



**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**GARY MOLLOY  
COMMISSIONER**

**March 7, 2025**

Good morning, Honorable Senator Kurt Vialet, Chairman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, Honorable Members of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, distinguished Senators of the 36<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and listening and viewing audiences. I am Gary Molloy, Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL).

I am here today with Assistant Commissioner Jean Forde, Director of Workforce Development Services Charlene Hodge, Director of Youth and Apprenticeship Shenika Sebastien, Assistant Director of Workforce Development Services Deitra Powell, and Territorial Youth and Apprenticeship Coordinator Kimberly Nelson. Thank you for inviting us to provide a status update of workforce development programs that align with key industries, the distribution of local and federal funds allocated for workforce development, an update on Youth & Apprenticeship programs, the status of the Summer Youth Work Experience Program, and the Youth team impact in the Territory.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

The Virgin Islands State Workforce Development Board (VISWDB) determines policy and identifies the target industries in the Virgin Islands. VIDOL builds the territory's pipeline through Workforce Development programs that focus on those identified target industries funded through a combination of local and federal funds. The local funds are used only for Youth Services, which we will describe later in the testimony.

The current Workforce Development programs are under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). These programs serve the Adult and Dislocated Workers. The Dislocated Worker program focuses on promptly reintegrating displaced workers into the job market when they have faced mass layoff or shifts in economic sectors.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 reinforced the role of state and local workforce boards in workforce development and stressed the importance of cooperation among stakeholders in the workforce development system. The Workforce Development system encompasses the U.S. Virgin Islands American Job Center (AJC), which includes the One-Stop Operator, Equus Workforce Solutions (Equus), contracted by the Workforce Development Board and housed in the VIDOL offices on St. Croix and St. Thomas with two specific responsibilities. First is to manage the WIOA Program funding for the Adult and Dislocated Workers and second is to coordinate the activities of the other partners within the AJC to create the One Stop process for our WIOA eligible customers. As a result, when customers visit the VIDOL office, they will initially interact with a staff member in Employment Services (ES) of VIDOL. After further assessment and determining their individual need, the customer will then either remain in Employment Services or be referred to WIOA Youth, Adult and/or Dislocated Worker Program, if more staff-intensive services are required.

*Key Industries*

The demand industries identified by the Workforce Development Board include the following:

- Administrative and Support Services
- Allied Health
- Architecture and Construction Trades
- Information Technology
- Leisure and Hospitality
- Retail
- Transportation and Logistics
- Engineering and Mathematics
- Agribusiness
- Health Sciences
- Renewable Energy and Maritime Industry

The U.S. Virgin Islands AJC partners include the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL), the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE), the Virgin Islands Department of Human Services (VIDHS), the Virgin Islands Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Virgin Islands Department of Veteran’s Affairs, and Equus. Our other partners are the Virgin Islands State Workforce Development Board (VISWDB), Bureau of Corrections, Board of Education, the Virgin Islands State Apprenticeship Council (VISAC), ICF, and Workforce180.

*Status of Workforce Development Programs that align with key industries (construction, technology, healthcare)*

The following chart shows the funding source, appropriation, and the total number of job seekers and employers served, for the Adult and Dislocated Workers programs. The numbers for 2024-2025 are subject to change as the year is still in progress.

<b>ADULT/DISLOCATED WORKERS</b>						
<b>2022-2023</b> <small>(7/1/22 - 6/30/24)</small>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>Number Served</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
			<b>Job Seeker</b>	<b>Employer</b>		
<b>Federal</b>	WP (Wagner Peyser)	\$ 1,073,783	1089	582	<b>1671</b>	connections between job seekers and employers seeking qualified individuals for employment
	WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) - Adult/Dislocated	\$ 1,418,509	558	N/A	<b>558</b>	Career Services (Basic and Individual Service)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 2,492,292</b>	<b>1647</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>2229</b>	
<b>2024-2025</b> <small>(7/1/24 - 6/30/26)</small>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>Number Served</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
			<b>Job Seeker</b>	<b>Employer</b>		
<b>Federal</b>	WP (Wagner Peyser)	\$ 1,201,098	524	323	<b>847</b>	connections between job seekers and employers seeking qualified individuals for employment
	WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) - Adult/Dislocated	\$ 1,311,287	312	N/A	<b>312</b>	Career Services (Basic and Individual Service)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 2,512,385</b>	<b>836</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>1159</b>	

