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# HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

## MINUTES

**Date:** January 22, 2026

**Time:** 1:30 pm to 3 pm

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

**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/>

### **Attendees:**

#### **Members:**

##### **Present**

Keith DeMello, WDC Chair, Senior Vice President of Communications & External Affairs, Ulupono Initiative  
Trang Malone, Executive Committee Vice Chair, Manager, Workforce Initiatives, CVS Health  
Cary Miyashiro, President, Quad D Solutions

Lorna Woo, Director of Government Affairs, Intl Union of Painters & Allied Trades, D.C. 50

Sean Nakamura, Corporate Controller and Treasurer, TradeWind Group

Sean Knox, President, Hawaii Employment Services, Inc.

Lea Dias, Administrator, Department of Human Services, Vocational Rehabilitation Division

Dion Dizon, Business Representative, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 1186

Carla Kurokawa, Employment and Training Manager, Alu Like, Inc.

Amber Akana, Union Representative, Seafarers International Union of North America

## Guests & Staff:

Lei Ana Green, Workforce Development Division  
Keala Monaco, UH Community Colleges  
Bennette Misalucha, Executive Director, Workforce Development Council  
Jeanne Ohta, Employment Specialist, Workforce Development Council  
Margaret Miura, Program Specialist, Workforce Development Council

### Excused

Rona Fukumoto, President & CEO, Lanakila Pacific  
Gina Anonuevo, Vice Chair and Chief Administrative Officer/Chief Human Resources Officer, First Hawaiian Bank  
Derek Kanehira, Senior VP, Human Resources, Alexander & Baldwin  
Cheryl Cross, Executive Search Consultant, Inkinen Executive Search  
Pane Meatoga III, Deputy Political Director, Operating Engineers Local 3  
Thomas Chock, Program Specialist, Dept. of Business, Economic Development and Tourism  
Tui Scanlan, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 665

- I. The meeting was called to order by Keith DeMello, Workforce Development Council (WDC) Chair, at 1:33PM. Following roll call, Chair DeMello confirmed that 10 executive committee members were present; five members were needed for quorum. Chair recognized 2 guests and 3 WDC staff members were also present.
- II. Performance Management and Finance Committee Chair Sean Nakamura made a motion to approve the Minutes for October 29, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting which was seconded by Sector Strategies and Career Pathway Committee Chair Cary Miyashiro.
- III. Executive Director Bennette Misalucha reported on the Modified Strategic Plan Status and explained that every four years all states are required to:
  - 1) Submit a unified (or combined) plan every four years in order to receive federal funds
  - 2) After the second year, the plan is modified following a guidance document sent around December. Although it has not yet been released, the core partners (Title I, II, III, & IV), DVR (Vocational Rehabilitation) have been meeting on a regular basis to review/prepare modifications to their own section of the document.

#### IV. 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.

#### V. Workforce Pell 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.

Council member Dias: Are these eligible programs only going to be programs within the Community College system or could it be private?

Executive Director Misalucha: Both. One idea is to look at the ETPL, list of possible qualifying programs—potentially some programs could qualify for WIOA funds and Workforce Pell.

Dias: In reference to the possible 10 programs being identified, do you have an idea what kind of jobs we are talking about that they're preparing people for? It's tied to the labor market, right?

Misalucha: It is.

Keala Monaco continued the presentation and explained about the original Pell Grant which is about \$7,400 for low-income students who are in degree programs. Workforce Pell is available for students taking non-credit courses—which is about 13,000 students who are now eligible for financial aid.

- Reviewing current courses
- Courses that meet Workforce Pell qualifications include:
  - CDL (Commercial Driver Licensing)
  - CNA (Certified Nurse Aide)
- Challenges
  - Standard UH semester is 16 weeks long
  - Standard non-credit course is less than 150 hours
  - Possibly bundle courses

#### VI. Certification of the Kauai American Job Center \*

The plan, as discussed at the November meeting, was to obtain a provisional certification up until January 31, 2026. It would be prudent to extend the certification of the conditional certification until after the board meets on May 20<sup>th</sup>. The committee was asked to extend the certification of Kauai AJC to May 30, 2026.

Motion to extend the certification of Kauai AJC to May 30, 2026 was made by Council member Cary Miyashiro and seconded by Lea Dias. Motion carried without opposition.

At 2:02 p.m. Executive Director Misalucha noted that Thomas Chock, Special Projects Vice Chair, was present and that Special Projects Chair Dizon left the meeting. No change to quorum.

#### VII. Legislative Plans for 2026 Legislative Session

Previously authorized (permitted interaction) to communicate and relay legislative findings

clearly aligned with the Workforce Development Council’s work and the State Unified Plan, Councilmember Tui Scanlan and Chair DeMello will continue to carry out that responsibility through the 2026 session. Summary points include:

- Met with DLIR Director Jade Butay and Deputy Director William Kuntsman to review the process and reaffirm transparency and coordination with DLIR for awareness and consistency
- Key dates:
  - Jan 21 - Opening day for the Legislative Session
  - Jan 26 – Governor’s State of State Address
  - Jan 26 – Last day to introduce bills for the administrative package
  - Jan 28 – Last day to submit bills
  - Mar 12 – First crossover
- Updates and reports on any testimony will be provided through the Special Projects Committee (Sunshine-compliant).
- Looking ahead:
  - Expect confirmation of new WDC board members (Keep watch for Governor’s Messages
  - Track bills of interest
  - Plan to offer testimony aligned with the State Unified Plan and four pillars (Generational Commitment)

#### VIII. Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha’s report included the update on the Unified Plan Implementation:

- Modification to state plan underway
- Hawaii Funders Collaborative and the Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii are leaders in the community-driven effort to meet the generational commitment via the Learn, Work, Thrive Hui
- “Stronger Together: How Other States are Managing to Build Strong Workforce Systems,” the first of a series of webinars starts tomorrow. Sharing the results of Harvard study with 32 states, the National Governor Association representative will frame the following webinars featuring Maine, North Dakota, and North Carolina who has just been awarded the best workforce system in the country.
- Synergy Summit III is planned for July at which time state and community partners will lay out the measures of the generational commitment for the annual report at the end of the year.
- Hawaii Internship Summit is on March 4

#### IX. 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

#### X. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 2:11 p.m.