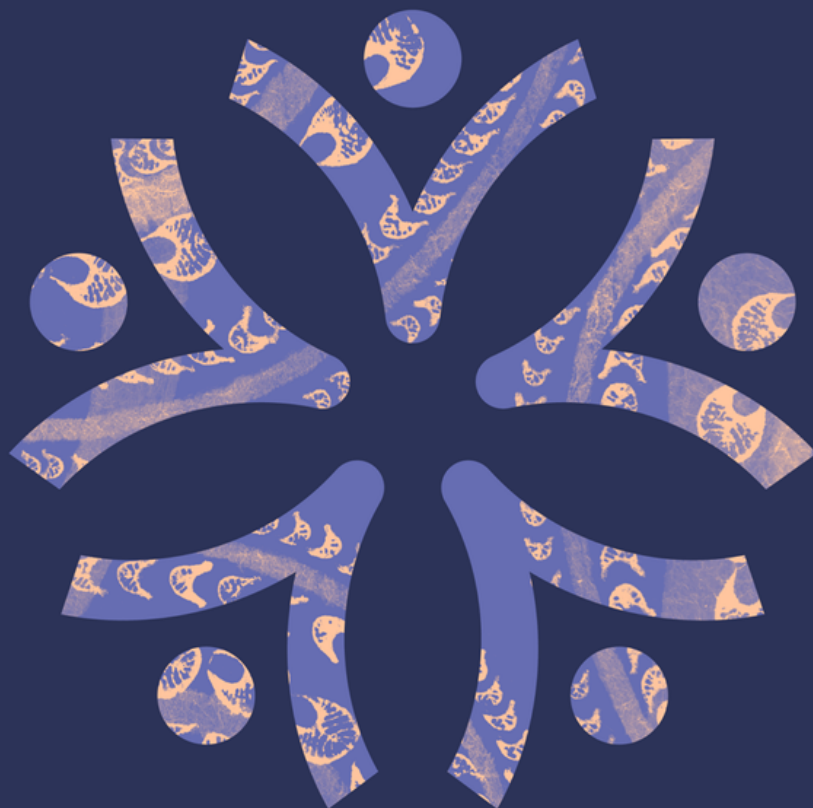


Hawai'i
Community
Foundation

2025 Health and Wellness Grantee Gathering Report

October 2023 – May 2025

MAY 20, 2025





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The grantee gathering was hosted by Summer Keli'ipio of 'A'ali'i Alliance. The information contained within this report reflects information gathered and synthesis of information from the debrief meeting between HCF staff and 'A'ali'i Alliance.

Mahalo nui to the grantees who gave their time and energy to share stories about the Health and Wellness sector. We are forever grateful to the hard and thankless work, and hope that this report represents their perspectives, elevates the voices of those in need, and moves us closer to a healthier Hawai'i.





BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 16 out of 20 Health and Wellness Sector grantees gathered at Ka Waiwai ma Ko'olau in Kāne'ohe, O'ahu for the purposes of:

- Celebrating 18 months of accomplishments, continuing to build pilina among grantees, and to network;
- Gathering stories of success and challenge from the October 2023 to May 2025 grant period to serve as the final reports for grantees in attendance;
- Understanding impact in the Health and Wellness strategy areas; and
- Providing insight for future funding cycles and the work ahead in the Health and Wellness sector.

The Health and Wellness Sector Vision Statement is:

Health and Wellness has shifted from “fixing the individual” to supporting changes identified and led by communities across Hawai'i. These shifts will impact the overall ecosystem of health in places where people live, connect, work, and play. Shifting agency, resources, and decision-making to community members closest to the solutions creates a more resilient, equitable, and secure Hawai'i.

Grantees participated in activities throughout the day to answer key questions included in this report. HCF staff and the contracted facilitator documented the responses of participants and analyzed the information at the conclusion of the gathering. A complete listing of all notes as well as the gathering agenda can be found at the end of this report.

