



U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL
Advancing Agricultural Sustainability and Food Security in the USVI

TESTIMONY OF

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V.I. LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL

OCTOBER 13th, 2026

BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE
THIRTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

FRITS LAWAEZ
LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
ST. CROIX, U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS

Table of Contents

OPENING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
FIVE-YEAR OVERALL ASSESSMENT	2
FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION.....	2
IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW BY MANDATE.....	3
Mandate 1 – Comprehensive Regulatory Framework	3
Mandate 2 – Business Models	3
Agriculture Business Center.....	3
Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund	4
Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy and Fellowship.....	4
Organic Agriculture	5
Mandate 3 – Local Food and Farm Coordinator.....	5
Mandate 4 – Local Food and Farm Fund.....	5
Mandate 5 – Local Food and Farm Council (Advisory Committee)	6
Mandate 6 – Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol	6
Mandate 7 – Education and Training.....	7
Mandate 8 – Data, Benchmarking, and Analysis.....	7
Five Additional High-Priority Projects.....	8
CLOSING REMARKS.....	8
APPENDICES TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	9
Appendix A - Five-Year Mandate Summary	9
Appendix B - Council FY2027 Budget Request.....	9
Appendix C – VI Department of Education	9
Appendix D – UVI Agriculture Business Center.....	9
Appendix E – UVI Office of Sponsored Programs	9
Appendix F - Eastern Caribbean Center	9
Appendix G — PPPIF Grantees Update.....	9

OPENING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Hubert L. Frederick, Chair of the Committee on Economic Development and Agriculture, members of the Committee, other members of the Legislature, and the listening and viewing public. On behalf of the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council, thank you for the opportunity to present this five- year review of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan and to discuss the progress achieved, the work that remains, and the resources required for continued implementation.

Act 8404, signed into law on December 11, 2020, directed the Commissioner of Agriculture and the President of the University of the Virgin Islands to develop a comprehensive agricultural plan. The Agricultural Plan Task Force brought together agencies, farmers, agricultural professionals, and community stakeholders to develop the Plan, which was finalized and submitted on December 29, 2021, and publicly unveiled on May 9, 2022. Subsequent legislative action, including Act 8700, supported its adoption and implementation.

Although this review covers the five-year period beginning in 2021, the Local Food and Farm Council first convened on July 18, 2023. The review therefore includes the Task Force’s foundational work, the legislative and organizational actions that followed, and the Council’s coordination of implementation since 2023. To provide the Committee with a connected account of the work, each mandate presented today addresses the accomplishments achieved, current status, specific challenges, relevance to production and food security, next priorities and measures, and funding or legislative action required.

FIVE-YEAR OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The five-year record reflects meaningful but uneven implementation. Progress includes business services delivered through the Agriculture Business Center, direct investment in farm and fishing operations through the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund, grant-development training through the TAP Academy and Fellowship Program, and recurring agricultural surveys conducted by UVI’s Eastern Caribbean Center. VIDE has also advanced agricultural education through development of the Pre-K–12 curriculum, professional development and instructional resources for educators, practical learning opportunities for students, and renewed FFA participation. The Council has contributed policy recommendations and initiated formal program development for organic agriculture. These accomplishments were achieved by the Council and its implementing support partners even though programs began at different stages and received inconsistent levels of funding, staffing, and administrative support.

The record also shows that the Territory has not yet established the dependable implementation system contemplated by the Plan. Without a permanent Local Food and Farm Coordinator or Council Grant Writer, responsibility for daily follow-up, interagency coordination, funding development, and performance monitoring has been divided among Council members and support partners who already carry substantial duties within their respective organizations. This has slowed the movement of recommendations and commitments from planning to completion. Several programs have also relied upon partner institutions to absorb implementation costs, while essential work involving infrastructure, regulatory reform, market development, and technical staffing remains incomplete. Overall, the Plan has demonstrated that targeted agricultural investments can produce results, but sustained implementation requires consistent funding, personnel, and clear administrative responsibility.

FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR MANDATE IMPLEMENTATION

The Legislature appropriated \$180,000 under Act 8411 to develop the Agricultural Plan, followed by \$1,733,000 for implementation in fiscal year 2023 under Act 8617. Act 8700 allocated those implementation funds among designated programs and agencies and provided an additional \$500,000 from the Education Initiative Fund, bringing the total appropriated under that framework to \$2,233,000. Act 8918 later appropriated \$1,807,500 for fiscal year 2025. These amounts represent legislative appropriations and must be distinguished from the funds actually received, the dates they became available, and whether they could be used for their intended purposes.

Since the Council convened, its implementation request has never been funded in full. The initial \$500,000 for the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund was received on time in fiscal year 2024, allowing the program to launch, but funding was not provided for another award cycle. No comprehensive implementation funding was provided for fiscal year 2026, and the personnel funding needed to hire the Local Food and Farm Coordinator and Council Grant Writer was not made available. The Agriculture Business Center also began operating without its designated startup funding. The SBDC supported the Center for two years, but the continuing shortfall resulted in the loss of one of its two staff members, and the Center now has no operating funds remaining.

The Council appreciates the \$500,000 approved for fiscal year 2027. However, this allocation represents approximately 17 percent of the \$2,983,000 requested and is insufficient to sustain existing programs, fill essential positions, and advance the responsibilities assigned under the Agricultural Plan. We therefore ask the Committee to recommend an adjustment to the fiscal year 2027 allocation, supplemental funding, or another authorized funding option that will allow the Council to continue its work and protect services already in place. We also request funding to complete the administrative and organizational steps needed to place the Local Food and Farm Fund into operation through the Council's supporting nonprofit. That structure will include defined public purposes, financial controls, oversight, and reporting requirements.

IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW BY MANDATE

Mandate 1 – Comprehensive Regulatory Framework

Review, accomplishments, and status. Overall, this mandate is partially implemented. In 2021, the Agricultural Plan Task Force reviewed existing agricultural laws and identified outdated provisions, unclear agency responsibilities, and requirements that lacked adequate funding. Since convening, the Council has continued this work through policy recommendations, resolutions, correspondence, and legislative testimony. The Council adopted a formal position supporting composting, mulching, chipping, and other alternatives to burning green debris. A press release communicating that position received coverage in local newspapers across the Territory. In 2026, the Council also reviewed the proposed Territorial Orchard Initiative and recommended a mother orchard supported by smaller orchards on participating farms. This recommendation was consistent with Mandate 1 and High-Priority Project No. 4, which calls for the development of a territorial orchard.

Challenges and next action. Although the Council has addressed specific policy issues, comprehensive reform of the Territory's agricultural laws, regulations, and policies remains incomplete. Advancing this mandate will require legal and technical review, clearly assigned agency responsibilities, and funding for implementation. The Council recommends a prioritized regulatory work plan that identifies each barrier, the action required, the responsible agency, the estimated cost, and a timetable for completion. Progress should be measured by actions implemented and results achieved, not only by recommendations submitted or legislation enacted.

Mandate 2 – Business Models

Agriculture Business Center

Review, accomplishments, and status. The Agriculture Business Center (AgBC) is operational, but its ability to continue providing services is at risk. Established through UVI's Small Business Development Center (SBDC), the AgBC began serving farmers, fishers, and agricultural businesses in December 2023 and expanded its presence across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John. During the third quarter of fiscal year 2026, the Center reported 28 new clients, 251 counseling sessions, and 29 training events serving 376 participants. It also reported that three clients secured a combined \$177,000 in capital. Separately, the AgBC secured two \$50,000 grants to support tree stewardship and farm and ranch stress assistance. Through these services, clients receive help with financial management, access to capital, planning, and sustainability.

Challenges and next action. The AgBC began operating without receiving its designated startup funding, requiring the SBDC to support the program financially for two years. The continuing shortfall has forced the Center to reduce its staff from two employees to one, and no operating funds remain. Operating support is now needed to protect services that are already producing measurable results and to maintain access across all three islands. The Council also requests appropriate flexibility for UVI to use previously appropriated implementation funds for Plan-related purposes when legally authorized, subject to required approvals and reporting. Future results should be measured through clients served, capital secured, businesses sustained, and access to markets.

Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund

Review, accomplishments, and status. The Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund (PPPIF) was successfully implemented for one award cycle but did not receive funding for subsequent cycles. The Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority received the initial \$500,000 on April 25, 2024, and launched the program on May 1. The program attracted 106 applications requesting more than \$4.6 million and issued 12 awards totaling \$500,567. Follow-up reporting indicated that approximately 80 percent of awardees increased their production capacity, while site visits documented investments in irrigation, fencing, solar pumps, and land-preparation equipment. These results demonstrate how timely, direct investment can strengthen farm and fishing businesses and improve their resilience.

Challenges and next action. Demand exceeded the available funding by more than ninefold, and the first award cycle could support only a small portion of the applicants. Had the \$1 million budgeted for fiscal years 2025 and 2026 been made available, the program could have conducted additional award cycles, assisted more eligible farm and fishing businesses, and expanded investments in production capacity and resilience. Continued implementation will require funding made available in time for scheduled awards, along with business assistance and follow-up monitoring. Results should be measured through funds disbursed, projects completed, equipment placed into use, changes in production and sales, and business continuity. This information will allow the Legislature to evaluate the program's economic benefits and contribution to food security.

Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy and Fellowship

Review, accomplishments, and status. Overall, the TAP Grant Academy and Fellowship are partially implemented. Core activities were completed, and the Academy recorded three sessions and 117 registrations, including two hybrid grant-writing trainings coordinated by UVI's Office of Sponsored Programs. Participants received guidance on identifying funding opportunities, developing proposals and budgets, managing grants, and meeting post-award requirements. OSP also distributed the Principal Investigator Agriculture Grants Guide and reported that approximately six proposals were submitted and are being tracked.

The two inaugural TAP Fellows, Dr. Carolyn Boykins-Winrow and Diana E. Collingwood, supported proposal development, agricultural career presentations, youth engagement, curriculum activities, and the first USVI Envirothon. The Fellowship demonstrated how the Territory can use local expertise to strengthen its grant-development capacity. Together, the Academy and Fellowship created a foundation for helping farmers, fishers, nonprofit organizations, and agricultural partners develop projects capable of attracting outside investment.

Challenges and next action. Reaching farmers and fishers remains difficult because many cannot leave their operations during regular working hours. Future sessions should therefore include evening schedules, flexible delivery options, and direct follow-up for participants developing proposals. Funding for the program was received, and OSP's agricultural grant-development support was identified in legislation as recurring. However, no funding was provided to OSP for fiscal year 2027, and the Council Grant Writer position remains unfilled. Without continued support, the Academy and Fellowship cannot operate consistently, and proposals may not receive the assistance needed from development through award and implementation.

The Council recommends restoring annual support for OSP's agricultural grant-development responsibilities, continuing the Academy and Fellowship, and funding the Council Grant Writer. Subject to available resources, the Fellowship should expand toward a goal of ten Fellows annually. Progress should be measured through

participation, pre- and post-training results, proposals submitted, awards received, outside funding secured, and projects completed. These investments can bring additional resources into the Territory for production, infrastructure, conservation, education, research, and market development.

Organic Agriculture

Review, accomplishments, and status. Overall, the Organic Agriculture Program is in development and has not yet reached full implementation. The Organic Agriculture Subcommittee held its first meeting on August 19, 2025, bringing together representatives from VIDA, UVI, Cooperative Extension, VIDE, DPNR, and honorary farmer members. Based on concerns raised by farmers, the subcommittee identified certification costs, limited training opportunities, and the high cost of importing approved organic supplies as significant barriers. It established four initial priorities: certification-cost assistance, pilot buffer zones, access to approved organic inputs through VIDA depots, and education through VIDE, UVI, and Cooperative Extension. This work established a direction for the program, but the identified services have not yet been delivered.

Challenges and next action. The Council requested \$24,500 for organic agriculture in fiscal year 2025, and that amount was included under Act 8918 as part of the Council's operational budget. However, the Council received only \$13,000 in total operating funds, limiting its ability to implement the organic agriculture priorities. For fiscal year 2026, the Council increased its organic agriculture request to \$150,000 to support education, technical assistance, certification and transition support, access to approved inputs, and pilot activities, but no funding was provided. The Council requests sufficient funding to begin delivering these services, with a responsible partner, budget, and timetable assigned to each activity. Progress should be measured through farmers trained, certifications or transitions supported, approved inputs made available, buffer demonstrations completed, and resulting production and market opportunities.

Mandate 3 – Local Food and Farm Coordinator

Status, challenges, and impact. Mandate 3 remains unfulfilled. More than three years after the Council first convened, the Local Food and Farm Coordinator position remains vacant despite legislation establishing the position and its reporting responsibilities. The Council identified a highly qualified individual with the experience and capacity to help move the Agricultural Plan forward, but the absence of available personnel funding and completed administrative arrangements prevented the appointment from proceeding.

The impact extends across every area of implementation. Without a Coordinator, responsibility for daily follow-up has been divided among Council members and partners who already carry substantial duties within their respective institutions. As a result, interagency commitments, implementation schedules, producer referrals, funding opportunities, project development, performance monitoring, and required reporting have not received the sustained attention that a plan of this size demands. Council members have continued the work, but their efforts cannot replace a dedicated person responsible for coordinating the mandates and high-priority projects.

Requested action and measures. The Council requests the funding and administrative action necessary to appoint and retain a qualified Local Food and Farm Coordinator. Consistent with the Council's July 2026 correspondence, the position and its supporting appropriation should be transferred from VIDA to UVI. That action is necessary to complete recruitment and provide administrative support, while preserving the Coordinator's accountability to the Council. Performance should be measured through implementation milestones completed, producer matters addressed, agency commitments tracked, funding opportunities pursued, and required reports delivered. Filling this position is not an optional enhancement; it is necessary to carry out a core mandate of the Agricultural Plan.

Mandate 4 – Local Food and Farm Fund

Review, accomplishments, and status. Mandate 4 remains in development. The Agricultural Plan called for a Local Food and Farm Fund supported by voluntary contributions to expand the resources available for agricultural development. To advance this mandate, the Council completed the 501(c)(3) filing for VI Local

Food and Farm Council Inc. This represents an important organizational step, but the supporting nonprofit is not yet fully operational and has not begun administering the Local Food and Farm Fund.

Governance clarification and next action. Discussions held on October 8, 2026, with Senators, the Council, VIDA, and legal counsel confirmed that additional review and development are needed to determine the appropriate governance structure and relationship between the statutory Council and the supporting nonprofit. It was recommended that this process include legislative participation in developing the bylaws and clarifying how nonprofit service will relate to membership and terms of service on the statutory council. If the nonprofit becomes operational, it should supplement, not replace, the public funding required to implement the Plan.

Mandate 5 – Local Food and Farm Council (Advisory Committee)

Review, accomplishments, and status. The establishment of the Local Food and Farm Council created a continuing structure for agencies, institutions, farmers, fishers, and community partners to support implementation of the Agricultural Plan. This mandate is operational, although the Council does not yet have the full membership, staffing, and administrative support needed to perform all of its responsibilities. Act 8716 formally established the Council, which first convened on July 18, 2023. Since then, the Council has held regular biweekly meetings, established subcommittees, reviewed reports from implementing partners, participated in community events, and hosted annual town halls across the Territory. The Council has also appeared before the Legislature annually to provide budget and implementation testimony, evaluated proposed agricultural initiatives, and issued policy recommendations, including its positions on composting and territorial orchard development.

