

**ANNUAL REPORT
FOR
TITLE I
OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT ACT OF 1998
TERRITORY OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE UNITED STATES
For the period of
July 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008**

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GOVERNMENT OF
THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES



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Albert Bryan Jr – Commissioner

October 1, 2008

Grace A. Kilbane
Regional Administrator
U.S. Department of Labor ETA
John F. Kennedy Federal Building, Room E-350
Boston, MA 02203

Dear Mrs. Kilbane:

Transformation! A journey to empowerment. This past year has been a journey indeed and in building our "Talent Development System" we have had our challenges and victories. We started out on this journey over a year ago and have been constantly tweaking the system to make it work. We are proud today to submit some fruits of this success.

The new customer service model that we are implementing speaks to the core of what we are trying to accomplish. The three teams Talent Engagement, Talent Development and Talent Marketing forces the staff and the customers to think about the One Stop differently. Coupled with the newly created Business Services Unit, we are able to provide services to our entire customer base that cater to their primary needs.

We will continue to Transform and adapt our tools and workforce professionals to accommodate the changes in our demand sectors and overall national market. We expect even greater accomplishments in PY 08 and appreciate the tremendous support of the region in assisting VIDOL to work for the good of all our local customers.

Sincerely,


Albert Bryan Jr.
Commissioner



Introduction

Focusing on building a strong, viable and flexible talent development system the Virgin Islands Workforce Investment Area has in Program Year 2007 realized changes that impact both program and performance. There were systemic changes which included new assessment tools, increased customer service, and an expanded resource center; program changes that resulted in new service provider activity and more defined sector development; and, increased performance aided by the addition of waivers that allowed for more flexible use of formula funds.

The new National Strategic Direction which encourages the development of a demand-driven system built on regional economic development, coupled with the Workforce Board's priorities identified in the Two-Year Strategic Plan, which include building strategic partnerships throughout the local community, opened the door for new collaborations with partner agencies and local business that fell within the Territory's demand occupation sectors. The Virgin Islands has targeted six areas for sector development. They include Information Technology, Healthcare, Construction, Manufacturing, Hospitality and Homeland Security.

As in previous years, the local economic situation continued to affect the targeted direction as well as the outcome of workforce activities. The type of activity developed is closely aligned with the demand of each district and though the Virgin Islands is a single local workforce area, the activity of each district is quite distinct as is reflected in both programming and performance. This year saw little change from the previous year as far as the overall employment availability. Although the unemployment rate was slightly reduced so was the total labor-force.

Virgin Islands Employment Statistics for Program Year 2007

| | Territorial | St. Croix | St. Thomas/ St. John |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| July 2007 | | | |
| Unemployment Rate | 6.2% | 7.3% | 5.3% |
| Total Labor Force | 53,876 | | |
| June 2008 | | | |
| Unemployment Rate | 5.6% | 6.7% | 4.8% |
| Total Labor Force | 52,946 | | |

The differences between districts again reflect more diverse employment opportunities in the tourism-based St. Thomas/St. John district compared to that of the industry-based St. Croix district. The tourism sector offers many more entry-level jobs for skilled workers in the St. Thomas/St. John district allowing

more unskilled workers to find employment. Statistics indicate that even though more jobs were posted in St. Croix during the last two quarters, the majority of jobs were for skilled occupations requiring experience in the field.

The Cost of Business

The WIA Title I allotment for the US Virgin Islands, in Program Year 2007 was \$2,320,125.

| CATEGORY | ALLOTMENT PY'07 | ALLOTMENT PY'06 |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Youth | \$ 644,493 | \$ 643,072 |
| Adult | \$ 619,870 | \$ 688,744 |
| Dislocated Worker | \$1,055,762 | \$1,173,069 |
| TOTAL | \$2,320,125 | \$2,504,885 |

This allotment reflected a slight reduction from the previous program year in the adult and dislocated worker funding streams and a slight increase for youth.