Finally, the contracted facilitator, 'A'ali'i Alliance, provided a short training on Data Storytelling. Grantees were asked throughout the day to use storytelling approaches when sharing ideas. The presentation slide deck is archived with the Health and Wellness team.



GRANTEE PARTICIPANTS

'A'ALI'I Mentoring

Family Hui Hawai'i

Going Home Hawai'i

Grow Some Good

Hawai'i Public Health Institute - Hawai'i Community Health Worker Association

Hawai'i Children's Action Network

Hawai'i Health and Harm Reduction Center

Hawai'i Health Information Exchange

Hawai'i Island Adult Care, Inc.

Ho'okua'āina

I Ola Lāhui

Kipuka O Ke Ola

Lāna'i Community Health Center

Mālama Kaua'i

Root & Rise Hawai'i

Samaritan Counseling Center Hawai'i



OVERALL FINDINGS

HCF staff and the contacted facilitator analyzed the information from the grantee gathering and generated the following findings:



Grantees achieved the success they set out to achieve

We met and exceeded our goal for the number of nature and art therapy workshops and added equine therapy. (Root & Rise)

Success and progress was palpable at the grantee gathering. Organizations felt like they did what they set out to do and formed valuable partnerships that will keep the momentum going.



Importance of flexible funding

The original plans shifted due to ongoing staff changes. Positive changes came through increased volunteer support and community partnerships. (Grow Some Good)

Grantees faced constantly shifting environments throughout the grant period. Flexible funding enabled them to adapt (hire more staff, change the program, seek alternative partnerships, purchase supplies) and implement programs without having to jump through hoops. Given the state of the world, needing to change rapidly will remain a critical competency of any program, and therefore flexible funding will need to continue to support success in the future..



Invest in relationships as a means of strengthening the system

Mentors also wanted their own meeting and ended up using their hui as a place to turn to each other to get ideas and deal with challenges like a support group. ('A'ALI'I Mentoring)

Many grantees needed partnership and collaboration--including within the grantee cohort--in order to be successful. They also remarked that funders often will not pay for pilina activities. Investing in pilina is an investment in the connective tissue of the health and wellness system. Pilina enables greater access to referrals, data sharing, program scaling or enhancement, opportunities for staff development, and many more activities that strengthen the system and its outcomes. Pilina is vital to strong and cohesive system.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations come from a synthesis of the information in this report as well as the debrief conversation after the convening. The list below may not be fully exhaustive of helpful ideas for the future and are intended to spark conversation, generate ideas, encourage curiosity, and center future thinking on empathy and aloha for grantees and the communities they serve.

- **Keep funding flexible.** The ecosystem changes constantly, and programs need flexibility to adapt and be successful.
- **Encourage collaboration among grantees.** Minimize competition or perceptions of competition as this erodes the spirit of collaboration.
- **Invest in storytelling.** Funders need information to understand what community programs are doing in order to invest in them. Supporting storytelling through grants or professional development opportunities will help build understanding of this work.
- **Invest in collaboration.** Collaboration improves outcomes, scale, and scope of what grantees can do, but funders often do not provide support for collaboration. Investing directly in collaboration leads to greater impact.
- **Continue to invest in existing programs.** New or “innovative” programs often seem more attractive to funders, but existing programs also can lead to greater scale or new ideas in addition to the contributions they already make as existing services.
- **Underscore HCF’s role as a connector and risk taker.** HCF plays an important role in connecting people and being a partner willing to take risks. This is very helpful for grantees.
- **Message broadly the talent and skills of professionals in this industry.** Working in this sector requires resilience, creativity, determination, kindheartedness, and deep skills. Support the sector by sharing the strengths and value of this sector.
- **Support different types of programs.** How we address health and wellness in Hawai’i requires many different service approaches. To be successful, we need all program types.
- **Collaborate with other funders.** Spread the word about the sector and work with other funders to decrease silos among the philanthropic community.
- **Advocate for the sector through better messaging.** In addition to ongoing policy work, there needs to be more and better messaging around the key principles of Health and Wellness. Destigmatizing mental and behavioral health, better defining illness and health, and improving how we talk about holistic wellness is needed for this sector to gain traction.
- **Continue to increase community participation in decision making.** In order to do this, there will need to be investments in compensation, changes to the way individuals are compensated, and training for community members and organizations to understand how to navigate the rules for compensation.



SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS

What program successes are grantees most proud of?



Successful implementation

We're most proud of implementing "front end justice" deflection and diversion. (GHH)

Grantees are most proud of the strides they made implementing programs, completing the activities of their grants, continuing existing programs, starting new programs, and building partnerships in the community.



Increased collaboration

We're most proud of buy-in from partner program staff - they refer and help get their clients to our programs, speak highly of our network, and support our initiatives. (Roots & Rise Hawai'i)

Many partnerships and relationships across programs were built during the grant period. The strengthening of connective tissue across the sector will help to generate systemic change.



Successful program participants

We're most proud of linking people who have difficulty accessing services of care with services without strings. (HHRC)

Program participants graduated, successfully received services, received training, and experienced the program outcomes intended for these grants. Successful program implementation and participants ensures the vital work of the health and wellness sector continues and keeps Hawai'i strong.



Improved data systems

We're most proud of expanded data collection with various health organizations across the state (I Ola Lāhui)

Sharing information makes accessing health and wellness services fluid across the state. Grantees with projects in data operations were able to achieve success and other grantees also noted their successes with data over the course of the grant period.



SNAPSHOTS OF SUCCESS

What else did programs accomplish?



Community-based decision making

Our program took a neglected fire-prone site and turned it into a garden/farm that nurtures community through food, returns space to community, and creates opportunities for connection. (Grow Some Good)

Community engagement helps to uncover and remedy gaps in services or issues with accessibility. Programs were able to involve communities more and address challenges across the sector through engagement.



Increased sector capacity

We strengthened capacity of our on the ground community partners to support mental health. (Various)

Many new programs were added to the sector as a result of grant funds. Many beloved or existing programs were able to continue as well. This indicates that grants were able to maintain capacity where it was already needed and expand capacity into new areas.



Strengthened internal operations

We were able to spend time on leadership development and succession planning (Ho'okua'āina).

Some grantees indicated internal operations improved over the grant period including in areas of data operations, communications, human resources administration, and strategic growth. Many of these activities are critical to ensuring organizations can recruit and retain staff, which leads to better program outcomes.



Developed the workforce and capacity

We were able to share the importance of community health workers and increase the presence of CHWs across the state. (Hawai'i CHW Association)

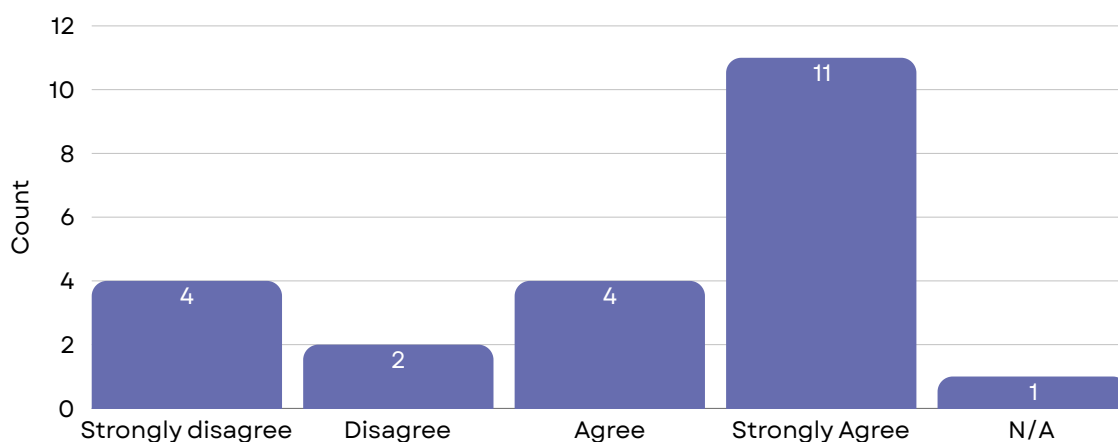
Building a strong and competent workforce to support varied needs across the state will help achieve the Sector Vision. Grantees noted that professional development was an important accomplishment for this grant period. This investment in people will have lasting effects into the future.

