



VIRGIN ISLANDS

WIOA Unified

State Plan

2020-2024

PRESENTED TO:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

WASHINGTON, DC 20210

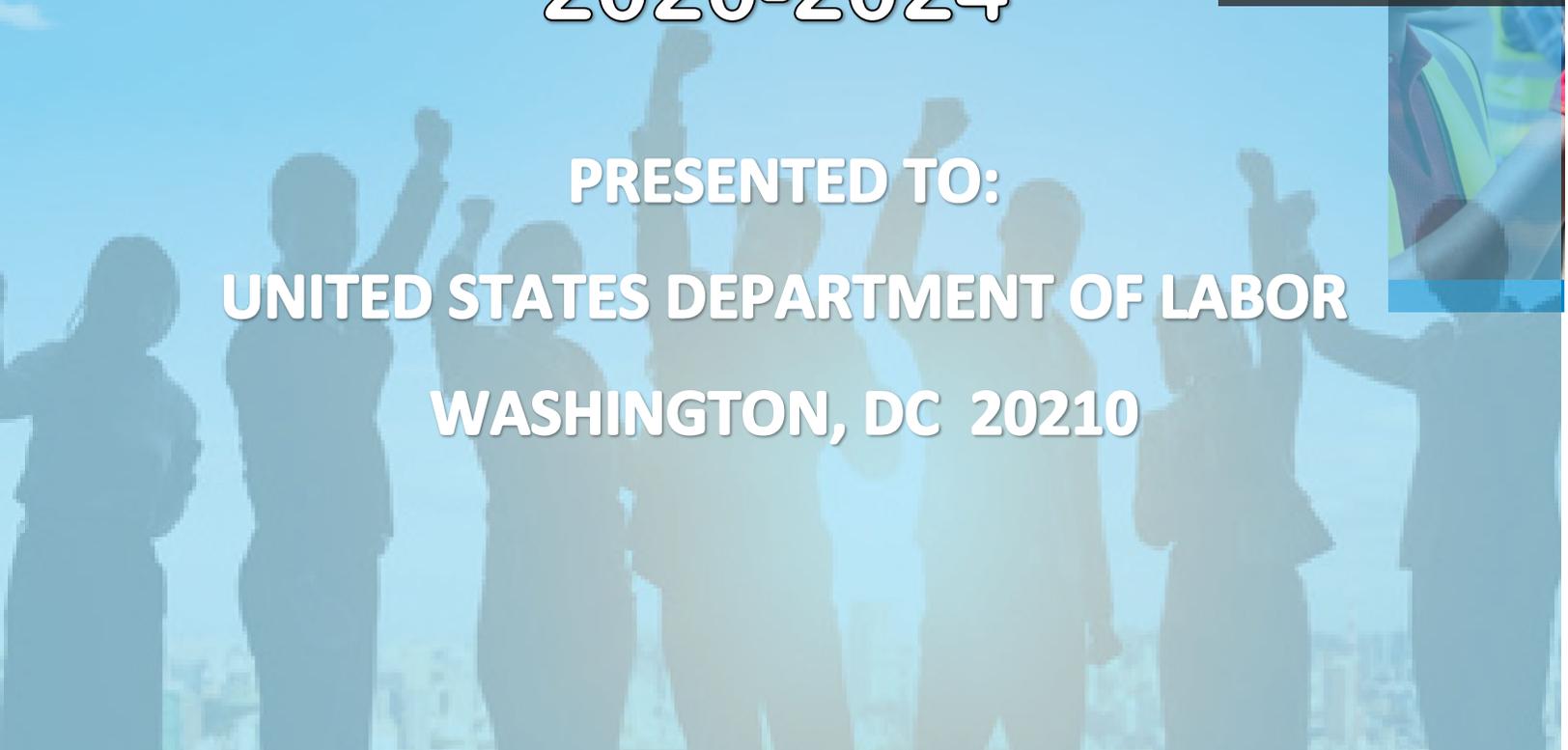


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview

I.	WIOA State Plan Type	Page 2
II.	Strategic Elements	
	Economic, Workforce and Workforce Development Activities Analysis . .	Page 5
	State Strategic Vision and Goals	Page 37
	State Strategy	Page 42
III.	Operational Planning Elements	
	State Strategy Implementation	Page 50
	State Operating Systems and Policies	Page 61
IV.	Coordination with Combined State Plan Programs	Page 78
V.	Common Assurances	Page 79
VI.	Program-Specific State Plan Requirements for Core Programs	
	Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs Activities and Assurances .	Page 79
	Wagner-Peyser Act Program and Agricultural Outreach Plan (AOP) Adult	
	Education and Family Literacy Program Activities and Assurances	Page 110
	Vocational Rehabilitation Program Activities and Assurances	Page 111
	Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs	Page 161

I. WIOA State Plan Type and Executive Summary

(a) Unified or Combined State Plan

The US Virgin Islands has selected to submit a Unified State Plan which covers the six (6) required programs and is administered locally by three (3) separate agencies

Virgin Islands Department of Labor (Title I and III)

1. Adult
2. Dislocated Workers
3. Youth
4. Wagner-Peyser

Virgin Islands Department of Education (Title II)

5. Adult Education and Family Literacy Act

Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (Title IV)

6. Vocational Rehabilitation

(b) Plan Introduction or Executive Summary

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

(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. Declining population and high median age
2. A Changing age profile
3. A changing age profile
4. Low educational attainment of workforce

Additional economic factors include:

5. Contracting output for close to a decade that is expected to rise
6. Growth volatility
7. Undiversified economy: extreme tourism dependence
8. Most jobs are low paying
9. We are amid economic recovery fueled by Federal assistance

(A) 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.

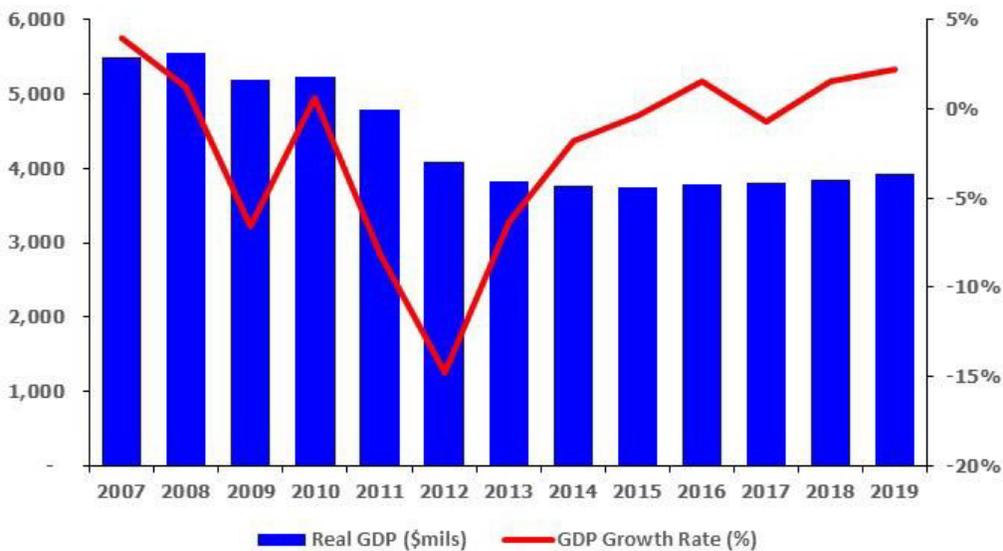
The U.S. Virgin Islands continues to recover from the widespread devastation brought about by two back-to-back category 5 hurricanes that severely impacted the Territory in September 2017 and as recovery was progressing impacted by the recessionary pressures caused by the

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.

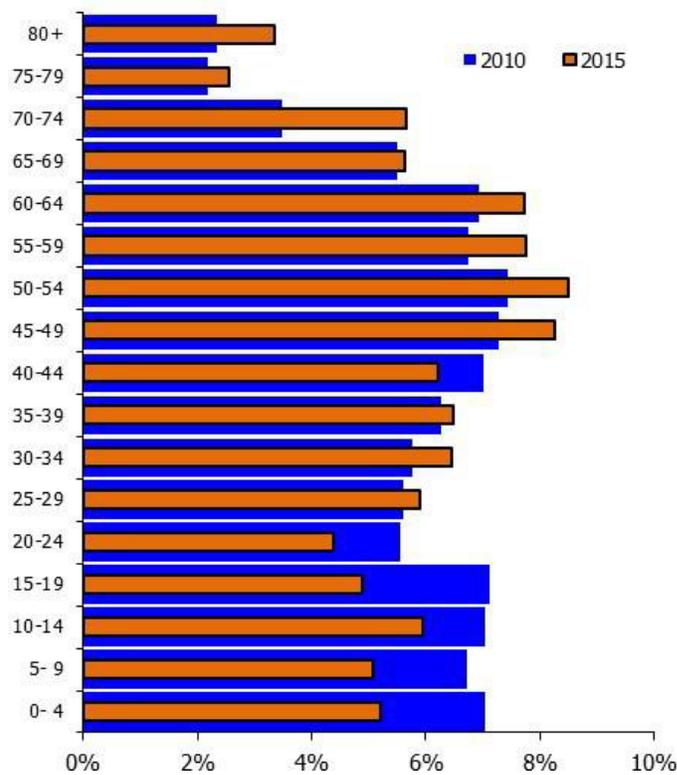


The changing age profile

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.

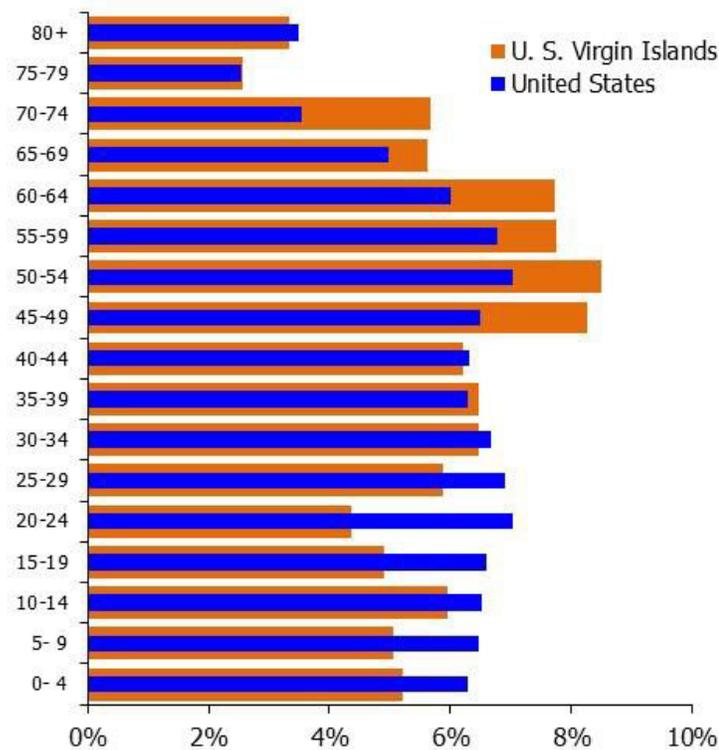
The population structure by age groups in 2010 and 2015 is shown in Figure 4 and compared with the U.S. in Figure 5. The USVI population is growing older, as reflected by an increasing proportion of persons aged 45-64 years who comprised 32.4 percent in 2015, more than in 2010 when it was 28.1 percent. 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 4. US. Virgin Islands Population Share by Age Cohort, 2010 and 2015.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, VICS.

Figure 5. Population Share by Age Cohort, U.S. Virgin Islands and the United States, 2015.

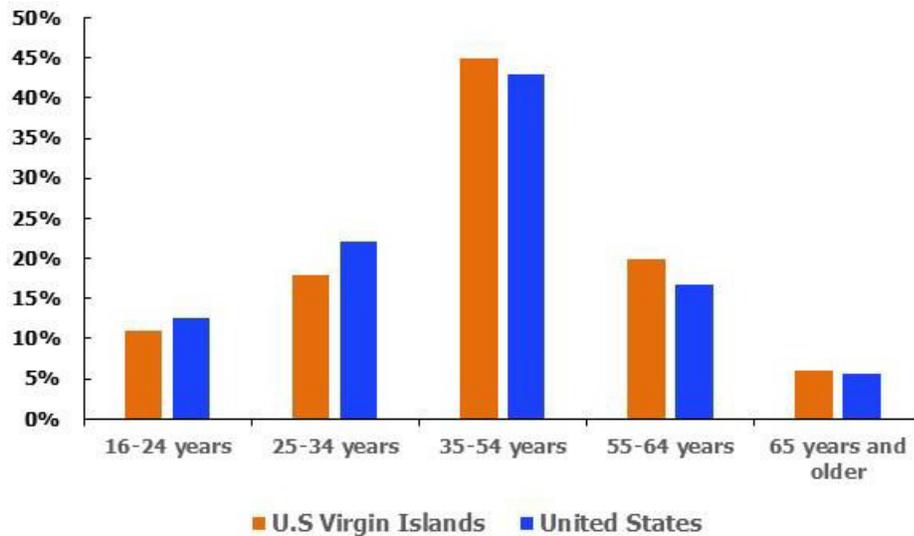


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, VICS

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 6. 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

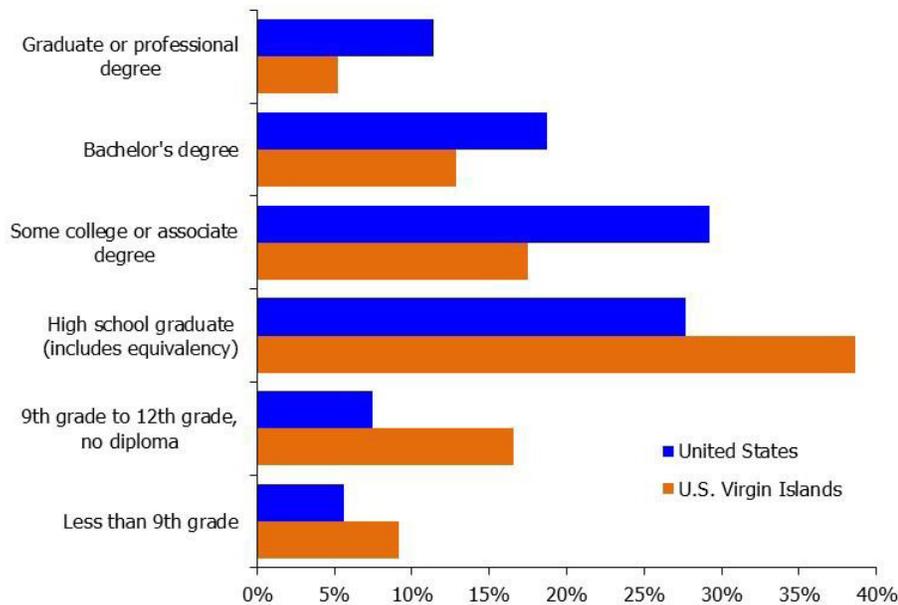
Alongside these overall economic and demographic trends, occupation patterns discussed later in this report suggest that employment opportunities are changing for workers with different education and skill levels. For example, the employment share gains for occupations in the fastest-growing health care 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.¹ These results suggest that the demand for higher education and skills will dominate employment opportunities in the economy.

Figure 7. Educational Attainment of the Population, Aged 25+, 2015.

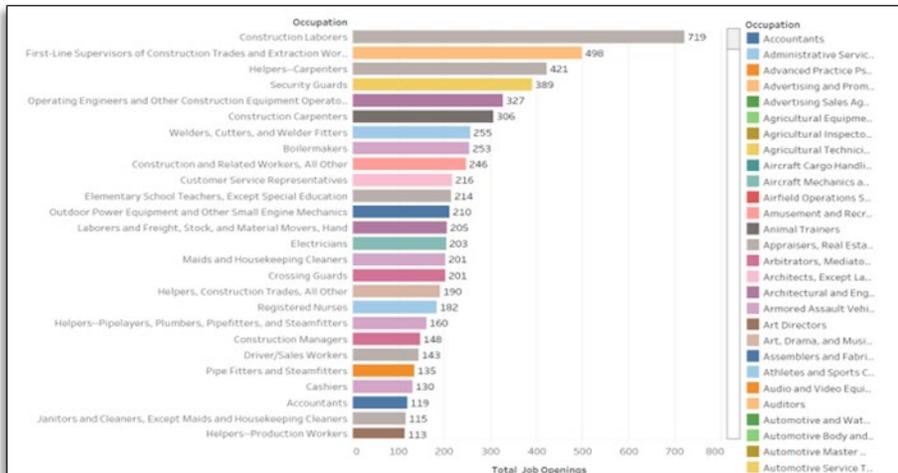


Source: U.S. Census Bureau: VICS.

