Retaining People with a Purpose

2025 PHIG ARC – St. Louis, MO

Hawaiʻi State Department of Health – Public Health Infrastructure Grant Workforce Strategies

Brad Suenishi

PHIG Retention Manager

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Hawaiʻi PHIG Workforce Development Process: Recruit to Retain People with a Purpose

1. Workforce Planning

Identifies economic, cultural, social, and environmental issues that can impact our incumbent workers. Identifies the changing workforce needs of public health in Hawaiʻi.

2. Employee Retention

Focus on people. Give employees resources to be the best version of themselves and build resiliency. Shifting the culture to drive positive outcomes that address greater challenges together in the future.

3. New Employee Recruitment

Create pathway support for students and job seekers who share the mission and vision of the Hawaiʻi State Department of Health.

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

HI-DOH Employee Engagement Activities

1. Current Activities:
    1. New Employee Orientation
    2. Friday Messages
    3. Volunteer Events

2. Future Activities (in development):
    1. Brown Bag Sessions / Coffee Talks
    2. Collaboration/Partnerships with Academia – Professional and Personal Enrichment Opportunities

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

DOH New Employee Orientation

KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

Friday Messages

Happy Aloha Friday everyone,

Today, we woke up to learn of the Microsoft Windows disruptions in air travel, health care, transportation, and critical infrastructure. Although this was confirmed as a defective update and not a cyberattack, this situation demonstrates the complexity of the world we live in.

Modern comforts that we take for granted are built on extremely complex systems. However, when events like this happen, we are uncomfortable and vulnerable not because of the complexity of situation, but rather, the resultant confusion.

I grew up in much simpler time. The biggest disrupters that complicated my childhood were Skip Hess' introduction of the Mongoose BMX bike, Tom Morey's Morey Boogie 136, and the Atari 2600. Our world has come a long way since then and there is good and bad with its complexity. We often don't have a choice in accepting it, we simply have a choice on how we deal with it.

Mahalo for your great work this week in service to our community and have a wonderful relaxing weekend.

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Date Sent	Subject (Hover for message body)	Engagement- Replies	Engagement- Reactions	Total Engagement	Notes
6/14/2024	Let your Voice Be Heard by the CDC/PHAB Through the Job Task Analysis Survey!	1	0	1	Scott
6/21/2024	Curiosity	3	0	3	Scott
6/28/2024	Your Feedback Matters	0	0	0	Scott
7/3/2024	The Pursuit of Happiness	10	1	11	Sent on Wed (before 4th of July) - Scott
7/12/2024	Innovation	3	2	5	Scott
7/19/2024	Complexity vs. Confusion	7	4	11	Scott
9/4/2024	DOH is Participating in the PH WINS 2024 Workforce Survey: YOUR voice is important!	4	1	5	Sent on Wed - Scott
9/27/2024	Online Canva Training and New PH101 Professional Development Opportunities!	13	1	14	Scott
10/4/2024	Happy Aloha Friday!!!	6	0	6	Scott
11/8/2024	Mahalo for Your Dedication in Serving Our Public	3	3	6	Scott
11/25/2024	Exciting News on the 2024 PH WINS!!	4	0	4	Sent on Mon - Scott
11/27/2024	Happy Thanksgiving	10	5	15	Sent on Wed (before Thanksgiving) - Scott
12/13/2024	Happy Aloha Friday	4	1	5	Scott
12/24/2024	Happy Holidays!	5	5	10	Sent on Tues (Xmas Eve) - Scott
1/17/2025	PHIG Workforce Development Team Introduction	2	3	5	Brad
1/30/2025	The Power of Uncertainty	3	10	13	Sent on Thurs - Scott
1/31/2025	Simple Joys in Life	3	8	11	Brad
2/7/2025	Our Values Are Our Guiding Light	3	7	10	Scott
2/14/2025	The Law of the Aloha Spirit and the Importance of Relationships	3	5	8	Scott
2/28/2025	Integrity - Do the right thing, even when no one else will know	4	10	14	Brad
3/14/2025	Curiosity: Seek to Understand Why, How and What	4	4	8	Brad
3/28/2025	Happy Aloha Friday!	7	10	17	Brad
4/11/2025	Convergence!!	4	11	15	Scott
4/17/2025	Mahalo for your Positive Contributions	4	7	11	Brad
4/25/2025	Serving Our Communities	2	6	8	Brad
5/30/2025	Change of Pace	6	5	11	Brad
6/27/2025	Wise Words of Advice	2	6	8	Brad
7/3/2025	Happy 4th of July Weekend and Mahalo for All That You Do!!	5	5	10	Sent on Thurs (before 4th of July) - Scott
7/11/2025	Chance um!	4	9	13	Brad
	TOTALS:	129	129	258	