The record of Workforce Development services that align with key industries (construction, technology, and healthcare) in VIEWS includes the following:

- Number of individuals enrolled in training programs- 118
- Number of individuals certified- 20
- Number of individuals in process of studying- 51
- Number of individuals currently employed in the field- 32

Additionally, a “Grow with Google: program provided the public with free training in specialized programs, including, Data Analytics, digital Marketing E-commerce, IT Support, Project Management, Cybersecurity, etc. Once enrolled, participants could select more than one class. The program yielded the following statistics:

- 85 live learners
- 71 learners enrolled
- 16 completers (earned certificate)

The graph below describes the performance measures for several areas regarding the WIOA program. These measures are separated by the target demographic: Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programming. Program Year 2023 covers July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024 and Program Year 2024 Q2 includes July 1, 2024-December 31, 2024.

### Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Performance

PERFORMANCE MEASURE	PY 2023	PY 2024 Q2
Adult Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	67.0%	64.2%
Adult Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	70.9%	65.5%
Adult Credential Attainment	63.0%	54.4%
Adult Measurable Skill Gains	88.5%	91.5%
DW Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	44.4%	60.0%
DW Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	77.4%	77.8%
DW Credential Attainment	87.5%	72.7%

DW Measurable Skill Gains	100.0%	92.9%
Youth Entered Employment (2nd Qtr)	66.1%	71.0%
Youth Entered Employment (4th Qtr)	61.0%	57.6%
Youth Credential Attainment	42.1%	54.5%
Youth Measurable Skill Gains	65.4%	87.2%

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES FOR YOUTH**

*Update on the Youth and Apprenticeship Program, including participating service providers and individuals served*

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

The division offers various programs, such as Occupational Skills Training, the Work, Learn and Earn Program (17–24-year-olds), the Summer Youth Work Experience Program (14–25-year-olds), the Labor Investing for Tomorrow (LIFT) Internship Program, and the Jobs for America’s Graduates Virgin Islands program (JAG-VI), in collaboration with the Virgin Islands Department of Education.

Through a significant, but final, investment of \$385,956.64 from Virgin Islands Casino Control Commission to VIDOL, the JAG-VI program was expanded, enabling continued support for on-the-job training (OJT) stipends, uniforms, and participation in annual national training and conferences. This funding allowed over 100 12th-grade students to receive stipends for their required OJT hours. This year, the JAG-VI program extended its reach by including 9th and 10th graders, resulting in an 81% increase in enrolment, bringing the total to 329 students. Among the 12th-grade students, 140 successfully completed the JAG Model and graduated in May 2024, representing an impressive 98.59% graduation rate for the senior class. The performance is based on students that graduated in 2024. VIDOL will not be able to present the completed performance until the end of the 2024-2025 academic year with high school graduation in May 2025.

JAG-VI’s success was further recognized with the prestigious **6-of-6 National Network Award**, awarded for exceeding all six national performance metrics focused on graduation and employment. Notably, 90% of the Class of 2023-2024 achieved successful outcomes during the 12-month follow-up phase, either securing employment or pursuing further education.

As of March 2025, we have upheld our dedication to the JAG-VI program by placing 265 12<sup>th</sup> graders on per diem to ensure they stipends for their required on-the-job training hours. These students commenced their ten weeks training experience in January across various sectors, both public and private. As we remain committed to supporting the development of Virgin Islands youth, this year we have committed to providing stipends to forty (40) 12th graders engaged in the OJT segment of the NAF Academy. Annually, the Youth Team serves over seven hundred (700) youth by leveraging both federal and local funding, with the number of participants determined by the availability of funds.

