

Impact Grant Award Summary

Impact Grants for Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Project summaries are compiled from Grant Proposal Abstracts

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS PROGRAM

Kohala Food Hub, \$20,000

Talk Story, Eat Local: Nourishing Kūpuna, Supporting Farmers, Connecting Community

Kohala Food Hub (KFH) proposes to strengthen and grow its food distribution programs that connect Hawai'i Island residents to locally grown and made foods. Our primary goal is to expand participation in our Online Marketplace, Multi-farm CSA, and network of 10 pickup locations and two doorstep delivery routes. To achieve this, we will focus on two integrated strategies: Direct Access, which combines targeted outreach to and support for kūpuna to overcome technological and mobility barriers with a refer-a-friend campaign that leverages personal networks to recruit new households; and Community Engagement & Awareness, which combines bringing residents together through quarterly pop-up community meals featuring 100% locally sourced foods with coordinated marketing campaigns across print, digital, and social media channels. Together, these initiatives will expand awareness, boost participation, increase revenue streams for our network of local food producers, and ensure that SNAP and DA BUX benefits are fully utilized to make local produce more affordable for low-income families. This project directly benefits more than 820 active households—reaching an estimated 3,200+ residents—across North and South Kohala and Honoka'a, while also supporting our network of over 155 local producers, including small and mid-scale farmers, backyard growers, ranchers, fishers, and value-added food businesses. By bringing locally grown food closer to communities with limited grocery options, the project reduces travel burdens for busy families and kūpuna and provides an efficient, affordable way to shop for a wide range of local products. The project will generate economic, social, and environmental benefits by increasing market opportunities for local producers, reducing the region's reliance on imported food, reducing food miles and ensuring equitable access to fresh, healthy products.

Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation, \$15,000

Continuing to build an ag workforce pipeline through AgTech Initiatives on Hawai'i Island

The Hawai'i Agricultural Foundation (HAF), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, seeks to strengthen the agricultural workforce pipeline on Hawai'i Island by continuing its innovative AgTech initiatives, including Tower Power and the Young Entrepreneurs Program (YEP). In response to teacher requests, HAF will also provide in-person trainings for a second year for Where Would We Be Without Seeds (WWWBWS) and Veggie U (VU), while incorporating In the Fields (ITF) opportunities that connect students with hands-on learning experiences at local farms and agricultural enterprises. The project's primary goal is to equip students and teachers with critical agricultural and AgTech skills, spark early interest in agricultural careers, and support the long-term sustainability of Hawai'i's food systems. Target beneficiaries include elementary and high school students, teachers, and local farmers, with broader impacts for the island's food security and workforce development.

Kahua Pa‘a Mua, Inc., \$15,000

Agricultural Intelligence (Ag-1): Agriculture Workforce and Food Security Initiative

Kahua Pa‘a Mua (KPM), a nonprofit rooted in North Kohala, proposes Agricultural Intelligence (Ag-I), a 12-month workforce and food security initiative. The project aims to build agricultural career pathways while strengthening local food resilience. Over the course of the year, interns will complete training, supported by docents who manage year-round farm visits and safety. Key activities include weekly skill-building modules in crops, livestock, irrigation, soil management, work ethics, farm construction, and small equipment in partnership with Hawai‘i Community College; structured producer placements with local farms and ranches; quarterly imu events serving as both training practicums and food distribution points; and monthly farm visits. The program’s primary goal is to train young people and community members in agriculture while expanding access to healthy, culturally meaningful food.

