

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, 2015 – June 30, 2016

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Introduction

Program Year 2015 began an intensive period of redefining the way workforce services are developed and administered. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law by President Obama on July 22, 2014. WIOA encourages a shared path forward for workforce practitioners through the introduction of new workforce development strategies; increased collaboration with other workforce agencies, workforce partners and local and regional employers; as well as a more flexible relationship with education entities.

The US Virgin Islands Workforce Partnership utilized the transition period of Program Year 2015 to design, refine and implement strategies built on several themes:

Interagency Partnership

Directors and managers of the Virgin Islands Departments of Labor, Education, Human Services and Justice led by the Workforce Board met weekly discuss what they wanted the VI Workforce System to look like, the methods that would work to realize that vision and set benchmarks to achieve set results.

Partner Co-location

Beginning July 2015 representatives from partner agencies Vocational Rehabilitation, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) brought their services into the AJC on dedicated days each week. Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth, Wagner-Peyser and Unemployment Insurance partners were previously co-located.

Employer Engagement

Recognizing that the key to a better relationship with business is to engage them in discussion and foster participation in development activities, the Employer Engagement team made up of members from each of the partner agencies began work on a plan that includes a one-point approach to employers that engages them in system building at the ground floor with choices as to where they wanted to focus their talents rather than in individual sometimes duplicative agency activities.

Employment Advantage

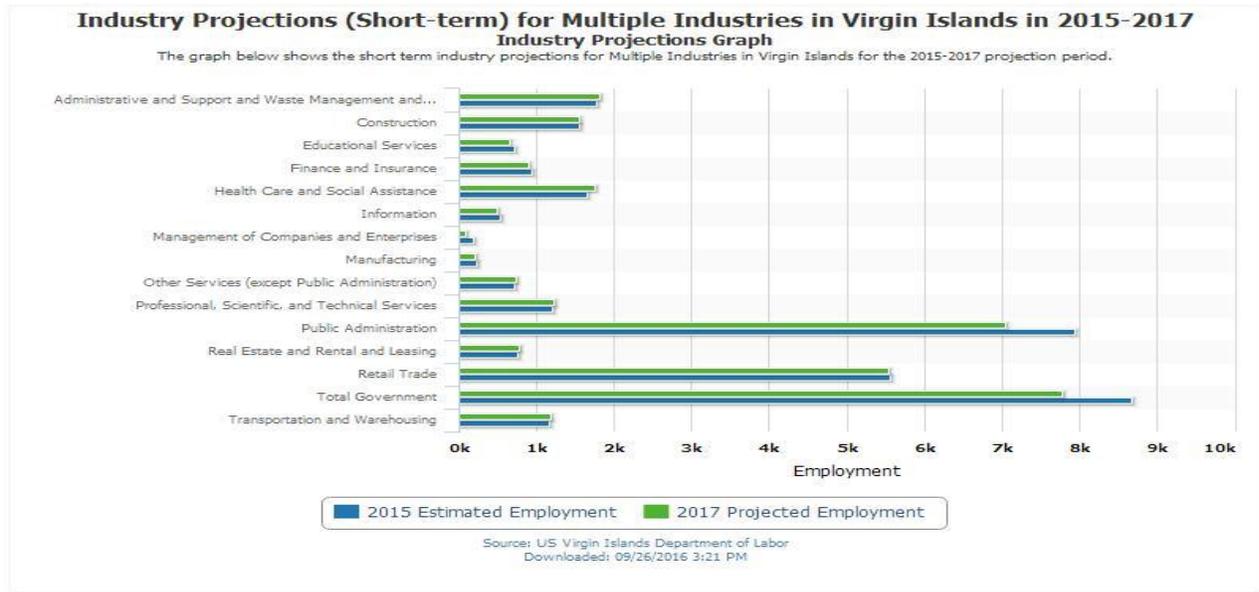
In order to stimulate job seeker interest and to encourage their participation in the entire workforce development experience, “work” was brought to the forefront of Individual Service Strategies, allowing individuals who are concerned about spending too much time in training and sacrificing a paycheck the opportunity to work and simultaneously participate in long term training needed to advance in the workforce.

These strategies are now in the implementation phase and are bound to have a significant impact on workforce delivery throughout the Territory.

