



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Executive Committee

Meeting Packet

January 22, 2026



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

COUNCIL

AGENDA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADET. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

BENNETTE MISALUCHA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA

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HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

AGENDA

Date: January 22, 2026

Time: 1:30 pm to 3 pm

**In-Person
Meeting** Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani Building
830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317
Location: Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Virtual Virtual Videoconference Meeting – Zoom Meeting (Link below)

Participation: Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84842831729?pwd=NMhRF3FP4b6IVRvkFkXi67Jaosm0Xm.1>

Meeting ID: 848 4283 1729

Passcode: 618837

Agenda: The agenda was posted to the State electronic calendars as required by §92-7(b), Hawai'i Revised Statutes ("HRS")

**Board Meeting
Materials:** Meeting materials are available for review at
<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/meeting-docs/>

Individuals may submit written testimony by hard copy mail or hand delivery to: Attn: Workforce Development Council, 830 Punchbowl Street, Suite 317, Honolulu, HI 96813 or by email at DLIR.Workforce.Council@hawaii.gov. We request submission of testimony at least 24 hours prior to the meeting to ensure that it can be distributed to the Board members. Any written testimony submitted after such time will be retained as part of the record and distributed to members as soon as practicable, but we cannot ensure members will receive it in sufficient time to review prior to any decision-making.

Internet Access:

To view the meeting and provide live oral testimony, please use the link at the top of the agenda. You will be asked to enter your name. The Board requests that you enter your full name, but you may use a pseudonym or

other identifier if you wish to remain anonymous. You will also be asked for an email address. You may fill in this field with any entry in an email format, e.g., *****@***mail.com.

Your microphone will be automatically muted, and video will be turned off. When the Chairperson asks for public testimony, you may click the Raise Hand button found on your Zoom screen to indicate that you wish to testify about an agenda item. You will individually be enabled to unmute your microphone, turn on your video if you choose to, and testify. When recognized by the Chairperson, please unmute your microphone and turn on your video if you choose to before speaking and mute your microphone and turn off your video after you finish speaking

Phone Access:

If you do not have internet access, you may get audio-only access by calling the Zoom Phone Number listed at the top on the agenda. Upon dialing the number, you will be prompted to enter the Meeting ID which is also listed at the top of the agenda. After entering the Meeting ID, you will be asked to wait to be admitted into the meeting. When the Chairperson asks for public testimony, you may indicate you want to testify by entering “*” and then “9” on your phone’s keypad. After entering “*” and then “9”, a voice prompt will let you know that the host of the meeting has been notified. When recognized by the Chairperson, you may unmute yourself by pressing “*” and then “6” on your phone. A voice prompt will let you know that you are unmuted. Once you are finished speaking, please enter “*” and then “6” again to mute yourself.

For both internet and phone access, when testifying, you will be asked to identify yourself and the organization, if any, that you represent. Each testifier will be limited to five minutes of testimony per agenda item. Pursuant to section 92-3.7(e), HRS, the Board may remove or block any person who willfully disrupts or compromises the conduct of the meeting.

If connection to the meeting is lost for more than 30 minutes, the meeting will be continued on a specified date and time. This information will be provided on the Council’s website [at](https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/meeting-docs/) <https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/meeting-docs/>.

Instructions to attend State of Hawaii virtual board meetings may be found online at

<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/State-of-Hawaii-Virtual-Board-Attendee-Instructions.pdf>.

Vision Statement

The Workforce Development Council’s vision is that all employers have competitively skilled employees and all residents seeking work or advancement have sustainable employment and self-sufficiency.

Mission Statement

It is the intent of the Workforce Development Council to support and guide the implementation of the Unified State Plan through active collaboration and regional sensitivity for the purpose of aligning, coordinating, and integrating workforce services to meet the needs of employers and residents in order to foster a robust economy.

- I. Call to OrderKeith DeMello, Workforce Development Council (WDC) Chair
- II. Approval of Minutes of October 29, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting

****Requires Executive Committee Action***

III. Modified Strategic Plan Status Report and Board Role

One of the key responsibilities of the Workforce Development Council or State Board is the development, the modification, and the implementation of the State Workforce Unified Plan. The modification is mandated to be submitted this year and State is now in the process of preparing that document, in collaboration with the other core partners. This agenda item provides a status report on the work involved.

IV. WorkforcePell Grant

*The Workforce Pell Grant is a new federal program that provides funding for short-term training programs. The Governor, in coordination with the State Workforce Development Council, will be responsible for establishing the approval framework and for approving or denying program applications. There is a working group composed of representatives from the Hawaii Department of Education, University of Hawaii, University of Hawaii Community Colleges, who are working on the details with guidance from the National Governors Association. This agenda item provides a status update on the project, which is scheduled to launch on **July 1, 2026**, and for which the State must be fully prepared to begin accepting applications.*

V. Certification of the Kauai American Job Center *

Certification of an American Job Center normally falls within the purview of their local board. However, because Kauai does not have a board, the responsibility, by default, goes to the State Board. The Workforce Development Council conducted the certification process early this year. It granted provisional certification to the Center but with some conditions. The provisional certification will lapse on January 31, 2026. This is an update on the certification process.

***Requires Executive Committee Action**

VI. Legislative Plans for 2026 Legislative SessionKeith DeMello and Tui Scanlan

For the 2026 Legislative Session, the Special Projects Committee will review and refine its legislative engagement protocols based on lessons learned from the past three years. The goal is to ensure timely coordination, consistent communication, and clear roles in advancing workforce priorities aligned with the State Unified Plan. This includes strengthening collaboration with legislative partners and improving internal tracking of proposed measures and testimony processes. The Council's Legislative Team will provide a report on the legislative outlook this year.

VII. Executive Directors Report

1. *Implementation of the Generational Commitment (Hawai`i North Star): There will be a webinar series in January and February which will feature several states who are going through a transformational journey to achieve their workforce development objectives. The details of the series will be provided. The timeline in the implementation will also be provided.*
2. *Internship Summit on March 4, 2026: The Workforce Development Council*

collaboration with other workforce partners will hold the first ever Hawai‘i Internship Summit on March 4, 2026, from 8:30 am to 3:00 pm at the Japanese Cultural Center. Details on the agenda and other pertinent details will be shared.

3. *Internship Excellence Awards: The award recognizes the outstanding programs and participants from both the Hele Imua internship program as well as the non-governmental sectors (private businesses and non-profits). Details of the award categories as well as the nomination process will be shared.*
4. Here will be the focus for the first quarter of 2026
 - First Annual Hawaii Internship Summit 2026
 - Internship Excellence Awards
 - Workforce Pell Working Group
 - Legislative Matters
 - Operational Transition on pertinent Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) roles
 - Implementation of Unified Plan/collaboration with Hui stakeholders
 - Building Strategic Alliances with key community organizations
 - Procurement of Services for Research and Grants
 - Staff Training and Transition.

