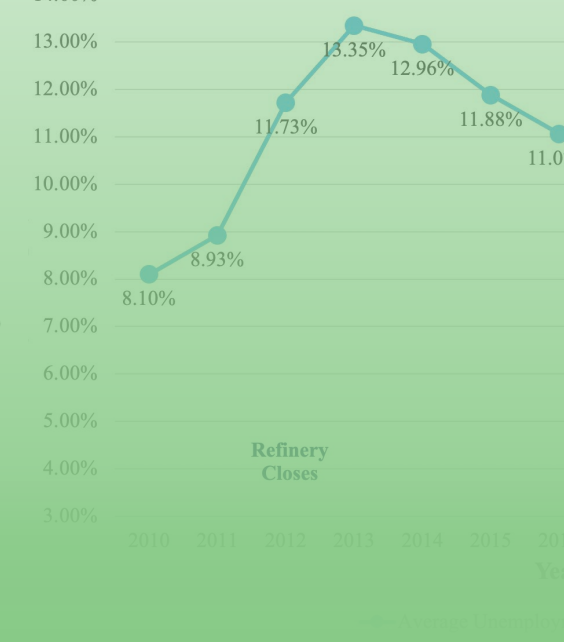
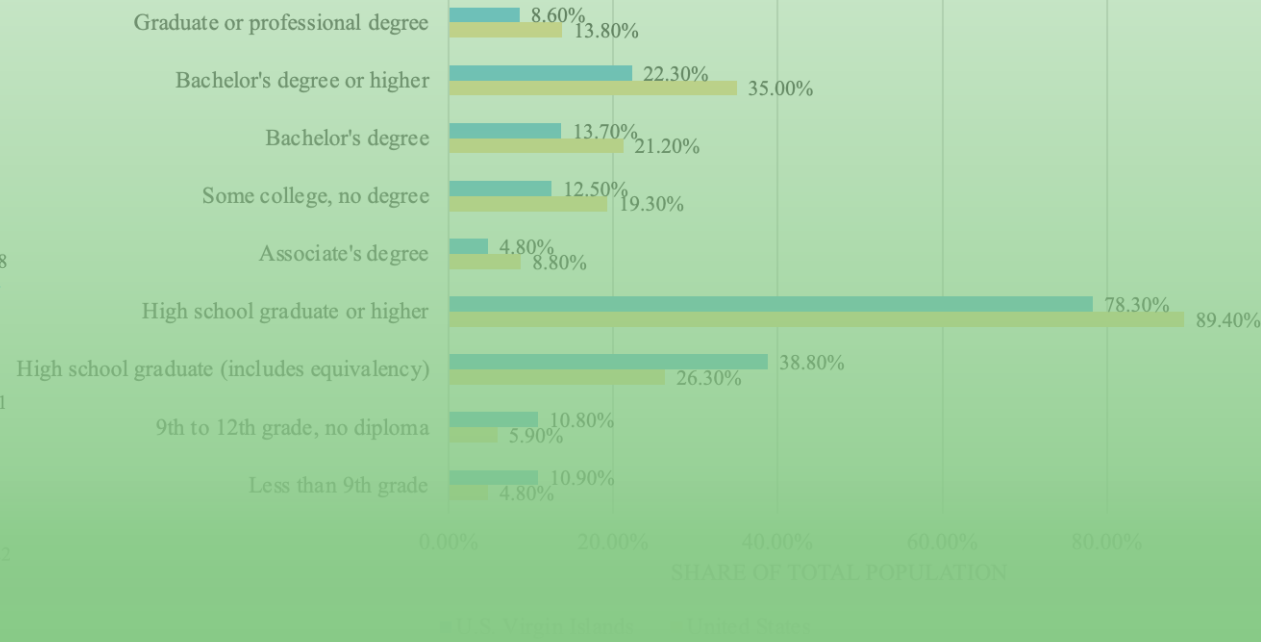




USVI WORKFORCE ASSESSMENT AND LABOR SHED STUDY





Context – Key Highlights

Demographic, employment, industry sector trends, and current training landscape.



CONTEXT - KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Demographic Trends

- ❖ Aging and shrinking population
- ❖ Low educational attainment
- ❖ Low household and per capita income combined with high cost of living
- ❖ High child poverty rates

Employment Trends

- ❖ Economic shocks since 2011
- ❖ Long-term positive trend in unemployment
- ❖ Downward long-term trends in labor force and labor participation rates

CONTEXT - KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry Sector Trends

- ❖ Tourism, retail trade, and administrative services, including government, drive economy
- ❖ Accommodation and food service, transportation and warehousing, retail trade, public administration, and construction are top growing sectors.

