

FOAHU WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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RICK BLANGIARDI
MAYOR



CHRISTOPHER K. LUM LEE
CHAIR

HARRISON KURANISHI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SPECIAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE MEETING

Monday, September 22, 2025

10:00 am to 12:00 pm

Note: Per the State Office of Information Practices (OIP), members of the public may contact OahuWDB@honolulu.gov to be added to a mailing list for future meeting announcements

Members Present:

Wesley Akamine
Andrew Rosen
Carla Kobashigawa
Janna Hoshide
Trevor Bracher
Christopher Lum Lee

Staff:

Harrison Kuranishi, Oahu Workforce Development Board, Executive Director
Lisa Pereira, Oahu Workforce Development Board, WIOA Specialist
Erin Nicole Fernandez, Oahu Workforce Development Board, WIOA Specialist
Daven Kawamura, Oahu Workforce Development Board, WIOA Specialist

I. Call to Order

The Special Projects Committee meeting was called to order at 10:03 am by Committee Chair Wesley Akamine.

II. Welcome and Introductions

(Note: Per the State OIP, a quorum of members must be visible throughout the public portion of the meeting, but so long as that requirement is met, Oahu Workforce Development Board (OWDB) members are allowed to attend board meetings on audio only. Their votes will still count, and their attendance will also count toward quorum. However, board members must state their names clearly during introductions and before all of their comments during the meeting.)

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair Wesley Akamine stated that the meeting today is a single subject meeting, entirely dedicated to a single topic. Moving forward Wesley stated that not all meetings will revolve around a single subject.

This is the first time the Special Projects committee is convening. There are no minutes from previous meetings to approve.

IV. Discussion around the OWDB Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Local Plan

Carla Kobashigawa shared an updated OWDB WIOA Local Plan that she had helped format the Local Plan that was previously shared. The updated OWDB WIOA Local Plan with tracked changes made before/during the committee meeting can be found at the following link:

<https://oahuwdb.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Workforce-Innovation-and-Opportunity-Act-Local-Plan.pdf>

There were no questions or concerns from board members not present at the Special Projects committee meeting sent in regarding the OWDB WIOA Local Plan prior to this meeting. The main purpose of this meeting was to facilitate discussion regarding the revisions to the Local Plan, prior to bringing it to the Full Board for a vote of approval.

Harrison Kuranishi, Executive Director of OWDB, gave a slight background regarding the Local Plan.

- Although the OWDB oversees the WIOA funding, there are guidelines. One of the main functions of the board is to create and approve the Local Plan to provide guidance on how the funding can be used.
- Harrison noted that at the time the last Local Plan was drafted and approved, the entirety of the Workforce Development Council staff was different and the main push of the plan was Digital Literacy.
- The Local Plan must follow the State Unified State Plan that was submitted and approved last year.

Carla Kobashigawa mentioned that at the last Full Board meeting there was nothing noted for the abstentions to the “Approval of the OWDB WIOA Local Plan”. She noted the readability issues that were present in the originally shared Local Plan draft.

- Per the template that was received there were requirements and the responsibility of the Local Board/Board Staff was to respond to the requirements as listed.
- Carla noted that another difficulty may be due to a misunderstanding of what the Local Plan is. Rather than an ultra-defined plan that puts limits on what deliverables can be utilized, it is a broader approach to have guidelines to achieve the performance goals and outcomes.

Carla Kobashigawa went over the format changes that she added to refine readability she also noted a possible addition of an acronym list, after the table of contents to better illustrate what the acronyms in the Local Plan refer to.

Harrison Kuranishi noted that per the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) a bulletin must be present with the dates of submission, questions, requirements, etc. from the State Workforce Development entity. To encourage collaboration with key partners in the drafting of the Local Plan. However, rather than an official bulletin being issued a meeting was held instead.

- Daven Kawamura, WIOA Specialist from OWDB, clarified that at the meeting mentioned by Harrison the blank template with questions, links, etc. was presented to the Executive Directors. This initial template is what OWDB

was working off of to draft the Local Plan draft that was shared prior to the 9/11/2025, Full Board meeting.

- Harrison quoted CFR § 679.500(c), “The Governor must establish and disseminate to Local WDBs and regional planning areas a policy for the submission of local and regional plans. The policy must set a deadline for the submission of the regional and local plans that accounts for the activities required in plan development”.

Janna Hoshide brought attention to Section 1.2 of the presented Local Plan, regarding the language presented regarding “prioritizing vulnerable populations and promoting equity”.

