

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Bennette E. Misalucha  
Executive Director



# Agenda

Introduction

Highlights of the Year

Challenges

Future Outlook/Opportunities



## WDC VISION

“Hawaii is committed to career pathways to living wage jobs, advancement opportunities and equitable upward mobility to build a 21<sup>st</sup> century, globally competitive, inclusive economy for all its residents.”



# Introduction: State of Workforce Development Council

## Current Position

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- Program ID restored
- Funding - \$6.5 million in FED funds/ \$450K in General Funds (effective July 1)
- 7 FTE (3 Fiscal, 3 Program/ 1 ED)
- Seven Standing Committees/re-set
- Executive Director is on her second year in her role
- Robust partnership with local boards

- Supportive Board/ Collaborative community partners

- Strong leadership/ Chair, Vice-Chair, Asst Vice Chair and Committee Chairs

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- no staff
- challenging transition marked by numerous obstacles
- Board vacancies (6 since 2023)
- Ambiguity in roles with internal stakeholders/trust issues

## Highlights of the Year

- Completion of the State Unified Plan/Not in Implementation Stage
- September as Workforce Development Month in Hawaii (Inaugural Future of Work Conference, Workforce Development Heroes, Workforce Community Summit)
- Board retreat/WDC Strategic Plan
- Strong Community collaborations in public, private, non-profit, philanthropy- (about 75 organizations)
- Board Governance – all Committees are focused on mission and strategic objectives
- WDC as Convenor for Other sectors: healthcare and transportation
- Robust partnerships with local board areas
- Broker for American Job Centers
- Voice for Workforce Development in the State

## CHALLENGES

Budget and Organizational transitions

Lack of Human resources during transition.

Board Vacancies

Building WDC Knowledge Base

Building trust with all stakeholders

(please refer to written plan on how to mitigate challenges)

# 2024-2025 Opportunities

## 2024

- September 27: Board retreat
- September 30: Future of Work Conference
- September: Staffing/ Local area Plans due/ Performance Measures
- October : Community Stakeholder Summit
- October/November: Transition
- December: Full Transition

## ASPIRATIONS

- Alignment of all workforce ecosystems/
- Implementation of Unified Plan
- Convene Workforce Development Stakeholders around topics: Living Wage, industry shortages, over-Arching WF Goals
- Inventory of current data platforms and work to integrate data to guide strategic directions.
- Publish important studies on workforce development in Hawai'i.



## CONCLUSION

Mahalo to those who have contributed to our successes this year.

Manage expectations: Transitions are hard!

Need for more in-depth technical training for all concerned (board, staff, community partners, businesses)

Call to Action: We need engaged Council members!

We are poised for great outcomes!



# MAHALO

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Workforce Development Council

**DR. JOSH GREEN**  
GOVERNOR

**JADE BUTAY**  
DIRECTOR, DLIR

**WILLIAM KUNTSMAN**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, DLIR



**KEN LOUI**  
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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**  
**August 22, 2024**  
**(Period between May 9 , 2023 to August 22, 2024)**

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**2024 HIGHLIGHTS**

As the Executive Director of the Workforce Development Council, a role assumed on May 9, 2023, this inaugural 'State of WDC Report' is presented to the Council members to demarcate the accomplishments and milestones achieved this year.

This report, which is intended to be delivered to the board each August, also enumerates the challenges faced as the Council strives to strengthen workforce development initiatives across the state.

When the Executive Director joined the Council, the WDC had been without leadership for more than a year, resulting in a period of uncertainty and transition. Since stepping into this role, the primary focus has been on providing stability and direction to the Council's efforts.

Over the past year, despite the lack of personnel support, remarkable progress has been made in aligning workforce development strategies with the evolving needs of the economy. Stronger partnerships have been forged with key stakeholders, outreach efforts have been expanded, and innovative programs have been initiated that have positively impacted communities. The highlights of these achievements, detailed within this report, are a testament to the dedication and collaboration of Council members, partners, and the broader workforce development community.

However, there is a keen awareness of the challenges that lie ahead.

The rapid pace of economic change, persistent gaps in Hawaii's workforce readiness, and the need for more inclusive opportunities for everyone, particularly those with barriers to employment, are areas that require continued focus and innovation.

To navigate these challenges, it is imperative to work closely with the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and particularly the Workforce Development Division. Our goal must be to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to the needs of both employers and job seekers, that they comply with federal laws, and that the Council remains agile in the face of future uncertainties.

Deepest gratitude is extended to all who have contributed to the successes this year, with confidence that, together, the mission of the Workforce Development Council will continue to advance.

## **COMPLETION OF THE STATE UNIFIED PLAN**

**Completed April 2024/Approved by the Feds in June 2024**

The development of the State Unified Plan was our most significant accomplishment this year, demanding the majority of our time, energy, and focus. Collaborating closely with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) core partners, we managed deadlines and addressed various challenges. The Plan reflects the strategic input of business leaders, private sector representatives, non-profits, and philanthropic communities, aiming to create a truly inclusive STATE plan that engages all sectors, not just the public sector.

