GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

PRESS RELEASE

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Department Of Trade Hosts Final MSME Grant Award Ceremony For 2025

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Government of the Virgin Islands commits to supporting local entrepreneurship

The Department of Trade, Investment Promotion and Consumer Affairs successfully hosted its final Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) Grant Award Ceremony for 2025 on Friday, 19 December, in Road Town, reaffirming the Government of the Virgin Islands' commitment to supporting local entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainable business development.

The ceremony brought together grant recipients, government officials, and members of the business community to recognise the achievements of MSMEs and to highlight the range of support initiatives available to entrepreneurs across the Territory.

Delivering remarks at the ceremony, Honourable Lorna G. Smith, OBE, with responsibility for financial services and economic development, congratulated the grant recipients and commended the Department of Trade for its continued efforts to strengthen the MSME ecosystem. She reminded recipients that the grants are intended to support business development and accountability. "The government is investing in you, the people," Honourable Smith said, encouraging recipients to use the funds wisely and to take advantage of available training and support programmes.

Hounourable Smith also reiterated the Government's commitment to modernising systems, addressing inefficiencies, and ensuring that the business environment becomes more responsive to the needs of entrepreneurs.

Deputy Director for Business at the Department of Trade, Dr. Lincoln Bobb, underscored the Department's mission to actively support businesses and strengthen the local economy. He noted that the Department has expanded its outreach beyond the office and into communities, while also prioritising training, mentorship and digital transformation. "We exist to really support you, the business community," Dr. Bobb said, adding that the future remains bright for MSMEs in the Virgin Islands.

Dr. Bobb highlighted several initiatives being rolled out or expanded, including entrepreneurial education programmes, community outreach, the establishment of

an Entrepreneurial Zone, and plans to further modernise and digitalise services to improve ease of doing business.

Mr. Leroy James, Business Development Manager at the Department of Trade and Master of Ceremonies for the event, emphasised that the MSME Grant Programme reflects the Government's belief in local entrepreneurs and their potential to drive national development. "This MSME grant award is not only about handing out grants," Mr. James said. "This is the government supporting small business development in this territory… we believe in your dreams."

The keynote address was delivered by entrepreneur and Chief Executive Officer of P3: Paper Plastic Products Inc., Mr. Sinclair Flemming, who shared insights on business growth, mentorship and long-term vision. Mr. Flemming encouraged recipients to define what success looks like for their businesses and to make strategic decisions accordingly. "Don't trap yourself in a life that you don't want," he advised, emphasising that psychology, mentorship and proper allocation of capital are just as important as funding.

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Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Financial Services, Economic Development and Digital Transformation, Mrs. Natalie Fahie-Smith, delivered the vote of thanks and congratulated the recipients on their success. She praised the creativity and innovation represented among MSMEs and encouraged recipients to remain engaged and to continue contributing positively to the Territory's economic development.

In addition to the awards presented at the ceremony, the Department of Trade recently issued an MSME grant to Lawrence “Bunchie” Wheatley of Anegada, a young and budding entrepreneur. The Department noted that Mr. Wheatley’s entrepreneurial drive and commitment to business development exemplify the potential of MSMEs across all islands of the Territory.

The Department of Trade reaffirmed that the MSME Grant Programme forms part of a broader strategy to empower entrepreneurs through financial assistance, training, mentorship and policy reform, as the Virgin Islands continues to build a resilient and inclusive economy.

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