

HAWAII AI WORKFORCE READINESS SYMPOSIUM SERIES

# AI Strategy Deep Dive

Event 2 of 4 — From Awareness to Organizational Action

June 25,  
2026

Oahu,  
Hawaii

8:15 AM – 4:00  
PM

June 25, 2026 · 8:15 AM – 4:00 PM · Oahu, Hawaii

Registration begins at **8:15 AM** · Lunch on your own 12:10 – 1:40 PM · Return by **1:38 PM**

## ● WHAT TO BRING

Your phone or laptop · Something to write with · Knowledge of your organization's current priorities · An open mind — this afternoon requires your active participation

## ● MORNING SESSION · 8:45 AM – 12:10 PM

8:15 AM

### Registration & Networking

Doors open. Check in, find your table, and connect with colleagues from across Hawaii's workforce ecosystem.

8:45 AM · 5 MIN

### Welcome & Series Overview

**Bennette Misalucha**, Emcee · **Keith DeMello**, WDC Board Chair · **Gary Albitz**, Imua 'Onipa'a

A warm welcome and orientation to the day — what we are covering, how the sessions connect, and what you will leave with.

8:50 AM · 45 MIN

OPENING KEYNOTE

### AI Safety and the Workforce: Setting the Foundation

**Andres Ramirez** · AI Safety Awareness Project Remote

Before we talk about opportunity, we need to talk about foundation. Andres opens the day with an honest look at the AI safety landscape, the foundational concepts every organization needs to understand, and what it all means for the workforce right now.

9:35 AM · 30 MIN

KEYNOTE

## AI and Hawai'i's Economic Impacts

**Elizabeth Kneebone** · Assistant VP of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Remote

What does the data actually show? Elizabeth grounds our conversation in national and Hawai'i-specific economic research on what AI is already doing to the labor market — and where the biggest shifts are coming.

10:05 AM · 15 MIN

PANEL

## Economic Impacts Panel

**Panelists:** SF Federal Reserve · **Shawn Bernard**, Tetra Tech · **Andres Ramirez** · **Thomas Chock**, DBEDT

**Facilitator:** Ian Kitajima

A focused panel discussion on economic disruption, the gaps between employer needs and workforce supply, and what it would take for Hawai'i to lead rather than lag.

10:20 AM · 20 MIN

PRESENTATION

## Workforce Risks and Worker Protections

**Leslee Stockton** · Growth Strategy Advisor, StillDayOne.ai In Person

Leslee has spent 25+ years at the intersection of technology and responsible adoption. This session maps the workforce risk landscape, examines worker protection frameworks, and asks what responsible AI adoption actually looks like from an employer's perspective.

10:40 AM · 20 MIN

PANEL

## Workforce Risks & Worker Protections Panel

**Panelists:** **Leslee Stockton** · **Eugene Chang**, IEEE/MIT

**Facilitator:** Ian Kitajima

Where do organizations most commonly go wrong with AI — and what does it cost workers? A candid conversation on governance, organizational readiness, and what both leaders and employees need to know.

11:00 AM · 15 MIN

PRESENTATION

## What Hawai'i's Education & Training Systems Need to Do

**Praveen Khurana** · Cornerstone OnDemand / Salesforce Trailhead Remote

Data-driven insights on how organizations successfully upskill their workforces for AI — what the research shows, what does not work, and what Hawai'i's training ecosystem needs to prioritize.

11:15 AM · 15 MIN

PRESENTATION

## Hawai'i DOE: AI Readiness & Workforce Pipeline

**Brett Tanaka** · Computer Science Education Manager, Hawai'i Department of Education In Person

The pipeline starts in our schools. This session examines where K–12 and CTE systems stand today on AI readiness, what educators need, and what meaningful employer-education alignment looks like.

11:30 AM · 15 MIN

PRESENTATION

### Blue Dot Labs: AI in Education & Training

**Jacob van Almelo** · AI/ML Engineer, Blue Dot Labs In Person

Practical AI tools for learning systems, what the data shows about learner outcomes, and Hawai'i-focused applications for the training programs already running in our community.

