

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Interior Supports Schools In U.S. Territories With \$3 Million For Deferred Maintenance Needs

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U.S. Virgin Islands funding helps address 2017 hurricane impacts on schools.

Doug Domenech, U.S. Department of the Interior assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs, this week announced \$3,000,000 in fiscal year 2018 Maintenance Assistance Program (MAP) grants to the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to address critical deferred maintenance needs. Interior identified these needs through the Insular Area Assessment of Buildings and Classrooms (ABCs) initiative.

The assistant secretary also announced grants to the U.S. Virgin Islands to address impacts following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Puerto Rico, while also a U.S. territory, is not eligible for this funding.

“Infrastructure and maintenance needs at schools in the U.S. territories outweigh the resources available,” Mr. Domenech said. “While Secretary Zinke and I are happy to provide this assistance, we acknowledge that the need is greater and will advocate for more assistance.”

Funding provided in this announcement is as follows:

American Samoa Department of Public Works - \$750,000 to upgrade bathroom facilities and upgrade electrical systems at schools in the Manu'atele District, including three on the island of Ta'u and one on Olosega.

Guam Department of Education (GDOE) - \$750,000 to repair and replace canopies and make drainage improvements identified through the Insular ABC's initiative. These projects, identified as addressing critical health and safety issues, are currently underway and will be completed this year.

The (GDOE) Internal Audit Office also received an additional \$34,579 to train and enhance GDOE audit and accounting personnel skills and knowledge in monitoring, managing, and safeguarding local and federal funds.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Public School System - \$750,000 to make electrical, mechanical, and plumbing improvements, as well as roof, door, window, and fire alarm replacements in the schools.

U.S. Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) Office of Instruction - \$750,000 for maintenance-related projects for schools in the St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix school districts damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. Funds will (1) support fiber optic and cyber-security training/certification; and (2) provide equipment to increase resiliency in the face of extreme weather events such as backup batteries, specialized vehicles, fiber & cable maintenance, server upgrade/support, and solar panels as back-up energy sources. VIDE has received funding from FEMA to repair school infrastructure damaged by the hurricanes as well as the Immediate Aid to Restart School Operations grant for the 2018-2019 school year.

Funds are made available through the Maintenance Assistance Program<<https://www.doi.gov/oia/fiscal-payments>> at the Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs. Applications are submitted annually from October through May 1 each year by the governments and other entities within the U.S. Insular Areas for consideration. Funds are awarded once OIA receives appropriations from the U.S. Congress until they are exhausted.

The Assistant Secretary, Insular and International Affairs, and the Office of Insular Affairs carry out the Secretary of the Interior's responsibilities for the U.S. territories of Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Additionally, OIA administers and oversees Federal assistance under the Compacts of Free Association to the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. OIA supports the Secretary's mission of

Fulfilling Trust and Insular Responsibilities through balancing efforts and limited resources towards stronger economic and health capacities, and fiscal accountability in the U.S. insular areas.

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