



# Strength in Service

## Funding Opportunity

**Letter of Interest Application Deadline: Tuesday, September 23, 2025, 4:00 p.m. HST**

### OVERVIEW

Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) believes in a secure, connected and thriving island home for people and place. Nonprofit organizations are an essential part of delivering support to meet the health, human service, security and legal needs of Hawai'i's people. HCF believes that solutions are most effective when led by those with lived experiences and cultural knowledge. This is how we adapt to uncertain times and care for each other across our island home.

Federal disinvestment is weakening the fabric of Hawai'i's nonprofit safety net—the community organizations and essential services our residents rely on every day. Federal government is rapidly restructuring, including the downsizing of the federal employee workforce that work across health, human services, and environmental programs, and reducing or eliminating federal funds through grants and contracts. Without funding from the federal government, many Hawai'i's nonprofits need to adjust their business model and look at local sustainability.

The current state of the sector:

- Over \$97 million in federal funds to Hawai'i nonprofits have already been significantly delayed or cut, and an additional \$300 million is at risk (CauseIQ).
- 500,000+ residents may lose access to essential services.
- 12% of Hawai'i's workforce is employed in the nonprofit sector—now facing significant layoffs and service reductions anticipated to continue through at least 2027, as the effects of federal disinvestment ripple through the sector.

The nonprofit sector supports critical services such as food security, housing, domestic violence support, child welfare, and immigrant legal services. It employs over 80,000 people—roughly 1 in 8 workers in Hawai'i—and generates more than \$7 billion annually in economic activity, according to the Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO), making it a vital part of the state's stability and recovery capacity. These organizations—deeply rooted in community and culture—are now struggling to sustain operations amid funding gaps. While the State Legislature has set aside \$50 million to respond to this crisis, UHERO estimates a loss of assistance funding to nonprofits of up to \$89M in FY25 and a



staggering \$191M at risk in FY26, not including passthrough grants administered by state or local governments.

The Strength in Service Grant Program is designed to complement—not duplicate—state resources by offering nimble, transparent, and transformative support. It focuses on building nonprofit capacity, adaptability, and sustainability beyond short-term relief.

There is power in working together—joining up to collectively ensure Hawai'i's families and people get what they need to survive and thrive here. Through relationships and collective ingenuity that resides in communities, we will strengthen the services and social safety net now in these uncertain times—and for future generations.

### **GRANT PROGRAM DETAILS**

The goal of the Strength in Service Program is to support organizations that need to transform operations to maintain health, and social safety net services such as immediate shelter, food security, health care, public health including child welfare and domestic violence supports, immigrant legal services. For this first round of grantmaking, priority will go to social safety net organizations.

Organizational strategies to adapt to this current climate are unique. Suggested uses of the funds are:

- Financial management – financial planning and forecasting, fundraising
- Leadership and staff well-being
- Safety and security concern – digital, physical security including information storage
- Community and crisis communications
- Legal review and support
- Strategic planning for local sustainability
- Restructuring and/or merger

### **Funds shall not be used to directly fund programs or services.**

Hawai'i Community Foundation in partnership with Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organizations (HANO) and funder partners are exploring additional enhanced support offerings such as technical assistance on restructuring, program closure, organizational models that include comprehensive administrative supports, leadership coaching, risk management, technology and security improvements, policy engagement, and nonprofit network strengthening through a new nonprofit concierge navigation service (formal name TBD) housed at HANO.



## GRANT AWARD INFORMATION

**Funding:** Funding will be granted from the Hawai'i Resilience Fund at HCF, the Robert Emens Black Fund at HCF, and other HCF funds as available. We anticipate this opportunity to be highly competitive.

Total Funding Available	Approximately \$500,000, contingent on funds available.
Anticipated Number of Organizations	We anticipate awarding funding to 6-10 organizations.
Grant Award Amounts	\$25,000-\$100,000 over 24 months. We anticipate that the average grant size will be \$50,000.

**Grant Term:** The grant period will be Monday, December 15, 2025 through Monday, December 13, 2027.

**Reporting:** Grantee partners shall submit a short narrative and financial progress report after the first year, and final reports to share their learnings.

**Requirements:** Grantee partners will be occasionally invited to share information about their projects, organizations, and impact of federal actions. Grantee partners may also be invited to participate in HANO and other offerings relevant to your organization.

