

From Tsunami to Renewal:

A Review of American Samoa's
National Emergency Grant Program



**SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH
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Acknowledgements

This document was written by Kristin Wolff, Vinz Koller, Elizabeth Waiters, and Dae Woo Son of Social Policy Research Associates under contract with the American Samoa Department of Human Resources.

It is the culmination of a ten-month review of the American Samoa National Emergency Grant (NEG) Program. The report benefited from the contributions of Papali'i Dr. Failautusi Avegalio and Dr. CL Cheshire of the Pacific Business Center at the University of Hawaii, the comments and feedback of the NEG Program staff – Evelyn Vaitautolu Langford, Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola, Makerita Enesi, Toti Fata, Silia Time, and Patrick Ti'a Reid – and the written and oral insights of government, non-profit and private sector leaders and community members with whom we met to share the first draft of the documentary film and the initial report findings during August 2012.

Our filmmaker Aleixo Gonçalves captured as many stories on video as our review team did in spreadsheets, and proved indispensable in the course of our analysis. Sam McCoy provided invaluable editorial assistance and aided in the report's layout and design.

The cover graphic and the accompanying website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org was designed by BootsRoads Group, LLC, our frequent partners in projects that aim to help communities thrive.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Department of Human Resources of the Government of American Samoa or the NEG staff.

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa



Lolo M. Moliga
Governor

Lemanu S.P. Mauga
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**AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES
PAGO PAGO, AMERICAN SAMOA 96799
17 January 2013**

Talofa friends,

This report, together with the documentary film "National Emergency Grant American Samoa: From Tsunami to Renewal" and the project's website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org provide a window into what has been an extraordinary journey for our island, our people, and the National Emergency Grant (NEG) Team.

We could hardly believe the devastation wrought by the tsunami that fateful September day. Villages, homes, schools, businesses were destroyed. Thousands lost their livelihoods. Thirty-four lost their lives. No one went untouched by the tragedy.

But islanders are resilient. Together, we began to pick up the pieces. In the absence of power and in the context of their own personal losses, members of my team worked with the Department of Labor to secure the NEG that would help us launch the largest workforce program we'd ever run. Together with public, private, and non-profit partners, we helped 2,361 people get back on their feet and into training for new jobs or careers, launched the American Samoa Culinary Academy, debuted the island's first One-Stop Career Center, and more recently, as part of an effort to advance a regional agenda, initiated programs in construction in Guam and professional services in American Samoa that make talent central to economic development.

During the past eight months, we have worked with Social Policy Research to document this story so that its lessons could be shared widely, both here in American Samoa, and around the world.

It is my sincerest hope that our story will help others facing similar circumstances find a way to renew spirits, livelihoods, and communities, and prepare for a brighter day.

Soifua and God bless,

Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola
NEG Program Manager
Department Human Resource

From Tsunami to Renewal: A Review of American Samoa's National Emergency Grant Program

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AmericanSamoaRenewal.org

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Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) is a leading research, evaluation, and technical assistance firm located in Oakland, California.

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Executive Summary

In the spring of 2012, the Department of Human Resources of the American Samoan government commissioned Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) to conduct a review of the National Emergency Grant (NEG) program. Unlike a formal evaluation, the primary goal of the review was to help the NEG team and its partners document the NEG experience and to identify lessons and opportunities that might benefit the remainder of the program as well as other education and workforce and economic development initiatives in the territory.

After reviewing key documents and participating in a number of briefings, a five-person team from SPR spent nearly a month immersed in the NEG program in American Samoa and briefly visiting Guam. With the help of our on-island project team, we spoke formally with over 100 individuals and informally with dozens more. We used traditional data collection methods, crafted a video documentary and participated in grassroots community engagement. In a commitment to transparency, all of our source documentation, including key video interviews, papers, and links to sources we used, are available on the project's website:

AmericanSamoaRenewal.org.

The National Emergency Grant Program

In the wake of a devastating tsunami of 2009, which eliminated one in eight jobs in the territory, American Samoa received the largest National Emergency Grant (NEG) ever awarded¹ by the US

Department of Labor – nearly \$25M – to support the recovery process. Within weeks after the Tsunami, despite severely compromised infrastructure, the Department of Human Resources (DHR), the agency charged with planning and implementing the NEG initiative, launched Phase I – a public jobs program. NEG program staff recruited and employed 2,361 people in cleanup and recovery efforts at 65 worksites between November 2009 and June 2010. They launched the program without a one-stop career center or other key

“We had to set up manual systems, locate generators, set priorities in the face of overwhelming need . . . Nothing about a disaster is normal.”

*Tuimavave Tauapaia Laupola,
NEG Program Manager,
American Samoa Department of
Human Resources*

¹ The next year, in 2010, the State of California was awarded a National Emergency Grant of just over \$25M.

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Department of Labor assets common on the US mainland.² They partnered with village-level community leaders and faith-based organizations with limited prior experience managing employment and training programs or recovery efforts on the scale required in the wake of the tsunami.

There were operational challenges – among them reporting and payroll. But in a few short weeks, DHR staff successfully built a program that served over ten times the number of people its annually funded workforce programs reach in a typical year.

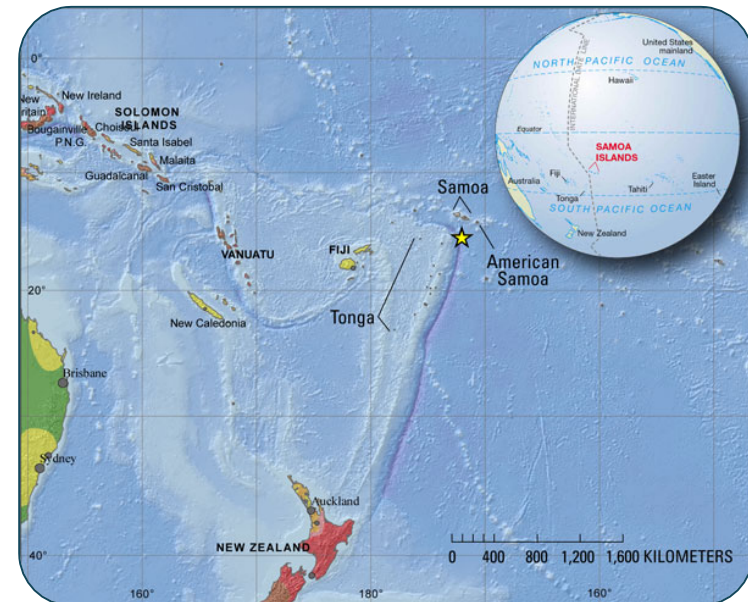
In 2010, following NEG disaster grant requirements issued by the US Department of Labor, the NEG program shifted its focus to Phase II – longer term workforce development – including training, education, and otherwise helping over two-thousand NEG temporary workers and hundreds of unemployed job-seekers affected by the tsunami transition to new jobs and build new careers.

There were daunting challenges. American Samoa is small. It is home to fewer than 68,000 people living within 77 square miles. It has only one major private-sector industry: fish processing. Even before the tsunami, employment had been a challenge for the territory. Afterward, there was no industry, sector, or cluster of economic activity capable of absorbing the number of people who

needed work even if their skills were well aligned with labor market demands.

Moreover, the transition to Phase II – Workforce Development and Reemployment – is not a simple one for disaster grantees. The systems and processes required in Phase I, such as outreach, recruiting and payroll, and placement, are fundamentally different than those required during Phase II, when the program emphasis shifts to strategy – identifying training opportunities in growing sectors that help participants connect with jobs that lead to careers.

In American Samoa, the unique context of the program made the transition to training and jobs even more difficult. The absence of career centers, the scale of unemployment, and the combination of profound needs and uncertainty about the economic future of the territory left NEG leaders with few good options.



Location of American Samoa. (credit: USGS)

² There is no Wagner-Peyser Employment Service in American Samoa, for example. In states on the US mainland, this program is a critical partner in most one-stop centers (America's Jobs Centers).

Three other factors are critical to understanding the economic context in which the NEG program was launched:

- *A rising minimum wage.* In 2007, the US Congress sought to raise the minimum wage in American Samoa to eventual parity with that on the US mainland – a planned two-fold increase in an eight-year period. The implementation of this policy resulted in layoffs in the territory’s canneries,³ accelerating the planned closure of one of them. Remaining workers received wage increases, but employers complained that the cost of labor was undermining their competitiveness relative to lower wage neighbors in the Pacific region.
- *The recession and recovery effort.* The economic output of the island decreased in 2008, and again in 2009. Federal funds available through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Emergency Grant prevented a more serious economic disaster: federal funds coming into the island more than doubled in two years and comprised half the territory’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2010.
- *Massive shifts in the global economy.* For over three decades, American Samoa was able to attract

investment by offering low wages, tax incentives, and access to its abundant fish stock and natural harbor. As a result, the cannery industry grew and wage labor increased, complementing investments by the federal government in roads, schools, and communication systems. But it also made American Samoa dependent on a single industry just as global trade was opening up, and competition in low wage industries was increasing. The territory, like many of its neighbors and like so many states on the US mainland, must now *rethink its entire approach to jobs, development, and prosperity.*

In this economic context, NEG staff, with the help of consultants from the Pacific Business Center (University of Hawaii) reviewed findings from dozens of studies commissioned over the previous decade to help the territory prepare for the downsizing of the tuna canneries – the largest source of employment in the territory. The NEG program conducted surveys of participants and engaged partner agencies and members of the business community in an effort to craft a workforce development strategy. By the end of 2010, NEG staff had begun to build a program around a clear goal: creating meaningful work and learning opportunities leading to jobs and careers for people who needed them in the aftermath of the tsunami.

³ A 2011 GAO report (*American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Employment, Earnings and Status of Key Industries Since Minimum Wage Increases Began*), found that nearly 1 in 5 jobs were lost between 2008 and 2009, not including those lost as a direct result of the tsunami.

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Toward that end, Phase II of the NEG program emphasized the following strategies:

- Adopting a regional approach to cultivating economic opportunity, including reaching out to neighboring Pacific islands and US territories.
- Raising the skill-levels of low-skilled workers so they would have better employment opportunities on- or off-island, regardless of their chosen career paths.
- Investing in specific vocational and technical training programs to prepare workers for existing opportunities aligned with their interests or expertise.
- Helping workers advance who had already demonstrated interest or participation in higher education.

The NEG Program Review

This Report documents the activities and key lessons learned through the American Samoa NEG program. It also contains recommendations compiled by the study team.

In reviewing key NEG program components and approaches during 2012, the SPR team found a workforce development strategy which blended capacity building, bold program investments, and direct business engagement to connect people with training, education, and jobs leading to careers. The NEG program:

- Brought new testing and training opportunities to American Samoa's only college;
- Created a diverse range of work opportunities for hundreds of participants, exposing many to new jobs and work environments;
- Established a first-of-its kind culinary training program that helped NEG participants begin new careers and launch new businesses;
- Collaborated with Pacific region neighbors, tapping into training and job opportunities in high-growth Guam; and,
- Opened the territory's first One-Stop Career Center as part of a major employment and job creation effort (see *Postscript* addendum to this report).

Through these and other efforts, NEG leaders are cultivating the economic assets they hope will anchor American Samoa's long-term recovery, creating new jobs and bringing new development opportunities to the territory.



Clockwise from upper right: American Samoa Community College, students in American Samoa Culinary Academy classroom, students in construction trades training in Guam.

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Although not strictly part of the strategy, the NEG also did something as important as any of its individual programs or initiatives: *it revealed the critical importance of investing in workforce development as a foundation of the territory's future prosperity.*

Senior leaders including former Governor Tulafono and the General Manager of the largest private sector firm on the island have recognized the importance of education and training in the performance of their organizations and in American Samoa's economy.

On January 3, 2013, newly elected Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga and Lt. Governor Peleti Sialeaga Mauga were sworn into office.⁴ The platform of the incoming administration includes numerous policies consistent with those of the NEG program, including: closer ties to the US Department of Labor in support of workforce development; a laser focus on enterprise, entrepreneurship and growing new industries; improved technology infrastructure; and renewed attention to the well-being and preparedness of youth and young adults.

Workforce development was identified as a potential catalyst for broader economic change even before the NEG. It also features prominently in the comprehensive economic development strategy

⁴ The previous Governor Togiola Tulafono had served as Lt. Governor from 2007 until 2003, and as Governor from 2003 through 2012.

(CEDS) study currently under review.⁵ After the tsunami and NEG program, people outside of the Department of Human Resources and its programs are talking about jobs, education, training, and career choices.

Workforce development issues are emerging as part of policy discussions in other domains. The Tsunami Study, for example, identifies “jobs training and development” as an element of economic resilience and recommends attention to vocational and technical training and direct linkages to job creation.

American Samoa's new Career One-Stop Center (launched in the summer of 2012) offers a community-based location where people looking for jobs or educational opportunities can find the help they need. It has designed services to emphasize the building of careers. The One-Stop has attracted the attention of job-seekers and of students from nearby Tafuna High School and American Samoa Community College, prompting the Department of Human Resources to explore partnership strategies for sustaining the Center after the NEG program sunsets.⁶

⁵ We spoke with the authors of this study – Malcolm McPhee and Lewis Wolman of Malcolm D. McPhee & Associates – and shared preliminary documents back and forth as we advanced our respective work.

⁶ During our final visit in early 2013, we learned the One-Stop Center had relocated due to a problem with the lease on the building. Program staff and the contractor organization are working on relaunching the center in another location as soon as possible.

Even the island's ubiquitous *aiga* (family) buses seem to invite informal conversations about jobs – especially among young people. Longtime observers characterize these conversations as a change from previous years.

Still, there is much to be done. The linkages between federal agencies and programs and their American Samoan counterparts, though reportedly improving,⁷ will require constant reinforcement. Difficult conversations about shared priorities must involve government, business, and village leaders – despite significant budget pressures. And workers, entrepreneurs, and young people and their families must advocate for access to opportunities that will benefit their communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

Our review of American Samoa's NEG program and engagement with key private, public, and nonprofit sector leaders, policy

⁷ Government and business leaders in American Samoa credited the appointment of Anthony Babauta as Assistant Secretary for Insular Areas in 2009 with injecting new energy into state-federal collaboration in the Pacific. Assistant Secretary Babauta was the highest-ranking native Pacific Islander serving in the US government and the first person of Marianas/Micronesian descent appointed by a US President. Although the Assistant Secretary resigned from his post during our final visit (January 2013), territorial leaders seek to preserve the improved communication and collaboration realized during his tenure.

professionals, program managers, community leaders, and hundreds of residents from dozens of villages pointed to three key opportunities for using the NEG experience to inform a prosperity strategy going forward.

We encourage the American Samoa's leaders to:

1. *Embrace the broader workforce agenda that has evolved since the launch of the National Emergency Grant.*

Five primary components of this broader agenda form the heart of our recommendations

- **Deepening and strengthening formal and informal relationships with territorial and federal agencies on- and off-island.** Working with US and Guam Departments of Labor colleagues to secure the National Emergency Grant, and the Department of Interior on capacity building are examples of reaching beyond traditional approaches to workforce development. These efforts may be even more crucial in the post-grant period, especially as the Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS) nears completion and the new administration of Governor Lolo Moliga begins to shape its approach to the territory's development.
- **Collaborating with government and private-sector partners throughout the Pacific region.** In keeping with the American Samoa Government's longtime strategy to strengthen linkages between islands across the Pacific

region, the NEG team worked closely with their colleagues in Guam to plan, launch and managed the NEG program, even collaborating on a first-of-its-kind construction training program for American Samoans willing to learn and work in Guam. New such opportunities are possible with continued commitment to regional collaboration.

- **Advancing innovation and enterprise, while effectively managing risk.** As American Samoa moves away from a development approach dependent on low wages to one that prioritizes higher skills and creative enterprises, it must experiment with new approaches – supporting self-employment, prioritizing emerging sectors and clusters, and advancing workplace-based development initiatives. The NEG program provided opportunities to pilot new ideas, like the culinary training program. The Work Experience Internship and On-the-Job Training programs engaged dozens of private sector employers, many of them small. Finding ways to attract resources, scale effective initiatives, and vet and test new ideas while balancing potential risk are critical capacities needed across sectors among American Samoa’s workforce leaders.
- **Developing strategic relationships with philanthropic and non-profit organizations on- and off-island.** American Samoa’s “social good” sector (philanthropy, charitable giving, and non-profit organizations) is young, undercapitalized, and lacks access to peer networks, regular technical assistance, and local capacity building champions.⁸

⁸ Using *Guidestar*, we identified 81 non-profit organizations registered in the territory, including one foundation. But 34 of these had lost their exempt status, many others are Church-affiliated, and very few have websites which would help people learn more about them.

Many manage only project-based funding, ceasing operations between projects, which impedes their ability to grow or develop deep expertise in critical areas of need in American Samoa.⁹ The territory’s public and private sectors could play a role in building the social sector’s capacity by engaging those non-profits with complementary missions¹⁰ as long-term workforce development partners.

- **Shifting away from “program” as the heart of workforce development and toward the idea that workforce development is about effective people management and development practices that can be adopted in any school or workplace.** The old model of workforce development was about training people for available jobs. Increasingly workforce professionals also play important roles in advocating for career education in schools and professional development in the workplace; collaborating with industry to access training and development; promoting self-employment; helping organizations – public and private – to adopt modern talent development and management practices. These activities create value for firms and help individuals and families whether they are participants in workforce programs or not. NEG staff took initial steps toward this broader role in Phase II of the program. To further advance this agenda, a network of the Chamber of

⁹ Two organizations heard about our project and contacted us, as technical assistance providers, to inquire about helping them with fundraising.

¹⁰ The Pacific Islands Center for Educational Development (PiCED) supports educational achievement among the island’s young people and was the territory’s 2011 non-profit of the year. Intersections Inc. runs Nuanua Media Communications – a combined leadership development and film and media skills development program for young people. These are two examples of such non-profits but there are likely many others.

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Commerce, the Workforce Development Commission, the Territorial Planning Commission, and others – have an opportunity to adopt exemplary workforce practices that can increase productivity, grow jobs, and seed new industries.

2. *Engage the extended family ('aiga') network.*

We saw countless examples of American Samoans returning from the US mainland or elsewhere to assist their families after the tsunami leading game-changing initiatives by engaging their off-island networks. Chef Sualua Tupolo, who launched the American Samoa Culinary Academy, is one example. At the same time, there are thousands of networks in the US comprised of American Samoans who are working or attending school. Families, churches, and now workforce programs are engaging these networks in ways that help students and new arrivals succeed. American Samoa's leaders must build and support networks that enable opportunities for off-island education, training, development for residents of American



Samoa, and opportunities for US mainlanders and Pacific islanders to learn and work in American Samoa. Reaching out to those who have returned home from military service, education, or off-island holds tremendous promise as a low-cost, high-impact workforce development strategy.

3. *Employ technology strategically to advance the broader workforce agenda, and increase the training and job opportunities for American Samoans of all ages.*

Four specific opportunities are described below.

- American Samoa Community College is a large and well-regarded educational institution – even housing a Small Business Development Center on its campus. The government has supported the college in its effort to secure accreditation for its first bachelors degree program expected in Spring 2013. But the college cannot be expected to meet all of the territory's education, training, and professional development needs. As Internet connectivity in American Samoa improves, online education and training programs, partnerships with off-island colleges and universities, and even peer-learning platforms can help fill that gap.
- Similarly, new service industry companies that employ individuals all over the world offer nontraditional employment opportunities, especially for women and people who seek part-time work or flexible hours. Some of these companies are even social enterprises, which would

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offer needed services as well as mission alignment.¹¹ Such strategies are new to workforce professionals – on the US mainland or in American Samoa – but are increasingly important tools for cultivating talent and enterprise in isolated communities.

- One challenge facing American Samoa is a lack of timely and high-quality workforce data. There is no Department of Labor on the island, and therefore no system for regularly tracking employment, wages, and other important labor market information. However, as the cost of technology decreases and access improves, workforce professionals across sectors could find ways to employ these technologies, even in collaboration with one another, so that territorial leaders would have access to good information about jobs, skills, and the movement of people through the labor market.
- Finally, public agencies, non-profit organizations and others are just beginning to use social media to organize champions, supporters, volunteers, and even donors – and could engage small business lenders.¹² The National Park of American Samoa, is an example of a public agency that uses Facebook particularly well to engage its “tribe.” It will be increasingly important for public agencies of all kinds to engage this way as more citizens and residents demand it.¹³

¹¹ Samasource, for example, is a non-profit organization that connects poor women and young people to training and employment in the digital economy and provides “microwork” for people in need all over the world.

¹² Kiva provides a platform that allows individuals to make small business loans to aspiring entrepreneurs who lack access to capital.

¹³ We heard many anecdotes about young peoples’ expectations about education and jobs shifting as a result of communicating with off-island

These recommendations and additional examples are summarized in Insert 14 of the full report.

Going forward, government, private sector, and community leaders must make serious choices about the focus of their economic and workforce development efforts. But they will be making these choices in the context of a community that has begun to understand the importance of workforce skills in the recovery of the island and in its accompanying economic, social and spiritual renewal.



In American Samoa, tradition and modernity live right alongside one another.

friends on Facebook – and we experienced this dynamic ourselves as American Samoan colleagues and friends began communicating with us this way.

Introduction

In September 2009, a powerful earthquake centered 150 miles off its southwestern shore struck American Samoa. The quake was followed by a devastating tsunami that swallowed cars, homes, and businesses, took the lives of 34 people, and forced the closure of one of the largest employers on the island – the Chicken of the Sea tuna cannery.

Although the cannery – one of two large-scale canneries on the island – had been downsizing and planned to cease operations the next day – an event already widely viewed as an economic catastrophe – the additional devastation caused by the giant waves led to unforeseen economic, environmental, and social hardship, and the loss of thousands more jobs than had been expected.

The island received significant emergency housing, relocation, and rebuilding assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (\$125.5M) to help feed and shelter families and stabilize unsafe infrastructure. At the end of October, a month after the disaster, the US Department of Labor awarded American Samoa a \$24.8M National Emergency Grant (NEG) – at the time, the largest

such grant ever awarded – to help get people back to work and begin rebuilding their lives.

