



Office of Economic Development

Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Report

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025

Nalani Brun
Director

OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

I. MISSION STATEMENT

The Office of Economic Development partners with our community to develop and implement creative strategies to enhance economic opportunities and build a better quality of life for the people of the County of Kaua'i.

II. DEPARTMENT GOALS

The goals of this office are:

- A. Assist businesses of all sizes, emerging industries, and organizations by providing technical and, when feasible, financial support to create meaningful employment for all the County of Kaua'i's residents.
- B. Utilize the guiding principles of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and other community plans to help improve and diversify Kaua'i's economy:
 - Economic Diversification: To strengthen selected industry clusters to minimize dependence on a single industry and maximize creative expansion.
 - Economic Self-Sufficiency: To minimize imports where possible and promote import substitution.
 - Economic Opportunity for all: To offer an appropriate education and training opportunities to give workers choices and to promote living wages.
- C. To work with the business community and partners to ensure Kaua'i's workforce meets their needs today, as well as in the future.
- D. Assist the business industries in growing their businesses to meet the needs of the island and beyond, through partnership, technical assistance, education and accessing resources.

Duties and Functions

1. *TOURISM*: Co-Lead and work on projects related to the Destination Management Action Plan which has replaced the Tourism Strategic Plan and cooperate with and support visitor industry partners.
2. *FILM*: Increase film opportunities and support film partners on Kaua'i. Increasing other areas of Creative Industries including cultural and performing arts, emerging media, music, and entertainment industries.
3. *AGRICULTURE*: Increase agricultural production and products on Kaua'i, support agriculture partners, and monitor viability of the Sunshine markets.
4. *SUSTAINABILITY*: 1) to have county government lead by example by developing, adopting, and implementing sustainable practices and policies, and 2) to support and leverage community efforts that promote island sustainability.

5. *ENERGY*: The objective of the County's Energy Program is two-fold: (1) to manage, reduce, and facilitate the County's fossil energy use through increased efficiency in both facilities and fleets, and (2) to initiate, coordinate, and partner with stakeholders and the community on innovative programs and projects in the clean energy and transportation sector.
6. *WORKFORCE*: Support partners' direct programs relating to workforce training and workforce programs as they relate to our Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.
7. *BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT*: Build a thriving, resilient, and interconnected economy that supports businesses, emerging industries, and nonprofits by: (1) providing direct support to businesses by providing technical assistance, connections to resources and community partners, and guidance navigating government bureaucracies; and (2) identifying, reporting, and addressing challenges in the business community; (3) supporting the Kaua'i Made program.

III. PROGRAMS

GRANT PROGRAM (All sectors)

The OED grant program is generally a competitive awards program that supports sustainable economic development in agriculture, tourism management, film & creative industries, sustainability and energy, business, and workforce capacity building. Proposals must address and support the chosen sector area program's goals and objectives. This fiscal year we continued to focus our efforts on larger grants of approximately \$50,000 for projects that helped move the needle to solving problems including those called out by our community in community plans. Staff are assigned grant funded programs monitoring by sector area of the program and capacity availability.

INNOVATION AND LINE ITEMED GRANTS:

A. Objective

- The objective of the grant program is to create funding opportunities that support partners in creating programming in the sectors of agriculture, sustainability, energy, destination management, product enhancement, creative industries, workforce, business support, and special events. Currently, our Film Commissioner is also serving as the OED Grants Manager.

B. Highlights:

- OED switched online services from Amplifund to Survey Monkey application platforms for more controlled and intuitive application processes. The new platform has been a huge success with our applicants. The Grants Manager also overhauled forms, set up clearer processes over the last fiscal year, and created a guide sheet for OED staff.
- See listing of grants provided.

Table 1. OED Grant Program Data-Grants managing in FY25

FY2025 GRANTS			
Sector	Non-Profit Organization	Project Name	Amount
AGRICULTURE FARM EXPANSION GRANTS (AFEG)			
Agriculture	Kumano I Ke Ala	Mahaihai Restoration Phase 3	\$100,000.00
Agriculture	Waipa Foundation	Building Propagation Capacity in Waipa	\$40,778.00
Agriculture	CG Foundation	Lydgate Farm Expansion Cacao, Honey & Vanilla	\$70,000.00
Agriculture	Ho'omalua Ke kai	Laboratory Expansion	\$46,596.00
Agriculture	Kukulu Kumuhana O Anahola	Ulupono Anahola Farm	\$50,000.00
Agriculture	Waioli Valley Taro Hui	Auwai Ditch Repair	\$21,140.00
Agriculture	Waioli Valley Taro Hui	RPS Solar Pumps	\$36,200.00
Agriculture	Hawai'i Farm Bureau Foundation	Ueunten Farms Plan	\$24,206.00
Agriculture	CG Foundation	Community Engagement with Regenerative Ag	\$52,509.00
Agriculture	Malama Kaua'i	Makaweli Auwai Improvements	\$100,000.00
Agriculture	Malama Kaua'i	Olohena Aina Center	\$55,000.00
Agriculture	Bee Team	Building Regenerative Model	\$41,000.00
TOTAL:			\$637,429.00
CULTURAL & EVENTS GRANTS			
Tourism	Pihana Ka Ikena	Na Mamo Kalaulu	\$6,300.00
Tourism	Garden Island RC&D	E Malama Pono Mānā	\$10,000.00
Tourism	Hosea Lovell Foundation	The Koolau Limu Festival	\$15,000.00
Tourism	Hui Makaainana O Makana	La 'ohana Workshops	\$15,000.00
Tourism	The Hanalei Initiative	Preserving Hanaleis Chinese Heritage	\$15,000.00
Tourism	National Tropical Botanical Garden	Ohia Love Fest	\$14,983.00
Tourism	Hawai'i Opera Theatre	Opera Express Kaua'i	\$5,000.00
Tourism	Rice Street Business Association	Lights on Rice	\$5,000.00
Tourism	Rice Street Business Association	Hookipa Kaiaulu	\$5,000.00
Tourism	Kala Foundation	Kaua'i Chocolate & Coffee Festival	\$15,000.00
Tourism	Kaua'i Japanese Society	Matsuri Festival	\$7,500.00
Tourism	Kaua'i Concert Association	2025-2026 Concert Season	\$10,000.00
Tourism	I Ola Wailuanui	Huli Ka Lima I Lalo	\$5,000.00
Tourism	Southside Arts Initiative	Southside Music Festival	\$5,000.00
Tourism	Port Allen Fishing Club	Kamalii Challenge	\$7,500.00
TOTAL:			\$141,283.00
DIRECT GRANTS			
Sustainability	Kekahu Foundation	Community Driven Mixed Media Waste Diversion	\$15,000.00
Film	Kaua'i Economic Development Board	Island Wide Drone Clubs	\$50,000.00

