



# WORKFORCE

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**GARY MOLLOY  
COMMISSIONER**

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Good Morning, Honorable Senator Marise C. James, Chairperson of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, Honorable Members of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, distinguished Senators, ladies and gentlemen, listening, viewing and virtual audiences. I am Gary Molloy, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL).

I am here today with Attorney Nesha Christian-Hendrickson, Assistant Commissioner/Legal Counsel, Jean Forde, Assistant Commissioner, Shenika Sebastien, Director of Youth and Apprenticeship, and Charlene Hodge, Director of Workforce Development Services. Thank you for inviting us to provide testimony on VIDOL's role in the workforce development system in the Virgin Islands, specifically the workforce development programs and services available to help people find, prepare for, and maintain employment.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

The Virgin Islands State Workforce Development Board (VISWDB) determines the target industries in the Territory. VIDOL builds the territory's pipeline through Workforce Development programs that focus on target industries funded through a combination of local and federal funds. Workforce Development continues to build stronger and better relationships with employers throughout the territory, recognizing that employers drive the workforce.

To clarify the roles of the Workforce Development Board, VIDOL, Equus Workforce Solutions (Equus), American Job Center (AJC) and the One Stop services from our partners, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 federal legislation reinforced the role of local workforce boards in workforce development and stressed the importance of cooperation among stakeholders in the workforce development system. WIOA also placed a significant focus on industry-led partnerships and sector-specific approaches to ensure that training programs aligned with employer needs. The Act is structured into five titles, which define and authorize employment services:

Title I – Workforce Development Activities: This section authorizes workforce development boards to fund, supervise, and hold selected providers accountable for offering skills training and support services to the unemployed and underemployed.

Title II – Adult Education and Literacy: This title permits services for adults seeking basic education and those transitioning to post-secondary education after completing their secondary education.

Title III – Amendments to the Wagner-Peyser Act: This section integrates the United States Employment Services (ES) into the One-Stop Career Centers across the nation.

Title IV – Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: It ensures that individuals with disabilities can access vocational rehabilitation services within the One-Stop Career Centers.

Title V – General Provisions: This title defines the transitional changes from WIA to WIOA, providing an overarching framework for the entire Act.

The Workforce Development system is under the umbrella of the U.S. Virgin Islands American Job Center, which includes the One-Stop Operator, Equus, contracted by the Workforce Development Board and housed in the VIDOL offices on St. Croix and St. Thomas with two specific responsibilities. The first is to project manage the Adult and Dislocated Worker WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) funding and program offerings and the second is to coordinate the activities of the other partners within the AJC to create the One Stop process for our WIOA eligible customers. Therefore, when customers visit the VIDOL office, they will initially interact with a staff member in Employment Services (ES) of VIDOL. After further assessment and determining their individual need, the customer will then either remain in Employment Services or be referred to Youth Services, Equus for an Adult or Dislocated Worker program, or One Stop services from our other partners.

The U.S. Virgin Islands AJC partners include the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL), the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services, the Virgin Islands Vocational Rehabilitation Center, the Virgin Islands Department of Veteran’s Affairs, and Equus. Our other partners are the Virgin Islands State Workforce Development Board (VISWDB), the Virgin Islands State Apprenticeship Council (VISAC), ICF, Workforce180, and the Virgin Islands Stem Archive (VISTA+) through the University of the Virgin Islands Research and Technology Park (RT Park).

I want to note that VIDOL is currently encountering challenges in its ongoing collaboration with RT Park, particularly concerning the VISTA+ program. We are actively working to address issues related to access, marketing, and deliverables with the goal of improving the database for EDC beneficiaries targeting Virgin Islanders living abroad.