Council service and in-kind support. Much of the Council's work has been supported by the uncompensated service of its members and the in-kind support of their respective agencies and institutions. The attendance report covering August 4, 2023, through March 6, 2026, documents 50 meetings and 230 instances of attendance by co-chairs, agency representatives, designees, and institutional members who received no compensation from the Council. Only eligible farmer and fisher members receive honoraria for meeting participation. These figures do not include time devoted to meeting preparation, subcommittee work, legislative testimony, town halls, correspondence, technical review, or implementation follow-up and therefore represent only a portion of the in-kind support to the Council's work.

Challenges and next action. The Council's effectiveness remains limited by outstanding appointments and confirmations of farmer and fisher members, inconsistent operating support, and the absence of a permanent Local Food and Farm Coordinator. These gaps affect continuity, daily follow-up, interagency coordination, and the Council's ability to maintain a complete record of implementation across all eight mandates and five high-priority projects. Recent discussions have also shown that the Council's role and its relationship with VIDA are interpreted differently, making it necessary to clarify the Council's statutory responsibilities, VIDA's implementation responsibilities, and the administrative and reporting arrangements governing their work.

The Council recommends completing the remaining appointments and confirmations, providing dependable administrative support, and formally clarifying the responsibilities of the Council and each implementing agency. A Council-approved implementation schedule should identify the lead agency, required actions, funding needs, milestones, reporting dates, and unresolved decisions for each mandate and priority project. Standardized quarterly updates and an annual assessment should provide the Governor and Legislature with a record of accomplishments, expenditures, in-kind contributions, implementation barriers, and recommended policy or funding actions.

Mandate 6 – Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol

Review, accomplishments, and status. This mandate is partially implemented. Initial symbol designs were commissioned in 2021, produced in three sizes, and distributed on a limited basis at public events. The Council later established the Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee, which will determine the distinct brand for products grown, caught, or produced in the Virgin Islands that is separate from the Council's logo.

Challenges and next action. A final symbol and territory-wide program have not yet been approved. Implementation requires a confirmed design, eligibility and verification standards, administrative responsibility, protections against improper use, and funding for enrollment and public outreach. The Council recommends a phased rollout involving producers, retailers, restaurants, and institutional buyers, with progress measured through participation, sales locations, consumer recognition, and purchasing outcomes.

Mandate 7 – Education and Training

Review, accomplishments, and status. This mandate is partially implemented, with substantial progress in curriculum development, student engagement, and practical agricultural education. VIDE and its partners developed the Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education, comprising more than 1,000 pages of Pre-K through grade 12 lessons grounded in local culture and growing conditions. The curriculum integrates agriculture into English, mathematics, science, and STEAM, includes an Agricultural Business and Careers Manual developed with the AgBC, and is available through Go Open VI. Practical learning has expanded through growing supplies, aquaponics equipment, vertical towers, irrigation technology, animal-husbandry demonstrations, agricultural fairs, and the distribution of more than 10,000 seed packs and growing kits. FFA participation increased from 25 students in 2023 to more than 150 by September 2026, and National FFA confirmed the re-establishment of Virgin Islands programming in April 2025. Engagement through 4-H, MANRRS, town halls, and community partnerships has also expanded students' exposure to agricultural leadership and careers.

Challenges and next action. Teacher shortages, school reconstruction, site readiness, utilities, and maintenance requirements continue to affect implementation. Six greenhouses are planned across the Territory, while the Freight Farm at Eulalie Rivera Elementary School still requires electrical wiring before it can operate. Each facility must be supported as a complete project, including site preparation, power, water, installation, training, daily oversight, and maintenance.

Funding and priorities. Act 8700 appropriated \$500,000 from the Education Initiative Fund for curriculum development, training, and a pilot program. VIDE's report identifies \$79,000 in services and \$110,000 in capital. Priorities include sustained curriculum implementation, teacher recruitment and training, completion and operation of agricultural facilities, continued growth of FFA and other student programs, and stronger connections with UVI, the AgBC, farmers, fishers, and agricultural employers. Progress should be measured through curriculum use, educators trained, functioning facilities, student participation and learning, and agricultural career involvement.

Mandate 8 – Data, Benchmarking, and Analysis

Review, accomplishments, and status. This mandate is partially implemented. UVI's Eastern Caribbean Center, working with VIDA and the Council, established recurring agricultural surveys and completed a third consecutive year of data collection in 2026. Its work included survey design, interviewer training, field and telephone interviews, quality assurance, data management, and preliminary analysis. The July 2026 report documented outreach involving 339 farmers, 51 fishers, and eight participants engaged in both activities, as well as comparisons from 501 home and community survey responses collected in 2024 and 2025.

Challenges, funding, and next action. At the time of its July 2026 report, ECC had not received the complete VIDA administrative records needed to conduct a comprehensive analysis. Event-based surveys and smaller respondent groups also require careful interpretation and should not be treated as complete measures of agricultural activity across the Territory. Act 8918 appropriated \$150,000 for data collection, but the amounts received and expended should be reconciled before a final funding total is reported.

Agencies should provide complete records according to an established schedule, with designated staff responsible for submission and verification. Sustained funding is needed to continue the annual surveys, complete the outstanding analysis, and establish benchmarks for production, producer participation, market

access, infrastructure needs, and funded-program outcomes. The Council should incorporate these findings into its annual assessment so future funding and policy decisions are based on reliable evidence.

Five Additional High-Priority Projects

Applicable project areas: Water and Irrigation; Agricultural Infrastructure; Critical VIDA Positions; Territorial Orchard; and Dedicated Grant Writer

Review, accomplishments, and status. Overall, these five projects remain largely unimplemented. No lead has been assigned and no territory-wide program has been established for water and irrigation or agricultural infrastructure. The critical VIDA positions, agricultural engineer, plant pathologist, conservationist, soil scientist, and entomologist remain unfilled because appropriated funding was not received. The Council recommended a mother orchard supported by smaller orchards on participating farms, but an operating orchard system has not been established. The dedicated Council Grant Writer has also not been hired because the appropriated funding was not received.

Challenges and next action. Each project requires a designated lead, sufficient funding, a clear implementation schedule, and measurable outcomes. Priorities include establishing water and infrastructure programs, filling and retaining VIDA's technical positions, developing the territorial orchard system, and hiring the Grant Writer. Progress should be measured through completed projects, positions filled, orchard acreage established, and outside funding secured.

CLOSING REMARKS

The five-year record demonstrates that investment in the Agricultural Plan can produce meaningful results. Farmers, fishers, and agricultural businesses have received business assistance and direct investment; students have gained locally relevant curriculum, practical learning, and renewed FFA opportunities; and the Territory has strengthened grant development, policy review, and agricultural data collection. The record also shows that progress becomes uneven when funding is inconsistent, essential positions remain vacant, and implementing partners must absorb costs within their existing operations.

The Council appreciates the Legislature's approval of \$500,000 for fiscal year 2027 and recognizes it as continued support for implementation. However, an honest assessment shows that the allocation cannot sustain every existing program, fill the required positions, and advance all eight mandates and five high-priority projects. Clear decisions are therefore needed regarding which responsibilities can be supported, which must be deferred, and which require an adjustment, supplemental appropriation, or other lawful funding mechanism. Council members and their respective agencies and institutions have contributed substantial time, expertise, and in-kind resources to this work. They remain committed to fulfilling the responsibilities assigned under the Plan, but those expectations must be matched with dedicated staff, completed appointments, clear administrative authority, dependable operating support, and accountability from every implementation partner. Ultimately, the success of the Agricultural Plan must be measured by whether farmers and fishers receive the practical support needed to strengthen their businesses, increase local production, and contribute to a more secure and resilient food system.

The Council remains prepared to work with the Legislature, VIDA, UVI, and all implementing partners to address the outstanding responsibilities identified in this review. We respectfully ask the Committee to consider the recommendations presented today and to support a clear, accountable path for continued implementation. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We welcome your questions and look forward to continued collaboration on behalf of the Territory.

APPENDICES TABLE OF CONTENTS

Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan Five-Year Review | 2021–2026

The following attachments provide the detailed program, financial, and implementation information supporting the Council’s five-year review testimony.

VIRGIN ISLANDS LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL

Appendix & Title	Purpose and Contents
Appendix A - Five-Year Mandate Summary	Detailed review of the eight mandates and five additional high-priority projects, including accomplishments, current status, challenges, responsible partners, measures, and recommended actions.
Appendix B - Council FY2027 Budget Request	Recreated \$2,983,000 implementation budget submitted for FY2026 and FY2027, together with the FY2027 approved allocation, funding history, documented consequences, and Council in-kind service.
Appendix C – VI Department of Education	Supporting report for Mandate 7, including curriculum, facilities, student programs, partnerships, expenditures, challenges, and next priorities.
Appendix D – UVI Agriculture Business Center	Supporting report for Mandate 2, including counseling, training, clients served, capital secured, grant activity, staffing, and operating needs.
Appendix E – UVI Office of Sponsored Programs	Supporting materials for Mandate 2, including the three Grant Writing Academy and Fellows Program, and TRP-UVI Engagement Overview.
Appendix F - Eastern Caribbean Center	Supporting report for Mandate 8, including survey activities, coverage, preliminary findings, data limitations, and outstanding analysis.
Appendix G — PPPIF Grantees Update	Highlights the Public-Private Partnership Investment Fund’s applications, awards, producer investments, reported outcomes, and impact on agricultural capacity.

APPENDIX A

Five-Year Mandate and Priority Project Summary

Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan

Review Period: 2021–2026

Eight Mandates and Five Additional High-Priority Projects

Prepared by the Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council

Council Leadership

Dr. Safiya George, Co-Chair

Dr. Louis Petersen, Co-Chair

Dr. Usman Adamu, Co-Chair Designee

Statutory Council Representation

University of the Virgin Islands; Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture; Virgin Islands Department of Education; Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources; Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority; and honorary farmers and fishers.

MANDATE 1

Comprehensive Regulatory Framework

Purpose	Review and update agricultural laws, regulations, and policies so responsibilities are clear and requirements can be implemented with appropriate staffing and funding.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council, with affected agencies and the Legislature
Led by	Local Food and Farm Council Members
Current status	Partially addressed. Reviews and recommendations occurred, but the comprehensive framework has not been completed.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	The 2021 Agricultural Plan Task Force reviewed agricultural laws and identified outdated provisions, unclear responsibilities, and statutory requirements without adequate funding. Since 2023, the Council has addressed individual policy matters through correspondence, resolutions, and testimony. Its 2026 orchard review recommended a mother orchard supported by smaller orchards on participating farms. This was a policy recommendation, not an operating orchard program.
Outstanding goals and current status	No consolidated regulatory work plan, assigned schedule, or package of reforms has been completed. Laws and policies affecting composting, orchard development, agricultural land, infrastructure, and other Plan priorities still require individual review and action.
Specific implementation challenges	The work spans several agencies and requires legal research, technical expertise, producer input, and sustained follow-up. The Council has lacked dedicated legal and coordination capacity, and some requirements have been enacted without the staffing, funding, or administrative preparation needed to carry them out.
Funding appropriated and received	No separate appropriation for the comprehensive regulatory review has been confirmed. General Council resources supported policy review and testimony, but inconsistent funding and the vacant Coordinator position limited broader follow-through.
Production, food security, and market relevance	No production or sales increase can be attributed directly to this mandate. Workable laws can reduce delays, clarify agency responsibility, improve access to land and infrastructure, and give agricultural businesses greater certainty when investing.
Priorities and measures	Develop a prioritized work plan identifying each barrier, required change, responsible agency, cost, staffing, timetable, and expected benefit. Measure reviews completed, recommendations submitted, measures adopted, and changes actually implemented.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide legal, technical, and coordination support. Require future agricultural measures to identify the implementing agency, cost, staffing, administrative process, timetable, and reporting requirements before enactment.

Overall assessment: Policy review occurred, but Mandate 1 has not been completed as a comprehensive regulatory reform program.

MANDATE 2

Agriculture Business Center

Purpose	Provide business counseling, training, financial guidance, and capital-access assistance to farmers, fishers, and agricultural businesses across the Territory.
Lead organization	University of the Virgin Islands; Small Business Development Center
Led by	Shanta Roberts, Director, Agriculture Business Center
Current status	Implemented and producing results, but operating capacity is now at immediate risk because of the funding shortfall.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	The AgBC launched in December 2023 and served all three islands. For the third quarter of FY2026, it reported 28 new clients, 251 counseling sessions, and 29 training events serving 376 participants. Three clients secured \$177,000 in capital. The Center separately secured two \$50,000 grants for tree stewardship and farm and ranch stress assistance.
Outstanding goals and current status	Services continue, but one of the Center's two staff members was released because funding was unavailable, and no operating funds remain. Continued tracking is needed for clients served, financing secured, businesses sustained, sales, and market connections.
Specific implementation challenges	The AgBC began without receiving its designated startup funding, requiring the SBDC to support operations for two years. The loss of half of the Center's staff has reduced service capacity and threatens continued territory-wide delivery.
Funding appropriated and received	Implementation appropriations identified \$250,000 for the AgBC, but the designated startup funds were not received when needed. The FY2027 request included \$250,000. The distribution of the Council's approved \$500,000 total allocation has not been confirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Business planning, recordkeeping, financing, pricing, and buyer-readiness assistance help agricultural businesses remain viable and turn production capacity into reliable sales.
Priorities and measures	Restore staffing and operating capacity on all three islands. Measure clients served, financing secured, businesses sustained, sales, market connections, and agricultural projects placed into operation.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide immediate operating support and dependable annual funding. Permit appropriate reallocation of implementation funds within the Plan's purposes, with documented approvals and regular reporting.

Overall assessment: The AgBC is one of the Plan's clearest operating accomplishments, but its continuity is threatened by the same funding problem it faced at startup.

MANDATE 2

Public Private Partnership Investment Fund

Purpose	Provide investment capital to farmers, fishers, and agricultural businesses for equipment, technology, and improvements that increase productive capacity.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority
Led by	Wayne L. Biggs Jr., Chief Executive Officer
Current status	One funding cycle was completed. No sustained second cycle has been established.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	VIDEA received the initial \$500,000 on April 25, 2024, and launched the program on May 1. It received 106 applications requesting more than \$4.6 million and reported 12 awards totaling \$500,567. Follow-up indicated that approximately 80 percent of awardees increased production capacity, with site visits documenting irrigation, fencing, solar pumps, and land-preparation equipment.
Outstanding goals and current status	The initial award cycle is complete, but another funded cycle has not been established. Award totals, disbursements, completed projects, equipment in operation, production, and sales should be reconciled and monitored.
Specific implementation challenges	Requests exceeded available funding by more than nine times. The program reached only a small share of applicants, and reported increases in capacity must be distinguished from verified increases in production, sales, and long-term business stability.
Funding appropriated and received	The initial \$500,000 was received on time in FY2024 and was not repeated. The Council requested \$2 million for FY2027, but only \$500,000 was approved for the Council's entire implementation request, and its distribution has not been confirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Direct investment can remove production constraints, reduce losses, improve efficiency and resilience, and help farm and fishing businesses serve local consumers and institutional buyers.
Priorities and measures	Establish predictable award cycles with technical assistance and follow-up. Measure applications, awards, disbursements, completed projects, equipment operating, production, sales, jobs, and business continuity.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide timely funding for additional competitive cycles and require clear eligibility, selection, disbursement, monitoring, and outcome reporting.