This report was commissioned by the Department of Human Resources of the American Samoa Government and prepared by Social Policy Research of Oakland, California, working closely with partners and colleagues from American Samoa. It is part of a larger effort that also includes a documentary film, website, and document archive, all available at AmericanSamoaRenewal.org.

Together, these materials comprise a review of the NEG program as it neared the end of its third year. The goal was not just to evaluate the program, but also to learn from it. Through this report and related materials, the research team hopes to:

- Help American Samoa's leaders, policy makers, program managers, firms, workers, and residents understand the scope and scale of the program, how and why it was implemented in the way it was, and invite a conversation about what comes next.
- Help other communities affected by disasters and receiving NEG support learn from American Samoa's experience so they can better understand what to expect, and how to avoid key hazards while maximizing the potential impact of NEG resources.
- Help the US Department of Labor and other federal agencies responding to similar disasters better understand the kind of help communities in crisis need so that the NEG program learns from each instance of disaster and improves over time.

Since launching the project, three additional groups have expressed interest in its progress and products:

- American Samoans, Samoans, and other Pacific Islanders living off-island (on the US mainland or elsewhere) for whom the 2009 disaster remains a painful memory, a source of concern, or a potent symbol of the distance that separates them from extended family.
- Samoans, Tongans, Fijians, Micronesians and other islanders who experience frequent natural and weather-related disasters and who seek to improve their own economic and social resilience.
- US mainland communities – rural communities in particular – experiencing their own economic or environmental disasters for whom there may be useful lessons and ideas courtesy of their colleagues in the South Pacific.

It is our hope that they, too, will find value in this report and related materials.

METHODS & APPROACH

As noted, this project is not a traditional evaluation. Its primary goal is to tell an authentic and data-driven story about American Samoa's NEG experience. This is a complex story best told in a way that emphasizes narrative as much as data. As is common in post-disaster environments, local stakeholders lack the resources or the time to gain a coherent understanding of the recovery effort as it occurs. In speaking with other NEG grantees on the US mainland, we learned that this, itself, was a common lesson. These grantees,

like American Samoa, expressed the need for better, clearer, and more consistent ways of communicating the role, program elements, and outcomes associated with the NEG to their communities – and the difficulty of doing this in the throes of an emergency. This report and the accompanying web archive are thus meant to serve as a 'memory bank' as well as a collection of relevant resources and lessons learned.

Our team designed an approach to the project that included three primary methods for collecting data: interviews, data and file reviews, and story gathering.

Interviews. We conducted dozens of interviews with government, business and community leaders, program managers, and project leaders who had experience with the NEG program, both in American Samoa and in Guam. Thirty-five of these interviews were conducted on video. We also spoke with NEG participants, training providers, and NEG partner agencies about their experiences – what they did, what they learned, and what difference they think the NEG made. Some of these interviews were conducted in a more ethnographic way – in people's villages, yards, even homes – so that we might learn as much about context as content.

Data and file reviews. We reviewed spreadsheets, project files, binders documenting village-level projects, media, and other resources that helped us understand the nature of the program and how it had evolved. This was challenging as the program was still in

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progress while we conducted our review. As a result, some of the data cited in the report will be out of date by the time the report is released. However, we made every effort to prioritize trends over specific data points, and lend enough context in our written materials to avoid misinterpretation.



Story gatherer Jacqueline Leatigaga preparing for interviews.

Story gathering. We engaged a local team of American Samoans who worked with us as ‘story gatherers’ the entire time we were on-island, collecting stories about the tsunami experience from people who lived through it. We felt this was important context as a way to capture the kinds of challenges that NEG staff were faced with in the storm’s aftermath, when many of them did not just lack power and other basic infrastructure but were also without shelter or had not located loved ones themselves. As an ancillary side effect, we expected that the story gatherers would

enhance their own personal and professional networks through their interactions.

The project’s deliverables include:

- A thirty-five minute video documentary about the tsunami and NEG project called “From Tsunami to Renewal.”
- A report detailing the context, program, lessons, and results to date of the American Samoa National Emergency Grant Program.
- Profiles of three NEG initiatives that demonstrated creative responses to documented need, engaged new partners, and generated excitement among “the public” – people with no direct connection to the NEG program.
- A website and project archive that includes: links, the video documentary and video interviews, and downloadable documents cited in the report; “Stories from the Community” – video interviews produced by the story gatherers in which residents describe their experiences during the tsunami; and other relevant documents and resources.

As a commitment to transparency, all of these resources are available on the project’s website: AmericanSamoaRenewal.org.

RESEARCH TEAM

Our primary research team comprised 13 people:

- An SPR team of five (Vinz Koller, Kristin Wolff, Dae Woo Son, Elizabeth Waiters, and Aleixo Gonçalves) spent between two and five weeks in American Samoa and Guam conducting interviews, reviewing files, gathering video, and working with our Samoan colleagues to understand the NEG program in its entirety.
- A logistics and support team of four (James Faumuina, Fa'aolataga Finou Fusitu'a, Lupi Leasoon, and Noai Silao) helped us navigate government and community based agencies and organizations, private-sector firms, and the territory's villages, and then transcribed, translated, and otherwise assisted with data processing. Without their help, there would be no report; without their openness, there would be far less to share.
- A story gathering team of four (Jacqueline Leatigaga, Brett Levu, Spencer Toeava, and Iosefa Siatini) shared their stories with us, collected stories from their neighbors, colleagues, and friends (using flipcams), they became integral members of the research team within a day of our arrival on island and remained so all the way through the project.

We also want to recognize the following individuals at Social Policy Research who provided logistics support, assistance with document or video production, and communications support throughout the project: Laura Aron, Trace Elms, Sam McCoy, and Miloney Thakrar.

Finally, central to our ability to complete the project was Evelyn Vaitautolu-Langford and her team at the Department of Human Resources – the Makerita Enesi, Toti Fata, Tuimavave Tauapai Laupola, Patrick Ti'a Reid and Silia Time – and Professors Failautusi Avegalio and C.L. Cheshire. All of them helped us understand the program by sharing information and data, explaining evolving strategies, and identifying what they had learned.



NEG Team during morning briefing.

About American Samoa

After midnight, as the inky black sky envelops the nation's capital, the orange sun still hangs over a glistening horizon in American Samoa, the western most US territory. American Samoans say, "Here is where America's day ends."

American Samoa occupies a remote corner of the South Pacific – the only US territory in the southern hemisphere. Its closest neighbor (165 miles) is Independent Samoa. Other neighbors in the region include:

- Tonga (582 miles)
- Fiji (600 miles)
- Tuvalu (966 miles)

American Samoa's capital city, Pago Pago, is 1,600 miles from New Zealand (Auckland), 2,500 miles from Australia (Brisbane), and 2,600 miles from Hawaii (Honolulu). Pago Pago sits on the island of Tutuila, American Samoa's main island and home to nine out of every ten residents and the vast majority of trade, commerce, and administrative activity in the territory.

Government & Administration

In 1900, "the rock", as many locals call the main island, became the US Naval Station Tutuila. The Manu'a Islands and Aunu'u were integrated and the territory was renamed American Samoa in 1911. Today, American Samoa is largely self-governing under the Constitution of American Samoa. It maintains a locally elected Governor and Lieutenant Governor who support an executive branch; an elected legislature (Fono) comprising a House of Representatives and a Senate; and a high court and district courts.

Military power is vested in the President of the United States with the US Secretary of the Interior playing a key role in administering policy and serving as a conduit between the American Samoan government and mainland federal agencies and government departments.

American Samoans are not American citizens. Though they do elect a non-voting representative in Congress, they cannot vote for US President, (the territory does send delegates to each of the main party's nominating conventions). American Samoans may travel to and settle in the US mainland as "US Nationals."

American Samoa

Status: US Territory

Capital: Pago Pago

Land area: 77 sq. miles

Main island: Tutuila

Other islands: Ofu, Olosega and Ta'u (Manu'a Group) and Aunu'u, Swains Island & Rose Island (atolls)

Population (2010): 67,380

Median age: 21

Estimate per capita income: \$4,357

Key Industries: Tuna Canning, Government

Source: American Samoa Statistics Yearbook 2010, American Samoa Department of Commerce, Statistics Division

Culture, Religion, Patriotism: Fa’a Samoa (the Samoan way)

The Samoan islands have been inhabited since 1500 BC, with trade and travel among the people of the South Pacific generating a distinct Polynesian culture at least 1,000 years before North America was “discovered.” Samoans in particular have fiercely adhered to their culture and traditions – many of which are as much economic and political as religious or social.

Most American Samoans are bilingual – Samoan is their first language and English their second. The basic unit of social organization is the *aiga*, or family. In Samoan, family does not mean nuclear family but extended family network ranging in size from a few to hundreds of people related by blood or marriage and sharing an allegiance to a *matai*, or high chief. The high chief acts as a steward of family resources and land – most of which is communally owned – in consultation with *aiga* members.

“[The] world cannot be kept away from American Samoa. Neither can American Samoa continue to stand apart ... from the world. New ideas cannot and must not be suppressed...The new and the old must be mixed in a suitable blend. By retaining the fundamental principles of the old system and accepting a new, more democratic political structure, American Samoa can gracefully become a part of the modern world without casting its rich and long-established heritage aside.”

American Samoan Political Status Commission report cited in American Samoa’s Economic Future and the Cannery Industry (1979)

This traditional family-centered social order is complex and often confuses outsiders (*palagi*) but exists alongside modern institutions from corporations to governments. This interconnectedness can be

an important asset in advancing community goals, including recovering from natural disasters.

The church also plays a central role in the lives of most American Samoans. Nearly all American Samoans are Christian; about half of them belong to the Christian Congregationalist Church. The territory is home to large numbers of Catholics and members of the Church of Latter Day Saints.

Samoans invoke the language and practice of their faith everyday. They

often speak of God – at work, in commerce, at school, and socially. They typically attend church several times a week convening family birthdays, reunions, and anniversary celebrations there. And the music (group harmonizing) for which Samoans are rightly famous is largely religious in nature.

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Many villages honor “sa”, a daily time for evening prayer or reflection during which noise and activity are discouraged. In some cases, elders restrict access to and from their villages during this time.

Finally, the *faiifeau* (minister) and other church leaders often play critical roles – together with the tribal chiefs – in maintaining social health and order. They organize community level emergency responses; provide food, shelter or other necessities to families in need; and instill family and community responsibility in young people. American Samoa’s motto is “*Samoa, Muamua Le Atua*” (*Samoa. Let God be first.*)

American Samoans are also fiercely patriotic. Flag Day (April 17th) is among the most significant holidays of the year and is marked by a weeklong celebration comprising sport, music, ceremony, and the presence of foreign dignitaries.

Since the 1970s, whether out of economic need, desire for opportunity, family tradition or other reasons, American Samoans have joined the US armed services and reserves in large numbers. Proportionally, Pacific Islanders (including American Samoans) are 249% overrepresented in the US Army.¹⁴ The island’s Junior ROTC program always exceeds its recruitment targets. This also means that American Samoans sustain injuries and casualties resulting

from combat in much greater numbers than members of other racial or ethnic groups or residents of the US mainland.

Finally, American Samoans are known to be warm, friendly, and welcoming to visitors. Their collective orientation makes crowdsourcing anything – information, directions, even meals – second nature. Our team certainly found this to be true. We were offered rides, directions, food, drink, music, and company nearly everywhere we visited. Riders on the family buses proved to be tremendous sources of information, guidance, and inspiration. Whenever we had a question, we just asked, and people graciously responded.

American Samoa’s Economy & Labor Force

American Samoa’s economy is fragile.

Among the island’s key assets are its deep-water port and abundant fishing grounds, a combination that enabled in Chicken of the Sea and StarKist tuna canneries to become the two largest employers on the island by the 1990s. In 2005, the canneries directly employed over 4,500 people – more than one in four of the territory’s workers. Considering the economic effect of these firms on local supply chains (the multiplier effect), the numbers of jobs linked to the canneries nearly doubles. A 2008 study, *American Samoa’s*

¹⁴ *White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Fact Sheet 2011* <http://www.whitehouse.gov/aapi>

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Economic Future (citing 2002 figures), found that fish processing accounted for 45.6% of total employment on the island.

Government was the second largest source of employment, providing over 3,200 jobs for island residents or nearly one in four of the island's 17,000-person labor force.

As wages began to rise in American Samoa and barriers to global trade decreased, concerns grew over the territory's dependence on the canneries and on government as the primary sources of employment. American Samoa's leaders began seriously considering economic diversification and growth strategies. *See Insert 1: Why did wages rise so quickly in American Samoa?*

We found no fewer than ten studies and reports – most published between 2002 and 2009 – intended to help private-sector and government leaders prepare for cannery downsizing and lay the foundation for the next stage of the territory's development.¹⁵ We also saw evidence of increased collaboration among community leaders in the form of multi-agency commissions, advisory groups and public-private partnerships, the launch of the American Samoa Visitors Bureau (replacing the former association), and a more strategic structure and direction at the Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁵ Currently, the island's Territorial Planning Commission is completing a *Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS)*. We have reviewed an initial draft and been in touch with its authors. While the final version will not be published by the time we release this report, we do not expect that the CEDS study will diverge substantially from the findings we list here. Rather it will provide valuable and current information for American Samoa's new administration as it devises a strategy for growing and diversifying the economy and cultivating future generations of talent.

These developments stimulated a diligent effort to address the lack of key economic indicators, such as a territory-level Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that had long inhibited American Samoa's ability to assess the effectiveness of its economic development strategies.

Most studies completed during this period reached similar conclusions:

There is no single blueprint for strengthening and diversifying the economy of American Samoa. The transition requires a mix of long and short-term context-appropriate strategies aimed at:

- Improving the quality of the territory's infrastructure;
- Aligning and making more efficient use of government policies and incentives (locally and at the federal level);
- Building on existing geographic, commercial, social and cultural assets; export-oriented and locally-focused commercial activities (including entrepreneurship and small business); and
- Raising the levels of skills and educational achievement among American Samoans across all age groups – in and out of the workforce.



Insert 1: *Why did wages rise so quickly in American Samoa?*

In 2007, the US enacted legislation (*US Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007*) that would raise the minimum wage in American Samoa and in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) incrementally until they reached parity with the minimum wage on the US mainland. Prior to 2007, the minimum wage for each of American Samoa's 18 industries was set by the US Department of Labor through a process of biennial reviews. In 2006, minimum wages in American Samoa ranged from \$2.68 (garment industry) to \$4.09 (shipping and transport).¹⁶ As a result of the new legislation, American Samoa's minimum wage was set to increase by \$.50 each year until 2018 when it reached the US federal minimum wage of \$7.25.

In American Samoa, this was seen as a major threat to the territory's competitiveness because the percentage of workers earning the minimum wage was so high – American Samoa canneries compete with those in lower wage in the Pacific region.

A 2009 employer survey¹⁷ revealed that the hourly wages of 37% of all workers and nearly three-quarters of workers employed by large private-sector firms were low enough to be affected by the first \$.50 minimum wage increase in July 2007. The same survey found that between 2007 and 2009, the first three wage increases resulted in a rise in median hourly wages of \$1.50 (a 44% rise) among tuna cannery workers and \$1.00 (a 25% rise) among employees of other private-sector firm who responded to the survey.

The survey results also suggested that the original planned minimum wage increases would affect the wages of close to 95% of those private sector workers by 2016.

By 2009, the minimum wage on the island had increased to a low of \$4.18 per hour and a high of \$4.76. In May of that year, Chicken of the Sea Samoa Packing announced the planned closure of the Chicken of the Sea¹⁸ (COS) plant, which, at the time, employed 2,041 workers – 12% of the labor force. The plant was scheduled to close September 30, 2009. The earthquake and tsunami struck on September 29th.

In 2010, President Obama signed a subsequent law that delayed the scheduled minimum wage increases for two years. As a result, there was no mandated wage increase in American Samoa in 2010 or 2011. Increases were scheduled to resume September 2012, but on July 19, 2012, Congress approved another delay – until 2015 – in a bill signed into law by President Obama on July 26, 2012.

¹⁶ Source: *The Minimum wage in American Samoa 2007*. US Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration, Wage and Hour Division (May 2007).

¹⁷ Source: *American Samoa and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Wages, Employment, Employer Actions, Earnings, and Worker Views Since Minimum Wage Increases Began*. GAO, April 2010.

¹⁸ There is some controversy over the role of minimum wage increases in COS's decision to close. We heard anecdotally that the plant was dated and owners had not invested in technologies that would have kept it competitive. This seems to bear some truth as the company replaced its American Samoa operations with a new plant in Lyons, GA that employs only about 200 workers – about one-tenth of the size of the workforce in American Samoa.

Specific areas of economic opportunity identified in these analyses included:

- *Contract work*, for which physical proximity to the US mainland was of little consequence – contact centers, for example;
- *Manufacturing*, specifically products which would benefit from a US production facility thus avoiding import tariffs that might otherwise apply;
- *Tourism*, especially adventure or ecotourism,¹⁹ or educational tourism which might help students from the region access American-quality education either as an end in itself or for transfer credit the US mainland;
- *Alternative Energy*, wind, solar, and especially waste conversion technologies all have the potential to diversify energy sources, reign in energy costs, and reduce pressures associated with waste disposal; and
- *Food and Agriculture*, American Samoa's agricultural production would benefit from the kind of diversification evident in the territory's new hydroponic farms, which are vastly increasing the volume of produce per acre. Moreover, American Samoa offers a small number of very unique products, including noni and breadfruit for which entrepreneurs and others are seeking new markets.²⁰

¹⁹ In December 2012, *Lonely Planet* named American Samoa one of the top 10 US destinations for 2013. As a result, the territory expects an uptick in tourism in the coming years. <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/travel-tips-and-articles/77583>.

²⁰ Noni (*Morinda Citrifolia*) is a small tree native to Southeast Asia, the Pacific islands and parts of South America. It bears a fruit (the noni berry or noni fruit, also called the Indian mulberry) that can be eaten, but is also of

Despite nascent efforts toward diversification, American Samoa remained dependent on the tuna canneries for the vast majority of the island's private sector jobs into 2009. In May of that year, Chicken of the Sea announced the closure of its American Samoa operations scheduled for September 30, 2009 – an event that would result in a direct loss of 2,041 jobs or 12% of total employment.

The 2009 Earthquake, Tsunami & National Emergency Grant Program

In May 2009, when government officials learned the Chicken of the Sea Cannery was scheduled to close permanently, they began exploring ways to help over 2,000 workers transition to new jobs. Options were few. The cannery was the second largest private-sector employer on the island and the third largest employer overall, just behind the American Samoan Government. In short, there was and no industry in American Samoa capable of absorbing the number of job-seekers who needed work, prompting several of our key respondents to note that the NEG program helped the

interest to herbalists, dermatologists, and practitioners of natural medicine for its healing properties: <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/noni>. Breadfruit is highly nutritious fruit that is inexpensive to grow—and plentiful in American Samoa and the other Pacific islands. Although criticized for its “blandness,” chefs and sustainable agriculture and food policy experts, together with gluten-free activists are working together to find new ways of cultivating and preparing it as a response to hunger, famine, poverty, and better-tasting gluten-free products across the globe: <http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=72712>.

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island avoid a second – economic – tsunami.

Nonetheless, the cannery closure provided an opportunity to put all of the work on economic growth and diversification, job creation, and workforce development to the test. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) of the American Samoan government took the lead, seeking the assistance of the US Department of Labor (USDOL) San Francisco regional office and workforce colleagues in Guam who had experience with National Emergency Grants.

DHR staff, under the direction of Director Evelyn Vaitautolu-Langford, assembled a request to the US Department of Labor for a National Emergency Grant to aid cannery workers who would need to transition to new jobs, obtain training, or prepare for alternative careers. The request was approved and the Department was gearing up to provide services.

The day before the plant was due to close – on September 29, 2009 – the tsunami struck.

Panic-stricken Chicken of the Sea employees streamed out of the cannery and ran toward the nearest evacuation route. They never returned. The plant was swamped by the ensuing series of waves. Successive walls of water measuring over 55 feet – approximately five stories – slammed key villages including Amanave, Leone, Pago Pago, and Paloa.

Dozens of coastal homes, sea crafts, businesses, parks, and developments were lost, including much of Pago Plaza, home to

many federal agencies and professional service firms and a favorite concession stand irreverently called *Don't Drink the Water*. The remaining cannery, StarKist, and major coastal landmarks sustained significant damage still visible three years later. The human toll was devastating. Thirty-four deaths, hundreds injured, and hours spent searching for lost loved ones. The tragedy remains close to the surface for many survivors, as our team – story gatherers and researcher alike – found in talking with residents. Many recalled in vivid terms running to the shore to help their neighbors only to realize another wave was coming. Others relayed stories of frantic searches for children and loved ones or calls from the US mainland asking for help checking on parents or grandparents. Many were grateful for having recently “practiced” evacuating for just such an event.²¹ See *Insert 2: Residents of American Samoa Documenting the 2009 Tsunami*.

²¹ By sheer coincidence, the territory had just marked *Emergency Preparedness Month* during which villages, schools, government organizations, and businesses had held disaster simulations that included tsunami evacuations. During a post-tsunami field survey of the destruction across the Pacific Islands, one researcher attributed the low fatality rate in American Samoa to the high levels of public awareness and community education about tsunamis.

Insert 2: Residents of American Samoa Documenting the 2009 Tsunami

In an effort to understand what the experience was like for residents of American Samoa, we searched for videos, photos, and other ways residents documented the 2009 tsunami. Here is a small sample of the materials we found.



- **Sia Figiel's "The Day of the Tsunami", an OP-ED in the *New York Times*, September 30, 2009**
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/01/opinion/01figiel.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- **Gordon Yamasaki's photos of the destruction near Pago Plaza, where he worked for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**<https://picasaweb.google.com/qrkpub/SamoaTsunami>
- **Pacific Tsunami "Galu Afi": The Story of the Greatest Natural Disaster Samoa Has Ever Known, by Lani Wendt Young (2010)**
http://www.amazon.com/The-Pacific-Tsunami-Galu-Afi/dp/0615398405/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1357859393&sr=8-1&keywords=Galu+Afi

The young filmmakers at Intersections Media produced a collection called "American Samoa Tsunami Survivors: Story Telling for Healing" and generously shared it with us.