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Volunteer Events

- Connection through service

- Build employee engagement and community

- Relax and have a good time!

KA 'OIHANA OLAKINO

Brown Bag Sessions / Coffee Talks (in development)

- Build Community and Connection in DOH

- Provides the opportunity and space for DOH employees to collaborate and drive positive outcomes, share work experiences, and to learn ways to embrace and overcome challenges

- Values in Experience and Practice
  - Sessions focused on DOH values in practice on the job
  - Guest speaker sharing experiences that aligns with DOH values

- Administrative Series
  - Covering fiscal, contractual, HR, and other related DOH procedural topics

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Collaboration/Partnerships with Academia: Professional and Personal Enrichment Opportunities (in development)

- University of Hawaii Public Health Workforce Catalyst Lab
  - Public Health 101
  - Canva Workshop

- Leeward Community College
  - 21st Century Skills Workshop
  - Team Building Experience

- UH Community Colleges
  - Non-credit courses offered for DOH employees
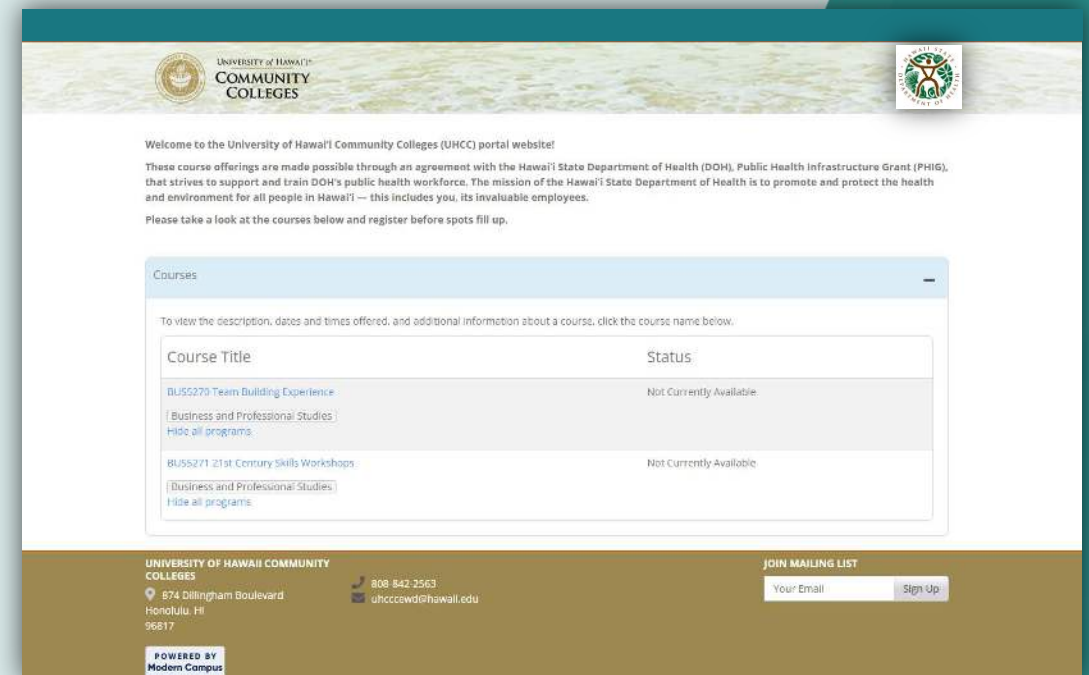
Workforce Acceleration Initiative

- **Strategies for Attracting and Onboarding Technology Talent in Public Health**

Michelle Panneton, Director for Programs – CDC Foundation

Workforce Acceleration Initiative Overview

- **FOCUS:** Help address the technology workforce needs of the nation's public health systems by placing tech and data experts to accelerate improvements in information systems.