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. **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 4th quarter of 2017 into 3rd 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 /a	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
Average		22.83	47484.67

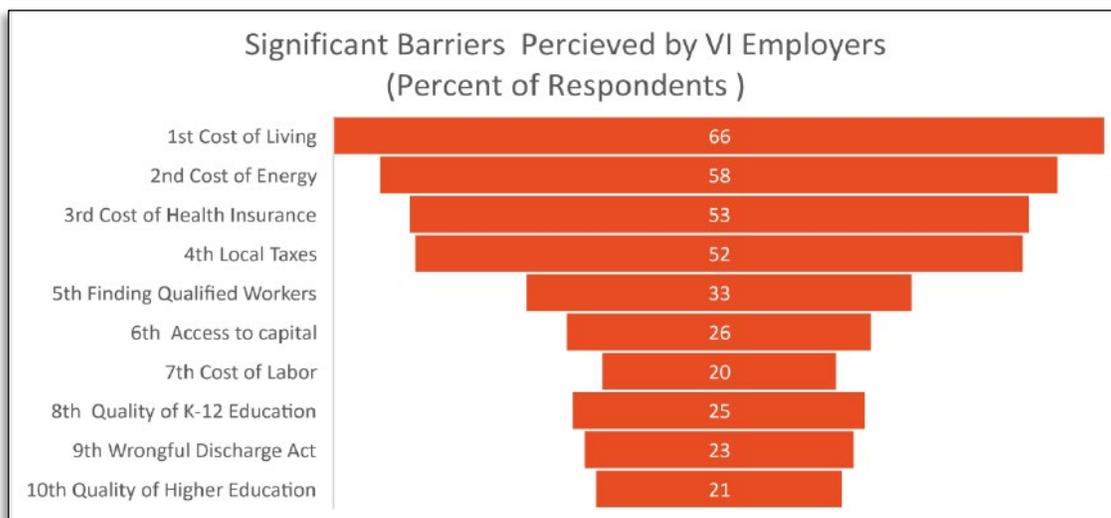
The most underrepresented occupations in the territory, however, are the highest paying as these jobs are knowledge-intensive, as detailed above.

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.



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 5th 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.

(B) 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.

(i) 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.² Researchers suggest that by 2030, about 8 to 9 percent of employment will be occupations that barely exist today.³

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

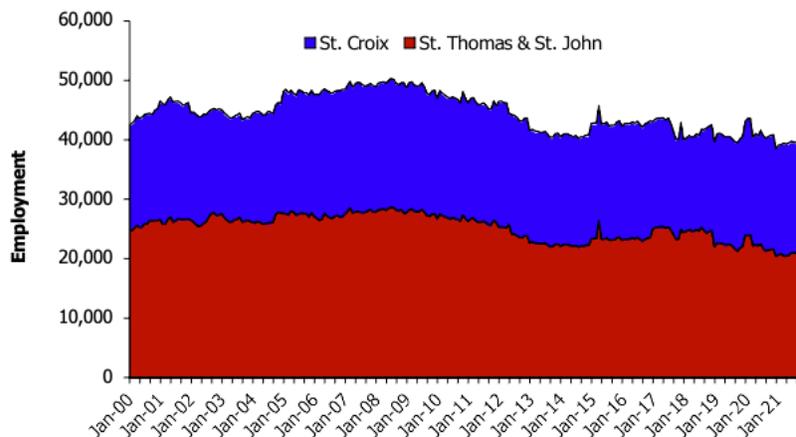
indicated by USBLS' projection, the fastest-growing future jobs are information and healthcare occupations. Conversely, office and administrative support occupations, sales occupations, food preparation, serving-related occupations, and production occupations are projected to experience a long-term decline.

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. Johns 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.

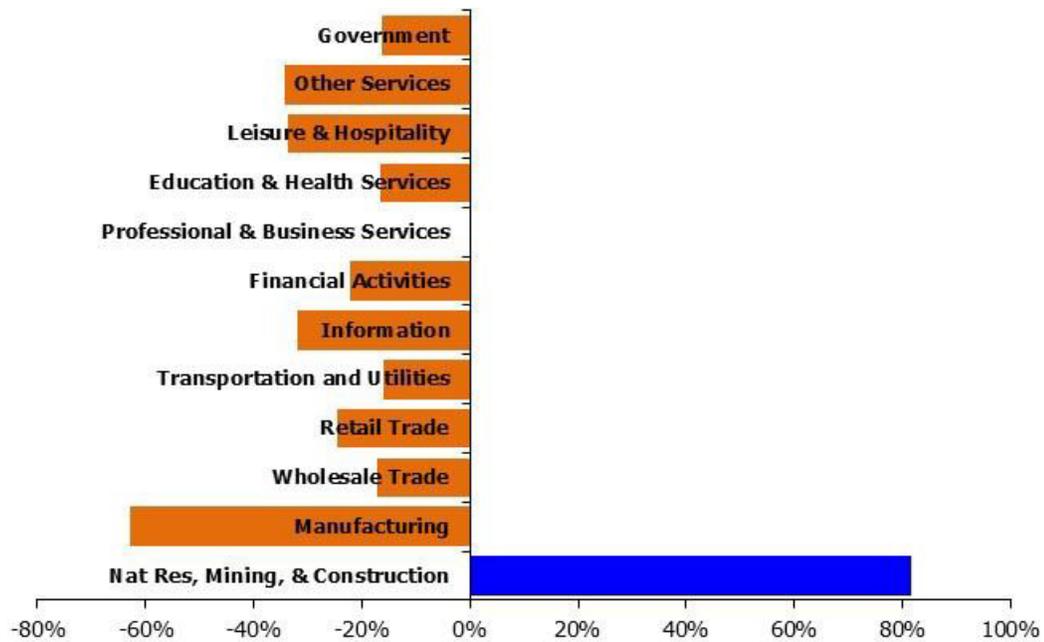
Table 1: Employment Change in the U.S. Virgin Islands by Major Industry, May 2020.

Industry Sector	Employment		Percent Change	Percent Distribution	
	2010	2020		2010	2020
Total	44,267	36,115	-18.4	100.0	100.0
Private	31,254	25,215	-19.3	70.6	69.8
Goods-producing	4,302	4,522	5.1	9.7	12.5
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
Service-providing	39,965	31,594	-20.9	90.3	87.5
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
Public Administration	13,012	10,900	-16.2	29.4	30.2
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.

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-employing industries by four-digit NAICS codes.

Occupation 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	Stockers 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 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.

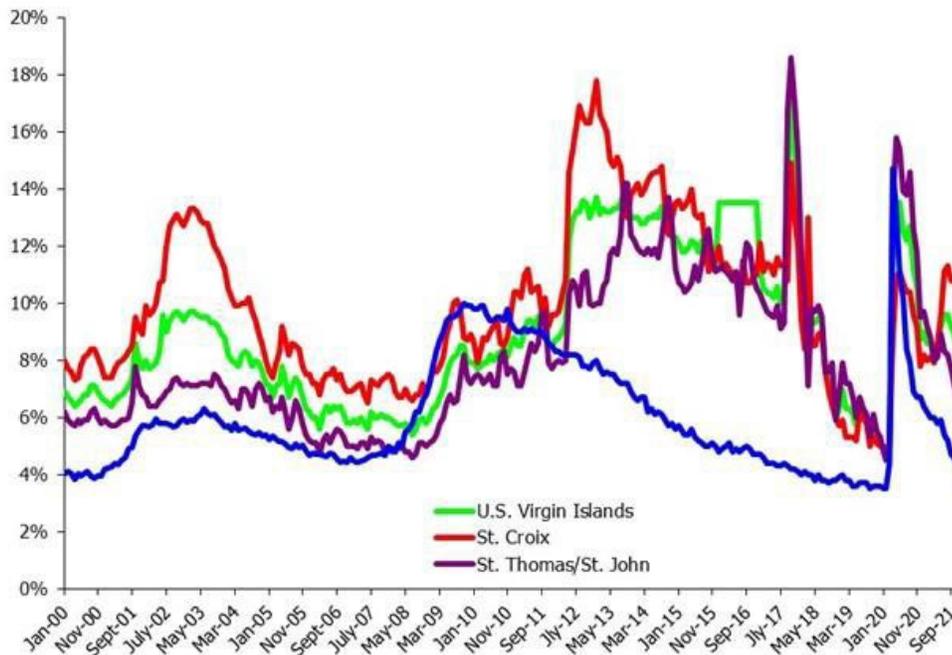
* The percent share of employment or mean hourly wage for this area is significantly different from the national average of all areas at the 90-percent confidence level.

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

Unemployment

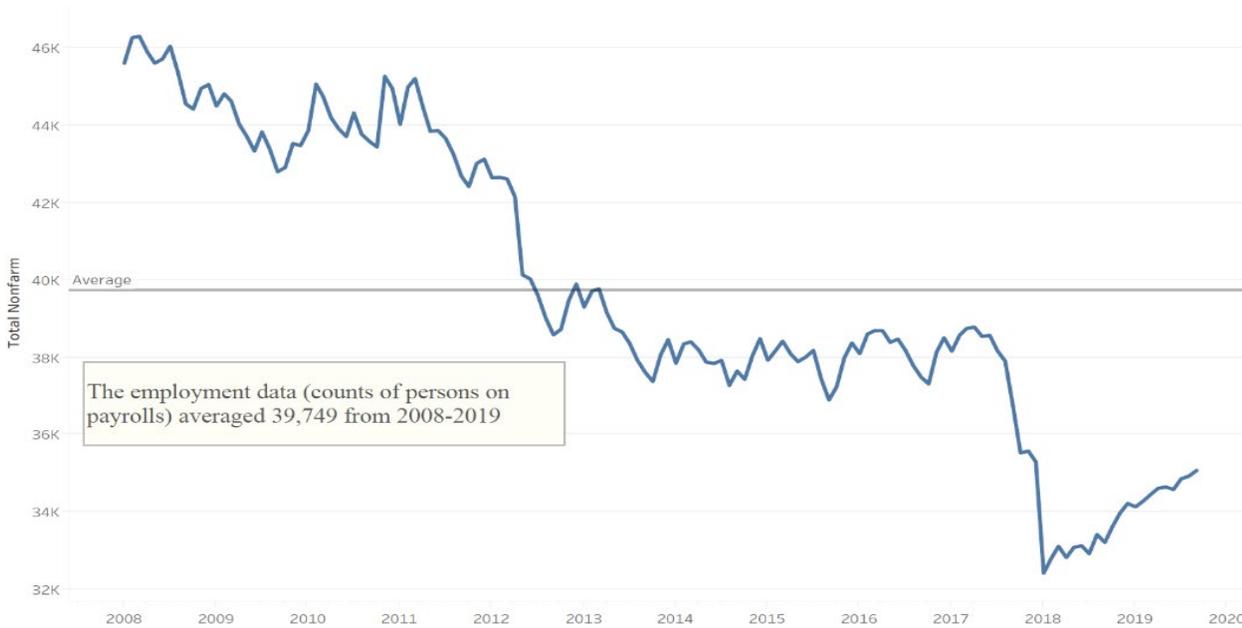
Figure 9 shows cyclical variation in unemployment in the USVI and the U.S. since 2000, highlighting the peaks and troughs for each series. Comparing the USVI's unemployment growth trend to that of the nation's showed a similar pattern between 2000 and 2010. Note the increasing peaks in unemployment, 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 9. 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

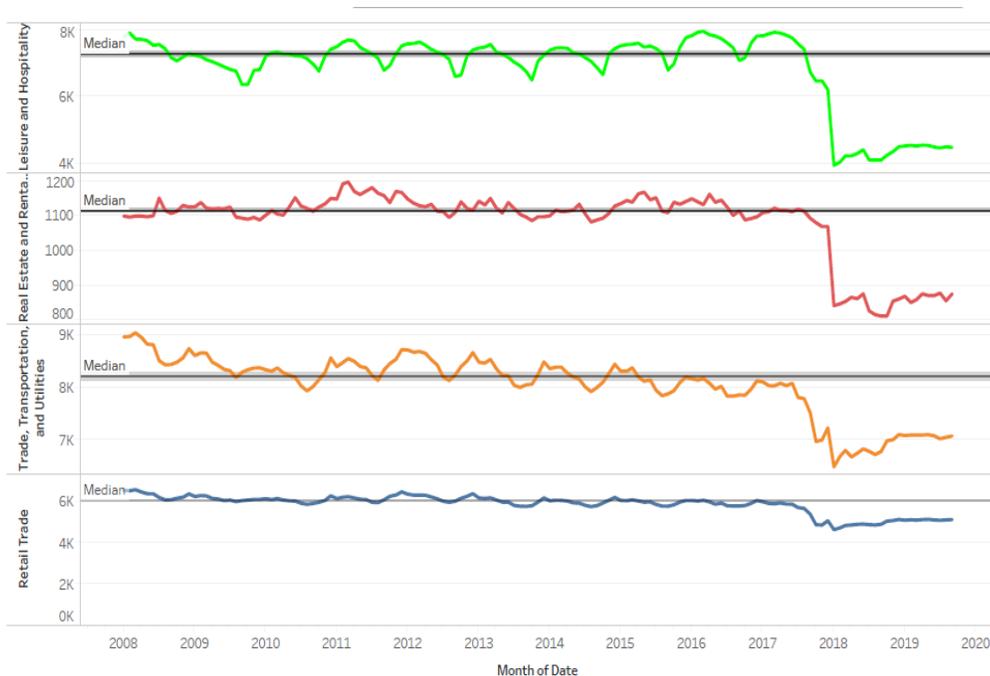
Total Virgin Islands unemployed average for 2019: 2,701

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?



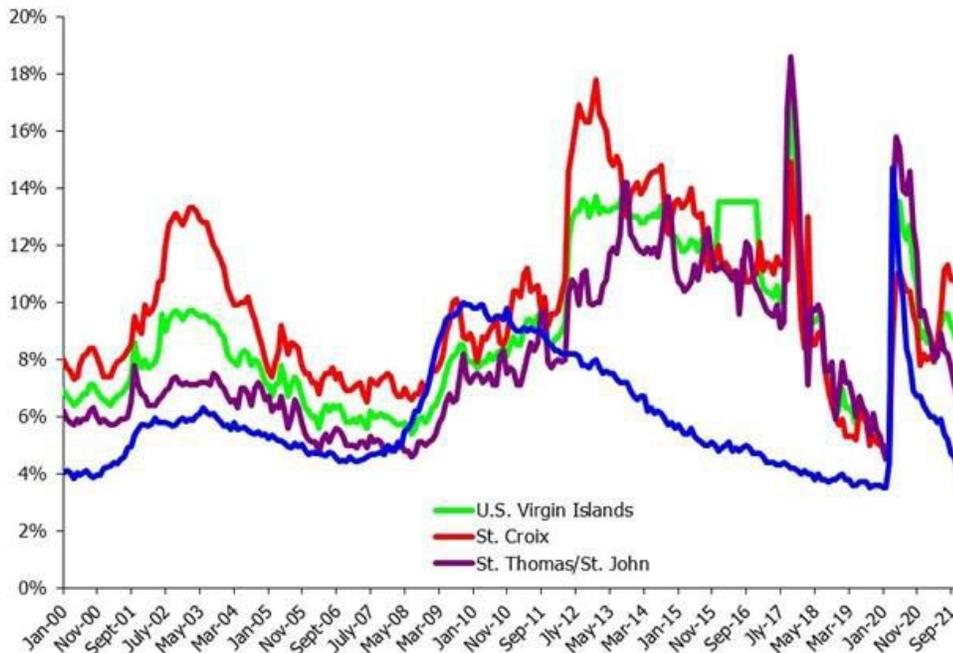
But not surprising is the fact that data shows the direct Tourism-related employment being steady will little to no loss from 2008 up until 2018.