We made a concerted effort to gather public feedback on the draft, presenting it to over 25 groups from education, business, and regional associations. The implementation of the Plan is now in the developmental stage.

## **STRONG BOARD GOVERNANCE**

### **Ongoing**

We conducted a gap analysis of the WDC board members and committees, identifying key sectors for targeted recruitment. We also reviewed and redirected committee roles where necessary. We continue to enlist the US Department of Labor for technical assistance. The first combined board training for both State and local boards was held. We are creating a WIOA Training academy for the next few months to raise the level of understanding amongst board members. As a result, our committees are robust, and we have an engaged board, though there is always room for improvement. With additional staff, we anticipate even greater impact.

## **SEPTEMBER AS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MONTH IN HAWAII**

### **September 2023**

September is celebrated nationally as Workforce Development Month, but Hawaii had never recognized it—until 2023, when, upon WDC's initiative, the State finally joined in. The activities

included the first ever Future of Work Conference in September 2023. In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii, WDC spearheaded the inaugural event, which brought together seven major employment sectors to share data, initiatives, and potential challenges. The event drew more than 350 attendees.

In addition, WDC sponsored a program to recognize workforce heroes in our community. There were five recipients including Department of Education Superintendent of Schools Keith Hayashi who received the Lifetime Achievement Award.

We intend to make these annual events.

#### **BOARD RETREAT** **September 2023**

Held on September 28, 2023, the Board retreat ensured seamless integration and alignment with our strategic objectives.

#### **COMPLETION OF WDC STRATEGIC PLAN** **Completed November 2023**

In collaboration with consultants, we developed the Workforce Development Council (WDC) Strategic Plan and crafted the state's vision and mission statements. The Board approved the Plan in November 2023.

#### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT** **Ongoing**

Recognizing our limited resources, we proactively established strong community partnerships. We met individually with community leaders to share the WDC's vision.

Thus far, we have engaged with more than 75 agencies, community organizations and groups, in all the islands and engaged with each to better understand the State's workforce needs. The network we have built positions WDC as a key convenor in solving workforce development issues.

Throughout the year, WDC was invited to advocate for the State's workforce initiatives at various events, including the Hawaii Cloud Innovation Summit, the Las Vegas-Hawaii Business Summit (twice), the Organization of Women Leaders, the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii podcast, the Immigrant Resource Center's monthly meeting, and most recently, WDC provided the opening remarks for the workforce session during "Hawaii on the Hill".

## **WDC AS AN ATTACHED AGENCY**

**July 1, 2024/Ongoing**

In its 2024 Supplemental Budget, the State Legislature reinstated the WDC program ID and restored the status of the Workforce Development Council as an attached agency. The delineation of roles and responsibilities between the WDC and the Workforce Development Division will need to be clearly defined moving forward.

## **STRONGER ALLIANCES WITH THE LOCAL BOARDS**

**Ongoing**

We have established regular meetings with the other local area Executive Directors, fostering a strong collaborative spirit. Our long-term goal is to develop high performing robust local workforce board that aligns with the state's workforce initiatives, community needs, and economic goals.

## **WDC AS A CONVENOR FOR OTHER SECTORS**

**Ongoing**

### **Health Care**

In February 2024, the WDC was one of the key organizers of a Health Care Summit focused on long-term care. Led by Senator Sharon Moriwaki, the summit brought together nearly 100 healthcare stakeholders to develop a master plan addressing the looming long-term care crisis. The WDC is chairing the Workforce Committee as part of this critical initiative.

### **Transportation**

Still in its early stages, the WDC is serving as the primary convenor to explore the establishment of a transportation sector partnership. The working group includes representatives from the private sector, the business organization, the university, the community college, and the Department of Education. The goal is to create a curriculum for maritime, aviation and even commercial driver's license (CDL), and the training will begin in high school.

## **BROKERING PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE AMERICAN JOB CENTERS**

**Ongoing**

The American Job Centers are considered the first line of defense for WIOA recipients. However, they are currently underutilized, as evidenced by low participation rates. To address

this, we are actively working to increase their visibility and accessibility. Two notable instances illustrate these efforts:

1. **Partnership with Palama Settlement:** This collaboration led to the opening of an AJC outreach effort in the area, specifically targeting the COFA communities.
2. **Partnership with the Hawaii State Library System:** While there were initial efforts in the past, the recent initiative has yielded significant results, with 10 libraries now hosting an AJC presence."

The Special Projects Committee has been tasked to increase participation levels at the American Job Centers statewide. There are current conversations on raising public awareness and visibility.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME THEM**

### **1. Budget and Organizational Transition**

To address the challenge of restructuring the organizational chart for WDC and WDD, the following steps are recommended:

- **Collaborative Planning and Communication:**
  - Establish a joint task force with representatives from WDC and WDD to collaboratively plan and execute the organizational reset.
  - Hold regular meetings to ensure clear communication and alignment on goals, progress, and challenges.
- **Clear Organizational Chart Redesign:**
  - Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of WDC and WDD, ensuring no overlap and distinct functions for each entity.
  - Create a detailed organizational chart that visually represents the new structure, highlighting WDC's independent status while showing its attachment to DLIR.
- **Compliance and Legal Review:**
  - Ensure the redesigned organizational chart and structure fully comply with federal mandates, particularly regarding WIOA performance monitoring.
- **Formal Documentation and Approval:**
  - Prepare comprehensive documentation outlining the new organizational structure, roles, and responsibilities.