YouTube Videos:

- **Tsunami Damage in Pago Pago:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fl2q4eOFW7M>
- **Pago Pago Village After Major Tsunami:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KAw0D58Zzyc>
- **Lawrence Wilson's Documentary in Leone Village:** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbMW7hvn62k>
- **American Samoa Tsunami Waves in Amaluia (multiple parts):** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3FyhMuliC-g>

The combination of the global recession in 2008, the closure of the Chicken of the Sea Samoa plant, and the disastrous September 29th earthquake and tsunami resulted in the loss of one of every five jobs in American Samoa in one year.²²

National Emergency Disaster Grant

American Samoa needed help – emergency medical care, shelter, and food, and, crucially, a path to recovery for the thousands left jobless and uncertain about the future. The development of such a path is exactly what the National Emergency Disaster Grant program was designed to support.

The Department of Human Resources (DHR) of the American Samoa government had originally applied for an NEG to help the territory transition workers affected by the planned Chicken of the Sea layoff to new jobs or careers. After the tsunami, the original request was amended.

On October 19, 2009, an NEG disaster grant in the amount of \$24,857,608 was awarded to the territory to support a two-phase recovery process.²³ *See Insert 3: Types of National Emergency Grants Administered by the Department of Labor.*

²² Source: *American Samoa and Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands: Employment, Earnings, and Status of Key Industries Since Minimum Wage Increases Began*. US Government Accountability Office (GAO), June 2011

²³ US Department of Labor provides \$16.6 million to continue tsunami recovery efforts in American Samoa. Retrieved from <http://www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/eta/eta20100536.htm>

Insert 3: Types of National Emergency Grants Administered by the US Department of Labor

The US Department of Labor offers a number of different types of National Emergency Grants (NEG):

- NEGs for communities adjusting to one or more mass layoffs;
- NEGs for communities in which military bases are downsizing, growing, or where military infrastructure is shifting, causing abrupt changes in local labor markets;
- Special NEGs offered through ARRA or to support communities impacted by Trade Adjustment; and
- NEGs for communities recovering from the effects of natural disasters – flooding, fire, hurricanes, tornadoes – or tsunamis.

Initially, USDOL released \$8,285,870 to create temporary jobs for eligible dislocated workers to assist in the territory's cleanup and recovery efforts (Phase I). On April 22, 2010, the Department announced an additional \$16,571,738 for continued support of temporary employment and to enable the development and implementation of a strategy for transitioning workers to new jobs and careers as temporary employment came to an end (Phase II).

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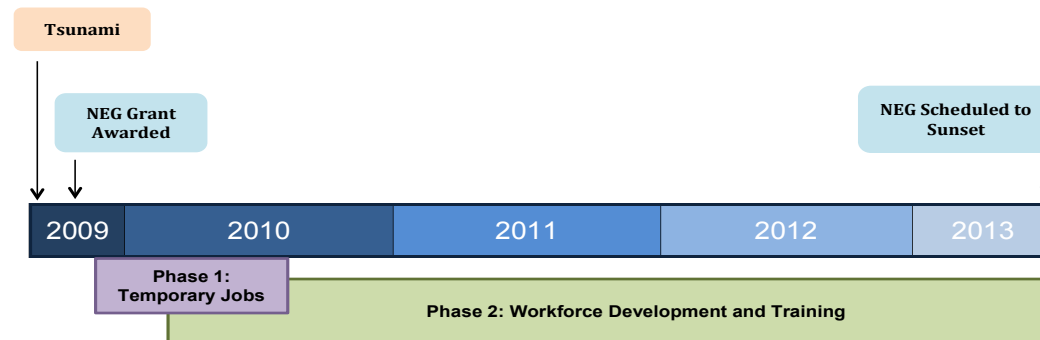
Finally, during the writing of this report, American Samoa was awarded another \$500K and the timeline was extended through June 30, 2013 to support significant economic and workforce opportunities in the territory. *See Insert 4: American Samoa National Emergency Grant Timeline.*

Also on September 29, 2009 – the same day as the earthquake and tsunami – the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) declared all islands in the US territory of American Samoa eligible for FEMA’s Public Assistance Program. As a result, between September 29, 2009 and September 12, 2010, FEMA provided \$125.5 million to support humanitarian assistance, housing assistance and repair, hazard mitigation, and cleanup and recovery. The NEG program worked with FEMA staff to leverage resources where possible.

Though recent droughts and wildfires may make 2012 the exception, NEG disaster grant awards are less common than other types of NEG grants. During 2009, 17 of the 93 NEG awards were disaster grants – and no other NEG disaster grant approached the size of American Samoa’s. This means regional, state, and local workforce agencies at all levels may be less familiar with them than with other DOL programs or even other kinds of NEG grants. In addition, NEG disaster grants are typically awarded and implemented in the midst of extreme economic, social, and environmental crisis. As a result, original cost and participant estimates submitted by grantees can be wildly inaccurate, and the demands for technical assistance by grantees can be significant and complex – ranging from understanding the basic NEG processes to setting priorities in the context of extreme need, to developing a long term strategy under conditions of economic uncertainty.

See Insert 5: The NEG Disaster Grant Process.

Insert 4: American Samoa National Emergency Grant Timeline



Insert 5: *The NEG Disaster Grant Process*

NEG disaster grantees are required to submit series of documents to the US Department of Labor in the course of their implementation efforts:

Phase I:

- Initial Disaster Application, 15 days from date of event
- Full Disaster Application, 30 days from initial NEG award
- Operations Plan for NEG Disaster Recovery Efforts, 90 days from initial award

Phase II:

- Operations Plan for Workforce Development & Reemployment Services, 240 days from initial award

Reporting:

- Bi-weekly progress reports for a specified period of time articulated in the grant award letter
- NEG Quarterly Progress Report, including a report on each project the NEG program supports
- NEG Quarterly Financial Status Report
- WIA Quarterly & Annual Reports and WIASRD Performance Report

The program is governed by rules that differ from traditional Workforce Investment Act programs in a number of ways:

- NEG supports public service employment - this means states and communities must determine “prevailing wage” and monitor participants closely to insure they do not exceed the 6-month time limit or \$12K wage cap. There are also rules governing the kinds of work program participants can do and the organizations for which that work can be performed.
- NEG allows the purchase or leasing of equipment over \$5K with prior justification and approval by the Grant Officer (and only if it is disaster-related).
- NEG and FEMA agencies are encouraged to work together, but also to avoid duplication of effort. As a result, FEMA will reimburse government 75% of the total cost of eligible work, but wages of temporary workers under the NEG program would be deducted from that amount, making it critical that NEG staff be attentive to how joint FEMA-NEG recovery projects are staffed.

NEG Phase I: Temporary Employment

The NEG disaster grant program helps communities respond to a variety of tragedies including flooding, wildfires, drought, hurricanes, tornadoes, and tsunamis. During such disasters, communities typically face a common dilemma: an overwhelming amount of recovery work and large numbers of people made jobless as a result of the disaster's destruction of government, commercial, and agricultural property and infrastructure.

The first phase of the NEG disaster grant program is designed to address these twin goals. It provides support for temporary employment. Jobless individuals – many of whom are also suffering personal loss or property damage – are connected with paid work repairing and rebuilding damaged infrastructure, thereby providing them with structure and their families with income, and accelerating the path to sustained economic recovery for their communities.

When the American Samoa NEG project launched, it targeted members of the following four groups for temporary employment:

- People displaced from their workplace because of the earthquake, tsunami, or the flooding that followed;
- Former employees of the Chicken of the Sea Samoa packing plant;
- The long-term unemployed; and
- Unemployed residents, in general.

During this phase, the NEG program focused primarily on continuing FEMA-sponsored disaster recovery efforts: humanitarian assistance and hazard mitigation intended to restore villages, property, and infrastructure damaged by the tsunami. NEG projects were launched in sixty-five worksites, which included twenty-seven government and non-profit agencies²⁴ and thirty-eight village units throughout the island. Several village projects comprised two or more neighboring villages (e.g., Fagaitua and Pagai). *See: Map of Tutuila Island: NEG Phase I Village Worksites.*



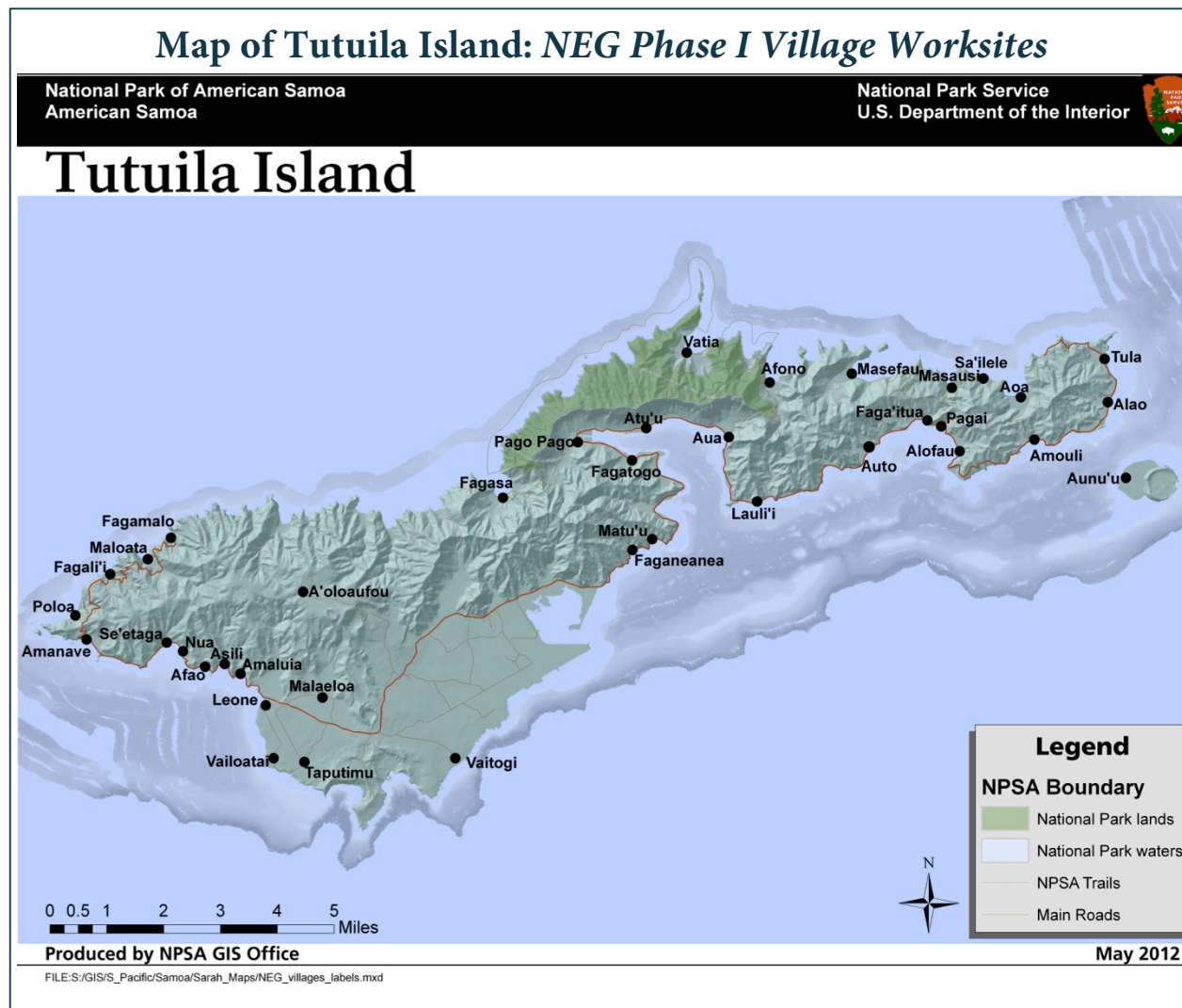
One of the many tsunami warning signs in the territory.

²⁴ The NEG Program requires that Phase I workers be employed by public agencies and/or non-profit organizations.

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These projects employed some 2,361 temporary workers between November 1, 2009 and April 24, 2010. Most of these individuals worked to clear debris from the shorelines, streams, river banks,

beaches, and communal lands and roadsides, help families with cleanup and restoration of their homes, and restore vegetation to abate erosion caused by the tsunami and flooding.



Work in the Villages

Village Councils (fono) comprising the chiefs (matai) of all of the households in the village played a key role during the first phase of the NEG program. They developed workplans for their respective sites, and selected and screened temporary workers (NEG participants) for approval by NEG staff at the Department of Human Resources. They selected worksite supervisors and supervisor backups, and served as “Host Agencies” for village projects. They provided NEG participants with skill development opportunities such as training and certification as EMS First Responders.

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Finally, they worked with the site supervisors to document resources allocated and work completed and to maintain NEG participant files in sufficient detail to demonstrate compliance with the Worksite Placement Agreements they signed with the NEG program.²⁵

Across the Phase I village worksites, men comprised a slight majority²⁶ of participants. Based on closeout and evaluation reports supplied by the compliance teams, women were primarily involved in cleanup activities and men in construction and repair.

Work in Government and Non-Profit Organizations

In addition to working on initial cleanup and infrastructure repair and environmental restoration in the villages, Phase I participants were also employed by 27 government agencies and non-profit organizations in work linked to tsunami recovery. The work performed in the agencies tended to be quite specialized. Agency workplans were more specific and more varied than those submitted by the villages, often describing in great detail the nature of specific jobs and the skills required for each. For example, American Samoa Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA) required

²⁵ These requirements included creating and maintaining daily and weekly work schedules for NEG participants; ensuring appropriate working conditions including adequate supervisions and necessary equipment, materials, and safety precautions. Host agencies were also required to report absenteeism, illness, injuries, or problems that arose involving NEG participants at the worksites.

²⁶ There were 1,365 male participants in Phase I activities and 992 women. In four cases, gender was not specified.

an AS degree in an electrical field, a BS degree in electrical engineering or 6+ years experience as a cable splicer for key positions at the agency; the Department of Public Works (DPW) and the Department of Energy (DOE) required plumbing or carpentry skills for the positions they offered. For a complete list of Phase I government and nonprofit worksites, descriptions of work performed and number of NEG participants employed at each worksite, see Appendix A.

A variety of reporting, compliance, and verification procedures were put into place to insure program quality and performance. [See Insert 6: NEG Phase I Program Compliance and Verification.](#)



Post-tsunami cleanup and reconstruction

Insert 6: NEG Phase I Program Compliance and Verification

All worksites were required to submit:

- Worksite proposals
- Worksite agreements
- Monthly work plans and weekly work schedules
- Inspection/verification reports, and
- Closeout reports.

Overall evaluation reports were completed by NEG-DHR compliance officers who inspected the majority of Phase I projects at least three times, recording the number of NEG participants at each site (and documenting any absent workers), any training they had received, and noting any compliance issues reported by workers or observed at the worksite.

Our team reviewed 52 complete files documenting worksite activity and found compliance challenges in 40 of them. The most common issues cited fell into one of three categories:

- **Worksite health and safety.** Only three injuries were documented, two of them serious and treated immediately and appropriately. There were also four reports of safety equipment needed at the worksite missing or delayed, and one report of the need for additional restroom facilities.
- **Personnel and payment processing issues.** Ten sites indicated late payment for some or all employees. Delays were largely attributable to clerical errors – incorrect social security numbers, incorrect spellings of participant names, or errors in the NEG registration process, such as incomplete applications. There were more serious issues relating to the changing of information on employees timecards, third-parties punching participants' timecards, and calculations relating to the number of hours participants worked, but these were less frequent.
- **NEG Rules and Regulations.** Nine sites struggled with NEG rules and regulations – either understanding them or communicating them to participants. Specific challenges included: maintaining accurate workplans, repairing homes located in villages that were not targeted by the program, and understanding NEG policies regarding holiday pay, sick days, termination, and the 1,040 hour maximum for enrolled participants.

Program Results

The most visible accomplishments of Phase I of the NEG program were clean up and debris removal and restoration of damaged property and infrastructure throughout the island. A less visible, but tremendously important outcome of Phase I was the exposure of 2,361 people to a variety of jobs, training, and physical environments in which work was viewed as an intensely positive contribution to the well being of the territory.

Although the village worksites focused primarily on cleanup and debris removal, which required minimal training or skills, participants expressed gratitude at being able to provide for their families while playing an active role in the restoration of the territory. After this initial cleanup phase, many NEG participants employed in government, quasi-government and non-profit agencies received specialized training applicable to a variety of industries.

As one example, NEG participants working in villages were offered WorkKeys skills assessments and training²⁷ to not only familiarize participants with basic computer skills but also assess their math, reading and information location skills, allowing placement of participants in skill-appropriate jobs or training, such as the construction training program in Guam.

²⁷ An estimated 1,800 NEG participants were encouraged to participate in WorkKeys, which was ongoing at the time of our August 2012 visit. Not all of these participants were enrolled in Phase I of the NEG program, but all Phase I participants were offered the opportunity.

In addition, many participants working in more specialized environments developed skills in carpentry, welding, drafting and design, electrical work, plumbing, and gained laboratory or surveyor experience. Others learned communication and management skills through teaching and working with students in public schools, others acquired trauma care skills while training as Emergency Medical Technicians – an entry point for a career in healthcare or emergency response. Still others were supported in combining their cultural knowledge with entrepreneurship through the creation, display and sale of locally produced crafts.

Phase I employers reported that most of the participants lacked specialized knowledge at the time of placement but exhibited keen interest and willingness to learn, and were quick to take on new responsibilities. Although most of the non-village project employers were able to hire permanently only a few of the most highly skilled participants or participants with the most needed skills, a number of employers expressed regret at not being able to take on more participants at the end of the NEG program. At least two employers spoke of NEG participants who were “high school students with zero experience” but were eager to learn a trade. One employer described Phase I participants as “tremendous assets to our [workplace] and community.” Another wished that the government could release funds to allow these young people to be hired without having to wait for current staff to retire – “It’s a good program because finally they have a chance to work and learn something for the future.”

Lessons from Phase I

Implementing a new program is a challenge under any circumstances. Implementing a program like NEG in the aftermath of island-wide devastation requires uncommon courage and commitment – the kind found among American Samoa’s workforce leaders, their colleagues, and everyone who helped along the way. They launched Phase I while their own families were still at risk. They were largely successful. But there are always lessons to be learned from such experiences with a view toward improving the NEG program as a whole and its implementation in other communities.

We identified the following lessons from the first phase of American Samoa’s NEG experiences:

1. *Early project implementation revealed a need for specific support that extended beyond adhering to Department of Labor grant requirements.*

In many disaster scenarios – and this was true in American Samoa – emergency response occurs in the absence of basic services, including electric power. This means program managers process information with little more than paper, pen, and battery-powered calculators. Access to operations and process expertise at this time is essential. American Samoa had skilled military personnel who quickly established a chain of command and set up mission-critical processes, nonetheless

they lacked basic templates for job applications, participant tracking, worksite agreements, and so on. They crafted a bevy of checklists and spreadsheets, but a simple “how-to” guide would likely have accelerated their progress and increased their confidence at a crucial time. As the NEG program gained a foothold, new staff came aboard, most with limited knowledge of workforce programs. And since American Samoa had not managed an NEG before, nor does it administer a standard suite of Department of Labor programs, NEG staff had far less existing infrastructure to draw from than would a typical NEG grantee on the US mainland. Assistance in setting up processes to facilitate reporting and enable efficient monitoring would have improved the quality of program data – eliminating errors such as missing data fields, or errant names and social security numbers. In addition, it would have almost certainly shortened delays in program implementation and reduced frustration among overworked staff – and eased the glitches experienced by NEG participants.

2. *There was a demand for training in practical skills among NEG participants.*

Many participants enrolled in Phase I of the NEG program had little work experience and few formal qualifications, yet they proved eager to learn and their employers responded positively to their attitudes and aptitudes – they learned quickly on the job. This observation (confirmed by survey data) informed the evolution of the workforce development strategy in Phase II of

the program and suggests the potential for broader engagement of workers and employers in development opportunities intended to raise skill levels, enable new business opportunities, and increase the territory's economic competitiveness.

3. *Public sector and non-profit employers recognized the lack of good jobs and career prospects for young people as an important community issue.*

Because these employers witnessed firsthand the eagerness of younger participants to work and learn, many realized that unemployment was not just an economic problem for individuals and their families. High unemployment also leaves the territory unable to fully benefit from the talents and gifts of its people. This is an issue for the broader workforce agenda discussed in section four of this report, *Overall Program Summary and Recommendations*.

4. *There is a need for enhanced technology skills in the workplace, and a mix of enthusiasm and trepidation about its implications.*

Simple, reliable Internet access – Wi-Fi access in particular – remains a challenge in American Samoa, but it is improving. In the workplace, technology-related skill requirements differ vastly from one firm, agency, or organization to another –

within and across industries. As a result, the demand for computer-related skills – from basic office applications to programming to social media – is uneven and fast changing. When Phase I NEG participants went to work in government agencies and non-profit organizations, their experiences varied. In some workplaces, participants who had never worked with computers learned basic applications. In others, tech-savvy workers helped their workplaces function more efficiently. Nearly universally, when workers had access to the internet, they experimented with social media and reached out to on- and off-island friends, family, colleagues, and finding resources to bring to their work. Participants – especially younger participants – were generally enthusiastic about new technologies and opportunities to learn how to use them. But as in many communities on the US mainland and elsewhere, organizations are uncertain about rules and boundaries. The subject of using new technologies, especially social technologies, effectively and appropriately, may also offer workforce and economic development professionals – as well as educators, non-profit organizations, and village or religious leaders – an opportunity for the kind of community engagement suggested in section four of this report, *Overall Program Summary and Recommendations*.