Film	Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce	2025 HI on the Hill Support	\$15,000.00
Agriculture	Garden Island Resource Conservation & Development	Proven Tools for Invasive Species Management	\$50,000.00
Business	Kaua'i Economic Development Board	Feasibility Study Waimea Theater & Coworking Space	\$122,500.00
Tourism	Hui Mālama O Polihale	Polihale Burial Sites & Wahipana Stewardship	\$10,000.00
Tourism	Niumalu Outrigger Canoe Club	Kaua'i Nui Kuapapa Signage Stewardship Project	\$10,000.00
Tourism	Malie Foundation	Kings Parade 2025	\$7,000.00
Agriculture	Conservation Dogs of Hawai'i	CRB Detection and Mitigation on Kaua'i	\$30,000.00
Agriculture	Malama Kaua'i	CRB Mitigation Green Waste	\$36,000.00
All	UHERO	Economic Forecast	\$25,000.00
TOTAL:			\$370,500.00
INNOVATION GRANTS			
Agriculture	Kumano I Ke Ala	Mahaihai Sustainable Water Project	\$48,300.00
Agriculture	Aina Hookupu O Kīlauea	Kīlauea Farm & Community Compost	\$41,180.00
Agriculture	Hale Puna	Growing Westside Wellness	\$15,000.00
Agriculture	Ho'omalua Ke Kai	Expanding Opportunities around Aquaculture	\$39,545.00
Business	Kuleana CoWorking Corp	Kuleana AI Lab	\$50,000.00
Sustainability	Anaina Hou Community Park	Foundation for Fire Safety - Soil Testing	\$10,000.00
TOTAL:			\$204,025.00
KEKAHA CAC			
Kekaha CAC	E Ola Mau Na Leo O Kekaha	Kekaha Seniors 55th Anniversary Celebration	\$4,994.30
Kekaha CAC	Waimea Project Graduation	Waimea project Grad Class of 2025	\$17,500.00
Kekaha CAC	Kekaha Elementary School PTA	4th Grade Educational Tour Program	\$30,100.00
Kekaha CAC	Kekaha Elementary School PTA	We Are Kekaha Winter Celebration 2025	\$54,000.00
Kekaha CAC	Iwikua	Manokalanipo Track Camp	\$19,536.00
Kekaha CAC	Kaua'i Cat Project	Spay/Neuter/relocate Project	\$40,000.00
Kekaha CAC	E Ola Mau Na Leo O Kekaha	Kekaha College Financial Assistance Program 2025-2026	\$71,000.00
Kekaha CAC	Westside Basketball Club	Yearly Maintenance & Supplies	\$10,000.00
Kekaha CAC	Westside Basketball Club	Endless Summer Travel	\$10,000.00
Kekaha CAC	W of Kaua'i	Basketball & Volleyball Club	\$24,571.00
TOTAL:			\$281,701.30
LINE ITEM GRANTS			
Tourism	Kaua'i Visitors Bureau	2024-2025 KVB Consumer Promotion/ Kaua'i Festivals	\$250,000.00
Health & Safety	YWCA	2025 Sexual Assault Treatment Center	\$70,518.00
Health & Safety	YWCA	2025 Family Violence Shelter	\$85,518.00
Agriculture	KEDB	2024-2025 Parakeet Population Control Grant	\$100,000.00
All	KEDB	2024-2025 CEDS Support	\$125,000.00
TOTAL:			\$631,036.00

Table 2. OED Grant Types

GRANT TYPES	TOTAL
AFEG	\$637,429.00
CULTURAL & EVENTS	\$141,283.00
DIRECT	\$370,500.00
INNOVATION	\$204,025.00
KEKAHA	\$281,701.30
LINE ITEM	\$631,036.00