- **WHY:** More modern, integrated systems enable public health authorities (PHAs) to more rapidly detect and respond to emerging threats, make timely, informed decisions, and drive better health outcomes in the communities they serve.

- **WHO:** 140 technology and data experts supporting 49 PHAs across the country—including large county and city agencies, Tribal authorities, and territorial PHAs—serving populations both over and under 100,000 residents.

WAI WORKFORCE ACCELERATION INITIATIVE

PUBLIC HEALTH DATA & TECHNOLOGY

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Why hire from outside public health?

Workforce Acceleration Initiative Overview

- What Type of Agency do you work for?

- What tyle of role do you currently play related to public health data modernization workforce?

- Have you ever worked outside of governmental public health?

- Do you currently have team members that came from the private sector?

- What are the pros/cons from hiring from outside governmental public health?

WAI **WORKFORCE ACCELERATION INITIATIVE**

PUBLIC HEALTH DATA & TECHNOLOGY

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

What type of agency do you work for?

What type of role do you currently play related to the public health data modernization workforce? (Select all that apply)

Have you ever worked outside of governmental public health?

Do you have team members or work with colleagues who came to governmental public health from the private sector?

The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

slido

What are the cons of hiring from the private sector into governmental public health?

What are the pros of hiring from the private sector into governmental public health?

What challenges do you see in finding staff with the correct skillsets to meet your DMI goals?

slido

Recruiting WAI Placements
91% of WAI Placements were hired from outside public health agencies (PHAs)

WAI Placement Most Recent Employer Type (N=109, 05/30/25)

Employer Type	Count
Healthcare company or organization	27
Technology company (e.g., Google, Oracle, Amazon)	21
Consulting in business, management or IT (e.g., Deloitte)	19
Other for-profit company/organization (e.g., financial)	13
Another state, local, territorial or Tribal PHA	7
Other	5
Other non-profit organization (includes philanthropic)	4
Not actively employed	4
Academia or University	4
Public-health-related federal agency or national organization	3
Pharmaceutical company or organization	2

7 WAI Placements came from other state, local, territorial or Tribal PHAs

3 WAI Placements came from other public health national or federal agency

KINO

Types of Roles being Onboarded
WAI Placements by Role Type (N=127 directly-allocated Placements, June 2025)