IMPLEMENTATION DATA

The implementation data comes from a live poll hosted on Mentimeter.com and administered during the gathering. There were approximately 22 attendees replying to the questions, and some attendees represent the same organization. These questions help to answer the extent to which programs were successful implementing their programs, which is critical for programs to achieve success.

To what degree were programs implemented and successful during the grant period?

Figure 1. Count of responses to the statement “Our program was implemented as planned.”



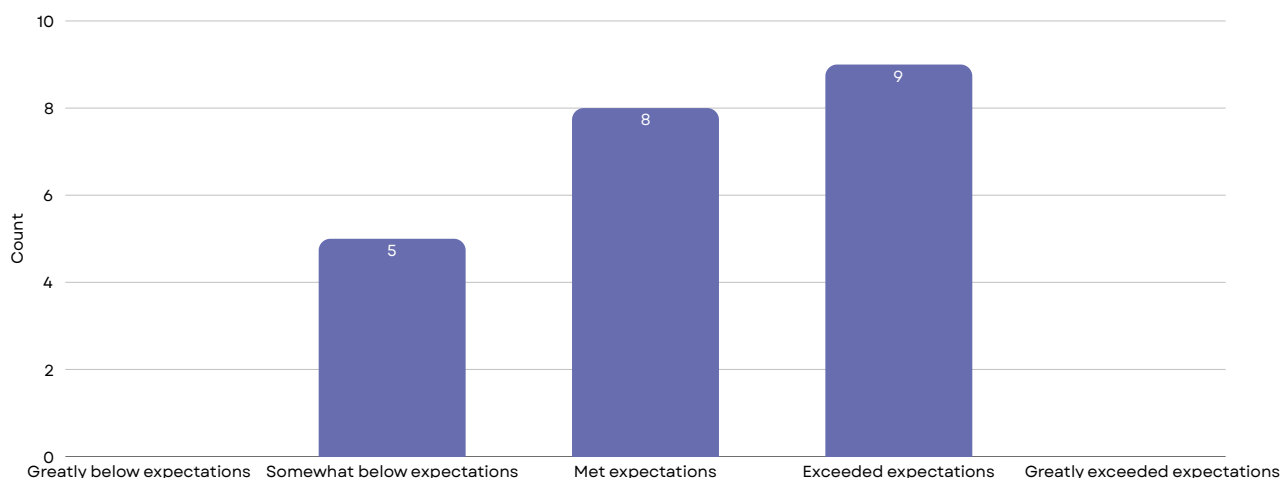
- 15 out of 22 respondents (68 percent) report agreement to the statement that programs were implemented as planned.
- 6 out of 22 respondents report disagreement or strong disagreement to the statement, suggesting that potentially one-third of programs experienced unplanned shifts in implementation.

Takeaway: More than half of programs implementing as planned is a strong indication that grant funds were used as expressed in the grant applications. For the remaining programs, shifts were needed, which is expected given how quickly social needs shift.

IMPLEMENTATION DATA

Serving the community

Figure 2. Count of responses to the question “To what extent were you able to serve the number of community members you expected to serve?”