NEG Phase II: Workforce Development Strategy

After any community crisis, there is a point at which community members begin to shift their attention from responding to immediate needs to working toward a new normal. For this reason NEG disaster grants are structured around two phases: 1) Disaster Recovery and 2) Workforce Development and Reemployment. Grantees must submit their Workforce Development and Reemployment strategy 240 days after the initial grant award. The implementation of the strategy is typically staggered over the life of the grant. The strategy can change many times over – as a result of new opportunities generated by continuing recovery or through simple trial and error.

Transitioning from Phase I to Phase II

This shift from crisis response to strategy is not easy for many NEG disaster grant recipients.²⁸ The infrastructure required to put many

²⁸ After learning about American Samoa's challenges during the transition period between phases, we contacted representatives from Texas (Hurricane

people to work quickly in subsidized jobs is not the same as that required to link them to training and jobs leading to careers.

American Samoa's unique context posed additional challenges for NEG program staff. First, unlike most states, American Samoa does not have a Department of Labor. Prior to the NEG, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) of the American Samoa Government managed a small Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program that served about 200 people each year with a budget of \$400K. The program employed four case managers who offered limited adult, dislocated worker and youth employment and training support, and some rapid response services.²⁹ These services were not offered

Ike) and Iowa (severe tornados, storms and flooding) – states that had received sizeable NEG disaster grants around the same time as American Samoa. In both cases, respondents noted that their experience with previous disaster grants had helped them know what to expect in 2009-10. They graciously shared the challenges they faced and the lessons they learned from those experiences, which are strikingly similar to those described by NEG staff in American Samoa. Iowa and Texas respondents noted that although all disaster contexts are unique, their experiences “the first time around” strongly influenced the way they managed in 2009-10. In Iowa, staff even produced (and shared) a guide derived from 2008 lessons that accelerated implementation in 2009-10 (*Emergency Public Jobs Guidelines for Severe Storms and Flooding Grant 2010*). More recently, Kentucky produced a similar monitoring-focused document last year (*National Emergency Grant (NEG) Disaster Grants Monitoring Guide: Division of Workforce and Employment Services 2012-13*).

²⁹ Rapid Response services are typically offered through a WIA-funded dislocated worker program. They are designed to respond to fast emerging labor market changes, such as the growth of a new company or the downsizing or closure of a firm. See the US Department of Labor's Rapid Response information page: <http://www.doleta.gov/layoff/employers.cfm>.

through a one-stop center (or America's Jobs Center)³⁰, but through the DHR office itself, the same office charged with managing human resources for the government of American Samoa.

In addition, key partners typically associated with workforce development in states on the US mainland, such as the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service, Unemployment Insurance, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, are not present in American Samoa, making it more difficult to leverage resources and infrastructure across public programs. For American Samoa, implementing Phase I of the NEG program meant launching an initiative of *more than ten times the size of its existing Workforce Investment programs* (by enrollment) which – at the time – lacked basic infrastructure – from office space to computers and even electric power.

Second, because of its size, the NEG program touched the lives of many people. “NEG,” as the program is called in American Samoa, became well known, very quickly. It overshadowed the annually funded Workforce Investment Act program became a stakeholder in education and economic development policies, raising questions about the proper role of the Department of Human Resources and its programs.

In 2010, in accordance with the required two-phase design, the NEG program shifted away from temporary jobs (Phase I) and began

to craft a workforce development strategy (Phase II). However, participants, employers, and other government agency staff had begun to associate NEG with “jobs,” rather than broader human capital and economic development initiatives. They became confused about the nature of the NEG program itself. Several respondents expressed frustration that individuals they referred for temporary work in 2010 – as the temporary jobs phase was coming to an end – were not able to find jobs. Others lamented not knowing about NEG in 2009 because they could have employed more people through on-the-job training (OJT) or work experience internships, even though these program components – by design – were not in place until 2010.

In many stateside communities, a cross-sector advisory board – such as a Workforce Investment Board or similar public-private partnership – plays an important role in shaping a broader workforce agenda that is operationalized through workforce development programs and related initiatives. American Samoa has a Workforce Development Commission, but it did not appear to play a substantive role in shaping or implementing the NEG Program,³¹ and therefore was not able to help the department communicate its role or those of its programs to partner agencies, employers, or the public.

³⁰ Subsequent to our April 2012 visit, DHR did launch a long-planned One-Stop Center, funded in part with NEG grant resources. See <http://asjobs.org>.

³¹ Our program review occurred in 2012, in the throes of the gubernatorial campaign, also a common time for the terms of appointed advisors and board members to sunset. We learned that the Workforce Commission had not met in some time and would likely be reconstituted in the post-election period. As a result, we did not speak with officials who formally represented the Workforce Development Commission during our review.

High unemployment posed a third challenge. There are far fewer jobs available in the territory than people who want to work, raising questions about what the NEG workforce strategy would train people for. Although economic and labor market data about American Samoa is difficult to ascertain³² and often inconsistent, clearly unemployment, underemployment, and poverty are critical challenges on the island:

- Using 2006 data, a US Department of Labor report found that 16,718 of 17,627 people in the labor force were employed, implying an unemployment rate of 5.2%.³³
- A study commissioned by the American Samoan Government and published in 2008 found that 33% of those

³² American Samoa is not included in the American Community Survey or the Current Population Survey – both conducted by the US Census – nor is it included in the Current Employment Statistics surveys or the Local Area Unemployment Statistics program managed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. As a result, ascertaining comparable monthly and annual “unemployment rates” as on the mainland is not possible in American Samoa. Moreover, only in 2010, for the first time, did American Samoa report a Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a project the Bureau of Economic Analysis had been working on since 2009. Finally, a number of American Samoa government agencies have had difficulty managing and tracking data accurately and consistently, a problem the US Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs has been working to address through capacity building grants and convening activities.

³³ *Impact of Increased Minimum Wage on the Economies of American Samoa and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands*, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, US Department of Labor (January, 2008). Of all of the unemployment data we reviewed, this figure was by far the lowest estimate we encountered.

surveyed (members of the available labor pool) were unemployed.³⁴

- The NEG Workforce Development Strategy takes a cumulative approach that includes translating mandatory reductions in government work hours into job losses and finds an unemployment rate of 46.9% (March 2011).
- The *2010 American Samoa Statistical Yearbook* (using 2005 data) finds 10% unemployment among the civilian labor force.
- The CIA World Factbook cites a 2005 unemployment rate of 29.8%.

While reliable under-employment figures for American Samoa do not exist, we heard many anecdotes from participants who were attracted to the NEG program because it offered the prospect of “real jobs” with “real paychecks,” rather than sporadic income generated in the informal economy. The official poverty rate in American Samoa, based on the 2000 census, was 61%. Although the figure remains a source of controversy,³⁵ it does suggest that underemployment is a significant problem in the territory.

Whatever the unemployment rate prior to the tsunami, 2,200 more people were without work immediately afterward, with indirect losses of hundreds more accumulating for some time during the

³⁴ *American Samoa Government Labor Pool Study*, Pacific Business Center Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa (2008).

³⁵ There is no separate measure of poverty for the islands or territories as there are for Alaska and Hawaii. As a result, there is some concern that the poverty rates in the islands and US territories are inflated. See *Poverty Determinations in US Insular Areas: Briefing to Congressional Staff*, May 28, 2009.

aftermath. There was and remains no industry in American Samoa capable of absorbing that number of job seekers.

Moreover, even if there had been jobs, a skill-alignment challenge would likely have remained. The number of providers of training/workforce development services in American Samoa is very limited. American Samoa Community College is the only accredited post-secondary institution in the territory. It is under pressure to both evolve into a four-year institution and enhance its vocational offerings. Few other professional development, vocational training, or credential-based education programs exist.³⁶

A fourth challenge was uncertainty about the proper scope and scale of the workforce development plan and its “fit” with broader economic and workforce development strategies – as well as with the strategy developed for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act earlier that year. Alignment posed a challenge for the NEG program.

The tsunami struck in late 2009, just as the Workforce Investment Act program was preparing to craft its next five-year plan.³⁷ The closure of the cannery together with the disaster and recession profoundly changed the context for necessary economic and

workforce development planning.³⁸ There were few anchor strategies or plans for the NEG program to complement or leverage. Crafting a workforce development strategy to overcome such extraordinary job-losses in an island territory with limited training, professional development, and business support opportunities was no small challenge.

NEG program staff turned to the Pacific Business Center Program at the University of Hawaii (Manoa) to help craft the strategy and implement Phase II of the NEG program. The program procured the assistance of longtime experts in the Pacific island economies and culture – Papali’i Dr. Failautusi Aveglio (Samoaan, and from the territory) and Dr. C.L. Cheshire (an researcher and student of island economies for many years). Even with this expertise, NEG program staff realized they had no blueprint and would have to forge a new path. Staff described the strategy development process and launch of NEG Phase II as “building the plane while flying it.”

³⁶ Moreover, online educational options are not yet well known, a challenge we address at the conclusion of this report.

³⁷ The *Workforce Investment Act Plan* guiding investments and activities in American Samoa today was developed in 2005. Although the tsunami interrupted the process, a new draft is currently under development.

³⁸ Much of the economic development planning for the years prior to 2009 had been focused on a version of the question “How do we manage in the absence of the canneries?” The tsunami prompted interest in longer-term more fundamental questions about cultivating economic assets at all levels. A new economic development planning effort was launched and is currently underway. Our team has been in contact with researchers Malcolm McPhee & Associates and Lewis Wolman, who have graciously shared their initial ideas, approaches, and outlines.

Lessons from the Transition from Phase I to Phase II:

1. Shifting from emergency response to long-term strategy proved challenging. American Samoa would have benefitted from templates, examples of workforce development plans from other NEG projects, models for linking NEG and annually funded program strategies, and regular technical assistance leading up to and through the transition, especially given the island's unique economic and data challenges. NEG staff did reach out to Guam and to DOL for support and received it gratefully, but as Dr. Cheshire observed, "We did not know what we did not know." More regular and structured communication between USDOL and NEG program staff and more frequent peer-to-peer and technical assistance contacts with other NEG grantees and DOL would likely have helped staff accelerate the transition between Phases I and II.

2. Developing a long-term strategy required flexibility and the ability to experiment. American Samoa's isolation and lack of reliable economic and workforce data made program planning particularly challenging. The standard labor market information compiled for states on the US mainland was unavailable. The numerous economic development studies completed prior to the tsunami provided little specific direction. In the NEG program's own research, no single strategy emerged as most promising. American Samoa's context called for a mixed

approach – a situation increasingly familiar to (especially rural) communities on the US mainland. Therefore, NEG staff structured programs and interventions that were effectively experiments (or pilots) – with all the operational and political challenges and expense this entails. Assistance in managing such a strategy – helping to identify and mitigate risk, for example – would likely have helped staff move forward more quickly and with greater confidence.

3. The NEG program helped raise the profile of workforce development in American Samoa. Lingering stakeholder questions remained about DHR's role in the workforce and economic development arena. Nevertheless, the grassroots engagement with village leaders, public agencies, and non-profit organizations during Phase I – complemented by similar engagement efforts during the development of the strategy that guided Phase II – helped stakeholders from across sectors better understand workforce development issues in the territory. Stakeholders also began to understand the relationship of workforce development to broader educational, economic, social, health, and other policy issues managed by other agencies and departments. Since the NEG program launched, key DHR leaders have participated in broader community well-being initiatives, including the Tsunami Study project and the Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS) initially led by the Tsunami Advisory Committee and the Commerce Department and Territorial Planning Commission. NEG and DHR staff reported looking to deepen and broaden these relationships, and contribute more

substantively to the island's comprehensive economic development strategies in the future.³⁹

³⁹ For example, American Samoa's *Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS)* will likely be published in final form early in 2013, and taken forward by incoming Governor Lolo Moliga and Lt. Governor Lemanu Mauga in collaboration with the Territorial Planning Commission and key government agencies. This represents an ideal opportunity for cross-agency collaboration in planning a major development effort.

Workforce Development & Reemployment

The stated goal of the Phase II Workforce Development Plan was to:

“Provide employment opportunities or training for employment or employment certification for all of the American Samoa National Emergency Grant participants.”

Approved Workforce Development Plan 3/8/11

The approved plan was informed by a process that included:

- Reviewing dozens of economic studies and plans relating to the development and diversification of island economies generally, and to American Samoa’s economy in particular;⁴⁰
- Collecting and analyzing data (including survey data) about participants’ experiences, interests, and needs. *See Insert 8: Key Findings from Workforce Development Planning Process.*
- Engaging key stakeholders, including providers, agencies, businesses, and community leaders, around workforce assets and needs; and
- Drawing on the expertise and experiences of community leaders and entrepreneurs with new ideas for revitalizing American Samoa’s economy and cultivating its next generation of talent.

⁴⁰ The SPR team aggregated these studies and plans in a searchable database accessible through the project website:

AmericanSamoaRenewal.org/resource-library

This plan, closely following NEG guidelines, emphasized the following four strategies:

1. Identifying and quantifying the eligible population;
2. Identifying and focusing on key industries that offer long-term employment opportunities;
3. Developing clear career paths that offer participants opportunities to advance in a profession, field, industry, or discipline; and
4. Connecting NEG participants with job and career opportunities in key industries consistent with their individual interests.

Regionalism: An Evolving Strategy

Over time, a key strategy not articulated in the original plan but central to understanding the NEG program evolved: *adopting a regional approach to workforce development*. To some extent, DHR, following the American Samoa Government’s long standing commitment to regionalism, had been coordinating and collaborating with off-island partners for some time. *See Insert 7: Creating New Opportunities Through Collaboration with Pacific Region Neighbors.*

Two factors made a regional workforce strategy attractive to the NEG program:

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

1. The invaluable assistance of Guam Department of Labor staff, who only coincidentally were in American Samoa when the tsunami struck, and helped assemble the NEG request and provide ongoing technical support; and
2. The industry analysis undertaken to inform the workforce development plan which identified Guam as the only significant Pacific island “neighbor⁴¹” experiencing economic growth and offering a range of development opportunities.

As a result of this strategy, in mid 2011, the American Samoa NEG team developed a training program in Guam for islanders who were interested in construction careers.



“There aren’t other opportunities here. It’s not like we can go to the next state or next island over. We have to come up with our own ways.”

Evelyn Vaitautolu-Langford, Director, Department of Human Resources and NEG Governor’s Authorized Representative

⁴¹ Guam is actually 3,600 miles from American Samoa – about 200 miles more than the distance between Miami, FL and Seattle, WA – and requires a stop in Honolulu in both directions. The two islands are also 27 hours apart, as they are on opposite sides of the international dateline.

Insert 7: Creating New Opportunities Through Collaboration with Pacific Region Neighbors

Like people in neighboring island communities, residents and businesses in American Samoa pay higher prices for imported goods and services because of the distances between suppliers and markets, but the small size of Pacific Island markets makes it difficult to recruit firms who could produce needed goods locally. In recent years, regional approaches to economic development⁴² have gained currency in the South Pacific, just as they have on the US mainland. However, in the South Pacific, collaborating involves navigating a very complex mix of jurisdictions, languages, cultures, and labor migration patterns and protocols.

American Samoa has embraced the idea that the small island nations of the South Pacific are stronger when they act collaboratively. By sharing resources, expertise, information, talent, and even sample legislative proposals or plans, each jurisdiction seeks to advance key goals more efficiently than it can by acting alone.

American Samoa is a member of:

- Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Comprising 26 member states and territories, the organization works regionally in the areas of geoscience, economic development, education and human development, fisheries, land resources, public health, statistics and regional policy and planning.
- Pacific Island Conference of Leaders - An initiative of the Pacific Island Development Program of the East West Center (Honolulu, HI), the Conference of Leaders (20 heads of government, including the Governor of American Samoa) meets every three years to advance shared development goals.
- Pacific Island Forum. In 2011, with the help of the US State Department, American Samoa secured observer status within the Pacific Island Forum, a 16-member organization working to advance economic growth, improved security and governance, and strategic partnerships and collaboration, guided by “The Pacific Plan.”

Increasingly, American Samoa has also reached out bilaterally to partners like Guam:

- Guam has a recently established Department of Labor and considerable experience applying for and managing large grants.
- Guam’s economy is growing, owing largely to expansion of the US military base and naval hospital, and offers training and job opportunities for American Samoans who are interested in living and working there.

⁴² There are many different approaches to regionalism, but at its heart is the idea that jurisdictions and communities can act collaboratively – linking and promoting each other’s natural, commercial, human and environmental assets in strategic ways – enabling larger more competitive markets and supply chains and healthier economies. The OECD provides a gateway to regional development resources: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regional-policy/regionaldevelopment.htm>; and StatsAmerica offers a collection of reports, resources, and toolkits: <http://www.statsamerica.org/innovation/reports.html>

Entrepreneurial Approach

A unique aspect of the second phase of program was the entrepreneurial approach NEG staff adopted to implement its key strategies. They treated each major initiative as a pilot with a view toward scaling, replicating or growing it, but moved on quickly when results were not forthcoming. This procedure resulted in many program “firsts,” and facilitated recalibration when initiatives did not work as planned or were delayed for reasons outside of the program’s control.

First, even before the tsunami, NEG staff were working with their economic development colleagues on a plan for repurposing the former Chicken of the Sea fish processing plant. The tsunami significantly delayed the transition, but in October 2010, the plant was purchased by Tri-Marine, a group of seafood and fish processing companies headquartered in Bellevue, Washington. NEG program staff were prepared to assist Tri-Marine in training and placing workers immediately. But in the midst of a global recession, Tri-Marine ramped up slowly. The company is planning to increase the pace of hiring in 2013, but likely after the NEG grant period is complete.⁴³

This scenario is common when workforce development programs collaborate with economic development partners in recruiting new businesses. As a result, while NEG staff were engaged in the

development of long-term industry strategies in accordance with their approved plan, they were also crafting backup plans in case timelines that were out of their control extended beyond the grant period.

Second, as noted, one strategy NEG staff pursued was developing training and employment opportunities consistent with participants’ interests. One area of interest among participants that also represented a potentially sustainable career path was the food service industry. Economic development studies over the years had concluded that American Samoa’s food service establishments lacked diversity and that the quality was inconsistent. Moreover, many workers in the industry were not Samoan – restaurants and cafes reported that they could not find qualified staff. The NEG program set out to develop a response to this set of needs. They hoped a new culinary program would attract participants who could earn credentials, secure available jobs, and eventually raise skill levels and improve offerings within the territory, increasing the economic impact of the sector, and growing new jobs.

The NEG program engaged Chef Sualua Tupolo and together, they built the first culinary training program in American Samoa. The American Samoa Culinary Academy is a social enterprise – a business established to achieve a social mission. Though not without risk, it is one of the most creative ventures the NEG program supported. The Culinary Academy is at once a clear response to an unmet need and an anchor for what is an evolving “food systems approach.” The academy curriculum integrates agriculture, food preparation and safety, and health and wellness

⁴³ For this reason, NEG staff requested and received an extension for the NEG Program from the US Department of Labor through June 2013.

education for cooks, including mothers enrolled in the Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program and employees of the school lunch program. It aims to link successful Academy trainees with jobs or with small business support for those seeking to start their own ventures. It runs a catering business, a student bistro, and – through an evolving partnership with Native Hawaiian Holding Company – is launching two additional restaurants. It promotes the use of fresh local produce in an effort to grow the market for sustainable produce in the territory. Ultimately, NEG staff would like to see this program attract aspiring food service workers from the region in the same way Guam attracts aspiring construction workers. The Academy is the subject of one of three profiles featured in this report (see *Profile: The American Samoan Culinary Academy*) on the project website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org, and in the 35-minute documentary about the NEG Program.

Finally, because there was no single industry capable of absorbing the large number of NEG participants who needed work once the recovery phase concluded, NEG staff had to cultivate many opportunities with many different employers. They developed On-the-Job Training programs (OJTs), work experience internships, piloted training programs in fields as diverse as Hawaiian dance and community health care. Some efforts were successful and some were not. But staff grew their personal and professional networks, and increased the visibility of DHR and the NEG program simply by pursuing such a diverse array of opportunities. Moreover, they modeled the kind of entrepreneurial behavior that had been noted as lacking in so many economic development reports about the territory's economy during the previous decade.

This focus of this section is Phase II program activities, comprised primarily of training and work experience.

Insert 8: *Key Findings from Workforce Development Planning Process*

The NEG Team collected demographic data and conducted a survey of 1,771 NEG participants to inform the Workforce Development Plan.

Key Facts About Target Population

- 1 in 4 ages 20-24
- 34% did not graduate from high school (among cannery workers this figure was 40%)
- Median earnings: \$8,626 (women), \$9,332 (men)
- Limited career-related education or direction – few people had given serious thought to jobs or careers

Survey revealed five distinct participant profiles:

- People who had successful employment track records and wanted to return to work or advance in similar jobs or careers
- People who needed a degree to pursue their career goals (some had college credit, others did not)
- People who were engaged in technical work in a previous job but lacked the technical qualifications to advance (e.g. people who had experience welding but cannot be hired as welders because they lacked certificates or credentials)
- People who had a high school diploma but no work experience – young and lacking in career direction
- People who lacked a high school diploma and had little work experience.

The survey also included questions about potential sectors in which participants might enroll in training or prepare for jobs. The following areas generated significant interest:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ▪ Call centers | ▪ Culinary |
| ▪ Seasonal labor (off-island) | ▪ Small-scale farming |
| ▪ Hospitality | ▪ Small-scale commercial fishing |
| ▪ Construction (off-island) | ▪ Community healthcare |
| ▪ Entertainment | |

Economic Anchors

The NEG program staff, with the help of Pacific Business Center Program experts, also reviewed economic analyses and conducted a decade worth of reports, focusing on the following: canneries, local fishing, agriculture, tourism, construction, and potential emerging opportunities in healthcare, telecommunications, disaster response, education, call-centers, and entrepreneurship.

They concluded, as previous studies had, that there was no magic bullet destined to create jobs on the island. Rather, they would have to pursue a variety of strategies including:

- Adopting a broader regional approach to cultivating economic opportunity, even if it was not in American Samoa.
- Raising skill level of low-skilled workers so they would have access to better employment opportunities on- or off-island, regardless of their chosen career paths.
- Investing in specific vocational and technical training programs intended to prepare workers for existing opportunities in which they had interest or experience.
- Helping workers advance who had already demonstrated interest or commitment to higher education.

