

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, 2008 – June 30, 2009**

*Contact Person: Albert Bryan, Jr., Commissioner
VI Department of Labor
2203 Church Street
Christiansted, VI 00820-4612
(340) 773-1994*

Introduction

The activities of Program Year 2008 reflect a transitioning workforce system, forced to reinvent itself as it responded to unforeseen challenges in the local labor market. Initially, all efforts were focused on the implementation of a well thought out plan to transform the Territory's One-Stop service delivery system. Soon into the year however, the nation's economy suffered a meltdown that sent ripple effects throughout the worldwide economy. The Virgin Islands was no exception to this crisis and a shift in both focus and resources was necessary to meet the needs of customers.

The workforce system was now tasked with providing multi-layered services to individuals who had previously been employed in occupations where they were comfortable with their knowledge set and where they expected to remain until they were ready to seek new employment or leave the workforce. Not anticipating the depth of the economic downturn, job seekers soon realized that it would not be that easy to find a comparable job as many were now obsolete. Besides seeking employment, those looking for work would also have to assess their skill sets, possibly enhance them or in some instances be retrained in new occupational areas.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided welcomed additional capital into the workforce system to help address the growing crisis. Services to dislocated workers were enhanced and the summer youth employment program expanded. In addition to receiving career assessments and preparing for new lines of work, customers benefited from support services to include childcare and transportation that allowed them to fully utilize academic and training activities that were now a part of their job preparedness plan. New training was made available in demand occupation areas and in occupations slated for growth namely the energy or "green jobs" sector.

The local economic situation mirrors that of the US mainland in that business and industry is expected to continue streamlining their workforce in order to remain competitive. The Virgin Islands is further challenged by having limited employment opportunities available. In a small community like this, there is little chance of transferability to another company thus leaving displaced workers no choice but to retool themselves for other occupations. The challenge of the workforce system is to identify new and emerging occupations and provide access to the training that prepares workers to attain them.

Based on current employment statistics, the Virgin Islands private sector has lost 1,056 jobs since July 2008. Consequently, the workforce system in conjunction

with the government leadership and the business community continue to develop partnerships aimed at maximizing the talent of the remaining workforce to

Virgin Islands Employment Statistics for Program Year 2008

	Territorial	St. Croix	St. Thomas/ St. John
July 2008			
Unemployment Rate	5.5%	6.6%	4.6%
June 2009			
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	9.5%	6.9%

become more efficient. These partnerships also recognize that “new” growth sectors may provide some relief for the unemployed and underemployed and have begun to develop pathways into possible new careers. Additionally, they are also exploring ways to leverage all available resources to get individuals trained and ready for work.



Unemployment has soared over the past year in many of the employment sectors that have maintained stability through previous periods of economic uncertainty. Among those affected have been the workforce system’s best producing demand occupation areas such as hospitality, construction and manufacturing.

The Cost of Business

The WIA Title I allotment for the US Virgin Islands, in Program Year 2008 was \$2,224,038. American Recovery and Reinvestment funds, also considered PY'08 funding were \$2,094,243.

CATEGORY	ALLOTMENT PY'07	ALLOTMENT PY'08	ARRA PY'08
Youth	\$ 644,493	\$ 633,401	\$ 817,044
Adult	\$ 610,948	\$ 589,102	\$ 327,487
Dislocated Worker	\$1,041,901	\$1,001,535	\$ 949,712
TOTAL	\$2,297,342	\$2,224,038	\$2,094,243

During Program Year 2008, the Virgin Islands Workforce System anticipated serving two hundred and fifty (250) adults and dislocated workers through Individual Training Accounts (ITA). However, this year having been adversely affected by the economic downturn, many more customers accessed the services of the One-Stop system. By June 2009, three hundred and sixty-five customers had received training through formula funded ITA's.

WIA Formula Funds

CUSTOMERS	ST. THOMAS/ ST. JOHN	ST. CROIX	TOTAL
Adults	146	55	201
Dislocated Workers	70	94	164
TOTAL	216	149	365

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. Due to the high demand for advanced level training particularly important to the dislocated worker population, the Workforce Investment Board increased the ITA cap from \$3230 to \$3800.

Expenditures on intensive and training services during Program Year 2008 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 \$1354.75. 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.

Older and out of school youth who participate in the year-round youth program have the added benefit of using ITA's to access additional academic and training services. The Youth program encourages mastery of foundational level skills, which include basic skills, GED prep, or high school diploma classes prior to participation in occupational skills classes. Many of the ITA's issued were to youth seeking their high school credentials or refreshing their knowledge of the basic academic skills.

CUSTOMER	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
Youth	45	30	75
DOLLARS	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
Youth	\$10,684.50	\$40,869	\$51,553.50

Occupational areas included entry level and intermediate computer skills training, welding, and AC and refrigeration repair, as well as nursing and allied health. On average, the cost per ITA per youth participant was \$687.38.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funds

Additional training was made available through ITA training for individuals funded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Ninety-six (96) ITA's had already been issued for the month of June 2009.

