

**AGRICULTURE WORKFORCE ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Department of Labor and Industrial Relations**  
**Monday, March 1 , 2021**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**DRAFT**

DATE: Monday, March 1, 2021  
TIME: 1:00pm – 3:00pm  
LOCATION: Virtual Meeting through TEAMS

**Board Members Present through TEAMS:**

JoAnn Vidinhar, Chair, DLIR Deputy Director  
(representing Director Anne Perreira-Eustaquio)  
Representative Mark Nakashima  
Evangeline “Vangie” Casinas (Department of Education)  
Nicolas Comerford, (Dean - UH Manoa CTAHR)  
David Fuertes (Representative of Farmers)  
Bruce Mathews, (UH Hilo)  
Michael Moser, (Windward Community College)  
Brian Miyamoto, (Farm Bureau - for Randy Cabral)  
Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, (Director, Dept. of Agriculture)

**Staff:**

Maricar Pilotin-Freitas	Staff, DLIR, WDD
Jarret Yip	Staff, DLIR, WDD
Jay Ishibashi	Staff, DLIR, WDD

**Guests:**

Gary Chun	Waipahu High School
Randy Higa	Waipahu High School
Ken Kajihara	Waipahu High School
Niki Kunioka-Volz	County of Kauai
Maliekekaimaika “Kai” Ward	Molokai High School
Janel Yamamoto	UH Manoa GoFarm Hawaii

**I. Call to Order and Introductions**

With a quorum of members present, the meeting was called to order by Chair JoAnn Vidinhar at 1:11 p.m. virtually through Microsoft Teams.

Chair Vidinhar asked the Board members to introduce themselves and informed the Board that she will be turning over the meeting to Jay Ishibashi as she has to participate in another meeting. Prior to her departure, Chair Vidinhar thanked the proposal review committee - Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, Bruce Mathews and Brian Miyamoto and the Board members for their time and diligence in reviewing the proposals submitted to the department and the Board.

- II. The approval of minutes for the board meetings held on September 27, 2019 and January 7, 2020 were deferred until the next meeting as they were not listed as an item for this meeting's agenda.

III. **FY2020 Project Updates**

GoFarm Hawaii (UH Manoa)

Janel Yamamoto, the Director for GoFarm Hawaii thanked the Board for the grant and its continued support of the program's operation. GoFarm's beginning farmer training program pivoted its classroom sessions into virtual zoom classes. The field classes were able to continue in person by observing Covid safety protocols. During the grant period the program trained over 70 individuals statewide of whom 59% stated that they plan to start a farm and 24% planned to work in agriculture and/or the food industry. The demand for training in the agriculture industry increased during the pandemic. On Hawaii island, 133 individuals attended informational sessions and 44 applied for training as compared to pre Covid where only 19 attended the informational session. On Oahu, 234 attended the information session with 103 applying to the program – which was up 43% from the previous year. Maui and Kauai experienced similar increases in attendance and participation. On the training and consulting side of the GoFarm Hawaii program, the focus was to help farmers adjust to the Covid situation by providing sessions on funding, adapting to changing market opportunities, exploring new agricultural opportunities in value added and ag tourism, as well as preparing farmers financially. GoFarm Hawaii worked with CTAHR Extension to support other programs including Sustainable Molokai, the Hawaii Farmer's Union FAM program, the Kohala Center, and training new farmers at Mahi Pono on Maui. GoFarm Hawaii also started a Gold Fish Hawaii pilot in collaboration with CTAHR Extension and the UH Sea Grant program to help farmers incorporate aquaponics into land based programs. There were over 1000 participants in GoFarm Hawaii projects throughout the state.