11:45 AM · 25 MIN

PANEL

### Education & Training Panel

**Panelists:** **Brett Tanaka**, DOE · **Jacob van Almelo**, Blue Dot Labs · **Rachele Pezel**, Employer's Options

**Facilitator:** Nicholas Winfrey

What does the employer community actually need from education right now — and are we aligned? This closing morning panel connects training systems, employer demand, and implementation realities.

12:10 PM

LUNCH BREAK · 90 MINUTES

### Lunch on Your Own

Networking encouraged. Return and be seated by **1:38 PM** — the afternoon shifts from listening to doing.

## AFTERNOON SESSION

● AFTERNOON SESSION · 1:40 PM – 4:00 PM

1:40 PM · 75 MIN

WORKING SESSION

### Identifying Hawai'i's AI Priorities — Table Working Session

**Facilitated by Nicholas Winfrey**, Executive Director, Imua 'Onipa'a · Presenters and panelists circulate as advisors

This is the work. Everything you heard this morning feeds into this session. In small table groups, you will use the Event 2 AI Strategy Worksheet to identify your organization's AI priorities — your highest-value use case, your competitive edge, your governance starting point, and your 90-day commitment. Presenters and subject matter experts will rotate through to answer questions at your table. **The worksheet is yours to keep and take home.**

2:40 PM · 20 MIN

## SYNTHESIS

### Synthesis & Preview of Event 3

**Nicholas Winfrey** · Executive Director, Imua 'Onipa'a

Table groups share their top insights. Nick synthesizes common themes from across the room and bridges to what is coming next: Event 3 on September 3 goes deep on AI governance — policy, vendor accountability, data sovereignty, and manager readiness. The more you complete in your worksheet before September, the more you will get out of that session.

4:00 PM

### Adjourn

Mahalo for being here. Safe travels home.

## THE FOUR-EVENT SERIES ARC

1

EVENT 1 · COMPLETED

### AI Foundations & Landscape

Earlier in 2026

Building shared vocabulary and understanding the AI landscape across Hawai'i's sectors.

2

EVENT 2 · TODAY **YOU ARE HERE**

### AI Strategy Deep Dive

June 25, 2026

From awareness to action — defining your organization's strategic priority, competitive edge, governance foundation, and role redesign plan.

3

EVENT 3 · COMING UP

### AI Governance Deep Dive

September 3, 2026

Policy, vendor accountability, data sovereignty, and manager readiness. Built directly from what this room surfaces today.

4

EVENT 4 · COMING UP

### Implementation & Measurement

October 29, 2026

Bringing it all together — your complete organizational AI implementation plan, ready to execute.

● TODAY'S SPEAKERS & PANELISTS



**Andres Ramirez**

AI Safety Awareness Project · Opening Keynote & Economic Panel

REMOTE



**Elizabeth Kneebone**

Assistant Vice President of Research, Community Engagement and Analysis · Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco · Economic Impacts Keynote

REMOTE



**Leslee Stockton**

Growth Strategy Advisor, StillDayOne.ai · Workforce Risks & Worker Protections

IN PERSON



**Eugene Chang**

IEEE / MIT · Workforce Risks Panel — AI Pitfalls & Worker Impact

IN PERSON



**Praveen Khurana**

Cornerstone OnDemand / Salesforce Trailhead · Education & Training Systems

REMOTE



**Brett Tanaka**

Computer Science Education Manager, Hawai'i Department of Education · Education Presentation & Panel

IN PERSON



**Jacob van Almelo**

AI/ML Engineer, Blue Dot Labs · Education & Training Presentation & Panel

IN PERSON



**Ian Kitajima**

Panel Facilitator · Economic Impacts & Workforce Risks Panels

IN PERSON





NW

**Nicholas Winfrey**

Executive Director, Imua 'Onipa'a · Working Session Host & Education Panel Facilitator

IN PERSON

**Convened by Imua 'Onipa'a**

Hawai'i AI Workforce Readiness Symposium Series

**Event 2 of 4 · June 25, 2026**

Questions? Contact us at **[contact TBD]**

Next event: **Event 3 · September 3, 2026**

# **SPEAKER PROFILES**



## **Bennette Espineli Misalucha**

Bennette Espineli Misalucha brings more than three decades of leadership experience in business, government, and community service to her role as Executive Director of the Hawai'i Workforce Development Council, the Governor's principal workforce policy and planning advisor.

