged a relationship with Island Therapy Solutions to provide similar services. This partnership has yielded positive results and increased the number of successful closures. The services were extremely beneficial to the population and will serve as a framework to build on. The updated CSNA will help to identify deficiencies and successes of the CRPs.

## 3. 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 THE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT

VIDDRS continues to assess the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services. In collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Education, VIDOE, the VIDDRS began an on-the-job training program and work-based learning activities for transitioning students. The students are required to complete surveys and or participate in exit interviews to assist the program with making the necessary improvements. However, VIDDRS realizes that there is room for growth in this area as parents and employers should be included in the overall assessment. These services are the introduction into the world of work and the on-the-job training experiences create an avenue for employers to have the option to select their employees based on their performance and work ethic. The newly onboarded Transition Coordinator will be responsible for assessing and expanding the VIDDRS transition services offerings.

## K. ANNUAL ESTIMATES

Describe:

### 1. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES

Based on the Disability Status Report completed in 2010 on the U.S. Virgin Islands, the prevalence rate for individuals with a disability is 9.8%. In other words 10,372 of the 105,443 people reported one or more disabilities.

- In St. Croix in 2010, the overall percentage (prevalence rate) of people with a disability of all ages was 10.8 percent (5,398 people with disabilities out of 49,858).
- In St. John in 2010, the overall percentage (prevalence rate) of people with a disability of all ages was 7.0 percent (292 people with disabilities out of 4,169).
- In St. Thomas in 2010, the overall percentage (prevalence rate) of people with a disability of all ages was 9.1 percent (4,682 people with disabilities out of 51,406).

The VIDDRS will not use these figures to provide estimates of individuals in the state that are eligible for services. The VIDDRS records indicate that 328 participants were eligible for VR services in FFY 2022. However, in FFY 2023, the VIDDRS estimates that 375 participants with disabilities will be eligible to receive VR services.

2. THE NUMBER OF ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS WHO WILL RECEIVE SERVICES UNDER:

A. THE VR PROGRAM;

The VIDDRS records indicate that 328 participants were eligible for VR services in FFY 2022. However, in FFY 2023, the VIDDRS estimates that 375 participants with disabilities will be eligible to receive VR services.

B. THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM; AND

The VIDDRS estimates for FFY 2022 approximately 24 eligible participants will receive Supported Employment services. The VIDDRS estimates in FFY 2023, 32 individuals with the most significant disabilities will receive Supported Employment services.

C. EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY, IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION.

The state agency is not implementing an Order of Selection.

3. THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR VR SERVICES, BUT ARE NOT RECEIVING SUCH SERVICES DUE TO AN ORDER OF SELECTION; AND

The VIDDRS is not implementing an order of selection.

4. THE COST OF SERVICES FOR THE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS ESTIMATED TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR SERVICES. IF UNDER AN ORDER OF SELECTION, IDENTIFY THE COST OF SERVICES FOR EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY.

The U. S. Virgin Islands Vocational Rehabilitation Program does not operate under an order of selection. The state agency provides client services in the order that the cases are received. Therefore, there are no priority groups.

For FFY 2022, VIDDRS will serve an estimated total of 328 individuals with disabilities who received VR services at an average cost of \$6, 453.51 per client; and 24 eligible individuals would receive supported employment services at an average cost of \$2,182.12 per client using Title VI funds. The total cost of services in FFY 2022 totals \$2, 169,122.16.

Based on projections for FFY 2023, VIDDRS estimates that 375 individuals with disabilities would receive VR services at an average cost of \$6, 168.90 per client; and 32 eligible individuals would receive supported employment services at an average cost of \$1,880.81 per client using Title VI funds. The total cost of services for FFY 2023 is estimated at \$2, 373,523.42. The overall cost of services for FFY 2022 and FY 2023 averages \$4,542,645.58.

## L. STATE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

The designated State unit must:

1. IDENTIFY IF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES WERE JOINTLY DEVELOPED AND AGREED TO BY THE STATE VR AGENCY AND THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL, IF THE STATE HAS A COUNCIL, AND JOINTLY AGREED TO ANY REVISIONS

The goals and priorities that were jointly agreed upon by the VISRC and VIDDRS are as follows:

Increased Visibility and Improved Service Delivery-The State Agency needs to be more visible in the community to individuals with disabilities and stakeholders. The VIDDRS will commit to providing high-quality customer service to all eligible individuals to assist them in obtaining employment consistent with their chosen career pathways. Engage in a media campaign that will promote the service offered by the VIDDRS on various platforms to included social media. This will forge new community partnerships.

