

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Dept. Of Interior Announces Nearly \$5 Million In Funding For Territory

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The U.S. Department of the Interior's Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia'aina announced on Monday via press release nearly \$5 million in grant funding for the U.S. Virgin Islands to support a wide range of local government initiatives that will, among other things, help build resilience to the impacts of climate change, strengthen essential social services, foster economic opportunity and promote government efficiency for the islands' people.

"I want to thank Governor Mapp and his staff for their tireless efforts in working with the Office of Insular Affairs to prioritize the government's initiatives and develop the scope and scale of the projects this funding will help to advance," said Ms. Kia'aina. "We look

forward to continuing this productive relationship as we carry out these critically important efforts to strengthen capacity and quality of life issues.”

The assistance package announced today will help the USVI government build its capacity for climate change planning and adaptation, upgrade hospital infrastructure and equipment, increase public health services to underserved communities, repair public school buildings, renovate public libraries and develop educational outreach programs regarding the islands’ self-determination options. The funding is provided by Interior’s Office of Insular Affairs technical and maintenance assistance, and capital improvement programs.

U.S. Interior Secretary Sally Jewell will make her first official visit to the USVI later this week where she’ll discuss many of the same issues, highlighting the unique and important relationship Interior shares with the Islands.

“As the Virgin Islands marks the 99th anniversary of its transfer to the United States, and prepares for its centennial commemoration of that historic event, we are pleased to extend these grants as part of the Obama Administration’s continuing commitment to work with territorial leaders in addressing the social, economic, and environmental challenges they face,” Secretary Jewell said. “I look forward to discussing these initiatives and other aspects of our relationship in my upcoming visit to the islands.”

Secretary Jewell will be accompanied by Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas Esther Kia’aina. During the visit, Jewell will meet with Gov. Kenneth Mapp, deliver keynote remarks at the 99th Transfer Day Ceremony, and join the USVI Climate Change Council to discuss how the Administration is helping island communities prepare and adapt to the impacts of climate change. She will also visit the Virgin Islands National Park on St. John and St. Thomas to underscore the [Every Kid in a Park](#) initiative, which connects young people to the outdoors, and meet with island leaders and community members at the Christiansted National Historic Site on St. Croix.

The technical assistance, capital improvement, and maintenance assistance grant funding awards and descriptions for FY 2016 are listed as follows:

Technical Assistance Program

Capacity Building and Educational Awareness of Self-Determination - \$250,000 to the University of the Virgin Islands to establish an Office of Self-Determination and Constitutional Development. The office will work with the Centennial Commemoration Commission and other stakeholders across the territory to address the issue of self-determination. Major duties and responsibilities include political status and constitutional education; research and development; mass public education; and complementing activities of the Centennial Commemoration Commission.

Climate Change Adaptation Planning - \$828,050 to the U.S. Virgin Islands Climate Change Council to develop a framework for climate change adaptation and planning by assembling a project team to research and collect information related to climate change vulnerability and risks associated with multi-sectors of society; and to strengthen relationships with governmental and nongovernmental partners to prioritize adaptation and mitigation plans; and to develop a robust multi-sector climate adaptation strategy.

Public Health Prevention - \$80,000 to the St. Thomas East End Medical Center Corporation to increase services geared to improving the health status of rural and under-served populations by addressing the impact of climate change and implement community outreach activities relative to health literacy and education for non-communicable and chronic diseases.

Hospital Equipment Upgrades - \$400,000 to the Juan F. Luis Hospital for operating rooms, upgrade for new equipment for Orthopedics, Cardiology, Gastroenterology and General Surgery, including a sterilization machine, anesthesia machines, biomedical testing equipment and machine servicing.

Maintenance Assistance Program

Hospital Roof Rehabilitation - \$100,000 to the Juan F. Luis Hospital to help support complete renovation and replacement of the hospital roof infrastructure.

Utility Crane Truck - \$169,000 to the U.S. Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for a 17-ton crane truck to enable the utility maintenance team to transport pipes of different sizes, remove and replace existing waterline in trenches with new waterlines, and transport equipment to and from the construction site.

Capital Improvement Program

Enid M. Baa Public Library, St. Thomas - \$480,000 to complete structural renovations and technology upgrades including design, engineering, and structural reconfiguration of the second and third floors of the library. Renovations will include upgrades to electrical wiring that has been damaged by water leaking in during rainstorms.

Regional Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, St. Croix - \$105,000 for the purchase and installation of a new powder-coated aluminum shelving system for audio books for the blind, an upgraded wiring system within the building to meet increased demands of electrical equipment and assistive devices, and the purchase of new office furniture and computer stations to accommodate the Public Computing Center and assistive devices for broadband internet access.

Elaine Ione Sprauve Public Library, St. John - \$100,000 for the design and installation of a photovoltaic system for efficient energy production and consumption, improvements to parking areas to improve access for patrons, installation of a security system and exterior lighting, improvements to guttering system and replacement of air conditioning units. The funding supplements a fiscal year 2015 CIP grant for \$65,000 for similar structural renovations.

Athalie M. Petersen Public Library, St. Croix - \$190,000 for the renovation of the subterranean flood-prone Children's Room to prevent further damage, replacement of doors and windows compromised by weather damage, and repairs and upgrades to the plumbing infrastructure. The funding supplements a fiscal year 2015 CIP grant for \$250,000 for similar structural renovations.

Florence A. Williams Public Library, St. Croix - \$125,000 to purchase and install an integrated security system for print and DVD collections and special collections in the

Caribbean Research Room, upgrades to the plumbing infrastructure, and long-term technology upgrades including a storage area network, plotter/printer, and a teleconferencing system. This funding supplements a FY 2015 CIP grant for \$600,000 for similar structural renovations.

Insular Assessment of Buildings and Classrooms (ABCs) Initiative - \$1,939,000 will be used to address high-priority health and safety deferred maintenance items identified in the Office of Insular Affairs' most recent assessment of school buildings across the territory. The repairs will include the installation or replacement of fire alarm systems, upgrades to fire protection and plumbing infrastructure, upgrades to heating, ventilation, air conditioning (HVAC) systems and priority structural repairs.