

# Reimagine, Revolutionize, Reinvent: VIHFA's New Digital Landscape

**Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority**  
Management Innovation: Technology

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## RISING TO THE OPPORTUNITY

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The Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority (VIHFA) is strategically positioned across two islands in the US Virgin Islands, operating four sites with two locations each in St. Thomas and St. Croix. This geographical spread underlines the importance of VIHFA's journey toward digital transformation, driven by a clear mission to enhance stability, efficiency, and resilience. By focusing on these core aspects, the Authority aims to optimize operations across all sites, ensuring that each location is well-supported and capable of delivering services effectively. This commitment to improvement is pivotal in meeting the community's needs across the diverse environments of both islands, embodying VIHFA's dedication to its mission.

In 2021, the VIHFA IT team grappled with outdated infrastructure, including Windows 2008 servers and aged unmanaged switches. What can be considered the most critical system, the financial system, System Application and Products (SAP), operated on unsupported on-premise variants, leading to constant crashes and operational headaches. Recognizing the urgent need for change, VIHFA's IT division launched a comprehensive overhaul. The team worked diligently to develop a plan of attack to create a sustainable and protected network. The overhaul's first phase included deploying new Fortinet Switches, Fortinet Access Points, and Windows 2022 servers alongside cloud backup and redundancy on Azure. These upgrades slashed unpredictable maintenance costs and freed up troubleshooting resources. The result? Operational efficiency soared, costs plummeted, and disaster preparedness was automated.

In conjunction with the hardware upgrades, notable achievements over the past two years include the implementation of a company-wide cybersecurity protocol, transitioning to fiber-optic network infrastructure, and adopting a cloud-based data management system. These initiatives have improved operational efficiency and significantly bolstered data security, furthering VIHFA's strategic objectives. Upgraded internet bandwidth in all four business sites and included network redundancy, which reduced operational downtime and productivity. Previously operating at 25/50 Mbps at each respective location, the agency was upgraded to an ISP Fiber Upgrade of 100 Mbps, resulting in faster internet speeds, thus improving operational efficiency and employee satisfaction.

The IT Team found it essential to address management challenges from outdated procurement processes with the Procurement Team. VIHFA responded by launching a pioneering E-Procurement Portal. Before this electronic initiative, the Procurement Team relied on manual methods for notifications, data collection, and information distribution via email to bidders and vendors. This innovative platform revolutionized procurement practices by introducing electronic processes that transcended time constraints and improved transparency. The Procurement staff no longer had to rely on filtering through their email mailboxes with notice updates, bid responses, and filtering through local copies of file folders. Real-time notifications tailored to registered suppliers and procurement team members streamlined the process, enhancing efficiency and accessibility for employees and benefiting community members.

## BRIDGING THE GAP

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Serving the community is central to the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority's (VIHFA) mission. Following significant upgrades to core systems and enhancements to data security, the IT team shifted its focus towards boosting efficiency internally among staff and externally for stakeholders. These improvements were designed to streamline operations, facilitate smoother interactions, and enhance service delivery, ensuring that VIHFA effectively meets the community's needs. Responding to this, the IT team launched a phone auto-attendant, allowing customers to reach the necessary division directly by extension dialing or through the virtual phone line menu. This has relieved the strain on the receptionist, who would otherwise be the sole gatekeeper of the phone, and allows customers to feel more independent while collaborating with VIHFA staff.

Internally, a key issue identified was the necessity to update outdated computer systems to empower employees and enhance service to the community. In response, in 2022, VIHFA undertook a significant initiative to replace all computers, transitioning from models dating back to 2013 to the latest technology. This equipment modernization was strategically executed in four phases, significantly increasing productivity and decreasing maintenance requirements. These upgrades have led to smoother, more efficient operations, allowing staff to focus more on strategic tasks and less on technical difficulties.