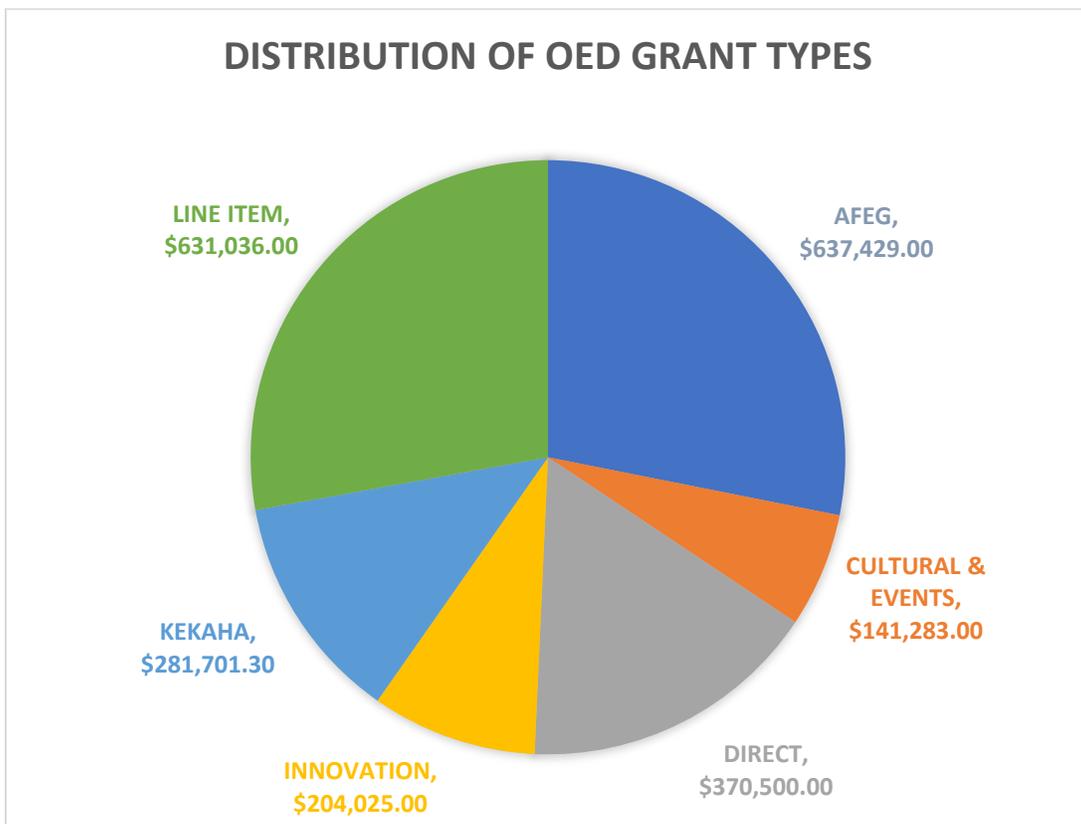


Figure 1. Grant Funding Award Distributions

ARPA PROGRAMS (\$332,000):

OED is managing the last of our American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funded programs during this fiscal year including:

- ARPA Kaua'i Film Industry relaunch social media and promotion campaign which is continuing.
- ARPA co-funded Mobility Hub Plan which closed out in June of 2025.

TOURISM: DESTINATION MANAGEMENT

The Office of Economic Development (OED), in collaboration with the Kaua'i Visitor's Bureau (KVB), the broader Kaua'i community, and the Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA), continued to implement initiatives outlined in the Destination Management Plan (DMAP). The DMAP now serves as the guiding framework for managing tourism on Kaua'i, effectively replacing the previous Tourism Strategic Plan (TSP). Many of the goals and priorities originally identified in the TSP are reaffirmed in the DMAP, allowing OED and its partners to maintain momentum and build upon ongoing efforts to align tourism with community values.

A. Objectives

- The overarching objective of Kaua'i's DMAP is to refocus tourism through responsible and sustainable economic development, while simultaneously creating memorable and respectful experiences for visitors, enhancing the quality of life for local residents and promoting the long-term stewardship of our natural, cultural and historical resources.

B. Highlights

- OED remains an active partner in implementing the Destination Management Action Plan (DMAP) in collaboration with the Hawai'i Tourism Authority and the Kaua'i Visitors Bureau.
- The website <https://Kauaifestivals.com/> continues to serve as a go-to calendar and information hub for residents, visitors, and hospitality industry professionals alike.
- In tandem with the website, weekly social media engagement is sustained through our Facebook and Instagram pages, ensuring real-time promotion of community events, festivals, and public information.
- Sister-city relationships with Japan continued through ongoing student exchanges, participation in the annual Matsuri Festival, and engagement with the Kaua'i Marathon & Iwaki Marathon, reinforcing cultural and international ties.
- In May 2025, 15 grantees were awarded grants for the Kaua'i Cultural Grant Program and Events. These awards support initiatives that not only preserve and perpetuate Kaua'i's unique cultural identity but also stimulate economic development by creating jobs, attracting residents and visitors to cultural experiences, and supporting community-based industries.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES/FILM PROGRAM

A. Objective

- The Film Commission program's objective is to increase film opportunities and other areas of Creative Industries including cultural and performing arts, emerging media, music, and entertainment industries and to support our film community.