VIII. Next Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for Thursday, April 23, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. Virtual Videoconferencing Meeting via Zoom and in-person at 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu, HI 96813

IX. Adjournment

Reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities are available upon request. Requests for accommodations should be submitted via email to Bennette.E.Misalucha@hawaii.gov or by calling Bennette Misalucha at (808) 586- 3018 (voice) as soon as possible. Such requests should include a detailed description of the accommodation needed. In addition, please include a way for Bennette Misalucha to contact the requester if more information is needed to fulfill the request. Last minute requests will be accepted but may not be possible to accommodate. Upon request, this notice is available in alternate formats.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

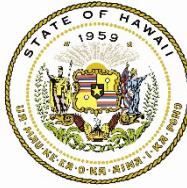
COUNCIL

Minutes:

October 29, 2025

DR. JOSH GREEN
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE BUTAY
DLIR DIRECTOR

WILLIAM KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

KEN LOUI
CHAIRPERSON

BENNETTE E. MISALUCHA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

STATE OF HAWAII
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
WRITTEN MINUTES
Wednesday, October 29, 2025
1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Attendance:

Keith DeMello, Council Chair, SVP of Communications & External Affairs, Ulupono Initiative
Cary Miyashiro, Council Vice Chair and President, Quad D Solutions
Lorna Woo, Asst. Business Manager, International Union of Painters & Allied Trades, District Council 50
Gina Woo Anonuevo, Vice Chair/Chief Admin Officer/Chief HR Officer, First Hawaiian Bank
Derek Kanehira, SVP, Human Resources, Alexander and Baldwin
Sean Nakamura, Controller/Treasurer, Trade Wind Group, parent company of Pacxa
Sean Knox, President, Hawaii Employment Services, Inc.
Trang Malone, Manager, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health
Cheryl Cross, Executive Search Consultant, Inkinen Executive Search
Tui Scanlan, President, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 665
Carla Kurokawa, Employment and Training Manager, Alu Like, Inc.

Excused:

WDC Staff:

Bennette Misalucha, Executive Director, WDC
Kelly Quitevis, Program Specialist, WDC
Sahara Sauni-Medina, Hele Imua Intern, WDC

I. Call to Order

Chair Keith DeMello called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. Quorum was established with 10 members present.

II. Approval of July 30, 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes

Chair Keith DeMello introduced the first agenda item, the approval of the July 30, 2025 Executive Committee meeting minutes. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Sean Knox with a second by Tui Scanlan. Before calling for a vote, Chair DeMello asked for any members of the public wishing to present testimony. Hearing none, he called for a verbal vote. Motion carried unanimously. The July 30, 2025 Executive Committee minutes were approved.

III. By-laws Changes

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha reviewed the Proposed Amendments to the By-Laws (pages 17–28). Regarding Section 3.6, Derek Kanehira, asked for clear language to replace the statement, “Upon a vacancy due to resignation, removal, death, or ineligibility, the Chairperson shall notify the Governor in writing within ten (10) business days of the vacancy” to clarify when notification is required: ten days from actual vacancy or ten days of receiving official notification of vacancy. Executive Director Misalucha will confer with the AG for the appropriate language.

No further comments were made, and the Proposed Amendments were presented for an Executive Committee action. Chair DeMello called for a motion with the revisions agreed upon during deliberation. Tui Scanlan made a motion, and Derek Kanehira seconded the motion to approve. The motion passed without opposition.

IV. Legislative Plans for 2026 Legislative Session

No members of the public offered testimony at this time. Chair Keith DeMello and Tui Scanlan were previously authorized to lead and convey legislative positions of the WDC last year and the upcoming 2026 legislative session. Both met with DLIR Deputy Director William Kuntzman to go over the process to maintain transparency and coordination with the department focusing on legislation that specifically aligns with WDC.

Last year, Chair DeMello reported that DeMello and Scanlan provided testimony on several measures including Senate Bill 742, Establishing a Workforce Data Sharing Working Group, that was signed into law which includes the WDC Chair or designee as a member. It was suggested the data working group be invited to present to the Special Projects Committee or full WDC Board to see how it connects with the council's priorities.

Chair DeMello also noted the Workforce Excellence Award resolution was passed and all the governor's nominations to the WDC were confirmed.

The bill introduction cutoff typically lands in late January during which time, DeMello and Scanlan will identify bills that mention the Workforce Development Council and align with the four pillars of the State Unified Plan in the 2026 Legislative Session. Two Special Projects Committee meetings will be held during the legislative session where updates can be shared, and the committee can consider early testimony. At least one full WDC Board meeting during the legislative session is another opportunity to report on activity and maintain transparency. He noted that hearings often occur with very little notice and bills can change multiple times. He also said we cannot rely on one blanket testimony template. We will use our best judgment to submit timely testimony that stays consistent with the Council's intent and the State Unified Plan.

Deputy Director Kuntzman will be updated, and any major shifts and developments will be brought back to the Special Projects Committee, the Executive Committee, and full WDC Council to remain consistent with the Council's intent and ensure the Council's voice is heard throughout the session.

V. Proposed WDC Financial Protocols for General Appropriation Funds

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha outlined the proposed Financial Protocol Policy approved by the Performance Management and Finance Committee in three parts. The first defines the roles. Part two covers the approval process on the budget. The last stipulates how local, state, GA (General Appropriation) funds are reported. Federal funds have their

own protocols. The executive director is authorized to issue purchase orders/invoices that have been budgeted. General appropriations for \$51,000–\$100,000 will be approved by the executive director and finance chair. Appropriations over \$100,000 will go through the executive committee. If it is not budgeted and over \$50,000, the full board will review.

Financial reports will be provided to the Finance Chair and WDC Chair monthly.

The format of the quarterly financial reports that will be submitted to the executive committee are currently being developed with the Administrative Services Office.

On an annual basis, financial reports will be presented to the board and posted to the public as part of the board packet.

As part of the approval process, the proposed Financial Protocol Policy has been approved by the Finance Committee. The Executive Committee was asked to ratify before it moves to the full board at the November meeting.

Chair Sean Nakamura moved to approve the financial protocols as recommended by the Finance Committee and seconded by Cary Miyashiro. Motion carried.

VI. Status of General Appropriation Funds

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha provided an overview of the status of the WDC's GA funds, and the changes as approved by the Finance Committee. In consultation with the DLIR leadership team following the last board meeting and due to the uncertainty in the federal funds and impact of GA funds, the board will not be asking for additional FTE for personnel. As a result, the personnel cost allocated for this year and next year's proposed budget was redistributed.

The increase to Grant disbursement signifies the intent to provide resources to the projects and programs needing support. In the forthcoming months, a proposal will show how funds will be distributed. The creation of a proposed Permitted Interaction Group will be formed to detail how grants will be administered.

A motion by Member Cary Miyashiro was seconded by Member Tui Scanlan to send the change in allocation to the board for final approval. Motion was carried.

VII. Certification of Kauai American Job Center

The certification of the American Job Center (AJC) normally falls within the purview of the local board. However, because Kauai does not have a board, the responsibility by default goes to the state board. The Workforce Development Council conducted the certification process early this year. It granted provisional certification to the center, but with some conditions. This is an update on the responses to the finding as well as the recommended action.

The full board voted on the conditional certification of Kauai American Job Center in June 2025 with the condition of a Corrective Action Plan to be submitted by September 30th. The Workforce Development Division submitted the Plan on time; however, it was recommended that the Plan be modified with timelines. A provisional certification is recommended until January 31st at which time another recommendation will be made for unconditional certification or may require another provisional certification.

Member Cary Miyashiro moved to approve the recommendation to extend the provisional certification of the Kauai AJC to January 31, 2026, pending receipt of a new plan with timelines and preliminary implementation plan. Motion seconded by Member Cheryl Cross. Motion carried.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha highlighted the activities during the third quarter which included the presentation of Hawaii's Scorecard on its Workforce Potential by Strada Foundation, July 9th Workforce Synergy Summit, collaboration with First Hawaiian Bank and SHRM on training sessions with current Hele Imua interns, the Future of Work Conference, and Workforce Heroes 2025.

At the next meeting, the National Governors Association (NGA) will address the challenges of resource limitations and status of federal funding. The Executive Director stated other challenges included:

- a) ensuring that each of the local boards can implement their own local plans and provide consistency across the state following WIOA (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act) rules, continued communication and shared accountability,
- b) sustaining the current momentum and address modernization of technology infrastructure, at some point we will need to upgrade our Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL), and
- c) increasing Board engagement/development and providing training. Just as it was done in the past, training is planned for the state and local boards in the first quarter of 2026.

