

OAHU WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU

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**EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING**
Thursday, February 12, 2026
9:30 am to 10:30 am

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:

Sarah Guay
Wesley Akamine
Trevor Bracher
Christopher Lum Lee

Staff:

Sherrie Garedo, 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 Employer Engagement Committee meeting was called to order at 9:32 am by Committee Chair Sarah Guay.

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. Public Testimony Relating to Agenda Items

There was no public testimony relating to agenda items.

IV. Approval of May 13, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Chair Sarah Guay requested a motion to approve the minutes for the May 13, 2024, meeting. Trevor Bracher moved to approve the minutes. Wesley Akamine seconded the motion. There were no objections or abstentions. The minutes were unanimously approved.

V. Discussion regarding the Eligible Training Provider List Processes

Daven Kawamura, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Specialist for the OWDB, noted that the main topic discussed at the May 13, 2024 Employer Engagement Committee meeting was what the committee's role is.

- Daven informed the committee that the eligible training provider list (ETPL) is one of the main bloodlines of WIOA as it dictates what training programs can be utilized for training funds. It stands as one of the main responsibilities of the Employer Engagement Committee.

Daven Kawamura gave some background on the lists noting that there are three lists, two that are facilitated by the Local board; the ETPL and the Work Readiness, Career Service, Prevocational services list (CSP), and one which is facilitated by the State Apprenticeship agency which is the Workforce Development Division, the ETP-registered apprenticeship list.

- Daven noted that as of right now OWDB staff is facilitating the process of addition onto the ETPL, at the last committee meeting discussion started around creating a sub-committee to go over the additions/removals/renewals of the ETPL programs.

Wesley Akamine wanted clarification on why a sub-committee was proposed to facilitate the actions associated with the ETPL.

- Daven Kawamura let him know that as a sub-committee, it would not be bound by the same posting requirements of a standing committee. So it would facilitate a steadier workflow instead of requiring the posting of an agenda, creation of an agenda, posting of minutes, etc. that is needed for a committee meeting.

Sarah Guay asked what the scope of the sub-committee would be. Asking if it would just act as an approval body or a reimagining of the whole process of the ETPL.

- Daven Kawamura indicated that the sub-committee will act as a combination of both, noting that the sub-committee would be the approval body for the ETPL.
- Daven also noted that the ETPL includes a category titled Business Partnerships, a policy is forthcoming that will indicate that a provider on the ETPL will need to have a business partnership to be eligible.
 - This committee will be crucial in obtaining business insight on what is needed for the transition from training to employment building a pipeline for employment.

Sarah Guay inquired if anybody present at the meeting would volunteer to be a part of the sub-committee.

- Wes Akamine noted that being on the sub-committee seems like a double-edged sword, as his organization is on the ETPL.
 - Christopher Lum Lee noted that sub-committee members do not need to be part of the board, so if the organizations of board members want to be represented different members of the organization can represent.

VI. American Job Center Business Services Team

Unfortunately, there were no American Job Center (AJC) representatives to go over the purview of the AJC Business Services Team (BST). At the last Full Board meeting there was discussion around the BST, however at the meeting it seemed as though it was a WorkHawaii BST. The agenda item was added to obtain a better understanding of if there's a general AJC BST.

VII. Open Discussion regarding the composition and goals of the Employer Engagement Committee

Sarah Guay noted the scope that is on the OWDB website, "The Employer Engagement Committee works to facilitate engagement of employers in workforce development programs, including small employers and employers in in-demand industry sectors and occupations. Coordination of workforce development programs and economic development. Avocation for organizational quality standards to build and sustain employer partnerships."

Sarah posed some questions; "What does Employer Engagement look like and what is the desired outcome?", "What is the process of coordination of potential workforce programs and align with organizations such as the Workforce Development Council?", and "What are some standards or metrics that the committee would be able to track progress towards goals?"

Trevor Bracher noted that for the Hospitality industry they are constantly looking for partnerships to fill positions in the industry.

