

# Hawaii Is Hiring

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*Four of the principal movers behind the workforce recovery initiative Hawaii is Hiring are (clockwise from top left) Sherry Menor-McNamara, president and CEO of Chamber of Commerce Hawaii; Leslie Wilkins, chair of Hawaii Workforce Development Council; Erika Lacro, vice president of University of Hawai'i Community Colleges; and Beth Whitehead, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of American Savings Bank.*

If you're among the thousands looking for a job, a change in career, or simply a chance to upskill through more educational opportunities and training programs, Chamber of Commerce Hawaii and its business allies have just the site for you.

Their online resource Hawaii is Hiring, which went live nearly a month ago, remains a hot spot for out-of-work residents searching for relief from the economic fallout of COVID-19. As of last week, the website had garnered more than 63,000 page views and attracted 17,000-plus users — a clear sign that those navigating their way through its pages are pinning much of their hope on the workforce recovery initiative.

As a streamlined hub for employment seekers, Hawaii is Hiring points users toward established and emerging industries, pulling together available jobs from online sites such as Indeed.com and HirenetHawaii.com, and allowing searches to be conducted by island, industry or specific set of skills.

But that's not all. The site also provides valuable training and educational guidance for both seasoned workers looking to push the career reset button, as well as recent high school and college graduates who may still be trying to figure out how to land their first job.

"It can be overwhelming for people because there are many job sites and different kinds of resources to go to," says Sherry Menor-McNamara, president and CEO of Chamber of Commerce Hawaii. "Many don't know where to start, what opportunities are available and what kind of training is needed."

Thankfully, the chamber and its partners have stepped up with a site that thus far appears to be delivering.

"We thought, 'Why not launch a one-stop center where we have everything on the site that will direct job seekers to the appropriate resource?'" says Menor-McNamara. "That's how it was created."





*Hawaii is Hiring* partners include (from left) Erika Lacro, vice president of University of Hawai'i Community Colleges; Beth Whitehead, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of American Savings Bank; and Sherry Menor-McNamara, president and CEO of Chamber of Commerce Hawaii. **MARK GALACGAC PHOTO**

Website visitors are encouraged to explore a number of featured industries and learn about salary ranges, the type of training and education required, financial aid possibilities and more. In addition, links are provided for those who need assistance with their résumés or help in preparing for job interviews.

Currently, there are more than 21,000 job postings in sectors that include health care, education and professional services.

"Even in fields like aerospace and energy, we have jobs, so there's a wide range of positions available in different industries," explains Menor-McNamara. "And again, what makes this website so useful is that you can search by industry, or by skill set or by the island you're on."

As for those hoping to improve their education and thus increase their value to prospective employers, she says that short-term certificates are possible to obtain through a manifold of online courses.

"Kapi'olani Community College has a rapid health education program that within just a few months an applicant can receive a certificate for in-demand jobs such as medical assistant or nurse assistant. Even Hawaii Tech Development Corporation is offering free online technology courses through a Coursera program," Menor-McNamara explains. "So the website is definitely a great short-term way for people to gain skills and get the training they need."

The genesis for the website began soon after the pandemic hit in March when the chamber, which was already working with Workforce Development Council on educational initiatives at the time, realized it had to change course.

"We saw Hawai'i go from the lowest unemployment rate to its highest with more than 200,000 people out of work, and we knew we had to pivot quickly and pull resources together fast," recalls Menor-McNamara.

Credit goes to Workforce Development Council and allies such as University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, American Savings Bank, Hawaii Executive Collaborative, Upspring Digital and Anthology Marketing Group — all of whom immediately agreed to partner up and provide the necessary funding for the website.

"Hawaii is Hiring is a successful example of a public/private partnership, which leveraged resources to build a tool that guides job seekers to career pathways, training and credentials, and to jobs," says Leslie Wilkins, chair of Hawaii Workforce Development Council. "We believe that a skilled workforce will anchor our state's economic recovery."

For Erika Lacro, vice president of University of Hawai'i Community Colleges, the opportunity to provide "award-winning data, resources and tools" and "help people to achieve their career goals" was never in doubt for the educational institution.

"We are committed to supporting our Hawai'i 'ohana with quality education, training and career navigation, especially during these uncertain and challenging times," she says.

While the state's unemployment rate has been nearly cut in half (April's high of 23.8 percent has dropped to 13.1 percent in July), there are still some 80,000 people out of work, according to the latest statistics from the state Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Menor-McNamara believes Hawaii is Hiring can be an important step in "creating a path forward" and ultimately, out of the coronavirus nightmare.

"Obviously, businesses are hurting right now and the longer we have people unemployed, the more impact it has on our economy and the livelihood of families," she says. "Hopefully, and sooner than later, we can rebuild our economy in a healthy and safe way, and get people back to work."

Beth Whitehead, executive vice president and chief administrative officer of American Savings Bank, agrees.

“We encourage all job seekers to take advantage of this valuable community initiative. It’s always crucial that our private and public sectors come together and collaborate to ensure Hawai’i is strong, especially as we recover from this pandemic,” she says.

*To learn more about the workforce recovery initiative, visit [hawaiiishiring.com](https://hawaiiishiring.com).*