Program Activities

The NEG Workforce Development Plan emphasized four different activities: on-the-job training (OJT), work experience, training, and education.

On-the-Job-Training

As noted in the NEG Workforce Development Plan, participant assessments conducted by DHR during the transition from Phase I to Phase II revealed that many NEG participants were “primarily interested in getting a job, and with it, a regular paycheck,” as much as they valued training. This focus on employment is evident in the early Phase II emphasis on on-the-job training (OJT) and work experience.

The OJT program offered NEG staff their first opportunity for large-scale engagement with employers. Staff reported going door-to-door to meet with private-sector companies, public agencies and non-profit organizations about participation in the OJT program. Typically, OJT programs offer employers an opportunity to hire a candidate for up to six months while receiving a partial wage reimbursement to subsidize training costs. Training is expected to be relevant and meaningful.

During the program, candidates with limited work experience learn specific skills they will need for the job in the context of the workplace. After six months, there is an expectation that individuals who perform well will be hired as regular employees.

NEG OJT Program Incentives

The NEG OJT program offered different levels of reimbursement incentives to different kinds of employers, with larger employers paying a greater share of participant wages than smaller ones.

- Employers with more than 250 employees shared the cost of wages for NEG OJT participants equally. Nineteen public and private sector employers⁴⁴ participated in this category providing 330 OJT experiences.
- Employers with 51-250 employees paid 25% of participant wages while the NEG program covered the remaining 75%. Only one employer in this category participated, providing OJT opportunities for seven NEG participants.
- Employers with 50 or fewer employees paid 10% of participant wages while the program covered 90%. Twenty-five small employers – all private-sector firms – provided OJT opportunities for 164 NEG participants.

Although smaller employers outnumbered larger ones, it is the larger employers who offered the majority of the OJT opportunities (over 70%).

⁴⁴ Most USDOL programs recruit only private sector employers to participate in the OJT program. American Samoa was able to engage public sector agencies because of the limited number of private sector firms in the territory – there are just 466 registered private-sector businesses establishments in the territory and 254 of them employ between 1 and 4 people.

Additional program details and OJT program results are summarized in *Insert 9: Key Facts About the NEG On-the-Job Training Component*. OJT host employers are listed in *Insert 10: OJT Employers*.

OJT Completion and Hiring

At the time of our analysis, over 90% of OJT participants had successfully complete their programs, and over half of them had been hired permanently.

Insert 9: Key Facts About the NEG On-the-Job (OJT) Program Component

The OJT program began on June 21, 2010, and ended almost two years later on June 12, 2012.

- DHR contracted with 45 employers to provide 580 OJT slots for 501 participants (79 participants received a six-month extension of their OJT slots). Employers were expected to hire participants who successfully completed the program.⁴⁵
- Most OJT contracts gave participants up to 1,040 hours of OJT over a six-month timeframe.⁴⁶
- Almost all OJT participants were paid \$4.41/hr. A few agencies offered slightly higher wages for positions that required more expertise.⁴⁷
- About 60% of the employers that offered OJT were private-sector businesses. These employers provided almost two-thirds of the total OJT opportunities.⁴⁸

Through August 2012, the combined cost of the OJT program to employers and the NEG was \$2,135,920. Employers paid \$781,061 or 37% of participant wages. The NEG program paid \$1,354,859 or 63% of participant wages. Approximately two-thirds of this total (\$886,596) supported OJT slots with private-sector firms, and the remainder (\$468,263) supported OJT slots with public and semi-autonomous agencies.

Outcomes by the end of August 2012:

- Ninety-one percent (455 of 501) of OJT participants successfully completed all of their OJT hours, with roughly equal completion rates among public and private-sector employers (92% vs. 90%).
- Fifty-four percent of OJT participants who successfully completed programs were hired by their employers (247 of 455). Public and semi-autonomous agencies hired OJT completers with greater frequency than private-sector employers (78% vs. 46% respectively).
- Small private employers with 50 or fewer employees hired completers less often than their larger counterparts with over 250 employees (10% vs. 66%).⁴⁹

⁴⁵ There were originally 46 employers, but the Department of Agriculture dropped out of the program when its officials realized that they were responsible for hiring OJT participants.

⁴⁶ Contracts with the StarKist tuna cannery allow only 520 hours because the work required little training. Also, the two OJT experiences that began in 2012 were shorter in duration because DHR anticipated the end of the grant would be June 30, 2012.

⁴⁷ For example, the Department of Commerce offered \$7.20/hr for a GIS data specialist, and the American Samoa Development Bank offered \$5.99/hr for a grant assistant.

⁴⁸ Twenty-eight OJT employers are private-sector businesses such as construction companies, grocery/retail stores, and private schools. Seventeen were public or semi-autonomous American Samoa government agencies such as the Department of Public Works, Department of Port Administration, and American Samoa Power Authority. Of the 501 total OJT slots, privately owned businesses provided 368 slots (73 percent). Public and semi-autonomous agencies provided 133 OJT slots (27 percent).

⁴⁹ All public and semi-autonomous agencies were considered large employers, so further analysis of those agencies' hiring practices is not possible.

Insert 10: OJT Employers

Public Agencies:

Office of Attorney General/Immigration, Emergency Medical Services, Office of Public Information, American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture and Humanities, Office of Property Management, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Treasury, Department of Public Safety, Department of Public Works, Department of Health, Department of Youth and Women's Affairs, Port Administration, Department of Commerce, Office of the Governor

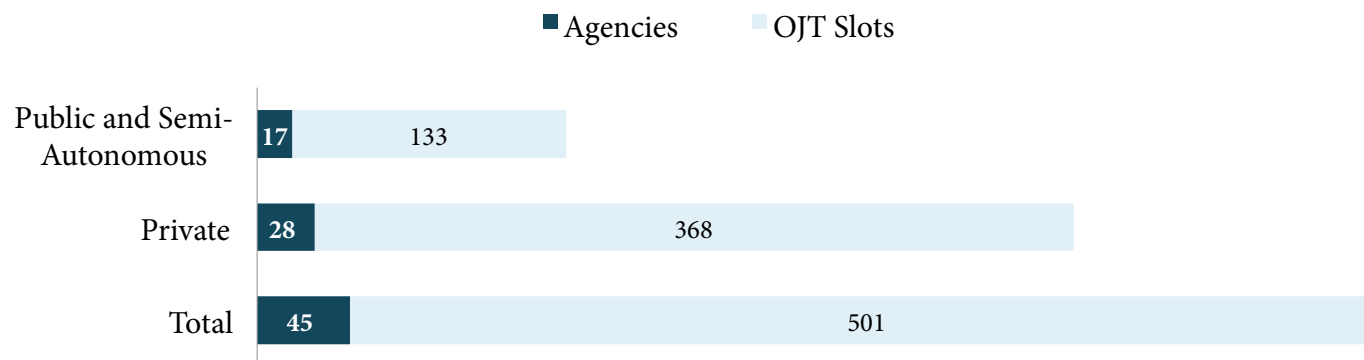
Semi-Autonomous Agencies:

Development Bank of American Samoa, American Samoa Power Authority

Private Employers:

Betham Technologies Inc., CBT Nuuuli, CBT Tafuna, Niu School of Culinary Arts, FRAILER Incorporated, H&H Incorporated dba Dae Young, International Builders, J&J Pacific Construction, Jacey's Day Care, Kanana Fou, KS Mart, Manua Store, NAPA Auto Parts, Niko & Son's Const., OSEMA Inc., Pacific Products, S&S Builders, Samoa Motors, SHALHOUT Inc., SKYVIEW Inc., South Pacific Academy, Star Kist Samoa Inc., Steven & Sons Ltd, Tony's Construction, TSM Mart, Tutuila Store, Vailu'u & Sons, Wulf Corporation

Number of OJT Employers and Training Slots



Work Experience

The NEG program also offered participants Work Experience – a structured, work-based, learning activity lasting from just a few weeks to four months (13 weeks) that can occur in the public, private or non-profit sectors.

The NEG staff called this program component the “NEG Work Experience Internship Program” because companies, agencies, and people all understood the nature of an internship, but were less familiar with the concept of “Work Experience.”

The NEG program opted to provide work experience internships for participants in part because their survey revealed participants’ strong preference for learning skills on the job. Moreover, program staff had learned that many participants had little exposure to legitimate long-term work, making it difficult to place them directly into an OJT experience and limiting their ability to make informed decisions about formal training.

The goal of the work experience component of the NEG program, as articulated in the worksite agreements, was to expose participants to good work habits, job skills, and a positive work environment. NEG staff engaged 53 public, private and non-profit host agencies in the program. These host agencies provided 812 NEG participants with work experience internship opportunities.

Additional program details and results are summarized in **Insert 11:**

Key Facts About the NEG Work Experience Internship Program and Insert 12: Work Experience Providers by Sector.

Feleti Faatua’o’s work experience internship comprises one of three profiles completed as a part of this report and featured on the project website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org and in the 35-minute documentary film about the NEG Program. See *Profile: A Work Experience Internship with the National Park Service*.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Leveraging lessons and relationships built in the early stages of the OJT program, NEG staff again reached out to the community, engaging public, private and non-profit agencies in hosting internships. Each conversation with a potential host was an opportunity to communicate the value of investing in people and their skills and invite potential employers to be part of long-term workforce and economic development solutions for the territory.

The scale of the Workforce Experience Internships Program – of the 812 participants 740 completed their internships – raised the interest of the media, which covered the program in the local press. Participants (“interns”) who spoke with the press gave the program high marks.⁵⁰ In the NEG program’s own reviews, the work

⁵⁰ See, for example, “Participants in DHR NEG Work Program Pleased with Their Experience” and “NEG Participants Find Valuable Job Experience in the Program”, both in the Samoa News and available in the searchable resource library in the project’s website: AmericanSamoaRenewal.org/resource-library

experience internships were viewed favorably by both participants and employer hosts.

Unlike the employers of OJT participants, hosts of those enrolled in work experience internships were not expected to hire participants and the end of the program. Nevertheless, 62 interns were hired on as employees at the end of their programs. Work experience internships were completed on July 11, 2012.

Insert 11: Key Facts About the NEG Work Experience Internship Program

The work experience internship program began in December 2011 and was completed by July 11, 2012.

DHR developed contracts with 53 work experience internship hosts, 20 of which were also OJT employers. These organizations offered 812 participants work experience internships.

- Twenty-three internship providers were private-sector companies. They hosted 181 work experience interns.
- Thirty hosts were public sector or semi-autonomous agencies. They hosted 631 work experience interns.
- Work experience agreements offered participants up to 520 hours of work over a period of three months.
- Participants earned \$4.41 per hour, all of which was paid for by the NEG program.
- Ninety-one percent (740 out of 812) work experience interns successfully completed the program.

Although there was no expectation that work experience internships would result in job offers, 62 NEG participants were hired as employees at the end of internships – 13 by private companies and 49 by public and semi-autonomous agencies.

Insert 12: *Work Experience Providers by Sector*

Public Agencies:

Office of Property Management, Department of Parks and Recreation, Department of Treasury, Department of Public Safety, Department of Public Works, Department of Health, Office of Procurement, Department of Agriculture, Department of Youth and Women's Affairs, Port Administration, Department of Commerce, Department of Education, Budget Office, Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Administrative Services, Mauga O Alii, Office of Samoan Affairs, Historic Preservation Office, National Park of American Samoa, Department of Information Technology, American Samoa Visitors Bureau, Department of Human Resources, Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Governor, DHR-Human Capital, DHR-National Emergency Grant, Shipyard Services Authority

Semi-Autonomous Agencies:

American Samoa Power Authority, LBJ Medical Center, American Samoa Community College

Private Employers:

Manu'a Store, Tutuila Store, S & S Builders, Tafuna SM Mart, KS Mart, South Pacific Academy, Niko & Sons Inc, Pacific Horizons School, Forsgren Ltd, Asifoa & Sons, Bluesky Communications, Lia's Florist, Pualele Foundation, Kionasina Inc, Toe Afua Mai Matua, All Star Signs & Graphics, C.B.T. Ltd., SPICC Academy, Longline Services, FJ&P Kruse, Inc, Carries Daycare Services, Matavai Family Food Court, American Samoa Organization on Aging, O Measina Samoa Creations

Number of Work Experience Providers

	Providers	Participants
Public and Semi-Autonomous Agencies	30	631
Private Employers	23	181
Total	53	812

Training

The training component of the NEG program posed particular challenges for American Samoa. There were many participants in need of training and very few jobs scattered across a range of industries and professional fields. The NEG team had to wrestle with the question of what to train participants for.

In an attempt to answer this question, the NEG program staff considered three factors:

- **What are emerging growth industries in American Samoa?** Although employment was declining in American Samoa – a result of the tsunami, the recession, minimum wage increases and other factors outside of the NEG program’s control – specific industries were expected to grow. For example, repair of damaged properties and a planned new power plant promised jobs in construction, though timing was uncertain.
- **Where are there growth opportunities in the South Pacific region – including Guam, the smaller Micronesian islands, Hawaii, and even New Zealand?** Documented needs in the areas of construction, hospitality and entertainment, disaster response, and seasonal labor offered opportunities for American Samoans willing to train and work off-island.
- **What are the interests of NEG participants?** The combination of the participant survey, together with program staff interaction with participants, provided the NEG program with good information about the kinds of training and jobs likely to appeal to NEG participants.

The NEG program initially focused its training resources in the following programs:

- A certificated construction trades training program in Guam, in partnership with the Center for Micronesian Empowerment and Guam Contractors Association Trades Academy.
- Training in commercial food preparation at the American Samoa Culinary Academy.

The NEG program also experimented with a smaller-scale training in cultural dance and music performance with Tihati Productions, but this was discontinued after one class because of limited interest and enrollment and low job placement rates.

Construction Training Program in Guam

Guam is undergoing a construction boom as a result of infrastructure investments by the US military. It is one of few places with sustained employment growth in the Pacific islands. Guam – also a US territory and one in which government and private sector leaders already have a long history of collaboration – was a good location for piloting an off-island training program.

The NEG program contracted with Center for Micronesian Empowerment (CME) for a 90-day construction trades training and placement program in Guam. The Center had run similar programs for islanders coming from Micronesia and was familiar with the kinds of issues that arise when students from isolated and close-knit

communities leave home for the first time for an environment so different from what they know. The Center worked with the NEG program to ensure an appropriate level of structure and support, and designed a program model suited to the students' cultural, dietary, and spiritual needs as well as their vocational training requirements.

Program Context

This decision to train American Samoans in Guam was not without controversy. The NEG program was criticized for 'outsourcing unemployment,' encouraging brain drain, and 'looking to foreigners to train when it could be done on-island.' Public agencies and elected officials expressed concern that resources that could be invested in American Samoa were being invested elsewhere.

But NEG leaders saw a different kind of opportunity. They knew that construction workers would eventually be needed in American Samoa. They also knew that when foreign contractors pursued major construction projects, they often brought in foreign labor because of a shortage of qualified laborers in the territory. If American Samoans could be trained and certified, and even gain work experience in Guam, they would be in high demand in American Samoa when major construction projects did commence.

Furthermore, the same contractors tend to bid on construction projects in the Pacific region. It is likely that American Samoans working and living in Guam would be among the first recruited by successful bidders on construction projects in American Samoa.

Finally, NEG program staff saw the partnership as a natural extension of the regional collaboration already occurring throughout the territories. Island leaders know that none of them can afford to build or buy everything they need. By collaborating, they can all access a wider range of resources and opportunities while also specializing in the particular sectors, professional fields, or industries for which they have unique resources or expertise. NEG leaders knew they could never build and sustain a construction trades academy on par with that of Guam. They also hoped that a partnership would create opportunities for Guamanians and others in the region to travel to American Samoa.

Program Launch

From January to February 2012, the NEG program worked with the Center for Micronesian Empowerment to recruit and screen participants. Students selected for participation in the program completed:

- A two-week pre-departure work readiness training program and orientation to Guam;
- An intensive seven-week construction and trades training comprising:
 - One-week of skills assessments, medical screenings, and workplace culture training (in Guam)
 - Six week of classroom and hands-on training, supplemented by job search training and assistance through the One-Stop Career Center (America's Jobs Center) in Guam.

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

While enrolled in training, students were provided room and board at Ukudu Workforce Village, and transportation back and forth to the constructions trades Academy. The NEG program hired a Samoan liaison who also lived in the village, and provided cultural support, translation, and help for students who wanted to attend church services or interact with other Samoans in Guam. The NEG program also hosted Skype sessions so that students could video-chat with their families in American Samoa. This simple and inexpensive service was highly valued by participants and families. Program staff reported that it kept many students from leaving the program.

At \$15K per participant plus airfare, the program was costly, but the likelihood that students who completed it would find employment – at a living wage and with opportunities to advance – was high.

Thirty students began the program in February 2012. All of them successfully completed their studies, and only three had not found employment in advance of their graduation in May 2013 – the three were interviewing at the time of our visit. Fifteen students were offered more advanced training. For 18 months following graduation, students will be offered mentoring services and assistance with housing and transportation leading to greater independence from the program over time.

The construction training program is one of three initiatives components profiled as a part of this report and featured on the project website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org and in the 35-minute

documentary film about the NEG Program. See *Profile: Construction Trades Academy Program*.

American Samoa Culinary Academy

Food is an important part of Samoan culture and tradition. Cooking is a point of pride for many Samoans, including men, many of whom participate in food preparation, especially during ceremonial events.

Many NEG participants who responded to the program survey had expressed an interest food service as a career. In researching the food service industry on the island, NEG staff identified 701 food service jobs in local restaurants and 280 jobs in the school lunch program. These jobs are reportedly difficult to fill because employers cannot find applicants with the required skills. Food handling and safety, for example is a critical skillset on a tropical island, especially in commercial or institutional settings. But prior to NEG, there was no training available in the territory that taught such skills. Plating, presentation, and service skills were reportedly also in short supply, especially among the few higher-end restaurants in the territory. Restaurant managers consulted by NEG staff reported “there are no local Samoans with even entry level skills that are required for many food service jobs. Such jobs usually are filled with trained, off-island cooks and chefs.”

At the same time, Chef Sualua Tupolo, who had built a career as a successful Chef and entrepreneur on the US mainland but returned home after the tsunami, had discovered similar needs. He was

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teaching cooking classes to residents who knew little about the relationship between health and food and offering televised courses in specialty cuisine in order to help diversify the diets and palates of American Samoans.

The NEG program saw an opportunity. They worked with the Chef to seed the establishment of a cooking school, first called the Niu School of Culinary Arts and later renamed the American Samoa Culinary Academy. By contracting with the Academy to provide culinary training to 100 NEG participants – at a cost of \$513,730 plus \$81,000 in equipment – they could meet the needs of the NEG program, but also help create a lasting asset in a key industry for the island and for the region.

Program Results

The first culinary training took place during three, four-month sessions between March 15, 2011 and May 5, 2012. Although the first class of NEG students did not obtain industry-recognized certificates,⁵¹ they followed a curriculum of instruction consistent with that offered by accredited post-secondary culinary training programs on the US mainland and received industry-specific job-search assistance. The school also provided each participant with textbooks, uniforms, equipment and cooking supplies.

⁵¹ The school was seeking accreditation during our visit, having its first American Culinary Academy site visit the week before we arrived in American Samoa. It is also pursuing a relationship with Kapiolani College (Honolulu, HA) that would enable a joint culinary certification/AA degree.

Of the 98 participants who began training, 95 completed it. Placement was initially difficult, revealing two characteristics of the food service industry in the territory:

- Cyclical hiring patterns in both the restaurant and hotel industry and the school lunch program mean that hiring of large numbers occurs at specific time intervals.
- Except for a few major employers, the majority of the industry comprises small ‘mom and pop’ shops that hire infrequently, and often inefficiently. School officials and NEG program staff noted that building partnerships with these businesses – and major food service employers in Guam – could accelerate placement.

By December 1, 2012, 52 of 95 graduates had found employment.

Academy Innovations

Four other aspects of the academy program make it uniquely suited to American Samoa’s particular context.

First, the academy is a social enterprise. Adjacent to the commercial kitchen and classroom space, is a student bistro serving breakfast and lunch and selling carry-out baked goods and sandwiches, and a growing catering operation. In addition to providing hands-on training in an active workplace, these lines of business bring revenue into the academy to support the operations of the school and the provision of community education classes.⁵²

⁵² After we had completed our analysis, the Culinary Academy established a partnership with Native Hawaiian Holding Company (NHHC), the firm

Second, students are encouraged to think creatively about the kinds of jobs that would suit them after graduating from the academy. Some aspire to positions with the school lunch program that offers predictable hours and even benefits; others prefer the size and environment offered by well-known restaurants. At the time of our visit, two students were exploring setting up their own businesses (and others were considering the possibility). As a result, the Small Business Development Center and the College and the Academy planned to work more closely with one another. Furthermore, this kind of entrepreneurship is a priority of the American Samoa Department of Commerce, the Chamber of Commerce, and the incoming administration of Governor Lolo Moliga, and provides opportunity for cross sector workforce and economic development collaboration.

Third, nutrition and food ecology are emphasized as part of the culinary program both to promote health and healthy eating and to increase the demand for a wider range of produce on the island. Chef Sualua understands that hydroponic and organic farmers and growers are part of the ecosystem that will enable a culture of better food prepared in more healthy ways, and reduce American Samoa's dependence on imported food. – a danger that was particularly evident in the wake of the tsunami.

contracted by the NEG program to operate the One Stop Career Center, leading to the purchase of two additional restaurants in American Samoa likely to employ Academy graduates. Additional information about NHHHC and its relationship with the NEG program is summarized in a postscript addendum to this report.

Fourth, the school seeks to make strategic use of technology, including video conferencing and video-based learning. Using video to connect to the US mainland or to other islands and US territories would provide access to a wider array of learning opportunities for students in American Samoa, while also extending the reach of the Culinary Academy – enabling it to serve more students and sustain its operations when the NEG grant period ends.