Over the past two years, the Skills for Today program has emerged as a vital resource for Virgin Islands residents. By delivering essential training and certifications, the program has empowered individuals to play a crucial role in our territory's recovery, development, and transformation. Beyond basic construction skills, the program has offered opportunities for participants to specialize in areas such as welding, plumbing, electrical work, and supervisory positions, earning NCCER certifications and OSHA 10 certification. This has significantly bolstered their qualifications, enhancing their prospects for success. The program's impact is evident in the overwhelming response it received, with 1,378 applications. Of these, 961 individuals actively engaged in the program, showcasing their commitment to personal growth and contributing positively to the Territory. Highlighting its effectiveness, over 70% of participants successfully completed the rigorous construction skills and core program. This high completion rate underscores both the program's efficacy and the dedication of its participants.

In summary, the Skills for Today initiative stands out as a pivotal program in the Virgin Islands, providing essential training, certifications, and opportunities for individuals to actively contribute to the recovery, redevelopment, and transformation of our Territory.

<b>Construction Training Cohort Completers</b>	<b>Total - 541</b>
Core Construction Certification	302
Supervisory Curriculum	33
Welding	62
Electrical	86
Plumbing	51
Pipefitting	7

<b>Customized Training Cohort Completers</b>	<b>Total - 184</b>
M1-USVI - Healthcare	33
Mbreo Institute - Healthcare	52
MedCerts, LLC - Healthcare	15
MedCerts, LLC – Information Technology	4
UVICELL – Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	30
VIP Cleaning Service – Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	40
Voyage Metal Works – Welding - Construction	2
Blue 11 – Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	8

<b>On-the-Job Training Cohort Completers</b>	<b>Total - 107</b>
Blue 11 - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	13
Coral World (VI) Inc. - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	9
Frenchman’s Reef - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	49
Indigo 4 - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	16
KZW Services, LLC - Construction	3
Reef Surfari Snorkeling, LLC – Maritime Industry	3
Scoops & Brew, LLC - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	3
Thriving Islands - Maritime	3
Thriving Islands - Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	1
Today’s Satellite Television - Other	7

<b>Incumbent Worker Training Completers</b>	<b>Total - 126</b>
Project Management	73
Grant Management	15
Data Science	38

<b>Registered Apprenticeship Program Completers</b>	<b>Total - 28</b>
Islands Seasfire, LLC – Construction	6
Lovongo Island Holdings, LLP – Maritime	1
Peace of St. Croix - Healthcare	2
Plessen Healthcare, LLC	15
St. Thomas Yacht Club/St. Thomas Sailing Center - Maritime	1
The Tropical Treasure Hunt Company, LLC – Hospitality (Hotel/Restaurant)	3

According to the Labor Market Information found in the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIeWS), over the past 12 months the leading 11 occupations for both employers and job seekers encompass roles such as waiters/waitresses, customer service representatives, maids/housekeeping cleaners, construction laborers, bartenders, retail salespersons, hotel/motel/resort desk clerks, accountants/auditors, janitors/cleaners (excluding maids/housekeeping cleaners), carpenters, and security guards. The charts below provide a detailed breakdown of the top 5 occupations for both employer and job seeker categories.

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Total Job Openings</b>
Waiters and Waitresses	169
Customer Service Representatives	80
Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	74
Construction Laborers	69
Food Preparation Workers	65

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Total Job Seekers</b>
Customer Service Representatives	42
Office Clerks	42
Construction Laborers	28
Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers	27
Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (not including Legal, Medical, and Executive)	25

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR YOUTH**

The Youth & Apprenticeship Division is dedicated to designing and managing workforce development initiatives for individuals aged 14 to 25. Within this framework, the Youth team conducts in-house academic and career assessments to tailor services and activities to each individual's needs. They create Individual Employment Plans or Service Strategies, make referrals to service providers, and offer a range of Youth Services, including job preparation skills, resume building, and both paid and unpaid work experiences.

