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DEPUTY DIRECTOR

BENNETTE MISALUCHA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 317
HONOLULU, HAWAII' 96813
<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/>
Phone: (808) 586-8815 / Fax: (808) 586-8822
Email: dlir.workforce.council@hawaii.gov

**HAWAII WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
BOARD MEETING - 2026 FIRST QUARTER**

AGENDA

Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2026
Time: 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon
In-Person Princess Ruth Ke'elikolani Building
Meeting Location: 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 310
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
Virtual Participation: Virtual Videoconference Meeting – Zoom Meeting (Link below)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89009397490?pwd=PWj1QLIaaEEgL0N9Xo9TDFUW61yyB3.1>

Meeting ID: 890 0939 7490

Passcode: 224167

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.

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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 Order**Keith DeMello, Workforce Development Council Chair

II. **Approval of Minutes: November 18, 2025***

***Requires Board Action**

III. **Welcome New Board Members**

- A. Jason Benn – Senior Vice President, Chief Transformation & Administrative Officer, Hawaiian Electric
- B. Douglas Chang – General manager, Ritz Carlton, Oahu Turtle Bay
- C. George Denise- Director, Project Management Hawaii; Workforce Development Chair, General Contractors Association

***Swearing in of New Board Members**

IV. **Presentation: Federal Funding Matters** Tim Carlton, National Governor’s Association, Director of Legislative Affairs

The National Governor’s Association has been closely monitoring the budget appropriations process and will share the latest update on the State’s Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding as well as the efforts for WIOA re-authorization by Congress.

V. **Presentation on Hele Imua Internship Program** Maricar Pilotin-Freitas, Administrator, Workforce Development Division and Denise Yamaguchi, Executive Director, Hawaii Agricultural Foundation

*The **Hele Imua** program is a State of Hawai’i-administered, 12-week paid internship initiative designed to give eligible participants hands-on work experience, originally within state government, to help bridge education and career pathways and support transition into long-term employment. At its 2025 session, the State Legislature has expanded the program to the private sector.*

The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR) Workforce Development Division will provide an overview of the Hele Imua Internship program. In addition, the Hawaii Ag Foundation will report on the status of the Hele Imua pilot program for the private sector.

VI. **Presentation: 2024-2028 State Unified Plan Modification***

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 by March 3, 2026, to the United States Department of Labor.

The Modified Plan sets a four-year strategy to align core workforce programs (Adult Program, Dislocated Worker program, Youth program, Adult Education and Family Literacy Act program, the

Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program) and strengthen partnerships among public, private, and educational sectors. It aims to connect residents to quality jobs, create pathways to living-wage careers, and address barriers to employment, especially for vulnerable populations. The plan focuses on economic diversification, upskilling, and leveraging federal investments to prepare Hawai'i's workforce for high-demand industries like healthcare, technology, and energy. It also seeks to transform workforce services, improve coordination, and foster long-term strategies for a sustainable, competitive economy

This agenda item will involve having the Council ratify the first Draft of the Plan and releasing this version for public comment which commences on February 19, 2026, and concludes on March 23, 2026. This is all in preparation for the submission of the final version of the Plan to the United States Department of Labor by the deadline of April 3, 2026.

*** Requires Board Action**

- VII. Presentation: Learn, Work, Thrive Hui** Matt Stevens, Hawaii Workforce Funders Collaborative and Keala Peters, Chamber of Commerce of Hawaii

The Hawaii Funders Collaborative has just published a report called "From Crisis to Coalition: A 2026 Roadmap for Hawaii's Generational Workforce Commitment. The Collaborative has been an active partner of the Workforce Development Council for the past two years in the implementation of the State Unified Plan, which had resulted in the convening of two Synergy summits. These summits brought together various stakeholders who were galvanized towards a common goal, or a north star, which has been dubbed "a generational commitment". This presentation showcases the community driven efforts that has since evolved and the various initiatives it plans to undertake.

