

Guam receives funds for worker training

GAYNOR DUMAT-OL DALENO
GDUMAT-OL@GUAM.GANNETT.COM

Guam's Department of Labor is helping island employers expand the local labor pool with more trained workers, with the help of federal funds.

The effort to let local employers and employees know of the federally funded jobs program comes in light of Guam employers' recent difficulties hiring or renewing employment for certain foreign workers on H-2 visas.

Under the federally funded Work Experience Program, employers can select trainees for three to six months, after which the employer must hire the individuals who complete the training successfully, according to the Guam Labor Department.

On Guam, several employers started participating in the program late last month, and received their first initial batch of trainees shortly after, the local Labor Department stated.

The wages of the trainees are paid by the federal government, and may not exceed a total of \$4,500 per trainee, said Greg Massey, administrator of the Alien Labor Processing and Certification Division at the local Labor Department.

The participating employers



Guam Department of Labor staff are pictured at their offices. Guam Labor is helping island employers expand the local labor pool with more trained workers, with the help of federal funds.

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are: Cup & Saucer, one trainee; Inland Builders, one trainee; BBR Micronesia, two trainees; and Ace Builders, three trainees, according to Massey.

Over the past several weeks, discussions among immigra-

tion attorneys, private-sector employers and government representatives sought for ways to meet the island's labor needs.

Guam expects to need several thousand additional workers

in light of the military buildup-related projects, but certain construction companies have been experiencing a higher-than-normal number of rejections for H-2 foreign worker visa applications, Pacific Daily

News files show.

U.S. immigration authorities have tightened scrutiny on applications for new or renewal petitions for foreign workers, immigration attorneys and Guam Delegate Madeleine Bordallo have previously stated.

Employers' foreign worker petitions are rejected if they're unable to sufficiently justify that the proposed foreign hires are for temporary jobs, immigration attorneys have said in a previous Pacific Daily News report.

Under the program, some workers are training as painters, baristas and masons, and many more training opportunities could be available depending on who is training with which employer at any given time, Massey stated.

The local Labor Department has received funds through the Workforce Investment Act, which has been in place since 1998. The federal law was replaced by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act in 2015.

The typical federal grant for Guam funds about \$3 million a year to support several different training programs at Guam's American Job Center, according to the local Labor Department.