The Executive Director reported that the focus for the last quarter of 2025 and first quarter of 2026 will include working on our modified unified plan that is due to the U.S. Department of Labor in March 2026 and in collaboration with other core partners.

IX. Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 12, 2026 at 1:30PM.

X. Adjournment

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 2:21 p.m.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Change to
Modified
State Unified Plan

STATE OF HAWAII WORKFORCE MODIFIED PLAN

WORKPLAN TIMELINE (Nov 2025 – March 2026) -ORIGINAL SCHEDULE

Modified State Unified Plan – Due March 15, 2026* (subject to change based on Guidance Document from US DoL)

Week of November 17–22, 2025

- NGA presentation to WDC (Nov. 19)

Nov 24 – Dec 20, 2025 (4 weeks total)

- Kickoff huddle with Modification Plan team (Nov. 24)
- Identify writing leads and section owners (Nov 24)
- Finalize workplan and internal deadlines
- Begin drafting sections using current guidance + prior plan
- Collect existing data, performance reports, and partner inputs
- Draft statewide needs assessment updates
- Begin crosswalk between current plan and modifications needed

Holiday Break (Dec 21 – Jan 3)

- Light work only (if any); no major deadlines
- Section owners continue optional offline drafting

Jan 6 – Jan 24, 2026 (3 weeks)

- Full first draft assembled by Jan 12
- submitted into “portal” by deadline
- Internal review by DLIR leadership (by January 24)
- Edits for alignment with WIOA, WDD, DLIR, DOE and WDC priorities
- Begin preparing the “Public Feedback Plan”

Jan 27 – Feb 7, 2026 (2 weeks)

- Formatting, consistency review, federal compliance check
- Prepare presentation materials for WDC board

- Final internal editorial review

February 10, 2026 — INTERNAL DEADLINE

Draft Plan completed

Finalize second draft and submitted into “portal”

Ready for WDC Board presentation

Ready for public comment presentations

February 10, 2026 *

- Start of Public Comment Period

February 18, 2026 — WDC BOARD MEETING

- Present draft Modified Unified Plan
- Board discussion and approval

Feb 19 – March 10, 2026

- Continuation of Public outreach + comment period
- Virtual meetings + partner sessions
- Collect and summarize all feedback

March 6 – March 12, 2026

- Incorporate final revisions
- Prepare final draft

March 15, 2026

Final Modified State Unified Plan due to USDOL

** Note: We will need to accommodate a minimum 30-day public comment period, which means the comment window should begin before the Feb 18 Board meeting and run through March 10. During this time, the draft Plan can continue to be refined and finalized based on the feedback received.*

(UPDATED)WORKPLAN TIMELINE (Nov 2025 – March 2026)

Modified State Unified Plan – Due April 15, 2025* (subject to change based on Guidance Document from US DoL)

As of January 22, 2026

Week of November 17–22, 2025

- NGA presentation to WDC (Nov. 19)

Nov 24 – Dec 20, 2025 (4 weeks total)

- Kickoff huddle with Modification Plan team (Nov. 24)
- Identify writing leads and section owners (Nov 24)
- Finalize workplan and internal deadlines
- Begin drafting sections using current guidance + prior plan
- Collect existing data, performance reports, and partner inputs
- Draft statewide needs assessment updates
- Begin crosswalk between current plan and modifications needed

Holiday Break (Dec 21 – Jan 3)

- Light work only (if any); no major deadlines
- Section owners continue optional offline drafting

Jan 6 – February 13 2026 (5 weeks)

- Core Partners submit their respective portions into “portal” by deadline (Feb 13)
- Edits for alignment with WIOA, WDD, DLIR, DOE and WDC priorities

February 17, 2026: FIRST FULL DRAFT

- Send for Internal review by DLIR leadership (comments due Feb 21)

February 21-25 (Review, Edit and Develop Final Draft)

February 24, 2026 – INTERNAL DEADLINE

February 26, 2026 : Draft to be circulated to Board members [Note: this is a Sunshine law compliance; materials for board meetings have to be routed 3 full business day prior to the board meeting]

March 6: Full Board to hold a Special Meeting to Approve the Modified Plan

March 6 – Start of Public Comment Period

March 5-April 3: Public Outreach/Presentations

April 6: End of Public Comment period/ Incorporate public comments into Plan/Finalize Plan

April 15, 2026 Final Modified State Unified Plan due to USDOL (Subject to Change)

** Note: We will need to accommodate a minimum 30-day public comment period, which means the comment window should begin before the Feb 18 Board meeting and run through March 10. During this time, the draft Plan can continue to be refined and finalized based on the feedback received.*

UPDATED TASK MATRIX

(Roles & Responsibilities)

(As of January 22, 2026)

Task	Lead	Support Team	Deliverables	Deadline
Project Coordination	Bennette	WDC Staff	Workplan, timelines, communication	Ongoing
Writing Leads for Plan Sections	Determine team leads	WDC staff, WDD staff, WIOA core partners	Strategic and Operational portion of the Plan	Nov 24
Labor Market Analysis	WDD Research / DBEDT	WDC	Updated data tables, trends	Dec 20
Writing/	WDD + WDC	Wagner-Peyser, VR, Adult Ed, TANF, DOE	Written first Draft	Jan 12
Draft Assembly	WDC	All writers	Complete first draft on the portal	Jan
Internal Review by DLIR leadership	Bennette, Maricar	WDD/WDC	Comments & revisions	February 17
Draft Assembly II	WDC	All writers	Complete second draft on the portal	Feb 24

Task	Lead	Support Team	Deliverables	Deadline
Special Board Meeting/	Bennette	WDC Staff	Slides + talking points	March 6
Board Presentation				
Public Comment Period	WDC Staff	Partner agencies	Outreach meetings + summary	March 6 to April 6
Community Outreach	WDC Staff			March 6 to April 6
Deadline for Public Comment	Bennette	WDC Staff	Slides + talking points	April 6
Final Draft	WDC	WDD +WDC+ WIOA Core partners	Final Document	April 9, 2026
Submission to USDoL				April 15, 2026

** Note: We will need to accommodate a minimum 30-day public comment period, which means the comment window should begin before the Feb 18 Board meeting and run through March 10. During this time, the draft Plan can continue to be refined and finalized based on the feedback received.*



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Hawaii Workforce Pell Grant

**HAWAII WORKFORCE PELL GRANT
PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**For Presentation to the WDC Executive Committee Meeting
on January 22, 2026**

I. Background on Workforce Pell Grants

Congress amended the Higher Education Act of 1965 to create the Workforce Pell Grant Program. Beginning with the award year that starts on July 1, 2026, and for each subsequent award year, the Secretary of Education shall award grants, known as Workforce Pell Grants, to eligible students who are enrolled in an eligible workforce program.

These amendments take effect on July 1, 2026 and apply to the 2026–2027 award year and all succeeding award years.

Key Statutory Design Features

The Workforce Pell statute establishes several core requirements:

- The Workforce Pell program is administered by the US Department of Education.
- Program eligibility standards. Eligible workforce programs must meet specific federal criteria, including program length of at least 150 clock hours and less than 600 clock hours, or the equivalent in credit hours, and a duration of at least 8 weeks and less than 15 weeks. Programs may not be offered as correspondence courses.
- Governor and State board role. A workforce program is eligible for Workforce Pell only if the Governor determines, after consultation with the State workforce development board, that the program meets the statutory requirements related to workforce alignment, credential quality, and credit transferability or “stackability”.
- Definition of State board. The statute defines “State board” by reference to section 101 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Under Hawaii Revised Statutes Section 202, the State board is the State Workforce Development Council.
- Governance Implication

The Workforce Pell statute creates a joint workforce and higher education governance model. Program eligibility requires action by the Governor informed by consultation with the State Workforce Development Council, while program delivery occurs through eligible postsecondary institutions.

This structure ensures that Workforce Pell is both labor market driven, and education system based, rather than solely an education finance program.