Current Training Landscape

- ❖ A network of organizations anchored by three government departments:
 - VI Department of Education—K-12 and adult learners
 - VI Department of Labor—training programs funded by the U.S. Department of Labor
 - VI Department of Human Services—vocational rehabilitation programs
- ❖ University of the Virgin Islands (UVI) and the UVI CELL (Center for Excellence in Leadership and Learning)

METHODOLOGY

- ❖ Build on existing reports, strategic plans, and policy documents
- ❖ Industry focus groups and stakeholder interviews
- ❖ Student survey



Agribusiness



Coastal/Ocean Resources



Health Sciences



Light Manufacturing



Professional/Tech Services



Renewable Energy



Research & Development

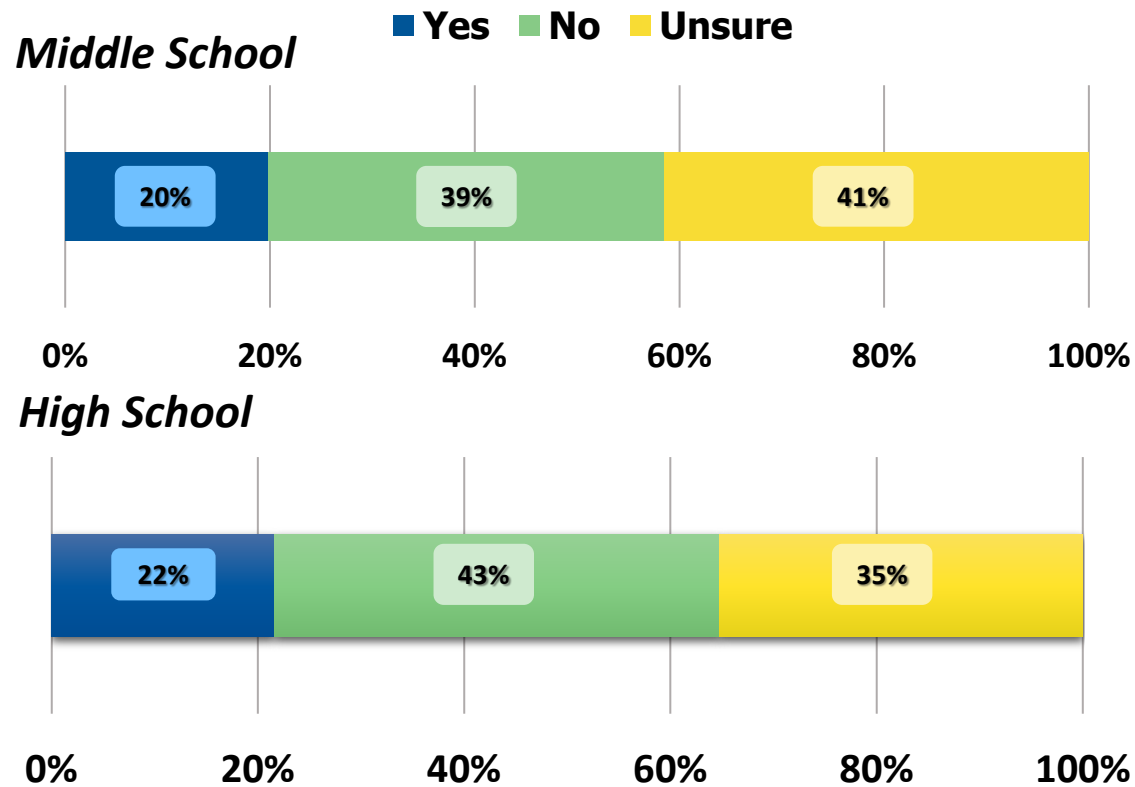


VI-Style Tourism

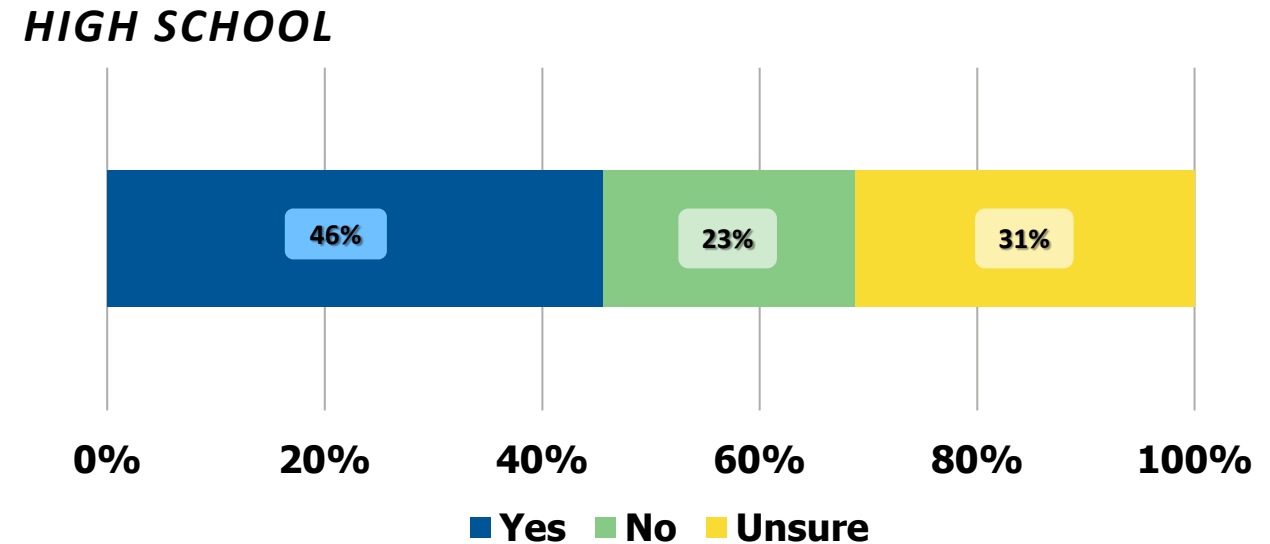
Identified 177 “bright outlook” careers with high school diploma+ education requirements

STUDENT CAREER INTEREST SURVEY: KEY OBSERVATIONS

WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTINUE TO LIVE AND WORK
IN THE USVI AFTER YOU GRADUATE?



DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN PURSUE THIS
CAREER IN THE USVI?





8 Priority Industry Sectors

Challenges, opportunities, leading occupations, and training requirements.

COMMONALITIES

Challenges

- ❖ Infrastructure – High cost and unreliability of electricity and access to high-speed internet.
- ❖ Lack of Training Programs – Employers consistently cited lack of programs to prepare and develop a workforce for their business needs.
- ❖ Employee Recruitment & Retention – High cost of living and low wages.
- ❖ Limited Exposure to Careers – Exposure to a variety of career pathways is misaligned with priority sectors.
- ❖ Lack of Work-Ready Skills – Existing soft skills critical to success in the modern workplace are insufficient.

Opportunities

- ❖ Many existing policy documents and strategic plans are ripe for implementation.
- ❖ Strong industry forecasts across all priority sectors.
- ❖ Existing economic drivers are well-positioned to support growth and diversification across the economy.
- ❖ An eager workforce – needs the scaffolding for success.



Seven Recommendations

