



# State of the Territory

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## COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

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38th Legislature, 3rd Regular Session,  
January 8th, 2024



GOVERNOR LEMANU P.S. MAUGA





**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT**

Serial No.: 004 – 24

**Governor's Foreword**

It is with great humility that I present the State of the Territory report for the year 2023. This document encapsulates the collective endeavors of our government, community, and partners as we navigate the path towards progress and resilience in American Samoa. We celebrate yet another year of collaborative efforts taken by the Executive Branch in shaping the landscape of our governance and policy priorities. The commitment of our Government leaders and staff has been instrumental in propelling us forward, and I extend my sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to our successes.

The well-being of our community hinges on the foundational pillars of education, security, and welfare. This report explores the government's dedicated endeavors and initiatives to address the changing needs of our community, fostering a future that is promising and inclusive.

Education has consistently been a fundamental element in our vision for a prosperous American Samoa. The nurturing of our youth is crucial for the sustained progress of our territory. In the past year, we've directed efforts towards bolstering educational infrastructure, encompassing the installation of fences, development of access roads, enhancement of classrooms, kitchens, and the construction of multipurpose buildings. This comprehensive approach aims to cultivate an atmosphere that stimulates curiosity, critical thinking, and creativity, thereby equipping our youth to emerge as the leaders of tomorrow.

Additionally, with the passage of Public Law 38-4, American Samoa has joined the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). This momentous accomplishment opens doors for our graduates, providing substantial tuition savings at over 160 colleges and universities across the Western region. In the face of skyrocketing tuition costs and a massive student loan debt crisis, this legislation offers a beacon of hope by enhancing access and affordability for higher education.

Concurrently, we have maintained a key focus on infrastructure development — from public parks and community space improvements to main and residential area roads. This investment lays the foundations of economic development and an improved quality of life. Notably, in response to the imminent threat of climate change, we are actively constructing seawalls and fortifications, underlining our commitment to safeguarding our communities and preserving our natural environment.

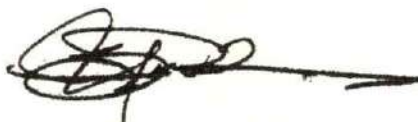
In the realm of security for American Samoa, we remain dedicated to advocating for membership in regional forums, seeking opportunities for collaboration within the Pacific region. This collaboration spans various areas of shared interest, including trade and commerce, tourism, healthcare workforce, energy, and food security, internet access, and climate resilience, among

others. Such comprehensive engagement not only enhances our regional security but also contributes significantly to our financial security and independence, ensuring a sustainable and self-reliant future for American Samoa.

One of the key focuses for the Lemanu Talauega Administration is prioritizing the welfare of the people of American Samoa. Significantly, a substantial allocation of \$300 million from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is directed towards the healthcare sector. This funding is intended to improve the quality of healthcare services within our community, encompassing crucial upgrades to existing hospitals and clinics, the construction of a state-of-the-art facility in the Western District, the establishment of treatment facilities for substance use disorders, and comprehensive initiatives to fortify our healthcare infrastructure.

Recognizing the urgency of the national healthcare workforce crisis, our office collaborates with the National Governors Association to formulate a robust action plan and strategy. This collective effort aims to enhance collaboration among pertinent healthcare stakeholders, addressing the critical need to strengthen our healthcare workforce.

As we reflect on the achievements and challenges detailed in this report, may we continue to work hand in hand to foster a more resilient American Samoa. The journey ahead may be arduous, but with faith and collaboration, we can secure a brighter future for our Territory and the next generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**LEMANU P. S. MAUGA**  
**Governor**

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# FINANCIAL OUTLOOK

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The financial outlook of our Territory showcases the collective work of the Lemanu-Talauega Administration to support the government and people of our Territory. The Administration continues to enforce the continued integrity of revenues to sustain government operations, coordinated efforts with a mid-year budgetary oversight and review, addressed audit recommendations, and implemented corrective actions as provided by the U.S. Treasury Office of Inspector General (OIG) Audit, Government Wide Audit to include the US Department of Education (USDOE) High Risk Audit and the US Government Accountability Office engagements.

## Department of Treasury

The Department of Treasury operates and maintains a wide range of crucial functions that are critical to the American Samoa Government's economic prosperity and financial infrastructure, such as revenue collections, maintaining the American Samoa Government's (ASG) financial accounting system, management of local collections/funds and federal grants for government operations, as well as the disbursements of payments to the public. The mission of the Department of the Treasury serves as the financial agent of the American Samoa Government by administering economic, fiscal and tax policies outlined under law.

**Revenues:** The Department of Treasury is at the forefront of meeting the government's core objectives of financial stability and revenue collection. The Treasury has significantly improved collections and resolved many accounts payable issues to provide the Administration with stability and a clear picture of our financial health.

The year 2023 has been memorable for the Department of Treasury for its unexpected and record revenue collections, maintenance of the ASG's financial regulatory and supervisory system for American Samoa financial system, management of local funds and federal grants for our government operations, as well as the disbursement services to the people of American Samoa.

Due to the increase in federal grants, actual indirect cost collected overall as of the end of FY23 is \$2.3M higher than projected.

Indirect Cost FY2023 Budget \$7 million received \$9,385,620

ASG's DOI Basic Operations grant, as noted below, has a positive variance of \$816,000

DOI Basic Ops. - Gen. Fund \$12,271,000     \$13,087,000

**Tax Refunds:** In the calendar year 2023, the Tax Office disbursed an estimated \$29,205,399.38 million in refunds to taxpayers in American Samoa. This amount includes approximately \$8,124,878.91 million in local refunds and \$7,849,772.00 million in Child Tax Credit (CTC) refunds and a total of \$13,230,748.47 million to eligible taxpayers through the Earned Income Tax Credit.

## Office of Program Planning and Budget

### Preliminary Fourth Quarter Performance Report - FY2023

The inflation (increase in prices) is showing signs of leveling off as a result of the increase in interest rates. However, the high interest rates carry risks of softening demand and the potential of a worldwide economic slowdown. As global risks of a recession remain; in contrast, there are strengths in pockets of our local revenues in the tax area such as in the business sector and child tax credits that have boosted our revenue pool to positive levels.

The federal aids to fund startup and ongoing projects in our economy is producing a positive impact to our revenue streams. These catalysts continue to sustain and provide stability to our economy. A vibrant economy continues to provide a steady pillar towards the solvency of our general fund.

LOCAL FUNDS	FY2023 Approved Budget	YTD 4th Qtr. Exp.	YTD Balance	% of Spending (Exp/Budget)
Executive	85,550,500	83,379,653	2,170,847	97%
Judiciary	3,629,500	2,417,407	1,212,093	67%
Legislature	9,116,500	9,046,628	69,872	99%
Special Programs	26,985,000	36,405,366	(9,420,366)	135%
Non-Departls.	0	30,970,939	(30,970,939)	0%
<b>Total Basic Operation</b>	<b>125,281,500</b>	<b>162,219,993</b>	<b>(36,938,493)</b>	<b>129%</b>

To date, the local fund preliminary FY2023 4<sup>th</sup> quarter YTD expenditures amounted to approximately **\$162.2** million versus the budget of **\$125.3** million; thus leaving **\$36.9** million in the deficit mostly to defray costs incurred on projects to improve our community. With certainty, a preliminary upward trend in the revenue pool has provided great headwinds towards offsetting outlays as a result of building a better environment for our people to enjoy. In summary, our general fund is strong and sound and despite the chaotic headwinds within the global market that continue to drive the illusion of a potential slowdown, our local economy continues to be resilient and thriving.

### FY2024 Spending projections:

The US market has been strong, despite the projected recession by experts in 2023 that never materialized. However, the global economic risks still remain due to geo-political instability and market uncertainty. With inflation (high prices) peaking and projected to slowly descend, economic conditions will improve. With that, our local economy will continue to sustain traction and thrive. As strong collection trends continue, the current YTD estimated expenditures for 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of FY2024 amount to about \$40 million. Overall, projected spending for FY2024 to meet government operations is expected to be around \$160 million.

<b>Approved FY2024 Budget</b>	<b>\$162,500,000</b>
<b>Estimated Year End Expenses</b>	<b>\$162,500,000</b>
<b>Balance Budget (Projected)</b>	<b>0</b>

## American Samoa Economic Development Authority

### Fiscal Responsibility, Compliance & Accountability

**Debt Service (DS) Compliance** managed by the American Samoa Economic Development Authority (ASEDA) continues to be compliant with timely payments to investors, monitoring reports required by our continuing disclosure with the Municipality Securities Rulemaking Authority (MSRB), US Government Accountability Office (GAO) and rating agency.

Debt service earmarks authorized by the Fono coupled with investment interest earned provide the inflow of revenues to sufficiently address our compliance payments. As of September 1, 2023, the Territory has made 16 payments for a total of \$84,166,031.57 of debt service payments to its investors as required.

The general obligation bonds aided over 23 projects to help improve the quality of life; develop sound financial decisions and governance; support economic development; dedicate resources to secure capital improvements that would strengthen infrastructure and provide services in the territory.

### Compliance & Office of Inspector General (OIG) Audit

With the increase in available federal funding to the American Samoa Government, the Lemanu-Talauēga Administration continues to concentrate its efforts in assuring that these funds are spent in accordance with federal and local procurement policies and procedures. ASEDA's priority and commitment to ensure these audits are completed in a timely manner and are resolved supporting the territory's credibility and accountability of governance.

### 2022 Year End Closing/Government-Wide Audit – Annual Investor call – Moody's Rating

The 2022 ASG Single Audit and the Financial audit were performed during the 2023 second quarter. Borders were opened in January 2022 allowing our auditors to conduct on-site visits and complete our audit with our treasury team. Financial Highlights include the following:

- Fiscal Year 2022, the Territory's net position of the primary government increased by \$56.1 million from the previous year;
- During the year, the Territory's expenses for governmental activities totalled \$479.5 million, an increase of \$103.7 million from the previous year. Expenses were primarily funded by federal program revenues, local taxes and fees and other general revenue and bond proceeds;
- The Territory's business-type activities, which include the airport, industrial park, and shipyard, program revenues exceeded expenses by \$3 million compared to the increase of \$702,000 from the prior year;
- The general fund reported a cumulative net fund balance of \$48.1 million as compared to the prior year's net fund of \$25.5 million. The improvement was due to realizing a surplus in FY 2022 of \$22.6 million. Since 2012, ASG has continued from the prior and current administration has recorded a year-end surplus in the General Fund nine of the ten fiscal years.

The fund balance of the territory has improved over the years, preliminary reports indicate another positive fiscal year.



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The primary government of the Territory again received an “unmodified” opinion in its Governmental Activities, Business-Type Activities, General Fund, Grant Fund, Capital Projects Fund, Debt Service Fund, Airport Fund and Aggregate Remaining Fund Information. However, the Aggregate Discretely Presented Component Units received a “Modified” Opinion due to the failure of the Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS) to provide an updated or 2022 financial audited report. Instead, the TBAS 2021 audited financials were incorporated into the ASG financials for 2022. Due to this failure on the part of the government wide, our financial audit was not complete. ASEDA as required by its bond disclosure requirements and covenants filed a “Failure to File” with its investors through the reporting mechanism of MSRB.

As concurred with our auditors and the Treasury, we anticipate an updated TBAS audit this January 2024 in preparation of the 2023 audit completion with all primary and components units to be filed on April 30, 2024.

ASEDA held its annual call with Moody’s for their Review and Analysis in May of 2023. Purpose was to provide Moody's Investment Services an update to ASEDA’s rating. Questions and responses were provided to specific questions from ASG’s financials among other queries. ASEDA was pleased to receive confirmation of its outstanding rating of Baa3 with a stable outlook.

ASEDA held its Annual Investor call in June 2023 to provide information to investors. ASEDA provided specific responses to various questions posed by investors. Questions ranged from finances of ASG, economy of the Territory, Medicaid, ARPA, Federal Assistance, LBJ Medical Center, ASGERF, and updates to bond funded projects.

### **U.S. Treasury Office of the Inspector General Audit**

This year marks the ongoing audit of over three (3) and a half years since July 2020, required submissions to the U.S. Department of Treasury Office of the Inspector General as part of the audit of the \$35 million Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF) received under the previous administration.

Currently, 1 of 4 reports is complete as the first interim report, 3 additional reports will be forthcoming once review is complete, targeted completion date is September 2025. Initial questioned costs over \$9.3 million to include access roads, MV Pago Pago purchase, school improvements, DPS vehicles, TBAS, Visitors Bureau and others. The territory has recently provided additional documentation and justification of \$3.9 million questioned costs for the above projects. The Interim Report #1 identified the MV Pago Pago as an ineligible purchase.

To date, the 2020 COVID-19 Fono stipends, Leapaga lease payments and the purchase of the MV Pago Pago are ineligible costs and ASG has reimbursed U.S. Treasury these costs of over \$2.5 million. The territory is awaiting the decision of the most recent submission if additional questions and ineligible costs must be reimbursed to the U.S. Treasury.

### **Government Accountability Office (GAO)**

Audits, review and engagements are facilitated through requests of congressional committees or subcommittees or are statutorily required by public laws or committee reports. The review provides Congress, the leaders of U.S. executive agencies and the public with timely, fact-based, non-partisan information. The territory has undergone a total of five (5) engagements this past

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year with a few ongoing. Completed are the Territorial Debt and COVID-19 with issued GAO reports.

Engagement 106045 Territorial Debt Engagement is a result of the Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act (PROMESA) which contains provision for GAO to review public debt to each U.S. territory every 2 years, this is our 5th engagement since the passage of the PROMESA legislation. Highlights from the current 2023-2024 report include the following:

As of September 30, 2021 American Samoa's total debt outstanding was \$162.2 million, or about 23 percent of GDP (\$710.8 million). This reflects recent borrowing to invest in its infrastructure. The government's pension plan is underfunded and the government is increasing contributions to extend solvency. American Samoa's economy is stable but continues to depend almost entirely on activity generated by the Starkist Samoa Company tuna cannery and government employment. Prospects for economic growth outside of these areas face challenges.

Engagement 106050 COVID-19 Relief funding to U.S. territories as mandated in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; review what the territory received and how the funds were utilized. GAO conducted an on-site visit this past January, meetings held with local, federal and our Chamber of Commerce partners and members to review the challenges of the various engagements to include COVID-19 funds to the territory with the Task Force, Climate Risks with the American Samoa Resilience Commission and Territorial Debt with ASEDA.

The COVID-19 GAO report is issued, the outcomes and takeaways can be summed in 4 focus areas. 1) leveraging pre-existing programs, 2) technical Assistance, 3) funding flexibilities and 4) immediate available funding. The leveraging of existing programs encountered fewer challenges due to readily available technical assistance from its federal program counterparts, the flexibility of the federal funding to meet the challenges of the unprecedented global pandemic were crucial and the immediate funding readily available instead of awaiting reimbursements all contributed to a successful approach to the COVID-19 efforts and deployment of safety measures to keep the territory and its citizens safe from the deadly effects of the virus.

Engagement 106236 Indo-Pacific Climate Change Risks pursuant to a congressional committee chair on how the U.S. government departments and agencies have supported the analysis of climate risks, the effectiveness and actions. The engagement is ongoing as we await additional requests for information and documentation.

Engagement 106574 Federal Collection of Data from U.S. Territories concurrent to the U.S House of Representatives on Natural Resources and Delegates request to review recent 2020 Census data collection on population decline combined with data collection challenges have given rise to heightened concerns on unique and disproportionate challenges in obtaining quality federal statistics related to the territories. Entrance call and initial documentation to include the Statistical Data of the Commerce Department as well as the Vital Statistics have been provided to GAO. The territory is awaiting any additional queries and requests for additional information.

Engagement 106670 AMBER Alert Expansion in response to a U.S. Congressional mandate under the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act 2021 reviewing expansion of the amendments to include efforts to eliminate the gaps at airports, maritime ports,

border crossing areas and checkpoints. Ensuring the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) is providing the required assistance and support to its U.S. territories. The territory has held its entrance call and is working with both GAO and the delegation team of the AMBER Alert Training and Technical Assistance (TA) Program. The TA team is tentatively scheduled to be on island in February 2024 to meet with enforcement, legal and policy leaders to help navigate through the federal requirements and determine the best approach to be implemented in the territory.

Ensuring budgetary compliance is a priority of the Lemanu-Talauega Administration. Adjusting cost-saving measures will be put in place as a result of any shortfalls or improper expenditures. Weekly compliance review meetings are conducted throughout the year and will continue to ensure the government has complied and instituted corrective measures as these types of non-budgetary concerns and findings arise. The Administration will continue to be vigilant in this endeavor to resolve our findings and incorporate recommendations for improvements.

ASEDA will continue to support the Administration in all audits, reviews and engagements and comply in a timely manner to ensure accountability to adhering to bond covenants, disclosure requirements, good governance, and responsible stewards of government funds.

## **Territorial Audit Office**

In 2023, the Territorial Audit Office (TAO) prioritized performance audits, investigations, and surprise cash counts to enhance government operations' effectiveness, efficiency, and economy, while also preventing fraud, waste, and abuse. The year was one of significant changes for the Territorial Audit Office as it hired three new staff and a chief auditor on contract. Mike Edmonds, the Chief Auditor, was confirmed as the first Territorial Auditor in more than 10 years.

### **Performance Audits, Investigations, and Cash Counts Completed in 2023**

- Performance Audit of the Tax Receivables of the Department of Treasury's Tax Office Division
- Performance Audit of the ASG Christmas Festival's Food Vouchers
- Performance Audit of Department of Health's Care Act Funding
- Performance Audit of the Medicaid Program
- Performance Audit of the American Samoa Travel and Visitors' Bureau
- Investigation of the Department of Agriculture's Alleged Misuse of Government Resources-Eggs from Samoa
- Surprise Cash Count of the Department of Port Administration
- Surprise Cash Count of the Territorial Registrar

### **Performance Audits and Other Reports Pending**

- Audit of the Port Administration's Accounts Receivables
- Audit of the Department of Public Safety Expenditures
- Audit of the COVID-19 Quarantine Program

In addition to these audits, the TAO has been working through the Compliance Review Committee to develop and implement the first Ethical Climate Survey for American Samoa. The biosurvey should be sent out to ASG employees in the upcoming months and should be finished by the end of the calendar year. The survey will provide a baseline for assessing the ASG's ethical climate, as well identifying future training opportunities on ethics.

**American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Grant**

The TAO secured approval for a \$159,000 grant, earmarked for covering rent for the next three years and acquiring office equipment like video conferencing machines and computers. In the preceding fiscal year, the Office utilized a \$251,000 Technical Assistance Program Grant to fund three staff positions for the current fiscal year.

**Audit Manual**

The TAO spent considerable time developing a new audit manual that will be finalized by the end of the calendar year. The new manual will guide staff in conducting performance audits in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Audit Standards (GAGAS).

**Staff Training**

From January 24-26, 2023, the Pacific & Virgin Islands Training Initiatives (PITI-VITI), supported by the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs and administered by the Graduate School USA, conducted a three-day government-wide training for ASG Departments and Agencies. Ethics officers and employees from ASG attended courses tailored to address common challenges, equipping them with tools to navigate and respond to ethical dilemmas. A total of 93 individuals attended the training and a total of 169 participants were awarded certificates. The TAO is collaborating with PITI-VITI to deliver a similar training in American Samoa scheduled for January 16-18, 2024.

**Association of Pacific Island Public Auditors (APIPA) 2023 Annual Conference**

The Association of Pacific Islands Public Auditors (APIPA) conducted its 34th annual conference in Majuro, Republic of the Marshall Islands, from August 28 to September 1, 2023. Themed "Shining a Light on Public Accountability," the conference aimed to enhance public awareness of the significance of auditing public resources and fortify the auditing profession in our jurisdictions. The conference offered twenty courses across plenary, audit, audit supervisory, finance, advanced finance, and management tracks, drawing 400 participants, including the Acting Territorial Auditor and an Audit Manager. Both received up to 40 hours of Continuing Professional Education (CPE) and had the opportunity to network with auditors from across the Pacific Region.

**Other Activities**

In accordance with its mandate, TAO has developed its annual work plan for the 2023-24 Fiscal Year. Additionally, TAO initiated discussions with the Pacific Association of Supreme Audit Institutions (PASAI) and APIPA to share information on common problems facing auditors in the Pacific Region, provide joint training opportunities, and ultimately enhance the TAO's capabilities.

**U.S. Department of Education Risk Compliance**

The U.S. Department of Education's High-Risk designation and semiannual reporting constitute an ongoing audit process. The High-Risk Task Force (HRTF) submitted its latest report on November 30, 2023, to the U.S. Department of Education Risk Compliance. This report aims to address persistent high-risk issues and enhance risk compliance within the department. U.S. DOE conducted a site visit in September, with teams from Consolidated Grants, Management Support and IDEA meeting with AS DOE and other relevant departments. While the U.S. DOE High-Risk Team did not physically travel to American Samoa, they collaborated with the visiting



U.S. DOE team, aiming to yield valuable information. Currently, some of the open findings are awaiting a site visit, and the HRTF is optimistic that collaboration with various components of the U.S. DOE will facilitate the exchange of information, leading to decisions or guidance on these findings.

## American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Oversight Office

The America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) represents a monumental legislative effort aimed at addressing the economic and healthcare challenges facing the Territory of American Samoa. In FY2023, the ARPA Oversight Office continued its efforts to implement the ARPA Recovery Plan and saw progress on projects across the board. The Office has dealt with challenges including allocating funds most effectively and ensuring compliance among a wide range of departments, agencies, and project types. There remain, however, many opportunities and projects underway that will put the nearly \$500,000,000 in State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds to use in a way that will help American Samoa not only recover from the effects of the pandemic but prepare us for the future. This accomplishment report provides an overview of the progress and achievements made during the reporting period in implementing ARPA initiatives for each project and program.

FY 2023 Key ARPA Oversight Office Allocation/Performance Accomplishments:

1. **Project Name:** New Hospital, Fagaalu Hospital Improvements and Expansion, and Enhance Healthcare Workforce Capacity

**EC:** 1.7

**Amount:** \$300,000,000 (Breakdown below)

**Project 1:** Faga'alu Expansion

**Amount:** \$50,000,000.00

- Completed less than 50%
- Planning and pre-construction phase ongoing
- Project Status to be updated once the expansion project begins

**Project 2:** New 40 Bed-Hospital/Medical Office in Tafuna

**Amount:** \$200,000,000.00

- Completed less than 50%
- Contract executed with AHL on 19 January 2023
- Project has completed space programming and schematic design phase
- Project currently in Design Development phase and on track for its projected construction start date on October 2024

**Project 3:** Staffing Recruitment, Retention and (re)Training for both Faga'alu and Tafuna LBJTMC sites

**Amount:** \$50,000,000.00

- Completed less than 50%
- LBJ Management continuing planning and recruitment of needed staffing

2. **Project Name:** Behavioral Health Services & Drug and Alcohol Facility

**EC:** 1.12 - Behavioral Health Services

**Amount: 24,000,000 (Breakdown below)**

**Project 1: Behavioral Health Service & Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Facility**  
**EC: (1.10 – Mental Health Services) (1.11 Substance Use Services)**

**Amount: \$23,010,000.00**

- Behavioral Health Addendum approved.
- Request for bidding forms in progress to adhere to the local procurement process.
- Pending awarding of A&E contract to qualified bidder.

**Project 2: Vet Clinic Relocation**

**EC: 1.12 - Other Public Health Services**

**Amount: \$990,000.00**

- Vet Clinic addendum in progress for major renovation and pending letter from Governor’s office to verify location.
- Request for bidding form in progress for local procurement process.
- Pending Survey Location

3. **Project Name: Village Community Health Centers**

**EC: 1.7 - Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses**

**Amount: \$20,000,000 (Breakdown below)**

**Project 1: Laboratory Conversion**

**EC: 5.16 - Infrastructure – Broadband: “Last Mile Projects”**

**Amount: \$2,705,829.00**

- The change order for the Laboratory Conversion Project is in progress to adhere to the local procurement process to complete remaining work

**Project 2: Ofu and Olosega Clinic**

**EC: 5.17 - Infrastructure – Other projects**

**Amount: \$2,375,565.00**

- Project planning and implementation.
- Addendum in progress for land lease agreement.
- Request for Bidding in progress to adhere to local procurement process.

**Project 3: COVID-19 Administration Building**

**EC: 5.17 - Infrastructure – Other projects**

**Amount: \$2,563,094.00**

- Project planning and implementation.
- Addendum in progress for combining projects.
- Request for Bidding in progress to adhere to local procurement process.

**Project 4: Aunu’u Community Health Clinic**

**EC: 5.17 - Infrastructure – Other projects**

**Amount: \$2,415,048.00**

- Project planning and implementation.
- Addendum in progress for land lease agreement.
- Request for Bidding in progress to adhere to local procurement process.

**Project 5: Ta’u Community Health Clinic**

**EC: 5.17 Infrastructure – Other projects**

**Amount:** \$2,789,225.00

- Project planning and implementation.
- Addendum in progress for land lease agreement.
- Request for Bidding in progress to adhere to local procurement process.

**Project 6:** Fitiuta Medical Expansion

**EC:** 5.17 Infrastructure – Other projects

**Amount:** \$398,945.00

- Project planning and implementation.
- Request for Bidding in progress to adhere to local procurement process.

**Project 7:** Aunu’u & Manu’a Medical Evacuation Vessel

**EC:** 1.12 Other Public Health Services

**Amount:** \$770,000.00

- DOH is conducting research for recommendations for the most appropriate type of vessel.

**4. Project Name:** Non-profit Assistance Program (NAP)

**Expenditure Category:** 2.34 – Assistance to Impacted Nonprofit Organizations (Impacted or Disproportionately Impacted)

**Amount:** \$4,800,000.00

- 22 applicants were approved and issued award letters
- All MOA’s have been signed by all parties and submitted to the ARPA Oversight office.
- All 22 award grantees have completed the Purchase Order forms and submitted to the Procurement Office.
- All 22 award grantees have been identified by the Department of Treasury and have been granted “vendor ID’s” which means that they are recognized parties in the ASG finance system currently used.
- 1 of the subrecipients has completed their entire project.
- 17 of the subrecipients have begun spending their awarded funds and have their projects underway.
- Almost 40% of the entire awarded funds has been encumbered and spent on both nonprofit projects and personnel.

<b>Nonprofit Organization</b>	<b>Award Amount</b>
Alofa Tunoa Samoa Medical Supply	\$91,500
Parents with Children of Special Needs	\$100,000
American Samoa Legal Aid	\$52,000
Harvest Vision Church Inc.	\$20,000
American Samoa Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence	\$60,000
Pala Lagoon Swimming Centers Inc.	\$68,200
Intersection Inc.	\$50,000
American National Red Cross	\$25,000
Back on Track	\$50,000
Tualatai I – Drug Free Coalition	\$75,000
Friends of the Museum of American Samoa	\$50,372

Agency for Better Living Endeavors (ABLE)	\$100,000
Nature's Educational Laboratory of American Samoa Inc.	\$40,000
The James Christopher Foeoletini Ledoux Foundation	\$100,000
Marion Elmer Liki Reed II Foundation	\$40,000
American Samoa Community Cancer Coalition	\$47,500
Hope House	\$2,900,000
CCCAS Nua & Se'etaga	\$175,000
Oceania Community Development of Network	\$71,000
CCCAS Aoa	\$85,000
CCCAS Kananafou	\$250,000
CCCAS Amanave	\$100,000

- 5. Project Name:** Business Recovery Capital Program (BRCP) – Revolving Line of Credit and BRCP Grants and Cash Assistance Program (CAP)  
**EC:** 2.29 – Loans or Grants to Mitigate Financial Hardship  
**Amount:** \$12,000,000 (**Breakdown below**)

**Project 1: RLOC**

**Amount:** \$5,000,000.00

- As of June 30, 2023, there were a total of 23 active; 2 paid off and closed (not to be renewed); 2 paid off and to be renewed; 1 charged-off; and 1 commitment expired and rescinded.
- Total commitments were at \$4.25 million against outstanding balances of \$3.133 million. The one charge-off totaled \$50k. 2ea. ready for renewal totaled \$200k while the non-renewal (due to lack of activity previously) was \$300k and one rescission was for \$75k.
- The total available for term-out was at \$3.133 which should be paid off via monthly reductions by 12/31/26. It is anticipated that with the term outs, the amounts needed for collateral deposit account will come down gradually.

<b>Summary</b>	
Total Active Accounts	23
Total Closed/Payoff Accounts	4
Total Charge-Off	1
Recission	1
Total all Accounts	29
Total Approved Commitments	\$4,250,000
Outstanding Balance	\$3,132,892
Payoff Total	\$500,000



Charge Off Total	\$50,000
Recission	\$75,000
Total Interest APR-JUN 23	\$45,447.61

**Project 2: BRCP Grants**

**Amount:** \$4,000,000.00

- As noted, 37 have been fully disbursed and we are processing the grant close-out procedures which include a final site inspection documented for the files.
- The remaining 149 were sent letters indicating individual anniversary award dates and were given an additional up to a month grace period to fully utilize the funds or the draws will be closed, and funds remitted back to the program. We will follow for closeout and report by September 30th as the majority are coming due.

#	Amounts	Status
37	\$743,000	Fully Funded and Completed Award
36	\$743,000	90% to 99% Funded
37	\$743,000	50% to 80% Funded
76	\$1,513,827	0% to 50% Funded

**Project 3: CAP**

**Amount:** \$2,000,000.00.

- To date, DOC issued \$1,218,882 to 199 eligible CAP awardees. The total allocated to this program was \$2 million. The program is closed and DOC is working on final closing procedures and will report on the next quarter 2023.

DOC ARPA Funding	Total Funding	Total Awarded & Obligated	Funding Balance	# of Applicants Funded
CAP	\$2,000,000	\$1,218,882	0	199

**6. Project Name:** New Seaport Facilities, Pago Pago International Airport Terminal Building Constructions, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine

**EC:** 1.7 - Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (Including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)

**Amount:** \$40,000,000.00 (**Breakdown below**)

**Project 1: Seaport Facilities**

**EC:** 2.13 Other Economic Support

**Amount:** \$20,000,000.00

- At the moment, project performance is measured based on weekly meetings, weekly progress reports, and monthly pay applications. DPA also performs site visits daily to ensure the project is progressing according to the work plan and schedule.

- Demolition – Complete

**Project 2: New Inter-Island Transportation Economic Program**

**EC:** 2.13 Other Economic Support

**Amount:** \$6,500,000.00

**Status:**

- At the moment, project performance is measured based on weekly meetings, weekly progress reports, and monthly pay applications. DPA also performs site visits daily to ensure the project is progressing according to work plan and schedule.

**Project 3: Pago Pago International Airport Terminal Building Reconstruction**

**EC:** 2.13 Other Economic Support

**Amount:** \$15,000,000.00

**Status:**

- At the moment, project performance is measured based on weekly meetings, weekly progress reports, and monthly pay applications. DPA also performs site visits daily to ensure the project is progressing according to work plan and schedule.

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**7. Project Name: DBAS MAOTA Affordable Loan Project (DBAS MALP)**

**EC:** 2.15 Long-term Housing Security: Affordable Housing

**Amount:** \$8,000,000.00

- Implementation of the DBAS MALP, DBAS accomplished the following:
  - Hired a Project Manager. Hired two building inspectors. Hired two loan officers.
  - Hired an Office Assistant and Administrative Assistant.
  - Conducted orientation workshops on the DBAS MALP for prospective, interested loan applicants.
  - Issued passes and lottery tickets to prospective, interested loan applicants.
  - Conducted the lottery and picked the winners to apply for home renovations and new homes.
  - First round DBAS MALP Lottery was conducted on September 6, 2022, and 25 applicants were selected for a chance to apply for home renovations, 7 applicants from Eastern District were pulled for new homes and 15 Western District applicants were selected for new homes.
  - Second round Conducted DBAS MALP workshops with residents of Tutuila on September 19, 2022, at the Lee Auditorium, Pago Pago, American Samoa; 400+ members of the community attended.
  - Reviewed submitted loan applications.
  - Approved loan applications that met all the loan requirements.
  - Submitted administrative expenses for reimbursement.
  - Established an MALP ACH account.
  - DBAS Maota Grants Team attended the ARPA Mandatory Workshop on reporting at the ASG ARPA Oversight Office on September 7, 2022.
  - The DBAS MALP loan officers participated in the workshop on underwriting loans conducted by the DBAS President Ruth Matagi.

- Conducted DBAS MALP workshops with residents of Tutuila on August 9-10, 2022, at the Lee Auditorium, Pago Pago, American Samoa; 438 members of the community attended.
- As of June 2023, DBAS have committed funding of \$880,000 for 15 New Home Constructions for Tutuila residence and have disbursed \$207,115.22.
- As of June 2023, we have committed funding of \$523,996.00 for 32 Home Renovations for Tutuila residence and have disbursed \$247,695.90.

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**8. Project Name:** Broadband iNEI

**Expenditure Category:** 5.21 Broadband: Other Projects

**Amount:** \$10,000,000.00

- ASTCA – 5G network upgrade (\$3,350,000)
  - ASTCA is working closely with Ericsson to troubleshoot issues starting with Tafuna and then move to next sites. So far, it has improved compared to before, but will get better.
- BlueSky – 5G network upgrade (\$3,350,000)
  - Phase 1 Deployment and launch of 5G NR across Tutuila and Aunu’u
  - Phase 2 Increase 5G capacity and 5G sites across Tutuila and Aunu’u
  - Phase 3:
    - Deployment of three sites in Manu’a
    - Deployment of two new coverage sites in Tutuila – Sailele and Fagali’i
- ASTCA – Manu’a Cable Repair (\$2,800,000)
  - Scheduling a cable repair ship
  - Obtaining proper permitting (scheduling conflicts) American Samoa
- Department of Commerce – BCORD Administrative Costs (\$500,000)
  - Continued monitoring of project status.

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**9. Project Name:** ASPA Water System Improvement Projects

**EC:** 5.11 Drinking Water: Transmission & Distribution

**Amount:** \$20,000,000.00 (**Breakdown below**)

**Project 1:** ACP Replacement (Tafuna)

**Amount:** \$4,000,000.00

- 70% of the design is complete, fire flow testing is on-going
- 50% design complete
- PNRS hearing for land use permit completed.

**Project 2:** ACP Replacement (Pago)

**Amount:** \$2,000,000.00

- Final design package including plans, specifications, cost estimates, and structural plans and calculations for the Pipe crossing at Vaipito Stream being transmitted and under ASPA review.
- Pre-final design submittal completed, awaiting final review and comments from ASPA
- PNRS site visit for Land use permit completed.

- Preliminary design deliverables completed, reviewed, and awaiting corrections from the designer per ASPA comments.

**Project 3: ACP Replacement (Aua)**

**Amount:** \$3,500,000.00

- RFQ for Materials was issued and the closing date is July 19, 2023. Prepare RFP for the project construction.
- Completed design portion of project.

**Project 4: CIP Replacement (Pago Hillside)**

**Amount:** \$2,500,000.00

- 06.19.23 Design in Progress
- 05.23.23 LUP No. 22-8485 ASG approved.
- 04.10.23 NTP Issued
- 03.20.23 Pre-Design Meeting Completed

**Project 5: ACP Replacement Airport Loop (Tafuna)**

**Amount:** \$1,500,000.00

- The procurement department is currently in the process of acquiring materials for purchase.
- Permitting and design is in progress.

**Project 6: Well Exploration Drilling and Connection (Tutuila)**

**Amount:** \$2,000,000.00

- Land Use Permits are in progress

**Project 7: HDPE Pipe Replacement Phase III (Tualauta)**

**Amount:** \$8,870

- Design is 100% Complete
- Permitting and RFQ/RFP in progress
- Project has been redirected to other sources of funding.
- Completed ARPA Goals for Designing Water Safety for the Territory
- Amend RFQ/RFP to alleviate Coagulation.

**Project 8: Rehabilitation of Welded Steel Tanks (Tutuila)**

**Amount:** \$700,000.00

- Project is 66% complete.
- Contract Awarded to JF Tanks for three (3) Tanks
- Completed Rehabilitation for Pavaiai Tank #2
- Completed Rehabilitation for Pavaiai Tank #3
- Issued NTP for Pavaiai Tank #3 Rehabilitation

**Project 9: Water Salinity Reduction (East Side Tutuila, Aunu'u)**

**Amount:** \$1,800,000.00

- Project RFP is out for advertisements for both Aunu'u Desalination System and the new R.O's for Pago Pago, Fagaitua and Alao.
- Redirection Completed: \$800K redirected from Rehabilitation of Existing Welded Steel Tanks to add three RO units for the Eastside.
- Site visit and easement application for Desalination plant scheduled.
- RFP for project materials closes on June 30, 2023.



**Project 10:** Coagulation-Flocculation Treatment Plant (Well 72 & 81)

**Amount:** \$1,991,130.00

- 06.23.2023 Request approved to Amend project HDPE Pipe Replacement Phase III to Coagulation-Flocculation Treatment Plant (Wells 72 & 81).

**10. Project Name:** ARPA Cash Assistance Program (CAP) for Impacted Non-Profit Worker

**EC:** 2.9 Unemployment Benefits or Cash Assistance to Unemployed Workers

**Amount:** \$200,000.00

- Total Claims – 56
- Pending Claims – 6
- Total Paid Amount - \$39,214.00

**11. Project Name:** Public Buildings CDC Compliance Program

**EC:** 1.4 Prevention in Congregate Settings (Nursing Homes, Prisons/Jails, Dense Work Sites, Schools, Child Care Facilities, etc.)

**Amount:** \$12,000,000.00 (**Breakdown below**)

**Project 1:** Department of the Treasury

**Amount:** \$1,480,000.00

- Task 1 & 2 are in the final stages of the procurement process, with a contract waiting to be issued to the vendor. We anticipate the project starting between July and August of 2023. Task is at 20%.
- Task 3 is completed 100% since the prior reporting period (August 2022).
- Task 4 is completed 100% since the prior reporting period (August 2022).
- Task 5 is completed 100%. since the prior reporting period (August 2022).
- Task 6 is completed 100% since the prior reporting period (August 2022).
- Task 7 is slightly behind schedule, with an anticipated launch date of the ASG Procurement.
- Contracts feature/functions by the end of July. More time was required to outline in detail individual processes at the department level and incorporate them into the respective signature workflows.
- This project is now at 35% completed.

**Project 2:** Department of Public Works

**Amount:** \$700,000.00

- A vendor was selected and awarded for the new Vacuum Truck: American Material Handling, Inc. Some changes were made in the funding allocation for DPW because of the cost of shipping and handling for the Vacuum Truck. Projected arrival of Vacuum Truck to American Samoa is July 2024. The new vacuum truck goes through a process of various features for the truck to be installed.

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Funding</b>
Vacuum Truck	\$680,000.00
Office Cubicles	\$20,000.00

**Project 3: Department of Public Safety****Amount:** \$450,000.00

- DPS facilities are being renovated properly to ensure public health safety and social distancing.
- Tafuna substation with 20+ employees (civilians and uniformed officers) is currently undergoing a major renovation on their building to provide for a safe working environment that practices social distancing and the public health safety.
- Renovations are at an estimated 30% completion at the Tafuna sub-station while the Fagatogo Main Station and Faga'itua substation renovations are currently pending initiation of procurement process on bidding for contractors.
- The Tafuna substation with newly installed carpet, and office dividers for each different divisions provides for a more improved and cleaner environment.
- The TCF ventilation system project is also still pending initiation of project due to changes within the Department's management. Resuming discussions soon with new management to ensure proper protocols and procurement procedures are followed to complete this much needed project for the correctional facility.
- All 3 stations received fumigation and pest control treatment to protect its facilities from infestation.

**Project 4: Department of Human Resources****Amount:** \$475,000.00**Status:**

- To date, less than 50% of the project has been completed as DHR has been assessing available information on cost estimates and working with the Office of Procurement on making the proper purchases.

**Project 5: Department of Legal Affairs****Amount:** \$150,000.00**Status:**

<b>Phase</b>	<b>Proposed Action Plan</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>1</b>	Initiation of procurement process for supplies/equipment and installation of barriers window	<b>60%</b>
<b>2</b>	Oversight of construction projects, supplies, and equipment secured through purchase order and remote work implemented	<b>60%</b>
<b>3</b>	Construction of Barrier Windows and Ventilation Systems	<b>Complete</b>

**Project 6: Fono (Legislature of American Samoa)****Amount:** \$2,731,600.00

- The American Samoa Legislature's main building and office wings are currently under construction. The construction project began in 2018 and since the outbreak of the covid pandemic; the project has experienced

numerous delays and modifications. While these adjustments are costly, the goal of the project is to ensure proper covid safety measures are implemented in the construction and operative services the Legislature provides. In doing so, this project aims to incorporate and implement the safety practices and restrictions as mandated by the government. These practices will be mandated and enforced in all legislative operations and procedures. Due to the delays on the construction of the new Legislature main building there currently have not been any funds expended.

**Project 7: Office of the Administrative Law Judge**

**Amount:** \$185,000.00

- Total Cost of IT Equipment & Related Services is \$59,709.
- Total Cost of Building Repairs / Security / and CV-19 furniture is \$125,291 (Includes \$4,291 apportionment for furniture)

**Project 8: Office of Program Planning and Budget**

**Amount:** \$285,000.00

- Completed less than 50%
- The Budget Office has received needed equipment such as computers for their work operations and also updated versions to accommodate them with their responsibilities in processing and reviewing a lot of government processed payments that come through their office.
- Budget has plans in place and are working on full renovations of their present office space from cubicle layout, old flooring and ceiling, doors, walls, and window blinds, upgrading their A/C system, purchase PPE COVID 19 material & supplies, equipment and amenities, improving employee break room to be used as isolation quarantine room whenever it's necessary, upgrade storage and printing room, and the front waiting area.

**Project 9: Department of Administrative Services**

**Amount:** \$1,820,000.00

- Plans for barriers and AC ventilation modifications and UVGI light installation therefore progressed.
- Construction sketches were made and shared with administration and staff to refine.
- Public Works was then requested to visit and provide a Scope of Work.

**Project 10: Department of Homeland Security**

**Amount:** \$1,253,000.00

- This project has not been fully implemented and is in the procurement phase.

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**12. Project Name:** Protecting Communities from COVID-19 (Office of Samoan Affairs)

**EC:** 1.7 - Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (Including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)

**Amount:** \$950,000.00

- Negotiations with the Department of Parks and Recreation for renovations
  - Followed the U.S. Dept. of Labor overtime regulations and compensatory payments made through the local Department of Treasury's Payroll division.
-

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**13. Project Name:** American Samoa Safe Travels Website Design, Development and Deployment

**EC:** 1.3 COVID-19 Contact Tracing

**Amount:** \$7,716,000

- Completed 17% of Personnel, 9% of overall budget.
  - Staff has been hired and are currently serving employment under funding.
  - Total funds spent up to date are as followed: \$78,263.98.
- 

**14. Project Name:** ARPA Oversight Office Administration Program

**EC:** 7.1 Administrative Expenses

**Amount:** \$3,754,000

**Status:**

- Ensuring full compliance with all statutory requirements for the eligible use of ARPA funds as prescribed in the American Rescue Plan Act.
  - Ensuring all ARPA funded projects are implemented with transparency and accountability.
  - Ensuring compliance with all public health emergency measures and to protect the people of American Samoa.
- 

**15. Project Name:** Public Safety – Keep American Samoa COVID Free

**EC:** 3.1 Public Sector Workforce: Payroll and Benefits for Public Health, Public Safety, or Human Services Workers

**Amount:** \$1,907,200

**Status:**

- Complete
  - 54 police officers avoided layoff, including overtime pay for all public safety personnel who were required to provide 24-hour surveillance to combat the community spread of COVID-19.
  - Renovated sub-stations to establish quarantine facilities for law enforcement officers and personnel to prevent further spread of COVID-19 to their families and community.
- 

**16. Project Name:** American Samoa Vaccination Program

**EC:** 1.1 COVID-19 Vaccination

**Amount:** \$2,665,254

- Complete
  - At the close of the program, American Samoa had 84% of the population fully vaccinated with just short of 90% having at least one dose.
- 

**17. Project Name:** American Samoa Repatriation Program

**Expenditure Category:** 1.7 Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (Including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine)

**Amount:** \$16,000,000

- Project is completed and closed out with any left over funds to be redirected for allowable eligible projects. Close out reports and data information are to be processed and collected for office records and documentation. This project was a success and very effective considering the remote and isolated location

of American Samoa in protecting the territory, promoting prevention strategies, and controlling the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the island community.

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The America Rescue Plan Act has demonstrated its capacity to provide vital support to individuals and communities in a time of crisis. These accomplishments would not have been possible without the dedication of policymakers, government agencies, and the collaborative efforts of diverse stakeholders. We remain committed to the continued implementation of ARPA to support the recovery and resilience of American Samoa.

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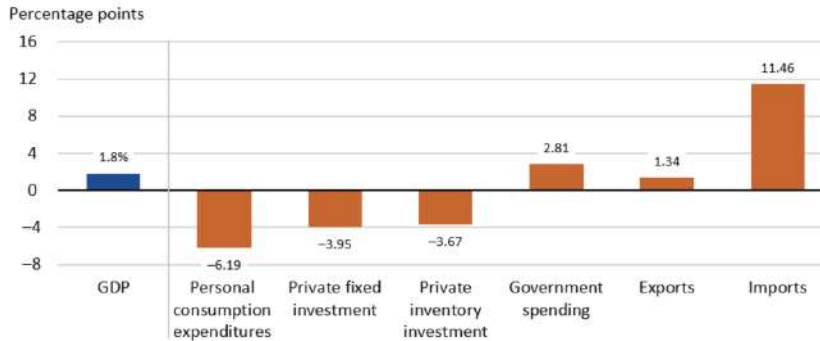
# STATE OF THE ECONOMY

## Economic Indicators

### Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

As per statistics released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), American Samoa experienced a 1.8 percent growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022, rebounding from a 0.8 percent decline in 2021. The rise in real GDP can be attributed to heightened government

Chart 1. American Samoa: Contributions to the Percent Change in Real GDP, 2022



Note. This chart shows the percent change of total real GDP and the contributions (in percentage points) of each major component to that change. For example, exports accounted for 1.34 percentage points of the 1.8 percent increase in real GDP in 2022. Imports are a subtraction item; thus, a decrease in imports results in a positive contribution to GDP.

U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

spending and export activities, as outlined in table 1.2. However, growth was offset by declines in personal consumption expenditures, private fixed investment, and private inventory investment. Imports also saw a decrease during this period. Further, the BEA reported that “personal consumption expenditures decreased 7.8 percent, primarily reflecting decreased spending on goods, such as motor vehicles and food. Economic impact

payments distributed to households through the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations (CRRSA) Act and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) tapered off by 2022. These payments had supported consumer spending in 2021.

## Executive Actions

The following is a summary of key Executive actions and legislation signed into law during 2023:

**(PL 38-1) FY2023 Supplemental Appropriation:** An Act appropriating the sum of \$7,405,000 from unobligated and unexpended revenues from FY2021 to supplement the FY2023 budget

**(PL 38-2) Purse Seiner Bill:** An Act granting the Department of Port Administration authority to issue landing licenses to purse seiner vessels to maintain a record of locally based purse seiner vessels

**(PL 38-3) Samoan Affairs Bill:** An Act to resolve land and matai title disputes before the Office of Samoan Affairs as an alternative to complying with the procedure provided in A.S.C.A. 43.0302(a)

**(PL 38-4) WICHE Bill:** An Act making American Samoa a ratifying member of the Western Regional Higher Education Compact and a member of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education

**(PL 38-5) Settlement Appropriation:** An Act appropriating sum of \$278,000 to provide funding for the settlement of various legal claims against ASG

**(PL 38-6) FY2024 Budget:** An Act providing for the appropriation of the American Samoa Government budget for FY2024



**(PL 38-7) FY2024 Supplemental Appropriation:** An Act appropriating the sum of \$22,000,000 from unobligated and unexpended revenues from FY2022 to supplement the FY2024 budget  
**(PL 38-9) Fono Expense Fund Increase:** An Act to provide for an increase in the office expense fund for Legislators

<b>Executive Order</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Title</b>
EO 001-23	Overtime and Compensatory time	An order to establish overtime and compensatory time policy
EO 002-23	Department of Corrections	An order to transfer funding, personnel, property, and equipment to the Department of Corrections
EO 003-23	Department of Search and Rescue	An order to transfer, personnel, property, and equipment to the department of search and rescue
EO 004-23	Behavioral Health Services	An order to consolidate behavioral health services under the Department of Health and Amending Executive Order 0012-2016
EO 005-23	Governor's Youth Council	An order establishing new membership criteria for the governor's youth council and superseding Executive Order 010-2022
EO 006-23	Broadband office and steering committee	An order establishing of the territorial broadband coordination, opportunities, redevelopment and deployment office and broadband steering committee
EO 007-23	Broadband office and steering committee, and repealing EO 006-23	An order establishing the territorial broadband coordination, opportunities, redevelopment and deployment office, establishing the broadband steering committee, and repealing Executive Order 006-2023
EO 008-23	Innovation Authority	An order establishing the American Samoa Innovation Authority
EO 009-23	Flying flags at half staff	An order establishing guidelines governing the flying of flags at half-staff within the territory and the use of the national and territorial flags in funeral ceremonies, superseding Executive Order No. 001-2008
EO 010-23	Invasive Species	An Order Amending the American Samoa Invasive Species Advisory Committee and the American Samoa Invasive Species Plan and Repealing Executive Order 004-2016
EO 011-23	Sharks and Rare Marine Species	An Order Prohibiting the Sale of Sharks or possession of Rare Marine Species in American Samoa, Superseding Executive Order 002-2012

## Department of Commerce

### Calendar Year 2023 Registered Business License

Approximately 3,548 business licenses were registered at the Revenue Branch of the American Samoa Department of Treasury. A total of 4,616 business licenses were recorded in the previous calendar year. Compared to CY 2022, there is a 2.95% decrease in returning business owners within fiscal year 2022 since the business license renewal period opened in October 2023.

## Collected Revenue

The table below states the breakdown of revenue collected in business license renewals as well as new and additional business activities in CY2023 thus far:

Calendar Year (CY) 2023 Business Registration from Jan. 1 – Sept. 30, 2023	Revenue Collected
New Businesses (Jan 1 – Sept. 30, 2023)	\$41,087.75
Additional Business Activities (Jan 1 – Sept. 30, 2023)	\$28,354.00
Business Renewals (Jan 1 – Sept. 30, 2023)	\$456,671.50
Total Revenue	\$526,113.25

## CY2023 Top 10 Business Activities (as of September 29, 2023)

2023 Business License Activities-Top 10 Business Activities as of 9/29/2023	
Retail	412
Food Establishment	356
Alcoholic/Beer License	263
Landscaping/Janitorial	252
Commercial Transportation	194
Commercial/Residential Rental	177
Import & Export	173
Construction/Engineering	127
Wholesale	123
Sewing Shop	89
<b>Top 10 Business Activities</b>	<b>2,166</b>

## CY2023 Top 10 Businesses by Employment (as of September 29, 2023)

The following is the list of the top ten (10) businesses by employment, determined by the number of employees in an individual business establishment with its own individual EIN.

Name of Applicant	Business Name	Business Activity	FT Emp.
Starkist Samoa, Co		Fishing Base	2180
Paramount Builders, Limited		Construction	128
American Industries, Inc	Neil's Ace Home Center	Retail	119
AST Telecom, LLC	BlueSky Communications	Telecommunications Retail	101
McConnell Dowell American Samoa Limited		Construction	97
Nana's Incorporation		Construction	95
Silva Group Corporation		General Engineering	70
Triple T Services, Inc	Pentagon	General Construction	63
Ottoville Investment One, Inc	Tradewinds Hotel	Hotel	59
Tools, Inc	Tool Shop	Hardware Store	56
<b>Sub Total for Top 10</b>			<b>2968</b>

**One-Day Business Licensing Process**

This process has proven to be a streamlined and business-friendly method. An increasing number of American Samoan entrepreneurs are visiting the Department of Commerce to obtain business licenses for a variety of business activities such as child daycare services, e-commerce, food catering delivery services, consulting services, fast food, freelance photography, power wash services, business consulting, farming, barber shops, landscaping services, rental units and commercial building leasing, import & export etc.

**Small Business Technical Assistance**

BTID provided technical assistance to local businesspersons when they request necessary documents to meet the requirements of small business-related programs offered through the Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS), the Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Vocational Rehab Financial Assistance Program., etc.

**Employer Identification Number (EIN)**

DOC assisted 30 applicants with their EIN applications on the IRS website this year.

**Certificate of Good Standing (CGS)**

DOC is ASG's authorized and recognized agency to prepare and issue CGS' for all businesses, except for Limited Liability Companies, as required by off-island banks and other entities for verification and the setting up of business bank accounts and other purposes. DOC prepared and issued 48 Certificates of Good Standing (CGS) for CY 2023.

**Notice of Violation**

DOC-BTID Enforcement Team is currently issuing "Notice of Violation" to businesses without valid business licenses or ones that have not renewed their business licenses.

**Enforcement Site Visits**

For CY2023, BTID developed an Enforcement Plan, effective on January 9, 2023. Inspectors began inspecting businesses with assistance from the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) staff to generate a Survey123 to easily map and locate businesses on the island.

As of September 29, 2023, approximately 127 business establishments were inspected with a total of 282 business activities and 4 Notice of Violations (NOV) issued. From the 4 NOV, all businesses have complied with the business regulations. Enforcement of A.S.C.A. § 30.0162 Annual Report-Contents-Exemptions from filing BTI is working with the AG Office to have the Department of Treasury implement and enforce the filing of annual reports.

**Regulatory Board Enforcement**

The DOC has incorporated zoning approvals for business licenses as needed.

**DOC ADMINISTERED BOARDS / COMMISSIONS**

**The Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board** is currently awaiting reactivation.

**The American Samoa Board of Cosmetology** is currently awaiting reactivation.

### **AS Commerce Commission**

The Commerce Commission has had 12 meetings and has approved 14 Commercial Permit applicants. A total of 221 Taxis and 100 Buses were issued Certificates of Convenience. Rule #2023-0007, a new rule to increase the bus rates and establish new high school and elementary school bus rates, in addition to other amendments related to commercial vehicle transportation, including fines for owners of commercial vehicles, commercial carriers, and passengers became effective on July 19, 2023.

### **Territorial Board of Public Accountancy (TBPA)**

The TBPA oversees the administration and biennial 2022-2023 renewal of license(s) and permit(s) for Certified Public Accountants (CPA) and Public Accountants (PA). 5 CPA 1 PA permits/licenses have been renewed for this fiscal year. Also 2 TBPA Temporary Permits issued to 2 CPAs from Crowe LLP CA USA to practice auditing for 3 months (May 24, 2023, to August 23, 2023). The audit of the Territorial Bank of American Samoa's financial statements for the year ending December 31, 2022. However, TBAS has retained a different accounting firm-JLS Accounting Solutions, LLC from Arizona for the TBAS audit requirements.

### **Territorial Planning Commission (TPC)**

The TPC board members were recently approved to be compensated with stipends. This incentive has proven to be effective, whereas there has been more active participation and movement in business application decisions under TPC review.

### **Zoning Board**

The Zoning Board Administrator received 196 applications for this fiscal year. The board reviewed and approved 156 zoning variance applications, including car rentals, fast food restaurants, taxi stands, home-based businesses, etc.

### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Business Recovery Capital Program (BRCP)**

The Revolving Line of Credit (RLOC) program was offered in January 2022 for \$5 million. The approvals mostly ranged from \$50k to the maximum of \$500k. RLOC was for a one-year revolver; payable on demand; and required a 30-day consecutive cleanup. It could be renewed for another year if the lending need is still warranted, and clients comply with all conditions.

### **Revolving Line of Credit**

As of September 30, 2023, there were a total of 16 active Lines of Credit under ARPA-BRCP - 12 paid off and not renewed; and 1 charged off. A total of 29 customers participated in the program initially. There were 12 canceled commitments totaling \$1,675,000. This amount is eligible for transfer to another ARPA BRCP program namely grants. Currently, the grants need funding for 70+ recipients estimated at \$2 million.

On the 16 active accounts, it needs collateral coverage on the amounts outstanding/committed totaling \$2,550,614. The required cash coverage is 105% which equates to \$2,678,145 out of \$5 million in the program money market account. Even with the possible transfer of \$1,675,000, there is still enough in the MMA to

#### **Statistical Summary**

Active Accounts	16
Closed & Paid Off	12
Charged off	1
Total Participants	29
Original Commitment	\$5,000,000
Cancelled Commitments	\$1,675,000
Outstanding & renewed	\$2,200,614
Not yet Matured	\$350,000
Collateral Required (105%)	\$2,678,145
Available for Transfer	\$2,321,855
Charged-off	\$50,000

cover current customers with balances until the end of the program. As the term loan balances are reduced monthly, more will become available until the full payoff on 12/31/26. All facilities are handled adequately and adhered to the program line and now, loan requirements. The main reasons for payoff and subsequent cancellation are due to companies only needing emergency funding during the COVID shutdown. The majority were used for bulk order of inventories due to shipping delays. As business began to re-engage, the bulk orders and construction (recovery) picked up and funds were correctly used to pay off these short-term borrowings. The cash flow cycle normalized and businesses had adequate internal funding for their operational needs moving forward.

### ARPA BRCP GRANTS

This grant program was launched in February 2022. Initially, it was a grant and loan program which finally settled as grants only up to \$25,000. The allocated budget is \$4 million. To date, DOC has awarded 178 totaling \$3,707,084. While the majority have been fully funded and closed, there remains 14 with commitments of \$344,800 deemed not fully disbursed.

The grants awards are currently capped and not available to the public. However, DOC is working on transferring \$1,675,000 available from the RLOC to the grants program. This transfer plus \$293k available from the initial \$4 million should give ample funds to offer to “pending applications pending fund transfers”. DOC anticipates funding 78 applicants each at \$25k amounting to \$1,950,000.

**The ARPA CASH ASSISTANCE PROGRAM** managed by DOC was for \$2 million covering special assistance to locally registered businesses as of February 22, 2024. It complemented other DOC ARPA BRCP programs such as the \$5 million Revolving Line of Credit and Grants for \$4 million, all offered in early 2022. To date, a total of 244 businesses have been approved for CAP assistance.

### Project Objectives

Support recovery efforts of local businesses that were affected by the COVID shutdown that started in February 2022. CAP was specifically for utilities, rent, payroll, and other similar short-term working capital experienced during the lockdown declared by ASG. The limit was \$10,000 per applicant.

### Broadband Coordination Opportunities Redevelopment and Deployment (BCORD)

The Executive Order 007-2023 officially established the BCORD Office within ASDOC, as well as the Broadband Steering Committee that provides advice and guidance to the BCORD Office through multi-agency collaboration. BSC meetings are held monthly to discuss relevant matters and priorities around the Broadband industry.

The BCORD Office now employs the Territorial Broadband Coordinator and Program Assistant. It is currently in the process of hiring an additional member to the team as the Digital Equity Coordinator. Additional staff will be hired in the coming year to support the project and program initiatives outlined below.

<b>ARPA BRCP GRANTS</b>		
SUMMARY		
Month	#	Amounts
May	29	\$687,029
June	37	\$860,500
July	44	\$714,344
August	40	\$801,800
Sept.	21	\$483,140
October	7	\$159,800
<b>Total</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>\$3,707,084</b>
* Not fully disbursed 14 \$344,800		

Total Allotted	\$4,000,000
Available	\$292,916
To be added from RLOC	\$1,675,000
Adjusted Available	\$1,967,916
<b>Number available @25k</b>	<b>78 \$1,950,000</b>



To date, the BCORD Office has assisted with the facilitation of allocations or awards from various federal agencies in an amount of \$67,781,961. Not all of this funding has been allocated or awarded to BCORD directly.

### **ARPA Broadband iNEI**

The ARPA Broadband iNEI Grant program sub-grantee projects to both local internet service providers are moving along well with implementation projects of their 5G network upgrades. Progress has been moving steadily for both sub-grantees.

For the Manu'a Cable Repair project, progress has slowed due to scheduling complications with the submarine cable fiber optic repair ship, which will now be available toward the end of this calendar year. No additional payments have been made to the sub-awardee yet, pending scheduling with the cable repair vessel.

### **BEAD-USDOC NTIA**

On June 26, 2023, an official announcement was made at the White House for allocation for all States and Territories under the Broadband Equity, Access, and Development (BEAD) funding. The National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) under USDOC announced on the same day that the Territory of American Samoa would receive approximately \$37.5m in funding for broadband infrastructure-related projects.



The BCORD office and its partners through the broadband core working group diligently worked on the completion and submission of the draft 5-Year Action Plan for the BEAD program. The next requirement in progress is the Initial Proposal in which the team is working through to meet programmatic requirements.

### **Digital Equity - USDOC NTIA**

On June 1, 2023, the USDOC-NTIA announced that American Samoa had received \$150,000 in Digital Equity Planning funding. This announcement (for all Territories) was also jointly announced with the BEAD Program Planning funding, which had actually been awarded in December of 2022, but not publicly announced. With this program, BCORD Office is currently in the process of hiring a Digital Equity Coordinator.