Overall assessment: The first cycle demonstrated both results and substantial unmet demand, but the Fund has not become a recurring investment program.

MANDATE 2

Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Grant Academy

Purpose	Help agricultural stakeholders understand funding opportunities, prepare competitive proposals, and manage funded projects.
Lead organization	University of the Virgin Islands Office of Sponsored Programs, in coordination with VIDA and the Council
Led by	Rick Nader, Ph.D., Vice President for Research and Economic Development, UVI
Current status	Training and proposal-development activities were delivered. Continued territory-wide delivery is not funded.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	OSP reported two in-person grant-writing trainings conducted with VIDA, distribution of the Principal Investigator Agriculture Grants Guide, and approximately six proposals submitted and being tracked. Broader TAP reporting recorded three Academy sessions in 2026 with 117 registrations. Registrations should not be reported as verified attendance unless attendance records confirm the number.
Outstanding goals and current status	The reported activities are current, and OSP plans to repeat the training and increase UVI proposals supporting Agricultural Plan goals. Proposal decisions, awards, funds received, and completed projects still require follow-up.
Specific implementation challenges	Farmers and fishers are difficult to reach during normal business hours, making evening and flexible sessions important. Participants also need individualized assistance after training, and changing sponsor priorities require current guidance.
Funding appropriated and received	OSP did not confirm receipt of a separate Academy allocation. Although OSP's agricultural grant-development function was identified for recurring support, no FY2027 funding was issued to OSP.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Successful proposals can bring outside funding into the Territory for water, infrastructure, conservation, research, workforce development, producer assistance, and market projects. Training alone does not produce these outcomes unless proposals are funded and completed.
Priorities and measures	Repeat the Academy, provide territory-wide follow-through, and track registrations, verified attendance, pre- and post-training results, proposals submitted, awards received, funds secured, and projects completed.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide dependable annual support for OSP's agricultural grant-development role, Academy delivery, individualized proposal assistance, and outcome tracking.

Overall assessment: The Academy delivered training and proposal support, but its value must be measured by funded and completed projects, not registrations alone.

MANDATE 2

Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) Fellowship Program

Purpose	Develop a community of local professionals who can prepare projects and proposals and support implementation of the Agricultural Plan.
Lead organization	UVI Office of Sponsored Programs, the Council, and participating partners
Led by	Rick Nader, Ph.D., Vice President for Research and Economic Development, UVI
Inaugural Fellows	Carollyn Boykins-Winrow, Ph.D., and Diana Collingwood
Current status	A two-person pilot was completed. A sustained Fellowship program has not been funded or established.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	Two inaugural Fellows were selected through a competitive pilot. They supported proposal development, Academy activities, agricultural career presentations, youth engagement, curriculum work, and the inaugural USVI Envirothon. Broader program reporting identified support for four proposals or applications.
Outstanding goals and current status	The pilot showed how local expertise can support implementation, but a continuing cohort, formal work plans, mentoring, compensation, supervision, and long-term outcome tracking remain to be established.
Specific implementation challenges	Continuity depends on reliable funding, defined assignments, qualified mentors, viable projects, and coordination among OSP, the Council, UVI, and community partners.
Funding appropriated and received	Fellowship-specific funds received, stipends, and expenditures have not been fully confirmed. Funding No FY2027 was issued to OSP for its recurring implementation role.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Fellows can help turn producers, research, education, conservation, and market needs into fundable projects. The pilot's direct effect on production or sales has not yet been established.
Priorities and measures	If funded, expand gradually toward the proposed goal of up to ten Fellows per year. Measure satisfaction, training gains, completed assignments, proposals submitted, awards secured, outside funds received, and projects implemented.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide sustained funding for recruitment, stipends, mentoring, project assignments, evaluation, and coordination with OSP and the Council's proposed Grant Writer.

Overall assessment: The pilot created useful local capacity, but the Fellowship is not yet a permanent program and its funding remains unresolved.

MANDATE 2

Organic Agriculture

Purpose	Develop practical assistance for farmers interested in organic and sustainable production, including certification support, technical education, approved inputs, demonstrations, and market development.
Lead organization	LFFC Organic Agriculture Subcommittee with VIDA, UVI, Cooperative Extension, the Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance, and community partners
Led by	Nathaniel Olive, Ph.D., Subcommittee Co-Chair; Louis Petersen, Ph.D., Council Co-Chair
Current status	Program development has begun. A complete territorial Organic Agriculture Program is not operating.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	The Organic Agriculture Subcommittee first met on August 19, 2025, bringing together farming, government, education, Extension, and community representatives. It reviewed producer needs and identified certification assistance, pilot buffer areas, access to approved organic inputs, education, and market development as priorities. The work has been informed by USDA's Transition to Organic Partnership Program, administered locally by the Virgin Islands Farmers Alliance.
Outstanding goals and current status	The identified services have not all been delivered. Each activity still needs a confirmed lead, budget, schedule, eligibility process, and method for reporting results.
Specific implementation challenges	Farmers identified certification expense, limited training, shipping costs, access to approved inputs, and technical capacity as barriers. Land, water, climate, and dependence on imported materials also affect financial viability.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8918 identified \$24,500 within the Council's FY2025 operating budget for organic agriculture. The amount received, spent, and remaining requires reconciliation. The Council requested \$150,000 for FY2027, but distribution of the approved \$500,000 total Council allocation is unconfirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Organic and regenerative practices may improve soil health and resilience and create specialized markets. No territory-wide production or sales increase can yet be attributed to this developing program.
Priorities and measures	Implement the identified activities and track farmers trained, certification or transition support provided, approved inputs made available, buffer demonstrations completed, practices adopted, production costs, yields, buyers, and sales.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Confirm available funds, assign responsible partners and schedules, and continue technical assistance beyond the identified TOPP period. Do not create new requirements before farmers have access to clear guidance and practical assistance.

Overall assessment: The Subcommittee established direction and priorities, but planning and partnership activity should not be presented as a fully operating program.

MANDATE 3

Local Food and Farm Coordinator

Purpose	Employ a dedicated Coordinator to manage daily implementation, partner follow-up, producer referrals, progress monitoring, and reporting across the Agricultural Plan.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council; current administrative placement involves VIDA
Led by	Vacant
Current status	Not implemented. No permanent Local Food and Farm Coordinator was hired during the review period.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	Legislation established the position and its employment and reporting arrangements. The Council developed responsibilities and undertook preliminary recruitment planning. Interim volunteer help was reported in 2024, but these steps did not result in appointment of a permanent Coordinator.
Outstanding goals and current status	The requirement remains to fund, recruit, appoint, and retain a qualified Coordinator. The position has remained vacant since the Council convened in July 2023.
Specific implementation challenges	Personnel funding was not made available in a form that resulted in a sustained appointment. Council members and partners have divided the work among people with substantial duties elsewhere, limiting daily follow-up, interagency coordination, producer referrals, funding development, monitoring, and reporting.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8979 directed part of the remaining \$383,000 under Act 8918 to VIDA for critical positions, including the Coordinator. No appointment resulted. The FY2027 request included \$200,000, but the amount, if any, assigned from the Council's approved \$500,000 allocation has not been confirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	No production or market result can be attributed to this unfilled position. The vacancy has weakened coordination among the services, funding, infrastructure, education, and market activities intended to support producers.
Priorities and measures	Confirm funding, complete recruitment, and appoint the Coordinator. After appointment, measure implementation milestones, agency commitments tracked, producer matters referred or resolved, funding opportunities coordinated, and reports submitted on time.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide salary, benefits, and operating support; establish a firm recruitment timetable; and resolve administrative placement. If transfer to UVI is required, authorize the position and appropriation transfer while preserving accountability to the Council.

Overall assessment: Mandate 3 has not been implemented. Legislative authorization and planning are not substitutes for hiring the Coordinator.

MANDATE 4

Local Food and Farm Fund

Purpose	Create a transparent mechanism for voluntary contributions, charitable support, sponsorships, and eligible grants that supplement public implementation funding.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council and VI Local Food and Farm Council Inc.
Led by	Local Food and Farm Council Members
Current status	Partially implemented. The nonprofit filing is complete, but the Fund is not yet operating or distributing resources.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	The Council completed the 501(c)(3) filing for VI Local Food and Farm Council Inc. This advances the supporting nonprofit mechanism envisioned for the Fund. The filing does not establish that tax-exempt recognition, contributions, grant awards, or funded projects have been completed unless separately confirmed.
Outstanding goals and current status	The relationship among the statutory Council, nonprofit corporation, and Fund must be formalized. Governance documents, board responsibilities, banking, eligible uses, financial controls, conflict-of-interest rules, fundraising priorities, and reporting must be completed before funds are administered.
Specific implementation challenges	The structure must broaden fundraising without replacing public appropriations or confusing the Council's statutory authority with the nonprofit board's fiduciary duties. Donor restrictions and public funds must be tracked separately.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8700 appropriated \$13,000 in FY2023 to establish the Fund. The Council did not receive the money, and the amount was not appropriated again. Contributions and grants should not be reported as available until they are secured.
Production, food security, and market relevance	A properly governed Fund could support defined producer assistance, education, demonstrations, market development, and other eligible initiatives. No production or market outcome can yet be attributed to the Fund because it is not operational.
Priorities and measures	Finalize governance and controls, confirm tax and legal status, establish banking and reporting, and begin project-based fundraising. Measure contributions received, funds committed and spent, projects supported, beneficiaries, and outcomes.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Recognize the filing as progress under Mandate 4, provide necessary establishment support, and clarify statutory authority if required. Maintain transparent accounting and Council-aligned priorities.

Overall assessment: The filing is a concrete accomplishment, but the Local Food and Farm Fund itself is not yet operational.

MANDATE 5

Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council

Purpose	Maintain the statutory body responsible for monitoring the Plan, coordinating partners, engaging producers, and recommending policy, funding, and implementation actions.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Local Food and Farm Council
Led by	Co-Chairs Dr. Safiya George and Dr. Louis Petersen; Co-Chair Designee Dr. Usman Adamu
Current status	Implemented. The Council was established and is operating, but staffing, membership, funding, and reporting capacity remain incomplete.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	Act 8716 established the Council, which first convened on July 18, 2023. It has held meetings, reviewed partner activity, submitted budget and implementation testimony, evaluated proposed initiatives, issued policy recommendations, and compiled updates for the Legislature and Post Audit. Farmers have participated, including honorary farmer members.
Outstanding goals and current status	Outstanding statutory appointments and farmer and fisher participation confirmations remain unresolved. The Council also needs a consolidated implementation schedule and standardized partner reporting on activities, expenditures, barriers, and results.
Specific implementation challenges	The Council has operated without consistent annual funding, a permanent Coordinator, a Council Grant Writer, or fully completed membership. Members conduct Council work while carrying major responsibilities in their own organizations.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8918 identified \$274,500 for Council operations and related initiatives; receipts and expenditures should be reconciled. The FY2027 request included \$274,500 for operations, while only \$500,000 was approved for the Council's total \$2.983 million request and distribution is unconfirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	The Council does not produce food directly. Its role is to connect policy, producer services, investment, education, infrastructure, data, farmers, fishers, and buyers so implementation is coordinated rather than fragmented.
Priorities and measures	Complete appointments, secure dedicated staff, adopt an annual work plan, and require standardized quarterly partner reports. Measure milestones completed, funding used, partner delivery, producer engagement, unresolved barriers, and recommendations acted upon.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Release approved funding promptly, provide dependable administrative support, complete statutory appointments, and require consistent implementation and financial reporting from responsible partners.

Overall assessment: The Council has been established and has performed its advisory work, but it has not been given the stable staffing and funding needed to coordinate implementation fully.

MANDATE 6

Virgin Islands Local Food Symbol

Purpose	Create a credible identifier that helps consumers and buyers recognize eligible Virgin Islands food and agricultural products.
Lead organization	LFFC Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee
Led by	Members include Dr. Louis Petersen, Dr. Nathaniel Nate Olive, Dr. Nicole Angeli, Director Cydney Meadows, Director Shanta Roberts, and Mr. Royce Creque, and Mr. Harith Wickrema
Current status	Early development only. A territory-wide authorization, verification, distribution, and marketing program is not operating.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	The Task Force commissioned proposed designs in 2021. Council reporting documented a symbol in three sizes, limited distribution at events, and formation of the Local Food Symbol and Integrity Subcommittee.
Outstanding goals and current status	The approved design, product eligibility standards, authorization process, verification method, administrative responsibility, outreach plan, and procedures for improper use must be finalized before a territory-wide rollout.
Specific implementation challenges	A credible symbol requires consistent standards, verification, producer and retailer participation, consumer education, administration, and enforcement. None of these functions should be assumed from the existence of a design.
Funding appropriated and received	No separate confirmed appropriation, receipt, or expenditure for the symbol program has been identified. Program and enforcement costs should be established before expansion.
Production, food security, and market relevance	A credible symbol could improve visibility and help consumers, retailers, restaurants, and institutional buyers identify local products. No verified purchasing or sales outcome has yet been attributed to the symbol.
Priorities and measures	Confirm the design and standards, identify the administrator, and conduct a controlled rollout. Measure authorized users, participating outlets and buyers, consumer recognition, purchasing activity, compliance, and market results.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide funding for administration, verification, materials, and outreach. Identify any legal authority needed to protect the symbol and address improper use before broad distribution.

Overall assessment: A design and subcommittee exist, but Mandate 6 has not yet become a functioning territorial marketing program.

MANDATE 7

Education and Training

Purpose	Build agricultural knowledge, practical skills, career pathways, and informed participation from early childhood through adulthood.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Department of Education - Office of Sustainability and Agricultural Education
Led by	Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Ph.D. Commissioner, Cydney Meadows, M.S., Territorial Director of Sustainability and Agricultural Education, Renee Charleswell, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction; Harith Wickrema - President, Island Green Living
Current status	Substantial progress. Curriculum, student programs, and practical activities expanded, while several facilities and staffing needs remain incomplete.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	VIDE and partners developed more than 1,000 pages of Pre-K–12 sustainability and agricultural standards integrating agriculture into English, mathematics, science, and STEAM, together with an Agricultural Business and Careers Manual. Practical learning included growing systems, animal-husbandry demonstrations, fairs, and more than 10,000 seed packs and kits. FFA grew from 25 students in 2023 to more than 150 by September 2026 and was nationally re-established in April 2025.
Outstanding goals and current status	Curriculum use and professional development continue. Six greenhouses are planned; the Jane E. Tuitt installation was redirected to the new Julius Sprauve School. The Eulalie Rivera Freight Farm still requires electrical wiring. Animal-husbandry and career pathways remain areas for expansion.
Specific implementation challenges	Agricultural teacher shortages, school reconstruction, site readiness, power, water, procurement, trained personnel, animal care, and maintenance affect sustained use of the curriculum and facilities.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8700 appropriated \$500,000 from the Education Initiative Fund. VIDE reported \$79,000 in services and \$110,000 in capital outlay, plus a \$15,000 FFA travel grant and community support. These figures should be reconciled and are not presented as a verified cumulative five-year expenditure total.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Education develops the future workforce and connects students with production, business, technology, conservation, and food-system resilience. School production should be reported separately from educational participation.
Priorities and measures	Sustain curriculum use, recruit and train teachers, complete and maintain facilities, and expand FFA and career pathways. Track teachers trained, functioning sites, student participation and learning, production activity, and career engagement.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Fund each facility as a complete operating project, including site preparation, utilities, installation, training, staffing, and maintenance. Sustain teacher development and student participation.