Promote Pre-Employment Transition Services- The VIDDRS needs to host regular information sessions to students, educators, and parents. The VIDDRS held several forums with students with disabilities and education officials to orient them to available resources and services. The program continues to collaborate with the Virgin Islands Department of Education on various training initiatives that address the five core areas-Job Exploration, Work-based Learning, Post Secondary Education Counseling, Work Place Readiness, and Instruction in Self Advocacy.

New Community Partnerships will increase the number of individuals applying for services. The VIDDRS has to connect more with Government agencies and the private sector to adequately address areas the needs of the population. Supported Employment services is an area that the VIDRRS has struggled with due to the lack of certified job coaches. Recently, the VIDDRS partnered with a private provider to facilitate these services to the individuals with the most significant with disabilities.

Staff development and hire new personnel-The VIDDRS is currently understaffed and needs to recruit new personnel to address the increasing caseloads. Another priority area is staff development and succession planning as there staff members that are close to retirement. The transfer of knowledge is extremely important to ensure that VIDDRS continues to evolve

Improve service delivery, update Case Services Manual and Procure an electronic Case Management System. The VIDDRS will have the ability to reach more consumers through the use of technology. The State Agency is in the process of updating the case manual and securing an electronic case management system that will improve its ability to connect with its consumers, vendors, and partners, as well as stakeholders.

The achievement of the state goals and priorprities will be measured by the customer satisfaction and needs surveys and reports from stakeholders

2. IDENTIFY THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES IN CARRYING OUT THE VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS

The VIDDRS and VISRC jointly developed the state goals and priorities of the VR and Supported Employment Programs and they are as follows:

### **1. Goal # 1: Improve Quality Employment Outcomes**

P1: Develop a year-round employment training program that focuses on building the skill set that adequately prepares consumers for competitive employment. The support from this program will boost consumers' confidence and lead to their success on the job.

P2: Provide Sensitivity training for employers and the community to remove the stigma from hiring an individual with disabilities and educate them on available accommodations.

The target for this goal is to continue to make strides that will effect change on a ongoing basis and the plan will be reviewed quarterly to ensure target improvement is achieved.

## **2. Goal# 2: Increase the number of qualified job coaches/providers to strengthen the VIDDRS supported employment offerings**

P1: Continue partnership with VIUCEDD to recruit, train, and maintain certified job coaches in both districts.

P2: Collaborate with community partners and providers to assist with providing SE services to this population.

P3: Hire new personnel to address the shortfall and provide training opportunities for staff on SE services.

This goal will be assessed annually as funding is required and allotted within the course of the fiscal year. This measure will help support the VIDDRS plan to build capacity and improve performance.

## **3. Goal# 3: Promote and advertise the VR program through the use of social media, television, and public service announcements.**

P1: Distribute printed material on the available services to local businesses and government agencies

P2: Utilize Social Media, create radio/tv ads, and purchase radio slots to announce to the listening and viewing public about VR and SE offerings for persons with disabilities.

P3: Continue pursuing the implementation of the electronic case management system.

This goal will be assessed on a monthly basis and adjustments will be made as needed. Through the use of surveys and interviews, the agency will determine if strategies employed have been profitable.

## **Goal#4: Enhance Collaboration with the community and core partners, employers, and stakeholders to ensure that consumers receive the best quality of service.**

P1: Continue to be a presence in the One-Stop Center to meet the need of prospective consumers and educate others about the need for inclusion in the workforce.

P2: Update existing Memorandums of Understanding, MOU, and develop new agreements with partners.

After a review of the goals and objectives, not all the goals were met and will continue to be a priority over the next four years. The VIDDRS is committed to providing quality services to its consumers and will work towards achieving and exceeding the specified benchmarks.

The goals and priorities listed will be addressed on an ongoing basis as well as reviewed annually for targeted improvement. The VISRC is charged with the responsibility of monitoring and taking corrective action to ensure that the agency achieve the set priorities. However, the

VIDDRS will continue to monitor internally to ensure that the goals aligns with the performance measures.