### **FCC - ACP Program**

ASDOC was awarded the Affordable Connectivity Outreach Grant Program funding in September 2023. The BCORD Office will manage approximately \$385k outreaching funding targeted for populations who are eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program. The ACP was created by Congress to help low-income households afford the costs of internet services for work, school, healthcare, and more. The benefit is administered by local internet service providers in which the BCORD Office and partnering agencies will help boost advertisements and outreach.

### **US Treasury - Capital Projects Fund (CPF)**

ASDOC was awarded \$14.3m in June 2023 of CPF funding to support a multi-purpose community facility in the development of the Tech Park campus in Lions Park. This project is part of a larger (big picture) project to revitalize the Lions Park area. More detailed information will be available concerning the CPF project in the coming months. The BCORD Office will be



playing a strategic and technical advisory role for the CPF project, which will be managed out of the Urban Planning & Development Division.

### **Atoa O Samoa Trade Show**

The first-ever Atoa O Samoa Tradeshow was executed by the department in April 2023. The event provided an opportunity for both businesses from the Independent State of Samoa and American Samoa to showcase and exhibit their locally-made products.



### **Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Workshop**

Representatives from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) flew to American Samoa to conduct a workshop on FDA requirements. They discussed the steps for exporting and importing goods to the territory. This was the first ever workshop of its kind opened and free to the public. DOC hopes to continue to provide these types of workshops in collaboration with FDA to help support local businesses that want to increase imports and exports.

### **Masterplans**

As the planning and development arm of the Urban Planning and Development Division, three major plans were funded: the Lion's Park Master Plan, the Downtown Fagatogo Revitalization Master Plan, and the Sports Complex Development Plan.



The **Lions Park Masterplan** creates a new enhanced look and function of the area that will house healthcare facilities, commercial and private practices and businesses, a technology hub, and much more. All existing tenants will eventually relocate as new construction will begin.

The **Downtown Fagatogo Revitalization Master Plan** includes 10 sites for future development and revitalization. The idea behind the design is to incorporate resilience and sustainable development and create more public space for community use and future business opportunities.

The **Sports Complex Development Plan** includes a multipurpose stadium that will be used for different sports and community events. Having this facility on the island will provide opportunities for American Samoa to host regional games. Sports tourism is another economic development opportunity for the Territory.

### **Masterplan Update**

The Department of Commerce (DOC) is working in collaboration with the American Samoa Visitors Bureau (ASVB) to update the Tourism Master Plan. The current Tourism Master Plan is outdated and a thorough assessment is needed to provide realistic and reasonable tourism improvements and plans.

### **Historic Landmark Sites Signs in Manu'a**

The Department of Commerce (DOC) completed the installation of informational signs for various historic landmark sites across the district of Manu'a. These signs serve as indicators for tourism and educational purposes.

### **Super Alia Project**

The Security Agreement between the EDA Economic Development Administration and the American Samoa Government, Department of Commerce finally reached completion with all pertinent signatories in place and then registered with the ASG Registrar's Office. This document is to assure the protection and responsibilities of ASG DOC over these government assets given that of the EDA's investment of \$4,377,666 in a grant form.



The paperwork to hire the captain for the training platform is in progress as well as the master fisherman. Both professionals are qualified with decades of ocean-going experience in commercial fishing. These positions have been put forth through bidding processes and personnel advertisements.

The DOC American Samoa Seafood Academy Training, Education, and Business Incubation Center is now in the planning and set-up stages at the Fagatogo Marketplace. A landing area for fresh fish catches (harvest) has been approved by the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources. A 5-ton ice flake machine plant will also be erected. The first fishing vessel which is the training platform will be shipped in early 2024.

### **Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**

The Department of Commerce was successful in completing the Emergency Rental Assistance requirements to draw down the second tranche of funding for our ERA 2 award (funded under ARPA) from the US Treasury. This brings the total ERA 2 amount received by the American Samoa Government to \$5.8 million. The total ERA 2 allocation for American Samoa is \$8.3 million and we will be able to request the third and final tranche at a later time. Funding is available through September 30, 2025, for residential rent and utilities. In this year alone, DOC has assisted 455 households.

### **Tafuna International Airport Food Court Area**

The project is a partnership with the Department of Port Admin (DPA) to construct a food court area for the Tafuna International Airport to encourage social distancing by providing more space for the general public to be able to sit down and rest and even enjoy their food while at the same time adhering to the COVID-19 protocols for safety. While COVID-19 protocols are now more relaxed, the need for resting areas where the public can enjoy a meal while waiting for boarding calls is still prevalent.



### **Housing Assistance Fund (HAF)**

The Department of Commerce is working to finalize a required Homeowner Assistance Fund (HAF) Plan for submission to the US Department of Treasury. The HAF Plan must be approved for draw down an allocation of \$3.7 million for American Samoa which will provide mortgage relief to eligible homeowners. DOC was able to collect data from the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority, Bluesky Communications, the Territorial Bank of American Samoa, and Mooney Wieland Warren Financial Services (who purchased the ANZ loan portfolio) to help determine our budget breakdown for the HAF Plan.

### **Medical Plaza Design**

The project aims to build a facility wherein we can consolidate all our local private healthcare providers for the convenience of the public. The project would not only be of convenience to the public but also raise awareness of a service provider that might be needed however never got the public exposure necessary to reach those in need of the service. The flow of clients would benefit the providers as well as they could all promote their respective services or even coordinate a collaboration of services to benefit the public and their venture. The design is in its final stages and will be bid thereafter for construction.



### **Pago Pago Sky Tramway Feasibility Study**

A contract was bid out for this project. Funds were allocated for the study by the Economic Development Administration. The study was conducted and completed. The recommendation is that it is feasible and cost-effective to rebuild the Pago Pago Sky Tramway. The project would primarily cater to tourists but also be an attraction for the island community.

### **Mid-Year Population Estimate**

The Statistics and Analysis Division releases the Mid-Year Population Estimate for American Samoa annually. The 2023 Mid-Year Population Estimate was released on August 23, 2023. The mid-year pop estimate for 2023 was 53,331.

### **Economic Census**

The Statistics Division is assisting the U.S. Census Bureau with the follow-up work for the 2022 Economic Census of American Samoa. The follow-up started on September 20, 2023, and will end on November 17, 2023. Staff are visiting nonrespondent businesses at their physical locations and calling the businesses to submit their census forms.

### **Agriculture Census**

The Agriculture Census is scheduled for the spring of 2024. Planning is ongoing, and we've had bi-weekly video calls with the U.S. Department of Agriculture-National Agriculture Statistics Service (USDA-NASS).

### **Statistical Enhancement Project**

The Statistical Enhancement Project, funded by the Department of the Interior (DOI), is ongoing and progressing well. The American Samoa Statistical Advisory Council met for the first time since the inception of the 2003 Statistical Act of American Samoa twenty years ago. The meeting was held on February 1, 2023, and LT Governor Eleasalo Ale chaired the meeting. A Users-Producers workshop was held on March 22, 2023, at the Lee Auditorium to hear from data users and producers on what their data needs are and what they use data for. A number of data forums followed from April 24-28, 2023, at the Naumati Conference Room at the Tradewinds Hotel. A report summarizing these events was prepared by the Statistics staff and submitted to the DOC Director for her review and approval. The Statistics and Analysis Division is currently drafting the statistical strategies and framework, which is the project's end result.

**Real Property Management Division (RPMD)**

Since the administration of Tafuna Industrial Park was transferred to the Department of Commerce in 2013, the Department of Commerce (DOC), specifically through its Real Property Management Division (RPMD), has consistently demonstrated a solid commitment to its pivotal role in overseeing and managing American Samoa Government (ASG) real estate properties. RPMD's responsibilities have expanded to include managing ASG real estate properties beyond the 325-acre Tafuna Industrial Park, including oversight of all properties except those managed by the Department of Port Administration, Departments of Parks & Recreation, and Administrative Services. Their primary objective is to automate and improve the management of government-owned real estate, focusing on streamlining lease processing, collecting payments, and ensuring lessees comply with their lease provisions. A decade later, significant improvements are evident in the efficiency of collecting payments and reducing outstanding arrears. Notably, there has been a substantial increase in revenue collected this year.

**Relocation of DOC Real Property Management Division (RPMD) Office**

After operating for many years at the Tafuna Industrial Park (TIP) Office on Lion's Park Tasi Street, the DOC RPMD relocated to the Sa'ofetai Building in Ottoville across from the Tradewinds Hotel.

**Tafuna Industrial Park Revenue Collection Progress**

Over five fiscal years, DOC Real Property Management Division (RPMD) has achieved a significant milestone in its revenue collection efforts, highlighting a remarkable trajectory of financial success. In the fiscal year 2018-2019, the journey began with an initial revenue collection of \$545,603.00.

Moving into 2019-2020, there was a noteworthy surge in revenue, culminating in collections amounting to \$637,605.00. The momentum continued into 2020-2021, with revenue collection reaching an impressive \$741,059.00. The most recent fiscal year, 2022-2023, marked a significant milestone, boasting a staggering revenue collection of \$850,807.00. This consistent growth is a testament to the unwavering dedication and exceptional competence of DOC in managing and optimizing revenue collection processes. In summary, DOC has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to revenue collection, resulting in substantial year-to-year growth and an impressive average annual increase of \$76,301.00.

**Territorial Planning Commission**

The Territorial Planning Commission (TPC) reconvened on August 1, 2023 after being inactive for some years. With a few meetings in, the TPC has started to renew the General Plan in addition to a review of business licenses.

**Biz'Fest**

The Department of Commerce (DOC) hosted its Second Annual Biz' Fest event in November, which is National Entrepreneurship Month. To help revitalize the marketplace area, the event was held at the Fagatogo Marketplace. More than 30 local vendors signed up and sold goods at the Biz Fest. This event will be an annual event to help promote entrepreneurship in the territory.

**Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) Awards**

Seven organizations have been awarded CSBG for FY2023. Proposals were reviewed by the CSBG Tripartite Board and approved by the Director of Commerce. All organizations work towards meeting their goals and accomplishing their mission by using the allocated award to carry



out items that have been pre approved. Overall, the allocations support community projects that foster partnerships, economic development, and community service.

### **DOC Hosted 1st Chamber of Commerce General Meeting of 2023**

ASDOC hosted the Chamber of Commerce at its first general meeting of the year by sharing new and ongoing priorities relevant to the local business community. This was an opportunity to engage directly with the ASDOC management team and members of the American Samoa Chamber of Commerce.

## **Foreign Trade & Investment Opportunities**

### **Atoa o Samoa Groundbreaking in Moata'a**

On October 10, 2023, in Moata'a, Samoa, the American Samoa Government conducted a groundbreaking ceremony, a historic event in the diplomatic relations between American Samoa and Samoa. This marked the establishment of the inaugural American Samoa Government (ASG) Office on Upolu territory, reflecting a significant step in fostering stronger ties between the two regions. The groundbreaking ceremony was a result of the formalization of a land swap agreement between the Government of Samoa and ASG. This noteworthy exchange took place during the Atoa o Samoa biannual executive meeting, serving as a pivotal moment that further strengthened the cooperative alliance between the two governments.



### **Fourth Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting**

The Fourth Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting commenced on October 11, 2023 (Apia Standard Date and Time) at the Taumeasina Island Resort, with an official opening ceremony. This event marked a significant milestone in enhancing the ties between American Samoa and Samoa, aiming to explore avenues for mutual development to benefit the Samoan populace collectively. The second day featured three notable site visits across Savaii Island, each focusing on distinct sectors. These initiatives are in perfect alignment with the Governor's vision to position American Samoa as the Hub of the Pacific in terms of economic development. Both governments engaged in additional site visits, enabling the American Samoa delegation to explore potential industries. The Atoa o Samoa event remains a remarkable platform for collaboration and the exchange of ideas, fostering strong relationships that will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of Samoa and its neighboring regions.

### **Atoa o Samoa Outcome: Gift of 500 Giant Clams to American Samoa**

In a significant step towards fostering collaboration and bolstering mutual support, the Samoa Government has gifted 500 giant clams to American Samoa. This marks a significant moment in the ongoing partnership between the two governments, aimed at strengthening cooperation in crucial areas such as fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture, and capacity building. The exchange, a key fulfillment of the anticipated outcomes of the Atoa-o-Samoa Meeting, emphasizes the commitment of both nations to work hand in hand for the betterment of their communities. The exchange program aligns with the broader vision of the Atoa-o-Samoa Meeting, emphasizing the importance of solidarity and cooperation in addressing shared challenges. As both the American Samoa Government and the Government of Samoa continue to explore avenues for joint initiatives, the exchange of giant clams stands as a tangible manifestation of the friendship and commitment between the Samoa Government and American Samoa.



### **SelectUSA Investment Summit 2023**

American Samoa had a delegation to the US Department of Commerce Office of US Trade's SelectUSA Investment Summit held in DC in May of this year. All Governors from US Territories were in attendance. American Samoa's delegation included a group of local students who showcased our culture at this global investment opportunity.



### **Fact Finding Mission on Impediments and Opportunities in US-Pacific Islands Trade & Investment**

Two Trade Economists from the US International Trade Commission visited American Samoa in March of this year to conduct a fact finding study about trade and investments in the Pacific. ASDOC was the local coordinating agency in this effort to identify key stakeholders and arrange meetings between the team from USITC and the public and private sector. The report was released by USITC in September 2023. Discussions are now underway between ASDOC and the same research lead to conduct further research on how best to align American Samoa with regards to US trade in the Pacific region.

### **Leadership Engagement with Assistant Secretary of Insular and International Affairs**

On October 25, 2023, Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga had the opportunity to meet with Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs (OIA) Carmen G. Cantor once again. This meeting served as an important update since their previous encounter at the SelectUSA Summit in May 2023. Accompanying Mrs. Cantor was Mr. Basil Ottley, OIA Director of Policy and a native of



the U.S. Virgin Islands. There was a strong emphasis on American Samoa's membership in the Pacific Island Forum. It was revealed that attorneys from both the U.S. State Department and Interior are actively engaged in discussions to explore possibilities for Guam, CNMI, and American Samoa to become associated members of the PIF under certain conditions. The meeting covered a wide range of important topics to ensure that American Samoa is well-equipped for future opportunities and challenges. Discussions revolved around renewable energy initiatives and electric subsidies, biosecurity measures, potential funding avenues for U.S. territories, infrastructural grant funding (BIL/IRA), and increased benefits for veterans and their families, among other pressing issues. The aim was to delve into these matters with thoroughness and foresight to promote the overall progress and readiness of American Samoa on both local and national levels.



### **USVI Site Visit- Virgin Islands (Coral Conservation & Preparations)**

On October 25, 2023, Governor P. S. Mauga participated in one of the activities leading up to the U.S Coral Reef Task Force Meeting in St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands (USVI). The USVI experiences unique challenges as they continue to combat the impacts of climate change coupled with the aftermath of the Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD). This event provided



valuable insight into the current state of the Virgin Islands' reefs. Understanding and addressing these challenges is crucial for the long-term protection and conservation of the Virgin Islands reefs. Furthermore, collaboration among agencies and stakeholders is essential in implementing effective measures to mitigate threats and ensure the resilience of coral reef ecosystems. Nonetheless, through diligent efforts, the USVI Department of Planning and Natural Resources has strived to identify innovative

solutions and effectively implement measures to mitigate the ongoing threats. While this particular danger has yet to manifest itself in the Pacific waters, it remains vital that the Pacific jurisdictions including American Samoa remain steadfast and continue to understand the mechanisms crucial to develop preventative measures to protect its fragile coral reef ecosystems.

### **Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga attends the 12th Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) and the 52nd Pacific Island Forum (PIF)**

Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga attended the 12th Polynesian Leaders Group (PLG) and the 52nd Pacific Island Forum (PIF) on October 6, 2023 in Cook Islands. He had the opportunity to meet with Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs (OIA) Carmen G. Cantor in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands previously to discuss updates on American Samoa's eligibility as full members of the Pacific Island Forum (PIF). The Governor has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to maximizing opportunities that will benefit not only American Samoa, but also extend support and resources to fellow Islanders in the Pacific. By being part of the PIF, American Samoa's voice would gain significant influence and strengthen our ability to address our unique needs within this regional forum.

### Leadership Engagement with White House leadership

The Honorable Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga met with Chair Brenda Mallory, White House Council on Environmental Quality and Associate Director for Puerto Rico and the Territories at the White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs Gretchen Sierra-Zorita on numerous topics related to ongoing and future developments for American Samoa. The meeting discussed key issues on the following: Improvements for American Samoa and its role in the Pacific Island, Federal funding opportunities and permitting for our natural infrastructure projects, and Environmental permitting processes and emergency approaches.



### Fesoasoani mo Maui Humanitarian Drive

The American Samoa Government marked a significant occasion with the closing ceremony of the Humanitarian Relief fundraiser for the people of Lahaina, Maui on Saturday, September 9, 2023. The Drive, which ran from September 4th to September 9th, was a heartfelt endeavor to provide much-needed support to the families on the beautiful island of Maui, Hawaii. A total donation of \$500,000 will go a long way in assisting the families in need in Lahaina, Maui, and exemplifies the compassion and unity of the American Samoa community. The American Samoa Government extends a heartfelt and compassionate thank you to all who contributed to this humanitarian relief effort.



## Department of Human and Social Services

The American Samoa Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS) is comprised of six divisions: (1) the American Samoa Nutrition Assistance Program (ASNAP), (2) the American Samoa Women, Infants, and Children (ASWIC), (3) the Child Care Division (CCD), (4) the Children and Family Services Division (CFSD), (5) the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), and the Program Integrity and Tobacco (PIT) Division, along with the Office of the Director.

It is important to note that at the beginning of 2023, per Executive Order 004-2023, DHSS' Behavioral Health Services Division was consolidated under the Department of Health (DOH). This resulted in the transfer of almost 25 employees and other assets, including over \$4.1 million in federal grant program awards for substance abuse, mental health (including the 9-8-8 suicide and mental health helpline), prevention, and treatment services from DHSS to DOH.

Despite this reduction in force, DHSS remains steadfast in our commitment to improving lives across our Territory. DHSS continues to administer a wide range of programs and services aimed at positive outcomes for individuals, families, and communities in the areas of supplemental food assistance for low-income elderly, blind, and disabled individuals; supplemental food assistance for low-income women, infants, and children; nutrition and breastfeeding counseling and education for mothers; child care; children and family welfare; sheltering and support services for victims of crime and families and individuals who are homeless or at risk of being homeless; advocacy, systems change, and capacity-building efforts that promote self-determination, integration, and inclusion for individuals with developmental disabilities; retailer licensing and enforcement for ASNAP, ASWIC, and the sale of tobacco products, along with building capacity and expanding public awareness for all DHSS programs and services.

Although great strides have been made in regaining a sense of normalcy after the preceding years of emergency declarations and the global pandemic, the residual impacts continue to affect many of American Samoa's families. Social, economic, and health challenges amid rising inflation, and the repercussions and uncertainties stemming from the turmoil of war and other violence, natural disasters, and new variants of communicable diseases further underscore the importance of DHSS programs and services as a support system that members of our community rely on.

DHSS maintains its focus on strengthening existing services and securing new programs to assist our people as quickly, efficiently, and effectively as possible. **Overall, in 2023...**

- **DHSS served approximately 42,000 adults and children through the various programs and services administered through our 6 Divisions.**
- **DHSS remains 100% federally funded.**
- **DHSS infused close to \$131 million (\$130,855,300.15) in new money into our local economy.**

In addition to the regular grant awards DHSS received in 2023, COVID-19/ supplemental awards also continued to help enhance programs and services through the ASNAP, ASWIC, CCD, CFSD, DDPC, and PIT divisions, many of which were awarded in fiscal year 2022 but their program periods wrapped up in 2023.

Moreover, COVID-19/ supplemental awards enabled DHSS to continue targeted services and support to address some of the implications of the pandemic such as (1) food assistance for all school children in kindergarten to grade 12 who lost access to free meals at school during the summer break, (2) provide emergency allotments for all ASNAP participants by increasing their monthly benefit levels to \$277 for a whole year from October 2022 to September 2023 and issuing monthly benefits to one additional family member of ASNAP participants with the lowest income for the same period, (3) continue paying subsidies to child care providers during mandatory closures to protect the supply of child care, (4) issue supplemental stipends for qualifying child care teachers to encourage attendance and improve retention, and (5) provide subsidy assistance to families who open up their hearts and homes to foster a child who may or may not be biologically related to them.

### **Significant Accomplishments:**

Services provided by DHSS in 2023 continue to impact the lives of practically every family in American Samoa. DHSS' achievements this year transformed service delivery for our Territory and incorporated the continuation of several services that were newly introduced for various segments of our community. The following are some examples of *significant* accomplishments for 2023 that amplified and/ or expanded services available through DHSS:

#### **American Samoa Nutrition Assistance Program (ASNAP)**

**DHSS pursued and implemented enhancements for nutrition assistance benefits and services for qualifying ASNAP participants:**

- **The Enhanced Nutrition Assistance Benefits (ENAB) Program infused almost \$9 million (\$8,935,781.00) in benefits before it expired on September 30, 2023.** Also, ASNAP's request to extend the expiration date of ENAB food coupons to November 15, 2023, so clients would have more time to expend their benefits was approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Background: The ENAB Program was funded by \$10 million in additional

ARPA funds that the USDA FNS approved in September 2022 to address food insecurity and provide more equitable resources to American Samoa. The ENAB Program allowed for the continuation of increased monthly benefit allotments for all ASNAP recipients to \$277 through September 30, 2023, which were initiated on October 1, 2022. Additionally, the ENAB Program allowed for the continuation of the issuance of an additional \$208 in monthly benefits to one additional family member, for up to 1,080 families of ASNAP recipients with the lowest income. This increased the total ASNAP monthly benefits for each of those households from \$277 to \$485 each month up until September 30, 2023.

- **The ASNAP annual funding was increased by \$1.2 million in June 2023, which was used to fund additional benefits for ASNAP participants, upgrade the ASNAP eligibility system, and earmarked for renovations to the ASNAP building.**
- **In September 2023, a one-time payment of end-of-year (EOY) benefits was issued for all ASNAP participants and their ASNAP-approved additional family members.** These EOY benefits provided a total of \$496 to all ASNAP participants who were receiving \$277 and \$336 for their additional family members who were receiving \$208. These EOY benefits were made possible when USDA FNS approved our request for the use of unspent fiscal year 2023 funds for this purpose. **ASNAP issued over \$2.6 million (\$2,603,720.00) in EOY benefits for 2023.**
- **The number of restaurants accepting ASNAP food coupons has increased by 62.5%.** Since getting USDA approval to launch the Restaurant Meals Program last year beginning with 5 authorized restaurants, ASNAP recipients have the increased flexibility of redeeming their benefits to enjoy a meal in 8 local ASNAP-authorized restaurants.
- **Advancements continue to be made in transitioning ASNAP benefits from food coupons to an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) system.** USDA FNS approved the Scope of Work (SOW) and the Request for Proposals (RFP) that was developed to procure an EBT Processor for the ASNAP on June 20, 2023. The approved SOW and RFP were submitted to the Office of Procurement on July 13, 2023. On September 8, 2023, the Request for Proposals (RFP) EBT Processing Services was advertised and the closing date for proposals is December 8, 2023.

**ASNAP applied for and was approved by USDA FNS to implement the third round of Summer P-EBT for all school children who were enrolled in public and private schools as of the end of School Year 2022-2023.** USDA FNS approved \$2 million for the 2023 Summer P-EBT providing \$139 in food coupons because they did not have access to school lunch meals and snacks during the summer break. As of the time of this report, **\$1,600,724.00 in 2023 Summer P-EBT benefits were issued for 11,515 students from 5,178 households.**

### **American Samoa Women, Infants, and Children (ASWIC) Program**

**The USDA FNS approved WIC Modernization Grant for funds for ASWIC earmarks \$750,000.00 to upgrade Health and Nutrition Delivery Systems (HANDS) and \$20,000.00 will be used to upgrade the ASWIC Program website.**

**ASWIC increased access to locally sourced produce for improved nutrition.** The USDA FNS approved our request to allow WIC participants to use their Cash Value Vouchers (CVV) benefits to purchase local green bananas, uncooked taro and breadfruit, and locally-grown hydroponic

lettuce, in addition to imported fresh, canned, or frozen fruits and vegetables. CVV benefit amounts increased from \$24 to \$25 for children, \$43 to \$44 for pregnant and postpartum women, and \$47 to \$49 for fully and partially breastfeeding mothers.

**ASWIC has completed preparations to launch its Clinic on Wheels.** A Transit Cargo van that was purchased last year has been retrofitted so **WIC services can be taken directly to clients, especially those residing in remote villages and households with transportation challenges.** All hardware, software, and technical requirements for complete client service delivery have been tested and verified as fully operational from various remote locations on Tutuila.

### **Child Care Division**

**Unprecedented funding levels awarded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) remain accessible through 2024 and 2025.** With grantor-approved waivers, **over \$62 million** (\$62,337,778.00) in CCDF supplemental COVID-19 awards remain accessible through 2024 and 2025, allowing for more time to obligate and liquidate these funds to improve the quality of child care for qualifying low-income families. Added to the regular CCDF awards for American Samoa for fiscal years 2023 and 2024 (\$21,651,335.00) the total CCDF awards for American Samoa stands at almost \$84 million (\$83,989,113.00).

**The proactive measures CCD took early on to protect and sustain the supply of child care services continue to prove beneficial,** even after the cancellation of the public health emergency declaration in early May 2023. These mitigation measures include increasing subsidy rates, delinking subsidy payments from attendance and paying based on enrollment, and continuing to issue full subsidy payments to authorized child care providers, even when they are ordered to close. Despite mandatory closures in 2023 due to the highly contagious Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) and concerns about measles, over 40 child care facilities were sustained and had the financial resources through the CCDF to protect the over 400 jobs created through their facilities.

### **Children and Family Services Division**

**The Court-Appointed Relative Assistance (CARA) Program,** funded through the Family First Prevention Services Act, **pays a monthly subsidy of \$150 per child to support relatives/guardians who are appointed by the Court** to assume physical custody of and care for minors who cannot live at home because of safety concerns. There are currently 38 minors who are living with CARA-supported families. By the end of 2023, it is estimated that over \$100,000.00 will have been expended on CARA subsidies (\$97,950.00 subsidies issued for January – November).

**The new Manaia Shelter location is now providing refuge for children and women who are victims of domestic violence and related crimes.** The 3,760 square feet of residential space (including the new extension) that makes up the new and improved Manaia Shelter has been completely renovated, is fully furnished with all new furniture, appliances, and more, with a perimeter that is entirely gated with access via a remote or security code. The Shelter has four bedrooms for boys, four bedrooms for girls, two self-contained rooms for women with children, two full bathrooms and a one-and-one-half bathroom, a common kitchen, a spacious living room, as well as a safe space outside for children to play. There is also an office and an intake area for administration activities. On July 12, 2023, the new and improved Manaia Shelter location was officially open to provide refuge for survivors of domestic violence. The expansion and renovation of this facility were made possible through funding from the Office of the Governor.

**Expanded rental assistance through the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) for people experiencing homelessness** by paying up to \$500 per month in rent for three months or up to two

years. The ESG also provides a flat rate assistance with monthly utilities. In 2023, ESG assisted 136 clients who lost their homes to fires and others experiencing financial struggles and needed time and assistance to improve their economic self-sufficiency.

**Also, DHSS applied for and was awarded \$339,000.00 for renovations to improve healthy and safe services for our clients and staff at our office facilities in Utulei.** Funded through the ARPA Public Buildings Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Compliance Project for Congregate Settings, this award makes possible vital repairs and improvements for our office building in Utulei that houses 4 of our 6 Divisions (CCD, CFSD, DDPC, PIT) and improve one of the emergency exits for our WIC building. Since most of the administered by DHSS does not allow for or have very limited opportunities for building or renovations, getting approved for an award for repairs, renovations, and other structural improvements, for the health and safety of the clients being served therein and our staff is an opportunity we welcome.

### **Challenges and possible solutions**

Despite the cancellation of the declared national public health emergency on May 11, 2023, the implications of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic continue to resonate and pose problems for programs and services. These difficulties are exacerbated by our remote location and our level of reliance on imported goods and other supplies. Here are examples of the challenges faced this year and our efforts to mitigate their effects:

**The ongoing decline in American Samoa's birth rates equates to a continued decline in client numbers for benefit programs that serve children, such as the ASNAP, ASWIC, and Child Care.** The 2021 Statistical Yearbook confirms that live births in American Samoa have dropped from around 1,300 ten years ago to only 706 in 2021. This along with a decreasing population count, increased deaths, and the constant rise in emigration rates results in great reductions in the number of children that can be served through ASNAP, ASWIC, and Child Care. As a result, our programs try to reach as many qualifying children as possible and work with their parents/ guardians to facilitate access and maintain benefits and services for as long as they are eligible and require assistance.

**Supply chain challenges continue to make it difficult to maintain reliable access to the supplies and materials needed by our clients and programs.** These difficulties are compounded by manufacturing issues, not to mention the turmoil stemming from wars and natural disasters. Where practicable, our programs continue to project our needs and order materials and supplies accordingly to avoid shortages. However, there have been circumstances beyond our control and we rely on the understanding and patience of our clients and the community at large. In the end, we try our very best to minimize disruption to services.

**Renovations are delayed for the new location of the temporary homeless shelter.** Funded through the Emergency Solutions Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the renovation and opening of the new location for the Temporary Homeless Shelter was delayed due to legal challenges posed by a tenant of the complex who refused to vacate, even after the sale was completed. Formerly the Afio Mai II Apartment complex in Ottoville, purchased last year for \$300,000 with the assistance and support of the Attorney General's Office, the six-unit apartment complex consists of two buildings: one two-story concrete building containing four two-bedroom units and one single-story building that contains two one-bedroom units, all sitting on 0.26 acres of individually owned land. Budgeted at \$300,000, the renovations planned for these new spaces continue to be delayed into 2024 because



of the backlog of the Court calendar. At this point, DHSS continues to work closely with the Deputy Assistant Attorney General to track any progress in this matter.

**The lack of real estate that is conducive to expanding DHSS services remains a challenge.** Affordable rental spaces to house individuals/ families who are clients of the ESG Program because they are experiencing homelessness are very hard to find. The current rental apartment market is cost-prohibitive for low-income clients of the ESG Program who receive up to \$500 in rental assistance each month, with the intent that the family will continue their lease payments once their ESG assistance expires. Most property owners, including those with 1602 housing, cannot serve ESG clients either because they do not have any units available or the cost of their units is too high for ESG clients to continue paying once their ESG assistance expires. DHSS ESG staff continues to engage property owners to consider modifying their rates to help families.

DHSS remains committed to the active pursuit of opportunities to amplify, elevate, and expand our services. Listed below are some examples of the activities that DHSS will be initiating or continuing this year:

- Continue to seek funding opportunities to enhance or expand existing services, implement new programs and services as they apply to our 6 Divisions, and/ or improve our Department's infrastructure.
- Actively explore the expanded use of technological resources for our programs and services. For example, we will be updating our Department website so that it is more comprehensive and interactive. Also, we will have eligibility determination information that is currently relayed during in-person workshops made available in video formats that prospective clients can access whenever needed.
- Amplify the business opportunities that are available through the ESG Program. Property owners who have residential spaces can lease them to ESG Program participants for 3 months or up to 2 years. During that time, the ESG Program pays up to \$500/ month with security deposits and a flat rate fee to assist the participant with monthly utilities.

DHSS maintains their commitment to identifying and implementing transformative and positive changes that improve their services for the people of American Samoa. They remain open to exploring measures that will streamline their processes and procedures so that qualifying individuals, families, and/ or children who need them most can easily access our programs and services and maintain that assistance for as long as they need them and are eligible. Ultimately, DHSS strives to work with families to improve outcomes and ensure healthier and safer communities throughout American Samoa.

## **Development Bank of American Samoa**

The Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS) is a semi-autonomous agency of the American Samoa Government (ASG) established in 1969 by Title 28, Section 28.0101. The Development Bank's primary function is to serve the community of American Samoa by providing affordable financial programs. The Bank serves businesses by financing start-up or expansion ventures. The Bank also finances new home construction and home repair with the aim of improving the quality of housing in the Territory. It is a conduit for economic diversification yielding financial capacity to the people of American Samoa to participate in their development process and has been a source of fair housing in American Samoa.



### Loans Department Major Accomplishments (November 2022-October 2023)

From the years 2022 to 2023, the Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS) funded a combined total of twenty-five (27) home renovations and new home construction loans through its Direct Mortgage Loan Program totaling \$855,000.00. Through the Federally funded HUD HOME program 10 new homes were approved, built, completed and in progress from 2022 to 2023 totaling \$569,000.00. HUD workshops and lottery resumes at the Lee Auditorium however, lottery is conducted virtually utilizing automatic selection spin the wheel to ensure fairness. DBAS MAOTA Affordable Loan Program (DBAS MALP) 38 homeowners were able to either renovate or build a new home utilizing \$998,997.00 from the American Rescue Plan Act. Twelve homeowners from Aunu'u village were able to receive grant funding to renovate and upgrade their homes under the Housing Preservation Grant from USDA totaling \$88,000.00.

Through the federally funded Economic Development Revolving Loan Fund (EDRLF) program 2 existing businesses productively funded a total of \$20,000.00. Another federally funded loan program that we have partnered up with is the VA Native American Direct Loan (NADL) for the Veterans returning home to build their homes in American Samoa. This program approved 9 loans over the past year with a loan volume of \$2,232,495.00.

Small business developments from November 2022 to October 2023, DBAS has also funded the following programs:

- 3 small businesses through the direct micro loan \$6,000.00.
- 2 start-up businesses through the direct commercial loan program in total amount of \$30,000.00.
- 2 Direct Special Project Commercial a total of \$30,000.00.
- 30 Special Project Commercial Loans (Small Business loans) for Farmers a total of \$86,000.00
- 11 Special Project Commercial Loans (Small Business loans) for Fishers a total of \$32,000.00

DBAS continues to serve the Manu'a islands by providing the same services available in Tutuila for the Manu'a islands.

To demonstrate fiscal year progress, the table below outlines DBAS programs, total disbursements, and jobs created in FY2023.

Loan Programs Nov. 2022-Oct. 2023		# Of Loans	Volume	# Of Employed	# Of Household
1	Direct Consumer: HIU	15	\$ 205,000.00	42	36
2	Direct Consumer: HIS	7	\$ 245,000.00	40	144
3	Direct Mortgage (New Home)	5	\$ 405,000.00	36	26
4	HUD-HOME Loan Program	10	\$ 569,000.00	45	56
5	VA Home Program	9	\$ 2,232,495.00	76	45
6	Direct Commercial	2	\$ 30,000.00	12	N/A
7	Direct Micro	3	\$ 6,000.00	8	N/A
8	Special Project Commercial	41	\$ 118,000.00	223	N/A
9	EDRLF	2	\$ 20,000.00	8	N/A
10	DBAS MALP	38	\$ 988,997.00	213	296
11	DBAS HRAP Aunu'u Grant	12	\$ 88,000.00	23	72
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>144</b>	<b>\$4,907,492.00</b>	<b>726</b>	<b>675</b>

***Building Inspections Accomplishments***  
***November 2022-November 2023***

<b>VA PROJECTS</b>	
Eastern District	8
Western District	14
Completed Projects	1
<b>Total VA Projects as of November 2023</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>HUD NEW HOME PROJECTS</b>	
Eastern District	6
Western District	10
Completed Projects	4
<b>Total HUD Projects as of November 2023</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>DIRECT LOCAL PROJECTS</b>	
Eastern District New Homes	4
Eastern District Repair	1
Western District New Home	5
Western District Repair	8
Completed Repair Home	10
Manu'a Repair Projects	4
Aunu'u Repair Projects	1
<b>Total Direct Projects as of November 2023</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>DBAS MAOTA AFFORDABLE LOAN PROJECT (MALP)/ARPA</b>	
Eastern District New Homes	4
Eastern District Repair	5
Western District New Home	6
Western District Repair	8
Completed Repair Home	16
<b>Total ARPA/MAOTA Projects as of November 2023</b>	<b>39</b>

<b>DBAS HOUSING REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE Projects (Aunu'u)</b>	
Ongoing Projects	9
Completed Projects	3
<b>Total HRAP Projects as of November 2023</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>DIRECT COMMERCIAL LOANS</b>	
<b>Business</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total Completed &amp; Ongoing Projects 2023: 128</b>	



(Picture on the left a new direct home loan project in the village of Fagaalu, and photo on the right is inside of a new HUD home loan in Nuuuli both completed in 2023. Photos taken by DBAS staff.)

### **Finance Department Major Accomplishments (November 2022-October 2023)**

The Finance Department continues to follow the Policies and Standard Operating Procedures, with the guidelines as required through Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), and Uniform Guidance (UG).

Development Bank of American Samoa's new auditors conducted field work in April 2023, and auditors are working arduously to close out the audit for FY2020. DBAS anticipates receiving results of the audit shortly. Each month, by the 10<sup>th</sup>, major federal programs require submission of financial reports. As part of improving interdepartmental workflow, Finance managed to complete and submit monthly financials for these programs on time. In addition, at the end of each program year, compiled reports for the different periods were provided on time.

For the period covered on this report, November 2022 through October 2023, the following are reported on financials as highlights of achievements to date:

- Total loan disbursements not to include pass through programs is \$1,420,790.87.
- Repayments collected for loans, pass through programs not included and applied to principal only is \$2,207,059.83.
- Interest repayments as DBAS revenue amount to \$791,995.89.
- Total loan disbursements of restricted funds or pass through programs such as VA and Student loan where VA with a total of \$2,259,573.70 and SL with none.
- DBAS is not responsible for collecting for the VA Program, and SL repayment is \$157,395.81. DBAS earns 20% of the total amount for admin fees as revenue.
- The operating loss decreased significantly to \$147,724 by the end of October 2023 compared to FY 2022.
- Total Net Assets in October 2023 is \$20,141,680 compared to \$20,084,735 in 2022.

### **Collections & Loan Recovery Accomplishments**

The total cash collected from January 2023 to October 2023 on delinquent accounts totals \$1,400,000.00. Loan Recovery collected a total of \$189,562.00 as of October 2023. The Collections Department continues to uphold, enforce, and strategically execute methods incorporated in the collection policies to improve monthly collection efforts.

### **DBAS Human Resource Accomplishments**

DBAS in partnership with the ASG Human Resources received 14 participants in 2023 for the Summer Youth Employment Program. At the end of their program DBAS requested to maintain 2 participants. DBAS foster skills to help promote good work ethics, train, and maintain employees.

DBAS continues to conduct quarterly training on ethics, code of conduct, safety and employee handbook. March 2023 DBAS Building Inspectors attended a training conducted by OSHA representatives from Hawaii, to further equip them with knowledge of safety practices. September 2023 ninety percent of the DBAS staff attended the Suicide Prevention Awareness conducted by the Department of Health in partnership with ASG Governor's Office.

### **Ongoing Grant Funding Projects Awarded FY2023:**

#### *DBAS MAOTA Affordable Loan Project*

May 24, 2022, DBAS was awarded \$8,000,000.00 under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) by the American Samoa ARPA Oversight office for the DBAS Maota Affordable Loan Project

(DBAS MALP) proposal. We greatly appreciate this opportunity for American Samoa as COVID-19 exacerbated housing disparities and home insecurities.

DBAS has developed DBAS MALP to address local needs, provide necessary housing assistance, and strengthen communities. The following objectives are being identified for this project: (1) To improve and build quality homes, (2) To increase suitable living environments within the community, (3) To increase economic opportunities and (4) To increase the number of affordable housing units.

June 2022, DBAS was able to conduct public meetings to Tutuila residents and the Manu'a Island residents to inform the public of loan funding opportunities for DBAS MALP. August 9 & 10, 2022 mandatory workshops were conducted at the Lee Auditorium for both Eastern and Western Districts for Tutuila. Over 500 plus individuals were able to participate. The first DBAS MALP lottery draw was conducted on September 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, whereas winners were selected randomly, and 25 winners won a chance to apply for home repairs, 15 winners from Eastern district participants won a chance to apply for new home loan, and 15 western district participants won a chance to apply for a new home loan. Out of the 55 DBAS MALP lottery winners, 25 were approved for a loan for a home repair or a new home loan totaling \$868,499.00.

Second DBAS MALP workshops were conducted on September 19, 2022, for the Tutuila districts. DBAS MALP Lottery for the second round took place on October 17, 2022, and lottery winners' applications were accepted and under review.

To date thirty-eight (38) DBAS MALP loans have been approved and disbursed totaling \$988,997.00. These funds have helped assist over 250 people with building new homes and renovating houses to maintain a secure and safe dwelling. Third DBAS MALP workshops are scheduled to be conducted on November 27, 2023, and November 28, 2023, and we anticipate receiving over 100 participants.

#### *Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines*

On May 31, 2023, Development Bank of American Samoa was a recipient of a \$5,000.00 grant from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines (FHLB Des Moines). The grant award from FHLB Des Moines was used in purchasing office supplies to further assist with DBAS operations to sustain an efficient and effective service to our local community.

#### *Step Into Virtual Banking*

DBAS has successfully installed new computers and monitors for each DBAS employee. The DBAS operation is being conducted with a newly installed system for email and data storage. The new network system installation has been completed and concluded the Step into Virtual Project. With the newly installed network system DBAS was able to move forward on upgrading its website and anticipate having the new website go live on December 1, 2023.

### **DBAS FY2023 Shovel Ready Projects and Proposals:**

#### *Proposals for Funding Opportunities*

The DBAS submitted the following proposals and received grant funding:

- DBAS Housing Rehabilitation Assistance Project (HRAP) under the USDA Housing Service (RHS)
  - Goal: To assist the residents of Aunu'u with housing related repairs they may need.

- Funding is a 100% grant and not a loan.
- Awarded \$100,000 grant funding to assist 12 households in Aunu'u. Disbursements of funding for this grant funding was awarded in September 2023.
- DBAS Office improvement Project under the USDA Communities Facilities Rural Development Communities Facilities Direct Loans and Grant funding.
  - Goal: To upgrade DBAS office furniture to maintain the capacity to serve the people of Tutuila efficiently.
  - Awarded on September 14, 2022, \$72,496.00 to upgrade office furniture and equipment to better serve the community.
  - March 16, 2023, USDA Community Programs Director Alton Kimura, and Engineer/Environmental Coordinator Lennie Okano-Kendrick of Hawaii/Western Pacific visited DBAS.
- DBAS Rural Business Development Grant under the USDA Housing Preservation Grants (DBAS RBDG)
  - Received letter of approval in August 2023 for \$84,000.00 and awaiting further direction from grantor to move forward with disbursing funding to small business owners that submitted letters of intent and support for this grant application.

DBAS continues to serve the American Samoa community and diligently strive to develop new programs under local or federal funding to further assist the people of American Samoa to address their economic, social, and financial needs. As the year 2024 approaches, DBAS looks forward to serving Tutuila and Manu'a community with deeper commitment to implementing effective programs and providing efficient and equitable services in partnership with the private sector and other ASG agencies.

## Office of Financial Institutions

The objective of the Office of Financial Institutions (OFI) for 2023 was to promote a stable banking and financial sector that facilitates economic growth and development within the Territory. OFI was also able to promote excellence through strong consumer protection; provide effective regulatory oversight and support to all clients in the territory. The following are a few of OFI's accomplishments that we have accomplished throughout the year.

- The migration of LLCs from Blanche Lulu Barber
- New leadership position hire of Administrative Assistant and Examiner
- Successful registration for CSBS for Examiner training program
  - Series 1 BSA/AML Examination Training in Minneapolis
- BSA/AML Examination for TBAS completed
- Forensic Examination of TBAS completed
- Continued collaboration with FRB on updates of the Safety and Soundness of TBAS
- Ongoing collaboration with MSBs on reporting improvements
- Monitoring of TBAS management and operations
- Introduction to Problem Banks training program for Senior Examiner completed
- Examiner Exchange Series program completed
- Data below collected from the registered MSBS of monthly remittances



<b>MSB Total Foreign Remittance FY 2022</b>		<b>MSB Total Foreign Remittance FY 2023</b>	
October 2021	\$4,626,272.97	October 2022	\$2,906,026.68
November 2021	2,280,499.93	November 2022	2,574,533.80
December 2021	3,015,846.89	December 2022	3,731,159.18
January 2022	2,307,055.98	January 2023	2,647,749.37
February 2022	1,754,833.86	February 2023	2,692,098.85
March 2022	2,159,755.32	March 2023	3,677,894.34
April 2022	3,062,872.51	April 2023	2,882,663.23
May 2022	3,618,509.89	May 2023	3,535,433.73
June 2022	3,841,631.09	June 2023	3,356,153.92
July 2022	3,267,858.29	July 2023	3,463,216.45
August 2022	3,212,104.63	August 2023	2,923,264.48
September 2022	3,431,446.80	September 2023	2,936,266.04
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$36,578,690.16</b>	<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$33,968,416.07</b>

<b>MSB Total US Remittance FY 2022</b>		<b>MSB Total US Remittance FY 2023</b>	
October 2021	\$952,778.23	October 2022	\$579,769.68
November 2021	397,981.00	November 2022	469,251.50
December 2021	487,755.51	December 2022	747,941.16
January 2022	416,642.85	January 2023	404,967.17
February 2022	375,663.00	February 2023	413,706.00
March 2022	339,143.85	March 2023	609,143.00
April 2022	541,154.44	April 2023	729,052.83
May 2022	629,959.02	May 2023	920,543.94
June 2022	664,384.37	June 2023	913,652.50
July 2022	513,577.00	July 2023	869,985.01
August 2022	599,852.00	August 2023	767,515.01
September 2022	595,477.00	September 2023	719,185.07
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$6,514,368.27</b>	<b>Totals:</b>	<b>\$8,144,712.87</b>

The OFI are continuously maintaining oversight to ensure practices, processing and procedures are operating in a safe and sound manner in accordance to Federal Reserve Bank (FRB), Conference of State Bank Supervisors (CSBS), Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council (FFIEC) guidelines.

### **American Samoa Visitors Bureau**

The reopening of American Samoa's borders has led to a reinvigoration of both direct and indirect economic growth, fostering opportunities for both visitors and residents alike. Moreover, the American Samoa Visitors Bureau (ASVB) has made significant strides in the development of the local industry and the promotion of domestic tourism. Through strategic local and regional partnerships, training programs, the Atoa o Samoa initiative with Samoa Tourism Authority, and local product development, the ASVB has laid the foundation for a sustainable and thriving tourism ecosystem.

The following is a summary of accomplishments of the overall focus to develop and support both public and private sectors to strengthen and develop the tourism and hospitality industry in American Samoa.

### **17 Cruise Ships Visited American Samoa in 2023**

American Samoa extended a warm welcome to 17 cruise ships, hosting a total of 41,705 passengers and crew members who graced our shores. This substantial influx of visitors has yielded a favorable impact on our local economy. It is noteworthy to emphasize that at a conservative estimate, of at least 50% (fifty percent) of disembarking passengers and crew members, each contributing a minimum of \$50 during their stay, results in a calculated total revenue of USD **\$1,042,625**. This calculation is considered a conservative baseline figure, as a multitude of passengers opt for island bus tours, ranging from \$20 to \$150 per person, or choose to rent vehicles for the day. This estimated generated revenue does not include port/entry fees, purchase and restocking of supplies for the cruise ships, indirect revenue, nor does it include revenues generated by visitors arriving via air.



### **Disney's Maiden Voyage Success**

A significant milestone in 2023 was the maiden voyage of the Disney Wonder on October 19th. This visit, which had been in the pipeline since 2021, tested American Samoa as a possible destination for future cruises. ASVB organized a full transformation of the wharf and provided both welcoming and departing performances for the passengers. The visit was a resounding success, with Disney Wonder considering adding American Samoa to their itinerary twice for 2024. Numerous expressions of gratitude from visitors through email and social media comments is evidence of the positive impact of this visit.

### **Regular flights/ferry to American Samoa provide stable booking opportunities for visitors**

With the complete opening of our borders from January of this year, American Samoa has enjoyed economic growth with reliable air and ferry transportation increasing visitors to American Samoa. An average of 6000+ passengers arrive monthly on Hawaiian Airlines not including visitors traveling to American Samoa on Talofa Air, Samoa Airways, or private planes. The numbers do not include visitors traveling by Ferry or other ocean vessels. It is important to note that the economic impact of visitors to American Samoa continues to increase.

### **Hospitality Industry Programs with ASCC**

ASVB was pleased by the successful development and completion of Basic Customer Service Applications and Introduction to Hospitality Management courses in collaboration with the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) Adult Education program. These courses, designed to develop capacity within the tourism industry, allowed participants to earn Course Education Units (CEU). Students from both the public and private sectors gained essential skills and its application in customer service and hospitality management, ensuring American Samoa's cultural heritage and natural beauty are showcased through exceptional experiences. Future hospitality courses are in the pipeline, building towards a robust and industry-aligned curriculum.

### **SPTO Workshops**

In collaboration with the Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO), ASVB hosted several workshops throughout the second half of the year. These workshops covered digital marketing, plastics



repurposing, destination standards, and communication, aiming to enhance the knowledge and skills of the community and government agencies involved in the tourism sector.

### **Plastics Repurposing Workshop**

This initiative aimed at addressing the ever-growing problem of plastic waste in the Pacific while providing an exciting economic opportunity for local communities. In partnership with the South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO), ASVB hosted a three-day Plastics Repurposing Workshop at the ASPA Compound in Tafuna. The workshop focused on turning plastic bottles into jewelry and other handicrafts, offering a cost-effective way to both reduce plastic pollution and generate income.

### **Taxi and Bus Workshop**

The crucial role of the land transportation sector as part of the growth of the tourism industry is one of the focus areas in capacity building for the ASVB. The ASVB conducted a workshop in conjunction with DOC/Commerce Commission for transport operators aimed at building for all taxi and bus operators and owners servicing visitors to American Samoa with a focus on taxi and bus operators and owners servicing cruise ships.

### **Pacific Tourism Sustainable Destination Standard Workshop**

The workshop was the first of its kind and aimed to engage the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Destination Standard at the National Tourism Organization level. Introducing the Standard to key Government agencies & industry members is critical in achieving clarity on the standard, what they mean and how it can best be contextualized to American Samoa's context. This workshop was the pivotal first step to our work in improving the overall industry and economic wellbeing of American Samoa and in the South Pacific Region.

### **Digital Marketing Training**

The Digital Marketing Training aimed to build capacity in the private and public sectors, equipping participants with essential skills and knowledge in the rapidly evolving field of digital marketing. The Training, coordinated by the ASVB, was conducted by the South Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO), of which the ASVB is a founding member. The workshop brought together professionals from various sectors, including ASG executives, marketing executives, entrepreneurs, and small business owners. ASVB's target in offering this training in American Samoa also held throughout the South Pacific is to empower local businesses and government agencies to leverage the power of digital platforms to promote American Samoa as a premier tourist destination, drive online engagement, and attract a global audience.

### **Marketing Heads (Leads) Workshop Training**

The 2023 South Pacific Tourism Exchange (SPTEx) held in Christchurch, New Zealand included training for Tourism organizations. The workshop facilitated knowledge sharing, networking, and the establishment of partnerships to enhance travel experiences in the Pacific. Additionally, ASVB attended Marketing Heads Workshop training, further strengthening their engagement in the industry.

### **Communications Workshop**

The workshop provided support to ASVB with its Communications Plan, reviewing needs and priorities, and updating ASVB on relevant opportunities for collaboration at a regional scale. The training also included an opportunity for ASVB staff to practice streamlining mainstream media and digital platforms including social media channels to complement efforts for the benefit of the American Samoa as a viable destination.

### **SPTO Regional Consultations Workshop**

The workshop provided an opportunity for ASVB to review the findings of the tourism research cooperation framework, discuss climate and resilient priorities, review the Draft Pacific Sustainable Tourism Standards Action Plan and Communications Strategy and a digital training to support research, statistics, and sustainable tourism initiatives.

### **The Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit**

A new era of sustainable tourism in the Pacific has been ushered in, with significant implications for American Samoa. This transformative summit saw enthusiastic discussions challenging traditional norms and exploring innovative opportunities, ultimately fostering resilient destinations, and forging vital partnerships. Notably, the summit underscored the importance of preserving cultural identity while promoting sustainable tourism practices.

### **Cruise Summit 2023**

ASVB, on behalf of American Samoa, attended the 2023 Cruise Summit in Tahiti. The summit shared pivotal information on Cruise Economics and how we can use the information to improve the Cruise industry in American Samoa. Topics of engagement included the Cruise Market, Societal acceptability, sustainability, data collection and key indicators.

## **MARKETING**

With the complete border opening in our territory, the ASVB aggressively pursued both in-person and digital marketing opportunities, actively engaging and successfully completing campaigns on major platforms throughout the year.

### **ASVB Joined the Samoa Tourism Authority in Joint Marketing**

As a priority of ASG in the Atoa o Samoa efforts, ASVB initiated its first combined marketing efforts with Samoa Tourism Authority (STA) at the Dallas Travel and American Samoa Visitors Bureau Adventure Consumer show. Additionally, ASVB joined the Samoa Tourism Authority on their Australian roadshow making key stops in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, which provided a valuable opportunity to meet with consumers and travel agencies in person to promote American Samoa as a tourist destination in the Australian market. The roadshow signifies an assertive approach to tourism marketing, as both National Tourism Organizations (NTO's) take the lead in connecting directly with wholesalers in Australia. ASVB introduced the Australian audience to what American Samoa has to offer. This venture also presented an opportunity for American Samoa to explore the Australian market and develop invaluable ties with wholesalers in the region.



### **Seatrade Cruise Global, 2023**

ASVB recognized the significance of attending the 'Seatrade Cruise Global' in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and sent a team of six representatives to the event. The four-day exhibition provided an excellent platform to meet with prominent cruise lines and publications, with over 500 exhibitors in attendance. ASVB established valuable connections with key players in the industry, including MSC Cruises, Silversea Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, Royal Caribbean Cruise, and further strengthened the existing partnership with the Princess Cruise Line. Seatrade serves as a crucial event for cruise lines to finalize their future destinations, making ASVB's presence vital to ensure American Samoa is considered.

**Trade Shows 2023**

ASVB actively participated in key industry trade shows to showcase American Samoa's tourism offerings and strengthen our presence in the global tourism market.

**The Travel & Adventure Show Series**, known for connecting millions of travel enthusiasts with thousands of travel brands, also played a significant role in ASVB's marketing efforts. The series commenced in February in Los Angeles with a follow-up show in early April in Dallas.

**USA Investment Summit, 2023**

ASVB joined the ASG contingency to continue to market American Samoa to investors as a viable destination for Tourism development. Opportunities to meet with investors and attend forums and workshops was an invaluable opportunity to market American Samoa.

**South Pacific Tourism Exchange (SPTE), 2023**

The 2023 SPTE was held in Christchurch, New Zealand. This gathering serves as a significant platform for Pacific Island destinations to connect with international buyers, media representatives, and tourism operators, aiming to promote tourism development and foster partnerships in the region. Participation in SPTE allowed ASVB to engage with international buyers, travel agents, and industry professionals, providing an opportunity to showcase American Samoa's unique tourism offerings. The event facilitated knowledge sharing, networking, and the establishment of partnerships to enhance travel experiences in the Pacific.

**Social Media Growth and Online Presence for ASVB**

In today's competitive market, the growth and maintenance of a robust online presence have become critical for organizations across various industries. ASVB is no exception to this trend. Below highlights the substantial increase in online engagement and reach for ASVB across its Facebook and Instagram platforms between August 10 and November.

During the period under review, ASVB has witnessed remarkable growth in its last 90 days on its Facebook platform. Facebook engagement has surged by an impressive 984%, reflecting a substantial increase in audience interaction with ASVB's content. Net followers on the ASVB Facebook page increased by 174%, indicating a growing online community. Moreover, the overall reach on Facebook has increased by a significant 438%, which demonstrates that ASVB's content is reaching a broader and more diverse audience. On the Instagram platform, ASVB has also made notable progress. Engagement with followers has increased by 32.6%, highlighting a more active and involved online audience. Non-followers' engagement has seen an even more substantial increase, rising by 33%, indicating an enhanced ability to attract new users and maintain their interest. The number of visitors to the ASVB Instagram profile has grown by 13.4%, further increasing the potential customer base. Overall profile activity has increased by 11.6%, indicating a more vibrant and engaging online presence.

The significant growth in online presence and engagement for ASVB on both Facebook and Instagram underscores the importance of a strong social media presence in today's digital age. This growth is a positive sign for ASVB, and by continuing to invest in social media marketing and maintaining a compelling online presence, ASVB is well-positioned for future success.

**LOCAL PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT**

The need for additional local products within the tourism industry that balance the interest and demands of both domestic and off island visitors has been a focus of the ASVB and as a result the ASVB is pleased to note the following accomplishments in 2023.

**Moso'oi Events 2023**

ASVB introduced the Explore, Experience, Enjoy (EEE) Moso'oi Event on October 3rd and 4th for the local community. The event provided ideas to promote tourism, business opportunities and sustainable tourism. It featured possible business prospects which residents may be interested in engaging in. This event also encouraged residents to 'visit' other parts of Tutuila, which they may not have ever visited. Free bus tours to both sides of the island and less visited villages (Fagamalo, Malota, Fagasa, Vatia, etc.) were offered. Agency partners hosted booths to share their department's visions, and the Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS) was present to assist anyone interested in microloan opportunities for starting a tourism-related business. The event concluded with an around-the-island tour, supported by Port Administration, allowing the local community to rediscover the beauty of their island home.

**Maloata Nature & Cultural Experience Project**

The ASVB has provided support for the development of the Maloata project providing the opportunity for visitors to enjoy the secluded serenity and deep culture embedded in the natural environment in the private location at Maloata. The support included supplies for the building of a fale for visitors to be able to enjoy recreational activities that range from a cultural experience, picnics, fishing, farming and even touring the green houses that supply our local florists. Tours to Maloata, or opportunities to book the area for camping or functions are available now to both domestic and off island visitors.

**Save the Music Project**

The ASVB supported the reprinting of a book with lyrics and history of many of our traditional music where our history and stories are stored. The value of the legacy held in the lyrics is crucial to maintaining the strength of our thriving culture with visitors.

**Maliu Mai Resort Destination Enhancement Project**

The ASVB provided support to enhance the visitor experience at Maliu Mai with a focus on both domestic and cruise ship visitors. The project included the development of a platform for entertainment and demonstrations.

**Experience Fagasa Project**

The ASVB supported the securing of recreational materials as well as restoration of an area for both domestic and traveling visitors. The Experience Fagasa Project was open for business upon the arrival of the maiden voyage of the Disney Wonder to American Samoa. This project is another destination for domestic visitors to learn more about the history of Fagasa and to share that knowledge with all visitors to American Samoa.

**Airbnb Development Project**

ASVB worked with individuals seeking to support the need for accommodations through efforts to transform available home(s) for visitors interested in Airbnb type accommodations.

**Local Events**

ASVB continued to support the success of local events attracting both domestic and off island visitors to include the following.

- Fishing Tournaments
- MASI events to include Miss Pacific Islands Pageant and the 2023 Miss American Samoa Pageant
- The Pala Lagoon Paddle Battle

- Supported various private and public events with promotional material and the ASVB reusable bag.
- Provided support for local artist to participate in WESTAF Arts Event
- Supported various sports federations to promote sports tourism.

In conclusion, 2023 has been a successful year for ASVB, marked by increased cruise ship visits and the successful introduction of a new cruise line, Disney Cruises. The ASVB has formed partners with a wide range of community entities and continues to support and encourage events to be held, locally, for our residents as visitors. Collaboration with local and regional partners and participation in industry events have further solidified American Samoa's position as a preferred tourist destination. The ASVB looks forward to building on these accomplishments in the years to come as they continue to build the Tourism Industry to become a viable economic pillar in the territory; thus, improving the quality of life for our people. The tourism industry is very instrumental in preserving our cultural practices and traditions.

## **Department of Human Resources**

As the central department overseeing government employment, the Department of Human Resources is dedicated to promoting opportunities and services for job seekers and workforce development. Emphasizing collaborative initiatives, DHR consistently works across divisions and with various departments and agencies to fulfill shared goals and commitments. Despite challenges, our steadfast dedication to serving the workforce and the public endures. Here are key achievements from each division: Personnel, Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act, Administration & Finance, Drug & Alcohol Testing (DAT), Unemployment Insurance, and Compliance.

- Conducted ASG New Hire Orientation in collaboration with DAT, Compliance, as well as other departments and agencies such as Retirement, Workmen Compensation, & Payroll
- Conducted monthly training for ASG Personnel Reps.
- Completed an audit requested by Treasury
- Successfully remodeled the Personnel Division
- Acquired new computers for over half of the Personnel Division
- Collaborated with WIOA during the SYEP and the Career Fair
- Regularly created and posted weekly and monthly media videos and Personnel announcements on DHR website
- Provided training and DAT in Manu'a
- Provided training to various organizations, including the Department of Public Safety, Territorial Audit Office, DOE-SPED, DYWA, KVZK TV Staff, and ASG Personnel Representatives. Topics covered included ASG New Hire Orientation, Customer Service, Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), Professional Ethical Decision-Making for Governmental Employees, Abandonment of Employment, Ethics, Overtime Payment, and Comp. Time.
- Funding was approved for the execution of the SYEP 2023 Plans & Employment Events, with 200 participants allocated through the WIOA Consolidated formula grant. In 2023, the Summer Youth Program successfully registered 933 participants who were placed in worksites. Additionally, leveraging resources from the Governor's Office enabled the expansion of SYEP, employing over 800 eligible youth across government operations,

businesses, nonprofits, semi-autonomous bodies, faith-based authorities, and the private sector.