A former Hawai'i State Senator, she represented Pearl City, 'Aiea, Pearl Harbor, and lower Hālawā, and made history as the first Philippine-born State Senator in the United States.

Prior to public service, Senator Misalucha built a distinguished career in banking, media, marketing, public policy, and community relations, often breaking barriers for women and minorities in leadership roles. She spent more than sixteen years in banking, culminating in her position as Senior Vice President at Central Pacific Bank. Earlier in her career, she worked as a television reporter and news producer in both Hawai'i and the Philippines, including with KHON2 News.

A dedicated community leader, Bennette has served in numerous nonprofit and civic leadership roles. She was the founding president of the Hawai'i Chapter of Women in Transportation (WTS) and served for eighteen years as a Regent of Chaminade University. She currently serves as President of the Congress of Visayan Organizations (COVO). Her past board service includes the O'ahu Transit Services (TheBus), YMCA, YWCA, Hawai'i Public Radio Community Advisory Board, and the Filipino Community Center.

Her contributions to Hawai'i have earned her numerous honors, including the Girl Scouts of Hawai'i's *Woman of Distinction Award*, the United Filipino Council of Hawai'i's *Progress Award in Banking and Finance*, *Hawai'i State Mother of the Year* by American Mothers, Inc., and recognition as one of *Hawai'i's Ten Outstanding Women Volunteers* by Pacific Business News. She is also a graduate of the Pacific Century Fellows program, Hawai'i's premier leadership development initiative.

In 2022, Bennette received the prestigious **Presidential Banaag Award**, one of the highest honors conferred by the Philippine government on overseas Filipinos for their contributions to their communities and their country of heritage.

Bennette earned her undergraduate degree from the University of Hawai'i. She is an honors graduate of the Graduate School of Retail Bank Management at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and also attended the Pacific Coast Banking School at the University of Washington.



## **Keith DeMello**

In addition to serving as chair of the Workforce Development Council, Keith DeMello is the senior vice president of communications and external affairs at Ulupono Initiative. As a member of Ulupono's management team, he oversees the communications and government affairs teams in support of the firm's mission: to improve the quality of life for the people of Hawai'i by working toward solutions that create more locally grown food, renewable energy, clean transportation choices, and better management of freshwater resources. A recipient of the Public Relations Society of America Hawai'i Chapter's Gregg W. Perry Public Relations Professional of the Year in 2022, Keith brings to the Ulupono team more than 25 years' experience in public relations, communications and policy across a wide range of sectors, including corporate, government, nonprofit, and information technology. His career includes more than 13 years at Anthology Marketing Group, Hawai'i's largest integrated marketing firm, most recently as its vice president of public and government affairs. He also served as deputy communications director for Gov. Neil Abercrombie and later in the dual role of senior communications manager and legislative coordinator for the State of Hawai'i Office of Enterprise Technology Services. Born and raised on O'ahu, Keith earned his Bachelor of Arts in Journalism from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He is a past-president of the Hawai'i chapters of the Public Relations Society of America and the American Marketing Association, and he currently serves as the treasurer of the Hawai'i chapter of the American Advertising Federation. Keith resides in Honolulu.



## **Andres Ramirez**

Andres Ramirez, Director of Partnerships @ AI Safety Awareness Project: Originally from Caracas and based in Chicago for the past 25 years (with time spent in Canada, Colorado, and Scotland), Andres brings a cross-sector background spanning startups, strategy, and emerging technology. Over seven years, he worked with five startups as a key sales and growth lead, helping teams navigate expansion and secure funding rounds. In 2024, he shifted his focus toward AI safety and public-interest technology. He now leads execution of AISAP's partnership framework, building collaborations that expand public engagement and institutional readiness regarding the societal impacts and long-term risks of advanced AI systems.