Role Type	Count
Business Analyst	30
Data Engineer	28
Systems Architect	12
Product Manager	11
Data Scientist	9
Software Engineer	8
Project Implementation Manager	6
Data Governance Specialist	6
DMI Senior Advisor	4
Data Science and Informatics Specialist	4
Software Developer	3
DevOps Engineer	3
Informatics Project Manager	2
Cybersecurity Specialist	1
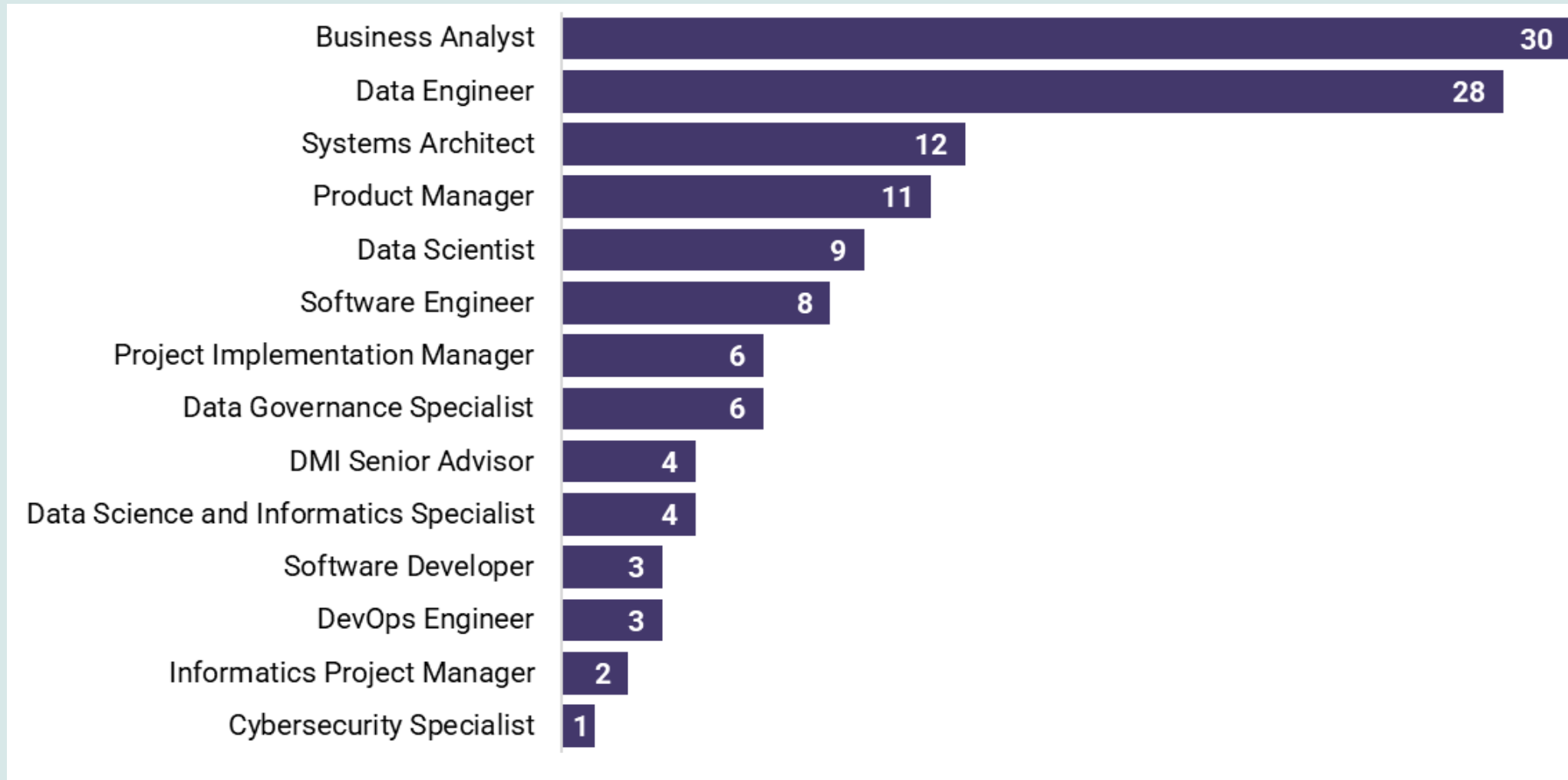
Successful Recruitment

Why It is an Ineffective Job Description – And What Would Make it Effective?
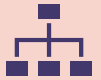
Job Title is Too Generic

Emphasize data and engineering terms technology and data professionals recognize.
Avoid bureaucratic or opaque labels like "Specialist II."

Lack of Public Health Context, Vision or Impact

Add context like: "Work within the county's electronic disease reporting system to improve the quality and timeliness of COVID-19 and tuberculosis case reporting for countywide public health surveillance."

Why It's an Ineffective Job Description – And What Would Make it Effective?

Lacks Clarity and Focus

Provide specific project examples.

Group related tasks and define outcomes.

Disconnected Technical Requirements (No Mention of Tools or Systems)

Clarify scope.

Establish technical and domain environment.