- VIII. Presentation: Holomua Collective**

Holomua Collective brings together voices from across the community to focus on making Hawai'i more affordable for working families. They will share and present initiatives related to economic and workforce opportunities, and how different sectors can work together to create meaningful change. Their work is grounded in research, community dialogue, and a shared commitment to keeping local families thriving in Hawai'i.

- IX. Presentation on Workforce Pell***

*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 Department of Labor and Industrial Relations Workforce Development Division, the Hawaii Department of Education, University of Hawaii, University of Hawaii Community Colleges), which is 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 at which time the State must be fully prepared to begin accepting applications. A Board resolution providing the preliminary framework for Workforce Pell will be presented, which will also define the Council's role.*

*** Requires Board Action**

X. Governor’s Time *Dan Kouchi, Policy Advisor at Governor’s office and Designee for Governor Josh Green*

- *State of the State and Governor Green’s priorities*
 1. *Expanding Affordable Housing*
 2. *Reduction in the cost of living*
 3. *Boost Economic development and workforce development*
- *Overview of 2026 legislative session*
No specific legislation will be mentioned but the themes will be related to Governor Green’s priorities which are housing, reduction in the cost of living, and economic development and workforce development initiatives.
- *Update on Governor’s work in national organizations*
 1. *Western Governors Association*
 2. *National Governors Association*

XI. Labor Director’s Update..... *David Rodriguez, Designee for Department of Labor Director Jade Butay*

- *Overview of legislative priorities*
No specific legislation will be mentioned but the themes will be related to Governor Green’s priorities in economic development and workforce development initiatives.
- *Department Budget Briefings*
A report on the House Finance Committee and Senate Ways and means Committee budget briefings earlier this month.
- *Federal funds instability*
A discussion on what the Department is doing in view of the possible reduction of federal budget support.

XII. Fiscal Reports: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Grants*Hong “Julie” Radke, Administrative Services Office and Bennette Misalucha*

Administrative Services Office Accountant Julie Radke and Executive Director Bennette Misalucha will provide an overview of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant expenditures, budget status, and financial performance. The report will highlight current allocations, spending trends, and forecasts.

XIII. Certification of the Kauai American Job Center *

Certification of an American Job Center (AJC) 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; to request that the provisional certification be extended to May 30, 2026.

The Full Board will vote to ratify the Executive Committee's recommendation on the extension of the provisional certification of the Kauai American Job Center.

*** Requires Board Action**

XIV. Legislative Plans for 2026 Legislative Session Keith DeMello

For the 2026 Legislative Session, the Council's Legislative Team, under the aegis of the Special Projects Committee, will provide a report on the legislative outlook this year. There will be no specific bills that will be discussed. The discussion will be centered on the refinement of 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, including the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and improving internal tracking of proposed measures and testimony processes.

This item will also contextualize the Council's approach to legislative representation and oversight, including the limited backup representation by staff, consistent with Council policy and governance best practices. *

***Requires Board action**

XV. Executive Director's Report

A. Projects/ Activities

The Executive Director will report on the status of the following projects/activities

- Strategic Planning meeting in December 2025
- First Hawaii Internship Summit
- Internship Excellence Awards
- Modification of the Unified Plan/ Due March 2026
- Implementation of the State Unified Plan
- webinar series on the Transformation Journey of other states: Maine, North Dakota and North Carolina
- Workforce Pell Grant working group
- Eligible Training Provider List Task Force

B. FOCUS FOR 2026 Quarter 2 and Quarter 3

The Executive Director will report on the focus for the next two quarters:

- Preparation for the implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant
- Building Staff Capacity (The Council will continue to strengthen its team and align staffing for optimum efficiency.)
- Establishing Parameters for WDC Grants and Procurement of these services.