**Restrictions:** Grant funds may not be used for: re-granting (i.e., redistribution of these funds to other organizations or individuals); endowments; for the benefit of specific individuals; major capital improvements including capital campaigns, construction or renovations (minor capital improvements required to implement programs are allowable); or activities that promote religious beliefs.

## ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS

- Registered 501(c)3 organization located in Hawai'i with service delivery within the State of Hawai'i. Universities, schools, and fiscally-sponsored organizations are not eligible to apply.
- Directly receives substantial federal funding for the purpose of program operations; and have received notification about termination, suspension, or significant reduction to your organization's normal federal funds or can demonstrate that your federal funding is at-risk of losing or receiving a significantly decreased amount of federal funding.



- Priority for this funding round is given to organizations providing programs, services, and outreach in any social safety net area including—but not limited to—food access, health, human services, immigrant rights, and legal representation.
- Plan to continue operating in Hawai'i for the long-term (at least two years or longer).
- Be in good standing with HCF (i.e., no past due final reports from previous HCF grants). Applications from organizations with overdue final reports will be administratively denied.

#### Applicant Selection Criteria

- Applicant clearly describes the impact to the organization of the federal disinvestment (funding cuts, staff reductions, and changes to program and services for Hawai'i's people or places).
- Applicant articulates the need, and an emerging plan addressing one or more of the suggested nine strategies listed above for organizational transformation.
- Applicant shows high potential for overcoming federal funding vulnerabilities. This criterion will be partially informed by University of Hawai'i Economic Research Organization (UHERO) forthcoming analysis of economic impacts to Hawai'i.
- Applicant has secured board and staff leadership to lead and champion operational changes.
- Applicant organization can demonstrate a thoughtful approach to revenue and funding sources including non-federal funds, as well as other replacement funding sources.
- Priority for organizations with demonstrated leadership in past crises in Hawai'i. Applications that articulate an organization's historical role in emergencies in Hawai'i will receive higher scores during the review process.

#### KEY DATES

Description	Date
Letter of Interest Application Release	Wednesday, September 3, 2025
Virtual Information Session Coffee Hour <i>Please click the link to register for the Coffee Hour.</i>	Friday, September 12, 2025, 10:00am-11:00am <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/A6ecBKpnTjC_3G-lnYYXQQ">https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/A6ecBKpnTjC_3G-lnYYXQQ</a>

	Friday, September 19, 2025, 2:00pm-3:00pmm <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/D16irFemR0G7TNd5yyMtJQ">https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/D16irFemR0G7TNd5yyMtJQ</a>
Letter of Interest Deadline	Tuesday, September 23, 2025, 4:00 p.m. HST
Applicant is Notified about Letter of Interest Decision	Tuesday, September 30, 2025
Full Application Deadline (Invite Only)	Tuesday, October 21, 2025, 4:00 p.m. HST
Grant Start Date	Monday, December 15, 2025
Grant End Date	Monday, December 13, 2027

## APPLICATION PROCESS

### Online Application

This application is available for online submission through the Hawai'i Community Foundation's Grants Portal. New users may register for an account here [https://hawaiiicf.smartsimple.com/s\\_Login.jsp](https://hawaiiicf.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp). Registered users may log in to their account to submit an application. Please give yourself adequate time before the submission deadline to access the system and familiarize yourself with the application process and requirements. Please reference our [Applicant User Guide](#) for further instructions.

### Instructions

- Only complete and timely applications will be accepted.
- The online application has fillable boxes with character limits. The character counts in MS Word may not match the character counts in the application. If you cut and paste your work into the application, please be sure your text fits the space provided.

## ORGANIZATION PROFILE

As part of the online application your organization profile must be certified prior to submission of grant applications and must be certified every 6 months. Information needed to complete your organization's profile includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter (not required if previously applied to the Foundation or if applying through a fiscal sponsor)
- Number of full-time, part-time, or regular volunteer staff
- Organization Mission
- Service Location(s)



- Types of services provided and demographics (including age, gender, and target populations served)
- Financial Statements
  - Annual Operating budget for current year
  - Income statement (or profit/loss statement) for the most recently completed fiscal year
  - Balance sheet for the most recently completed fiscal year
  - Audited financial statements are preferred but not required
  - Local units of national organizations must submit local unit financial information
- Board of Directors List

## LETTER OF INTEREST AND APPLICATION

This application follows a two-step process that begins with a short Letter of Interest application. Applicants will be notified by HCF about the status of their application and selection to submit a full application (Step 2). There is no guarantee of funding if an organization's LOI is selected to move forward to the full application step.

