

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE UPDATE TO WDC BOARD

August 12, 2021

The Employer Engagement Committee met on July 29, 2021.

PACXA's HUAKA'I PROGRAM

Jean Isip Schneider, Director of Workforce Development with Pacxa presented the company's Huaka'i Workforce Development Program. Pacxa was founded in 2013 and formed under the Island Holdings umbrella of companies doing business as Ho'iike Networks. Pacxa employs 80 workers and serves over 350 organizations including state and local government. Interesting fact: the name Pacxa is a combination of Pacific + exabyte. Exabyte is a unit of measurement for the computers of the future. One exabyte equals a million trillion bytes. The mission of Pacxa is to be a group of dedicated, professional team of problem solvers, helping local organizations leverage technology to reach their full potential. Pacxa provides technology consulting services and has worked with the State Department of Human Services with the Medicaid eligibility calculation platform; cloud services for organizations moving away from in-house servers to cloud-based services; managed services that provide help desk services; and value-added resell (VAR) services providing soup to nuts upgrading of computers and software.

The Huaka'i Program's goal is to nurture and develop a resilient local workforce that delivers innovation and excellence to help Hawaii's businesses leverage technology to succeed. Huaka'i translates to voyage, mission and journey. The program accelerates training to prepare people for entry into IT careers by on-the-job training, mentoring, support with IT industry certifications, and assistance with career services. It is a 6-month program that starts with fundamental practice areas of IT, and then training, mentoring and certification preparation that includes certification exams and ending with assistance with career seeking strategies, connections to education and employment opportunities. The career paths that the program prepares people include project management and business analysis, cloud and infrastructure, networking and cyber-security related careers.

OPPORTUNITIES POPULATION SUB-COMMITTEE

This Sub-Committee was formed to take a deeper look at target groups that have barriers to employment as well as to facilitate discussions with employers and the American Job Centers (AJCs). The Sub-Committee has selected as a project to focus on Pacific Islander jobseekers who may face cultural barriers amongst other possible challenges to employment to explore the outreach and service awareness needs. They are looking to raise awareness of AJC support and opportunities the Center can provide so that this opportunity population are ready for employment and that employers have access to a qualified and diverse workforce. From the employer side, the group would like to engage businesses on the advantages of hiring people from this and other populations.

There are existing activities in different local areas. Maui AJC is collaborating with Imua Family Services and Kokua Outreach Navigator that supports Marshallese jobseekers to access services. One of the barriers that this population faces is language access and/or overcoming English as a second language. In Hawaii County, Goodwill Industries is the service provider for WIOA adult and dislocated worker programs and jobseekers through the State Office of Community Services' program for immigrant and low-income populations. The Hawaii County AJC emphasizes dual enrollment to access different streams of funding and training opportunities. Oahu AJC also offers the State Office of Community Services program and City Office of Revitalization, a non-profit called We are Oceania,

the Counsel General of the Republic of the Marshal Islands, and the Marshallese Community of Hawaii.

From the business community side, the Sub-Committee identified two areas to support (1) hiring events on all island AJCs, and (2) exploring holding webinars for employers to help them understand why hiring from the opportunity population is good for business and share success stories from companies such as Zippy's, Whole Foods, Roberts Hawaii, care homes and airlines, among others. An example of a recent hiring event where Whole Foods hired seven individuals and Zippy's hired 4 people. These companies have opened/expanded their recruitment practices with success.

The next Opportunities Population sub-committee meeting is set for September 2, 2021.