

Awards

1999 NAMTAC Award. The National Association of Management and Technical Assistance Centers (NAMTAC) has over 140 members representing organizations in 49 states, Puerto Rico, and Guam. In October, 1999 at their National Convention in Seattle, they honored the RETA-H Program with their prestigious national 1999 Outstanding Project of the Year Award for Economic Development.

The project-of-the-year awards competition is held annually to identify outstanding programs that assist businesses to become more globally competitive, more viable in their fields of expertise, or more capable of delivering services to the public sector. NAMTAC's award was made in recognition of the accomplishments of the RETA-H Program in assisting in the conversion from plantation agriculture to a market-driven diversified agriculture.



NAMTAC's press release described the RETA-H Program as having been developed through a federal government appropriation initiated by Senator Daniel K. Inouye. It further stated that issues addressed in the various projects included state agricultural policy, land use, water availability, and business viability of projects, as well as agronomic issues and marketing. It added that, due to the high level of technical and policy expertise available to projects from the grant writing process through production and marketing of products, success of the projects had been high, with coordinating marketing strategies put into place for some of the projects and networking encouraged among participants.

NAMTAC is a national association of diverse organizations engaged in business development, economic development, technical assistance, and technology transfer to businesses and communities.

SBA Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year for 2001. Based upon his work as the director of the RETA-H Program, Dr. Robert G. Chase received the SBA Minority Small Business Advocate of the Year Award for 2001. The award was for the State of Hawai'i and for SBA Region IX, which includes Arizona, California, Guam, Hawai'i, Nevada, and the Pacific Island Territories of the U.S.

In Resolutions passed by both the House and Senate of the State Legislature in recognition of this award, Dr. Chase was extolled for his positive impact upon the lives and dreams of hundreds of individuals and families across the State of Hawai'i. The Resolution further stated that for many workers facing the end of an era and a way of life, Chase offered new hopes, challenges and vast horizons as the Director of the Rural Economic Transition Assistance – Hawai'i Program. In that capacity, he has facilitated the creation of 274 new businesses and 929 new jobs, mostly in the areas hit by the closures of sugar plantations at Hamakua, Ka'u and Kaua'i. Through the program's focus on job creation, Dr. Chase aggressively encouraged entrepreneurial efforts and self-employment as the way to create sustainability and accept ongoing responsibility in the community. His efforts were very successful. Over 17,000 acres of former sugar land were converted to diversified agriculture by program participants. Almost half of these former sugar workers have now become the owners and decision makers in their own operations.



Dr. Robert Chase with Senator Russell Kokubun at State Legislature Presentation of resolution.

In this capacity, Dr. Chase, who has a Ph.D. in agronomy and social science from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (1982), worked with uncommon dedication and diligence over a nine year period. He is a management specialist with 23 years of experience in ag-based economic development project management, including nine years in West Africa and five years in the South Pacific nations.