II. Implementation Considerations

- A. A preliminary review of the current University of Hawai'i Community Colleges curriculum indicates that only a limited number of courses may initially meet the requirements for Workforce Pell eligibility. There is also an anticipated challenge in validating and certifying programs, as some of the required performance and outcome data are either not yet available or difficult to obtain. These factors, combined with the rigorous federal standards, may result in a relatively small number of programs qualifying for Pell funding in the early stages. Nonetheless, the State has an obligation to implement this program as effectively as possible to advance its objectives and to support job seekers for whom this financial assistance could make a meaningful difference in achieving successful employment outcomes.
- B. With recommendation from the Hawaii Department of Education, the Governor has designated the Workforce Development Council as the lead for the convening of a Workforce Pell Implementation Working group.
- C. The National Governors Association is instituting a Workforce Pell Academy for the next six months to provide technical assistance to all the states. Each state is entitled to three representatives to the NGA Academy, and they have been identified as Keala Monaco (UH Community College), Judy Oliveira (UH Finance Office) and Bennette Misalucha (Workforce Development Council).

III. Actions Required for Workforce Pell Implementation

Track 1 — Legal and Fiscal Authority (January–May 2026)

While the Workforce Pell operational framework must be established prior to the July 1, 2026 federal launch, the Hawai'i State Legislature will need to establish the statutory and fiscal foundation necessary for Workforce Pell implementation. The enabling legislation will

provide the legal authority required for the Governor, the Workforce Development Council, and the University of Hawai‘i to carry out their respective roles.

This includes enacting legislation to:

- Authorize Hawai‘i’s participation in the Workforce Pell program
- Designate the Workforce Development Council as the State’s Workforce Pell certifying authority
- Authorize the Governor to transmit Workforce Pell certifications to the U.S. Department of Education
- Authorize the University of Hawai‘i and its community colleges to deliver Workforce Pell-eligible programs
- Provide any required appropriations, position authority, or system support necessary for program administration

In addition to the federal requirements, Hawai‘i will need to figure out how to handle short-term online programs offered by schools that enroll Hawai‘i students but do not have a physical presence in the state. Right now, federal guidance is not clear about whether the student’s home state or the school’s home state is responsible for approving these programs, or whether existing reciprocity rules for Title IV aid apply to Workforce Pell. To protect Hawai‘i residents, the state may want to require that any school enrolling students here in a Workforce Pell program, even if it is based elsewhere, obtain state approval before it can participate.

Completion of this legislative action provides the Workforce Development Council and partner agencies with the legal authority required to operate prior to the July 1, 2026 federal launch.

The two WDC legislative designees: Representative Andrew Garrett and Senator Donovan M. DelaCruz are preparing to introduce a Workforce Pell bill during this coming 2026 legislative session.

Track 2 — Operational Readiness (January–June 2026)

Concurrently with the legislative process, the State will initiate the establishment of the Workforce Pell operational framework. This includes implementation of the process for governance, certification, program development, fiscal coordination, and federal submission.

OPERATIONAL READINESS TIMELINE

	TIMELINE	Agency/org Responsible	Additional Notes
STEP 1 — Establish State Governance for Workforce Pell			
A. Creates a Workforce Pell Implementation Working Group <i>(Please see Page 13 for details)</i>	January/February 2026		
B. During a board meeting, the Council, through a resolution, formally acknowledges its statutory role as the certifying authority for Workforce Pell programs.	February 18, 2026 (WDC Quarterly Board Meeting)	Workforce Development Council	
C. The Council adopts a certification process (delegation, review standards, timelines).	February 18, 2026 (WDC Quarterly Board Meeting)	Workforce Development Council	
STEP 2 — Program Development and Submission	February -May 2026	University of Hawaii, University of Hawaii Community Colleges	What this agency does NOT do:

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It does not replace the State board's certification role. It does not independently approve Workforce Pell programs for federal purposes
<p>A. Identify or design short-term career pathway programs that meet federal criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Minimum clock hours and weeks ◦ Industry-recognized credential ◦ Alignment to high-value occupations 		<p>University of Hawaii University of Hawaii Community Colleges</p>	<p>Colleges do not self-certify for Workforce Pell.</p> <p>The goal is to present these programs to the Working Group... and the working group can send the recommendation to the Council at its May 20, 2026 Board Meeting.</p>
<p>Assess that programs are aligned with real world environment</p>		<p>Workforce Pell Implementation Working Group</p>	<p>The goal is to present these programs to the Working Group for consideration... and the working group can send the recommendation to the WDC at its next board meeting (the target for this first reiteration will be the May 20, 2026 Board Meeting.)</p> <p>It does not replace the State board's certification role.</p> <p>It does not independently approve Workforce</p>

			Pell programs for federal purposes.
B. Submit programs through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ State ETPL process (if not already listed) ○ Workforce Pell certification application to the State board 		University of Hawaii University of Hawaii Community Colleges	
STEP 3 — Fiscal Coordination	February to July 1, 2026	University of Hawaii	
A. Coordinates financial aid administration readiness.			
B. Ensures institutions understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pell disbursement rules ○ Student eligibility requirements ○ Reporting obligations 			
C. Aligns Workforce Pell with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Existing state financial aid systems ○ Accreditation and academic policies 			

STEP 4 — State Board (Workforce Development Council) Certification	May 20, 2026 (WDC Board Meeting)		What certification means: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State board is affirmatively stating that the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meets federal statutory requirements ✓ Is workforce-aligned and credible ✓ Is appropriate for Pell eligibility
A. Review submitted programs for compliance with federal Workforce Pell requirements.	May 20, 2026 (WDC Board Meeting)		
B. Issue a formal certification (approval or denial).			
C. Maintain documentation and board action records			
STEP 5 — Federal Submission and Approval	May 21 to June 1, 2026		The courses certified by the Council at its May 20, 2026 meeting will be sent to the Governor, and the Governor will send the request to the US Department of Education for further action.

<p>US Department of Education (ED) receives:</p> <p>Program application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State board certification • ED has a statutory 60-day window to determine eligibility. • ED approval enables Pell disbursement beginning July 1, 2026 (or later, if approved later). 	<p>May 21 to June 1, 2026</p>	<p>U.S. Department of Education</p>	<p>The US Department of Education will determine the Workforce Pell eligibility and will notify the Governor regarding the requests.</p> <p>Ideally, the Department of Education's review process may take up to 60 days, and this timeframe should be factored into the submission of requests.</p>
<p>Community Outreach</p>	<p>June 1, 2026 to July 30, 2026</p>	<p>All</p>	
<p>STEP 6— Program Launch</p>	<p>July 1, 2026</p>	<p>Community colleges (delivery)</p> <p>State Department of Education (aid administration)</p> <p>Workforce Development Council (oversight)</p>	
<p>STEP 7: Program Oversight</p>			
<p>Ongoing responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor outcomes and compliance. 		<p>Community colleges (delivery)</p> <p>State Department of Education (aid</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update certifications if programs materially change • Respond to federal guidance updates. 		administration) Workforce Development Council (oversight)	
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SUMMARY

Entity	Role
WDC	Sets Workforce Pell policy and approves programs
Governor	Certifies eligibility
UH	Delivers programs and administers Pell
DOE	Prepares and refers students
Labor agency (WDD/DLIR)	Provides labor market data, referrals, employer connections
Labor Unions/Businesses	Validate which credentials matter; Confirm wage and hiring demand
Local Boards	Validate demand, refer students, report results

RESEARCH MATERIALS

I. From the Bipartisan Committee on Education: Workforce Pell Act Section by Section

https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/bipartisan_workforce_pell_act_section_by_section_final.pdf

“In order to be an eligible program, a state workforce board authorized under WIOA must first determine if a program provides education aligned with high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand industry sectors or occupations, meets the hiring requirements of potential in-demand industry or sector employers, and satisfies any applicable educational prerequisite requirement for professional licensure or certification in the state or states in which the program is offered, as applicable.”