During Program Year 2007, the Virgin Islands Workforce System anticipated serving three hundred (300) adults and dislocated workers through Individual Training Accounts. By June 2008, two hundred and forty-eight customers had been served.

| CUSTOMERS | ST. THOMAS/ ST. JOHN | ST. CROIX | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Adults | 80 | 97 | 177 |
| Dislocated Workers | 31 | 40 | 71 |
| TOTAL | 111 | 137 | 248 |

The customer's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) determines the amount of each ITA and each customer works with his/her counselor to ensure that all his or her needs are met in a cost effective manner. Expenditures on intensive and training services during Program Year 2007 are as follows:

| DOLLARS | ST. THOMAS/ ST. JOHN | ST. CROIX | TOTAL |
|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Adults | \$122,755.05 | \$183,870.00 | \$306,625.05 |
| Dislocated Workers | \$ 39,234.35 | \$ 92,840.75 | \$132,075.10 |
| TOTAL | \$161,989.40 | \$276,710.75 | \$438,700.15 |

On average, the cost per ITA per participant amounted to \$1769. However, the actual cost per participant may be somewhat higher when support services such as transportation, meals and/or child care for eligible customers are included.

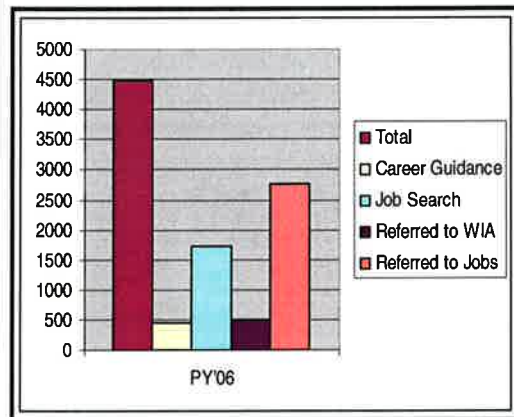
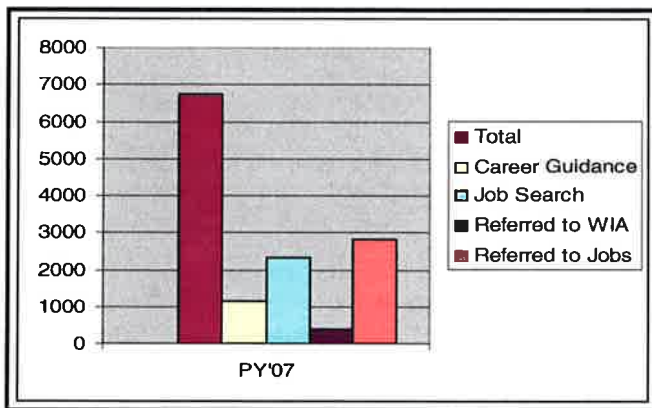
The use of Individual Training Accounts for Youth has aided the system by giving more youth immediate access to occupational skills training. This year in addition to the summer work experience and year round basic skills, GED, and life skills training, forty-four older and out-of-school youth took advantage of the youth ITA option and participated in entry level and intermediate computer skills training, welding and pipefitting, and AC and refrigeration repair courses to name a few.

| CUSTOMER | STT/STJ | STX | TOTAL |
|----------|------------|----------|-------------|
| Youth | 22 | 22 | 44 |
| DOLLARS | STT/STJ | STX | TOTAL |
| Youth | \$2,160.00 | \$51,799 | \$53,959.00 |

On average, the cost per ITA per youth participant was \$1,226.34.

Wagner-Peyser Activities

Although funding for Wagner-Peyser activities for PY'07 remained unchanged at \$1,374,641 there were more customers accessing the system and receiving services. Six Thousand, seven hundred and forty-five (6,745) customers accessed services this year.



One thousand, one hundred and fifty (1,150) received career guidance while two thousand, three hundred and ten (2,310) took advantage of job search activities. Approximately three hundred and ninety-nine (399) individuals were referred to WIA services. A total of two thousand, eight hundred and twenty-eight (2,828) individuals were referred to jobs.

There were one hundred and thirty-seven (137) new veteran job seekers applications between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008. Thirty-three (33) took part in job search activities while forty-six (46) were referred to employment. Two (2) individuals were referred to WIA services and one (1) participated in training activities.

Service Delivery Strategies

During the program year, the VI Department of Labor (VIDOL) along with the Workforce Investment Board (WIB) participated in transformation activities geared to improve overall service delivery of workforce services in the Territory. The transformation effort is two-fold – first, VIDOL, the operators of the One-Stop system, sought to renew the One-Stop centers and streamline the services available within and make them more efficient and customer friendly. Secondly, the WIB embarked upon overall system development through strengthened partnerships with both the public and private sector. The transformation is an on-going effort and results are aimed at being both far reaching and long-lasting.

Assisting the system transformation process has been the use of ETA approved waivers that drive not only performance but also enhance the quality of the product offered to customers. For example, by using ITA's for youth, 44 additional young people who would have otherwise not had immediate access to occupational skills training were afforded that option.

