Family Literacy Funding Opportunity

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) Family Literacy funds is to increase the English literacy of Hawai'i residents. Programs are funded through the Public-Private Partners for Literacy Fund, Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Fund for Family Literacy, and the George J. Henritzy Memorial Fund, each of which is a donor-directed fund of HCF. The Family Literacy Advisory Committee reviews applications and makes recommendations for grants that are most consistent with the purpose and priorities of the funds.

Background

The Family Literacy funds focus on advancing family literacy through intergenerational learning that strengthens literacy skills for both parents and children in alignment with the Hawai'i State Literacy Plan. Developed by 59 organizations across the education pipeline, this plan offers guidance to improve literacy alignment and support the design of strong instructional and program approaches.

The plan notes that foundational literacy skills include print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and oral language development.[1] Applicants should describe how their program develops one or more of these foundational literacy skills.

The Hawai'i State Early Literacy Guide further describes early literacy concepts[2], Birth–Preschool to Kindergarten–3rd transitions[3], and developmental continuums for implicit and explicit acquisition.[4] The following focus areas were informed by advisory committee input and donor funding priorities.

Funds must be used to support **family literacy** efforts that strengthen the capacity of parents and caregivers to serve as their child's first and most important teacher. Proposed projects should focus on **families with young children**, from birth through age eight, and "equip caregivers with the tools, resources, and strategies to guide children's learning activities and language experiences at home."[5]

Priority will be given to applications that:
- **Serve under-resourced communities**, including families experiencing economic hardship, immigrant or refugee families, rural communities, and others with limited access to high-quality literacy supports
- **Implement evidence-based family literacy practices or programs**, including nationally recognized models adapted to reflect local cultures, languages, and community contexts

All funded projects must also:
- **Include an assessment or evaluation component** to monitor implementation and measure progress toward family literacy outcomes

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[1] *Hawai'i State Literacy Plan* p. 17.
[2] *Hawai'i State Early Literacy Guide* p. 22.
[3] *Hawai'i State Early Literacy Guide* pp. 23–25.
[4] *Hawai'i State Early Literacy Guide* p. 26.
[5] *Hawai'i State Literacy Plan* p. 62.

- **Describe how project staff and partners will be prepared to implement family literacy effectively**, which may include professional learning or training for educators, family engagement staff, or community partners
- **Engage community-based partnerships** to build trust, increase participation, and ensure programming is responsive to families' cultural and linguistic backgrounds

Programs not likely to be funded:
- Programs that are not focused on families with young children (birth through age 8) and do not provide parents/caregivers with literacy tools, resources, and strategies.
- Programs that take place as part of or supplant any part of a school curriculum.
- Programs that replace Hawaii State Department of Education funding.
- Requests for books, materials, equipment, and/or technology alone that do not support the development of foundational literacy skills.
- Major capital projects, although some small facility improvements to improve the ability to deliver a literacy program may be considered.
- Funds for an endowment or for the benefit of specific individuals.

EVALUATION CRITERIA
The strongest proposals are those that meet all or most of the following criteria:
- Program aligns with the identified focus areas.
- Organization demonstrates ability to deliver program.
- Program is well-defined and likely to be successfully implemented.
- Program develops one or more foundational literacy skills.
- Program utilizes evidence-based practices.
- Program aligns with one or more of the Hawaiʻi State Literacy Plan's recommendations.
- Program budget is current and adequate; program costs are consistent with the program activities and are reasonable.
- Program has clearly defined outcomes and means to measure those outcomes.
- Program assessment is clearly incorporated into program design.
- Program demonstrates the ability to leverage other resources (i.e. funds, in-kind support and/or community partnerships).

FUNDING
- Grants will be for **two years** and may range from $5,000 to $30,000 per year. HCF will award up to $100,000 each year. Individual awards are expected to average $18,000.
- Applicants will be notified of funding decisions in June 2026. The grant period will start **July 1, 2026**.

ELIGIBILITY & REQUIREMENTS
Hawaiʻi nonprofit organizations that are 501(c)(3) IRS tax exempt organizations and programs with a fiscal sponsor with 501(c)(3) status, are eligible to apply. Organizations currently funded by HCF with overdue final reports are not eligible to apply.