Molokai High School (DOE)

Maliekekaimaika "Kai" Ward thanked the Board for Molokai High School's initial funding support and the opportunity to expand their programs. Through a slide presentation Kai described Molokai High School's taro initiative. The initiative was projecting a May or June start but due to Covid there was a delay until the students were better able to participate in person. A total of eight student interns (88% native Hawaiian) were selected to participate in the program. The students were able to plant different kalo/poi varieties and the instructors wanted to make sure that all the students were able to participate in the different stages of the growing of Kalo. Due to scheduling difficulties the program enlisted help from the faculty, other FFA students, and community members to help the interns with harvesting and community distribution. The program during September and December distributed 200 one pound bowls of poi and 200 one pound bowls of Kalopaa/taro chunks. In addition, taro leaves and bananas were distributed to the community. The students also learned how to partner with the community and use technology to maintain the fields (building fences to protect against deer invasions; and planning for potential weather disruptions).



Board member David Fuertes thanked Kai and Molokai High School for the progress the program has gone through since his visit last year.

#### County of Kauai and DOE Summer Agriculture Internship

Niki Kunioka-Volz reported that the originally planned summer internship program for Kauai was restructured due to the Covid pandemic. The County of Kauai awarded three entities (Kanuikapono; Iwikua; and Kumano I Ke Ala) grants to carry out agriculture education and workforce development programs to implement the original goals and outcomes of the summer internships. In Kanuikapono's "Na Mea Kanu " Program, two interns along with consultants and 36 high school and 57 middle school students collaborated to design and implement a farm program that included aquaculture, chicken farms, and agroforest (Ulu) production. The students also learned to harvest crops from the campus farms and organize pop up farmer's markets. In the Iwikua "Seed to Sale" program, three interns worked to grow, harvest and sell over 2700 pounds of produce. The interns also conducted research prior to the selection of crops and carrying out proper propagation methods. The Kumano I Ke Ala program provided opportunities for eight at-risk youth interns to learn traditional Hawaiian farming techniques (to properly restore, maintain and operate kalo patches) in addition to essential workforce skills inherent to the agriculture industry.

#### Waipahu High School/DOE "Ohana Excellence Academy"

Vice Principal Gary Chun thanked the Board for its support and provided a power point presentation on the Waipahu High School Ohana of Excellence Academy agricultural occupations project. The Academy acquired model status recognition from the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) and is the first in the country to be specifically designed to work primarily with students of varying disabilities. Through the support of Senator Donovan Dela Cruz and the Workforce Transition Center (WTC), ten of the Academy agriculture students earned FFA (Future Farmers of America) Green Hand Degrees and participated in the commodity competition at the Oahu District FFA Conference with two students qualifying to attend the FFA State Conference on Maui. Additionally, because the students could not go into the community due to the pandemic - the academy implemented project based learning on campus - focusing on promoting real world landscaping skills, including the building of a 12 x 12 pergola to plant produce such as green onions, bitter melon and air plants. The students also began working with the residents of senior community homes in the area on the cultivation of air plants.

#### **IV. FY 2021 Proposal Review and Recommendation for Budget Allocation**

Jay Ishibashi notified the Board's proposal review committee and the Board that there may be additional funds available above the proposed funding ceiling for additional agriculture projects if the funding for other industry areas were not fully utilized.

Jay Ishibashi asked Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser, Chair of the Agriculture Workforce Development Board Proposal Review Committee to lead this portion of the meeting.

Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser introduced and thanked the other members of the Proposal Review Committee - Bruce Mathews and Brian Miyamoto.

The Agriculture Workforce Development Board Proposal Review Committee met on Thursday, February 25, 2021 to review the proposals submitted to DLIR and formulated recommendations for allocation to the Board. Chair Shimabukuro-Geiser proceeded to provide the Board members with an overview of the committee's seven recommendations and two alternates (as listed below) for FY21 state funding appropriated to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations Agriculture Workforce Division by the State Legislature.

