The Virgin Islands Consortium

V.I. Economic Development Strategy Presented To De Jongh

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Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. recently convened a meeting of the Virgin Islands Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee that outlined plans and projects to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for possible federal grant funding support.

The opportunities include alternative energy grants, business development assistance, expansion of information technology systems, and assistance for improving public utilities. Other federally funded CEDS identified projects include the $98 million Virgin Islands Next Generation Network (viNGN), which received funding from the U.S. National Telecommunications and Information Administration to develop broadband technology across the territory. In addition, EDA funding was received for the Research & Technology Park to create opportunities in communications, financial, business, and information technology services within the Virgin Islands.

Furthermore, in FY 2013, the EDA provided $3.4 million in grant funding to support the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority Revolving Loan and Business incubator programs, along with funding awarded to the Bureau of Economic Research for the Targeted Industry and 2015 CEDS Plan reports.

A presentation of the Targeted Competitive Industry Study was given by Jon Roberts of TIP Strategies, Inc. The study was comprised of interviews from 81 local businesses; a quantitative assessment based on a shift-share analysis, and an industry trend and site location factors. The presentation included industry employment concentrations by location quotient, a ratio of jobs in the Virgin Islands as compared to similar jobs in the U.S., occupational employment along with median hourly earnings, a jobs by skill level compared to the U.S. and the availability of workforce training that documented a deficit in jobs with middle skills that require a high school diploma and certification that was extensively discussed by the CEDS Committee members. An online survey of the perception of the business climate identified energy costs and government efficiency and effectiveness as critical factors.

The 2015 CEDS Plan Report by Lauritz Mills of Sygma PCS included measures related to economic growth and prosperity, such as output growth, job growth, educational attainment, median income, per capita income, and poverty levels along with Virgin Islands assets.

To view both reports, click here and here.