

# Preliminary Report on the Leeward Coast Initiative

## **Description of Process**

The Administration has worked successfully with the Leeward Coast community during the past year to develop a new transitional housing project as the first step toward ending chronic homelessness, particularly along the Wai`anae Coast. While the community welcomed the transitional housing, everyone recognized that additional steps would be required to build the community economic development opportunities necessary to truly end homelessness.

The Leeward Coast Initiative is intended to develop implementation actions that strengthen our human and economic resources in rural communities so that residents can meaningfully participate in our state economy in a manner that respects their community vision and is tailored to their community strengths and priorities.

This initiative will focus on three basic steps to develop a model program for rural communities:

1. Deploy a cross-cutting team of staff from all state agencies that service rural communities in order to create a model which integrates currently segregated state programs and services, including job training and placement, childcare, housing, health, welfare and environmental protections.
2. Develop a true State-community partnership, in which the State works with the community to effectively connect these state programs and services with the community, and identify the long- and short-term means best suited for that community to overcome barriers impeding residents from developing or participating in economic opportunities prioritized by the community.
3. Measure the long- and short-term outcomes of the strategic actions to identify the means which are most effective and why, so that the model may be successfully deployed in other interested communities.

The first step was to put together a team of staff from participating state agencies that could be deployed on a regular basis into the community. The “outreach” process began in mid-February, with the inter-agency team meeting internally to develop a variety of strategies to approach the community in a meaningful way for both sides. The plan developed by the group was crafted to align with the culture of the Wai`anae community, where face-to-face conversations are likely to yield broader participation and more in-depth information than are paper-and-pencil surveys.

The Outreach Team collaboratively developed a set of discussion questions and information gathering surveys which have been used to guide their interactions with the community. There is more than one set of questions and surveys dependent upon how an individual or group being interviewed identifies themselves: service user, service provider, community leader, business operator, or general community member. However, all sets of questions are designed to address four overarching concerns:

1. What are the greatest problems and needs impeding economic and workforce development on the Leeward Coast?

2. Which programs are effective in serving the Leeward community? Which ones are ineffective? What lessons on service delivery can we learn from these programs?
3. What does the Leeward community envision for its economy?
4. What immediate and long-term actions should be taken to support the Leeward economy and its working families?

Beyond these core concepts in the discussion questions, additional surveys were developed to provide more in-depth information on the businesses and nonprofit organizations that underpin the Wai‘anae economy and employ its workforce.

These discussion questions and surveys are used in both one-on-one and group interviews. In some cases, group interviews are more comfortable for community participants. The forms, however, are used only as discussion guides and each interview team attempts to tailor the questions to the audience while being careful to listen and probe as needed for deeper information. This type of interview provides extremely rich content that does not always respond directly to the questions being posed. The Outreach Team is working on analyzing the quantitative data we have received and determining the best way to portray the more qualitative, “talk-story” information.

In addition to the individual and small group interviews, the Outreach Team partnered with one local community organization to conduct a larger group meeting with community and business leaders (approximately 50 participants). The Outreach Team is currently working with additional community organizations to design and develop a series of community speak-outs patterned after successful events previously conducted by those groups.

*Table 1: Community participants by type of participant and type of contact*

	Individual Interviews/ Small Group Meetings		Large Community Meeting		Total Community Participants	
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.
Business (incl. agriculture)	14	20.9	9	20.9	19	19.6
Community leader	18	28.4	16	39.5	33	35.1
Service provider	24	35.8	16	37.2	34	35.1
Service user	11	14.9	2	2.3	11	10.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Note: “Total community participants” refers to the sum total of individuals who took part in either interviews/small group meetings or the large community meeting. However, because several individuals who participated in the large community meeting also took part in individual interviews or small group meetings, the numbers provided for each type of contact do not sum to the total number of community participants.

We acknowledge that the work is ongoing, that there are individuals and groups we have yet to meet with, and that the information therefore cannot be considered comprehensive. We continue to work with the community to identify individuals and groups who still need to be contacted and to seek partnerships with community groups in hosting or setting up meetings for the Outreach Team members.