3. ENSURE THAT THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES ARE BASED ON AN ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. THE MOST RECENT COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT, INCLUDING ANY UPDATES;

The VIDDRS in partnership with VISRC completed the Combined Statewide Needs Assessment prior to the twin storms and the nationwide pandemic. The CSNA is past due as it was last completed in 2016. Data is being collected and preparations are being made to update the assessment. Once completed, it will support the goals and priorities as well as address any service gaps. The assessment will serve to inform the VIDDRS of areas of improvement that should be included in the strategic plan for the next three years. The objective is to update the CSNA in FFY 2022.

B. THE STATE'S PERFORMANCE UNDER THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES OF SECTION 116 OF WIOA; AND

The State Agency tracks its performance accountability measures against the data that is collected monthly and quarterly to ensure that it is meeting the outlined goals. The VIDDRS continues to research additional strategies to improve performance and has developed processes to ensure that the data collected is reliable and accurate.

The agency has been working to develop policies and procedures that will support the performance accountability measures.

The implementation of an electronic case management system will assist staff in reporting accurately on the five performance accountability measures. The case management system will help to alleviate possible errors in the data entry process. It will further assist with the monitoring of successful closures and tracking of credential attainment and MSGs.

The VIDDRS plan is to continue enforcing consistent training on the requirements of WIOA; this will encourage dialogue with staff on the definition of credential attainment and how it leads to gainful employment. Technical assistance will be sought to ensure that all avenues are explored as it pertains to improvement in this area.

Continued collaboration with core and community partners is necessary to address employer engagement activities and shape the decisions of the Workforce Investment Board.

C. OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION ON THE OPERATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VR PROGRAM, INCLUDING ANY REPORTS RECEIVED FROM THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL AND FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MONITORING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED UNDER SECTION 107.

VIDDRS continues to address the findings and recommendations. We are in the process of updating our policies and procedures as required to enhance timely service delivery to clients and vendors. Within the last year, VISRC has experienced significant setback in terms of membership vacancies that we are currently working to correct. The recruitment of new members are ongoing to better support and advocate for the VR program and its clients. VIDDRS is very interactive and transparent as it relates to the sharing information about operation and programmatic challenges with the SRC that affect the effectiveness of the VR Program. SRC leadership has been at the table during meetings with core partners and has

provided input that it believes will help the VIDDRS with WIOA mandates. Specifically as it relates to: • Outreach and marketing to impact access to VR services for the unserved and underserved. • Improving transition services for students and youth with disabilities • Implementation of an electronic client case management system.

#### M. ORDER OF SELECTION

Describe:

1. WHETHER THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT WILL IMPLEMENT AND ORDER OF SELECTION. IF SO, DESCRIBE:

A. THE ORDER TO BE FOLLOWED IN SELECTING ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS TO BE PROVIDED VR SERVICES

VIDDRS will not implement an order of selection for VR services.

B. THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE ORDER

Not Applicable.

C. THE SERVICE AND OUTCOME GOALS

Not Applicable.

D. TIME WITHIN WHICH THESE GOALS MAY BE ACHIEVED FOR INDIVIDUALS IN EACH PRIORITY CATEGORY WITHIN THE ORDER; AND

Not Applicable.

E. HOW INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES ARE SELECTED FOR SERVICES BEFORE ALL OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Not Applicable.

2. IF THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT HAS ELECTED TO SERVE ELIGIBLE INDIVIDUALS, REGARDLESS OF ANY ESTABLISHED ORDER OF SELECTION, WHO REQUIRE SPECIFIC SERVICES OR EQUIPMENT TO MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT

Not Applicable.

#### N. GOALS AND PLANS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI FUNDS

1. SPECIFY THE STATE'S GOALS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUNDS RECEIVED UNDER SECTION 603 OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

The funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act are utilized for the provision of supported employment services. As mentioned, VIDDRS' goal in this area is to increase the population that is served by a minimum of 8 individuals. The VIDDRS will continue to focus on improving employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities by partnering with other stakeholders and providers. Increased advertisement about success stories and actively training staff on job development, customized employment, and coaching.

2. DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED, WITH FUNDS RESERVED PURSUANT TO SECTION 603(D), FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING:

A. THE PROVISION OF EXTENDED SERVICES FOR A PERIOD NOT TO EXCEED 4 YEARS; AND



The VIDDRS's main objective is to assist individuals and youths with the most significant disabilities towards achieve employment outcomes. In providing these services, the State Agency through a private provider focuses on developing employability and work readiness skills; these activities allow for job placement/coaching. Each supported employment case is processed individually and based on the need for these services. The VIDDRS will provide extended services for youths with the most significant disabilities following assessment, evaluation, and coaching. If there is a need for extended services, the staff is required to monitor closely to ensure that the individual achieves the identified goal with support. As funds are limited, the agency plans to leverage opportunities for additional funding to serve the population as need. Individuals are transition into extended services after receiving up to 24 months of supported employment services; this decision also based on assessment and in agreement with the consumer. These services aim to provide services to individuals with the most significant disabilities.

**B. HOW THE STATE WILL LEVERAGE OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNDS TO INCREASE RESOURCES FOR EXTENDED SERVICES AND EXPANDED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES.**

The VIDDRS first utilizes private funds such as medical insurance and other available resources from the Department of Health to fund extended services for youths before SE funds are authorized. Half of the SE funds received are reserved for youths with the most significant disabilities who are between the ages of 14 and 24 years old. The services provided fosters an employment outcome and assist with skill-building. The agency will work collaboratively with other community partners within the workforce system and in the private sector to increase extended and expanded supported employment services. The VIDDRS will build new partnerships with employers, private businesses and local government agencies to increase resources for the population. Enforce staff training and professional development to ensure that staff remains on the cutting edge as it relates to opportunities for youths with the most significant disabilities.

**O. STATE'S STRATEGIES**

Describe the required strategies and how the agency will use these strategies to achieve its goals and priorities, support innovation and expansion activities, and overcome any barriers to accessing the VR and the Supported Employment programs (See sections 101(a)(15)(D) and (18)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act and section 427 of the General Education Provisions Act (GEPA)):

**1. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO EXPAND AND IMPROVE SERVICES TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

VIDDRS, in collaboration with the partners of the workforce system, 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) Workforce development activities revolve around the build-out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are: Administrative and Support Services, Allied Health, Construction Trades, and Information Technology. VR counselors will receive training to better assist clients to develop employment plans that will enable them to be employed in areas that provide opportunities to earn a living wage and in-demand sector industries that afford them opportunities for professional growth and career development.

The VR Transition Units (one each on St. Thomas and St. Croix) provide coordinated activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings.

Transition Unit staff will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE as developed by the student's VR Counselor. VIDDRS will engage in collaborative initiatives to facilitate the provision of pre-employment services as required.

Students leaving for college will be provided with those assistive or technological devices necessary for the successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace.

The State Agency will also partner with the Department of Education to hold joint training sessions for parents of students in the Special Education Program and plan educational and informational meetings with teachers, counselors, and coordinators of the education Department. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

The VIDDRS will strengthen its administrative, fiscal, and programmatic controls to ensure the smooth delivery of service to persons with disabilities. Provide training opportunities and conduct regular meetings with staff to ensure knowledge and skills in their duties.

## **2. HOW A BROAD RANGE OF ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES AND DEVICES WILL BE PROVIDED TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES AT EACH STAGE OF THE REHABILITATION PROCESS AND ON A STATEWIDE BASIS**

VIDDRS will work collaboratively with VIUCEDD to facilitate opportunities for VR consumers to have access to AT services. VIDDRS recognizes the importance of technology in the business world. The full utilization of AT services and devices are needed to assist individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential. VIDDRS will continue to provide these services through our partnership with local vendors as required to facilitate the achievement of client goals. Eligible persons with disabilities in the Virgin Islands receive devices from the Medical Assistance Program and also from the VIDDRS. This includes assistive technology such as visual and hearing aids, prosthetics and other independent living devices to improve mobility. Under the VIUCEDD persons may qualify to receive interest loans to purchase assistive technology and through a local specialized vendor there are affordable hearing aid programs. The local telephone company also provides services for the hearing impaired and the elderly population. There are opportunities for training of personnel on the use of these devices through our specialized vendor and community partners.