- 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

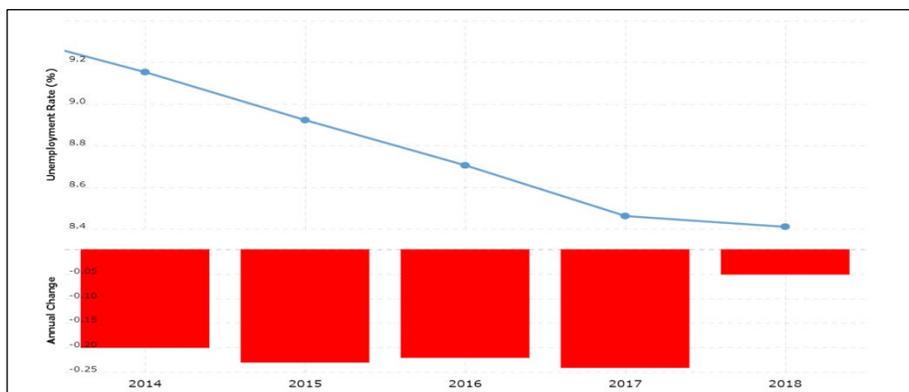
While it is the common notion that we need to diversify from a tourism-based economy, the reality is we should diversify **from** tourism, and we should diversify **with** tourism. The biggest threats to tourism are natural disasters and/ or pandemics like we are experiencing in 2020. This suggests a 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.

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.



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.

(ii) 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

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

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 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.

(iii) 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
Total	75,036	100

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.

(iv) 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.

Conclusion

The labor market has been giving signals about the jobs and skills in demand now and in the future. The occupations in the economy are changing, and the demand for higher skills and education are also changing alongside new technological developments. The new wave of occupations will displace office support, food service, transportation and logistics, and sales and customer service roles that now dominate the territory's economy. At the same time, the economy will continue to create jobs, particularly in healthcare, science, technology, and math fields, and business services.

Therefore, this work brings four of the most critical challenges into focus that the territory must address: preparing workers for new opportunities through improved education and job skills; retraining efforts for displaced workers; creating new economic development approaches to diversify the economy, focusing especially on higher demand jobs in the technology and healthcare fields; and addressing low-wage incomes.

(2) Workforce Development, Education, and Training Activities Analysis

(A) 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 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 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 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 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.

(B) 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.

(C) 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.

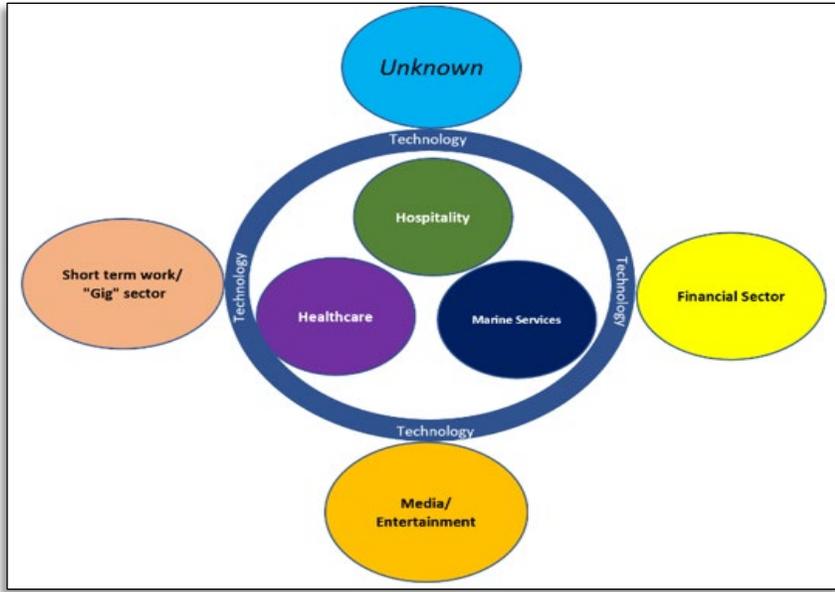
(b) State Strategic Vision and goals

The 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 in response COVID-19 **Contact Tracer**. This occupation would be a cross between data analyst, customer service, and health care. *

(2) 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 goals:

<p>Goal 1 – Enhance Business Engagement through a Sector- based approach to Workforce Training</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop program design in conjunction with the business sector needs • Establish on-going work-based learning opportunities based on real time skills gaps expressed by employers • In this age of diversity, through the Empowerment Initiative encourage and expand minority and diversity in business and employer engagement. • Create a USVI accepted skill validation certificate.
<p>Goal 2 – Align Work-Readiness and Workforce Training Programs with Economic Development Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proactively prepare for new employers and emerging occupational opportunities • Develop a signature work readiness product that stamps customer as “ready to work” through the workforce system • Through the Siren Initiative expand communications among the workforce system to ensure response to worker and employer needs. • Through work-based training assist in developing Employer Permitted Training.

<p>Goal 3 – Promote Diversification of Post-Secondary Education and Training Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore alternative and innovative methods of attaining credentials • Foster new opportunities for online and blended learning options • Through the +1 Initiative work with training providers to expand opportunities in the labor market. • Working with various partners, review and study the impact and development of family-based workforce needs to ensure increased retention opportunities. • Increase outreach to those with barriers including re-entry and others.
<p>Goal 4 – Develop Focus Driven Sector Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reengineer the workforce system from the “street level” • Engage with hiring agents who assess job applicants for competency • Encourage sector <i>expose</i> where employers present their business process and core occupations • Develop great awareness and response among job seekers through the Continual Movement Initiative to develop common career pathways aligned with sector strategies.
<p>Goal 5 – Develop network for temp or “gig” economy workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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; • Encourage jobseekers to unify as talent groups in related occupations

<p>Goal 6 - Develop an Integrated Data System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate agency operations through technology • Design electronic common intake tools • Manage customers through shared profiles • Partner with private sector entities • Promote employer services and consultations • Implement “The Pulse Initiative” and collect information comprehensively and regularly to ensure business information is complete. • Consider as part of the One Stop AJC system a referral or work crisis line for response.
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(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 7% and 11% respectively.

The negotiated adjusted levels for the following categories:

	2020-2021 Proposed Individual Targets	2021-2022 Proposed Individual Targets
ABE Beginning Literacy	37%	38%
ABE Beginning Basic Education	37%	38%
ABE Intermediate Low	37%	38%
ABE Intermediate High	37%	38%
ASE Low	37%	38%
ESL Beginning Literacy	37%	38%
ESL Beginning Low	37%	38%
ESL Beginning High	37%	38%
ESL Intermediate Low	37%	38%

ESL Intermediate High	37%	38%
ESL Advanced	37%	38%

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 to 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).

(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 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:

Industry	Occupation
Administrative and Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Staff • Program Managers/Administrators • Security Guards
Allied Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing • Home Health Care Attendants • Healthcare Technicians • Child/Senior Care Attendants • Dental Assistants/Hygienists • Behavior/Mental Health Professionals
Construction Trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervisors • Electricians • Carpenters • Masons • Welders • Plumbers • Alternative Energy Installers/Maintenance Workers
Information Technology <i>(across industries)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Analysts • Information Systems Operators • Fiber Optic Installers/Technicians • Network/Computer System Administrators
Leisure and Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Managers • Front Desk Clerks • Food & Beverage Service • Marine Service Workers
Retail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail Clerks & Managers
Transportation and Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy Equipment Operators • Warehouse Clerks & Logisticians

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

2. 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 *VIEWWS* 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

(A) State Strategy Implementation

(1) 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.
2. The review of statewide policies, of statewide programs, and of recommendations on actions that should be taken by the State to align workforce development programs in the territory in a manner that supports a comprehensive and streamlined workforce development system in the territory, including the review and provision of comments on the State plans, if any, for programs and activities of one-stop partners that are not core programs.
3. The development and continuous improvement of the workforce development system in the territory, including:
 - a. The identification of barriers and means for removing barriers to better coordinate, align, and avoid duplication among the programs and activities carried out through the system.
 - b. The development of strategies to support the use of career pathways for the purpose of providing individuals, including low-skilled adults, youth, and individuals with barriers to employment (including individuals with disabilities), with workforce investment activities, education, and supportive services to enter or retain employment;
 - 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.
2. The identification and dissemination of information on best practices, including best practices for-
 - a. The effective operation of one-stop centers, relating to the use of business outreach, partnerships, and service delivery strategies, including strategies for serving individuals with barriers to employment.
 - b. The development of effective local boards, which may include information on factors that contribute to enabling local boards to exceed negotiated local levels of performance, sustain fiscal integrity, and achieve other measures of effectiveness; and
 - c. Effective training programs that respond to real-time labor market analysis, that effectively use direct assessment and prior learning assessment to measure an individual's prior knowledge, skills, competencies, and experiences, and that evaluate such skills, and competencies for adaptability, to support efficient placement into employment or career pathways;
3. The development and review of statewide policies affecting the coordinated provision of services through the State's one-stop delivery system.
4. Objective criteria and procedures for use by local boards in assessing the effectiveness and continuous improvement of one-stop centers.
5. Guidance for the allocation of one-stop center infrastructure funds.
6. 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.
7. The development of strategies for technological improvements to facilitate access to, and improve the quality of, services and activities provided through the one-stop delivery system, including such improvements to-
 - a. Enhance digital literacy skills.
 - b. Accelerate the acquisition of skills and recognized postsecondary credentials by participants.

- c. Strengthen the professional development of providers and workforce professionals; and
 - d. Ensure such technology is accessible to individuals with disabilities and individuals residing in remote areas.
8. The development of strategies for aligning technology and data systems across one-stop partner programs to enhance service delivery and improve efficiencies in reporting on performance accountability measures (including the design and implementation of common intake, data collection, case management information, and performance accountability measurement and reporting processes and the incorporation of local input into such design and implementation, to improve coordination of services across one-stop partner programs);
 9. The development of allocation formulas for the distribution of funds for employment and training activities for adults, and youth workforce investment activities, to local areas as permitted.
 10. The preparation of the annual reports.
 11. The development of the statewide workforce and labor market information system.
 12. The development of such other policies as may promote statewide objectives for, and enhance the performance of, the workforce development system in the territory.

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

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 and III)

- Title I: Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth
- 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 “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. During the planning phase, the group met weekly to discuss areas of possible collaboration and streamlining of services. A splinter group comprised of program directors and front line managers also met once a week to discuss each 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.

(A) Core program activities to implement the State’s strategy

The board, which is comprised of members from the private sector and representatives from the partner agencies will have regularly scheduled full board meetings and committee and sub-committee meetings. At a minimum committee will meet on a semi-monthly basis to ensure the implementation of WIOA goals and strategies progresses smoothly. The Board committee will lead the partner’s workgroup by providing direction and review of activities leading to the Board’s goals.

The partner’s workgroup will continue to meet on a semi-monthly basis to ensure the implementation of WIOA progresses smoothly. Representatives from each of the core partners – Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, Adult Education and Family Literacy, Wagner-Peyser and Vocational Rehabilitation have agreed on a universal intake strategy. A common intake form and process is being designed to simplify the customer’s initial entry into the workforce system and

promote the “one system” message across agencies. Customers will be made welcome “at any door” and will have access to basic information on obtaining services from each of the core partners.

The Job Center will operate as the hub of workforce services and in addition to providing information, all core partners will be able to deliver at least their initial assessment services at these centers. An inter-agency video is also being created to provide a system-wide orientation to the activities of the workforce system promoting “employment” as the joint goal. The orientation is the key to tying the agencies’ message together. The videos will run on a loop at each Job Center site as well as in the lobbies of each core and some One-Stop partner agency locations.

One of the Board’s primary consensus and collaborative activity will be a common intake strategy. Implementation of the common intake strategy being the beginning of the workforce pipeline a client can approach or be referred by any program partner. While the American Job Center will operate as the hub of workforce services, however between the agency partners a decentralized approach will be implemented. Any of the partners will be able to guide and inform the client on the path to take and be available for follow up in the future.

Based on the success of the common intake, the Board will then explore co-enrollment and co-servicing and a common referral system for increased collaboration among partners.

(B) 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

An individual service strategy will be developed for all customers seeking more than basic career services that include referrals to the core and one-stop partners for additional services. The referral connections are currently documented in the service strategy and followed up via points of contact in each agency and through email and telephone contact. In addition to the core partners, One-Stop partners TANF and SNAP also maintain a presence at the Job Centers facilitating the referral process to occur in real-time. Appointments can be set up on the spot, and customers benefit from making all their connections at one location. For those customers accessing the 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 and there should be a clear direction for their migration within a year of the approved State Plan.

(D) 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 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

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

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 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 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.

(l) 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 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.

(2) 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. 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.

(3) State program and State Board Overview

(A) 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

(i) Membership Roster.

State Workforce Development Board

Business

	Name	Trade	Status
1	Michael Carty**	Information Technology	Owner
2	Moleto Smith	Health-Primary Care	Executive Director

3	Michael P. Hand*	Construction	Owner
4	Mario Austin	Retail/Restaurateur	Owner
5	Keith O'Neale	Transportation	Owner
6	Oriel Blake	Maritime	Executive Director
7	Sam Rey	Hospitality	Owner
8	Brendan Anzalone	Allied Health	Owner
9	Tracey Sanders	Home Health	Owner
10	Nancy Torres	Retail	Owner
11	Peter Chapman	Research & Technology	Executive Director
12	Natalie Knight	Administrative Support	Owner
13	Flamon Lewis	Security	Owner
14	Leon Hughes	Information Technology	Owner

Workforce

15	Ricky Brown	Organized Labor
16	Sheryl Parris	Organized Labor
17	Gary Molloy	Commissioner of Labor

Education & Training Representatives

18	Shirley Lake King	UVI Representative
19	Racquel Berry-Benjamin	Commissioner of Education
20	Suzanne Darrow-Magras, PhD	UVI CELL
21	Nancy Callwood	Director of Adult Education & CTE

Government & Economic Development

22	Sharia Green	Vocational Rehabilitation
23	Wayne Biggs	Economic Development
24	Asiah Clendinen Gumbs	GERS

Other Members

25	Kimberly Causey-Gomez	Commissioner of Human Services
26	Javan James	Legislature Representative

** Board Chairman

* Vice-Chair

+ Apprenticeship representation

The Commissioners of the three lead agencies with workforce programs sit on the Board. The Commissioner of Labor and the Assistant Commissioner of Employment and Training 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.

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.

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

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

- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program
- The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from program;
- The median earnings of program participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from program;
- The percentage of participants who obtain a recognized postsecondary credential, or a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent during participation in or within (1)

year after exit from program;

- The percentage of program participants who during a program year are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are receiving measurable skill gains toward such a credential or employment; and
- The indicators of effectiveness in serving employers.

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

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

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

(B) Assessment of One-Stop Program Partner Programs

The One-Stop program partners will continue to evaluate and assess their programs in keeping with their individual program and agency requirements. In the first year of WIOA implementation, the partners' workgroup will research best practices for methods of One-Stop evaluation. The assessment will be put into effect immediately upon determination of the process.

(C) Previous Assessment Results

Due to the twin hurricanes of September 2017, which halted the flow of "normal" services and activities the Virgin Islands Workforce System has not been able to gather data to be used as a

benchmark of the newly enacted system.

With staff changes at the Board and then the impact of the Covid-19 Coronavirus again impacting even more significantly the flow of “normal” services, data gathering was once again not possible.

A reevaluation of the resources, services and capacity of individual agencies as well as of the system as a whole will be conducted prior to the development of an evaluation and assessment roll out plan.

(D) 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.

(5) Distribution of Funds for Core Programs

(A) For 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.

B) For Title II Programs - Adult Education and Literacy

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

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

Thomas/St. John district, the St. Croix district, or both that provide services or instruction in

one or more of the following categories: Adult Education and Literacy services; and English literacy programs.

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 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 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 including 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.

As in the past, the Virgin Islands procurement will make awards according to 334 CFR 463 Part C. The Board looks forward and appreciates Technical Assistance in this area as offered and available by the appropriate Department.

(ii) Describe how the eligible agency will ensure direct and equitable access to all eligible providers to apply and compete for funds

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.

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 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

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. 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.

VIEWS have the capacity to manage the data needed for reporting under WIOA section 116 (d) (2). The data systems integration of the four titles will maximize the accuracy of data collected and reported on for WIOA. This is a project that will be further researched during the next few months as implementation gets underway.

(B) Assessment of Participants’ Post-Program Success

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 have not determined a need for or set any additional indicators of performance at this time.

(C) 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

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

(7) 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) 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.

- (9) 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

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 held a series of planning sessions to develop the State Strategic Vision and Goals. The Virgin Islands Planning Workgroup comprised 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 met weekly from March 2015 to present day to operationalize the vision and goals described by the State Board. The partners planned activities that 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 always 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)

Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Activities under Title I-B

(a) GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

(1) Regions and Local Workforce Development Areas

[A] *Identify the regions and the local workforce development areas designated in the State*

The US Virgin Islands is a single state local workforce development area. Its population is approximately 104,000. 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; describe the process used for designating 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 WIOA relating designation of local areas*

There is no process required.