## **Elizabeth Kneebone**

Elizabeth Kneebone is assistant vice president of research in Community Engagement and Analysis at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. In this role, she manages the Community Engagement and Analysis research team and shapes and contributes to its research portfolio, with a focus on understanding the economic experiences of lower-income communities and informing community development stakeholders on promising practices related to economic opportunity.

Before joining the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Elizabeth served as the research director for the Turner Center for Housing Innovation at the University of California, Berkeley, where her research focused on the ways in which the built environment, housing, and land use policies shape access to economic opportunity. Prior to the Turner Center, Elizabeth was a fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program, where she led the program's research examining the changing geography of U.S. poverty and its causes and consequences and co-authored the book *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America*. Elizabeth also previously worked as a research project manager at IFF (formerly the Illinois Facilities Fund).

Elizabeth holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of Chicago, and a bachelor's degree in history from Indiana University.



## **Ian Kitajima**

Ian Kitajima is Co-Founder of Design Thinking Hawai'i and President and CEO of the Pacific International Center for High Technology Research, known as PICHTR. Based in Honolulu, Ian works at the intersection of education, technology, entrepreneurship, business, culture, and community.

Through Design Thinking Hawai'i, Ian helps students, teachers, and community partners use design thinking to identify real problems, prototype solutions, and build confidence as young innovators. Through PICHTR, he supports technology commercialization, startup development, workforce training, and Asia-Pacific innovation partnerships.

Ian is known as the Technology Sherpa for his ability to translate complex technologies into practical tools people can understand and use. His current work emphasizes design thinking, AI education, and entrepreneurship as essential skills for Hawai'i's future. Across both organizations, Ian is focused on helping Hawai'i grow creative, ethical, and community-rooted innovators who can use emerging technologies to serve people, strengthen local opportunity, and connect Hawai'i to the wider world.



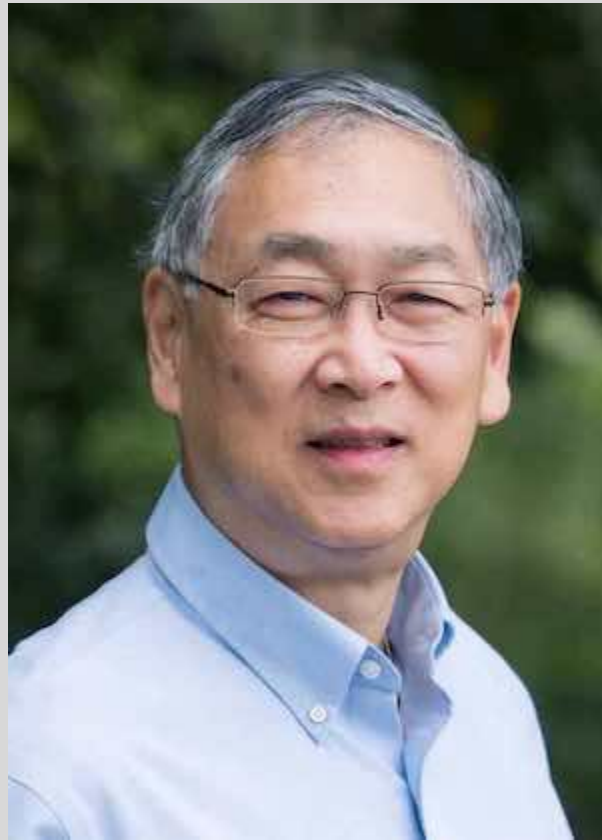
## **Shawn Bernard**

Shawn Bernard, PMP, is Director of Business Development Support Services and Group Manager of the Digital Solutions Division at Tetra Tech Canada. He helps lead the development and growth of digital infrastructure solutions, including FusionMap, with a focus on remote sensing, geospatial analytics, and practical applications of AI/ML. Shawn's work bridges business development, technical teams, and client needs, helping translate complex technology into usable solutions for transportation, environmental, and infrastructure resilience projects.



