

**United States Virgin Islands  
Labor Department  
One-Stop Labor Market Information  
Program Year 2003  
  
Annual Report**

The United States Virgin Islands Department of Labor, through its primary function to protect and advance the workforce of the Virgin Islands, participated in the One-Stop/Labor Management Information (LMI) State Program Year 2003 Employment and Training Administration Grant program. The LMI services were directed by the LMI director, Dave Barber, Director of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The ALMIS program included collecting, analyzing and disseminating to our customers a wide variety of information on the Virgin Islands economic conditions.

The Labor Department continued to improve products and services, and furthered the development of a Labor Market Information system for the territory. To implement the LMI Program Year 2003 core products BLS launched a Website, gathered employment information, held two Customer Service Conferences for our various customers, and disseminated Workforce and Labor Market Information to our customers and partners. The Labor Department gathered data on the employment and benefits provided by employers and a special survey was conducted for the Economic Development Authority (EDA) beneficiary companies in the territory. Labor market information and assistance was provided to EDA applicants and beneficiary companies at conferences and meetings to assist in their reporting of employment information and compliance. BLS held two Informational Seminars in the territory in October 2003. These seminars disseminated statistical and compliance data to various businesses and individuals in attendances. This information has been transferred to our Website.

1. The Labor Department, BLS, with limited staff and resources, developed and launched a new Website, [WWW.VIDOL.GOV](http://WWW.VIDOL.GOV) and commenced the dissemination of LMI core products and program information. This information includes reporting of ES-202, CES, OES, QCEW, and our local LAUS statistics as part of our core products. Results of the first annual Job Vacancy Survey were posted on the website, along with many links and information to aid our customers and partners.

A territory-wide employer database was established, but due to confidentiality concerns, the information was not posted on the website. Employer databases were also constructed for the EDA and business licenses as a cross reference to the BLS employer listing. BLS increased the size of the BLS network server to accommodate the website needs. Two quarterly newsletters were published and were used to disseminate statistical information to customers in the Virgin Islands economy.

2. The first Virgin Islands Job Vacancy Survey was developed and the data was collected and analyzed under the Program Year 2003 grant. The results have been placed on the Website. Over 3,000 employers were sent survey forms and later contacted to assist in their response to the survey request. Being a new survey for the employers, the Job Vacancy Survey was well received once an understanding of the benefits the survey could have for the territory. Due to an initial low response rate, a second survey form was sent to over 2,300 employers.

Responses were received from over 1,000 employers, 34%, as a result of the two mailings and personal contacts. Three Hundred Seventy (370) vacancies were reported. Sixty-nine per cent (69%) were located in the St. Thomas/St. John District. The average salaried position received an annual salary of \$33,500, while the average hourly rate of pay was \$8.95. The reported Major Occupational Groups consisted of Office and Administration (22%), Sales and Related (19%), Food Preparation and Serving Related (15%), Business and Financial Operations (11%), and Production (9%) which made up seventy-six percent (76%) of vacant positions reported for the survey. Eighty-four percent (84%) of the employers responding reported they offered benefits. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the vacancies required a minimum educational level of a high school graduate. The information gathered during this base year survey will be used to measure the subsequent responses to our second survey to be performed during Program Year 2004.

The Department of Labor's efforts in implementing the LMI core products include development of an expanded marketing strategy to facilitate a dynamic and expanding customer base with improved scope and sophistication of workforce information and timely delivery of information to our varied audience. The primary goal of the Virgin Islands Labor Marketing Strategy in Program Year 2003 was to widen our exposure to our customer base through the use of our website, personal contacts and conferences.

Develop the essential databases and commence delivery of labor market information. We placed much information, including a Customer Satisfaction Form, Customer Complaint Form, New Hire Report, Employers Quarterly Wage and Contribution Report forms, and other aids on the website to expand and ease the gathering of information. Linking of other sites was used to expand the information which our customers sought to aid them in their business and professional decision making process. Our local customers and partners were made up of job seekers, employers, territorial business and fiscal planners, administrators, government policy makers, the business community, the University of the Virgin Islands, territorial workforce development professionals and the public at large. We continued our efforts to construct close working relationships with various organizations, nonprofits and community groups to assist in identifying the need for quality programs and services. Our outreach activities continued to connect with and get input from additional customer groups, to develop customer profiles to better target customer needs, and to better prioritize our services.

Our strategy for serving our customers included getting customer input on each of our products, developing products in a readable and usable form, and continuing to expand and improve our products and services. The reduction in the grant amount from \$122,585 to \$89,130 did not advance our efforts to retain personnel and improve our LMI service. Some LMI related expenses were bore by other sources.

The Virgin Islands Bureau of Labor Statistics continued to work towards maximizing the delivery of invaluable technical support and strategic direction to support a comprehensive Labor Market Information System for the Territory. During Program Year 2003 the Virgin Islands unemployment rate averaged 8.4%, a slight drop from the prior year. In August 2003, the territory was experiencing an unemployment rate of 9.1%, even with summer employment programs employing nearly 1,000 students. The 9.1% is compared to an annual unemployment rate of 8.7% for 2002, and 7.1% for 2001, all well above the national unemployment rate.

One employee attended a seminar on Long Term Projections and started to assemble historical data and information to populate the database. The US Department of Labor was requested to provide the last twenty years of information to be used on the Projections effort. We have obtained a copy of the last ten years and continue to attempt to identify the source of the last twenty years of statistics for the Virgin Islands. A request was made to ascertain if ten years could be used for this projection project. The shortage of staff has had a negative impact on our efforts to compile the database for the compilation of projections. Using the website we were able to provide national information links for Industry and Occupational Employment Projections with the support of our Job Vacancy Survey.

3. The Commissioner of Labor issued a Press Release to broaden public exposure to the Labor Market Information and better inform the workforce and employers alike. Our continued receipt of feed back on our website and its products helped improve the original product. An employer database was created to aid in the development and marketing of core products and services. A database has also been created with business licenses identified with each employer, by district. The employer database will be linked to a resume bank once it has been finalized. This will provide a means, through our Website, for job seekers to interact with employers with the assistance and guidance of the Labor Department.

The balance of the core products and services were provided through the website and personal dissemination of our statistical data. An initial set up of an employer job postings and resumes bank was developed for EDA firms. An employer database was prepared, after receiving clearance, for our Website and other forums. Virgin Islands Business License and employer database was incorporated into our database for delivery of information to Info-USA.

We will continue this bold effort to improve our marketing approach to include media exposure, site visits, meetings, conferences and our website. This will expand our knowledge and understanding of the territory's businesses and their specialized needs. Our business sector will concentrate on small business to highly technical global businesses doing business in an island territory. Measurement of customer satisfaction was started and we will pin point our strengths and needed improvements.

Better and timelier service is our goal. Careful assessment of customer's needs and the development of custom solutions surpassed many local expectations, while we struggled to stay with budgetary constraints. Providing accurate, timely, dynamic, relevant, and accessible employment and training information helps to establish a solid foundation for our LMI system.