



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 23, 2026

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**Hawai'i Community Foundation Celebrates 25 Years of Giving in Waimea
through its Richard Smart Fund**

\$500,000 to Support Community Programs in Waimea

Waimea, Hawai'i Island — The Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) is marking 25 years of impactful giving in Waimea with \$500,000 in grants through its 2026 Richard Smart Fund. This year's funding will benefit 29 community programs that are helping to advance culture, education, health and safety in Waimea on Hawai'i Island.

"For the past 25 years, the Richard Smart Fund has supported the people and organizations who care deeply about Waimea and its future," said Michelle Pope, HCF program officer, Hawai'i Island. "Each year, we see how this work continues to evolve, whether through culturally grounded healthcare, 'āina stewardship, or new approaches to housing. This funding reflects what's possible when we listen to community and work together to support what matters most."

Established in 2001 through the Parker Ranch Foundation Trust, the Richard Smart Fund has distributed \$8.65 million to 108 nonprofits serving Waimea.

In 2023, HCF refined the Richard Smart Fund grant program to better address current needs and opportunities through the guidance of the Waimea Community Weaving Hui – a community advisory group of local leaders.

Building on the relationships and insights shared through community conversations, this year's grantees will also be invited to come together as a learning cohort. Through this space, they will share 'ike (knowledge), learn from one another, and explore culturally grounded and innovative approaches to caring for Waimea's future, including stewardship of land and water, economic resilience, and community well-being.

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The 2026 Richard Smart Fund grants range from \$8,000 to \$25,000, and include:

Grantee	Program	Grant Amount
<u>Alex & Duke De Rego Foundation</u>	Water Safety Ocean Awareness Education	\$21,612
<u>Big Island Mediation</u>	Community Mediation	\$15,000
Boys to Men Mentoring Network of Hawaii Incorporated	Kuleana for Our Keiki Kāne: Culturally Grounded Mentorship for the Future Men of Waimea	\$20,000
<u>Discover Your Kuleana (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Discover Your Kuleana 3.0	\$14,900
<u>Five Mountains Hawaii dba Kīpuka o ke Ola (KOKO)</u>	Alaka'i Mālama	\$25,000
<u>Friends of the Future</u>	Tutu's House	\$25,000
<u>Hawai'i Preparatory Academy</u>	Mālama 'Āina in the Upper Pasture: A Reforestation and Learning Pilot	\$15,000
<u>Hemp Hale Initiative</u>	Hale Initiative	\$10,000
<u>Kamuela Philharmonic Orchestra Society</u>	Free Children's Education Concerts	\$10,000
<u>Kaua'i Music Festival</u>	Hawai'i Songwriting Festival 2026	\$15,000
<u>Kawaihae Canoe Club</u>	Junior Wa'a Keiki Program	\$7,500
<u>Leandra Rouse Creative (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Hawai'i Beekeeper Legacy Project	\$12,688
<u>Lehua Community Birth Center (Fiscal Sponsor: AABC Foundation Inc.)</u>	Midwifery Pathways Program: Connecting Generations of Care	\$12,500
<u>Māla'ai – The Culinary Garden of Waimea Middle School</u>	Culinary Garden at WMS: Integrating Soil Health into Student Learning	\$25,000
<u>Mālama Kai Foundation</u>	Ridge to Reef Ahupua'a, Watershed Student Education Program	\$23,000
<u>Nalukai Foundation</u>	2027 Nalukai Spring Innovative Stewardship Program	\$10,000
<u>Parker School</u>	Ho'okuleana: Strengthening Our Community Connections	\$12,000
<u>Prince Dance Company</u>	He Wā'a He Honua: A Place-Based Education and Performance Initiative Rooted in Waimea	\$20,000
<u>Project No Ke Ola Pono O Nā Keiki (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Project No Ke Ola Pono O Nā Keiki	\$20,000
<u>Small World Preschool</u>	Accessible Early Education for our Young Keiki	\$25,000
<u>St. James Episcopal Church</u>	Waimea Community Meal	\$10,000
<u>The Kohala Center</u>	The Waimea Food Story: Building Community One Plate at a Time	\$20,000

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<u>The Rama Tree</u>	E Ola Ka Wai Ola! O Wau Ka Wai Ola! A Community Mālama 'Āina Mural	\$20,000
<u>Waikoloa Dry Forest Initiative Inc.</u>	'Ōuli Park Revitalization	\$10,000
<u>Waimea Community Association</u>	"Welcome to Waimea" signs	\$8,000
<u>Waimea Country School</u>	Foundations of Kuleana: Strengthening Waimea's Future through Garden, Art, and Service	\$17,800
<u>Waimea Elementary School</u>	Community Resource Center	\$25,000
<u>Waimea Hawaiian Homesteaders' Association, Inc.</u>	Paniolo Festival	\$25,000
<u>Waimea Resilience Hub (Fiscal Sponsor: Friends of the Future)</u>	Waimea Resilience Hub	\$25,000

"We are incredibly fortunate to have the Richard Smart Fund in Waimea, investing in projects like ours that help tell the story of our community," said Leandra Rouse, founder and curator of Hawai'i Beekeeper Legacy Project. "Their support allowed us to bring the Hawai'i Beekeeper Legacy Exhibit to Waimea last spring and share a unique part of our island's agricultural history. We are grateful for the opportunity to go deeper into our research, preserve these stories, honor the families who helped shape Hawai'i Island's beekeeping industry, and share this unique history with communities across the state."

To learn more about the Richard Smart Fund, visit hawaiicommunityfoundation.org/strengthening/island-by-island/richard-smart-fund.

Images of the grantee organizations are available [here](#). Please credit photos to the respective grantee organization.

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About 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 110-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 2025, HCF stewarded more than 1,175 funds, established by individuals, businesses, and organizations committed to building a better Hawai'i. Through these funds, along with contracts and private foundations, we've distributed over \$116 million in grants statewide so far this year, including scholarships assisting more than 1,400 Hawai'i students. For more information about HCF, please visit Hawaiicommunityfoundation.org and follow our social media channels on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).