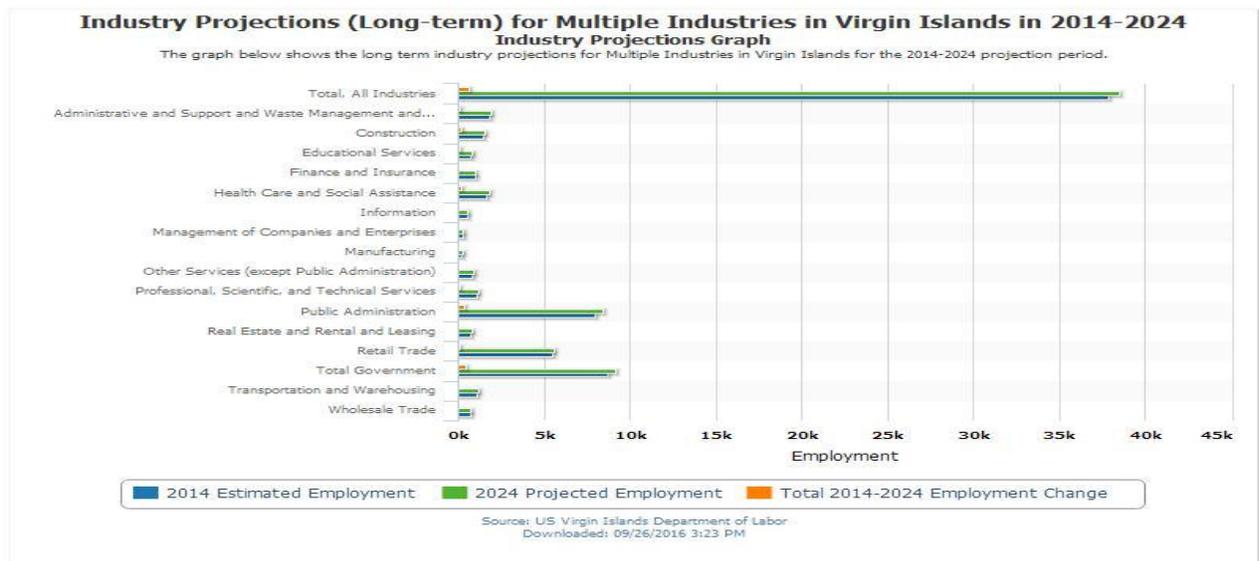
Labor Market Information

Although excited about the new strategies, the economic realities of the Territory remain challenging as growth though steady is not ubiquitous.

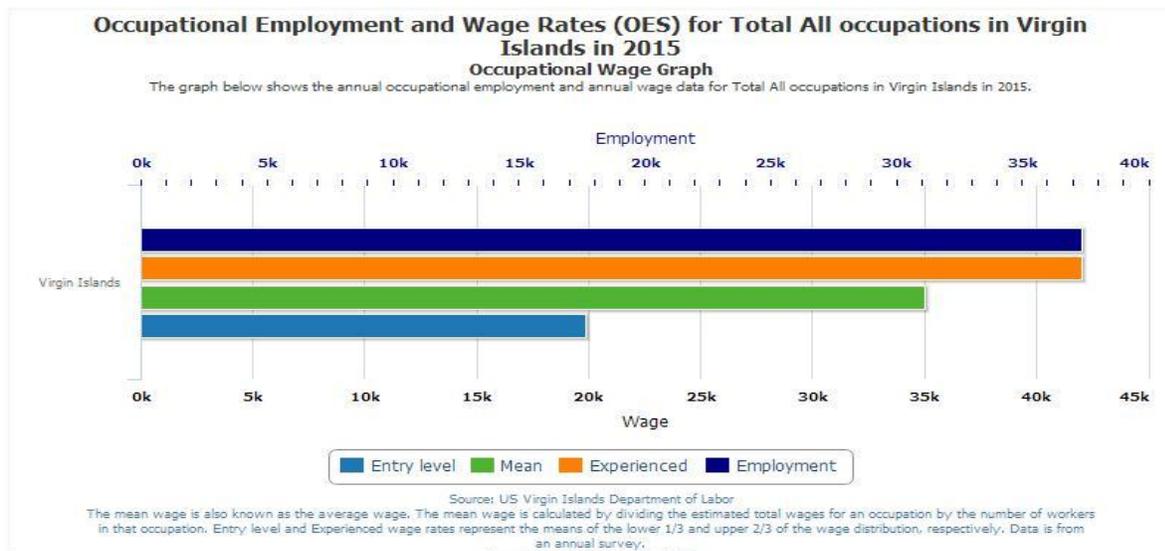
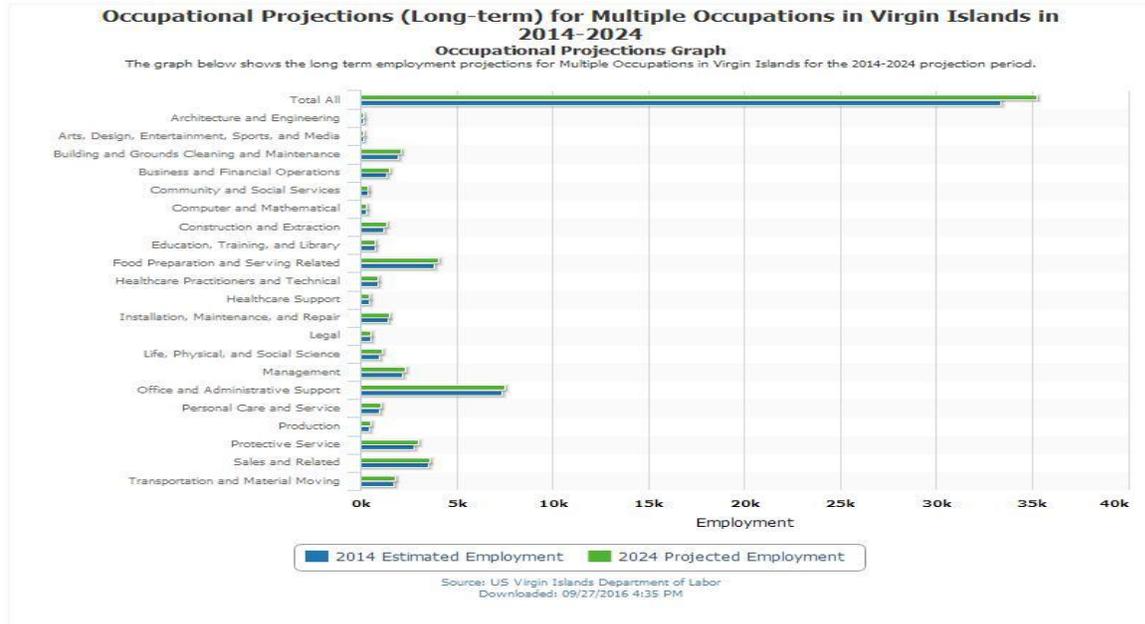
Job seekers interested in Administrative and Supportive Services remain more likely to find employment even short term employment than those interested in manufacturing. As evidenced during Program Year 2015 most employment occurred in Retail, Public Administration and Government Services.