- Quality worksite training for SYEP Youth Participants provided by: 25 Government Agencies 33 Private Sector/Businesses, 4 Authorities and 4 Non-Profit Organizations
- A new Financial Reporting System has been established, allowing DHR to submit reports before deadlines.
- The territory has been chosen for Technical Assistance from the DOL, and the implemented plan is set to commence shortly. The new funding allocation supports the continuation of the Work-Based Learning (WBL) and On-the-Job Training (OJT) requests. Over the past six months, four WBL participants successfully completed their training services.
- Revised internal control procedures to enhance WIOA operations
- Conducted drug and alcohol testing, deterring substance abuse; tested over 1,500 government employees in 2023.
- Issued ASG service checks for 72 employees with 20 years of service, 22 with 30 years, and 3 with 40 years.
- Reviewed and approved 71 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) applications
- Provided cash assistance to all eligible individuals (3,460 applicants) under the ARPA Cash Assistance Program (ARPA CAP)
- Extended cash assistance to 55 applicants from non-profit organizations through ARPA CAP
- Conducted ARPA CAP Intake outreach and distributed checks to residents in the Manu'a Islands.
- Established rapport with Federal Agencies (e.g., USDOL), ASG Departments (e.g., Treasury and Budget Office), and local ARPA Office Branch, gaining their support for program success.

## Insurance Commissioner's Office

2023 updates are as follows:

- Completed 4-months of staff training and continued to face-time with NAIC Staff/Mentor through September and October 2023 with the NAIC Insurance Summit, Kansas City, MO (September 7-21, 2023) and the 2023 NAIC Western Zone Summit/Training for San Antonio, TX (October 9 – 16, 2023).
- Data Collection Summary for all classes of insurance sold in American Samoa for 2021 & 2022; report completed and is to be published shortly.
- 98% percent of insurers renewed their Certificate of Authority (COA's) for 2023-2024.
- Established \$200,000 of Surety CD Bonds of insurers added to the Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS') portfolio for 2023.
- Progressive, Oxford, and Insurance of the Pacific case - Working with Attorney General's Consumer Affairs for the final court approval payout/distribution

The Insurance Commissioner (IC) Office had made good progress relative to staff training in collaboration with the NAIC Mentors and training staff both online and face training. Staff training will continue until all insurance, insurance markets, risks, etc. are completed. The Insurance Commissioner (IC) in collaboration with NAIC will continue to seek and solicit large financially solvent insurers both domestically and internationally with a variety of insurance products to strengthen the local insurance market here in American Samoa.



## American Samoa Workmen’s Compensation Commission

The American Samoa Workmen’s Compensation Commission (WCC) is established under Title 32: Chapter 05 and 06 of the A.S.C.A. to oversee and enforce the American Samoa Workmen’s Compensation Act. The WCC administers and regulates all provisions of the statute for the Territory of American Samoa, including ensuring all employers of the Territorial government and the private sector secure workmen’s compensation coverage. The statute also authorizes the Commission to investigate and hear workmen’s compensation claims; grant authorization for carriers to provide workmen’s compensation insurance in the Territory; enforce coverage compliance and requirements among businesses; administer of all special funds established by the act; and establish a statutory office to transact official business of the Commission.

Year 2023 WCC accomplishments are as follows:

- Continued improving the growth and retention of the ASG WC Fund under the fund custodian (Treasurer). In comparison to last year, the ASG WC Fund is significantly up to \$7 million (unconsolidated) since April 2023. This is a 29% increase from last year’s reporting to the Legislature (\$5million). Through constant efforts and pressure to ensure the fund custodian is diligently committed to safeguarding the fund, including the Commission’s commitment to raise and seek legal actions on any sign of violation, the Commission continues to see a significant progress and trend in the fund’s gradual growth since 2020.
- Applied and approved for ARPA’s Public Building CDC Compliance Project funding. The Commission’s Office applied for \$30K to fund 4 projects with ARPA to upgrade all of the Commission’s office premises to improve safety and wellness of its employees and visitors.
- Completion of a final draft of proposed statutory amendments with the Rule Reform panel, including the Commission’s proposed draft rules and regulations. The Department of Legal Affairs has also completed its review and recommendations of both drafts. The Commission is currently reviewing the Attorney General’s recommendations before a final submission by the onset of CY2024.
- Successfully conducted a first ever outreach effort for ASG employees in the Manu’a Islands from October 24 to October 26, including the Commission’s Office first ever compliance enforcement for employers and businesses operating in the Manu’a Islands.
- Successfully conducted and facilitated training outreach for the following ASG departments and agencies upon request: American Samoa Power Authority, Criminal Justice Planning Agency, Department of Education and the Department of Port Administration.
- Renovation of the Commission’s main office to repair several interior damages and flooring (this effort is not part of the Commission’s Office ARPA’s project). The renovation project was paid directly under the office’s operating budget.
- Creation and publication of the Commission’s first-ever citation booklet, which specifies all violations and penalties and fines cited under the American Samoa Workmen’s Compensation Commission. The Commission’s Office will begin and commence citation issuance starting January 2024.
- Filling of the vacant Clerk’s position. The Commission’s Office recommended to retain and hire its SYEP applicant for the Clerk’s position due to extensive training received in performing such duties and functions during the summer.
- Successfully mediated a total of 29 workers’ comp. claim cases towards a settlement.

**WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION CLAIMS BEFORE THE WCC  
(ASG CLAIMS ONLY)**

	TOTAL CLAIMS
New disability claims filed	29
New death benefit claims filed	1
Claims successfully settled & closed by the WCC	29
Claims successfully settled and mediated but required medical evaluations before closing	11
Unsettled claims forwarded by the WCC to the ALJ for a final decision	0
Unsettled claims awarded by the ALJ	0

**WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION CLAIMS BEFORE INSURANCE CARRIERS  
(PRIVATE SECTOR)**

\*\*\* Note: Under A.S.C.A. §32.0650, no settlement can be enforced or effectuated on a claim unless filed by the Commissioner.

	TOTAL CLAIMS
Private sector claims successfully settled & paid by Insurance Providers	11
Private sector claims filed before the WCC	0
Total of compensation settlements approved and settled by Insurance Providers (Private Sector cases only)	\$425,959.63

**COMPENSATION ORDERS  
(ASG Claims Only)**

	TOTAL PAYMENT
Total compensation orders approved by the WCC on all settled claims (Payments for Continuing Beneficiaries Included)	\$865,630.98

## Department of Administrative Services

The four current components of the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) are the Administrative Bldg/ Security/Maintenance/Mailroom; the Print Shop; Office of Archives and Records Management; and the Government Housing Division. Accomplishments of Administrative Services for year 2023 are as follows:

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The Department of Administrative Services Director's Office conducted many administrative matters during FY2023. Work involved personnel matters; financial transactions; post pandemic normalization policies; Executive Office Building EOB upgrades, Tafuna Housing property development; staff and community outreach programs and annual public Christmas decorations and tree installations.

Personnel actions included full time conversions; interdepartmental transfers; leave code adjustments; promotions; new vacancies and abandonments; and a number of payroll evaluation increments. Overtime compensations and staff training and service awards were also conducted. Regular administrative forms, reports and budgeting was done, including acceptance of a \$1.8 million dollar ARPA grant award to promote CDC Building compliance measures. This pending project will focus on ARPA's CDC COVID19 Building Compliance program. It aims to renovate the EOB roofing with a central air unit equipped with UVGI germicidal lights; retrofit in place Division ACs with HRV/MERV/HEPA filters; and provide safety supplies and materials for DAS first line maintenance workers and security guards. These objectives would create safer employee working conditions and safer public access while promoting preparedness for future COVID19 variants. Prudent management of Director's Office expenditures for the year was noted at ~83%, a budget allocation savings of~17%. DAS sub-division budget savings were also evident. In addition, DAS collaborated with the Governor's Office to develop the Tafuna Housing property area. A new Dept. of Commerce Technology Shoreline Park was realized; space for a new ASG Hospital prepared; and several new ASG government buildings and offices were constructed.

Another notable FY2023 accomplishments were the hosting and training of annual DHR/SYEP summertime Interns, with dozens of High School, Jr. College and young adult students experienced and learned about future Dept. Of Administrative Services careers. And DAS personnel also participated in regular Island Cleanup Day and TAOA Old age partnership activities as well as the post Pandemic Xmas 2022 Song Caroling reinauguration.

Other DAS Divisions also excelled during FY2023. The EOB Security Division team provided 24 hr on call duty to protect EOB employees and properties from harm. This year's accomplishments entailed heightened control of EOB vehicular and pedestrian traffic and public safety for visitors/employees. Public crowds were also safeguarded during tax return season gatherings and/or ASG public events and service activities in the EOB atrium. DAS' Maintenance also ensured safe and clean EOB working conditions for EOB office government employees and the general public. It responded to facility trouble calls that sometimes required water, electricity or communications repairs as well as handling trash conditions and keeping building, grounds and lawn maintained. This year also saw elevator service improvements and installation of automatic safety lights for evening hours and emergency repair of an electric water pump problem inundation. The DAS Maintenance crew also coordinates annual EOB Xmas lawn decorations and public Xmas Tree set ups at the Fagatogo Capital Malae or at Event venues. The annual cleaning and painting of Afono Village Elementary School buildings was also performed.

Elsewhere, the DAS Mailroom continued its responsibilities for ASG incoming and outgoing mail via the USPS and/or other private mail carriers. FY2023 included about 20,000 outgoing letters and packages and nearly 3700 incoming letters and packages. IGC Inter Governmental Charges are made to ASG Departments. Staff at the DAS Print Shop reported the completion of 206 of 221 incoming print job requests during FY2023, an accountability rate of **93%**. Local **and** grant IGC revenues therefore totaled approximately \$166,000.00

The DAS' Office of Archives and Records Management OARM also performed its duties and services during FY2023. Normal duties of preparing ASG Archives and Records Finding Guides, researching request; conserving aging documents, tapes and photographs; and seeking microfilming or digitization and safer storage solutions. Regular accomplishments included 247 Record Transfer boxes processed for storage and databasing; 353 ASG or Public research request completions for retrievals, info or copies; and 53 Certified Statements for Birth Certificate Verifications or One U.S. National Parent Passport Evidence. OARM also continued to adopt post-COVID best practice measures to remain alert and reduce potential vulnerability of staff and visitors. In this regard, its bilingual website for ASG employees and the public continued to provide public CDC links to free vaccine information along with OARM records management forms, public research forms, finding guides and remote access resources. Periodic updates and new features were added during FY2023: <https://dasoarmasg.net> A new Treasury Records storage center was also constructed on OARM grounds this year to alleviate and process excessive Treasury Division holdings occupying OARM floor space.



*New Treasury Storage Bldg.*



*Tafuna Archives and Records Center.*

OARM Community Outreach strengthened partnerships with the Constitution Office, Governor's House, Feleti Library, and Friends of the Jean P. Haydon Museum. The Museum continued featuring a 1960 Historical Constitution Mural and Display, while the Archives supported a Government House Fita Fita archival photographs exhibition. Efforts were made with Mormon Familysearch.org to digitize and publish Matai and Land Title cases from 1974 to 2007. In FY2023, a letter requesting support for a possible FY2024 project was sent to the High Court Chief Justice, with copies to the Governor and Legislature.

This year saw significant engagements, including visits from national and international writers and researchers, such as a Harvard Curator, a University of Munich researcher, and a Pacific Writer documenting Gov. Peter Coleman's memoir. Local ASHC authors and a University of Hawaii Professor collaborated with the Archivist on a new DOE Civics textbook for Secondary students. The Archivist was also involved in a national NEH project to enhance the Pacific Humanities Island Network collaboration, celebrating Pacific Islanders with professional training

meetings in Hawaii and the USA during FY 2024. Additionally, a Council of State Archivists-COSA ILMS grant will conduct a consultant survey and report project for Pacific Territories, Hawaii, and Alaska in FY2024. The Archivist played a role in the 2022 American Samoa Constitutional Convention, resulting in 5 Constitutional Amendments approved by the electorate on Nov. 8, 2022, for U.S. Congressional consideration. OARM also collaborated on an initiative with the Lt. Gov Secretary of American Samoa to update ASG Dept. Rules and Regulations.

### ***PENDING PROJECTS***

1. Implementation of a \$1.8 million ARPA grant will enhance safety at DAS and Divisions, guarding against current and future COVID-19 variants. The initial phase, scheduled for FY2024, focuses on making the EOB Building CDC compliant. This effort extends to the EOB, Printshop, Housing, and Archives, enhancing efficiency and services to ensure a safe environment for both employees and the public.
2. Additional development of the Tafuna Government Housing area property is anticipated.
3. Printshop and Mailroom account funding increase or sourcing requests is being considered.
4. Security Division understaffing and workspace needs and suggestions for a smoking area.
5. Archives and Records projects:
  - Conservation and digitization project for High Court Matai and Land Title cases 1974-2007.
  - Updating of OARM Rules and Regulations via the CARR project.
  - Repair and renovation and expansion of ASG Archives and Records Center building. Including electrical rewiring, security cameras/alarms, emergency sprinklers, gate-driveway-parking spaces and ground floor door and window repairs.
  - OARM reviews of open source archiving tools or PRESERVICA software to achieve online metadata records standardized to the professional academic online OCLC community.
  - Participation in ASHC projects to compile a 2024 High School Civics Textbook and build a Pacific Islands Humanities Network that includes an OARM conservation and digitalization project of significant public holdings.
  - A Council of State Archivists COSA grant consultant project for Pacific Islands with a community event and personnel mainland training.

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# STATE OF HEALTHCARE

Enhancing the health of our citizens continues to be a foremost goal for the Lemanu-Talauega Administration. Despite considerable strides in elevating the standard of healthcare services, there is still much work ahead to address the lingering impacts of persistent systemic challenges and navigate the recovery process from a global pandemic.

## Department of Health

### Public Health Accomplishments & Significant Projects

Over the past year, the American Samoa Department of Health (DOH) has been actively involved in various initiatives, grant funding, and significant developments to enhance healthcare services across the territory including (but not limited to):

- \$105,034 awarded to the Maternal and Child Health Program (MCH) by a grant from HHS HRSA, emphasizing the importance of early, quality, and consistent care for mothers and children.
- \$431,000 awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This grant is dedicated to fortifying the Health Department's HIV/STD/VH/TB prevention and control program, focusing on improving efforts related to HIV and viral Hepatitis prevention and control.
- \$556,177 awarded for a three-year crisis response to mental health and substance abuse needs, aligning with the nationwide 988 suicide and crisis lifeline effort.
- \$2 million, under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services – Projects of Regional and National Significance category, further strengthens local mental health and substance abuse behavioral services for prevention and treatment efforts.
- \$3,252,225 awarded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS). This grant aims to enhance routine medical care for residents, alleviating pressure on the LBJ Hospital to focus on more critical health issues.
- \$3,961,917 awarded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS), to strengthen infrastructure, workforce, and related areas, demonstrating federal support for health initiatives in American Samoa.
- Hosting Regional Tuberculosis Conference:
  - The DOH successfully hosted the Pacific Islands Tuberculosis Controllers Association Conference, welcoming over 50 off-island delegates. This event, sponsored by the CDC and Pacific Islands Health Officers Association, facilitated collaboration among jurisdictions under PIHOA and promoted regional healthcare initiatives.
- New Hospital Project Leadership:
  - The Department of Health has assumed the lead agency role for the new hospital project in Tafuna, taking charge of the project's planning and development. This shift in responsibility was communicated to the LBJ Hospital board and management during a meeting with the Governor.
- Proposed Fee Adjustments:
  - The DOH is proposing adjustments to various fees, including health permits, closure penalties for businesses violating health conditions, and other charges. The proposed fee



changes aim to align with the territory's healthcare needs and support ongoing public health initiatives.

- Consolidation of Behavioral Health Services:
  - Behavioral Health Services have been consolidated under the Department of Public Health, streamlining services previously shared between the Department of Human and Social Services-Behavioral Services and the Department of Public Health. This consolidation aims to optimize deployment, improve efficiency, eliminate duplication, and enhance coordination in delivering behavioral health services.
- Expansion of Healthcare Services - Aunu'u Clinic
  - The DOH has inaugurated a health clinic on Aunu'u Island, marking a significant milestone for the local community. The clinic operates as a primary care facility, providing essential healthcare services. Plans for a new facility are underway pending funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA).
- Public Health Infrastructure Grant
  - A total of \$3.685 billion was awarded to 107 public health departments in all 50 states, Washington D.C., 8 territories/freely associated states, and 48 large localities (cities serving a population of 400,000 or more and counties serving a population of 2,000,000 or more based on the 2020 U.S. Census).
- Noncommunicable Disease Strategic Action Plan
  - The American Samoa Department of Health is actively engaged in revising its strategic action plan. This effort involves an assessment of the existing plan, incorporating the latest research, data, and stakeholder input.

### **American Samoa Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

The department has been approved for a total of \$44 million in ARPA funds for Community Health Center and Behavioral Health infrastructure and workforce capacity to further support COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Below is a breakdown of the Community Health Center ARPA funding proposed projects totaling \$20 million dollars and its Behavioral Health ARPA projects for a total of \$24 million dollars.

#### *Community Health Center ARPA funds (\$20 million)*

1. Laboratory Conversion \$2,705,829.00
  2. Ofu and Olosega Clinic \$2,375,565.00
  3. COVID-19 Administration Building \$2,563,094.00
  4. Aunuu Community Health Clinic \$2,415,048.00
  5. Tau Community Health Clinic & Fitiuta Medical Services Expansion \$4,231,170.00
  6. Aunuu & Manu'a Medical Vessel \$770,000.00
  7. Tafuna Health Center Expansion \$4,939,294.00
- \$20,000,000.00

#### *Behavioral Health ARPA funds (\$24 million)*

1. Behavioral Health Services and Drug & Alcohol Facility \$23,010,000
  2. Veterinary Clinic \$ 990,000
- \$24,000,000.00

### **Animal Services**

The DOH Animal Services comprises Animal Shelter, Animal Control Officers and Veterinary Clinic.

**Accomplishments:**

1. Community Neuter clinics in May occurred at several sites across the island.
2. Training course for ACO (and other interested participants) relative to direct ACO work and Shelter management in May/June 2023.
3. Institution of monthly reports providing data related to Animal Services collected and shared with DOH and other relevant authorities. Data includes numbers of complaint responses by ACO, number of animals picked up by ACO, number of animals through the shelter, and data on Veterinary Clinic work.
4. This data as well as detailed daily finance reports is obtained by using the veterinary software system instituted within the last 2 years.
5. Animal Services continues daily work of surgery and consultations, sheltered animal care and adoptions, and animal retrieval from the community all working within the well known limitations.

**Breast & Cervical Cancer Program Early Detection Program (BCCEDP)**

Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (BCCEDP) aims to improve health outcomes through timely screenings and interventions to detect cancer at its earliest, most treatable stages. BCCEDP offer free breast and cervical cancer screenings, educational outreach about the importance of early detection and preventive measure to all women of our territory.

**Accomplishments**

- Completed Year 1 (July 2022 – June 2023) of the new 5-year cycle (2022 -2027)
- Exceeded our Year 1 projected goal of 600 screened women to screening a total of 824 (unduplicated)
- Women’s Health Village Screening completed for 35 villages. It will continue to the remaining villages until October 2024
- Women’s Breast and Cervical screenings are now available at 4 locations on a regular basis and during after hours (4pm – 7pm):

**Community Health Center (CHC)**

The Community Health Center (CHC) maintains a robust engagement strategy, including monthly meetings with the Governing Board and regular quarterly calls as mandated by the HRSA Bureau of Health Care Services.

**Accomplishments:**

1. Strengthening of laboratory capacity to include:
  - a. Completion of molecular lab
  - b. Hiring 2 Phlebotomists
  - c. Full blood lab work like chemistry
2. Continued collaboration with technical partners from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. eClinicalWorks to replace our current EHR system
4. Opening a new clinic in Aunu’u
5. Hiring new physicians from Samoa and Fiji
6. Attended Atoa o Samoa
7. Coordinating medical support from Command General BG Siekman of the 9<sup>th</sup> Mission Support Command (MSC) – Innovative Readiness Training (IRT)
8. Unrestricting of federal accounts from grantor
9. Continue to support our outreach program for bedridden and elderly patients
10. ARPA grants to improve infrastructure for all clinics

11. Medical Supplies warehouse re-organized and re-evaluated for clinical needs.

### **Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (CCCP)**

The Comprehensive Cancer Control Program aims to enhance cancer prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivorship through a collaborative approach. By partnering with initiatives such as the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (BCCP) and the Department of Health's Non-Communicable Disease Programs, as well as engaging with community partners, the program integrates a variety of strategies. The overarching goal is to reduce the burden of cancer by fostering a coordinated and synergistic effort among various stakeholders/coalition members, ultimately improving outcomes and quality of life for individuals affected by cancer.

Accomplishments:

- Completed the first year of the new 5-year cycle (DP22-2202) for 2022-2027.
- Women's Health Campaign:
  - Collaborated with the Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.
  - Organized the Women's Health Softball Tournament in March, screening over 50 women.
- October's Breast Cancer Month Wellness Activities:
  - Collaboration with BCCP, DYWA, South Pacific Watersports, Zumba with Erica&Ashley, and LBJ Physicians (Dr. Carter)
- Program Positions:
  - Administrative Assistant position filled in April.
  - One more vacancy pending advertisement for the Outreach Coordinator role.

### **COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant**

The COVID-19 Health Disparities Grant focused on two key strategies:

- 1) Expanding access to the Electronic Health Record System and
- 2) Improving IT infrastructure.

Accomplishments:

- Recruited and increased our IT staff:
  - 2 IT TECH III
  - 1 IT Admin
  - 2 IT TECH 1/Helpdesk Support
  - 1 SYSTEMS DEVELOPER
- Established IT Helpdesk for DOH.
- Bridged the gap between the Department of Health and LBJ Hospital, initiating EHR
- Training for staff. Five EHR trainings have been completed since 2022.
- Launched the official DOH website in April 2023 - <https://doh.as/>
- Revitalized clinics through Clinic Rehab.

### **Emergency Preparedness & Response Division (EPRD)**

The Emergency Preparedness & Response Programs at the Department of Health (DOH) are designed to fortify territorial public health preparedness and response capabilities. This involves an ongoing cycle encompassing planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action.

Accomplishments:

- 1) Enhanced Information Management:

- Significantly improved Information Management capability through the implementation of interoperable systems and the expansion of communications resources.
  - Information management plays a crucial role in emergency preparedness, facilitating rapid and informed decision-making at the leadership level, influencing outcomes for the entire territory.
- 2) Dedicated ASDOH Frequency:
- Established a dedicated frequency for the American Samoa Department of Health (ASDOH), enabling independent operations separate from other government agencies.
- 3) Communication Equipment Advancements:
- Acquired a substantial amount of communications equipment, contributing to the excellence of Public Health Information Management and Incident Command Management, a significant leap from the situation a decade ago.
  - Currently, DOH boasts the following communication resources:
    - 6 communications repeaters, including one on Ofu and five on Tutuila.
    - 4 base radios strategically located in community health centers (Tafuna, Leone, Tau, and Ofu). - 50 handheld radios supporting COVID response operations, covering quarantine sites, vaccination activities, and resource management.
- 4) Office Relocation:
- Successfully moved the EPRD division offices from the previous location at Lion's Park, ensuring operational continuity and efficiency.

### **Environmental Health Services Division**

The Environmental Health Services Division (EHSD), often referred to as the "sanitation" office, serves as the authoritative agency tackling a spectrum of issues related to sanitary conditions. This spans from food and non-food matters to handling public complaints and nuisances like foul odors, septic/sewer overflow, piggeries, and waste accumulations. EHSD is the go-to division for anything affecting public health, addressing concerns directly or making referrals to the appropriate agencies.

#### Accomplishments:

1. Mosquito Vector Control Training:
  - Eight EHSD staff successfully completed training on Targeted Residual Spraying for Mosquito Vector Control conducted by Dr. Schmaedick of ASCC Land Grant and Dr. Limb, PIHOA Regional Epidemiologist (April 25 - May 1, 2023).
2. Pesticide Applicators' Training:
  - All three EHSD staff members who attended the Pesticide Applicators' Training Course on June 30, 2023, completed the program. Two of them successfully passed the exam and were issued licenses to purchase and use Restricted Use Pesticides.
3. Grant Acquisition for Program Standards:
  - EHSD secured a NEHA Retail Program Standards grant, amounting to \$26,500 in December 2022. The funds are allocated for updating standards and facilitating staff training on program standards.
4. Data Tracking System Implementation:
  - EHSD is actively working on implementing a new data tracking system as of September 2023, with plans to go live in January 2024.
5. Regulatory Drafting Initiatives:
  - Drafted rules on fees for health permits and violations, with processes routed through the CARR project.
  - Drafted rules on food labeling, also part of the CARR project.

#### 6. Operational Continuity despite Constraints:

- Despite limited staff and funding, EHSD ensured the continued closure of food establishments, non-food establishments, and schools, mitigating potential health risks.
- 7. Staff Training and Workshop Attendance:
  - Two out of eight staff attended and completed the 2023 Pacific Vector Training in Hilo, Hawaii.
  - One out of eight staff participated in the PacMossi Workshop on Residual Spray Activities in Cairns from October 9-13, 2023.

### **Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity (ELC)**

#### 1. COVID Testing Milestone:

- Conducted a commendable 136,694 COVID tests collectively by ELC and CHC.

#### 2. Expansion of ELC Team:

- Welcomed new additions to the ELC team, including a Lab Manager, Medical Lab Scientist, Division Head, Operations Manager, Finance Manager, Personnel Specialist, and a Reopening Schools Coordinator.

#### 3. Schools Prepared for COVID Testing:

- Successfully trained all public elementary and secondary schools to administer COVID-19 testing.
- Equipped all schools, including the majority of private schools, with test kits and assigned test administrators.

#### 4. Lab Renovations and Upgrades:

- Lab renovations are progressing well, reaching an 80% completion rate. - HVAC system and PCR Room enhancements are underway.
- Introduced new instruments and testing capabilities, enhancing both ELC and CHC capabilities.

#### 5. Lab Workforce Strengthening:

- Expanded the Department of Health (DOH) lab team by hiring two new microbiologists and three medical lab scientists.

#### 6. Data Modernization Project:

- Initiated a new Data Modernization project, integrating with the US National Syndromic Surveillance Systems.
- Strengthened the team with the addition of an IT Manager, a Systems Developer, and an IT Tech.

#### 7. Epi Tech Onboarding:

- Welcomed two new Epi Techs to the team, focused on implementing new lab information systems and contributing to Notifiable Diseases Surveillance efforts.

### **Helping Babies Hear (HBH) Program (Early Hearing Detection and Intervention)**

Helping Babies Hear (HBH) is the territory's newborn hearing screening program. This program provides hearing screenings for all newborns prior to discharge from LBJ hospital as well as outpatient follow-up for any newborn who does not pass their initial hearing screening. HBH also provides diagnostic audiological evaluations for newborns/toddlers in need of further testing. The diagnostic audiological evaluations conducted by an Audiologist will determine whether newborn/toddler has congenital or acquired hearing loss. HBH partners with the Part C program, Helping Hands, to provide further support through speech and language services.

#### Accomplishments:

1. 637 live birth/maternal data collected and entered in SILAS/FamilyTrac Database

2. 98.7% inpatient hearing screenings completed before infant discharge from LBJ Hospital 100% referral rate to Part C Early Intervention Program for all risk factor newborns and hearing screening refers
3. Participated in the Annual Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Conference in Cincinnati, OH with program stakeholders- {parents, Deaf Night, and Part C Early Intervention} and presented at the Pacific Islands Meeting
4. Hired and trained full time CNA/Hearing Screener who received hearing screening certification from the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM)
5. Collaborated with Maternal & Child Health Program to secure Newborn Screening Propel Grant for Bloodspot screening in American Samoa
6. Participated in the Annual APHL (Association of Public Health Laboratories) Conference in Sacramento, CA representing American Samoa's Newborn Screening program
7. Member of SPED Advisory Council and co-organizer in Disabilities Awareness Month
8. Continued partnership with Deaf Night organizers promoting American Sign Language (ASL)
9. Completed calibration for all hearing screening equipment located at LBJ Hospital and HBH program sound booth
10. 2nd Host Site for Pacific Islands Health Officers' Association (PIHOA) Pacific Public Health Fellowship (PPHFP) program; HBH staff member is 1 of 2 fellows accepted in to program
11. 1 of 20 jurisdictions to receive competitive EHDI supplemental funding of 75K for 20 language acquisition and language outcomes for Deaf/Hard of Hearing

### **Helping Hands Early Prevention Program (Part C)**

The American Samoa's Helping Hands Early intervention program is under the AS Department of Health. The program is funded through a formula grant from the US Department of Education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. The American Samoa, Helping Hands Early Intervention Program provides support to families as well as many types of services to infants and toddlers under the age of three who have a developmental delay, a health condition or a disability that affects their development. Areas of development include Physical, Cognitive, communication, social-emotional, self-help, and sensory processing skills. Helping Hands partners with the local EHDI program, Helping Babies Hear, the Maternal and Child Health program, and the MIECVH programs for additional services as needed by the children and their families.

#### Accomplishments:

1. Approved for funding for FFY 2023-2025
2. Competed its Differentiated Monitoring System on-site visit with the Office of Special Education
3. Programs in September 2023
4. Completed and signed a Transition MOU with the Special Education Program under ASDOE
5. All services provided to children and their families are 100% compliant with the IDEA regulations
6. All potentially eligible infants and toddlers were assessed and enrolled accordingly

### **HIV/STD/TB/Viral Hepatitis Program**

The HIV/STD/TB/Viral Hepatitis Program at the Department of Health has made noteworthy strides in ensuring the health and well-being of the community.

#### Accomplishments:

- 1) HIV Success Story:



- The program has achieved the significant milestone of retaining and ensuring the care of People Living with HIV, with well-maintained medication stocks.
  - Notably, American Samoa has not reported a new HIV case since 2001, a testament to the program's effectiveness.
  - Ongoing outreach and awareness campaigns, coupled with the availability of HIV tests at DOH clinics and the LBJ laboratory, fortify the commitment to maintaining a HIV-free American Samoa.
  - STD clinics operate throughout the week, including weekend appointments, ensuring accessible screening and treatment services.
  - Collaborative efforts with LBJ Family Planning and OB GYN clinic stand out as an annual accomplishment.
  - Daily tasks for the STD program include ongoing STD screening, treatment, and partner tracing, with a successful protocol in place enhancing the treatment procedure for all STD positive cases.
- 2) Women's Health Clinic Opportunity:
- Identified as a key opportunity, the establishment of a Women's Health Clinic emerges as a strategic move to focus on offering comprehensive services for women of all ages, considering the program's priority population.
- 3) Communicable Disease Clinic Development:
- The program has successfully developed the Communicable Disease Clinic in Fagaima, offering free screening, treatment, and education for STDs (chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, viral hepatitis), HIV, Tuberculosis (TB PPD skin test), and blood pressure checks (vitals).
- 4) Collaboration Initiatives:
- Forging collaboration with the IMPACT club at the American Samoa Community College, the program screens the priority population of LGBTQI persons, contributing to community health.
- 5) Educational Outreach and Achievements:
- Sustained educational and screening outreaches at the American Samoa Community College showcase the program's commitment to community health.
  - Recognition with an award for Year 01 in the 5-year cycle is a testament to the program's dedication and impact.
- 6) Disease Prevalence and Staffing:
- American Samoa maintains a low prevalence of active TB persons, reflecting the program's effectiveness in disease control.
  - Notably, there have been no newly diagnosed HIV persons in American Samoa. – The program continues to maintain a full-time staff complement, ensuring seamless program and clinic operations for HIV/STD/TB/Viral Hepatitis programs.

### **Immunization Program**

Operating under the umbrella of the ASG Department of Health, the American Samoa Immunization Program comprises various components, including the Hepatitis B Program, Surveillance Systems, Immunization Information Systems, VFC Program, Adult Vaccination Program, and more.

Collaboration is integral to the program's success, involving partnerships with departmental programs, governmental agencies, private and public sectors, and most importantly, the community. The program plays a crucial role by supplying 95% of Federal dollars for Vaccines (VFC-Vaccine For Children) to safeguard children from Vaccine Preventable Diseases.

Over the past year, the Immunization Program has diligently pursued its goals and objectives, aligning with the COVID-19 Pandemic Response Plan under the guidance of the Department, Director, and Deputies.

Accomplishments:

- 1) WEBIZ Participation Exceeding 95%:
  - Achieved outstanding participation with over 95% involvement in the WEBIZ system, including LBJ.
- 2) COVID Funds for Vaccine Response Infrastructure:
  - Successfully secured COVID funds dedicated to fortifying the vaccine response infrastructure.
- 3) Establishment of Call Center for Reminder/Recall:
  - Launched a call center catering to reminder/recall efforts, addressing both COVID and routine vaccinations.
- 4) Territorial MMR Coverage Surpassing 95%:
  - Attained robust coverage, with Territorial Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) exceeding 95%.
- 5) DOE & DOH Immunization Collaborative:
  - Established a collaborative initiative between the Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Health (DOH) focused on immunization efforts.

**Logistics**

The Department of Health's Logistics Division has embarked on a transformative journey from April 2022 to August 2023. This period has witnessed an array of strategic initiatives aimed at fortifying logistical infrastructure, enhancing efficiency, and ensuring seamless operations within the department.

Accomplishments:

1. Logistics Accomplishments stemming from APR 2022 – AUG 2023:
2. Inventory Management Record System of Assets
3. Official Govt Driving Permit System
4. Dept Vehicle inspections and updated reports
5. Updated Depts Vehicle Policies/Procedures
6. Streamlined After Hour Pass System for the Department
7. Warehouse organizational system, assigned bin locations.
8. Surveyed outdated equipment
9. Recorded all new assets including vehicles.
10. 100% manual inventory of DOH assets, pending reconciliation of OPM.

**Maternal Child Health**

1. Partnered with the Ophthalmology team from Oregon Health and Science University and Lions Club to complete a pilot eye screening for school children ages 4 - 14, in May.
2. Partnered with the Cardiology team from BYU Provo to execute heart screening for RHD in elementary and high school students in May. More than 2000 individuals were screened in schools and church halls.
3. Mrs. Ipuniuese Eliapo-Unutoa received the 2023 Emerging MCH Professional Award for Region IX.
4. Collaborate with SPED and key stakeholders in the community to execute the Disability Awareness Month Carnival in the month of March.

5. Awarded the Newborn Bloodspot Screening Grant in the month of July. 6. Serve more than 110 families of Children with Special Health Care Needs providing care coordination.
7. Ongoing care coordination, monitoring and surveillance of 150 children with Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease.
8. Continue to support and promote services available for women and children across all relevant health sectors (Community Health Centers, LBJ Hospital, WIC, FoodStamp, Child Care, SPED etc.)
9. Submitted annual reports with required MCH Data legislated by Title V federal laws.

### **MIECHV-Maternal, Infant, Early Childhood Home Visiting Program**

The *Aiga Manuia* of the American Samoa Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (AS MIECHV) Program is the recipient or grantee, funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau<sup>1</sup> administered by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA), committed to serve overburdened families, teen pregnancies, and at-risk parents.

### **Serving Eligible Families**

Under Social Security Act<sup>2</sup>, Title V, Section 511(k)(2), “[t]he term “eligible family” means— (A) a woman who is pregnant, and the father of the child if the father is available; or (B) a parent or primary caregiver of a child, including grandparents or other relatives of the child, and foster parents, who are serving as the child’s primary caregiver from birth to kindergarten entry, and including a noncustodial parent who has an ongoing relationship with, and at times provides physical care for the child.

#### Accomplishments:

1. Project Name: State CQI (Continuous Quality Improvement) Plan

#### Outcome:

Required document completed and submitted by the end of October 2023

2. Project Name: Annual Performance Report for Period 10/01/2022 through 09/30/2023

Outcome: Successfully submitted on October 30, 2023 (Deadline was October 31, 2023)

3. Project Name(s) AS MIECHV Quarterly Reports

Outcome: Quarter 1, 2, 3 and 4 were completed and submitted in EHB system as required by HRSA and met deadlines

4. Project Name: AS MIECHV Fiscal Reporting

Outcome: All items encumbered for the FY 2021—FY2023

5. Project Name: AS MIECHV ARP 1 (American Rescue Plan Act)

- a. Quarterly Progress Report:

Outcome: Completed and Submitted in EHB system by HRSA as required and met deadlines

- b. Quarterly Performance Report

<sup>1</sup> Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program, HRSA

<sup>2</sup> Social Security Act, Title V, Section 511(k)(2), “ DEFINITIONS on term eligible family.” 27

Outcome: Completed and Submitted in EHB system by HRSA as required and met deadlines

6. Project Name: AS MIECHV ARP 2 (American Rescue Plan Act)

- a. Quarterly Progress Report

Outcome: Completed and Submitted in EHB system by HRSA as required and met deadlines

- b. Quarterly Performance Report:

Outcome: Completed and Submitted in EHB system by HRSA as required and met deadlines

7. Project Name: Required Threshold Number of Families Served is Two-hundred twenty five (225)

Outcome: Two-hundred thirty-nine (239) families serving by the program as of November 15, 2023.

8. Project Name: Completion Services at Target Age 3 years since birth of child Outcome: 33 completed services at age of 3 years in the program

9. Project Name: Celebrating Children Completing Services through a Graduation ceremony  
Outcome: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 is the key date! Save the date. Event will take place at the Good Vibes in Tafuna from 11:00 AM to 01:30 PM

10. Project Name: Families Enrollment

Outcome: This is a continuous effort by the program.

Continued families from FY2022 to 11/15/2023 as of 11/15/2023: 162

*Families enrolled (01/01/2023 to 12/31/2023)*

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: 25

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter: 25

- 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter: 20

- 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter (10/01/2023 to 12/30/2023): 18

- Active Families serving: 214 as of 11/15/2023

- Teens Pregnancy serving: 46 as of 11/15/2023

11. Project Name: Staff Development and Training

Outcome: Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) training was conducted on Thursday, September 28, 2023

12. Project Name: New Employees

Outcome: Hired 3 new employees in Summer 2023

13. Project Name: Aiga Manuia Personnel Status (23)

Outcome and Current Status:

- FTE (2) Family Resource Specialists

- FTE (1) Family Resource Specialist Supervisor

- FTE (12) Family Support Specialists

- FTE (1) Data Specialist

- FTE (3) Family Support Specialist Supervisors

- FTE (2) Administrative Management Staff

- FTE (1) Program Management Staff 28

- FTE (1) Finance Officer

- Vacancies: FTE (2)—IT Technician I and Family Resource Specialist

- In—kind Grants Analyst from ASG Treasury Dept.

14. Project Name: AS MIECHV Program Expansion to the Manu'a islands Outcome: Two (2) employees hired in Summer of 2023 from Manu'a.

Furthermore, a total of six (6) mothers enrolled from Manu'a (Ta'u, Ofu and Olosega) in September 2023

- Three site visits completed for the expansion to remote islands in Manu'a for assessing the program needs for its implementation, establishing an office, and for providing services in Ta'u island, Ofu and Olosega in September 2023

- 1 re-hired staff lives and works in Manu'a

- 1 transfer staff lives and works in Manu'a

- Enrolled 2 prenatal mothers lived and from Manu'a

- Enrolled 4 postnatal mothers lived and from Manu'a

## **Nursing**

The focus of the Nursing Division primarily lies on the patient-centered care of individuals, families and communities so they may reach, maintain or recover optimal health and well-being. The goal is to increase our workforce to be able to better serve in all areas or clinics where the need is great and to advance or expand our knowledge as the nursing profession continues to evolve, in order to continue to provide preventative measures and top quality care for our patients.

### **Accomplishments:**

In the year of 2023, the Nursing Division has been successful in the following areas:

#### **1. Increasing Nursing Workforce:**

- a. Registered Nurse : 10
- b. Licensed Practical Nurse : 19
- c. Medical Assistant : 2
- d. Certified Nurse Assistant : 45
- e. Practical Nursing (PN) Program at the American Samoa Community College : 5 Certified Nurse Assistants
- f. Registered Nursing (RN) Program of Spring 2024 : 4 Licensed Practical Nurses

#### **2. Obtaining an Inservice Coordinator:**

- a. Basic Life Support (BLS) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) classes have been offered and are continued to be made available to certify doctors, nurses and all other personnel
- b. Since March 2023, 42 nurses and doctors have been BLS certified and 28 other personnel have been certified with Heartsaver
3. Alleviating the critical nursing shortage within the LBJ Tropical Medical Center by providing nurses to assist the hospital each day over the course of seven months.
4. Assisting the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) with instructors to teach nursing courses.
5. Accumulating continuing education units (CEUs) from monthly inservice training used for renewing medical licenses for nurses and doctors.

## **Pacific Island Health Officers Association**

Accomplishments: 4<sup>th</sup> Round of IDA-MDA Implementation (August – November 2023)

In the ongoing pursuit of eliminating Lymphatic Filariasis, the 4th round of Implementation of Infectious Diseases Assessment (IDA) Mass Drug Administration (MDA) marked a significant chapter. The Pacific Islander Health Officers Association has been at the forefront of addressing challenges and advancing the cause.

## **Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) Program Coordinator**

PHHSBG supports public health efforts that focus on preventing and managing disease, promoting health equity, and improving the overall well-being of the communities. It is a flexible grant that tailor's programs to address unique challenges and priorities within our local communities.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Successfully completed a Community Wellness Programs for the children and adolescents (2-19 years) conducted by a local wellness organization in efforts to battle obesity in the territory.
- Provided additional funds to support RHD school and clinical screening
- Approved for 2023 funding (October 2023 – September 2024)

### **Rheumatic Heart Disease Prevention and Control Program**

The Rheumatic Heart Disease Control & Promotion Program was established less than 10 years ago to address the critical health concerns in relation to premature heart failure and life-long disability from Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) among the children population of the territory. This program continues to address the cardiovascular health needs of the territory in both children and the adult population through opportunities to access professional care from a visiting cardiology team, as well as maintaining preventive visits in community health centers that will provide support and monitoring of all RHD diagnosed clients.

#### Program Achievements:

- Completed and submitted MCH Title V Program 2021 annual report/2023 Grant
- Application on August 12, 2022. Total amount 510K
- Submitted SSDI Grant Application for 2023 on August 24, 2022. Total amount 100K.
  - Screened 2, 202 individuals for Rheumatic Heart Disease in Tutuila, Manu'a, and Aunuu.
- A rate of 12.7 per 1,000 were new cases (28 individuals) of RHD
- Initiation of overseas training on Echocardiography for local DOH personnel Approved for 2nd cycle (5 years) of funding for the Leo o Aiga F2F Center

### **Tobacco & Diabetes Prevention Program**

#### Accomplishments:

- For older people and those with disabilities, Tobacco and Diabetes delivers CDSMP courses with information and resources to help them manage chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, chronic pain, and depression. Early this year, a ceremony to distribute certificates for the participants who completed the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program was held. The Program is committed to provide services to our elderly population and collaborate with TAOA to educate our elderly population.
- As part of its school outreach initiatives, the team has visited Fitiuta, Faleasao, Ta'u, Ofu and Olosega. Education about tobacco's risk factors and diabetes was delivered to the group of men and women. Emphasis was put on the importance of keeping a healthy lifestyle. All schools in Manua were educated on harms and effects of Tobacco initiation and vaping on the adolescent developing brain, behavior and overall health. ● A total of 19 outreaches were conducted in both Manua and Tutuilla, which educated a total *1052 Participants*.
- Collaboration between DOH and LBJ opened World Diabetes Month with a church service to educate on the burden of Diabetes and re-establish our commitment to work collaboratively. Outreach into the community continues.
- The program is committed to Train Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist-Four providers have been trained to provide evidence based services for people who are dependent on Tobacco. A total of 6 providers from CHC will be able to provide these services.
- Upcoming Training of 5 doctors, 5 Nurses, 10 non-clinical staff in Diabetes Self Management Education in December by Visiting Master Trainer from Guam.



### Outreach Coverage Year 2023-2024

	Community Outreach	No. of Participants
1.	Pavaiai Elementary school	177
2.	Hosa Outreach	75
3.	Manua High school	29
4.	Faleasao Elementary School	52
5.	Fitiuta Elementary School	31
6.	Fagaitua High School	231
7.	Mafutaga Tina Ofu/Olosega	14
8.	Mafutaga Tama Ofu/ Olosega	7
9.	Olosega Elementary School	19
10.	Tobacco Awareness Wave	40
11.	Diabetes QIQA project CHC	15
12.	Residential Home- DOH Tobacco Cessation Counseling -3 sessions	5
13.	Diabetes Month Church Service DOH in Collaboration with LBJ	150
15.	Tafuna and Leone CHC Outreach	63
16.	Leone CHC Outreach	7
17.	Fagaitua Outreach in Collaboration with LBJ and LDS Missionaries.	37
18.	Leone Midkiff Elementary School	80
19.	Alataua Elementary School	20

### Lyndon Baines Johnson Tropical Medical Center (LBJ)

**During the period October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023, the LBJ Medical Center has worked extensively on a number of Engineering and Facilities Projects in order to upgrade and add to the existing facilities. Below is a summary of the current projects underway.**

#### OR/Labor Delivery Expansion and Renovation Project:

This Project has four phases; Contractor is currently working on Phase II of the project. Phase II is to install wall partitions for two OR Rooms, LD Recovery area, complete space allocated for Respiratory Therapy. Install all new Air Handling Units, sprinkler system and fire protection system. A desire of the Administration to design and construct a new two-story building to house ICU (16 Private Rooms) on the top floor and other services on the bottom floor changes our approach in our construction schedule; now OR/Labor Delivery Expansion and Renovation Phase III and IV are put on hold until ICU is complete. Completion date for Phase II will be changed due to changes to the original Scope of Work. The Respiratory Therapy area was completed in June of 2022. The OR side target completion date is the ending of February 2024. The nationwide shortage of materials and equipment have contributed to the delay in the completion of this project..

#### Design and Renovation of New ICU/ER Project (ARPA Funding)

The original project design was for the ICU/MIS/Hyperbaric Chamber Project which was completed in March of 2022. It was later changed to the ICU/ER Renovation Project due to the

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need to expand the current footprint of the ER. The ICU/ER project will incorporate a new ER and MRI on the first floor, the ICU on the second floor and a penthouse style mechanical room on the third floor. This project is currently in the re-design phase which is scheduled to be done by April 2024. An RFP to demolish the current COVID ward is currently out for bid and the groundbreaking is scheduled for December 8th, 2023.

#### COVID Retrofit Project (FEMA)

This project consisted of retrofitting the COVID Ward, Pediatric Ward, COVID OR suite, and LDR OR Suite. It was completed in March 2023.

#### MRI

The LBJ leadership team is currently working with the vendor to finalize the service contract for the new MRI. The new MRI will be located on the first floor next to the new ER.

#### Second CT Scan

The CT Scan purchase agreement has been finalized and ready to move forward with the purchase.

#### Central Plant (ARPA Funding)

The design team has completed the Design Development (DD) phase for this project and is awaiting approval from LBJ to proceed to the Construction Development (CD) phase. Tentative completion date for the design is March 2024.

#### Training Center/EMS office

Plans are being finalized to construct a 2-story training center where the current EMS building is located. The building will consist of a first level training center and EMS office while the second floor will house administrative offices. A RFP to demolish the EMS building has been bid and is set to close on December 11, 2023.

#### LED Lighting Upgrade (DOI-EIC funding)

This project will consist of purchasing and installing LED lights throughout the entire facility. A RFP is currently underway and expected to be bid out by December 2023.

#### Wellness/Physical Therapy Rehab Center

Plans are being made to design a 2-story Wellness center where the current Nursing villa is located. The first floor will be a state of the art physical therapy rehabilitation center and an amphitheater style meeting room on the second floor for medical symposiums. A RFP for the design is estimated to be bid out in February 2024.

#### Chiller #2 Installation Project: (DOI-MAP funding)

DOI-MAP grant funding was approved to install one of two new chillers that was purchased in 2020. The project was bid out in July 2023 and is estimated to be completed in February 2024

#### Chiller #1 Installation Project: (DOI-EIC funding)

DOI-EIC grant funding was approved to install the second new chiller that was purchased in 2020. This project has been awarded with an estimated completion date of February 2024.

#### Medical Records Renovation Project

This project consisted of renovating the old PAR and Finance office to install new space savers for our medical records and office space for the staff. The project was completed in October 2023.

#### MIS Renovation Project

The MIS Department will be moved out of the COVID ward (which will be demolished for the new ICU/ER project) into the current medical records office. This project will consist of renovating the medical records office to house LBJ servers, MIS staff, LBJ Operators, and Patient admitting staff. This project has been awarded and is estimated to be completed by December 2023.

#### Cafeteria Renovation Project

This project had to undergo a redesign which is set to be completed by the end of December 2023.

#### Emergency Backup Generator Replacement Project

One of the two generators that was ordered has been placed at a temporary location at LBJ, while the other will remain in storage due to space issues. The current generator house needs to be renovated in order to permanently place both generators in the building. The design to renovate the generator house is currently underway and estimated to be completed in March 2024. We will be moving forward with installing the new (used/refurbished) unit, followed by decommissioning and removing the current unit. The installation and commissioning of the new unit is scheduled to be completed by December. Shipping delays for cables and breakers has affected the installation of this project.

#### Maternity Ward Shower Renovation

Three patient showers located towards the entrance of the Maternity Ward underwent a renovation in July 2023. All three showers received a fresh coat of paint and new tiles on the floor and walls.

#### Surgical Ward Shower Renovation

Three patient showers located towards the entrance of the Surgical Ward underwent a renovation in December 2022. All three showers received a fresh coat of paint and new tiles on the floor and walls.

#### Maternity Ward ISO rooms #1 and #2 Renovation

Isolation Rooms #1 and #2 were both renovated in February 2023. The bathrooms/showers in both rooms were remodeled, retiled, and repainted. New fixtures, baseboards, and acoustic tiles were replaced in both rooms.

#### Annual Medical Gas Inspection

Two ASSE certified technicians arrived on island in August of this year to inspect the medical gas supply lines throughout the whole facility. This inspection fulfills the CMS COP (Conditions of Participation) in regard to Medical Gas supply lines. The findings are as stated:

"The systems have been found to meet or exceed the requirements of the NFPA 99..."

One of the technicians also conducted ASSE 6040 Medical Gas Maintenance Personnel

Certification training for our Maintenance staff. Each participant received a facility specific certificate at the end of the training.

#### Dialysis Dual RO Unit Installation

A new dual Reverse Osmosis (RO) Unit is currently undergoing installation and testing in the Dialysis Clinic. Three consecutive passing water (endotoxin and LAL) samples are required by AAMI before the system can be put online. The first sample was sent during Thanksgiving week. The estimated time to fully commission the unit is December 2023.

#### ER Triage/Restroom Renovation Project

A second triage room and physician's room were constructed in the ER waiting room in July of this year to assist with the flow of patients in the ER. A long-awaited restroom was also constructed in the ER.

#### Billing/Coding Renovation Project

The Billing office went through a renovation to install 16 newly fabricated cubicles with data and electrical outlets, three ac's, and a fresh coat of paint. The project was completed in November 2023.

#### Pharmacy Clean Room Project

Paramount and GEM were contracted to construct the Pharmacy Clean Room in the current Pharmacy area. GEM's SOW consisted of site preparation for the Clean Room. Paramount is currently installing all of the ducting, diffusers, and terminal units that make up the HVAC system for the Clean Room. The estimated date of completion is January 2024.

**In addition to the Engineering and Facilities projects, the LBJ Medical Center has taken strides to improve Nursing services. The LBJ Nursing Department accomplishment are as follows:**

#### SERVICE

- Staff Satisfaction Survey conducted in March and October 2023. There were a lot of issues of concern with the 1st survey from the staff on staffing, supplies, maintenance, security, etc. The 2nd survey showed tremendous improvements. Based on the feedback from the surveys, changes were implemented focusing on areas of supplies, cleanliness, and staffing. Addressed security, facility, and maintenance issues with the respective department chiefs during the daily morning huddle
- Performance Evaluations and Competencies Skills Checks completed for licensed and unlicensed assistive personnel September 2023

**QUALITY** Nursing Department QAPI projects 2023 based on "high risk", "high-volume", and "problem-prone"

1. Nursing Administration 2 QAPI projects already reported to hospital-wide QAPI:
  - April 2023 and ongoing ER waiting lounge- patients arriving at the ER through the main entrance will be monitored on arrival within 10 to 30 minutes to identify any life-threatening situation or immediate medical needs. Positive feedback, the CNA will remain in the lounge to observe patients for any deteriorating signs and symptoms.

- March 20-October 10, 2023: Developed IV assessment team consisting of 2 CNAs and PCD. All patients with peripheral IVs will be assessed two times a week. The total number of 1087 patients assessed from March to October. Much improvement was noted after the implementation of labels for IV bags, IV sites, IV tubings, etc.
2. Emergency Room:
    - Admission Waiting time, there were issues with prolonged time for admitting patients to the units due to nursing shortages, room availability, miscommunication between staff, and high acuity levels of patients. Corrective actions were implemented, and some improvements in the waiting time as reported by Patient Care Directors.
  3. Medical Unit:
    - Prevent Healthcare-Associated Pressure Injuries
    - The skincare assessment team champions selected and started the project
  4. Operating Room/PACU:
    - Why there are Delayed and Canceled Surgeries
  5. Labor/Delivery Room:
    - Increasing Breastfeeding Rates During Postpartum Hospital Admission
  6. Nursery:
    - Breastfeeding: to promote exclusively breastfeeding for all mothers
  7. ICU:
    - Preventing Ventilator Acquired Pneumonia

#### **FINANCE** Staff Development Projects: Grant Funding

1. Hyperbaric Chamber Training: 2 RNs and 2 LPNs completed and received certification
2. Wound Care Advanced and Basic Courses for RNs and LPNs 6 months duration: 2 RNs, LPN, 4 CNAs completed

#### **PEOPLE** RN Recruitment from Thailand: Total 36, 15 arrived

- Local RNs employed at LBJ and passed NCLEX-RN-6
- Local LPNs employed at LBJ and passed NCLEX - 7
- 3 Fijian nurses passed NCLEX-RN
- 18 remaining Fijian nurses are attending Chaminade University review
- Perdiem DOH nurses assisting LBJ with coverage

#### **GROWTH**

- Hyperbaric Chamber training completed: 2 RNs and 2 LPNs
- Wound Care Education by Nancy Morgan for staff on 9/21-9/28
- Monthly in-service on crucial topics for Nurses ongoing (topics such as high-alert medications, patient safety, prevention of pressure injuries, fall preventions, health promotions, restraints and seclusion, health-care associated infections, neurological disorders, musculoskeletal common disease conditions, common disease conditions, basic EKG interpretation, etc)
- Completed Certification Neonatal Resuscitation Program (AAP): 12 physicians, 34 nurses
- NRP Inservice provided for Respiratory Therapy Staff
- Hemorrhage Carts created for the Labor/Delivery room and Maternity unit
- 2 New incubators (first time) purchased and placed in Nursery/NICU and training done for

- nurses and physicians
- NCLEX-RN review for Fijian nurses conducted by Nursing Education

### Hiring of certified health compliance specialist

As part of improvement efforts, the LBJ Medical Center has hired a certified health compliance specialist who is now serving as the Chief of Business Affairs and Auditing. This individual has worked extensively in the last two months to address LBJ's long-standing issues related to coding, billing, and business services. These issues have affected LBJ's ability to collect complete revenue for services provided. With continued efforts in this area, LBJ will see an increase in revenue which will provide additional resources to upgrade facilities, service and healthcare for the people of American Samoa.

### Department of Search and Rescue

In the span of fifteen months, the Department of Search and Rescue (DSAR) has evolved into a vital entity, embodying resilience amidst a range of essential responsibilities. Under the authoritative guidance of the Director's Office, the department receives operational support from the Administrative Services (AS) Division, ensuring smooth collaboration across the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division, Fire Protection (FP) Division, and Marine Patrol (MP) Division—integral components in DSAR's emergency first responder functions.

### Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division

Throughout the year, the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) team undertook vital functions in responding to a diverse range of health-related emergencies within the community. Their primary duty involved swiftly addressing a significant number of emergency calls, encompassing medical crises and trauma incidents alike. The data underscores the team's consistent commitment to dispatching ambulances and medical personnel, ensuring not only prompt medical responses but also comprehensive patient care and transportation. The peak in emergency calls observed in November 2022 further emphasizes the team's crucial role in providing immediate assistance during crises, contributing substantially to the overall health and well-being of the community.

In parallel to their emergency response duties, the EMS team actively facilitated medical transfers, showcasing their integral role in ensuring the movement of patients to and from the healthcare facility. The fluctuating counts for medical transfers across the months suggest a dynamic healthcare landscape, with notable peaks recorded in January and June

2023. These transfers signify the team's dedication to facilitating specialized care and ensuring

EMS Data Table

DATA CATEGORY	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Annual Total	Monthly Average
1 EMS DISPATCHED	838	826	694	709	701	656	627	584	585	636	581	532	7969	664
2 EMERGENCY CALLS	521	602	495	495	511	474	413	423	444	395	400	358	5531	461
a. MEDICAL CALLS	452	542	445	433	445	426	342	357	373	343	332	298	4788	399
b. TRAUMA CALLS	69	60	50	62	66	48	71	66	71	52	68	60	743	62
3 MEDICAL TRANSFERS	102	72	83	112	94	73	64	68	75	88	90	68	989	82
4 APPARENT DOA	7	10	7	9	7	14	7	7	15	7	13	110	9	
5 OUTGOING MEDEVAC	2	1	2	2	4	1	7	3	1	2	3	0	28	2
6 TOTAL INCIDENT RESPONSES	632	685	587	618	616	562	491	501	527	500	500	439	6658	555

EMERGENCY CALLS DISPOSITION	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Annual Total	Monthly Average
1 MEDICAL WARD	19	30	29	35	25	27	14	19	24	18	11	15	266	22
2 SURGICAL WARD	8	15	18	25	20	22	23	25	14	15	24	21	230	19
3 INTENSIVE CARE UNIT	11	6	8	11	7	14	10	12	11	11	10	3	114	10
4 PEDIATRIC WARD	1	1	2	3	5	0	2	1	3	3	5	2	28	2
5 MATERNITY WARD	5	13	9	11	11	8	3	9	6	21	13	7	116	10
6 LABOR & DELIVERY	10	6	10	11	13	12	16	8	12	9	8	7	122	10
7 NURSERY	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
8 PSYCHIATRIC WARD	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1	5	0
9 MORGUE	4	11	10	14	8	11	4	7	2	8	7	9	95	8
10 NO DISPOSITION FOUND	48	34	45	4	3	12	54	45	48	13	23	17	346	29
11 ABSCONDED	0	1	4	5	3	6	1	2	1	1	3	4	31	3
12 TREATED & RELEASED	368	438	317	333	381	323	242	248	279	262	261	244	3696	308
13 REFUSE TX /TRANSPORT	46	47	43	42	35	38	44	47	42	33	34	28	479	40



that patients are seamlessly transferred to our only medical facility for their specific needs. In summary, the EMS team's functions, as gathered from the data, encompass a comprehensive spectrum of activities, spanning immediate responses to emergencies and the facilitation of medical transfers, underscoring their decisive contribution to the broader healthcare infrastructure within the community.

### Fire Protection Division

The fire suppression operation responded to various incidents throughout the year, including structural, vehicular, vessel, waste material, and brush fires. A subset of the structural fires was identified as abandoned, while vehicular fires included instances caused by overheating engines during the ascent to specific villages. In collaboration with the Marine Patrol Division, the Fire Division successfully managed five search-and-rescue missions in the western districts of the island. Additionally, the Fire Division addressed four minor HazMat calls related to ammonia leaks at the canneries. The Fire Prevention Outreach Program actively participated in fifteen events, encompassing educational activities, career day events, private sector business affairs, and professional development workshops, aiming to educate diverse audiences on fire safety measures. Numerous inspections were conducted throughout the year, primarily for private businesses and public educational institutions, ensuring compliance with National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) recommendations.

Lastly, the Fire Protection Division engaged in two training events, including a Hazmat Awareness Level training and the Continuing Challenge training in Sacramento, California, covering various aspects of firefighting, HazMat, and emergency response. The latter opportunity was made possible through the Department of Interior Cares Act TAP Grant for Emergency Responders administered by the Lyndon Baines Johnson (LBJ) Tropical Medical Center. The knowledge gained during training was effectively disseminated among all firefighters and ranking officers.