- *Continuing to maximize the relevance of existing committees and adjust as needed.*
- *Operational Transition with Workforce Development– Ongoing (We continue to clarify roles and responsibilities between the Workforce Development Division and the Workforce Development Council to ensure efficiency and compliance.)*
- *Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL) Task Force (A specialized task force will be convened to streamline and strengthen the process for approving and monitoring eligible training providers.)*
- *State Board Acting as the Local Board on Kauai (Training will be conducted to ensure the State Board can fully meet its responsibilities when acting as the Local Workforce Board for Kauai.)*
- *Board Member Training – State and Local Boards (We are planning an in-person statewide joint training session in April, focusing on roles, governance, and compliance).*
- *Implementation of Hawai‘i’s Unified State Plan & pivot from the Four Pillars Catalyst Teams to the values of Learn, Work, Thrive and Belong that are part of the Generational Commitment.*
- *Pro-active efforts towards continuous improvement and best practices (The Council will commit to identifying opportunities for growth and effectiveness.)*

XVI. Acceptance of Written Reports from Core Partners of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (No Oral Presentation)

This agenda item is informational only and does not include oral presentations. Written reports are included in the Board Packet and will be accepted into the record.

A. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I and Title III – Workforce Development Division* Maricar Pilotin-Freitas, Administrator, Workforce Development Division

*PowerPoint slide deck will be part of the Board Packet

- *Wagner-Peyser Performance Reports (October 2025 to December 2025)*
- *Hele Imua Status Report*
- *Apprenticeship program Status report*
- *Community Outreach Activities*
- *Success Stories*

B. WIOA Title II – Adult Education Family Literacy Act (AEFLA)..... Wanelle Kaneshiro, Hawaii Department of Education, Workforce Division

1. *Introduction to Ryan Mandado, new program manager for AEFLA and Adult Education*
2. *AEFLA funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026*
 - *Congress agreed to maintain the Fiscal Year 2024 and Fiscal Year 2025 funding level for FY2026.*
 - *While the House passed the measure, the Senate has yet to vote.*
3. *Hawaii Department of Education is interested in establishing more Integrated Education and Training programs that will*
 - *lead to a workforce need.*

- lead to industry-recognized certifications.
- provide unskilled/under-skilled individuals with opportunities to gain the skills needed for a viable career.

C. **WIOA Title IV – Vocational Rehabilitation** *Lea Dias, Administrator, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Human Services*

1. *Performance Measures matrix and graphs*
2. *Key Metrics and Outcomes*
3. *Employment Outcomes*
4. *Agency Updates*

American Job Centers of Hawaii (AJCH)

- a. Statewide: Hawaii Division of Vocational Rehabilitation collaborates with community, government, and business partners in various work groups to promote competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. These include the statewide American Job Centers (AJCs), the Hawaii Employment First Task Force, the Association for People Supporting Employment First (APSE), the organization, Disability: IN, and the Society for Human Resource Management.*
- b. Oahu Branch (OB) meets with AJC monthly to discuss referrals, participants, and services. Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) are co-located at certain AJCs statewide on scheduled days to complete intakes and assistance.*
- c. Services for the Blind Branch (SBB) also known as “Ho`opono”: Stationed at the Oahu AJC twice per month, the Services for the Blind Branch Employment Services Specialist (ESS) is available to assist clients with disabilities in job search and collaborates with other staff in the employment section of the City and Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Ho`opono staff are helping AJC staff assess job seekers’ abilities, capabilities, and, when appropriate, accessibility and accommodations for individuals with disabilities.*
- d. DVR staff collaborate on providing an integrated service model at the AJCs.*
- e. DVR continues working with AJC staff to find a way to track dual enrollments between programs.*
- f. Ongoing support from AJC partners includes providing tours and sharing information with new Vocational Rehabilitation staff assigned to weekly on-site services for Hawaii residents with disabilities eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services.*
- g. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)/Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFA) with all counties but Kauai have been signed.*

Timeliness

- *The timeframe for processing DVR applications (30 days) and eligibility determinations (60 days) for persons with disabilities seeking vocational rehabilitation services continues to be shortened with DVR’s rapid engagement initiatives. DVR’s rate complies at or above 90 percent.*

Vacancies

- Still working to hire qualified individuals for various positions within DVR. We are currently at a 35% vacancy rate agency-wide, which is an improvement.