The long term projections reflect little change from that in the short term. The 2014-2024 long term projected employment for total – all Industries in Virgin Islands was 38,487 with an annual average percentage change of 1.67%.



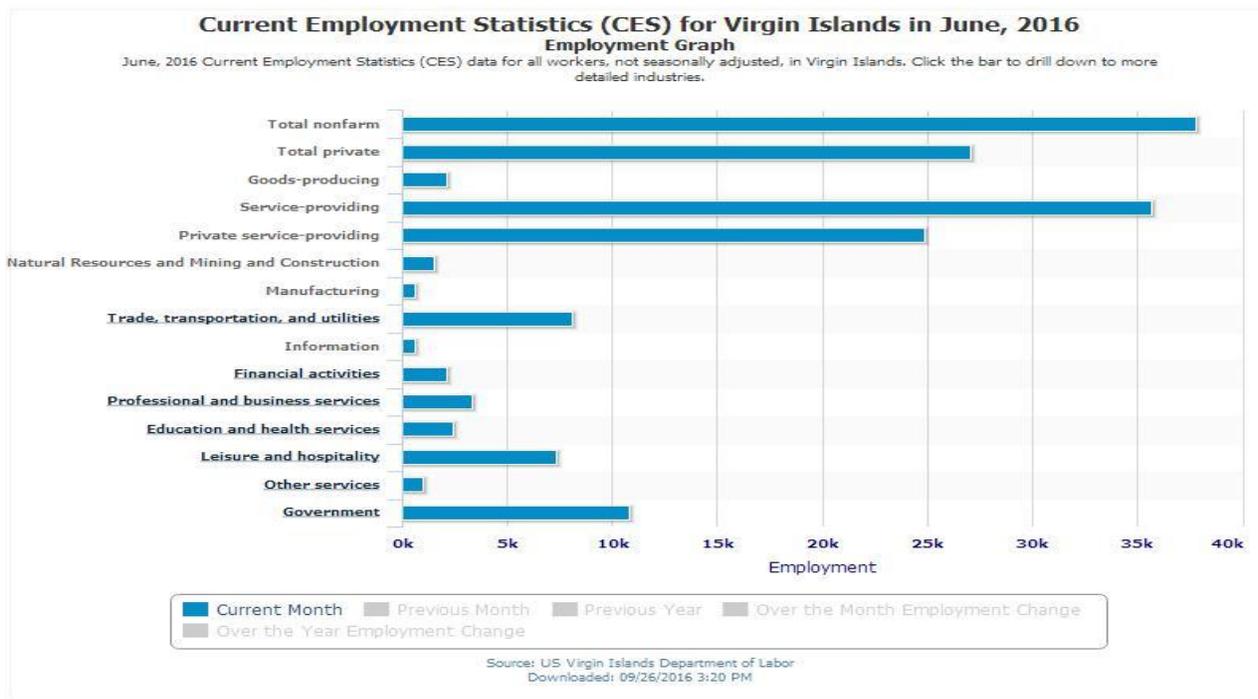
The estimated number of total – all employed in Virgin Islands in 2014 was 33,401. It is projected that in 2024 there will be 35,277. This represents an annual average growth rate of 0.55% percent.



