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Bid Solicitation For JFL, Other Major Projects Coming Soon Amid Concern Over Meeting Timeline Targets

After two failed bidding processes, the Office of Disaster Recovery revises its approach to attract contractors for the hospital's reconstruction, with a new request for proposals set to be issued by the end of March.

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The Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center building awaits demolition and reconstruction. By. ERNICE GILBERT, V.I. CONSORTIUM

After two previous unsuccessful attempts, bid solicitations for the reconstruction of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital will soon be going out for the third time, members of the Senate Committee on Disaster Recovery, Infrastructure and Planning learned on Thursday.

The JFL reconstruction project was initially included in a project bundle, and put out to tender twice in 2024. “The first effort only received one bid, while the second solicitation received no bids,” Ms. Williams-Octalien testified. Now, the request for proposals is being revised and the new RFP will “incorporate recommendations from our market study in an attempt to garner interest.”

ODR's research revealed that the hospital reconstruction project is too “complicated” to be bundled with other work. “It has to be done while a functioning facility will be on campus,” Ms. Williams-Octalien explained. Further, “the cost associated with maintaining a live activity of a hospital nature and construction within a very tight space makes it not a very attractive project, so we took it out of the bundle.”

The third solicitation for bids will be issued at the end of March. In April, bids will be invited for the Schneider Regional Medical Center, followed by the Herbert Grigg Home for the Aged in June, Ms. Williams-Octalien told lawmakers.

Once contracts are initiated for these projects, they will join the large number of recovery projects currently being managed by the Office of Disaster Recovery and its Super Project Management Office. Among its projects to date, the Super PMO has executed a contract with Suffolk-CBNA Joint Venture for the St. Thomas educational bundle, which includes the Yvonne E. Milliner Bowsky Elementary School, Lockhart K-8, and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School among others. Consigli Benton has been awarded a contract for the Charles Howard Medical Complex, now the Donna M. Christian-Christiansen Complex.

ODR is currently evaluating the St. Croix north-central horizontal bundle which includes power, water, wastewater, and roadworks projects. Evaluations are also in progress for the St. John vertical bundle which includes the Morris F. deCastro Clinic, Myra Keaton Smith Community Health Center and Julius E. Sprauve K-8 School.

Upcoming solicitation requests include the St. Thomas healthcare bundle, which includes “the old mental health building,” the Queen Louise Home for the Aged, and the Knud Hansen Departments of Health and Human Services buildings. This will be released in March, as will the solicitation request for the St. Croix education bundle which includes the Pearl B. Larsen , Alexander Henderson, Alfredo Andrews, and Claud O. Markoe elementary schools

Most of the recovery projects in the Virgin Islands are funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and funds must be expended by 2035 to be able to take advantage of the [temporarily reduced matching funds requirement](#). If the deadline is missed, the territory may be on the hook for tens of millions more as the requirement risks reverting to the original 10% arrangement. Given the total value of recovery projects, the territory must hit a spending target of \$2 billion annually to meet the 2035 deadline. “What are the challenges with scaling up this expenditure, because, you're basically going to be spending fourfold,” Senator Angel Bolques wondered.

Ms. Williams-Octalien responded with a sentiment shared several times before by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. “The biggest challenge that we have is finding the workforce, a manpower of professionals that really understand the process.” ODR, for its part, is strengthening its ability “to process payments to the contractors” and consequently expedite spending. “The value for the payments is going to increase because we're going to be engaging in the larger projects,” she explained.

The Government of the Virgin Islands is [continuing to lobby](#) for exemptions to visa requirements for work and leisure, something that Senator Bolques says is needed to source “necessary construction labor so that we can complete these projects.” “I know the efforts are already underway, but expediting that is very important,” he urged. However, that decision will be made at the federal level, according to timelines that are largely beyond the control of any local official. Mr. Bolques has also advised ODR to “keep our local contractors and small businesses in the loop so that they can receive their fair share of opportunities.”

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