Administrative

- VR is working on updates to the Unified State Plan due in March 2026.
- VR continues to be active on the Workforce Development Council; we also have representation on the Workforce Development Boards statewide.

XVII. Acceptance of Written Reports from Local Workforce Development Board.*

This agenda item is informational only and does not include oral presentations. Written reports are included in the Board Packet and will be accepted into the record.

**A. Oahu Workforce Development Board..... Harrison Kuranishi,
Executive Director**

The Oahu Workforce Development Board (OWDB) met on January 22, 2026.

- *Bylaw Amendments to Article III, Section 6 and Article IV, Section 1 Amendments to ensure previously scheduled meetings can be conducted in the event the respective Chair/Vice-Chairperson is unavailable to conduct said meeting.*
- *Article III, Section 6; Addition of item F to read: "If the Committee Chairperson is unable to conduct a scheduled Committee meeting and in the absence of a Committee Vice-Chairperson, any Executive Committee member may conduct the Committee meeting as the Vice-Chairperson."*
- *Article IV, Section 1; Addition of item D to read: "If the Board Chairperson is unable to conduct a scheduled Board meeting and in the absence of the Board Vice-Chairperson, any Executive Committee member may conduct the Board meeting as the Vice-Chairperson."*
- *Update on OWDB Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan*
- *Recertification of the Oahu Workforce Development Board*
- *Request for Proposal status*
- *Monitoring the Service Provider*
- *Response to WIOA Title I Findings*
- *Status of Budget Modification*
- *Status of Invoices*

B. Maui Workforce Development Board (MCWDB) Chentelle Rowland, Executive Director

1. *The Maui County Workforce Development Board (MCWDB) is scheduled to meet on Friday, January 30, 2026, at 9am.*
2. *The County of Maui received a letter dated December 19, 2025 from Department of Labor and Industrial Relations Director Jade Butay, in response to Mayor Richard Bissen’s request for clarification regarding compliance requirements for the Maui County Workforce Development Board(MCWDB) in light of the recent guidance issued by the State Workforce Development Council (WDC) on September 3, 2025 in WIOA Bulletin No. 04-15 Change 2. The letter from Director Butay confirms that the MCWDB remains in compliance and is fully certified. The updated MCWDB by-laws is scheduled to be presented and approved at the next full board meeting. The updated by-laws reflect the revised term-limit language and ensure future board appointments align with the new State criteria. The updates will be completed as part of our normal certification process, which is due March 31, 2026.*
3. *Program Service/Enrollment Data*
4. *Success Stories*

C. Hawaii County Workforce Development Board..... Clinton Mercado, Executive Director

Board Governance and Operations

1. *Board Action and Membership: Hawaii County Workforce Development Board (HCWDB) held a full board meeting on November 12, 2025.*
 - a. *New Appointments: The Board welcomed new members Austen Drake (SSFM Hawaii) and Kehau Costa (Director, Hawaii County Office of Housing and Community Development).*
 - b. *Committees: The Board moved to activate the Business Engagement Committee to specifically address youth employment barriers and coordinate job fairs.*
 - c. *Upcoming Meeting: The next tentative board meeting will be in March 2026.*

Fiscal Management and Funding Challenges

1. *Federal Funding Delay: The County received the bulletin for Program Year 2025 allocations (covering July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027) but was notified of a significant hold. Only 46% (\$652,448) of the expected \$1.22 million was released,*

leaving a shortfall of approximately \$777,239 due to federal budget uncertainties.