Overall assessment: Mandate 7 has produced substantial, documented progress, but incomplete facilities and staffing shortages limit full implementation.

MANDATE 8

Data Benchmarking and Analysis

Purpose	Produce reliable information about producers, production, markets, needs, and program results to guide decisions and measure implementation.
Lead organization	University of the Virgin Islands - Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC)
Led by	Marissa Johnson Rogers, Ph.D., ECC Director, Social Science Research Institute; Ayishih Bellew, Statistician; Trevesia Queeley-Richardson, Research Specialist III
Current status	Data collection is active. Comprehensive analysis and consistent benchmarks remain incomplete.

Area Requested by the Committee	Five Year Review
Accomplishments during the review period	ECC established recurring agricultural surveys and reached a third consecutive year of collection by 2026. Work included survey design, interviewer training, field and telephone interviews, quality assurance, data management, and preliminary analysis. The July 2026 report covered 339 farmers, 51 fishers, eight people engaged in both, and comparisons from 501 home and community survey responses collected in 2024 and 2025.
Outstanding goals and current status	Survey findings still need to be combined with timely administrative records and converted into consistent benchmarks for production, markets, infrastructure, producer needs, and funded-program outcomes.
Specific implementation challenges	ECC reported delayed access to VIDA administrative records, limiting comprehensive analysis. Event-based collection may miss people who do not attend those events, and small respondent groups require cautious interpretation.
Funding appropriated and received	Act 8918 identified \$150,000 for data collection, and ECC identified a \$150,000 continuation need. Amounts received and spent should be reconciled. Distribution of the Council's approved FY2027 allocation has not been confirmed.
Production, food security, and market relevance	Reliable information can identify service gaps, track production and markets, evaluate investments, and direct limited resources toward demonstrated needs. Data collection itself does not increase production.
Priorities and measures	Maintain annual surveys, establish deadlines for agency records, complete outstanding analysis, and report consistent indicators for production, producer participation, markets, infrastructure, program outcomes, and food security.
Funding and legislative actions requested	Provide sustained funding for data collection and analysis and require responsible agencies to submit complete, timely, and verifiable administrative records.

Overall assessment: The recurring survey series is a concrete accomplishment, but the mandate is incomplete until the Territory has usable benchmarks and integrated reporting.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT 1

Water and Irrigation

Purpose	Improve reliable access to agricultural water and irrigation so producers can maintain and increase production during dry conditions.
Lead organization	Unassigned
Led by	Vacant
Current status	Not implemented.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT 2

Agricultural Infrastructure

Purpose	Address shared needs for equipment, storage, processing, transportation, utilities, and other facilities that help producers operate and reach buyers.
Lead organization	Unassigned
Led by	Vacant
Current status	Not implemented.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT 3

Critical Technical Positions at VIDA

Purpose	Provide the specialized expertise needed in areas such as agricultural engineering, plant pathology, conservation, soil science, and entomology.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture
Led By	VIDA Commissioner Dr. Louis Petersen
Current status	Not implemented. Funding was appropriated but not received.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT 4

Territorial Orchard Development

Purpose	Increase local fruit production through an orchard system that is technically sound, financially realistic, and connected to participating farmers and markets.
Lead organization	Local Food and Farm Council
Led by	Local Food and Farm Council Members
Current status	Not implemented. The Council provided a policy recommendation, but a territorial orchard system has not been established.

HIGH PRIORITY PROJECT 5

Dedicated Grant Writing Capacity

Purpose	Maintain dedicated capacity to develop agricultural projects, prepare applications, and support funded work.
Lead organization	Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture
Led By	VIDA Commissioner Dr. Louis Petersen
Current status	The dedicated Council Grant Writer has not been hired. Funding was appropriated but not received.

APPENDIX B

Council Implementation Budget

Fiscal Year 2027

Budget Request

Lead Agency	Program or Purpose	FY2027 Request
UVI	Agriculture Business Center	\$250,000
UVI	Organic Agriculture	\$150,000
UVI	Council Operations	\$300,000
UVI	Eastern Caribbean Center	\$150,000
UVI	Office of Sponsored Programs	\$250,000
VIDA	Critical Staff Hiring	\$383,000
VIDE	Sustainability and Agricultural Education	\$500,000
VIDEA	PPPIF Grant Program	\$1,000,000
	TOTAL REQUEST	\$2,983,000

Fiscal Year 2027 Funding Position

Council request	\$2,983,000
Approved allocation	\$500,000
Unfunded difference	\$2,483,000 (17%)

VIDE Sustainability & Agricultural Education (SAE) 5 YEAR Report

September 22, 2026

Curriculum & Instruction

Sustainability & Agricultural Education Director

Cydney Meadows



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

Overview

The Virgin Islands Department of Education Curriculum & Instruction Sustainability & Agricultural Education division has completed the work set forth under the Territorial Ag Plan (Act 8404, Mandate #7 and funded through Act 8700). This report documents the development, approval, and implementation of the Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education (VISA SAE).

The mandate called for agricultural education from Pre-K through farmer education and with that work complete. The next phase is to nurture and grow it through infrastructure, education support, funded ag teachers, and live animal husbandry availability. This work represents a collective effort across Curriculum & Instruction, Sustainability and Agricultural Education, the Local Food and Farm Council, VI Good Food, Island Green Living, Farm Education For All, FFA, UVI, 4H, the Ag Business Center, CTE Board, Board of Education, and numerous partners.

Cydney Meadows was hired in July 2024 as Territorial Director of Sustainability & Agricultural Education. Upon arrival, the division moved immediately into curriculum review, partner coordination, and infrastructure planning while building on the curriculum development work that began in 2021.

1. Curriculum Development

Through partnership and teacher input we created the Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education (VISA SAE) Curriculum — over 1,000 pages of Ag in the Classroom lesson plans and educational guidance. The curriculum includes:

- Virgin Islands Standards of Achievement for Sustainability and Agricultural Education — Pre-K through 12th grade
- Crosswalk aligning VISA SAE to national ANRF frameworks for grant reporting and alignment
- SAE Calendar — international and Virgin Islands events
- SAE SOPs — step-by-step guidance for adverse growing conditions including power outages and water supply breaks

- Ag Business and Careers Manual — career exploration, job applications, resume building, land access, organic certifications, and value-added product labeling and distribution for 10 grades through Farmer Education with the Ag Business Center and Director Shay Roberts and team
- Practical Practicum Practice — Flora and Fauna Playlists with QR codes, scientific names, common names, and local uses
- STEAM-based integrated lessons aligned to VISA ELA, VISA MATH, and NGSS standards
- Intervention-ready lessons with built-in scaffolds for struggling students with VISTAS and Director Semper
- All content is based on Zone 13 and the Virgin Islands.

2. Approvals

The curriculum was presented to the public and governing bodies and received the following support: it was presented to the public at the Ag Fair and during the 3 Island Town Halls across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John; support was received from the Local Food and Farm Council; formal support was received from the VI Board of Education; and the curriculum was unanimously approved by the CTE Board.

Specific presentation and review activity included:

- Local Food and Farm Council town halls held across all three islands, working with the entire Local Food and Farm Council, Ms. Jackie Maynard, Coordinator, and Dr. Petersen, Chair
- Public presentations at the Ag Fair and at 3 Island Town Halls
- Review by the COER Curriculum Council, led by Dr. Yvette McMahon-Arnold, with the presentation delivered by Director Cydney Meadows on March 11, 2026
- Review meetings requested by the VI Board for Career and Technical Education, chaired by Mr. Anthony Mardenborough, Jr., with Executive Director Genevieve Whitaker and Vice-Chair Dr. Anastasie Jackson
- Formal presentation to the VI Board of Education, which provided support
- Formal presentation to the CTE Board, which unanimously approved the curriculum

3. Implementation and Access

- Serving public and private schools across St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix
- All principals and administrators received professional development
- All English and math teachers received professional development sessions and toolkits to use the integrated curriculum in English, math, and science lessons
- Curriculum is open-sourced and available on Go Open VI for all schools, partners, and sustainable entities
- VIDA on St. Thomas is working through VI Good Food with Kaila Francis on St. Croix and Lynesia Richards to ensure children have the same access to display their ag science fair projects and displays on both districts

Phase Plan for All Schools

Each school is on a phase plan that reflects plants and animal husbandry.

Phase 1, our youngest students in grades K through 2 begin with chickens and egg hatching.

Phase 2, students in grades 3 through 5 continue into incubators, chicken production, and egg production.

Phase 3, students in grades 6 through 8 move into aquaponics, deep water culture, and mini tank and NFT table top systems.

Phase 4, students in grades 9 through 12 advance into vertical towers, media beds, and commercial-scale production through the advanced Ag Business Career manual.

Participating Schools and Sites

St. Croix Educational Complex (C-TEC)

St. Croix Central High School

Pearl B. Larsen School

Charlotte Amalie High School

Juanita Gardine School

Alfredo Andrews School

Jane E. Tuitt School

Ricardo Richards School

Edith Williams School

Eulalie Rivera School

John H. Woodson Junior High / Arthur A. Richards School

Lew Muckle School
Julius Sprauve School
Ivanna Eudora Kean High School
Ulla F. Muller Elementary School
Claude O. Markoe School
Yvonne Milliner Bowsky School
St. Joseph Catholic School
Free Will
St. Patrick's
Montessori at St. Dunstan's
Good Hope Country Day School
Community Outreach

Supply Summary

Please note that with the curriculum now complete, we are operating to build infrastructure and maintenance that will allow for even more school garden access across the territory. The core supply categories are as follows:

- Seeds and Growing Materials
- Seed packs and seed banks, including Moringa, Swiss chard, carrots, basil, kale, kallaloo, mustard greens, collard greens, spinach, and quinoa Rapid rooters, seed starter trays, 70-cell seeding trays, egg cartons for seed starting, grow bags in 3, 5, and 10 gallon sizes, and plant ID tags in quantities up to 1,800 per site
- Growing Systems and Equipment
- NFT desktop systems, aquaponics systems, Dutch bucket systems, vertical towers, and media beds, Grow lights, solar irrigation lights, soaker hoses, dual outlet water timers, and WiFi-connected irrigation monitoring
- Collapsible water tanks, PH meters and sticks, peat moss, net pots, and soil sieves
- Animal Husbandry Supplies
- Chicken incubators with light and fertilizer
- Chicken catchers, feeders, water fountains, and pooper scoopers
- Five climatized male or female layers per site
- Site Infrastructure

- Lean-to sheds and storage, shade cloth, weed covering, solar irrigation systems, freight farm and 6 greenhouses

4. Infrastructure and Technology

Ready for Implementation in the 2026-2027 School Year

Greenhouses — delivery and installation at Yvonne Milliner Bowsky, Arthur A. Richards School, Ulla F. Muller Elementary, Ivanna Eudora Kean High School, and Pearl B. Larsen School. The greenhouse originally designated for Jane E. Tuitt will go to Julius Sprauve School as part of its new build.

Freight Farm — wiring of the freight farm at Eulalie Rivera School.

Animal Husbandry RFP — a Request for Proposals for chickens, ducks, poultry husbandry, and egg production at St. Croix Central High School and Yvonne Milliner Bowsky School.

Freight Farm

The Eulalie Rivera School on St. Croix is the site of the territory's first hydroponic freight farm, a fully self-contained, climate-controlled classroom on wheels producing the equivalent of 2.5 acres. This project was advanced with support from St. Croix District leadership including Ms. Juel Mills, CTE Coordinator, Ms. Joann Lewis, Science Coordinator for the St. Croix District, and Mrs. Loretta Moorehead, then Principal of Eulalie Rivera and now at Ricardo Richards, along with district staff and partners.

Technology

WiFi-enabled irrigation systems being installed — students monitor soil, water, and crop health from phones and computers

Industry-sized greenhouses on the line this year — commercial-scale production

RFPs for poultry coops and greenhouse build outs have been submitted to leadership

Greenhouse buildouts at pearl B. Larsen school underway

Proposed Biotech and Animal Science Sites

- St. Croix Educational Complex (CTEC) — animal science
- Charlotte Amalie High School (CAHS) — animal science
- Eulalie Rivera — plant science
- Sprauve STEAM Center on St. John — plant science

5. Student Organizations

FFA is growing, with chapters across the territory and more to come with 25 students in 2023 to now over 150.

A delegation of students is attending the 99th FFA National Convention

One of our students was selected as State Flag Bearer at the 99th FFA National Convention

\$15,000 travel grant received from FFA for convention travel this year

National FFA confirmed in writing on April 11, 2025 that FFA programming has been successfully re-established in the USVI, with multiple chartered chapters and growing membership

4-H — Pre-K through 4th grade engagement

MANNRS — high school and college networking

Seeds of Security (SOS) Council — community network of experts, educators, and advocates

6. Animal Husbandry

Students were able to interact with the following at public events including the Ag Fair, Bush Cook, and Chef Cook:

Raising chickens and ducks — Easter Egger chickens and ducks for student animal husbandry programs

St. Croix Hair Sheep — students learning about climatized animals through Farm Education For All and what types of feed can be grown, manufactured, and sold in the USVI

Animal feed pellet making — hands-on exhibits at Ag Fair

Students engaged in feeding, raising, and learning full production cycles from chick to egg to table

7. Professional Development and Community Engagement

Igniting STEAM — professional development for educators

Girls in STEAM — inspiring young women in agriculture and sustainability

Week of the Young Child — community engagement

Ag Fair — student exhibits, community art, pellet making demonstrations, curriculum presentations to the public

3 Island Town Halls — public presentations across St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John
Local Food and Farm Council Town Halls — curriculum presented across all three islands
VI Youth Fun Quest — STEAM-based youth engagement
Over ten thousand seed packs and grow kits distributed to students, families, farmers, and community members

2026-2027 Professional Development

Four-part professional development series with the Professional Development office of Ms. Michaelrose Ravalier
Meet the Directors chats for Ag Fair

Partners

Government and Education

Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture (VIDA), including Dr. Petersen, Chair of the Local Food and Farm Council
UVI, including Dr. Safiya George, President, and Dr. Adamu, Dean of the School of Agriculture, with Adriana Santana, who runs the systems at the Bethlehem Aquaponics site owned in conjunction with Farmers in Action. UVI aquaponics facility visits were made and will be confirmed for 2026-2027 field trips for students
VI Board of Education
CTE Board
VI Board for Career and Technical Education
Vistas VI State Assessment Team
VI Cultural Education
School Food Authority

Community and Nonprofit

Local Food and Farm Council, including Ms. Jackie Maynard, Coordinator
VI Good Food, including Kaila Francis on St. Croix and Lynesia Richards
VIWMA
Women in Agriculture, led by Diana Collingwood, former Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture
Island Green Living Association
VINE (Virgin Islands Network of Environmental Educators)
Seeds of Security partnership school in Sri Lanka
Eco-Schools
Planet Green Force
Farm Education For All, including Taj James
Crucian Heritage and Nature Tourism, Inc. (CHANT)

Industry and Business

Ag Business Center (Director Shay Roberts)

RT Park

National FFA

4-H

MANNRS

Funding

\$79,000 in services

\$110,000 in capital outlay

\$5,000 FFA grant for service and National Convention attendance

\$15,000 FFA travel grant for convention travel this year

\$5,000 in EDC funds from Greenleaf in conjunction with Matthew King, Partnership Director with VIDE

This funding is in place to install the greenhouses currently.