The division offers various programs, such as Occupational Skills Training, the Work, Learn and Earn Program (17–24 year-olds), the Summer Youth Work Experience Program (14-25 year-olds), the Labor Investing for Tomorrow (LIFT) Internship Program, and the Jobs for America’s Graduates Virgin Islands program (JAG-VI), which collaborates with the Virgin Islands Department of Education. These programs target different segments of the population, including current high school students, out-of-school youth, current college students, graduate students, and recent graduates. Annually, the Youth Team serves over seven hundred (700) youth by leveraging both federal and local funding, with the number of participants determined by the availability of funds.

## **REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (RAP)**



This week, from November 13-19, 2023, marks National Apprenticeship Week, a nationwide celebration spotlighting the achievements and significance of Registered Apprenticeships in economic revitalization. Registered Apprenticeships operate as a work-based learning model, combining supervised on-the-job training with job-related education, all while apprentices earn a progressively increasing wage. Designed for long-term employment, these programs serve as proven training strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining top-tier talent, with a history spanning decades across various industries.

All registered programs adhere to industry occupational standards, ensuring authenticity and consistency, ultimately leading to a nationally recognized certificate. The duration of a registered apprenticeship program varies from one to five years, contingent on occupation training requirements.

Functioning as a State Apprenticeship Agency, VIDOL contributes to program development by registering those that meet Federal and State standards. VIDOL also actively promotes the creation of new programs through marketing and technical assistance, provides ongoing support to sponsors throughout the program lifecycle, and ensures that all programs maintain high-quality training standards.

### **Current Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

<b>Occupations</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certified Massage Therapist (CMT) – Territorial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pipefitter (construction) – Territorial</li> </ul>

• Medical Assistant/Patient Care Coordinator - STX	• Certified Nursing Assistant – Dementia Specialty - STX
• Life Safety Coordinator - STX	• Certified Nursing Assistant – Restorative Specialty - STX
• Surgical Technologist - STX	• Recreation Assistant
• Able Seaman (Water Sports) - STT	• Cyber Security Support Technician - Territorial
• Construction Craft Laborer - STX	• Cook
• Marine Services Technician	• Boat Builder

As I conclude, it's crucial to highlight the proactive initiatives undertaken by the V.I. Department of Labor (VIDOL) as it charts its course and solidifies our commitment to a compelling vision and mission. The vision, encapsulated in the acronym P.I.E. (Protect, Improve, Employ), aims to enhance the entire U.S. Virgin Islands labor force. The mission involves administering effective programs to develop, protect, and sustain a robust workforce.

Guided by the core values of Customer Satisfaction, Integrity, Openness, and Accountability (CIOA), the department aspires to cultivate a superior working environment. These values emphasize treating customers well, upholding integrity even in the absence of oversight, fostering openness to truth and trust, and taking ownership of responsibilities and mistakes.

In alignment with the Governor Bryan’s mandate for increased efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability, the Department of Labor has undertaken various activities, including quantitative and qualitative analyses, discussions with department leaders, and efforts to fill vacancies, particularly federally funded positions. Individual performance evaluations are conducted to inform promotions, with a preference for internal promotions.

Looking ahead to 2024, the department plans to digitize and partially automate the Unemployment Unit, enhancing accuracy and efficiency through an employee portal. Embracing digitization, VIDOL has implemented the digitized service VENTIV and is exploring the merger of the Workers’ Compensation unit with the Government Insurance Fund.

To address community needs, VIDOL's Workforce Unit will strategically focus on sector training, particularly in the Transportation and Agriculture sectors, maximizing available funding to meet community demands.

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is dedicated to applying the Workforce Development policies established by the Workforce Development Board across all sectors and industries. Our commitment is evident through the various programs and services offered at our offices in St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. On behalf of VIDOL, I want to thank the Bryan/Roach Administration and my VIDOL staff. I also want to express gratitude to the members of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development for allowing us to testify about the Programs and Services available to all Virgin Islanders. This concludes my testimony, and my staff and I are ready to address any questions you may have.