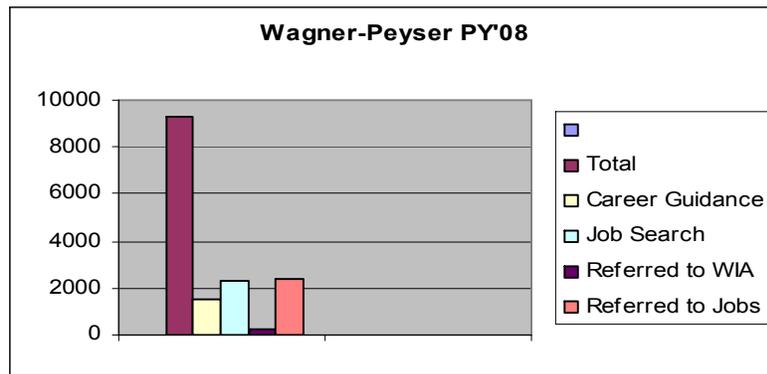
CUSTOMER	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
ADULTS	47	14	61
DISLOCATED WORKERS	12	15	27
YOUTH	8		8
TOTAL	67	29	96
DOLLARS	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
ADULTS	\$29,045.00	\$16,290.00	\$45,335.00
DISLOCATED WORKERS	\$ 6,900.00	\$17,221.00	\$24,121.00
YOUTH	\$ 4,750.00		\$ 4,750.00
TOTAL	\$40,695.00	\$33,511.00	\$74,206.00

The average cost of an ITA for ARRA funded participants is \$772.98.

Two Hundred and seventy-two (272) youth participated in the summer work experience funded with ARRA at the cost of \$379,440. By the end of the summer each youth total earnings was approximately \$1395.00.

Wagner-Peyser Activities

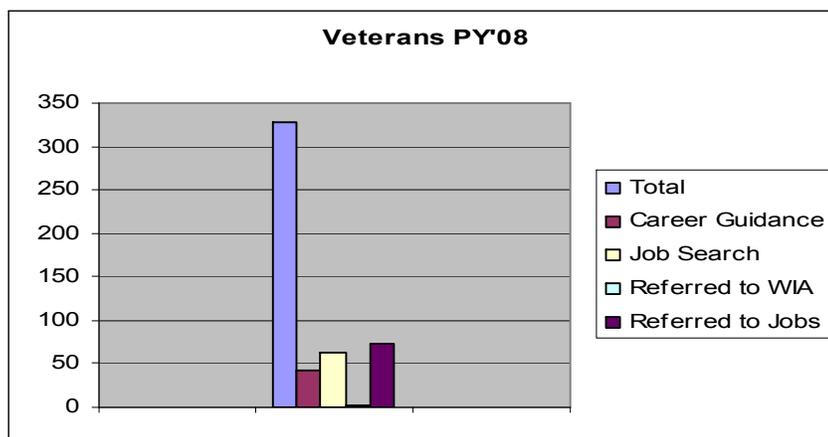
Wagner-Peyser funding for PY'08 increased slightly to \$1,385,462. Here again, the effects of the recession were evidenced by a 38% increase in the number of customers accessing the system and receiving services. Nine thousand, three hundred thirteen (9,313) customers accessed services this year.



One thousand, five hundred forty-three (1,543) received career guidance while two thousand, two hundred sixty-two (2,262) took advantage of job search activities. Approximately two hundred thirty-two (232) individuals were referred to WIA services. Despite all the activities the employment situation worsened and only two thousand, three hundred ninety-eight (2,398) individuals were referred to jobs for which they qualified.

Veterans

There were three hundred and twenty-eight (328) new veteran job seekers applications between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009.



Sixty-three (63) took part in job search activities while seventy-four (74) were referred to employment. Five (5) individuals were referred to WIA services and one (1) participated in training activities.

Service Delivery Strategies

As the Territory strives to help displaced workers return to normalcy, new and alternative methods of providing services have been employed. The Territory's primary focus is to ensure that all eligible customers have strong foundational skills, which include personal effectiveness, academic and workplace competencies. This is the first phase of the tiered competency model adopted by the Virgin Islands; one strategy currently being used to manage the complex needs of the twenty-first century worker.

Another strategy particularly embraced by employers provides for advanced training for incumbent workers. As workers move up in their profession, entry-level opportunities are created for first time workers. Employers who are forced to downsize their workforce also benefit by having employees who are retained skilled at multiple tasks within the organization. For workers transitioning from one job to another, this type of training may also allow for lateral moves into comparable positions in other organizations.

One aspect of providing access to more customers throughout the Territory is to have services available in multiple locations. The VI Workforce system has partnered with the community development arm of the University of the Virgin Islands (UVI-CELL) to provide access points for One Stop services. These access points will offer many of the core and some of the intensive and training services usually found only at the designated One-Stop centers. All access points will report data directly to the One-Stops to ensure the consistency of services. These strategies are at different levels of implementation but are already having a positive effect on both the employer and job seeker customers.

