

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, 2009 – June 30, 2010

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Introduction

During Program Year 2009, the VI Workforce Investment System had the opportunity to put into action many of the new strategies recently developed to engage the workforce community both from the employee standpoint as well as the employer.

- The Territory rolled out its competency based tiered level training guidelines which require each customer seeking occupational skills training to pass basic competencies in academics, personal effectiveness and workplace behavior, either by demonstration through testing or by undergoing preliminary training in those areas. Advanced career assessments and career mentoring were also introduced to assist those following career paths which require long term training.
- The additional resources made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds allowed for an additional focus on two distinctly hard to serve populations – the dislocated worker by facilitating, through short term workshops and clinics, their reconnection to an ever shrinking job market; and the out-of-school youth by offering them long term training that coupled basic skills with occupational skills in a single setting resulting in industry recognized credentials in occupations slated for growth namely the energy or “green jobs” sector.
- In order to widen the System’s customer base, the Territory introduced technology based learning to our eligible customers whose barriers may have included long distances from training locations. Off-island training was also approved by the Workforce Board for those “serious” customers whose only option would be to relocate to the mainland for training purposes.
- The Territory’s fifteen percent discretionary funding used in tandem with system waivers allowed for industry specific training for incumbent workers who without the necessary training would have not had the skill set necessary to keep their jobs.
- On-the-job training efforts also resurged during the past program year with increased efforts by the Workforce Board and the VI Department of Labor to promote this training option to the business community as a viable means of employing untrained individuals and receiving reimbursement on a graduated scale for the time spent training them.

Even as job opportunities remained stagnant, the VI Workforce System opted to use the combination of these strategies to equip the workforce from all angles in preparation for the new opportunities that will slowly come.

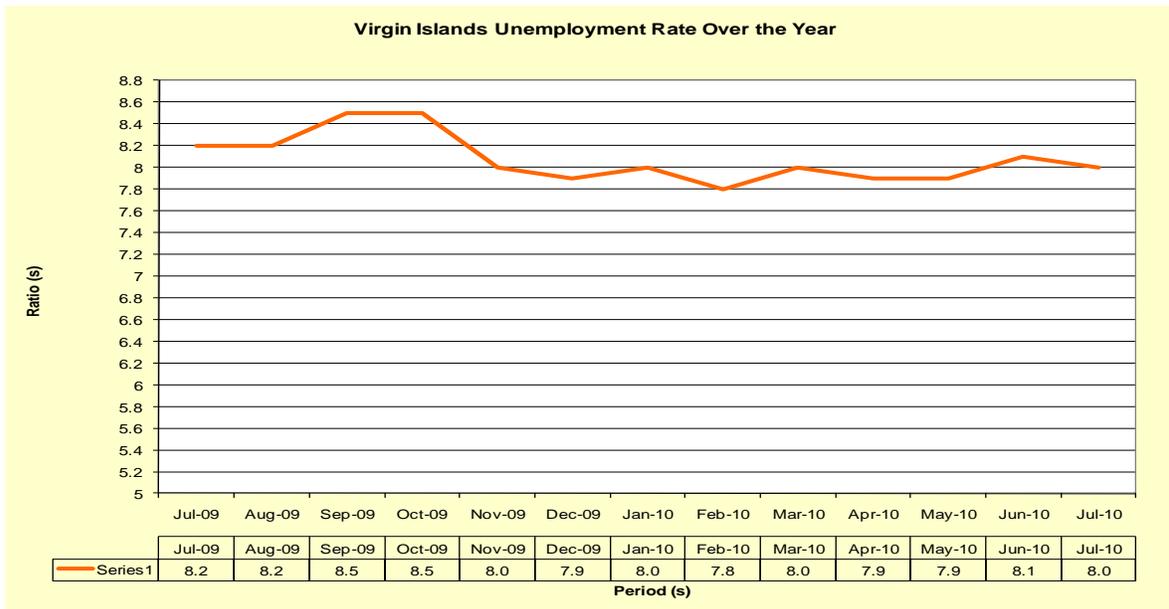
Labor Market Information

The labor force trend moved down a point in the month of July compared to June, primarily due to summer employment payroll. Although there was positive public sector change, private sector employment inched down by (0.5%) during the period amounting to 166 less jobs in the economy. (Source: Current Employment Statics monthly survey). (Virgin Islands VIDOLA\$ Unemployment Insurance automated system).