La‘i‘ōpua 2020, \$12,500

Papa Ku‘i ‘Ai & Pōhaku Ku‘i ‘Ai Workshop Series

The *Papa Ku‘i ‘Ai & Pōhaku Ku‘i ‘Ai Workshop Series* (Board & Stone Program) seeks to strengthen West Hawai‘i ‘ohana by revitalizing the ancestral practice of ku‘i—pounding kalo into poi. Over a 12-month period, La‘i‘ōpua 2020 (L2020), a Native Hawaiian nonprofit in Kailua-Kona, will host monthly intergenerational workshops. Guided by cultural practitioner Keahi Tomas, ‘ohana will craft their own papa ku‘i ‘ai (poi boards) and pōhaku ku‘i ‘ai (stone pounders), while learning tool-making, safety practices, and cultural protocols interwoven with mo‘olelo (stories) of Hāloa. The program is grounded in Native Hawaiian values of ‘ohana (family), ‘āina (land), and identity, with primary beneficiaries being Native Hawaiian families in West Hawai‘i, particularly those in Title I school districts facing poverty, cultural dissonance, and limited enrichment opportunities. This project directly supports the Department’s goal of balancing Hawai‘i Island’s economic, social, and environmental well-being by generating measurable benefits for residents. Economically, ‘ohana gain lifelong tools and knowledge to prepare and consume kalo regularly, reducing household food expenses while supporting local farmers and producers. Socially, the program strengthens cultural identity, restores intergenerational bonds, and builds community cohesion through shared practice at workshops and *Ku‘i Nights*. Environmentally, it promotes food sovereignty and stewardship by encouraging reliance on locally grown kalo rather than imported foods. The project also aligns closely with the Agriculture and Food Systems Program Objectives. By equipping ‘ohana with the tools and skills to prepare kalo at home and participate in *Ku‘i Nights*, the program directly increases consumption of local agricultural products. It strengthens agricultural resilience through the transmission of ancestral knowledge about kalo cultivation, preparation, and cultural significance, ensuring traditional practices continue to inform modern food systems. Partnerships with Laupa‘i Ke Ola, the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands, local schools, and other community organizations foster collaboration and sustainability, while also helping reduce food waste through traditional preparation methods. Finally, the workshops provide place-based agricultural and nutrition education rooted in Hawaiian values, improving educational and health outcomes while deepening participants’ sense of stewardship for ‘āina.

Big Island Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc., \$12,500

Ka‘ū Coffee Growers Cooperative

The Ka‘ū Coffee Growers Cooperative and its fiscal sponsor, the Big Island Conservation and Development Council, inc., introduces a hybrid initiative to elevate the visibility, market access, and economic resilience

of Ka'ū coffee farmers. This multifaceted project combines a unified cooperative marketing campaign with the 2026 Ka'ū Coffee Festival, an event designed to promote regional branding and foster engagement between farmers and buyers. Ka'ū coffee is grown by small-scale, independent farmers, many of whom are former sugar plantation workers. Through years of dedication and collaboration, these producers have established Ka'ū as a globally recognized coffee origin. Despite international acclaim, significant barriers to retail integration, brand visibility, and economic independence remain for these farmers. The Cooperative will launch bilingual outreach, direct-to-consumer education, and targeted media placements to enhance the profile of Ka'ū-grown coffee. The festival will serve as a platform for storytelling, sampling, and sharing the Cooperative's message, while the marketing campaign will extend outreach to urban buyers, hotels, and boutique roasters not only in Hawai'i but also across the United States and Japan. This initiative aligns with County objectives for economic development and food system resilience, aiming to strengthen the long-term capacity of Ka'ū's farming community.

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Purple Mai'a Foundation, \$21,206

Digital Creators, East Hawai'i

This project aims to strengthen East Hawai'i's cultural economy by training residents in digital storytelling, design, and marketing skills that support local businesses and nonprofits. Through an 11-week training program followed by capstone projects and a six-week paid internship, participants will gain marketable skills while directly contributing to the growth of culturally rooted and 'āina-based businesses. The target beneficiaries include 10 East Hawai'i residents—with priority for Native Hawaiian, rural, and 'āina-based community members—along with 10 local businesses and nonprofits who will receive digital marketing and design support. This project will generate economic impacts by creating pathways to employment, freelance opportunities, and entrepreneurship for East Hawai'i residents while expanding the digital capacity of local small businesses. It will produce social impacts by empowering participants to integrate Hawaiian values such as mo'olelo (storytelling) and mālama 'āina (care for the land) into their work, strengthening community well-being and cultural identity. It will also promote environmental impacts indirectly by supporting 'āina-based and conservation-focused organizations that benefit from increased visibility and community engagement. These outcomes directly support the Department's Goal of balancing economic, social, and environmental well-being and fulfill the Cultural Business Development Program Objective by fostering culturally rooted, sustainable businesses that preserve traditional practices while advancing economic growth.