2. Workforce Pell Is Coming. Are State Legislatures Ready?

<https://www.ncsl.org/resources/details/workforce-pell-is-coming-are-state-legislatures-ready>

*"States are responsible for identifying which short-term programs qualify for Workforce Pell based on criteria set in federal law. **Governors, in coordination with state workforce boards, will review programs to confirm they prepare students for in-demand jobs, confer a recognized credential, and verify that they build toward, or "stack into," further education or training"***

3. Bipartisan Workforce Pell Act (H.R. 6585) Fact Sheet

[chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bipartisan workforce pell act fact sheet1.pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://democrats-edworkforce.house.gov/imo/media/doc/bipartisan%20workforce%20pell%20act%20fact%20sheet1.pdf)

3. Implementing Workforce Pell

<https://nationalskillscoalition.org/resource/publications/implementing-workforce-pell/>

4. Workforce Pell Is (Finally) Law. Now What

https://www.richmondfed.org/region_communities/regional_data_analysis/community_college_survey/community_college_insights/2025/workforce_pell_finally_law_now_what#:~:text=Under%20the%20legislation%2C%20the%20governor's,70%20percent%20each%20award%20year.

*"Under the legislation, the governor's office in each state is responsible for consulting with their **state workforce boards** to determine which programs are "aligned with the requirements of high-skill, high-wage" occupations or focus on jobs for in-demand industries. Programs must also meet accountability thresholds designed to ensure funding yields positive educational and labor market outcomes. An institution must demonstrate that 70 percent of their students complete the course (within 150 percent of the normal time for completion) and the job placement rate is at least 70 percent each award year."*

5. Fulfilling the Promise of Workforce Pell: Why We Need State Leadership

<https://all4ed.org/state-policy-center-fulfilling-the-promise-of-workforce-pell-why-we-need-state-leadership/>

6. Preparing for Workforce Pell: How colleges can lead the way

<https://achievingthedream.org/preparing-for-workforce-pell/77/>

7. Workforce Pell Rules Take Shape; States to Play a Major Role in Implementation

<https://www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/workforce-pell-is-coming-are-state-legislatures-ready#:~:text=These%20performance%20standards%20apply%20only,satisfy%20federal%20program%20performance%20requirements.>

8. Workforce Pell Rules Take Shape; States to Play a Major Role in Implementation

<https://whiteboardadvisors.com/workforce-pell-rules-take-shape-states-to-play-a-major-role-in-implementation/>

9. Preparing to Implement Workforce Pell Grants: States Should Legislate to Solidify Student Protections

<https://ticas.org/accountability/workforce-pell-state-model-legislation/>

10. Workforce Pell is moving Forward: Advocates must help shape what comes next

<https://nationalskillscoalition.org/blog/higher-education/workforce-pell-is-moving-forward-advocates-must-help-shape-what-comes-next/#:~:text=States%20have%20a%20lot%20to,needed%20to%20meet%20hiring%20requirements>

11. Preparing for Workforce Pell: The Role of States and Governors

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llxnR3r5CE>

12. Workforce Pell, State Roles, and Implications for Digital Learning

<https://wcet.wiche.edu/frontiers/2025/12/18/ahead-week-one-recap/#:~:text=Governor%20and%20State%20Responsibilities,necessary%20to%20implement%20Workforce%20Pell.>

13. Eight Steps States Should Take to Get Workforce Pell Right for Students and Workers

<https://tcf.org/content/commentary/eight-steps-states-should-take-to-get-workforce-pell-right-for-students-and-workers/#:~:text=States'%20actions%20in%20the%20coming,states%20are%20set%20out%20below.>

14. Making Workforce Pell Deliver for Workers, Local Businesses, and Shared Prosperity

<https://nationalskillscoalition.org/blog/news/making-workforce-pell-deliver-for-workers-local-businesses-and-shared-prosperity/>

15. Key Issues for Governing Boards

<https://agb.org/news/agb-alerts/agb-policy-alert-consensus-reached-on-new-workforce-pell-grant-program/>

16. Workforce Pell Grants for Short-Term Programs: A Primer and Update from Negotiated Rulemaking

<https://upcea.edu/workforce-pell-grants-for-short-term-programs-a-primer-and-update-from-negotiated-rulemaking-consensus-reached-whats-in-the-draft-regulations/>

17. Unpacking Workforce Pell: Learning from the States

<https://bipartisanpolicy.org/article/unpacking-workforce-pell-learning-from-the-states/>

18. Workforce Pell Grants Create New Opportunity: A Preliminary Guide to Micro-Credential Eligibility

<https://mcclintockcpa.com/workforce-pell-grants-create-new-opportunity-a-preliminary-guide-to-micro-credential-eligibility/>

19. Workforce Pell: A Potential Game Changer for Adult Learners and the Economy

<https://www.cael.org/resources/pathways-blog/workforce-pell-a-potential-game-changer-for-adult-learners-and-the-economy>

20. Workforce Pell Rules Take Shape; States to Play a Major Role in Implementation

<https://whiteboardadvisors.com/workforce-pell-rules-take-shape-states-to-play-a-major-role-in-implementation/>

21. Six steps community colleges can take now to prepare for Workforce Pell

<https://ab.com/resources/blog/community-college-blog/six-steps-community-colleges-can-prepare-for-workforce-pell/>

22. Preparing for Workforce Pell: Leveraging the Data

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kwJjNf27wo>

23: America's Workforce: Implementing Workforce Pell

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kwJjNf27wo>

24. Workforce Pell: Learning from Virginia's G3 Program

<https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/implementing-workforce-pell-g3.html>

25. Preparing for the Workforce Pell-funded workforce

<https://intelliboard.net/blog/preparing-for-the-new-pell-funded-workforce-development-era-how-intelliboard-supports-compliance-and-accountability/>

26. Workforce Pell can be a catalyst, unless we try to make it a cure all

<https://nationalskillscoalition.org/blog/higher-education/workforce-pell-can-be-a-catalyst-unless-we-try-to-make-it-a-cure-all/>

27. ED Releases Draft Workforce Pell Regulations

<https://www.ccdaily.com/2025/12/ed-releases-draft-workforce-pell-regulations/>

28. Congress OK'd Pell Grants for Workforce Training. Now, It's Up to the States

<https://www.the74million.org/article/congress-okd-pell-grants-for-workforce-training-now-its-up-to-the-states/>

29. Why Implementation Matters: Ensuring Quality in the New Workforce Pell Program

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/events/why-implementation-matters-ensuring-quality-in-the-new-workforce-pell-program/>

30. The latest Workforce Pell Resources

<https://eddesignlab.org/news-events/updated-weekly-the-latest-workforce-pell-resources/>

31. Education Outlines Workforce Pell Regulations

<https://www.highereddive.com/news/education-department-outlines-potential-workforce-pell-regulations/807224/>

32. JFF Offers Guidance on Workforce Pell Implementation

<https://www.jff.org/blog/jff-offers-guidance-on-workforce-pell-implementation/>

33. Workforce Pell Resources

<https://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/workforce-pell/>

34. Building Pathways: How Pell Grants Are Transforming Continuing Education and Workforce Development

<https://entrinsik.com/enrole/workforce-pell-grants-continuing-education-workforce-development/>

35. How States Can Use Short-Term Workforce Pell Grants to Help Students Succeed

<https://thefga.org/research/how-states-can-use-short-term-workforce-pell-grants/>

PROPOSED Hawai‘i Workforce Pell

Implementation Working Group

I. Purpose of the Workforce Pell Implementation Working Group

The Workforce Pell Implementation Working Group (“Working Group”) is established to support the Hawai‘i Workforce Development Council (WDC) in designing and operationalizing the State’s implementation of the Federal Workforce Pell Grant Program for a July 1, 2026 launch.