- Seek formal approval from relevant authorities, including DLIR leadership, state legislators, and federal oversight bodies.
- **Phased Implementation:**
  - Develop a phased implementation plan to smoothly transition to the new structure without disrupting ongoing operations.
  - Assign transition leads to oversee specific aspects of the implementation, ensuring accountability and focused efforts.
- **Training and Support:**
  - Provide training and support to employees to help them adapt to the new structure and understand their roles within it.
- **Regular Monitoring:**
  - Establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and evaluation of the new structure.

## **2. Lack of Human Resources During the Transition**

Although the Legislature provided WDC with seven positions, these are all civil service roles, which typically take 6-9 months to onboard. In the meantime, WDC is hampered by a lack of staff, including the absence of an administrative assistant. This poses a significant challenge, particularly during the transition of WIOA roles. WDC intends to seek the Legislature's support to potentially convert these civil service positions into exempt positions, given the specialized skill sets required.

Note that the 2024 budget allocated three fiscal positions and three program positions for WDC. The fiscal positions are set, as they are currently housed under the Administrative Services Office (ASO). However, hiring for the three program positions will be challenging under current civil service rules and Hawaii practices.

### **Tactics to Overcome Challenges:**

- Explore the possibility of hiring 89-day hires.
- Consider interagency agreements to borrow staff with the necessary skills from other departments.

## **3. Board Vacancies**

Currently, there are six vacancies on the board: three from the private sector and three from labor. There is some ambiguity regarding how potential board members are selected. Ultimately, the WDC is the Governor's board, with candidates submitted by the Governor to the

State Senate for confirmation. However, WDC can help expedite the process by designating the Special Projects Committee to vet candidates, as it has historically done.

**Strategies to Address Board Vacancies:**

- **Identify Ideal Candidate Profiles:**
  - Define the skills, expertise, and backgrounds needed on the board to address current and future challenges.
  - Prioritize diversity and inclusion to ensure a wide range of perspectives and experiences are represented.
- **Expand Recruitment Channels:**
  - Leverage existing professional networks, including those of current board members, to identify potential candidates.
  - Reach out to industry associations, chambers of commerce, and professional organizations to source candidates.
  - Engage with community leaders and organizations to identify local talent with the desired skills and backgrounds.
- **Develop a Compelling Value Proposition:**
  - Highlight the impact that board members can have on the organization's mission and the community.
  - Clearly communicate the benefits of serving on the board, such as professional growth, networking opportunities, and the chance to contribute to meaningful initiatives.
- **Personal Outreach:**
  - Have current board members and executive leadership personally reach out to potential candidates to invite them to apply.
  - Develop an onboarding program and mentoring system for new board members to ensure they are well-supported and can quickly become effective contributors.

**4. Building the WDC's Knowledge Base**

The board is currently working on building its knowledge base on WIOA. On January 24, 2024, we held our first combined training of the State Board and all the local boards. While initial training has begun, there is still a need for more in-depth learning to ensure effective monitoring and support of WIOA performance.

### **Plan to Overcome This Challenge:**

- **Training Sessions:**

- Organize advanced workshops focusing on in-depth aspects of WIOA, including its legislative framework, key components, and implementation strategies.
- Implement monthly training modules that cover different aspects of WIOA in detail, ensuring continuous learning and reinforcement of key concepts.
- Initiate a guest speaker series where thought leaders and experienced professionals share their insights on WIOA-related topics during quarterly board meetings.

- **Performance Monitoring Tools:**

- Train board members on using performance monitoring tools and dashboards that track WIOA outcomes and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Conduct workshops on interpreting performance data, identifying trends, and making data-driven decisions.

- **Peer Learning and Mentorship:**

- Utilize the National Governors Association's network to establish peer learning groups where board members can share knowledge, experiences, and best practices related to WIOA.
- Pair less experienced board members with mentors who have a strong understanding of WIOA to provide guidance and support.

- **Field Visits:**

- Organize site visits to organizations and programs successfully implementing WIOA to provide board members with practical insights and real-world examples.

- **Feedback and Evaluation:**

- Hold regular feedback sessions with Council members to evaluate their needs.

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**In conclusion**, while the accomplishments achieved this year are commendable, there are always opportunities for growth and improvement. The challenges faced have provided valuable lessons and highlighted areas for enhancing strategies and approaches. Moving forward, the commitment is to leverage successes, address areas of concern, and work collaboratively with DLIR, WDD, and other community stakeholders to navigate future challenges. After a year in this role, the Executive Director remains unwavering in the

commitment to the mission. There is a relentless desire to deepen WIOA knowledge and expertise to achieve outstanding outcomes. With the unwavering support from the Workforce Development Council members, the path ahead is not just promising—it is poised for constant growth and achievement.