Junior Achievement of Hawai'i, \$20,000

Financial Education for Hawaii's Future Leaders

Junior Achievement of Hawai'i (JA Hawai'i) proposes to expand its Entrepreneurial Mentorship Network on Hawai'i Island with the primary goal of equipping local youth and emerging entrepreneurs—particularly those from rural and underserved communities—with the knowledge, skills, and mentorship needed to thrive in the local economy. The project will deliver hands-on entrepreneurship education through JA's proven, volunteer-driven model, pairing students and young entrepreneurs with business mentors for one-on-one guidance, group sessions, and networking opportunities. By leveraging JA's research-based curriculum and Hawai'i Island's community partnerships, this initiative will inspire participants to

strengthen financial literacy, develop entrepreneurial mindsets, and gain confidence in their ability to contribute to their island's business community. This project will expand economic opportunity for underserved youth on Hawai'i Island by reducing barriers to entrepreneurship, building confidence in career pathways, and creating a sustainable mentorship network between experienced business leaders and emerging entrepreneurs. This aligns directly with the County of Hawai'i's Goal of Entrepreneurial Mentorship Networks by fostering capacity, reducing barriers to success, and strengthening the foundation for a supportive local business ecosystem. Socially, the program will empower rural students to envision themselves as future business owners and community leaders. Economically, it will prepare them to participate in and strengthen Hawai'i Island's workforce and entrepreneurial sector. Environmentally, by cultivating local leadership and reducing reliance on off-island resources, the program supports long-term resilience and sustainability.

Hawai'i Keiki Museum, \$15,847

Keiki Makers

Keiki Makers is a school-out STEAM program that transforms recycled plastic water bottles into 3D printing filament. The primary goal is to expand access to high-quality STEAM education while promoting environmental stewardship and fostering a resilient maker community. Through seasonal workshop camps, field trip workshops, community outreach classes, and science vendor fairs, participants will learn Computer-Aided Design (CAD), 3D printing techniques, and the use of an industrial plastic digester/reclaimer. Graduates will continue developing projects through teen meetups, engaging in peer-supported learning and mentorship. The program targets underserved and rural youth, especially girls, Native Hawaiians, and housing-insecure keiki, alongside their caregivers, ensuring equitable access to technology and hands-on learning experiences. The program equips at least 50 youth with career-ready skills in Computer-Aided Design (CAD), 3D printing, and entrepreneurial literacy, creating a local workforce prepared for technology-driven careers. By providing hands-on, industry-aligned training and mentorship, Keiki Makers strengthens Hawai'i Island's creative and STEAM economy, supports future job readiness, and fosters connections between young innovators and local industry partners. Keiki Makers builds a resilient, peer-supported maker network that encourages collaboration across generations. Youth participants gain confidence, creativity, and cultural connection through hands-on learning and mentorship. The program engages underserved and rural communities, including girls, Native Hawaiians, and housing-insecure youth, ensuring equitable access to STEAM education. Showcasing participants' work at public events highlights community achievements and inspires pride in local youth. The program fosters environmental stewardship by transforming recycled plastic bottles into 3D printer filament for tools, art, and products. Demonstrations at fairs, festivals, and community events educate thousands of keiki and caregivers about sustainability and responsible resource management. By combining hands-on technology with environmental awareness, the program encourages lifelong stewardship of Hawai'i's natural resources. Following the grant period, the Hawai'i Keiki Museum will continue offering Keiki Makers workshops, field trips, and community demonstrations, ensuring ongoing access to equipment, mentorship, and peer-supported learning opportunities.