Fire Protection Data Table

Month	Outreach	Inspection	Drill	Total
Oct. 2022	3	4	0	7
Nov. 2022	3	5	0	8
Dec. 2022	0	6	0	6
Jan. 2023	1	0	0	1
Feb. 2023	0	7	0	7
Mar. 2023	3	9	0	11
Apr. 2023	0	4	0	4
May 2023	2	5	0	7
Jun. 2023	0	0	0	0
Jul. 2023	2	3	0	5
Aug. 2023	0	27	1	28
Sept. 2023	1	0	0	1

## **Marine Patrol Division**

The Marine Patrol Division demonstrated a commitment to maritime safety through comprehensive training, community engagement, and strategic initiatives. Fourteen officers completed rigorous training sessions with the USCG Honolulu Maritime Safety Security Team, gaining certifications across essential skills. The Annual Boating Raffle, now in its third year, attracted significant participation, fostering a sense of responsibility among the boating community. Boating education outreach efforts reached a diverse audience through television programs, school engagements, and collaborations with nonprofit organizations. The establishment of Life Jacket Loaner Stations and Angel Rings underscored the division's dedication to water safety, providing tangible resources for boaters. The division's responsiveness was evident in the 60 assists provided for emergencies, boater requests, and collaborations with various agencies and events. Overall, the Marine Patrol Division's multifaceted approach continues to contribute to a safer and more informed maritime community.

### **Trainings**

A total of fourteen (14) officers successfully completed training by the USCG Honolulu (MSST 91107) Maritime Safety Security Team.

### **Annual Boating Raffle**

Third year of the Annual Boating Raffle with 103 boats Registered. A total of 10 raffle prizes at a total value of \$10,000. A total of 30 boatowners participated at the raffle drawing with 10 winners and 10 consolation prizes for different categories.



### **Boating Education Outreach**

- Conducted a total of 12 boating education outreach programs via the local television network.
- Conducted a total of 6 boating education outreach programs to schools and engaged with 600 students.
- Conducted onsite boating education outreach with 4 nonprofit organizations and engaged with 260 individuals.

### **Life Jacket Loaner Stations**

With the assistance from the SEATOW Foundation, we were able to launch 5 life jacket loaner stations at various locations; 2 in Ofu, Manu'a, 1 in Olosega, 1 in Utulei at the South Pacific Water Sports and 1 at the Marine Base.



### **Angel Ring Project**

As part of our campaign in promoting water safety, a total of 6 angel rings were installed at Masefau, Faleasao, Olosega, and Lion's Park.

### **Assists**

A total of 60 assists were rendered for various emergencies, requests from boaters, USCG, and government special programs and events.

The achievements realized throughout the year stand as a testament to the indispensable financial support extended by DSAR's invaluable partners, including the American Samoa Economic

Development Authority (ASEDA), Department of Public Works (DPW), Governor’s Office Special Projects, and Governor’s Office Capital Improvement Project, among others. This support enabled the establishment of the Director's office and administrative services facility, the acquisition of specialized equipment equipping all ambulances, funding for essential firefighter gear, and the continuous daily operations of DSAR through provisions such as fuel, maintenance services, and supplies. Additionally, their assistance played a crucial role in procuring new fire trucks, further enhancing our capabilities and reinforcing our commitment to public safety.

### **American Samoa Medicaid State Agency**

In Fiscal Year 2023, Medicaid conducted two demonstration efforts to gather data for ineligible services and ineligible individuals. Medicaid accepted on a temporary basis for one fiscal year, off-island referral for cancer patients and ineligible foreign nationals. This included American Samoa permanent residents and other immigration categories. Obtaining the referral numbers and the costs for non-eligible individuals was necessary to acquire the documentation to propose potential solutions. The demonstration was made possible using 100% local match. Medicaid cannot use federal dollars for ineligible referrals or ineligible services.

As expected, the demonstration effort depleted Medicaid’s total local match budget. The number of cancer patients were nominal and more time is needed to assess this service coverage. Historically, cancer treatment due to its long-term duration and indeterminate costs, has not been covered by the American Samoa Government due to the local match constraints. American Samoa is the only jurisdiction with the status of AS permanent residents. In all 50 states and US territories including American Samoa, only US permanent residents (green card holders) are eligible for Medicaid.

## **HIGHLIGHTS of KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **Consolidated Appropriations Act**

- **83% FMAP**--American Samoa and the smaller US territories received the 83% Federal Matching Assistance Percentage (FMAP). American Samoa is working on individual enrollment to be eligible for this 83% FMAP.
- **\$4.2 million**--American Samoa received \$4.2 million to design and develop Individual Eligibility and Enrollment. (E&E) and Medicaid Management Information Systems (MMIS).

**Total MAP funding**--Medicaid was awarded in FY2023 a total of **\$97.5 million** in Medicaid grants to deliver Medicaid beneficiary services and administer the Medicaid program.

**LBJ Hospital**--Medicaid reimbursed LBJ a total of **\$45,596,290** in Medicaid funds.

**DOH Community Health Centers**—Medicaid reimbursed DOH **\$8,053,948** in Medicaid funds.

**Adventist Castle Hospital**--Medicaid made inroads into the State of Hawaii by signing a contract with Adventist Castle Hospital, to accept American Samoa referral patients. This is the first Hawaii hospital to open its doors to American Samoa referral patients through the Medicaid program.

**Hawaii Eyesight**—Medicaid signed a contract for cataract surgeries at Hawaii Eyesight.

**Orthopedic Associates of Hawaii**—Medicaid signed a contract for orthopedic surgeries in Hawaii excluding spinal cases.

**COVID Reimbursement Continuation**—Medicaid submitted a State Planning Amendment to continue reimbursement for COVID testing, treatment and vaccination at LBJ and DOH, through September 2024.

**NUMBER OF PATIENTS SERVED**

Medicaid served in FY2023 a total of **3,074 patients** for all Medicaid services outside of LBJ excluding the Department of Health community health centers that logged 45,205 patient encounters.

- **229** patients were referred to NZ/HI on the Off-Island Medical Referral Program
- **1,836** patients were referred to the island for vision and eyeglass benefits.
- **426** patients were referred for wheelchairs, cpap machines, etc under the Durable Medicaid Equipment and Prosthetics, Orthotics and Supplies benefit.
- **78** patients were served for personal patient care at the Hope House home for the elderly and severely disabled.
- **505** patients were referred for dialysis services at the Hope Dialysis center.

**MEDICAID FUNDING BREAKDOWN**

#	Funding Source	Federal Match	Local Match Appropriate	Purpose
1	Medical Assistance Payments (MAP)	\$89,210,000	\$3,000,000	Eligible individuals and eligible services defined in the AS State Plan
2	Children’s Health Insurance Program Payments (CHIP)	\$6,054,488	--included above	All children 21 years and younger
3	Prescription Drug Program Payments (EAP)	\$439,421	--not needed	For Medicare Part D eligible individuals
4	Health Information Systems (HIT)	\$640,000	\$60,000	For payment of EHR incentive payments
5	Administration	\$1,200,000	\$517,000	For office administration—salaries, training, travel, office operations
6	Medicare Co-Pay	\$180,196		
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$97,543,909</b>	<b>\$3,577,000</b>	

**\*Note: \$33,742,620.04 of MAP allocation is expected to be returned to CMS after the FY2023 reconciliation due to the lack of local match for the medical services.**

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# STATE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

## The Department of Public Works

The Department of Public Works (DPW) strives to maintain the same course of action from the previous year regarding numerous new infrastructure projects. DPW continues to provide maintenance work, and emergency repairs especially on drainage and shoreline work due to the effect of climate change on our island. Furthermore; work on upgrading existing government structures as well as developing new projects with innovative ideas that will project the new face of the government with modern infrastructure and developments within the coming years.

As a means to further enhance capital improvements, Public Works has been successful with the submissions of several applications for federal funding, namely:

### **Grant Awards**

#### **MAP & TAP Projects Total Award: \$560,000.00**

- ASG Gas Station Rehabilitation \$280,000.00
  - Tank Restoration- Clean/Repaint/Repair Building
  - Gas Dispenser Installation- Install new dispensers
- DPW Heavy Equipment Storage Facility \$200,000.00
  - Construction of storage facility to store all Heavy Equipment i.e. Backhoes, Excavator, Grader, Dump-truck, Loader.
- DPW Training: Land and Survey Drone Training \$80,000.00
  - Workforce Development Program

#### **Homeland Security Grant Program Total Award: \$390,000.00**

- DPW Physical Security \$200,000.00
  - Construction of new fence
  - Installation of new cameras
- DPW Network Infrastructure and Cyber Security \$190,000.00
  - Brand new network install
  - Cyber Security upgrade

#### **ARPA Total Award: \$700,000.00**

- New Vacuum Truck \$680,000.00
- Office cubicles (COVID-19 Prevention) \$20,000.00

#### **CIP: \$2,877,000.00**

- DPW Heavy Equipment (2 new Backhoes, 1 New Excavator) \$1,500,000.00
- DPW Loader \$500,000.00
- DPW Dump Trucks \$560,000.00
- DPW Heavy Equipment Maintenance Fund 1 \$120,000.00
- DPW Heavy Equipment Maintenance Fund 2 \$197,000.00

The Lemanu-Talauaga Administration continues to prioritize the numerous public works improvement projects from road maintenance and development, education and airport facilities. See the following comprehensive listing of infrastructure projects for year 2023:



# CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE



**Alataua II ES Two-Story Building**



**Alataua II ES Multipurpose Building**



**Fagali'i ES Multipurpose Building**



**ASCC Cafeteria**



**Early Childhood Education Building**



**Manulele ES Gymnasium**



**Lau'i ES Kitchen/Dining Improvements**



**Kanana Fou Taeafua O Tupulaga Multipurpose Facility**



**Afonotele ES Two-Story Classroom (Kitchen/Cafeteria)**



**A. P. Lutali Multipurpose Building**



**A. P. Lutali ES Classrooms**



**Fagaitua High School Classroom Improvements**





**Matafao ES Fence**



**Tafuna ES Fence**



**Tafuna HS Lower Campus Fence**



**Tafuna HS Upper Campus Fence**



**Lupelele ES Fence**



**Coleman ES Fence**



**Leone HS Administrative Building**



**Leone Midkiff ES #1**



**Leone Midkiff Elementary School #2**



**Lupelele ES Improved Classroom/Kitchen & Cafeteria**



**Lupelele ES Classrooms & Restrooms**



**Tautalatasi Tuatoo ES New Multipurpose Building**





**Pava'iai ES #1 Classrooms & SPED Unit**



**Pava'iai ES #2 Improved Kitchen, Cafeteria, & Classrooms**



**Olomoana ES Classrooms**



**Iakina Distance Learning Plan & Classroom**



**Tafuna HS JROTC Building**



**Tafuna HS Retrofitting Building**



**Manumalo Junior & Secondary Academy**



**Manumalo Junior & Secondary Academy**



**Peteli Academy Renovation & Repair**



**Marist St. Francis ES**



**Faasao Marist HS Classroom**



**Samoa Baptist Academy Extension**





**SPICC Building**



**St. Theresa ES**



**Mauga-o-Alava ES**



**Lauli'i ES**



**Coleman ES Buildings**



**Pacific Horizon School Building**



**Fagaitua HS Access Road**



**New School Buses**



**Faleniu Access Road**



**Tula to Alofau Road**



**St. Theresa Access Road (Leone)**



**Fatuoaiiga Access Road**





**Leone Midkiff ES**



**Mapusaga Fou Road**



**Leone HS Road**



**Tafuna ES Road**



**Little League Baseball**



**Route 13 Road Construction Malaeloa**



**Poloa to Fagamalo Road Resurface**



**School Lunch Program Access Road**



**Nu'uuli Airport Intersection Rd**



**Fogagogo 1 Access Road**



**Fogagogo II Access Road**



**Fogagogo III Access Road**





**Road 018 New Road Construction Fagaima**



**Leloaloe Sidewalk**



**Aolou/Siliaga Access Road**



**Nuuli Project**



**Matatula ES Access Road**



**Route 003 Road Reconstruction Taputimu**



**Nuuli Vocational Technical HS Access Road**



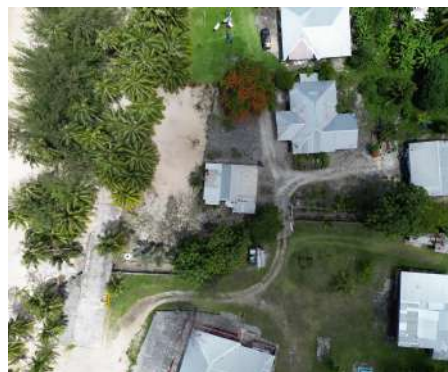
**Basketball Court/ Cricket Parking Lot- Faga'alu Park**



**Naumati Access Road**



**Asili Seawall**



**Sailele Road Side Drainage**



**Ottoville and Fagaima**





**Little League Baseball Field**



**Tony Solaita Baseball Field**



**Parks & Recreational Office Renovation**



**DHSS Malaeimi Shelter Renovation**



**Boys & Girl Club Renovation**



**Maritime Cultural Heritage Center (DMWR)**



**Office of Samoan Affairs**



**Fono Building**



**District Court**



**DPS Tafuna Office**



**Juvenile Detention Center**



**Country Club Renovation**





**Island- Wide Safety Improvement Guardrail Project**



**Island- Wide Safety Improvement Pavement Marking**



**Amanave to Fagali'i Access Road**



**K9 Facility**



**Amouli to Aoa**



## Manu’a Development

The Lemanu-Talauega Administration remains dedicated to serving the people of Manu’a through ongoing efforts to enhance government services and invest in vital infrastructure projects. These initiatives play a pivotal role in improving accessibility to government services and enhancing the overall quality of life for our residents in Manu’a. The government's footprint on the Manu’a Islands has steadily grown, reflecting a commitment to progress. Below is a compilation of projects, developments, and achievements undertaken by the Administration in Manu’a throughout the year 2023:

### Inter-Island Ferry Service

The Administration remains committed to investing in the expansion and enhancement of Manu'a's air and surface transportation infrastructure.

### MV Manu’atele – Services to Manu’a

2020: Manuatele sailed 3 times to Manu’a

2021: Manuatele sailed 57 times to Manu’a

2022: Manuatele sailed 48 times to Manu’a

2023: Manuatele sailed 53 times to Manu’a

### The Development Bank of American Samoa- Manu’a Services

The Development Bank of American Samoa continues to serve the Manu’a islands by providing the same services available in Tutuila for the Manu’a islands.

In July 2023, DBAS President Ruth Matagi and staff participated in the Manu’a Flag Day festivities and hosted the first movie night at the Manu’a High School in Tau, Manu’a. The activity promotes small business ideas that can be conducted in a remote area such as Manu’a islands. Despite the power outages experienced throughout the week the event was a success.



(Tau'u, Manu'a movie night for Manu'atele Flag Day photo taken by DBAS staff)

### Manu’a Infrastructure Projects

The Lemanu-Talauega Administration continues to prioritize public works improvement projects in Manu’a. See the following comprehensive listing of infrastructure projects for Manu’a:

# MANU'A CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE



**Fitiuta Sidewalk**



**Faleasao Wharf**



**Faleasao Emergency Escape Road**



**Ofu/Olosega Bridge Safety Rails**



**Fitiuta Airport Passenger**



**Olosega Village Road**



**Ofu Village Emergency Road**



**Olosega Seawall**



**Olosega Village Escape Road**



**Ta'u ECE School Building**



**Olosega ES (Two Story Building)**



**Ta'u New Consolidated ES Building**





**Agriculture Access Road- Cattle Farm**



**Fitiuta Village/Matasaua ES Escape Road**



**Ta'u Village, Si'ufaga Side Escape Road**



**Ta'u DPS Substation Repair**



**Ta'u Coastal Road**



**Ta'u School Lunch Warehouse**

## Department of Port Administration

The American Samoa Department of Port Administration (DPA) manages and operates the territory's airports and harbors. These critical infrastructures are the territory's gateway to domestic and international trade. DPA strives to ensure the continuous operation of the government's airports and harbors to facilitate the movement of commerce and people.

### Projects

#### PAGO PAGO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

1. Apron Reconstruction Project  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
\$30,000,000 – Federal Aviation Administration AIP Funding
2. Airport Courtyard  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
\$200,000 – Department of Commerce CDBG Funding
3. Access Road to Airport Industrial Park (West End)  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
\$100,000 – Local Funding
4. Airport Triennial Full-Scale Exercise  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
Date: November 24, 2023  
Status: Successful completion of the FAA required Triennial Full-Scale Emergency Response Exercise
5. ARFF Leadership Boot Camp  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
Dates: October 31 to November 24, 2023  
Status: Successful completion of the ARFF Firefighter Leadership Boot Camp
6. Airport PA & Voice Alarm System  
**75% Complete (2023)**  
\$96,000 – Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs Funding
7. New Mobile Aircraft Passenger Boarding Ramp  
**60% Complete (2023)**  
\$265,000 – American Rescue Plan Act Funding
8. Runway 5-23 Rehabilitation Project (7,000 feet)  
45% Complete (2023)  
\$25,000,000 – Federal Aviation Administration Funding
9. New Airport Terminal  
**15% Complete (2023)**  
Conceptual Design In Process  
\$15,000,000 – American Rescue Plan Act Funding
10. Pago Pago International Airport Maintenance & Repairs  
**10% Complete (2023)**  
Funding Approved October 2023  
\$2,000,000 – Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs



## PORT OF PAGO PAGO

1. Demolition of the Old Port Building  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
 \$800,000 – American Rescue Planning Act Funding Contractor: Tony’s Construction
2. Fender Repair & Maintenance  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
 Contractor: Ronald Reagan Shipyard
3. Landing Licenses  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
 Status: DPA required by law to issue landing licenses to Purse Seiners. Licenses are now issued by DPA.
4. Hydrographic Survey  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
 \$26,000 – Department of Interior, Insular Affairs

Status: Successful completion of survey conducted by United States Army Corp of Engineers Project

5. Cyber Security Assessment of DPA Network by USCG Cyber Protection Team  
**100% Complete (2023)**

United States Coast Guard Sector Honolulu Funding  
Status: Assessment complete and USCG report received.

6. Port PA System & Voice Alarm System  
**50% Complete (2023)**

\$123,000 – Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs Funding Contractor: VCX, Technologies, Inc.

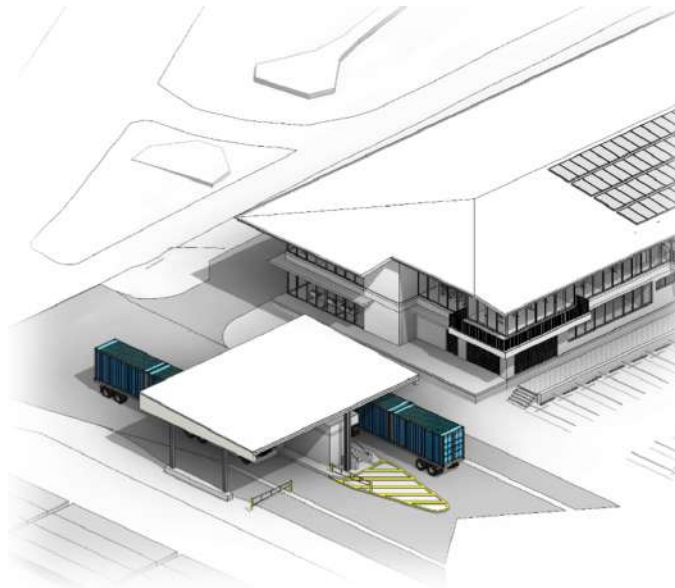
7. Vessel Fleet Maintenance & Staff Maintenance Training  
**25% Complete**

\$199,000 – Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs MAP Funding Project

8. New ASG Facilities  
**20% Complete**

**Design Concept Complete. Detailed Concept In Process**

\$15,000,000 – American Rescue Planning Act Funding Designer: Pioa Consulting and Engineering





**AUNU’U & AUASI HARBORS**

1. Aunu’u Wharf Reconstruc/on  
**Environmental Permitting in Progress (2023)**  
\$2,100,000 – Department of Transporta/on PIDP Funding
2. Au’asi Wharf & Terminal Repairs  
**Environmental Permitting in Progress (2023)**  
\$1,500,000 – Department of Interior, Office of Insular Affairs Funding

**OFU AIRPORT & HARBOR**

1. Forklift provided to Ofu Harbor  
**100% Complete (2023)**
2. Ofu Airport Shoreline Project  
**Environmental Permitting In Progress (2023)**  
United States Army Corp of Engineers & Local Funding

**TA’U AIRPORT & HARBORS**

1. Forklift provided to Faleasao Harbor  
**100% Complete (2023)**
2. Faleasao Harbor Terminal Building  
**100% Complete (2023)**  
Local Funding – Department of Public Works
3. Fiti’uta Airport Lighting Upgrade Project  
**90% Complete (2023)**  
\$2,000,000 – Federal Aviation Administration AIP Funding

**GRANTS**

GRANT	DEADLINE	PROJECT	AMOUNT	STATUS
1 DOT PIDP	Submitted 5.15.22	Aunu'u Wharf	\$2,120,000.00	Awarded - October 2022
2 ASDOC	Requested 12.21.22	Ofu Wharf Terminal	\$1,200,000.00	Awarded - January 2023
3 OIA TAP	Submitted 3.17.23	AS Harbor Pilot Training Program	\$167,400.00	Awarded - June 2023
4 OIA TAP	Submitted 3.17.23	Port Workflow Invoice System	\$265,000.00	Awarded - June 2023
5 OIA CIP	Requested 3.1.23	Auasi Wharf	\$2,000,000.00	Awarded - July 2023
6 DOT FHwy via ASDPW	Requested 8.15.23	Ferry Program	\$533,096.33	Awarded - August 2023
7 NOAA Marine Debris	Submitted 10.26.23 (LOI)	Derelict Vessel Removal	\$2,700,000.00	TBD
8 DOT RCN	Submitted 9.27.23	New Airport Terminal	\$9,600,000.00	TBD
9 DOT PROTECT	Submitted 8.17.23	Airport Shoreline	\$36,896,000.00	TBD
10 FTA Ferry Program	Submitted 7.16.23	Ferry	\$21,250,000.00	TBD
11 DOT PIDP	Submitted 4.28.23	Ta'u Wharf	\$5,000,000.00	Denied
12 DOT RAISE	Submitted 2.28.23	Port of Pago Pago Master Plan	\$2,000,000.00	Denied
13 NOAA Marine Debris	Submitted 10.5.22	Derelict Vessel Removal	\$3,000,000.00	Denied
14 DHS PSGP	Submitted 5.18.23	Perimter Fence, Rescue Boat...	\$1,109,000.00	Denied



## REVENUE COLLECTED

### MV MANU'ATELE

YEAR	VOYAGES	REVENUE
2021	57	\$242,622.00
2022	48	\$320,048.00
2023	53	\$712,734.00

### PASSENGER FACILITY CHARGE

YEAR	AIRCRAFT OPS	PASSENGERS	REVENUE
2021	868	5,462	\$11,338.93
2022	2,470	20,130	\$47,951.21
2023	8,209	60,876	\$316,854.25

### TOTAL REVENUE

YEAR	SEAPORT	AIRPORT	TOTAL
2021	\$3,866,172.00	\$967,357.45	\$4,833,529.00
2022	\$4,306,137.30	\$1,380,034.00	\$5,686,171.30
2023	\$5,036,317.03	\$1,907,951.15	\$6,944,268.18

## RULE REFORM

2021: DPA submitted two proposals for review by the rule reform panel.

2022: Ongoing review by ASG Lawyers and DPA.

2023: The two proposals were finally submitted to the Senate for review and were both passed with some revision. DPA now awaits review by the House of Representatives. The proposals submitted addressed: 1) Deputization of Port Security Officers, similar to Airport Police Officers and 2) Port Fees.

## American Samoa Shipyard Authority

The achievements of the Shipyard team surpassed expectations, revitalizing the previously closed facility to provide services for the American Samoa Fishing fleet and vessels across the Pacific. With expanded equipment and inventory, the Shipyard Authority secured contracts with ASPA for water tank projects, GHC Reid for building work, ASG Port Administration, and the Pago Marina. Notably, the Machine Shop underwent expansion with additional equipment and tools. In the past year, the American Shipyard Authority accomplished the following:

- Fetuolemoana (boat) - Engine repairs
- Miss Lilly (boat) - Drydock for maintenance Lady Samoa III (boat) - Drydock for maintenance Port Administration - Subcover and fender repairs
- Samoa Boy (boat) - General repairs
- Survivor (boat) - Mast repair
- Howard Afualo - Church gate restoration Manaolemoana (boat) - Sewage tank repairs
- ASPA - Dismantle old water tank in Aua
- ASPA-Tramway water tank restoration (on going)
- Manaolemoana (boat) - Welding repairs
- Evelina DaRosa (boat) - Shaft repairs
- Miss Lilly (boat) - Drydock for additional repairs

- Department of Marine Wildlife - Customize a new gain way and access gate to the Marina
- Fasefulu (boat) - Drydock for maintenance
- Yu Long Fa No. 168 (boat) - Drydock for maintenance
- Man Fu Tsai (boat) - Drydock for maintenance
- Shin Jaan Shin (boat) - Drydock for maintenance
- GHC Reid - Rail restoration at main office in Fagatogo

## Office of Public Information

As with the previous year, KVZK continues to prioritize the update of standards and systems of local production, the expansion of programming to reach broader audiences, and the upgrade of existing analog to the digital library system.

## American Samoa Telecommunications Authority

The American Samoa Telecommunications Authority provides the Territory (ASTCA) with modern telecommunication infrastructure for keeping residents and businesses connected to the ever-changing requirements of communications in voice, data, video, and IoT (internet of things). From mobile, broadband, wireline, high-definition television, and more, ASTCA serves as the American Samoa Government's (ASG) catalyst for economic development in the new global digital economy.

### Customer Service and Commercial

The key to achieving this has been optimizing business-process reviews to ensure ASTCA policies and regulatory compliance across department functions are followed. Development of KPIs across each department and automation of various HR and administrative processes, from managing data and employee services, to enabling productivity tools for streamlining human resources operations, is the framework we are using for improving customer experience.

#### High-Level Customer Service Accomplishments:

- Improvement in call center performance.
  - Exceeded the monthly target of 95% for answered calls on a consistent basis.
- Designed a training program designed to improve knowledge and skills.
- Improved processes to close performance gaps related to the turnaround time for new services and repairs.
- Implementation of one-to-one meetings to identify performance gaps and development plans to address those gaps. As a result, trust and morale are enhanced within the team, a culture of transparency has developed, and specific training needs are identified.

#### High-Level Commercial Accomplishments:

- Product Launches
  - 5G Wireless Mobile; higher data speeds, diminished lag, IoT opportunities.
  - Parental Controls for Broadband.
  - Customer Loyalty Program.
  - Mobile Roaming and improved A2P connectivity
- HDTV Television Expansion

- New Channels
- Launch of Live Rugby programming.
- Introduction of Private Sector Advertising.
- Marketing channels added for promotions, local engagement, and content.
- Mobile Network Enhancements:
  - Increased Compatibility for VoLTE Handsets.
  - Integration of 5G Handsets.
  - Enhancement of SMS Text Platform.
  - Expansion of wireless coverage and signal areas.
- Staff Development
  - Sales and Customer Service Training.
  - Inter/Intra department functional cross-training.
  - Leadership training.
  - Organizational culture transformations and improvement.
- Service Improvements and Expansions
  - Upgraded and expanded VOIP sales initiatives.
  - Enhanced Customer Service at Retail Stores.
  - Residential and commercial Broadband services and upgrades.
  - Build out of ICT Services.
  - Planning underway for a retail store in Manu'a to improve customer service.
- Performance Measurement and Compliance:
  - Improved tracking and measurement of KPIs.
  - Identification of non-compliance with service standards.
  - Customer service software to measure performance
- Marketing and Community Engagement:
  - Increased sponsorships and community support.
  - Improved use of media marketing channels.
  - Enhanced team support, interdepartmental cooperation and coordination.

### High-Level Engineering Accomplishments

- 5G Wireless was launched across the Territory.
- LTE Microcell modules were installed across Tutuila and Ta'u to improve mobile coverage for voice and data services
- FCC MetaSwitch Stir and Shaken, technology to combat fraudulent robocalls and illegal phone number spoofing, has proven successful in protecting residents since FY2022.
- Warning Alert System (WEA/IPAWS) for imminent threats worked in nationwide tests.
- High-level engineering and project management work completed for BLAST submarine cable between Tutuila and Manu'a; repairs scheduled Q2 FY2024.
- **Swains Islands:** Enabled LTE mobile cellular and broadband data services for the first time on Swains Island, marking a major milestone in our telecommunications services expansion and oceanic communications across the Pacific, all operating from a local 684 exchange as a domestic call.
- Deployed Firewalls to enhance security on ASTCA's network, improving our defenses and infrastructure, including sensitive customer data from potential cyber threats.
- Comprehensive training on the MIND CTI system, empowering our team to use software for more efficient operations and improved customer service.
- Setup A2P and roaming for global connectivity capabilities, ensuring uninterrupted communication for customers, even during international travel.

- Enhanced network infrastructure performance and capabilities by upgrading the Calix
- Broadband CMS Server, ensuring a more efficient and reliable broadband service.
- Apple 5G certification for network adaptability to Apple’s 5G devices, offering quicker data rates, enhanced connectivity, and a smoother user experience.
- Improved security at digital central offices (COs).
- Design and engineering plans for new Cable Landing Station (CLS).
- Engagement with Samoa government for microwave broadband backup, analysis of a second cable to Samoa, and other cable operators for Hawaiki redundancy.

### Human Resources

ASTCA continues to successfully automated various HR and administrative processes from managing data and employee services to enabling productivity tools for streamlining human resources operations and management support.

- High-level accomplishments:
- Optimizing business-process reviews for ensuring ASTCA policy and regulatory compliance across department business functions.
- Bi-annual document reviews for compliance and security.
- Safety and Compliance policies and compliance manager for deployment of injury and security plans hired and successfully deployed.
- Employee development programs, productivity learning.
- Safety and workplace behavior initiatives for reducing injuries and promotion of a healthier and more productive workplace for increasing outcomes.
- Employee Company Handbook updated.

### Special Projects & Grants

The SP&G (Strategic Planning and Grants) Division at ASTCA plays a crucial role in identifying and securing funding opportunities for projects and operations that are beyond funding possibilities from normal sales revenue. In this capacity, SP&G also manages both short and long-term projects, which includes acquiring necessary licenses, permits, and conducting research studies. This involves close coordination with various local and Federal government agencies, ranging from ASG to the US Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Interior (DOI), and even marine biologists for coral studies, e.g. potential displacement caused by submarine fiber optic cables. In overseeing the development, implementation, and monitoring of these projects, SP&G ensures the successful execution of key initiatives, thereby advancing ASTCA’s goals of serving the Territory. **Total secured in FY2023 was \$12.637M.**

Program Name	Cost	Project
ASG/DOI- CIP	\$1M	Cable Landing Station Relocation
DOI-Energizing Insular Communities	\$670K	Fagatogo CO Chiller Units
ARPA Broadband iNEI	\$3.35M	5G upgrade
ARPA Broadband iNEI	\$2.8M	Manu’a cable Repair
ASG- DOE	\$2.5M	BLAST Undersea Cable Repair
OIA- MAP	\$60K	GIS Mapping Survey

OIA- TAP	\$39K	LTE Remote Site Batteries
BRIC- HMG (ODAPM)	\$850K	CO Hardening (FEMA Review)
BRIC- HMG (ODAPM)	\$468K	Tower Replacement (FEMA Review)
BRIC- HMG (ODAPM)	\$900K	Backup Generators (FEMA Review)

## American Samoa Power Authority

### Accounting and Finance

ASPA posted an operating surplus of \$2,058,321 (unaudited) in FY-2023.

Total revenue was \$86,124,828 and expenditures totaled \$84,066,507.

The largest single expenditure was diesel fuel - totaling \$48,144,585.

### Human Resources

Despite challenges brought about by COVID restrictions and economic pressures, ASPA has engaged several professional staff from off-island to manage and push forward its federally funded projects.

Outstanding salary adjustments for performance/promotions/detail designations have also been processed and are caught up.

A Compensation Benchmark Study was completed, where ASPA staffing patterns are compared against the Guam Power Authority, Guam Waterworks Authority, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation, Marianas Energy Company, and electric and water utilities within the U.S. Mainland. This data will be used to do a full Compensation Study; the current model being 8 years old.

ASPA's Apprentice Program resumed following COVID 2022. Five (5) power engineering technicians (scheduled to graduate in June 2024) and three (3) Civil Engineering Apprentices (Land Surveying) are attending technical institutes in Auckland, New Zealand. The latter will complete their program in November 2024. Upon receiving their New Zealand Degrees at the end of their studies, apprentices will return to work in ASPA in their areas of work/training.

### Power Division

3.1 Installation and commissioning of GE No.1, a General Electric 16V250, 3.4MW diesel gen-set at Tafuna Power Plant.

3.2 Installation and commissioning of GE No,2, a General Electric 16V250, 3.4MW diesel gen-set at Tafuna Power Plant.

### Water & Wastewater division completed in FY2023

4.1 Expand & Improve WW Collection System

Cost - \$300,000



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Funding - USEPA

4.2 East Side Villages WW Collection System Project: Package 5 Phase II

Cost - \$11,740,968

Funding - USEPA

4.3 Fagaima Well Field Filtration System

Cost - \$8,700,000

Funding - USEPA

4.4 Well Exploration Drilling - Phase II Project

Cost - \$1,000,000

Funding - USEPA

4.5 HDPE Pipe Upgrade - Tualauta Phase I

Cost - \$2,679,344

Funding - USEPA

4.6 HDPE Pipe Upgrade - Tualauta Phase II Design

Cost - \$121,000

Funding - USEPA

4.7 AC Pipe Replacement - Malaemi to Futiga

Cost - \$1,250,000

Funding - USEPA

4.8 Onenoa Tank Replacement

Cost - \$282,000

Funding - USEPA

4.9 Vatia Tank Liner System

Cost - \$100,000

Funding - USEPA

4.10 Fagaitua Tank Replacement Project

Cost - \$440,000

Funding - USEPA

4.11 Futiga Welded Steel Tank Rehab - Phase I Project

Cost - \$1,146,000

Funding - USEPA

4.12 ARPA- Rehabilitation of Existing Welded Steel Tanks

Cost - \$1,500,000

Funding - ARPA

4.13 AC Pipe Replacement - ACP Replacement (Pavaiai - Malaeimi)

Cost - \$5,345,000

Funding - USEPA

## Territorial Energy Office

The Territorial Energy Office program aims to decrease energy expenses for low-income households by enhancing home energy efficiency, prioritizing health and safety.

### **The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP):**

A life-saving initiative, LIHEAP assists low-income households with frail elderly, individuals with disabilities, and young children by subsidizing a portion of their electricity bills through ASPA. Direct payments to ASPA prevent electricity disconnection, ensuring the safety of vulnerable populations. LIHEAP not only covers a percentage of the electrical bill but also provides energy-efficient appliances for low-income families. Without LIHEAP, households may face utility service disconnection, leading to perilous conditions, especially for elders and young children. Unaffordable energy bills can force low-income households to cut back on essential needs such as food, medicine, and medical care.

The following details of households being served for the year 2023.

### **WAP/LIHEAP/LIHWAP**

#### **Program year 2023: Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**

- Total households weatherized: 55
- Total people assisted: 269
- Total elderly assisted: 22 (60yrs and older)
- Total disabled assisted: 05
- Full children assisted: 148

#### **Program year 2023: Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

- Total households assisted: 789 Tutuila, 61 Manu'a, 1 Aunu'u (**Total 851**)
- Total people assisted: 4,130
- Actual elderly assisted: 414 (60 yrs and older)
- Whole disabled assisted: 86
- Real children assisted: 1,679 (0 – 19 yrs.)

#### **Program year 2023: \*Low-Income Home Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)**

- Total households assisted: 200

The LIHWAP grant, a crucial source of financial aid for our community, has reached its conclusion and is no longer accessible. We remain committed to maintaining communication with the Federal Department of Energy and collaborating with other states and territories to advocate for the continuation of this vital program benefiting low-income households. We are optimistic that through collective efforts, we can work towards persuading the DOE to sustain this essential initiative.

### **State Energy Plan (SEP) GRANT AWARD EE0009489**

#### **Light Retrofit Activities 4th Quarter (2023)**

TEO completed the retrofitting of 3 Kanana Fou High School buildings. The estimated area of coverage is approximately 12,000 sq. ft. Before the retrofit, the buildings were using 6,979 watts; after the retrofitting, watt usage decreased to 3,706.

### **Staff Recruitment**

The Territorial Energy Office has secured approval from federal grantors to finance two additional positions.

### **Funding Opportunities 2023**

TEO is awaiting a response regarding a proposal submitted to DOE for the program "EV Career Pathways," which is focused on training local candidates to maintain and repair EV Charging Machines and EV Vehicles, if necessary.

*The following are standard annual grants that American Samoa receives for ongoing services that TEO provides for its low-income clientele:*

- 1) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Formula grant, '23-'24 WAP Bipartisan Infrastructure Law '22 - '25 Approved funds released 10-01-2022
  - a) 07-01-2023 – 06-30-2024
  - b) Approved. Funds released 07-2023
  - c) \$278,000.00
  - d) \$823,753.00 (BIL)
- 2) Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Annual Formula Grant 2023 - (LIHEAP)
  - a) 10-01-2023 - on-going
  - b) Approved. Funds release date: 11-03-2023
  - c) \$305,324.00

*The following are new DOE funding opportunities that TEO will participate in by submitting applications to secure funds for the territory:*

- 1) Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant BIL \$23 - \$25
  - a) Grant application submitted.
  - b) \$430 M
  - c) \$1.5 M (BIL)
- 2) Department of Energy (DOE), State and Community Energy Programs announced a Notice for Intent for the release of the Energy Auditor Training Program; following the release of the "Funding Opportunity Announcement" (FOA), up to 40 million in funding will be made available through the Biden-Harris Administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, (BIL). The FOA will outline how the available allowance will be distributed through competitive grants to states demonstrating the need for training energy auditors.
  - a) \$40 Million competitive grant for States and territories
- 3) Sustainable Energy Resources for Consumers (SERC)
  - a) \$70M (BIL)

The Territorial Energy Office (TEO) is steadfast in its commitment to a comprehensive and sustainable energy future for the community. Through collaborative efforts with ASEPA, ASPA, and other key stakeholders, TEO aims to facilitate the deployment of EV Charging Stations, secure funding for the waste-to-energy project, and promote the adoption of hydropower and solar panels for individual homes.

The ongoing partnership with ODAPM to update building codes underscores TEO's commitment to maintaining regulatory frameworks that align with evolving energy standards. Additionally, the extension of the Department of Energy (DOE) Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant and discussions with the Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS) demonstrate TEO's proactive approach to securing financial resources for sustainable energy initiatives, including low-income programs.

TEO's recent achievements, such as securing federal funding for program vehicles, installing a new commercial-type elevator, and pursuing solar panels for the office carport, highlight the office's commitment to leading by example in adopting clean energy solutions. The ongoing collaboration with federal counterparts further emphasizes TEO's dedication to securing funding for educational charging stations, EV vehicles, and initiatives aimed at public awareness and education.

## **Department of Parks and Recreation**

Parks and Recreation serves as a tool for revitalization, shaping economic development, creating safe communities, promoting green infrastructure, helping children learn, and promoting public health, arts, cultural programs, and tourism. DPR has attained so much in 2023 and is inclined to continue through 2024. Much was accomplished especially with DPR's newly renovated office and the completion of the first round of rule reform for the Department. In addition, DPR conducted its Community Outreach in the villages of Fagasa and Matuu and is planning on expanding to other villages. Furthermore, aside from its Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant, DPR was awarded 3 more grants this year; one from ARPA and the MAP and TAP grants through DOC.

DPR endured challenges along the way, especially with its LWCF and the process of utilizing the funds. The process is lengthy and complex, but we provide as much information as requested. National Park Service which administers the LWCF grant program, has as of October 2023, put in a new management team and replaced employees. Hopefully, this change will allow for faster approval of projects.

### **DPR Newly Renovated Office**

The newly renovated Office for Parks and Recreation was funded by the Office of the Governor with the Governor's Education Stabilization Funds. The project cost \$1.2 million. On September 08, 2023, USDOE accompanied by the Office of the Governor conducted a site visit of the building.

### **DPR Statutory Reform Recommendations and Draft Rules under the CARR Project**

On October 24, 2023, DPR submitted its Statutory Reform Recommendations and Draft Rules to the Attorney General's office for legal review. This was made possible with the assistance of the Office of the Secretary of American Samoa Legal Consultants David Weisner and Kylie Wilson. DPR submitted its rule reforms on August 02, 2023, before the Rule Reform Panel. The Packet consists of statutory reform recommendations in A.S.C.A. Title 18 – Parks and Recreation (the "SRR") and administrative rule amendments in A.S.A.C Title 15 – Parks and Recreation (the "DR"). The Department believes both the SRR and DR are in the best interests

for the development of the overall operations of the Department and further the CARR Projects’ purposes and guidelines outlined in EOs No. 001-2019 and 001-2021.

**Meeting with National Park Service (NPS) in Washington D.C. for LWCF Grant**

On March 27, 2023, DPR traveled to Washington D.C. to meet with the National Park Service (NPS) regarding the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant. Administrative Division Manager, Project Officer, and Grant Writer Mrs. Mile Filoialii and Admin Supervisor Mrs Palagi Sunia traveled to D.C. for this important face-to-face meeting. The meeting was with Elisabeth Morgan, NPS Recreation Grant Programs Branch Chief, Joel Lynch, Chief of State and Local Assistance Programs Division, Susan Broeksmit, Financial Assistance Program Manager and Marina Tinitali of the Office of Insular Affairs. The meeting was to discuss the status of our LWCF grant applications from fiscal year 2022. The meeting was very informative and productive. NPS thanks the Department of Parks & Recreation for administering the LWCF program.

**Technical Assistance Program (TAP) Grant: \$122,270**

On June 08, 2023, the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) awarded ASDPR a new Technical Assistance Program (TAP) grant of \$122,270 to fund the “Parks N Rec Kid” Summer Camp project. The Summer Camp will take place in July 2024.

**Maintenance Assistance Program (MAP) Grant: \$150,000**

On August 08, 2023, OIA awarded \$150,000 in FY23 MAP funding to ASDPR for the Renovations of the Tia Seu Lupe Historical Site. Consultations with OIA regarding the National Historic Preservation Action Section 106 compliance is underway.



**Tia Seu Lupe Historical Site**

**Park Fees**

DPR collected \$44,330 worth of revenue from park reservations and leases for fiscal year 2023. All revenues are deposited to the Revenue Office in the General Fund.

Month	Monthly Deposit	Qtr	Qtrly Total	Balance Total Amt.
OCT	\$ 4,260.00			
NOV	\$ 3,225.00	1ST	\$ 12,455.00	\$ 12,455.00
DEC	\$ 4,970.00			
JAN	\$ 2,450.00			
FEB	\$ 2,450.00	2ND	\$ 7,750.00	\$ 20,205.00
MAR	\$ 2,850.00			
APR	\$ 2,400.00			
MAY	\$ 2,925.00	3RD	\$ 11,365.00	\$ 31,570.00
JUN	\$ 6,040.00			
JUL	\$ 4,125.00			
AUG	\$ 6,535.00	4TH	\$ 12,760.00	\$ 44,330.00
SEPT	\$ 2,100.00			



### Park Security

In collaboration with the Office of the Governor, 4 Security Services were contracted to provide security in Pago Pago Park, Utulei and Suigaula o le Atuvasa Park, Fagaalu Park, Lions Park, and Vaitogi Park. Days are from Sundays to Saturdays, weekdays from 6 pm to 6 am, with 24 hours on weekends and holidays. These Security Stations at Vaitogi, Lions and Fagaalu Park have been added for security personnel use. Vaitogi and Lions Park stations are completed whereas Fagaalu is in its last phase.



### American Samoa to host the 2023 U18 Women's & Open Men's Oceania Softball Regional Qualification Event– November 5 – 12, 2023

The World Baseball/Softball Confederation (WBSC) awarded American Samoa to host the 2023 U18 Women's & Open Men Oceania's Softball regional qualification event in November. DPR worked with the Department of Public Works (DPW) in getting the fields ready. The Little League Field was contracted to Paramount Builders while DPR and DPW worked on the big field. The renovation was partially funded through the LWCF grant and assistance from the Office of the Governor. The total cost of the materials and supplies purchased through the LWCF grant is estimated at \$150,000.



### **2023 American Samoa Government (ASG) Coed Slow Pitch Softball League**

The league kicked off on March 18, 2023 with a total of nineteen government departments. The goal of this league was to encourage camaraderie between the different departments which was a success.

### **Table Tennis**

On June 17, 2023, DPR in partnership with the Department of Youth & Women’s Affairs (DYWA) held its first Table Tennis Tournament at the DYWA gymnasium in Tafuna. The tournament was open to the public and all age groups. It was held every other Saturday from June 2023 to August 2023

### **FAA ASG LOT – Proposed Multipurpose Field.**

DPR is working closely with DPW, the Attorney General’s Office, DOC, and CIP in finalizing the plans.

## **1. Territorial Parks Playground**

- Status: 4 playground sets have been purchased and are now on their way to American Samoa. The estimated arrival date for the first playground set is the last week of November 2023. The last three will arrive in 2024 before the end of April.
- Cost: \$1.2 million

Onesosopo Park Playground Site Plan & 3D Render.



### **Fagasa Village Project**

DPR was in Fagasa to help the village council with their basketball and volleyball courts. This is part of our five-year Territorial Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (TCORP) in villages. Fagasa is the first village to receive assistance with the repair of two courts. Replaced four basketball backboards and four rims. Painted the two courts and replaced two sets of volleyball poles.

### **CCCAS Matuu and Faganeanea**

The Department of Parks and Recreation’s Community Outreach Program continues to give service and assistance to non-profit groups, churches, and schools in improving, repairing, and upgrading its recreational courts. It is also one of the key reasons why sports are used to enhance wellness and fitness. The Parks and Recreation staff finished the CCCAS Matuu and

Faganeanea basketball/Volleyball court, which included new basketball, backboards, rims, volleyball poles, court resurfacing, and painting the court.

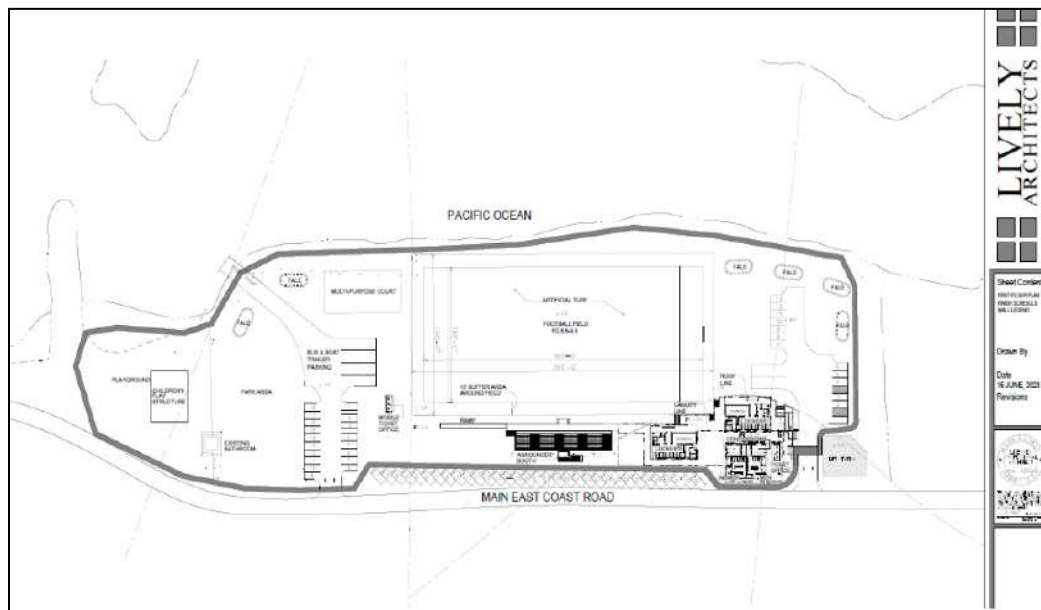
### **Lions Park (Lima St. (DOE) – Fa St. (ALJ)**

As part of our community outreach program, the Department of Parks and Recreation not only went out to non-profit organizations, schools, and churches, but we also assisted and supported other ASG departments. Lima St. (DOE area) and Fa St. (ALJ area) were trimmed, cleaned, and landscaped by the Parks and Recreation maintenance crew.

### **Projects**

- **Onesosopo Park**

- Project: Onesosopo Playground
  - Status: Estimated date for the first shipment of playground set to arrive on island is November 2023.
  - Amount: \$300,000
- Project: Football field with tracks, bleachers, parking, etc.
  - Status: Application is with grantor for review for FY2023 funding
  - Amount: \$3.7M



- **Pago Pago Park**

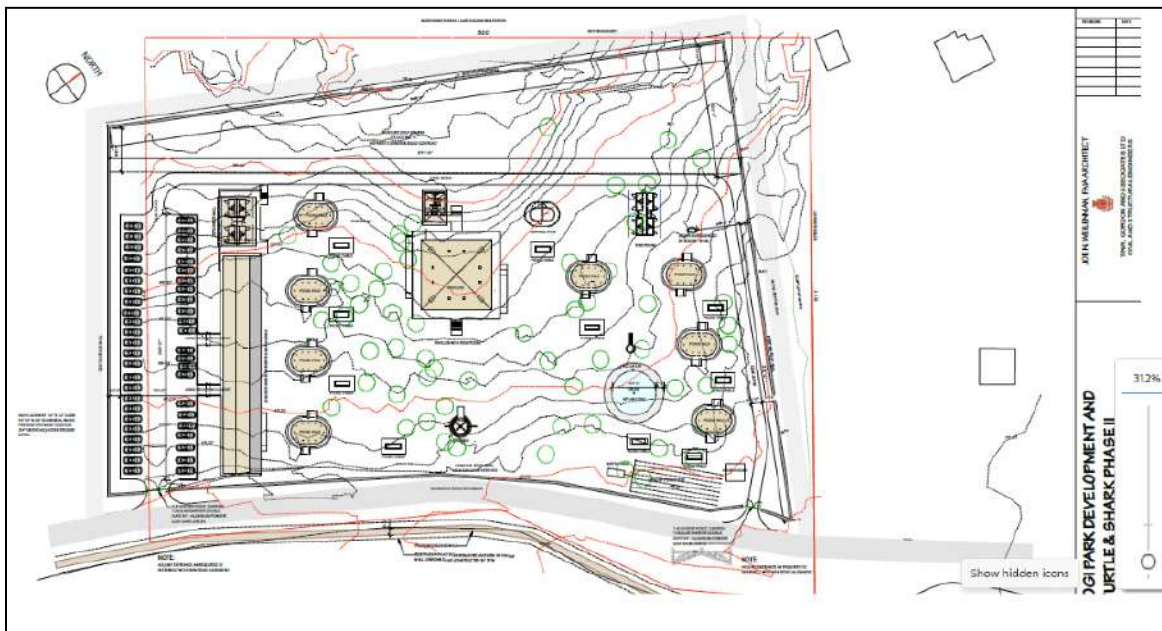
- Project: New restroom by the cricket field
  - Status: Application is with grantor for review allocated use of FY2023 funding
  - Amount: \$250,000
- Project: Playground
  - Status: Playground set to arrive in December 2023
  - Amount: \$250,000

- **Fagatogo Park**

- Project: Fagatogo multi-purpose court renovation
  - Status: Application is with grantor for review - fy2023 funding
  - Amount: \$250,000

- **Utulei & Suigaula Park**
  - Project: Utulei Shoreline
    - Status: Prep application for LWCF grant in FY2024
    - Amount: \$500,000
- **Lions Park**
  - Living Shoreline
    - Status: DPR agreed to assist with the shoreline in Lions Park for LWCF FY24.
    - Amount: \$400,000
  - Beach Court, 3 storage units, 3 lifeguard stations
    - Status: Working on getting the site plan and cost estimate.
    - Amount: \$200,000
  - Survey of the area behind the Pala Lagoon Swimming Pool
    - Status: Looking for a contractor to do the survey
    - Amount: \$5,000
- **FAA**
  - Project: Multi-use field with lights, restrooms, and bleachers.
    - Status: Finalizing the plan.
    - Amount: \$1M
- **Vaitogi Park**
  - Project: Vaitogi Park Complex
    - Status: Working on LWCF application
    - Amount: 1.9M

DPR will fund 8 fale samoa, a swimming pool, 27-hole putt miniature golf, and the walkways between the fale samoa under the LWCF grant. The application will be submitted to the grantor.





## Sports Complex

### Veterans Memorial Stadium:

The Stadium is accessible to be used for promoting health and wellness by the government for government sponsored activities (i.e., Flag Day, territorial high school football games, Samoa bowl, etc.). Additionally, it is authorized by the SC Director upon request for ASG department activities, community and family activities, churches' activities, federally sponsored activities like the annual U.S. Army Reserve Fitness Training, ASG-DOE High School JROTC per semester fitness training exercises. And privately sponsored activities like ruby practices and ruby tournament games.

### Accomplishments:

- Completed 10 months plus of hosting authorized access and on-site assistance to all the above-mentioned group sponsored activities from January 2023 to the current submission date November 15, 2023 of this report.
- Completed 10 months plus of daily ground and facilities maintenance. Ground maintenance includes continually mowing the main field/malae and surrounding grass field areas on a weekly basis. This also includes fertilizing the main field/malae to make sure it is always in event ready status for all the above-mentioned activities throughout each calendar year. Facilities' maintenance includes continually cleaning the grandstands crowd areas and cleaning and sanitizing the grandstand restrooms to make sure it is also always in event ready status for each of the above activities throughout each calendar year months from January to December.
- September 12, 2023-Received American Rescue Protection Act (ARPA) Award Letter of \$219,000.00 for ARPA Public Buildings CDC Compliance. The \$219K is for the Stadium's Main GrandStand Building # 1 and Building# 3 renovations.
- Completed installation of \$13,930.00 SC Bldg #1 top horizontal windows.
- Completed \$4,150.00 Air Conditioning Units order with H&H Incorporated for three AC Units (One 9000BTU and two 24000BTU).
- Completed installation of a 9000 BTU Air Conditioning Unit for the Golf Course Starter Office structure.

### Pending Projects:

- To execute the awarded \$219, 000.00 ARPA Public Buildings CDC Compliance SC projects for Stadium Buildings #1 and #3.
- Awaiting H&H Inc. to complete installation of two 24000BTU ACS for the SC office
- Awaiting \$104,067.00 completed Official Contract with all the authorizing signatures from Procurement Office for Faleulaosamoa Construction Incorporated to immediately start demolition and renovation work on the Stadium's Building #3 and subsequent \$60,000.00 renovation to Building #1 two attached public restrooms.
- Awaiting \$3,910.00 ordered security cameras from AL's Audio and Electronics in Malaeimi.
- Awaiting Department of Public Works (DPW) to work on solving SC Office ceiling leaks when it rains, as well as all the other Bldg #1 office space ceiling leaks.
- Also awaiting DPW to work on installing front Yawning and re roofing for Bldg #1 GrandStand area.



## Information & Communication Technology



The American Samoa Government Technology Office (ASGTO) has been instrumental in advancing technology adoption across the entire American Samoa Government, not just in the Office of the Governor. ASGTO, operating under the guidance of the Governor's Office, has consistently rendered technical assistance to numerous government agencies upon request, primarily focusing on the Governor's Offices. The principal aim of ASGTO is to guarantee that the Governor's Office and all governmental organizations are equipped with the requisite technological solutions and assistance to function optimally. Supporting government employees in utilizing diverse technology systems, training and advising them on resolving technical issues, and facilitating hardware and software installations are all aspects of the services provided by ASGTO. Additionally, its active involvement in assessing and developing information technology policies (ASGTO) strengthens its contribution to the government's technological landscape.

### **Empowering the Governor's Office: The Technological Advancements of the Modernization Grant Award Project**

The United States Department of the Interior awarded the American Samoa Government Technology Office (ASGTO) a two-year Technical Assistance Project grant in July 2023. This \$190,000 grant aims to modernize, strengthen, and secure the information technology of the governor's office. The project has begun, and ASGTO is working to improve, ensure, and modernize different parts of the Governor's Office operations.

The Governor's Office will receive enhanced technical support, including hardware and software installations, as well as resolution of any potential technical issues, at the ASGTO's direction. Furthermore, ASGTO shall provide ongoing support and training to government personnel to ensure they are sufficiently equipped to operate the diverse technological systems. ASGTO aspires to improve its contribution to the government's technology landscape by assessing and establishing information technology policies and ensuring that all government organizations have the appropriate technology solutions and support for effective and efficient operations. This grant for a technical assistance project exemplifies the American Samoan government's dedication to utilizing technology to enhance its services and operations for the Samoan people. To aid the AS Office of Governor in enhancing collaboration and office communications, the development of a communications system via a partnership with Google utilizing the secure domain space "go.as.gov" and the suite of Google applications will remain a top priority and ongoing project. This enhancement project encompasses the procurement of subscription licenses and equipment necessary to utilize collaborative services, such as Zoom, which facilitates virtual meeting collaborations. Additionally, it entails the installation of digitizing equipment to convert manual documents into a centralized digital document repository.

### **Advancing Technology and Cybersecurity in American Samoa Government: Initiatives and Accomplishments in 2023**

The American Samoa Cybersecurity Planning Committee (ASCPC), established by the American Samoa Governor's Executive Order 005-21, has held regular meetings and achieved notable objectives throughout 2023. The American Samoa Department of Homeland Security

and the ASCPC organized a noteworthy event, the Cyber Disruption Consequence Management workshop. Representatives from the FBI Honolulu Office, FEMA's Federal Office of Intelligence and Threat Analysis (OITA), and CISA's Cybersecurity Advisor for American Samoa participated in this event. Representatives from the public and private sectors attended this symposium, a forum for meaningful discussions about cyber disruptions, cybersecurity, and cybercrime in the territory.



The ASCPC has advanced the development of the American Samoa Cybersecurity Plan (ASCP) in addition to activity and workshop organization. The committee authorized and signed off on this plan in September 2023, after it was created with input from the ASCPC. The ASCP addresses increasing cybersecurity risks and prioritizes programs to secure cyberspace and critical infrastructure, aligning with the 2020–2024 DHS Strategic Plan.

The ASCPC's work in raising awareness and preparing American Samoan government entities has been critical regarding cybersecurity. Through its active engagement with the public and commercial sectors, the ASCPC has fostered crucial conversations and partnerships to strengthen American Samoa's cyber resilience. The committee's notable achievements and steadfast dedication to cybersecurity for the year prove the substantial progress achieved in American Samoa concerning safeguarding critical infrastructure and establishing robust cyberspace.

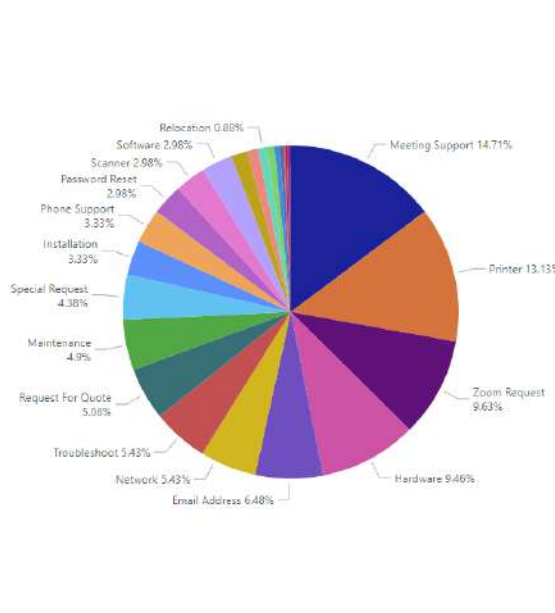


### **Enhancing Governor's Office Operations through Help Desk and IT Support**

The Technology Office (TO), situated within the Governor's Office, has significantly contributed to improving operational processes and expanding the IT support services offered to the Governor's Office. Implementing the Technology Office has provided the Executive Branch, including the Governor's Office, on-demand access to dependable technology services. The Technology Office has significantly contributed to the support of departments through its provision of network support services, which have ensured streamlined operations and uninterrupted connectivity. Furthermore, the office has prioritized data and network security by

implementing cybersecurity tools and measures, thereby protecting sensitive information from potential threats.

The Technology Office's help desk assistance and enhanced IT support services have substantially contributed to the Governor's Office's operational improvements. The office has



- Meeting Support
- Printer
- Zoom Request
- Hardware
- Email Address
- Network
- Troubleshoot
- Request For Quote
- Maintenance
- Special Request
- Installation
- Phone Support
- Password Reset
- Scanner
- Software
- Assessment
- New User Request
- Relocation
- Inventory
- After Hour Support
- Google Apps
- Data Backup
- GO-4B
- Training
- VOIP-3CX Troubleshoot

successfully resolved technical challenges on time by employing devoted IT specialists, guaranteeing continuous operations and output. Actively committed to network support services, the Technology Office has ensured that all government agencies can access secure and dependable networks for collaboration and communication. The Technology Office's video teleconferencing in holding meetings for the Governor and the directors has created an exciting new prospect for efficiency and cooperation. This technology has effectively overcome the geographical isolation of American Samoa, enabling uninterrupted communication with

counterparts located off-island. The Technology Office's help desk assistance and expanded IT support services have transformed operations within the Governor's Office. Dedicated IT specialists respond quickly to technical issues, assuring continuous productivity. The office is dedicated to delivering secure and dependable networks to all government entities, allowing for smooth collaboration. The Governor's Office safeguards its data and infrastructure from any potential cyber dangers using cutting-edge cybersecurity solutions. This all-encompassing approach improves the Governor's Office's overall performance and security posture. The ASGTO is able to monitor trouble tickets that are submitted to the help desk due to the implementation of automated workflow software. The following is a breakdown of the different types of support tickets that the TO has completed in 2023. There were 965 support tickets completed up until November. The graph also depicts a percentage of the various types of support calls.

