



## HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

### CHANGE Grants 2021 – Overview of Themes and Trends

#### Background

In 2021, Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) launched the inaugural CHANGE Grants program based on the [CHANGE Framework](#). HCF staff had the opportunity to meet virtually with nonprofit applicants across the state to hear first-hand about their impactful work. As a result, we gathered major themes and trends across the nonprofit sector and in each of the six CHANGE sectors. The following overview from the CHANGE Grants application process is our first step to share these initial learnings.

For questions or feedback, please email [changegrants@hcf-hawaii.org](mailto:changegrants@hcf-hawaii.org).

#### Common themes and trends across all CHANGE sectors:

- Not enough resources – This is a clear barrier across the nonprofit sector. Many organizations shared they are dealing with **symptoms instead of root causes**, but they do not have the capacity to address root causes because the symptom needs are so great.
- Difficulty finding and retaining **qualified staff/workforce** – This is especially true on the neighbor islands.
- **Government as a barrier** – For example, compliance is more important than results, slow payments, and the reimbursement model requires large up-front capital.
- Difficulty in **collecting and utilizing data** to show impact. Data is gathered more often for grant/contract compliance than for assessing effectiveness.
- There is a general sense that **networks are needed/helpful** for system change and peer learning, but more time, technical assistance, and support is needed to build networks and collective action.
- Types of **training, resources, and technical assistance** that are needed to improve include: advocacy, technology systems, evaluation, fundraising and sustainability, federal funding access and management, increasing earned revenue, and outreach and communications.
- All organizations **faced deep challenges by COVID-19** (e.g., reduced fundraising events and volunteer participation; restricted in-person services). Many nonprofits served as first responders in our community. The forced technology adaptation was difficult but ultimately positive beyond the pandemic. Government pandemic funds were useful but difficult to manage.

#### Themes and trends by CHANGE sector:

##### **Community & Economy**

- Affordable housing is a major issue and only getting worse. Collaboration rather than “us vs. them” mindset is needed to find bigger solutions.
- This sector already has several networks and umbrella organizations working on systems change. Many others are interested in becoming part of a network.
- Many organizations exist to address inequities in the community, but few are using data to show progress towards equity over time.

## **Health & Wellness**

- Across the board, organizations are aware of Social Determinants of Health concepts (SDoH). Many framed their strategies/goals to address SDoH as the basis of healthcare.
- Access to healthcare is a huge issue, especially for rural, immigrant, and non-English speaking populations, and for persons with mental/behavioral health needs.
- Nearly all organizations provided emergency response to the pandemic. COVID-19 rapidly accelerated the shift to telehealth, in some areas increasing access to services. Sharp increases in mental/behavioral health needs are expected, including among youth.
- Health and wellness sector organizations vary widely in size and scope of services. Many of the largest nonprofits provide comprehensive services, have strong networks, use data extensively to measure impact, and innovate toward system change. Many others treat a specific disease or condition, focus on prevention, or provide wrap-around support services that complement medical care.

## **Arts & Culture**

- Vibrant arts and culture organizations are indicators of social and economic strength.
- Arts and culture organizations play a pivotal role in advancing equity and social justice, including through preservation and perpetuation of traditional cultural knowledge.
- The pandemic caused widespread losses in audiences, revenue, and opportunities for organizations, artists, and cultural practitioners, causing rapid shifts to virtual platforms.
- The arts and culture sector demonstrated great resilience in responding to their hardships caused by the pandemic by collaborating and finding creative solutions to survive.
- Arts organizations have difficulty leveraging data to illustrate the impact of their work overtime, but many are interested in improving data collection and evaluation practices.
- There are many strong arts and culture associations across the state, with great potential to form broader networks of shared interests that can influence systems and policies.

## **Natural Environment**

- There is a strong statewide groundswell of community organizations supporting hands-on grassroots restoration of Hawai'i's natural environment.
- A few organizations in the sector are reaching across communities and islands, forming stronger networks to leverage knowledge and expertise and to influence systems change through collective action. Many other organizations in this sector want to participate in stronger networks.
- There is nowhere near enough capacity in this sector to combat the accelerating impact of climate change across Hawai'i.
- The agriculture sector lacks access to capital and infrastructure needed to help the sector grow and support greater food independence for community sustainability.
- The natural environment sector appreciates the value of data to demonstrate impact but often lacks the capacity and know-how to collect and analyze data effectively.
- The pandemic was very challenging for natural environment sector organizations, but also created unexpected opportunities to help other organizations, to provide outdoor activities for the community, and to strengthen community resilience and mental health.

## **Government & Civics**

- There were relatively few applicants to the government and civics sector compared to other sectors. Among those applicants, a few were very strongly aligned with the application criteria while most others struggled to describe alignment.
- Few formal networks broadly embrace this sector as a whole, but there are many networks focused on specific subjects or policy issues.
- Organizations with robust volunteer support often applied under the government and civics sector because volunteerism is viewed as a direct form of civic engagement.
- The strongest organizations in this sector may be a resource to support the development of stronger networks and collective action to achieve needed systems and policy changes across all sectors.
- Systemic change in this sector usually is gradual, often occurring over years, so it can be difficult to track data demonstrating impact.
- Schools have great potential to increase civic engagement among Hawai'i's youth.

## **Education**

- Many education applicants had the advantage of longevity, working in the education sector for many years to build a strong continuum of learning, knowledge, and relationships.
- Data tracking and analysis to measure long-term impact are comparatively commonplace and well-developed in this sector.
- Social emotional learning and trauma-informed approaches to education are strongly supported in this sector.
- Many applicant organizations are stepping up to address immediate needs of students and their families facing financial hardship, food insecurity, job loss, and access to distance learning technology.
- Project-based and 'āina-based learning kept students engaged throughout the pandemic.
- Many applicants are focusing on professional development for educators in areas such as distance learning, virtual programming, and training on mental health support.
- A few applicants provide direct education services while conducting research, using their programs as laboratories to test pedagogy and curriculum while strengthening educators' skills and knowledge.
- Most applicants have active partnerships, but few participate in formal networks with shared goals, common data, and collective action.