Nalukai Foundation, \$17,947

Nalukai Academy: Expanding Youth Leadership and Entrepreneurship on Hawai'i Island

Nalukai Foundation, with nearly a decade of experience cultivating youth leadership and entrepreneurial empowerment in Hawai'i, seeks to strengthen its Nalukai Academy programs on Hawai'i Island by investing in staffing infrastructure essential for execution and growth. Nalukai Academy's primary goal is to develop a new generation of culturally grounded leaders and entrepreneurs who will create innovative, place-based solutions to Hawai'i's most pressing economic and community challenges, including food security, sustainable industry development, and workforce diversification. This project will expand access to entrepreneurial leadership training for Hawai'i Island youth, cultivating a skilled and innovative local workforce that directly contributes to the County's Business & Industry Development goals. By equipping students—especially those from rural and underserved communities—with practical skills in business development, innovation, and cultural stewardship, Nalukai Academy prepares the next generation to strengthen Hawai'i Island's economy through diversification, job creation, and locally rooted enterprises. The economic impacts include youth-led ventures, stronger career readiness, and a pipeline of future business and industry leaders who remain in Hawai'i. The social impacts include increased leadership capacity among Native Hawaiian and rural youth, greater personal confidence, expanded mentorship networks, and stronger community resilience. The environmental impacts include student-driven projects applying entrepreneurial solutions to challenges such as food security, sustainable agriculture, and 'āina stewardship. Through intensive 5–10 day leadership academies, facilitator-led workshops in design thinking, digital storytelling, and entrepreneurship, and alumni mentorship, Nalukai Academy equips students with skills, confidence, and networks for long-term resilience. Activities are rooted in Native Hawaiian values of stewardship and community responsibility, ensuring that leadership development is both culturally grounded and locally relevant.

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING PROGRAM

Hawai'i Island United Way, \$25,000

Hawai'i Island Furniture Bank

This project aims to improve housing stability and health equity for marginalized communities on Hawai'i Island by expanding Hawai'i Island United Way's Furniture Bank initiative and embedding human-centered support services led by trained Community Health Workers (CHWs). Through culturally responsive outreach and peer-based navigation, CHWs will connect Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, immigrants, LGBTQI+ individuals, older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income rural residents to essential household furnishings and wraparound services that support their transition into safe, stable housing. The Furniture Bank provides free, gently used furniture and home goods, allowing individuals to select items in person at our Hilo office, restoring dignity and choice in the re-homing process. Impact Statement The project will reduce economic hardship by eliminating the financial burden of furnishing a home, improve social outcomes by fostering community connection and empowerment, and promote environmental sustainability by diverting reusable goods from landfills. These outcomes directly support the Department's Goal to advance health equity and resilience and align with Program Area Objectives focused on addressing social determinants of health, increasing access to culturally competent care, and supporting peer-led service models.

Parents and Children Together, \$25,000

Rooted in Health: Plan, Cook, Flourish

This project seeks to strengthen family nutrition, food security, and sustainable eating practices by providing a comprehensive series of Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) workshops to 27 Head Start families residing in the Hawaiian Beaches subdivision of Hawaii Island. These families, many of whom face barriers to affordable healthy food access, will benefit from hands-on, culturally responsive nutrition education and practical skill-building designed to improve long-term health outcomes for both children and parents. The program's primary goal is to increase knowledge, confidence, and capacity for families to prepare healthy meals, purchase fresh and local foods, and begin growing their own food at home. Across the course of nine EFNEP workshops, families will participate in interactive cooking demonstrations led by a University of Hawaii at Mānoa nutrition facilitator. Ingredients used in demonstrations will be purchased for both the workshops and for families to take home, enabling them to practice preparing the same recipes in their own kitchens. This hands-on component ensures that skills learned are reinforced through real-life application, helping parents overcome the cost, confidence, and accessibility barriers that often prevent the adoption of healthier eating practices. The workshop series will culminate in a special session at the Maku'u Farmers Market, a community hub for fresh, locally grown food. Families will hear directly from a local farmer about how to select seasonal produce, budget wisely, and integrate local ingredients into family meals. To encourage participation and practice, each family will receive a \$50 voucher to shop at the market during the event, turning education into immediate action while also strengthening relationships between families and local agricultural producers. The final activity of the project introduces food production at home and at the classroom level. In this culminating workshop, families will come together to build three raised garden beds for the Hawaiian Beaches Head Start classrooms, supported by the expertise of a local farmer. Parents will also receive individual raised bed kits and starter materials for home use, empowering them to begin growing vegetables, herbs, and other edible plants with their children. This activity not only reinforces the nutritional knowledge gained in earlier workshops but also plants the seeds for long-term, sustainable household food practices. The Head Start classrooms will continue to use the garden beds as part of their curriculum, ensuring that the project has ongoing benefits for current and future children at the center. The project will directly support the Department's Goal and Program Area Objectives by improving access to healthy foods, promoting self-sufficiency, and strengthening the local food system. Economically, families will gain skills to stretch food dollars and reduce reliance on processed, costly groceries. Socially, the program builds family engagement, strengthens parent-child relationships, and creates community connections through shared gardening and market experiences. Environmentally, the promotion of local produce and home gardening reduces dependence on imported food, encourages sustainable food practices, and increases community resilience in the face of supply chain disruptions. These impacts directly support the Department's goal of balancing Hawai'i Island's economic, social, and environmental well-being by promoting food self-sufficiency, reducing household expenses, and strengthening community resilience.