In addition to the technological enhancements, the IT Team brainstormed a new and engaging method to improve our internal communication and collaboration throughout the organization. This initiative led to the development and launch of the VIHFA Intranet. This centralized platform provided employees with streamlined access to essential resources. This has fostered and significantly enhanced organizational and operational efficiency, productivity, and staff collaboration by centralizing communications and resources, aligning the team with organizational goals, improving access to crucial information, and increasing employee engagement and satisfaction. The IT team recently developed an in-house power app, accessed through the intranet, that centralizes policy management and ensures all employees can quickly locate and review agency policies. This innovative app eliminates the need to search through emails for the latest policy versions, streamlining access and increasing efficiency. The app significantly enhances the ability to maintain and consult up-to-date agency guidelines by providing a dedicated platform for policy retrieval.

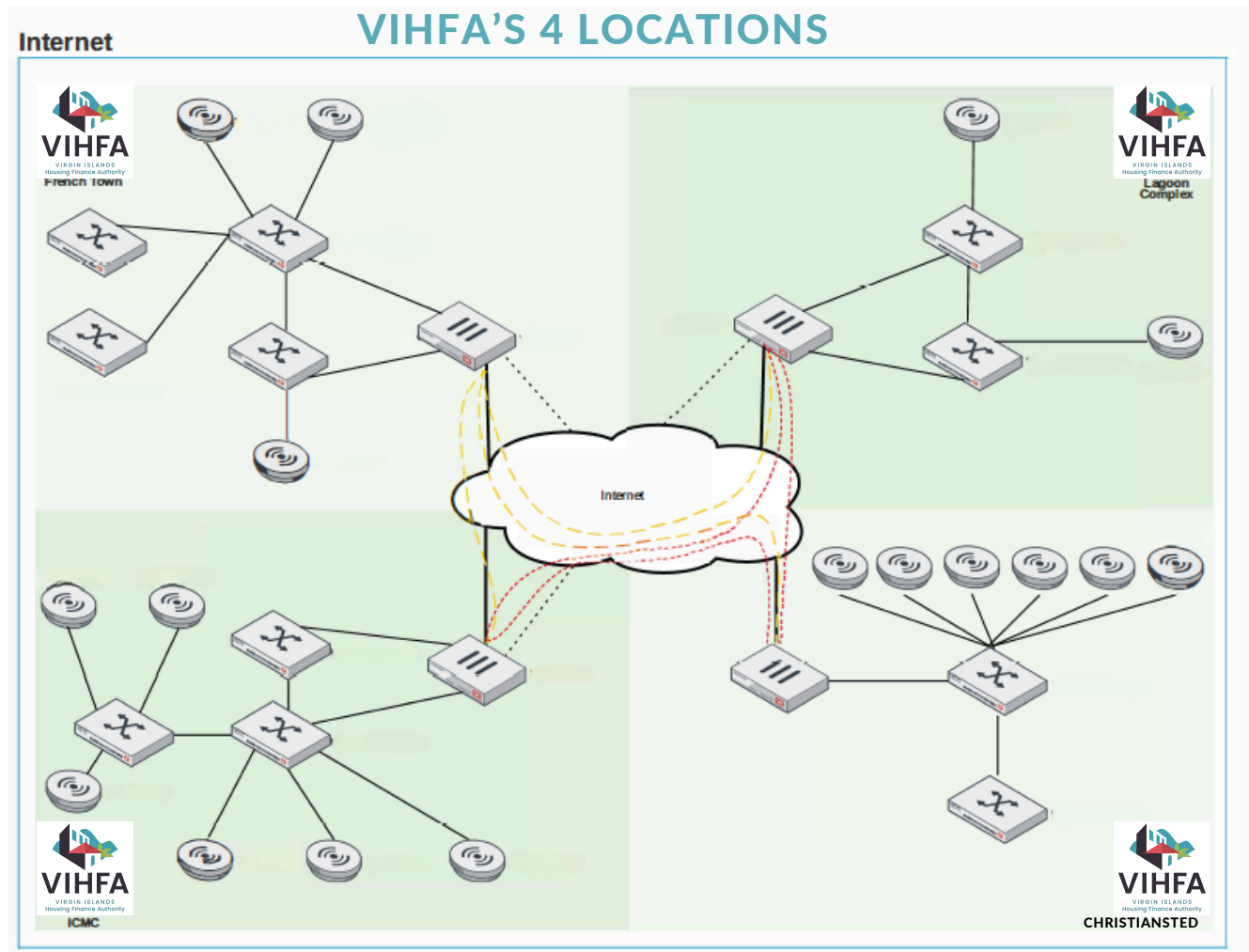
The comprehensive efforts of the VIHFA's IT team culminated in substantial benefits that significantly outweighed the initial costs, achieving cost savings of approximately \$359,682. The team spearheaded technical advancements and fostered progress throughout the authority, enhancing network resilience and ensuring operational efficiency in every main subdivision. The team handled everything from routine infrastructure maintenance to deploying innovative technologies and robust disaster recovery strategies. These improvements optimized current operations and fortified the authority against potential future disruptions.