## **Leslee Stockton**

Leslee Stockton has dedicated her career to standing at the forefront of tech for good, spending 25+ years positioning herself at the cutting edge of technology. Her path has taken her from early-stage startups in virtual and augmented reality, AI, and machine learning, to roles at Microsoft (Xbox) and Amazon Web Services. At AWS, she built the company's Charities Enterprise vertical from \$1M to \$130M in annual revenue, growing into a global leadership role and partnering with organizations across the country and around the world, including United Way chapters from Maui to Washington, D.C. Leslee has helped nonprofits navigate some of the sector's toughest moments. During the Lahaina wildfires, she worked closely with Maui United Way to put technology to work in support of relief and recovery efforts. She has done the same for organizations like NPR and PBS, helping them adapt through COVID-19 and, more recently, government funding cuts under DOGE and USAID. She now consults on growth strategy through StillDayOne.ai, speaking on innovation culture, AI readiness, and building mission-driven organizations.



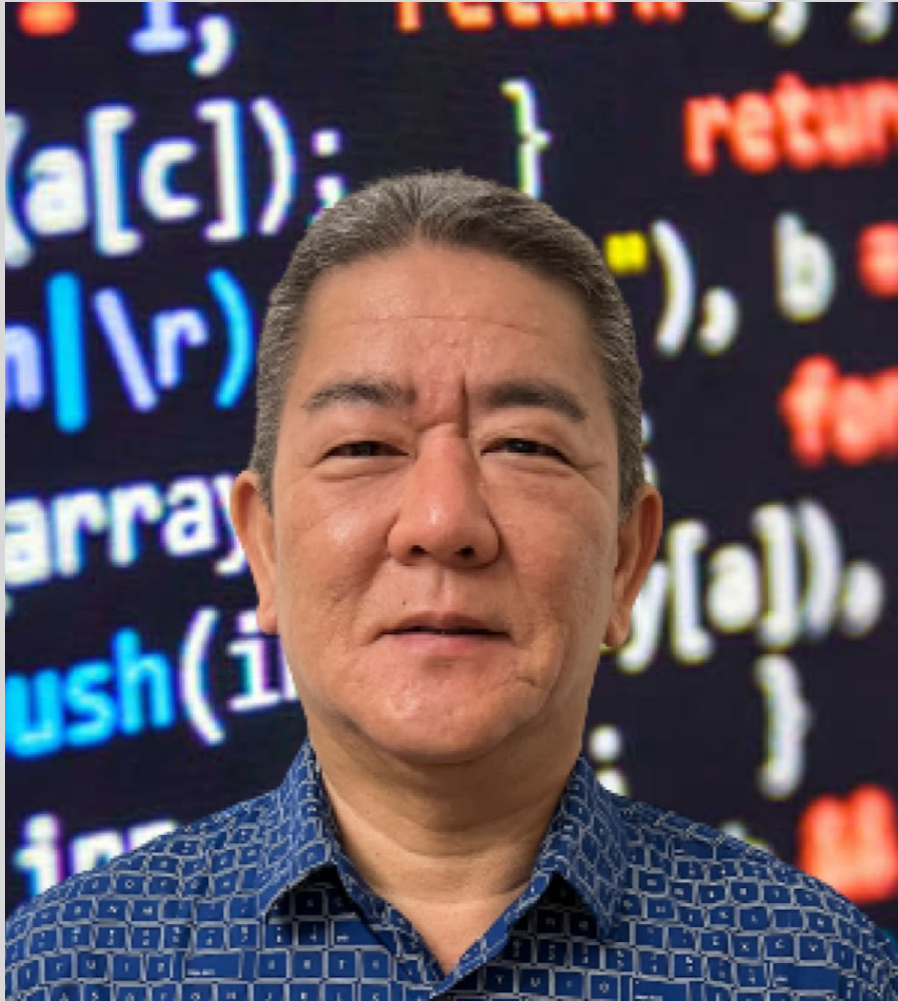
**Eugene Chang**

Mr. Chang has spent his career turning ideas into products and scaling sales from breakeven to \$100M+. A key part of this challenge is building engineering and sales teams. As a student of AI for 50 years, an interesting challenge is understanding how we identify human expertise and how we amplify that knowledge with AI. Mr. Chang earned BS and MS degrees in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. He has experience designing hardware and software for networks, distributed computing, and cybersecurity. He holds five networking patents. He has traveled three million miles supporting marketing and collaborating with competitors on standards.



