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QUEST BULLETIN NO. 04-23

TO: QUEST Partners

FROM: Maricar Pilotin-Freitas, Administrator
Workforce Development Division

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maricar Pilotin-Freitas".

SUBJECT: QUEST Participant Flow and QUEST Services

PURPOSE

This Bulletin describes the intended flow of participants in the Quality Jobs, Equity, Strategy, and Training (QUEST) Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG) among QUEST subrecipients and partners, and the types of services that may be provided in QUEST.

BACKGROUND

As provided in QUEST Bulletin No. 2, QUEST Target Groups and Participant Eligibility, all QUEST participants are required to meet specific eligibility requirements. Target groups are those marginalized and historically underserved populations identified in QUEST Bulletin No. 2 that QUEST prioritizes for services.

Training and Employment Guidance Letter (TEGL) No. 2-22, QUEST: Disaster Recovery National Dislocated Worker Grants Funding Announcement, established that employment and training activities in DWGs encompass career services, training, and supportive services that enable participants to gain the skills and experience necessary to qualify for, obtain, and advance in safe and sustainable jobs, particularly high-quality jobs in growth industry sectors. Supportive services must be provided as appropriate to increase the likelihood of program participants' successful completion of workforce services and activities associated with economic mobility. Partnering with employers to prepare and place participants in high quality employment in priority industry sectors identified in Hawaii's QUEST grant is also essential.

Hawaii's QUEST Grant and QUEST Bulletin No. 3, QUEST Allocations, identified the service providers for QUEST.

POLICY

The intended flow of individuals to be served in QUEST begins with outreach to potential participants and ends with follow-up after exit from QUEST. The basic sequence with the entity or entities responsible for each step is described below.

Specific entities within the American Job Center (AJC) that are responsible for QUEST are the City and County of Honolulu, County of Hawaii, and County of Maui (hereafter collectively referred to as "Counties" in this QUEST Bulletin) and State Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) Workforce Development Division (WDD) Branches for Oahu, Hilo, Maui, and Kauai. Any references to the AJC below pertain primarily to the Counties and WDD Branches, in collaboration with AJC partners.

In every step, regularly scheduled meetings should take place between the County and WDD Branch staff to avoid duplication of efforts and optimize coordination.

Outreach

- AJCs: Outreach to potentially eligible individuals, especially from populations targeted for QUEST, is conducted by the AJCs as part of, or in addition to, their outreach for Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and other employment and training programs. As key members of each AJC, Counties and WDD Branches have developed networks of partner agencies, including, but not limited to, community-based agencies, that serve marginalized or historically underserved populations who may be eligible for and benefit from QUEST activities.

As part of outreach, Counties and WDD Branches will do the following in collaboration with AJC partners:

- ❖ Inform their partners of QUEST and arrange referral procedures of prospective participants to the AJC;

- ❖ Review their current WIOA and other non-QUEST case records to identify individuals who may benefit from QUEST co-enrollment to access internships and/or other services offered by QUEST that are not provided by non-QUEST programs;
 - ❖ Share information about QUEST to employers so they may refer QUEST candidates to AJCs; and
 - ❖ Regularly meet with the organization. DLIR will procure for outreach to ensure expeditious and smooth hand-offs from the organization to Counties and WDD Branches. QUEST staff of Counties or WDD Branches should contact a QUEST candidate referred by the outreach contractor within 48 hours of receiving the referral.
- Outreach Organization: The organization to be procured by DLIR to conduct outreach for potential QUEST participants will work closely with each AJC to ensure the organization's efforts are aligned with, complement, and expand each AJC's outreach efforts. The organization's outreach will accomplish the following:
 - ❖ Ensure that outreach efforts are successfully recruiting from targeted populations;
 - ❖ Handoffs of potential candidates to AJCs are expeditious and smooth and do not result in any persons inadvertently being dropped before contact with the AJCs;
 - ❖ Provide information necessary for QUEST staff of Counties and WDD Branches to contact the QUEST candidate within 48 hours of their receiving the referral; and
 - ❖ Regularly meet with AJCs to identify issues and implement solutions.

Intake

The AJCs are responsible for ensuring that intake is being performed in the most effective way to identify potential QUEST participants. This requires Counties and WDD to provide staff training for all AJC staff, including those performing intake functions, and developing internal routing procedures of potential QUEST candidates to QUEST career counselors of the Counties or WDD Branches. The referral routing process should enable the County or WDD QUEST staff to contact a QUEST candidate within 48 hours of the candidate's contact at the AJC intake, unless intake has determined that QUEST services would be inappropriate or inapplicable.

Enrollment Into QUEST

The Counties and WDD Branches determine which candidates to enroll in QUEST and thereby become QUEST participants based on an assessment of QUEST eligibility and an initial assessment of each individual's employment skills, experience, interests, and challenges. Enrollment into QUEST is the responsibility of the Counties and WDD Branches, which requires them to ensure that an individual is at least 18 years old, meets QUEST eligibility criteria, supplies the documentation required as described in QUEST Bulletin No. 2, and have the likelihood of benefitting from QUEST services or activities.