Community First Hawai'i, \$25,000

Advance Health Care Directives Expansion

Community First, Inc. proposes the Advance Health Care Directives (AHCD) Expansion Initiative to empower Hawai'i Island residents—especially kupuna, rural, and underserved populations—to take charge

of their healthcare decisions before a crisis occurs. The project's primary goal is to increase AHCD awareness and completion rates by transitioning a volunteer-driven program into a robust, staff-managed initiative. Key activities will include community workshops across East and West Hawai'i, the creation of culturally relevant educational materials, production of digital video assets for online and clinic-based education, and integration of AHCD resources into the Kuleana Health Connect platform. The project will expand access to proactive healthcare planning, reduce stress on families during emergencies, and ensure that patients' wishes are honored. By reaching residents with education and tools to complete AHCDs, the initiative will improve community health literacy, strengthen support for kupuna, and advance social equity in access to care. This directly supports the Department of Research & Development's Community Well-Being Program objectives, particularly Objective A (addressing social determinants of health for kupuna and marginalized populations) and Objective C (bringing mobile and accessible health services to rural areas). This project will enable Community First to expand AHCD outreach into West Hawai'i, integrate digital innovation for broader impact, and transition the program into a sustainable component of Community First's core services.

FILM AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PROGRAM

Hawai'i Songwriting Festival, \$22,500

Hawai'i Songwriting Festival 2026

The Hawai'i Songwriting Festival ("HSF") is a 501(c)(3) that has supported the local songwriting community for over 20 years. Our flagship event is an annual songwriting conference at the Westin Hapuna. About 200 songwriters attend the conference, with numbers limited in order to keep the event small and intimate so attendees are able to connect with each other and music industry mentors in a meaningful way and build strong, long-lasting relationships. Most conference attendees are from Hawai'i (66% in 2025), with about one third from Hawai'i Island (35% in 2025) and others joining from the US continent and a few foreign countries. It's important for local songwriters to network horizontally with folks from abroad, and we welcome these attendees as they help our community grow and thrive. However, our priority is always our local songwriters. Conference workshops and panels feature 30+ mentors from all areas of the music industry, including professional songwriters, producers, artists, music publishers, record label representatives, music attorneys, and music supervisors (who license music for use in film, TV, and advertising). Our industry-savvy board carefully handpicks individuals who are not only highly experienced and highly regarded in their field, but who are also committed to connecting with the local songwriting community and truly want to develop relationships and help our attendees to grow their music careers. We ask mentors to make themselves available to our attendees, providing access to information and resources that are usually hard to come by in the industry. We intentionally promote inclusivity and teach those who are joining us to value and respect our unique local culture. Over the years, we've seen that our conference is having a positive and tangible impact on our local songwriting community. Countless songwriters report that their lives and careers have been changed by attending our conference. The relationships they develop and the knowledge they gain at HSF empower them to realize that music doesn't have to be a side hustle or hobby; they can have a legitimate career in the music industry. The independent music scene on Hawai'i Island has blossomed and grown as a result of these songwriters learning how to do what they love and make a career of it. Through the knowledge acquired, skills developed, and relationships fostered at our

festival, local songwriters are now collaborating with each other and folks in the mainstream music industry and finding success in the global market by licensing their music for use in film, TV, and advertising — all while living at home here in Hawai'i. All of this directly supports the Department's Goal and Film and Creative Industries Program Objectives. HSF is increasing Hawai'i Island residents' access to careers in the music industry, and in doing so we strengthen our local creative sector and help songwriters establish reliable careers in the music industry without leaving home. We are also bringing local songwriters together, resulting in countless collaborations and connections that last year round and make our entire music community stronger.