Another breakthrough occurred by using the waiver to utilize up to 50% of the Rapid Response funds for incumbent worker training coupled with the waiver to minimize the amount of data collected from incumbent workers. The VI Workforce System partnered with a local hospital to offer certification and upgrade courses to CNA's, LPN's, RN's and other medical personnel. One of the challenges living outside the mainland US is the cost of transportation and lodging. Often individuals would have to use annual leave to travel to the mainland to participate in these types of courses which are necessary to keep their various certifications valid. This financial burden often meant that many would delay certifications as long as possible or simply choose to stay at their present level. This training activity brought a certified medical training team to the Virgin Islands. A week long series of seminars was conducted and covered topics to include CEN/CCRN/PCCN Review (Emergency Nursing, Critical Care Nursing, Progressive Care Certified Nursing); Healthcare Legal; Healthcare Leadership & Management (prep for nurse administration certification test); CEN-P and CCRN-P Nursing Review (competency review of the pediatric emergency and critical nurse certification exams); and Medical-Surgical Nursing Review (prep for certification test and to improve day to day clinical skills). In addition to the week long activity, all who participated are further availed more than three hundred (300) hours of online training to continue advance courses at no extra cost.

Other waivers include a sliding scale for reimbursing OJT and Customized Training. Both these waivers make it more feasible for smaller businesses to design in-house training programs for their current and prospective workforce.

The Year In Programs

Throughout many communities, services to youth engender more emotion than any other segment of the population. Perhaps it is because this is a time when potential is at its peak, but life circumstances sometimes cause young people to make poor decisions that later have a negative effect on their lives and livelihood. Services to at-risk youth present specific challenges by virtue of the customer dynamic. For some service providers, this is when “work” turns into *opportunity*. For many, the right mix of skills, self-reflection and the lure of future possibilities make vibrant projects that have lasting effects on a young person’s life. In this program year, the workforce system was proud to include in its portfolio several promising programs that offered “at-risk” youth the skills and opportunity to make better choices.

Open Doors: The Other Choice

In this program thirteen at-risk/adjudicated youth participated in a diverse curriculum that touched on every aspect of youth development.

Starting with *life enhancement skills*, participants were exposed to the importance of communication as the basis for exchanging ideas and engaging others whether personally or in a social setting. They worked on self esteem through role playing which allowed them deeper insight into why they react as they do to different situations. They touched upon dependency versus self reliance – why public assistance did not have to be a “way of life”. Topics such as substance abuse and parenting, peer pressure and non-violence were also covered in an effort to get them thinking about how their perception of each of these things contributed to the decisions they had already made in life and how maybe a different view might help them not repeat the same mistakes but learn from them.

The participants of this program also had an opportunity to explore career choices. An introduction to entrepreneurship component was added so that the young people could work through the steps of starting their own business using skills and knowledge they already had. Participants realized that small engine repair, baking landscaping, hair and nail care, baby-sitting, and cooking are all skills that can lead to legitimate businesses. Given that we now live in a global economy, the participants were also shown the importance on electronic communication and received basic training on computer operation basics.

This was an intensive six-week course that allowed participants to look at themselves as a “positive person” capable of making good choices. Students were reinforced with the knowledge that because they had already made mistakes did not mean that their lives were over; it simply meant that now they had to make “the other choice”.

Work-Able Summer Institute

The Work-Able 2007 Summer Institute allowed six youth between the ages of 15-21, three of who are disabled and two who are in foster care to embark upon a discovery of self through reading, life skills development and connections with a local industry.

At the local library, students participated in the Summer Reading Clinic. They discussed books, stories or articles recently read and related them to situations in their own lives. They learned about story plots; participated in a *Call and Respond* session of “A Negro Love Song” by Paul Lawrence Dunbar and recited poems to the rhythm of drums. Daily journals were kept which, helped students to focus their thoughts for current and future assessment.

The life skills component was presented to introduce good oral and written communication skills, the importance of teamwork, problem-solving and workplace ethics. Each day time was set aside for building social skills through a variety of activities including a life skills board game, computer games and viewing videos with discussions of its content as a group.

Students then set about the task of learning a new skill – jewelry making. A local Jeweler conducted sessions with the youth showing them the basics of jewelry making and discussing possible entrepreneurship opportunities. They were taught to design and make a piece of jewelry for themselves during the last two weeks of the program.

This program lasted for six weeks during the summer however; it gave the participants the ability to start building strong career goals that can last a lifetime.