## **3. THE OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND SERVE INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES WHO ARE MINORITIES, INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM**

Resources in the Virgin Islands are limited in relation to availability in other jurisdictions across the United States; this is due mainly to our geographical location from the continental United States. This has created a challenge for persons with disabilities and the VI Vocational Rehabilitation Program. A comprehensive database should be established to identify those persons that are minorities and have been marginalized by society. This provides an avenue to those individuals that are overlooked. Counselors will be encouraged to seek out opportunities for professional growth and career development that will effect change in the life of the consumer. VIDDRS plans to continue connecting with various community, civic and church groups to identify services needed by the minority and underserved populations.

## **4. THE METHODS TO BE USED TO 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, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES)

The methods used to improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities include the following initiatives. VIDDRS in both districts (St. Thomas/St. John and St. Croix) is slated to provide coordinated activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings. Staff will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE as developed by the student's VR Counselor. VIDDRS will engage in collaborative initiatives to facilitate provision of pre-employment services as required. Students leaving for college will be provided with those assistive or technological devices necessary for their successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace.

The State Agency will partner with the Department of Education to hold joint training sessions for parents of students in the Special Education Program and plan educational and informational meetings with teachers, counselors and coordinators of the education Department. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

5. IF APPLICABLE, PLANS FOR ESTABLISHING, DEVELOPING, OR IMPROVING COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS WITHIN THE STATE

There are no community rehabilitation programs in the state at this time. Since we lost the CRPs several years ago, the VIDDRS has shifted its focus in hopes of delivering the services provided by the CRPs. The designated state agency plans to increase employment outcomes and skill level of consumers to include youths by utilizing a more integrated approach through the use of the American One-Stop Center. The VIDDRS will engage the partners in the One-Stop to provide various services. Through the implementation of the electronic case management system that will enhance collaboration with partners and provide a platform for consumers to access more services. VIDDRS will continue to lobby for new employers to become VR partners while providing sensitivity training to educate on the needs of the population. Regular consumer assessments conducted by VISRC and VISILC will be encouraged to assist in identifying service gaps.

6. STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF THE STATE WITH RESPECT TO THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA

The VIDDRS continues to implement the following strategies to improve state performance with respect to the evaluation standards and performance indicators. Continue with the practice of sharing periodically statistical information with staff. Articulate intervention plans with Managers in order to comply with the established goals. Continue efforts to procure an electronic case management system as it will make a significant improvement in the area of data collection. It can be modified to follow the participants after exiting the program. This will assist with the accountability measures under section 116 of the WIOA and id with tracking throughout the quarters after exit. The VIDDRS will focus on employer engagement and provide training or orientations to improve awareness about the benefits of hiring persons with disabilities, and also inform them about technical assistance after placement. The VIDDRS will continue to refer consumers to other core programs and continue to promote post-secondary education among consumers. Sensitivity trainings will be made available to all stakeholders to include core partners. The VIDDRS will continue to work with core and non-core partners to strengthen its efforts and improve its performance.

## 7. STRATEGIES FOR ASSISTING OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM IN ASSISTING INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

VIDDRS, in collaboration with the partners of the workforce system, will forge industry or sector partnerships as it relates to in-demand industry sectors, occupations and career pathways, as required by WIOA section 101(d)(3)(B),(D) Workforce development activities revolve around the build-out of Industry sectors. The Territory's current demand sectors based on current hiring trends are: Administrative and Support Services, Allied Health, Construction Trades, Information Technology, Leisure and Hospitality, and Transportation and Logistics. VR counselors have received training to better assist clients to develop employment plans that will foster employment and provide opportunities to earn a living wage and encourage professional growth and career development. The VIDDRS coordinates activities for transitioning students to assist them in preparing for jobs in integrated work settings. The VR counselor will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE and engage in collaborative initiatives with the board to facilitate the provision of pre-employment services as required. VIDDRS will provide information about the Vocational Rehabilitation program and the available post-secondary services. Students leaving for college will be provided with assistive or technological devices necessary for the successful achievement of their post-secondary educational goals. Similarly, those clients entering the workforce will be assisted with the provision of assistive technology services to improve their performance in the workplace and maintain their employment. The State Agency participates in the American Job Center-One Stop to ensure that persons with disabilities' needs are met. The VIDDRS has conducted joint training sessions and job fairs with the Department of Education and the Department of Labor to exchange ideas on how to better serve the consumers.