## CONCLUSION

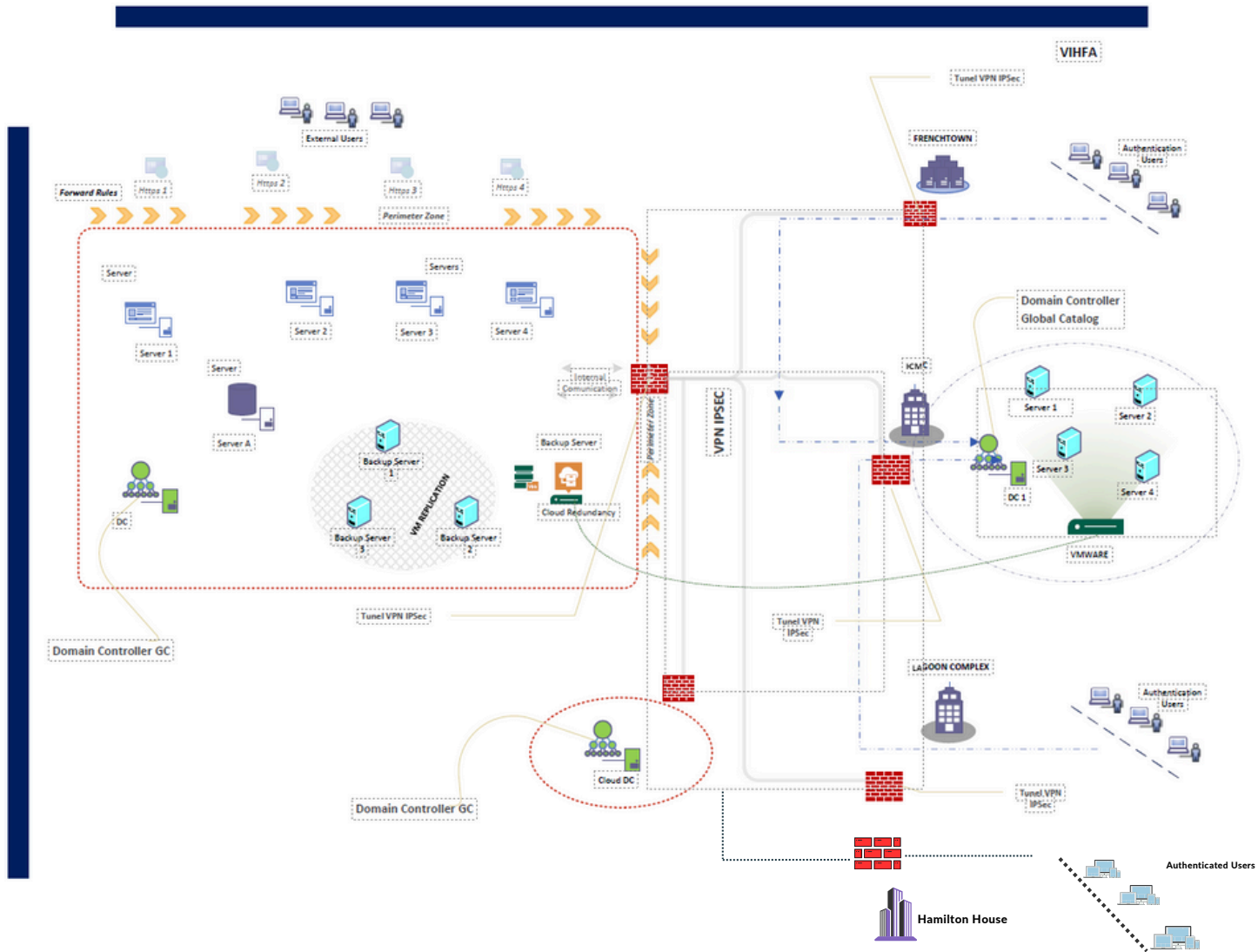
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In conclusion, the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority's (VIHFA) innovative approach to technology management has effectively addressed existing challenges and established a strong precedent for future technological advancements within the organization. Their significant achievements underscore the pivotal role of strategic management and technological innovation in propelling organizational success. VIHFA's dedicated team of IT professionals continues to consistently reimagine, revolutionize, and reinvent the digital landscape. Their efforts ensure that the authority is well-equipped to deliver efficient and effective services to the community, showcasing a commitment to continual improvement and excellence in service delivery.