Individuals are considered participants when they have received a QUEST service other than self-service or information-only activities and have satisfied all applicable programmatic requirements for the provision of services, such as eligibility determination. (See § 677.150(a) of 20 CFR.)

Career Services

As with WIOA formula-funded programs, Counties and WDD Branches are responsible for providing the full range of career services as appropriate for each participant that shall include, but are not limited to, jointly developing an individual employment plan with the participant that includes an in-depth assessment of the participant's skills, interests, experiences, employment goal, and issues related to finding and sustaining jobs targeted by QUEST; a plan to resolve any issues identified; and a projected and actual timeline for each step.

As with other WIOA programs, regular contacts with and provision of career guidance to the participant throughout the individual's participation are necessary to identify and resolve barriers that may jeopardize successful participation. The goal is unsubsidized employment with high wages and high skills that can sustain a family in Hawaii, ideally a job that incorporates at least three (3) of the eight (8) principles of a "good job" as defined in TEG L No. 7-22. (See item below, *Participant Performance Outcome Goals*, for more information.)

Counties and WDD Branches shall enter data on a timely basis about QUEST participants and QUEST services into HireNet Hawaii and shall maintain case records for every QUEST participant. Case records shall include contacts made with the organization that conducts QUEST outreach and the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii as these contacts relate to specific QUEST participants.

Training Services

The Hawaii QUEST grant does not include funds for training because there are many options for no-cost or partially subsidized training outside of QUEST. The following examples apply:

- University of Hawaii Community Colleges (UHCC)— Good Jobs Hawai'i training <http://goodjobshawaii.org/>

A variety of online, in-person, and hybrid UHCC classes in high-demand industry sectors are available at no-cost for all Hawaii residents. Class listings are usually posted by each Community College campus shortly before registration begins on a continuous basis. Participants may also earn the relevant college or industry certifications, and credentials where applicable.

- DLIR WDD - Helpful, Useful, Basic Tools (H.U.B.) Learning Platform, Workshops, and Summits Administered by WDD

H.U.B. Learning Platform is a free, online learning space available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, where recordings of prior sessions are available to the public to learn helpful, useful, and basic work skills and job search practice. Currently, there are recordings focused on digital workplace skills such as email, google docs, google drive, Zoom, and internet.

H.U.B. workshops are short, online sessions administered to help jobseekers on a variety of subjects. H.U.B. Summits are offered on a quarterly basis where experts from across the community share their tips and strategies over one (1) hour sessions each day for three (3) consecutive days.

H.U.B. workshops and Summits are available to the general public; registration is via [Workforce Development Division | Job Fairs and Training Opportunities \(hawaii.gov\)](https://www.hawaii.gov/workforce-development/division/job-fairs-and-training-opportunities/)

In addition to H.U.B. workshops and Summits available to the general public, additional H.U.B. workshops and Summits will be designed to specifically assist QUEST participants.

- WIOA Formula-Funded Dislocated Worker and Adult Programs

QUEST participants who are co-enrolled in the WIOA Dislocated Worker or Adult Programs may receive training services from these formula-funded programs. Note that not all QUEST participants qualify for Dislocated Worker programs. Being a Dislocated Worker is only one of several possible criteria under which a participant may qualify for QUEST.

Also note that a QUEST participant who is working, as with formula-funded WIOA programs, must have a family income below 225% of the Lower Living Income Standard Level to be eligible for training services funded by WIOA formula funds or QUEST.

All training of QUEST participants from non-QUEST funding sources shall be recorded in HireNet Hawaii and case records.

Internships (Work-Experience)

Internships, a form of work-experience, are a featured component of Hawaii's QUEST program. Work-experience is defined in 20 CFR § 680.180 as a planned, structured learning experience that takes place in a workplace for a limited period of time. As designed for Hawaii's QUEST program, they are all paid work-experiences. QUEST internships may be arranged within the public sector, private for-profit sector, and/or private non-profit sector.

All internships arranged and paid by DLIR WDD Branches' QUEST funds are within State agencies. Counties' QUEST internships may be with County agencies, private non-profit organizations, or private for-profit entities.

Counties and WDD Branches should incorporate a planned structure for internships that includes periodic evaluations and feedback from worksite supervisors and interns and a process for resolving issues identified.

Counties and WDD Branches must ensure safeguards are in place so that QUEST interns (as with WIOA formula-funded work-experience) —

- Do not displace or partially displace existing employees;
- Do not impair existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements (and if it is inconsistent with a collective bargaining agreement, the appropriate labor organization and employer must provide written concurrence prior to internship beginning);
- Do not perform work for the same or substantially similar job, if the employer has terminated the employment of any regular, unsubsidized employee or otherwise caused an involuntary reduction in its workforce with the intention of filling the vacancy so created with the QUEST participant; or
- Do not infringe in any way on the promotional opportunities of currently employed workers as of the date of the participation. (Refer to 20 CFR § 683.270.)