### **Outreach Team**

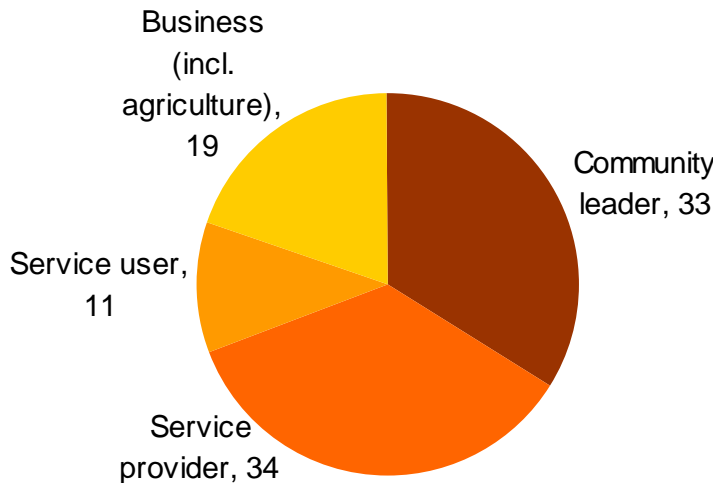
The multi-Department team includes the Departments of Labor and Industrial Relations; Business, Economic Development and Tourism; Agriculture; Human Services; Health; Land and Natural

Resources; and Hawaiian Homelands, as well as the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, University of Hawai'i, and Leeward Community College.

The Outreach Team consists of twenty state agency staff who dedicate at least one day per week to outreach in the community and one two-hour team briefing each Wednesday. The Outreach Team has split into small groups to more efficiently reach more people. The small groups generally team up two to four staff from different agencies. This provides greater cross-learning for both the Outreach Team and the community people being interviewed. When we have had large meetings a majority of the Outreach Team attends and has directly participated in facilitating discussions.

To date, between mid-February and mid-April, the Outreach Team has collectively spent approximately 1,900 hours gathering information through community dialogue and interviews. This effort has resulted in contacts with approximately 100 individuals; of those individuals are represented roughly 35 self-identified community group affiliations.

*Figure 1: Total number of community participants by type of participant*



The Outreach Team still has a list of several dozen individuals and groups, identified by our interviewees, that we intend to contact and meet with. The Outreach Team during its weekly briefings continues to refine our techniques and identify knowledge gaps or segments of the community to be targeted. During late-April, for instance, two of the outreach team groups are focusing their efforts on small businesses in the Leeward community to ensure that our business data sufficiently reflect the interests of that population. Meanwhile, another outreach team group is reaching out to those in the transition shelter and in area public housing.

**Website**

The Office of Planning has created space on its website to post information about the process and pertinent planning documents ([http://www.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/projects/leeward\\_coast\\_initiative/](http://www.hawaii.gov/dbedt/op/projects/leeward_coast_initiative/)). In particular, these planning documents represent a rich resource of past work by the community to identify important issues, strategies and projects that they support. In the outreach work to date, the Outreach Team has repeatedly heard that the State needs to do its homework and look back at the work already

completed by the community. The documents on the website can serve as a resource for individuals in the community as well as the Outreach Team.

The use of the worldwide web has tremendous potential for these types of outreach efforts in rural communities. Websites allow users to keep up-to-date with current information and provide public space for comment and discussion, provided that staff resources and technical capacity are sufficient. However, it should be recognized that not everyone has internet access to utilize this resource. And perhaps more importantly, before this type of distance learning and interaction is acceptable, it may be important to establish a level of personal relationship with the community.

## **Data Analysis**

The data collected is being transcribed by Outreach Team members into electronic files capable of being analyzed with statistical programs. We are still working on the best ways to capture and analyze the large amounts of open-ended question remarks. Early analysis by the Outreach Team has identified a number of issues and ideas that have repeatedly come up in our community discussions. These common themes provide insight into the types of community economic development strategies that might be most successful on the Leeward Coast.