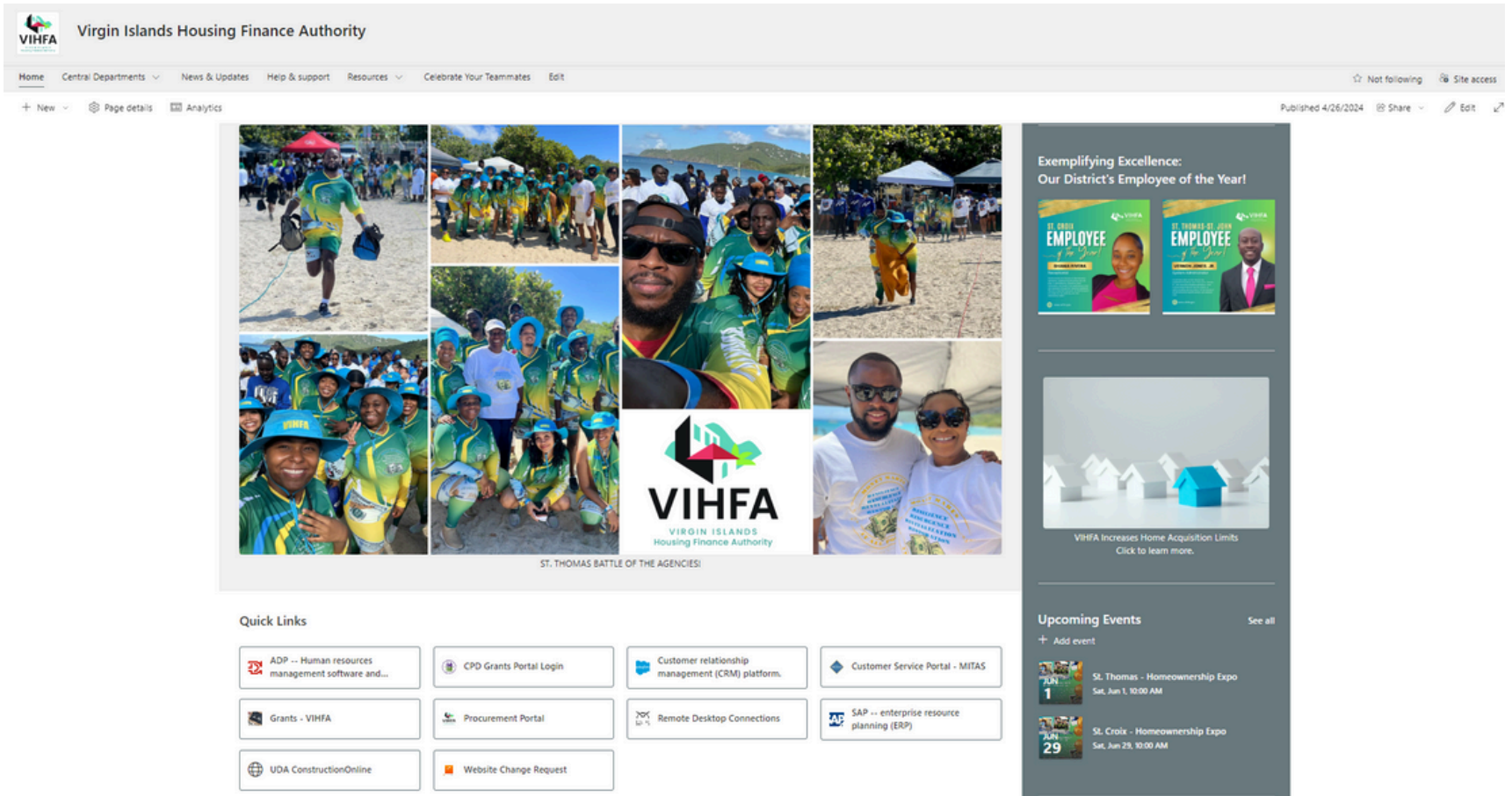
# ON-PREM LOCAL NETWORK TOPOLOGY



# ENHANCED NETWORK CONFIGURATION



# VIHFA INTRANET





The screenshot shows the VIHFA Intranet homepage with the following elements:

- Header:** "Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority" with navigation links: Home, Central Departments, News & Updates, Help & support, Resources, Celebrate Your Teammates, Edit. Utility links: Not following, Site access.
- Secondary Header:** + New, Page details, Analytics. Published 4/26/2024. Share, Edit, and other utility icons.
- Main Content Area:** A collage of photos from the "ST. THOMAS BATTLE OF THE AGENCIES!" featuring staff in green and blue uniforms. A central graphic displays the VIHFA logo. To the right, a featured article titled "Exemplifying Excellence: Our District's Employee of the Year!" includes two employee profiles and a link to "Click to learn more." Below this is a section titled "VIHFA Increases Home Acquisition Limits" with a link to "Click to learn more." and an image of house models.
- Quick Links:** A grid of eight links: ADP -- Human resources management software and..., CPD Grants Portal Login, Customer relationship management (CRM) platform., Customer Service Portal - MITAS, Grants - VIHFA, Procurement Portal, Remote Desktop Connections, SAP -- enterprise resource planning (ERP), UDA ConstructionOnline, and Website Change Request.
- Upcoming Events:** A section titled "Upcoming Events" with a "See all" link and "Add event" button. It lists:
  - St. Thomas - Homeownership Expo, Sat, Jun 1, 10:00 AM
  - St. Croix - Homeownership Expo, Sat, Jun 29, 10:00 AM