During our research, we encountered critics of the program – individuals concerned about the Academy's costs and prospects for sustainability. However, NEG program staff were clear about why they supported the program and understood the risks. During our research, they were actively networking with other government departments, financial institutions, and mainland grant-makers and investors in order to increase the potential for sustaining the program over the longterm.

NEG staff saw the Academy as more than a training program. They hoped it would transform culinary arts on in the territory, reconnect residents with their ancient cooking traditions, and provide a launch pad for new businesses. Taking a regional view, they also hoped the Academy would be attractive to new and growing food industry businesses in Guam and other Pacific Islands.

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

The American Samoa Culinary Academy is one of three NEG program components profiled as a part of this report and featured on the project website AmericanSamoaRenewal.org and in the 35-minute documentary film about the NEG Program. See *Profile: American Samoa Culinary Academy*.

Tihati Productions

In another effort to expand the range of job opportunities for participants, the NEG program piloted an initiative designed to train American Samoans for positions as Polynesian entertainers – musicians and dancers – who would work in Hawaii. The decision was prompted by research demonstrating a growing demand for Pacific island entertainers fueled by Chinese tourists beginning to travel outside the Chinese mainland in large numbers. Anticipating Hawaii as a destination, Tihati Productions, a company that provides Polynesian entertainers (singers, dancers and musicians), was recruiting entertainers in significant numbers. The NEG program contracted with Tihati to recruit and train NEG participants for \$29,850 during the period of October 31, 2010 to January 31, 2011. Because only four NEG participants were ultimately hired by Tihati Productions, NEG staff discontinued the program.

Education

Support for traditional classroom-based education and credentialing opportunities were also offered to NEG participants because so many had not completed high school or college. The NEG program sought to help those participants qualify for better jobs by completing GEDs, earning post-secondary degrees, or both.

For participants not interested in these credentials, the NEG program provided access to WorkKeys assessments and certification, which can demonstrate a range of skills and competencies to employers in lieu of formal credentials, and KeyTrain, a curriculum designed to help increase skills and competencies for which participants could earn credentials. The NEG program contracted with American Samoa Community College (ASCC) to provide:

- GED certification
- Remedial instruction in math, composition, and ESL
- College level degree programs; and
- WorkKeys and KeyTrain assessments.

Program Results

From August 2010 to June 30, 2012, 23 students enrolled at ASCC, and all students successfully completed their registered courses. During this time, only one student completed enough courses to earn an Associate Degree. Twenty-eight enrolled in GED courses, but none was able to complete the sessions required for a GED certificate.

KeyTrain began in October 2011, and by March 2012, 914 people had participated in the training. In this same time period, 220 participated in WorkKeys testing at a total cost of \$116, 592 plus \$55,916 in licensing fees.

Related Initiatives

The NEG program explored two other options for providing employment and training opportunities to NEG participants: seasonal work in New Zealand and contact center training.

New Zealand's Seasonal Work Program

Nearly 200 NEG participants who completed the survey expressed interest in seasonal work in New Zealand. The NEG program contacted the New Zealand General Counsel in Apia (Independent Samoa) about the possibility of becoming a part of New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employee (RSE) program through their agreement with Samoa. The program enables workers from the member states of the Pacific Island Forum to work in New Zealand on a seasonal basis. However, because American Samoa, as a US territory, was not a member of the Pacific Island Forum,⁵³ its workers were not eligible for the New Zealand program. NEG program staff hoped to include American Samoans in the Samoan group's agreement with New Zealand, but were not able to negotiate details in time for the 2011-2012 harvest season.

⁵³ American Samoa had since been granted observer status with the Pacific Island Forum, which may open the door to participating in the RSE program in future years.

Contact Center Training

NEG program staff negotiated contracts for contact center⁵⁴ training with two different bidders over fourteen months before the bidding companies finally pulled out, indicating they were not able to comply with NEG program requirements.

Initially, the training was aimed at preparing workers for contact center work linked to economic development projects led by the Commerce Department and Governor's Office. Like the Tri-Marine project, such development projects often take longer to implement than initially envisioned.

At the same time, the WIA program was collaborating with the NEG program to develop plans for the first One-Stop Center (America's Jobs Center) in American Samoa. In March 2012, a contract for a larger scope of work that included supply chain initiatives and contact center training, job fairs and business recruitment, job placement and economic development, and the launch and management of the One-Stop Center, was awarded to Native Hawaiian Holding Company (NHCC). The One-Stop Center opened its doors in April 2012 and had served over 1,200 NEG participants

⁵⁴ The phrases "contact center" and "call center" are used interchangeably but imply different things. A call center tends to manage in-bound communications about simple transactions over the telephone – order processing, complaints, and the like. A contact center tends toward more sophisticated transactions that occur over the phone, chat, video, or other web-enabled means. As traditional call centers give way to more diverse communication systems, the two may evolve into a single kind of service center, but today, there are important differences between them.

and the writing of this report. Because NHHC was contracted after our analysis was complete, but is currently an important NEG program component, our team conducted several telephone interviews during December 2012 and January 2013, resulting in a brief *Postscript* narrative attached as an addendum to this report.

Lessons from Phase II

American Samoa's experience with Phase II of the NEG program – still ongoing – offers lessons about both operations and strategy. These include:

1. *Developing an information infrastructure to facilitate both reporting and project management is critical.*

In DHR's traditional WIA programs, staff had developed information management systems and processes over time that are suited to its needs. But the NEG program was much larger and more complex – and built from scratch. The systems and processes with which DHR was familiar did not necessarily scale to the needs of the NEG program. Individual project managers developed excel spreadsheets to manage their work. When the need to look at data across programs was evident, a more detailed and comprehensive spreadsheet was built. But as individual managers needed only subsets of program-wide data, they collected it and added it to their own spreadsheets. Three challenges followed:

- At important points in the program, staff lacked a complete picture of the program – total number of individuals enrolled, cost per individual, total costs, outcomes to date, and so on. This information was spread across many data

sources (which were not universally accessible) forcing staff to aggregate it upon request.

- Program managers missed signals which would have alerted them to potential program design issues or implementation challenges. For example, because OJT placement rates were aggregated upon request, but not tracked continuously, program staff realized only late in the program that smaller employers were hiring at much lower rates than larger employers.
- Cost information that would allow the efficacy of one program component to be compared with another was difficult to access and inhibited this kind of analysis early in the program.

2. *Developing new programs is more demanding than contracting with existing ones and may require higher levels of effort leading to higher costs.*

The Culinary Academy training program was the first of its kind on the island. Supporting it meant not just supporting participant training but investing in development of the curriculum, the procurement of equipment and infrastructure, and the basic operations and capacity of the program. In supporting the Academy, the NEG program was not executing a simple training contract, it was investing in a social enterprise. Similarly, the construction training in Guam required considerable program and supportive service design. Both were different from traditional DHR or workforce programs and activities, causing staff to devote considerable effort in the design phase, and then in learning how to support, monitor, and

share information about the initiatives. Sustainability planning – especially in an environment that offered so little access to additional resources – also proved a formidable challenge.

3. *Providing the right kind of participant support can yield significant results.* The construction trades training program in Guam was the first off-island training program DHR had ever supported. The program design was informed by the experience of American Samoans in the US Military, who first struggled with the unfamiliar surroundings of off-island military bases, but thrived once they were connected to churches, Samoan social networks, and opportunities for communicating with families back home. The NEG program hired a cultural liaison who lived with participants in Guam, connected participants to Samoan networks in Guam – including faith-based communities, and attended to a variety of personal and social needs. Adding the opportunity for participants to Skype with their families in American Samoa proved a critical support and likely contributed to the 100% graduation rate. The lesson here is about being attentive to diverse needs as they arise and addressing them in creative and flexible ways.

4. *Engaging businesses as community problem-solvers and not just employers generates valuable intelligence and creates the possibility for shared solutions to workforce challenges.* The tsunami and NEG response created a unique opportunity to engage the business community at scale. There are 466 registered private-sector businesses establishments in American Samoa (254 employ between 1 and 4 people). NEG staff went door-to-door for the purpose of engaging these businesses in the NEG

program, eventually recruiting over 50 companies for participation in OJT or work experience programs. At the same time, they collected valuable information about these companies, developed relationships with key employees, and began to lay a foundation for deeper, broader collaboration over time. Staff found that many companies were eager to help train or find jobs for those laid-off as a result of the tsunami, especially young people who finished their studies and joined the workforce during a period of highest unemployment in a half-century.

5. *Regionalism can take a variety of shapes and forms and offers an opportunity for creative solutions to critical economic, education, workforce, and social problems.* Many communities on the US mainland and increasingly all over the world are engaged in some level of regional policy or strategy work aimed at improving their economies.⁵⁵ For island territories, regional collaboration poses a host of additional complexities – from data (“Are we collecting the same information in comparable ways? Can we share it?”), to time zone issues (setting up conference calls with partners for whom it is different days) to diplomacy (If we’d like to make a change, who is authorized to do it?). But this kind of collaboration also offers significant promise as an approach to building more resilient economies and communities and increasing access to opportunities islanders may not have at home. The NEG program’s construction trades academy partnership represented such an

⁵⁵ A good collection of resources on regional development issues is maintained by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD): <http://www.oecd.org/gov/regionaldevelopment/>

opportunity. It required considerable diligence to stay within the allowable program rules that govern the NEG program and, as noted, it was controversial. However, NEG staff saw the program as an opportunity to support the growth and evolution of an asset in the region (the construction training program) while also laying the foundation for similar partnerships in the future – such as a culinary training program for people from Guam in American Samoa – and expanding the range of possibilities regional collaboration offers.

Overall Program Summary & Recommendations

Summary

In April 2012, the Department of Human Resources engaged Social Policy Research to conduct a program review of the National Emergency Grant effort. The idea was not strictly to evaluate the program, but to document – in written and multi-media form – key program activities and outcomes where possible, construct critical lessons from which the agency and its partners could learn, and identify opportunities revealed by the NEG program for accelerating American Samoa’s efforts to create a more resilient, sustainable, and prosperous future.

SPR employed a diverse team of US mainland and Samoan analysts and story gatherers using a range of research, ethnographic, and multimedia methods to document the NEG and its impact on people who learned, trained, and found jobs through the program. Throughout this document, we have summarized lessons associated with the various NEG program phases. In this section, we provide a

table describing all 12 lessons from across phases. See [Insert 12: Lessons from America Samoa NEG Program Phases](#).

Collectively, these lessons reveal practical steps that can improve current NEG programs and accelerate the progress of future ones. They also highlight specific challenges policy makers and workforce development professionals can expect programs in economically vulnerable communities to encounter and suggest simple but important factors that can increase the likelihood of program success. Finally, they point to potent opportunities for community engagement – technology, youth unemployment, and human resource practices among them – that could help everyone in American Samoa play a role in increasing opportunities islanders’ opportunities to work, learn, and prosper.

Another objective of our review was providing program staff, partners, and stakeholders with a comprehensive picture of the program – what it accomplished, what it struggled with, and what kinds of opportunities American Samoa's leaders have before them as a result.

Our team reviewed program activities from 2009 - mid 2012. We found a workforce program that blended capacity building, bold program investments, and direct business engagement with the aim of connecting people to jobs leading to careers and enhancing economic, educational, and workforce opportunities for all of the territory’s residents.

Insert 12: Lesson from American Samoa NEG Phases

Phase I

Lesson

Summary

1. Early project implementation revealed a need for specific support that extended beyond adhering to Department of Labor grant requirements.

American Samoa's infrastructure – from electric power to the workplace – was severely compromised as the NEG was being negotiated and the program launched. Early on, NEG staff would have benefited from basic templates – even a “how-to” guide – to help them accelerate program implementation. As the NEG program gained a foothold, assistance setting up processes to facilitate reporting and enable efficient monitoring may have improved the quality of program data, shortened delays in achieving program milestones, and reduced frustration among staff, partners, and participants.

2. There was a demand for training in practical skills among NEG participants.

Many participants enrolled in Phase 1 of the NEG program had little work experience and few formal qualifications, yet they proved eager to learn and their employers responded positively to both their attitudes and aptitudes – they learned quickly on the job.

3. Public sector and non-profit employers recognized the lack of good jobs and career prospects for young people as an important community issue.

Because employers witnessed firsthand the eagerness, especially of younger participants, to work and learn, many realized that unemployment was not just an economic problem for individuals and their families. Rather, high unemployment leaves the territory unable to fully benefit from talents and gifts of its people.

4. There is a need for enhanced technology skills in the workplace, and a mix of enthusiasm and trepidation about its implications.

Simple, reliable Internet access – Wi-Fi access in particular – remains a challenge in American Samoa, but it is improving. The demand for computer-related skills – from basic office applications to programming to social media – is uneven and fast changing, posing skills and management challenges for organizations and firms across sectors.

Transition Phase

Lesson

Summary

5. Shifting from emergency response to long-term strategy proved challenging.

American Samoa presents unique economic and data challenges, and would have benefitted examples of workforce development plans from other NEG projects, models for linking NEG and annually funded program strategies, and regular technical assistance leading up to and through the transition.

6. Developing a long-term strategy required flexibility and the ability to experiment.

American Samoa's particular context called for NEG staff to try a number of different things. This meant that NEG staff structured programs and interventions that were effectively experiments (or pilots) – with all the operational and political challenges such an exercise entails – and struggled to support and manage them.

7. The NEG program raised the profile of workforce development in American Samoa.

Despite lingering stakeholder questions about DHR's role in the workforce and economic development arena, the grassroots engagement with village leaders, public agencies, and non-profit organizations during Phase I, complemented by similar engagement efforts during the development of the strategy that guided Phase II, helped stakeholders from across sectors better understand workforce development issues in the territory and their relationship to broader educational, economic, social, health, and other policy issues managed by other agencies, departments and of concern to American Samoa's residents.

Phase II

Lesson

Summary

8. Developing an information infrastructure to facilitate both reporting and project management is critical.

The systems and processes with which DHR was familiar did not necessarily scale to the needs of the NEG program. Staff routinely created separate spreadsheets for their own use, making it difficult for staff to access a complete picture of the program and use it to provide proactive technical assistance.

9. Developing new programs is more demanding than contracting with existing ones and may require higher levels of effort leading to higher costs.

The Culinary Academy training program and the program in Guam were both unprecedented. Advancing them meant not just supporting participant training but investing in design and development of the initiatives themselves. This kind of capacity building is required in communities like American Samoa, with limited access to service providers. Sustainability planning can pose additional challenges.

10. Providing the right kind of participant support can yield significant results.

The construction trades training program in Guam borrowed a strategy from the US Military: connecting students in Guam with churches, Samoan social networks, and familiar food and cultural traditions. Adding the opportunity for participants to Skype with their families in American Samoa proved a critical support and likely contributed to the 100% graduation rate. The lesson here is about being attentive to diverse needs as they arise and addressing them in creative and flexible ways.

11. Engaging businesses as community problem-solvers and not just employers generates valuable intelligence and creates the possibility for shared solutions to workforce challenges.

The tsunami and NEG response created a unique opportunity to engage the business community at scale. NEG staff went door-to-door to engage the territory's 466 registered private-sector businesses for participation in the NEG program. At the same time, they collected valuable information about these companies, developed relationships with key employees of those companies, and began to lay a foundation for deeper, broader collaboration over time.

12. Regionalism can take a variety of shapes and forms and offers an opportunity for creative solutions to critical economic, education, workforce, and social problems.

Communities on the US mainland and increasingly all over the world are engaged in some level of regional policy or strategy work aimed at improving their economies. For island territories, regional collaboration poses a host of additional complexities, but also offers significant promise as an approach to building more resilient economies and communities and increasing access to opportunities islanders may not have at home.

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

The NEG program:

- Brought new testing and training opportunities to American Samoa's only college;
- Created a diverse range of work opportunities for hundreds of participants, exposing many to jobs and work environments that were new to them;
- Established a first-of-its kind culinary training program that helped NEG participants begin new careers and businesses;
- Collaborated with Pacific region neighbors, tapping into training and job opportunities in high-growth Guam; and
- Opened the territory's first One-Stop Career Center as part of a major employment and job creation effort (see *Postscript* addendum to this report).

There were most certainly challenges. But through these and other efforts, NEG leaders are cultivating the kind of economic assets they hope will anchor American Samoa's long-term recovery.

Though not strictly a part of the strategy, the NEG also did something as important as any of its individual programs or initiatives: *it revealed the critical importance of investing in workforce development as a foundation of the territory's future prosperity.*

There is simply no industry on the island capable of employing the number of people who need and want jobs. In addition, the tsunami revealed hidden vulnerabilities: dependence on imported food; talent, skills, and knowledge shortages in healthcare and emergency response; limited advanced construction and trades skills in the territory; and untapped entrepreneurial potential among islanders

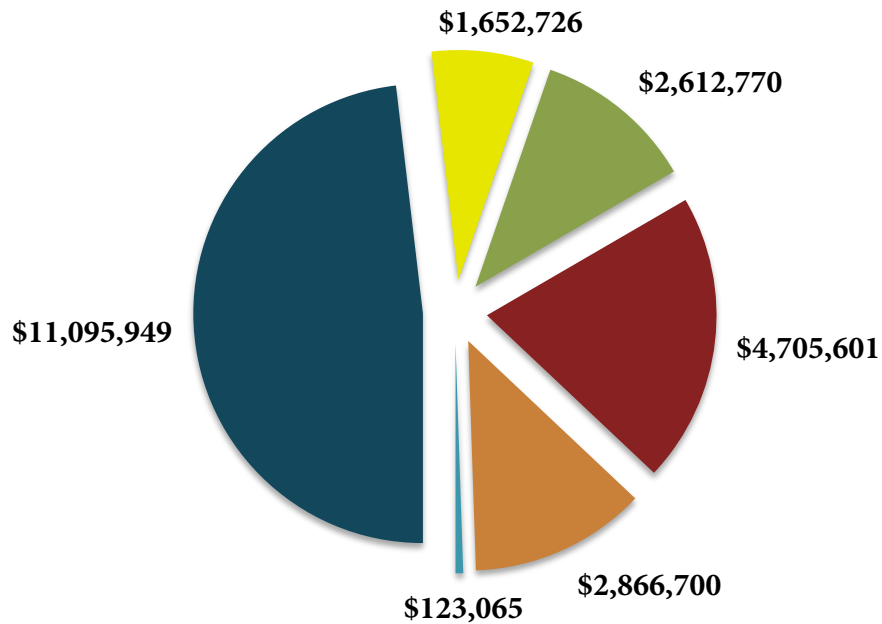
who could make their own jobs rather than applying for them. Workforce development can play a key role in solving these problems.

The program tested DHR's capacity, but it also opened the agency to new ideas about program development, information management and transparency, and community engagement in the territory's villages, and collaboration with government, non-profit and private-sector firms and agencies within the territory, on the US mainland, and across the entire Pacific region.

NEG Project Budget and Expenditures

The total grant award was initially \$24,857,608, with an additional \$500,000 awarded in late 2012. To date, the project has obligated or expended \$23,056,812. Just over half of this amount – \$12,041,763 – supported temporary employment during the first phase of the project. The remainder – \$11,015,049 expended or obligated – continues to support Phase II activities through June 2013. A chart detailing project-level expenditures is provided in **Insert 13: NEG Project Budget and Expenditures**, with more detailed expenditure information provided for each phase in Appendix B.

Insert 13: NEG Project Budget and Expenditures



■ Phase I: Temporary Jobs	\$11,095,949
■ Phase II: Workforce Training and Education	\$1,652,726
▪ Culinary, Construction	
▪ WorkKeys/KeyTrain	
▪ Education	
■ Phase II: OJT & WE	\$2,612,770
■ Phase II: Job Placement & Business Support	\$4,705,601
▪ One-Stop	
▪ Contact Center & Training	
▪ Job Fairs	
▪ Business Services	
■ Program Management & Administration	\$2,866,700
Program Administration	
Office Supplies	
Indirect	
■ Other	\$123,065
Total:	\$23,056,811

Recommendations: Making the Most of the NEG Experience to Improve Economic Opportunities in the Territory

Our review of American Samoa's NEG program and engagement with key private, public, and nonprofit sector leaders, policy professionals, program managers, community leaders, and hundreds of residents from the dozens of village we visited pointed us to three key opportunities for using the NEG experience to

inform a prosperity strategy going forward. We offer them as recommendations -- in narrative form below and in table for, accompanied by examples, in *Insert 14: Recommendations: Making the Most of the NEG Experience to Improve Economic Opportunities in the Territory*

We encourage American Samoa's leaders to:

1. *Embrace the broader workforce agenda that has evolved since the launch of the National Emergency Grant.*

Five primary components of this broader agenda form the heart of our recommendations

- **Deepening and strengthening formal and informal relationships with territorial and federal agencies on- and off-island.** Working with US and Guam Departments of Labor colleagues to secure the National Emergency Grant, and the Department of Interior on capacity building are examples of reaching beyond traditional approaches to workforce development. These efforts may be even more crucial in the post-grant period, especially as the Comprehensive Economic Development Study (CEDS) nears completion and the new administration of Governor Lolo Moliga begins to shape post-tsunami development.
- **Collaborating with government and private-sector partners throughout the Pacific region.** In keeping with the American Samoa Government's longtime strategy to strengthen linkages between islands across the Pacific region, the NEG team worked closely with their colleagues in Guam to plan, launch and managed the NEG program, even collaborating on a first-of-its-kind construction training program for American Samoans willing to learn and work in Guam. New such opportunities are possible with continued commitment to regional collaboration.
- **Advancing innovation and enterprise, while effectively managing risk.** As American Samoa moves away from a development approach dependent on low wages to one that prioritizes higher skills and creative enterprises, it must experiment with new approaches – supporting self-employment, prioritizing emerging sectors and clusters, and advancing workplace-based development initiatives. The NEG program provided opportunities to pilot new ideas, like

the culinary training program. The Work Experience Internship and OJT programs engaged dozens of private sector employers, many of them small. Finding ways to attract resources, scale effective initiatives, and vet and test new ideas while balancing potential risk are critical capacities needed across sectors among American Samoa's workforce leaders.