*Status and of the Summer Youth Work Experience Program*

The Summer Youth Work Experience programs target different segments of the population, including current high school students, out-of-school youth, current college students, graduate students, and recent graduates. LIFT participants must be college juniors, seniors, or recent graduates with 60 credits or more, a GPA of 2.8 or better on a 4.0 scale, and between the ages of 18-25.

As of February 26, 2025, VIDOL has received a total of 548 online applications for the Summer Youth Work Experience Program. The breakdown by program and by island is described in the chart below.

	STX	STT	STJ	TOTAL
5 weeks paid work experience (16-25)	271	140	2	413
Career Exploration Program (14-15)	82	38	1	121
LIFT Internship *Only 30 are eligible*	11	3	0	14
<b>TOTAL APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>548</b>

*Youth Team impact: Number of youths served, completed academic/career assessments, and service referrals*

The following chart displays the funding source, appropriation, number of youth participants served, and purpose for local and federal funds in 2024.

<b>YOUTH</b>				
<b>2024</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b># of Participants Served</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Local</b>	SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program)	\$ 576,955	381	Summer and year-round work-based learning opportunities.
	At-Risk (DOL COMMLABOR)	\$ 385,956	136	Summer and year-round work-based learning opportunities.
	YT (Youth Transition)	\$ 320,278	170	Summer and year-round work-based learning opportunities.
	<b>YE (Youth Employment)</b>	<b>\$ 190,982</b>		<b>Support staff (2) salary</b>
	<b>Apprentice Training</b>	<b>\$ 201,053</b>		<b>Support staff (2.5) salary</b>
<b>Federal</b>	WIOA FY2023	\$ 580,671	143	Assessments/work-based learning/occupational skills training   support services (transportation & childcare support  support staff (4.5) salary
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$ 2,255,895</b>	<b>830</b>	

The following chart displays the funding source, appropriation, number of youth participants served, and purpose for local and federal funds in 2025. These numbers are projected and subject to change, as the year is still in progress.

<b>2025</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b># of Participants Served*</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Local</b>	SYEP (Summer Youth Employment Program)	\$ 876,922	503	Summer and year-round work-based learning opportunities.
	YT (Youth Transition)	\$ 320,278	170	Summer and year-round work-based learning opportunities.
	<b>YE (Youth Employment)</b>	<b>\$ 190,982</b>		<b>Support staff (2) salary</b>
	<b>Apprentice Training</b>	<b>\$ 201,053</b>		<b>Support staff (2.5) salary</b>
<b>Federal</b>	WIOA FY2024	\$530,803	131	Assessments/work-based learning/occupational skills training   support services (transportation & childcare support  support staff (4.5) salary
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$2,120,038</b>	<b>804</b>	

\*Numbers are projected for 2025

The following chart displays financial information for Apprenticeship in 2025 regarding Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), on-the-job training, and customized job training.

<b>APPRENTICESHIP</b>				
<b>2025</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Appropriation</b>	<b># of Participants Served</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<b>Local</b>	JPTA Administration	\$720,000	90	Individual Training Accounts (ITAs); on-the-job training; customized job training

## **BUILDING THE USVI TALENT PIPELINE: A STEP-BY-STEP ANALYSIS**

The USVI Talent Pipeline is a structured approach designed to develop a skilled workforce that meets the needs of key industries in the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI). By guiding students from

early education through training and employment, this initiative directly supports Governor Bryan’s Workforce Development Initiative and involves collaboration among employers, educators, and mentors, ensuring that students gain the necessary skills and experience to thrive in the workforce.

Employers play a crucial role in this talent pipeline by providing opportunities for learning, training, and hiring. Their involvement ensures that workforce development remains aligned with industry demands. Businesses benefit from a pipeline of qualified, work-ready candidates, while students gain practical experience and career exposure.