- Janna noted that since the Local Plan is following the State Unified Plan she wanted to be sure that there is alignment between the Section 1.2 requirements and the responses provided. She recommended that to have a broader definition, to change the verbiage to “...providing services to vulnerable populations, and those experiencing barriers to employment.”

Janna Hoshide wanted clarification on the inputted information for Section 1.3 of the presented plan, which was previously blank.

- After review it was determined that the information that is in the requirements box after the verbiage, “Describe how the local board’s goals, strategies, programs, and projects align with and will contribute to achieving the priorities established” for section 1.3 was the answer and will be redacted and moved to the correct space.
- Andrew Rosen asked to have Native Hawaiians be added to the bullet point under “Inclusivity and Equity”, as an example vulnerable population.

Carla Kobashigawa noted the usage of ‘okina in the Hawaiian language. She spoke with Harrison Kuranishi prior to the meeting regarding the usage, when OWDB transitioned over from Oahu Workforce Investment Board the paperwork submitted didn’t indicate the ‘okina in the name. She noted that in the plan if the reference is to the Island of O‘ahu the ‘okina is used.

Janna Hoshide asked about the data that was presented in 2.5a, regarding the “Not in Labor Force (16+)” that is in the chart.

- Harrison Kuranishi informed Janna that the number relates to individuals such as Out of School Youth (OSY) and those who may qualify for work but are not currently working. Harrison mentioned that WIOA shifted the focus of the Youth program from the previous Workforce Investment Act’s focus on In-School-Youth (ISY). WIOA has a 75% OSY and 25% ISY restriction for Youth Program funding.
 - Andrew Rosen wanted clarification if there are any programs for the Youth Program that are preparing them to engage in effective communication, preparation for opportunities, etc.
 - Harrison informed Andrew that the 14 Youth elements are supporting initiatives such as the preparation pieces he brought up, however currently it’s happening on a one-on-one mentoring basis vs group workshops. Harrison noted that there has been outreach from businesses to conduct group workshops such as, interviewing

workshops, resume workshops, etc. but were turned down by the One-Stop Operator (OSO).

- Andrew Rosen asked if there is any program that is currently being used to profile participants to help them understand the opportunities that may be in alignment with their goals.
 - Harrison noted the budget modifications presented at the 9.11.25 Full Board meeting, the funds will possibly be used to purchase a program, from SoluCIO partners. The program includes a Career Advisory tool which could allow career mapping and identification of roles where local talent can best align.
- Harrison Kuranishi noted that the charts and data in Section 2.1-2.5a are from Lightcast, OWDB's Lightcast subscription has since expired.
 - Carla Kobashigawa noted that in previous conversations it was revealed that the bulk of data that is presented through Lightcast could be obtained through free avenues.

Carla Kobashigawa noted the possible concern with getting alignment from the partners and providers to the new plan and proposed ecosystem and what it means for the plan if OWDB cannot obtain that alignment.

- Harrison Kuranishi noted that monitoring will be very important to maintain the alignment. Harrison also noted that previously monitoring has been outsourced to a mainland consultant, OWDB staff will be doing the monitoring moving forward.
- Harrison also noted the Request for Proposal (RFP) process will be important as the RFP's will need to align with the Local Plan and the State Plan. The score of the RFP will be based off of the alignment to the plans.

Wes Akamine wanted to clarify if updates/revisions to the 2025 – 2028 Local Plan can be made anytime during the span of 2025-2028.

- Harrison Kuranishi informed him that there is no limit to the revisions that can be made. For example, if the Chief Local Elected Official changes they may have a different workforce goal, so the goals will need to change similarly.

Janna Hoshide inquired if the Technology, Food and Beverage, and Construction industries referred to in Section 3.6 A. have been the primary sectors of focus.

- Harrison Kuranishi noted that all funds for training must tie into the Eligible Training Provider List (ETPL). Harrison noted that 91% of the programs on the ETPL were not being utilized as of January of 2025 and had to be removed.
 - Andrew Rosen inquired if there is any data on why 91% of the programs were not being utilized.
 - Harrison let Andrew know that the industries listed in the plan were where participants were being placed for training. The programs that remained on the list correspond to the indicated sectors.
 - Janna inquired if the target sectors align with the data regarding the economic growth, high priority sectors, etc.
 - Harrison informed her that the target sectors align with the charts in Section 2.

- Janna Hoshide proposed an addition of a statement to Section 3.6 A. to notate the alignment of the target sectors with the ETPL.

Janna Hoshide brought attention to Section 3.15 as it relates directly with the ETPL.