B. Highlights

- Film Commission program measures are based on economic impact through film production company expenditures and jobs created which are tracked on a Fiscal Year basis.
 - The Hawai'i film industry, while known for iconic productions, is currently facing challenges and uncertainty. Recent setbacks include the loss of projects to other locations, like the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Atlanta; and a recent bill aimed at boosting the industry died in committee. The industry is seeking to revitalize itself through various measures, including increased tax incentives and better alignment among stakeholders.
 - FOHI – The Film Office of the Hawaiian Islands was reborn and efforts of the State & Island Film Commissions to collaborate more closely continues. Efforts to finalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) were delayed on Maui by required amendments and the passing of a bill by the Maui County Council. This has been completed and we expect the MOU to finally make its way back to Kaua'i.
 - The Hawai'i Film Alliance, which unites film & tv professionals, unions, and supporters across the islands to protect, strengthen, and grow Hawai'i's media industry through collective advocacy, data-driven solutions, and community action, was formed in 2025 to:
 - Bring together diverse roles, unions, and perspectives under one purpose
 - Transparency: Sharing knowledge, data, and processes openly.
 - Action-oriented: Focusing on practical, measurable steps toward tangible goals
 - Non-Partisan: Collaborating across ideologies and affiliations in pursuit of shared outcomes
 - Respect: Ensuring all voices are heard.
 - Strategy for stabilization and growth includes film tax credit stability, infrastructure incentives, education to workforce career pipeline, industry specific training to job placement, and purpose- built studio facilities.
 - Education: An effort to assist the schools with Creative Industry learning programs has begun with funding to start Drone Clubs in high schools across Kaua'i in collaboration with Kaua'i Economic Development Board.

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>2022</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>Production Tax Credit</i>	<i>\$1,604,428.57</i>	<i>\$4,240,353.52</i>	<i>\$2,275,492.00</i>
<i>Non-Qualified Spend (Permits/State)</i>	<i>\$1,000,926.67</i>	<i>\$894,606.50</i>	<i>\$1,010,466.67</i>
<i>County non-State Lands Est Spend</i>	<i>\$8,666,666.67</i>	<i>\$6,497,635.27</i>	<i>0.00*</i>
<i>O/A Permit (State)</i>	<i>\$290,600.00</i>	<i>\$50,616.67</i>	<i>\$7,200.00</i>
<i>Private</i>	<i>\$500,000.00</i>	<i>\$2,500,000</i>	<i>\$500,000</i>
<i>Sports Production</i>	<i>\$500,000.00</i>	<i>\$1,200,000</i>	<i>\$500,000</i>
<i>Total**</i>	<i>\$12,562,621.90</i>	<i>\$15,383,211.95</i>	<i>\$4,293,158.67</i>

*No further carryover from prior years production tax credit **DBEDT Reports

AGRICULTURE

A. Objectives

- The Agriculture Program supports the viable growth of Kaua'i's agriculture sector by working closely with agriculture producers, agriculture organizations, federal and state agencies, and other key stakeholders. To this end, OED supports various agriculture endeavors and participates in networking to match agricultural needs in the county with opportunities represented by state, federal, and educational agencies.

B. Highlights

- **Workforce Development:** OED continues to actively invest in workforce development by supporting an agricultural educational pathway. In collaboration with the Department of Education, OED has implemented Roots of Learning: Kaua'i's Ag Education Pathway for Young Learners. This initiative aims to introduce elementary students to agriculture through exposure and awareness programs, laying the foundation for future interest in the industry. Through an open invitation to every Kaua'i public elementary school to submit a short proposal, funding was awarded to 'Ele'ele, Kekaha, and Kīlauea Elementaries to enhance garden programs and transform grow spaces into outdoor learning labs. By fostering this early connection to agriculture, OED is not only strengthening its workforce but also ensuring that future generations are equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to support the island's food system and economy.
- **Strategic Agriculture Economic Development Plan:** Over the past year, OED prioritized plan actions tied to invasive species prevention and control. We strengthened integrated pest management capacity through support for industry-targeted trainings, expanded County-led outreach, and coordinated funding to enable boots-on-the-ground response. Looking ahead, OED will continue to prioritize invasive-species education and outreach while laying the groundwork for an Agricultural Economic Development Advisory Committee aligned with the plan's priority actions.

The committee will be charged with co-developing a detailed implementation roadmap, fostering shared ownership among partners, and guiding effective execution of tasks that advance Kauaʻi's agricultural industry.

- **Invasive Species Mitigation Efforts:** OED continues to prioritize invasive-species mitigation and management.

OED continues to facilitate the Kauaʻi Rose-Ringed Parakeet Working Group, manage the citizen-science survey, and oversee population-reduction operations. Over the past year, a conservative estimate indicates that 6000 birds were removed by the County's wildlife-control contractor.

To strengthen Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle (CRB) detection, OED granted funds to Conservation Dogs of Hawaiʻi to deliver a detector-dog training program. As of spring 2025, four handler-dog teams are enrolled and receiving classroom and in-field training, with emphasis on breeding-site detection. Following a County radio campaign, interest surged, and a waitlist was established pending additional funding.

In response to industry needs, OED granted funds to the Kauaʻi Invasive Species Committee to support acquisition of an agricultural spray drone to target Little Fire Ants and CRB infestations. OED also partnered with Malama Kauaʻi to launch a micro-grant program that cost-shares with small and mid-sized farms to properly manage and sanitize on-farm green waste. Data collected through the micro-grant program will inform the design of future initiatives that support industry and community efforts to control CRB.

- **Legislative Support:** OED tracks and testifies on key State legislative measures that impact the Kauaʻi agriculture industry. Additionally, we review and provide feedback on local government policies and proposed bills impacting the agricultural sector.
- **Groups, Networks and Affiliations:** The Agriculture Specialist is actively involved in several networks, which play a crucial role in supporting agricultural development and sustainability. This involvement helps to facilitate communication, collaboration, knowledge exchange, and resource sharing among various stakeholders in the local agriculture sector. Over the past year, the Agriculture Specialist participated in the County of Kauaʻi Resilience Team, Hawaiʻi Four County Sustainability Network, United Sustainability Directors Network, DLNR Kaulunani Urban and Community Forestry Advisory Council, Garden Island Resource Conservation and Development. In addition, the Agriculture Specialist participated in several working and technical advisory groups, including the State Climate Change Commission's Farming, Ranching, and Food Systems Technical Working Group and Biofuels and Land Use Technical Working Group, the Kauaʻi Rose Ringed Parakeet Working Group, the Kauaʻi Invasive Species Committee's Executive Committee, the Hawaiʻi State Meat Processing Task Force, the Kauaʻi Economic Development Board's Food and Agriculture Committee, and the County of Kauaʻi Disaster Recovery Working Group.