The Working Group serves in a technical, advisory, and coordination role to ensure that Workforce Pell programs are:

- Aligned with labor market demand
- Validated by employers and labor
- Designed for quality, equity, and economic mobility
- Integrated with the State’s Unified Workforce Plan

The Working Group does not approve programs or funds. All policy and approval authority remains with the Workforce Development Council as stipulated by law.

II. Scope of Work

The Working Group shall support the WDC by:

1. Developing recommendations on priority industry sectors and occupations for Workforce Pell;
2. Advising on credential quality standards, including wage, safety, and career pathway considerations;
3. Recommending program eligibility criteria consistent with federal law and state workforce strategy;
4. Supporting the development of the Workforce Pell Program Approval Framework;
5. Reviewing draft program proposals from the University of Hawai‘i for alignment with employer and labor needs; and
6. Advising on pipeline alignment, including coordination with adult education and career pathways.

III. Duration

The Working Group shall operate from January 2026 through the launch of Workforce Pell on July 1, 2026, and may continue thereafter at the discretion of the WDC for ongoing oversight and program refinement.

IV. Executive Summary:

The intent is to have Workforce Pell Implementation Working Group be the coordination table.

It:

- Brings UH, DOE, employers, labor, and WDC together
- Helps design the framework
- Reviews draft programs before they reach the Council
- Ensures alignment across systems

Decision-Making Authority: The Working Group is advisory only. It has no approval power.

All formal decisions regarding:

- Workforce Pell policy
- Program eligibility
- Credential approval
- Funding authorization

shall be made exclusively by the Workforce Development Council. The approval protocols will be set at the onset.

V. Membership

The Working Group shall include representation from:

- **Workforce Development Council (Executive Director and one Council member/max of 2)**
 - * The Council (as a body) sets the policy and reviews/make recommendations on programs
 - a. Sets statewide Workforce Pell policy
 - b. Defines which sectors, credentials, and standards qualify
 - c. Adopts the approval framework
 - d. Approves or denies specific Pell-eligible programs
 - e. Oversees performance, equity, and outcomes
- **University of Hawai'i system**

*UH is the operator.

- a. Designs short-term credential programs
- b. Works with employers and labor on curriculum
- c. Submits programs to WDC for approval
- d. Enrolls students
- e. Delivers training
- f. Administers Pell aid
- g. Reports outcomes to WDC

*UH cannot self-approve programs.

- **Hawaii Department of Education (K-12 + Adult Education +CTE)**

*DOE is the feeder system.

- a. Prepares learners (adult education, GED, CTE, dual credit)
- b. Refers students into UH Workforce Pell programs
- c. Provides academic and career readiness bridges
- d. Shares (?) student pipeline data

* DOE does not manage Pell.

- **Employers from priority industry sectors/**
- **Labor union representatives/**
- **Workforce Development Division**
- **Relevant workforce stakeholders**
- **Local Area Workforce Development Boards**

* They ensure Workforce Pell leads to real jobs.

- a. Validate which credentials matter
- b. Confirm wage and hiring demand
- c. Review curriculum relevance
- d. Protect job quality and safety

* They advise and validate — they do not fund or approve.

V. Reporting

The Working Group shall provide:

- Regular updates to the WDC
- Formal recommendations on Workforce Pell eligible Program will be tentatively included in the May 20, 2026 WDC Board Meeting Agenda.



IMPLEMENTING WORKFORCE PELL

Why Rulemaking Matters – and How Advocates Can Help

AUTHORS: NICKY LAURICELLA COOLBERTH, KATIE SPIKER, AND CAROLINE TRESCHITTA

For the first time, Pell Grants can now help workers afford short-term, career-focused programs that connect them to in-demand jobs. Workforce Pell expands eligibility to programs 150-600 clock hours and 8-15 weeks long – a major step toward making education and training accessible to working adults, parents, and people changing careers.

Passing Workforce Pell was a major win – and it's just the beginning. **The real test will be whether it's implemented in a way that delivers on its promise: expanding opportunity for working people and helping employers hire with confidence.**

CAREER FOCUSED PROGRAMS prepare workers for jobs like phlebotomy technicians, welders, medical billers and coders, HVAC technicians, electrical line workers, or IT support specialists.



FOR WORKERS:

Workforce Pell means more affordable, fast pathways to credentials that lead to higher earnings and good jobs.

FOR EMPLOYERS:

Workforce Pell means a stronger pipeline of skilled candidates for critical industries – from manufacturing and construction to health care and IT.

WHAT IS NEGOTIATED RULEMAKING, AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with representatives of those affected by the regulations, must write the rules that determine how the law will actually work – like what programs qualify and how they'll decide whether students and employers truly benefit. This rulemaking process will shape how the program operates for years to come. That's why advocates' voices are essential right now: to make sure the final rules reflect the needs of working people, employers, and communities in every state – and to ensure that Workforce Pell is a springboard for complementary policies that strengthen local economies and expand shared prosperity.

WHO IS DOING THE IMPLEMENTING?



The U.S. Department of Education will:

- Set national, baseline definitions that will help states determine which programs can qualify.
- Spell out minimum standards and specify the data and evidence that states must use to demonstrate completion, employment, and earnings outcomes.
- Create the approval and oversight process so states can confirm programs meet minimum federal standards.



Governors will:

- Decide which programs meet state workforce needs and have employer involvement.
- Gather and submit the data that demonstrate strong results for workers.
- Work with colleges and training providers to ensure credentials stack and lead to good jobs.

WHO DECIDES WHAT?

Federal agencies will set basic standards in each of these six areas of implementation, and states will tailor them to local needs. Advocates can influence all of this to ensure Workforce Pell dollars flow only to programs that deliver real opportunity and economic mobility for workers and give local businesses a reliable talent pipeline.

AREAS OF IMPLEMENTATION						
	Program Eligibility	Credential Portability	Employer Engagement	Program Performance	Tuition vs Value Added Earnings	Articulation & Credit Transfer
FEDERAL Responsibilities	Set the rules for converting hours to credits	Define what counts as "stackable" & "portable"	Provide an approval process for states to show employer demand	Specify which data states must report to show completion & job placement	Set the formula for calculating value-added earnings	Explain what proof is needed to show credit will count towards a next step
STATE Responsibilities	Apply state specific requirements	Refine state specific standards for stackability and portability	Decide which jobs are "in demand" and how employers help shape programs	Collect and report data from programs to meet federal standards	Ensure availability of wage record data that shows whether programs lead to strong earnings	Verify that credit is awarded and applies to a related certificate or degree

WHEN WILL THIS ALL HAPPEN?

Workforce Pell is on a fast timeline. The law says that students should be able to use Pell Grants for short-term programs starting in the 2026-27 school year. States will move on different timelines. Some states already fund short-term programs and can adapt faster. Others will need more time to build new systems.

Timeline for Implementation and Advocacy						
Shaping the Rules			Launching the System	Strengthening Implementation		
JULY 2025	FALL 2025	WINTER 2025	SPRING 2026	SUMMER 2026	FALL 2026	WINTER 2026 & BEYOND
<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Law passes through Congress» U.S. Department of Education (DoE) begins implementation planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» States submit initial priorities to DoE» States begin preparing systems and processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» DoE conducts negotiated rulemaking» States continue groundwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» DoE releases final rules» States apply rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Workforce Pell goes live» Colleges and training providers launch eligible programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Students enroll in newly eligible programs» States refine alignment with state financial aid systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» States and DoE refine policies and processes based on early results» Eligible program list expands as more approvals are completed

← Advocating for complementary policies →

WHEN & HOW CAN ADVOCATES INFLUENCE DECISIONS

Shaping the rules

- Submit written priorities during negotiated rulemaking.
- Comment on proposed rules in early 2026.
- Engage workforce, higher education, human services, and employer partners to ensure diverse voices influence the rules.