Regular employees and program participants alleging displacement may file a complaint under the applicable grievance procedures found at § 683.600.

Labor standards also apply in any work experience setting where an employee/employer relationship, as defined by the Fair Labor Standards Act, exists. Individuals employed in activities under Title I of WIOA must be compensated at the same rates, including periodic increases, as trainees or employees who are similarly situated in similar occupations by the same employer and who have similar training, experience, and skills. Such rates must be in accordance with applicable law but may not be less than the higher of the rate specified in sec. 6(a)(1) of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (29 U.S.C. 206(a)(1)) or the applicable State or local minimum wage law. (From 20 CFR § 683.275.)

For this reason, QUEST interns are unlikely to warrant pay at the same flat rate as the State-general revenue funded interns administered by DLIR WDD in the Hele Imua internship program. Instead, the pay rate and fringe benefits of QUEST participants will vary based on the wages and fringe benefits of a comparable position performing similar duties in the organization that hosts the intern.

While the goal is for most or all QUEST participants to participate in a QUEST internship, if a suitable worksite is not found for a QUEST participant, it may result in a QUEST participant being without an internship. If these circumstances arise, the participant should be provided with other services or activities to foster placement in a high-skilled, high-wage job. Discussions between County and WDD staff should also take place to determine whether internships offered by the other agency are available.

Employer Engagement

Employer engagement is a critical element of QUEST. In addition to assisting businesses with finding the workers they seek, strong business engagement will enable AJCs to work more closely with businesses, develop long-term relationships between AJCs and employer community, and provide solutions to needs of individual employers or industry associations.

The Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii (Chamber) is a key partner in QUEST to facilitate the information sharing between businesses and AJCs. The Chamber will support industry sector partnerships to assess workforce issues and potential solutions, expand and refine career pathways with the State Department of Education and industry sectors, promote employers' use of HireNet Hawaii to find workers they need, and sponsor hiring events for QUEST interns. These activities will be conducted Statewide with a focus on Oahu due to its larger share of prospective interns and participants.

The hiring events and other activities that interface businesses with QUEST participants will be designed by the Chamber with input and feedback from AJCs.

Regular communication between AJCs – specifically the Counties and WDD Branches – and the Chamber is necessary to build stronger and more effective connections for the benefit of both businesses and jobseekers. The Chamber and AJCs are responsible to keep the lines of communication open, productive, and recurring on a regular basis. If a participant has signed a written consent to share information with businesses for the purpose of getting a job, Counties and WDD Branches shall only share the participant's data relevant to the job. Information on a participant's unsubsidized employment status may be shared with the Chamber (provided that participant's written consent was obtained) so that the Chamber will be aware of the results of their hiring events and promotional efforts with businesses.

Participant Performance Outcome Goals

Counties and WDD Branches are required to meet QUEST participant outcome goals, which are the same as those for the WIOA Dislocated Worker formula grant. The Chamber has additional outcome goals for unsubsidized employment of QUEST participants, which is why it would be very helpful if Counties and WDD Branches share employment information with the Chamber to the extent possible.

As stated in TEGL No. 7-22, U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) defines a good job as one that "helps workers achieve economic stability and mobility, while prioritizing diversity and worker voice." The TEGL identifies eight (8) key principles for the following areas:

1. Recruitment and hiring;
2. Benefits;
3. Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility;
4. Empowerment and representation;
5. Job security and working conditions;
6. Organizational culture;

7. Pay; and
8. Skills and career advancement.

Please refer to the USDOL Good Jobs Initiative site (<https://www.dol.gov/general/good-jobs>) for details. It should be a foundational resource for all workforce system programs and partners.

Follow-Up After Participant Exit

Counties and WDD Branches will follow up on a participant after their exit from the program as an information-gathering activity that will not extend the duration of a participant's enrollment unless further services are deemed necessary. The follow up with QUEST participants should be scheduled as similarly required for WIOA formula-funded participants in order to collect supplemental wage data and determine employment status of the individual, which will help assess effectiveness of the program.

Staff Training

County and WDD Branch Managers shall ensure their staff are trained to carry out the requirements of this Bulletin.

Participant Flow Chart

A QUEST Participant Flow Chart is attached.

INQUIRIES

Inquiries regarding this bulletin may be directed to Ms. Carol Kanayama by email at Carol.H.Kanayama@hawaii.gov

REFERENCES

- TEGL No. 2-22, QUEST Disaster Recovery National DWG
- TEGL No. 16-21, Updated National Dislocated Worker Grant Program Guidance
- TEGL No. 19-16, Guidance on Services provided through the Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs under the WIOA and the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service, as amended by Title III of WIOA, and for Implementation of the WIOA Final Rules
- TEGL No. 7-22, Increasing Employer and Workforce System Customer Access to Good Jobs
- QUEST Bulletin No. 2-23, QUEST Participant Eligibility and Target Groups
- QUEST Bulletin No. 3-23, QUEST Allocations
- 20 CFR § 680.180, § 683.600, 683.600

Attachment

QUEST PARTICIPANT FLOW (3/7/23)

