



OFFICE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS

**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

www.doi.gov/oia
News Release

Date: May 5, 2015

Contact: Tanya Harris Joshua 202-208-6008

Tanya_Joshua@ios.doi.gov

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas

**\$850,000 in Interior Grants to Assist U.S. Virgin Islands
Government**

*Will fund Medical Center Upgrades, Youth Apprenticeships, Utility Maintenance
Training and Database Set-Up, Economic Indicator Survey*

WASHINGTON, D.C. (May 5, 2015) – Interior Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina recently approved nearly \$850,000 in grant assistance to help address priority areas for the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) Government. Funding will support improvements to the St. Thomas East End Medical Center; provide at-risk youth with apprenticeship opportunities; strengthen capacity at the Water and Power Authority; and underwrite the 2015 Household Income and Expenditure Survey.

“It is important that the Virgin Islands have the resources to update economic indicator data for the Territory. Accurate and timely data is critical for investors and decision-makers with respect to the economy and in seeking fair treatment by the federal government in its allocation of federal funding to the Virgin Islands,” said Assistant Secretary Kia’aina. “The additional federal funding provided will also help strengthen capacity within the Virgin Islands Housing Authority and USVI Water and Power Authority as well as increase healthcare access provided by the St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation,” added Kia’aina.

St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation (Center) - \$201,500 to support the only existing federally qualified health center in the St. Thomas-St. John district which provides health services to more than half of the total population of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Funding will be used to upgrade, improve, and enhance existing information technology infrastructure and to help the Center continue to meet its goal and commitment to provide appropriate, cost-efficient,

comprehensive high-quality health care to the residents of the community without regard for their ability to pay.

Virgin Islands Housing Authority (VIHA) - \$242,698 to fund the YouthBuild Apprenticeship Pilot Project geared towards developing at-risk youth ages 16-24. Youth will receive training and develop skills to build and install cabinets and screens for the VIHA, developers, and private homeowners. The program aims to establish itself as a non-profit 501c(3) corporation, conduct staff training, develop and administer project evaluation activities, and develop an apprenticeship business model for replication and sustainability.

Virgin Islands Household Expenditure Income Survey (HIES) - \$242,836 will fund the University of the Virgin Islands to conduct the Household Income Expenditure Survey, a statistical tool used to adjust the Consumer Price Index, and quantify household poverty and hardship in a community. Last conducted in 2005, the HIES will provide important economic indicators, as well as data and performance measures to evaluate the development and self-sufficiency needs of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

USVI Water and Power Authority (WAPA) - \$125,437 will be used to build capacity and train WAPA engineers to operate, maintain, and manage water treatment plants. Courses through the American Petroleum Institute will teach maintenance skills needed to ensure the integrity of pipelines, pressure vessels and above-ground storage tanks after they have been placed in service. The training further enables WAPA engineers to conduct full-scale internal inspection and evaluation to reduce costs and eliminate the need for outsourcing.

USVI Water and Power Authority (WAPA) - \$35,857 will provide safety training to employees at the St. Thomas Power Plant. Funds will also be used to purchase a multifunction printer that will enable the 50-year old power plant to preserve, create, and document historical plant data; and provide upgrades to a schematic electronic database.

The Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas carries out the administrative responsibilities of the Secretary of the Interior in coordinating federal policy for the territories of American Samoa, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and administering and overseeing U.S. federal assistance to the Freely Associated States of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau under the Compacts of Free Association. The Assistant Secretary executes these responsibilities through the Office of Insular Affairs.

###