[D] *Provide the appeals process referred to in WIOA relating to determinations for infrastructure funding.*

There is no process required.

(2) Statewide Activities

[A] *Provide State policies or guidance for the statewide workforce development system and for use of State funds for workforce investment activities.*

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

[B] *Describe how the State intends to use Governor's set aside funding. Describe how the State will utilize Rapid Response funds.*

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.

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.

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.

[C] Describe policies and procedures to provide Rapid Response 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 to worker groups on whose behalf a Trade Adjustment Assistance petition has been filed.

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

(b) 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. The Board will work closely with the Apprenticeship Training Council to assist with growth of Apprenticeship throughout the Virgin Islands.

(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 under the tab – Plans, Performance and Reports.

The Board is currently reviewing as part of the approved or pending waivers the collection of all data related to the Training Provider Eligibility. Once this is in place the Board expects to increase the number of providers, both traditional and virtual as well as Apprenticeship Programs and providers effective with the start of the next program year. The Board will consider a “substantial violation of the requirement to timely and accurately submit all required information” as a significant part of the new policy as it is adapted and applied at the start of the upcoming program year.

(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.

(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 has not yet established a policy on the transfer of funds between adult and dislocated worker programs.

(C) Youth Program Requirements

(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

The Youth team at the Job Center has developed an interactive program that is being rolled out throughout the Territory directed at addressing the needs of out-of-school youth. The *Work, Learn and Earn* program is a twelve (12) week paid work experience for out-of-school youth aged 18-24 in which youth customers work for twenty (20) hours a week. During this time, they will engage in work ready foundational skills development and career planning related workshops offered by the WIOA Youth team. At the program's outcome each youth customer will:

- Learn the soft skills needed for Job Success;
- Be able to and complete at least one networking experience with local employers in the community;
- Complete a resume and cover letter;
- Be able to perform a self-service search through the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) to access current job openings;
- Participate in a work experience in a career sector of interest;
- Know how to use labor market information to determine career interest

(3) 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 those that are 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 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

- (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 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

(a) 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.

(b) 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

(6) 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-

(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.

(d) SINGLE-AREA STATE REQUIREMENTS

(1) 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).

(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. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor 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) WIOA Title I services are administered through the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL). VIDOL also serves as the One-Stop Operator and manages the programs and services offered through the AJC. As a government entity, VIDOL follows the requirements as outlined in 2 CFR 200.317 “When procuring property and service under a Federal award, a state must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal funds.” All procurement, which includes the competitive process to award sub-grants and contracts for the Virgin Islands government is administered by the VI Department of Property and Procurement. Their processes may be accessed from their website at: <https://dpp.vi.gov/forms-documents> in documents entitled: Procurement Process Overview & Guide and Procurement Rules & Regulations.

(5) 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.

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.

Linkage to occupations in demand: Training services shall be directly linked to an in-demand sector or occupation in the local area or the planning region, or in another area to which an adult or dislocated worker receiving such services is willing to relocate, except that a local board may approve training services for occupations determined by the local board to be in sectors of the economy that have a high potential for sustained demand or growth in the local area.

All providers are given a copy of “Eligible Training Providers Background Information” document, accessible through www.viwib.org under the Providers tab, which details the types of training available and the requirements of participating in each one.

- (6) The Operations Committee, out of the State Board is designated to fulfill the roles of the local board. As part of the submission process Title II applicants will describe the alignment between their proposed services and the local WDB plan by demonstrating the extent to which the eligible provider aligns the proposed activities and services; strategy; and goals of the local plan to the activities and services of the one-stop partners.

As required under WIOA (34 C.F.R. 463.21), VIDE will submit all applications to State Board for review by the Operations Committee. The Board will make recommendations to the VI Department of Education about the application’s alignment with the local plan. The Workforce Board provides recommendations on the applications, but they are not responsible for approving or denying AEFLA grant applications.

- (7) The VI Workforce System does not have any cooperative agreements at this time.

(e) WAIVER REQUESTS

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.

Title I-B Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

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;
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;
3.	The State has 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;
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);
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;
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;
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);
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;
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;

10.	The State agrees to report on the impact and outcomes of its approved waivers in its WIOA Annual Report.
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);

Wagner-Peyser Act Program (Employment Service)

(a) 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

All UI customers are required to view an orientation video informing customer of their benefits and rights and procedures for filing a claim. They are then given the opportunity to ask questions of both the UI and W-P staffs on next steps, timelines or to clarify any information that was given.

(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

1. 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.

3. 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.

(a) Agricultural Outreach Plan

The Virgin Islands does not participate in the AOP program.

Wagner-Peyser Assurances

The State Plan must include assurances that:

1.	The Wagner-Peyser 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))
2.	The State agency is complying with the requirements under 20 CFR 653.111 (State agency staffing requirements) if the State has significant MSFW one-stop centers;
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 services, Adult and Dislocated Worker programs and Youth Programs under Title I; and
4.	State agency merit-based public employees provide Wagner-Peyser Act funded labor exchange activities in accordance with Department of Labor regulations.

Adult Education and Literacy Programs

(A) Aligning of Content Standards

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, and Adult Education will provide professional development to all instructional staff in presently funded programs, and to any prospect 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

The State Office of Career, Technical and 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. An eligible provider is an organization that has established effectiveness in providing adult education activities to qualified individuals and may include:

- A public or private non-profit agency
- A public housing authority
- A community –based or faith-based organization
- A local education agency

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

- A consortium or coalition of agencies, organization, institutions, libraries, or authorities.

Qualified individuals are individuals who are 16 years of age, not enrolled or required to be enrolled in secondary school under State law; and who is basic skills deficient; does not have a

secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent and has not achieved an equivalent level of education; or is an English language learner.

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 ESOL course is designed to improve the employability 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.

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

<p>Citizenship Course</p> <p><i>(This course is not supported with federal funds and not reported for NRS purposes)</i></p>	<p>This course is designed to prepare students for success in becoming naturalized citizens of the United States (U.S.). For adults preparing for the citizenship test, the content includes U.S. history, government, culture and symbols, with specific emphasis on rights and responsibilities under the Constitution of the United States of America.</p>
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Special Rule

The Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical, and 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.

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). Non-profit entities will be required to have proof of tax-exempt organization status under 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

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 the

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

their children; assist adults in the completion of a secondary school education. Title II , Adult Education and Family Literacy Act provides funding through a Consolidated Grant to the VIDE 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 sub grant to establish or 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 including workplace literacy services; family literacy services; and or English Literacy programs; for individuals interested in improving their education and employability skills.

AEFLA, Section 231 (b)

Awards will be subject to availability of funding from the US Department of Education.

Time Period

The period will be assigned for the period of (2) two years.

Required Local Activities

Eligible providers receiving sub grant award are required to:

1. Obtain a WIOA Approved MIS System to comply with State, Federal and National Reporting System (NRS) mandates.
2. Use the grant to operate one or more programs that provide services and instruction in one or more of the following categories:
 - Adult Education and Literacy services, including workplace literacy services
 - Family Literacy services (as described in section 203 of the AEFLA)
 - English Literacy programs that incorporate elements of civics and citizenship

Also included under types of instruction:

- Adult Basic Education (ABE) is instruction for adults whose literacy skills are at approximately the high school level and who are seeking to pass the General Educational Development (GED) tests or obtain an adult high school credential.
- English Literacy (EL) is instruction for adults who lack proficiency in English and who seek to improve their literacy and competency in English. English literacy instruction is sometimes integrated with civics education (EL/Civics).

Statutory Considerations

AEFLA Section 231

In awarding sub grants, the Virgin Islands Department of Education and the VI

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

Workforce Investment Board will consider the following factors:

1. The degree to which the eligible provider will establish measurable goals for participant outcomes
2. The past effectiveness of an eligible provider in improving the literacy skills of adults and families. After the 1 year period beginning with the adoption of an eligible agency's performances measures, the success of an eligible provider receiving funding under the subtitle in meeting or exceeding such performance measures, especially with respect those adults with the lowest levels of literacy
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;
4. Whether or not the program—(A) is of sufficient intensity and duration for participant to achieve substantial learning gains; and (B) uses instructional practices such as phonemic awareness, systematic phonics, and fluency and reading comprehensions that research has proven to be effective in teaching individuals to read.
5. Whether the activities are built on a strong foundation of research and effective educational practice.
6. Whether the activities effectively employ advances in technology, as appropriate including the use of computers;
7. Whether the activities provide learning in real life contexts to ensure that an individual has the skills needed to compete in the workplace and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship;
8. Whether the activities are staffed by well-trained instructors, counselors and Administrators
9. Whether the activities coordinate with other available resources in the community such as by establishing strong links with elementary schools and secondary school, postsecondary education institutions, one stop centers, job training programs, and social service agencies;
10. Whether the activities offer flexible schedules and support services (such as childcare and transportation) that are necessary to enable individuals, including individuals with disabilities or other special needs, to attend and

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

complete programs;

11. Whether the activities maintain a high-quality information management system that has the capacity to report participant outcomes and to monitor program performance against the eligible agency WIOA performance measures; and
12. Whether the local communities have a demonstrated need for additional English literacy programs
13. The extent to which eligible provider demonstrates alignment between proposed activities and services and the strategy and goals of the local plan (463.20(d)(4))

In order to receive funding, applicants must satisfactorily address all thirteen considerations.

Eligible Participants

The following local providers are eligible to participate in the application process for federal Adult Education and Family Literacy funds: Local educational agencies; community based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness; volunteer literacy organization of demonstrated effectiveness; institutions of higher education; public or private nonprofit agencies; libraries; public housing authorities; 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 the agencies; organizations and nonprofit institutions to include nonprofit faith based organizations. For profit entities will not be eligible.

Successful provider receiving sub grants under AEFLA are required to obtain a Management Information System to comply with State and Federal National Reporting Systems (NRS) enrollment information will be provided at orientation.

The Virgin Islands Department of Education maintains a record of eligible past providers in the state who might offer Adult Education and Literacy Services. A request for Proposal (RFP) including and application packet, will be prepared and public notice will be given to the general public and interested parties.

The request for proposals will be an 8-month period or a period negotiated by between the VI State Office for Adult Education and the VI Workforce Investment Board.

Newspapers, websites and commonly used medium will be used to advertise the availability of funding and proposal information. Training of Recommendation panel will be further reviewed by the State Office for Adult Education and the VIWIB. Reminders

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

of deadlines for Applications will be posted with the final month of RFP acceptance. The process of reading and rating the proposal will be followed by the notification and successful selection process.

Evaluation of Applications

Teams use an evaluation tool with specific criteria to determine whether the proposed applications will meet the specific requirements set by US Department of Education as set in Section 231 of Title II of the Workforce Investment Act and the VI Department of Education. 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.

Number of Sub Grants

The number of sub grants funded will depend on the number applicants, number of centers and **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 complete 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, one stop delivery systems performance reporting for eligible providers. Additionally, the State would be responsible for the evaluation and review of outcomes achieved by each local program.

Assessments of progress made in achieving State goals for Adult Education will be handled by reporting of findings at the National level.

Evaluation of Applicants

Sub Grantee applications will be evaluated on the basis of

1. How satisfactorily the thirteen considerations are addressed
2. The Applicants inclusion of the following required information;
 - A description of how funds awarded under this subtitle will be spent and
 - A Description of any cooperative arrangements the eligible provider has with other agencies, institutions, or organization for the delivery of adult education and literacy services

3. The applicant's demonstration of their ability to provide the necessary services including;
 - Services to assist adults to become literate and obtain the knowledge and skills necessary for employment and self sufficiency
 - Services to assist adults who are parents to obtain the skills necessary to become partners in the education of their children; and
 - Services to assist adults in the completion of secondary education

Management Control of the Program

The Sub grantee has complete management responsibility for this sub grant. While the VIDE Staff may be consulted, they will not be directly responsible for the selection of the sub grantee or vendors, nor will they be directly involved in the expenditure and payment of funds.

The Sub grantee has complete management responsibility for the fulfillment of the projected outcome of the program expressed within the submitted application as it related to student educational gains, total students served and nay of other measurable projections made by the applicant in securing the award.

The sub grantee award can be reduced by the grantee (VIDE) in the event that projected target population participation or other projected outcomes have not been realized by the sub grantee and a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was not submitted to the state ; was not executed; or did not correct the condition.

Sub grantee Award Decisions and Disposition of Applications

The VIDE reserves the right to award in part, to reject any and all application in whole or in part, and to waive technical defects, irregularities or omissions if is in its judgment, the best interest of the US Virgin Islands would be served. After receiving the sub grant application and after the VI Workforce Investment Board issue recommendations, the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) reserves the right not to award all sub grants, to negotiate specific sub grant amounts, and to selects certain sub grantees regardless of points awarded as part of the evaluation process to meet federal requirements or the VIDE priorities. In addition, the VIDE reserves the right to change the dollar amount of sub grant awards to meet federal guidelines for sub grant awards.

Applicants will be notified, in writing of the acceptance or rejection of their applications. If a provider is selected for funding, the VIDE Will initiate a sub grant award letter. The

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

level of funding and effective dates of the programs will be set forth in the notification of the sub grant award. All applications submitted will be retained by the VIDE and will become part of the public domain.

All awards are subject to availability of federal funds. Sub grants are not final until a VIDE and applicable Third-Party Fiduciary **Purchase Order** and award letter is executed.

Application Contents

The sub grant application must be double spaced and include the following completed sub grant sections in order to be considered:

- A. Signed sub grant Application cover page
- B. Application Abstract (no more than one page)
- C. Application Narrative:
 - Need for Project (2 pages maximum)
 - Adequacy of Resources (2 pages maximum)
 - Program Management plan (2 pages maximum)
 - Program Evaluation (2 pages maximum)
- D. Budget and Budget Narrative (2 pages maximum)
- E. Certificate of Good Standing issued, license to operate in the US Virgin Islands or 501 9c)(3) letter (whichever is applicable)
- F. Signed and dated Statement of Assurances;
- G. Funding History and Experience (2 pages maximum)
- H. Signed and Dated Certifications Regarding Lobbying (B-10)
- I. Signed certification Regarding Debarment (B-11)

The following components must be included in the application:

- A. Need for Project (2 pages maximum)**
 - 1. The extent to which the proposed project will provide services or otherwise address the needs of the adult population.

Guidance for applicants: Provide a description of your community and the extent to which the proposed project is appropriate to and will successfully address the needs of the target population. In doing this, you may:

- a) Cite the factors that place adult students at risk; from becoming literate and obtain the knowledge and skill necessary for employment and self-sufficiency; prevent parents from obtaining the skills necessary to become partners in the education of their children; and prevent adults from completion of secondary school education.
- b) Describe how the proposed project will remedy the risk factors for

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

each target population. Applicants are advised that a needs assessment may be helpful in determining the needs of the community and the gaps in the services that are available. The services to be provided should be closely tied to the identified needs.

B. Quality of Design (2 pages maximum)

The extent to which the goals, objectives and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specified Project Design and measurable.

C. Adequacy of Resources (2 pages maximum)

1. The adequacy of support, including facilities, equipment, supplies, and other resources from each of the partnership organization.
2. The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the number of students to be served and to the anticipated results and benefits.
3. The extent to which items purchased are allowable under selected cost of item listed (OMB Omni Circular A-87)
4. The extent to which the activities are allocable to the needs of the local program and curriculum

Guidance for applicants: Show that appropriate resources and personnel have been carefully allocated for the tasks and activities described in your application.

Successful applicants must ensure that their budget will adequately cover program expenses. It is important to demonstrate how you will leverage existing school resources, such as computer labs, libraries, and classrooms to carry out your activities. Also describe the resources that partners that are contributing, such as the use of community recreational areas, staff, supplies, etc. You are advised that costs should be allocation and will be judged against the scope of the project and its anticipated benefits. Applicants should provide evidence that the plans have the support of program designers, service providers and participants.

Program Management Plan (2 pages max)

1. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines and milestones for accomplishing project tasks.

Guidance for applicants: Charts, timetables and position descriptions for key staff are particularly helpful in describing the structure of your

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

project and the procedures for successful managing. We recommend that you clearly spell out objective, activities, events, beneficiaries, and anticipated results. Many successful projects budget for, and employ a project director and seek guidance from a variety of members of the community. Also, you must address the issue of planning for sustainability after the grant period and elaborate upon how your school district, community-based organization and partnering organizations will assist in sustaining the project. Successful applicants should describe the role and responsibility of all key staff and how they plan for and provide resources for ongoing staff development and training.