The US Virgin Islands Department of Labor estimates that the mean annual wage for total - all in Virgin Islands in 2015 was \$35,050. The estimated entry level annual wage was \$19,860 and the experienced annual wage was \$42,060. Average employment in 2015 was 37,370.

Source: US Virgin Islands Department of Labor

The mean wage is also known as the average wage. The mean wage is calculated by dividing the estimated total wages for an occupation by the number of workers in that occupation. Entry level and experienced wage rates represent the means of the lower 1/3 and upper 2/3 of the wage distribution, respectively. Data is from an annual survey.



The Current Employment Statistics (CES) program is a monthly survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The survey provides employment, hours, and earnings estimates based on payroll records of business establishments

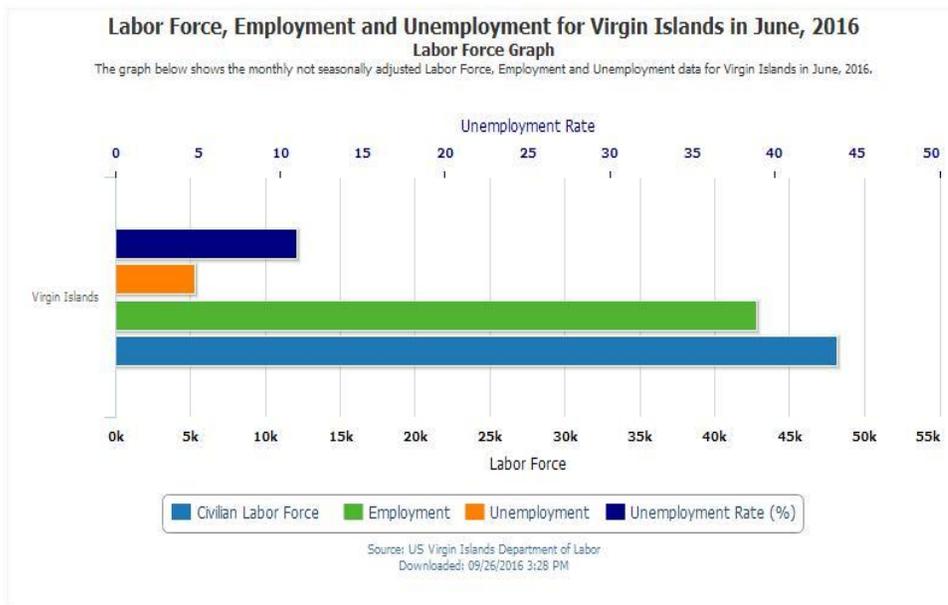
In June, 2016 there were a total of 37,834 non-farm jobs in Virgin Islands (not seasonally adjusted - all workers). This is a decrease of -102 jobs from the prior month and an increase of 173 jobs from the prior year. The top growing industries over the past month were Retail trade with 25 jobs added, Finance and insurance with 12, Real estate and rental and leasing with 6, Health care and social assistance with 5, Membership associations and organizations with 3.

Virgin Islands Employment Statistics for Program Year 2015

	Territorial	St. Croix	St. Thomas/ St. John
July 2015			
Unemployment Rate	11.8%	13.0%	10.8%
June 2016			
Unemployment Rate	11.0%	11.0%	11.1%

Note: Employment includes non agricultural wage and salary employment. Data has not been benchmarked. Labor force is comprised of persons 16 and older who show up in our unemployment insurance wage data working full time or part time and actively seeking employment through VIDOL. This data set is not comparable with labor force estimates developed as part of the national cooperative program. Virgin Islands estimates reflect the use of prescribed BLS methodology but are not adjusted to an independent estimate provided through the CPS (Current Population Survey).

Source: Virgin Islands Department of Labor unemployment insurance claims data and the current employment statistics monthly survey of establishments. **Prepared by:** VIDOL Bureau of Labor Statistics.