### 8. HOW THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIES WILL BE USED TO:

#### A. ACHIEVE GOALS AND PRIORITIES BY THE STATE, CONSISTENT WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT;

The overarching goal of the State Agency and stakeholders is to create a permanent pipeline to prosperity in the territory through available resources and support services. Therefore, all the goals and priorities are aligned to meet said goal and the VIDDRS is committed to doing its part to ensure that persons with disabilities have a voice and are included in the workforce. The goals identified in the 2016 combined needs assessment will be used as marker to determine the achievement of set goals and will significantly help to improve the territory ability to meet the future needs of persons with disabilities. The goals identified by the last assessment were to increase program visibility, promote pre-employment transition services, develop new partnerships, staff professional development and improve service delivery to clients. The strategies employed by the Designated State Agency include the following but are not limited to:

Continued participation in IEP, PTA and Office of Special Education Advisory Panel meetings.

Initiated a marketing and advertisement campaign through a private provider to promote community awareness.

Held and participated in career fairs that catered to individuals with disabilities seeking an employment outcome.

Attended meetings and participated in conference calls with core partners and the Workforce Board to build capacity.

Provided refresher training to staff, partners and stakeholders on the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Facilitated ongoing training for staff to increase awareness of labor markets and customized employment options.

Working to implement a strategic service alignment plan that will outline goals and objectives for all the partner agencies with expected timelines.

Developed on the job training program with the local education agency.

Implement summer work training initiatives for students with disabilities to acquire skills and experience.

Conducted online training program to the pre-employment transition student population.

Continue to provide opportunities for skill gains and credentialing.

Discussions are ongoing with local agencies and/or programs to forge new partnerships.

Establishing rapport with potential employers and maintaining established relationships.

Pursuing a contract to implement an electronic case management system that will encourage collaboration between the partner agencies and improve service delivery.

Once the next CSNA is completed prior to the close of the year, the results will be used to identify current goals, priorities and strategies to be included in the state plan amendment.

#### B. SUPPORT INNOVATION AND EXPANSION ACTIVITIES; AND

The VIDDRS will continue to explore the needs of these activities within the community. Some areas that these activities will assist in supporting persons with disabilities in the election process by ensuring that they have the resources to exercise their right to vote. Advocate for transportation and accessibility needs, creating an executive order that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities. The VIDDRS will continue to support the State Rehabilitation Council and State Independent Living Council with their operations in PY 2020 and 2021 to ensure that the appropriate services are available to the disabled population.

#### C. OVERCOME IDENTIFIED BARRIERS RELATING TO EQUITABLE ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM AND THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM.

The VIDDRS has made services available to all individuals with disabilities despite barriers. The agency is involved in various community outreach activities and at times when needed travels to provide VR and SE services. Therefore, the necessary steps are taken to alleviate barriers as they are presented. However, there is a great need for certified job coaches in the Virgin Islands. The VIDDRS will work towards eliminating the shortfall in personnel by advocating for the program's critical need to fill positions through the Human Resources Department and securing supported employment services through private providers.

#### P. EVALUATION AND REPORTS OF PROGRESS: VR AND SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT GOALS

Describe:

1. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE VR PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE APPROVED VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN FOR THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:

A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

The VIDDRS goal to promote pre-employment transition services was realized by strengthening the collaboration with core community partners such as the State Workforce Board, Virgin Islands Department of Labor, Virgin Islands Department of Education, SNAP, TANF & MAP programs, VIUCEED, Center for Independent Living, and the Disability Rights Center. Through this coordination of services, consumers are educated on available transition services and benefits from a well-rounded customer focused approach. The agency expanded its services to transition aged students to include school based on the job training and online work-readiness workshops as well as paid summer internships. The program is in discussions with several partners to deliver various pre-employment training opportunities to students prior to graduation.

With respect to a second goal to advance staff knowledge base, heightening awareness and promote staff professional development for staff. Technical assistance was provided on several occasions throughout the program year to build their skillset, enhance professionalism/customer service and avoid burnout. Staff is engaged in numerous webinars, conference call, virtual and in person trainings. Staff are strongly encouraged to become high qualified counselors by attaining advance degrees and acquiring their certification in rehabilitation counseling, CRC. Expanding and building capacity of the VIDDRS staff to address the diverse needs of the population is of high priority.