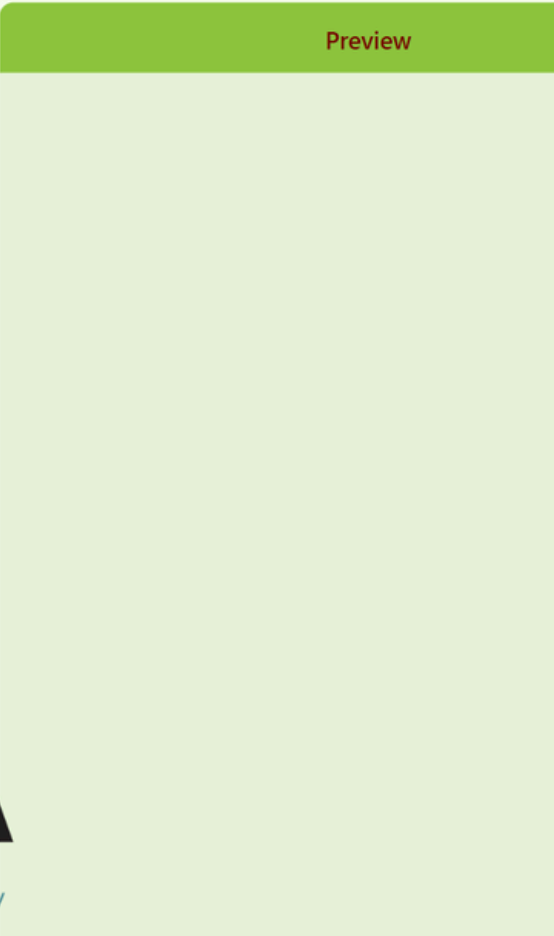
# VIHFA POLICY POWER APP


Power Apps | Policy Library on CDBG\_DR\_Department forms ⓘ

### Properties

- \* **Category**  
 ▼
- \* **Document Number**
- \* **Current Approved Version**
- \* **Policy Title**
- \* **Author**
- \* **Department**
- \* **Date of Original Approval**  
 