## Office of Procurement

The Office of Procurement serves as the central authority on procurement for the American Samoa Government and is responsible for the procurement of all goods, construction, and services including the management, control, warehousing, and sale of stores/inventory commodities contained in its warehouse.

### Accomplishments

With the injection of hundreds of millions of dollars in CARES Act funding (ESF & ARPA) for the Department of Education, it was deemed necessary to increase personnel levels to

handle the increase in purchase requests. Therefore, this year had started off with the hiring of 8 additional staff funded through the Department of Education. With this additional staffing, the Office of Procurement were able to assist the Department of Education by committing more manpower and hours towards the purchasing and receiving of their numerous orders, such as air conditioners, fences, school buses, tech equipment (i.e. computers, laptops, drones, robotics, etc.), supplies, school buildings, gyms and roads.

The month of March is recognized as Procurement Month to expand the awareness of the procurement professional's role to government officials, the general public, and business and corporate leaders. This year the Office of Procurement planned several activities to commemorate Procurement Month with the theme of "Value Your Service" or "Fa'ataua Lau Auaunaga." The month-long celebration started off with an employee wave and church service. Training and workshops were held weekly as were team-building and physical health activities. The Office of Procurement also participated in a Service Project and volunteered their time to assist the American Samoa Red Cross with their "Sound the Alarm" project to install smoke alarms in homes.

This year, Procurement was also able to obtain video teleconferencing capability for their conference room. This has greatly assisted operations by allowing staff to attend online meetings as well as conduct Source Evaluation meetings and interviews with off-island bidders.

With the numerous priority projects established by the administration, a committee of staff from the Department of Public Works, Governor's Office Special Programs, Department of Education and the Office of Procurement meet weekly to review and update the status of these various projects. This committee is in constant contact to ensure that the projects are on track and moving expeditiously through the proper channels and processes. These projects range from the various school projects, road rehabilitation projects, seawalls/slope protection, demolition projects, etc. This also includes the numerous Manu'a projects such as the road and shoreline projects, Evacuation Routes, etc.

As was done last year, the office of procurement assisted the Department of Education with their emergency school repairs to address the Department of Health reports for the successful opening of the school year. This was accomplished by setting an allocation of \$50,000 for each of the 4 local hardware supply stores, which allowed DOE to immediately pull materials for their maintenance projects. Staff conducted receiving of these materials thereby ensuring timely payment to partner vendors. Procurement has further assisted DOE by expediting Purchase Orders for their school repair projects conducted by various contractors.

In September, the U.S. Department of Education had conducted an onsite visit to American Samoa. The Office of Procurement had met with these off-island officials and were able to successfully present their processes and procedures as well as answer any questions.

Throughout this year we had been meeting with the Rule Reform committee on a biweekly basis to update the Procurement Rules. This has been a large undertaking as the Office of Procurement's Rules had not been updated since they were promulgated in 1984.

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# STATE OF EDUCATION

## The Department of Education

The American Samoa Department of Education employs two thousand personnel in its various Divisions and offices. More than 10,000 students, ages 3 to 18 years of age are provided with support and services in the 22 Head Start / Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers, 23 elementary schools and 6 high schools. The year 2023 entails two school years, SY 2022-2023 and SY 2023-2024. The school year begins in August of the current year and ends in July of the new year.

- K-3 Early Literacy Skills Initiative fully implemented in the 23 Elementary schools.
- Training on Equitable School Services completed for Central & school leadership.
- Successful implementation of the Credit Recovery Program at all high schools
- Computer literacy advancement- integration of coding courses at the Elementary and Secondary schools.
- 65 scholarships were awarded SY 2022-2023 (30 off-island, 35 ASCC).
- Increased participation in the Dual Enrollment program- opportunity to challenge and better prepare for college.
- Close-Up Summit-strengthened DOI partnership
- JROTC programs - 5 passed JROTC Program for Accreditation (JPA); 4 earned the Honor Unit with Distinction (HUD).
- Completion of Samoan translation of Special Education
- Career Readiness: 104 Seniors passed - 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills for Workforce Success of the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute/NOCTI; and 51% of 135 students passed the Job Readiness Assessment of the NOCTI
- An increase of 21st-century STEAM activities inspiring critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- 890 students participated activities: *HOSA, HS Science Symposium, HS Speech Festivals, Young Writers in ELA and Samoan Studies, Science Fair, and History Day*
- 29 administrators completed the San Diego State University
- Principal Certification Program ~Implementation of the National School Lunch week- 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grades students learned about locally grown food and health impact. Continuous training on sanitation and hygiene to ensure food safety.
- Ongoing Library renovations; access to e-books available for students and teachers.
- 3 years of digitization completed for all Elementary and Secondary school records
- Policies and Procedures established for the School
- Accountability Improvement System (SAIS); Tech assistance-R19cc; School SAIS Awareness Outreach completed
- Quarterly oversight monitoring of 5YR Strategic Plan Implementation across divisions
- Strengthened collaborative partnership with DOH to monitor school facilities safety and improvements.
- First electric school bus purchased which includes funding for installing a charging station.
- 15 new school buses- eight gasoline engines and seven diesel engine-total fleet of 22 buses.
- Cleared one Van that is operating right now, 3 on the way.
- Technology infrastructure- campus-wide internet access at all school



- Social-Emotional Well-Being- implementation of first ever Mental Health Awareness Outreach with Faith-based partners; After school Student Engagement Program with DYWA partners; Tele-Health access
- Power school, Student Information System (SIS) Upgrade

### **School Projects (22)**

- Ongoing -17
- New - 5

### **USDOE Joint Monitoring Visitation**

- Successfully completed on 9/8/23
- Meeting and site visits involved ASDOE and key government agencies directly involved with funding.

### **American Samoa Department of Education's Close Up Summit**

The American Samoa Department of Education hosted a week-long Close Up Summit event dedicated to empowering the youth through discussions on democratic principles and governmental functions. The summit was held from November 6 to November 9, 2023, and was held at the Governor H. Rex Lee Auditorium and gathered a selected group of students from each high school in American Samoa. This event represents the Department of Education's commitment to equipping young individuals with the essential tools and knowledge required for active participation in the future governance of American Samoa. The Close Up Summit is facilitated by a team including Mia Charity, President of the Close Up Foundation, Anna Bauder, and Danny Hastings. These Close Up staff members traveled to American Samoa to lead engaging workshops and discussions, examining public policy issues. Together, the students worked together to develop recommendations to resolve those issues.



### **Samoa Bowl 2023**

After several years of absence, the Samoa Bowl was reestablished as a platform dedicated to fostering sportsmanship, camaraderie, and athletic excellence. With the aim of reconnecting athletes with their roots, the Samoa Bowl 2023 officially commenced with a vibrant opening ceremony at Su'igaula Park in Utulei. Chief of Staff Loa Tuimavave T. Laupola, also serving as the Chairman of the Samoa Bowl committee, led the ceremony. The event, held on December 27, 2023, celebrated culture and talent by bringing together local volleyball and football teams, coaches, and families alongside teams from the Midwest, West Coast, and across the United States. The initiation of the Samoa Bowl 2023 3-Day Volleyball Tournament featured the opening matches of the round-robin volleyball games.



The culminating event of the Samoa Bowl 2023 occurred on December 30, 2023, with an exciting football game at the Veterans Memorial Stadium in Tafuna. More than just a



competition, the matchup embodied unity, teamwork, and the spirit of community, aligning with the "Back to the Roots" theme. Team Manu'a and Team Tutuila engaged in a spirited competition, embracing their shared connection as athletes and community members. In the end, Team Manu'a emerged victorious. Beyond the final score, the teams exemplified true sportsmanship during the post-game celebration. Handshakes, high-fives, and words of encouragement were exchanged, emphasizing the notion that, both on and off the field, the players

are united as brothers by their shared passion for football. The Samoa Bowl 2023 successfully reignited a sense of community and pride, providing a platform for athletes to reconnect with their heritage and celebrate the essence of sports.

### **Marching Band Initiative**

The Marching Band Initiative Team continues to provide musical band classes for high schools. The pinnacle of their work was displayed and showcased during the Flag Day 2023 celebrations. Even with the time constraints and the lack of band instructors, everyone was able to witness the long awaited return of the marching bands to American Samoa Flag Day Festivities.

## **Aligning Education, Workforce and Economy**

Workforce development produces resilient individuals and promotes long-term economic expansion. The Territory's workforce and economic development begin in the classroom. The ASDOE plans to align with the Territory's workforce needs as identified by the ASG Department of Commerce, and offer new career pathways in these areas.

### **Job Corps**

For decades, Hawaii Job Corps has played a pivotal role in providing top-notch education and career training opportunities to the young people of American Samoa. On August 1, 2023, Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Hawaii Job Corps in Waimanalo, Hawaii. The MOU signing marks a significant step forward in furthering this vital collaboration, leading to even greater support and assistance for the youth in their pursuit of bright futures. In October, the Governor's Office established a local recruiting office in American Samoa. This step aims to streamline the enrollment process, ensuring that interested individuals can access the program's benefits with ease and convenience. On November 27, 2023, Joshua Sagele became the first Job Corps recipient from American Samoa since the transfer of recruitment responsibilities from the Legislature to the Governor's Office.



### **Hospitality Training**

Hospitality Training Courses have been offered at the American Samoa Community College (ASCC) in the hospitality field as an option in career choices for the local community. ASVB is

working closely with the American Samoa Department of Commerce (ASVB) in monitoring this project. This project is funded by DOC's Tourism Grant.

### **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Capacity Building Fund**

An award of \$450,000 was received by the Department of Commerce's Resource Management Division (RMD) through the IIJA funding opportunity to recruit and train staff to focus on habitat restoration and wetland delineation projects. The goal is to equip local staff with the knowledge and skills needed to manage American Samoa's coastal resources effectively.

### **Coastal Zone Management Summer Internship Program**

This year the Department of Commerce launched a summer internship program for high school and college graduate students to experience and learn more about various jobs in the coastal zone management program. A total of eight (8) young individuals were accepted as CZM Summer Interns this year, and they all left the program feeling inspired to pursue a related career in environmental stewardship and climate resilience.

## **American Samoa Community College**

As an institution created by American Samoans with the needs of the Territory's people in mind, ASCC continues to offer an excellent option for students both young and old who seek either a beginning to their higher education or a return to the classroom in pursuit of upgraded skills or credentials. The information in this report showcases the many different types of achievement taking place in many areas of study at ASCC. The College also prides itself in its engagement with the community. While it offers knowledge of the wider region and wider world, in its focus on the unique aspects of American Samoa's people and culture.

The college initiated the FY 2023 annual audit in the first quarter of the fiscal year through virtual collaboration with its auditors. In the second quarter, the College completed the required Federal Audit Clearinghouse (FAC) for institutions spending more than \$750,000 or more on federal grants. The college successfully completed the audit during the summer and immediately began preparation for the FY 2024 Audit.

In early 2023, ASCC's President Dr. Pato was nominated by the Pacific Postsecondary Education Council (PPEC) to be the PPEC representative to the ACCJC. After an interview by the ACCJC President Dr. Mac Powell, the nomination was accepted and forwarded to the ACCJC for confirmation. Dr. Pato will serve a three-year term to the ACCJC as the PPEC representative. PPEC is an association consisting of presidents and chancellors in higher education institutions in the U.S. and U.S. affiliated Pacific Islands who have agreed to work collaboratively to serve the needs of member institutions as they address regional and postsecondary education issues involving American Samoa and the American Pacific region.

### Capital Improvements:

The three major Capital Improvement Projects begun in 2022 have yet to reach completion, although one is very near to being ready for use. Construction is complete on the new ASCC Cafeteria building, which will include office space on the second floor for the Admissions and Financial Aid Offices. As for the two other projects, work on the ASDOE Career and Technical School, which is an ASDOE funded project in the final design phase, while the design plans are completed on the ASCC Smart-Art and Community Higher Education Building (SACHEB) to proceed with the bidding for the construction phase. In addition to the major Capital

Improvement Projects mentioned above, many other smaller-scale but necessary repairs and improvements are always underway on the ASCC campus under the aegis of the Physical Facilities and Maintenance (PFM) division.

*ASCC Awarded ‘Connecting Minority Communities’ Grant:*

In March, ASCC received notice it had been awarded a grant of nearly \$3 million for its A’oa’oga Aso Nei (“Education of Today” Initiative. The initiative was designed to bring major new improvements to the campus internet service, technology loaning capabilities, and technical curriculum. Awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Agency, the grant is part of the Connecting Minority Communities pilot program offered to institutions of higher education nationwide.

*Office of Institutional Effectiveness Partners in Data Voyage Project:*

In September, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) formalized a partnership with the Data Voyage Project, an initiative with the long-term goal of increasing the number of Pacific Islanders in higher education. The project, organized by a consortium of academics from the US and the Pacific, has established working relationships with partners from wherever Pacific Islanders are known to live, with the aim of gathering data that clearly reflects the experience of Pacific islanders seeking higher education, in order that this experience can be improved upon. IE has made a long-term commitment to participate in the project, which will run through the end of 2024.

*First ASCC Professor Emeritus:*

In January, ASCC reached another milestone when the President’s Office announced that, for the first time in its history, the College would confer the status of Professor Emeritus on a retired faculty member who, while in active service to ASCC, had displayed exemplary service as an instructor, researcher, and/or administrator. The first person in the ASCC family to earn this distinction is Mr. Larry Hirata, who for many years served as an educator and department leader with ACNR.

*ASCC Establishes Staff Senate:*

During the earlier part of 2023, ASCC officially established its Staff Senate. The newly-formed Staff Senate is the result of concerned staff members coming together to ensure the staff has representation in areas that affect them within the institution and with the long-term goal of fostering unity and teamwork. Just prior to the fall 2023 semester, the Staff Senate organized two events: a “Meet and Greet” on Thursday, August 3<sup>rd</sup>, and a “Field Day” on Friday, August 4<sup>th</sup>.

*In-House Scholarships Awarded:*

In May, the Division of Student Services, which administers the in-house scholarships, announced the four recipients for the spring 2023 semester. Each recipient received a \$500 credit towards their tuition balance.

*Admissions Night Assists Public with Application Process:*

The Department of Student Services held its fall 2023 Admissions Night held on the evening of August 7th. A collaboration between the Counseling, Financial Aid and Records offices, Admissions Night gives members of the public an opportunity to receive information and guidance regarding the process of applying to ASCC.

*FNEP Outreach to Food Stamp Recipients:*

In September, the ACNR EFNEP program conducted its monthly Nutrition & Food Safety outreach, which included a cooking demonstration and promotion of physical activity, to 70 American Samoa Nutrition Assistance Program (ASNAP) Authorized Recipients. In the first ten days of food stamp issuance, EFNEP staff provided Nutrition & Food Safety lessons on topics such as nutrition, hygiene, and the importance of physical activity.

*Social Science Department Community Donations:*

PSY 150 Section 1 chose to donate emergency supplies to the three elementary schools in Manu'a following reports of tremors disrupting the islands' school routine. The students in PSY 150 Section 2 chose to donate to Aunuu, to help with its community's recovery from flooding. Finally, the students in PSY 150 Section 3 supported the local Veterinary Clinic by funding and purchasing a 48 x 96 pull-up banner, and another banner measuring 3 x 6 for the Clinic to use during its outreach activities.

*ACNR 4-H Joins Effort to Fight Alcohol and Tobacco Use:*

In May, ACNR 4-H staff collaborated with the Health & Fitness Specialist and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to conduct a presentation and lead activities for 250 students in the 7th and 8th grade from Coleman Elementary School. The program hopes to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs among 10 to 17-year-olds, while also increasing the age and proportion of youth who remain alcohol, tobacco, and drug free.

*ASCC Represented at Emergency Management Symposium:*

Three ASCC faculty attended the Emergency Management Higher Education Symposium, which took place from June 5th through 7th in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The event's emphasis was on professional learning, and it offered dialogues and events to explore the research and teaching of emergency management and related disciplines.

*ACNR Hosts Fulbright Scholar:*

As a recipient of the Fulbright Scholar Program, in late July ACNR hosted Dr. Mary-Nia M. Santos, who shared her expertise with the academic community. Dr. Santos, who is Head of the Research and Development Division under the Republic of the Philippines Department of Agriculture, gave an academic presentation on opportunities for aquaculture in American Samoa. Specifically, she discussed oyster cultivation in Pala Lagoon and suggested various local species that hold promise for farming purposes. She also shared valuable insights into funding opportunities available for both students and staff members affiliated with ASCC/ACNR.

*ASCC Signs MOU with Yale School of Public Health:*

Following an ongoing dialogue, ASCC and Yale School of Public Health (YSPH) signed a memorandum of understanding in spring 2023 to create an official partnership. As part of the agreement, YSPH will provide internship opportunities for ASCC students, collaborate on the development of a new institutional Review Board (IRB) at the College, and help with ASCC's efforts to archive research. YSPH has had an active presence in American Samoa for almost 10 years. The memorandum solidifies Yale's commitment to creating capacity-building opportunities for faculty and students at ASCC.

*ACNR Hosts Workshop on Childhood Obesity:*

In March, ACNR hosted a special workshop to address the ongoing concern of childhood obesity in American Samoa. The Group Model Building workshop was facilitated by representatives



from the Children’s Healthy Living (CHL) Center for Excellence at UH Manoa, along with a specialist in the strategic practice of group model building from Case Western University in Cleveland, Ohio. Dr. Rachel Novotny and Dr. Jean Butel represented the CHL, while Dr. Peter Hovmand from Case Western University guided the model-building process along with ACNR staff.

*AELEL Collaborates with Visitors Bureau to Offer Hospitality Courses:*

In June, the College’s Adult Education, Literacy and Extended Learning (AELEL) program offered two new courses designed in collaboration with the American Samoa Visitors Bureau. These courses provide basic training for individuals in the visitor industry. Basic Customer Service Communication Skills examined the methods of communicating with others, allowing participants to improve their individual communication skills. The second new course, Understanding Tourism and Hospitality, enabled participants to gain more understanding of these subjects.

*Samoan Studies Department Introduces Amerika Samoa Language Academy:*

The staff of the Samoan Studies Institute (SSI) finalized its work on developing the Amerika Samoa Language Academy, a three-year project funded by the Administration for Native Americans. For this project, the SSI is collaborating with local non-profit organization Intersections, Inc. The goal of the project is to create a certification process for local teachers in Samoan language and culture. Among its first-year activities for this project, the SSI staff has put together materials for Academy-related courses that will be designated as SAM 271, SAM 281, and SAM 291. While these course materials have been collected to create readers for the Academy courses, the same readers will also be used for regular SSI courses. During FY 2023, the first group of teachers from American Samoa’s public schools enrolled in the Academy and received their certificates.

*Area Health Education Center Hosts Teen Camp:*

In December 2002, the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) at ASCC hosted a Teen Health Camp at which more than 40 high school students spent the morning on the ASCC campus, receiving hands-on training in medical services and technology. While the Camp was open to all high school students, most participants belong to the chapters at their respective schools of HOSA-Future Health Professionals In American Samoa, an association run collaboratively between ASCC-AHEC and ASDOE.

*Health Science Majors Attend Summer Academy at PSU:*

In June, Health Science instructor Derek Helsham accompanied five ASCC Health Science majors to Oregon for a Summer Research Academy at Portland State University (PSU). The selected students were Amber Rose Leota, Lawrence Talatau, Fouaimalo Luamanu, Precious Ieremia, and Meghan Paletaoga, all of whom have an interest in going into Biomedical research. The Summer Research Academy gave them the opportunity to meet students from other colleges and universities, and to attend lectures from leading researchers in different areas of health

*Teacher Education Department Promoting STEAM Through Guitar Building Project:*

The Teacher Education Department (TED) began its second STEAM Guitar Building Project/Technician Education Readiness Pathway (TERP) session on July 3rd. The purpose of TERP was to have teachers use STEAM project-based activities to pique the interest of students to excel academically, and also to teach students to apply academic skills to life skills. The summer Guitar Building session hosted 12 high school students from Nuuli Voc Tech and

Faasao Marist. Three students who participated in the first Guitar Building Project in 2022 returned as Student Aides, who assisted teachers while helping guide students in the building of their guitars.

## **Feleti Barstow Public Library**

The mission of the Feleti Barstow Public Library (FBPL) is to serve as a center for lifelong learning dedicated to meeting the informational, technological, and cultural literacy needs of all age groups by providing both current and historical reading and instructional materials in a variety of formats. As the central public library for American Samoa, the FBPL serves as a model for other libraries and information centers to increase access to reading materials and the promotion of literacy.

### **FY 2023 Circulation Statistics**

Total Users/Visits 18,531  
Library Card Patrons 16,246  
New Library Cards FY23 402  
Books in Collection 44,892  
Books Loaned 4,338  
Children's Programs 333  
Children's Program Attendance 4,009  
Homework Club Attendance 4,886  
Reference Questions/Inquiries 163  
Computer Lab Use 2,464  
Wi-Fi Access 305

\*Circulation Statistics are collected daily, reported monthly, combined quarterly and compiled annually.

### **Children's Literacy Programs**

Children's Literacy Programming continues to be a main staple of the services offered at FBPL. There was a significant expansion of these programs through outreach to local daycares, ECE centers, and schools this year. Also notable is the expansion of the annual Summer Reading Program through community collaborations with the American Samoa Department of Education and several non-profit organizations. A detailed report on these programs is attached.

### **Palace Ebook App**

2023 also welcomed the addition of the Palace App which is FPL's latest Ebook and audiobook offering making over 35,000 titles available with the potential to add to this collection. It also provides a gateway to more digital content to be added if so desired to include locally produced content. This project is in its early stages as FBPL looks to focus on a more robust digital presence through its digital collections.

### **Polynesian Photo Archives**

The continued preservation and storage of cultural and historical images for public access has been an ongoing objective of the Polynesian Photo Archives. This project has allowed FBPL to add chronologically from 1975 to 2011 through the addition of the Keith Dahl Collection featuring close to 800,000 photos. In 2023 we were able to curate and upload 73,777 photos of

the Keith Dahl Collection that include photos from high school baccalaureates and proms as well as the Moso’oi Festival and the latest release of South Pacific Games of years past. These photos span from 1975-2011.

### **Bookmobile: Feleti Barstow on the Go**

Due to the lone central location of the library, a bookmobile was purchased to allow for the delivery of library services to the far eastern and western tips of the territory. This will allow FBPL to bring library services to the north shore villages where transportation may be limited. The ability to bring library services directly to the communities and villages that may have been neglected due to the lone location of the library will increase accessibility to library services as FBPL attempts to bring the library to the homes of patrons.



### **American Samoa Library Consortium (ASLC)**

FBPL, through grant funding, continues to provide access to an Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) for several information entities in American Samoa that include the American Samoa Department of Education Public High Schools, American Samoa Historic Preservation Office, American Samoa Community College Learning Resource Center, and Kanana Fou Theological Seminary. The OPAC allows each entity to catalog their holdings for the public to view online. Together, we form the American Samoa Library Consortium with FBPL as the lead entity.

### **Professional Development**

FBPL continues to invest in professional development as we were able to send three staff members to the annual American Library Association Conference in Chicago this year. Ongoing assessments and evaluations of needed staff training is a major goal of the FBPL Five Year Plan for 2023-2027.

### **Children’s Literacy Programs FY 2023**

The literacy programs provided by the Feleti Barstow Library have supported many children in American Samoa. This year the FBPL have had the opportunity to support children in schools, at government events, daycares, and within the children’s room. The goal is to continue serving the children and families who attend the programs at the library and to help them have experiences that will encourage them to return time and time again.

Data for October 2022 to September 2023:

Month	Programs	Attendees	Reading Minutes
October	37	363	1630
November	32	337	3370
December	25	259	2590
January	30	264	2640
February	34	431	4310
March	34	490	3,400
April	27	226	2,260
May	27	309	2,850
June	22	381	3810
July	10	132	1320
August	32	626	6260
September	23	191	1910
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>333</b>	<b>4,009</b>	<b>36,350</b>

### **2023 Summer Reading Program**

The outreach partnerships this summer helped us to meet an unprecedented amount of students. With over 4,000 children served, the Feleti Barstow Library and partners were able to support the community efforts in educating and engaging with children from villages throughout American Samoa. We have plans to continue broadening support for children in American Samoa with the annual summer reading program next year.

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# STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is an imminent reality with extensive global, regional, and local consequences, posing a threat to the stability of the region through shifts in climate and weather patterns. The increasing number of village communities and residents in the area shoulder the weight of adverse impacts and costs linked to rising sea levels, substantial land and coastal erosion, scarcity of food and water, pollution, diseases, and health issues. In response to these challenges, communities worldwide are anticipated to employ innovative and critical thinking, embrace sustainable solutions, adopt new measures for adaptation and mitigation, and undergo transformative actions, regardless of their location.

### Governor's Resilience Office

The Governor's Resilience Office continues to coordinate a comprehensive approach to the Territory's future planning and development. Operating under ASRC, the office identifies vulnerable groups, communities, industries, ecosystems, and potential economic impacts of climate change. GRO collaborates with ASRC, conducting physical visits, assessing risks and needs, and submitting reports and recommendations to the Commission.

### ASRC-GRO Quarterly Meetings

Following the 2023 quarterly meetings, GRO presented a draft of ARC's mandated Territorial Climate Resilience Framework (TCRF) and Action Plan (TCRAP), showcasing a model for climate crisis and community resilience. The TCRF and TCRAP write-up will be finalized soon. In an effort to create an inclusive model, ASRC passed a resolution to form five subcommittees collaborating with GRO on the TCRF and TCRAP. Recognizing limitations, GRO proposed and tabled an additional five subcommittees in the July 2023 quarterly meeting, resulting in ten subcommittees covering Food Security, Energy, Infrastructure, Coast and Oceans, Health, National Security, Economy, Education, Legal Policy, and Cultural Heritage. These subcommittees integrate non-government organizations, multi-ethnic groups, and faith-based communities.

### GRO Projects & Programs

GRO planned a number of climate change initiatives and programs, which included site visits to some of the areas affected and/or impacted by climate change, outreach programs, training and educational programs, as well as community/village projects. Some of these planned projects are on hold due to financial and budgetary constraints.

#### *Climate Change - Rising Sea-level Project: Coastal Village Outreach Program*

GRO received \$72k over three years from a \$3 million grant endorsed by OIA, excluding \$200k for an Ocean scientific study program. This funding is allocated for climate resilience outreach programs in coastal villages. The territorial resilience program coordinator is ready to kickstart the project pending approval from the project coordinator.

#### *Sand and Coral Mining: Revegetation of Native Trees/Plants on Abandoned Zones*

On October 31, 2023, GRO received approval to start the Sand and Coral Mining Revegetation

project from the Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs. With \$555k allocated for two years, the project will focus on improving coastal shorelines in four villages: Ofu–Manu’a, Aunu’u, Alao, and Amanave. GRO is currently hiring a project manager for a two-year contract to lead the initiative.

#### ***Biodiversity – Wetland Project 2023/2024***

As a result of the collaboration, GRO handles the educational and outreach initiatives, and the Biodiversity Office manages practical implementation. The next steps involve finalizing financial allocations and expenditures in this joint venture.

#### ***Renewable Energy Project – ASPA & GRO***

Participating in the 'Blue Planet Alliance Fellowship' at the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii, Manoa has led to a productive collaboration between ASPA and GRO. Both entities have agreed to work together to achieve 100% Renewable Energy by 2040. In this initiative, GRO is working to support ASPA in village community outreach programs and is collaborating with ASG-DOE on youth education and renewable energy development. GRO is assisting ASPA in selecting two youth candidates for the BPA program, focusing on nature-based solutions as alternatives to fossil fuels, such as solar energy, windmills, and energy storage. The financial details of this plan are yet to be discussed.

## **RESILIENCE AND MITIGATION**

### **The Office of Disaster and Petroleum Management**

The Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM) administers and provides oversight of federal funding for pre disasters preparation and mitigation and post disasters with Public Assistance Recovery resources in the aftermath of all federally declared disasters. ODAPM also manages all petroleum products imported into the Territory and ensures ample quality fuel supply is readily available.

The following programs, services and councils are under the auspices of ODAPM:

- Office of Petroleum Management (OPM)
- American Samoa Petroleum Cooperative (ASPC)
- American Samoa Disaster Recovery Office (ASDRO)
- American Samoa Government Property Insurance
- The Hazard Mitigation Council
- The Silver Jackets

#### **Operations:**

**Throughput:** After the fourth quarter, the upward trend for all products has continued. Volumes in the first chart are in comparison to 4th qtr. throughput in FY 2022. The second chart compares FY 2022 with FY 2023.

The increase in Mogas is consistent with a long-term trend of a gradual increase. Jet consumption has fully recovered and will be more than 2M gallons. A recent increase in military flights may push the throughput higher than expected. Half of the annual increase in marine throughput occurred in the 4th quarter and reflects the increased military traffic. The number of



fishing boats has not increased. Land diesel continues a steady upward trend and is now 66% of the total diesel.

**Expenditure:**

The COVID shadow is over and shipping rates are going down but it is still difficult to get local contractors to perform due in part to the amount of ongoing building work in the territory. In recent bid solicitations as many as half the contractors on the bid list declined to submit bids.

**Full year**

Fuel dock improvements	\$240,560	Fenders, digital meters, slops tank
Tank farm improvements	\$326,935	Fire pump, automation, office windows
Airport tank farm	\$298,363	Shield walls, new Jet Truck
Admin	\$38,420	CD purchase, audit
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$904,278</b>	

**PPG Tank Relocation:** Complete and fully operational

**Fuel Dock:** Slops tank ready for installation, digital meters completed and functioning

**Fire system improvements** - Jockey pump and controller are installed and ready to connect. Commissioning 12/23

**Utulei pipeline:** Pipeline inspection completed. Condition assessment continues to improve. An alternative to pigging is the installation of a batching valve on the 8" line to facilitate eventual pipeline replacement.

**Automation system upgrade:** A fiber optic local area network connecting three new logic controllers has been installed and is functioning. Significant rewiring is being required due to periodic short cuts over the years. Completion of this phase is scheduled for mid-November.

**Throughput:** Ultra-low diesel (land diesel) represents 48% of the total throughput at the tank farm.

**Revenue:** Revenue is calculated on throughput. Calculated revenue for 4th Qtr. FY 23 is \$289,756 continuing a positive upward trend. Although revenue was slightly lower than 2nd qtr, (\$308,622), year total revenue exceeds budget estimate by \$212,000. Fees on fuel for power generation continue to contribute over 75% of the total ASPC revenue.

**Audit:** CD purchase from BOH was completed. Similar investments are planned for FY 2024.

**Hazard Mitigation Grant Program**

Under the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, there are 3 Open Disasters that ODAPM has received funding from for Mitigation projects. The 3 Disasters include the Tropical Storm Gita, the COVID-19 Pandemic and the King Tides Disaster. Ongoing Project status for each disaster are as follows:

## **DR-4357 GITA**

### **ASTCA Backup Generators, \$166,667**

Project includes the purchase of new generators to improve and maintain communication services during the event of a disaster. The generators are on the island and being installed. Anticipating close out with next quarter reporting.

### **Fagaima Drainage, \$3.1 million**

Working with FEMA to obtain a final time extension. This requires information for the BCA due to the changes of the DPW design which duplicate the benefits of the Federal Highway jurisdiction. We are working with the US Army Corp of Engineers and HUD to obtain the requirements needed to move this project forward.

## **DR-4537-COVID-19**

### **LBJ Storm Shutters, \$585,000**

Project approval is for the installation of hurricane/storm shutters on the wards at the LBJ Tropical Medical Center. It will provide added protection for in-patients and the equipment at the wards during times of disaster.

## **DR-4669-King Tides**

The Hazard Mitigation portion of funding is anticipated at approximately \$300,000. The Hazard Mitigation Council will need to meet to decide whether we submit an application for one entire project that is lower on the priority OR minimize the scope of work of a large project.

### **The Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council**

The Territorial Hazard Mitigation Council has met quarterly as outlined in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. The HM Team at ODAPM continually seeks funding opportunities for all mitigation projects. The HM Council has been active in and supportive in all activities, especially in the participation of the 2nd Disaster Resilience Summit.

The HM Council also successfully prioritized the submitted HM Projects, which has been amended in the Territory's Hazard Mitigation Plan. In addition, because of the support of the HM Council, American Samoa was finally able to obtain the required support to become a member of the USACE Silver Jackets team. ODAPM works with all Departments and agencies to expand the search for viable funding sources for all proposed mitigation activities.

## **FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Grant Opportunities**

### **FY 2020 BRIC Funding Approved and Ongoing**

#### **ODAPM Building Codes Upgrade, \$318,000.00**

Project includes the upgrading of American Samoa's Building Codes in order to comply with FEMA Assistance regulations, improve our infrastructure and amend the codes to accommodate the needs of our Territory. Awarded Contractor, PIOA Consultants, met with various local government agencies and contractors to complete an assessment and impact study. They utilized the Disaster Resilience Summit to announce the upcoming town hall meetings to obtain community support and feedback. Project schedule is for two years.

**ODAPM HM Outreach, \$142,800.00**

Project includes the hosting of the ODAPM Disaster Resilience Summit. Due to the supportive collaboration of local Emergency Support Functions, federal partners, and the support of local leadership, the first Summit was a success. The 2nd Disaster Resilience Summit was a success.

**FY 2021 BRIC Funding-Pending Official Award****American Samoa Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, \$374,588.33**

As a requirement for the Territory, in order to receive Hazard Mitigation funding following a Presidentially Declared Disaster, American Samoa must have an updated All-Hazards Plan. Funding is forthcoming to update this plan for the Territory for 2025-2030. We currently have an active and updated HM Plan which has allowed us to receive project funding under the COVID and King Tides Disaster.

**ASCC Drainage Project Scoping, \$270,000.00**

American Samoa Community College will receive funding from BRIC to conduct feasibility studies, hydrology study and development of design to construct proper drainage to mitigate the flooding in the Mapusaga area.

**FY 2022 BRIC Funding-** At the Disaster Resilience Summit in September 2023, FEMA Region IX Deputy Regional Administrator announced the award of the following projects.

**Project Scoping-Shoreline Improvements, approx. \$1,890,360.00**

Grant application was submitted to FEMA for the planning, assessment and design of the shoreline improvements as we continue to face coastal erosion daily which endangers coastal roads.

**Faga'alu Shoreline Protection, approx. \$10,350,000.00**

For the first time under the BRIC Application for American Samoa, a significant project has achieved a competitive standing among other States and Territories. We eagerly anticipate the official award, enhancing protection for our critical hospital facility. ODAP has identified key factors boosting the competitiveness of our hospital projects.

**American Samoa Government Building Survey - \$269,000.00**

ODAPM was awarded funding from the US Department of the Interior- Office of Insular Affairs through a Technical Assistance Program Grant to survey all government owned facilities. The grant award for the project was \$269,000. Through a competitive procurement process, PIOA Consultants was awarded the contract. They are in the final stages of their contract. PIOA has completed the survey of the buildings and are now installing identification tags for each of the units as contracted. At the completion of this Survey, American Samoa will have all the ASG building information documented for insurance updates and FEMA records.

**USACE Silver Jackets Membership**

This accomplishment is historical for American Samoa. In 2023, American Samoa successfully fulfilled the requirements to become a member of the Silver Jackets. The Silver Jackets organization focuses on Flood Mitigation projects through the US, seek solutions and funding opportunities, and share information for successful protective actions.

### American Samoa Building Codes Upgrade - \$300,000.00

The last Building Code Adoption for the Territory was done with the 1964 Uniform Building Codes. However, the Department of Public Works is currently using the 2006 edition of the International Building Codes to monitor current projects. In an effort to update the building codes, we seek community input in order to adopt the 2018 International Building Codes. The first steps to implementing this project is to (1) meet with key ASG Departments and Agencies that have a vested interest in the Building Codes Upgrade, (2) Coordinate Town Hall Meetings for Public Comment in order to gain their perspective and recommendations, (3) meet with local contractors to see how the changes will impact the community. This project will take 2 years.

### Amerika Samoa 2nd Annual Disaster Resilience Summit

ODAPM collaborated with the Governor's Resilience Office (GRO) to host the 2nd Disaster Resilience Summit from September 26-28, 2023, at Metotisi Hall in Ottoville, Tafuna. The 2023 theme, "Strengthening Disaster Resilience in our Community," focused on ensuring the continuity of disaster preparedness and resilience efforts, particularly in addressing the rapid adverse effects of climate change. We were honored to host neighboring Territories and Countries, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange. The summit featured roundtable discussions on the whole community approach to climate change and disaster resilience. Informational booths showcased emergency support functions identified in the Territorial Emergency Operations Plan, engaging public and private school students. Originally planning for 500 students, we were delighted to welcome over 1,000, planting seeds of awareness about emergency support functions, climate change impacts, and individual roles in strengthening community resilience.

Additionally, ODAPM organized training sessions for local government leaders, facilitating networking on information and funding resources for American Samoa. Topics included nature-based solutions, flood mitigation, food security, invasive species, building code upgrades, and infrastructure improvements—all contributing to the overarching goal of strengthening disaster resilience. The Summit has evolved into a platform for sharing experiences not only with US Federal Leaders but also with Pacific Countries facing similar challenges.

#### Hazard Mitigation Financial Drawdowns - 2023

Project Worksheet #	Applicant Name	Total Authorization	Date Received of Draw Downs
#004	ASTCA	\$46,274.40	2/6/2023
#005	SMC	\$30,454.10	9/21/2023
#005	SMC	\$23,200.02	9/8/2023
#005	SMC	\$26,250.00	6/28/2023
#005	SMC	\$72,683.18	5/5/2023
#005	SMC	\$69,438.72	2/9/2023
#005	SMC	\$19,501.80	2/7/2023
BRIC	2020	\$49,947.56	06/30/2023

**DR4357 HM TOTAL: \$337,749.78**

## THE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Under the Public Assistance Program, there are three (3) Open Disasters that ODAPM has received funding from for Recovery-Public Assistance projects. The 3 disasters include the Tropical Storm Gita, COVID-19 Pandemic and the King Tides Disaster. Ongoing Project status for each disaster are as follows:

### DR4669 King Tides Approved Projects 2023

- Department of Port Administration's Emergency Protective Measures Project approved on 03/29/2023 in the amount of **\$10,306.10**.
- Department of Port Administration Debris Removal Project approved on 07/13/2023 in the amount of **\$106,461.83**.
- ASPA's Exposed Power Lines approved on 2/13/2023 in the amount of **\$141,159.91**.
- ASTCA's Generators in Aunu'u approved on 02/10/2023 in the amount of **\$39,643.34**.
- Department of Homeland Security EOC and EMP approved on 4/6/2023 in the amount of **\$16,361.20**.
- ASTCA Fiber Optic Cables and Utility Vehicles, approved on 11/27/2023 the amount of **\$24,206.29**.
- ASTCA Undersea Fiber Optics- Aunu'u, approved on 11/27/2023 the amount of **\$56,763.51**.
- ASPA Emergency Protective Measures, approved on 11/27/2023 the amount of **\$73,819.46**.

Total Project Approved in 2023: **\$468,721.64**

### DR4537 2023 Approved Projects

- ASTCA's Emergency Protective Measures Project approved the amount of **\$18,203.99**.
- ASTCA's Safe Opening Operations Project approved on 08/02/2023 in the amount of **\$16,011.01**.
- LBJ's COVID Tent Rental Project approved on 07/27/2023 in the amount of **\$226,760.00**
- LBJ's PCR Tent System and Kits approved on 02/08/2023 in the amount of **\$957,192.79**
- LBJ's Morgue project approved on 01/23/2023 in the amount of **\$195,217.81**
- LBJ's Hospital Increase Capacity Part 2 post 6/30/2022 at 90% approved in the amount of **\$2,122,003.00**
- DOH Covid Testing approved on 11/27/2023 the amount of **\$995,416.95**.
- DPA's Supplies for Transportation, Personnel and Cargo to Support Covid-19 Operations approved on 11/27/2023 the amount of **\$117,636.08**.

Projects Approved in 2023: **\$4,648,441.63**

Vaccination Total Summary: **\$8,072,281.25**



## Public Assistance Program Funds Received

## DR4537-COVID-19 Pandemic

## DR4537-COVID-19 Pandemic

Project Worksheet #	Applicant Name	Total Authorization	Date Received of Draw Down
3	LBJ	\$273,230.76	2/2/2023
4	DOH	\$1,790,630.56	4/10/2023
11	SMC	\$87,386.36	11/10/2023
11	SMC_2	\$140,739.22	7/18/2023
15	LBJ	\$1,903,957.00	5/25/2023
16	LBJ	\$352,686.75	2/2/2023
17	LBJ	\$162,406.65	2/2/2023
18	LBJ	\$957,192.79	5/25/2023
19	ASPA	\$79,918.43	2/2/2023
20	LBJ	\$1,260,000.00	11/17/2023
22	ASTCA	\$16,011.01	8/25/2023
23	ASTCA	\$18,203.99	8/25/2023
25	LBJ	\$226,706.00	8/25/2023

**DR4537 TOTAL: \$7,269,069.52**

## DR4357-Tropical Storm Gita

Project Worksheet #	Applicant Name	Total Authorization	Date Received of Draw Down
8	DOA	\$35,998.98	9/22/2023
10	EO	\$19,078.34	10/5/2023
26	DPA	\$1,525,599.77	9/22/2023
39	DOE	\$9,090.00	9/22/2023
41	DAS	\$7,072.18	9/22/2023
49	DOE	\$17,907.60	9/22/2023
56	ASDHS	\$33,324.88	9/21/2023
64	DAS	\$13,808.36	9/21/2023
78	DPW	\$83,151.47	9/22/2023
80	LBJ	\$906.17	9/21/2023
82	SPA	\$1,884.43	9/21/2023
84	VOC-REHAB	\$1,272.04	9/21/2023
85	DMWR	\$31,766.40	9/21/2023
93	ASDHS	\$34,596.01	9/21/2023
94	DOC	\$4,829.13	9/21/2023
102	ASTCA	\$3,431.70	5/24/2023
103	ASCC	\$84,651.96	9/21/2023
104	DPW	\$15,761.79	9/22/2023
107	SMC	\$80,719.31	9/21/2023
107	SMC	\$26,250.00	6/28/2023

**DR4357 TOTAL: \$2,031,101.52**

**FEMA Mitigation Framework Leadership Group (MitFLG) Quarter 1 2023 Meeting**

The FEMA Mitigation Framework Leadership Group (MitFLG) held its first quarterly meeting of 2023 on February 9 at FEMA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Ms. Lisa T. Tuato'o, Director of the Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management, serves as a State Local Tribal Territorial (SLTT) member on MitFLG. The meeting aimed to discuss mitigation and resilience opportunities identified by the White House, including priorities from the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. With over 60 federal, SLTT, and other participants, both in-person and virtually, actively engaged in the four-hour session. MitFLG members had the opportunity to share their 2023 mitigation and resilience-focused initiatives and priorities. A significant discussion point was building codes. Director Lisa T. Tuato'o reported that ODAPM applied for and received funds from FEMA to upgrade building codes. The procurement process is complete, and a contractor has been selected for the project. The building survey schedule of values for government facilities is underway and nearing completion. The last building survey in American Samoa was in 2004, and in 2021, ODAPM took the lead, successfully securing funds from the U.S. Department of the Interior-Office of Insular Affairs Technical Assistance Program for the project.

**Pacific Risk Management Ohana (PRIMO) 2023 Conference in Hawaii**

In April 2023, ODAPM presented American Samoa's efforts in addressing Climate Change challenges at the conference. We highlighted the Disaster Resilience Summit, daily climate impacts, and equity issues. The audience commended our local and federal collaboration showcased through the summit. Emphasizing efficient collaboration, we acknowledged the crucial support of the Governor, HM Council Chairman, and GAR, Lieutenant Governor Talauega E.V. Ale. Our focus included advocating for equity in federal grant competitions, introducing Disaster Resilience Zones, and fostering connections with leaders from other territories.

**Territorial Climate Infrastructure Workshop 2.0**

In May 2023, with Director Lisa T. Tuato'o serving as the Territory's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law/Inflation Reduction Act Coordinator, ODAPM assisted OIA with the organization of the Territorial Climate Infrastructure Workshop (TCIW) 2.0 in means of preparing our delegation to represent our Territory. This is the second year the U.S. DOI- OIA took the lead to ensure U.S insular areas are provided with the technical assistance, training, federal resources in bridging identified gaps, and addressing challenges experienced by the U.S. Territories in applying for these federal funds. The workshops were held at the Honolulu Convention Center on May 8-12, 2023. This report includes the pre-workshop activities, accomplishments under BIL/IRA, the sessions and roundtable discussions with Federal Agencies in addressing the gaps and challenges and the technical assistance received. In addition to the BIL, the Inflation Reduction Act announced in 2022 focuses on climate change projects.

**Hazard Mitigation Expanded Quarterly Partners Meeting**

In June 2023, ODAPM presented at the Expanded Quarterly Partners Meeting hosted by FEMA in Hawaii. This meeting was attended by the Deputy Director, the State Hazard Mitigation Officer, the Hazard Mitigation Planning Coordinator and ODAPM Grants Specialist. This meeting included similar representatives from each state and territory under FEMA Region IX. Region IX Hazard Mitigation Director, Kathryn Lipiecki and the FEMA Team from Hazard Mitigation, Flood Mitigation Assistance Program and the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program. This was a 3-day meeting in Hawaii which consisted of presentations

from the states of FEMA Region IX, Training sessions by FEMA leadership and exercises to grasp the challenges faced by each of the states and territories.

### **2023 Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop**

ODAPM attended the 2023 Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop in Galveston, TX on October 24-25th at the Moody Gardens Hotel & Convention Center. Invitation to attend was shared by Department of Commerce Director Petti Matila as we work collaboratively on infrastructure improvement and climate resilience projects. This workshop was hosted by Restore America's Estuaries and Galveston Bay Foundation, to offer a unique platform to learn, engage, and exchange knowledge with professionals, experts, and stakeholders in the field of coastal and estuarine habitat restoration. The workshop included two days of insightful presentations, invigorating discussions, and valuable networking opportunities. This workshop offered cutting-edge research findings, best practices, case studies, and the dynamic interplay between living shorelines and coastal resilience.

### **Government of Samoa MNRE National Environment Week**

At the Atoa-O-Samoa side event held by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Government of Samoa, Honorable Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster invited Directors from ODAPM, ASEPA, DOC and DMWR to participate in the National Environment Week set for November 6-10, 2023. ODAPM Director Lisa T. Tuatoo served as a panel member at the biennial National Environment Forum, alongside influential speakers and leaders representing diverse sectors, including youth and local communities. During the event, ODAPM staff actively participated as evaluators in the Urban Area Tsunami drill and served as observers in shoreline hotels. The forum, held every two years, focuses on raising awareness of current and emerging environmental issues through national commemorative events. These events underscore the crucial importance of safeguarding and conserving our natural environment, covering biodiversity, soil and land, forests, water and wetlands, waste and pollution, sanitation and wastewater, climate change, renewable energy, meteorology, geoscience, and disaster risk management.

### **BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW (BIL) and INFLATION REDUCTION ACT (IRA)**

In November 2021, President Joe Biden enacted the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), also known as the Infrastructure Investment Jobs Act (IIJA). Representing a unique funding opportunity for states, territories, and tribes, the American Samoa Government promptly formed a BIL/IIJA working team. This team comprises key entities such as the Governor's Resilience Office (GRO), Department of Public Works (DPW), American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA), American Samoa Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA), American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (ASEPA), Department of Commerce (DOC), Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), Territorial Energy Office (TEO), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Agriculture (DOA), Department of Port Administration (DPA), and the Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM). Led by the Director of ODAPM, this team aims to collaboratively pursue federal funding opportunities to enhance the well-being of the people of American Samoa.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and GRO) submitted an application to the Office of Insular Affairs (OIA) for the Restore Native Vegetation and Mitigate Hazards on Mined Lands grant opportunity. The Territory was awarded this project in the amount of **\$555,000.00**. The Governor's Resilience Office is the recipient of this grant award.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and DOE) worked with ASEPA to obtain the requirements for application submission for the Clean School Bus Rebate Program. This **\$395,000** grant allowed for the replacement of operational Diesel Fueled Buses to include procurement of new school buses, warranties, training, etc., with little maintenance costs.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and DMWR) submitted an application for the America the Beautiful Challenge under the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for invasive species eradication. The Territory was awarded **\$864,300** for the Swains Island Tropical Ecosystem Restoration Planning for Invasive Mammal Eradication and Rainforest Realignment. The award was announced on November 10, 2022 with DMWR being the recipient of the grant award.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and ASEPA) submitted an application for the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Program under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The Territory was awarded **\$753,755** as announced by Honorable Uifaatali Aumua Amata Radewagen on September 14, 2023. Additionally, the EPA received **\$500,000** under the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and DPA) submitted an application to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for American Samoa's airports. The Territory was awarded **\$1,049,537** for Pago Pago International Airport, **\$113,000** for Ofu Airport, and **\$113,000** for Fitiuta Airport. The award was announced via media release by Honorable Uifaatali Aumua Amata Radewagen on November 14, 2023.

Under the BIL/IRA, the DPA also submitted an application for the Port Infrastructure Development Program. The territory was awarded **\$2,120,000** to reconstruct the Aunu'u Wharf. Furthermore, the DPA was also the recipient of the DOT's Ferry Boat Program, being awarded **\$533,096.33** as announced in August 2023.

The BIL team (ODAPM and DOC) submitted funding applications to the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration in 2022 for the Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) planning program and the Digital Equity Planning program. In December of 2022, DOC received **\$1,244,300** for BEAD planning. In May of 2023, DOC received **\$150,000** for Digital Equity planning. Both planning grants require the development of respective plans and grants administration documentation. The BEAD 5 Year Plan was completed in August of 2023, with the grant administration documentation submitted on December 15 after a public comment period, ahead of the December 27th deadline. The development of the digital equity plan is underway, due in May of 2024.

In June of 2023, it was announced that the BEAD program implementation funding allocation would be **\$37.56m** for American Samoa - these funds will become accessible after BEAD grant administration metrics are met for project implementation, sometime in mid to late 2024 (grantor estimate for all programs nationally).

Additionally, DOC received funding from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) for **\$342,760** to conduct outreach for the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) through its National Competitive Outreach Grant Program.

Additionally, the ODAPM and DOC submitted a project application to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and NOAA's Climate Ready Coast Initiative. In April 2023, NOAA announced that the territory was awarded **\$203,000** to help American Samoa for the Wetlands

Delineation Project which is intended to map and monitor nine wetlands across the Territory.

The DOC, under funding made available through the BIL/IRA, has also received **\$1,670,000** from the National Coastal Resilience Fund through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support projects that are designed to strengthen natural infrastructure, **\$342,760** through the National Competitive Outreach Program, and is currently awaiting the awarding of **\$37,500,000** under the Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program.

Furthermore, the American Samoa Coastal Management Program (ASCMP) proposed to recruit additional staff to focus on habitat restoration and wetland delineation projects and to also provide capacity building opportunities for current staff to effectively implement program functions. The award for this project was in the amount of **\$450,000.00**.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and the Governor's Biodiversity Conservation Office) submitted an application for the Agroforestry Plant Giveaway Project under the US Department of the Interior Office of Insular Affairs (DOI-OIA). In August 2022, Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor announced **\$389,025** in federal funds for the restoration of wetland ecosystems in American Samoa and the replanting of mangroves. Additionally, the Governor's Biodiversity Conservation Office, under the DOI-OIA, was awarded **\$116,850** for Regional Biosecurity Training to strengthen and improve the existing biosecurity measures within the territory.

The BIL/IRA team (ODAPM and ASPA), submitted applications for Solid Waste Infrastructure under the U.S. EPA's Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling grant opportunity. The territory was awarded **\$3,768,775** (\$753,755 for 5 years) to implement solid waste infrastructure projects. Additionally, the ASPA was awarded **\$197,500,000** (39,500,000 for 5 years) in BIL-SRF funding to support water and wastewater projects and **\$3,500,000** (\$700,000 for 5 years) from the Grid Resilience and Innovation Program opportunity to enhance grid flexibility and improve the resilience of the power system against growing threats of extreme weather and climate change.

Under the BIL/IRA, the ODAPM has submitted applications under the FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grant opportunities for various fiscal years. Awarded projects are: Building Codes Upgrades **\$318,502**, Mitigation Outreach Activities **\$142,800**, ASCC Drainage Project Scoping **\$270,000**, and Hazard Mitigation Plan Update **\$374,588.33**. Additionally, the ODAPM has been awarded **\$2,800,000** under the OIA-IRA Climate TAP grant. Forthcoming is the formal announcement of the awarding of \$1,890,060 for Shoreline Protection Project Scoping and **\$10,350,000** for the Faga'alu Shoreline Protection project.



<b>Department/Agency</b>	<b>BIL Funding Source and Project</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>
American Samoa Power Authority \$204,768,775.00	BIL/State Revolving Funds, Water Infrastructure Investments	\$197,500,000.00 (5- year total)
	Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR)	\$3,768,775.00 (5-year total)
	Grid Resilience and Innovation Program (GRIP)	\$3,500,000.00 (5-year total)
American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency \$1,253,755	Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR)	\$753,755.00
	Climate Pollution Reduction Grant	\$500,000.00
Department of Commerce \$41,105,760.00	Broadband, Equity, Access & Deployment (BEAD)	\$1,240,000.00 (\$37,500,000.00 forthcoming)
	National Competitive Outreach Program (NCOP)	\$342,760.00
	Digital Equity Program	\$150,000.00
	NFWF-National Coastal Resilience Fund	\$1,670,000.00
	NOAA-Habitat Protection and Restoration	\$203,000.00
Department of Education \$395,000.00	USEPA Clean School Bus Rebate	\$395,000
<b>Department/Agency</b>	<b>Funding Source &amp; Project</b>	<b>Grant Award</b>
Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources \$864,300.00	NFWF-America the Beautiful	\$864,300.00
Governor's Biodiversity Conservation Office \$505,875.00	DOI-OIA Agroforestry Plant Giveaway Project	\$389,025.00
	OIA-Component B: Regional Biosecurity Training Support	\$116,850.00
Governor's Resilience Office \$550,000.00	OIA-Restore Native Vegetation & Mitigate Hazards on Mined Lands	\$550,000.00
Department of Port Administration \$24,653,096.33	DOT-Ferry Boat Program 2023	\$533,096.33
	DOT-Port Infrastructure Development Program 2022, Aunu'u Wharf Improvements Two (2) Vessels for DPA	\$2,120,000.00 \$22,000,000.00
Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management \$13,345,250.33	BRIC 2020: Mitigation Outreach Activities	\$142,800.00
	BRIC 2021: ASCC Drainage Project Scoping	\$270,000.00
	BRIC 2021: Hazard Mitigation Plan Update	\$374,588.33
	BRIC 2022: Faga'alu Shoreline Protection	\$10,350,000.00
	BRIC 2022: Shoreline Protection Projects Scoping	\$1,890,360.00
	OIA-IRA Climate TAP	\$2,800,000.00
	<b>Total Awards</b>	<b>\$287,442,811.66</b>

In the past year, ODAPM has fulfilled its duties in accordance with the Executive Order that established the office. The extensive range of responsibilities undertaken by ODAPM has greatly benefited the safety of American Samoa's residents and the protection of their properties. Federal funds managed by ODAPM have supported local capacity development and projects to enhance the Territory's ability to address climate change and maintain disaster resilience.

## Protection and Conservation Ongoing Departmental Efforts

### 2023 Coastweeks

The American Samoa Coastal Management Program (ASCMP) continues to balance economic development and coastal resources management, ensuring resiliency and sustainability through the Project and Notification Review System (PNRS). Key specific areas supporting PNRS include the Geographical Information System (GIS), Wetlands Management, Public Awareness, Ocean Resource Management, Environmental Planning, and the ASCMP Administration.

### Fostering Partnership Through the Coastweeks Enhancement Strategy

The Resource Management Division once again coordinated another successful Coastweeks program with the Coastweeks theme “A Healthy Coast is a Wealthy Coast,” focusing on increasing awareness of the value of the land use permitting system, wetlands, coastal hazards mitigation efforts, and the use of GIS tools for better decision making to strike a balance between our coastal heritage and economic prosperity. The 2023 Coastweeks Enhancement Strategy included the following programs:

- **Educational Tours** - Partnered with the American Samoa Power Authority to provide a tour of their green building for high school students and learn about their energy efficiency program; Partnered with GHC Reid to provide insights on the importance of recycling; Partnered with National Park Services of American Samoa to educate students on conservation and preservation efforts.
- **Wetland Tours** - Partnered with Environmental Activist Andra Samoa of Leone to conduct wetland tours for the Tafuna High School students at the Leone Pala Lagoon and the Nu'uuli Pala Lagoon. The primary goal of these tours is to provide an opportunity for the students to explore the wetland ecosystems and to learn about the conservation and restoration efforts spearheaded by the local community.
- **Coastal Cricket Challenge** - Partnered with the Office of Samoan Affairs to pilot a coastal cricket challenge for the community. This initiative had a great turnout, with more than 300 participants, including old folks and the young generation.
- **Beach Volleyball Challenge** - Partnered with the American Samoa Volleyball Association to host a beach volleyball, bringing the community together to enjoy recreational activities along the coast.
- **Coastal Stabilization Day** - Partnered with Finafinau, Oceania, and Land Grant to coordinate a coastal stabilization activity along the Nu'uuli Pala Lagoon.
- **Geographic Information System (GIS) Workshop** - Partnered with the GIS Users Group to host a GIS workshop for high school students to learn about the GIS works each agency implements in their line of work.
- **Project Notification & Review System (PNRS) Workshops** - Partnered with the PNRS Board to coordinate two PNRS workshops in the village of Lauli'I and Pago Pago to raise awareness of the importance of land use planning and the permitting process.

- **Nature-Based Solutions Training/Workshops with NOAA** - Partnered with NOAA OCM to host a Nature-Based Solutions Training for local government agencies involved in infrastructure work.
- **Island-Wide Coastal Cleanup** - Coordinated an island-wide coastal cleanup with the IWCC committee, targeting streams and shoreline areas.
- **Fishing Tournament** - Partnered with the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources to host a fishing tournament to raise awareness about the conservation of our fisheries and marine resources and their significance to economic development.
- **Family Coastal Activity Day** - Coordinated a family coastal activity day to demonstrate the value and benefits of the coasts by bringing the community together to enhance awareness and further understanding of the importance of conserving the natural resources within the coastal zone.
- **Drone Light Show** - Partnered with the American Samoa Telecommunication Authority to coordinate American Samoa's first-ever drone light show to highlight the importance of technology in the CZM program.

ASCMP continues strengthening its relationship with various local agencies and departments, private sectors, and federal partners over the years, as evident in the participation and partnerships established and solidified during the 2023 Coastweeks.

In partnership with the NOAA Office of Coastal Management, the CZM program coordinated a two-day workshop with our local government agencies and departments on nature-based solutions and community engagement. The goal of these workshops is to raise awareness of green infrastructures and how they contribute to reducing the impacts of hazards and building resilience. The workshops took place at the Department of Youth and Women Affairs Building in Tafuna from September 20-21, 2023, with 50-plus participants. The workshops also discussed the strengths and limitations of different stakeholders' engagement techniques and identified NOAA resources to help strengthen funding proposals.

### **Wetlands Monitoring Summer Program**

Throughout the summer months of July and August, the Department of Commerce's Resource Management Department (RMD) collaborated with 13 local church youth groups to execute a series of projects to monitor, preserve, and safeguard our Territory's wetlands. The Wetlands Monitoring Summer Program is a critical initiative to engage the youth of our wetland village in the conservation and preservation of our wetlands, with a particular focus on those in their respective villages. The program entails various activities, including outreach programs, clean-ups, and monitoring for unauthorized activities in the wetlands and villages. The American Samoa Coastal Zone Management Program (ASCMP) of the Resources Management Division (RMD) is committed to covering 13 wetland villages, namely Leone, Malaeloa, Nuuuli, Vatia, Aua, Masefau, Alofau, Aoa, Alao, Tula, Aunu'u, Ofu, and Olosega. To achieve this noble objective, ASCMP will collaborate with and coordinate with village mayors and youth groups from each village throughout the program. The initiative's inception, which included clean-up efforts and public outreach, took place on July 14, 2023, with the Nuuuli's wetland.

### **Workshop with NOAA GIS Team on Geospatial Data Management**

The American Samoa Coastal Zone Management Program facilitated a GIS Workshop for the American Samoa Government. The GIS team was joined by Mr. Andy McGowan (Pacific Region Geospatial Coordinator) from the NOAA Office of Coastal Management. The target audience was the GIS Users Group, which consists of the following agencies: the American

Samoa Power Authority, the Department of Public Works, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Marine and Wildlife, the Department of Commerce, and the American Samoa Telecommunication Authority. The GIS team and Andy provided two training sessions (ArcGIS Quick Capture and Asset Inspections). Users learned to utilize the mobile application and desktop software to collect and manage geospatial data.