APPLICATION PROCESS
Applications must be submitted online through HCF's **Grants Portal** available here:
https://hawaiicf.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp. New users must register for an account. Registered users may login 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.

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 (including age, gender, and target populations served)
- Financial Statements
  - Annual Operating budget for current fiscal 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
- **If any organization profile elements are missing or do not meet the requirements above, the application will be administratively denied.**

FISCAL SPONSORS
- Complete organization profile including the certification requirement prior to the Funding Opportunity Application Deadline, and upload the following required documents:
  - Resolution by fiscal sponsor's board of directors authorizing fiscal sponsorship
  - Fiscal sponsor's agreement form
    Both forms can be found at: http://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/grants/fiscal-sponsor-materials
  - Fiscal sponsor's IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter

APPLICATION

The application consists of 4 tabs. Information needed to complete your application includes, but is not limited to the following:
1. **Program Overview**:
   - Provide general information and characteristics about the program including program title, duration, area of interest, 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 this website https://www.hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/change.

- If you have a fiscal sponsor, you will be asked to identify your fiscal sponsor. Please note, your fiscal sponsor must be registered by submitting its Organization Profile in the Grants Portal prior to submitting your application.

2. **Program Information**:
   - **Organization Description:** Describe the history and mission of the organization/program. What is the organization's experience implementing this program and staff capabilities to conduct the proposed work? What community partnerships or collaborations are critical to successful program implementation? *(Maximum 2,500 characters = ¾ page)*
   - **Problem or Opportunity:** Describe the need or opportunity you are trying to address and why this is critical. Who is the target population? Does the program focus on supporting families with young children (ages 0–8) or communities that are low-income, immigrant/refugee, or located in rural areas? Describe any barriers to literacy. Share how your program is filling a gap and not duplicating services. *(Maximum 3,000 characters = ¾ page)*
   - **Program Activities:** Describe the program activities and rationale for the program design to effectively meet the needs of participants. Describe how parents/caregivers will be equipped with tools, resources, and strategies to guide children's learning activities and language experiences at home. Describe how culturally and linguistically diverse materials will be incorporated or adapted for the populations served. Describe the foundational literacy skill(s) the program develops, the evidence-based practices implemented in the program, and how the activities align with the Hawai'i State Literacy Plan's recommendations. If the activities will be different in years 1 and 2, describe the expectations for how the program will develop.
     - **If this is an ongoing program**: Describe what results the program achieved in the past year. Describe any planned changes, improvements, or expansions to the existing program and explain how client feedback informs these decisions.
     - **If this is a new program**: Explain why this approach was chosen and whether there is evidence it works in similar settings.

     (Maximum 3,500 characters = 1 page)
   - **Expected Results:** Describe how many people will participate in your program (provide duplicated and unduplicated numbers by year as appropriate). What will be the impact of your program on those you serve, including how you will assess participants' development of foundational literacy skills? *(Maximum 3,500 characters = 1 page)*

3. **Budget**: Provide your total program budget and total amount requested through this application (ex. $40,000 if you are requesting $20,000 per year for 2 years). Upload a copy of your program budget, showing income and expenses, indicating sources of income that are pending and secured.
   - Applicants are strongly recommended to use the Program Budget template available in the Grant Portal's Resources section.

4. **Supporting Documents & Certification**: Upload any additional required documents as listed in the application guidelines.

The program budget and fiscal sponsor documents can be found in the Grant Portal's Resources section.

KEY DATES

Description	Date
Application Release	2/25/2026
Virtual Coffee Hours for Q&A *Please register to attend the Coffee Hour event. You are not required to attend this event.*	Thurs 3/12/2026 11:00 – 12:00pm: Register here. Wed 3/18/2026 2:00 – 3:00pm: Register here.
Application Deadline	**4/24/2026 by 4:00pm HST**
Grant Start Date	7/1/2026

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this funding opportunity, please contact Jen Murphy at 808-566-5515 or jmurphy@hcf-hawaii.org.

For technical assistance with the online application process, please submit a support ticket at http://hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/ticket.