- \* **Revision Approval Date**  
 
- \* **Review Frequency**  
 ▼
- Location 1**
- Source URL**

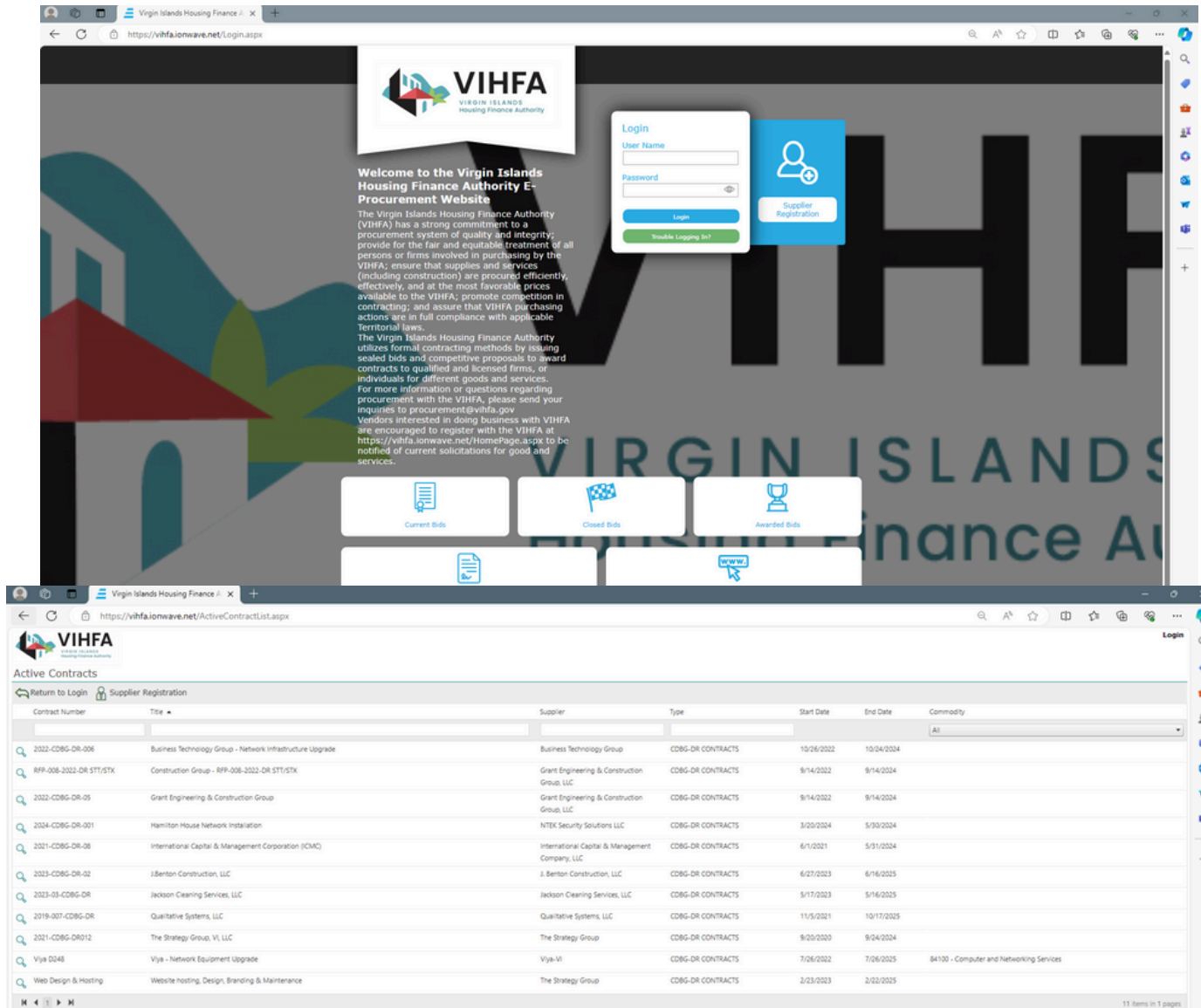
### Preview





**VIHFA**  
VIRGIN ISLANDS  
Housing Finance Authority

# CLOUD BASED E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL



The screenshot displays the VIHFA E-Procurement Portal. The top section features a login form with fields for 'User Name' and 'Password', a 'Login' button, and a 'Supplier Registration' button. Below the login form is a 'Welcome to the Virgin Islands Housing Finance Authority E-Procurement Website' message, followed by a detailed paragraph about the authority's commitment to quality and integrity in procurement. Below the text are five navigation buttons: 'Current Bids', 'Closed Bids', 'Awarded Bids', 'New Bids', and 'Help'. The bottom section shows a table of 'Active Contracts' with columns for Contract Number, Title, Supplier, Type, Start Date, End Date, and Commodity.

Contract Number	Title	Supplier	Type	Start Date	End Date	Commodity
2022-CD8G-DR-006	Business Technology Group - Network Infrastructure Upgrade	Business Technology Group	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	10/26/2022	10/24/2024	
RFP-008-2022-DR-STT/STX	Construction Group - RFP-008-2022-DR-STT/STX	Grant Engineering & Construction Group, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	9/14/2022	9/14/2024	