(C) Corrections Education and other Education of Institutionalized Individuals

Each eligible agency using funds provided under Programs for Corrections Education and Other Institutionalized Individuals to carry out a program for criminal offenders within a correctional institution must give priority to serving individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within 5 years of participation in the program.

The Virgin Islands State Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (SOCTAE) will spend no more than 10 percent of the funds used to award grants and contracts under section 231 for activities under section 225. 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. Individuals also participate in career

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.

As required by WIOA, individuals who are likely to leave the correctional institution within five years of participation in the program are eligible for enrollment in adult education programs.

Presently, persons over the age of 16 assigned by Court Order that are required to complete Adult Education are accommodated in order to fulfill Court mandates. Additionally, VIDE has assisted Adult Education Administrators with funding testing and programs for inmates.

However, additional time is needed to complete a revised plan of action to address Prison Population needs immediately.

Additionally, new plans are underway to provide Continuing Education and Career

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

Pathways for newly released persons. Additional time is needed to gain more information on plans and timelines for implementations along with guideline and curriculum alignment to local programs.

(D) Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program

Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education Program will be supported by local information and activities presented through History and Cultural Education Divisions. These activities will be integrated to the Adult Education Curriculum.

Civics Education can be integrated into the English Literacy programs by encouraging Principals and Teachers and Partner Local Educational Agency sub grantees to focus on topics related to Civics for conversations and discussion content in the classroom.

Principals, Administrators, Executive Directors will need to ensure that reading materials and corresponding information is Grade level appropriate for the ability of the learner.

(E) State Leadership

SOCTAE 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.*

SOCTAE will 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)*

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

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

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;
- Webinars/Teleconferences

3. Technical Assistance

SOCTAE 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.

SOCTAE 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.

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

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

activities such as family literacy and civic education.

In conjunction with Partners programs and recommendations from the Workforce Investment 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.

(F) Assessing Quality

SOCTAE 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. The results of these processes determine program improvement actions.

Monitoring

SOCTAE 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.

The State Office for Adult Education has in place a monitoring tool that assesses 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

STATE UNIFIED PLAN – US Virgin Islands

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.

Actions taken to improve quality

If 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

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

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).

Annual Performance Report and Evaluation Requirements

Each year, sub grantees are required to submit an Annual Report (APR) that describes project activities, accomplishments and outcomes. The two purposes of the APR are to; (1) demonstrate that substantial program has been made toward meeting the objectives of the project as outlined in the sub grant application and (2) collect data that addresses the performance indicators for the AEFLA program and WIOA Core Partner common indicators.

All Sub grantees will be monitored by the VIDE to ensure compliance to all Federal and State mandates and procedures. Programs will be monitored with the use of VI monitoring checklist (Appendix H of Implementing Guidelines (Measures and Methods for National Reporting Systems for Adult Education)

Obligations of Sub Grantees

All applicants are hereby notified that the sub grant to be awarded is subject to contract compliance requirement of the Virgin Islands Department of Education. Furthermore, the sub grantee must submit periodic reports of its employment and sub-contracting practices in such form, in such manner, and in such time, as may be prescribed by VIDE.

Freedom of Information Act

All the information contained in applications submitted in response to Announcements is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

Adult Education and Family Literacy Act Program Certifications and Assurances

<i>States must provide written and signed certifications that:</i>	
1.	The plan is submitted by the State agency that is eligible to submit the plan;
2.	The State agency has authority under State law to perform the functions of the State under the program;
3.	The State legally may carry out each provision of the plan;
4.	All provisions of the plan are consistent with State law;
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;
6.	The State officer who is submitting the plan, specified by the title in the certification, has authority to submit the plan;
7.	The agency that is submitting the plan has adopted or otherwise formally approved the plan; and
8.	The plan is the basis for State operation and administration of the program
<i>The State Plan must include assurances that:</i>	
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 supplemental and not supplant provisions);
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;
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;
4.	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;

5.	The Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education program under section 243(a) of WIOA will be designed to (1) 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 and (2) integrate with the local workforce development system and its functions to carry out the activities of the program; and
6.	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

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

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 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 VISRC recognizes the diligent efforts of the VR Team for their support to the Council members' in helping the council to move forward in a productive manner as to better understand and respond to mandates of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) while navigating in a rapidly changing system. Although WIOA measures are being established and the rule development is still in process, the VISRC supports high standards and expectations in every area of the VR system.

The VISRC is committed to the growth and strengthening of its partnership with the VIDDRS. We are supportive of Virgin Islands Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services (VIDDRS) efforts to provide services to transitioning youth. The Recruitment of new SRC members continues to be a challenge. VISRC continues to work in partnership with the VIDDRS to expand membership; focus is being placed on recruitment of current or former applicants for, or recipients of vocational rehabilitation, more individuals representing business, industry, and labor, and also a representative of the State workforce investment board.

The VISRC sponsors annual forums for the evaluation of the VR agencies performance

based on goals and policies that have been implemented; it also gives interested parties an opportunity to provide VI SRC with input to guide its efforts throughout the fiscal year. The VISRC also sponsors the events for the National Disability Employment Awareness Month, acknowledging and recognizing both clients and employers who have utilized the programs offered by the VIDDRS and had successful employment outcomes.

While VISRC is encouraged with VIDDRS efforts to engage community stakeholders it is recommended that the VIDDRS develop and implement a comprehensive outreach plan. Additionally, the VISRC supports the VR's efforts to implement a client case management system as this will facilitate more efficiency in the overall management of the program.

2. the Designated State unit's response to the Council's input and recommendations; and

VIDDRS has reviewed the comments and input from the VI SRC and are in agreement with their recommendations/concerns. VIDDRS has an "open door policy" and will continue to encourage the VISRC to share concerns throughout the year.

3. the designated State unit's explanations for rejecting any of the Council's input or recommendations.

N/A

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 Vocational Rehabilitation Program is not requesting a waiver of statewideness.

2. the designated State unit will approve each proposed service before it is put into effect; and N/A

3. All State plan requirements will apply requirements of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan will apply to the services approved under the waiver.

N/A

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 Vocational Rehabilitation program continues to cooperate with entities not in the State Workforce System. The Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence on Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), in conjunction with Banco Popular provides low interest loans to purchase assistive technology devices for individuals with disabilities. They also present mini workshops on disability related issues. Periodically, they offer sign language training to companies in the community. Self-advocacy training for persons with disabilities is also provided. The St. Croix Career & Technical Educational and the Wheatley Skills Centers are operated by the Department of Education. They provide vocational and technical training in areas such as typing, computer repair, auto and diesel mechanic, cosmetology, food and beverage management, upholstery, carpentry, and many other vocational courses.

Vocational Rehabilitation clients who demonstrate interest and potential are referred to both facilities for training. The Child Care Block Grant Program is a division within the Department of Human Services through which eligible mothers receive assistance with childcare while actively seeking employment. This service extends after they have been placed in employment. Small Business Development Center (SBDC) is an entity with whom we have developed a working relationship. As part of our Entrepreneurship Services to qualified VR Clients, it is required that a business proposal be developed with the assistance of the SBDC. Clients who are interested in the Business Enterprise Program are required to attend seminars sponsored by

SBDC. The Vocational Rehabilitation Program in collaboration with its partners, (Department of Labor, and the Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD) and the UVI Cooperative Extension Service (UVI-CES) who also hosted the camp on the UVI St. Thomas campus) co-sponsored an agricultural summer enrichment program. The students participated in numerous field trips and engaged in a wide variety of learning and fun-filled activities to further stimulate their interest in agricultural areas. The six-week program was designed to increase knowledge and create awareness of career and work opportunities in the field of agricultural science. The second objective of this initiative was to equip the participants with job preparation skills through classroom presentations, practical exercises and field activities. This summer, the program will be expanded to include the LEA as a partner. The designated State Unit strives to maintain a professional relationship with the Client Assistance Program locally known as the Disability Rights Center of the Virgin Islands. They are invited to participate in workshops and VR sponsored events, VR is also invited to participate in parent forums and other activities as appropriate.

VR will provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. This will be achieved through the

expansion of our supported employment initiative to include the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD). Additionally, Independent job coaches will provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances for up to four years post placement. VIDDRS will continue to partner with the VI Department of Labor to ensure that a sound business engagement strategy is implemented to maximize opportunity for sustainable relationships and employment opportunities with businesses in the community. VIDDRS will utilize existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in the private sector to facilitate these extended services.

2. State programs carried out under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act

of 1998; N/A

3. Programs carried out by the Under Secretary for Rural Development of the United States Department of Agriculture;

N/A

4. Non-educational agencies serving out-of-school youth; and

5. State use contracting programs.

N/A

d. Coordination with Education Officials

1. DSU's plans

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.

Many 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 Utilizing this information, VIDDRS is at the table with stakeholders of the local education agency to complete the development of a collaborative Transition Services Procedure. VIDDRS and the LEAS continue to work collaboratively to develop a seamless process which will clearly identify the procedures for application, eligibility determination and provision of transition services, including pre-employment transition services for VR eligible students. The process ensures the Development and Approval Process for the IPE prior to students exiting school.

VIDDRS will provide technical assistance to counselors on strategies for timely

determination of eligibility and development of IPEs for youth with disabilities to ensure that the IPE is developed before the student leaves high school.

VIDDRS will hold regular (bi-weekly) case reviews to provide a forum for counselors to discuss and share strategies that have been successful in addressing challenges.

VIDDRS will implement a plan for identifying cases at day 45 for which eligibility has not been determined as follows: Transitioning applicants will be identified and flagged upon receipt of referral; cases that have been in applicant status for over 30 days will be reviewed and appropriate action taken Once eligibility has been determined;

DRS will monitor IPE development based on 90 days as stated in our policy manual Quarterly case reviews will be conducted within the last two weeks of December, March, June, September to determine compliance with requirements for timely determination of eligibility and development of IPE. The goal is for 100% of IPEs will be developed within 90 days of eligibility determination.

VIDDRS is committed to building its capacity to provide extended services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. VIDDRS is in the trial stages of partnership with the University of the Virgin Islands to develop innovative pathways that will allow individuals to access support services in "non-traditional" ways, while helping to build the foundation for achievement of sustainable accomplishments. Independent job coaches may provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances. VIDDRS policies and procedures will be updated to reflect updated WIOA authorizations for extended services.

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;

Interagency Agreement

I. PURPOSE

This Joint Interagency Agreement for Secondary Transition Services (hereinafter "Agreement") is designed to improve cooperative and collaborative efforts between the Virgin Islands Department of Education, as the State Educational Agency, through the State Office of Special Education ("VIDE/SOSE") and the Department of Human Services, through the Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services (herein after "VR"). The Agreement shall ensure that each student with a disability in the territory who needs special education and/or vocational rehabilitation services is promptly

identified, and the appropriate transition services are made available.

II. AUTHORITY

VIDE/SOSE

VIDE/SOSE is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that each eligible student with a disability is provided with a free appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (“IDEA 2004”), 20 USC § 1400; and

- IDEA also requires VIDE/SOSE to provide transition planning and services which will prepare students with disabilities for transition from school to post-school life; [34 CFR 300.1(a)] [20 U.S.C. 1400(d)(1)(A); and
- VIDE/SOSE is required to ensure that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination is in effect between each non-educational public agency as required by the IDEA [20 USC § 1412(a)(12)], in the provision of a free appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities; and
- IDEA requires participating states and territories to have in place an agreement or mechanism to: (i) identify the state agency responsible for providing services that are also special education and related services to ensure a free appropriate public education; (ii) specify the terms and conditions under which responsible agencies reimburse local agencies for providing certain services that are special education and related services; (iii) resolve interagency disputes; and (iv) coordinate the provision of services that are also special education or related services to eligible students with disabilities in accordance with 20 USC §1412(a)(12).

VR is the agency responsible for implementing the Vocational Rehabilitation Program as authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, which includes the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Title IV; and an individual, including a student, is eligible to receive Vocational Rehabilitation services (hereafter “VR services”), including transition services, if he or she is “an individual with a disability,” including eligible students under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, meaning that the individual has a physical or mental impairment that results in an impediment to employment and can benefit in terms of an employment outcome from VR services; and to be eligible, an individual also must require VR services in order to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment; and the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations require Vocational Rehabilitation agencies to enter into formal interagency agreements with State Education Agency (SEA) describing how they will collaboratively plan and coordinate transition services for students with disabilities needing those services (Section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act and 34 CFR 361.22(b)).

NOW THEREFORE, the parties hereto agree:

III. GOALS

It is the overarching goal of this Agreement that, to the maximum extent possible, all eligible students with disabilities exit high school prepared to go directly into employment and/or post-secondary training programs, and independent living. In furtherance of this, VIDE/SOSE and VR shall work together to accomplish the following:

Implement practices in secondary school programs that include pre-employment transition services, that will prepare eligible students with disabilities for competitive and, where appropriate, supported employment; integrated recreation and leisure activities; college or postsecondary training, and personal management skills that allow for the greatest level of independence in social, recreational, residential and employment settings;

Ensure that all eligible students with disabilities and their parents/guardians are provided the necessary tools and resources to be actively engaged in planning their high school experiences and future post high school goals;

Coordinate activities among all involved segments of the community toward the purposes stated in this Agreement.

IV. Interagency Responsibilities

WHEREAS, both VIDE/SOSE and VR have obligations to serve the same population of eligible students with disabilities to ensure smooth transitions from school to post school activities, it is

THEREFORE, the parties intent in this Agreement to abide by the following provisions as the terms and conditions of their mutual understanding to ensure that eligible students with disabilities are college, career, and community ready.

The parties (VIDE/SOSE and VR) to this Agreement shall:

Establish and maintain collaboration needed to achieve the purpose of this cooperative effort in providing for the successful transition of eligible students with disabilities from school to adult life;

Allow for the exchange of student information between VIDE/SOSE and VR as needed and within the parameters of students' confidentiality rights;

Provide services to eligible students with disabilities in accordance with the mandated responsibilities, funding appropriations and available resources of the participating agencies;

Implement and disseminate this Agreement as well as other pertinent information Territory- wide;

Provide professional development and technical assistance activities for VIDE/SOSE and VR personnel, the LEAs, other public and private agencies, and parents/guardians/surrogates/students on topics related to transition planning and adult service activities;

V. VIDE/SOSE Responsibilities

1. 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;
2. 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;
 - a. Convene quarterly meetings, or as needed, to evaluate the transition process and recommend system changes.
3. Coordinate with VR for 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;
4. Distribute the “VR Information Packet” for LEAs to provide to students referred to VR by age (16).

The Information Packet will include:

- a) VR program and contact information; and
- b) VR brochures.

VI. VR Responsibilities

1. Provide the following five activities to eligible students with disabilities (16–21 year-olds): (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;
2. Attend IEP meetings for eligible students with disabilities as appropriate and anticipate service needs;
3. Work with local workforce development boards, One-Stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities;
4. Develop guidelines and provide technical assistance on the implementation of this

Agreement to LEA personnel, parents and students;

5. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process;

6. Develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible students, before the student leaves the school setting;

Financial Responsibilities:

This Agreement was drafted prior to the release of final regulations of the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) and will be revisited upon release of final regulations.

The final approved agreement is pending

B. Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs

The VI Department of Education, State Office of Special Education is responsible for the provision of special education and related services for students with disabilities, including transition services. The VIDOE is responsible for the development, coordination and implementation of the student's IEP. Staff of the VI DOE and VIDDRS Transition Unit work collaboratively to facilitate interagency planning as well as collaboration with other agencies to assist in referring 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.

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 Interagency Agreement outlines roles and responsibilities for both education staff and VR staff. VIDDRS staff is actively engaged in the implementation of the student's IEP collaborating in the planning and referral development and facilitating 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 goals on a student's IPE are aligned. VR services should compliment services provided by schools but not replace those services.

D. Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services

VIDDRS is engaged with the LEA to participate in IEP meetings. VIDDRS is also a

member of the SEA/LEA Capacity Building team and we are working together to develop a territorial plan for transitioning students that will be inclusive of required Pre Employment Transitioning requirements. The plan will include action steps that each agency's responsibility to promote the core principles for transition.

