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## **O‘AHU WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD – SECTOR COMMITTEE 40/40 WORKFORCE STRATEGY: KEEPING LOCAL TALENT IN HAWAI‘I THE PROBLEM (DATA-DRIVEN REALITY)**

Hawai‘i is experiencing a sustained out-migration of working-age residents, especially young adults, driven by a structural mismatch between cost of living and wages.

- Net out-migration in **23 of the past 25 years**
- ~58,000 people left Hawai‘i in 2023 (partial offset by in-migration)
- Population remains below 2020 levels
- **50–60% of Hawai‘i-born college graduates leave**
- Primary reason: **cost of living + lack of high-paying career pathways**

### **KEY INSIGHT**

This is not just population loss.

This is the loss of **future workforce, leadership, and economic stability.**

### **THE 40/40 SOLUTION**

**\$40/hour × 40 hours/week = ~\$83,000/year**

This is the **minimum viable income threshold** for long-term retention in Hawai‘i.

>Below this level:

- Residents struggle to remain in Hawai‘i
- Young professionals leave for mainland opportunities

>At or above this level:

- Individuals can **live, stay, and build a future locally**
- Increases likelihood of **family formation and homeownership**
- Strengthens local economy and community stability

### **WHY 40/40 MATTERS NOW**

#### **1. RETENTION OF LOCAL TALENT**

Without viable wage pathways, we are exporting our educated workforce.

#### **2. ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Higher wages = more local spending, business growth, and tax base stability

#### **3. REDUCING DEPENDENCY ON IMPORTED LABOR**

Build from within rather than relying on external workforce pipelines

#### **4. NATIVE HAWAIIAN IMPACT**

- Native Hawaiians disproportionately impacted by cost pressures

- 40/40 pathways create **real opportunity for upward mobility**
- Aligns with long-term goals of **economic resilience and mālama ‘āina**

## **HOW TO IMPLEMENT (SECTOR STRATEGY)**

### **1. EMPLOYER-LED SECTOR PATHWAYS**

Focus on industries that can realistically reach or exceed 40/40:

- Construction & Skilled Trades
- Healthcare
- IT / Digital Economy
- Renewable Energy
- Infrastructure & Public Works

### **2. APPRENTICESHIP-FIRST MODEL**

- Earn while you learn (no debt pathway)
- Align training directly with employer demand
- Fast-track to living-wage jobs

### **3. STACKABLE CREDENTIALS**

- Short-term certifications → mid-level skills → career advancement
- Clear wage progression tied to skill acquisition

### **4. ALIGN EDUCATION + WORKFORCE SYSTEMS**

- DOE, UH System, and employers aligned on outcomes
- Focus on **placement into 40/40 careers**, not just completion

### **5. TARGETED SUPPORT FOR WORKING-AGE RESIDENTS (20–40)**

- The highest-risk group for out-migration
- Focus on retention, not just training

## **STRATEGIC TAKEAWAY**

Hawai‘i does not have a population problem.

Hawai‘i has a **wage and opportunity alignment problem**.

The 40/40 framework provides a **clear, measurable target** to:

- Retain local talent
- Strengthen our workforce
- Build long-term economic stability

## **CALL TO ACTION**

Adopt 40/40 as a **guiding benchmark** for:

- Sector investments



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- Workforce program design
- Employer partnerships
- Policy alignment

**If we do not create viable economic pathways, we will continue to lose our people.  
If we do, our people will stay, return, and thrive.**





# 40/40 Workforce Initiative

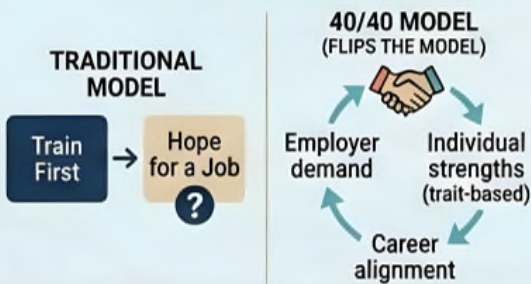
Employer-Led Pathways to Economic Mobility for the Lāhui

## THE OPPORTUNITY



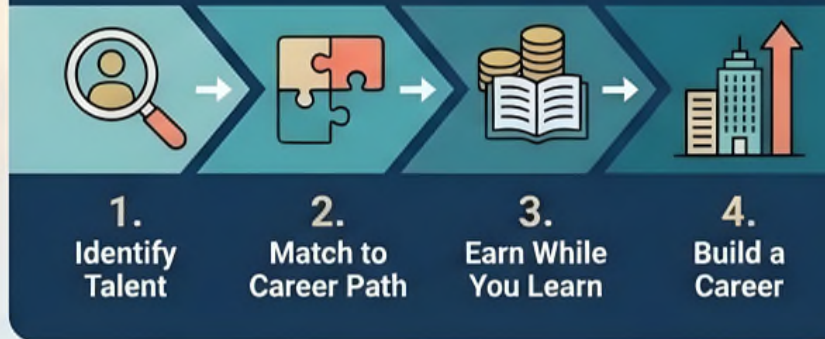
Employers are workforce-starved while Native Hawaiians remain underrepresented in stable, high-wage careers.

## THE SHIFT



Most programs train first – then hope for a job. 40/40 flips the model.

## HOW IT WORKS



## PILOT + PARTNERSHIP

**Pilot Sectors:**  
Financial Services | Government | Employer-driven

**Partnership:**  
NHCC → Employer engagement & execution  
OHA → Program support & scaling

More Native Hawaiians working.  
Stronger businesses. Stronger lāhui.  
Helping keep Native Hawaiians home in Hawai'i.

## THE GOAL

\$ **\$40**/hour × **40** hours/week

↑ **\$83,000+** Career Pathway

Not just a job – a sustainable future

## WHY IT WORKS

- ✓ No degree required
- ✓ Employer-driven training
- ✓ Higher success rates
- ✓ Blue + white collar pathways