Job Description Activity

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Onboarding

WAI Learning Community
Integrating Experts from Outside Public Health

WAI University	Community of Practice	Mentorship Program
Technical Training	**Peer Collaboration**	**Counsel and Coaching**
• Core Training Curriculum • Quarterly Learning Events • Tools and Resources Library	• Bi-Monthly Learning Events • Cohort Calls by Topic Area • Online Discussion Board	• Assigned PHA mentor • Planning Worksheet • Monthly Meetings

**Centralized in Basecamp Platform**

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

WAI University's Core Training Curriculum

Curriculum based on Core Competencies for Public Health Professionals:

- ✓ Public Health 101
- ✓ Public Health Authority
- ✓ Public Health Funding Basics
- ✓ Public Health Informatics
- ✓ U.S. Public Health Ecosystem
- ✓ CDC Public Health Data Strategy
- ✓ Public Health Interoperability and Standards
- ✓ IT Work in a Government Agency
- ✓ Data and Information Governance in Public Health
- ✓ HIPAA Training
- ✓ Other Key Skills (Communications, Partnership, Community/Stakeholder Engagement)

Placements Reporting that the Core Curriculum Informed their Work at 90 Days
(N=102, as of 05/12/25)

Did not inform work 2%

Somewhat informed work 41%

Significantly informed work 57%
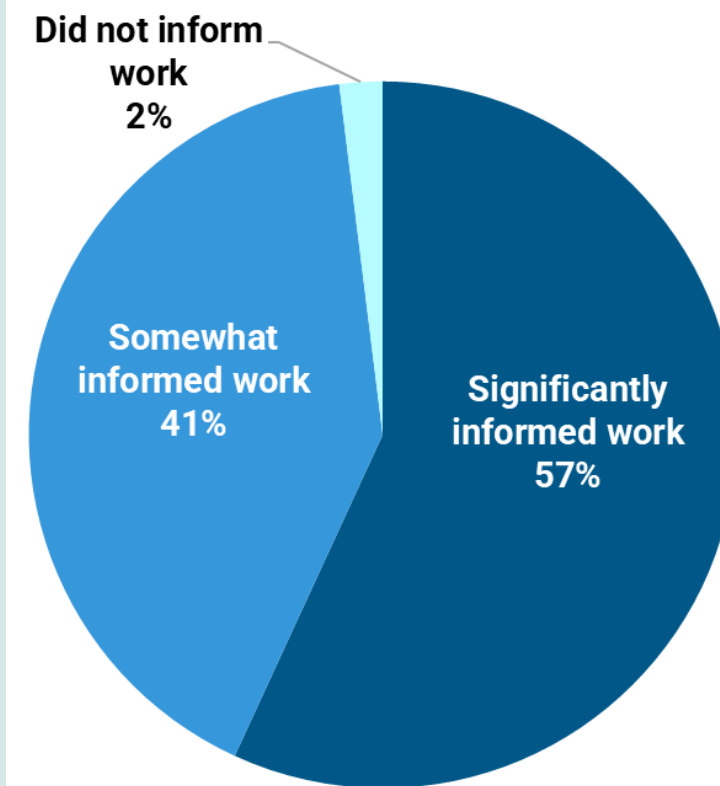
KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

Core Training Feedback

- **Valuable to Placements and PHAs** for orienting individuals new to public health

- Some felt the training was **too basic, long, and time consuming**, particularly while trying to onboard at their PHA

- **Missing:** Tribal public health, more on partner engagement in data practices

- Request for more **hands-on, real-world learning** (use cases, discussion groups)

- **Integration challenges:** despite the training, some PHAs have faced challenges in integrating Placements into the public health context (e.g., low resources, need to do several roles at once, bureaucratic dynamics)

Having CDC Foundation provide support to the Placements and **help them understand how data is used and managed in public health was very helpful**.

WAI PHA, quarterly survey

The core curriculum is **well-structured and informative**, providing a strong foundation in public health.

WAI Placement, core training post-assessment

I really did not understand the role of public health or PHAs before I started this training…This context has been incredibly valuable, and something I wish I had sooner!

WAI Placement, Learning Community survey

KA ʻOIHANA OLAKINO

https://www.cdcfoundation.org/programs/workforceacceleration