Transition planning for youth requires a multi-agency collaboration with early dialogue between the student with their families and other stakeholders (VR, DOE and DOL). This coordination will ensure consistent information and guidance about VR program and the availability of services between partner agencies.

e. Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(3)). Describe the way the designated State agency establishes cooperative agreements with private non-profit VR service providers.

In keeping with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, the designated state unit will continue to strengthen agreements with Private Non-Profit Rehabilitation Agencies. This will allow individuals with significant disabilities to develop skills which result in an employment outcome. The Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living plays a vital role in teaching independent Living skills to Vocational Rehabilitation Clients who are interested in the coordination of attendant care services, mobility training and integration in community affairs.

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 VR staff has been invited to make presentations at these workshops also.

f. Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(4)). 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.

The Virgin Islands has been faced with challenges in the provision of supported employment services for its VR clients. In 2010, the VI lost its two CRPs. Due to the uniqueness of the population, and the geographical isolation of the territory, traditional CRP models have not been most beneficial therefore VIDDRS is implementing a

unique model that it believes will be successful. VIDDRS has recruited and trained six individuals who have interest and transferrable skills to be certified job coaches. Due to reasons beyond our control, three job coaches have since left the program.

As mandated by WIOA, VIDDRS is engaging in an initiative with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) and Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), to facilitate employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

The intervention will serve as a pilot led by VIUCEDD and the results will be documented and used to improve employer engagement, outreach efforts and employment outcomes for the most significantly disabled individuals.

VIDDRS continues to collaborate with private non-profit service providers who are able to provide supported employment in limited fields. VIDDRS continues to work with clients to develop natural supports to include employers, family members and other local programs that serve our target population. The agency will continue to explore available options for funding the provision of extended supports. The VR Program continues to partner with the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL) to facilitate employment services for VR clients. VIDDRS is not present in now

present in the job center weekly. Through this partnership, VIDDRS to serve VR eligible individuals who are attempting to navigate the Virgin Islands Department of Labor.

VIDDRS collaborates with DOL to access on the job training and other job services available to support our clients. VIDDRS continues to concentrate its efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a non-traditional provider source for supported employment services. A variety of supported employment provider choices are needed, particularly due to the lack of “factory-type” businesses in the territory. VIDDRS continues to focus on providing technical assistance and coordinating training for vendors of supported employment services to VIDDRS staff members, and staff members of other public and private agencies such as DOL and DOE.

VIDDRS has developed a relationship with VIUCEDD and we will continue to pursue evidence-based practices to favorably impact supported employment outcomes. VR will provide supported employment services for individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth, to achieve the employment outcome of supported employment in competitive integrated employment. This will be achieved through the expansion of our supported employment initiative to include the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD). Additionally, Independent job coaches will provide supported employment services for up to 24 months, with the option to increase as needed in special circumstances.

VIDDRS will continue to partner with the VI Department of Labor to ensure that a sound business engagement strategy is implemented to maximize opportunity for sustainable relationships and employment opportunities with businesses in the community. VIDDRS will utilize existing partnerships and establish new partnerships in the private sector to facilitate these extended services.

The Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living is a partner that continues to provide independent living skills and mobility training to individuals with the most significant disabilities. In addition, the Designated State Unit and the Virgin Islands Association for Independent Living are developing projects and extending services to individuals who are older with visual impairments.

Funding for extended services is available from several sources based on the consumer's disability, eligibility and the available resources available, VIDDRS will provide extended services funding to those individuals who, after placement in employment have no other resources to provide the long-term supports. Accordingly, VIDDRS will utilize its funds to provide extended services in supported employment post-placement in employment.

VIDDRS and its WIOA core partners are in the process of developing a service delivery system that will enable state agencies to cost share the appropriate services needed for consumers to choose, find and maintain meaningful competitive supported employment. We believe that the implementation of this initiative will increase in the availability of resources for extended services. Currently, available funding is administered at local levels and each situation handled individually. Sources include:

- Virgin Island Department of Labor - Employment and Training
- VI Department of Education - LEAS
- VI JOBS Program
- Social Security Administration Work Incentives when applicable
- Private Sector Natural Supports

[g. Coordination with Employers](#)

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.8(b)(5)). 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

VIDDRS is working in collaboration with the Department of Labor Employment and Training Division to implement a seamless system for employer engagement to facilitate career opportunities in the demand occupations in the territory which include Administrative and Support Services, Allied Health, Construction trades, Information Technology, Leisure and Hospitality, Retail and Transportation and Logistics.

2. Transition services, including pre-employment transition services, for students and youth with disabilities.

Development and Approval Process for IPE prior to students exiting school VIDDRS will provide technical assistance to counselors on strategies for timely determination of eligibility and development of IPEs for youth with disabilities to ensure that the IPE is developed before the student leaves high school.

- VIDDRS will hold regular (bi-weekly) case reviews to provide a forum for counselors to discuss and share strategies that have been successful in

addressing challenges. VIDDRS will implement a plan for identifying cases at day 45 for which eligibility has not been determined as follows: Transitioning applicants will be identified and flagged upon receipt of referral;

- Cases that have been in applicant status for over 30 days will be reviewed and appropriate action taken Once eligibility has been determined;
- VIDDRS will monitor IPE development based on 90 days as stated in our policy manual Quarterly case reviews will be conducted within the last two weeks of December, March, June, September to determine compliance with requirements for timely determination of eligibility; and
- Development of IPE

The goal is for 100% of IPEs will be developed within 90 days of eligibility determination.

Coordinating with Education Officials The Virgin Islands Department of Education as the State Educational Agency (“SEA”), and through its State Office of Special Education (“SOSE”) and through its Local Educational Agencies (“LEAs”), is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that each eligible student with a disability is provided with a free appropriate public education in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”), 20 USC § 1400(d); and

The purpose of this agreement is to support the transition of eligible students with disabilities from secondary schools to integrated employment and adult roles, continuing and post– secondary education, adult services, independent living and community participation through improved cooperative and collaborative efforts among relevant service providers; and

The Virgin Islands Department of Education shall:

- Ensure that an interagency agreement or other mechanism for interagency coordination is in effect between each non–educational public agency and the DOE, as required by the IDEA, and its implementing regulation at 34 CFR § 300.2(a)and (b) [20 USC § 1412(a)(12)], in the provision of a free appropriate public education to eligible students with disabilities; and
- Coordinate with the Department of Human Services – VIDDRS for dissemination of information to local education agencies regarding effective, results–based practices for students with disabilities to be prepared for postsecondary 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;
- Coordinate with DHS to provide professional development and technical assistance activities for DOE staff, the LEAs, other public and private agencies, and parents/guardians/students/ surrogates on topics related to

transition planning and adult service activities;

- Provide training in conjunction with DHS regarding transition services and interagency service linkages; and
- Coordinate with DHS to distribute the “DHS Information Packet” for LEAs to provide to students referred to DHS by age (16). The Information Packet will include DHS program and contact information and DHS brochures.

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES (DHS) The Department of Human of Services, as a State Agency federally mandated to collaborate with the Special Education Division of the Department agrees to Designate at least one member from its respective divisions that may provide services to the eligible client as an IEP team participant for the purpose of attending conference meetings pertaining to the implementation of this Interagency Agreement, and for planning for transition planning and implementing the services required by the student’s IEP.

The DHS’s Division of Disabilities and Rehabilitation Services agrees to:

- Develop guidelines on the implementation of this agreement and train state and local– level staff regarding those guidelines;
- Provide vocational rehabilitation services to students who meet the eligibility criteria of DHS; Attend IEP meetings for eligible students beginning at age 14 and at a minimum by age 16, to identify and anticipate service needs;
- Provide consultation and technical assistance to aid LEAs in planning for the transition of eligible students as needed;
- Conduct educational/informational workshops to interested students, parents/advocates on the Vocational Rehabilitation Process and where referrals may be accepted;
- Develop an Individual Plan of Employment (IPE) with eligible clients, before the student leaves the school setting. Notify relevant transition team participants of student eligibility determination and appeal process;
- Provide exploratory opportunities in community–based businesses for students identified by Vocational Rehabilitation and DOE throughout the school year;

This agreement recognizes that each agency has its own administrative mechanisms for the timely resolution of internal disputes.

All signatory parties and their respective agencies are responsible for resolving their own internal disputes, so long as each agency acts in a timely manner and consistent with provisions set forth in that program’s regulations. Financial responsibility rests with VIDDRS for vocational rehabilitation services needed by transitioning youth with disabilities, ages 16 to 21, who have left school by way of graduation or who have otherwise exited the school system. VIDDRS will provide services that are legally their responsibility for those transitioning youth who are approaching or are of working age and who are determined to be eligible for services by VIDDRS. *VIDDRS and VIDE have completed the first draft of the amended agreement (the original document was

signed in 2006). The final approved agreement is pending and will be

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 program are under the same DSA, and a collaborative relationship exists as it relates to shared clients and referral of clients. Existing information i.e. medical reports and other financial data is shared as necessary, additionally

2. The State agency responsible for providing services for individuals with developmental disabilities; and

VIDDRS works collaboratively with this entity to promote advocacy for VR consumers through partnering various initiatives to identify and address barriers to employment for people with developmental disabilities

3. The State agency responsible for providing mental health services

The Virgin Islands is experiencing significant challenges with the level of services available to persons who are mentally ill. Due to a retirement of professional staff, we are experiencing challenges in services to clients. Currently, VR is utilizing private vendor to ensure that diagnostic services and treatment are provided for VR eligible individuals.

i. Comprehensive System of Personnel Development; Data System on Personnel and Personnel Development

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.10)) 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. Data 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;

Presently, the total number of the Designated State Unit staff is eighteen (18), full time equivalent (FTE). The Designated State Unit needs twenty-four (24) full time equivalence staff and has projected a need for one full time VR Counselor within the next five years.

The Designated State has one vacant counselor positions which became vacant due to relocation of the staff; this position has proven very hard to fill. Currently, the Designated State Unit's active caseload is approximately 405 consumers whose needs are very diverse and complex.

In addition, they are markedly difficult and challenging. It is projected that within the next five (5) years the active caseload will increase to approximately 580 consumers with 480 being individuals with significant disabilities. Projections for the increase of consumers are based on all of the Designated State Unit vacant positions being filled, population increase in the territory, increase in Workers Compensation population, and the number of transitioning students within the next five years. It is also projected that the Designated State Unit will be able to serve the projected number of consumers with its current staff (assuming all vacancies are filled).

ii. The number of personnel currently needed by the State agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (1 vacancy) Transition Supervisor (1 Vacancy)
Administrative Officer (1 vacancy)

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 that the current VIDDRS staff (with existing vacancies filled) will be able to serve projected individuals that are eligible for VR services. Currently there are two managers who will be eligible for retirement. VIDDRS will work with our Human Resources office to ensure that succession planning is implemented.

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 (University of the Virgin Islands) within the territory that offers certified undergraduate and graduate degree programs. These programs are in Psychology, Education, Nursing and Business Administration. Unfortunately, the university does not provide a degree program or courses in

Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling. Staff interested in a graduate program must enroll in an institution on the U.S. mainland. Currently two VR counselors are pursuing master's degree programs at the University.

ii. the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and

iii. The number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of these 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.

N/A

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.

Staff interested in entering the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE) approved Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Programs must enroll in universities on the United States mainland or study via distance learning. The Designated State Unit (DSU) strongly encourages staff entering the unit to meet the CSPD standards, however this is not required. VIDDRS supports individualized educational pursuit with an expectation that the standards will be met within 3 to 4 years. Staff who are not certified are encouraged to meet the standards. In addition, the DSU is discussing incentives to encourage staff to meet this standard. The proposed incentive is to provide a \$2,000 increase for counselors that obtain their masters degree and an additional \$2,000 increase upon achievement of CRC certification. Recruitment of staff is conducted through the government personnel system; persons trained in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation counseling or persons with similar backgrounds in social work, education or psychology are qualified to be hired as VR counselors.

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) and 34 CFR 361.18(c) 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 Designated State Unit is communicating with the Office of Personnel and Labor Relations to approve a plan that will address this issue,

however, the plan has to be negotiated and agreed with the counselors’ collective bargaining unit.

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.

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 will work collaboratively with VIUCEDD, LEA, and other training providers to ensure that VR personnel is equipped with the tools required to address the complex challenges that confront VR consumers may face utilizing evidence based research and other available data.

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. System of Staff Development

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

The Designated State Unit annually identifies personnel need for educational upgrading. This year analysis of personnel educational need reveals that five (5) counselors are in need of further education to comply with the Designated State Unit requirement for highly qualified personnel. One (1) counselor has completed the graduate program at the State University of New York at Buffalo via distance learning. The employees that remain in need of training are encouraged to participate in an accredited VR graduate degree program.

The Designated State Unit continues to work with the Office of Personnel and Labor Relations to implement an approved individualized training plan for the counselors' professional development which has the support/approval of the counselor's collective bargaining unit. The fundamental guidelines for this plan include individualized educational pursuit with anticipation that they will meet the CSPD standard for a qualified VR counselor in 3 to 4 years. Progress of these individuals with respect to meeting the applicable standard will be reviewed annually.

Therefore, the Designated State Unit is committed in assisting present counseling staff with bachelor degrees to meet the new entry-level requirement of a graduate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. Those interested persons can enroll in the local university with the understanding that they will also have to complete their studies at a CORE approved Rehabilitation Counseling program at a mainland university or via distance learning. Staff on all levels employed by the Designated State Unit, as well as, staff from supporting agencies, such as Independent Living, Special Education, Mental Health and the Department of Labor Employment Training Unit is invited to participate in all in-service training workshops.

Training is provided for staff on all levels through local programs, the State University of New York at Buffalo, Technical Assistance Continuing Education (TACE) Center and by other related programs sponsored by various agencies. Training may be in areas such as Assistive Technology, the Rehabilitation Act Amendments, Computer Literacy, Workforce Development, Individual Disabilities, Method of Supervision, Supported Employment or Ticket-To-Work.

Through this mode, staff is able to keep abreast of all emerging trends and changes in the program, as well as, the development of self-growth. All staff is given an annual evaluation of their job performance in accordance with the territory's personnel policies and procedures.

Training needs assessments are conducted among the staff, which assists VIDDRS in planning and training providers.

B. Acquisition and Dissemination of Significant Knowledge

Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to designated State unit professionals and paraprofessionals

VIDDRS will provide access to VR personnel and stakeholders to facilitate a more trained team with enhanced 21st century knowledge on the issues confronting persons with disabilities and strategies that have been effective in other jurisdictions.

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.

In addressing issues associated with diversity and cultural needs, the Designated State Unit employs one bilingual individual. The territory has a large Hispanic population

Coordination of Personnel Development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

mainly due to its close proximity to Puerto Rico and the surrounding Hispanic islands. Furthermore, the Designated State Unit is committed to securing the cost for interpreter services for any other languages. The DSU also makes available, devices to help improve communication for visually impaired consumers. Lastly, the Designated State Agency has a list of interpreters for the deaf available on an as needed basis.

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.

Attempting to maximize available resources and to increase networking opportunities, the Designated State Unit plans to continue cross-training activities that would benefit all professionals involved. The Designated State Unit is actively collaborating with the State Office of Special Education in its capacity building initiatives. Counselors are involved in enhancing transitioning activities within the schools and attend training events sponsored by the schools.

Counselors and support staff participate in students IEP development and provide services for students to enhance transitioning from school to work. Staff from related programs is encouraged to enroll in our training programs. Training efforts are geared to ensure the development of qualified staff for succession planning and leadership skills.

The Designated State Unit utilizes all opportunities to involve all managers in the Unit's overall functions. They are

encouraged to attend management training programs offered by the Department, as well as those offered in the territory and off island specifically for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In the event of the resignation or retirement of any staff member, remaining on-board staff will be knowledgeable enough to keep the program running until replacements are hired in accordance with the Designated State Agency's policies. The Designated State Unit continues to search for new and effective practices to attract qualified personnel to work in the territory. Recruitment and retention of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors continues to be the biggest challenge and liability.

j. Statewide Assessment

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(a)).

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;

Introduction This needs assessment was jointly developed under the direction of the Department of Human Services, Division of Disabilities & Rehabilitation Services, the Virgin Islands State Rehabilitation Council, and the Virgin Islands State Independent Living Council. The first two entities are recognized by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), United States Department of Education, as the territory's vocational rehabilitation agency and council under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Rehabilitation Act requires each state's vocational rehabilitation agency and state rehabilitation council to periodically develop a comprehensive statewide needs assessment.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to inform the agency and the council as they develop a new three-year strategic state plan. The assessment is designed to answer important questions about the population of eligible for VR services that live in the Virgin Islands and their vocational rehabilitation needs. It serves to inform DVR's strategic plan and goal development for the next three fiscal years, 2016 - 2020.