Virgin Islands Employment Statistics for Program Year 2009

	Territorial	St. Croix	St. Thomas/ St. John
July 2009			
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	10.0%	6.5%
June 2010			
Unemployment Rate	8.1%	9.0%	7.5%

On an over the year basis unemployment overall is relatively flat, however, in the disaggregation, each district is moving in opposite directions. The St. Thomas/St. John local area has a higher rate over the year while St. Croix’s rate has moved down. Some factors attributing to this are the industries and their employment concentration, specifically in the hospitality and retail sectors, which have seen slow growth. (Source: Current Employment Statistics monthly survey).



Although unemployment rates have fluctuated only slightly over the past year it has remained consistently high. 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 2009 was \$2,225,531.

CATEGORY	ALLOTMENT PY'08	ARRA PY'08	ALLOTMENT PY'09
Youth	\$ 633,401	\$ 817,044	\$ 633,401
Adult	\$ 589,102	\$ 327,487	\$ 589,102
Dislocated Worker	\$1,001,535	\$ 949,712	\$1,003,028
TOTAL	\$2,224,038	\$2,094,243	\$2,225,531

During Program Year 2009, the Virgin Islands Workforce System benefitted from additional resources due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Initial plans anticipated doubling the number of individuals receiving services in the adult, dislocated worker and youth categories. Altogether 905 individuals received intensive and training services through Individual Training Accounts.

WIA Formula Funds

CUSTOMERS	ST. THOMAS/ ST. JOHN	ST. CROIX	TOTAL
Adults	216	150	366
Dislocated Workers	134	92	226
TOTAL	350	242	592

The customer's Individual Service Strategy (ISS) determines the amount of each Individual Training Account (ITA) and each customer works with his/her counselor to ensure that all his or her training needs are addressed. Due to the uncertain economic climate the workforce system saw a sixty-two percent (62%) increase from last program year in the number of individuals receiving services this program year with formula funds.

Expenditures on intensive and training services for Adults and Dislocated Workers during Program Year 2009 are as follows:

DOLLARS	ST. THOMAS/ ST. JOHN	ST. CROIX	TOTAL
Adults	\$188,987.48	\$248,700.07	\$437,687.55
Dislocated Workers	\$ 91,537.88	\$198,950.75	\$290,488.63
TOTAL	\$280,525.36	\$447,650.82	\$728,176.18

On average, the cost per ITA per participant amounted to \$1,230.03 and consisted largely of short-term occupation related courses that honed current skills or introductory level courses that introduced new technologies to old

workplaces. With employers now requiring employees to multitask, both adults and dislocated workers benefitted from these fast paced courses designed to get them back to the workplace as soon as possible. Additionally, support services to include transportation, meals and childcare approximate \$750.00 per eligible participant per six-week period.

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. On average, the cost per ITA per youth participant was \$628.06.

CUSTOMER	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
Youth	76	24	100
DOLLARS	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
Youth	\$15,599.62	\$47,206.00	\$62,805.62

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. Upon completion of the GED, high-school diploma or skills refresher classes’ youth are encouraged to continue their education either at the local University or through local service providers offering occupational skills training in many of the Territory’s demand occupation sectors.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Funds

Much of the focused training that occurred in PY’09 was a direct result of the additional funding made available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The VI Workforce System partnered with the local high growth sectors to develop training and employment opportunities for adults, dislocated workers and older youths. These training opportunities were designed to be more intensive than traditional training programs and of a longer duration. Industry-recognized credentials were required for successful completion.