NSC has already urged the U.S. Department of Education to center quality and equity in Workforce Pell implementation – ensuring that eligible programs lead to good jobs, equitable outcomes, and stackable credentials. Our comments draw on lessons from states that have built strong data systems, quality frameworks, and holistic supports for learners.

Launching the system

- Work with governors, workforce boards, and higher education to align Workforce Pell with existing state financing systems.
- Capture early experiences from students and businesses with the purpose of making improvements.
- Protect and sustain state and federal investments in human services because basic needs are workforce needs.

Advocating for complementary policies

As Workforce Pell is implemented, it will likely shine a spotlight on the need for strong sector partnerships, support services, and reliable outcomes data. Advocates should advance state and federal policies that strengthen these critical elements of our workforce and education system.

Strengthening implementation

- Identify state policy challenges – such as issues with data sharing or difficulties integrating Workforce Pell with existing state and federal financial aid – and push for fixes.
- Ensure colleges and training providers have the resources to offer support services that help people complete their training programs.
- Help your state spot and address unintended consequences – from college capacity needs to program quality issues – and advocate for policy changes where Workforce Pell needs strengthening or new investments to ensure it's delivering for learners.

Misalucha, Bennette E

From: Kane, Will J
Sent: Sunday, December 28, 2025 6:57 AM
To: workforcepell@nga.org
Cc: Porter, Jack; Oyadomari-Chun, Tammi; Misalucha, Bennette E
Subject: Hawaii's participation in the NGA Workforce Pell Academy

Aloha,

On behalf of Hawai'i Governor Josh Green, I am designating Bennette Misalucha, Executive Director of the Hawai'i State Workforce Development Council, as the state's lead for the Workforce Pell Academy. Ms. Misalucha will convene a state team that includes other state agency officials, including the University of Hawai'i.

Ms. Misalucha's contact information:

Bennette Misalucha
Executive Director, Workforce Development Council
830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317
Honolulu, HI 96813
Email: Bennette.E.Misalucha@hawaii.gov
Phone: [808-586-8815](tel:808-586-8815)

Please let me know if you have questions.

Mahalo,
Will

Will Kane | Senior Advisor
[Office of the Governor | Ke Ke'ena O Ke Kia'āina](#)
State of Hawai'i
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WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Kauai AJC

Certification



***PROPOSED BOARD ACTION ON KAUAI AMERICAN JOB CENTER CERTIFICATION**

***REQUIRES BOARD ACTION**

Status: As of January 16, 2026

The Workforce Development Council respectfully requests the Executive Committee's concurrence to extend the current American Job Center (AJC) certification period for the Kauai American Job Center, which was originally scheduled to conclude on January 31, 2026, to **May 30, 2026**.

The primary reason for this requested extension is to allow the Workforce Development Council (WDC) adequate time to continue working with the Kaua'i American Job Center to support the implementation of its corrective action plan. The additional time will enable staff to provide focused technical assistance, monitor progress, and ensure that corrective actions are fully addressed prior to final certification. This approach is intended to strengthen outcomes and ensure that the certification process results in meaningful and sustainable improvements.

In addition, the timing required to complete the certification review, finalize supporting documentation, and align the process with the Executive Committee's meeting schedule presented practical constraints that limited the ability to complete the process within the original timeframe. Extending the certification period will allow for a more deliberate and comprehensive review consistent with the Council's oversight role.

WDC staff anticipate completing the certification report for presentation to this (Executive) Committee at its April 23, 2026 meeting. Based on the Executive Committee's recommendation., the full Council will then be asked to consider and take formal action on the AJC certification at its May 20, 2026 meeting.

This extension is procedural in nature and is intended to ensure that the certification process is conducted thoroughly, responsibly, and in a manner that supports continuous improvement across the system.

(Background information is included in this packet)

Background

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the certification of an American Job Center (AJC) at least once every three years to ensure the delivery of high-quality services. The certification process evaluates the AJC across a set of federal and state-defined criteria, including customer service, integration of services, responsiveness to employer needs, and continuous improvement. The local workforce development board usually undertakes the role of certifier, but because Kauai local area does not have a local board, the Workforce Development Council (as the State Board) was tasked with this assignment.

Action Taken

April 10, 2025: the WDC staff conducted the on-site visit.

April 16, 2025: the WDC staff filed its report. A copy is attached.

The recommendations were as follows:

Certification Status: Provisionally Certified – With Conditions

The Kauai AJC satisfies baseline certification criteria but would benefit from targeted improvements in several key areas. As part of the next phase, the center is encouraged to develop a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) within 60 days that outlines steps to:

- Evaluate staffing needs and explore options to fund an outreach/community engagement position using WIOA resources.
- Enhance engagement with the Kauai Department of Economic Development and other key partners
- Strengthen processes for capturing and utilizing customer feedback.
- Expand employees' professional development opportunities based on identified service gaps.
- Re-establish routine coordination meetings among core partners.
- Develop and implement written policies specific to this AJC to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). While the State has overarching policies in place, the EEOC has indicated that each AJC must establish its own localized written ADA policy. According to the designated EEOC Officer, monitoring visits will soon be conducted to assess compliance at the local area level.

June 24, 2025: the full Board voted to conditionally certify Kauai AJC pending receipt of the Corrective Action Plan.

September 30, 2025: Response letter was received with the Corrective Action Plan.

October 22, 2025: Communication was sent and based on the initial review by WDC staff on the Corrective Action Plan, we noted the following:

1. AJC needs to submit a **detailed timeline** of each planned action so that we can effectively monitor progress and milestones.
2. Please note that since the certification was previously signed off by the full Board at its June 24, 2025 board meeting, this new document will need to be placed on the Executive Committee agenda at its October 29, 2025 meeting and subsequently on the full Board meeting agenda on November 19, 2025.
3. Action plan with timelines will need to be submitted by November 7, 2025, so the **updated** document can be included in the November 19 Board packet.
4. While the Corrective Action Plan is still in the process of being fully implemented and documented, we recommend extending the provisional certification to **January 30, 2026**, which will allow additional time to demonstrate progress and conduct a thorough assessment.

October 29, 2025: This item was presented to the Executive Committee. Proposed Action: Extend the provisional certification until January 30, 2025. Executive Committee voted in favor of motion.

November 7, 2025: Updated Corrective Action Plan was submitted to WDC with timelines. Please see attachment.

November 19, 2025: The Full Board will vote to ratify the Executive Committee's recommendation on the provisional certification of the Kauai American Job Center.

January 22: 2026: The subject of extending the recertification of the Kauai AJC will be presented to the Executive Committee. Proposed Action: Extend the provisional certification until January 30, 2025

February 18, 2026: The full board will vote to ratify the Executive Committee's recommendation on the provisional certification of the Kauai American Job Center.

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR



JADE T. BUTAY
DIRECTOR

WILLIAM G. KUNSTMAN
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

MARICAR PILOTIN-FREITAS
ADMINISTRATOR

STATE OF HAWAI'I
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
KA 'OIHANA PONO LIMAHANA
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 329
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813
<http://labor.hawaii.gov/wdd/>
Phone: (808) 586-8877 / Fax: (808) 586-8822
Email: dlir.workforce.develop@hawaii.gov

September 30, 2025

VIA EMAIL & HAND-DELIVERED: Bennette.E.Misalucha@hawaii.gov

Ms. Bennette Misalucha, Executive Director
Workforce Development Council
830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear Ms. Misalucha:

Subject: Corrective Action Plan in response to Kauai American Job Center Certification Determination

The enclosed Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is the Workforce Development Division's (WDD) response to the Kauai American Job Center Certification Executive Summary received on April 16, 2025.

