

Over 1,000 Projects Completed, \$18B Obligated as Bryan Administration Advances Recovery Efforts

The 2024 Report from the Office of Disaster Recovery shows \$18.1 billion in obligated funds and 1,017 completed projects, with major investments in schools, hospitals, housing, utilities, and roads as part of the Bryan administration's recovery strategy.

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The V.I. Office of Disaster Recovery (ODR) has released its 2024 Annual Report, outlining a year of substantial progress in hurricane recovery efforts and laying the groundwork for even more expansive infrastructure projects across the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The report highlights over \$18.1 billion in obligated funding and more than 1,000 completed projects, marking a critical turning point in rebuilding the territory after Hurricanes Irma and

Maria.

Governor Albert Bryan Jr., in a message included in the report, described the past year as a milestone in the territory's recovery journey. He emphasized FEMA's additional commitment of \$13 billion in funding and noted key projects such as the \$116 million revitalization of the Walter I.M. Hodge Pavilion and the launch of the Own-a-Lot, Build-a-Home program to support first-time homeownership. "Thanks to the commitment of ODR and our partners, 1,017 projects have been completed, and 90 construction projects are actively underway," the governor stated.

Director of the Office of Disaster Recovery, Adrienne L. Williams-Octalien, said the agency is focused on execution and action. A major achievement was the increase in the federal cost-share adjustment from 90% to 95% (and 98% for fixed-cost offer projects), saving the Virgin Islands close to \$2 billion. "We remain committed to ensuring these projects serve as a foundation for a stronger, more resilient Virgin Islands," she said.

Key initiatives include the establishment of the Super Project Management Office (SuperPMO) under the Rebuild USVI initiative. This office will oversee more than 40 large-scale projects totaling over \$8 billion in funding. These include the reconstruction of schools, hospitals, utilities, roads, and critical infrastructure throughout the three islands. Solicitations for school and hospital bundles on St. Croix, St. Thomas, and St. John are already underway, with most major projects expected to be under contract by the end of 2026.

In 2024, the territory obligated more recovery funds than in the previous six years combined. Of the \$20 billion in anticipated funding, \$18.1 billion has been obligated and \$3.77 billion expended. The FEMA Public Assistance program alone accounts for \$15.7 billion, while the Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program holds \$1.9 billion.

Highlights from priority sectors include:

- **Schools:** Over \$1.3 billion has been obligated. Major projects include the Arthur A. Richards PreK-8 School on St. Croix (nearing 50% completion), the design-build of Charlotte Amalie High School, and bundling of six St. Thomas schools for reconstruction.
- **Hospitals:** The Charlotte Kimelman Cancer Institute is 30% complete, while Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital's permanent replacement facility is in the procurement phase.
- **Utilities:** Four new Wartsila generators were installed at Randolph Harley Power Plant. FEMA approved a full replacement of Richmond Power Plant. Over 8,000 composite poles have been installed territory-wide as part of the grid modernization strategy.
- **Roads and Infrastructure:** Bridge reconstructions, road restorations (such as the Queen Mary Highway), and the start of horizontal project bundles across the islands are transforming the territory's transportation network.
- **Public Buildings:** The Florence Williams Public Library was restored, and construction continues at multiple libraries, police stations, fire stations, and historic landmarks. The

Charles “Tappy” Seales Fire Station on St. Croix is also underway.

- **Housing:** The Walter I.M. Hodge Pavilion was fully revitalized with 248 units completed. CDBG-DR funds are also backing projects like the Donoe Redevelopment and D. Hamilton Jackson Terrace. The EnVIision Tomorrow Program has completed 38 homes and has 93 more in construction.
- **Solid Waste and Water Systems:** VIWMA has over \$1 billion obligated for wastewater recovery. CDBG-DR is being used to fund modernized solid waste collection sites and water infrastructure projects.

The ODR also reported a \$16.5 million return in Gross Receipts Taxes to the government in FY 2024 from \$330 million in expenditures, showcasing the economic ripple effect of recovery efforts. Projections indicate expenditures will rise to \$441 million in FY 2025, with early spending already generating \$4.3 million in gross receipts taxes during the first quarter, according to the report.

Challenges persist, including labor shortages, rising construction costs, and regulatory complexities. However, the ODR said it has adopted strategic solutions—such as hosting Industry Day events, bundling billion-dollar projects, and lobbying for visa waivers to attract specialized labor—to accelerate recovery and maintain project timelines.

Looking ahead to 2025, the report identifies the reconstruction and modernization of ten schools, expansion of Head Start centers, major healthcare infrastructure improvements, and restoration of critical public facilities as top priorities. The ODR says its approach is one of “resilience and transformation,” focused on ensuring that investments yield lasting benefits for current and future generations in the U.S. Virgin Islands.