The talent pipeline follows a structured five-stage process that takes students from career awareness to full-time employment in high-demand fields. The first stage, Inform, introduces students to different career possibilities through interactive learning experiences. At this stage, industry professionals visit schools to discuss their careers and the skills required. Class presentations provide insights into various industries, helping students understand career pathways and job responsibilities.

The second stage, Attract, engages students in career exploration by providing direct interaction with professionals. Through site visits, students tour workplaces to observe professionals in action and gain real-world exposure. They also receive mentorship from industry professionals, either in a group setting as part of class mentorship or through individual mentorship, where a professional provides personalized support as the student explores career options.

At the Acquaint stage, students transition into hands-on industry experience, allowing them to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. Job shadowing provides an opportunity for students to observe professionals in their daily work environment. Internships offer short-term work experiences with hands-on training, while temporary work experiences help students develop skills and workplace familiarity. Summer employment provides additional paid or unpaid work-based learning opportunities, and pre-apprenticeships serve as early training programs that prepare students for full apprenticeships in high-demand industries.

Once students have identified their career interests, they move into the Train stage, where they receive formal education and skill-building programs. Occupational classroom training focuses on industry-specific coursework that aligns with real-world job requirements. On-the-job training (OJT) allows students to learn while working under industry professionals, while customized training ensures that their education remains job-relevant.

The final stage, Hire, ensures that trained students transition into the workforce seamlessly. Equipped with skills and experience, they move into full-time employment in high-demand industries, contributing to economic growth in the USVI.

This initiative is designed to prepare students from elementary school to post-secondary education for careers in key industries that are vital to the USVI economy. The talent pipeline supports students at all education levels, ensuring a smooth transition from learning to employment. Students in elementary and middle school (K-8) are introduced to various career options and industry opportunities, allowing them to explore careers and develop early interests. In high school



(grades 9-12), students begin researching specific jobs and narrowing down career choices based on personal interests and market trends. Their education and training become more focused on career pathways, and they earn credentials and certifications that enhance their employability. For students in post-secondary education or those entering the workforce (12+), networking becomes essential as they connect with professionals, employers, and mentors to expand job opportunities.

Students are the foundation of the talent pipeline, and this structured approach ensures they receive early exposure, practical experience, and job-specific training to become workforce-ready. The framework supports a seamless progression from education to employment, ensuring that graduates are prepared for sustainable, high-demand careers.

By following the five-stage process of Inform, Attract, Acquaint, Train, and Hire, the pipeline ensures that employers have access to skilled workers while students gain the experience and education necessary for career success. This initiative not only supports Governor Bryan’s Workforce Development Initiative but also strengthens the overall economic resilience of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (RAP)**

Registered Apprenticeships operate as a work-based learning model, combining supervised on-the-job training with job-related education, while apprentices earn a progressively increasing wage. Designed for long-term employment, these programs serve as proven training strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining top-tier talent, with a history spanning decades across various industries.

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

Functioning as a State Apprenticeship Agency, VIDOL contributes to program development by registering those that meet Federal and State standards. VIDOL also actively promotes the creation of new programs through marketing and technical assistance, provides ongoing support to sponsors throughout the program lifecycle, and ensures that all programs maintain high-quality training standards. The most recently approved Apprenticeship programs include the Line Maintainer program sponsored by the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority and the K-12 Teacher program sponsored by the Virgin Islands Department of Education. As of January 2025, 14 apprentices are approaching the completion of their programs with 85% on track to graduate successfully with the nationally recognized certification.