The total civilian labor force (not seasonally adjusted) for Virgin Islands in June, 2016 was 48,151 of which 42,846 were employed and 5,305 were unemployed. The unemployment rate was 11.0% percent.

Source: US Virgin Islands Department of Labor

The Cost of Workforce Investment Activities

The WIA Title I allotment for the US Virgin Islands in Program Year 2015 was \$2,084,971.

PROGRAM	ALLOTMENT PY'14	ALLOTMENT PY'15
<i>Youth</i>	\$605,383	595,424
<i>Adult</i>	\$563,710	574,721
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	\$899,528	914,826
<i>TOTAL</i>	\$2,068,621	2,084,971

Cost Per Participant

The cost per participant measure is calculated by taking total program costs in terms of expenditures and dividing by the number of participants served during the year by the particular program. The Adult participant count includes self service participants.

Program	*Total Expenditures	Total Participants	Cost Per Participant
<i>Adult</i>	\$191,214	3,365	\$ 56.82
<i>Dislocated Worker</i>	\$194,257	86	\$ 2,258.80
<i>Youth</i>	\$138,432	149	\$ 929.07

*Total expenditures are not reflective of the total dollar amount expended in PY'15; carry-over funding from PY'14 was also used during this program year.

A significant number of Adult customers utilized self service for labor market research, preparing resumes and conducting job search activities, thus reducing the cost of services provided in this category. Dislocated workers however, who were faced with having to transition their skill sets to other occupations or learn new skills worked more closely with AJC staff to map out their goals, take the requisite training and search for new employment.

Training Activities

- Fifteen customers who sought occupational skills training were provided Individual Training Accounts which totaled \$37,898 and consisted largely of short term training programs for entry-level positions that led to industry recognized certification. This training occurred in the construction trades, and healthcare. Additionally, support services to include transportation and childcare approximated \$550.00 per eligible participant.

- Ten individuals received training that combined high school diploma acquisition, career exploration and entry level training in varied hospitality occupations. The cost of the program was \$38,000, with additional support services provided at approximately \$750.00 per eligible participant.
- Eight individuals participated in a five week work experience program in boat building at the cost of \$29,058 with approximately \$250.00 per eligible participant in support services.

The AJC Experience

Additional services were introduced during Program Year 2015 to enhance the Job Seeker experience. Among them was the Woofound “personality” assessment tool that aided in both workforce professional and job seeker in determining career compatibility but was also just a fun activity.

Using technology to engage busy learners was enhanced with the METRIX learning on-line courses which allows users to access career learning modules in various occupations and attain certificates upon successful program completion. This has proved a vital part of the career pathways preparation.

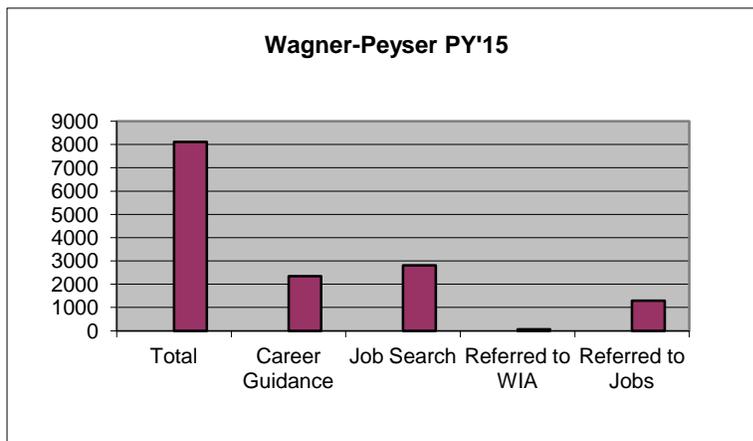
Fast Forward - An online GED preparation offered facilitated coaching/preparation in learning labs available to over one hundred participants.

These programs, workshops and services are available to all American Job Center participants which includes individuals accessing the system through partner agencies.



Wagner-Peyser Activities

The VI Workforce Investment System received \$1,304,749 in Wagner-Peyser funding for PY'15. These services coupled with Core WIA services allowed all individuals accessing the AJC to receive job search and work readiness services.



This year, eight thousand, one hundred nine (8,109) individuals sought employment services through the AJC; while seven thousand, two hundred sixty-nine (7,269) customers delved further into exploring career opportunities by obtaining workforce information.