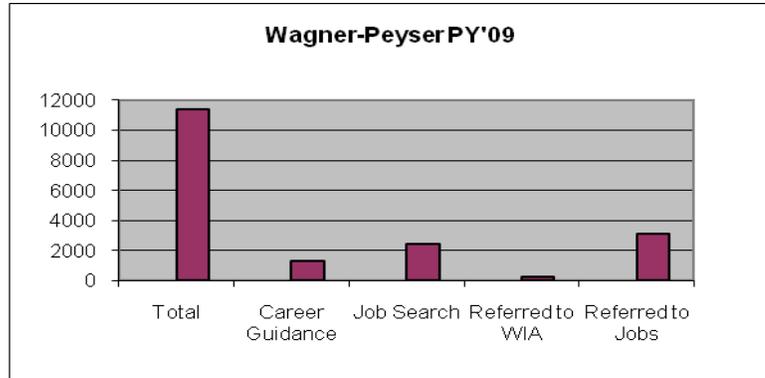
CUSTOMER	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
ADULTS	48	62	110
DISLOCATED WORKERS	24	68	92
YOUTH	1	10	11
TOTAL	73	140	213
DOLLARS	STT/STJ	STX	TOTAL
ADULTS	\$ 68,491.50	\$125,726.50	\$194,218.00
DISLOCATED WORKERS	\$ 31,625.00	\$135,241.00	\$166,866.00
YOUTH	\$ 300.00	\$ 16,874.00	\$ 17,174.00
TOTAL	\$100,416.50	\$277,841.50	\$378,258.00

The average cost of an ITA for ARRA funded participants was \$1,775.86

Wagner-Peyser Activities

The VI Workforce Investment System received \$1,385,855 in Wagner-Peyser funding for PY'09. These services coupled with Core WIA services allowed all individuals accessing One-Stop services to receive job search and job preparatory services. Those individuals transitioning from one job to another received pertinent information and quick turnaround services. Eleven thousand three hundred and fifty-eight (11,358) customers accessed services this year.

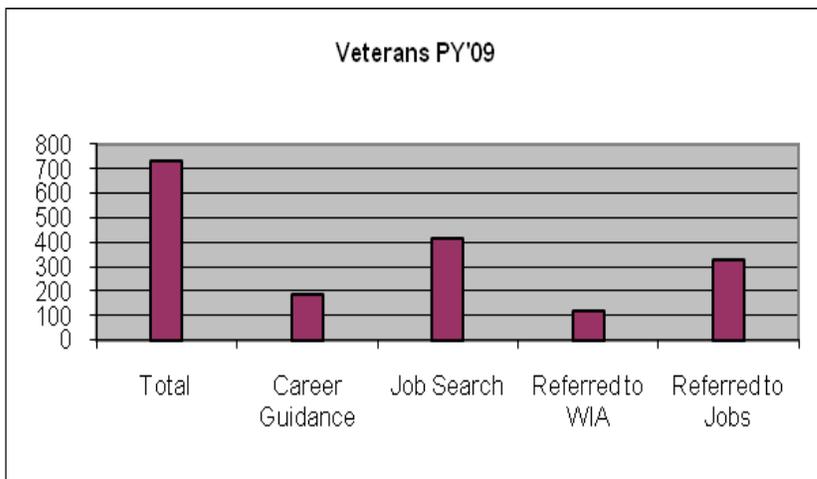
One thousand, three hundred and thirty-six (1,336) received career guidance while two thousand, four hundred and fifty-eight (2,458) took advantage of job search activities. Still hoping to re-enter the workforce sooner rather than later, fewer than



requested or required training services. Approximately two hundred seventy-one (271) individuals were referred to WIA services. As on the mainland, although the economy is showing signs of recovery, employers are still reluctant to hire more than absolutely needed thus, only three thousand, one hundred and eight (3,108) individuals were referred to jobs for which they qualified.