Please submit a Letter of Interest as the first step. The letter of interest and application consists of 4 tabs.

### Letter of Interest Questions

- **Program Overview:**
  - Provide general information and characteristics about the program including program title, duration, program location(s), ages and genders served, and the CHANGE sector(s) your program most closely aligns with.
  - For more information about the CHANGE framework, please visit our website <https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/change>.
- **Program Information:**
  - **Amount Requested:** Please enter the amount you are requesting
  - **Organization Description:** Describe the history and mission of the organization/program. In your description, please highlight your organization's role and leadership in past crises in Hawai'i. *(Maximum 1,000 characters, including spaces)*
  - **Problem or Opportunity:** What federal funding stream(s) (grant or contract) does your organization receive? Name the specific federal funding sources (agency and federal grant fund code RFA, for example *CDC-RFA-OT21-2103, National Initiative to Address COVID-19 Health Disparities Among Populations at High-Risk and Underserved, Including Racial and Ethnic*



*Minority Populations and Rural Communities grant*). If multiple funding streams, please cite each separated by semi-colons. *(Maximum 1,250 characters, including spaces)*

- **Project Overview:** Describe the need or opportunity you are trying to address and why this is critical. Please focus on describing the impact of federal funding cuts or actions on the program or services of your organization, including program and staff changes. What is the opportunity for transforming your organization? *(Maximum 1,250 characters, including spaces)*
- **Expected Results:** What will you use the funds for, if awarded? How do you anticipate it strengthening your organization and community resilience? *(Maximum 500 characters, including spaces)*
- **Usage of Funds:** Please select what areas you would like to focus the project on. (multiple choice)
  - Financial management – financial planning and forecasting, fundraising
  - Leadership and staff well-being
  - Safety and security concern – digital, physical security including information storage
  - Community and crisis communications
  - Legal review and support
  - Strategic planning
  - Restructuring and/or merger
  - Other, please describe in the short narrative below
- **Short narrative:** Please describe the leadership that would be provided by staff and board members to lead organizational transformation efforts? *(Maximum 500 characters, including spaces)*
- Do you plan to continue operating in Hawai'i for the long-term (at least two years or longer)? Yes/No
- Do you agree to allow HCF to release information in this application to other funders we are collaborating with? (The response will not be used for funding decisions). Yes/No
- Do you agree to allow HCF to release information in this application to Hawai'i Alliance for Nonprofit Organizations to assist with the design of Nonprofit Concierge Service offerings? (The response will not be used for funding decisions). Yes/No
- **Supporting Documents & Certifications:**
  - **Optional Upload:** We invite you to submit an advocacy letter about the impact of federal disinvestment on your program, i.e. letter to stakeholders, federal program officers, or elected officials (PDF or Word formats).



## INVITED FULL APPLICATION QUESTIONS

HCF will review the LOI applications and may invite the applicant to submit a full application. Completing the application does not guarantee funding. Information needed to complete the application includes:

- **Program Information:**
  - **Program Activities:** Describe the activities that will be completed to address the need/opportunity. Explain why you chose this approach. Provide a program timeline. Describe how your project aligns with the priority of the fund you are applying. *(Maximum 3,500 characters, including spaces)*
  - **Expected Results:** Describe what you hope to achieve and how you will measure the effectiveness of your efforts. *(Maximum 3,500 characters, including spaces)*
- **Budget:**
  - **Budget & Narrative:** Provide a budget for your proposed program. The budget should include income and expenses, indicating sources of income that are pending and secured. Please add a short budget narrative about the organization's finances, including any changes due to disinvestment and information you would like to share about how the organization plans to meet operational budget goal.
- **Supporting Documents & Certifications:**
  - **Optional Upload:** We invite you to submit an advocacy letter about the impact of federal disinvestment on your program, i.e. letter to stakeholders, federal program officers, or elected officials (PDF or Word formats).

## RESOURCES

- [Hawai'i Alliance of Nonprofit Organization's Curated Resources on Federal Action](#)

## CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this funding opportunity, please contact Uri Martos, Program Officer, at [umartos@hcf-hawaii.org](mailto:umartos@hcf-hawaii.org) or 808-245-4585.

For technical assistance with the online application process, please submit a support ticket at <https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/web/support-tickets>.