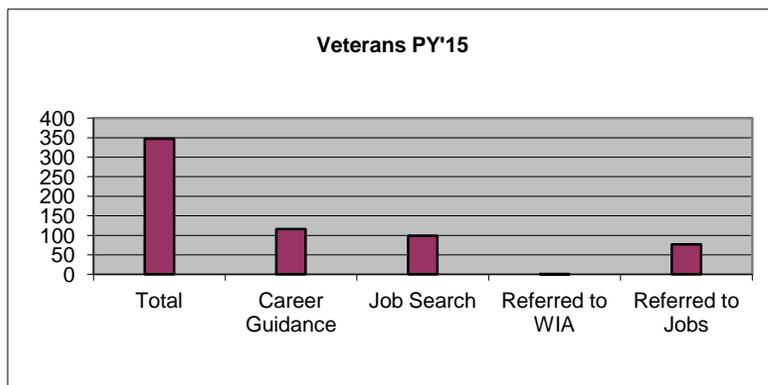
Four thousand, one hundred and one (4,101) received staff assisted services and AJC staff offered career guidance to two thousand, three hundred and forty-six (2,346) individuals. Two thousand eight hundred fifteen (2,815) opted for job search activities and approximately sixty-seven (67) individuals were referred to WIA services. Customers referred to jobs based on qualifications and interest totaled one thousand, two hundred and ninety-one (1,291).

Four thousand, one hundred

Veterans

There were three hundred and forty-seven (347) new veteran job seeker applications in PY'15, not significantly different from the previous year. Of those, three hundred thirty-three (333) researched their options through available workforce information.

Many veterans sought to obtain employment as soon as possible. To that end, one hundred sixteen (116) sought career guidance to help them match their acquired skills with available jobs. Ninety-nine (99) took part in job search activities and seventy-seven (77) were referred to employment. Only one (1) chose occupational training to upgrade their skills through WIA services.



Success Stories

Each year, hundreds of individuals access services from the American Job Center whether as a job seeker looking to attain or upgrade skills or simply looking for information. Each year, certain individuals stand out for having achieved success despite the odds and it is our pleasure to share their stories. These stories are told by the AJC staff.

Going the Extra Mile

Ms. Saida Solis, who recently relocated from St. Croix, came into the Job Center on St. Thomas seeking employment. She had been a customer of the Job Center on St. Croix and was familiar with some of the services provided. She was however, new to the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS). The Customer Service Representative provided a demo of VIEWS and highlighted the features that she could utilize to help with her job search activities.



Ms. Solis and the Customer Service Representatives spent some time reviewing positions she might qualify for based on her experience and skills. She expressed some interest in a food service worker position opened at Sabarro Restaurant that she and the Customer Service Representative agreed might be a fit for her. The referral was made and Ms. Solis was asked to go to the employer immediately to fill an application on site. The employer was in walking distance from the Job Center, but just relocating to the island and not too familiar with the area, Ms. Solis was apprehensive about finding the employer. The Customer Representative then walked with Ms. Solis

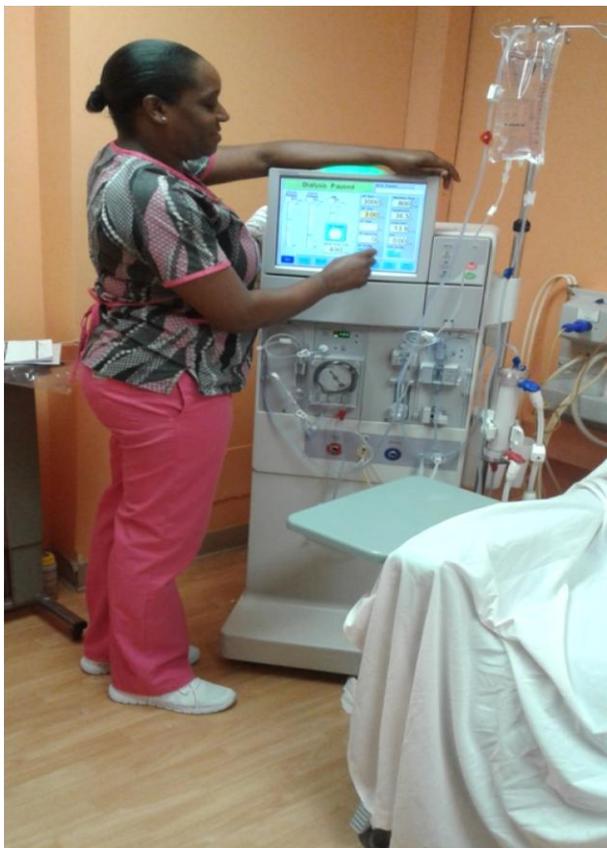
to the employer and assisted her with filling out the application. Ms. Solis began work the next month. She is still employed there.