- 2. Proactive Mitigation: To prevent interruptions in service contracts, the Executive Director initiated an appropriation of \$1.4 million through the County Council. This measure ensures contracts can be executed immediately once the federal balance is released.*
- 3. Training Budget Constraints: As of late October, the Adult Program had expended approximately 90% of its training budget due to high demand for high-cost training like Commercial Driver's License (CDL) programs. This necessitated close monitoring of the budget for the remainder of the calendar year.*

Workforce Development Partnerships

- 1. One-Stop Operator (OSO) Transition: Change Makers Community Economic Development Corporation successfully assumed the role of One-Stop Operator in early October 2025.*
 - a. Operational Firewall: This transition formally removed the County from daily roles at the American Job Center of Hawaii operations, eliminating previous concerns regarding firewall violations between oversight and operations.*
 - b. Initial Progress: The new OSO has focused on coordinating partner services and managing the American Job Center Hawaii (AJCH) infrastructure. The AJCH telecommunication system was also upgraded from copper lines to a Voice-Over-Internet-Protocol (VOIP) system to improve public access.*
- 2. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) A Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Programs*
 - a. Enrollment & Spending: New enrollments were low during this quarter (example: 1 new adult participant in October) due to the nearly exhausted training funds and participants utilizing other benefits before seeking WIOA services.*
 - b. Training Outcomes: Despite enrollment caps, active participants continued to progress. In October, one participant successfully obtained licensure.*
 - c. Challenges:*
 - i. CDL Testing Backlog: A critical shortage of CDL examiners continues to prevent participants from obtaining their final licenses, despite completing training. Research and Development (R&D) staff are*

collaborating with the County Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to address this personnel shortage.

- ii. Data Validation: Staff reported ongoing difficulties obtaining employment verification documents from exited participants, which impacts on the "Exit-to-Follow-Up" data integrity.*

3. WIOA Title I Youth Program (Ola I Ka Hana)

- a. Entrepreneurial Skills Training: In October, the youth program focused on Entrepreneurship, utilizing the Banzai.org curriculum. Activities included "Becoming a Young Entrepreneur" and "The Pros and Cons of Owning a Small Business," designed to help youth recognize their strengths and understand business models.*
- b. Complex Area Partnership: In October, WIOA leadership presented to Hilo-Waiakea Complex Area Principals and Vice Principals to strengthen the referral pipeline between kindergarten to Grade 12 schools and WIOA youth services.*
- c. Campus Events: Staff conducted outreach at the PacYES Event at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo library lanai, networking with community service providers and students.*

Strategic Economic and Workforce Development Alignments

1. Department of Research and Development provided updates on emerging industry sectors that will shape future workforce needs:

- a. Film Industry: A major production (Untamed for Netflix) is scheduled to begin filming at Hawai'i National Park in February 2026. Workforce development staff are preparing to negotiate internship opportunities for local residents within the production.*
- b. Aquaculture: Strategic planning continues for the "world-class aquaculture hub" at Natural Energy Laboratory of Hawaii Authority (NELHA), with a long-term goal of creating 100 specialized jobs by 2030.*
- c. County Hiring Reform: The Hawaii County Mayor and Research & Development Director are actively working to remove the one-year minimum experience requirement for entry-level County jobs. This initiative aims to allow WIOA youth and local graduates to gain their first year of professional experience within the County government.*

2. Expansion of Partnership: The HCWDB Staff continue to work with partners and community organizations to expand their network of available resources. Collaboration efforts are being utilized to reduce the amount of return funds at the end of the program's fiscal year.

3. *Upcoming Focus for the next Quarter (January – March 31, 2026)*

- i. *Monitoring: The HCWDB Staff are preparing for the annual program monitoring of WIOA Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth) scheduled for February/March 2026.*
- ii. *Funding Resolution: Continued advocacy and tracking of the remaining 54% of federal Program Year 2025 funds.*
- iii. *Digital Literacy: Implementation of free digital literacy classes in partnership with Waipahu Community School for Adults (WCSA) to address technology gaps identified among AJC visitors.*

4. *HCWDB Meeting: The next tentative board meeting will be in March.*

XVIII. Acceptance of Written Reports from Workforce Development Council Standing Committees

This agenda item is informational only and does not include oral presentations. Written reports are included in the Board Packet and will be accepted into the record.

