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# Solar Micro-Grid Project Aims to Transform Energy Consumption at St. Croix Educational Complex

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The V.I. Energy Office on Friday commenced construction of a state-of-the-art 125 kW solar micro-grid with a 300 kWh battery storage system at the St. Croix Educational Complex.

The project, set to be completed by August 2023, will ensure the Complex's emergency hurricane shelter remains functional during extended power outages and significantly reduce dependence on fossil fuel generators, the officials said.

The micro-grid project, funded by the Department of Interior's Energizing Insular Communities (EIC) grant, will not only enhance the resilience of the school's infrastructure but also offset approximately \$6,000 per month in utility costs during normal operation. VIEO said it has previously utilized EIC grants to develop a public charging station network and procure electric

vehicles for the territory.

Notable attendees at the groundbreaking ceremony included Department of Education Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Superintendent Ericilda Ottley-Herman, Governor Albert Bryan Jr.'s Chief of Staff Karl Knight, and AT Construction project manager Angel Ortiz.

Energy Office Director Kyle Fleming emphasized the project's role as a catalyst for diversifying energy sources in educational facilities and critical infrastructure across the Virgin Islands. The VIEO said it will continue to collaborate with agencies and stakeholders to secure additional federal funding for innovative energy projects, aiming to alleviate the energy burden on the community.

Mrs. Wells-Hedrington expressed optimism about the project's impact, stating, "This is just the beginning of many more projects as we work towards that goal of having our schools be able to sustain themselves."

Mr. Knight acknowledged the long-standing partnership between the Energy Office and the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) and highlighted the importance of assisting VIDE in achieving their energy goals, given that the Government of the Virgin Islands is the largest consumer of electricity and water in the territory.