2022-CD8G-DR-05	Grant Engineering & Construction Group	Grant Engineering & Construction Group, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	9/14/2022	9/14/2024	
2024-CD8G-DR-001	Hamilton House Network Installation	NTEX Security Solutions LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	3/20/2024	5/30/2024	
2021-CD8G-DR-08	International Capital & Management Corporation (ICMC)	International Capital & Management Company, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	6/1/2021	5/31/2024	
2023-CD8G-DR-02	J.Benton Construction, LLC	J. Benton Construction, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	6/27/2023	6/16/2025	
2023-03-CD8G-DR	Jackson Cleaning Services, LLC	Jackson Cleaning Services, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	5/17/2023	5/16/2025	
2019-007-CD8G-DR	Qualitative Systems, LLC	Qualitative Systems, LLC	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	11/5/2021	10/17/2025	
2021-CD8G-DR012	The Strategy Group, VI, LLC	The Strategy Group	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	9/20/2020	9/24/2024	
Vija 0248	Vija - Network Equipment Upgrade	Vija-VI	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	7/26/2022	7/26/2025	84100 - Computer and Networking Services
Web Design & Hosting	Website hosting, Design, Branding & Maintenance	The Strategy Group	CD8G-DR CONTRACTS	2/23/2023	2/22/2025	

# RESOURCE & COST SAVINGS