Implementation Challenges

Agricultural teacher shortages

Solution: create an integrated curriculum allowing all educators to teach Agricultural Education concepts.

Hurricane impacts

Working around rebuilds and revitalization projects creates limitations.

Solution: work with leadership and FEMA to build infrastructure in preapproved areas.

Supply chain

Solution: work with local members of the Local Food and Farm Council and VIDA.

These challenges were addressed by working with principals, community members, administrators, and leadership.

Outstanding Needs

Continued funding

Teacher support

Stable infrastructure

Maintenance and staff positions support

Maintenance staffing

Building and maintaining green spaces and greenhouses

Power and water needed for greenhouses and green spaces

Recommendations

Continued funding

Policy support

Expansion mandates

Continued teacher support for current teachers

Replication

The curriculum is open-source on Go Open VI:

<https://goopenusvi.vide.vi/courseware/lesson/825>

Vision for the Future

Our vision remains to design industry-leading, inquiry-based curriculum and teacher education that honors the Virgin Islands' heritage while preparing students for a future of food stability, sovereignty, and prosperity. The next phase is to nurture and grow this work through infrastructure, education support, funded ag teachers, and live animal husbandry availability.

Conclusion

It is a privilege and an honor to do this work for the resilient people of the USVI as we work together to create more food sovereignty, security, and a food system that creates better health outcomes. Continued legislative and community support will ensure the long-term success of these programs, fostering a resilient and self-sufficient future for our students and communities.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Agriculture Business Center

FY 2026 Third Quarter Summary Report

Reporting Period: April 1, 2026–June 30, 2026

Executive Overview

During the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2026, the VI Agriculture Business Center continued to expand business development support for farmers, fishers, and agribusiness owners throughout the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Center provided individualized counseling, training, outreach, grant application assistance, and access-to-capital support focused on strengthening agricultural businesses and improving long-term sustainability.

Major accomplishments included launching a new funding opportunity for farmers and fishers, participating in territory-wide outreach events, supporting farmers with national grant applications, and securing two grants totaling \$100,000.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

On May 13, 2026, Director Shanta “Shay” Roberts presented at **“Learning Under the Mahogany: Sustainable and Organic Practices in Action,”** hosted by the National Center for Appropriate Technology under the Florida Organic Growers Southeast Transition to Organic Partnership Program.

The hands-on workshop and farm walk were held at Wadeh’s Organic Farm in St. Thomas. Director Roberts presented farm business strategies, emphasizing business planning, financial management, recordkeeping, and informed decision-making for sustainable agricultural enterprises.

On May 6, 2026, the Agriculture Business Center collaborated with the RTPark Community Investment Fund to launch the new **Farmers and Fishers Program**. The webinar, **“Helping Farmers & Fishers Thrive: Community Impact Fund,”** covered program eligibility, funding benefits, application requirements, and strategies for preparing a strong application. Eligible applicants could request between \$500 and \$10,000 to support agricultural or fishing business growth.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

The Center also hosted informational tables at the **Government Contracting and Matchmaker Summit Series** on May 5 in St. Croix and May 6 in St. Thomas. Advisors engaged attendees and promoted available counseling, training, funding assistance, and business development resources for farmers and agribusinesses.

On May 27, Agriculture Business Center Advisor Dara Cooper hosted an introductory webinar featuring Dr. Renu Singh, Project Director of the Agribusiness Digital Commerce Program, and her marketing team. The session introduced an upcoming webinar series designed to help farmers and agribusiness owners improve branding, digital marketing, online sales, social media, and customer engagement.

In June, Agriculture Business Center advisors assisted several farmers across the territory with applications for the **National Viability Farm Grant** administered by the Rural Advancement Foundation International. The program offered up to \$10,000 to support working farms. Advisors assisted clients with project narratives, budgets, eligible expenses, business impacts, and market expansion strategies.

Grant Awards

The Agriculture Business Center secured two grants valued at \$50,000 each, for a combined total of \$100,000.

The first award was through the **Native, Medicinal and Fruit Tree Planting, Protection, Maintenance, Education, and Removal Grant Program**. The program is administered by the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture and funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service.

The project will support tree planting, stewardship, education, maintenance, and business development opportunities connected to agroforestry and sustainable agriculture.

The second award was received through the **Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network–South**. This USDA-funded initiative seeks to expand the capacity of organizations serving farmers, ranchers, farm workers, and other agriculture-related workers experiencing stress.

The grant will support outreach, partnerships, education, business resilience, farmer well-being, financial stability, and improved access to support services.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Training and Client Impact

During the quarter, the Agriculture Business Center hosted and supported webinars and training activities in business planning, marketing, digital commerce, financial management, and access to capital.

Highlighted sessions included:

- **Helping Farmers & Fishers Thrive: Community Impact Fund** — May 6, 2026
- **Canva Workshop, Sessions 1 and 2** — May 20, 2026
- **Agribusiness Digital Commerce Introduction Webinar** — May 27, 2026

The Center's third-quarter performance included:

- **28 new clients**
- **251 one-on-one counseling sessions**
- **29 training events**
- **376 training participants**
- **Three client capital infusions**
- **\$177,000 in capital secured**

These outcomes reflect stronger business planning, improved financial management, expanded access to funding, and increased readiness for business growth among the territory's agricultural producers.

Post-Quarter Highlights

In July 2026, the Agriculture Business Center partnered with Dr. Renu Singh and her marketing team to develop and deliver a four-part agricultural marketing webinar series focused on branding, digital presence, content creation, and online marketing.

Director Roberts also delivered a presentation titled **"Agriculture Business Center Support Programs for Farmers"** at the 58th Caribbean Crops Society and first USVI Agriculture Conference, held July 12–17, 2026, at the University of the Virgin Islands.



VI Agriculture Business Center Quarterly Report

Conclusion

The third quarter demonstrated the Agriculture Business Center's continued commitment to supporting a stronger and more resilient agricultural sector. Through counseling, training, outreach, grant assistance, access to capital, and strategic partnerships, the Center helped farmers, fishers, and agribusiness owners strengthen operations, pursue funding, and prepare for sustainable growth across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Prepared by:

Shay Roberts

Director

Virgin Islands Agriculture Business Center

Date: July 20, 2026

Grants Consulting Engagement Overview

UNIVERSITY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS ON BEHALF OF THE TERRITORIAL AGRICULTURAL PLAN

Welcome

Dear UVI Team:

It is with great pleasure that I, on behalf of Thorn Run Partners, welcome you to our partnership.

Your decision to sign a 1-year agreement for grants consulting speaks volumes about your commitment to growing the USVI's access to federal funding, and for supporting 2021 Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP) implementation activities in an intentional and proactive way. Our team is dedicated to advancing your goals in the following areas:

- **Grants Capacity Building:** We will help USVI break down barriers to securing federal funding, such as accessing information about grants, navigating grant requirements, and planning proposals and applications.
- **Grant Writing Services:** We will provide professional grant writing services to local farmers, producers, cooperatives, non-profit organizations, scientists and researchers, and other TAP stakeholders across the USVI.

At Thorn Run Partners, we view our clients as partners in a collaborative journey. We are committed to open communication, transparent processes, and delivering actionable results that drive the USVI's success.

Once again, thank you for entrusting us with the opportunity to support your grant-seeking endeavors. We are looking forward to making great strides together over the coming year.

Warm regards,



Jessica Venable, PhD, Partner, Thorn Run Partners

Email: jvenable@thornrun.com | Mobile: (240) 930-2843

Your Consulting Team



About Us



Thorn Run Partners provides clients with both **upstream solutions** that create and pave the way for sustained extramural funding, and **downstream solutions** to help clients to pursue targeted competitive and non-competitive funding opportunities.

We bring a **full spectrum of expertise** to help clients develop and implement strategies that increase institutional competitiveness, create and sustain relationships, and secure a pipeline of diverse funding to **grow their grants enterprise**.



Our Commitments

Bringing decades of expertise as researchers, practitioners, non-profit leaders, federal policy and advocacy experts, and grant development professionals, TRP works to **accelerate the effectiveness and value of organizations' grant enterprises.**



Partner with clients to devise and pursue a **shared vision** of a successful engagement



Co-create **personalized, flexible solutions**, based on best practices, to meet evolving needs



Dedicate a **stable, professional team** to oversee and implement all aspects of the engagement



Deliver **honest guidance and actionable recommendations** on competitiveness and likelihood of success



Make **explicit commitments** to diversity, equity, and inclusion in all areas of service



Strive for **transparency, accountability, and ongoing improvement**, and welcome all levels of feedback



Who we are

ENGAGEMENT LEAD



Jess Venable, PhD
Partner, Thorn Run Partners

Jessica (Jess) Venable co-leads the firm's Grants Enterprise Strategy consulting practice, which assists clients in increasing the extramural funding base needed to support programs and services, research, outreach and engagement, partnerships, and the innovation ecosystem.

With more than 25 years' experience, she delivers a unique combination of solutions-focused consulting services including strategic planning, government relations, public relations, grants enterprise development and capacity building, partner engagement, Team Science, program design, and grant proposal development.

Her client portfolio spans the higher education, non-profit, and local government sectors, for whom she has helped win more than \$650 million in competitive grant awards across the past decade alone.

In her role as Client Lead, **Jess will collaborate with in-house experts and oversee purpose-built consulting teams to deliver tailored services to UVI / USVI.**

Phone: (240) 930-2843
Email: jvenable@thornrun.com



Who we are

SENIOR CONSULTANTS



Ali Mohamed, PhD
Lead Federal Funding / USDA Strategist

Dr. Mohamed is the former Director of the **US Department of Agriculture's Division of Environmental Systems (DoES)**, where he provided coordination and oversight for research, extension and education programs to address contemporary environmental and natural resource problems with new approaches that are economically sound and environmentally advantageous.

DoES advances knowledge in natural sustainable resources, the environment, and conservation to help America meet its needs in the face of increasing competition for water, accelerated soil erosion, reduced biological diversity, loss of habitat, and other issues that may significantly affect agricultural sustainability and production. The division supports research, education, and outreach that involves air, water, soil, and wildland resources to advance the sustainability of agricultural, forest, and range production systems.

Dr. Mohamed also has an extensive track record of working with HBCUs and on international collaborations, having served as the National Program Leader for the 1890 Capacity Building Grant Program.

Consulting Services



How we work

CONSULTING SERVICES

Thorn Run Partners will work with UVI across 12 months to enhance stakeholders' capacity to **identify, attract, and steward extramural funding** towards the implementation of the USVI's 2021 Territorial Agricultural Plan (TAP).

PHASE 1: PLANNING

Landscape Analysis

- Understand TAP ecosystem & stakeholders
- Understand USVI capabilities, funding needs
- Review funding opportunities, trends, & policy directions

Planning & Positioning

- Identify funding opportunities that match USVI TAP implementation needs
- Plan capacity development projects, tools
- Plan engagement events

PHASE 2: IMPLEMENTATION

Capacity Building

- Deliver grantsmanship training
- Launch **Virtual Grants Resource Center**
- Support Ag Advocacy Day, Sponsor engagement

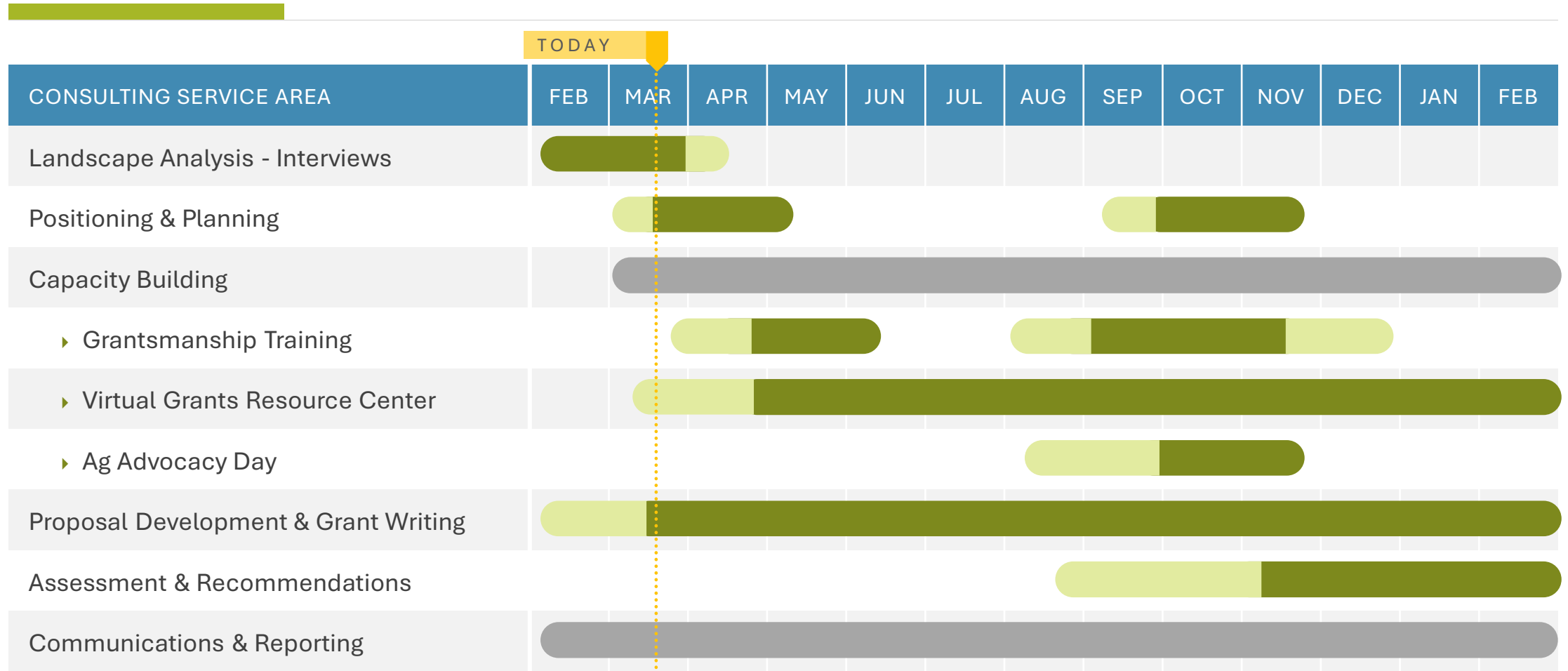
Proposal Development & Grant Writing

- Support Idea generation & refinement
- Manage & coordinate development
- Assist in narrative development & writing
- Provide graphic design support
- Advise on budget preparation
- Provide external pre-submission review & feedback, proofreading
- Advise on post-submission strategy



Timeline

ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES



Key: Planning; Implementation; Milestone, Data Collection; Reporting, Refinement, Revision

PHASE 1

Landscape Analysis

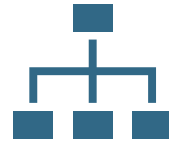


Landscape Analysis

INTERVIEWS

The Landscape Analysis will provide the consulting team with a clear understanding of TAP stakeholders' position in the federal funding landscape and develop a strategic plan to attract and manage federal grants effectively.

Our consulting team will meet with and **interview personnel and stakeholders across the TAP ecosystem** to capture diverse perspectives.