**Current Registered Apprenticeship Programs**

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

• Medical Assistant/Patient Care Coordinator - STX	• Certified Nursing Assistant – Dementia Specialty - STX
• Life Safety Coordinator - STX	• Certified Nursing Assistant – Restorative Specialty - STX
• Surgical Technologist - STX	• Recreation Assistant - STT
• K-12 Teacher - Territorial	• Line Maintainer - Territorial
• Able Seaman (Water Sports) - STT	• Cyber Security Support Technician - Territorial
• Construction Craft Laborer - STX	• Human Resources - Territorial

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

There are a few success stories that VIDOL would like to highlight regarding our services. The first success is a 17-year-old high school graduate, who came to our office seeking employment assistance. He recently completed a summer job at the Judiciary of the Virgin Islands and was eager to pursue a career in auto mechanics. Recognizing his potential and commitment, his Workforce Development (WD) Specialist quickly assessed his needs and guided him toward the best opportunities. He enrolled in the two-year Auto Mechanics Program at the Ralph O. Wheatley Skills Center (ROWSC). Understanding his need for financial independence, the WD Specialist recommended a work experience opportunity that would allow him to gain valuable on-the-job training while still attending school. This dual approach would help him stay financially stable while working toward his career goal. Shortly after beginning his training, he was placed in a three-month paid work experience as an Auto Mechanic Assistant with the Department of Property & Procurement. Recognizing his dedication and the value he brought to the team; the Department of Property & Procurement offered him a full-time position as an Auto Mechanic. After successfully graduating from the Auto Mechanics Program in May 2024, the graduate is still employed full-time with the Department of Property & Procurement. This journey is a powerful testament to the impact of combining education, hands-on training, and real-world work experience. His story highlights how the right combination of training, work experience, and mentorship can empower young individuals to reach their full potential and build a successful career.

The second youth success story is a recent high school graduate eager to join the workforce. After being unemployed for three months, with her most recent job being a cashier, a Workforce Development Specialist, committed to helping her gain relevant exposure. The recent high school graduate had a clear vision of becoming a Marshal, although she had no prior experience or exposure to the field. The WD Specialist contacted several agencies, including the District Court and the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD). As a final effort, she contacted the Superior Court’s Human Resources (HR) office. The WD Specialist explained that the young woman could participate in the Work, Learn, and Earn (WLE) program funded by the Department of Labor. She assured HR that her wages would be covered by the program and offered to sign any required confidentiality agreements. After careful consideration she began her placement at the Superior Court as a receptionist through the WLE program. This role allowed her to gain firsthand exposure to her field of interest. As the WLE program neared its conclusion, the receptionist position at the

Superior Court was officially advertised. The young participant applied for the role and was interviewed after she completed the WLE program. She was officially hired as full-time receptionist at the Superior Court and began her new role as a receptionist. All of this happened within just 6 months and her journey is a testament to the power of determination and opportunity. Her story highlights how tailored support, proactive advocacy, and the willingness to step outside one's comfort zone can lead to meaningful career achievements. Today, she is on a path aligned with her aspirations, gaining valuable experience that moves her closer to her ultimate goal of becoming a Marshal.

In April 2023, a client expressed interest in our training program. However, he faced significant challenges, including the recent loss of his home in a fire. This devastating event resulted in the loss of essential belongings, such as his DJ equipment, and clothing. Despite these setbacks, our client remained determined. With the support of his dedicated case manager, he attended our Joining Forces career fair in September and identified a company of interest. The case manager proactively submitted a letter of recommendation to the company on the client's behalf. To enhance the client's job prospects, his ES case manager enrolled him in OSHA 30 online courses. He visited the AJC everyday from 1pm to 5pm, walking over a mile and eventually losing his glasses. The client diligently completed these courses, often working without his glasses. As the client secured an interview with his dream company, the employment service team collaborated with him to prepare for the interview, including assistance with appropriate attire. This involved sourcing larger-sized shoes to ensure he presented himself professionally. The client's perseverance, combined with the unwavering support of his case manager and the employment service team, ultimately led to his success. In December 2023, on the same day, he received two job offers, one of which was his dream position. Happy to say almost a year later, client is still employed with the company. He now has reliable transportation and was able to replace his glasses.

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