AGRICULTURE (County Sunshine Markets)

The Sunshine Market Program provides access for farmers to the public via produce sales events.

A. Objectives

- The objectives of the Sunshine Market Program include helping to promote and provide a venue for selling local farmers' produce.

B. Highlights

- Kapa'a Sunshine Market expanded its lineup with three additional farms and one additional value-added vendor from the Kaua'i Made program, now participating as regular vendors.
- Due to the increase in private markets, improved producer-to-market networking, and the aging farming population, the County Sunshine Markets have struggled to maintain vendor participation.

Table 4. Sunshine Market Selected Statistics

Selected Statistics	CY 2022	CY2023	CY 2024
Sunshine Markets	2	2	1
Sunshine Market Farmers/Vendors	35	20	17
Sunshine Market Annual Revenue	\$110,587	\$163,765	\$167,250

*Due to COVID-19, most farmers have either retired or found additional venues to sell their products.

ENERGY PROGRAM

A. Objectives

- The objective of the County's Energy Program is two-fold: (1) to manage, reduce, and facilitate the County's fossil energy use through increased efficiency in our facilities and renewably fueled fleets, and (2) to initiate, coordinate, and partner with stakeholders and the community on innovative programs and projects in the clean energy and transportation sector.
- Goals for energy use reductions within County operations:
 - Renewable Energy: 100% renewable energy by 2045 (Statewide goal set in 2008)
 - Energy Efficiency: 4,300 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of electricity savings by 2030 (Statewide goal set in 2009)
 - Transportation: 100% renewable fuel use by 2035 (set in 2017)

B. Highlights

- **Electric Vehicle Chargers:** The County has progressed on the Congressional Designated Spending (CDS) Level 3 EV Charging Network Project, having completed National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) clearance in-house, federal funding obligation, and awarded a contractor for the design-build. During this next fiscal year, OED will procure chargers and complete design and construction. The County is additionally progressing on the U.S. Department of Energy - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) to install Level 2 electric vehicle (EV) charging stations at the new Lima Ola Affordable Housing Development. OED worked with the County's Housing Agency to include the project scope in community center parking lot construction and anticipates IFB publication in early FY26.
- **Mobility Hubs:** The County completed the Coconut Marketplace Mobility Hub Plan, having worked in a public-private partnership with ABC Stores, State Legislature, and the visitor and business industries, to develop a vision and high-level implementation plan for a mobility hub that could be replicated around the island. The long-term goal is an island network of mobility hubs, connecting people with shuttles and shared mobility options so residents and visitors can elect to get around the island without always choosing a single-occupancy vehicle. The Plan has transitioned to the implementation phase, with The Hanalei Initiative now leading coordination and project management. An OED grant will fund a hub coordinator and shuttle manager to operationalize the plan's recommendations with the goal to enable a mobility hub and airport shuttle pilot by December 2026.
- **Energy Efficiency Grants:** The County is partnering with the Kaua'i Economic Development Board and the Kaua'i Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) on the Kaua'i Small Business Energy Efficiency Grant. This grant operates alongside KIUC Commercial Retrofit Program and covers a percentage of labor costs associated with energy efficiency upgrades, while KIUC's program can cover a percentage of materials costs for eligible projects. The program is intended for small businesses, who may face more upfront financial hurdles when retrofitting. In FY25, three businesses participated and completed lighting and air conditioning upgrades. There is some funding remaining which is expected to be spent by December 2025.
- **Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Planning:** Over the last few years, OED worked with colleagues from the Planning Department, Mayor's Office, and KEMA to develop an island-wide Kaua'i Climate Adaptation and Action Plan (KCAAP). The draft plan was open for public comment in Spring 2025 and will be adopted in Fall 2025.
- **Networking and Knowledge-Sharing:** Program staff are members of multiple state and nation-wide collaborative networks, including the Urban Sustainability Director's Network, the Four County Sustainability Network, and Drive Electric Hawai'i (DEH), in which the Energy Coordinator is the Vice Chair for DEH. The Energy Coordinator also regularly meets with the Hawai'i State Energy Office and the other county energy coordinators. These networks and partnerships allow staff to remain engaged in state-wide initiatives, policy conversations, knowledge-sharing, procurement and grant opportunities.

- **KIUC Renewable Portfolio Standard:** Kauaʻi Island Utility Cooperative (KIUC) leads the State of Hawaiʻi in renewable generation, achieving 50.6% renewable during the 2024 calendar year. This puts KIUC ahead of the State of Hawaiʻi requirement of 40% by 2030, to be achieved by each electric utility as established by HRS § 269-92(a), as amended. KIUC announced that they are pursuing two new renewable energy projects expected to bring Kauaʻi close to 80% renewable energy by 2028, which aligns with the board of directors' aggressive goal of reaching 100% renewable by 2033.
- The County did not meet the 2023 energy efficiency goal to reduce County electricity use by 30% vs FY'12 baseline and will not make progress until we pursue additional efficiency projects. The Police Complex (3990 Kaana), Līhuʻe Wastewater Plant, and the Līhuʻe Civic Center are three of the best candidates to deliver larger savings. The Capital Improvements Projects team is working on a new project to replace the HVAC systems at the Police Complex and the Līhuʻe Civic Center which should significantly impact energy use. The County is also exploring an Energy Savings Performance Contract (ESPC) which would have high impact to energy reduction.

SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

A. Objectives

- The County's General Plan promotes a sustainable island by, "growing responsibly to meet the needs of current and future generations without depleting resources." Working towards the goal of a sustainable island requires a collective effort from both the county and the community. The primary objectives of the County's Sustainability Program are to:
 1. Foster the concept of sustainable, long-term thinking that considers multiple impacts of actions on the environment, social equity, and the economy, into all county policies and activities. **Institutionalize sustainability as a county value.**
 2. Help the County develop innovative, inter-departmental programs that save money, support local businesses, create jobs, improve quality of life, and protect the environment and public health.
 3. Track improvements and successes for the government program over time using verifiable metrics. Improve the county's data collection system so progress can be measured.
 4. Develop relationships between the county, non-profit organizations, and businesses to share sustainability practices, ideas, and opportunities for collaboration.
 5. Conduct meaningful and equitable engagement to ensure programs and policies are inclusive of the many diverse voices on island.

B. Highlights

- **Kekaha Road Brownfields Program:** In October 2021, the County was awarded a \$300,000 Community-Wide Brownfields Assessment Grant from the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to identify and assess brownfield sites, prepare cleanup plans, and engage the community. With Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., soil sampling was conducted at Kekaha Sugar Mill, Lot B (TMK 130071040000) from April 20 to May 2, 2025. In total, 55 multi-increment samples and 3 composite samples were collected in accordance with an approved Sampling Analysis Plan, reviewed by the Hawai'i Department of Health (HDOH) and the EPA. Next steps include working with HDOH to confirm compliance with environmental sampling guidelines. A final report summarizing test results is expected by August 2025, followed by a community meeting in Q3 FY26 to share findings. For more information, visit <https://Kauaiforward.com/kekaha-brownfields-study/>.

- **Youth Climate Class (YCC), Spring 2025:** The County hosted its third Youth Climate Class for high school students, designed to connect sustainability education with career opportunities. Guided by the Aloha+ Challenge, students visited organizations advancing Hawai'i's six sustainability goals: Clean Energy, Waste Reduction, Local Food, Sustainable Communities, Natural Resource Management, and Green Workforce & Education. As part of the program, students helped three local restaurants earn Hawai'i Green Business Program certification. For more information about the class, visit the StoryMap: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/4988533c5e4f4471bac9e1a4c2d71809>
- **Ho'olaulea no ka Honua:** On April 19, 2025, OED staff partnered with the Kaua'i Economic Development Board to host the third annual Ho'olaule'a no ka Honua, celebrating agriculture and sustainability with a focus on native and canoe plants. The one-day event, held at the Kaua'i Philippine Cultural Center, featured workshops, speakers, plant sales, cultural demonstrations, and a free movie matinee of *Moana 2*. About 300 attendees engaged with 20+ community organizations. Planning for Earth Day 2026 will begin in January. More information is available on: <https://Kauaiforward.com/hoolaulea-no-ka-honua-2/>.
- **County Cesspool Conversion Plan:** With funding from the EPA's Closing America's Wastewater Access Gap Initiative, the County is developing a cesspool conversion plan. The plan will assess options to connect cesspools to County or private systems, cluster treatment, or upgraded individual systems. Staff is assisting with community engagement, with completion expected by March 2026.
- **Play Streets Kaua'i:** Through Play Streets Kaua'i, the County and partners—including DOH, Planning, Get Fit Kaua'i, Na Lei Wili AHEC, and others—transforms streets and underutilized spaces into safe, temporary play spaces to foster active lifestyles and community connections. Since July 2022, 20 events have been held across the island. A promotional video was developed with Kaua'i Community College, and a toolkit is underway to help residents and other counties host their own events. More information is available at www.playstreetsKaua'i.com.
- **Resilience Team Collaborations:** The County Resilience team consists of several members from the Office of Economic Development, Planning Department, UH Sea Grant, Emergency Management Agency, Public Works, and Mayor's Office. The team

seeks to break down silos and work collaboratively on programs, projects, and initiatives that increase island resiliency.

- **Climate Adaptation and Action Planning:** Led by the Planning Department with Resilience Team support, this plan outlines actions to prepare for climate change. After four rounds of community outreach, adoption is anticipated in FY26. Learn more at Kauaiadaptation.com.
- **Multi-Hazard Mitigation and Resilience Plan Update (MHMRP):** Staff are part of the core team that are helping update this long-term strategy to reduce risks from natural hazards. A draft list of actions is complete, with public workshops planned for early 2026.
- **Statewide Collaborations**
 - **Four County Sustainability Network (4CSN):** Staff helped secure a \$20,000 grant from the Urban Sustainability Directors Network to convene an in-person gathering on Maui from July 17 to July 18, establishing a shared mission, goals, and action plan.
 - **Department of Health & Four Counties Climate Change & Health Campaign:** Staff contributes to educational campaigns on climate-related health issues. Recent efforts included a social media campaign on extreme heat, with this year's focus on invasive species, climate, and health.
- **Tracking Emerging Sciences and Opportunities:** Staff participates in networks such as USDN, Hawai'i Green Growth's Voluntary Local Review Task Force, the Built Environment Task Force, and the State Climate Commission's Climate Action Pathways planning. These forums keep staff engaged in statewide initiatives, policy development, and funding opportunities.