Veterans

This year saw a notable rise in veteran activity. As more young men and women returned from active duty, they sought jobs that utilized the skill sets they



acquired while in service. There were seven hundred and thirty-three (733) new veteran job seekers applications between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010.

Four hundred and sixteen (416) took part in job search

activities while three hundred and twenty-nine (329) were referred to employment. One hundred and fifteen (115) individuals were referred to WIA services and one hundred and eighty-eight (188) received career guidance.

Service Delivery Strategies

In implementing its service delivery strategies the VI Workforce System sought to engage workforce stakeholders at all levels – from the customer base: the youth, the disenfranchised, and the dislocated worker to the employer base to the agency collaborations. We began with a renewed focus on meeting the needs of the business community. For small business owners as well as large corporations, waivers received for customized training, on-the-job training and incumbent worker training assisted in promoting a training portfolio with options for entry level to seasoned employees. Whether the business was just starting out, reinforcing its workforce or reinventing its way forward, employers could find a training solution.

This strategy drew employers from the hospitality sector that had previously not thought about using workforce services for their training needs. Several of them collaborated with local training providers to develop a curriculum for entry level positions. The healthcare sector took advantage of incumbent worker training opportunities as it raced to certify hemodialysis technicians before an April deadline. Failure to do so would have resulted in numerous workers being terminated. A local boatbuilding company began by utilizing the incumbent worker training option to introduce their employees to the new technologies necessary to perform their jobs. Without this training, the company would have been forced to downsize. The training was successful enough that old employees moved up in position and responsibility and now that employer is developing an on-the-job training for new entry-level employees.

New strategies also included outreach to hard-to-serve communities. In conjunction with the Bureau of Corrections, the VI Workforce System is working on a two-part “reconnection” process that starts with the inmates who are soon to be released by developing an Individual Service Strategy for them before they are released. Core services, testing and career assessments are given to help them discern their career path and develop a plan for eliminating any barriers that may exist. The *Work Keys* test is administered to those ready for work to give employers a base point for training. Community based organizations provide intensive counseling and family reconnection support. Once release, the One-Stop staff provide one-on-one guidance to help the individual continue on their planned course of action through to employment.

The VI Workforce System has also collaborated with the Housing Finance Authority to help disenfranchised individuals become job ready and gainfully employed in order to be able to purchase the low income housing units in which they currently reside. This strategy too begins with intensive assessments to determine the barriers that have kept them from being employed and intensive counseling to help them overcome those barriers. The incentive of being a homeowner is a strong one, and many stay the course in order to reach that goal.

The multiple service portfolio was also successfully employed in the Youth development sector. For in-school or college aged youth, employers were given the option of a six-week work experience program or a customized work experience program (lengthier work experiences that expose students to all aspects of a company) with the basic requirement of providing a “real work experience” where occupational skills are learned. For long-term out-of-school youth, pre-apprenticeship training and on-the-job training programs were offered as the best options to provide both theoretical learning and hands-on experience as youth mastered a skill. An employer or industry recognized certificate must accompany the successful completion of either of these two options. Finally, to ensure that youth had sufficient reinforcement to navigate the new world of work, and encouragement to face unforeseen barriers a mentorship program was established that paired a young person with a business mentor (not necessarily in the same organization).

This service strategy outlined in the Program Year '09 Modification to the Strategic Plan was fleshed out beyond expectation. An ongoing process, it is expected that it will be further redefined as we progress.

Program Profile

Our training providers continue 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. One program in particular stood out above the others not only because it addressed a “hard-to-serve” population, but more so because it exemplified the benefits of private/public partnerships and highlighted the power of learning through combined academics and hands-on experiences.