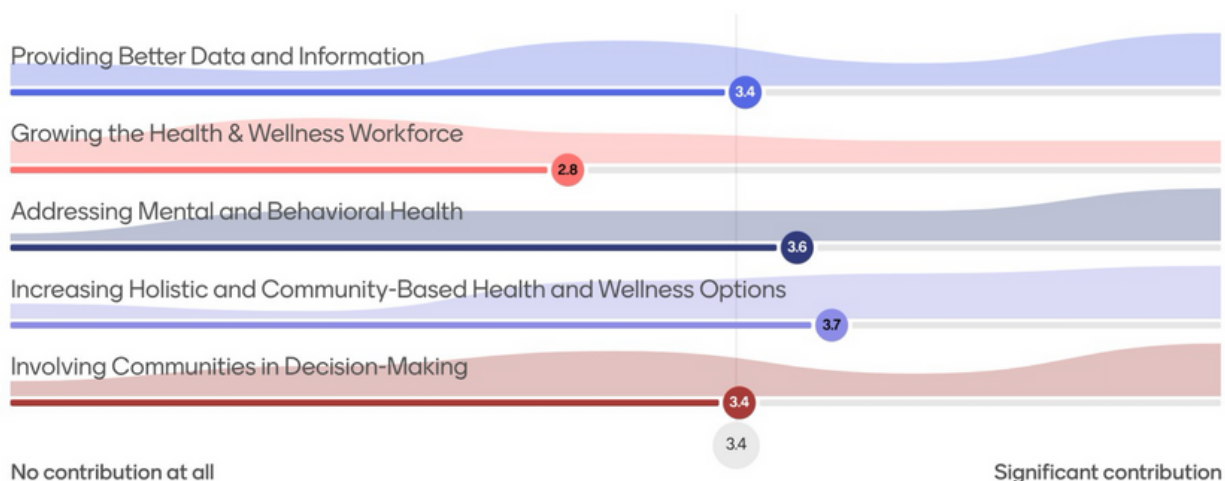
- 17 out of 22 respondents report at least meeting expectations on serving the number of community members they intended to serve.
- 9 out of 22 respondents reported serving more than they expected.
- No respondent reported that numbers were greatly below expectations indicating at least some success for every program.

Takeaway: More than half of programs met or exceeded the expectations they had to serve the community. While a handful of programs served fewer communities members than expected, on the whole, programs were successful with reaching into communities.

IMPLEMENTATION DATA

Contributions to the Health and Wellness Strategies

Figure 3. Average of responses when ranking whether their program had little (1) to significant contribution (5) to the 5 Health and Wellness Strategies.



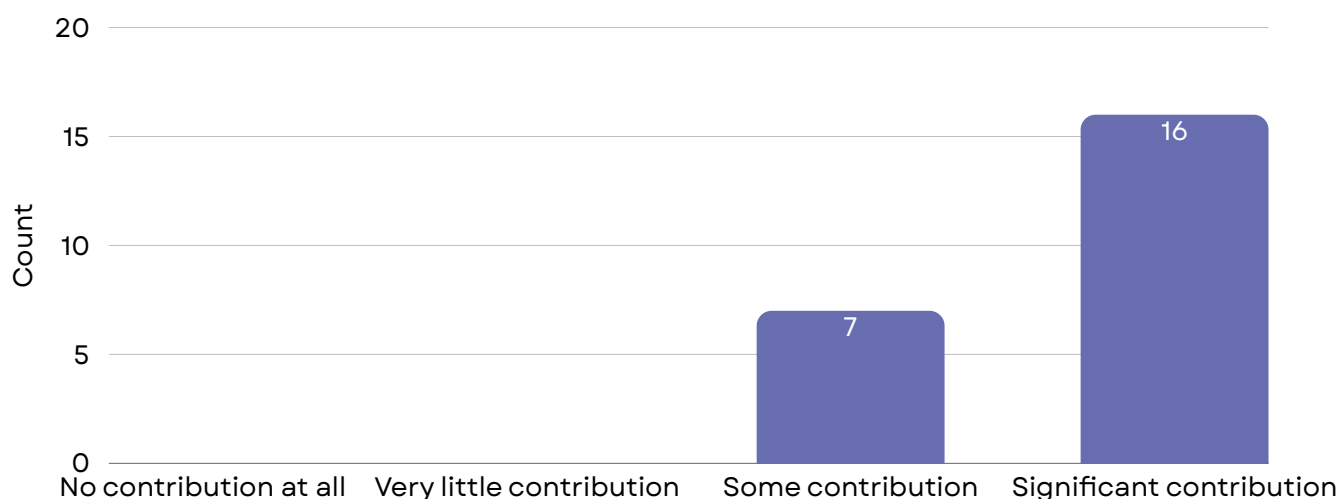
- Only one program directly served the Health and Wellness Workforce, and therefore it is good to see that other programs reported making some contribution to the workforce even if it was not a core program component.
- No program made a significant contribution to any one Strategy, but on average, there was some contribution to all of the Strategies.

