

Hawaii Workforce Development Council's Workforce Resiliency Initiative

Project Background

In the early spring of 2020, the Workforce Development Council (WDC) began work on the Workforce Resiliency Initiative (WRI), a plan to help Hawaii's workforce prepare for and mitigate future economic disasters through retraining and upskilling. The dictionary defines resiliency as an object's ability to return to its original shape after being compressed or deformed. Bending but not breaking, bouncing, and bobbing are all other common ways of understanding resilience. The Workforce Development Council's (WDC) 2020 Strategic Plan adds to those definitions the idea of "Ready for Anything." Ideally, Hawaii's workforce would be trained and ready to meet the challenge of future, unexpected and unknown, shocks and demands.

Written in late 2019 and early 2020, the strategic plan highlighted the need to prepare Hawaii's workforce to be resilient in the face of future economic shocks. This initiative springs from that goal. Why does Hawaii's workforce need to be resilient? Several factors, both state and worldwide, contribute to the fragility of Hawaii's economy. At the state level a lack of diversification and limited natural resources play a large part in the economy's shaky foundation. Nationally and internationally, the fast-paced growth of artificial intelligence, automation, machine learning, and the internet of things is transforming jobs, tasks, and skills in the modern work environment.

Computers and machines are fundamentally, and rapidly, changing how the world works. Research by the World Economic Forum suggests that 42% of jobs are expected to have completely different core skill sets by 2022.

Other predictions include:

- Artificial Intelligence machines will be part of companies' boards of directors by 2026;
- Office work is being automated at a rate of 12% per year; and
- 27% of jobs will be newly created in the next 2 years.

The United Kingdom estimates that low digital and poor computer skills cost them 63 billion pounds. With 67 million people in their country that comes out to 940 pounds, or roughly \$1200 USD per person. If 30% of Hawaii's population of 1.4 million has a similarly low level of digital skills, or 420,000 people, low digital literacy in our state could be costing us \$504,000,000.

The factors listed above stress the need for digital and job upskilling. However, adding to the

complexity and urgency, is the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. No one imagined the shock and negative impacts COVID-19 would bring to the state's economy. With one of the highest unemployment rates in the country, Hawaii's economy ground to a halt as the coronavirus locked the doors to local businesses. Hawaii economists are predicting the recovery to take years to return to what it was pre-pandemic.

Nationally, the University of Chicago is predicting 42% of the pandemic-induced layoffs will result in permanent job loss. The World Economic forum stated in January 2020, *pre- COVID-19*, that the world is already facing a reskilling emergency and are expecting to have to reskill more than 1 billion people by 2030. Add to this the impact of COVID-19 and we have a genuine workforce crisis.

WRI Approach

WDC's approach to understanding and strategizing for this initiative involved extensive collaborative discussions and research focused on best practices both nation and worldwide. In an effort to understand future training and upskilling needs, interviews and focus groups conducted with WDC board members, employers, and diverse workforce stakeholders, in the private and public sectors, sought to answer questions such as:

- What will jobs look like in Hawaii's future?
- What skills will be needed by Hawaii's workforce to help the state be competitive?
- What tasks would workers be asked to do?
- What problems would they be asked to solve?

Overall, WDC facilitated discussions with close to 200 participants.

The overwhelming consensus was that no one could predict specific future work needs with a strong level of certainty. What respondents were confident of, however, was that Hawaii's workforce needed two skill areas leveled up: computer skills and the professional, or so called "soft" skills, specifically problem-solving. Both of these skill areas are in the *transversal* category meaning they're not specific to any one job or profession but are vital and necessary in a broad variety of career paths. With the uncertainty of an unknown future facing our state and world these skills give Hawaii's workforce a working chance to be ready for anything.

Workforce Resiliency Initiative Plan: 'Ōlali Kamepiula

This initiative happens in concurrent steps.

Our state's workforce needs to be mobilized to digitally upskill. ~~That~~ This means that everyone needs to work together to work at improving our skills and knowledge.

Working in partnership, the public and private sectors must commit to seeing every member of the workforce equipped with the skills needed for Hawaii to compete globally. Computer skills and problem-solving in a "technology rich environment" are foundational to this effort.

The vision for the Workforce Resiliency Initiative plan is that Hawaii's workforce would be digitally literate and equipped with the professional skills necessary for success in the 21st century job environment. With this future state in mind, the plan intends to assess, train, and equip Hawaii's working population to be "Ready for Anything."

The following elements make up this plan overview:

- Goals
- Activities
- Timeframe and project dates
- Budget

Goal 1: Ensure Hawaii's Workforce Is Digitally Literate through in-person and online training

Persons Reached: 200,000 (roughly 30% of Hawaii's workforce)

Timeframe: 3-years

Activities:

1. Assess Hawaii's current state of digital literacy
2. Partner with private/public sector to increase awareness of digital literacy training
3. Develop partnerships with training providers and locations (e.g. Hawaii Libraries, Adult Education)
4. Create an outreach plan to promote computer training
5. Advocate for state policies to strengthen digital literacy efforts

Key Project Target Dates:

- Initial conceptualization: August 2020
- Procurement: December to January 2021
- Digital Literacy Assessment: November 2020-February 2021
- Coordination with Hawaii Libraries and Adult Education: October/November 2020
- Initial rollout of training program: January 2021
- Participation rates: Year 1: 20% Year 2: 30% Year 3: 50%

Budget: \$ 11,350,000 (3 years)

In-person (100,000 - 130,000 people) training -- \$7.5 million

Online basic computer training (50,000 - 70,000 people) -- \$1,500,000

Portable computers (300) -- \$150,000

Digital literacy survey and assessment -- \$200,000

Outreach/Public Awareness -- \$2,000,000

Goal 2: Hawaii's Workforce Is Trained in Problem-Solving Skills (PSS) For Technology-Rich Environments

Persons Reached: 200,000

Timeframe: 3-years

Activities:

1. Develop tool for companies and individuals to assess PSS
2. Partner with online training providers to offer curated training classes.
3. Create training paths for problem-solving skills in tailored jobs and careers
4. Provide access to in-person and online training modules via central workforce resource site

Key Project Target Dates:

Initial conceptualization: August 2020

Vendors contracted: November 2020

Initial rollout of training program: January-February 2021

Budget: \$4,500,000 (over 3 years)

1. Access to LinkedIn Learning \$3 million
 - 200,000 people
 - \$5/person
 - 3 years
2. Outreach campaign \$1.5 million

Goal 3: Develop A Comprehensive Statewide Training Infrastructure

Timeframe: 3 months

Activities:

1. Develop a central website to provide resources and information for digital training
2. Determine and develop outcomes/objectives for curriculum
3. Partner with training providers (e.g. Hawaii Libraries, Adult Education) to conduct in-person and online classes and workshops

Key Project Target Dates:

Initial conceptualization: October 2020

Platform development: November - January 2021

Curriculum development: November-December 2020

Initial rollout of training program: January/February 2021

Budget: \$ 200,000

Total WRI Budget: \$16,050,000