

The Virgin Islands Consortium

USVI Can Apply for Up to \$5.1M to Train and Employ Formerly Incarcerated Individuals

The U.S. Department of Labor's \$81 million RESTART initiative will fund up to 20 projects nationwide, supporting skilled trades, advanced manufacturing and apprenticeship pathways for justice-involved residents, with applications due April 15.

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The U.S. Virgin Islands is eligible to compete for funding under a newly announced \$81 million federal initiative designed to provide job training and employment opportunities for individuals returning from incarceration, according to the U.S. Department of Labor.

Announced Wednesday, the Reentry Employment in Skilled Trades, Advanced Manufacturing, Registered Apprenticeships, and Training (RESTART) initiative will fund up to 20 projects nationwide, with individual awards ranging from \$1 million to \$5.1 million. As a U.S. territory, the Virgin Islands qualifies to apply.

The program targets individuals with criminal records or those involved in the justice system, with the stated goal of improving employment outcomes and reducing recidivism. Funding will support training and job placement services in high-demand sectors such as skilled trades, advanced manufacturing, and shipbuilding. Eligible activities include pre-apprenticeships, registered apprenticeships, AI and digital literacy instruction, credential attainment, and paid work experiences.

Approximately \$30 million of the total allocation is reserved for national or regional intermediary organizations serving youth and young adults. The remaining funds are intended for state and territorial initiatives integrated with public workforce systems.

Eligible applicants include state and territorial governments, nonprofit organizations, faith-based entities, and Native American tribal organizations. Applicants must demonstrate partnerships with workforce systems operating under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. No matching funds are required, a provision that may benefit resource-constrained jurisdictions such as the Virgin Islands.

Applications are due by April 15, 2026, through [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov). Awards are expected to be announced later this year.

Labor Secretary Doug Burgum described the initiative as building on successful reentry models from prior administrations while focusing on emerging industries and addressing workforce shortages in key economic areas. The program, according to the Department of Labor, emphasizes measurable outcomes, requiring grantees to track employment placements and credential completion rates among participants.

For the Virgin Islands, the announcement comes as the territory continues to [expand reentry programming](#) through a 2025 memorandum of understanding aimed at reducing recidivism. Local efforts have focused on strengthening community partnerships and improving coordination with the Bureau of Corrections.

Challenges remain in connecting formerly incarcerated individuals to stable employment, particularly in an economy where job opportunities can be limited in sectors such as tourism and construction. The RESTART initiative could provide funding to support collaborations with local employers in construction and maritime trades, industries central to the territory's economy.

Previous federal reentry evaluations have grouped the Virgin Islands within regional frameworks, suggesting a potential pathway for competitive applications under the new grant structure.

As of press time, Virgin Islands officials had not announced specific plans to pursue funding. The program's goals, however, align with ongoing territorial efforts to expand vocational training and workforce reintegration services for individuals returning from incarceration.