## **Praveen Khurana**

For the past 20 years, Praveen Khurana has worked at the intersection of enterprise technology and human potential, building the learning and certification ecosystems that turn platforms into careers. Most recently at Salesforce, he led a global team of more than 150 people across customer and partner enablement, certification, and AI-powered learning infrastructure spanning over 100 countries, following earlier roles at VMware and NetApp. He currently serves as Vice President, Customer and Partner Enablement at Cornerstone. Throughout, one belief has stayed constant: learning only matters when it changes what people can do and what organizations can achieve. That belief is what drew him to Imua 'Onipa'a. The same certification and enablement pathways he has built for global enterprises, covers the very platforms that represent real career opportunity for Hawai'i's local workforce. These can open sustainable, high-paying careers for local residents and help keep opportunity in Hawai'i's hands. He is especially interested in how AI is reshaping work, both as a tool for upskilling into in-demand roles and as a path to independent entrepreneurship. His commitment to developing talent is long-standing and hands-on: for years he has volunteered as a math coach for school-age students preparing for competitions, work that earned his teams numerous awards. Outside of work, Praveen is a husband and a father of two college-age sons, which gives this work a personal dimension for him: he knows firsthand the hope every parent holds for a young person finding meaningful, lasting work, and he wants that same opportunity within reach for Hawai'i's next generation. He also loves to cook and bring people together over a good meal, and tries to live by four values: integrity, empathy, impact, and family.



**Brett Tanaka**

Computer Science/AI Educational Specialist, Hawaii State Department of Education

Brett is an Educational Specialist providing statewide K–12 support in Computer Science and AI education. He is dedicated to broadening participation in computing for all students and supporting professional development for CS and AI teachers aligned with the Computer Science Teachers Association (CSTA) K–12 Computer Science Standards. Brett holds a Master of Science in Information Systems (MSIS) from Hawaii Pacific University.



## **Jacob van Almelo**

Jacob van Almelo has spent roughly a decade building systems across controlled-environment agriculture, neurotechnology, and applied AI. Cornell-trained in plant sciences and engineering, he served as the biological engineer in the development of a novel software-driven growing system at a Southern California ag-tech company. He was later a founding principal at an early-stage neurotechnology startup developing Low Field Magnetic Stimulation, originated at Harvard Medical School, where he led startup strategy bridging both technical development and clinical psychiatry. Jacob joined The Blue Dot Labs after meeting founder Ali Alireza in a joint effort to provide internet to survivors around Lahaina following the Maui fires. Now as a Principal at TBD Labs, he leads engineering across multiple client projects and partners with the team on strategy and delivery, helping organizations turn emerging AI capabilities into practical systems, workflows, and training approaches.



## **Rachele Pezel**

Rachele Pezel is a seasoned General Manager with a proven track record of leading teams, optimizing operations, and delivering measurable business results. She specializes in streamlining workflows, improving organizational efficiency, and developing high-performance teams that thrive in fast-paced environments. Known for her hands-on leadership style, Rachele excels at aligning strategy with execution while maintaining a strong focus on customer experience.

Throughout her career, she has built a reputation for driving continuous improvement and creating systems that support both growth and sustainability. Rachele is passionate about empowering people, solving complex challenges, and leading with clarity and purpose. She brings a practical, results-driven perspective to every conversation.



## **Nicholas Winfrey**

Nicholas believes the most powerful thing a nonprofit can do is work itself out of a job. As Executive Director of Imua ‘Onipa‘a and founder of Innovate for Impact LLC, he brings that conviction to workforce development, systems change, and community-centered strategy across Hawai‘i.

With roots in the Marine Corps, international humanitarian work, and half a decade leading Maui United Way, Nick has spent his career at the intersection of institutional change and community trust — asking not just how to serve people better, but how to fix the systems that make the service necessary in the first place.

His work spans workforce development, AI workforce transition, disaster recovery, and cross-sector partnership building. He brings particular focus to the places where innovative thinking, authentic collaboration, and local knowledge combine to create change that lasts beyond any single program or funding cycle.

Nick is based on Maui, where he is rooted in the community he serves.