### **Developed a Web Tool to Support PNRS Efforts**

The GIS team has released a web mapping application to assist the Project Notification Review System's (PNRS) efforts to pre-scope proposed projects. The mapping application allows the board members to search the geography of submitted permits to consider all and any environmental impacts and setbacks from available GIS data. The board members are also able to view and access stop orders issued by the PNRS enforcement team. The map contains required features for all departments on the PNRS Board such as fire hydrants, water wells, archeological sites, food zones, wetlands, and power poles to name a few.



### **PNRS Retreat**

ASCMP hosted a three-day retreat for members of the PNRS Board and stakeholders as an opportunity to strengthen relationships, share visions and commitment to the PNRS mission and overlapping goals. The retreat was held at the Tradewinds Hotel Naumati Conference Room from May 30th to June 1st, 2023. A total of 20 participants attended the retreat each day to include representatives from 7 PNRS agencies, 2 Advisory members, Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS) and Coral Reef Advisory Group (CRAG) Technical Committee (CTC). The retreat focused on Permitting an Enhancement Strategies, GIS tools and services, and then concluded with a Coastal site visit.

### **Wetland Delineation**

In continuation of the Department of Commerce's Wetland Delineation project, our wetland specialist along with Maui Environmental Consulting, identified the jurisdictional boundaries of Leone and Aunu'u wetlands. The methodology is according to the United States Army Corps OF Engineering 1987 Wetlands Delineation Manual and the 2012 Supplement for the Hawaii and Pacific Islands Region. The progress of the project is essential to ASCMP's efforts to protect and maintain wetlands of American Samoa, especially verifying boundaries for PNRS land use permitting system and update GIS layers in order for our coastal resources to be adequately protected.



### **Management of the American Samoa Government Centralized Geospatial Database**

The GIS team continues to lead the Geospatial Framework project in managing the American Samoa Government centralized geodatabase and data-sharing plan between all government agencies. With 16 partnered agencies, ESRI software has been deployed to the five primary GIS



users who deal extensively with locational data – the Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (DMWR), American Samoa Telecommunication Authority (ASTCA), American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA), Department of Public Works (DPW), and American Samoa Department of Homeland Security (ASDHS). While distributing the software, data have been collected from the following agencies along with EPA and DOC’s data: DMWR, ASTCA, ASPA, Land Grant, and ASDHS. Data will be shared among the partnered government agencies according to the Data Sharing Plan.

The GIS User’s Group successfully launched the geospatial portal, <http://asgis.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>, where data have been published and shared. Partner agencies and departments have access to the data on ArcGIS Online, and an open data site is available at a local, state, and national level. In addition, the website is hyperlinked as an available public tool on the American Samoa Department of Commerce website.

### **NOAA 312 Evaluation**

ASCMP hosted the NOAA evaluation team with two meetings at the Lee Auditorium and one day of site visits to special management areas, wetland areas, and coastal high-risk areas. Discussions include accomplishments, challenges, and priorities. This evaluation is conducted every five years to track the effectiveness of individual programs to ensure that each program complies with the Coastal Zone Management Act and its regulations and to improve its effectiveness.

### **Art & Tide Competition**

The RMD launched its Art & Tide competition in October 2022 for school students in two categories: an Art contest for students from K5 to Grade 6 and a Photo contest for students from Grade 6 to college level. Students were invited to submit an entry that relates to or revolves around the theme “Our Coast, Our Home, Our Future.” Students were also encouraged to submit a paragraph explaining their work, their role in a coastal community, and some changes they would like to see within their community. The winners’ artworks are featured on the 2023 Art and Tide Calendar. The 12 winners were selected and notified to expect an upcoming award ceremony before the end of January.

### **Aquaculture Feasibility Study with Lynker**

In partnership with Lynker, ASCMP conducted aquaculture workshops with the villages of Fagamalo, Fagali’i, Maloata, representatives of the Manu’a Islands, and the village mayors to evaluate the optimal species and locations for mariculture throughout American Samoa using objective, quantifiable economic, biophysical, social, and cultural attributes that will facilitate future implementation success. This study will examine economic opportunities and constraints inherent in a nascent American Samoa mariculture portfolio, as well as how marine mariculture can contribute to food security. The project will identify potential impediments to successful mariculture and provide potential solutions when possible. Support industries for mariculture, such as ice production, export markets, and mariculture supplies, will also be investigated. Lynker is back on the island to conduct the second phase of this project.





### Mapping Support for the Department of Homeland Security

The DOC GIS team provided mapping support for the Emergency Operations Center as authorities declared a state of emergency due to damages from strong winds and high waves in July. The American Samoa Department of Homeland Security (ASDHS) and FEMA conducted site visits in Tutuila, Aunu'u, and Manu'a with the GIS team. The team generated maps and reports of damage assessments for individual and public assistance.



### Tsunami Inundation Mapping



DOC is an active member of the Tsunami Working Group spearheaded by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The GIS section provides mapping and data-collecting support for the DHS to produce evacuation maps. Work on the ground has been underway for the village of Pago Pago. The team has mapped possible assembly areas in the event of a tsunami, bridges, places of interest, and other features of interest. The group will reconvene for any necessary changes to the map.

### Tualauta/Fagaima Drainage

The Department of Commerce's Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Mitigation (CDBG-Mit) programs continue its coordination with its Partnered Agencies: the Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM), the Department of Public Works (DPW) & the Governor's Office (GO). The outcome of this coordinated effort has solidified the layout of the Tualauta Drainage Map and re-established Stakeholder Meetings with Partnered Agencies and funding agencies. The United States Army Corps of Engineers through the Interagency Institution Services (IIS) was initiated to establish a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to support or complete the pre-construction phases of the Tualauta Drainage and Fagaima Drainage. It is anticipated that MOA coordination will continue, where a measurable outcome will be reported.

The CDBG mitigation award of 1.4 million dollars will be utilized as a match for the FEMA-funded Fagaima Drainage. As of reporting, the Fagaima Drainage via ODAPM is currently compiling a Benefits Cost Analysis as required by FEMA. This requirement is necessary for the determination of FEMA funding awarded to ODAPM for the Fagaima Drainage. The Tualauta Drainage; Fagaima Drainage project continues progressing with its coordination efforts in the caveat of progress. As a target outcome, the goal of the CDBG-DR and CDBG-Mit is to complete the pre-design phase and move to procurement by the end of the next quarter.

### National Coastal Resilience Fund - \$1.6 Million

In collaboration with ASCC Sea Grant and other government agencies, the Department of Commerce was awarded a little over \$1.6 Million to acquire LiDAR-derived products to support the seamless topographic-bathymetric LiDAR and plane-based photographic imagery funded

through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Geodetic Survey (NGS) office. Products will include foundational water level and geodetic observations and inundation modeling for all of American Samoa’s islands and atolls. This grant funding will support our critical and dire need for elevation and imagery data that will have broad-reaching **impacts supporting resilience-based efforts for local, regional, and federal partners.**

### **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law: NOAA CZM Habitat Protection and Restoration Grants**

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris announced on Friday, April 21, 2023, that the U.S. Department of Commerce had recommended \$203,000 to the (DOC) CZM Program to make communities and the economy more resilient to climate change. This investment is made possible by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) with funds leveraged from the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). This grant award will benefit ecosystems and communities by completing an effort to verify and map wetlands, as well as conducting wetland monitoring, partner training, and community outreach workshops on their ecosystem benefits. The effort will also support the update of land use permitting policies and regulations to help ensure the protection of these wetlands and the services they provide, including the mitigation of flooding, and will help identify and inform prioritization of future nature-based restoration projects in each wetland village.

### **Seawalls**

The Department of Public Works is actively engaged in ongoing maintenance and emergency repairs, focusing particularly on drainage and shoreline projects in response to climate change impacts on our island. Deploying rock walls or revetments along the shoreline is a key measure to safeguard the inland region from wave action and combat coastal erosion. Emphasizing the priority of proper design and engineering, the department is dedicated to addressing sea level rise in high wave energy coastal areas.

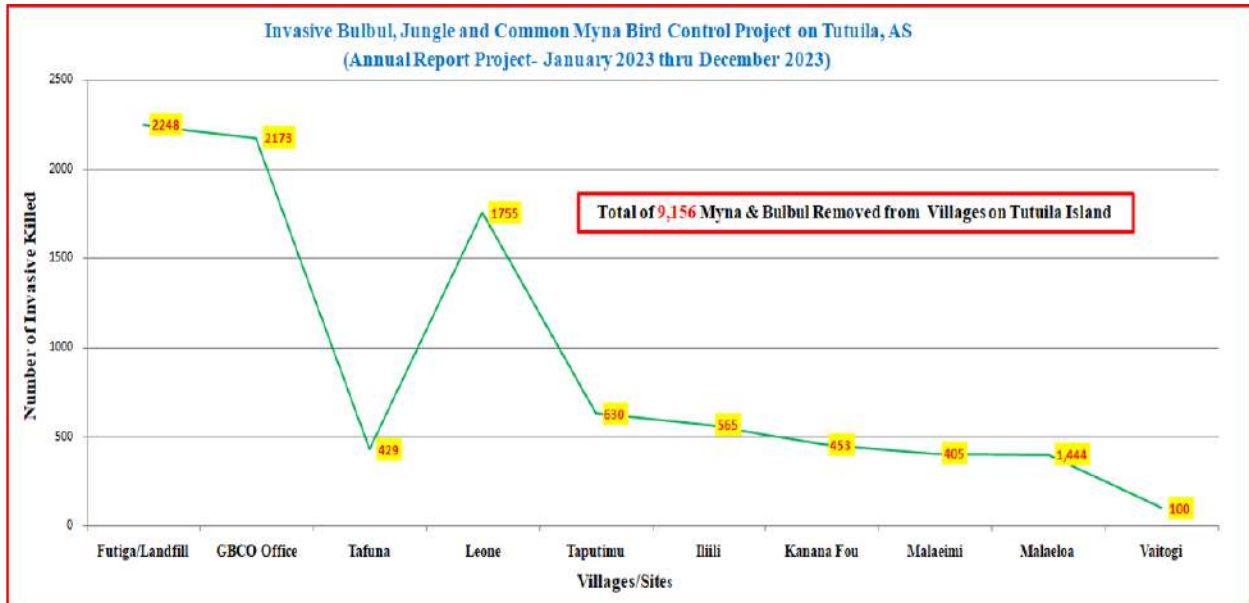
## **Governor’s Biodiversity and Conservation Office**

### **Controlling Invasive Myna and Bulbul Bird Populations on Tutuila Island (Phase Two)**

In 2023, the Governor's Biodiversity Conservation Office (GBCO) focused its invasive species management efforts on controlling three invasive bird species and the non-native African Tulip tree, already prevalent on Tutuila. The conservation field crew removed **9,156** invasive myna and bulbul bird populations. Eliminating these invasive birds is crucial for our local communities, farmers, churches, and traditional leaders who seek to eradicate these aggressive animals from Tutuila. Preventing damage to the ecological, economic, social, and cultural aspects of American Samoa is paramount. The motivation is to safeguard village farms, ensure food security, and support local agroforestry plantations. Protection of native wildlife habitats and food sources is essential for their recovery and thriving populations. GBCO’s long-term goal is to contain and eradicate these invasive bird populations on Tutuila and prevent their invasion of the islands of Manu’a, Swains, and Rose Atoll. Since March 2019, the Governor's Biodiversity Conservation Office has removed over **50,000** non-native birds. The GBCO has been awarded an additional grant of **\$486,628** from the DOI Office of Insular Areas to protect the rainforest

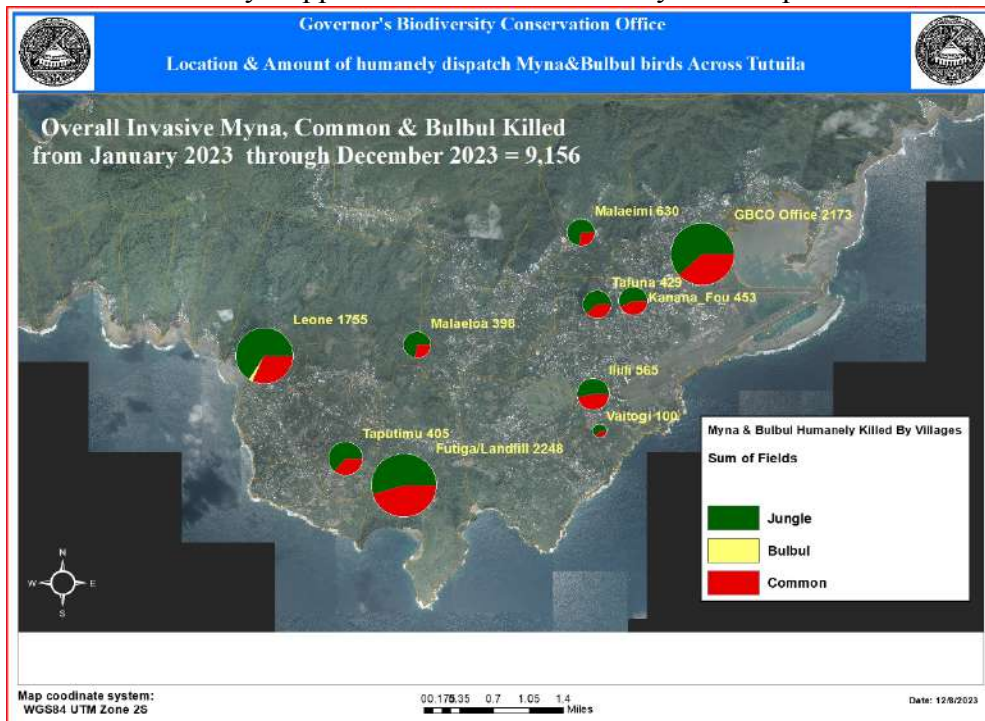


habitats and wildlife of American Samoa by controlling invasive bird populations on Tutuila (Phase Three).



**Above graph:** The landfill in Futiga and the Biodiversity Office at Lion’s Park contain the largest quantity of invasive birds captured at trapping sites. The Futiga landfill provides the appropriate disposal of all non-native bird populations that were eliminated.

**Below Map:** The map displays the number of invading birds humanely killed in each community area. GBCO recorded 2,173 birds trapped at the Biodiversity Office Lion’s Park and 2,248 removed from the Futiga Landfill site. The map depicts all ten trapping sites, which represent areas where GBCO humanely trapped invasive bulbul and myna bird species in 2023.





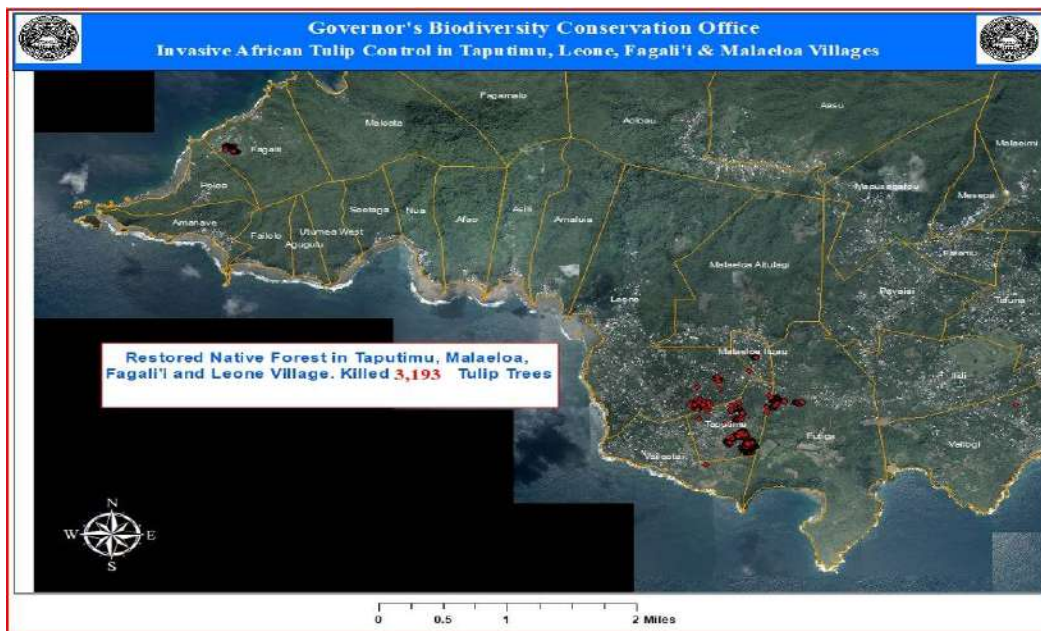
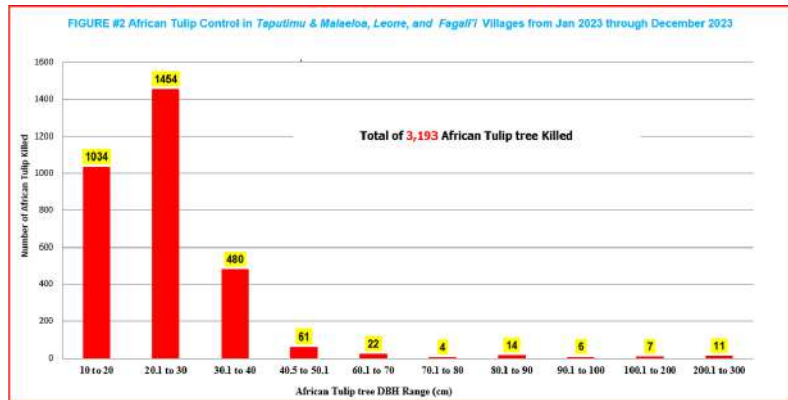
### Protecting Tutuila Island from the Highly Invasive African Tulip Tree

Introduced to Tutuila from Africa about 30 years ago for ornamental purposes, the African tulip tree has escaped the Taputimu village garden, now dominating disturbed lands across several western district villages. Thriving in moist habitats and tropical climates, this invasive tree's wind-dispersed seeds, numbering up to nearly 500 per pod, pose a significant threat. If not methodically controlled, it could replace lowland rainforests. The shade-tolerant species forms dense stands in gullies, along streams, and invades agricultural areas, forest plantations, and natural ecosystems, crowding out native vegetation. Traditional methods like girdling or ringbarking are ineffective against it. Local farmers face challenges accessing the expensive



Milestone herbicide, proven to eliminate the African tulip tree. The biodiversity field crew neutralizes the invasive populations with boots on the ground. In 2023, the GBCO team successfully removed 3,193 of these trees in the western district.

The graph reveals a recent invasion, with most treated tulip trees having a diameter at breast height (DBH) between 10 and 40 centimeters. Controlling these infestations will empower local communities to engage in agroforestry and agriculture, fostering the restoration of the indigenous forest in American Samoa.



The red dots on the GIS map indicate the exact GPS coordinates of treated tulip trees. These coordinates will guide the field crew during future visits to remove new seedlings and saplings at the treated sites.

### **Strengthening American Samoa’s Biosecurity through Regional Training Support Funding**

The Honorable Governor Lemanu P.S. Mauga emphasized that the American Samoa Government must collaborate on a regional scale with neighboring Pacific Islands, Countries, and Territories because we all share the same sea and air routes that support our livelihoods, well-being, food security, biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods, indigenous knowledge, and cultural resources. Therefore, an efficient biosecurity system is necessary for mitigating these risks and protecting our Samoan natural and cultural heritage.

The American Samoa Government has been awarded **\$116,850** from the Office of Insular Affairs, as a part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for regional biosecurity training support. The achievement results from the dedicated efforts of Tavita Pemerika Togia, Lydia Nomura Faleafine, Vanitha Sivarajan, and the American Samoa Biosecurity Leadership Team. Comprising representatives from various departments, the team, chaired by Director Togia, operates under Chief of Staff Fasisina Loa Tuimavave Laupola's leadership. The grant, designated for Regional Biosecurity Training Support, aims to enhance existing biosecurity measures in American Samoa, protecting the economy, environment, and people from plant and animal pests and diseases.

In February 2024, a biosecurity scientist in the region will be hired to assist in the development of **American Samoa’s first comprehensive biosecurity plan**. This biosecurity scientist will help conduct research and facilitate discussions with local village communities, government agencies, partners, traditional leaders, and local authorities. The Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources oversees the plan, which receives \$100K in funding from the USDA Forest Service.

**Photo:** Members of the American Samoa Biosecurity Leadership Team in blue and yellow uniform attended the regional biosecurity training in Guam from November 27 to December 1, 2023, with Honorable Philip Andreozzi, USDA Invasive Species Coordinator, Honorable Basil Ottley, OIA’s Policy Director, and Vanitha Sivaranja, OIA ecologist.



### **American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency**

The American Samoa Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA) regulates clean air, safe drinking water, and pollutant-free land to safeguard the environment and vital island resources. Divisions like Air and Land, Water, Technical Services, Education and Outreach, Special Programs, and Administration support AS-EPA's mission. Staff across these divisions prioritize public health, environmental protection, and natural resource preservation. The following report outlines key achievements of AS-EPA during the third year (2023) of the Lemanu and Talauega Administration.

#### **Fall Protection Training by AS-EPA and USEPA Region 9**

AS-EPA and USEPA Region 9 partnered to sponsor a 'Fall Protection Training' addressing territorial fall hazards. Government departments and private sector participants joined this inaugural initiative, featuring classroom lectures and a practical field demonstration on fall prevention measures. The goal was to equip local contractors with safety knowledge for work on



tanks, homes, poles, and similar structures. The training was successful, and participants received certificates upon completion.

#### **40 Hour HAZWOPER and HazCat Certification Training by USEPA Region 9**

AS-EPA's Air & Land Division Staff successfully completed the 40-hour Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) certification, with 32 hours online and 8 hours of hands-on training. This certification prepares participants, including firefighters from SARS, ARFF, DHS, ASPA, private sector oil spill response teams, and three members of the Samoa Government's Fire and Emergency Services, to effectively handle HazMat/HazWaste spills, releases, and emergencies. Additionally, a 16-hour HazCat training equipped AS-EPA and firefighters to use the Hazardous Category chemical field identification Kit, enabling them to identify unknown chemicals in the field without labels. All participants received completion certificates from the USEPA for both training programs.

#### **Chemical and Hazardous Waste Removal Project in American Samoa**

AS-EPA collaborated with US-EPA to collect, treat, and dispose of chemicals from island laboratories, including high schools, ASCC, LBJ, federal agencies, and American Samoa government departments. This initiative safeguards the island's water resources and environment. We value USEPA's continuous support, evidenced by their past projects and expressed commitment to future initiatives in American Samoa.

#### **Tafuna Scrap Metal Yard Assessment**

The AS-EPA assisted USEPA in conducting Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for the old Tafuna Scrap Metal Yard (TSMY). The results will determine cleanup efforts for potential contamination. Post-cleanup, development of Tafuna International Airport is anticipated. Funded by USEPA Region 9 under the Brownfields Program, the project follows USEPA's prior hazardous material removal from the site. Pending Phase II ESA results, AS-EPA will collaborate with USEPA and the Department of Port Administration on the project's next steps.

#### **Utulafilafi Environmental Site Assessment**

AS-EPA recently completed Phase I ESA for the Utulafilafi illegal dump site in Ta'u, Manu'a. The assessment indicates potential contamination due to historical site use. Designated as a Brownfields site, Utulafilafi qualifies for AS-EPA's Brownfields Program for sampling, analysis, and potential cleanup. The site, formerly used for discarding 55-gallon drums from a discontinued fuel dispensing business, requires further assessment to determine contamination extent and inform remediation actions. This project is funded by the USEPA Brownfields program and is highlighted in the 2023 AS-EPA Major Accomplishment Report.

#### **Air Quality Monitoring and EPA Method 9 Training Certification**

AS-EPA's Air Quality branch staff are now certified Method 9 observers, enhancing their skills for compliance assessments of air emission sources in the Territory. Additionally, AS-EPA obtained a Land Use Permit to install stationary Air Monitoring devices at predetermined locations on the island. These monitors will collect air quality data to support changes in regulations and inform policy adjustments. Industrial Plants, such as asphalt plants, rock/stone crushers, and concrete batch plants, although meeting emission thresholds, may impact air quality in residential areas. AS-EPA plans to station more air quality monitors throughout the island to gather additional emission data and assess the Territory's current air quality status.

**Electronic-Waste Program**

AS-EPA in partnership with American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA), Office of Property Management (OPM), and National Park Services (NPS) actively promotes electronic waste ("E-Waste") disposal and recycling in American Samoa. E-waste comprises discarded electrical or electronic devices and has evolved into a growing environmental concern in American Samoa over the years. The collaborative goal is to divert e-waste from the Futiga landfill to improve environmental conditions and reduce public health risks associated with waste contamination.

With the assistance of a local contractor, substantial amounts of e-waste are collected monthly from the local government under AS-EPA's supervision. The collected e-waste, including discarded large office printers and end-of-life tablet devices, fills two and a half 20-foot shipping containers. AS-EPA is in the process of arranging shipping and freight details with SWIRE shipping company and a California recycling firm to receive the e-waste shipments.

**Marine Debris Removal Program**

The Solid Waste Branch of the AS-EPA oversees the Marine Debris Removal Program, funded by the Governor's Office Special Programs. The targeted areas are the prioritized Watershed Management zones: Pago Harbor, Faga'alu Bay, and Pala Lagoon. The project aims to clear marine debris from coastlines, in-water areas, and stream mouths in these locations. Contractors conduct bi-monthly cleanups and submit reports on waste types and quantities collected. The program has successfully removed substantial amounts of waste, including plastics, fishing gear, and cigarette filters, contributing to the island's cleanliness and beauty.

**Water Quality Workshop for Local Construction Companies & Departments in American Samoa**

The AS-EPA Water Division organized a two-day water quality workshop, addressing local regulations, Best Management Practices, Erosion and Sediment Control, and Section 401 certification. The participants consisted of local construction companies and relevant departments within the American Samoa Government. The workshop aimed to equip attendees, especially those involved in BIL and IRA funded projects, with the knowledge to conduct infrastructure projects while minimizing their impact on water quality. The training emphasized the need to protect natural resources during the development of the Territory's infrastructure.

**Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources**

**The Shore-based Creel Survey:** sampled 182 days and completed 500 completed runs along the Tutuila and Manu'a islands coastlines in Weekdays and Weekends/holidays of this Fiscal Year. The monitoring team recorded 124 fishing participation counts (lower than the 256 in 2022) and 189 catch interviews) (higher than the 118 interviews in 2022).

The following table is a summary of the field data, collected from a diversity of fishing techniques applied by our local nearshore fishermen along with catch totals observed in shore-based creel surveys from October 1st, 2022, through September 30th, 2023.

***Expanded Catch/Effort Summary:***

2022-2023	Spearfishing	Rod and Reel	Gleaning	ThrowNet	GillNet(A)	Enu(traps)
Oct-Sep.	17,069 lbs	14,997 lbs	897 lbs	22 lbs	390 lbs	0 lbs

**Total expansions from October 2022 – September 2023**

Catch(lbs)	Gear-Hrs	Catch/Gear-Hrs
35,594 lbs	16,446 hrs	2.16 lbs

In summary, there was increased fishing activity and catch but decreased catch-per-unit effort declined 2023 compared to in 2022.

**Sportfish Life History Program:** Staff collected at least 30 samples for each species from each of the islands of Upolu, Savaii, and Tutuila, Manua and Rose Atoll. The population genetic markers (microsatellite DNA) were extracted and analyzed. The markers for malau and fuga were specifically derived from the Samoan Archipelago samples. This year, genetic markers specific to the Archipelago were developed for alogo. The genetic analyses indicated that the populations among the islands in the Samoan Archipelago for the 3 species were related. This suggests that both American Samoa and Samoa are fishing the same fish populations of these 3 fish species and that ideally management for these species need to coordinate. Staff is expanding research to three shallow bottomfish species: filoa *Lethrinus rubrioperculatus*, savane *Lutjanus kasmira* and malae *Lutjanus gibbus*.

**FAD Deployment:** 1. DMWR maintains a Fish Aggregation Program that deploys structures on deepwater sites to attract pelagic fish and provides fishing access to fishermen. For 2023, staff received 5 new prefabricated FADs and one was used to replace FAD A that had a drifting buoy. There were four fishing tournaments in FY 22-23. We have FAD A off Aunuu, FAD B in Pago Pago harbor, FAD C in Vaitogi, FAD D in Taputapu and FAD E in Fagasa. These FADs are inspected and maintained monthly.

**Fishing Tournaments:** There were two fishing tournaments between Sept and Dec. 2022: the Coastweek Fishing Tournament on Sept 30 and the Buds and Suds Fishing Tournament on Nov 25 and 26.

**Boat-based creel program:** The boat-based creel program staff recorded activity of four alia boats targeting pelagic fish for the whole year, landing around 9,565 lbs of pelagic fish. The top species was skipjack tuna with around 5,704 lbs. On the other hand, the commercial invoice system showed over 56,178 lbs of pelagic fish sold by commercial vendors. The top pelagic fish was blue marlin at 25,566 lbs, wahoo at over 18,506 lbs, yellowfin tuna at 4,877 lbs and swordfish at 4,731 lbs. The latter species are by-catch and non-target fish of longlining boats emphasizing the importance of this fish supply for the local community.

Around six alia boats were involved in spearfishing and landed over 5,611 lbs of reef fish. Around 2,353 lbs were parrotfish, 616 lbs were surgeonfish. And 684 lbs of lobster were caught. On the other hand, 8,945 lbs of reef fish were recorded in the invoice system. Around 4,261 lbs of bottomfish was caught this year by five alia boats: 750 lbs of gray jobfish; 1,430 lbs humpback snapper; 347 lbs redgill emperor; only 51 lbs of bottomfish was recorded in the commercial invoice system. Bottom Fishing has drastically declined in recent years probably due to the lingering effect of COVID-19 on crew availability, decreasing participation and high costs of operations.

**The Key Reef Species Program:** Staff completed 10 reef slope surveys (Alega, Amanave, Matu'u, Poloa, Nu'uuli, Aua, Afono, Alofau, Aoa, Sailele) and 5 reef flat surveys (Sailele, Aoa, Alofau, Auto, Amanave). Reef flat sea trials were also conducted to refresh and train new staff. Weather had been really unpredictable. American Samoa has been highly affected by the shift of Tradewinds which brought 25-30 mph winds. South winds and high surf advisory prevented DMWR from doing our monitoring survey. Staff also participated in our Oxygen 02 emergency administering training. Project staff has also been doing professional development for Species fish ID training to improve and strengthen species identification. Project staff collected and processed over 350 fish samples for life history. Gonads and otoliths were collected from: *Epinephelus merra*, *Lutjanus fulvus*, *Scarus oviceps*, *Monotaxis grandoculis*, and *Lethrinus amboinensis*. Fisheries staff worked together with POSEIDON representative John Wiley from Hawaii extracting otoliths and gonads for research. Otoliths are collected to determine the age of the fish species and gonads are to determine sex at maturity.



**Giant Clams Research Project:** In 2023, DMWR, in collaboration with University of Hawaii researchers Paolo Marra-Biggs and Dr. Rob Toonen, continued investigating the molecular ecology and abundance of giant clams in American Samoa. Mr. Biggs completed surveys in Manua and Rose, collecting samples for genetic analysis. Data analyses revealed that the highest densities of giant clams are found in the Tau and Manua Islands, followed by Rose. Recent surveys in Tutuila indicated nearly twice as many giant clams in north Tutuila compared to the south, with notable high-density areas in Aunuu, Amanave, Fagamalo, and Maloata. Additionally, low clam density in Swains suggests that factors beyond fishing pressure, such as habitat, watershed quality, and climate, influence clam abundance. Overall, American Samoa maintains a relatively higher abundance of giant clams in the south Pacific. Mr. Biggs also identified a new giant clam species, *Tridana noae*, expanding its distribution to this part of the Pacific.

**The Community-Based Fisheries Management Program (CFMP):** Program team attended the Community Planning workshop on May 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> at Paradise Pizza restaurant in Pago Pago, facilitated by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The workshop's objectives focused primarily on:

- Advancing agency mandates, reduce stakeholder fatigue and catalyze government support to communities through enhanced cross-agency collaboration in community planning and outreach
- Reviewing existing community-based outreach and planning efforts to identify areas of shared interest and barriers to collaboration
- Developing improved communication/collaboration for community engagement and planning across agencies/organizations in American Samoa

CFMP and Boat-based program leads attended the Leadership course held in Fiji from the 29<sup>th</sup> May-June 9<sup>th</sup> 2023. The course provided a diagnostic and strategic foundation for leading change in social and organizational settings and developing additional skills to Fisheries managers in mobilizing change in regional fisheries priorities and activities.

CFMP attended a virtual meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2023 on Water Quality Assessment for land-based sources of pollution (LBSP) impacts on Aua coral reefs with National Oceanic and

Atmospheric Association (NOAA). The presentation meeting focused on research findings on identifying water quality gradients at the site, linking LBSP to changes in coral reef ecology, identifying biological indicators for LBSP and identifying efforts that managers and community leaders can implement to maintain a healthy reef.

The Faga’alu first village meeting with CFMP for this fiscal year was held on June 29<sup>th</sup> 2023 at the village Fale Samoa. The meeting was called to update the village on the upcoming projects for the village and to establish the 2 village committees:

1. *Faga’alu village Fisheries Advisory Committee*- set up management measures and village by-laws in the village Marine Protected Area and help finalize the village Fisheries Management Plan.
2. *Faga’alu village Fisheries Monitoring and Enforcement Committee*- to monitor fishing operations and enforce village by-laws and management measures set for the village Marine Protected Area, as stipulated in the village Fisheries Management Plan.

CFMP team, together with CRAG and Key Reef staff attended the *Divers Alert Network (DAN) Emergency Oxygen for Scuba Diving Injuries* course on the **6th July 2023** at DMWR training room. The training was conducted by DAN certified dive safety instructors Erik Brown and Max Sudnovsky. All DMWR and CRAG staff that attended passed the course and are now certified to administer lifesaving first aid oxygen to injured dive buddies when needed.

CFMP staff and CRAG supporting staff attended the US Jurisdiction Indo-Pacific Coral Restoration Network workshop in Guam from **July 31<sup>st</sup>-August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023**.

The CFMP team and CRAG staff learned more about restoration methods including C-frame and A-frame outplant, direct transplantation, cement and epoxy fragment attachment, rope nursery, coral tree nursery, bouldering coral stabilization and micro fragmenting. The team from American Samoa to this

A meeting with Sailele village was conducted at the village fale on the **25<sup>th</sup> August 2023**. The purpose of the meeting was to confirm and name some representatives for the village Advisory council committee and the village Enforcement committee, most importantly to gather important details and village by-laws to draft and update the village Fisheries Management Plan. Present at the meeting were also the DMWR Education staff for awareness purposes. At the end of the meeting, the following were confirmed.

- Village Advisory committee members (Decision-making body of the village on anything proposed for the village MPA)
- Village Enforcement committee (enforce management measures and village by-laws within the village MPA)
  - *To be confirmed again from Mayor in the near future*

**American Samoa Coral Reef Monitoring Program (ASCRMP)** is an annual monitoring program that provides data and continual, local monitoring supporting all Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) Strategies. It also supports or provides evaluation data for most of the Local Action Strategy (LAS) objectives, specifically fulfilling the LAS Objective 11.1. At the beginning of the year, this program faced low staff capacity; therefore, ASCRMP recruited Valentine and Motusaga Vaeoso, who have worked on many CRAG-related projects and have past monitoring experiences, to assist the remaining two staff with the annual Tutuila Monitoring before the shutdown in February 2023. Analysis of the monitoring data and a final report for the 2023 monitoring of Tutuila will be the final product of this program, which will be finalized by the beginning of 2024. In addition, the final report and report cards (printed infographics) for the



2020 and 2021 monitoring will be completed by the end of this year. Delays on this project occurred due to COVID-19 impacts, government shutdown, and low staff capacity; nevertheless, with the current team, operations on these delayed projects are moving forward. Bleaching surveys are currently being conducted. Deploying the HOBO loggers around Tutuila will be completed shortly. Fish and Coral Identification are still ongoing tasks to increase accuracy for monitoring.

**Coral Restoration** is an ongoing effort to update the coral action plan and increase coral restoration efforts in American Samoa. The pilot project in Aua focuses on trial-and-error efforts utilizing three methodologies (epoxy, nails, cement). Below are the following updates and monitored actions done this year.

- One substrate stabilization technique piloted
- Growth study on 40 fragments of opportunity for *Acropora* corals with two different attachment methods over one year
- Conduct community awareness and education on coral restoration.

Although there are holdbacks on permitting nursery structures and supply availability, coral restoration efforts are ongoing via increasing capacity building within the DMWR workforce. Restoration is seeking locally available materials for future coral restoration projects. The DMWR/CRAG workforce attended workshops in Fiji and Guam on coral propagation, coral nurseries, and transplantation. These workshops have increased capacity-building within the department as many corals are affected by bleaching, coral diseases, land-based sources of pollution, overfishing, and destructive fishing impacts.

**Onesosopo Disease Monitoring** - At the beginning of 2023, we observed what appeared to be Black Band Disease during one invasive species monitoring in Onesosopo. Black Band Disease is a coral disease in which the corals develop a black band and are characterized by complete tissue degradation. The affected coral colonies were tagged and sampled for microscopy in Hawaii. In April, monitoring every week in Onesosopo continued for the tagged colonies. We received a report from Dr. Thierry Work after microscopy indicating that the main culprit for this disease was an unidentified algae. Black Band Disease in Onesosopo is still being monitored.

**Teacher and Community Projects** initiative supports teachers and organized communities in obtaining supplies for projects aligned with the Education and Outreach Strategic Communication Plan. This plan aims to enhance public awareness, community participation, and support for coral reef conservation, ultimately promoting environmental stewardship. Under the DMWR's Community-based Fisheries Management Program (CFMP), Amanave and Fagaalu Marine Protected Areas actively advocate for marine ecosystem protection. In collaboration with CFMP, Fagaalu and Amanave received 20 30-gallon trash bins, along with MPA signs. The Education and Outreach Coordinator conducted educational outreach in schools, including Matafao, St. Francis, Samoa Baptist Academy, Coleman, Aua, and Olosega Elementary, introducing the marine debris program. Trash and waste bins were donated to these schools, emphasizing future presentations on coral reef conservation.

**Storm Drain Marker Installation-** Over 60 markers were placed around the harbor area, spanning from Satala Power Station to Gatavai. These markers promote awareness of the interconnectedness of stormwater, marine debris, and our marine ecosystems. The project involved installing markers and conducting educational outreach in public schools, including St. Theresa, Peter Coleman Academy, and Aua Elementary. The Education Outreach Coordinator designed a newspaper ad for the general public, extending awareness beyond schools. This

initiative aligns with the Marine Debris Program launched by the Education Outreach Coordinator in four local schools: Samoa Baptist Academy, Coleman, Aua, and Olosega Elementary.

**Supporting Local Capacity in Marine Science and Climate Change Resilience** - This project awards two \$5,000 scholarships per semester. In Spring 2023, recipients included Miss Natasha Ripley and Miss Motusaga Vaeoso, pursuing master's programs in Marine Science at the University of Hawaii at Hilo and the University of Guam, respectively. In Fall 2023, scholarships were granted to Miss Motusaga Vaeoso and Miss Talofa Fe'a, both pursuing undergraduate programs in marine biology at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

**Aua Watershed Management Plan (WMP)** - Aua is considered one of the local priority watersheds in American Samoa. This project centers on developing a management plan concentrating on four goals based on communications with the village and local stakeholders. Horsley Witten, an NGO agency contracted to develop this plan, uses a holistic approach to address environmental and social challenges with sustainable solutions. After site visits to Aua and various meetings with the village and stakeholders, an Aua WMP draft was produced. This draft will be finalized at the beginning of December as it is undergoing a review process from Aua and local key stakeholders.

**Nuuuli Shoreline Protection Assessment** - On July 14, 2023, a visual site assessment was conducted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in response to the Order of Initial Corrective Measures for violations under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 at the Nu'uuli shoreline (DA File No. POH-2022-00138), dated July 6, 2023. The assessment aimed to plan the marine habitat assessment. On July 19, 2023, three survey teams from DMWR and CRAG conducted a comprehensive marine habitat assessment. Surveyors evaluated fish species, sizing, and abundance, while another team assessed coral demographics, focusing on threatened and endangered species listed in the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Two marine wildlife biologists surveyed for the presence of ESA-listed sea turtles. A detailed report summarizing the findings was submitted to The American Samoa Department of Public Works.

**Malaloa Wharf Extension** - On June 22, 2023, a site assessment for the upcoming dredging and expansion of the Malaloa Wharf was performed by Dr. Douglas Fenner (Lynker Technologies, LLC, Contractor) and Sana Lynch (Coral Reef Advisory Group Coordinator) via snorkel and SCUBA. A previous assessment performed by Dr. Domingo Ochavillo found around 600 coral colonies, and our assessment confirmed this finding. The size range of the corals (Table 1, Figure 1) was, on average, no greater than 60cm and was adjacent to the intended wharf extension except for two *Lobophyllia hemprichii* found at 26 feet depth during a SCUBA survey Sana Lynch performed at the planned dredging location. On June 30, 2023, five DMWR/CRAG snorkelers scoped out the proposed coral relocation site in Malaloa. A transect tape was laid out from the current wharf dock to the start of the proposed relocation area. The proposed relocation site and plan were made to transplant to corals. A report was created from this assessment and submitted to The Port Authority of American Samoa.

**US Coral Reef Task Force** – Governor Lemanu Peleti Mauga, DMWR Deputy Director Selaina Tuimavave, Sana Lynch, Fuamai Tago, and Casidhe Mahuka represented American Samoa's interests at the USCRTF meeting held from October 21st to 28th, 2023. They actively participated in USCRTF working groups, All Island Committee (AIC), and Executive and

Business Meetings. This meeting provided an opportunity to connect with various committee members and partners, including jurisdictional partners, working group members, NGO agencies, Federal partners, and government officials. These connections are invaluable for fostering future collaborations and information exchange.

### **WILDLIFE DIVISION**

The DMWR Wildlife Division managed 9 active USFWS Wildlife Restoration Grants, 1 USFWS State Wildlife Grant, and 1 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation America the Beautiful Grant during FY 2023. Grants that were delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic were resumed in FY 2023 with multiple accomplishments.

#### **Techinfo:**

The DMWR Wildlife Division provided Technical Guidance for public and private projects review in regard to Endangered Species and Wildlife Habitat. This included providing wildlife guidance on ASPA Solar Projects, DOC Infrastructure Projects, and DPW projects. DMWR Wildlife Division staff also participated in snail surveys and training with the Bishop Museum (Hawaii), USFWS, National Park of American Samoa, and ASCC Land Grant. The resulting snail surveys were the first extensive snail survey in AS in approximately 15 years.

#### **Collaborative Marine Mammals Research, Conservation, and Humpback Whale migration tracking:**

Humpback whale research resumed at American Samoa for the first time since the pandemic. Surveys were conducted in September-October off Tutuila, and researchers spotted humpback whales, spinner dolphins, and rough-toothed dolphins. Despite some stints of high winds keeping the team on land, over 90 unique individuals were documented, including 16 mother and calf pairs. Some individuals were seen only once during the month, while others were found on multiple days partaking in different social groups. At least 8% of the whales photographed in 2023 were known individuals that had previously been documented in American Samoa, one of which was seen almost 20 years ago during our 2004 research efforts. In addition to collecting individual IDs, the team also collected behavioral data, 20 genetic samples, and recordings of the 2023 song.

#### **Investing into the Status of Marine Turtles of American Samoa: Intensive monitoring of green and hawksbill turtle nesting beaches in Ofu Island and a stranding responsive programme in Tutuila Island:**

DMWR began assessing 20 historic turtle nesting beaches on Tutuila to determine the quality of nesting beaches remaining on the island. DMWR recovered over 10 stranded turtles and conducted necropsies to determine the cause of death in FY 2023. The new turtle biologist, Alpine Liusamoa, and other DMWR staff received extensive training from NOAA on turtle necropsies and turtle nesting in FY 2023.

#### **Naumati Forest Protection:**

DMWR continues with plans to conserve the last lava flow lowland rainforest in the Samoan Archipelago known as Naumati. During FY 2023, a market analysis was conducted to provide DMWR with an estimate of value for upcoming Forest Legacy Grant applications. The conservation lease of the forest continued through FY 2023. DMWR anticipates submitting a Forest Legacy IRA proposal in May 2024 for purchase and permanent protection of the forest.

**FY2023 American Samoa Wildlife Habitat Dynamics:**

The DMWR Wildlife Division successfully resurveyed large long-term forest monitoring plots on Tutuila and Manu'a. This included re-survey of the 4 long term tree plots and 4 sapling plots on Tutuila, and re-survey of the 4 long-term tree and 4 sapling plots on Ta'u.

**Population Ecology, Population Genetics, and Conservation of the Pacific Black Duck (*ANAS SUPERCILIOSA*) in American Samoa:**

DMWR worked with a crew from University of El Paso Texas to conduct fieldwork on the Pacific Black Duck (Taloa) from May – August 2023. Ducks were observed on Aunuu and Malaeloa, including 7 ducklings. Five ducks were tracked using GPS / Satellite tags. Data will provide DMWR with detailed habitat use that will be used to better manage and conserve the Pacific Black Duck population in American Samoa.

**2 DAY INSHORE FISHING COMPETITION**, Nov 11<sup>th</sup> – Nov 12<sup>th</sup> 2022 Angler and Fishing Stations were also set up for the children that want to learn how to fish, knot tying, and familiarize themselves with fishing equipment and casting. These booths were all spearheaded by our HOFNOD instructors. We also had booths from our Inshore and offshore program, Safety Guidelines from our Offshore Flag Day Fishing Tournament took place April 14-15, 2023. A total of 11 boats competed in this year's competition. While the boats were out fishing, several educational booths with activities were set up for fishermen's families and the general public. An estimated 120 people rotated through Fishing Demos, boat safety, water safety, MPA and partner booths from AS National Marine Sanctuaries and Fisheries council. Kids and parents alike rotated through each booth.

Manu'a Offshore Flag Day Fishing Tournament took place July 13, 2023. A total of 5 boats competed in this year's competition. While the boats were out fishing, HOFNOD instructor's conducted fishing clinics for the youth of Manu'a. Angler lessons consist of fish biology, rigging of rods, knot tying and safe casting. rotated through each booth.

**BOATING ACCESS DIVISION:**

The Boating Access Operation and Maintenance Division exists to ensure the facilities that connect the public to the oceans, to enjoy recreational fishing, and that boating activities are well maintained. These facilities are the only means available to the public to be able to launch their boats, develop transient capabilities for visiting vessels, safely secure local alias, trailers and vehicles. DMWR's Boating Access Division assists with the Boating community in American Samoa to continue to enjoy the oceans through generations.

There is a need to maintain Boating Access facilities to sustain operations and ensure there is no interruption in the boating access services provided to the boating community in American Samoa. The absence of consistent and effective maintenance of the Boating Access Facilities will result in the absence of quality facilities for the sport fishing and boating community of American Samoa to access its ocean for fishing and recreational boating purposes.

In FY 2023 the boating access division takes pride in providing this much needed service to our local fishermen and boaters. We had planned to purchase, repair, and replace damaged docks nonetheless, we were fortunate to have a professional Engineering team based out of Honolulu Hawaii (B.E. Engineering) that came to assess the DMWR Boating Access marinas as to its conditions and recommendations moving forward.

The overall assessment of the floating docks was found to be in critical condition, primarily due to failures and advanced deterioration of the mooring components (pile guides and rollers) as

well as widespread failures of the deck, floats, and sub-structure components. However, the steel piles are said to be in fair condition with minor to moderate corrosion and do not appear to be compromised, still able to withstand lateral dock forces.

**Accomplishments:**

Funding was now put on hold for replaceable floating docks and can allocate it elsewhere to refurbish severely damaged gangway that is now built to last for many years with One-inch-thick steel reinforced aluminum with casters and new platform.

A new enforced main entrance gate to the marina was built and a new security fence erected for patrons and facilities safety.

The DMWR Boating Access has a newly refurbished Security booth/office and restroom facilities with a new shower and a newly fabricated roof to replace the old roof so that Patrons may enjoy this new facility and private shower.



**Port State Measures Act (PSMA):** DMWR officers conducted vessel boarding, inspection, and monitored offload activities on foreign vessels. This was to ensure that all documentation satisfied all regulations associated with the Port State Measures Act.

During this period, DMWR officers boarded a total of 97 foreign vessels. Some vessels were boarded more than once when they re-entered port. Additionally, there were a total of 2 Purse Seine vessels that were boarded and inspected to ensure PSMA compliance.

**Magnuson Stevens Act (MSA):** The conservation officers conducted port checks to ensure MSA compliance under this priority. During port checks, officers observed markings to ensure legibility and that they meet currency requirements. During this period, DMWR officers boarded a total of 11 domestic vessels. Additionally, there were a total of 3 Purse Seine vessels that were boarded and inspected to ensure MSA compliance.

**Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP):** DMWR Officers inspect arriving and departing cargo and container shipments for prohibited, mislabeled, and/or undocumented fish and other seafood. The officers inspected a total of 394 containers of Albacore. They performed a total of 620 hours for Priority 3.

**National Marine Sanctuaries Act (NMSA):** DMWR officers conducted dockside, sea and land patrols to monitor and enforce the existing American Samoa National Marine Sanctuary regulations in all of the sanctuary units.

**General Enforcement: Protected Species:** Respond to illegal take of Humpback and other whales; violations of vessel approach regulations and illegal take of ESA listed sea turtle species protected under ESA and/or MMPA. Total hours performed for General Enforcement is 40 hours performed for dockside and 20 hours for clerical work.

## Food Security

Uncontrollable factors, including trade agreements, labor disputes, climate change, and the limited natural resources coupled with the remote location of American Samoa, have rendered the local economy increasingly vulnerable. This underscores the imperative for the



implementation of comprehensive plans aimed at building a more resilient Territory capable of supporting its economy and safeguarding the general welfare of its people. The Lemanu-Talauēga Administration remains steadfast in its commitment to prioritizing food security and safety.

## Department of Agriculture

In 2023, the department faced many challenges. But this did not stop the department from implementing its goals and objectives set forth in serving the people of American Samoa, especially addressing the needs of local farmers. The major hurdle was the availability of local (funds) revenue to secure supplies and hire new employees to effectively execute its many ongoing federal and local projects. Almost 90 percent of the department projects are funded by federal grants. By receiving the awards, the performance report depends heavily on data collection, documentation of projects status, verification for the use of funds, and hence the high demand for highly skilled and motivated workers.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Past administrations have failed to acquire a system to test/detect chemicals, soil residue, and water pH level for the purpose of food safety standards. Furthermore, local produce must meet FDA human consumption standards. DoA is pleased to announce the arrival of the new system (Soil Testing Machine with ThermoFisher Scientific) with the price tag of \$423,000.00

The DOA grants proceeding with the livestock farming for piggery projects; small scaled projects for existing and new pig farmers. Approved by the EPA, DOH and DOC with permits for standard size 8x16 structures to proceed with the DOA Micro Grant for Livestock Farming for piggery. 11 applicants approved to participate in this DOA project. Each applicant are also the subrecipients as approved by the Federal to receive \$4,701.00 for their small-scale piggery new and expanded piggery projects under the FY20 grant project.

DOA Micro Grant Projects for FY21 & FY22 revised to assist local farmers, new and existing to participate in its upcoming projects for basic farming tools and small-scale projects inclusive of hydroponics, livestock farming, poultry farming, gardening, aquafarming, apiary. Farmers will go through an application process for projects to receive subaward amounts of \$1,000.00 up to \$5,000.00 for their farming supplies and small-scale projects. Approval from federal and DOA to participate in its approved federal projects. DOA Projects will be announced by the end of November, 2023.

DOA Specialty Grants Project for FY21 & FY22 projects will provide an additional fifty-five vertical hydroponic systems for DOA applicants to be conducted and issued in DOA workshops. FY22 Award will assist local farmers with farming tools as it's been indicative with previous years from farmers and new farmers. Basic farming tools are in high demand within the territory from the agricultural community.

The department has been resuming participation in SPC meetings and activities since 2022. The administration re-established the participation of American Samoa in the SPC organization. American Samoa is now in the council of the PHOVAPS.

The finance division is currently establishing a master file to control the progress of personnel actions to avoid delays in the process of employee pay increments and personnel actions.

The construction of the cattle farm is currently under construction on the island of Manua. It is a project that is being implemented in Faleasao and more than 60 acres have been cleared. This project is scheduled to complete by mid-2024.

USDA Farm and Food Workers Reliefs Program:

- Outreach program and explaining the program to our local farmers
- 84 applications approved & received cards already

Distributed 50,000 tiapula to Tutuila local farmers and to the island of Manu'a (Ta'u & Ofu)

For the first time, two certified Veterinarians from the APHIS USDA Animal Health Group conducted two weeks long (Aug. 8-17) training to learn about the conditions of animal health, animal diseases and animal products that are brought into our territory. Quarantine personnel participated and other agencies were invited.

PPPO TRAINING IN RAROTONGA (21-26 August 2023)

(PPPO) Pacific plant protection organization (IPPC) International plant protection Convention phytosanitary measures workshop and PPPO Board meeting at Rarotonga Cook Island. American Samoa has once again had the opportunity to participate in this South Pacific Association of plant Quarantine and plant Biosecurity. It has been 9 years since we last attended. Hopefully we will continue to participate again in the next meeting going forward. The meeting ended successfully when American Samoa was able to help the Cook Islands to meet with the APHIS USDA team that came to do our training of the Heath plant group. Cook Island confirmed importation to Hawaii from Cook Island with Lei/Necklace (flowers/plants).

USDA 100v100v X Ray (5 September 2023) The installation of the X-ray at the airport wasn't easy. It has been sitting idle at the airport facility for many years. The previous DOA administration bought the machine but none was done to secure a technician to install it. With the spread of the COVID pandemic, it became even worse with the limitation of travel internationally. In mid-2022, Mr. Johnathan Tupuse, a Smithson tech from New Zealand, traveled from NZ to Samoa to install it. The X-ray machine currently functions well and can help with the scanning of import and export commodities.

**PAQ Total Collection FY 21-22: \$117,892.82**

**PAQ Total Collection FY 22-23: \$255,099.00**

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# State of Security

## Department of Public Safety

The Department of Public Safety responded to 2,864 calls in FY 2023. Police officers responded and investigated 1,136 criminal cases, served 871 calls for assistance, investigated 708 traffic accidents, and arrested 149 drivers' for driving under the influence of alcohol.

In further breaking down the types of calls served by DPS, the leading types of criminal cases were assault (291), followed by burglary (240) cases, public and private peace disturbance (196), stealing (136), domestic violence (98), and property damage (81). The Department of Public Safety's Vice and Narcotics Unit investigated 63 cases involving illegal drugs.

DPS has budgeted funds in FY 2024 for the following:

- A major problem facing the Department of Public Safety is the turnover of its police officers. Most of those that have resigned are due to better opportunities off-island. To address this problem DPS requested a supplemental budget for FY 2024 which was approved by the Governor and fono. The Department of Public Safety is looking forward to launching the 29th Police Academy in March 2024.
- The Police Substation West Tafuna building which was condemned as being unsafe to occupy is being renovated and the construction began in November. The project should be completed in March 2024. This Police Substation will allow DPS to better serve the Tualauta and Ituau Malosi counties.
- The Department of Public Safety Office of Motor Vehicle (OMV) continues to issue new REAL ID Driver Licenses and Identification Cards. The DPS OMV began issuing the REAL ID driver licenses and American Samoa Id cards on December 5, 2022. Thus far the Office of Motor Vehicle has issued 1,007 REAL ID Driver Licenses, 4,252 non-REAL ID Driver License, and 25 REAL ID Identification cards. A total of 5,284 Driver Licenses and Id Cards were issued by OMV in 2023.

## Department of Legal Affairs

The Department of Legal Affairs holds oversight responsibilities and is tasked with enforcing local laws while also regulating entry into the Territory. Collaborating with Public Safety, Port Administration, Homeland Security, and Agriculture, the Department plays a crucial role in safeguarding our border security. Ensuring the overall safety of the general public remains a top priority for the Administration. In addition to its enforcement duties, the Department of Legal Affairs allocates substantial resources and time to provide sound legal advice and assistance to various line and support agencies.

The following are major accomplishments by the Department of Legal Affairs in FY2023:

1. Successfully provided legal representation and legal services for the various American Samoa Government departments and agencies. The various divisions of the Department of Legal Affairs such as the Immigration Office, Travel Division, Consumer Protection Bureau, Weights and Measures, Registrar's Office, SORNA, Information Technology,

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Parole and Investigations effectively served our government and the people of American Samoa. Effective Immigration Office efforts to secure American Samoa borders resulted in Samoa Airways being fined twice for violating immigration requirements and a foreign national being immediately returned to Samoa for not having proper authorization to enter American Samoa. Territorial Registrar's Office efforts to follow land registration laws in American Samoa resulted in several persons being denied registration of communal lands as their individual lands.

2. Administration Bills Enacted into Law: Reviewed, drafted, edited and/or testified on Administration Bills submitted to the Fono which were later enacted into law: PL 38-3 provides six months period from referral of matai title dispute or communal land dispute to Office of Samoan Affairs, for hearings and completion of requirements, after which the Office of Samoan Affairs will refer matter to the Chief Justice or High Court for adjudication. PL 38-7 amends American Samoa tax code to fix the tax brackets, exemptions, and personal deductions at the 2000 levels. PL 38-4 establishes American Samoa as a ratifying member of the Western Regional Higher Education Compact and Member of Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education. PL 38-2 grants the Department of Port Administration authority to issue landing licenses to purse seiners. Long term ASG to FFA lease of 5.3 acres of land in Tafuna requiring \$6 million investment by FIFA to construct a multi-purpose soccer field which meets FIFA international standards.
3. Efforts to Repeal Federal Law Requiring Congressional Approval of Amendments to the American Samoa Constitution: Worked with Speaker Savali Talavou Ale for the local House of Representatives to pass a Resolution (H.R. 38-7) requesting Congresswoman Uifa'atali Radewagen to introduce legislation in Congress to repeal 48 U.S.C. 1662(a), a 1983 law which requires Congressional approval of any amendment to the American Samoa Constitution. Discussed with Congresswoman Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen, legislative director Richard Stanton and Department of Interior officials, the importance of Congress repealing 48 U.S.C. 1662(a) thru H.R. 6062 before DOI Secretary of Interior approves the 2022 American Samoa constitutional amendments.
4. Provide recommendation for American Samoa to first seek Associate Membership in the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) with support from the U.S. State Department and federal government and then to seek in about 2-3 years Full Membership in PIF. This is the first time in about eleven years the federal government has supported American Samoa's elevation from observer status to Associate Membership status on certain conditions.
5. Per Atoa o Samoa outcomes, locate one acre land at Taumeasina, Samoa for American Samoa Government to lease from the Samoa Government for American Samoa Government Office and compound. Drafted ASG to Samoa Government land lease at Tafuna that was signed by Governor Lemanu and Prime Minister Fiame in April together with the Samoa Government to ASG Taumeasina land lease that was drafted by the Samoa Government. Groundbreaking ceremony for the ASG Office and compound at Taumeasina held in October. Involved in efforts to secure an additional .5 acre of adjacent land at Taumeasina for ASG.
6. Per Atoa o Samoa outcomes, adopted administrative rules thru the Administrative Procedures Act (APA) to implement starting 10/19/23 a \$10 seven day waiver of entry

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permit for Samoa citizens traveling to American Samoa for tourism and business purposes. The Samoa Government reciprocated and on 10/19/23 removed for the first time in seventeen years its entry permit requirement for U.S. nationals. Samoa's seven day permit waiver for U.S. nationals also costs \$10. A report dated 11/20/23 from our Information Technology Division for the 7 day waiver of entry permit program, showed 97 Samoa citizens entered American Samoa thru this program, and there were no overstayers as of that date or any overstayers before under the permit waiver 7 days program had already returned to Samoa by 11/20/23.