A. Sector Strategies and Career Pathways Committee

SECTOR STRATEGIES & CAREER PATHWAYS COMMITTEE REPORT Submitted by:

Chair - Cary Miyashiro, Quad D Solutions

Vice Chair -Lorna Woo, International Union of Painters, and Allied Trades

Vice Chair – Rona Fukumoto, Lanakila Pacific

Sector Strategies & Career Pathways Committee Meeting,

Thursday, November 6, 2025, 1:00pm to 2:30pm.

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEETING

Presentations:

- *Hawaii Pacific Health (HPH) partnerships with education*

PRESENTATION RESCHEDULED

Shelli Ihori, Director of Workforce Development at Hawai'i Pacific Health, will discuss the organization's engagement with Hawai'i schools. In addition to highlighting various projects, she will share insights on the Waipahu High School Health Clinic. Shelli is a distinguished Human Resources professional with nearly two decades of experience in the health care sector. Her expertise encompasses benefits administration, talent acquisition, organizational effectiveness, regulatory compliance, and workforce development.

- *Olelo Community Media*

Wes Akamine, Director of Operations & Project Management, Olelo Community Media

Wes Akamine is a seasoned professional with over two decades of experience at ‘Ōlelo Community Media, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing public access television services in Hawai‘i. Since joining ‘Ōlelo, he has played a key role in expanding community access to media production resources and developing training programs that empower individuals to share their stories, with a particular focus on youth engagement. Wes shared about ‘Ōlelo’s K–12 programs and school partnerships, as well as the organization’s vision and desired outcomes for the future.

- *K-12 Programs, educational partnerships*
- *Vision & desired outcomes for future*
- *Re-entry program, Hawaii Pacific University’s (HPU)
Jennifer Merkel, Faculty Facilitator, Hawaii Pacific University
“Incarceration to Workforce”*
 - *What is HPU doing to aid re-entry? Challenges?*
 - *What will be needed to develop a sustainable model?*
 - *Present interaction with Corrections and Parole & Pardons.*
 - *Desired Outcomes*

Jennifer M. Merkle, Assistant Professor at Hawai‘i Pacific University, brings extensive experience in law, criminal justice, and corrections. A former Honors Attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice, she has held multiple federal and academic roles focused on criminal law, human rights, and workforce training. Her research spans offender preparation, re-entry, emotional intelligence in law enforcement, and evidence-based correctional practices. Professor Merkle discussed HPU’s initiatives supporting offender re-entry, including current efforts, key challenges, and collaboration with Corrections and Parole & Pardons. The discussion will also explore what is needed to build a sustainable reentry model and identify desired outcomes for program success.

- *Executive Directors Report, Bennette Misalucha*

*Sector Strategies & Career Pathways Committee Meeting, Monday, January 12, 2026 **
RESCHEDULED to Monday, February 2, 2026, 1:00pm to 2:30pm.

- *Nations First Elementary School Awarded NCAC Pre-Academy National Certification - Waikele Elementary
Shanell Kagamida, Nuha Taberner, Michelle Tavares-Yamada*
- *Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) Career Opportunities & FBI Honolulu Citizens Academy
Ryan Noonan, Joy VanderVoort*
- *Building Resilient Communities through Multi-Lingual & Multi-Culturalism,
Brandon Hill*

*Next Strategies & Career Pathways Committee Meeting:
Monday, April 13, 2026
1:00pm to 2:30pm.*

B. Special Projects Committee

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE REPORT Submitted by:

Chair: Dion Dizon

Vice Chair -Pane Meatoga III

Vice Chair – Thomas Chock

Committee meeting was held on Wednesday, January 28, 2026

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEETING

- 1. Discussed the Legislative protocols for the 2026 Legislative Session.*
- 2. Created the Permitted Interaction Group for the Military Spouses Project with Trang Malone and Cheryl Cross as the designated leads.*
- 3. Discussed the Roles and Responsibilities of the Special Projects Committee and the possible projects it should pursue this year.*
- 4. Executive Director's Report: Shared about the highlights of the past quarter, including the Workforce Pell Grants, the Modification of the Unified Plan, and the Implementation of the Unified Plan. Also announced about the Plans for the forthcoming Internship Summit which will be held on March 4, 2026, at the Japanese Cultural Center.*