REVITALIZE EXISTING CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS

- ❖ **Support C-TECH's current plans to pursue technical college accreditation** to become St. Croix Career and Technical Education College. This effort will likely take several years but could play an important role in further solidifying the Territory's commitment to robust CTE capabilities.
- ❖ CTE program leaders should **increase their emphasis on skill sets and competencies tied to important cross-cutting career opportunities**. Examples include customer-facing skills, soft skills, and basic English and math, as well as written communications.
- ❖ **Review, assess, revise, and upgrade existing CTE programs on a continuing basis**. New programs of study should be developed in cooperation with industry partners, with all programs of study supported and advised by an outside business advisory board of key employers and industry experts.
- ❖ **Encourage and enable industry professionals to serve as instructors in various CTE programs**.
- ❖ **Establish a scholarship fund to support students seeking training that might not be available in the USVI**. More specialized programs, especially those using state-of-the-art equipment, may only be available on the mainland. Students utilizing these resources should be required to sign some type of commitment to return to the USVI and work for a prescribed period that aligns with the cost and time requirements of their training programs.
- ❖ Support **expanded CTE training at the high school and college levels** and align with other USVI workforce initiatives. At present, four programs are in place, with two initiatives—in boat building and healthcare—directly tied to the USVI's current priority industries.
- ❖ **Expand CTE access to adult learners**. Several interviewed workforce development professionals pointed out that some adult learners face challenges in accessing existing service centers due to a lack of transportation or other factors. Improved access could take many forms, from adding additional service centers, embracing partnerships with other organizations serving at-risk populations, or by expanding the use and availability of online service options.