TAP Leadership



Ag Roundtable
Participants



Grants & Funding
Professionals



Extension & Outreach



Academic
Researchers



Ag Organizations,
Coalitions



Farmers,
Practitioners



Local & Federal Gov,
Agencies



Others



Landscape Analysis

INTERVIEWS

The Landscape Analysis will provide the consulting team with a clear understanding of TAP stakeholders' position in the federal funding landscape and develop a strategic plan to attract and manage federal grants effectively.

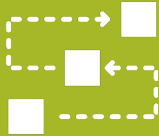
Our consulting team will meet with and **interview personnel and stakeholders across the TAP ecosystem** to capture diverse perspectives.



What is your vision for and role in TAP implementation?



What do you think is the best approach for TAP implementation, specifically with regard to fundraising?



What are your funding needs?



What are your most pressing challenges, concerns?



Landscape Analysis

CONCEPT DIAGNOSTIC TOOL

For any given idea for grant funding, we will also ask a number of diagnostic questions meant to gauge fitness, competitiveness, and readiness to apply.

This information will help the consulting team develop a suite of supports to turn ideas into fundable projects, and ultimately into **competitive grant applications**.

IDEA

- ▶ What is the concept / idea / project / effort for which you want funding?
- ▶ What are you trying to do? Articulate your objectives using absolutely no jargon.
- ▶ What is the current state? Why does it need to change?
- ▶ What data or evidence can you cite to justify that this project is needed, important, urgent?

IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ How do you propose to do this?
- ▶ How much will it cost? What is the maximum and/or acceptable Minimum \$ needed to complete the project?
- ▶ How long will the project take to implement / complete? When do you need to start?
- ▶ Who will be involved in carrying out the project, and what roles will they play?

IMPACT

- ▶ Why do you believe it will be successful?
- ▶ Who stands to benefit from the project? Why does this effort matter to them?
- ▶ How will you know that this project is successful? what difference will it make?
- ▶ How will you measure success?

FUNDING

- ▶ Which sponsors do you think would be interested in funding this project?
- ▶ Have you ever applied for grants from these sponsors? Were you successful?
- ▶ What challenges do you anticipate in preparing a grant proposal? What do you need help with



Thank you.



RE-MESSAGING STRATEGIES

Grantwriting Guidance for an Evolving Political Landscape



FEBRUARY 28, 2025

The Context & Challenge

Research and higher education communities are navigating a rapidly evolving landscape for federal grant funding under the current administration.¹

Recent changes, including Executive Orders⁴ like “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing” and “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” signal a shift away from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and toward merit-based practices and national security priorities.

In response, program officers at the National Science Foundation (NSF) are, allegedly, evaluating programs, proposals, and funded grants for “trigger words”² - including terms traditionally associated with DEI. Many agree that proposals containing these terms will face increased scrutiny, and, in some cases, be at risk of being defunded. There have also been hints and suggestions government scientists may

not be able to serve as co-author on manuscripts that include DEI-related terms, concepts, or priorities.

The exact vetting process for identifying flagged language remains unclear. While it appears to involve a mix of automated screening tools and manual reviews, we do not yet have a complete picture of how this new paradigm will unfold.

This uncertainty presents a real challenge for grant seekers: How do you comply with current guidelines while maintaining a strategic and authentic approach in your proposed work.

Understandably, many grant seekers (and grant makers) are feeling uncertain about how, and whether, to adapt to these rapid changes. Some are attempting a simple “find and replace” approach to avoid using flagged terms or using AI tools to suggest alternatives. However, grant professionals have found that this strategy often leads to

circular logic where proposed replacement words are also on the flagged list, or they fail to convey the original intent effectively.³ Others are exploring frameworks like the FAIR (Fairness, Access, Inclusion, and Representation) model, which seeks to achieve similar outcomes to DEI without triggering policy concerns.⁵

Like many institutions, Thorn Run Partners (TRP) has encouraged grant seekers to continue writing proposals unless or until there is clearer guidance from federal sponsors. We recommend that you aim for compliance with current guidelines while maintaining a strategic and authentic approach.

This advice is all well and good, but we also recognize the need for more practical and nuanced tools to help grant seekers navigate this new terrain.

TRP’s **Alternatives for NSF “Trigger Words” list** was developed to fill this gap. We took a deeper level of analysis to create a tool that recommends two approaches.

- ▶ **Rephrase** offers direct alternatives to avoid problematic language.
- ▶ **Reframe** goes further, suggesting ways to align proposed project with broader Administration priorities (Column 4) like national security, economic development, and scientific leadership.

This dual approach ensures that grant proposals remain competitive, thoughtful, and aligned with evolving federal expectations.

The list is not simply about avoiding 'trigger words' but about understanding the context in which these words might be problematic and strategically navigating around them without losing the proposal's impact.



One Solution

The Rephrase / Reframe List

TRIGGER	REPHRASE	REFRAME	PRIORITY
Activism Activists	Local involvement, civic contribution, community-driven action	Civic responsibility through local participation, community-driven programs	■
Advocacy Advocate	Championing community needs, advancing regional goals, program support	Advancing regional development, supporting programs that enhance local economies	■
Barrier Barriers	Challenges to progress, constraints, entry points for growth	Overcoming obstacles, creating pathways to educational & economic opportunities	■ ■
Biased Bias	Decision-making patterns, perceptual influences, cognitive approaches	Promoting transparent decision-making, processes that reduce unintended influences	■
BIPOC, Black & Latinx	Diverse heritage groups, global ancestry communities	Communities with rich heritage contributing to economic & educational growth	■ ■ ■
Community Diversity	Regional influence, local economic development, varied community input	Regional influence, local economic development to highlight community-wide benefits	■
Community Equity	Proportional community benefits, balanced access, transparent outcomes	Establishing balance in resource distribution, promoting transparency, local solutions	■ ■ ■
Cultural Differences	Distinct community traditions, varied social practices, local heritage	Highlighting community traditions & local heritage, emphasizing context-aware practices	■ ■
Cultural Heritage	Traditions, historical contributions, regional legacy	Honoring historical contributions, supporting regional legacies	■ ■
Culturally Responsive	Contextually aware, adaptable strategies, tailored community approaches	Promoting community-tailored approaches, enhancing effectiveness	■
Disabilities	Varied abilities, unique requirements, accessibility needs	Supporting individuals' needs through accessible healthcare, education, employment	■ ■ ■
Discrimination	Unbalanced practices, selective challenges, inconsistency in access	Promoting transparency, ensuring balanced access	■ ■ ■
Backgrounds	Personal experiences, life histories, regional expertise	Building a skilled American workforce, leveraging individual & regional talent	■ ■ ■
Diverse Diversified	Broadening skill sets, enriching perspectives, enhancing community fabric	Expanding perspectives, introducing varied experiences, boosting economic readiness	■ ■ ■
Enhancing	Strengthening, building upon, advancing community initiatives	Reinforcing local infrastructure, boosting resilience	■ ■
Equal Opportunity	Accessible opportunities, merit-based inclusion, balanced access	Providing accessible pathways for broad community engagement	■ ■ ■
Equality	Transparent practices, proportional access, balanced community outcomes	Using proportionate impact, transparent practices in developing & allocating resources	■
Ethnicity	Cultural heritage, ancestral background, community affiliation	Regional heritage, community identity	■ ■
Excluded	Overlooked, under-recognized, limited participation	Enhancing reach, supporting regions with limited access	■
Gender	Demographic characteristic, social identity, individual role	Inclusion of all demographics, support for diverse talents & skills	■ ■ ■
Hate Speech	Negative discourse, unconstructive narratives, divisive communication	Facilitating healthy discourse, encouraging community dialogue	■ ■

TRIGGER	REPHRASE	REFRAME	PRIORITY
Inequalities Inequities	Imbalances, resource distribution, inconsistent access	Addressing imbalances through broader resource availability, balanced strategies	■ ■ ■
Marginalize	Limit engagement, reduce visibility, restrict community input	Extending engagement, enhancing community input	■ ■ ■
Multicultural	Varied cultural perspectives, cross-cultural, globally influenced	Cultural richness, community variety, engagement in community support networks	■
Social Justice	Ethical practices, transparent outcomes, balanced governance	Promoting ethical practices, ensuring transparency	■
Underrepresented	Limited presence, minimal engagement, fewer opportunities	Widening involvement, increasing visibility through targeted initiatives	■ ■ ■
Underserved	Not yet reached, under-supported, in need of community resources	Enhancing resource availability, improving access for communities	■ ■ ■
Victim	Impacted individual, person facing adversity, community member in need	Assisting those facing obstacles, providing resources for overcoming challenges	■ ■
Women	Participants of all demographics	Accessible opportunities in career & education pathways for all	■ ■ ■
Trump Admin Priorities ■ Educational & Inst Reform ■ Econ Growth & Workforce Dev ■ Healthcare & Social Services ■ Nat'l Security & Public Safety ■ Religious Freedom & Cultural Policies			

Final Notes

Our guidance, created in response to NSF's approach to complying with the Administration's mandates, is intended as a starting point – not a one-size-fits-all solution.

First, consider how these strategies may be adapted across a range of federal funding opportunities by taking into account to the target agency's mission, priorities, and program requirements.

Also, for many organizations, DEI is not just a strategy but a core part of their mission. We understand that reframing language in grant proposals may be uncomfortable or even contradictory to your individual and institutional values.

Each organization must make its own decisions about how to approach federal grant seeking authentically. Our goal is to provide tools that support informed, thoughtful decision-making.

References

- ¹ Blake, J., & Knott, K. (2025, Feb 03). How Trump's executive orders are disrupting academic research. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/science-research-policy/2025/02/03/how-trumps-executive-orders-are-disrupting>
- ² Novak, M. (2025, Feb 05). The List of Trump's Forbidden Words That Will Get Your Paper Flagged at NSF. Gizmodo. <https://gizmodo.com/the-list-of-trumps-forbidden-words-that-will-get-your-paper-flagged-at-nsf-2000559661>
- ³ Rustic, H. (2025, Feb 18). Banned and Trigger Words in Federal Grant Writing in the Trump Administration 2.0. <https://grantwritingandfunding.com/banned-and-trigger-words-in-federal-grant-writing-in-the-trump-administration-2-0/>
- ⁴ U.S. Government. (2025). Executive Orders by Donald Trump. Federal Register. Retrieved from <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/donald-trump/2025>.
- ⁵ Zheng, L. (2025, January 23). What Comes After DEI: How a new framework built around fairness, access, inclusion, and representation can succeed where DEI has failed. Harvard Business Review. <https://hbr.org/2025/01/what-comes-after-dei>



Jessica Venable, PhD
Partner, Thorn Run Partners
jvenable@thornrun.com, 240-930-2843

Jessica co-leads TRP's Grant Enterprise Growth Strategy Practice. In this role, she delivers a unique combination of solutions-focused consulting services to help clients identify and pursue multiple pathways to sustained success in the Federal funding marketplace, including: strategic planning, government relations, public relations, faculty development, partner engagement, Team Science, program design, and grant proposal development. Her client portfolio includes local governments, colleges, universities, academic medical and other health systems, community groups, professional associations, and for- and non-profit organizations. **Interested in learning about how Thorn Run Partners can help your organization? Contact us at <https://thornrun.com/contact/>.**



All 'bout Grants! What are they, how do you win them?

Rick Nader, UVI Vice President for Research

Sommer Sibilly-Brown, Loca Food & Farm Council & VI
Good Food Coalition

Carollyn Boykins-Winrow, TAP Fellow

Diana Collingwood, TAP Fellow

Agenda Highlights



01 WELCOME & OBJECTIVES

02 LOCAL FOOD & FARM COUNCIL

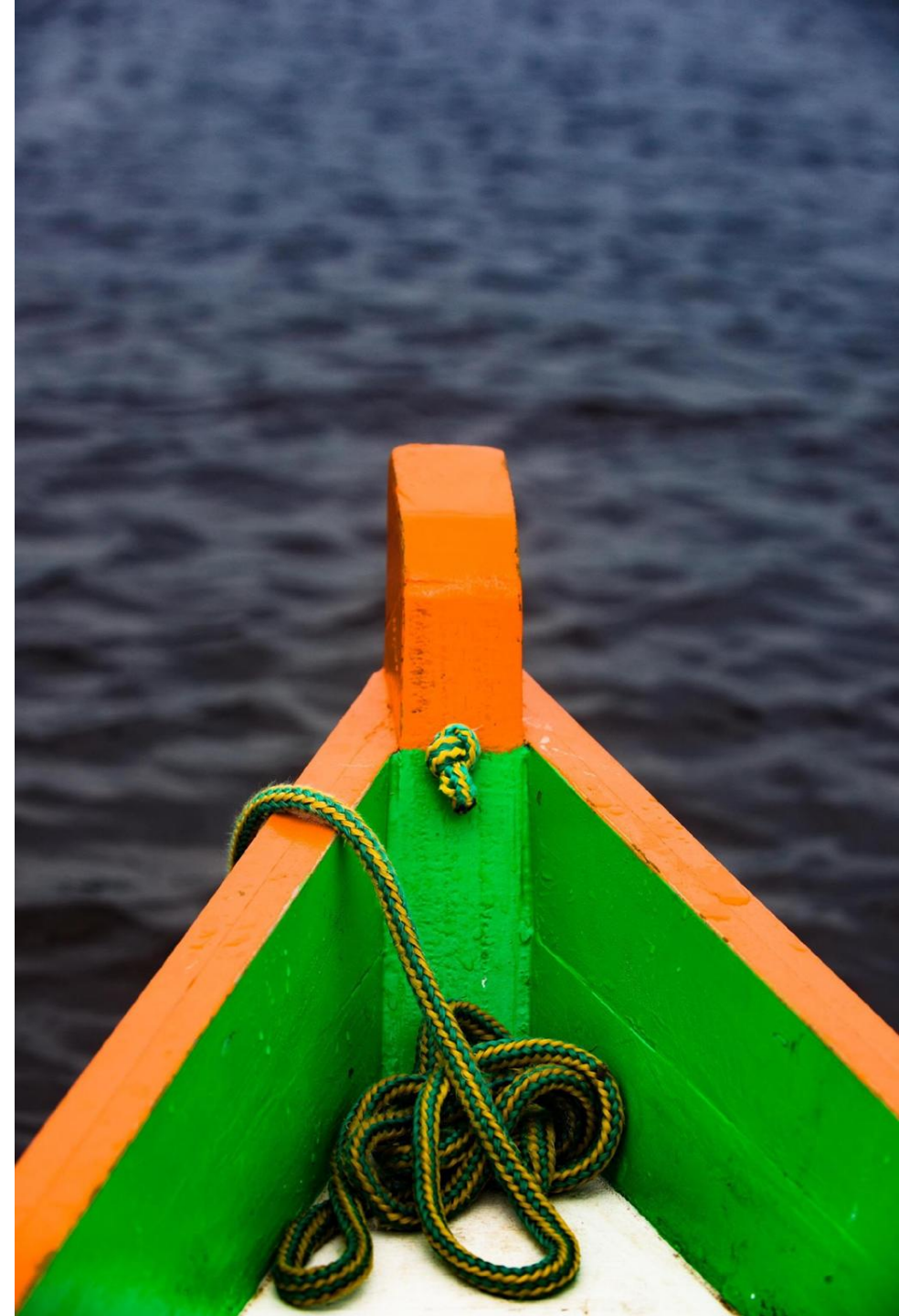
03 TERRITORIAL AGRICULTURE PLAN FELLOWS

04 GRANTS, GRANTS GRANTS!!

05 DR. NADER

Our Objectives

- **Advance Agricultural Goals:** Implement the Agricultural Plan to meet our community's needs.
- **Showcase Progress:** Highlight our achievements and key milestones from the past year.
- **Engagement:** Strengthen connections with farmers, fishers, and the wider community.
- **Transparency:** Communicate openly about our actions, funding, and decisions.
- **Deliver Impact:** Provide measurable benefits to the Territory through our initiatives.