Na'ālehu Theatre, \$22,000

Mālama Kō Aloha

Na'ālehu Theatre proposes *Mālama Kō Aloha*, a countywide Creative Industries workforce development initiative designed to expand access to training and employment in film, television, music, media, and fashion on Hawai'i Island. The project addresses underemployment, outmigration of youth, and limited on-island training by offering mentorship, technical instruction, and integration into professional productions. Activities include a TV series and podcast highlighting paniolo stories and traditions, music videos for rising artists competing for Nā Hōkū Hanohano, Grammy, and Country Music Awards, as well as social media campaigns, outreach, and cultural promotions. The project's primary goal is to build a sustainable pipeline of creative industry professionals by: delivering training bootcamps and workshops in film, photography, television, live-streaming, music, fashion, and event production; providing targeted mentorship that prepares participants for professional careers; hosting public creative events that double as live training labs; and supporting youth empowerment initiatives through skill-building, networking, and entrepreneurial development. Target beneficiaries include youth, emerging professionals, and underemployed adults across rural districts of Hawai'i Island, with priority for those who would otherwise lack access due to geography or cost. At least 100 residents and 200 K-12 youth will receive training. The project will strengthen Hawai'i Island's economy and workforce by training residents, creating jobs, retaining talent, and reducing reliance on outside hires. Location-based productions will preserve and celebrate diverse cultural assets while supporting creative, visitor, and value-added business industries.

Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i, \$21,300

NLTV Creative Media Workshops

The *NLTV Creative Media Workshop Series* is designed to strengthen Hawai'i Island's creative workforce and economy. The project's primary goal is to provide residents, particularly youth as well as emerging and mid-career creatives, with opportunities to gain new skills and refine existing ones, enabling them to advance their media projects and provide professional services to the community. Local small businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies continuously seek affordable, high-quality media expertise; these workshops help meet that demand while enhancing homegrown talent. Over the course of one year, NLTV will partner with industry professionals to design and deliver seven unique workshop topics, each offered in Hilo and Kona for a total of 14 sessions to ensure islandwide access. These workshops will cover in-demand skills such as drone camera operations, social media campaign development, podcasting, digital art and graphic design, animation, advanced video editing, and community storytelling. By aligning with community and industry needs, the series will build workforce readiness, expand entrepreneurial opportunities, and cultivate a culture of collaboration among local creatives. We anticipate serving an

average of 10-20 participants per session, reaching a total of 140-280 participants over the year, thereby building a network of skilled individuals who can support Hawai'i Island's growing creative economy. The project will generate economic benefits by equipping residents with marketable skills that open pathways for income generation as solo entrepreneurs, freelancers, or small business owners. This directly contributes to the growth of local creative industries and reduces reliance on off-island service providers. Socially, the series will increase access to quality media services, strengthen peer connections, and foster a circular economy, by keeping resources, knowledge, and income circulating locally. The workshops will also empower residents to tell authentic stories about Hawai'i Island, amplifying community voices and preserving cultural narratives. This work directly supports the Department's goal of balancing economic, social, and environmental well-being while advancing program objectives related to workforce development, entrepreneurship, and community collaboration.