WORKFORCE PROGRAM

The Office of Economic Development and administration restructured its partnership in the WIOA program that provides services to the workforce via the American Job Center. OED transitioned its WIOA funding allocation directly to the State Workforce Development Division (WDD), streamlining service delivery and reducing administrative duplication. We are continuing to provide space for the American Job Center which includes the WDD, partner work areas and computer areas for the public. Costs to maintain the space are being handled directly by the County of Kaua'i. Kaua'i maintains its seat on the Workforce Development Board, a statewide entity.

A. Highlights

- The AJC continues supporting participants who visit the Job Center requesting services, seeking assistance with signing onto HireNet, creating resumes and filling out job applications.
- With the guidance of Bennette Misalucha as Executive Director of the State Workforce Development Council, she hopes to find ways to re-engage in workforce development.

- In June of 2025, the County of Kaua'i Office of Economic Development (OED) prepared a Request for Proposals (RFP) to be released in the following fiscal for its Workforce Innovation Grant, which includes \$20,000.00 in funding to support initiatives that address critical workforce gaps and strengthen Kaua'i's economic resilience. This grant would be designed to catalyze new approaches, pilot programs, and collaborative efforts aimed at filling unmet needs within the island's workforce ecosystem. While OED welcomed all proposals, the following focus areas were identified as priority needs based on current workforce challenges:
 - Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Training: Proposals offering creative solutions to expand CDL certification access, address equipment or instructor shortages, or introduce fast-track programs to meet urgent transportation and logistics demands.
 - Kupuna Care Workforce Development: Projects that build caregiving capacity for Kaua'i's aging population, including CNA and home health aide training, or culturally grounded caregiving pathways that preserve dignity and respect for our kupuna.
 - Other High-Need Workforce Areas: Innovative initiatives targeting workforce shortages in skilled trades (e.g., plumbing, electrical, construction) and hospitality management up-skilling.
- This grant opportunity reflects OED's ongoing commitment to investing in forward-thinking, community-driven solutions that ensure Kaua'i's workforce is prepared, adaptable, and resilient.

BUSINESS INNOVATION AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS (Business)

KAUA'I MADE

The Kaua'i Made is a program created by the County of Kaua'i to officially represent products made on Kaua'i, by Kaua'i people, and are authentic to Kaua'i.

A. Objectives

- The goal of the Kaua'i Made Products sustainability program is to build upon the foundation of the program launch and establish priorities for the lasting success of this important program.
 - Increase the sale of products grown, created or manufactured in and by the people of Kaua'i; Increase the number and variety of products available on Kaua'i and elsewhere; Increase the visibility of the Kaua'i Made products in retail establishments and on the worldwide web; and to deliver information on how to purchase Kaua'i Products to visitors, residents and others through a variety of marketing vehicles.

B. Highlights

- Continued partnership with Sheraton Coconut Beach initiating a last Friday of the month Kaua'i Made Product Fair for members only.

- In December, the Annual Holiday Fair was relocated to the enclosed area of the Outrigger Kaua'i Beach Resort showcasing 40 members.
- The first Mother's Day Craft Fair event, which replaced the Easter event was held at Sheraton Kaua'i Coconut Beach Resort.
- Online applications are still being utilized while also making available paper copies as requested by members.
- The Kaua'i Made shopping guide continues to be printed quarterly with an updated membership listing and consists of 15,000 copies island wide in distribution numbers.
- Kaua'i Made continues to work with Kaua'i Family Magazine to promote Kaua'i Made and the Annual Holiday Fair.
- Kaua'i Made established a new partnership with Outrigger Kaua'i Beach Resort hosting Kaua'i Made Craft Fairs on Friday's from 3pm to 7pm located in the lobby of the hotel.

BROADBAND

High-speed internet benefits everyone on the island, including businesses, entrepreneurs, kupuna, students, and residents. OED has taken on the responsibility of coordinating the broadband efforts on the island to ensure that every household in Kaua'i has access to affordable high-speed internet. These efforts have involved collaborating with state and federal representatives, the other three counties, internet service providers, and countless specialists with ties to broadband initiatives. The Business Specialist oversees Kaua'i's BEAD (Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment) Program's Challenge Process, holds community outreach meetings, community training sessions, coordinates digital equity projects, and collaborates on state and county broadband strategies.

A. Objectives

- Improve the broadband infrastructure in Kaua'i.
- Identify the underserved and the unserved.
- Increase digital equity.

B. Highlights

- The County of Kaua'i's Broadband Story Map is a succinct outline of our current internet connectivity issues and our goals for the future. The story map can be found at <https://Kauaiforward.com/broadband/>.
- Through collaboration with partners at DHHL, Kaua'i has access to internet speed data from Ookla - the most widely used speed test available. Access to internet speed data gives insights into where needs might exist and guides where to focus outreach efforts.
- Community outreach meetings were well attended and well received. Key influencers in the community were won over and will help spread the word.
- The UH Team continues to move the project forward by submitting new Request For Proposals that comply with the new Federal Guidelines.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

This year brought changes to our business specialist team. We bid farewell to Nate Prescott, who supported Kaua'i through the challenging aftermath of COVID, and welcomed Mark Aqui, a business owner with a background in microgreens, a passion for technology, and strong communication skills. Mark's inquisitive nature and entrepreneurial experience will bring fresh perspective as we continue to serve the community

The Business Specialist works to build a thriving, resilient, and interconnected business community. Their mission is to support businesses, emerging industries, and nonprofits by offering essential services, technical assistance, and connections to key partners. They help organizations navigate government processes and regulations, while also identifying and addressing challenges that impact the local business environment. Through proactive problem-solving and advocacy, the Business Specialist plays a vital role in driving economic growth and sustainability.