Our 8 Mandates for Agricultural Success

1. Comprehensive Regulatory Framework
1. Business Models
1. Coordinator for Local Food and Farm Programs
1. Local Food and Farm Fund
1. Advisory Committee
1. Local Food Symbol
1. Education & Training
1. Data, Benchmark & Analysis

VIRGIN ISLANDS GOOD FOOD

Virgin Islands Good Food (VIGF) is a community-focused organization dedicated to creating a sustainable, equitable, and just food system in the U.S.

Virgin Islands. VIGF holds a unique role in the USVI community, working to bridge the gap between consumers, government, and private industry to facilitate long-term change and strengthen the USVI food system and the environment.



The 2021 Territorial Agricultural Plan(TAP)

Mandated by Act 8404

- Seeks To Increase Local Agricultural Productivity.
- Achieve Food Security And Sovereignty In The USVI.
- Focus On Developing Profitable, Sustainable, Community-based Food Systems.
- Aims To Strengthen Agricultural Enterprises by Expanding and Optimizing Operations.
- Organizes Industry Around The Following Business Models:
 - Traditional Small Private Businesses
 - Farming Cooperatives
 - Public-private Partnerships





Help Make the VI Agriculture Plan a Reality

*Engage and advocate for its
funding and implementation!*

Why is this important? It...



Reduces importation challenges. Disruption in importation impacts our very survival.



Creates a stronger, more diverse economy. Increasing food grown locally eliminates shipping costs, and supports our farmers and economy.



Improves nutrition and health. Fresh, unprocessed food provides the highest level of nutrition.



Addresses environmental issues. Packaging impacts landfills, land and sea. It pollutes our atmosphere — contributing to global warming.

**97% of the USVI food supply is imported.
We can do better!**



Created through extensive research and input from farmers, other stakeholders, experts, and YOU!

Scan the QR Code for Full VI Agriculture Plan.
Contact agplan@doa.vi.gov for more information.



Purpose

The TAP Fellows Program is a groundbreaking initiative that strengthens the Virgin Islands' food sovereignty pathway.

Two candidates were selected in this first (pilot) year from a competitive pool of applicants.

Together, they form a powerful team to transform how we develop local grantsmanship to address challenges facing the Virgin Islands' agriculture industry.



TAP Fellows' Roles

Grants, what are they?

- **Grants are:**
 - **Incentives** for public and private Non-Profit Organizations (NPO) to grow and improve in specific ways:
 - **Money** to carry out the values/charter and mission that match the funder's and the NPO's priorities
 - **Means** for the federal government to incentivize public goods/outcomes, or implement actions they cannot carry out directly

Grants ARE for short-term boosts to improve NPO's mission

Case Examples:

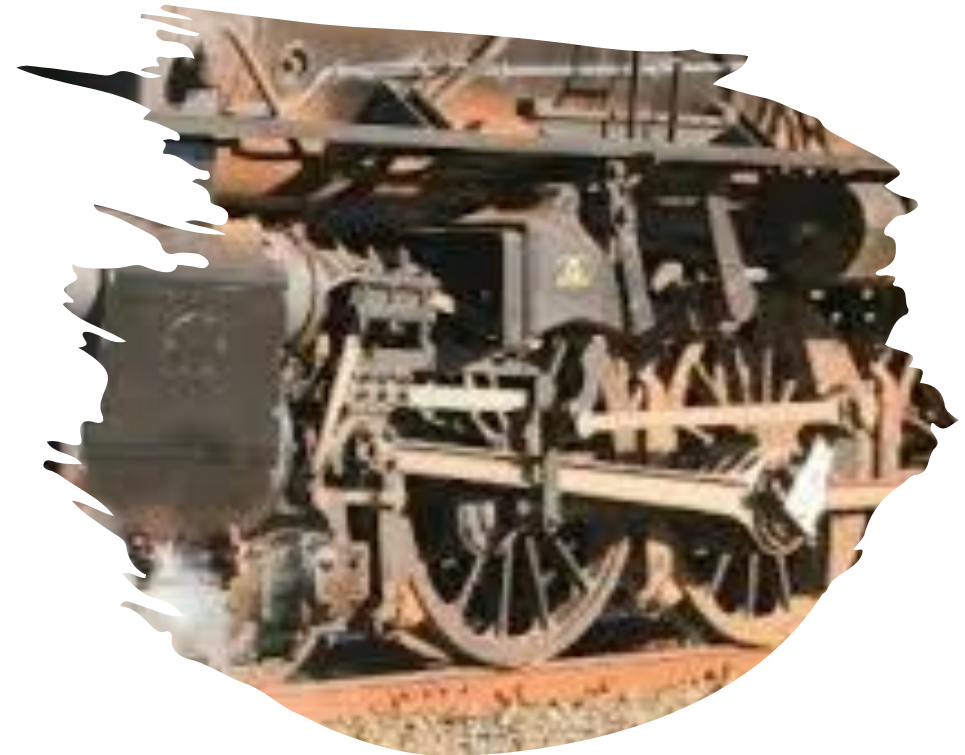


Grants, what they are NOT:

...NOT for long-term, operating funds

- **Contracts**, because contracts are more specific and clear about deliverables/expectations
- **Cooperative Agreements**, because these are partnerships where the funder jointly makes the decisions to implement proposed actions
- **Loans**, because you do not have to pay them back (but you will be held accountable for the outcomes)

Case examples:



Grants, where does the money come from?

Private vs. Public – Follow the \$\$\$ Trail



Grants, who wins them?

- **ELIGIBILITY:**
ORGANIZATIONAL/LEGAL STATUS
NPO, INDIVIDUAL
- **COMPETITIVENESS:**
IDEA - Is your Idea NEW/NOVEL?
NEED- Is your need compelling?
CAPABILITY/CAPACITY- If you get the money, can you do it?



Grants, Common Concerns

- It's **POLITICAL...**
- It's **WHO** you know...
- It's using the **RIGHT WORDS...**
- It's about **PERSISTENCE!**



Grants, Common Concerns

- **Matching**
 - Cash
 - In-kind
- **Indirect Costs**
- **Other topics?**



SEARCHING/FINDING Funding

Internet Search Engines

Artificial Intelligence (AI) ex. ChatGPT

Networking

Grants.gov

Local Awards

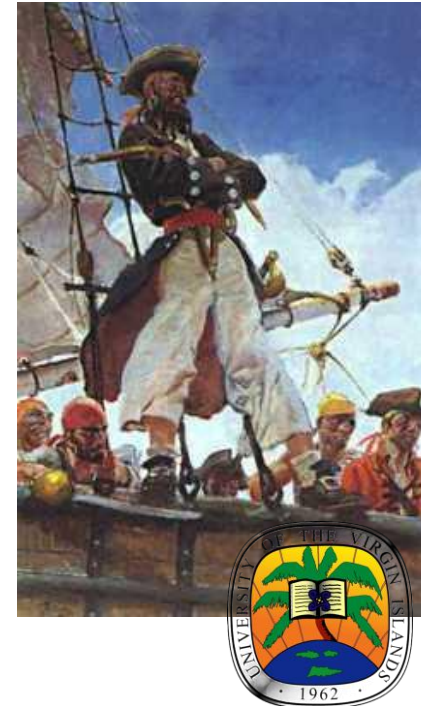
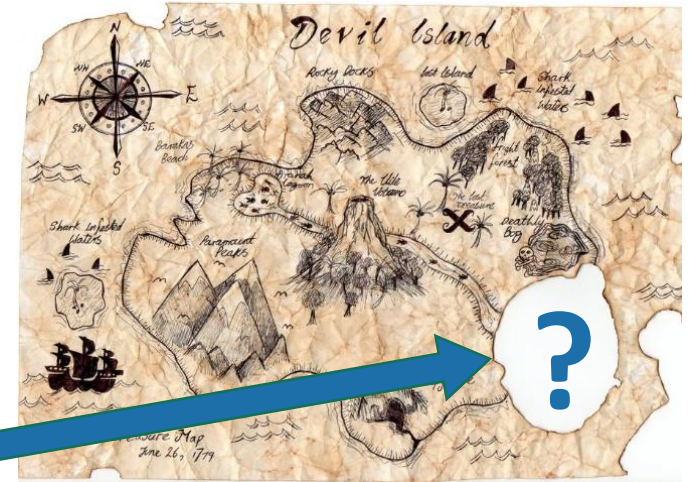
WORDS SELECTED ARE KEY!



REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

The Treasure Hunt!

- It's like a Treasure Map
 - Follow it closely
 - Clarify **uncertainties**
 - Talk to **PIRATES** (past winners) who found treasure!
- Beware of the "Musts."
 - **Must** meet the funder's priorities!
 - **Must** account for reviewers' perspectives
 - **Must** follow formatting guidelines in RFP (fonts, margins, forms/page limits, etc.)
- **Read the RFP closely no fewer than 10 times!**



Evaluate Whether Your Idea Is...

INNOVATIVE?

REALISTIC?

SUSTAINABLE?



Proposal Auditor's Question 1:

Is your proposal...**INNOVATIVE?**

Does your proposal...

- Advance a Novel CONCEPT?
- Describe a Novel PROCESS?
- Address a Knowledge GAP?
 - Creative, Original...
- Describe A Unique (Timely) Opportunity?
- Transformative, Transformational, Convergent?
- Adds Value To An Existing Initiative?



Yes or no? Why or why not?



Proposal Auditor's Question 2:

Is your proposal...**REALISTIC?**

Does your proposal...

- Have the right [capable] people, expertise, partners?
- Reflect appropriate commitments from all partners?
- Show institutional support, capabilities?
- Propose a *doable* set of activities? i.e., don't try to do too much!
- Inspire confidence that if funded, you not only can carry out the project, but also sustain and grow it.
- Demonstrate appropriate dissemination, outcomes and impacts?

Yes or no? Why or why not?



Proposal Auditor's Question 3:

“Love is old,
Love is new,
Love is all,
Love is you.”

-The Beatles

Is your proposal...**SUSTAINABLE?**

Must have “I” AND “R” + ??

Yes or no? Why or why not?

Does your proposal...

- Have a **believable** plan for continuation, forecasting 2-5 years beyond the award period?
- Give examples of past success in sustaining a grant project or exchange?
- Have a letter(s) of support committing future resources?

WARNING: Don't overpromise!





**FINALLY,
ALWAYS
FOLLOW
THE GOLDEN
RULE!!!**



Thank you!





NEXT WORKSHOP! IS 'BOUT WRITING

- NEED STATEMENT
- BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION
- GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
- STRATEGY/APPROACH
- EVALUATION
- SUSTAINABILITY



EASTERN CARIBBEAN CENTER QUARTERLY REPORT FOR JULY 2026

In partnership with the Virgin Islands Department of Agriculture and Local Food and Farm Council, the ECC develops and implements a systematic evaluation framework to ensure consistent, high-quality data collection. During non-census years, the survey uses purposeful sampling to gather information from active producers and maintain continuity with previous cycles. While this method does not capture every agricultural operation, it offers a practical and cost-effective way to track trends, identify emerging issues, and evaluate changes in production, marketing, and agricultural practices each year.

During FY 2025–2026, ECC continued to advance **Mandate No. 8 of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan** through the design and implementation of territory-wide agricultural data collection activities. Major accomplishments included:

- Successfully conducted telephone and field data collection to support implementation of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan.
- Coordinated agricultural data collection activities during the **St. Croix Agricultural Fair** and **St. Thomas Afternoon on the Green**, expanding outreach to farmers, vendors, and the public.
- Managed project planning, survey operations, interviewer training, quality assurance, data management, and preliminary analyses.
- Partnered with the Cooperative Extension Service to strengthen stakeholder engagement and improve survey coverage across the Territory.
- Continued developing a comprehensive agricultural data system to support evidence-based planning, policy development, and future evaluation of Agricultural Plan implementation.

The FY 2026 budget request for ECC remains **\$150,000**, consistent with the Council's previous budget request, and will support continued data collection, analysis, reporting, and monitoring activities necessary to measure progress toward the goals of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. As reflected in the Council's FY 2026 budget request, the Eastern Caribbean Center's requested appropriation is **\$150,000** under the University of the Virgin Islands to support **Mandate No. 8** of the Agricultural Plan.

1. Introduction

1.1. Charge to the Eastern Caribbean

For the third consecutive year, the Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) is responsible for conducting the annual agricultural survey across the U.S. Virgin Islands. This survey is a key tool for monitoring agricultural activity, assessing business trends, and measuring progress toward the goals in the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. Given

the impact of economic conditions, weather events, and evolving production practices on local agriculture, collecting reliable annual data is essential to identify both progress and ongoing challenges.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Methods of Data Collection

The Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) at the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) was responsible for collecting data from home gardeners, community farmers, commercial farmers, and fishers throughout the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John districts. The primary objective was to obtain reliable, consistent information that could be used to monitor agricultural activity and evaluate progress toward the goals of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan. Collecting data from these diverse groups required methods that balanced scientific rigor with the practical realities of conducting field research across multiple islands and production systems.

The survey instruments were developed collaboratively by subject matter experts representing the University's Cooperative Extension Service, the Eastern Caribbean Center, and the Virgin Islands Department of Planning and Natural Resources. The development team included the Associate Director of Cooperative Extension Services at the Albert A. Sheen Campus, the Acting Assistant Director of Cooperative Extension Services at the Orville E. Kean Campus, the Bureau Chief of Fisheries, and the ECC Statistician. Drawing on their collective expertise in agriculture, fisheries, extension education, and survey methodology, the team identified the information needed to address the study's objectives and to ensure continuity with data collected in previous years. The collaborative design process also helped ensure that the questionnaires reflected current agricultural conditions while maintaining consistency with earlier survey cycles, allowing meaningful comparisons over time.

2.1a Home Gardening and Community Survey

Data for the Home and Community Garden Survey were collected using a probability sampling approach during two of the Territory's largest public events that attract residents with an interest in agriculture and local food production. Surveys were administered on February 15, 2026, at the Agriculture and Food Fair on St. Croix and on March 15, 2026, during Afternoon on the Green on St. Thomas.

A cluster sampling design was used to efficiently reach home gardeners attending these events. This approach offered an effective balance between representativeness and logistical feasibility by concentrating data collection where large numbers of potential respondents were already gathered. While sampling at public events may not capture every type of home gardener, particularly those who do not attend community activities, these events attract a broad cross-section of individuals actively involved in gardening across the Territory. As a result, the approach provides a practical and cost-effective means of collecting high-quality data while

producing findings that are informative for understanding home gardening practices in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The use of the same events and comparable sampling procedures across survey years also strengthens the study's ability to monitor changes in gardening practices, production, and household food use over time. Maintaining methodological consistency enhances the comparability of annual findings and supports the development of a reliable longitudinal dataset for agricultural planning and policy evaluation.