## ***Emerging Issues/Themes***

*Question 1: What are the greatest problems and needs impeding economic and workforce development on the Leeward Coast?*

- Need for infrastructure improvements: roadways, drainage, digital, beach.
- Limited employment opportunities on Leeward Coast.
- Limited services on Leeward Coast.
- Lack of available and affordable land.
- Lack of basic job skills among residents.
- Lack of basic social and family skills among residents.
- Public safety: drug activity and crime rate.
- Social problems (e.g., substance abuse).
- Education system in crisis: problems recruiting and retaining skilled educators.

*Question 2: Which programs are effective in serving the Leeward community? Which ones are ineffective? What lessons on service delivery can we learn from these programs?*

- Successful program strategies:
  - ‘Ohana-based approach
  - “Building people:” confidence along with skills
  - Involvement in community
  - Understanding and accommodation of community culture in service delivery
  - Programmatic alignment with community values and beliefs
- Unsuccessful program strategies:
  - “Welfare mentality” of dependence
  - Undermining confidence of clients
  - Locating programs and services outside of the Leeward Coast
  - Staffing with “outsiders” unfamiliar with community and culture

*Question 3: What does the community envision for its economy?*

Vision

- Preservation of the cultural and rural character of Wai‘anae against the threats of commercialization, industrialization, and unrestrained development.
- Hawaiian culture and values as the foundation of the community’s economic, workforce, and human development.
- An independent community and economy on the Leeward Coast, with the capacity to educate, train, employ, and serve the needs of its own community members.
- An array of employers and industries who hire from within the Leeward community.
- Appropriate technology in the Leeward economy, reflecting a balance between high-tech and high-touch with focus on smaller, locally-owned and operated businesses.
- A group of business and economic development leaders who work with the community and are responsive to its plans, priorities, and preferences.
- An economy based on the values of ‘Ohana, Lōkahi, and Aloha rather than Domination, Individualism, and Exclusion.

Potential Industries

- Natural resource management: both land and sea
- Alternative energy
- Agriculture, aquaculture, and mariculture
- Tourism: culturally authentic with a high degree of community participation and/or ownership
- Media: digital and multi-media

*Question 4: What immediate and long-term actions should be taken to support the Leeward economy and its workforce?*

- Basic skills training for residents (e.g., parenting skills, literacy, GED).
- Expanded and varied job training for residents.
- Training of government workers and service providers in cultural sensitivity and “people-building” approaches.
- Recruitment and retention strategies for educators.
- Assessment and coordination of State services to community.
- Institutionalized mechanism for gathering community feedback on State services.
- Institutionalization of community values (‘Ohana, Lōkahi, Aloha) in programs, services, and economic development strategies.
- Exploration of economic and programmatic models that utilize and build on the community’s strong relationships and “people helping people” ethic.

Next Steps

Throughout the months of April and May, the Outreach Team will continue to meet with small groups of community members to gather in-depth ideas and information. A series of larger community “speak-outs” are also planned for May through early June to access a broader cross-section of the community, supplement and enrich the information collected in small group meetings, and gather feedback on some of the ideas and recommendations emerging from the initiative. The sum of information and input gathered

from these various channels—individual interviews, small group meetings, and community speak-outs—will then be analyzed and pulled together into a set of findings and community-derived recommendations. By the end of June, this final report will be submitted to the Executive Committee and presented to the broader Leeward community through a public event. Implementation of the community’s recommendations will be an ongoing process to be carried out by multiple State agencies over the next several years.

### **Contact Information**

The Outreach Team effort is being coordinated from the State Office of Planning. Inquiries can be directed to Scott Derrickson at 587-2805 (email [sderrick@dbedt.hawaii.gov](mailto:sderrick@dbedt.hawaii.gov)) or Koren Ishibashi at 587-2803 (email [kishibashi@dbedt.hawaii.gov](mailto:kishibashi@dbedt.hawaii.gov)).