Takeaway: There was at least some contribution to each of the 5 Strategies. If HCF would like to see significant contribution, it may be helpful to explain what that contribution might look like, or work with grantees to develop understanding of significant contribution so that this can be achieved intentionally.

IMPLEMENTATION DATA

Contributions to the Health and Wellness Vision

Figure 4. Count of responses to the question, “To what extent did your program contribute to progress toward achieving the Health and Wellness Sector Vision?”



- All programs reported at least some contribution to the Vision, which aligns with the responses from the previous questions about all programs making at least some contribution to the Health and Wellness Sector Strategies.
- Given that grantees were selected for program alignment to the Vision and Strategies, their program outcomes appear to align with the purpose of the grant. This data does not suggest any insight to the contributions made outside the grant process and how aligned non-grantees are to the Vision or not. In other words, grantees are selected to yield the responses in Figure 4, but these responses do not show the full picture of what is being contributed to the Health and Wellness Sector on the whole.

Takeaway: HCF seems to be doing well choosing grantees that are aligned to the Vision and Strategies. Whether these grantees are having an outsized effect on the Sector as a whole due to the grant they receive is a different question that could be investigated through future study.



ONGOING CHALLENGES

What challenges keep grantees up at night?



Recruiting and retaining staff

We continue to see community health workers overworked and underpaid. Now with funding cuts, CHWs are losing their jobs. What's next? (HIPHI)

The Health and Wellness sector is challenged to recruit and retain staff, often because of the low pay in the industry and competition from other labor markets that pay more. Constant turnover is a critical disruption to delivering high-quality services.



Scaling successfully

We know too many justice-involved people stuck in the cycle...We can and must do better (HHHRC).

Even though programs achieved success, they understand the problems they are trying to solve are significant and will not go away easily. They remain resolved and committed to work hard, but this does keep them up at night.



Securing sustainable funding

Funding cuts and finding sustainable funding is a problem for all of us (all organizations).

Sustainability was challenging in the past, and the unstable political and economic landscape has made stability even more difficult to find. All of the grantees noted that they are vulnerable to federal funding cuts and many missions are threatened because the populations they serve are under attack.



Data systems need to grow but lack funds

We didn't foresee how much a data system was going to cost and had to scale back (Lāna'i Community Health Center).

Many grantees found success sharing data and expanding their data operations. On the other hand, these improvements did not meet the needs for growing data systems and data sharing that will ultimately improve access to and quality of health and wellness services.



STRATEGIZING FOR THE FUTURE

What would help to increase holistic and community-based health and wellness options?

At the program level...

- Continue to add on and grow holistic program options
- Integrate culture into programming
- Emphasize programs that build connections to community members, families, and partner organizations as a means of supporting grassroots connections.
- Improve data sharing in holistic programs and services.

At the ecosystem level...

- Shift the language for mental health, wellness, and illness. Develop better messaging to de-stigmatize this field.
- Locate programs and services in community.
- Build awareness around the programs that are available.
- Provide training for those outside the sector on what holistic approaches are and how these approaches could help other professions (i.e. for law enforcement).
- Support decision makers to understand holistic options so they are more willing to support.

What are some important trends or challenges to manage?

- There is skepticism around holistic health and wellbeing still.
- There are still challenges paying for these services and making the rules and regulations adjust to the needs of clients.
- The current state itself is a big question mark. Almost all holistic programs are in peril as society moves farther away from supporting basic public health infrastructure.

