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## **\$10 Million Made Available to Dept. of Labor for Workforce Development Programs**

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The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) said Wednesday it has issued a notice to proceed to the Department of Labor (DOL) for the solicitation of project management services to execute work-based learning strategies for its Workforce Development programs.

Funded by the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery Program (CDBG-DR), an allocation of \$10 million from Tranche 1 and Tranche 2 will support Workforce Development under its Economic Revitalization sector, according to the release. Five million dollars will fund the DOL's "Skills for Today" program, and the remaining \$5 million will support on-the-job training initiatives through various employers.

“VIHFA is pleased to issue the Notice to Proceed to the Department of Labor to get the Workforce Development Program going,” said VIHFA Executive Director Daryl Griffith. “In the midst of the pandemic where unemployment is high, job-training programs are a great way to get residents back to work. We have a growing demand for work in the construction industry, so this program will ensure we train and certify individuals to work directly with the recovery efforts here in the territory.”

According to VIHFA, the project aims to train six hundred and twenty-five (625) low-to-moderate income residents over a two-year period through several stages, to include a targeted focus on the construction industry and additional employment sectors with projected growth over the next three years.

As it relates to disaster recovery, the project will address the recovery efforts by first assessing the capacity and skills gap of workers in the construction sector, which has a critical need with the reconstruction and rehabilitation currently taking place in the territory. Participants will be trained in areas such as carpentry, masonry, plumbing, and electrical. They will also earn a certification in their area or interest that can lead to job placements in high growth occupations, the authority said.

“A skilled labor force does not develop on its own. Strategic investments in education and workforce development, such as this program, will tie these systems to the needs of employers and produce qualified employees the Territory need,” said DOL Commissioner Gary Molloy.

D.O.L. will follow the procurement policies of the Department of Property and Procurement to solicit companies to provide project management services for work-based learning strategies for the territory. The program is projected to launch in January of 2021, according to the release.