EXPAND WORK-READINESS AND SOFT-SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAMS

Youth

- ❖ Enhance K-12 education by adding to basic education with integrated soft-skills training and basic direct occupation skills.
- ❖ Establish basic-skills and soft-skills assessments for students. Assessments identify gaps in education and/or soft skills that may be addressed in school or with on-the-job training.
- ❖ Connect employers to students.
- ❖ Establish basic skilled trade training tied to high-demand occupations.
- ❖ Develop basic customer services and food safety training programs at the high school level.
- ❖ Enhance outreach from UVI to high schools.
- ❖ Expand internship and apprenticeship programs for students. Increase funding to encourage businesses to provide more opportunities and to encourage greater participation by students.
- ❖ Identify/create a more flexible, localized pool of funds for apprenticeships, especially for students who are seeking post-secondary skills-based training.

Adults

- ❖ Establish a standardized basic and soft-skills assessment through the Workforce Investment Board, public sector and private sector training providers, and with support of businesses.
- ❖ Establish standardized soft- and basic-skills training that is focused on filling identified gaps for individuals as well as enhancing overall skills that support occupations in the Vision 2040 sectors.
- ❖ Increase access to programs based on location and extended operating hours. Provide online training, too.
- ❖ Identify resources to provide at least a modest level of support in a “pay-to-train” approach to encourage people to be engaged in the basic and soft-skills training needed to obtain and/or retain entry and foundation jobs.
- ❖ Develop life-skills training, especially for those in poverty, to enable them to better address issues that hinder their participation in the workforce (e.g., transportation, childcare, housing).

IMPROVE RESPONSIVENESS TO BUSINESS NEEDS

- ❖ **Conduct a formal review of existing rules and regulations** to identify leading bottlenecks and areas where regulatory reform efforts could be implemented. This effort should be done with businesses across size and sectors providing input.
- ❖ VIEDA and other key partners should **create advisory bodies, composed of business, workforce, and education leaders**, for each of target industry. These bodies would support regulatory review and provide a venue for shared discussion of key industry challenges, priority talent needs, and education and training opportunities.

EXPAND THE LOCAL TALENT BASE

- ❖ **Continue efforts to link with diaspora communities in the U.S.** VIEDA and other key agencies should develop a more formalized diaspora outreach and engagement effort that publicizes local economic development efforts and seeks to build connections between residents and businesses and the diaspora community.
- ❖ **Continue and expand investment in essential infrastructure.** High energy and housing costs and poor transportation options, are cited as factors that prevent them from returning to work in the USVI.
- ❖ **Actively support and promote new ways of working, such as remote work and gig work.** Continued efforts to support these workers with training and business assistance services and to connect them to business opportunities are needed.

BOLSTER WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY

- ❖ **Expand grant writing and fundraising capacity** in key agencies such as VIEDA and VIDOL.
- ❖ Provide additional Territory funding and expand efforts to **obtain Federal DOL and other funding** for the Workforce Investment Board.
- ❖ **Develop a non-government, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) entity under the WIB** that can obtain private, charitable, and philanthropic funding to support specific programs such as skills assessment, basic- and soft-skills training, and entrepreneurship.

IMPROVE LABOR MARKET INFORMATION RESOURCES

- ❖ **Continue investments to provide labor market information services.** The department's VleWS web portal is an excellent resource that lists job openings, provides guidance on accessing services, and offers real-time data on existing and future market trends.
- ❖ **Conduct an annual student survey** to understand and track the career goals and needs of young people in the USVI.

PROVIDE SPECIALIZED INDUSTRY SUPPORT

- ❖ **Basic manufacturing skills.** The Manufacturing Institute offers a broad array of basic and advanced skill training and certifications. The Institute offers curricula that can be taught in the classroom, online, or as a hybrid. Utilizing the Manufacturing Institute or similar national programs can also enhance CTE training and allow cost-effective training for smaller classes.
- ❖ **Food safety training.** ServSafe is one of several organizations that offer basic training in food and alcohol safety training. ServSafe has a number of modules and related materials that can be used in a classroom setting or online. Training is geared for both students and adults.
- ❖ **Customer service training.** UVI's current customer skills training offers an opportunity to leverage materials and faculty into a basic customer skills program for high school students and for adults in or returning to the workforce. In expanding its reach, UVI may also find opportunities to utilize national customer service training programs online (such as Salesforce and Dale Carnegie) to minimize staffing costs.