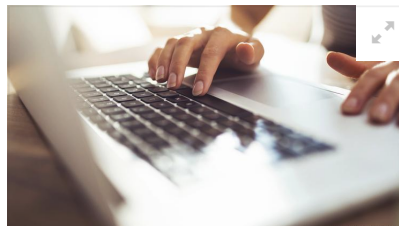


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TRAVEL & TOURISM

Tourism-focused workforce development event moves online this year



ClimbHI's annual LEI program will be held virtually in April.

MARKO GEBER/GETTY



By Christina O'Connor
Reporter, Pacific Business News

48 minutes ago

Workforce development nonprofit ClimbHI is shifting its annual LEI program to a virtual format this year, with the event slated to take place from 9 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. on April 9.

The event aims to introduce students to career opportunities within the hospitality industry, and typically features on-site tours of hotels. With the shift to a virtual format due to Covid-19, this year's LEI will include a virtual conference, career fair resources, guest speakers, giveaways and more.

The event is sponsored by the Hawaii Tourism Authority, or HTA, and is free for participants.

“As Hawaii continues to reopen to visitors after an unprecedented year of challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, programs like LEI have never been more vital in introducing our students to the many opportunities that await them in hospitality,” said John De Fries, president and CEO of HTA, in a statement.

ClimbHI President Julie Morikawa created the event as a way to connect younger generations with the hospitality industry. Since its inception in 2011, LEI has expanded to four islands, and in 2019 drew in more than 1,000 high school students, 150 college students and 110 businesses statewide.

“From the student’s perspective, LEI represents an opportunity for Leadership, Exploration and Inspiration. To the hospitality industry, LEI provides an opportunity to Lead, Expose and Inspire Hawaii’s youth,” said Morikawa in a statement. “The skills and connections fostered by LEI can be applied to so many facets of a student’s life, and we are grateful for the continued support of the HTA and our participating schools, businesses and partners.”

As Morikawa previously told PBN, hosting the event virtually this year will allow ClimbHI to bring in a greater amount of students. She said they are anticipating about 2,000 attendees this year.

As a part of the event, ClimbHI is producing a series of videos in collaboration with HTA and industry businesses that will highlight career options in the visitor industry.

Businesses interested in participating in the event should email info@climbhi.org by April 6.

While LEI focuses on tourism, ClimbHI has expanded its reach in the last couple of years to include programming for a broader range of industries. The organization recently

launched the ClimbHI Bridge, an online platform for businesses from any sector to connect with students for things like internships and volunteer opportunities.

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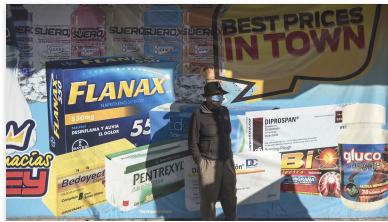
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