7. As of August 2023, at least 1355 guest workers from Samoa were working at StarKist Samoa (SKS). In October, SKS requested an additional 500 guest workers from Samoa before the end of 2023 to ensure that SKS reaches its production goals. SKS has agreed to build a housing facility in 2024 for the GWs to reduce peace disturbances in villages throughout the territory, and to reduce absenteeism and tardiness, and provide a safe and secure living environment for the guest workers.
8. The Civil Division of the Attorney General's Office handled more than 600 civil cases in 2023. Installation of Legal Edge case management system software and server for the Attorney General's Office. This is the first time AGO is having a case management system. Training is being conducted before the Legal Edge case management system is used.
9. The Criminal Division of the Attorney General's Office handled more than 7,000 criminal and traffic cases in 2023. Implementation of access system for AGO attorneys attending court hearings with the use of laptops, VPN, and Mifi devices at court. A local law school graduate was certified as a Legal Practitioner to handle criminal, traffic and juvenile cases in court for the Attorney General's Office, when offenses charged are class B misdemeanors, class C misdemeanors or infractions. AGO has signed an agreement with the Legal Practitioner for her to travel to Hawaii (HI) to prepare for the HI bar exam and AGO will allow her preparations for the HI bar exam as remote work for AGO, and if she passes she will be employed as an Assistant Attorney General in the Criminal Division to assist with the serious shortage of AGO attorneys on island, especially prosecutors.
10. Deputy Attorney General Roy Hall and the Civil Division successfully defended ASG in a local court action by two senior LBJTMC employees regarding adverse personnel action against them. Actively involved in efforts to protect American Samoa from federal regulations that will undermine fishing vessels supplying fish to StarKist Samoa. Negotiated a settlement to resolve a U.S. Department of Justice employment discrimination case against ASG.
11. Consumer Protection Bureau and Weights & Measures divisions traveled to Ofu, Manu'a for three days to advise residents, stores and government officials of the price gouging statute and consequences for violations of ASCA 27.0901. The W&M team provided the retailer's education on food labeling rules under ASCA 27.0611. The Director of Consumer Protection Bureau and the Weights & Measures team fielded and resolved consumer complaints, several grocery store complaints and a gas station complaint. Promulgated administrative rules under the APA to require importers to label imported packages in the English or Samoan language, allow for reconditioning of packages



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labeled in other languages and to increase W & M fees. Weights and Measures equipment taken to Hawaii for calibration and brought back for use in W & M work. The Director of Consumer Protection Bureau filed an annual report to the Governor's Office and Fono per local law.

12. Employees attended training or meetings of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG), Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC), Pacific Islands Law Officers Network and training by various ASG departments.
13. The Immigration Office successfully applied for \$84,500 in ARPA funds for equipment etc.
14. The CI/Travel Division relocated from the third floor to the first floor of the Executive Office Building next to the Department of Administrative Services office. The CI/Travel office has received positive feedback from the public that the new location is more convenient and provides extensive space for public service. A small office for the Immigration Seaport Division was constructed at the Inter-Island Dock with internet and scanning machines to enable Lady Samoa passengers' travel documents to be scanned during arrival instead of their travel documents being taken to the EOB Immigration Office to be picked up during the departure date. DLA is nearing completion of its repairs of the old Public Defender's Office on the third floor of EOB.
15. The Department of Legal Affairs received two new office vehicles: the SUV Ford Explorer for the Attorney General's Office and the Toyota Tacoma truck for the Immigration Office. The Attorney General's old vehicle is now utilized by the AG's office staff for office assignments and tasks. The new Toyota Tacoma is assigned to the Immigration Office Investigations Unit to assist with enforcement efforts against overstayers and their sponsors and other matters.

## Office of the Public Defender

The Office of the Public Defender (OPD) is responsible for providing legal representation to those who are unable to afford the services of a private attorney. Established by statute in 1977, the Public Defender is a cabinet level member of the Executive Branch of the American Samoa Government.

### **Summary**

On July 4th, 2022, the sole attorney at the Office of the Public Defender, Mike White, resigned without advanced notice, leaving those accused of a crime in limbo and adding to the already staggering backlog of pending cases at the local Courts and an overcrowded correctional facility. On July 18, 2022, local attorney David P. Vargas stepped up and was appointed the Acting Public Defender. Counsel Vargas was later confirmed as the Public Defender in September of 2022. Unfortunately, Counsel Vargas passed away on September 12, 2023, but not without setting in motion and fulfilling several key accomplishments as a result of his hard work and dedication. Upon David Vargas' untimely passing, attorney Asaua F. Fuimaono stepped up to continue with the marked improvements to the PD's office.

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## **Legal Services**

### **Immediate Reduction in Case Load**

OPD implemented an innovative model of hiring independent contractors consisting of local private sector attorneys and appointing them as Acting Assistant Public Defenders to shoulder the case load assigned to the PD's office. By the end of their contract terms, the Acting APD's achieved substantial progress, decreasing the staggering caseload by several hundred cases. In fact, by the end of the 4th Quarter of Fiscal Year 2023, a total of 520 matters before the Office of the Public Defender have been closed out while taking on additional matters within a three month period.

### **Increasing Competitiveness to attract Attorneys**

Attracting attorneys to move to American Samoa has been a long term impediment primarily due to the lack of competitiveness with other U.S. jurisdictions, particularly with other U.S. territories that were able to offer higher pay and better incentives.

In 2022, the Administration created a taskforce to address the recruitment and retention problems experienced by ASG. This taskforce consists of the Lt. Governor, the Deputy Attorney General, the Governor's Legal Counsel, the Public Defender, and the Director of Administrative Services.

Several outcomes have emanated from this taskforce, but most importantly, in mid – 2023, the Administration approved a salary increase for not just attorneys, but for other professionals as well. Since the salary increases were approved and advertised, we have seen an increase of interest as ASG is now able to offer competitive salaries and incentives.

In fact, OPD has since hired a 20-year veteran defense attorney as an Assistant Public Defender, who, literally a day after he was on board, took a case to jury trial and obtained an acquittal. OPD has since obtained several dismissals and disposed of even more of the backlogged cases.

Another candidate for Assistant Public Defender has agreed to an offer made by OPD and we are awaiting processing of his paperwork to bring him on board. This would bring the number of attorney's at OPD to three (3) by the start of 2024.

The recruitment and retention program established by the Administration's taskforce remains in force and we continue to see an increase in interest by qualified attorneys and other professionals.

### **OPD-Infrastructure Development**

#### **Budget Increased -**

For Fiscal Year 2024, the Administration increased the budget for OPD to \$484,000 with additional supplemental funding of \$250,000 approved by the Fono and passed into law.

The increase in funding for OPD is not limited to local funding, as we have seen additional grant funding to allow the hiring of two additional assistant Public Defenders and one (1) qualified investigator. This would allow OPD to increase its troop strength by a total of six (6) attorneys and two (2) qualified investigators/interpreters.

Additional federal funding has been allocated to cover two (2) years of leasehold costs for the OPD's current location at the Fagatogo Square immediately across from the Courts in Fagatogo.

#### **Additional Equipment and other updates -**

In February of 2023, the Office of the Public Defender relocated to the Fagatogo Square Building in Fagatogo and is now much closer to the Courts.

New computers and necessary Microsoft Office software suites for all of the computers within OPD have been purchased, installed, have been secured and currently in use by OPD courtesy of a combination of local and federal grant funding.

An additional vehicle was purchased in anticipation of the increase in investigative and other legal staff and an additional administrative staffer started working in November of 2024.

*Institutional Knowledge, Training and Systems -*

One key impediment that has been identified, and is vigorously being addressed, is the lack of capabilities to track both legal and operational matters consistently and accurately. Accurate tracking and reporting of this data is crucial in justifying and securing enough funding to cover all of the costs for OPD as the funding for the previous years have been based upon inaccurate and/or incomplete data.

For legal matters, federal funding was secured and OPD is in the process of purchasing a professional case management system, similar to systems utilized by state and federal government agencies (public defenders as well as attorney general's offices) in the mainland United States. This would allow for better tracking and case management to ensure that all matters as assigned by the Court are handled in a professional and efficient manner.

Standard operating procedures are currently being developed and implemented to establish a systemized approach geared towards efficient OPD operations, particularly from initial intake of matters all the way to ultimate disposition of either legal or administrative matters.

For example, on the legal side, we are currently developing a bank of relevant and standard motions that are used by defense attorneys on a daily basis. This would allow trained legal support staff to draft a motion to be reviewed and revised by a qualified attorney before submission to the court. This is a massive time saver for all involved.

Currently, all staff, administrative and legal support, are undergoing cross training to enable all staff to cover each position within OPD should a staffer with a designated area of responsibility become unavailable or out of the office.

Ultimately, the long term goal is to develop, instill, an internal program to retain institutional knowledge of the expertise, policies, procedures, data, training, experience, skill sets, and know-how. This knowledge and experience are a collection of input from the Administration's taskforce and this know-how will be stored and passed on to future staffers and serve as the foundation for the Office of the Public Defender infrastructure moving forward.

## **Department of Homeland Security**

The American Samoa Department of Homeland Security (ASDHS) is the central coordinating agency for the American Samoa Government with Federal, State, Tribal, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Religious denominations in response to Natural or Man-Made Disasters through its Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The Department provides disaster and technical assistance through the TEMCO and law enforcement via OTICIDE to combat terrorism in all forms, white collar crime, human trafficking, and the distribution and sale of illegal narcotics. The Department serves as the custodian of records through the Office of Vital Statistics (OVS) for all birth and death certificates, divorce records and other sensitive decrees. Additionally, the Department delivers intelligence products and services through the Fusion

Center to agencies on a no-cost basis including civil and criminal investigations, leadership development and training, supporting organizational assessments, and training and management assistance. The Department also delivers services and federal funding assistance to Non-for-Profit (NGO) Organizations.

### **Emergency Management Preparedness Grants:**

The Emergency Management Preparedness Grants are a cornerstone of ASDHS emergency management efforts, providing critical funding for preparedness, mitigation, and response activities. These grants enable us to build capacity, enhance coordination, and improve our response capabilities.

Accomplishments: During the year 2023, TEMCO achieved several significant milestones through the Emergency Management Preparedness Grants:

- Enhanced training and exercises for first responders and emergency personnel.
- Strengthened community outreach and education programs to raise awareness of disaster preparedness.
- Improved communication and coordination mechanisms among local, state, and federal agencies.
- Upgraded emergency operations centers and communication infrastructure to ensure efficient response during crises.
- Developed and updated emergency response plans and hazard mitigation strategies.

### **Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant:**

The Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant supports our efforts to prepare for and respond to hazardous materials incidents. It is essential for safeguarding our communities from potential environmental and public health risks.

Accomplishments: In the year 2023 TEMCO accomplished the following under the Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant:

- Conducted hazardous materials training for emergency responders and hazmat teams.
- Collaborated with industry partners to enhance hazard assessments and risk management.
- Strengthened coordination with regulatory agencies for hazardous materials transportation safety.
- Conducted public awareness campaigns on hazardous materials safety and reporting.

### **National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program:**

The National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program is vital for our coastal communities' resilience to tsunami events. It allows us to develop comprehensive mitigation strategies and improve early warning systems.

Accomplishments: In the year 2023, TEMCO achieved notable successes through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program:

- Enhanced tsunami evacuation planning and signage in coastal areas.
- Deployed and maintained advanced tsunami detection and warning systems.
- Conducted public education campaigns to educate residents about tsunami risks and evacuation procedures.

- Coordinated with federal and state agencies to streamline response and recovery efforts in the event of a tsunami.
- Developed and updated tsunami hazard maps and evacuation routes.

TEMCO's efforts in the year 2023 under the Emergency Management Preparedness Grants, Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant, and the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program have significantly contributed to our community's safety and resilience. We remain committed to improving our capabilities and addressing challenges as we continue to work towards a more prepared and resilient territory.

### **Tsunami Early Warning System:**

TEMCO continues to provide outreach to local partners and stakeholders as a way to provide emergency coordination to members of the general public. Outreach opportunities were delivered to schools, churches and private organizations. These outreach opportunities provide valuable information to the public on how to prepare for disasters and emergency situations.

The tsunami siren alert system is about 70% Operable at this time, this is due to the collaborated effort of AS Power Authority, AS Telecommunications, and AS Homeland Security while the Department is coordinating closely with American Signal Corporation (ASC), and the arrival of equipment and spare parts, to rehabilitate long standing sirens that are due routine maintenance (siren heads, solar panels, batteries, etc.) from deterioration from natural elements since the loosening of travel restrictions into American Samoa.



The Department has started to receive parts from ASC and schedule the arrival of the Technician in January 2024 to complete the repairs and upgrade to our Tsunami Warning Alerting System.

- Operational EOC Radio Activated Sirens: 38
- Inoperable Sirens: 18
- Combined Total of Operable Sirens: 56

### **Office of Territorial & International Criminal Intelligence and Drug Enforcement (OTICIDE)**

OTICIDE exists as a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional task force for the purpose of enhancing interagency coordination and intelligence gathering to facilitate interagency and multi-jurisdictional investigations. Furthermore, OTICIDE was designated as the lead investigative agency for illegal drug trafficking and human trafficking with its functions to include but are not limited to:

Federal and International Law Enforcement Systems which are under the direct oversight of OTICIDE continue to provide ample and needed personal and criminal background information to assist with our local government employment hiring process. These systems assist law enforcement officers with their on-going investigations, and it also provides our court systems with pre-sentencing reports for court review.



- National Criminal Intelligence Center (NCIC) – FBI operated system
- National Law Enforcement Telecommunication System (NLETS)
- INTERPOL I-24/7 System – American Samoa is a Sub-Bureau of the United States National Central Bureau (USNCB) US INTERPOL. INTERPOL consists of 194 member countries in the world.



Caption 3: OTICIDE Agents completing 40 Hours/5 Day Course on Foundations of Intelligence Analysis.



Caption 4: ASDHS Campaign joins National Campaign of “See Something, Say Something”

**AS Department of Homeland Security Invests heavily to combat Drugs & Narcotics in American Samoa.**

1. **NEW Ford F150** is a 4X4 Truck with a towing package and a utility box in the back. The towing capacity is 14,000 lbs and has a 10 speed automatic transmission.



2. **xCraft Drones. MATRIX SE/Matrix SE w/LiDar/Matrix SE w/FLIR.** The MATRIX SE is a powerful and efficient American-made workhorse that comes with an SUI Controller and Android tablet. Depending on the power you need, easily swap payloads. 4K camera with 3.5X zoom, LIDAR,



3. **Border Patrol Drug Enforcement Vessel.** A 32 ft Catamaran style vessel or Super Alia. The vessel is equipped with standard maritime required safety gear and equipment. The vessel is powered by twin 300HP Mercury Verado outboard motors. This vessel is also equipped with a GARMIN radar and autopilot feature. The fuel capacity of the vessel is 250 gallons, and it comes with its own trailer. Lastly, the vessel will have a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) capability to see at night.

### Office of Homeland Security

Office of the Homeland (OHS) Division is responsible for the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) is one of the three grant programs that constitute the DHS/FEMA focus on enhancing the ability of state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as nonprofits, to prevent, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks. These grant programs are part of a comprehensive set of communities against potential terrorist attacks. Among the five basic homeland security missions noted in the DHS Strategic Plan, HSGP supports the goal to Strengthen National Preparedness and Resilience.

OHS additional functions are responsible for establishment of the American Samoa Fusion Center (ASFC) per Executive Order No. 005-2017 signed by then Governor Lolo. M. Moliga. “Fusion Center” means an effective and efficient multidisciplinary and multi-agency organization to better enable information sharing between member agencies in support of criminal investigations, homeland or national security, and to reduce threats to security. The focus on the Fusion Center are the Big Four: Anti-Terrorism, Drugs, White Collar Crimes and Human Trafficking

### American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA) Radio System Upgrade

ASDHS aims to improve the radio system communication between all essential and involved agencies (such as DPA and ASPA) by upgrading each of their radio systems. As indicated in the



title, this project funded the upgrade of ASPA's radio system. Radio repeaters were planted in Olotele (as one of the sites in their plan).

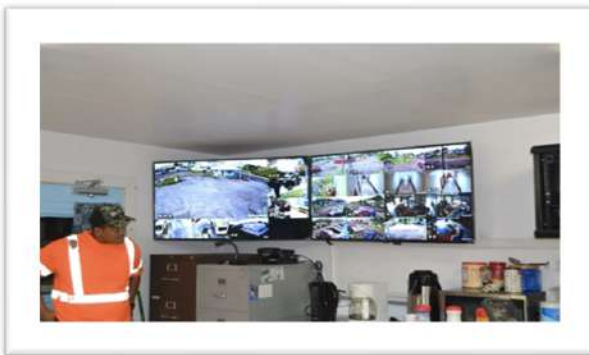


### **AS Election Office Cybersecurity Upgrades**

The HSGP continues to support the American Samoa Election Office in their efforts to preserve their voter's system by hardening their physical and cyber-security. During the course of this year, the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) helped secure desktops and computer monitors to equip the Election Office with the tools needed to efficiently perform their operations, especially preparations for this year's pass election season.

### **DPW Security Camera System**

In the event of a terrorist attack, DPW would be an effective target. Not only do they house and operate heavy equipment and machinery critical to disaster response and ASG daily operations, they also manage the gas station that fuels the entire ASG fleet of vehicles. The destruction of ASG assets would debilitate an emergency response. For these reasons, security layers have been implemented to better protect such assets of ASG. The DPW security surveillance system was completely installed in April 2023.



### **HSGP | Non-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP)**

Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) are part of a suite of grant programs that constitute the DHS/FEMA focus on enhancing the ability of state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as nonprofits, to prevent, prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks.

## **HSGP | State & Local Cyber Security Grant Program (SLCGP)**

The State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) is intended to address cybersecurity risks and threats to information systems of the government and territory. This grant program is intended to fund projects and activities that address the following overarching goals:

1. Implement cyber governance and planning
2. Assess evaluate systems and capabilities
3. Mitigate prioritized issues
4. Build a cybersecurity workforce

### Accomplishments:

**NSGP:** During calendar year 2023, the ASDHS was awarded the NSGP FY2023 award totaling **\$1,217,884**. Of the total award, **\$1,156,990** is allocated to sub-recipients whose applications were approved.

### The 8 sub-recipients for NSGP FY2023 are:

1. The Christopher James Foeoletini Ledoux Foundation
2. Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa – Nuuuli
3. Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa – Utulei
4. Happy Valley Baptist Church
5. Leone Seventh-Day Adventist
6. Talalelei o le Faaolataga CCCAS
7. Fagatogo CCCAS
8. Back on Track

**SLCGP:** The Department facilitated and coordinated the establishment of the American Samoa Cybersecurity Planning Committee (ASCPC), composed of cybersecurity and IT personnel throughout ASG and led by the American Samoa Technology Office. In the calendar year 2023, through the newly established ASCPC, ASDHS facilitated the development of the American Samoa Cybersecurity Plan, an official cybersecurity plan for the territory, which has been approved locally by ASG leadership and FEMA.

## **HSGP**

In the calendar year 2023, the ASDHS was awarded the HSGP FY2023 award totaling \$1,108,000. This grant will fund projects and activities that will improve the territory's counterterrorism posture through the implementation of security-related projects and activities as approved by FEMA.

## **Office of Vital Statistics**

**Revenue:** This year, OVS has collected a total of 112,980.00 in fees for our mentioned services. The revenue we collect goes to our American Samoa Government general fund.

**System Upgrade:** Vital Statistics has been operating on manual and paper files for the last century, while other territories and states have upgraded to electronic files. OVS has been working with other departments and our federal counterparts for assistance and OVS has finally secured funding to move OVS to the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the electronic filing system. This new upgrade will be ready as early as January 2024. In addition to this new system upgrade, OVS has

already secured new state-of-the-art security papers for all vital records. For the first time ever our new certificates will have the look, feel and security of other states and territories issued birth certificates. This new security paper will launch at the same time as our new upgraded system.

**Vital Check:** To keep up with demands of our people’s vital records needs all over the world, OVS offers online service to request for birth, marriage and death certificates. Our vital check website Successfully completed all vital check orders and our list is up-to-date as of today.

## **American Samoa Department of Corrections**

The recently established American Samoa Government Department of Corrections, separated from the Department of Public Safety, is dedicated to addressing the needs of the corrections population. Responsible for the safety and security of lawfully detained individuals, the department ensures compliance with legal requirements and health standards for the well-being of occupants. Celebrating its one-year anniversary since formation on December 20, 2022, through Public Law 37-14, the Corrections Department highlights significant developments and achievements achieved in the past year.

### ***Personnel***

Personnel has grown from 57 to 104, encompassing key roles such as the Director, Deputy Director, Administration, Counselors, Correctional Officers, and Cooks. Additional positions, including the Assistant Warden, Training Coordinator, Administrative Assistant, and fifty-five correctional officers, were added to support operational success and stability. Fifteen correctional officers are funded through the CJPA grant, contributing to our mission of effectively supervising and rehabilitating detainees.

### ***Building Structure***

Currently, the department has no administrative building, and the facility has limited space to house all its stakeholders. Fortunately, the administrative division temporarily rents office space at the Tafuna DYWA as it is closer to the operation. The Juvenile Detention Center is moving from the old facility to a newly remodeled temporary location on Tolu Street in Lion’s Park, Tafuna area. This movement will hold the juveniles until the new building is complete. The plan for the New Alternative School is in its final stages of planning. It is currently undergoing the procurement process for bidding before proceeding to construction. This work is in progress and is estimated to be completed between one and two years. The fencing of the prison wall has been launched. This work will construct an additional 4-6 feet chain link fence with razor concertina wire to ensure no escapes. This work is in progress and will be completed next week.

A plan is in progress for a medical infirmary to be built to serve the incarcerated population. This effort is in the planning phase between the ASDC and DOH. An infirmary inside the prison will treat non-critical incarcerated patients and will be funded by the Department of Public Health. This project will save unnecessary trips to the hospital and prevent escapes and threats to the community.



***Programs/Systems***

Sixteen cameras are already in place inside and outside the facility, including the front parking lot. Additional cameras will be installed in the back area as part of this inaugural implementation of a corrections system in American Samoa. The project aims to have a total of twenty-six cameras upon completion. The department has procured Quickbase, a data software, and both the IT division and administration are undergoing training to operate it. This database will sustain the department by collecting crucial information for various purposes, including in-depth studies of the prison system, the execution of rehabilitation and re-entry programs, and generating data to support grant proposals.

***Grants/Funding***

The Department of Corrections received its first grant award in August 2023 from ARPA for \$417,000. This grant was awarded to fulfill the safety and health areas of the operation left unattended for a period. It provides extra cells and improves the facilities' air circulation and industrial fans. It also provides a security system to assist with surveillance and patrolling. Furthermore, it funds materials to improve the condition of the facility in terms of office supplies such as computers, printers, laptops, and more. The second grant proposal was submitted in October 2023 to the Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council to be considered for OPIOID funding. We requested assistance to fund re-entry and rehabilitative programs, counseling positions, and equipment required for the safety and improvement of the operation. Corrections will also be receiving assistance through the CJPA RSAT program. The RSAT (Residential Substance Abuse Treatment) program provides a counselor and has selected four inmates to treat in this program. The counselor will video-conference the inmates three to four times weekly to rehabilitate them.

***Training/Staff Development***

Corrections Academy, class 0123, embarked on October 22, 2023, for a duration of four weeks. The academy comprises academic courses, physical training, government agency training, and professional development. Courses include law enforcement correctional training, psychology and the legal system, constitutional law, mental health and awareness, human resources new hire training, and more. This is the first academy for the department, and it will conclude next week, Wednesday, November 22, 2023, with a graduation, conferring the first commencement class in the department's history.

**Criminal Justice Planning Agency**

As the designated State Administering Agency of the American Samoa Government, the Criminal Justice Planning Agency is tasked with the sole responsibility to administer and monitor all criminal justice grant programs that are awarded to the territory of American Samoa from the United States Department of Justice. The Criminal Justice Planning Agency continues a collaborative effort between partnering criminal justice agencies, departments and stakeholders to advance the mission and purpose of the American Samoa Criminal Justice System with regard to the administration and monitoring of all grant awards to ensure effectiveness and efficiency across the spectrum.

**Accomplishments:**

**SMART Office determines Substantial Implementation Status of SORNA in American Samoa:** The U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Sex Offender

Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) declares the Territory of American Samoa substantially compliant with the implementation of the provisions of the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) with regard to Title I of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006. The SORNA Office continues its obligation and duties to maintain consistency with current SORNA regulations, with demonstration and adherence to ongoing practices in the American Samoa jurisdiction. Thus, as part of the annual implementation assurance review conducted by the SMART Office, American Samoa has been declared a status of substantial implementation of the SORNA.

**ARPA Non-Profit Assistance Program:**

The ARPA Non-Profit Assistance Program under the Criminal Justice Planning Agency continues its mission and objective to effectively respond to non-profit organizations that were impacted by the pandemic, and by distribution of ARPA funds has allowed Nonprofit Organizations to sustain economic recovery. With the support of ARPA funding, Nonprofit Organizations have been able to:

1. Recover lost potential revenue due to COVID restrictions imposed by the government;
2. Offset expenditures of the Nonprofit Organization that would have been covered by said revenue;
3. Re-stabilize the capacity of the Nonprofit Organization in efforts to continue providing essential services to the general population at very low to no cost;
4. Enhance the capacity of beneficial services to the general population at very low to no cost.

**Continuing Grant Projects for FY 2023:**

**ARPA Non-Profit Assistance Program:** The ARPA Non-Profit Assistance Program has successfully processed and approved twenty of twenty-two subrecipients eligible for funding for their projects. Among the subrecipients of this award include the CCCAS Nua and Seetaga & the CCCAS Kanana-Fou. Their projects are 100% in completion. The CCCAS Kanana-Fou project is now providing housing units for low-income households in a market that has high demand and little supply. Other subrecipients such as Back on Track, also serves families of their clients who can be qualified as potential clientele of these housing units. Another subrecipient, Hope House has had a significant amount of their award funds paid to them as their project is for the renovation of a wing of their facility. They are a unique entity as they are the sole providers of 24-hour care to their patients who are diagnosed with various terminal illnesses.

**ARPA Subrecipient Project Highlights**

**Hope House:** There were several aspects of their project that included renovations to their facility, a purchase of a wheelchair accessible van, and funds for some personnel. The renovation to the facility is for areas where patients are housed. The facility itself is an old building with aging structural support, plumbing and wiring. With the increase of patients coming in, the facility needs to be updated to be able to operate industrial equipment that is being purchased to be able to meet the demands. Materials that needed to be purchased for the renovations were not only costly but oftentimes, had to be ordered well in advance to be shipped here on time for the work to be done.

**Intersections Inc.:** Their current project is to get an enrollment of youth to plan, conduct and perform in shows that portray the traditional art of dance and story-telling. Majority of funding was spent on equipment for the shows including instruments along with equipment and costumes to be used by the youth performers. This enables the youth to foster respect between their peers, instructors, learn time management and have a sense of responsibility. This also helps their

families learn how to manage time and be involved with their child/children's lives by being present during both practices and performances.

**Pala Lagoon Swimming Center Inc.:** The funds expended were to purchase cleaning supplies and an important piece of equipment, a defibrillator, for safety reasons. Most of the necessary supplies to clean a pool are hard to find on island and if they are found, they are quite expensive compared to the same resources and supplies found in the mainland. The project they have proposed was to purchase a few necessary safety gears along with necessary renovations in the "kiddie pool" areas. Work in those areas have not yet commenced. The funds expended has allowed the Pala Lagoon to complete their renovations in replacing tiles in the pool making the swimming center safe for aquatic activities.

**Oceania Community Development Network:** Funds expended were to help secure a stable space for the NPO to operate and provide their services to their clients. Supplies and equipment were also purchased for the enhanced operation of the NPO in hopes to provide the services at a more efficient rate. Their work has mainly increased the interests of students in subjects of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts & mathematics).

**American Samoa Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence:** Funds expended helped the NPO renovate a space for their organization to offer more training and workshops along with a temporary safe space for their clientele before placing them in a more permanent living situation.

**CCCAS Nua & Se'etaga Church:** The funds expended were used to renovate the hall as it is located on the coastline. Aside from the elements of the islands the structure is faced with ocean spray daily causing it to deteriorate at a much faster rate than structures that are not on the coastline. Renovations include changing of windows, some electric work and wiring as sea salt can corrode at a fast pace. The maintenance of the hall is an important work as it is used by many different entities that affect the lives of the general public.

**Nature's Educational Laboratory of American Samoa:** The funds expended helped the NPO secure a more stable place for administrative purposes along with purchasing various equipment and supplies that will be used for the school children during their activities. Currently, the organization has been running their summer program with modules that include webinars and field trips. Their theme for summer 2023 is "Birds and Sea Turtles of American Samoa". They are currently preparing for the new school year with designing new modules along with updating old modules that could be incorporated in the future.

**Alofa Tunoa Samoa Medical Supply:** The funds expended were able to purchase 5 of those custom wheelchairs. So far, only one of the clients has received their chair. Four of the other chairs are still being assembled and shipped. With the one chair that has arrived and currently in use, the livelihood of this individual has drastically changed for the better and has enabled him to be a part of daily family activities.

**Back On Track:** Most of the funds expended on their part has helped them transition from a mobile service provider to a brick and motor place that allows for their clients to navigate their location at any given time of day. A landline with Wi-Fi services has also been installed for when clients and potential clients need to get a hold of Back on Track for a virtual or over-the-phone guidance and/or counseling sessions.

**American Samoa Legal Aid:** The funds expended was spent on one industrial printer that is a necessity to their organization. This allows them to serve the public by providing legal documents that are needed for their clientele in their various legal needs.

**Agency for Better Living Endeavors Inc.:**The NPO also initiated and carried out an emergency assistance program that allowed the dispersal of cash for utility expenses to families that were displaced from their jobs. during the COVID shut down. Their project consists of different services and events during the calendar year. The NPO would like to have another year of such activities and although funds have not been expended, an invoice has been recently submitted for some office equipment. ABLE Inc. plans to move forward with their annual projects, one being an involved partner in the very successful event dubbed the Moso'oi Festival.

**Tualauta I:** Tualauta I – Drug Free Coalition’s project consists of opening a computer lab available to the public for any needs there might be. Whether it be for educational purposes or trying to apply for a job, the NPO envisions a place where anyone can benefit from its use. Invoices have been submitted to purchase equipment and computers for the computer lab.

**Christopher James Foeoletini Ledoux Foundation:** Their proposed projects are to implement a tele-health center along with establishing a data collection system that will allow the ability to track substance-use disorder victims. The vision is to also have a facility dedicated to treating those with substance-use and abuse disorders as there is currently no facility of this capacity on island.

**Parents of Children with Special Needs:** A facility was recently acquired with the funds expended and soon their programs of teaching the special needs children will be housed under one roof. Programs and workshops such as vocational training, special adult education and independent living are some of the services the NPO intends to establish. This is to both help the special needs child/young adult be more independent and give some peace of mind to the parents of children with special needs in knowing that they are better equipped for life.

**Marion Elmer Liki Reed II Foundation:** Originally, their goal was to provide these services to the youth of the village of Fagatogo but they have since opened up to the general public. Their proposed project is to have a food pantry that will be open to the general public offering both food items and COVID prevention supplies and PPES (masks, sanitizers, etc.) Plans of renovating an area of their facility for a cooler/freezer with a generator will allow for a lasting pantry for their project.

**Harvest Vision Church:** The proposed project by the eleemosynary organization is to provide canned goods to families in need. The funds that have been expended have helped to purchase canned goods and deliveries to families, mostly in the Tafuna area, that are in need of this service.

**Friends of the Museum American Samoa:** A portion of the funds will go towards recovering lost revenue. The proposed projects of the NPO consist of digitizing their current collection and establishing a new exhibit that will display "old ways of life" of Samoa.

**Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa - 'Aoa:** Their proposed project is for the renovation of their hall that is used in various aspects of life of the entire community and for the installation of a system for livestreaming visual and audio services in the church hall and will

be used for both religious and nonreligious purposes. Like the previous NPO (CCCAS Nua & Se'etaga) the hall is used for any and all functions of the community and their various events.

**Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa - Amanave:** The proposed project is to establish an "internet café" that will encourage their community members, especially their elderly to learn computer literacy. The village of Amanave is one of the more rural villages and during the COVID shutdown, one of the most vulnerable members of society were the elderly. Due to their lack of knowledge and skills with technology, staying connected online was not an option for most of these individuals. It is the NPO's goal to have a place where internet access is easily available and accessible and where they can learn how to use computers and the internet. In order to complete this project goal, renovations to the hall are necessary for this purpose.

**American Samoa Community Cancer Coalition:** No funds have been expended; however, invoices are forth-coming for their proposed project to increase awareness of vaccines and cancer screenings.

**American National Red Cross - American Samoa Branch Office:** Their proposed projects include the maintenance of their facility on island and for recruitment and training of local volunteers. During the COVID pandemic, the American Samoa Government closed its borders and the NPO could not send down volunteers as they normally do. The need for trained local volunteers is necessary to provide relief and support to victims of both natural and human-made disasters; and to ultimately prevent and prepare for, and respond to emergencies.

**Community Based Policing Project – Aumaga Aid Project:** The Community Based Policing project is financed under the Justice Assistance Grant Award (JAG award). A program focused primarily on building relationships with the community with respect to the cultural and traditional structure of governance. The goal of this project is to provide necessary assistance to active village aumaga groups to serve and protect in the traditional and cultural sense through the village curfews. It is also critical that through this project a strong relationship between the government and the aumaga groups must prosper to bear fruit with the same goals of promoting safety and peace among its communities and strengthening this vital part of the village governance and motivating the spirit of community involvement.

**School Resource Officer Program:** The School Resource Officer Program continues its initiative of safeguarding schools and supporting the education system in American Samoa. Initially, the SRO Program was awarded to the territory under the COPS Hiring Program with a purpose to reinforce and integrate Community-Based Policing Initiatives in American Samoa and as part of the Criminal Justice Planning Agency's goal to secure and protect its citizens and communities and especially the target population of the SRO Program, which are the school-based environments. School Resource Officers carry out essential services to support and advance the mission and goals of each school and to provide insight to class management and instruction, but not limited to mentorship, and exercising safety strategies and protocols. In partnership with the Department of Public Safety, Department of Education and the Office of Samoan Affairs, the School Resource Officer Program establishes a standard of best practices that aid in the administering and managing of criminal behavior/demeanor among other common concerns that occur in a school-based setting. SROs have contributed immensely post-COVID and have had first-hand experiences of the imminent issues that arise in the event of a pandemic, and how it impacts specific areas of the education system and setting, within the school



administration and faculties that were tasked with accommodating students with interactive learning during the transition phases.

Most notably, School Resource Officers have assumed a wide variety of tasks and responsibilities that have molded a change in the nature of their role, including the network of interpersonal acquaintanceships formed between SROS and school officials. A realization that avoids any impaired communication and interaction, and rather provides growth and reliability on informal relationships to create rapport with not only school officials but also students and promotes receptive communication in this regard. Furthermore, SROs have maintained a high level of visibility during school time, dismissal, and school period rotation. Maintaining visibility and supervision of the school campus and has created an advantage for accountability and transparency in reassuring safety protocols and to prevent at-risk students of misconduct. A consistent theme that resonates in SRO reports is the success in addressing concerns and needs of the student population through collaboration of key personnel, faculty and staff. The invaluable support of the SRO Program has enabled best practices and resolutions, resulting in reduced suspensions, disciplinary actions, school violence and crimes in the areas surrounding schools. School Resource Officers continue to create a lasting positive impression in school environments.

**American Samoa Sex Offender Registry Project:** The American Samoa Sex Offender Registry Division is under the Office of the Attorney General and is tasked with the management and operation of the American Samoa Sex Offender Registry. The SORNA Office partners with various divisions of the AG's Office to successfully track and register all convicted sex offenders in the Territory of American Samoa. The collaborative divisions include the Probation Office, Criminal (Prosecution) Office, Parole Office and the Travel and Immigration Office. Other partnering government agencies include the Department of Corrections and the Department of Corrections. The duties of these partnering agencies are to retrieve and disseminate information to ensure successful operation of the Sex Offender Registry. The SORNA Division continues its efforts to track and register convicted sex offenders who have not yet been registered, and to ensure that they are in compliance with SORNA standards.

The Sex Offender Registry Project and notification programs allow the general public awareness and informing the public about sex offender information for the purpose of safety and protection of their well-being. Through distribution of information and data on their website, this initiative supports availability and accessibility for the general public to be wary of their surroundings and to also help the local authorities to provide information on the whereabouts of convicted sex offenders. As a compliance requirement for SORNA, they are mandated to register and collect sex offender information and submit to the Tribe and Territory Sex Offender Registry System (TTSORS). The functions of the TTSORS include provision of the public sex offender registry for American Samoa's jurisdiction. SORNA Division is also required to submit sex offender information through the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) System under the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Submission of sex offender information to NCIC is a compliance requirement as well.

Under the Department of Justice, Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking (SMART) Office, the American Samoa Sex Offender Registry has completed implementation of SORNA requirements and standards for its jurisdiction, and is fully compliant with SORNA regulations set forth by the SMART Office. This certification is a part of the annual assurance certification review verified by the SMART Office.

**Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program:** The Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) Program assists states and local governments to implement substance abuse treatment programs and services in local correctional facilities. The RSAT Program continues its effort to initiate and provide treatment and rehabilitation services to the RSAT Clientele housed at the Tafuna Correctional Facility (TCF) under the American Samoa Department of Corrections. To accommodate the necessary and imperative needs of these individuals, additions have been made to the RSAT room at the TCF that is equipped with installation of a teleconference system, television screen and computer for the purpose of establishing virtual telehealth services to include on-site counseling services at the TCF; with the support of certified and licensed counselors on-board. The RSAT Program anticipates to continue these services for the purpose of aiding the RSAT Clientele to assess and provide individualized treatment plans to ensure successful goal-oriented outcomes upon completion of the program.

**Sexual Assault Services Program:** The Sexual Assault Services Program continues initiatives to provide critical services to sexual assault victims through grant funding, in efforts to connect these individuals with the specific victim services and support services that they need. This is a collaborative effort between the Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS) and the Criminal Justice Planning Agency. The DHSS initiates programs catered to sexual assault victims with significant challenges and individuals who have experienced sexual crimes.

## **Governor’s Drug Control Office**

### **Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council**

Established by the Governor's Executive Order, the Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council (CSAC) is Chaired by the Lieutenant Governor Talauega E.V. Ale and receives coordination support from the Governor’s Drug Control Office with a core focus of minimizing the growing drug epidemic in the territory. The Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council (CSAC) convenes quarterly to exchange updates and provide feedback on best practices and lessons learned along its key goals and subcommittees: (1) Prevention & Awareness (2) Enforcement (3) Treatment & Rehabilitation.

The **Prevention & Awareness** (Outreach) subcommittee is Co-Chaired by Departments of Youth & Women Affairs (DWYA) and the Office of the Samoan Affairs. The community outreach programs help promote the anti-drug message to schools, faith-based organizations and communities in the territory. It conducted outreach to more than 10 elementaries and 4 high schools comprising more than 25 community engagements in 2023 including the Manu’a islands. Three Billboards have been erected in high-traffic and high-visibility areas of the community as part of an anti-drug messaging campaign. One is located in the Fagatogo central area across from the MarketPlace. The other two are located at the beginning and the end of Nu’uuli.

The **Enforcement** subcommittee is Co-Chaired by the Departments of Homeland Security & Legal Affairs focusing on enforcing laws, maintaining public order, and managing public safety. The DPS, Vice & Narcotics Division along with the Custom Division of the Department of Treasury are working on combating illegal drugs infiltrating the territory. The Enforcement sub-committee focuses on Seaport, Airport and at the Post Office confiscating any illegal drugs coming into the territory. There were more than 56 illegal drug bust cases that the enforcement initiative has conducted year alone.

The **Treatment & Rehabilitation** subcommittee is Chaired by the Department of Health with the assistance of other ASG Departments and Non-Profit Organizations. The focus of this sub-committee is providing treatment options to community members seeking to get back, keep, or improve abilities that they need for daily life. These abilities may be physical, mental, and or cognitive thinking and learning. Additionally, the Treatment & Rehabilitation emphasizes the importance of Mental Health. There are community-based organizations to include Non-Profit Organizations that offer treatment for patients seeking help.

The Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council received opioid settlement funds and has established policies and procedures to intake and review applications from government and non-profit organizations whose missions align with the allowable uses of these funds to address substance abuse issues.

The Governor Drug Control Office is housed at the Moso'i Business Center in Ottoville in Tafuna with the assistance of the Comprehensive Substance Abuse Council (CSAC).

## Office of the Administrative Law Judge

### I. OALJ WORK PLAN - PROJECT "A, B, C" GOALS & ACHIEVEMENTS 2023

#### A. PROJECT "A" GOAL: TO IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY TO SAFE, AFFORDABLE, AND EFFICIENT OALJ SERVICES

##### 1. ACHIEVEMENTS as of 2023 Year End:

- Installation of hearing room cameras for remote hearings. **ARPA funded – 100% complete;**
- Installation of auto transcriber for reduced transcription fee costs. **ARPA funded - 100% complete;**
- Attachable plexi-glass screens for desk used by attorneys, witness, clerk, judges during pandemics. **ARPA funded - 100% complete;**
- Replacement of ceiling beams damaged by leakage, mold, termite infestation. **ARPA funded - 100% complete;**
- OALJ Website: IT contracted to set up a website for contact information, standardized forms. **ARPA funded – 5% complete.** (Planning phase started. Estimated completion **2nd Qtr. 2023**);
- OALJ Procedure & Practice Rules, Standard forms, draft & promulgation. **75% complete.** (Estimated completion & release **2nd Qtr. 2024**);
- OALJ media outreach OALJ enhanced services. **25% complete.** (Planning phase started, estimated implementation **2nd Qtr. 2024**).

##### 2. MEANINGFUL MEASUREMENTS: Qualitative & Quantitative

- Remote video hearings held;
- Transcript ordered and paid;
- Clicks to OALJ website;
- Solicited public comments on accessibility of OALJ services; New cases opened;
- Filing fees generated to General Funds.

##### 3. GOVERNOR POLICY GOALS SUPPORTED or ACHIEVED:

- Reduce public burdens;
- Increase public awareness of agency's services;
- Support for due process;
- Efficiency and streamline of agency's services;

- Reduction in overall ASG costs.
4. COSTS: a) Local Funds: 0 b) Federal: AARPA funded sector
  5. OPPORTUNITIES: Positive gain to ASG with large federal ARPA funding \$185,000 received by OALJ invested mostly in upgrade of IT equipment and IT training for OALJ Staff. This will allow OALJ to offer remote hearing services to parties involved in cases, including witnesses and attorneys abroad, reducing costs for travel for local hearings (especially parties receiving medical treatment off-island). Promotes efficient processing of cases and operations due to upgraded case file and operations management technology installation. No local General Revenue funds invested in this sector with benefits for years to come.

**B. PROJECT "B" GOAL: REDUCTION IN PENDING CASELOAD AND TURN AROUND TIME BY END OF FISCAL YEAR BY 50% OF TOTAL PENDING CASELOAD OF PRIOR FISCAL YEAR.**

1. ACHIEVEMENTS as of 2023 Year End.
  - **75% of 50% Complete**
2. MEANINGFUL MEASUREMENTS:
  - Number of pending cases closed current fiscal year vs. prior fiscal year;
  - Average number of days from filing petition /complaint to issuance of final decision acceptable for type of subject matter.
3. GOVERNOR POLICY GOALS SUPPORTED:
  - Support for due process;
  - Efficiency and streamline of agency's services.
4. COSTS: Local Funds: <\$60,000 ALJ Pro Tempore Budgeted>
5. OPPORTUNITIES: The rate of reduction of pending caseload and turnaround time is key to monitoring the efficiency of a properly functioning agency. Law reforms under the CARR Project will include identifying clearly for agencies where disputes of agency director and permit decisions must be first appealed to. As required by the ALJ Act, most of these will be appealed first to the OALJ and not the high Court. The increase in caseload this portends means that an opportunity exists now to prepare the OALJ for an increase in its normal caseload from the past due to the CARR Project. The current shortfall of the 50% goals and the impact in added caseload from the CARR translates to the need to prepare.

**C. PROJECT "C" GOAL: OALJ LAW REFORM & COMPLIANCE WITH A.S.C.A. 84.0602**

**ASSIST DUTIES OF ALJ RULE REFORM FOR EXECUTIVE AGENCIES**

1. ACHIEVEMENTS as of 2023 Year End.
  - **LAW REFORMS FOR OALJ SPECIFICALLY:** Proposed statutory reforms to ALJ Act and OALJ rule adoption through Comprehensive Agency Rule Reform Project. 75% Complete. Estimated completion **2nd Qtr. 2024**;
  - **COMPREHENSIVE AGENCY RULE REFORM PROJECT (CARR Project).** ALJ attended all monthly meetings to review and assist in administrative law reforms of agencies for 40+ agencies of ASG alongside core agencies (Rule Reform Panel). Required ALJ duty under A.S.C.A. 84.0602 (b) and E.O. No. 001-2019 and E.O. 001-2021. And being implemented through the CARR Project overseen by the Secretary of American Samoa as Chair of the Rule Reform Panel. **100% Qtrly Participation Complete.**
2. MEANINGFUL MEASUREMENTS: Qualitative and Quantitative
  - OALJ legislation adopted & OALJ Rules promulgated;

- ALJ attended RRP and CARR Project meetings.

### 3. GOVERNOR POLICY GOALS SUPPORTED:

E.O. No. 001-2019 (Governor Moliga) and E.O.

No. 001-2021 (adopted and continued by Governor Lemanu).

- Reduce public burdens by ensuring helpful and clear procedures and requirements are stated in law and framework established for updating American Samoa's laws;
- Reduce ASG agency costs through removing duplicative, burdensome, and vague procedures;
- Update laws, minimize waste;
- Agency generated revenue through updated user/permit fees that are reasonable and commensurate with agency services offered;
- Efficiency and streamline of OALJ and ASG agency services.

### 4. COSTS:

a) Local Funds: OALJ law reform <\$60,000 ALJ Pro Temp to assist in law reform work>

b) Federal: TAP Grant for CARR Project (refer to Secretary of American Samoa Qtrly. reports).

### 5. OPPORTUNITIES:

- Positive increase in overall efficiency in operations and services of OALJ and other Executive Branch agencies;
- Lower costs and revenue increase;
- Alleviate public burdens and increase public satisfaction.

## CONCLUSION

IT IS the opinion of the undersigned head of the OALJ that significant progress has been made in the upgrade in skill sets of staff, technology, case management, and control of the OALJ towards cost savings and efficient use of AS resources in FY 2023. This includes immediate improved access of the public to this agency's services due to improved internal upgrades in systems brought about by new technology. This will afford wider access of the public to OALJ services during 2024 and beyond. Much of this FY 2023 upgrades can be attributed to ARPA funds awarded to the OALJ and the dedication and good planning of the staff to ensure these funds are maximally used for the improvement of OALJ services and the safety of the building we operate in. Recognition is also due to the ARPA Office for their continued guidance and insistence on documentation and accountability.

## Office of the Secretary of American Samoa

**Comprehensive Administrative Rule Reform (CARR) Project:** OSAS continues to spearhead the reforming and modernization of rules for the Executive Branch of the American Samoa Government through the Comprehensive Administrative Rule Reform Project.

### CARR

#### - SRR/Bills Completed: Total (11)

(Note: "completed" means LC draft/advisement & RRP review are complete. The SRR has been returned to the agency to take remaining steps: to DLA for legal review; next to Legislative Working Group (LWG); Governor; to Fono).

- **(3) Bills, completed DLA, LWG and GO Legal review, now with Fono:**



- DPA Expanded Powers of Arrest Bill:
  - Status: Housing hearing to be rescheduled with additional witnesses on Admin Request and version introduced and passed by Senate.
- DPA Fee and Licensure Restructuring Bill:
  - Status: Bill was tabled in the Senate despite favorable reaction from several Senators.
- ASEPA Pesticides Bill:
  - Status: First readings in January 2023. In Committee.
- **(4) Bills with DLA for legal review:**
  - Department of Human Resources
    - Status: Bill and DR with Counsel Bryan Randolph of DLA for legal review.
  - Office of Property Management
    - Status: Bill and DR with Counsel Coleman Foster of DLA for review, and pending outcome of AG legal opinion of A.S.C.A. section 4.1002;
  - American Samoa Community College
    - Status: Bill and DR with DAG Roy Hall for legal review.
  - Department of Homeland Security:
    - Status: Bill still with DLA for legal review, as per confirmation from Deputy James Faumuina of DHS latest update on 10.24.23.
  - Department of Agriculture:
    - Status: Bill completed DLA review by Counsel Lynne Blankenbeker now with GO Legal Team, GCLC Kristi Thaxton for further review. DR is with Counsel Coleman Foster of DLA for legal review and is pending the outcome of the AG legal opinion of A.S.C.A. section 4.1002.
- **(2) Bills with GO Legal team for legal review:**
  - Department of Agriculture:
    - Status: Bill with GCLC Thaxton for legal review before referral to LWG
  - Workmen’s Compensation Commission:
    - Status: Bill completed legal review by DAG Roy Hall, substantive rejection of Bill. Bill referred to GO Legal for further review of Bill and DR, now with Counsel Terry.
- **(2) Bills pending finalization before referral to DLA, LWG, GO & Fono:**
  - Office of Administrative Law Judge: SRR Bill only.
    - Status: With Agency for finalization
  - Department of Parks and Recreation: Both SRR Bill and DR. SRR dependent.
    - Status: With Agency for finalization.
- **DR completed RRP Review and APA: Total (1)**
  - Commerce Commission: New Rules became effective on 19 July 2023.
    - Status: DR’s completed RRP Review and pending APA completion: Total (5)<sup>5</sup>
  - Department of Health (new health permit fees):
    - Status: Pending filing new rule with Secretary of AS, Fono and AG’s Office before AG confirms effective date (update as of 10.24.23).
  - Department of Homeland Security (repeal outdated Territorial Disaster Assistance Act):
    - Status: 20 day public comment period completed, pending filing new rules with the Secretary, Fono and AG’s Office (latest update received on 10.24.23).

- LBJ American Samoa Medical Center Authority (US Food Code adoption as a guide for food labeling purposes):
  - Status: Notice of Intended Action published on 10 October 2023 for public comment for 20 days, ends on 30 October 2023
- Department of Marine and Wildlife Resources (Shark rule):
  - Status: EO 11-23 executed by GO Office
- Department of Commerce (Land Use Permits):
  - Status: Pending Agency approval before referral to DLA for legal review then APA stage.

### **Modernization**

- Equipment/Software purchase, training & installation
- COMPLETED 100% - Staff Training – COMPLETED 100%
- Document Search & Scanning – ONGOING (70%)
- Cataloging/Indexing – ONGOING (70%)

### **Website**

- The Office of the Secretary of American Samoa website was launched in June. Currently, the *Revised Constitution of American Samoa*, *American Samoa Administrative Code - 2023 Edition (full volume)*, *American Samoa Public Laws*, and *Codification of the Regulations and Orders for the Government of American Samoa* are available for online viewing or public downloaded on the Repository Catalog. Information regarding the notarial and authentication services provided by the Office can also be found on the website.

### **Notarial & Other Services**

- Notary Public
  - In 2023, the Notary Public Course transitioned from in-person training to an online remote course. 67 applicants have successfully completed the requirements necessary to become active Notary Publics over the course of 3 notary classes offered in March, June and November of this year. There are currently 77 Active Notaries in the Territory.
- OSAS Service Statistics as of *December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023*
  - Apostilles: 285
  - Certificates of Authority for Notarial Acts: 1
  - Certificates of Authenticity: 11

### **UPCOMING PROJECTS 2024**

- American Samoa Code Annotated revision *January 2024*
- Print Project: Office of the Secretary was granted \$1.5 million to provide physical hard copies of the American Samoa Administrative Code & American Samoa Code Annotated to all American Samoa Government Departments *January 2024*
- E-Notarization *TBD*
- E-Apostilles *TBD*
- Online Notary Public Course *TBD*

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## Key Demographics

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The Lemanu-Talauega Administration is committed to the empowerment and development of opportunities for the following key demographics across the Territory.

### Youth and Women Programs

#### Youth Council

The Department of Youth and Women's Affairs (DYWA) hosted the initial Governor's Youth Council meeting on Saturday, December 17, 2023. This event brought together selected students representing each public and private high school. The establishment of the Governor's Youth Council stems from the first executive order issued on October 7, 2022. Recognizing the evolving needs and dynamics of youth engagement, an updated executive order was released on February 08, 2023, outlining revised membership criteria for the council. The Governor's Youth Council is structured to be a representative body of the youth community in American Samoa. Comprising two students, one boy and one girl, between the ages of sixteen and twenty-two from each public and private school offering high school classes, these representatives are selected by the respective principals of their schools. In addition, a representative between the ages of sixteen and thirty from the American Samoa Community College is chosen by the college president to ensure a broader spectrum of youth perspectives.

### Department of Youth and Women's Affairs

#### Women's Division

The Sewing class, an eight-week program, successfully introduced participants to the basics, starting as a beginner's course focused on measuring tapes and sewing machine functions. Progressing from weeks 3 to 8, participants acquired skills in cutting, sewing, and designing, culminating in the creation of their own dresses and puleyasi. The program celebrated these achievements through certificate presentations and a fashion show, showcasing the participants' newfound skills and accomplishments.

Subsequent initiatives continued the momentum of empowerment. The Outreach Sewing Program, held at the LDS Church in Pago in February 2023, expanded skills to include flower arrangement and sustainable practices. Handicrafts, Culinary, Sewing, and the Summer Trade program, encompassing Elei, Sewing, Ribbon Leis, and Hakus, ran from July to August 2023, fostering a diverse range of creative skills.

Moreover, the Piano Class, part of a five-month program from April to August, successfully imparted basic music theory and piano skills, contributing to a well-rounded skill set.

As we reflect on these accomplishments, the DYWA Department is proud to have enriched the community. The recent Culinary Class, conducted from September to November 2023, successfully imparted valuable cooking and budgeting skills. Simultaneously, the Computer Literacy program, spanning three months from September to November 2023, equipped participants with essential computer skills, job-related tasks, and financial literacy, ensuring a holistic approach to skill development and empowerment.

## Youth's Division

The American Samoa Department of Youth and Women's Affairs (DYWA) engaged in a series of community-focused events and programs:

### **Constitution Day Carnival:**

- An educational family event focused on the constitution and proposed amendments.
- Festive games facilitated learning about constitutional amendments.

### **Constitutional Amendments Q&A Panel:**

- An informative event aimed at educating the public about the 11 proposed amendments.

### **Community Halloween Party - "Halloween Bash":**

- An annual safe environment event for children featuring games.
- Twenty ASG departments participated, hosting booths and providing games for children.

### **Read Aloud at Fagali'i Elementary School:**

- DYWA's participation in a read-aloud program, offering engaging activities for children.

### **Literacy Day at Manulele Tausala Elementary:**

- DYWA's involvement in a literacy activity, providing activities for 92 second-grade students.

### **Amanaki Fo'ou Program:**

- Weekly Amanaki Zoom Meetings focused on diabetic prevention, led by Mr. Peniasi Cibaciba and Mrs. Andrea Ferguson.

### **DYWA Summer Trades Program:**

- Held from June 26th to August 16th, 2023, at both DYWA Tafuna and DYWA Pago.
- Included basic carpentry courses, culinary classes, elei, Amanaki diabetic prevention classes, and health and wellness activities.
- Seven participants in DYWA Pago and 21 participants in DYWA Tafuna.

### **DYWA Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP):**

- Received 53 SYEP participants, with 34 in DYWA Tafuna and 19 in DYWA Pago.
- Participants assisted DYWA staff with the Summer Trades Program and other community services.

### **DYWA Youth Forum 2023:**

- Theme: "Breaking the cycle of substance abuse tomorrow requires youth engagement in prevention today."
- Addressed four issues through presentations and research.
- Acting Governor Talauega V. Ale delivered a motivational speech.
- 30 VIP and honored guests from different agencies attended, along with 200 to 300 youth participants.

## Health & Wellness

### Fitness Class Offerings:

- Successfully introduced and conducted 684 Xtreme Hip Hop Step at the Tafuna Facility.

- Implemented Taebo Defense classes at the Tafuna Facility, promoting physical fitness and self-defense techniques.
- Launched Power Up Fitness sessions at the Pago Pago Facility, providing diverse fitness options for the community.
- Enhanced the fitness experience with the establishment of a well-equipped Weight Room at the Pago Pago Facility.

### **Private and Public Partnership**

- Community Fair Hosted by DYWA & Alliance:
  - Objective: Raising awareness about programs and services for victims of sexual violence and their families.
  - Invited all Health and Wellness partners to actively participate.
  - Set up an information booth promoting wellness programs, distributing brochures, and providing healthy bars.
- Suicide Prevention "Walk To Remember" in Partnership with Mental Health:
  - Organized a walk to honor the silent struggles individuals face and unite against suicide.
  - DYWA contributed by donating drinks and snacks for participants.
  - The Health and Wellness team actively joined the walk at Lions Park.

### **Veterans Affairs Office**

The Veterans Affairs Office, leading the Governor's Challenge Initiative on the island, proudly sent a 12-member team to the National Convention in Alexandria, Virginia. Selected as one of the few U.S. Territories to present, showcased the innovative "Food Security" Peer Group Support System—a pilot program addressing mental health challenges among Veterans and their families. This nonclinical support therapy program is part of our commitment to assisting and supporting the well-being of our Veterans and their loved ones.

- Approved Grant Application with the Staff Sergeant Parker Gordon Fox Suicide Prevention Grant (\$750,000)
  - This Grant includes funding to support a newly designed Peer Group Support systems and four professional staffing to manage and run the grant programs.
  - Hosted three hydroponic classes for the veterans including hands on training
  - Offering therapeutic massage sessions for eligible veterans.
  - Have the supplies and tools for the upcoming golf recreational activities
  - Have the supplies and tools for the upcoming fishing recreational activities
  - Opened a Recreation Center for all Veterans in the VA Building
- Processed Requests and assisted with VA Burial Services with Honor Detail as follows:
  - November 2022-November 17, 2023 – TOTAL OF 21 Funeral Honor Details
    - US ARMY – 10
    - US MARINES – 5
    - US NAVY – 3
    - US AIR FORCE – 3
    - US COAST GUARD - 0
- Assisted Veterans with Benefit and Burial Claims



- We have 3 newly trained and accredited Veterans Service Officers (VSO) to better assist the veterans and families with benefits and claims.
- Successfully hosted the Territory’s Memorial Day ceremony/activities
- Successfully hosted a two-day Veterans Day event: The Candlelight Vigil and Concert.
- We have 225 new registered veterans at the VA office
- We have office furniture and equipment for effective daily operations

The Veterans Affairs Office continues to advocate for our Active Military and U.S. Veterans and their families on the island.

## **Disability & Aging Population**

The American Samoa Government is dedicated to ensuring that our senior citizens and individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to lead meaningful and productive lives, thriving within a fully inclusive society. The following highlights some of the progress and program activities aimed at delivering services to our senior citizens and residents with disabilities.

## **Territorial Administration on Aging**

In May 2023, TAOA submitted its Four-Year State Plan for American Samoa's aging service network, emphasizing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing social isolation and preparing for future emergencies are key concerns. Despite the waning impact of the pandemic, lingering effects persist in specific service areas. Formal approval of the plan was granted on September 20, 2023.

Significant strides have been made in catering to the distinctive needs of the aging community, with notable enhancements in TAOA's program delivery and expanded services. This summary highlights key programs and their respective achievements over the past year.

### **TAOA PROGRAMS:**

- Adult Protective Services
- Congregate Meal Program
- Home Delivery Meal Program
- Preventive Health Program
- Caregiver Program
- Support Services
- SCSEP Employment Program
- Traditional Crafts and Dance
- Cultural Outreach for Students

### **ADULT PROTECTION SERVICES**

Based on legislation targeting the protection of the elderly which was passed in 2018, TAOA became eligible and received funding to hire staff dedicated to developing the policies and procedures necessary to fully develop implement a newly APS program targeting primarily the protection of the elderly against self-neglect and financial exploitation in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Within the first six months of operation, approximately thirty cases were

referred to our APS program. Areas of concern focused around: Seniors being required to move off land; Family problems; Self neglect; Financial/emotional exploitations; and Online scams.

TAOA obtained a grant from the No Wrong Door initiative, securing seventy-five iPads and MiFis for distribution to wheelchair-bound seniors in the community. These devices aim to alleviate feelings of loneliness, depression, and isolation by facilitating communication with family and friends, internet access, and entertainment options. Additionally, they serve as a means to connect with medical facilities off the island when necessary.

Funding received through the APS program has enabled TAOA to:

- Develop an accredited APS Program
- Hire a Program Manager
- Purchase a new vehicle for community outreach
- Hire staff to develop and conduct outreach programs and perform casework
- Provide printed materials to key areas in the community
- Travel to outer islands to ensure program is available to all
- Hire Public Health outreach staff member to accompany APS team and to conduct outreach programs, home visitations throughout the Territory and training of staff
- Hire staff to maintain highest levels of health safety in all TAOA facilities, including vehicles
- Purchase a wheelchair accessible van to enable transportation for those in need

The program is now fully staffed and operational, actively receiving referrals from various sources. It also prioritizes community outreach projects, particularly in addressing financial and emotional exploitation, self-neglect, and various forms of abuse.

### **CONGREGATE/HOME DELIVERY MEAL PROGRAM**

Despite an overall population decline, Senior Citizens' involvement in TAOA programs has notably risen in the past year. This growth is primarily attributed to the expanded services and heightened popularity of the meal program. The meal program's total participants have surged by over 200, excluding the seniors transitioning from inactive to active status (102). Weekly, around 3,000 meals are provided to seniors aged 60 and above across Tutuila, Aunu'u, and the Manu'a Islands. Congregate Meal service to the island of Ta'u is currently suspended until an eligible meal provider can be identified. In the meantime, a 'box meal' service is being implemented on a monthly basis and is delivered to each eligible recipient. The Congregate Meal Program aims to promote seniors' engagement by organizing field trips. These outings not only allow seniors to explore available resources but also facilitate the sharing of information within their families. The goal is to instill values of environmental protection and encourage healthy lifestyle practices.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Our Ti'eti'e Pasi transportation program continues to provide transportation in the Western District to those in need of accessing meal sites. Efforts continue in addressing the Eastern District's needs though services providers have been difficult to identify.