ADA SUMMER PROGRAM

Most teenagers expect to have a summer work experience. No exception for this dynamic group of students who despite multiple challenges requested and received career exploration and career development activities in local demand sectors.

Through funding by the Developmental Disabilities Council, the VI Department of Human Services and the VI Department of Labor the six (6) weeks computer based curriculum using the Watson Institute Vocational Curriculum was designed specifically for the ADA Summer Program for twenty (20) developmentally challenged students. The program worked in conjunction with public and private sector employers in the community; providing hands on job training, site visits and exploration of the students’ interests. Using individual laptops, students were able to develop basic computer skills using visuals, art and music, enhance communication skills and develop appropriate vocational and social skills.



Private Sector assisted in Weekly Job Site Visits allowing students to explore vocational options in the community.



Students were encouraged to have discussions and develop communication skills with the assistance of the staff. Activities and down time were implemented to provide these opportunities.



During the six week program exploration and development of vocational skills of 14-21 year old high school students with development disabilities currently enrolled in public or private schools in the Virgin Islands. Because the program was computer oriented, each student was issued a laptop computer and taught the basics of operation and learned a few new applications. Arts and music were integrated into the curriculum to maintain the interest level. The computer based vocational skill building curriculum consisted of:

- Week 1: Vocational Exploration
- Week 2: Vocational Interviewing and Job Searching
- Week 3: Vocational Social Skills
- Week 4: Vocational Stress
- Week 5: Vocational Self-Advocacy
- Week 6: Vocational Health and Fitness Week

At the end of each week, a pediatric neuropsychologist assessed the performance of the staff and the progress of the students. Behavioral issues and best practices were discussed at these meetings. Students were allowed equal time to discuss their progress, give suggestions and speak in confidence with the psychologist and program manager.

During the first three weeks of the program, it became evident that students who were below grade level reading skills were quickly making advancement in reading and comprehension, partly because they were required to “read out loud” during the group reading sessions.

By the conclusion of the summer program, using all the skills they had acquired, each student gave a power point presentation on the different occupations they had visited and researched and further discussed which occupation they would like to pursue in the future.

Status of State Evaluation Activities

There was no evaluation conducted for the Program Year period being reported on. The VI Workforce Investment Board will be releasing an RFP in December 2010 to evaluate the activities of Program Year 2010. Items to be addressed will include:

- The general effectiveness of the programs and activities in relation to cost;
- The effectiveness of the performance measures relating to such programs and activities;
- The effectiveness of the structure and mechanisms for delivery of services; and
- The extent to which such programs and activities meet the needs of various demographic groups and meet the needs of the local community

This evaluation should be completed by July 2011 and will be reported on it the PY '10 Annual Report.

Performance Information

The Virgin Islands is a common measures state. A hallmark of the Workforce Investment Act is continuous improvement and each year new strategies are employed to increase the system's performance. Performance goals this year were met or exceeded in most categories with Entered Employment for Dislocated Workers still proving the most challenging. With the new strategies employed it is anticipated that this too will see significant improvement in the months ahead.

	State Negotiated Goal '09	Actual Performance
WIA ADULTS		
Entered Employment	44.8%	47.5%
Employment Retention	79%	80.2%
Average Earnings	\$9000.00	\$9,830.40

	State Negotiated Goal '09	Actual Performance
WIA DISLOCATED WORKERS		
Entered Employment	57.6%	41.1%
Employment Retention	77%	89.1%
Average Earnings	\$10,500.00	\$11,704.50

	State Negotiated Goal '09	Actual Performance
WIA YOUTH		
Placement in Employment or Education	58%	46.9%
Attainment of Degree/Certificate	44%	30.4%
Literacy/Numeracy Gains	36%	0.0%

	State Negotiated Goal '09	Actual Performance
WAGNER-PEYSER		
Entered Employment Rate	42.4%	36.0%
Employment Retention	75%	67.0%
Average Earnings	\$12,200.0	\$11,314.00