To forge a relationship with new community partners to ensure that the target population receives services to prepare, secure and retain employment especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities. The State agency through affiliation with the Workforce Board have connected with new employers and stakeholders that will aid in rebuilding the workforce. A new relationship was formed with a private provider to assist in the provision of supported employment services. This is a considerable accomplishment for the program as it has been extremely challenging to retain certified job coaches in the territory. This collaboration will broadened the scope of available services offered by the VIDDRS.

B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Some of the factors that impeded the achievement of goals and priorities are the State agency inability onboard new personnel and the constant change in administration. The program has been faced with budget cuts and these cuts prohibits the program from hiring the required staff to successfully and efficiently operate the program. The program remains grossly understaffed and there are a number of personnel that qualifies for retirement within the next two years. The VR program is constantly evolving and therefore, there is a great need to begin succession planning within the agency in order to retain the historical knowledge and facilitate the continuity of services.

The procurement arm of the Government is the Department of Property and Procurement and the approval process to execute a contractual agreement is quite lengthy and cumbersome. This unfortunate circumstance presents a barrier in the procurement of the much needed electronic case management system as services cannot be provided without a contract in place. Therefore, at this time the program is forced to compile data and maintain case records manually. This

prevents the program from moving towards an improved delivery of services through the use of technology and fully adhering to the data sharing requirements as stipulated by WIOA.

VIDDRS will continue to collaborate with community partners, stakeholders, and councils to develop and refine its strategies to ensure that goals and priorities are met and exceed.

**2. AN EVALUATION OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM GOALS DESCRIBED IN THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SUPPLEMENT FOR THE MOST RECENT PROGRAM YEAR WERE ACHIEVED. THE EVALUATION MUST:**

**A. IDENTIFY THE STRATEGIES THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS**

Based on the last completed assessment, the VIDDRS main goal in this area was to ensure that eligible participants receive the mandated services. The state agency experienced difficulty in securing and maintaining certified job coaches and these services were extremely limited to non-existent. Through the collaboration with community and core partners in the VI workforce system, the VIDDRS was aided in the achievement of its' program goals. As a result, new relationships formed with a private provider namely Island Therapy Solutions to provide person centered counseling, job development and placement, long term support and post employment training. The VIDDRS will continue to engage employers in sensitivity trainings to educate on the specialized needs of an individual with disabilities. This form of intervention will help to bridge the gap in connecting the talent pool with employers that are seeking to hire highly qualified individuals with excellent work ethics.

**B. DESCRIBE THE FACTORS THAT IMPEDED THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS AND PRIORITIES**

The factors that impeded the achievement of the program's goals and priorities are staff shortage geographic location. The VIDDRS has several critical vacancies that need to be filled and the limited resources and providers has proven to be impediments.

**3. THE VR PROGRAM'S PERFORMANCE ON THE PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY INDICATORS UNDER SECTION 116 OF WIOA**

The VIDDRS has been in discussions with the core partners and the operator of the One-Stop in regards to performance accountability. A data-sharing agreement was generated and executed between the agencies which should provide an avenue for the data to be captured. The VIDDRS performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA were estimated as follows for PY 2022 & PY 2023:

	PROGRAM YEAR	
2022	PROGRAM YEAR 2023	
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit:	39.1%	42.0%
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit:	39.1%	42.0%

Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter after Exit:	\$5600	\$5600
Credential Attainment Rate:	32.4%	35.0%
Measurable Skill Gains:	24.7%	26.5%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers:	Not available.	

4. HOW THE FUNDS RESERVED FOR INNOVATION AND EXPANSION (I&E) ACTIVITIES WERE UTILIZED

Due to the pandemic, funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities were not expended. The VI State Rehabilitation Council and VI Statewide Independent Living Council limited their operations due to the safety protocols issued by the Center for Disease Control, CDC. The plan going forward is to secure staff to support the administrative functions of the councils and assist in forging productive relationships with the VIDDRS community partners. The funds further support mutually beneficial projects and activities territory-wide.

Q. QUALITY, SCOPE, AND EXTENT OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Include the following:

1. 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

The quality and scope of supported employment services provided are monitored by the VR Counselor, District Managers that oversee the services and the consumer. The Designated State agency will work closely to ensure that the services aligned with the goals in the individualized plan for employment, VIDDRS is in the process of updating program policies and providing training.