- **Developing strategic relationships with philanthropic and non-profit organizations on- and off-island.** American Samoa's "social good" sector (philanthropy, charitable giving, and non-profit organizations) is young, undercapitalized, and lacks access to peer networks, regular technical assistance, and local capacity building champions.⁵⁶ Many manage only project-based funding, ceasing operations between projects, which impedes their ability to grow or develop deep expertise in critical areas of need in American Samoa.⁵⁷ The territory's public and private sectors could play a role in building the social sector's capacity by engaging those non-profits with complementary missions⁵⁸ as long-term workforce development partners.

⁵⁶ Using *Guidestar*, we identified 81 non-profit organizations registered in the territory, including one foundation. But 34 of these had lost their exempt status, many others are Church-affiliated, and very few have websites which would help people learn more about them.

⁵⁷ Two organizations heard about our project and contacted us, as technical assistance providers, to inquire about helping them with fundraising.

⁵⁸ The Pacific Islands Center for Educational Development (PiCED) supports educational achievement among the island's young people and was the territory's 2011 non-profit of the year. Intersections Inc. runs Nuanua Media Communications – a combined leadership development and film

- **Shifting away from “program” as the heart of workforce development and toward the idea that workforce development is about effective people management and development practices that can be adopted in any school or workplace.** The old model of workforce development was about training people for available jobs. Increasingly workforce professionals also play important roles in advocating for career education in schools and professional development in the workplace; collaborating with industry to access training and development; promoting self-employment; helping organizations – public and private – to adopt modern talent development and management practices. These activities create value for firms and help individuals and families whether they are participants in workforce programs or not. NEG staff took initial steps toward this broader role in Phase II of the program. To further advance this agenda, a network of the Chamber of Commerce, the Workforce Development Commission, the Territorial Planning Commission, and others – have an opportunity to adopt exemplary workforce practices that can increase productivity, grow jobs, and seed new industries.

2. Engage the extended family (‘aiga’) network.

We saw countless examples of American Samoans returning from the US mainland or elsewhere to assist their families after the tsunami leading game-changing initiatives by engaging their off-island networks. Chef Sualua Tupolo, who launched the

and media skills development program for young people. These are two examples of such non-profits but there are likely many others.

American Samoa Culinary Academy, is one example. At the same time, there are thousands of networks in the US comprised of American Samoans who are working or attending school. Families, churches, and now workforce programs are engaging these networks in ways that help students and new arrivals succeed. American Samoa’s leaders must build and support networks that enable opportunities for off-island education, training, development for residents of American Samoa, and opportunities for US mainlanders and Pacific islanders to learn and work in American Samoa. Reaching out to those who have returned home from military service, education, or off-island holds tremendous promise as a low-cost, high-impact workforce development strategy.

3. Employ technology strategically to advance the broader workforce agenda, and increase the training and job opportunities for American Samoans of all ages.

Four specific opportunities are described below.

- American Samoa Community College is a large and well-regarded educational institution – even housing a Small Business Development Center on its campus. The government has supported the college in its effort to secure accreditation for its first bachelors degree program expected in Spring 2013. But the college cannot be expected to meet all of the education, training, and professional development needs of the territory. As Internet connectivity in American Samoa improves, online education and training programs, partnerships with off-

island colleges and universities, and even peer-learning platforms can help fill that gap.

- Similarly, new service industry companies that employ individuals all over the world offer nontraditional employment opportunities, especially for women and people who seek part-time work or flexible hours. Some of these companies are even social enterprises, which would offer needed services as well as mission alignment.⁵⁹ Such strategies are new to workforce professionals – on the US mainland or in American Samoa – but are increasingly important tools for cultivating talent and enterprise in isolated communities.
- One challenge facing American Samoa is a lack of timely and high-quality workforce data. There is no Department of Labor on the island, and therefore no system for regularly tracking employment, wages, and other important labor market information. However, as the cost of technology decreases and access improves, workforce professionals across sectors could find ways to employ these technologies, even in collaboration with one another, so that territorial leaders would have access to good information about jobs, skills, and the movement of people through the labor market.
- Finally, public agencies, non-profit organizations and others are just beginning to use social media to organize champions, supporters, volunteers, and even donors – and

⁵⁹ Samasource, for example, is a non-profit organization that connects poor women and young people to training and employment in the digital economy and provides “microwork” for people in need all over the world.

could engage small business lenders.⁶⁰ The National Park of American Samoa, is an example of a public agency that uses Facebook particularly well to engage its “tribe.” It will be increasingly important for public agencies of all kinds to engage this way as more citizens and residents demand it.⁶¹

American Samoa’s NEG program provides a window into what is possible for all government agencies working to make sure that island residents can access good opportunities to earn a degree, learn a skill, and find a good job – or make their own. The road to American Samoa’s recovery and renewal is neither quick or easy, but it is among the most important work island leaders can do.

Going forward, government, private sector, and community leaders must make serious choices about the focus of their economic and workforce development efforts. But they will be making these choices in the context of a community that has begun to understand the importance of workforce skills in the recovery of the island and in its accompanying economic, social and spiritual renewal.

⁶⁰ Kiva provides a platform that allows individuals to make small business loans to aspiring entrepreneurs who lack access to capital.

⁶¹ We heard many anecdotes about young peoples’ expectations about education and jobs shifting as a result of communicating with off-island friends on Facebook – and we experienced this dynamic ourselves as American Samoan colleagues and friends began communicating with us this way.

Insert 14: Recommendations: *Making the Most of the NEG Experience to Improve Economic Opportunities in the Territory*

Recommendation 1: *Embrace the broader workforce agenda that has evolved since the launch of the National Emergency Grant.*

Dimensions

Examples

1.a. Deepen and strengthen formal and informal relationships with territorial and federal agencies on- and off-island.

The territory has long maintained good working relationships with the US Departments of Labor and Interior and with education and training partners in the territory. The NEG program expanded opportunities for collaboration with other ASG and federal agencies, from the ASG Department of Public Safety to the National Park Service. As the territory's workforce agenda evolves, these partnerships could play an important role in extending DHR's reach and impact. Working with the American Samoa Department of Commerce as it completes the CEDS project and prepares a submission to the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration poses a timely opportunity for collaboration on jobs, economic opportunity, and capacity building within and across government.

1.b. Collaborate with government and private sector partners throughout the Pacific region.

American Samoa has embraced a "regional" approach to trade, economic development, environmental policy, and even the development of young leaders. The NEG program experimented with specific sector-based training and employment opportunities in Guam and Hawaii, and pursued opportunities in New Zealand. The program offers valuable lessons for future similar endeavors and an opportunity to track and support the return of American Samoans working off-island as opportunities emerge on-island for which their skills and experiences are needed. The program also introduced new ideas about how sector-based economic development and training opportunities might be developed across islands and territories in the Pacific region.

1.c. Advance innovation and enterprise, while effectively managing risk.

American Samoa had not managed a program anything like NEG before. Many program elements were "firsts" for the territory. Many worked well, and some less well, but NEG staff developed important "start-up" skills and capacity that will be increasingly important as the territory seeks to diversify its economy and grow new jobs. Equally important are appropriate controls, information systems, and risk management capacity to insure that new initiatives are more likely to succeed, and when they do not, they can be stopped quickly and offer lessons for the future.

Recommendation 1: *Embrace the broader workforce agenda that has evolved since the launch of the National Emergency Grant (continued).*

Summary	Examples
1.d. Develop strategic relationships with philanthropic and non-profit organizations on- and off-island.	The “social good” sector in American Samoa is young, undercapitalized, and uncoordinated. Government and private sector firms could play a role in helping to build capacity in key areas over time – health and education, for example – by partnering with critical funders and/or facilitating resource development and sustainability strategies that allow small organizations to grow. This, too, is a workforce development strategy in that it promotes skills needed across sectors and builds organizational capacity and community-based expertise.
1.e. Shift away from “program” as the heart of workforce development and toward the idea that workforce development is about effective people management and development practices that can be adopted in any school or workplace.	At the heart of our recommendations is this new way of understanding workforce development and support for embracing a stewardship role over skills, jobs, careers, and people management practices in the territory. It is an ideal role for the Territory’s Workforce Commission, in partnership with economic development, education and Chamber partners and it supports the long term development aspirations of the territory.

Recommendation 2: *Engage the extended family ‘aiga’ network.*

Summary	Examples
2. Samoan social and family networks are a powerful source of support for Samoans on and off-island. Territorial leaders could build on past successes, mapping these networks as a step toward connecting more Samoans to information and opportunities in more strategic ways.	The territory has learned to engage Samoan networks on the US mainland to help support enlisted Samoans and others away from home for extended periods of time. A similar strategy was used to help Samoans in Guam complete their training and find employment through the NEG Program. Retired military and other professionals returning to American Samoa are likely to have mainland networks that could help others find jobs, access learning opportunities and launch or grow enterprises in the very industries the territory seeks to support. Mapping these networks is a first step toward making new kinds of collaboration and enterprises possible.

Recommendation 3: *Employ technology strategically to advance the broader workforce agenda, and increase the training and job opportunities for American Samoans of all ages.*

Dimensions	Examples
3.a. On-line and peer-based learning platforms can increase students' access to programs and expertise not available in the territory.	American Samoa Community College offers a wide range of educational and occupation programs, and is launching a four-year program in education. But no single institution could meet the needs of everyone in the territory. Online programs (accredited or not) can help fill that gap. A collaborative effort to introduce students, parents, and adults to such opportunities could increase access to a wider range of opportunities and may be needed to overcome challenges around development access, support, and resources.
3.b. Web-based, service-industry jobs can provide good employment opportunities and the kind of flexibility that might especially benefit workers seeking flexible or part-time employment or home-based enterprises.	The internet also provides access to employment opportunities, including contract work, that could bring needed revenue into the territory, build skills, and possibly appeal to people that traditional jobs do not. Recognizing the limitations of internet access in the territory, government and private sector leaders could collaborate with non-profit and private sector brokers with experience in isolated communities to overcome some of these challenges and secure work for the island residents.
3.c. American Samoa lacks traditional labor market data – and such data may not accurately reflect the way the territory's economy and labor market work. Mobile technologies in particular offer new ways to collect real time information about how people work, learn, and navigate job, careers, and business.	Data sources about the territory's labor market and economy are limited. However, the size and scale of the territory make it possible to collect data in inventive ways – as NEG did, for example, turning every point of contact with an employer into an opportunity to learn. The ubiquity of mobile devices also enables creative approaches to data collection – text-based surveys, for example. The scale and uniqueness of American Samoa's economy and labor market make it possible to examine important but less visible issues, such as the jobs for which technical expertise is hired from off-island. Focused polling and analysis in key sectors could reveal career path opportunities for students or returning residents to move into positions currently filled by off-island contractors or temporary workers.
3.d. The use of social media in the territory is growing and expectations about how government, non-profit, and private sector institutions and organizations interact with people through media are changing, creating opportunities for large-scale engagement about their use in work, learning, and business.	Despite internet access challenges in the territory, social media is changing the way people (especially young people) interact with peers, educational institutions, employers, and government. The NEG program revealed confusion about how these tools should be best used in the workplace and in a learning environment and pointed to an opportunity for large-scale public engagement around this issue.

Project Profiles

Profile 1: The American Samoa Culinary Academy

With the support of the NEG program, Chef Laautuvanu Sualua Tupolo helps Samoans eat healthier, build their culinary skills, and find new jobs – or make their own.

Chef Sualua has prepared food in some of the finest hotels and dining rooms in the world – on three continents – and served as Executive Sous Chef and Culinary Instructor at Weimar Center of Health and Education in Weimar, California. Now he is sharing his wisdom with aspiring food services professionals, health educators, and even moms back at home in American Samoa.

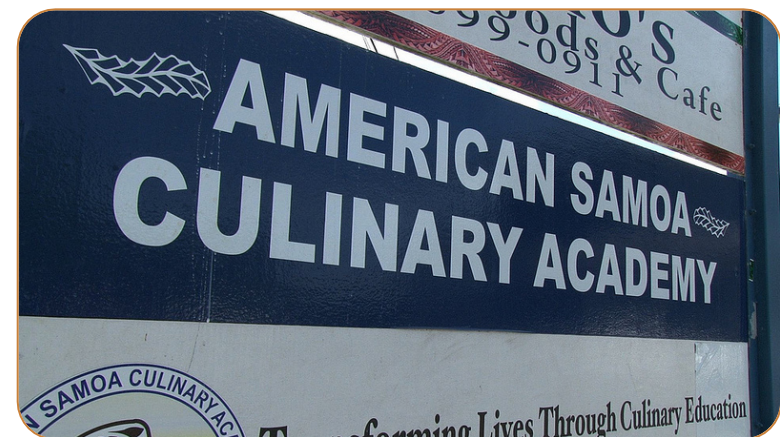
Like so many other Samoans who built successful careers on the US mainland or elsewhere, Chef Sualua returned to the island intent on “giving back.” It did not take him long to figure out what his contribution would be.

The absence of these skills among Samoans was impeding the development of globally competitive food enterprises and undermining healthy eating habits in homes and schools in the territory.

And no training program or other food-related professional development opportunities existed in American Samoa.

Chef Sualua began developing networks, offering public education on ethnic and health-conscious cooking and eating, and incubating ideas for diversifying menus and raising the standards for food preparation and service in American Samoa.

“Samoans are natural cooks – food is central to religious and cultural celebrations on the island. But most rely on knowledge passed down from generation to generation and lack an understanding of the science underlying food preparation – as well as nutrition and food safety.”



American Samoa Culinary Academy and student-run bistro in Malaeimi Village, American Samoa.

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

In 2010, Chef Sualua partnered with the American Samoa National Emergency Grant (NEG) program to launch the American Samoa Culinary Academy.

A hub of activity even before sunrise, the Academy opens its doors for classes at 7:30am. White uniformed students stream in each day for four months. The introductory level program provides training in four areas: cold food, hot food, baking and *garde manger* (cold storage just before serving). Chef Sualua insists on mastery of not just food preparation but culinary math, computer literacy, and job-readiness. His students study food science, prepare and cook food, and plate and serve meals, but they also develop resumes and practice their interviewing techniques so they can find jobs once their training is complete.

Students come with varying levels of experience – some have worked in food service, others have not; some have completed formal schooling, others not; and for some, the Culinary Academy is the first step to a first job, while for others, it's the chance to fulfill long-held career aspirations.

For Fa'afoi Fono, it was a life-changing opportunity.

Fa'afoi worked for Chicken of the Sea for 15 years. September 29, 2009, the day the tsunami struck, was her last day.



Fa'afoi Fono, Student, American Samoa Culinary Academy. Fa'afoi is also featured in the project's video collection at: AmericanSamoaRenewal.org/archive.

When she found the NEG program, she was just trying to find a job. But when the NEG staff told her about the Culinary Academy, it prompted her, for the first time, to consider building a career. She enrolled in the program, quickly becoming a top performer. When we met Fa'afoi, she had recently declined a job offer, opting instead to complete her apprenticeship with Chef Sualua in the student-run cafe adjacent to the academy.

"I wasn't ready to stop learning," she explained. "I want to learn all I can from Chef before I go."

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

The Culinary Academy is a social enterprise. It's one of few vocational training programs in American Samoa, and the only culinary school. It is in the process of attaining American Culinary Federation accreditation and building intermediate and advanced curricula in service of an eventual accredited degree program. It operates a catering business and student-run cafe that subsidize the training program, and has developed relationships with top-tier restaurants on the island and with high-volume enterprises such as the school lunch program.

Although questions about its long term viability remain, the Academy is betting that it can catalyze a virtuous cycle in which its skilled food service graduates raise the expectations (and the wages) associated with food-related occupations – or start more competitive businesses themselves – generating an increased demand for training.

The venture has created keen interest and enthusiastic support among neighboring businesses, even as cultivating relationships with smaller restaurants and food businesses has been a challenge. Quite recently, the Academy established a formal partnership with Native Hawaiian Holding Company (NHHHC), which provided needed access to growth capital and technical support for the enterprise. The purchase of two restaurants that could employ Academy graduates is also in the works, though this, too, creates new challenges (for more information, see the *Postscript* addendum to this report).

Online, supporters clearly outnumber detractors, with “Future Chef in the Making” commenting on one website “All that’s left to know now is...HOW TO APPLY!!!!”

At the writing of this report, 98 participants had enrolled in training and 95 have completed it. Fifty-two had found jobs.

Fa’afoi Fono is one of them.

Profile 2: The Construction Trades Academy Program (Guam)

The National Emergency Grant program, the Center for Micronesian Empowerment and the Guam Contractors Association Trades Academy teamed up to provide a unique training opportunity for American Samoans interested in construction trades and willing to work in Guam.

Guam and American Samoa are connected not just by their similar status as US island territories in the Pacific, but through the mutual respect and collaboration among their ancestors over decades and across the 3,600 miles between them.

During World War I, I'iga Pisa, a Samoan exiled to Saipan for resisting the German occupation, famously crossed the Straights that later bore his name – alone and in a canoe – landing in Guam, where a Chamorro fisherman saved his life.

“Islanders have long memories.”

Dr. Failautusi Avegalio

Years later, in the 1980s, American Samoans emigrated to Guam to assist with a massive infrastructure buildup on the island, a result of a surge in Japanese tourism. They performed well, cultivating a reputation as hard-working and enjoyable colleagues among their

peers from Guam and surrounding island nations.

And by coincidence, key representatives from the Guam Department of Labor were in American Samoa when the 2009 tsunami struck. The Guam program staff stayed on and helped Evelyn Vaitautolu-Langford, the Director of Human Resource for the American Samoan Government, and her team assemble its National Emergency Grant (NEG) request. The Guam team had experience with NEG grants and

the knowledge and infrastructure of a Labor Department to lean on. The shared experience of surviving and responding to the tsunami helped forge a bond between the staff of their respective islands.

So when a delegation from American Samoa attended a workforce conference hosted by the Center for Micronesian Empowerment (CME) in 2010, they were welcomed with open arms.



Dr. Failautusi Avegalio shares this story at the program's graduation ceremony. His speech is featured in the project's video collection at AmericanSamoaRenewal.org/archive

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

Guam is much larger than American Samoa – about 337 square miles – and is home to a population about three times the size and much more diverse than that of American Samoa's. About a third of the territory's 176,000 residents are native Chamorro, one in four are Filipino. The balance is white, Japanese, or Korean.

The US Military, air transport, and tourism dominate the economy, and the culture. High standards of product and service quality are a source of pride for the island – and have resulted in the highest skill requirements of the Pacific island territories.



Guam's construction boom is evident throughout the territory

Guam is again experiencing a construction boom – this time a result of US military plans for the reconstruction of the Guam Naval Hospital, upgrades to Andersen Air Force base and to the smaller installations that cover nearly one-third of the island, and the eventual relocation of over 16,000 marines and their dependents from Okinawa, Japan to the territory.

In response to the demand for construction workers the military build-up has generated, The Center for Micronesian Empowerment developed a model for helping workers from the Pacific islands in the region, such as the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and Palau, transition to jobs – and life – in Guam on the theory that they could build careers that support their families in Guam, and return home someday with new skills and experiences they could put to effective use. At the same time, earnings sent home in the form of remittances would remain within the islands of the region rather than “leaking” out as occurs so often with foreign labor. Finally, firms would benefit from skilled workers who are US nationals afforded hiring preference over foreign workers under contracts with the US Military or agencies of the US Government.

Could a similar approach work for American Samoans who wanted to work in Guam?

From Tsunami to Renewal: American Samoa

Thirty American Samoans participating in the National Emergency Grant program opted to find out.

Selected from among 200 who had expressed interest, the students participated in a brief acculturation program in American Samoa, and then boarded a plane bound for Guam. For most, it was the first time they had traveled outside of American Samoa.

Participants lived together at the Ukudu Workforce Housing Village, supported by Cultural Liaison Tafa Lefiti who helped guide students to familiar food, local churches, and Samoan families already living in Guam, and even coordinated videoconferences between the students and their families in American Samoa.

This kind of cultural support has proven essential elsewhere, including on US Military bases in which Samoans are living – like Ft. Knox, Kentucky, where Tafa first did this kind of work.

After three weeks of assessments (including medical), acculturation training, and orientation, 30 students began an intensive, seven-week course at the Guam Contractors Association Trades Academy. Students were in classrooms, on worksites, or at the One-Stop Career Center looking for work full-time from the first day of the program.



American Samoa students graduating from the construction trades training

On graduation day, Saturday, May 26, 2012, all 30 donned their lava-lavas and puletasis,⁶² and accepted their certificates in the company of Lt. Governor of Guam Ray Tenorio, dignitaries representing other island partners of the Center for Microenterprise and Construction Trades Academy, and National Emergency Grant program staff from American Samoa – accompanied by Savali

⁶² Traditional Samoan attire, *lava-lavas* are skirts that tie or cinch at the waist, common for both men and women. *Puletasis* comprise matching long skirts and tops worn by women for formal or festive occasions.

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Talavou Ale, the Speaker of the House of Representatives in American Samoa. By graduation day, 25 of the students had found jobs already and two more had advanced in their hiring process.

Fifteen students who showed particular aptitude were chosen to advance to the next tier of training, qualifying them for higher-paying jobs and an accelerated path to advancement in their careers.

Most of the 30 graduates were seeking to build skills and experience in Guam but planned to return to American Samoa eventually, anticipating a need for the skills they were developing in Guam back at home.

The program – and the students – seemed to make quite an impression at the trades Academy and at the workplace, too. Their colleagues responded well to their generosity of spirit and



Julie Brooks, Human Resources Coordinator for the Naval Hospital construction project hired student graduates

employers respected their talent and their courage – leaving home for the unknown and with a commitment to support family on-island is not without risk or hardship.

Julie Brooks, Human Resources Coordinator for the Guam Naval Hospital Replacement Project, hired nine of the graduates. “It’s made me realize what a huge responsibility we have in hiring and developing these employees. All of them were affected in one way or another by the tsunami, and working here, for us, is a way they can rebuild their lives and those of their families in American Samoa.”