Be the Change

This program was designed for 14 year old customers who were not yet ready to participate in work experience. They were however; ready to do more than just go to summer camp. Be The Change inspired change in these youngsters by offering a mix of activities ranging from life and pre-employment skills development to introduction to computers, photography, steel pan and job shadowing as displayed in this pictorial presentation.

Steel Pan



Social interaction mixed with culturally relevant activity results in more than just learning an instrument. It fosters pride in the local environment and challenges youth to continue to participate in community activities.



Basic Computer Skills



Photography



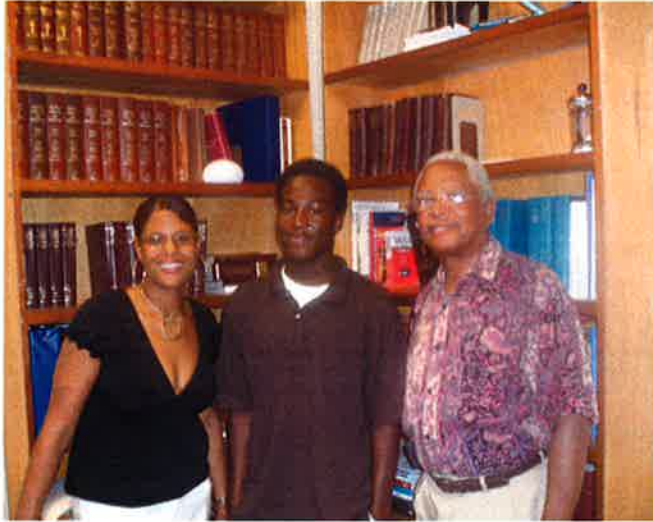
Learning a skill can be fun when it's "all about me"!

Life Skills Workshops

Role playing enables students to communicate with their peers as well as with adults, including parents, teachers and bosses, work out anger management issues, develop self-esteem and critical thinking skills.



Job Shadowing



Though not yet ready for work, adjusting to the world of work still takes practice. By participating in job shadowing activities, these youth have an opportunity to see what their “dream job” really entails. They also practice the skills they’ve recently acquired; dressing for the workplace, punctuality and attendance and getting along with coworkers.



Performance Information

The Virgin Islands is a common measures state. Achieving success in performance has been a challenge to the Virgin Islands system from the beginning of WIA operations. A hallmark of the Workforce Investment Act is continuous improvement and each year new strategies are employed to increase the system's performance.

| | State Negotiated Goal | Actual Performance |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| WIA ADULTS | | |
| Entered Employment | 54% | 43.5% |
| Employment Retention | 78% | 74.2% |
| Average Earnings | \$8500.0 | \$9,994.5 |

| | State Negotiated Goal | Actual Performance |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS | | |
| Entered Employment | 70% | 47.3% |
| Employment Retention | 75% | 80.6% |
| Average Earnings | \$10,000.0 | \$13,503.0 |

| | State Negotiated Goal | Actual Performance |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| WIA YOUTH | | |
| Placement in Employment or Education | 57% | 64.7% |
| Attainment of Degree/Certificate | 42% | 70.8% |
| Literacy/Numeracy Gains | 34% | 0.0% |

Although programming has been steady, a sluggish economy has adversely affected the Entered Employment measure as evidenced in both Adult and Dislocated Worker categories. Retention is more readily attained as once employed, an individual usually tries to stay employed since options are limited. The Virgin Islands is still working on strategies to fully employ the Youth literacy and numeracy gains measure.

Conclusion

The Virgin Islands Workforce Investment System continues to make definitive changes in the workforce development is perceived and implemented in the Territory. This year's performance showed the most promising gains than have been recorded in the past few years. Amid the planning and re-design activity that occurred from the boardroom to the resource rooms, several noteworthy programs took place that afforded system developers a glimpse into the future of a better defined system. By strengthening old partnerships and engaging new ones; by opening doors to individuals who have given in to the "glass half-filled", the Virgin Islands Workforce system attempts to offer new ideas, new suggestions and new hope to a rapidly developing community.

In the coming year, the Workforce Investment Board will be conducting several workforce forums with employers and businesses in the six sectors to further develop the training needs within their specific areas. The Board will also be implementing a Work Readiness Certificate to assure employers that individuals referred to them are equipped with basic skills and are ready to pursue specific industry curriculum; prospective employees can be confident that they can present acceptable credentials that show they are ready to take the next step.