Through the Supported Employment Services, consumers will have the opportunity to learn employment skills, employer expectations, independent living skills, and etiquette in order to secure meaningful employment while fostering social relationships with peers and/or customers with or without disabilities. These supports that will allow trainees with disabilities to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities and independence in the workplace.

2. THE TIMING OF TRANSITION TO EXTENDED SERVICES

The timing of transition to extended services happens after eligibility is established, a service plan is developed and additional support is needed to establish job stability. Youths with the most significant disabilities will receive extended support services for a limited time to ensure a successful transition or achieve an employment outcome. However, youths with significant disabilities are eligible to receive extended services for up to four years or until the age of 25, whichever comes first. Supported employment services are available territory-wide. The State Agency will be responsible for creating a support system within the workplace and regular monitoring to provide further support as needed.

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 WIOA[14], AND ITS SUPPLEMENT UNDER TITLE VI OF THE REHABILITATION ACT[15];

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY OR DESIGNATED STATE UNIT, AS APPROPRIATE

Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services

2. AS A CONDITION FOR THE RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS UNDER TITLE I OF THE REHABILITATION ACT FOR THE PROVISION OF VR SERVICES, THE (ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY)[16] AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE VR SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[17], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[18], POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES ESTABLISHED BY THE SECRETARY OF EDUCATION. FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE UNDER SECTION 111 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;

ENTER THE NAME OF DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY

Virgin Islands 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 AGREES TO OPERATE AND ADMINISTER THE STATE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE VR SERVICES PORTION OF THE UNIFIED OR COMBINED STATE PLAN[19], THE REHABILITATION ACT, AND ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS[20], 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;

4. THE DESIGNATED STATE AGENCY AND/OR THE DESIGNATED STATE UNIT 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;

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

Kimberley Causey Gomez

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

[14] Public Law 113-128.

[15] Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

[16] All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

[17] 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.

[18] 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.

[19] 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.

[20] Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in footnote 6.

#### CERTIFICATION SIGNATURE

Signatory information	Virgin Islands Department of Human Services
Name of Signatory	Kimberley Causey Gomez
Title of Signatory	Commissioner
Date Signed	March 9, 2022

#### 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 of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), 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 State Plan must provide assurances that:**

The State Plan must include	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 plan; section 103 of WIOA in the case of a submission of a Combined State Plan; 34 CFR 76.140.	
3. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to: Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:	
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. The establishment of either a State independent commission or State Rehabilitation Council, as required by section 101(a)(21) of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable (A or B must be selected):	
3.b.(A) "is an independent State commission" (Yes/No)	No
3.b.(B) "has established a State Rehabilitation Council" (Yes/No)	Yes
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. 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. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds (Yes/No)	No
3.f. The shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act. Select yes or no, as appropriate, to identify if the designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs (Yes/No)	No
3.g. Statewideness and waivers of statewideness requirements, as set forth in section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act. Is the designated State agency requesting or maintaining a waiver of statewideness for one or more services provided under the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan? (Yes/No) See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan	No

The State Plan must include	Include
3.h. The descriptions 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	
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)(D) 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 in accordance with section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act? (Yes/No)	Yes
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 requirements regarding the provisions of informed choice for all applicants and eligible individuals in accordance with section 102(d) 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	

The State Plan must include	Include
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 community rehabilitation program or any other employment under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as required by section 101(a)(14) 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.I. Strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and	
4.j.i.II. 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) and 101(a)(25))	
5. Program Administration for the Supported Employment Title VI Supplement:	
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	
5.c. The designated state unit will coordinate activities with any other State agency that is functioning as an employment network under the Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency program under Section 1148 of the Social Security Act	
6. Financial Administration of the Supported Employment Program:	
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)(G) and (H) 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	

The State Plan must include	Include
such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when 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:	Yes
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:	
7.b.i. 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	
7.b.ii. 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)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act	

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 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 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	39.1%		42.0%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	39.1%		42.0%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$6,500.00		\$6,500.00	
Credential Attainment Rate	32.4%		35.0%	
Measurable Skill Gains	24.7%		26.5%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>

*“Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is still being developed and this data will not be entered in the 2022 State Plan modifications.*

## 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. <sup>24</sup> 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.

All WIOA Core Programs

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Effectiveness in Serving Employers" is still being piloted and this data will not be entered for 2020 State Plans.

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
Non-Applicable

OTHER APPENDICES

Non-Applicable