**PREVENTIVE HEALTH**

The TAOA staff is well-versed in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP), designed for adults with chronic health conditions. Seniors interested in self-monitoring their health through discipline and determination can visit anytime to check blood pressure, weight, and receive nutritional guidance. TAOA's certified staff conducts CDSMP training, and they also collaborate with various CDSMP-trained fitness centers and individuals to promote an active and healthy lifestyle.

Currently, success of the preventive health programs is gauged by the number of participants; however, plans are in place to use actual data (blood pressure changes, weight and sugar levels) to determine successes. Additionally, the Department of Health has utilized the TAOA facilities on several occasions as Covid Vaccination sites and outreach centers; the location is easily accessible, well-known to seniors resulting in a high turnout. This easy access to vaccines and public health information results in a high percentage of vaccinated individuals in a particular age group. We are extremely proud of the efforts to protect members of our most vulnerable population.

**CAREGIVERS TRAINING PROGRAM**

TAOA partners with the American Samoa Community College's Nursing Program to offer a federally certified Caregiver Course for members of the community. Three classes are offered annually with graduates becoming fully trained in all aspects of home care and CPR. To date, approximately 165 individuals have completed the certification process. Additionally:

- Home visits are conducted regularly to assess needs of bed-ridden and wheelchair bound patients and their Caregivers;
- A database of Care Receivers and their Caregivers is maintained to ensure inclusion of all bed-ridden and homebound individuals for benefits and program purposes;
- Community outreach meetings to develop an opportunity to improve upon policies and procedures for the dissemination of information and services is ongoing;
- Trainings/information dissemination opportunities related to Caregiver responsibilities, expectations, concerns and opportunities for support is ongoing;
- TAOA is able to partner specific trained caregivers with the specific needs of an individual client.

**DATABASE**

TAOA continues to maintain a database of approximately 4,000 registered Senior citizens of American Samoa (out of a total of approximately 5,000), active and inactive, which enables TAOA to:

- Reference up-to-date records on all registered Seniors;
- Make well-informed decisions regarding dietary/health needs of Seniors;
- Make well-informed decisions regarding planning of all TAOA programs;
- Provide a basis for disseminating information to Seniors island-wide;
- Increase accuracy in planning/implementing Congregated Meal programs;
- Utilize data required to make well-informed decisions regarding the numbers and identity of Seniors listed on Center sign-in forms;
- Establish a resource for accessing comparative data;
- Provide access to information required for grant application/eligibility;
- Share AS Senior citizen population data as requested by ASG agencies; and,

- Ensure the reduction of program costs through accuracy in planning and implementation of the Title III programs.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

TAOA works closely with the Caregiver program to further develop a plan to address the Respite Care (daily care) needs of Seniors. TAOA works closely with Hope House and other non-profit agencies to ensure these much-needed services are made available. Respite Care, similar to daycare, is not only of benefit to the patient, but, possibly even more important, to the well-being of the caregiver who is too often required to give up a career to tend to the needs of an elderly family members.

**SCSEP COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (Senior Community Service Employment Program)** - TAOA partners with the following agencies to provide training to prepare seniors to enter or reenter the workforce and/or to learn new job skills to improve their chances to become employed. Currently, 96 seniors are enjoying the challenges of working in the following ASG Departments:

- ASG Department of Agriculture, Jean P. Haydon Museum, ASG Department of Education, ASG Election Office, Department of Health, Territorial Energy Office, Department of Port Administration, Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Disabled, Youth and Women's Affairs, US National Park Service, Department of Public Works, Office of Procurement, ASCC, ASPA, Administrative Services, Voc Rehab, American Samoa Visitors Bureau, DOE Early Childhood, Department of Marine and Wildlife, **Feleti** Barstow Public Library, ASG Governor's Office Ta'u Manu'a and the American Samoa Red Cross

To ensure successful community placement, we prioritize the meticulous development of IEPs (Individualized Employment Plans) for SCSEP participants. Seniors actively contribute to the planning and execution of these plans. Recently granted permission to forge partnerships with private sector Host Agencies, TAOA is confident that this expansion will boost the number of seniors securing employment beyond the SCSEP program. The program is actively working to create employment opportunities for recently incarcerated individuals, veterans, and members of minority groups within the Territory. In conjunction with the annual grant award, TAOA has secured a \$144,000 Technology Upgrade grant for enhancing communication and production. Collaborating with ASTCA and Bluesky, we are identifying specific needs and suitable technology solutions.

**COMMUNITY OUTREACH** - TAOA has developed community projects with the following agencies to develop opportunities for seniors to interact with the community, sharing culture, talent, craft and storytelling.

- **ABLE:** Ongoing partnership to bring awareness and understanding to the health concerns faced in the community, especially those related to dementia
- **AS Visitor's Bureau:** Seniors have participated in a number of field trips and outreach programs to ensure all members of the community are given an opportunity to learn and participate in the traditional crafts of our forefathers. Field trips have provided an enjoyable opportunity for seniors to enjoy sites not normally in their routine of outings.
- **Department of Agriculture:** Gardening on site

- National Marine Sanctuary: Sharing with students island-wide the traditional fishing techniques of the past. Included also were opportunities to enjoy story telling, making of coconut oil and weaving of mats.
- First Lady Ella Mauga, Dr Salu Hunkin, Mrs. Vatau Neria, Vaito'a Hans Langkilde and Ulale Ulale are familiar faces who visit our TAOA Ukulele band regularly offering their support, talents or just an opportunity to 'jam' with our seniors. The music, laughter, dancing and wonderful time is enjoyed by all.
- Bi-Monthly In-services: Members of the community are invited to share with the audience matters of concern or of interest, especially as they relate to the senior community. Of particular interest are topics related to health, finance and community resources.
- American Samoa National Park Service
- Members of the community often called upon the TAOA seniors to assist with the harvesting of *laufala* and *launiu*. Seniors are able to demonstrate how to cut the plant in such a way as not only to promote its growth but also to leave behind an attractive plant.
- Demonstration and instruction of traditional carving and weaving for students and community.

### **CELEBRATION OF SENIORS**

In May, Senior Citizen Month is celebrated with a week of activities and public recognition by the Lions Club of Pago Pago, Rotary Club of Pago Pago, Office of the Governor, and the Office of Congresswoman. These organizations formally acknowledge and award seniors for their contributions. TAOA and the Office of the Governor partner annually to celebrate Christmas with the seniors of the community. Government Agencies all contribute to the celebration by donating beautiful gift baskets to be distributed to all in attendance. The morning is filled with beautiful entertainment, excellent dining and special recognitions of seniors.

### **DEMENTIA FRIENDLY AMERICAN SAMOA**

Director of TAOA is very involved in the planning stages of the Dementia Respite Care Center for the Territory. The opportunity to participate in discussions related to the critical needs provided by such a facility is deeply appreciated.

## **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation**

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's (OVR) various program achievements for 2023 are as follows:

### **COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA):**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is the Federal agency that provides oversight of state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs. The American Samoa Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is required to complete the **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)** every three years in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation historically contracted out the performance of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to San Diego State Vocational Rehabilitation Institute. For the first time, this study was conducted internally by the American Samoa Office of Rehabilitation (ASOVR) and the American Samoa State Rehabilitation Council (ASSRC).



The Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment took seven (7) months to complete. The Needs Assessment Survey phase of the project took five (5) months to complete. Over three hundred (300) survey forms were completed by respondents.

Figure 1 provides the distribution of the survey respondents.

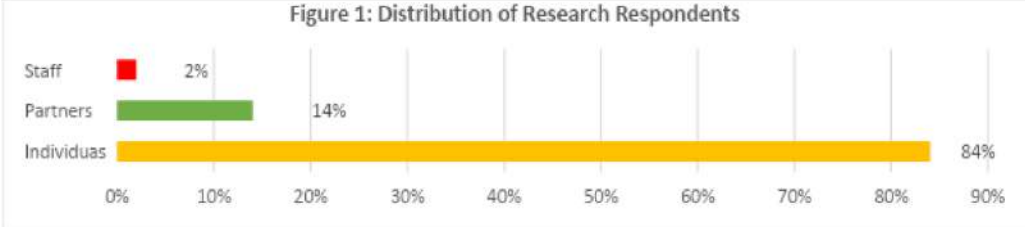


Figure 2 supplies the details of the villages which participated in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Survey. Practically all of the villages participated in the needs assessment research.

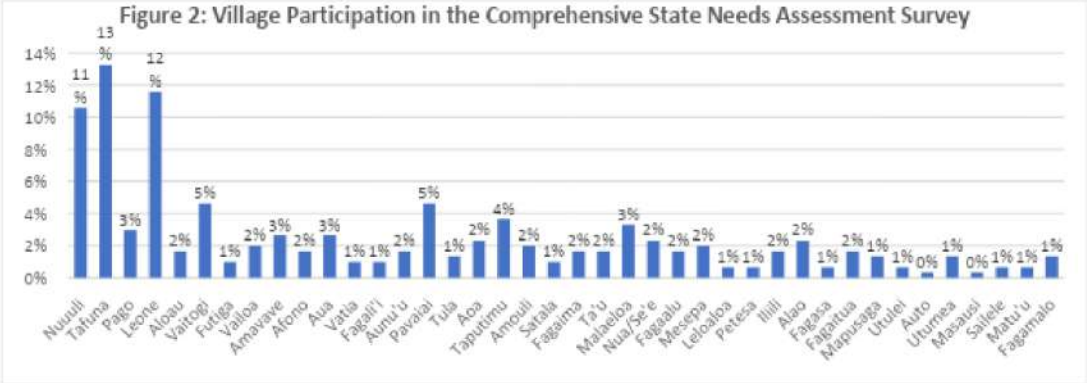


Figure 3 presents the age distribution of all individuals who completed the survey instrument. The largest concentration of respondents fell within the age group range of 51- 63 with 32%. Surprisingly, the respondents in the age range 64 – Over comprised 24% of the responders.

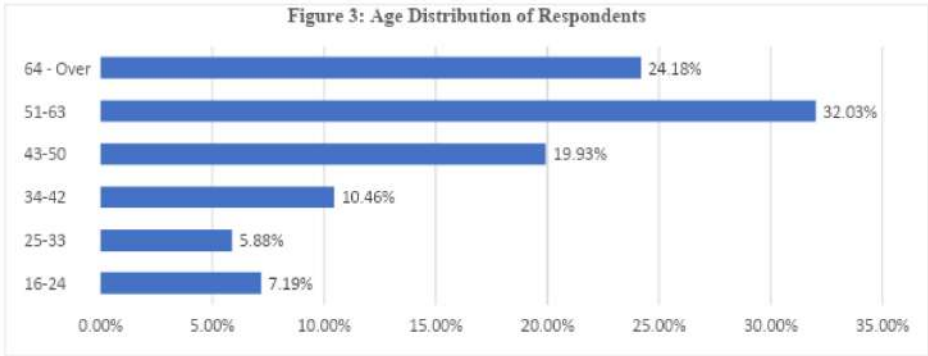
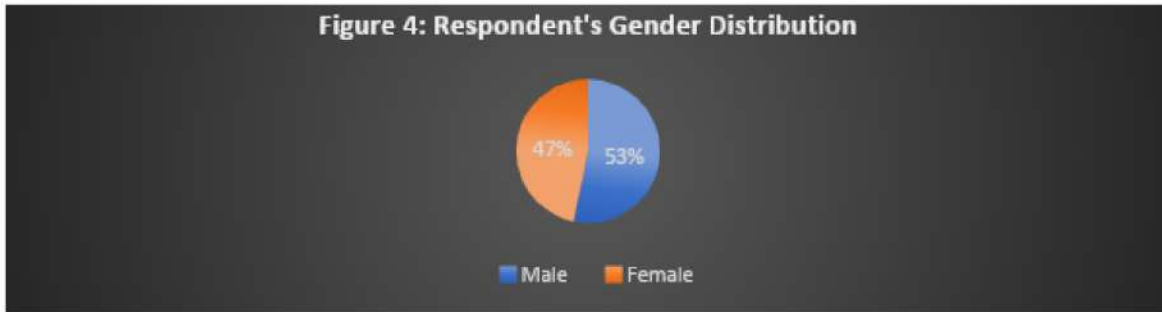


Figure 4 depicts the gender distribution of the survey respondents with 53% comprised of females and 47% were males.



The data analysis and report preparation consumed the remaining two (2) months. Conducted concurrently was the Service Providers Survey. Over fifty (50) service providers completed the survey forms. The Final Comprehensive Statewide Assessment Report has been completed and officially issued.

#### **COVID-19 FINANCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT:**

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, a division of the Office of the Governor, internally conducted the COVID-19 Impact Assessment. The core purpose of the COVID-19 Impact Assessment is to gauge the degree to which the lives of individuals with disabilities are affected by the imposed financial challenges. The entire territory was placed on temporary shutdown at the inception of the COVID-19 to contain the spread of the coronavirus which had wreaked havoc on the social, economic, and health systems of all countries of the world. While government employees still received their regular income during operational shutdowns, the private sector employees were not as fortunate, thus this loss of income due to non-payment of salaries decreased the territory's purchasing capacity. Supply chains were disrupted, which created food shortages and caused prices of goods to be excessively inflated, further exacerbating the already deteriorated social and economic downturns.

A total of 179 survey questionnaires were completed which represent 6.1% of the estimated population of 2,920, derived from the 2020 U.S. Census. The following reflect the results of the COVID-19 Financial Impact Assessment on individuals with disabilities. The most notable fact is the disparity existing between the disabled individuals and their able-bodied counterparts. Disabled individuals in the 36 – 45 and 46 – 55 age group recorded average incomes per month of \$602 dollars and \$708 dollars respectively. At the new living hourly rate of \$7 an hour, a non-disabled person earns a monthly income of \$1,213 dollars. If the monthly income is compared between disabled persons and its non-disabled counterparts the income disparity is \$611 dollars or 50.1% less. The hourly wage rate is \$3.47 dollars an hour which is \$3.53 lower than the able-bodied person.

The three age groups with over \$10,000 of annual earnings 56 – 65; 66 – 75; and 86 – 95 with hourly wage rates of \$7.50 dollars; \$4.90 dollars; and \$5.10 dollars. Except for the 56 - 65 age group, the rest of the age groups receive earnings far below the current American Samoa Government minimum wage of \$7 dollars an hour. Clearly, the disabled population of American Samoa are financially hindered by the income they currently receive. With inflation accelerating upward, the financial plight of the disabled is worsened.

## **BASIC 110 VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) PROGRAM**

The Basic 110 Program's projected primary goal for the fiscal year 2023 is to successfully close 30 eligible certified disabled clients through the provisioning of the full gamut of vocational rehabilitation services resulting in job placement in the highly competitive labor market or establishing a viable and sustainable self-employment program manifested in the successful establishment and management of small business concerns.

### **OVR Accomplishments of FY 2021, FY 2022, FY2023**

• Basic 110 Number of Caseloads	110
• Total Number of Caseloads Completed and Processed	98
• Total Number of Caseloads Determined to Be Eligible	83
• Total Number of Caseloads with Complement IPE	76
• Total Number of Caseload which Received Services Per Approve IPE	76
• Total Number of Caseload Closed Successful (Per Status 26)	27

### **OVR Accomplishments of FY2023**

• Total Number of New Cases Referred for VR Services	59
• Total Number of New Cases with Completed Application Forms	30
• Total Number of New Cases Determined to be Eligible for VR Services	23
• Total Number of New Cases Determined Ineligible for VR Services	7
• Total Number of Cases Served Based on an Approved IPE Plan	11
• Total Number of IPE Cases Receiving VR Services	11
• Total Number of IPE Cases Receiving Counseling & Guidance Services	11
• Total Number of Cases Successfully Closed under the Self-Employment Option	15

### **SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAM (PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES):**

In 2022, the Vocational Rehabilitation's School to Work Program Office registered, selected, and submitted 46 Transition High School Students' applications for Vocational Rehabilitation Transition services. In 2023, 45 students from various high schools participated in the Transition Program.

### **SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM:**

Severe funding limitations have historically hindered and thwarted efforts to maximize supported employment services to individuals afflicted by disabilities. In spite of this service debilitating constraint, one success story is highlighted memorializing the journey undertaken by the client's quest to achieve her employment goal amid overwhelming challenges.

## **CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING AND INDEPENDENT LIVING OLDER BLIND PROGRAM**

### **Independent Living-Older Blind Program Accomplishments:**

The present case load for the Independent Living Program is 217. In 2023, (October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023) 21 new consumers applied for IL Services. The Independent Living Program provided services to 127 Consumers. The current case load for the Older Blind Program is 202. For the operating year 2023, the Independent Living Older Blind program serviced forty (40) clients.

a. Grants Award:

The Independent Living Program and the Older Blind Program are 100% federally funded. It has been able to ensure that its full grant allocation is received for both grant programs.

b. RSA and ACL Annual Reports:

The required Annual Grant reports (7-OB Annual Report for FY 2022 and the 704 Part I and Part II Annual Performance Reports) were completed and submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the ACL-HHS (Administration of Community Living), Department of Health and Human Services.

c. Disability Awareness Month:

We partnered with UCED, SPED, DDPC, DOH, and OPAD in hosting activities to celebrate Disability Month during the month of October to raise disability awareness among the residents of American Samoa over the need to effectively address and accommodate the special needs of the disabled population of the territory.

d. Staff Development Training:

Staff development and training is an ongoing activity to bolster the skillsets of the staff to improve the quality of services rendered to the disabled population. Continual provision of training is required to facilitate exposure to and to understand any changes in program requirements, obtain the right information about the federal regulations and also local laws.

e. Medical Equipment and Supplies:

The total amount invested in the purchasing of medical equipment and supplies was \$31,000. These medical equipment and supplies reflect the requests from the Independent Living clients. Further other clients and family members were referred to the private agency in partnership with UCED in the distribution of wheelchairs donated by an off island donor. In the course of the year, six (6) wheelchair ramps were constructed, improving client mobility and easy home access. Clients were also referred to the Med-Quest Clinic in Matu'u for durable medical equipment and other Medicaid services.

f. Transportation:

Clients in need of transportation services are being referred to the DIAL-A-RIDE Program for transportation to the hospital for their medical appointments or to get their dialysis treatment 3 days a week.

## **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM**

### **Program Accomplishments:**

The American Samoa Assistive Technology Program through The American Samoa Office of Vocational Rehabilitation has partnered with many organizations both Government and private to provide computer/demonstration labs open to the public focusing on individuals with disabilities, including but not limited to WIOA, DYWA, TAOA and others. ASAT is currently working on placing a computer/demonstration lab in Ta'u, Manu'a in FY24. Since FY21 ASAT has also partnered with The Helen Keller Program Hawaii to provide assistive technology specifically for the deaf and blind.

### **UNIFIED 2020-2023 WIOA STATE PLAN:**

The preparation of the federally mandated revision of the Unified WIOA State Plan reflects the collaborative effort among the Department of Human Resources, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the American Samoa Community College Adult Basic Educational Program, the American Samoa Developmental Disability Council, and the American Samoa Office of

Protection and Advocacy. Each local governmental entity is made responsible for the Unified WIOA State Plan section element germane to its respective service responsibilities.

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation had completed and submitted amendments to the Unified WIOA State Plan 2020-2023 vocational rehabilitation section and for which it had officially received conditional approval. The final approval of the referenced plan in its totality is pending. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is ready to work collaboratively with the other stakeholders to revise the WIOA State Plan for the new period 2024 to 2027.

## **Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Disabled**

The Protection & Advocacy Project (P&A) is the federally mandated, statewide, protection and advocacy system serving individuals with disabilities in American Samoa. The central purpose of the protection and advocacy system is to respond to allegations of abuse, neglect, and violations of rights of persons with disabilities or discrimination based on their disability. The OPAD Year 2023 Program Accomplishments are as follows:

### **Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI)**

- PAIMI program conducted monitoring for DOH transition homes for clients.
- Advocating services in helping MI clients with employment opportunities
- Collaboration work with DOH nurses in getting the VR application for MI clients.
- DOH is providing social activities through ASCC fitness center, and Behavioral counseling at DOH headquarters.
- Rehabilitation and independent living activities and program
- Progression at Transition Home to resume.
- PAIMI program attended the 3-day Mental health summit at ASCC. Presenters from off-island and local service providers did presentations on Mental health. This Summit featured many of our local professionals who are involved and or work in some capacity in the field of mental health wellness
- Provided short-term assistance for the patient in Hope House and provided information about our office and other agencies if needed help.

### **Protection and Advocacy for Individual Rights (PAIR)**

- The PAIR program still conducts ADA accessibility monitoring of ASG govt buildings, private sectors, and businesses on a regular basis to ensure that compliance is adhered to.
- Successfully submitted application on the program side for the next fiscal year.
- Followed up with the Governor's office for the official General memorandum for the Advisory Council
- Site Visitation and continuing monitoring of the Transition Home. DOH provided a program of social activities for them to attend throughout the week. rehabilitation and independent living activities and program progression at Transition Home to resume. Advocating for DOH to provide an Individualized transition plan for clients.
- We continue to respond to individuals contacting our office through the phone needing information and assistance and follow up on their needs. We provided information and



referred them to the proper agencies for further assistance.

- Zoom meeting with Alliance and agencies that were able to attend their community fair. Discuss activities for October for Domestic Violence Month.
- Caseworkers attend ASCC SGA community outreach for students who attend the community college. Set up an informational OPAD booth.

### **Protection and Advocacy for Developmental Disabilities (PADD)**

- Provided Awareness of Service Outreach in Ta'u, Manu'a
- Provided IEP Parent Training in Faleasao, Manu'a
- Completed and submitted Annual Reports for all programs.
- Received TA training from NDRN
- Attended The Association of the Severely Handicapped (TASH) Conference in Arizona.
- Addressed concerns of SPED services in Manu'a with their Program Director
- Provided information and referrals for short-term services
- Notices of Awards for all our programs have been received.
- Completed Advisory Council meetings
- All Programs - Program Goals and Objectives Calendar completed.
- All Programs - Outreach at Fagatogo Market and Amouli Health Clinic for all programs.
- PADD - Attended Pac Rim Conference to connect and understand disability issues around the Pacific.
- PADD - Attended the Pacific Basin Interagency Leadership Council (PBILC) meeting.
- PADD and ADA monitoring - some businesses and government agencies are now complying with ADA Law.
- Presentation at NDRN raised awareness about American Samoa, and how culture plays an important role in our advocacy work. It also provided a platform for our office and our federal counterparts to meet and discuss the unique needs of our office as a state agency
- Finalized Corrective Action Plan (CAP) to address compliance issues found by our review team during our program review.
- Completed IEP training for parents.
- Visited potential clients for CAP
- Attended meetings for students with disabilities during their Transition IEP meetings.
- Completed Awareness Outreach at ASCC and DYWA.

### **Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS)**

- Received PABSS Award for Funding
- Submitted PABSS Semi- Progress Performance Report
- Updated all of PABSS required reports as mandated by Social Security Administration, so it could be taken off of High Risk Status.
- PABSS/Rep Payee - Corresponded with the grantor, finance officer, and director on late Federal Financial Reports
- PABSS - Attended PABSS Core Training to fulfill a requirement for our PABSS program.
- All reports for PABSS have been updated and Conference calls completed.
- Completed and submitted PABSS grant application for funding
- Completed and submitted PABSS Annual PPR
- Submitted the report for OPAD suitability for SSA funding of Rep Payee and PABSS programs

### **Protection and Advocacy for Voter Access (PAVA)**

We continue to work alongside the Election Office in preparation for next year's local Elections. We were able to make recommendations to the Election office on changes that were needed for a few of them in order for it to be accessible from the last elections. We identified five polling stations (Fagaitua, Poloa, Lailii, Tula, and Amouli) that would need ramps in order for it to be fully accessible and used for next year's elections. The remaining stations were all assessed by our team and found to be accessible to our disability population.

We will continue to work closely with the Election Office to ensure that all voters with disabilities will be accommodated and allowed access to exercise their right to vote.

### **CAP**

- Submitted CAP Progress Performance Report
- Resolved CAP case with VR, regarding transition for IEP students.
- Visited potential clients for CAP and PADD to provide information and referred to the proper programs here at OPAD.
- Resolved CAP client case with VR.
- Provided IEP training and assistance for parents with children who are receiving Special
- Education Services wanting to transition into post-secondary careers.

### **REP PAYEE**

- Completed and submitted application for Rep Payee program.
- Rep Payee - Attended Rep. Payee training for Pacific Islands P&A regarding Beneficiaries interviews and how to better document issues.
- Application for Rep Payee funding was approved and Notice of Award was posted and received.
- Completed and submitted application for Rep Payee program. Did follow ups and corresponded with grantors regarding grant amendments, and addressed grant notes as posted in grants solutions website.

### **OPAD Finance**

The Office of Protection and Advocacy for the Disabled has nine federal funded grants. These programs have been undergoing reviews for the past year and some have been put under new management officers and new policies that may have affected the way we are reviewed for grant processing.

Of the nine (9) grants, three (3) are on drawdown restrictions and these three programs are PAIMI, PABSS, and Rep Payee. These programs have a new policy that is based on a process that's different from the previous way we have done things. The drawdown restrictions are being assessed for alignment with the way ASG is accustomed to drawdowns in the past.

We have yet to completely remove drawdown restrictions on all three programs as initially reported, based on other additional review by our grantor. However, we are working continuously with each grantor in hopes the drawdown restrictions can be removed as initially discussed. There has been some positive strides in our collaboration as we have reached out and

have received help with training and walk through Zoom meetings to help us understand the new process. We hope to have these restrictions removed soon so we can proceed with our services and assistance for the disabled community.

## **American Samoa Election Office**

The Election Office is a nonpartisan agency of the American Samoa Government responsible for conducting all elections, by upholding proper administration of election laws through promulgating rules, regulations, issuing instructions, and providing information to electoral boards, candidates and the general public. The election Office maintains a centralized database of territorial-wide voter registration; the Official Roll of registered voters, and enforces federal election laws including the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, Uniformed of Overseas Citizen Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA) of 2008, and Military Overseas Voters Empowerment Act (MOVE) of 2010.

### **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

January 2023, coding of the data system and official roll reconciliation was implemented to prepare both electronic and manual files for the purge operation. The system recode operation included coding of rolls with assigned values by vote status type; matching and classifying absentee voting including questionable/late votes, provisional votes, and reconciliation of the 2020 and 2018 Signatures Rolls. By law, any voter in the official roll who failed to vote in two consecutive elections will be removed from the Official Roll of Registered Voters. At the end of the purge operation, over 1,332 voters were removed.

This upcoming General Election will be held on Tuesday, November 5, 2024 and all seats including Governor/Lt. Governor, Congress and House of Representatives will be contested. Statistically, every year of gubernatorial race generates high numbers of registered voters and vote cast. We predict that the 2024 General election will be at the exact same figures.

Our main focus is to get more percentage of voter turnouts and to continue outreaching out to our island community as a whole. Also, the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act requirement to allow armed forces voters and their dependents; students in institutions of higher learning to request absentee ballots starting January 1st, 2024. It is also our responsibility to assist our voters in this act by providing them details/information using our website, responding to emails and social media pages.

As of 2023 Accomplishments, it has been a very productive year for our office. Throughout the course of the year, a Special Election was held on September 12, 2023, for District Number #1 - Manu'a, to elect a new District Representative to the Legislature of American Samoa - House of Representatives. Staff of the Election Office conducted the Special Election in the District.

The Special Election was a success and completed with the Official Results being certified by the Chief Election Officer and released to the public. This is also an opportunity to recognize the key department within our government who contributed and played an important role in the completion of the 2023 Special Election for Manu'a District #1. (Office of the Samoan Affairs and KVZK-TV)

Other preparations for the 2024 General Election are as follows:

1. Calendar or Events for the General Election year 2024

2. Revised Campaign spending forms
3. Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) - Federal Voting Assistance Program American Samoa pages were updated and posted for the 2024 General Election for Federal Elections. The FVAP program contains online assistance for requesting and transmitting voter registration and voting materials for UOCAVA voters using the Federal Post Cast Application (FPCA) form.
4. Completed territorial input and updates for 2024 United States Voting Assistance Guide to be published and distributed nationwide.
5. Generated Statistic analysis of previous election numbers in an effort to survey, monitor, and maintain the participation of the general population of the territory in elections.
6. The Special Needs Assistance Program to our Disabled and Senior citizen voters.

A voter survey was conducted by the Outreach team to gather information and insights by contacting each individual by phone or email as to why voters did not vote in the Midterm Election 2022. In addition, the survey included questions to identify issues or concerns with the election processes in order to prepare the Election Office for the upcoming 2024 General Election.

These past few years the Election Office has been working very closely on Election Security projects through funding made available by the American Samoa Department of Homeland Security. This project is still ongoing and will cover security for election in both the physical and cyber aspects. This project consists of the following:

Project 1: Election Office Cyber security upgrade

- Enhancing the protection of soft targets/ crowded places.

Project 1: AS Election Office security Cameras

Project 2: AS Election Office Access Control Measures.

\*This year, as part of these projects, one aspect that has been completed was the updating of our Registration database ID system to be compatible with Window 10.

Reports for CARES Act funding have been completed and submitted. CARES Grant closeout complete and approved by our Grantor (Election Assistance Commission).

The American Samoa Election Office, in recent years has significantly progressed towards its underlying goal to operate at its most efficient capacity while exercising containment and economic friendly measures.

We continue to work assiduously to sustain the operations that prove to be a continued success, research and improve on areas that have the potential to be more effective, and most importantly continue to seek new ways to serve the territory when it comes to Elections.

In conclusion, we aim to improve on every aspect of the election and evaluate our work from previous elections so 2024, and all future elections can be even better. It is very important to dissect the problems that we encounter so these obstacles become stepping stones that will contribute to future successes not only for the Election Office but for the election process as a whole.

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# Culture

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## Office of Political Status, Constitutional Review, and Federal Relations

Executive Order 002-2016 established the Office of Political Status, Constitutional Review, and Federal Relations. In the preamble it states that “Whereas, the need for a more equal, full, and permanent political status will depend heavily on the ability of American Samoa to answer legal, constitutional, and policy questions with respect to its constitution and political status.” Therefore, it falls within the **General Duties, Responsibilities and Function** of the Office “to conduct a comprehensive research and development program on constitutional and political status issues related to American Samoa. This work includes but not limited to:

- the principles of self-determination and self-governing practices
- the decolonization process and international laws on self-determination;
- the application of the US Constitution to American Samoa and the political, economic, and social impact of federal policies and statutes;
- the advantages and disadvantages of further integration with the US including: US citizenship, federal court system, federal immigration, and representation in Congress;
- a comparative review and analysis of the history of other US territories and their organic acts, constitutions, covenants, statutes and their political relationships with the United States;
- a comparative review and analysis of the history and political systems of other Pacific-island territories and countries such as the Independent State of Samoa;
- the relevance of federal Indian law and laws governing Native Hawaiians;
- an examination of the instruments of cession;
- determining how to protect critical components of the faaSamoa;
- develop and publish an authoritative Samoan translation of American Samoa’s Constitution;
- analysis of any political, economic, social, scientific, historical, literary, demographic issues with implications on American Samoa’s constitution and political status.

### Why is it important to report on research efforts and provide a list of “REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS”?

Because “Research and Development” must be on-going. This includes monitoring, dialogue and participation in opportunities locally, in the region, nationally, and internationally.

#### Revised Constitution of American Samoa





### **Reaching the 5<sup>th</sup> Step: Historic First under Lemanu & Talauega Administration**

In his letter dated December 14, 2022, Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga conveyed to the Honorable Deb Haaland, Secretary of the Interior, details regarding the "Voter Approved Amendments to the Revised Constitution of American Samoa." Carmen G. Cantor, Assistant Secretary for Insular and International Affairs, responded to Governor Lemanu's memorandum on behalf of Secretary Haaland. She remarked, "It represents an historic first that a majority of the voters who cast ballots in American Samoa's constitutional amendment referendum approved five amendments to the local territorial constitution." That "historic first" was the **first time since 1979** that American Samoa's voters had approved amendments to its Constitution. All amendments up to 1979 only required the approval of the Secretary of Interior.

### **Removing the 6<sup>th</sup> Step: Executive & Legislative Unity - H. R. 6062.**

However, in 1983 with the passage of P.L. 98-213, Sec. 12, 97 Stat. 1462 (codified as 48 U.S.C. Sec. 1662a), the power of amendment was transferred from the Secretary of Interior to Congress. Section 12 states:

"Amendments of, or modifications to, the constitution of American Samoa, as approved by the Secretary of the Interior pursuant to Executive Order 10264 as in effect January 1, 1983, may be made only by Act of Congress."

**In an act of Executive and Legislative unity**, our local leaders agreed that taking amendments to American Samoa's Constitution to the "deep waters" of Congress presented many risks. It could "federalize" our Constitution and change it into an organic act and change our political relationship with the US. This was not the intention of the amendments.

For this reason, Congresswoman Uifaatali Amata Coleman introduced H. R. 6062.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, SECTION 1. REMOVAL OF RESTRICTION ON AMENDMENTS TO OR MODIFICATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION OF AMERICAN SAMOA. Section 12 of Public Law 98-213 (48 U.S.C. 1662a) is repealed.*

To restore the ability of the people of American Samoa to approve amendments to the territorial constitution based on majority rule in a democratic act of self-determination, as authorized pursuant to an Act of Congress delegating administration of Federal territorial law in the territory to the President, and to the Secretary of the Interior under Executive Order 10264, dated June 29, 1951, under which the Constitution of American Samoa was approved and may be amended without requirement for further congressional action, subject to the authority of Congress under the Territorial Clause in article IV, section 3, clause 2 of the United States Constitution.

### **The Deep Waters of Congress: How does American Samoa Prepare?**

There has long been fear of the "deep waters" of Congress where we would be "immediately swallowed by a big fish. We feel much safer and comfortable swimming in shallow and calm waters so that the big fish will not be tempted to even consider us a meal of any kind."

If the amendments approved by the 2022 referendum are approved by the Secretary of Interior, the final step would be to send these amendments to Congress. What would be the impact of Congressional approval were that to happen? Would it then change American Samoa's Constitution into an organic act?

Below is a statement prepared by the Office on “**Legislative Evidence.**”

Local leaders have long believed the faaSamoa’s exposure to the increased congressional scrutiny would be too risky. An increased level of scrutiny by Congress would place a greater burden on the people and government of American Samoa to prove its compelling interest in protecting critical components of the faaSamoa such as restricted land ownership and the matai system. An organic act in favor of keeping the faaSamoa would have to be supported by legislative evidence able to withstand the constitutional challenges such as equal protection, due process, and the prohibition of titles. **Can the existing evidence meet a legal standard of proof high enough to substantiate what are apparently assertions, inferences, and commonly-held beliefs about Samoa’s communal lands, matai titles and culture?** The late Stanley Laughlin of the University of Ohio, proposed that systematically collected social and legal data about the faaSamoa would be necessary to protect the faaSamoa since constitutional issues are best resolved on the basis of empirical data.

**Making Preparations in the Event:**

One recommendation is to systematically identify, collect, and publish social and legal data about the faaSamoa. The Office looked at three areas of the faaSamoa: the matai system, lands, and language.

**1) What is the state of the Samoan Language?**

<b>Population: 5 years and over</b>	<b>44,174</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	With such a high percentage of Samoan language speakers, the Samoan language looks to be in stable or healthy state.
<b>Samoan</b>	<b>38,835</b>	<b>90.9%</b>	

**Looking at the Existing Data Collections: Department of Commerce Statistics Division**

Office staff attended sessions of DOC User-Producer Data Workshop with a focus on Government (Local, Federal, Regional, International) Statistics.

Finding: Staff found no annual data reporting on the matai system and very little on communal lands.

**2) Samoan Matai System: the Matai Registry.**

Office staff has been reviewing the Matai registry. This registry provides interval-level data on the presence of the matai system in American Samoa. Many issues have been identified which will require very careful, considerate and respectful care.

Further, in another context, the Director is writing a paper as an introduction to the matai system.

**3) Samoan communal lands: Are the protections still working?**

The chart below provides data of American Samoan lands that have been alienated.

## American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021

TABLE 6.1. LAND OWNERSHIP REGISTRATION: 2011 TO 2021

Designation	American Samoa Statistical Yearbook 2021										
	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total	8,048	7,985	7,942	7,935	7,930	7,911	7,902	7,896	7,888	7,875	7,863
Freehold	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072	1,072
Government-owned	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651	1,651
Church	1,033	1,033	1,032	1,032	1,031	1,031	1,031	1,031	1,030	1,030	1,030
Individually-owned	2,110	2,066	2,044	2,042	2,042	2,042	2,035	2,030	2,029	2,027	2,016
Communal or native	2,182	2,163	2,143	2,139	2,134	2,115	2,113	2,113	2,106	2,095	2,094

In the years from 2011 to 2021, this table shows the registration of freehold land has stayed the same at 1072 acres. Government-owned land has stayed the same at 1651 acres. But registered lands owned by the Church increased by 3 acres. It is important to note that individually-owned lands increased from 2016 acres to 2110 acres, or by **94 acres**.

### Translating American Samoa's Constitution: No Simple Task

The Constitutional Review Office has developed guidelines for its translation including an educational intent, a user-friendly format with lots of white space, footnotes for vocabulary, and a standardized orthography. A sample of the work-in-progress follows.

	Article I Bill of Rights		Vaega I Pili o Aiā Tatau
<b>Section 1.</b>	Freedom of religion, speech, press, rights of assembly and petition <sup>1</sup> .	<b>Maga. 1</b>	Sa'olotoga i lotu, fa'aaliga o manatu, fa'asalalauga, aiā tau faapotopotoga ma talosaga.
	There shall be separation <sup>2</sup> of church and government, and no law shall be enacted <sup>3</sup> respecting an establishment of religion <sup>4</sup> or prohibiting <sup>5</sup> the free exercise thereof;		E tatau ona tuueseese le lotu ma le malo, ma e leai se tulafono e pasia e faavae ai se lotu pe fa'asa ai le sa'olotoga e fa'atino ai;
	or abridging <sup>6</sup> the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress <sup>7</sup> of grievances <sup>8</sup> .		pe fa'aitiitia ai le sa'olotoga e fa'aalia ai manatu po o fa'asalalauga, po o le aiā o tagata e potopoto filemu ai ma talosagaina le Malo mo le fo'ia o mea e le malilie ai.

<sup>1</sup> petition: talosaga, aioi atu

<sup>2</sup> separation: tu'ueseese, le feaiaa'i

<sup>3</sup> enacted: pasia, faatulafonoina

<sup>4</sup> religion: lotu, tapuaiga, talitonuga

<sup>5</sup> prohibiting: faasa

<sup>6</sup> abridging the freedom: pe faaitiitia pe toesea

<sup>7</sup> redress: fo'ia, fa'asa'o

<sup>8</sup> grievances: mea e le malilie ai; i se tagi e fia faasa'o

### Amending the Constitution: the Work of Generations

The 2022 Constitutional Convention was featured as the 6<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Convention. The significance in terms of public outreach and awareness is that American Samoa's many conventions show that amending our Constitution is the Work of Generations. It was explained that conventions took place in 1960, 1966, (1979), 1983, 1986, 2010, and 2022. Information about the 7th convention in 1979 was uncovered and recognized. The next convention would be the 8<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Convention.



### Amendments for the Future: Learning from 2010 and 2022

*As a result of a Nov 13, 2023 dialogue* made possible by Dr. Debra Zuercher of the University of Hawaii PACMED program, the Office Director was able to consult with Dr. Patrick Tellei of Palau. Palau is Freely Associated with the United States. It is a sovereign country with a vote in the United Nations. Dr. Aga is consulting with Dr. Tellei on how to improve amendments that American Samoa has considered in the past but that did not make it through the amendment process.

- 1) Approving Constitutional Amendments locally. (Such an amendment was approved by the 2022 Constitutional Review Committee but was not approved by the delegates of the 2022 Constitutional Convention.)
- 2) A Reapportionment Commission. (Repeated attempts to reapportion the House of Representatives have not been successful. Many states and territories use a **Reapportionment Commission**. Palau provides a model for American Samoa to consider. The Constitutional Review Office communicated with the CNMI Law Commission which uses a reapportionment strategy that was required by the CNMI courts.)
- 3) People-Initiated Amendment (Such an amendment was approved by the 2010 Constitutional Review Committee. It would require a percentage of locally registered voters to introduce an amendment.

### Federal Relations: 3 Critical Questions

#### Question 1: Is there a place for the Samoan “Tofa Mamao ma le Faautautaga Loloto” in federal actions and research?

The Office continues to engage in asking the critical questions. The Director participated in the **DOI Listening Session on “Indigenous Knowledge.”** This was hosted by DOI’s Office of Policy Analysis. Chapter 1 is on the “Departmental Responsibilities for Consideration and Inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge in Departmental Actions and Scientific Research.”

The Purpose. “... to respect, and equitably promote the inclusion of, Indigenous Knowledge in the Department’s decision making, resource management, program implementation, policy development, scientific research, and other actions.”

To develop and promulgate a definition of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and Indigenous Peoples – includes Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Indigenous People of the U.S. Territories, and their respective nations, communities, or groups that are indigenous to the United States and its territories.

Director Tapaau Aga proposed that the definition for Indigenous People of the Caribbean Ocean be separate from the definition of Indigenous People for the Pacific Ocean. This will give space for each region to develop a definition based on their own specific history and identity. OIA has not yet released its final document.

**Question 2: Do US civil rights conflict with the Samoans’ right to their family lands?  
Can civil rights be reconciled with communal land ownership?**

In May 2023, **Civil Rights Commission** staff visited American Samoa and has residents of American Samoa to apply for membership in the Commission. 7 names have been submitted for consideration.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the Civil Rights Act of 1957, is the only independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement.

**Deeds of Cession and Proposed Marine Sanctuary**

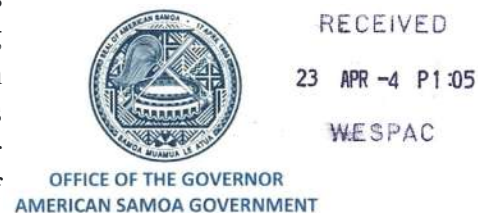
**Deeds of Cession and Proposed Marine Sanctuary**

**Question 3: Do the Deeds of Cession establish binding and enforceable obligations on the United States and its agencies?**

\*\*\* Letter from Governor Mauga to POTUS Biden opposing the Proposed Designation of Marine Sanctuary for the Pacific Remote Islands, Mar. 30, 2023

Dear Mr. President:

“Please hear and consider American Samoa’s strong objection to the designation of a Marine Sanctuary around the Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA). This follows my letter of June 15, 2022 urging you to consider the devastating impact this designation could have on our small island home. The concerns expressed in that letter have not changed. Our community is staunchly opposed to the expansion of Pacific (continued) Remote Islands Marine National Monument (PRIMNM), as proposed by the Pacific Remote Islands Coalition (Appendix 1). The restrictions on commercial fishing that will result from this designation will cripple the single largest private industry in our economy. I implore you to please take into account the serious cultural and financial impacts that this proposed action will have on the people of American Samoa.”



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**In September 2023, NOAA’s Office of National Marines Sanctuaries held a Workshop Agenda on the Proposed National Marine Sanctuary Designation for the Pacific Remote Islands at the Lee Auditorium in American Samoa. Office staff were invited to attend.**

**Deeds of Cession Test**

Many who attended expressed their opposition to the Marine Sanctuary. The NOAA representatives were asked if a legal analysis was done with respect to the Deeds of Cession. Federal Policies Impacting American Samoa Must Satisfy the Deeds of Cession Test. Deeds



contain the primary agreement between the US and the people of American Samoa respect and protect the individual rights of all people dwelling in Tutuila to their lands and other property in said District.

### **American Samoa’s Deeds of Cession: Where are the originals?**

Not on-island at the Archives, Historic Preservation, or libraries. Not at the Library of Congress. Staff wrote the Office of Treaty Affairs, Department of State. [treatyoffice@state.gov](mailto:treatyoffice@state.gov)  
*Clue: They could be at the Navy Department.*



## **Political Status Options and the Pacific Region**

For public outreach purposes, the Office has prepared “A Summary of American Samoa’s Political Status and Other Political Characteristics” and a “Comparison Chart of the Political Characteristics of AS, CNMI, Guam, USVI.”

American Samoa last political status report is available upon request. It is FINAL REPORT. The Future Political Status Study Commission of American Samoa. January 2nd, 2007. *For presentation to the Governor of American Samoa, the Legislature, the Chief Justice and the general public, as per P. L. 29-6; P. L. 29 – 24; and P. L. 29 – 25.*

In Spring 2023, a briefing was provided to the Governor on the Act on the Commission’s membership, functions, and powers.

**Political Status Options:** Territorial Status, Statehood, and Independence (Free Association)

### Panel Discussion of February 23, 2016

Presentation of Maria Lurie, Attorney-Advisor, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. Self-Determination in the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and Guam. Three Available Options: Continuity of. Exploring Future Status Options, Sources of U.S. Federal Law, Sovereignty and Plenary Power, Land Under the Sovereignty of the United States, Plenary Power of Congress, and Expressing a Preferred Pathway Forward.

### **Paying Attention to the other US Pacific territories: Economic Impact Studies**

The Office continues to keep an eye on the Pacific region and developments in the political status of island countries and territories. Economic impact is one of the most important considerations.

### **Pacific Islands Forum: What are the Implications of Membership?**

The Office participated in researching and understanding the application process for membership in the Pacific Island Forum. First, American Samoa’s relationship with the US State Department is key. American Samoa does not have a foreign affairs office.

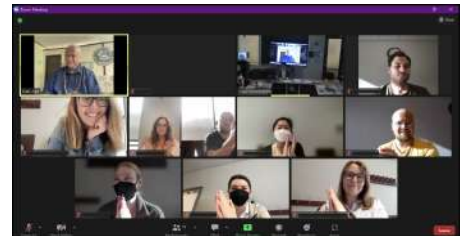
Secondly, American Samoa has to meet the criteria on self-government “Whether the territory exercises a degree of self-government such that it determines its own policy on regional issues, and will represent itself and its own interests in regional meetings and groups.” (Associate Membership in the Pacific Islands Forum).

## Preparations Pays Off – Academic Forums

The constant attention to national media, academic literature and continued dialogue with Pacific partners gave the office the preparation required to represent American Samoa in different forums. This is not to say there is not a range of views or a single local perspective.

### Georgetown University Law School: The Constitution of Empire

Tapaau presented on the seminar titled, “The Constitution of Empire,” at the invitation of Professor James Campbell, a Yale graduate, now on the Georgetown University Law School faculty. One of the questions asked during the seminar dealt with territorial leaders, lawmakers and others who are strongly opposed to automatic U.S citizenship for person’s born in American Samoa. Asked for his view on the outcome of the event, Tapaau told Samoa News this week that, “it’s important for Americans to understand a perspective unique to our people on why it’s so important to protect lands and culture even if it means rejecting US citizenship.”



### Yale University Law School Seminar: “Indigenous Self Government in the Constitutional Order”

Dr. Aga’s Oct 26 presentation for Yale Law School seminar was preceded by a Special Issue Symposium on the Law of the Territories and the publication of the Journal’s Special Issue on the Law of the Territories.



### In it for the Long Run: CLOSE UP students

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** Identify and recruit future youth and professionals who may be interested in this area. Recommend graduate and doctoral students write papers on the subject. Continue efforts in the schools and Community College.

### Building the Body of Knowledge: for future Conventions and the Next Generation

The Office is compiling all historical reports, making copies to be distributed to the Archives, Historic Preservation, Feleti Barstow Library, the ASCC Library, and artifacts to the Museum.

## Samoan Language Commission

The Samoan Language Commission (SLO) was established to promote, preserve, and guide the development of the Samoan language. The faaSamoa is inextricably linked to the culture as a living heritage and common means of communication cultivating diversity and human creativity.

### ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

ASCC SSI and Public Schools:

- SLC worked closely with the DOE Samoan Language Division on identifying critical needs, i.e. teacher shortage and lack of structured training.
- SLC will be part of the DOE five-year review of Samoan Language Curriculum in February 2024.

- ASCC – Samoan Studies Institute graduated in the Spring Semester 2023, a student with AA degree in Samoan Studies in addition to previous years graduates
- SLC member Aiono Okenaisa Fauolo, Director of SSI implemented a Teacher Certification Program for instructors of Samoan Language. First graduation is scheduled for December 15, 2023.
- SLC Director volunteers recruiting teachers for Samoan Language

#### Private Schools

- SLC Office conducted survey of Samoan language teaching in 8 schools  
4 - Faasao/Marist; Iakina, KF High School, and Elementary teach Samoan;  
3 – South Pacific Academy; Samoa Baptist; Manumalo expressed interest in teaching Samoan;  
1 – Pacific Horizon is not interested in Samoan language
- SLC Director works on upgrading connection between DOE and private schools on teaching Samoan;
- EFKAS Christian Education Division has incorporated significant upgrading of Samoan language usage in its curriculum material. SLC offered to share a collection of common errors in word usage and spelling.

#### Future Outlook

SLC will continue to strengthen working together with ASCC SSI on teacher training, and strengthen involvement of the Office of Samoan Affairs on cultural education and outreach to parents for partnering with schools.

### Samoan Heritage Initiative Program

The Lemanu-Talauega Administration has reinvigorated the Samoan Heritage Initiative Program in Hawai'i, underscoring their commitment to preserving and celebrating Samoan heritage and culture. Recognizing the importance of instilling a sense of pride and hope in Samoan youth, the administration seeks to sow the seeds of a brighter future, encouraging participants to return home and contribute to the welfare of the Samoan community. Over the past two years, the Samoa Heritage Initiative Program (SHIP) has been successfully conducted. The most recent program took place in July in Honolulu, Hawai'i, and was hosted by the American Samoa Government - Hawai'i Office.

### Office of Samoan Affairs

The year 2023 started slowly due to various issues and activities that the Secretary of Samoan Affairs and his Deputy attended but when available, hearings were conducted. Now with the new approved law being signed, the Office of Samoan Affairs is slowly adapting to fulfill its requirements as stipulated by the American Samoa Code Annotated.

With the newly approved law, we are working diligently to make sure the old cases from previous years are not being forgotten. We have reached out in trying to resolve all matters from parties involved before a hearing and during scheduled hearings as mandated by law. Cases are being scheduled as it comes in but sometimes it's impossible due to the parties not being available and sometimes the availability of the Office of Samoan Affairs or those necessary to hear hearings.

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As for the newly signed law, The Office of Samoan Affairs is working with the Attorney General's Office for a solution to several matters and other matters as stipulated by the law.

**Cases Refer from American Samoa Office of Registrar for Year 2023:**

Matai Titles: 18

Land Registration: 23

Walk-in Cases (Land): 21

**Cases Refer from High Court of American Samoa Year 2023:**

Matai Titles Case: 1

Land Registration Cases: 2

**Hearings Conducted for Year 2023:**

Matai Titles: 30

Communal Land Disputes: 21

Miscellaneous Disputes: 13

(Walk-in)

**Cases Resolved Year 2023:**

Matai Titles: 3

Communal Land Disputes: 4

Miscellaneous Disputes: 6

**Written Reports:**

Mediation Process and Dispute Resolution Reports Completed:

Matai Titles: 5

Land Disputes: 3

Certificate of Irreconcilable Dispute:

Matai Titles: Pending - 2

Land Disputes: Pending - 1

**ARPA Project: Office of Samoan Affairs New Conference Room:**

The Office of Samoan Affairs is currently using the building located behind Su'iigaula - Fale Samoa for Hearings while waiting for the completion of the New OSA Building renovations. The renovation is scheduled to be completed within eight months but with the amount of cases needed for hearings, the Office of Samoan Affairs has renovated one of the Fale Samoa to hold hearings for the time being.

## **American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture, & Humanities**

American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture, & Humanities (ASCACH) hosts a variety of activities for arts programming, personnel, and the museum geared at encouraging and preserving the traditional arts of American Samoa. This following summarizes the ASCACH Accomplishments for fiscal year 2023:

Poetry Out Loud:

Poetry Out Loud is a national poetry recitation competition offering high school students the chance to win prizes, including a national individual prize of \$20,000 and a school prize of \$500 for poetry materials. Details are available at [poetryoutloud.org](http://poetryoutloud.org). In March 2023, ASCACH hosted the 3rd Annual “TERRIES” competition with eight local high schools. Hazel I. Leo from Iakina Adventist Academy emerged as the winner and represented American Samoa at the Poetry Out Loud Nationals in Washington D.C. Ms. Leo reached the Top 8, and though she did not advance to the final 3, her achievements as a sophomore in American Samoa's inaugural in-person Poetry Out Loud national competition were noteworthy. ASCACH sent a staff member to D.C. for support and knowledge-sharing. This marked a significant achievement for ASCACH and American Samoa. Preparations for the 2024 “TERRIES” are already in progress.

47th Annual Flag Day Performing Arts Festival:

ASCACH registered 41 individuals from different organizations for pre-registration of the 47th Annual Flag Day Performing Arts Festival in January–February. During the audition phase, 15 groups showcased their performances over 3 evenings (April 13-15) at Veterans Memorial Stadium, Tafuna. All participants followed program guidelines and performance criteria. Artwork assessment was visual, revealing Samoan-indigenous dance choreography, notably executed by 2 standout groups.

Arts in Education:

In addition to the Mini Grant program, in which final refinements of the application process have been made for actioning FY23 – FY24, the ASCACH is looking into crafting an Early Childhood Education siapo mamamu project; a High School Yearbook Graphic Design and Layout project; and a Teacher of the Year visual arts project. The Mini Grant program is in the final phase of establishing its Review Panel and actioning the mini grant to financially assist all school level applicants in need of arts education projects. Its closure date is intended for April 5, 2024.

The Annual Holiday Music Festival (2023):

21 registrants successfully participated in the 46th Annual Holiday Music Festival, showcasing their talents for both the Community and local government components. The latter includes various authorities, agencies, departments, and offices, with programming overseen by the Governor's Office. Like last year, all participants adhered to program guidelines and performance criteria. Notably, choirs received positive ratings collectively, with a few standing out for exceptional music accompaniment and vocal arrangement in "Carol of the Bells," particularly the impressive Samoan interpretation. On the visual side, the array of minor choreography and themed attire, aiming for excellence, was commendable, mirroring the success of the previous year.



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## Our Path Forward

Over the past three years, we have made significant strides in building a solid foundation for our Territory. Together, we have achieved much; guided by our commitment to fostering sustainable growth, improving public services, and working to establish a thriving environment for our people.

Our journey ahead will require our continued partnership as there is still much to be done.

The Administration's infrastructure plans, while ambitious, remain centered on addressing the critical needs of the Territory, improving the lives of our people, and safeguarding our unique way of life. We will continue to focus on projects that will bridge gaps in services we provide to the public – the most critical is the need for improved medical facilities and services. Our key focus is fully executing plans to erect a new medical facility that will service our more densely populated area - our western district. Health care is a fundamental human right and we must make every effort to ensure our people are entitled to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

Our commitment to improving roads, reinforcing our seawall, and addressing infrastructure gaps such as our water system, broadband capabilities, as well as our sea and air port facilities remain unwavering. We understand that this is a major undertaking and while we anticipate challenges, we stand firm in our belief that collaborative efforts will overcome hurdles, ensuring the successful realization of a better and more resilient American Samoa.

As highlighted in the Financial Outlook, we have noted record revenue collections and we will continue to monitor collections to ensure our revenue growth maintains this trajectory. We intend to fully comply with our spending projections that will complete projects and mobilize plans initiated in FY2023.

Stimulating our economic growth continues to be one of the Administration's key focus areas. Through supporting our private sector and promoting small business interests we create more job opportunities and stimulate consumer spending. Our local consumer demands are ever increasing and ever changing, promoting small businesses to meet the demands of our local communities will have a lasting impact on our economy.

The Administration will press forward with reforms that we believe are essential for the advancement of our Territory. We remain committed to a transparent and collaborative approach in adapting to the evolving needs of our people.

Together we have an opportunity to continue building a foundation that not only sustains us today but propels us into a future defined by innovation, community involvement, and devoted service. We look forward to our continued partnership in creating a legacy of prosperity and well-being for generations to come.

Executive Branch: Cabinet Listing 2023			
Authorities		Name	Title
1	American Samoa Community College (ASCC)	Dr. Rosevonne M. Pato	President
2	American Samoa Medical Center Authority (ASMCA-LBJ)	Akapusi Ledua	Chief Executive Officer
3	American Samoa Power Authority (ASPA)	Wallon Young	Chief Executive Officer
4	American Samoa Shipyard Authority (ASSA)	Carlos Sanchez	Chief Executive Officer
5	American Samoa Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA)	Chuck Leota	Chief Executive Officer
6	American Samoa Visitors Bureau (ASVB)	Taimalelagi Minnie Tuia	Executive Director
7	American Samoa Development Authority (ASEDA)	Blanche Lulu Barber	Executive Director
8	Development Bank of American Samoa (DBAS)	Ruth Matagi	President
9	Feleti Barstow Public Library (FBPL)	Emma Solaita Malele	Territorial Librarian
10	Territorial Bank of American Samoa (TBAS)	Owen Peery	Acting President
Departments/Offices/Agencies		Name	Title
1	Administrative Law Judge (ALJ)	Marie Alailima-Lafaele	Administrative Law Judge
2	Administrative Services (DAS)	Afalava E. Afalava	Director
3	Agriculture (DOA)	Solia I. Mutini	Director
4	American Samoa department of Corrections	Tauanu'u Tauanu'u	Direcor
5	American Samoa Council on Arts, Culture, & Humanities (ASCACH)	Fuata S. Tiumalu	Director
6	Commerce (DOC)	Petti Tagipo Matila	Director
7	Education (DOE)	Talauega Dr. Samasoni Asaeli	Director
8	Election Office (EO)	Dr. Lealofi Uiagalelei	Commissioner
9	Environmental Protection Agency (AS-EPA)	Lefega Faamao Asalele Jr.	Director
10	Homeland Security (AS-DHS)	Samana S. Veavea	Director
11	Human & Social Services (DHSS)	Muavaefaatasi J. Suisala	Director
12	Human Resources (DHR)	Lynn Pulou-Alaimalo	Director
13	Legal Affairs (DLA)	Fainu'ulelei F. Ala'ilima Utu	Attorney General
14	Marine & Wildlife Resources (DMWR)	Taotasi A. Soliai	Director
15	Office of Financial Institutions	John Marsh	Commissioner
16	Parks & Recreation (DPR)	Kenneth S. Tupua	Director
17	Port Administration (DPA)	Falenaoti Loi-on Fruean	Director
18	Procurement (OP)	Ti'alemasunu Dr. Mikaele Etuale	Director
19	Program, Planning and Budget Office (OPB)	Catherine A. Saelua	Director
20	Property Management (OPM)	Poleen N. Asalele	Director
21	Protection & Advocacy for the Disabled (OPAD)	Matautu Dr. Peter Tinitali	Director
22	Public Defender (PD)	Asaua Falaniko Fuimaono	Acting Public Defender
23	Public Health (DOH)	Motusa T. Nua	Director
24	Public Information (OPI)	Aoelua Solomona Aoelua	Acting Director
25	Public Safety (DPS)	PC Lefiti F. Pese	Commissioner
26	Public Works (DPW)	Faleosina Voigt	Director
27	Samoa Affairs - Local Government (OSA)	PC Mauga T. Asuega	Secretary of Samoan Affairs
28	Search and Rescue Agency	Save Liuato Afa Tuitele	Director
29	Territorial Administration on Aging (TAOA)	Evelyn Lili'o Satele	Director
30	Treasury (DTR)	Malemo L. Tausaga	Treasurer
31	Youth & Women's Affairs (DYWA)	Dr. Salote Aoelua-Fanene	Director
GO Line Agencies		Name	Title
1	American Rescue Plan Oversight Office (ARPA)	Keith Gebauer	Executive Director
2	American Samoa Office-Hawaii	Tuiafono V. Sua	Director
3	Criminal Justice Planning Agency (CJPA)	Mariana Timu-Fai'ai	Director
4	Governor's Resilience Office	Amaamalele Tofaeono	Executive Director
5	Historic Preservation (ASHPO)	Tish Peau Folau	Director
6	Insurance Commission Office	Ben Te'o	Insurance Commissioner
7	Medicaid State Agency	Sandra King-Young	Director
8	Office of Disaster Assistance and Petroleum Management (ODAPM)	Lisa Tuato'o	Director
9	Samoan Language Commssion	Tialuga Seloti	Executive Director
10	Sports Complex (SC)	Uta'ifeau Lefiu Bill Kalasa	Director
11	Territorial Audit Office (TAO)	Mike Edmonds	Territorial Auditor
12	Territorial Energy Office (TEO)	Dr. Misipati A. Salanoa	Director
13	Veteran's Affairs Office (VA)	Suafaasisina Pulou	Director
14	Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)	Delaney Tilo	Director
15	Workmen's Compensation Commission (WCC)	Sagatea Filoiali'i	Commissioner