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\$2.5 Million Federal Grant to Boost Infrastructure, Sustainability and Heritage Preservation in USVI

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The Office of Insular Affairs within the U.S. Department of the Interior announced on Thursday that it will allocate a total of \$2,528,951 in Technical Assistance Program grant funding for fiscal year 2023 to benefit the U.S. Virgin Islands.

According to Interior, the federal funding aims to bolster the islands' emergency response capacities, enhance government processes, improve utility training, protect water resources, and support youth climate change and natural resources protection initiatives. The allocation also includes funding towards the commemoration of the 175th anniversary of emancipation on the islands.

Carmen G. Cantor, the assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs, spoke of the diverse projects that will be funded this year, highlighting the support they will offer to the USVI's essential services and environmental stewardship. "We are especially pleased to be able to support the U.S. Virgin Islands in preparations for the commemoration of 175 years of emancipation," Cantor added.

The grant awards will be allocated to various departments of the USVI Territorial Government and several non-government organizations, with one project in collaboration with the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation for water resilience funding.

Among the projects to be funded are \$655,423 for emergency response vehicles for the Fire Service, a \$300,000 business process improvement technology solutions project for the Bureau of Information Technology, and a \$200,000 allocation for the Office of the Governor to facilitate the Commemoration of 175 Years of Emancipation.

Several non-profit organizations are also beneficiaries of the grant. \$658,050 will go to the Virgin Islands Architecture Center for the VIAC Capacity Building Initiative program. \$296,500 has been awarded to the Virgin Islands Water & Power Authority for Water Distribution Training, and \$62,010 to the Ocean Foundation for youth outreach programs at the Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge.

The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation will receive \$296,968 to partner with the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for a project aimed at improving the Sustainability of Water Resources in a Changing Climate through Estimations of Groundwater Recharge on St. Croix.

The Office of Insular Affairs administers and oversees federal assistance to multiple U.S. territories, including the U.S. Virgin Islands, and also administers a discretionary Technical Assistance Program for all the insular areas. More information can be found at www.doi.gov/oia.