American Samoa, like neighboring islands in the extended region, is not large enough to offer the kinds of construction training programs available through the Academy. Partnerships like the one established under the National Emergency Grant can expand the range of opportunities and create social, cultural, family, and commercial links so essential to the economic resilience of the Pacific islands.

Profile 3: The National Park Service: Economic Resilience and Environmental Stewardship, *Fa'asamoa* (the Samoan way)

Together, the National Emergency Grants (NEG) program and the National Park Service are growing a cadre of Samoan leaders to steward the *Paka O Amerika Samoa* (National Park of American Samoa) and build environmental awareness throughout the territory.

“OJT.” “WEP.” Few firms, agencies, or other employers in American Samoa had heard of these prior to the National Emergency Grant program. That’s changed. At the writing of this report, nearly 1,400 people had participated in one of these NEG programs with some 88 businesses, government, or semi-autonomous public agencies. Feleti Faatua’o was one of these people. A soft-spoken outdoorsman and rugby player, he was attracted to the idea of working outdoors and in a team – instead of at a desk. Referred to the National Park Service by the NEG program, he learned quickly and developed a deep appreciation for the environmental treasure that is the National Park of American Samoa.

OJT is an acronym for “On-the-Job-Training.” OJT participants work up to six-months in positions for which they receive training and are paid a wage subsidized by public programs like the NEG. When the OJT concludes, host employers are expected to hire participants into full-time jobs. The program serves as a bridge connecting people with aptitude for their desired job, but lacking in either skills or experience.

WEP stands for “Work Experience Program. In American Samoa, they were called “Work Experience Internships.” As in the OJT program, participants receive exposure to work, training, and subsidized wages, though for three months rather than six, and without the expectation of full-time work after the work experience period. Work Experience programs are ideal for people who are entering work for the first time or transitioning to a new industry or profession.

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Feleti started with four other NEG participants who completed work experience internships with the Park Service. He thrived. He was offered a full-time position with American Conservation Experience, a non-profit organization that works alongside the National Park Service and offers a career path to a variety of conservation agencies including the National Parks Service itself. Today, Feleti leads his own crew.

The work is not easy. Most days, teams of five to ten enter the thick rainforest searching out and removing invasive species that threaten the health of the park, or planting trees to restore the native canopy. It's a physical job that also demands an understanding of complex ecosystems and specific knowledge of invasive plants, and requires precision in the collection of data and the use of GPS.

Leadership skills are also essential. Invasive species like the Tamaligi tree can harm the biodiversity of entire regions. A decade ago, over one-third of Tutuila – American Samoa's main island – was infested,

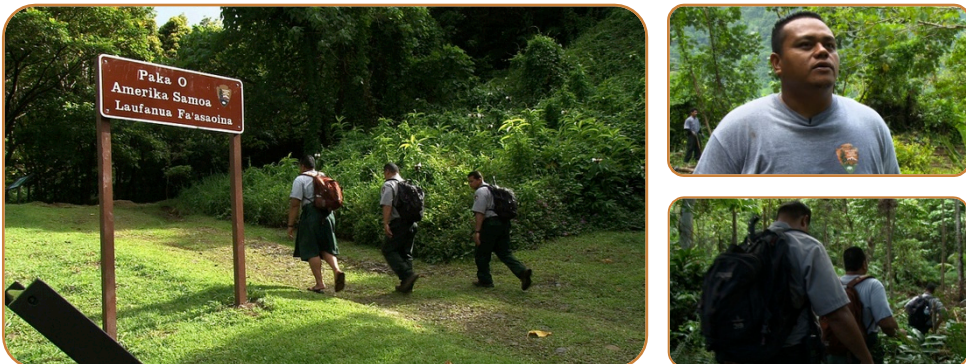
threatening the health of not only the forest canopy but the shoreline and the unique coral reefs for which the island is known. In 2001, the National Park Service launched a campaign to remove this fast-growing tree and its progeny. But as park Superintendent Mike Reynolds observed, invasive species don't stop growing at the park's boundary – they supplant greenery in the villages surrounding the park, too.

That's why the National Park Service emphasizes public education and community engagement in its work. Park Service employees work with Matai leaders to help villagers understand the dangers of invasive species and identify young men to help remove the unwanted plants from village lands – a practice cited as key to the success of American Samoa's efforts in a Pacific Southwest Research study published earlier this year (*Recovery of Native Forest After Removal of an Invasive Tree, *Falcataria moluccana*, in American Samoa*, 2012).

This kind of career demands skilled people who see their work as a kind of calling – a vocation. Workforce programs can help just such people connect with the right work opportunities as the NEG work experience internship program did with Feleti.

Feleti and his colleagues are on a mission. They are cultivating healthy ecosystems in the park and surrounding villages, and reinforcing a culture committed to preserving the natural environment for American Samoa's next generation.

With the help of programs like NEG, they are on their way.



Feleti Faatua'o with his crew in the National Park of American Samoa

Postscript

The American Samoa NEG program was originally scheduled to sunset in June 2012. However, during our work with the NEG team, the program was extended through June 2013. As a result, the new NEG program components launched since April 2012 were not included in our original review.

Contract with Native Hawaiian Holding Company

One of these components⁶³ is a contract between the NEG program and Native Hawaiian Holding Company (NHHC). NHHC specializes in private sector economic and supply chain development and commercial financing in the Pacific region, in tribal nations, and in other underserved communities on the US mainland and in Latin America. Company officials cited primary interests in core industries – healthcare, telecommunications, agribusiness, aquaculture and fisheries, manufacturing and other sectors that promise jobs and economic opportunity, but also help improve the quality of life in the communities in which NHHC works.

⁶³ The NEG contract with Native Hawaiian Holding Company was executed in February 2012, but the company was still launching its operations during our April review – program activities were not yet evident and the One-Stop Center had not yet opened. During our August interim briefing, we did visit the newly opened One-Stop, but were unable to meet with Native Hawaiian representatives. We later conducted phone interviews with two company principals from the US mainland.

As documented in the report, the NEG workforce development strategy (Phase II), called for the establishment of a One-Stop career center to help NEG participants transition to jobs and careers in key sectors American Samoa was trying to develop – such as contact centers. But the NEG program had difficulty contracting with an on-island firm that could meet the program requirements. In particular, the program sought a contractor that could bring additional resources in the form of matching dollars to support program activities, physical infrastructure that could house program operations, or additional staff support for programs (beyond what was contracted), or some combination.

Native Hawaiian Holding Company first learned about the NEG in late 2010.

In 2012, after becoming familiar with the NEG program and assessing opportunities for economic and workforce development and job creation in American Samoa, NHHC successfully bid on a broader \$4.7 million contract that included the following four elements:

- Establishing a contact center to train and employ NEG participants in business services and operations support for industries that would offer them a career path. The contact center would also provide video contact hardware, software and technical support. It would identify companies to contract for contact center services and provide trainees/employees with transportation assistance.

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- Hosting a series of job fairs, recruiting call center business, and working with agencies in American Samoa to assist firms in accessing development support, training, tax incentives, and financing.
- Launching a brick-and-mortar One-Stop Career Center, together with a website, that emphasized job search, education and training, and career development for individuals, and labor market information, training, placement, and tax credit information for employers.
- Placing 900 NEG participants in career-oriented jobs in American Samoa or on the US mainland in communities with large numbers of Samoans.

Another important factor in the decision to contract with NHHHC was the company's expressed commitment to locating in American Samoa for the long term and leveraging company assets (especially capital) to generate private sector activity in the territory.

Results to Date

Since launching its NEG initiative, NHHHC has experienced some successes and encountered serious challenges.

First, in establishing the contact center, NHHHC encountered a number of challenges relating to telecommunications and Internet capacity – from oversubscribed telephone lines that left callers with busy signals to limited Internet access. Because a contact center relies on these technologies, NHHHC set up its own satellite-enabled

broadband Internet and reportedly launched Cisco telepresence sites in ten locations in American Samoa, including Manu'a, reportedly achieving more reliable communications than the island's existing phone networks would allow. However, because the call center positions have not come to fruition as expected, serious questions about the sustainability of these technologies and their cost-effectiveness remain.

Second, NHHHC has hosted a number of job fairs – at the Lee Auditorium ("The Turtle") in Pago Pago. The company reported having identified a number of service-disabled veterans who qualify for business assistance, another area in which NHHHC is experienced. NHHHC linked them to larger firms that can help support and capitalize them through the US Department of Defense Mentor-Protégé program. NHHHC's finance arm (Community Investment Corporation, a Community Development Financial Institution) has reportedly also provided support for undercapitalized businesses. For example, NHHHC helped incorporate as a business the American Samoa Culinary Academy and then assisted the Academy in acquiring two additional restaurants (apart from the student Bistro). These establishments can potentially support the Academy, provide jobs for students, and fill an important market need. A strategic relationship with food export companies in Western Samoa is also reportedly under development. NHHHC has capitalized additional companies in healthcare (in Manu'a), transportation, and hospitality. The company's stated goal is for each of these businesses to be able to hire trained NEG participants.

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NHHC reported some success in placing NEG participants into jobs, though placements have been slower in coming than the company had expected. NHHC planned to place large numbers of applicants in jobs on the US mainland, but did not anticipate the large number of NEG participants who did not have US passports or were reluctant to leave American Samoa. As a result, the company is focusing on local job placement. Because there are fewer jobs in the territory, placement rates are lower than anticipated.

Finally, NHHC established the territory's first One-Stop Career Center in Tafuna, which reportedly processed over 1,200 participants. The center, like career centers on the US mainland, provided training and placement assistance to individuals and hiring, training and other support services to businesses, although core programs on which mainland centers typically rely—such as Unemployment Insurance—are not present in American Samoa.

This is why the Department of Human Resources' NEG and Workforce Investment Act (WIA) programs began exploring creative options for sustaining the Center—shifting it to American Samoa Community College, or to another educational institution or non-profit organization, for example.

However, NEG staff reported the sudden closure of the One-Stop Career Center at the end of December 2012 and are now looking into this unexpected development.

Finally, NHHC has also begun to pursue the creation of a new credit union in the territory, the Community Development Credit Union.

In December 2012, the Bank of Hawaii, one of two retail banks in American Samoa and the only American bank—the other is ANZ, Australia—announced it was leaving American Samoa, and would cease operations at its two branches in March 2013.

The announcement lent urgency to the idea of launching a credit union, which had been discussed for some time. During the last week of December, outgoing Governor Togiola Tulafono signed the permit enabling Community Investment Corporation (CIC) to establish the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation backed Credit Union, headquartered in Fitiuta, Manu'a. CIC collaborated with the US Departments of Interior and Treasury and the American Samoa Departments of Commerce and Human Resources in this effort. The company reportedly offered assurances of its long-term commitment to business development American Samoa to both outgoing Governor Tulafono and incoming Governor Lolo Matalasi Moliga.

Appendix

Appendix A: Phase I Government and Non-Profit Worksites

NEG Phase I Recovery Work in Government Departments

Legal Affairs Office of the Attorney General

Hired NEG participants as clerks, typists and administrative assistants.

Employed 6 people

The Department of Agriculture

Engaged NEG participants in crop restoration, veterinarian assistance to livestock farmers, stray dog control, surveillance and eradication of invasive species hazardous to plants and animals

Employed 97 people

The Department of Commerce

Hired NEG participants to help meet the influx of land use permit application demands of the community in the wake of the tsunami and to help provide customer support and enforce the project notification review system, and help map evacuation routes.

Employed 4 people

The Department of Education

Hired NEG participants as foreman, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, general laborers, and clerks to rebuild and renovate damaged and destroyed schools and classrooms

Employed 87 people

The Environmental Protection Agency

Employed NEG participants as laboratory field assistants and a water program field assistant to help meet the agency's increased demand for water quality monitoring as a result of the tsunami

Employed 3 people

The Territorial Office of Fiscal Reform

Engaged NEG participants: one as an administrative assistant, another as file clerk and third as a construction manager apprentice

Employed 3 people

The Department of Homeland Security

Hired temporary workers to assist with tent distribution and set-up demonstration

Employed 53 people

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The Department of Legal Affairs: Immigration Office

Hired NEG participants for the positions of clerk typist and administrative assistant to complement existing staff in restoring the department to pre-disaster operational level

Employed 5 people

The Legislature of American Samoa

Temporary NEG workers were hired to help restore the Fono to its pre-Tsunami state. The Fono NEG Administrator reported that while the focus of the work assignments was disaster-oriented duties and responsibilities, staff noticed the talents and skills possessed by the young participants and made an effort to nurture these skills by allowing participants to work in other divisions of the Legislature, including the President and Speaker's offices, Legislative Reference Bureau and the Legislative Financial Office

Employed 19 people

The Office of Procurement

Hired NEG participants to identify, inventory, inspect and survey, record and maintain government assets damaged by the tsunami

Employed 30 people

The Office of the Public Defender

Hired a receptionist from the NEG program to fill in for staff assisting with clean-up efforts in the own village, and a computer-internet technician to cover their needs while the office normally responsible for computer support turned their attention to assisting the Emergency Operations Center

Employed 2 people

The Department of Public Works

Deployed NEG participants throughout the Department's various divisions, including administration/finance, civil highway, building, heavy equipment operator, road maintenance, architecture and engineering, maintenance and operations, survey, plumbing, tools and supplies, electric shop, and security

Employed 158 people

The Department of Legal Affairs' Territorial Registrar Office

Hired a clerk typist and administrative assistant from the NEG program to help facilitate the restoration of the pre-disaster operational level of the bank, which included continued cleaning of the office setting, preservation of files, and restoration of the computer network system

Employed 2 people

The Department of Treasury: Payroll and Disbursing Divisions

NEG temporary workers were hired as file clerks to provide the time and person-power to allow these divisions to absorb the extra work created by the influx of over 2,000 workers.

Employed 11 people

The Department of Human Resources

Employed NEG temporary workers to assist with documentation of all NEG events, assist DHR payroll with the increased NEG payroll, and assist with the WIA increased case load, especially in anticipation of participants transitioning from NEG to WIA at the end of NEG Phase 1 activities.

Employed 20 people

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NEG Phase I Recovery Work in Quasi-Public Agencies and Non-Profit Organizations

American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture and Humanities (ASCACH)

NEG participants were hired to cleanup and refurbish ASCACH's Headquarters and the Jean P. Haydon Museum

Employed 113 people

American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA)

Hired temporary workers from the NEG program to support five Divisions: Solid Waste, Water, Business and Finance/Accounting, Records Recovery, and the Facilities, Safety And Maintenance Division, and one as a utility worker. Participants were involved in clean-up and debris removal, construction, grounds keeping and landscaping, pump maintenance, water well chemical injection and water tank refill, responding to water quality trouble calls, and clerical duties such as timesheets, generating/closing work requests, phone directory management, and filing

Employed 86 people

The American Samoa Telecommunications Authority

Recruited NEG participants to support personnel administration, accounting, inventory control, customer service and all aspect of permanent restoration of telecommunications services to affected residents and businesses including telephone repair and maintenance, telephone pole placement, key systems installation and maintenance, cable splicing, repair and maintenance of cellular communication systems/equipment/ component construction of underground conduits and pulling fiber, equipment and vehicle

repair and maintenance, map creation, GIS (geographic information systems) computer-aided drafting, and electrical wiring installation and maintenance

Employed 46 people

Emergency Medical Services

Deployed temporary workers as certified Basic Emergency Medical Technicians, First Responders, a program coordinator, an administrative assistant and a maintenance custodian

Employed 34 people

LBJ Tropical Medical Center

NEG participants were hired to assist in the departments of infection control, the morgue, housekeeping and maintenance, and radiology. In addition to helping with remodeling, repairing and alteration of the Medical Center's vicinity

Employed 46 people

The Pualele Foundation

The *Pualele Foundation's* mission was to help survivors physically and emotionally. The foundation engaged 24 NEG participants in light debris removal, cleaning and crisis counseling management, with some trainees earning a crisis counseling certificate from the Red Cross and the local Dept of Human Social Services

Employed 24 people

Territorial Administration on Aging: Recovery Through our Seniors Project

The "Recovery Through our Seniors" (Toe Afua Mai Matua) Project of the Territorial Administration on Aging hired NEG participants as Senior Support Mentors responsible for utilizing cultural, language

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and seniority skills, and wisdom and life experience to engage other seniors in the process of talking, sharing, and establishing stronger opportunities to allow for dialogue to continue and for seniors to re-enter and integrate back into the community, and covered seven of the agency's 26 functioning worksites throughout the Territory

Employed 26 people

Development Bank of American Samoa

Hired

NEG participants as loan and collections officers; operations, grants, and data entry clerks; and as survey and electrical technicians and carpenters to help extant staff repair property, relocate staff, and restore pre-disaster capacity

Employed 22 people

KVZK TV Station (Public Information Office)

NEG participants placed at KVZK TV Station helped with clean-up, road clearance and provided assistance to the documentation of the Disaster Recovery, as well as to the camera crew for television coverage of the FEMA Disaster Recovery Program

Employed 8 people

Other NEG Phase I Worksites

Inailau A Tina and Tina Mo A Taeao

Hired NEG participants. *Inailau A Tina* employed only women and girls, and *Tina Mo A Taeao* utilized men as well as women in the creation of handicrafts in their efforts to preserve the island's cultural handicrafting work that utilizes local material. Whereas

Inailau A Tina's efforts were aimed at passing this cultural heritage to younger women and girls, *Tina Mo A Taeao's* workforce provided an outlet for senior citizens to socialize and participate in a cultural activity that could potentially earn an income via sales of some of the goods at the port when cruise ships docked to visit the island

Employed 16 people

The Department of Youth and Women Affairs

Hired NEG participants to assist village women with replanting and harvesting pandanus plantations affected by the tsunami and flooding, and using the dried, harvested pandanus leaves to repair fine mats delivered to the worksite by community members

Employed 12 people

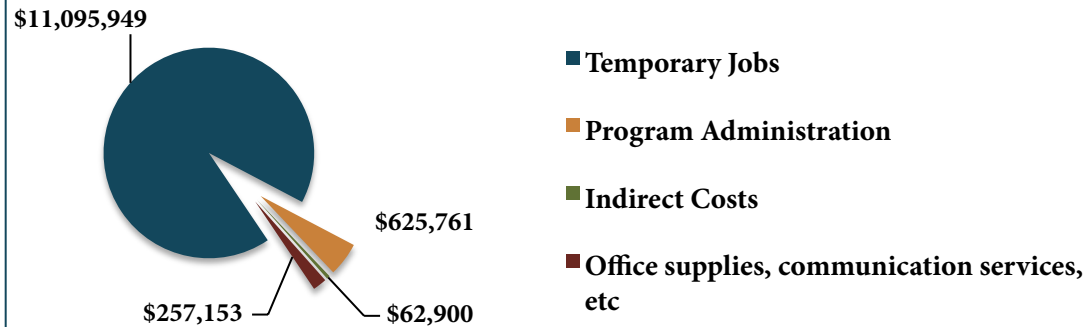
The Women's Community Action Program

The Women's Community Action Program employed 6 NEG participants in positions of administrative assistant, program supervisors, program facilitators, and micro-enterprise specialists in order to conduct outreach workshops to the community at large in learning and obtaining different skills for the betterment of their families in any case of emergency. These workshops included Literacy in Action groups, and micro-enterprise development workshops which addressed agriculture/

Employed 6 people

Appendix B: Budget and Expenditures

Phase I Expenditures



Phase I Expenditures

Temporary Jobs	\$11,095,949
Program Administration	\$625,761
Indirect Costs	\$62,900
Office Supplies	\$257,153

Total Phase I **\$12,041,763**

Phase II Expenditures

Workforce Training and Education

Culinary Training and Equipment	\$594,920
WorkKeys/ KeyTrain	\$178,708
Construction Trades Training	\$665,500
ASCC Tuition & Training	\$213,598

On-the-Job Training & Work Experience

On-the-Job Training	\$882,265
Work Experience Internships	\$1,730,505

One Stop & Placement

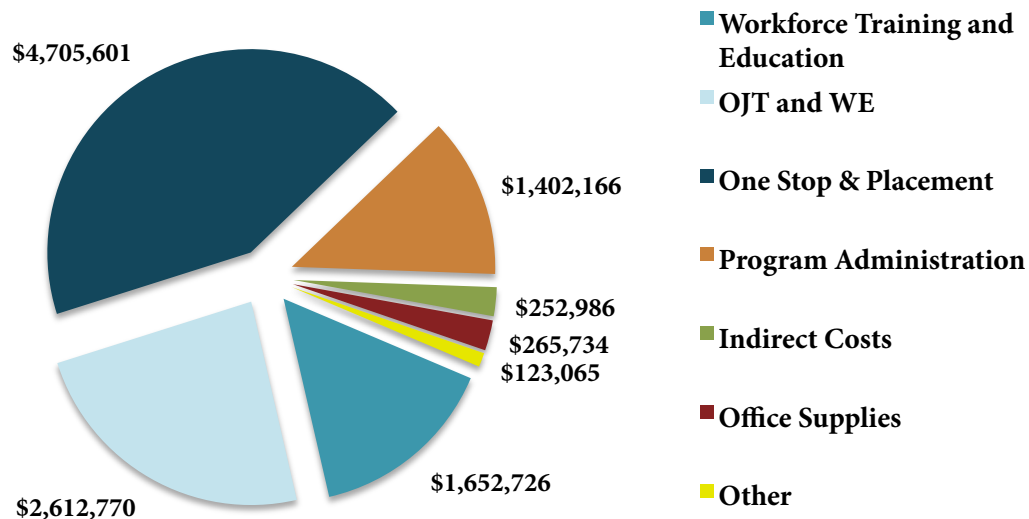
Native Hawaiian Holding Company	\$4,705,601
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Program Management and Administration

Program Management	\$1,402,166
Indirect Costs	\$252,986
Office Supplies	\$265,734
Other	\$123,065

Total Phase II **\$11,015,048**

Phase II Expenditures



Phase I & II Total Expenditures: **\$23,056,811**

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