The Executive Summary indicates that the Kauai American Job Center has been *Provisionally Certified – With Conditions*. In alignment with the Workforce Development Council's determination, this CAP addresses each of the areas outlined in the Certification Determination section of the report.

The WDD acknowledges the areas identified for improvement and appreciates the Council's thoughtful review and recommendations. We remain committed to strengthening service delivery and ensuring that the Kauai American Job Center continues to provide quality client-centered services to the Kauai County community.

Ms. Bennette Misalucha

September 30, 2025

Page 2

If you have any questions, please contact me at Maricar.R.Pilotin-Freitas@hawaii.gov or
Jaimee Tabangay of my staff at Jaimee.N.Tabangay@hawaii.gov.

Sincerely,



Maricar Pilotin-Freitas
Administrator

Enclosure

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

TDD/TTY Dial 711 then ask for (808) 586-8877

01.22.2026

Corrective Action Plan

September 30, 2025

I. Introduction

This Corrective Action Plan (CAP) is in response to the Kauai American Job Center Certification report received on April 16, 2025. The Workforce Development Division acknowledges the Kauai AJC's certification status as *Provisionally Certified – With Conditions* and is committed to addressing the areas identified for improvement.

This CAP outlines specific actions, responsible parties, and timelines to ensure full compliance with WIOA requirements and to strengthen the delivery of quality, client-centered services in Kauai County.

II. Background

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), American Job Centers (AJCs) must be certified at least once every three years to ensure the delivery of high-quality workforce services. In the absence of a local workforce development board for Kauai, the Workforce Development Council (WDC), serving as the State Board, conducted the certification evaluation on April 9, 2025, using a combination of self-assessment, stakeholder interviews, and site observations.

Following the decision by the Mayor of Kauai County not to be the grant recipient of the WIOA Title I funds, the Workforce Development Division (WDD) became the fiscal agent and assumed responsibility for the Kauai AJC. The AJC is currently operated by WDD's Kauai Branch, which provides WIOA Title I services along with other federal and state workforce programs administered by WDD.

WDC's evaluation recognized the dedication of the Kauai AJC team and its consistent delivery of essential services. However, the review also identified several areas where targeted improvements could enhance service integration, outreach, accessibility, and continuous improvement.

III. Summary of Certification Conditions

The following areas were identified as requiring corrective action in WDC's Kauai American Job Center Certification Executive Summary:

1. Evaluate staffing needs and explore options to fund an outreach/community engagement position or agency using WIOA resources.

2. Enhance engagement with the Kauai Department of Economic Development and other key partners.
3. Strengthen processes for capturing and utilizing customer feedback.
4. Expand employees' professional development opportunities based on identified service gaps.
5. Re-establish routine coordination meetings among core partners.
6. Develop and implement written policies specific to this AJC to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

IV. Action Plan

Area for Improvement	Corrective Action(s)
1. Staffing & Outreach	Continue state recruiting process to fill current vacant position; Conduct analysis of current staff duties and responsibilities; Create staff schedule for outreach.
2. Partner Engagement	Schedule quarterly meetings with Kauai Department of Economic Development; identify joint initiatives; formalize collaboration.
3. Customer Feedback	Develop and implement customer satisfaction survey; establish review process; integrate feedback into service planning.
4. Staff Development	Conduct training needs assessment; create training calendar; partner with WDC and other providers for workshops.

5. Coordination Meetings	Re-establish monthly meetings among core partners; rotate facilitation; document outcomes.
6. ADA Compliance	Draft localized ADA policy; train staff; prepare for EEOC monitoring.

V. Conclusion

WDD and its Kauai Branch staff remain fully committed to the continuous improvement of the Kauai American Job Center and to delivering high-quality, accessible, and client-centered workforce services to the community.

To ensure the successful implementation of this Corrective Action Plan, WDD's Administrative Office and Kauai Branch leadership will collaborate closely to monitor progress, address challenges, and adjust strategies as needed. Regular check-ins, documentation of milestones, and transparent communication with the Workforce Development Council will support accountability and alignment with WIOA goals.

This plan represents not only a response to the certification determination but also an opportunity to strengthen the Kauai AJC's role as a vital hub for workforce development. With shared commitment and strategic investment, the Kauai AJC is well-positioned to expand its impact and better serve jobseekers, employers, and community partners across the island.



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
COUNCIL

Executive Director's
Report



Executive Director's Report

Executive Committee
Thursday, January 22, 2026

Bennette E. Misalucha



Agenda

Update on Unified Plan Implementation

Status of the Modified State Plan

Focus for First Quarter 2026/Events

Update on Unified Plan Implementation

- Four Pillar Catalyst Teams will evolve into the Generational Commitment values of Learn, Work, Thrive and Belong
- Community-Driven Effort led by the Hawaii Funders Collaborative and the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii
- Lessons Learned from Other States Webinar Series
- Timeline for Implementation



Hawaii State Unified Plan Timeline



Modification of Unified Plan

- Background: Every two years, the State Unified Plan needs to be updated.
- Status of Guidance Letter from Department of Labor
- Working with core partners efforts
- Due date: TBD
- But need Board approval/ February 18, 20206 Board Meeting(?)

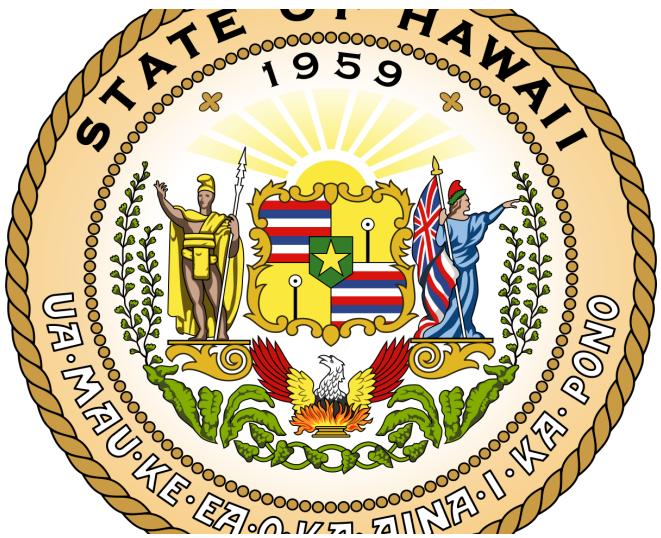
FOCUS IN 2026

First Quarter

- First Annual Hawaii Internship Summit 2026
- Internship Excellence Awards
- Workforce Pell Working Group
- Legislative Matters
- Operational Transition on pertinent WIOA roles
- Implementation of Unified Plan/collaboration with Hui stakeholders
- Building Strategic Alliances with key community organizations
- Procurement of Services for Research and Grants
- Staff Training and Transition.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **January 15, 2026** at 1:30 pm: Presentation from the State of Tennessee on best practices for employer engagement
- **January 17, 2026** : launch of the Internship Excellence Awards
- **January 23, 2026** at 9:30 am: Webinar Series: National Governor's Association
- **January 30, 2026** at 9:30 am: Webinar Series: Presentation from the State of Maine
- **February 4, 2026** at 9:30 am: Webinar Series: Presentation from the State of North Dakota
- **February 13, 2026** at 9:30 am: Webinar Series: Presentation from the State of North Carolina
- **February 18, 2026** at 9:30 am: WDC Quarterly Board Meeting
- **March 4, 2026** at 8:30 am to 3 pm: First Annual Hawaii Internship Summit at Japanese Cultural Center



Workforce Development Council

MAHALO!



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

COUNCIL

NEXT MEETING:

Tentatively Scheduled for

April 23, 2026

1:30 p.m.

via Zoom & in-person

830 Punchbowl Street, Rm. 317

Honolulu, HI 96813