- He noted that when the AJC first opened, the anticipation was to use the AJC as hub for training, job placement, pinpointing pain points for potential employees, etc. However he is not seeing a successful pathway based on the performance metrics.
- Trevor is currently working with other organizations and creating training programs within their own ecosystem. He noted that many organizations are doing the same thing, however the connection piece isn't there.
 - Through the Hawaii Lodging & Tourism Association, they've created a Human Resources sub-council to deal with pain points, one being employment.
- Christopher Lum Lee asked if the disconnect is in fact getting the individuals to the program.
 - Trevor noted that looking at the whole picture there is a disconnect for the AJC, he noted that in the current AJC structure there is a lack of the training to employer pathway. There needs to be a better path that is put into place that focuses on what the employers need.

Wes Akamine noted that in Olelo's workforce development a key part is customer service, and he mentioned that although Olelo is focused on media some individuals that went through the workforce development went into entirely different fields.

- Based off of that, Wes noted that the AJC needs to focus on the whole path that a participant will be taking. Wes talked about the importance of infrastructure mapping and the possibility of the committee leading that charge to direct participants along the pathway.

- Wes also noted the importance of performance metrics in the form of success stories, showcasing the possibilities for participants.

Trevor Bracher noted that the “package” that should be available at the AJC shouldn’t only include what the services are but also including the vision and outcome mapping that can come out of the pathway.

Sarah Guay asked if the main goal of the committee should be to get more employers involved in the shaping of quality trainings needed by the employer and the engagement of employers to hire the participants going through the WIOA system. Trevor confirmed that those two points are a high level overview of exactly what he was discussing.

Christopher Lum Lee noted that the discussion have been around individual trainings, organizations, and cultures. He inquired if other organizations/employers should/can develop a training curriculum together if they don’t have internal culture driven training program ecosystem like the hospitality industry.

- Christopher gave the example of when he was in the Police Academy, there was no interaction with public training. It was expected that you were already versed in job-ready skills such as confidentiality of personal information, dealing with individuals, etc. Rather than having an employer stating “We will hire you if you have x, y, z.”, get several employers to work together on a training curriculum.
 - Christopher gave the example of, Olelo provides customer services training, then the participant goes to a hotel for facility management training, and then finally the participant goes onto a property management firm actually managing units with the experience gained in the prior trainings.
 - Sarah Guay noted that she had a similar conversation with Wes regarding the creation of a sort of essential skills curriculum from different training providers. She noted Trevor’s point of organizations needing to build those training programs themselves, and she noted that many will not have the resources to create them.

Trevor Bracher brought up past OWDB member James Hardway from the Hotel and Restaurant Industry Employment & Training Trust (HARIETT). He noted that at HARIETT’s location they do hotel and hospital training programs. At the location there are things such as mock hotel guest rooms, electrical/plumbing workshops, bartending courses, etc. HARIETT is funded by key Hotel groups such as Hilton, Hyatt, Marriott, etc.

- Trevor noted that as a signatory employer, if they are missing certain roles or talents, training programs would be designed to fill those needs. Trevor noted that it may be in the best interest of the committee to go and see the training center HARIETT has created.
 - Wesley Akamine inquired if there are “open house” sessions for participants/individuals to see if they’d like to attend trainings.
 - Trevor noted that he hasn’t seen any structured open house sessions, however whenever they need something they scheduled it.

Erin Nicole Fernandez, WIOA Specialist at the OWDB, noted that since there will be more than two members present at the proposed visitation of HARIETT but strictly an informational meeting and no board action is discussed/met it would not be subject to the Sunshine Law's posting requirements. However she did note that the members present would need to report at the next Full Board meeting on what was learned.

- Trevor Bracher noted that information on a successful model of the training to employment pipeline is essential for building the knowledge base that the board has.

Sarah Guay expressed interest in that visitation to HARIETT and also asked Wesley Akamine if there is an opportunity to schedule a visit to 'Ōlelo for a similar informational meeting.

- Wesley noted that although some programs they host may be a little non-interactive such as someone editing/customer service, he noted that a walkthrough of the building could be interesting showcasing all that is being done there.
 - Wes also noted that he is very interested in the partnership of organizations/employers that was discussed earlier in the meeting, noting that if it could be organized that he takes participants that he has that are interested to a HARIETT "open house" to see if it may be a better fit for those participants.

Trevor Bracher noted that he would work with Daven Kawamura to set up a date for the visitation to HARIETT.

VIII. Announcements

There were no announcements.

IX. Schedule Next Meeting

The next Employer Engagement Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 20, 2026 from 11:00 am – 12:00 pm.

X. Adjournment

Chair Sarah Guay adjourned the meeting at 10:35 am.