

Hawaii Workforce Development Council's Workforce Resiliency Initiative

Project Background

In May 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
- 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 people has a similarly low level of digital skills, or 420,000 people, low digital literacy in our state could be costing us over \$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 could take years -- four to five and as many as ten years-- for a full recovery.

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 were 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 participated in discussions about this topic with close to 150 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 to 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 the inevitable changes.

Workforce Resiliency Initiative Plan: 'Ōlali Kamepiula

This initiative happens in concurrent steps. Our state's workforce needs to be mobilized to digitally upskill. This means that everyone needs to work together at improving our skills and knowledge.

Working in partnership, the public and private sector must commit to seeing every member of the workforce adequately 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."

Goal 1: Equip Hawaii's workforce with the necessary resources and skills to be "Ready for Anything"

Outcomes:

1. Provide workers with skills to adapt to changes in their current jobs and/or navigate between careers.
2. Learn how to learn to prepare for the jobs of the future.
3. Connect vulnerable and displaced workers with job opportunities and better employability.
4. Increased self-confidence and credibility in individuals.
5. Develop skills enabling growth and adaptation in current jobs.

Objectives:

1. Upskill Workforce to Digital Baseline Readiness level.
2. Provide online learning resources for both Hawaii and remote work career specific pathways.
3. Train design thinking problem-solving skills in problem-based learning challenges.
4. Develop comprehensive and dynamic training and tracking infrastructure.

Persons Reached:

- Digital readiness skills: 195,000 (Northstar, Hawaii Libraries, Adult Education, Hawaii Literacy, 'Ōlelo Community Media).
- Career-specific pathway training: 100,000 (LinkedIn Learning); 20,000 (Coursera).
- Problem-Solving skills: 10,000 (Local partner collaboration).

Timeframe: 3-years

Key Project Target Dates:

- Initial conceptualization: August 2020
- Procurement: December to January 2021
- Coordination with training partners: October/November 2020
- Initial rollout of training program: March 2021

Budget: \$ (3 years) \$10,187,500.00

In-person (100,000 - 130,000 people) training -- \$4,387,500

Online basic computer training (50,000 - 70,000 people) – Included with in-person

LinkedIn Learning access (100,000 people) \$1,500,000

Coursera: (20,000 people) \$2,000,000

Portable computers (400 units) -- \$200,000

Online Website Hub - \$100,000

Goal 2: *Measure and benchmark our progress towards building a resilient workforce*

Outcomes:

1. Provide program with actionable data.
2. Track progress of participants.
3. Measure efficacy of initiative.

Objectives:

5. Develop annual statewide literacy annual assessment.
6. Establish regular participant surveys.
7. Assemble stakeholder council.
8. Design program evaluation plan.

Key Project Target Dates:

- Initial conceptualization: August 2020
- Vendors contracted: December 2020/January 2021

Timeframe: 3-years

Budget: \$550,000

Digital Literacy Assessment: \$250,000

Evaluation Plan: \$300,000

Goal 3: *Motivate participants*

Objectives:

1. Design and implement outreach plan.

Key Project Target Dates:

- Initial conceptualization: August 2020
- Vendors contracted: December/January 2021

Timeframe: 3-years

Budget: \$2,000,000

Total WRI Budget: \$ \$12,737,500.00