- A. "Buy One, Give One Program" (DOE - Leilehua High School) – the committee recommended fully funding the proposal due in part to the strength of school's agriculture program and its partnership with the community - not only in agriculture education and workforce development but also in developing a community food assistance program.
- B. Aquaculture Workshop (DOE - Waianae High School) – the committee recommended fully funding the proposal. The project involves one week of education and exposure to various cultural practices and opportunities in agriculture through aquaculture.
- C. Agriculture Practicum (UH Hilo) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal as the committee liked the program that was developed for its broad diversity (high school students and an adult education piece) and as a pipeline to educational and technical training in agriculture.
- D. "Ohana Academy – Food Production and Sales" (DOE - Waipahu High School) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal to sustain and continue the success of training and empowering students with disabilities to become self-reliant as they become adults and mainstream into the community.
- E. "Farmers FFA Taro Enterprise" (DOE – Molokai High School) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal as a great value added project – collecting weather data with ag technology and utilizing the information in incorporating traditional and cultural agriculture practices.
- F. County of Kauai Summer Internships (Kauai County/DOE) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal with the noted success of the program (increased student interest and participation in the internships) over the last few years; The County of Kauai has supported the summer program with funding and has sustained internships through partnerships with the Department of Education schools and agriculture businesses.
- G. "Algae and Oyster Farming" (DOE - Waipahu High School) - the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal believing that it would be great opportunity for the students to continue their interest in the field and is in line with an industry that has demonstrated tremendous growth and economic contribution to our state.

If additional funding is available the committee recommended two alternates for allocation (dependent on the amount of additional funding available):



- H. [1<sup>st</sup> alternate] Hawaii FFA AGR Leadership (DOE – Waipahu Intermediate School) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal as a 1<sup>st</sup> alternate with a revised proposal (to have 5-6 FFA leaders in the place of some of the middle school students) to interface with other FFA students as a part of their travel to the National FFA Conference. The committee would like to sustain the continued growth of FFA in Hawaii and the focus on agriculture teacher professional development by also funding the proposed statewide conference piece.
- I. [2<sup>nd</sup> alternate] GoFarms Hawaii (University of Hawaii) – the committee recommended to fully fund the proposal as a 2<sup>nd</sup> alternate after learning the initial belief that GoFarms Hawaii was receiving another larger grant was inaccurate. There is a continued interest in the community for agriculture education and the opportunity to start farms or carving out a career in agriculture.

Committee Chair Shimabukuro-Geiser thanked the committee members for their work on the review of the proposals. The committee recommended to give the department the discretion over any excess funding (should there be additional funding or if one of the projects does not meet its expectations). The Board concurred and approved a motion by Board member Phyllis Shimabukuro-Geiser and seconded by Board member Brian Miyamoto for the department be given the authority to move any excess funds to other approved projects.

The Board then entertained a motion by Board member Nicolas Comerford for a blanket approval of the Proposal Review Committee's seven recommendations for the funding of fiscal year 2021 agriculture projects. The motion was seconded by Board member Brian Miyamoto. The motion was approved.

Board member David Fuertes motioned for the approval of funding of the 1<sup>st</sup> alternate (if funding becomes available). Board member – Representative Mark Nakashima seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

Board member Brian Miyamoto motioned for the approval of the funding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> alternate (if funding becomes available). Board member David Fuertes seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

Board member Brian Miyamoto thanked Representative Nakashima for his initial and continued efforts to support the agriculture industry; and asked if the Board would allow Representative Nakashima to address the Board.

Representative Nakashima shared that this legislative session will be a challenge and that the budget will be tight. He believes that the benefits and rewards of the programs for the small amount of money allocated has been great and the Representative is hopeful that the legislature will continue to provide funds.

Jay Ishibashi thanked Representative Mark Nakashima and the Board for their continued support and work in helping the agriculture industry.

**V. Announcements and Updates**

Board member Vangie Casinas shared that the Hawaii FFA is engaging virtually in their State conference this week. After Board member David Fuertes thanked Board member Casinas for her work with and support of agriculture teachers throughout the state and Board member Casinas reciprocated by thanking Board member Fuertes for his mentorship years earlier.

**VI. Next Meeting**

The Board agreed to schedule the next meeting after the beginning of the next fiscal year to discuss FY22 funding if appropriated by the legislature.

**VII. Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned by Jay Ishibashi at 2:24p.m.