A. Objectives

- Provide tools, resources, knowledge, and connections to help businesses grow and prosper.
- Attract new and innovative businesses to the community.
- Remove common roadblocks to ensure a healthy business ecosystem.
- Support workforce growth and upskilling.
- Expand the capacity of local nonprofits.

B. Highlights

- **Business Retention & Expansion Program** - The Business Retention and Expansion Program is focused on stabilizing current businesses and setting them up for growth. Last year the Business Specialist visited many businesses in-person, to better understand the challenges facing Kaua'i's business community. Data and information gathered at every meeting was used to inform new programs and was presented to the Mayor's office to keep them informed of the happenings in the business community. This year, the goal is to visit 100 businesses and to build stronger relationships with ten high-impact businesses – those with high growth potential, large employers, and organizations focused on community good. By building stronger relationships with high-impact businesses, we hope to encourage job growth and investment in the community, protect against business closures by providing resources and technical assistance, and foster an innovative and diversified economy.
- **Enterprise Zone Program** -The Enterprise Zone (EZ) program is a State-County partnership lead by the State of Hawai'i Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT). The Business Specialist serves as the EZ Coordinator for Kaua'i and works with DBEDT to recruit businesses for the program. The program allows local businesses that are growing and creating jobs on island to benefit from tax savings.
- **Groups and Affiliations** - The Business Specialist also represents the County at various business-focused organizations. Regularly attending Chamber of Commerce meetings

and even serving as an Ex Officio Board Member for the Līhu‘e Business Association. The Business Specialist is also the Committee Chair for an Island-wide high-school Academies Freshmen Advisory Committee, gathering input from industry experts and using it to guide and inform the career academies experience.

- **Legislative Support** - OED tracks and testifies on key State legislative issues that impact the economy and Kaua‘i businesses. We review and provide feedback on local government policies and proposed bills impacting the economy.
- **Empowering Small Businesses through the use of AI** - Recent developments in artificial intelligence (AI) are reshaping the way small businesses operate, particularly in the areas of marketing, branding, and digital presence. The Business Specialist worked with Kuleana AI to provide business classes in AI.

KAUA‘I FORWARD WEBSITE www.Kauaiforward.com

Over the past year, the Kaua‘i Forward website has shifted to focus on moving forward and sharing information about economic opportunities for Kaua‘i. It contains an expanded list of resources, programs, updates, and grant opportunities for residents, businesses, and non-profits.

A. Objectives

- Continue providing timely, accurate and relevant information for Kaua‘i residents on topics related to economic development.
- Maintain the site as a trusted hub of resources and opportunities for as long as it remains needed and actively used by the community.
- Strengthen the connection and pilina by highlighting the people, businesses and initiatives shaping Kaua‘i’s future.

B. Highlights

- Website Revamp: Staff working on updated design and navigation to improve ease for residents and businesses seeking resources.
- Community Rebrand: Transitioned to ‘Kui Kaua‘i’ to reflect a stronger connection to community voices, stories and resilience.
- Media Outreach Planning: Developed a media program to raise awareness and share updates on the Office of Economic Development’s efforts.

IV. BUDGET

Expense Type	FY 2025 (Budget)	FY 2025 (Actual)
Equivalent Personnel	9	9
Salaries & Wages	1,091,562	1,009,093
Operations	2,681,130	2,290,158
Equipment	500	321
Total	3,773,208	3,299,571

Other OED Funds	FY 2025 (Budget)	FY 2025 (Actual)
Kaua'i Made	370,326	0
Kekaha Host Community Benefit	328,921	328,921
ARPA Funding	2,100,000	2,063,600
EPA Grant	300,000	91,665
DMAP Program Funds-Mob Hub	100,000	100,000
Harbor Funds-HTA	62,830	62,830

V. ACCOMPLISHMENTS/EVALUATION

In FY2025, the Office of Economic Development (OED) advanced its mission through strategic investments, partnerships, and innovation across multiple sectors. Out of the initial 90 projects identified in FY24, 51 were completed, 32 adjusted, and seven placed on hold. By August 2024, OED had completed 113 projects, with 74 in progress, 22 on hold, and 22 cancelled, reflecting disciplined project tracking and adaptive management.

OED awarded more than \$2.2 million in competitive and direct grants, including Agriculture Farm Expansion Grants, Cultural & Events support, Innovation Grants, and targeted funding for sustainability, invasive species control, and business resilience. The Innovation Grant Program, supported through the **Consider.it** community platform, strengthened transparency and engagement while encouraging cross-sector collaboration.

Major accomplishments included advancing the Destination Management Action Plan, expanding invasive species mitigation and agricultural education, completing the Coconut Marketplace Mobility Hub Plan, launching small business energy efficiency and workforce innovation grants, and strengthening the Kaua'i Made program. OED also contributed to the acceptance of the Statewide Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which now guides local priorities in sustainability, agriculture, health, visitor management, and technology.

Looking forward, OED will continue refining grantmaking, expanding cross-sector innovation, and strengthening workforce, business, and sustainability initiatives to build a resilient, diversified, circular economy that reflects Kaua'i's values.