What does this imply for this Health and Wellness Strategy?

- Continued partnership is needed to keep this work going. Expanding partnerships into fields not usually touched by health and wellness may help show the value of the sector.
- Increasing options and increasing participation in holistic options is important. Everyone is “at-risk” for something. How do we get everyone involved in wellness because it is good for everyone? This also normalizes the sector and reduces stigmatization.
- Messaging is needed to support this work.



STRATEGIZING FOR THE FUTURE

What would help to increase community involvement in decision making?

At the program level...

- Dedicated program staff are needed to interface with community and connect.
- Ideally, programs would hire directly from community. Having resources to support skill building for these individuals is important.
- Build partnerships to expand the reach in communities.
- Engage with youth more so that they build a habit of engagement.

At the ecosystem level...

- Build more transparency and trust by showing up consistently, listening, and compensating people for their time, talent, and skills.
- Provide resources that prevent burnout. Community members are pulled in multiple directions. If we want them to participate, we have to help them find balance and practice health habits.
- The laws and regulations around compensation need to be looked at in order for community to engage effectively.

What are some important trends or challenges to manage?

- To work effectively with community, more diversity, equity, and inclusion training is needed for staff and leadership in this field and among funders. This will be a difficult sell in the near term.
- Out-migration makes engagement sporadic, disjointed, and sometimes superficial. We need to do things to keep young people in communities so they engage over the long-term and build community capacity.

What does this imply for this Health and Wellness Strategy?

- There is a need to look at regulations to ensure this Strategy is not held up by red tape.
- This Strategy is a way to invest in community so that it invests time, energy, and ideas into itself that stays over the long-term. Overtime, the investment should yield fruit and the momentum should be self-sustaining as community continuously reinvests in itself.



STRATEGIZING FOR THE FUTURE

What would help to address mental and behavioral health?

At the program level...

- Hire and invest in community health workers and the community health workforce.
- Partner more to fill service gaps.
- Hire from within the community so that there is empathy and understanding between the clients and staff.
- Provide opportunities to lift up community voice as a way to understand mental and behavioral health.

At the ecosystem level...

- Advocate with policy makers what mental and behavioral health means and effective approaches in the field.
- Share data to expand access for those who need mental and behavioral health services.
- Provide messaging to de-stigmatize the population.
- Provide housing for staff who are often not paid a living wage.
- Integrate culture and trauma-informed care across the field to increase effectiveness.
- Provide more prevention services.

What are some important trends or challenges to manage?

- In the current political climate, mental health is seen as a weakness and is stigmatized.
- Upstream and prevention work is more difficult as there is greater focus on the more negative downstream consequences like crime.

What does this imply for this Health and Wellness Strategy?

- There is a lot of overlap between this strategy and increasing community involvement in decision making.
- Provide more support for prevention work, particularly for youth and young adults.
- Continue to support integration of trauma-informed care into practice.
- There is a genuine desire to do more work in this area, but finding the right people to do the work is difficult. More training and up-skilling is needed to reach scale.



KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Activity

Questions

Walk-in Activity - Mana'o Wall

- What program successes are you most proud of?
- Who in your organization deserves a round of applause?
- What program issues keep you up at night?

Program Summaries - Mentimeter

- Our program/initiative was implemented as planned.
- To what extent were you able to serve the number of community members you intended?
- To what degree did your program contribute to making progress toward the Health and Wellness Sector Strategies?
- To what extent did your program make progress toward achieving the Health and Wellness Sector Vision?

Program Insights - Small Groups

- In the context of the five strategies, what did your program/initiative accomplish that you set out to accomplish?
- What did your program/initiative accomplish that was a change from your original plans?
- What challenges did you encounter along the way?

Looking to the Future - World Cafe

- What are the most important actions your program needs to take to maintain/build momentum in this Strategy?
- What are the most important actions needed in general, across the ecosystem to build momentum in this Strategy?
- What context or trends have important implications for this Strategy and your work or work in general?