



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2025

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AWARDS \$450,000 FROM THE RICHARD SMART FUND TO 24 PROGRAMS SUPPORTING WAIMEA

HONOLULU, HI — Today, the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) is announcing the award of \$450,000 from the Richard Smart Fund to 24 programs supporting culture, education, health, and safety in Waimea on Hawai'i Island. Grant decisions were informed in part by feedback from Waimea community organizations and residents about the area's top priorities and greatest needs.

"These grants from the Richard Smart Fund are the result of Waimea community members describing the future they want for Waimea, a future where all of the residents of the community understand and embody their kuleana for each other and the 'āina," says Michelle Pope, HCF program officer, Hawai'i-Island governance. "The funding also aligns with HCF's long-term strategy to elevate community voices and position Hawai'i as a model for local and global civic responsibility and collaborative policy development."

"[Richard] Smart held a special kuleana with the kama'āina of Waimea and his legacy should uplift the people of this beautiful place," says Jeannette Soon-Ludes, PhD, executive director of nonprofit grantee Māla'ai. "Today, the Richard Smart Fund is helping us give back to Ala 'Ōhi'a, the 'āina that for 20 years has hosted Māla'ai: The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School. From serving a scratch-cooked meal using garden-fresh veggies to increasing biodiversity by bringing more endemic plants back to our māla, we are excited to share new opportunities with the students of WMS and grateful to be among the grantees who strive to perpetuate the legacy of Richard Smart."

The proposals were evaluated based on the following criteria: what their kuleana is for Waimea's future, how their work addresses critical opportunities for Waimea's future, and how they effectively involve and engage with the community's diverse people, organizations, and 'āina.

Collaboration and policy development will be further supported by building on the momentum that began with the community conversations by bringing together a learning cohort with these

grantees to share indigenous knowledge and innovative approaches to addressing issues such as water and land management, economic development, and educating all members of the community about creating a vibrant future for Waimea.

Full list of grantees:

Grantee	Program	Grant Amount
<u>Alex & Duke De Rego Foundation</u>	Water Safety Ocean Awareness Education	\$23,100
<u>Big Island Mediation</u>	Community Mediation	\$18,000
<u>Discover Your Kuleana (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Discover Your Kuleana 3.0	\$20,000
<u>Five Mountains Hawai'i</u>	E Ho'omaika'i	\$20,000
<u>Friends of the Future</u>	Tutu's House	\$25,000
<u>Hāmākua Youth Foundation</u>	Hāmākua Youth Center Programs	\$7,500
<u>Hawai'i Diaper Bank (Fiscal Sponsor: Hawaii Children's Action Network)</u>	Hawai'i Diaper Bank Baby Bundle Program	\$5,000
<u>Hui Aloha Pu'ukapu</u>	Kū Kaiāulu	\$25,000
<u>Kahilu Theatre Foundation</u>	Community, Culture, and Connectedness for Keiki, 'Ohana, and Kūpuna of Waimea	\$18,000
<u>Kamuela Philharmonic Orchestra Society</u>	Free Youth Education Concerts	\$10,000
<u>Kaua'i Music Festival</u>	Hawai'i Songwriting Festival 2026	\$20,000
<u>Kawaihae Canoe Club</u>	Mālama i ko kākou wa'a, mālama i ko kākou kaia'ulu	\$12,500
<u>Kona Historical Society</u>	Hawai'i Island Beekeeper Legacy Project	\$17,900
<u>KUPU</u>	Conservation Leadership Development Program	\$25,000
<u>Māla'ai – The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School</u>	Rooted in Ala 'Ōhi'a: Cultivating Pilina through Food, Plants, and Place	\$25,000
<u>Mālama Kai Foundation</u>	Ridge to Reef Ahupua'a, Watershed Student Education Program	\$20,000
<u>Paniolo Preservation Society</u>	Stories in the Saddle: A Virtual Museum of Waimea's Paniolo Legacy	\$25,000
<u>Parker School</u>	Ho'okuleana: Strengthening Our Community Connections	\$20,000
<u>Small World Preschool</u>	Accessible Early Education for our Young Keiki	\$22,500
<u>St. James Episcopal Church</u>	Waimea Community Meal	\$15,000
<u>The Queen's Health Systems</u>	Queen's North Hawai'i Community Hospital – Market Research Project	\$20,000
<u>The Rama Tree</u>	E Ola Ka Wai Ola! O Wau Ka Wai Ola! A Community Mālama 'Āina Mural	\$12,500
<u>Waimea Community Theatre</u>	WCT Funding for 2025 – 2026	\$25,000

<u>Waimea Resilience Hub (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Waimea Resilience Hub	\$18,000
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To learn more about the Richard Smart Fund, please visit <https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/strengthening/island-by-island/richard-smart-fund>

For images of the grantee organizations, please visit [this Dropbox folder](#). All photos are provided courtesy of respective grantee.

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About The Hawai'i Community Foundation

The vision of the Hawai'i Community Foundation is to create an equitable and vibrant Hawai'i in which all our Island communities thrive. With our more-than-108-year history, our trusted expertise, and the generous support of donors, we are working to address the root causes of our state's most difficult challenges, including expanding access to affordable housing, conserving freshwater resources, and ensuring the healthy development of Hawai'i's young children. We focus our efforts through the CHANGE Framework, which identifies six essential sectors affecting the overall well-being of these islands and their people. HCF works in communities across Hawai'i, with offices and staff located statewide. In 2024, HCF stewarded more than 1,160 funds, established by individuals, businesses, and organizations who share our passion for a better Hawai'i. We distributed over \$172 million in grants to the community from funds at HCF, contracts, and private foundations statewide, including scholarships assisting more than 1,100 Hawai'i students. For more information about HCF, please visit [Hawaiicommunityfoundation.org](https://hawaiicommunityfoundation.org) and follow our social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

About the Richard Smart Fund

Richard Palmer Kaleioku Smart established the Richard Smart Fund at HCF when he created the Parker Ranch Foundation Trust to support healthcare, educational, and charitable giving for the Waimea community on Hawai'i Island. From 2001 to 2025, HCF has distributed more than \$6.5 million to nonprofit organizations serving Waimea.