In its compilation, we rely on a variety of publicly available sources, including survey information from the United States Census Bureau and data from the Rehabilitation Services Administration. We gathered information from the Virgin Islands Departments of Labor, Education, and Health and Human Services, as well as numerous stakeholder groups, including people with disabilities, employers, and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

The VIDDRS's needs assessment was designed to respond to federal regulatory requirement and to provide information for the development of the territory's plan for vocational rehabilitation around three broad areas of investigation:

1. Assess the impact and the nature and scope of services currently provided by VIDDRS;

2. Identify rehabilitation needs of persons with disabilities in the Virgin Islands and specifically the rehabilitation needs of the un-served and underserved Virgin Islanders; and

3. Identify areas for expansion or improvement of services. To address these issues the Agency reviewed data from a variety of sources including information available from the United States Census Bureau, the Rehabilitation Services Administration, Virgin Islands Department of Education and the Virgin Islands Workforce Investment Board.

Updated information was collected through a customer survey, and forums held throughout the territory.

Within this report the reader will find:

- Review of population statistics
- Review of VIDDRS service data
- Review of survey data to assess customer satisfaction
- Review of performance data to assess the provision of transition services and the needs of transition aged customers
- Review of the information received at forums held at strategic locations throughout the Territory Methodology

In accordance with federal regulations 34 CFR § 361.29, the focus of the data collection for the CSNA was on:

1. What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services?

2. What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities or in un-served or underserved populations?

3. What are the vocational rehabilitation service needs of individuals with disabilities who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?

4. What is the need to establish, develop, or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) within the territory?

Multiple data sources were used to inform the CSNA

- Consumer Satisfaction Survey

- Community Survey of the General Population
- VIDDRS VR Counselors Focus Group
- Stakeholders Focus Groups
- US Census Data
- USVI DOE Annual Performance Report FFY 2011
- RSA Statistical Data - Fiscal Years 2007 -2012
- USVI State Integrated Five Year Workforce Plan 2012-2017
- Public Forum A survey was conducted among 2984 persons.

Instruments were circulated to all government employees via their pay stubs, to the private sector via outreach activities coordinated by the SRC. Collection boxes were placed strategically in the community as well as telephone contact was made to coordinate pick-up from the more rural areas. VIDDRS was pleased with the enthusiasm and support from staff, stakeholders and the general public.

Data contained herein will be utilized as baseline data for future CSNAs Secondary Research Census Data Statistics.

The US Virgin Islands has a population of 105,433 people; 78% black, 10% white and 12% other. While 81% of the population is of West Indian background only 49% were born in the Virgin Islands. The remaining 32% were born elsewhere in the Caribbean. Residents originally from the US Mainland make up 13% of the population and Puerto Ricans make up 4%. The remaining 2% is a mixture of immigrants from across the world including the middle east, India and Asia (Source: US Census Bureau - 2000).

Data from the 2010 USVI Census indicates that there are 615 individuals a disability below the age of 18. The Virgin Islands Department of Education Annual Performance Report for FY 2011 indicated that in FY' 2011, 46 of 152 (30.26%) students in the 4 year cohort group earned a regular diploma; which allowed the Virgin Islands Department of Education, State Office of Special Education (VIDE/SOSE) to meet their targeted goal of 24%.

The four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate is required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is used to determine the graduation rate for students with disabilities. The percentage is identified by the number of students with disabilities in the cohort who earned a regular high school diploma through the summer of 2011 and divided by the number of first time 9th graders with disabilities who enter by the beginning of the first marking period each semester plus students who transfer in, minus students who transfer out during four prior school years.

The requirements for all students, including students with disabilities, to graduate with a high school diploma are as follows: students must earn a minimum of 26 Carnegie units from grades 9-12.

Twenty-one of these Carnegie units must be in specific required courses and the other five in electives. According to VIDE/SOSE FY' 2011 data, 61 of 1139 (5.35%) students with IEPs did not complete high school. "Dropout" is defined, in the Virgin Islands, as a student with a disability who is enrolled at the beginning of the school year and not enrolled at the conclusion of the school year. This definition applies to all students; however, the data that is presented is from grades 7 through 12. The VIDDRS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors participated in 2012 Summer Institute. Their participation was a result of an active effort by both VIDDRS and DOE to engage in collaborative activities for the benefit of students with disabilities. This activity enhanced the relation with the staff of both program and it facilitated the development of more effective transition plans for students and ultimately, to positively influence student success in achievement of post-secondary outcomes. VIDE/SOSE maintain data on Special Education students one year beyond secondary education to track students' career paths. The VIDE/SOSE had 6 out of 91 respondents (6.59%) report that they were "enrolled in higher education" within one year of leaving high school; 40 out of 91 respondents (43.96%) reported that they were "engaged in competitive employment"; and 19 out of 91 respondents (20.88%) reported that they were in "some other postsecondary education or training". 26 out of 91 respondents (28.57) report that they were "not engaged". The response rate for this survey was 73.39%.

Workforce Investment Board (WIB) The Virgin Islands is a Single Local Workforce Area and has one State Workforce Investment 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, Human Services and Justice.

The Workforce Investment Board and the Economic Development Authority comprise the advisory and policy development segment of the Workforce system. The VIWIB is currently coordinating a partnership effort that places additional focus on three vulnerable priority groups who though served can be served more effectively to maximize employment potential. Those groups are the disabled population, veterans and out of school youth. As employment opportunities shrink and become more competitive, disabled workers are forced to acquire even more skills and competencies to become employable.

Support services become essential and finding the best fit for their skills often provides a challenge for workforce staff as well as employers. The same is true for those youth who are out of school and displaced. Many find themselves unable to articulate the support they may need to achieve their goals. Watching friends and peers succeed while they do not, only adds to the stress of completing education and training goals. By developing the Careers Pathway model, specific to each group, the VIWIB hopes to

help each attain the skills needed to enter and advance in the workforce. Instead of waiting for qualified workers, they can assist in creating qualified workers through on-the-job training and registered apprenticeships for new or unskilled workers and by refreshing their existing workforce through incumbent and customized training. Employers now have the option to choose the most qualified individuals from a large pool of unemployed workers.

Unskilled and/or inexperienced Adults and Youth are now in direct competition with skilled and qualified dislocated workers for the same jobs; and many of the existing jobs may not be compatible with the skill set of the dislocated workers.

The success of any workforce investment initiative is contingent on the active participation of employers. This was the sentiment expressed by stakeholders and partners of the WIB.

Mental Health Services the Department of Health is the legal authority set forth in Virgin Islands Code; it functions as both the state regulatory agency and the territorial public health agency for the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Department of Health is responsible for the regulation of health care providers and facilities, policy development and planning, as well as vital, conducting programs of health promotion, protection and preventive medicine. The Division of Mental Health, Alcoholism and Drug Dependency Services (DMHADDs) is an entity within the Department of Health charged with establishing and administering programs designed to offer prevention and treatment intervention in the areas of substance abuse prevention, substance abuse treatment, mental health and residential services.

Issues and Challenges Impacting the Mental Health and Substance Abuse System of Care in the USVI are:

- No reliable data on the incidence of mental illness in the community;
- Major problems in delivery, coordination and integration of services;
- Lack of services for children with mental disorders;
- Increase in demand for counseling and case management services, especially among women and children DMHADDs is encouraging residents to do their part to help destigmatize the issue of mental health illness and to help raise the awareness of mental health wellness. Source: 3rd Annual Health Disparities Institute; St. Thomas, USVI October 21-22, 2010 Primary Research Program Staff Focus Group.

The VI SRC conducted focus groups with VIDDRS staff in an effort to obtain their opinion on the following:

- What are the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with most significant disabilities,

including their need for supported employment services?

- What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities or in un-served or underserved populations?

- What are the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with disabilities who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?

- What is the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the state? Staff indicated specific disability and demographic groups that are underserved or un-served: transitioning youths, US Virgin Islands minority populations, homeless

individuals, individuals with moderate to severe cognitive impairments, physical disabilities and mental illness, and migrants with language barriers.

Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that they felt that the disability group that are most underserved are persons with mental illness. They felt that appropriate service infrastructures are not in place; therefore, they are unable to manage or cope with their disabilities. In most cases, the consumers are not job ready and unable maintain employment for a significant time period. This may be due to the lack of psychiatric treatment to facilitate mental stability. Persons with challenges which often lead to homelessness was another group that staff felt that was underserved; this group is largely comprised of individuals who are mentally ill.

Responders indicated that these individuals had no contact information and were mostly un-reachable. This prohibited or caused a significant delay in services. Most times, these consumers were unstable and have mental illnesses. Many are closed before employment outcome; or, they fluctuate between jobs.

The Virgin Islands minority population was also indicated as a population that is underserved and un-served. Minorities in the Virgin Islands mainly consist of Asians, Caucasians, and Hispanics. Staff felt that the reason why minorities are underserved is due to attitudinal barriers within the community that deter the interest in seeking services.

Due to the proximity of the surrounding Hispanic islands, the territory has a large Hispanic population. Spanish is their primary language, and many have difficulty accessing resources in the territory. These individuals have a difficult time finding written information in Spanish, and they often experience challenges in verbal communication; especially during job a search.

Transitioning youths were considered underserved or un-served due to several concerns. The lack of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) continues to be a significant concern in providing supported employment services to transitioning youths.

VIDDRS has implemented a transition unit that provides some assistance to youths, however, there remains a significant gap in services when these individuals require the services of a job coach. These transitioning youth are mostly individuals with moderate to severe cognitive disabilities and mental illnesses. Some counselors also expressed that transitioning youths are unfamiliar with VR services; therefore, does not follow through with services. It was discussed that more outreach should be considered on different platforms to ensure that transitioning youths and their families have frequent opportunities to be fully aware of services; this may favorably influence the amount of closures before employment outcomes. 504 youths were another population that was considered underserved due the number of referrals. Counselors stated that referrals are only received when teachers or guidance counselors attempt to find resources for particular students.

VR Counselors are not regularly invited to 504 meetings and VIDDRS does not provide outreach specifically to this population. Due to the size and geographical uniqueness's to the territory, individuals with physical disabilities encounter many challenges which prevent full participation in the community. Many buildings in urban areas are historic buildings and are not accessible and modifications are not always possible. Many are not equipped with regulatory accessible bathrooms.

Additionally, in certain areas, even with the appropriate allotted parking spaces, parking is limited and sometimes challenging to access. In all, staff felt that continued collaboration with the program's stakeholders through outreach within the territory will increase services to the un- served and underserved populations, increase minority participation, and identify unmet service needs. They indicated that having an electronic case management system would increase the efficiency of program and services. All agreed that developing new CRPs or a pool of certified job coaches will increase services and employment outcomes. Consumer Satisfaction Survey Vocational Rehabilitation Services identified 133 former consumers whose cases were closed in fiscal year 2011 at various statuses throughout the Vocational Rehabilitation process. During August 2012, the State Rehabilitation Council conducted telephone interviews with 46 former consumers.

Assurances were made to consumers that their comments would remain anonymous and be precise to the extent possible. The interview questions can be found in the appendix. Varying reasons were identified for non-participation in the survey. Many consumers' telephones were disconnected during the survey period. Others never responded to multiple requests left on their answering machines. Several relocated to the Continental United States and a few denied receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services. The result of the survey revealed that more than majority of the consumers felt that Vocational Rehabilitation services were satisfactory or better. A small percentage was neutral throughout the survey. However, there were a significant percentage of consumers that felt the VR services need improvement, especially in continuous communication with consumers.

Some of the generalized comments that were expressed during the survey were:

- The need for more job search and job placement assistance,
- Insufficient communication and follow-up during service delivery,
- Insufficient customer service assistance from VR staff,
- Need for more collaboration between Special Education and VR services, and
- VR needs to help increase consumer self-advocacy. Transition Services RSA's 2012 monitoring of VIDDRS data analysis of the program's performance outcomes indicates, VIDDRS is bringing more youth with disabilities into the VR program, but an increasing number of them are leaving before receiving services, and therefore not achieving their vocational goal.

In addition to an analysis of the performance outcomes for youth with disabilities, RSA interviewed field level staff to better understand the challenges that they face. According to the Virgin Islands Division of Special Education Parent Satisfaction survey dated June 2013, parents responded that, the least satisfying item was that the transition outcomes were developed for the child with his/her input.

The second least satisfying item was that the parent was satisfied with the transition services provided to their child that will help prepare him/her for movement from school life to adult life. In response to these measures, VIDDRS the LEA and SEA have become more engaged to ensure that VIDDRS is involved in IEPs and outreach activities coordinated by the LEA and SEA.

Additionally, VIDDRS and the LEA are discussing how as partners we can be more engaged. VIDDRS, and VIDOL are working closely with the LEAS to facilitate job readiness training that will result in competitive employment opportunities in demand fields in the community. A comprehensive plan will be implemented for the 2017-18 school year.

B. Who are minorities;

Specific disability and demographic groups that are underserved or un-served: transitioning youths, US Virgin Islands minority populations, homeless individuals, individuals with moderate to severe cognitive impairments, physical disabilities and mental illness, and migrants with language barriers.

C. Who have been un-served or underserved by the VR program;

The Virgin Islands has experienced significant challenges in serving individuals diagnosed with mental illness as well as individuals with significant intellectual disabilities. In an effort to address these challenges, VR is engaged with the

Department of Health address the barriers that the mentally ill face in maintaining stability. The Workforce system is job driven and focuses on developing talent with specific employment outcomes in local demand sectors as a goal. VR counselors will provide counseling and guidance to assist clients in identifying career opportunities that matches their skills and abilities.

D. Who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system;

The VI 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. VR counselors have 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, and job search, matching and referrals.

E. Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition services;

The youth with disabilities with the most significant challenges are students with intellectual disabilities. There is a need for more coordination with the LEA to coordinate job readiness training and engagement of the workforce system to facilitate on the job training opportunities that have the potential of career opportunities for this population.

2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State;

The need for functional community rehabilitation programs remains critical. VR continues to work with the University of the Virgin Islands Center for Excellence in Developmental

Disabilities (VIUCEDD) and other stakeholders and partners, to develop an innovative model for recruitment, and training of job coaches that can meet client's diverse needs. VIDDRS management provides ongoing evaluation of the proficiencies of the job coaches. Technical assistance and training will be provided as needed.

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.

k. Annual Estimates

(Formerly known as Attachment 4.11(b)) Describe:

1. The number of individuals in the State who are eligible for services;

The need for Supported Employment services remains critical. It is projected that the agency will be able to provide supported employment services to all eligible individuals in fiscal year 2016. VIDDRS continues to work diligently to enhance and improve supported employment services through this innovative approach. Technical assistance and training will be provided as needed. The supported employment grant remains at approximately \$36,403.00. VIDDRS will utilize Title I funds for provision of services that exceed Title VI funds. The VI comprehensive statewide needs assessment identified significant gaps in services and available resources to facilitate employment outcomes for the most significantly disabled individuals. • Lack of specialized transportation • Need of more public awareness about services available for persons with disabilities • Need for more outreach to employers in both the public and private sectors • Development of quality assurance and evaluation system to improve the overall operation of VIDDRS.

VIDDRS will continue to recruit, train and work closely with the job coaches to address areas that require additional technical assistance to ensure sustainability of Supported Employment Independent Providers. Based on the current VR caseload, and existing VR counselor vacancy it is estimated that the VIDDRS will be able to serve 490 persons. Within twelve months, once the program is automated and data is integrated in within partners of the workforce system it is estimated that the VR program will significantly increase the number of clients served.

2. The number of eligible individuals who will receive services under:

A. The VR Program;

Title I Estimated Funds:

1,703,863 Estimated Number to

be Served: 490

Average Cost of Services 3,477.00 Persons with the most significant disabilities 310
Persons with significant disabilities 160 Persons with less significant disabilities 20

Title IV Average Cost of Services: 2,296 Estimated Funds: 34,435.00 Persons with
the most significant disabilities 15

B. The Supported Employment Program; and

The Designated State agency receives an annual award of \$34,435 for the provision of Supported Employment Services under Title VI –C part B. Due to challenges with the availability of functional CRPs, VIDDRS have been unable to provide adequate Supported Employment Services to meet the needs of the significantly disabled population. The transitioning program has played a significant role in augmenting our supported employment needs while we continue to work on implementing functional CRPs. This remains a high priority area for the 2017 Fiscal Year.