International Cultural Arts Network, \$20,500

Acting Workshops

This project aims to expand access to professional creative industry training for Hawai'i Island residents by delivering two intensive, two-day acting workshops in Hilo and Kona. Each workshop will serve 25 residents, for a total of 50 participants, providing hands-on training in voice, movement, character development, scene study, audition techniques, and on-camera performance. Led by a team of seasoned program directors, internationally recognized coaches, and professional actors, the workshops will remove barriers of cost and distance that often force island residents to seek training on O'ahu or the mainland. The primary beneficiaries are aspiring actors and creative professionals on Hawai'i Island, with a focus on adults and young adults who lack access to industry-standard training opportunities. The project will generate clear economic, social, and cultural impacts that align with the Department's goal of improving quality of life for Hawai'i Island residents. Economically, the workshops will strengthen the local creative workforce and expand the pool of trained talent available to productions, helping to increase local hiring and reduce reliance on imported cast and crew. Socially, the program will provide residents with opportunities to gain confidence, pursue creative careers, and contribute to Hawai'i Island's cultural life. By linking training directly to professional industry standards, the project also advances the Film and Creative Industries Program objectives of developing the workforce, supporting local productions, and raising the visibility of Hawai'i Island as a creative hub. While the project does not have direct environmental components, it reduces travel-related costs and emissions by bringing training directly to island residents, rather than requiring participants to fly to Honolulu or beyond.

REGENERATIVE TOURISM PROGRAM

Kelii William Ione Legacy Foundation, \$25,000

Kuu Home Sustainable Tourism Design

The objective of this project is to create a sustainable tourism model and management plan for the Keaukaha area. This initiative will involve a collaborative, multi-step process, including community meetings and direct engagement with key County officials and other tourism industry leaders. The project will result in a formal visitation guide and a set of policy recommendations to establish appropriate management protocols and ensure accountability. The target beneficiaries include Keaukaha residents, non-profit organizations that utilize the Keaukaha coastline. Schools in Keaukaha, as well as all visitors to

the Keaukaha coastline. This project will support an improved quality of life for Hawaii Island residents and promote balanced economic growth that prioritizes the protection of Keaukaha's environmental, social, and cultural well-being by implementing strategies to assess and manage carrying capacity at Keaukaha beach parks. The project design focuses on active local involvement, which ensures that tourism's development in Keaukaha reflects the community's values and needs. This project hopes to capture the need for community in creating recommended diverse job opportunities beyond the hospitality industry norms. This project plans to boost local economies: By encouraging tourist spending at locally owned businesses, a plan that ensures that profits are retained within the community, supporting entrepreneurs and reducing poverty. Effective tourism management: safeguards cultural heritage and strengthens social bonds, promoting mutual respect and community pride; preserves cultural heritage by ensuring Keaukaha's rich cultural and historical significance is shared with visitors through industry training; empowers local communities by involving residents in the design and decision-making process, giving the community a voice and a sense of ownership over tourism; and strengthens social cohesion: When the design is developed collaboratively, it can foster community pride, including networks, shared norms, and mutual trust.

Destination Kona Coast, \$25,000

Aloha Greeting and Cultural Program

Destination Kona Coast-Kona Coast Heritage Foundation has a thirty-year history of dedicating volunteer greetings to cruise ship visitors on the Kailua Pier. Our future is innovative and with positive results for our island residents and visitors. The Aloha Greeting Program will be engaged in greeting seventy-one ships for 2025 through June 30, 2026, in Historic Kailua Village. The primary goal is to educate new visitors about the historic sites within our village and the surrounding area. Our area encompasses two national parks: Pu'uuhonua O Honaunua and Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park. Our volunteer greeters are the ambassadors of Aloha, and we have a unique role in the hospitality mission. Our greeters distribute brochures about historic landmarks, ocean safety, safe-ocean sunscreen, shopping at the farmers' market, boutiques, galleries, and locations for essentials like the post office and drugstores. We share educational materials, such as 'Scenic By-Way: Royal Footsteps Alona on the Kona Coast.' We are providing our stewardship by endorsing the Pono Pledge for Hawai'i Island. We share the QR Code, and visitors go online and take the Pono Pledge. We are proud to share the Pono Pledge with visitors and residents. Many residents are swimmers, boat owners, paddle board owners, and canoe club paddlers who enjoy the Kailua Pier daily, and often join the volunteers for information and Talk Story. On Cultural Day, each Wednesday year-round, our Hula Halau performs. Two hula dancers perform twice a month, using hula implements and providing their own music for one hour. Our musicians play Hawaiian music on Cultural Days throughout our calendar year. Their performances feature guitars, keyboards, ukulele, and drums, and they are also songwriters. They play for three hours from 8 am to 11 am. We are pleased to have supported two Native Hawaiian culturalists for an extended period with "Talk Story" for one hour, sharing the stories about Kamakahonu National Historic Landmark. There was good enthusiasm; however, we hope to continue with the assistance of new funding for a Cultural Assistant who can upstart our cultural program with artisans in lauhala, lei making, ipo making, and additional Hawaiian music. The program will share more cultural aspects of the artistic and traditional crafts that support the Native Hawaiians now and for their future generations. The Culturalist will be skilled in the Hawaiian language and share a section in the new newsletter with translations of Hawaiian words. The Aloha Information Booth volunteer greeters welcome