Job Seeker not Unemployment Insurance Claimant

Ms. Chorester Harris came into the Job Center after being terminated from her position as a Teacher's Aide. Ms. Harris was a little distraught because the termination was unexpected and she was very concerned about finding another job. She expressed her concerns to the customer service representative and was assured that with her help she would get her back to work by the end of the month. Meanwhile, she filed a claim for Unemployment Insurance benefits. The Customer Representative noting that most of Ms. Harris' work experience was as a cashier referred her to a local retail store to fill a cashier position that was open with the business. Ms. Harris was offered an opportunity to interview for the position in a couple of days. The Customer Service Representative shared some interviewing tips and information on positive attitude at the work place to help Ms. Harris prepare for the interview. Ms. Harris interviewed as scheduled, was hired and began work the following week. No need for Unemployment Insurance Benefits.

And in the Job Seeker's own words . . .

Education is costly; price is usually one of the main factors that hinder people from furthering their education. Fortunately, there are government funded programs that can assist in covering tuition expenses. The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is one the local Institutions that offer tuition assistance.



The Virgin Islands Department of Labor has a well-organized team that meets the challenges of the 21st century and ensures the success of the territory in a global economy by pooling our resources to produce a work ready labor force that is dynamic, career driven, adaptable, literate and can meet the demand driven work environment.

I was afforded the opportunity to pursue a rewarding career in the Hemodialysis Technician Program. I successfully completed the course, passed the national exam and am now employed as a Certified Clinical Hemodialysis Technician at the Schneider Regional Medical Center.

As a Certified Hemodialysis Technician, my duties include but are not limited to: assembling the machine and ensuring that it is sterile, initiating and terminating treatment, recording patients' vitals, and monitoring and adjusting fluid removal.

The program has greatly impacted my life. As a single mother, this program has allowed me to remove financial barriers. I am now self-supporting and enjoy an affordable lifestyle. My skills have immensely improved, and I am able to work independently.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team at Department of Labor for giving me the opportunity of having a rewarding career as a certified Clinical Dialysis Technician. There is no hassle with the application process and it is available to the general public once you are deemed eligible. I am contented with my career of choice, and my intention is to continue to grow and excel.

Use of Waivers

The Virgin Islands was authorized to use nine (9) waivers for Program Year 2014; they were extended through Program Year 2015. Four were systemic and provided ease of operations functionality. The other five provided program flexibility and offered added options to employers who wanted to connect to the Workforce System. Program Year 2015 was a transition year which reflected a switch in workforce strategy and many of the waivers were not used.

➤ *Funds transfer authority for up to 50% between the Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams*

This waiver has historically been used to supplement the adult funding stream although funds are transferable either way. The VI Workforce system typically serves more adults than dislocated workers. This waiver was not used in PY'15.

➤ *The use of Individual Training Accounts for older and out-of-school youth program participants*

This waiver allows for the use of youth funds as ITA's for older and out-of-school youth eligible to participate in occupational skill training activities from providers on the Eligible Training Provider list. This waiver was not used in PY'15.

➤ *Use of Common Measures Only*

This waiver reduces the burden of reporting numerous measures by reducing the number of performance measures to be reported and attained to six. It benefits our operation by allowing the focus to be on providing quality services rather than working to meet seventeen measures.

➤ *Data Collection Relief for Incumbent Workers*

Anyone using WIA funds for training are subject to performance reporting which includes reporting eligibility information on the WIASRD. Previously, funding incumbent worker training was difficult because many did not meet the eligibility requirements under WIA. With the move toward more services for incumbent workers, some eligibility requirements have been relaxed. This waiver serves to reflect incumbent worker training activity in WIASRD reporting. Seven data elements have been discontinued when reporting participant data for incumbent worker training *only*. There was no incumbent worker training activities in Program Year 2015.

➤ *Use of Rapid Response Funds for Incumbent Worker Training*

Previously, rapid response funds could only be used for services to individuals affected by disasters, impending lay-offs, mass lay-offs or plant closings. This waiver expands the use of these funds to provide training services to incumbent workers *ONLY* as part of an employer's lay-off aversion strategy. In Program Year 2015, there was no incumbent worker activity.

➤ *Use of a portion of Local Funds for Incumbent Worker Training*

As with the rapid response funds, a portion of both Adult and Dislocated Worker funding streams – up to ten (10%) percent of each – may be used for incumbent worker training *ONLY* as part of an employer’s lay-off aversion strategy. All training under this waiver is restricted to skill attainment activities. There was no incumbent worker training in PY’15.

➤ *Sliding Scale Match for Customized Training*

In order to encourage small businesses to take advantage of training opportunities, the required 50% employer match is waived in certain circumstances. The sliding scale ranges from 50% to 90% depending on the size of the business. This waiver has been useful in discussions with employers who are developing a workforce strategy for new and growing businesses. Because many local employers are small businesses it gives them to option of designing relevant training at little cost to their operation. This waiver was not used in PY’15.

