



## USVI LFFC Launches Free TAP Grant Academy to Support Food Security

University of the Virgin Islands - January 7, 2026

In an effort to build enhanced food security in the US Virgin Islands, the Local Food and Farm Council (LFFC) will hold an inaugural three-part TAP (Territorial Agricultural Plan) Grant Academy series. The live virtual sessions will address how to find and secure grants and other resources for farmers, fishers, local organizations and those involved in local food production interested in supporting food sovereignty in the US Virgin Islands.



"One of the things that we heard loud and clear from those who attended the LFFC's USVI Agricultural Plan in Action town halls this fall is that attendees wanted technical support and tools to help make their individual efforts to grow agriculture, fishing and food production in the territory a reality," said Dr. Richard Nader, VP for Research and Economic Development at UVI, a LFFC Support Partner.

"Grants are readily available and these sessions will allow farmers, fishers, local producers and community organizations to get foundational knowledge so they can apply for and secure funding and other resources."

"Supporting greater local food production provides the community with fresher, healthier and more affordable food while boosting the income of farmers, fishers, and food businesses," said LFFC Co-Chair Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., Commissioner, VI Department of Agriculture. "At the same time, it is critical for strengthening resilience against supply-chain shortages and reducing the environmental costs of import dependence."

"Ninety-seven percent of the USVI's food supply is currently imported," added Co-Chair Dr. Safiya George, President, University of the Virgin Islands. "That is not sustainable. Our success hinges on allowing those who grow, harvest, and supply our food to be armed with the best resources, tools and technology available. Having the know-how to apply for and win grants will be game-changing."

Each Grant Academy session focuses on a distinct aspect of the process. Those interested must register in advance at <https://bit.ly/TAPGrantAcademy> or call 340-693-1003. The three-part series is as follows:

### **Friday, January 16**

All 'bout Grants: What Are They, How Do You Win Them?

Presenters: UVI Office of Research and Economic Development, VI Good Food Coalition, TAP Fellows

2 – 4 pm AST

**Friday, February 6**

Writing Successful Grant Proposals

Presenters: UVI Office of Research and Economic Development, VI Good Food Coalition, TAP Fellows

2 – 4 pm AST

**Friday, March 6**

Grants, Loans and Other Resources for Farmers and Fishers

Presenters: Director Shanta Roberts, Agriculture Business Center and VI Good Food Coalition

2 – 4 pm AST

The LFFC is charged with guiding the implementation of the Territorial Agricultural Plan and its eight mandates, which were approved and endorsed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. and ratified by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands.

The Local Food and Farm Council is made up of 17 members, including Co-Chairs Dr. Louis E. Petersen, Jr., Commissioner, Department of Agriculture and Dr. Safiya George, President, UVI; Dr. Usman Adamu, Dean and Director of the School of Agriculture, UVI; Dr. Dionne Wells-Hedrington, Commissioner, Department of Education (VIDE); Jean-Pierre L. Oriol, Commissioner, DPNR; Wayne L. Biggs Jr., CEO, USVI Economic Development Authority; Honorary Farm Members Abeba Sellassie, Ityopia Rootz Farm; Dr. Nate Olive, Ridge to Reef Farm; Edmon Titre, New Breed Farm; Royce Creque, Greenridge Guavaberry Farm; Honorary Fisher Members Winston Ledee and Mavel Maldonado; VIDE Designees Dr. Renee Charleswell, Deputy Commissioner of Curriculum and Instruction, VIDE; Harith Wickrema, President, Island Green Living; and Cydney Meadows, Territorial Director of Sustainability & Agricultural Education, Division of Curriculum & Instruction, VIDE; and DPNR Designees Dr. Nicole Angeli, Director of Fish & Wildlife, DPNR and Dr. Sennai Habtes, Bureau Chief, Fisheries, DPNR.

For more information or to share feedback, please contact 340-693-1003 or [vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov](mailto:vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil@doa.vi.gov). Please visit [www.vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil.org](http://www.vilocalfoodandfarmcouncil.org).

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