Table 2.1a. Farmer Type by Year

Response	USVI	2024	2025	Percent Change
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	
Home Gardener	63.5	57.2	70.1	22.6
Community Farmer	1.6	2.3	0.8	-65.2
Licensed Farmer	3.2	2.7	3.7	37.0
I do not farm/garden/ harvest	31.3	37.0	25.4	-31.4
Other	0.2	0.8	0.0	-100.0
Total Responses	501	257	244	

Note: Positive numbers in the percent change column represent an increase.

Percent Change is calculated by this formula $(\text{year}_2 - \text{year}_1) / \text{year}_1$

Overall, the results indicate that the 2025 survey achieved stronger representation of individuals actively engaged in agriculture than the 2024 survey. The proportion of home gardeners increased by 22.6%, rising from 57.2% to 70.1%, indicating that home gardeners became an even larger share of the survey population. In contrast, the proportion of respondents who did not farm or garden decreased by 31.4%, falling from 37.0% to 25.4%, suggesting that the survey was more effective in reaching its target population. Licensed farmers increased by 37.0%, from 2.7% to 3.7%, although they continued to represent a relatively small proportion of respondents. Conversely, community farmers declined by 65.2%, from 2.3% to 0.8%, indicating considerably lower representation in 2025. While these percentage changes should be interpreted cautiously because of the small number of respondents in some categories, the overall pattern demonstrates that the 2025 survey provided stronger coverage of active agricultural producers, particularly home gardeners, thereby improving the survey's ability to assess gardening and farming activities across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Table 2.1 **Representativeness of the Sample**

Demographics	Census 2020 (Ages 20-74)	Respondents to Survey (in percent)	Difference
Sex			
Male	48.3	42.4	-5.9
Female	51.7	56.3	4.6
Age			
24 years and under	6.9	11.5	4.6
25 to 34 years	15.3	6.6	-8.7
35-44 years	16.9	11.5	-5.4
45 to 54 years	20.4	24.2	3.8
55-64 years	22.4	25.8	3.4
65 years and over	18.2	20.5	2.3
Ethnicity			
Black/ African American	71.4	92.2	20.8
White	13.3	4.5	-8.8
French Caribbean		0.0	-
Asian	1.0	0.4	-0.6
American/Alaska Native		0.0	-
Other	6.3	2.9	-3.4

The comparison between the survey sample and the 2020 Census population indicates that the sample was generally representative of the target population, although several demographic differences were evident. Women accounted for 56.3% of survey respondents compared with 51.7% of the census population, while men represented 42.4% of the sample versus 48.3% of the population. Older adults were also more heavily represented, with individuals aged 55 to 64 years comprising 25.8% of the sample compared with 22.4% of the census population. In contrast, adults aged 25 to 44 years were underrepresented, whereas respondents aged 24 years and younger made up 11.5% of the sample compared with 6.9% of the population. The largest difference was observed in ethnicity. Black or African American respondents comprised 92.2% of the survey sample, substantially higher than their 71.4% representation in the census, while White respondents accounted for only 4.5% of the sample compared with 13.3% of the population. These patterns suggest that the survey was particularly successful in reaching the demographic groups most actively engaged in home gardening within the study area. Although these demographic differences should be considered when interpreting subgroup analyses and generalizing the findings to the broader population, the sample provides a robust basis for examining home gardening practices and their associated outcomes among the primary population of interest.

Fig 2a. Percent of Field Crops Consumed Locally

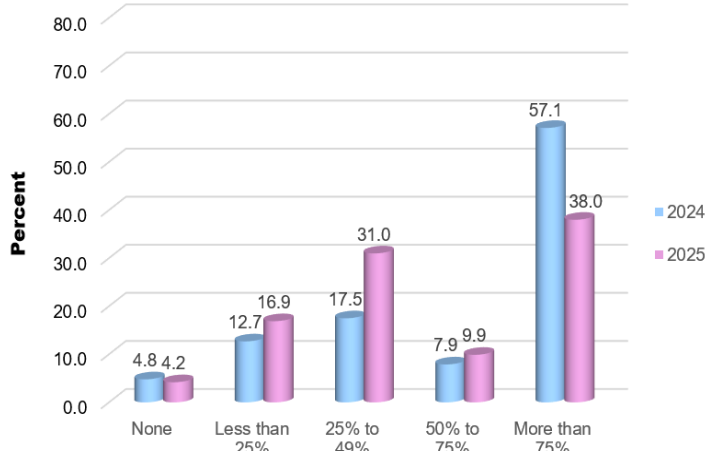


Fig 2b. Percent of Vegetables Consumed Locally

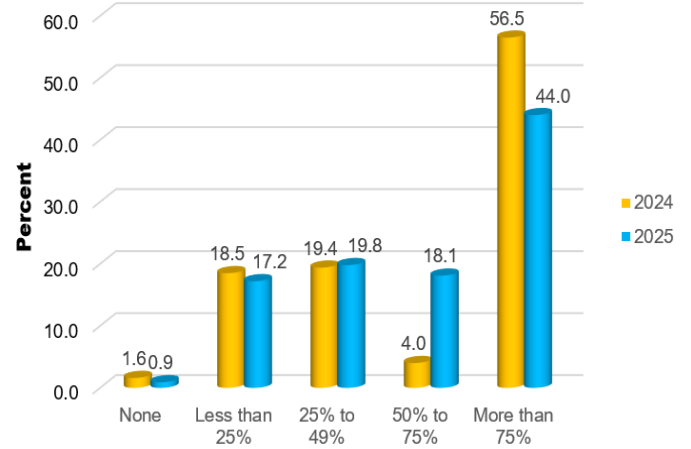


Fig 2c. Percent of Fruits Consumed Locally

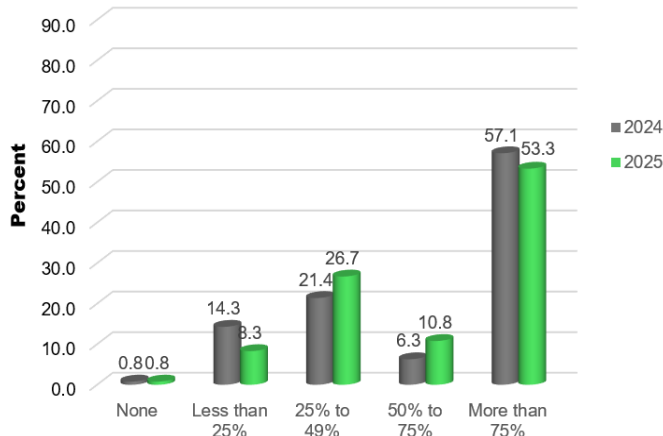
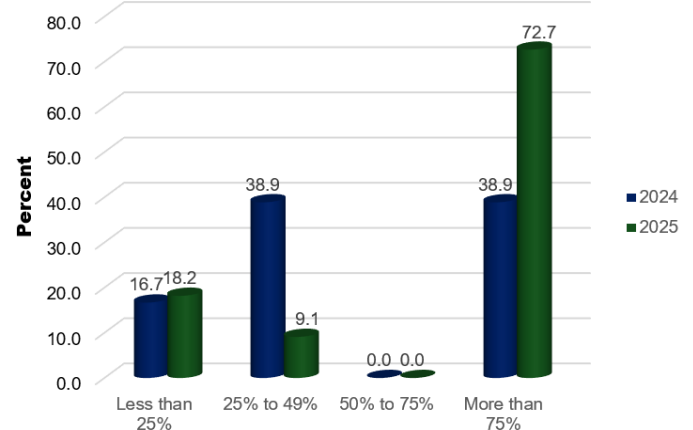


Fig 2d. Percent of Livestock/Eggs Consumed Locally



Overall, the findings indicate that home gardeners continued to consume most of their produce within their own households, highlighting the important role of home gardening in supporting household food security and self-sufficiency. Across all commodity groups, more than half of respondents reported consuming at least half of their harvest locally, with the highest levels observed for fruits and livestock products. While the proportion of respondents consuming more than 75% of their field crops and vegetables locally declined slightly between 2024 and 2025, these decreases were accompanied by increases in the moderate consumption categories,

suggesting a shift in consumption patterns rather than a reduction in the use of home-grown food. In contrast, local consumption of livestock products increased substantially, indicating greater reliance on home-produced eggs and meat. Collectively, these results demonstrate that home gardens remain a significant source of food for participating in households and continue to contribute to dietary needs, food resilience, and reduced dependence on externally purchased food.

2.2 Farmers and Fishermen Survey

The standard method in the conduct of a probability or representative sample among households was considered to be beyond the resources available to the survey planners. Given the relatively small number of bona fide farmers and fishermen throughout the Territory, it was methodologically appropriate to select a probability sample size that was smaller than these population. The study design utilized computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) procedure. The ECC CATI leverages an established centralized telephone facility at UVI to facilitate immediate data capture within the interviewing process. All data collected through CATI can be immediately reviewed and securely transferred to protect participant information and confidentiality.

The Eastern Caribbean Center (ECC) conducted telephone interviews among 339 commercial farmers, and 51 commercial fishermen and 8 participants that are both commercial fishermen and farmers in the US Virgin Islands who fit the following criteria: licensed farmer or fishermen in the year of 2024-2025, currently growing crops, fruits or vegetables, raising livestock/poultry or fishing. The interviewing process started May 8 and concluded May 28, 2026

Administrative Data Availability from Department of Agriculture

The preparation of this progress report was delayed because the administrative data required by the Department of Agriculture was delayed. These records are essential to the analysis, as they provide the information needed to assess program implementation, validate survey findings, and measure progress against established objectives.

At the time this report was prepared, the Department was still entering and organizing the requested administrative records. Because this compilation was ongoing, the available information was insufficient to support a comprehensive analysis. Rather than relying on incomplete records that could lead to inaccurate or misleading findings, the report is limited to data that could be verified during the reporting period.

The Department has indicated that data entry is expected to be completed within the coming weeks. Once the full administrative dataset becomes available, it will be incorporated into the analysis to provide a more complete assessment of program activities and outcomes. Any resulting updates or revisions will be reflected in the subsequent reporting cycle.

30+ years farming



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Derick Hodge

Staff of Life · St. Thomas

Orchard fruit & vegetables

MEET THE FARMER 3 OF 5

Grow healthy food sustainably and open the farm to the community.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Labor — land prep, trenching and drainage all done by hand.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



Mini excavator · attachments · training · soil work

\$50,000 · Tier 2

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES



75% projected increase in output



70% less manual labor · room for agritourism



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Healthy soils — land that stays productive for decades.**PANEL PROMPT** *What can you do now that you couldn't do by hand?*

25 years · 2nd generation



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Roniel Allembert

VI Honey Man · St. Croix

Honey, plantains, cucumbers, tomatoes · 350 hives

MEET THE FARMER 4 OF 5

Protect the territory's pollinators and grow more local food.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Termites — destroying wooden hives (180 lost) · no tractor.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



200 termite-proof hives · tractor · computers

\$54,616 · Tier 2

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- ↑ 200 termite-proof hives (~30-yr life)
- ↑ 2 acres cleared · 350 colonies protected



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Pollination — healthy bees pollinate farms across the island.



PANEL PROMPT *What do healthy hives mean for other farmers?*

Farming since 2015



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Trevor Warner

Pleasant Valley Farm · St. Croix

Bananas, plantains, pineapple, fruit, veg & honey

MEET THE FARMER 5 OF 5

Make locally grown, chemical-free food the community's first choice.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Wildlife & water — crop loss to deer, irrigation gaps, no tractor.

2

PPPIF INVESTED

\$57,000 · Tier 2



Tractor + implements · irrigation · plastic hives · fencing

3

WHAT CHANGED

REPORTED OUTCOMES

- ✓ Tractor, irrigation & fencing installed
- ✓ Vegetable & honey production up · hired two workers

Reported in 2025 legislative testimony



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Food production — more local food and more local jobs.



PANEL PROMPT You've grown output and hired staff — what's the next investment?



Looking Back. Looking Ahead.

A conversation with five Virgin Islands farmers.

1

What changed first after the investment?

2

What surprised you?

3

What would you do differently?

4

What advice would you give another farmer?

5

What should policymakers know?

6

If another investment came tomorrow, what would you prioritize?



Every investment tells a story.

One farmer. One family. One business. One community.

Together, a stronger Virgin Islands food system.

\$500,567

Invested

12

Awardees

106

Applications

3

Islands

1

Shared Future

Invest in a farmer. Strengthen the Virgin Islands.

Every farm has a moment.

A moment where the future depends on one investment.

One season. One piece of equipment. One opportunity.

When farmers succeed, our islands become stronger.

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS LOCAL FOOD AND FARM COUNCIL



Growing Impact

Investing in Farmers. Strengthening Communities.

Five farmers. One shared future.

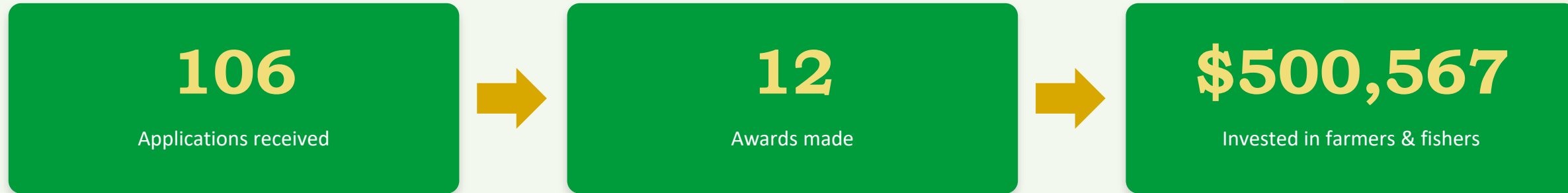




THE FUND

One fund. A territory of opportunity.

The Public–Private Partnership Investment Fund — created through the Virgin Islands Agricultural Plan and funded by Act No. 8700.



REPORTED 2025 follow-up visits found 80% of awardees increased production capacity.

So — what happens when we invest in Virgin Islands farmers?

Meet five of the twelve.

Farming since 2020



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Eric Ahrens

Mycelium Man · St. Croix

Fresh gourmet mushrooms + organic compost

MEET THE FARMER 1 OF 5

Give the islands a fresh, local, high-protein food — and turn waste into compost for other farmers.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Equipment bottleneck — production capped at 30–40 lbs a week.

2

PPPIF INVESTED

\$25,000 · Tier 1



Processing · cold storage · second grow room · solar power

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES



4× targeted weekly production capacity



Goal of 150 lbs/week · \$0 power via solar



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Local protein production — more homegrown protein for island tables.



PANEL PROMPT *What changed first once the new equipment arrived?*

Farming since 2015



ADD FARMER PHOTO

Leonardo Perez

Bordeaux Botanica · St. John

Microgreens, rare fruit, spices, nuts, honey

MEET THE FARMER 2 OF 5

Build a regenerative food forest that teaches the community climate-smart farming.

1

THE CHALLENGE

Water — steep land, heavy runoff and drought vulnerability.

2

PPPIF INVESTED



Mini excavator · Keyline water earthworks · soil & planting

\$42,500 · Tier 1

3

WHAT CHANGED

PROJECTED OUTCOMES



20–30% projected productivity gain



0.5-acre food forest · less hauled-in water



WHY THIS MATTERS FOR THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

Climate resilience — farms that endure drought and storms.



PANEL PROMPT *How does managing water change what you can grow?*