➤ *Graduated Scale Reimbursement for OJT’s*

To further promote small business participation in the Workforce System, the 50% required match for OJT’s has also been waived in certain circumstances. The graduated scale ranges from 50% to 90% depending on the size of the business. This waiver was not used during PY’15.

➤ *Conducting Evaluations of Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker Programs*

This waiver was again used for PY’15. Due to the economic downturn no local funding could be identified to perform this task.

Status of State Evaluation Activities

There was no evaluation conducted for Program Year 2015. The VI Workforce Investment Board applied for and was granted waiver for this requirement.

Customer Satisfaction

The Virgin Islands conducted a Customer Satisfaction survey using *Survey Monkey* for both participants and employers that accessed the system during Program Year 2015. The survey was open for a six-week period. Reminders were sent out every two weeks.

An electronic survey was sent to participants and employers with email addresses recorded in our operating system. Participants were asked five questions and employers were asked four questions. All were based on a five point scale with (1) being dissatisfied and (5) satisfied. The neutral category indicated neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

The response rate for the participant survey was moderate. 1894 surveys were sent to participants. Seven (7%) percent or (130) surveys bounced back due to invalid email addresses. The response rate was nineteen percent (19.0%) percent or (335) customers. All questions were answered. Of those that responded the results were as follows:

Participants – Job Seekers			
Question	Satisfied/ Very Satisfied	Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied
What is your overall satisfaction with the level of services received at the VI Workforce Center?	42.6%	27.7%	24.4%
How satisfied were you with the level of information available through booklets, handouts, videos, electronic access or customer service?	45.0%	24.1%	24.4%
If you interacted with Customer Service how would you rate that experience?	46.5%	17.0%	25.0%
Did the services received sufficiently address the purpose of your visit?	53.6%	22.0%	23.2%
How likely are you to use the services of the Workforce Center again?	49.8%	25.0%	18.2%

Job seeker customers showed relatively high dissatisfaction or indifference to activities at the AJC. Limited job opportunities and longer lengths of time unemployed may have impacted the survey results. A further analysis will be conducted to determine the underlying cause and be addressed in the on-going Job Center redesign.

The response rate for the employer survey was moderate. 283 surveys were sent to employers. Eight surveys or three (3%) percent bounced back due to invalid email addresses. The response rate was thirty-four (34%) percent or (93) employer customers. All questions were answered. Of those that responded the results were as follows:

Employers			
Question	Satisfied/ Very Satisfied	Dissatisfied/ Very Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied
What is your overall satisfaction with the level of services received at the VI Workforce Center?	65.5%	7.5%	24.7%
How satisfied were you with the level of information available through booklets, handouts, videos, electronic access or customer service?	52.6%	9.6%	25.8%
If you interacted with Customer Service how would you rate that experience?	50.5%	8.6%	17.2%
How likely are you to use the services of the Workforce Center again?	66.6%	9.6%	16.1%

Employer needs have become more of a focal point in AJC interactions and the attention to those details factor into satisfaction rates; however, the numbers who remain indifferent in some categories is of continued concern. As the AJC staff proceeds with new customer service techniques, methods to improve these results will be addressed.

Performance Information

Under the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA), the Virgin Islands was a common measures state. Performance Goals for Program Year 2015 were extended from Program Year 2014. Entered employment rates for Adults and Dislocated Workers reflect the gradual increase in basic employment opportunities. These may include temporary positions and the retention rate reflects the frequent transition to other jobs. Youth activities developed have allowed for long term work experience that include skill development and credential attainment simultaneously. The Wagner-Peyser performance accurately reflects the seasonality in the labor force where many individuals transition through multiple short-term employment opportunities.

	State Negotiated Goal '15	Actual Performance
WIA ADULTS		
Entered Employment	29.1%	49.2%
Employment Retention	79.0%	70.5%
Average Earnings	\$9,374	\$8,045

	State Negotiated Goal '15	Actual Performance
WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS		
Entered Employment	38.4%	56.6%
Employment Retention	80.0%	88.7%
Average Earnings	\$12,000	\$10,997

	State Negotiated Goal '15	Actual Performance
WIA YOUTH		
Placement in Employment or Education	38.0%	42.9%
Attainment of Degree/Certificate	42.0%	55.3%
Literacy/Numeracy Gains	28.9%	13.6%

	State Negotiated Goal '15	Actual Performance
WAGNER-PEYSER		
Entered Employment Rate	40%	33%
Employment Retention	80%	74%
Average Earnings	\$15,000	\$12,395