C. each priority category, if under an order of

selection; N/A

3. The number of individuals who are eligible for VR services, but are not receiving such services due to an order of selection; and

N/A

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.

N/A

I. State Goals and Priorities

The designated State unit must:

1. Identify if the goals and priorities were jointly developed

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 following describes the VIDDRS goals and priorities in collaboration with and agreed to by the State Rehabilitation Council. For the development of agency goals and priorities; VIDDRS and the VI SRC utilized the most recent comprehensive statewide needs assessment, agency data, from RSA's 2013 monitoring reporting and input from a variety of stakeholders.

1. VIDDRS consumers with significant disabilities can definitely benefit from the supports provided via a supported employment program. VIDDRS will provide enhanced supported employment services to facilitate employment and job training/internship opportunities for transitioning students and clients through development of relationships with the workforce system.

2. There is a need for increased visibility of the programs and services offered by

VIDDRS. VIDDRS will collaborate with its SRC, stakeholders and other organizations to provide information that will make it possible for persons with disabilities to learn about the resources available at the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

VIDDRS is very engaged in the Virgin Islands' Workforce System and we will be collaborating on marketing initiatives with our partners to inform, educate and promote the services that the VR Program provides for Virgin Islanders with disabilities. We are currently in discussions about how the Virgin Islands Workforce System will be branded to benefit all partners.

Additionally, VIDDRS will continue to engage new partners.

3. Increase outreach to the un-served and underserved individuals with disabilities; individuals who are minorities or individuals with the most significant disabilities. VIDDRS will provide brochures to public agency waiting rooms such as MCH, TANF, WIC, and the Emergency at our health facilities. We will continue to utilize local venues such as radio television and printed media to share information about the VR Program

- Results of our CSNA indicate that persons with disabilities are not integrated into the “fiber” of the community to the extent possible.

- The lack of knowledge and interaction with individuals with significant disabilities presents a definite barrier to vocational rehabilitation services thus to possible un-employment

4. Enhance collaboration with stakeholders to update existing Memorandums of Understanding;

5. Provide training on effective and innovative practices to improve employment outcomes for persons with disabilities. Specific emphasis will be placed on transitioning students and under/un-served youths; to enhance successful employment outcomes for these clients

6. Increase the number of individuals with significant disabilities applying for Vocational Rehabilitation services by:

- Holding informational forums jointly with the State Rehabilitation Council describing the vocational rehabilitation process for parent groups, education officials, families and other service providers of persons with disabilities.

- Marketing of the VR program through various media to inform and educate the general public about services provided by the VR program.

2. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

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;

B. the State's performance under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and

Summary of VIDDRS Performance on Standards and Indicators

1.1 The number of individuals exiting the Vocational Rehabilitation Program who achieved an employment outcome during the current performance period compared to the number of individuals who exit the VR program after achieving an employment outcome during the previous performance period. –20 F Required Performance Level: Performance in current period must equal or exceed performance in previous period.

49–37 = 12 (12 more individuals)

1.2 Of all the individuals who exit the VR program after receiving services, the percentage that are determined to have achieved an employment outcome is 56.1 P Required Performance Level: 55.8

$49/73 \times 100 = 67.2\%$

1.3 Of all the individuals determined to have achieved an employment outcome, the percentage who exits the VR program in competitive, Self or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage. 86.5 P Required Performance Level: 72.6 $43/49 \times 100 = 87.8\%$

1.4 Of all the individuals who exit the VR program in Competitive, Self or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the percentage who are individuals with significant disabilities. 100 P Required Performance Level: 62.4 $43/43 \times 100 = 100\%$

1.5 The average hourly earnings of all individuals who exit the VR program in Competitive, Self or Business Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage as a ratio to the State's average hourly earnings for all individuals in the State who are employed

(as derived from the Bureau of Labor Statistics report "State Average Annual Pay" for the most recent available year.) 70P Required Performance Level: 52 (VI Ave. hourly Pay: \$16.81 VR 26 closures Ave hourly: \$13.78) $13.78/16.81 (82\%)$

1.6 Of all the individuals who exit the VR program in Competitive, Self or Business Enterprise Program (BEP) employment with earnings equivalent to at least the minimum wage, the difference between the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of economic support at the time they exit the VR program and the percentage who report their own income as the largest single source of support at the time they apply for VR services. 47.4 F Required Performance Level: arithmetic difference of 53.0 Standard

$$(40/43 - 21/43) \times 100 = 93 - 48.8 = 44.2\%$$

2.1 The service rate for individuals with disabilities from minority backgrounds as a ratio to the service rate for all individuals with disabilities from non-minority backgrounds. 96
P Required Performance Level: 80

Minorities 67/95 = .71, Non-minorities 6/7 = .86, .71/.86 (82.6%)

C. other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the State Rehabilitation Council and finding and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107.

VIDDRS has addressed the findings from RSA's 2013 Monitoring. The VIDDRS continues to work with our fiscal office and third party fiduciary to update policies and procedures as required to enhance timely service delivery to clients and vendors. Within the last three years several longstanding membership vacancies on the VISRC have been filled, the council continues to recruit additional individuals for members whose terms have since expired. The new members are receiving ongoing training 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. With the implementation of WIOA the 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
- Development of the Business Engagement Plan.

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.

N/A VIDDRS will not implement an order of selection.

B. The justification for the

order. N/A

C. The service and outcome goals.

N/A

D. The time within which these goals may be achieved for individuals in each priority category within the order.

N/A

E. How individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities;

N/A

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.

N/A

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 VI comprehensive statewide needs assessment, identified significant gaps in services and available resources to facilitate employment outcomes for the most significantly disabled individuals. • Lack of specialized transportation • Need of more public awareness about services available for persons with disabilities • Need for more outreach to employers in both the public and private sectors • Development of quality assurance and evaluation system to improve the overall operation of VIDDRS.

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 purpose of VIDDRS Supported Employment Program is to assist individuals with the most significant disabilities to, including youth with the most significant disabilities, to achieve supported employment outcomes in competitive, integrated employment by developing and implementing collaborative programs with entities that can provide some extended supports. The populations that we will focus on initially are:

Students in special education programs transition to community employment and individuals with severe and persistent mental illness who have traditionally been unsuccessful in obtaining integrated employment.

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.

VIDDRS will work collaborative with the Business Engagement team to facilitate an audience with employers in the private sector. The plan to develop the local talent pool will implemented to target various sectors in the workforce.

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.

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. The current economic crisis has decreased the availability of jobs overall. This has created a challenge for persons with disabilities and the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Of the territory's caseload of 405 clients, approximately 3% are clients who receive supported employment services.

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 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 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.

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 collaborative with VIUCEDD to facilitate opportunities for VR consumers to have access to AT services and VIDDRS recognizes the importance of the full utilization of AT services and devices to assist eligible individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential. VIDDRS will continue to explore partnership opportunities with other vendors as required to facilitate achievement of client goals.

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.

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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

the transition Unit staff will assist with the implementation goals of the IPE as developed by of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, postsecondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services).

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.

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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.

The Virgin Islands has been faced with challenges in the provision of supported employment services for its VR clients. In 2010, the VI lost its two CRPs. Due to the uniqueness of the population, and the geographical isolation of the territory, traditional CRP models have not been most beneficial therefore VIDDRS is implementing a unique model that it believes will be successful. VIDDRS has recruited and trained six individuals who have interest and transferrable skills to be certified job coaches. Due to reasons beyond our control, three job coaches have since left the program.

As mandated by WIOA, VIDDRS is engaging in an initiative with the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL) and Virgin Islands University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (VIUCEDD), to facilitate employment for individuals with significant disabilities.

The intervention will serve as a pilot led by VIUCEDD and the results will be documented and used to improve employer engagement, outreach efforts and employment outcomes for the most significantly disabled individuals.

VIDDRS continues to collaborate with private non-profit service providers who are able to provide supported employment in limited fields. VIDDRS continues to work with clients to develop natural supports to include employers, family members and other

local programs that serve our target population. The agency will continue to explore available options for funding the provision of extended supports. The VR Program continues to partner with the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL) to facilitate employment services for VR clients. VIDDRS is not present in now present in the job center weekly. Through this partnership, VIDDRS to serve VR eligible individuals who are attempting to navigate the Virgin Islands Department of Labor. VIDDRS collaborates with DOL to access on the job training and other job services available to support our clients. VIDDRS continues to concentrate its efforts on educating interested parties regarding the process of becoming a non-traditional provider source for supported employment services. A variety of supported employment provider choices are needed, particularly due to the lack of “factory-type” businesses in the territory. VIDDRS continues to focus on providing technical assistance and training for independent job coaches to build capacity for the provision of supported employment services. VIDDRS, VIDOL and VIDOE have established relationships

with VIUCEDD and other providers utilizing evidence-based practices to impact the establishment of viable CRPs in the territory.

6. Strategies to improve the performance of the State with respect to the performance accountability measures under section 116 of WIOA.

The partner’s workgroup will continue to meet on a semi-monthly basis to ensure the implementation of WIOA progresses smoothly. Representatives from each of the core partners have agreed on a universal intake strategy A common intake form and process is being designed to make the customer’s initial entry more assessable into the workforce system and promote the "one system" message across agencies. VR consumers will be made welcome "at any door" and will have access to basic information on obtaining services from each of the core partners.

An inter-agency video is also being created to provide a system-wide orientation to the activities of the workforce system promoting "employment" is the joint goal. Sensitivity training will be included in the training for all core partners.

7. Strategies for assisting other components of the statewide workforce development system in assisting individuals with disabilities.

A 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. VR will be a full partner at the table to ensure that partners are knowledgeable about the needs and accommodations required by persons with disabilities to facilitate an integrated workforce.

8. How the agency's strategies will be used to:

A. achieve goals and priorities by the State, consistent with the comprehensive needs

assessment;

Employment being the outcome for all core partners is the common thread. VIDDRS role is to help level the field for persons with disabilities so that partner agencies are able to approach employers and identify opportunities for employment.

B. support innovation and expansion activities; and

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.

o. 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

A. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

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.

B. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.

3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.

4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

Both SRC and SILC were provided funds for their operations. VIDDRS has made progress in the development of productive relationships with collaborative partners in the community. VIDDRS is now at the table involved in discussions with the Workforce Investment Board in the development of their Strategic Plan and Division of Special Education State Office discussing collaboration on mutually beneficial projects. Collaboration on this level will have had a positive impact on achievement of established goals. These relationships will facilitate consistency in the implementation of services territory-wide.

p. 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.
2. The timing of transition to extended

services. Certifications

Name of designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate
Division of Disabilities & Rehabilitation Services

Name of designated State agency: Department of Human Services

Full Name of Authorized Representative: Kimberley Causey-Gomez,
MSW

Title of Authorized Representative: Commissioner

States must provide written and signed certifications that:

1. The designated State agency or designated State unit (as appropriate) listed above is authorized to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan under title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by WIOA*, and its supplement under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act.** Yes
2. As a condition for the receipt of Federal funds under title I of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of VR services, the designated State agency listed above agrees to operate and administer the State VR Services Program in accordance with the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, 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; Yes
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*, the Rehabilitation Act, and all applicable regulations, 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;**Yes

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; Yes

5. The State legally may carry out each provision of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement. Yes

6. All provisions of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its supplement are consistent with State law. Yes

7. The Authorized Representative listed above 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;Yes

8. The Authorized Representative listed above has the authority to submit the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and the supplement for Supported Employment services; Yes

9. The agency that submits the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan and its

Certification 1 Footnotes

* Public Law 113-128.

** Unless otherwise stated, "Rehabilitation Act" means the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA, signed into law on July 22, 2014.

Certification 2 Footnotes

* All references in this plan to "designated State agency" or to "the State agency" relate to the agency identified in this paragraph.

** No funds under title 1 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.

*** 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 3485; and the State VR Services Program regulations.

Certification 3 Footnotes

* No funds under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act may be awarded without an approved supplement to the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan in accordance with section 606(a) of the Rehabilitation Act.

** Applicable regulations, in part, include the citations in *** under Certification 2

footnotes Additional Comments on the Certifications from the State

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Vocational Rehabilitation

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.

Applicant's Organization Government of the Virgin Islands, Department of Human Services
Full Name of Authorized Representative: Kimberley Causey-Gomez, MSW
Title of Authorized Representative: Commissioner

Certification Regarding Lobbying — Supported

Employment

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.

Applicant's Organization Virgin Islands Department of Human Services

Full Name of Authorized Representative: Kimberley Causey-Gomez,

MSW

Title of Authorized Representative: Commissioner

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:

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. Administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan:

The designated State agency or designated State unit, as appropriate, assures it will comply with the requirements related to:

a. the establishment of the designated State agency and designated State unit as required by section 101(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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 (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council

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.

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).

e. the local administration of the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, in
The designated State agency allows for the local administration of VR funds No

f. the shared funding and administration of joint programs, in accordance with section 101(a)(2)(A)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act.

The designated State agency allows for the shared funding and administration of joint programs:
No

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?

See Section 2 of this VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan. No

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.

i. all required methods of administration, as required by section 101(a)(6) of the Rehabilitation Act .

j. the requirements for the comprehensive system of personnel development, as set forth in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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.

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.

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:

a. comply with all requirements regarding information and referral services in accordance with sections 101(a)(5)(D) and (20) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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 .

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?

Agency will provide the full range of services described above Yes

d. determine whether comparable services and benefits are available to the individual in accordance with section 101(a)(8) of the Rehabilitation Act.

e. comply with the requirements for the development of an individualized plan for employment in accordance with section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act.

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.

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.

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.

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

j. with respect to students with disabilities, the

State, has developed and will implement,

strategies to address the needs identified in the assessments; and

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

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:

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.

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.

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:

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.

b. The designated State agency assures that it will use funds made available under title VI of the Rehabilitation Act only to provide supported employment services to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including extended services to youth with the most significant disabilities, who are eligible to receive such services; and, that such funds are used only to supplement and not supplant the funds provided under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, when 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:

a. The designated State agency assures that it will provide supported employment services as defined in section 7(39) of the Rehabilitation Act.

b. The designated State agency assures that:

the comprehensive assessment of individuals with significant disabilities conducted under section 102(b)(1) of the Rehabilitation Act and funded under title I of the Rehabilitation Act includes consideration of supported employment as an appropriate employment outcome, in accordance with the requirements of section 606(b)(7)(B) of the Rehabilitation Act

an individualized plan for employment that meets the requirements of section 102(b) of the Rehabilitation Act , which is developed and updated with title I funds, in accordance with sections 102(b)(3)(F) and 606(b)(6)(C) and (E) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Appendix 1: Performance Goals for the Core Programs

	Year: 2022		Year: 2023	
	Proposed Expected Levels	Negotiated Adjusted Level	Proposed Expected Levels	Negotiated Adjusted Levels
Employment (Second Quarter after Exit)				
Adults		38.0%		43.0%
Dislocated Workers		55.0%		58.0%
Youth		38.0%		43.0%
Adult Education		Baseline		Baseline
Wagner-Peyser		55.0%		58.0%
Vocational Rehabilitation		Baseline		Baseline
Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit)				
Adults		38.0%		40.0%
Dislocated Workers		50.0%		.0%
Youth		40.0%		43.0%
Adult Education		B		B
Wagner-Peyser		48.0%		51.0%
Vocational Rehabilitation		B		B
Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)				
Adults		\$4,900.00		\$4,900.00
Dislocated Workers		\$5,700.00		\$5,700.00
Youth		Baseline		Baseline
Adult Education		B		B
Wagner-Peyser		\$5,600.00		\$5,600.00
Vocational Rehabilitation		B		B
Credential Attainment Rate				
Adults		62.0%		63.0%
Dislocated Workers		48.0%		50.0%
Youth		40.0%		43.0%
Adult Education		B		B
Wagner-Peyser		N/A		N/A

Vocational Rehabilitation		B		B

Measurable Skills Gain				
Adults	Baseline		Baseline	
Dislocated Workers	B		B	
Youth	B		B	
Adult Education	7%	37%	11%	38%
Wagner-Peyser	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Vocational Rehabilitation	B		B	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers				
Adults	Baseline		Baseline	
Dislocated Workers	B		B	
Youth	B		B	
Adult Education	B		B	
Wagner-Peyser	B		B	
Vocational Rehabilitation	B		B	