- Harrison Kuranishi noted that OWDB is pushing towards a 100% local ETPL, he noted that currently there are multiple online mainland courses that haven't shown success in employment attainment. For example, MedCerts has shown a ~6% employment rate vs. local medical programs that have business partnerships, etc.
 - Janna proposed a similar addition to Section 3.15 as 3.6 A. referencing the alignment or emphasis on key/in-demand industries.

Janna Hoshide asked if Harrison or Christopher could provide context on Section 3.16.

- Harrison Kuranishi informed her that the other platforms that are mentioned in the response include the program discussed earlier from SolluCIO.
 - Harrison noted that HireNet Hawaii (HNN) will not be moved away from as the United States Department of Labor pulls reports from HNN. He also noted that any individual looking for services must enroll on HNN.
- Carla Kobashigawa asked if data sensitivity is a reason for the non-creation of an app.
 - Harrison informed her that there is no concrete reason, however the funding that was spent on Lightcast took a large amount of the subscription budget. Without the cost of Lightcast other avenues are being looked at.
- Janna Hoshide asked what the primary challenges that are present for the current intake process.
 - Harrison informed her that intake is now primarily through an online interest form. He noted that participants have indicated waiting 40 – 60 days to get into the program. The service provider had indicated that it is due to documentation, however OWDB staff has found that it may be due to communication gaps.
 - Harrison noted that the participant counts are more than the service provider is used to handling. In Program Year (PY) 24 there were 392 new participants versus ~200 new participants from PY17-23.

Harrison Kuranishi provided background information on the responses for Section 4.

- He noted that in Section 4 OWDB's current service provider, WorkHawaii, was identified. As the RFP's are currently out if the service provider were to change section 4 would need to be revised.
- Section 4 indicates what is happening at the American Job Center. At one point the City and County of Honolulu's Department of Community Services WorkHawaii division acted as the OSO as well as the WIOA title I service provider. Currently Rent to Work is overseeing the OSO.
- Section 4 also breaks down the WIOA funding, for example there are training funds, supportive services funds, career services funds, etc.
 - A program to note is the On-the-Job training program where reimbursement of up to 50% of the hourly wage is available.

- Work Experience is another program and it can be possibly utilized for 100% of wage reimbursement.
- An Individual Training Account (ITA) is used for training costs associated with the ETPL, Career Services are non-ITA.

Janna Hoshide wanted to know if anything in Section 4 will need to be aligned or changed due to the RFP process.

- Harrison Kuranishi informed her that the only piece that would need to change is the verbiage noting who the service provider is. WorkHawaii is currently noted and has been the service provider for many years.

Janna Hoshide inquired if there are any other improvement areas, similar to the intake process in section 3.16 that are opportunities for board focus.

- Harrison Kuranishi indicated one focus area could be the spending of funds, Harrison noted the budget modifications are to supplement the spending of funds so OWDB returns no/less funds. Harrison shared that over the past couple of years the returned funds are as follows: 1.3MM, 2MM, 1MM, \$300,000.
- Another focus area would be the disallowed costs, with last year's return of 1.3MM there was \$800,000 in disallowed costs that the City had to pay for where the grant potentially could have paid.
 - An example of some of the disallowed costs include invoices that were from PY22 that haven't yet been paid.
- Carla Kobashigawa noted that the improvement areas should be kept in mind to keep repeat issues that shouldn't exist in the first place to a minimum.

Janna Hoshide noted that 4.2 B indicates strengths but doesn't include the opportunities for improvement. She noted that if there are key improvement areas that the board is working on they should be included in the sections.

- Erin Fernandez, WIOA Specialist at OWDB, noted that since we added verbiage to Section 4.2 B we should add similar verbiage to 4.1 B to be consistent between both Youth and Adult programs.

Andrew Rosen inquired if it would be a good idea to have a meeting with the current Service Provider to assess where they stand currently versus where they started and where they are headed and see how processes can be changed.

- Harrison Kuranishi informed Andrew that the Service Provider is present at the Full Board meetings.
- Christopher Lum Lee also stated that if there is an agenda item at a Committee level meeting that members would like the Service Provider to speak to, meeting invitations can be sent out to the Service Provider.

Trevor Bracher noted the returned funds over the past couple of PYs, and inquired if there are specific goals that are provided that can then be monitored throughout the PY as to see where vendors are falling short. He noted that having some kind of traceable metrics would likely help with lowering the amount of returned funds.

V. **Announcements and Public Testimony**

There were no announcements or public testimony.

VI. Schedule Next Meeting

The next Special Projects committee meeting is not yet scheduled. Meeting invitation and other pertinent information will be sent out accordingly once the meeting is scheduled.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Wesley Akamine adjourned the meeting at 12:11 pm.