Program Profiles

Despite the ailing economy, training providers cut no corners to offer a vast array of brilliant, well-developed relevant programming. Programs conducted with both WIA formula funds and the ARRA funds produced exemplary projects for adults, dislocated workers and youth this past year. Two adult/dislocated worker programs and two youth programs are profiled here.

YOUTH

My Brothers Workshop

My Brothers Workshop is a faith-based program that serves out of school youth. The program began as a church renovation project that involved members of the church slowly renovating their facilities. Noticing the interest displayed by several youth in the area, the program director invited them to help out with the renovation; thus began the "at-risk youth program". More young men were

invited to learn a trade and participate in construction and maintenance projects that included various aspects of the construction trade including electrical, masonry, and painting. The projects ranged from building bunk beds for needy parishioners to rehabilitating classrooms for the public school system.

Working with these young men however, presented its own challenges; most were illiterate, all had dropped out of high school and many could not communicate effectively. In addition to learning a skill, youth were encouraged to get their high school diploma or GED. With the assistance of the workforce system twelve youth were able to have a paid work experience to hone the skills they had learned. The program director notes that all participating youth have certain things in common:

- ♦ They all live in public housing;
- ♦ They are all from single parent families;
- ♦ They have all grown up in poverty;
- ♦ They have all experienced violence on a daily basis;
- ♦ They are all surrounded by drugs and crime;
- ♦ They are all looking for hope and a future; and
- ♦ ALMOST everyone has given up on them.

To date eighteen (18) young men with no prospects for the future have participated in *My Brothers Workshop*. Seven has been hired permanently; ten are enrolled in the GED program. Their lives have been changed.

CTEC Academy

The Career and Technical Education Center Academy boasted a mixture of in school and out-of school youth participating in a work and learn summer experience. During the academic school year the in-school youth were part of a career and technical program that taught the basics of the crafts skills trades. Summer was an opportunity for them to put into practice what they had learned. The out-of school youth were mostly high school dropouts known to the workforce system who were ready for their summer work experience. The out-of school youth participated in a mini training in the areas of electrical, mechanical, plumbing, welding and instrumentation, which brought them up to speed with their in-school counterparts. In the first phase of the program, the CTEC Academy provided students with workshops that dealt with safety in the workplace, leadership development and team building. The skills learned in these workshops were put into practice when the Academy youth were engaged to give safety awareness workshops to youngsters in summer camps. Not only did they have a chance to practice leadership skills and communication techniques, they also learned what it meant to rely on the efforts of a team rather than on themselves. The work experience phase allowed them to work on 'real' projects mostly school maintenance projects such as classroom rehabilitation,

repair of school water pump facility and structural fabrication. All of the in-school youth will return to school and continue their education. The out-of-school youth were inspired enough by this program to encourage them to continue with their occupational skills training straight through to certification attainment. This will be done concurrently with attainment of their high school credentials.

ADULTS/DISLOCATED WORKERS

Craft Training Pre Apprenticeship

The Craft Training Pre Apprenticeship program was designed to give dislocated workers who had previously worked within the construction or manufacturing industries an opportunity to become certified professionals in their respective areas of concentration. More than forty individuals participated in this project, many who had previously worked with the Territory's oil refinery and hoped to regain employment there upon the acquisition of their certification. All participants were required to take the NCCER core curriculum, which is a foundational level course for most construction and manufacturing occupations. Successful participants were then able to take classes in welding, pipefitting or boiler making, also using the NCCER curriculum – the end result being industry-recognized certification.

Solar Energy Project

The Solar Energy Project was a joint venture between the VI Departments of Labor, Energy and Education and private industry. Thirty individuals, most of who were dislocated workers were selected for this project. Again in this program NCCER's core curriculum was the required first course before delving into the particulars. The training concentrates on the basics of installing code compliant solar hot water systems. Student technicians learn practical design criteria, installation guidelines, safety issues, maintenance and legal considerations of solar hot water heating systems. This program consists of 20 weeks, (240) hours administered with a mix of online training, hands on training and On-the-Job training. All successful participants will be hired at the end of this training to work on an initiative with the Energy Office to install solar hot water systems to the residents of the US Virgin Islands.

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	56%	39.3%
Employment Retention	79%	60.1%
Average Earnings	\$9000.0	\$12,296.7

	State Negotiated Goal	Actual Performance
WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS		
Entered Employment	72%	48.7%
Employment Retention	77%	72.5%
Average Earnings	\$10,500.0	\$11,889.9

	State Negotiated Goal	Actual Performance
WIA YOUTH		
Placement in Employment or Education	58%	16.7%
Attainment of Degree/Certificate	44%	33.3%
Literacy/Numeracy Gains	36%	0.0%

	State Negotiated Goal	Actual Performance
WAGNER-PEYSER		
Entered Employment Rate	53%	36%
Employment Retention	75%	64%
Average Earnings	\$12,200.0	\$11,874.0