C. Youth Services Committee

YOUTH SERVICES COMMITTEE REPORT Submitted by:

Chair: Tui Scanlan

Vice Chair – Carla Kurokawa

Vice Chair – Amber Akana

The Committee meeting was held on January 20, 2026

- 1. Presentations*
 - a. Hawaii Future Farmers of America (FFA). Hawaii FFA became a part of the National Future Farmers of America Organization in 1929 to promote premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. State FFA Co-Coordinator Michael Barros presented about the program and current status.*
- 2. The Committee conducted a review of the current mission, vision, and role of the Youth Services Committee.*
- 3. Executive Director gave a report on the update on the 2024-2028 State Unified Plan Implementation & Plan Modification and the WDC's focus for the new calendar year.*
- 4. The next committee meeting will be held April 9, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.*

D. Employer Engagement Committee

Employer Engagement Committee Report Submitted by

Chair: Gina Anunuevo

Vice Chair – Derek Kanehira

Vice Chair – Cheryl Cross

Meeting was held on January 15, 2026

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEETING

1. *Presentation from the Tennessee Workforce Development Board Commissioner Deniece Thomas, who highlighted how the State of Tennessee has positioned itself as a national leader in employer engagement by aligning state resources to the full business life cycle.*
2. *Presentation from American Job Center Hawaii, WorkHawaii’s Business Services Team: Earl Kalani, Workforce Engagement & Recruitment Specialist. This presentation spotlighted Oahu’s unique approach to employer engagement, led by the Business Unit within WorkHawaii — the only local workforce board in the state with a dedicated outreach team. The presentation walked through how the unit builds relationships with local employers, creates on-the-job training opportunities, and leverages WIOA funds to meet business and workforce needs.*
3. *The Executive Director report covered the following topics:*
 - a. *Modification of the State Unified Plan (In order to continue to receive federal funds, the State of Hawaii needs to submit its strategic plan every four years, with a modification plan due every two years. The Modification Plan is due in March or April of this year).*
 - b. *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 were provided.*
 - c. *Internship Summit on March 4, 2026: The Workforce Development Council in 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 were shared.*
 - d. *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 were shared.*
4. *There was a strategic discussion regarding committee priorities for 2026, in view of*

the new committee leadership. It was important to clearly redefine the committee's parameters and areas of responsibility, so all members can share a common understanding.

5. *The next Employer Engagement committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.*

E. Performance Management and Finance Committee

Performance Management and Finance Committee Report Submitted by:

Chair: Sean Nakamura

Vice Chair – Sean Knox

Vice Chair – Lea Dias

Meeting was held on January 13, 2026

HIGHLIGHT OF THE MEETING

1. *There was a round table discussion on roles and responsibilities of the Performance Management and Finance Committee*
2. *Reports were shared on WIOA grant expenditures, budget status, and financial performance. The report also highlighted current allocations, spending trends, and forecasts.*
3. *Executive Director reported on the General Appropriations (GA) Funds allocated to the Workforce Development Council (WDC).*
4. *WDC Executive Director provided an overview of performance outcomes, including WIOA benchmarks, key performance indicators, and areas for improvement for all local areas:*
5. *Executive Director's Report included an Update on the 2024-2028 State Unified Plan modification, the Implementation of the plan and the planned focus for the first quarter of 2026.*
6. *The next Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, 2026, 1:30 p.m.*

XIX. Workforce Development Council's Next Meeting

Tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2026, at 9:30 am-12 noon

Virtual Videoconferencing Meeting via Zoom and in-person at 830 Punchbowl Street, Room 317, Honolulu, HI 96813

XX. Adjournment

Reasonable accommodation 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.