each visitor. We are pleased with our daily visitor service, and the average number of assisted visitors is 800 to 1,000 per ship. This year, our volunteer greeters extended to a record number of fifteen during the spring of 2025; however, our volunteers do leave for the summer, as we have fewer ships. In the fall, our greeters return refreshed to greet the increased number of ships arriving in September, October, and November. Our popularity has increased in the last eighteen months, and a weekly newsletter and QR card will increase more viability for activities and places to visit and shop. The economic impact has always been a factor for the local business community and its employed residents. Businesses in Historic Kailua Village hire extra staff for a day when a cruise ship is in port. The proximity of the village to the Kailua Pier has a significant impact on the overall economic outcomes. A short walking distance to shops, dining, and nearby restaurants, along with a short walk to the Farmer's market for fresh fruit, 100% Kona coffee, Macnuts, and other tasty fruits like mango. This economic impact is somewhat vital to the businesses in Historic Kailua Village, as a parking issue has decreased revenue for most businesses. T The cruise ship visitor is highly welcomed as there is no parking issue, and they have the entire day to select their activity. Our greeters provide essential information for activities for the day walker, as well as details on renting a car if desired. The Hawai'i Tourism Authority's website features a Cruise Fact Sheet compiled from two sources that collect data for cruise ship visitors, revealing an average daily spending amount that is overwhelming. The daily spending for Hawai'i Island is \$126.85 (2024 average per day). The economic spending statistics for August 2025 indicate 2,492 cruise ship visitors. The estimated spending is \$316,110 for one month in West Hawai'i. The social growth of this program is realized through the passion of the volunteer greeters. They work together each day, greeting new visitors to the island, and they know their feedback is always positive. Each volunteer teaches Hawaiian culture, shares interesting places to visit, and expresses the spirit of Aloha. This memorable experience yields positive rewards for the visitor, and their experience will be shared with others when they return home and to their community.

VASH Hawai'i Island, \$25,000

VASH Ocean and Safe Travel Campaign

This project aims to increase visitor safety on Hawai'i Island by reducing preventable injuries and accidents through a comprehensive Ocean and Travel Safety Campaign. The campaign will primarily benefit tourists and visitors of all ages, who engage in ocean recreation, hiking, and cultural site visits. Key activities include an 18-week radio flight on KWXX, KAPA, WAVE, and KKOA during peak tourism season (November 24, 2025 – March 29, 2026), a four-month digital/mobile ad campaign delivering approximately half a million impressions, and a dedicated safety webpage hosted by VASH with videos, tips, and resources. Messaging will highlight ocean safety (“Always Snorkel with a Buddy”), hiking and outdoor best practices, travel security, and respect for Hawai'i's environment and culture. The project is expected to increase awareness that supports reduced ocean-related incidents, hiking accidents, and theft among visitors, directly reinforcing economic stability by safeguarding the tourism industry, Hawai'i Island's primary economic driver. Socially, the campaign will advance community well-being by protecting residents, emergency responders, and visitors from avoidable harm. Environmentally, it will encourage mindful interaction with fragile ecosystems and protected species. These outcomes directly support the Department's goal of improving public safety and align with Program Area objectives to reduce preventable injuries and strengthen sustainable tourism.