

From Better Data to Better Outcomes

for Households in Hawai'i

Data Landscape
Report 2022



Post-Pandemic
Food Insecurity

Shifting
Economic
Realities

Unmet Demand
for Childcare

Lack of
Affordable
Housing

Racial & Ethnic
Inequities

“

Our founders showed that change comes from the community itself – rising up with agency and initiative, demanding change, and providing help to one another along the way. We measure outcomes and outputs for our work. However, data on impact and community conditions are often not measured well in our society. Having the ability to measure impact across the community would have helped deploy more resources to the source of the pain faced by our families.

— Ryan Kusumoto, President & CEO,
Parents And Children Together

Building Our Data Capacities to Respond to Household Need

Aloha!

Following the release of our first Hawai'i Data Landscape report in early 2021, we set out to apply what we learned about data challenges and opportunities to an urgent issue arguably only exacerbated by the pandemic: **the struggle of households just trying to get by**. Our decision to focus on data for those working to support households and communities in need led us to reach out to leaders across sectors with a guiding question:

What are the opportunities for community to enhance its ability to gain and act on data insight to serve households in need?

While we learned that responding to one of the most pressing issues in Hawai'i today is challenged fundamentally by limited data, our discussions with leaders across sectors demonstrated tremen-

dous untapped data opportunity: **relatively small investments in data capacity now will yield large returns in impact across households and communities into the future**. While COVID-19 cases may be waning in Hawai'i, many households that were struggling before the pandemic are likely in greater need today. More than ever, our ability to adapt often strained support resources to evolving need will be critical.

Hawai'i's devoted and capable service-providing organizations continue to work tirelessly to provide critical services to households across our islands. Government agencies know the critical role these organizations serve and rely upon them to ensure there is a safety net for these families. Many private funders are engaged to spur innovation and provide complimentary support when there are gaps. However, **we heard a near consensus — across leaders from these sectors — that we could be much more effective as a community if we had better data available to make informed decisions** to deliver better results and achieve greater impact.

Imagine a Hawai'i where quality, timely data guides how we respond to our pressing challenges. As we continue to listen and learn from leaders of nonprofit service providers, foundation executives responsible for funding decisions, and government officials directly involved with services for the public to gain their perspectives, we want to share what we have learned so far. In this report, you'll find our best representation of the breadth and depth of wisdom and aspiration held by these leaders toward **a robust household need data ecosystem** that ensures that Hawai'i's households and communities are supported to thrive.

Nick Redding, PhD

Executive Director
Hawai'i Data Collaborative



Mahalo!

The Hawai'i Data Collaborative is indebted to the numerous organizations that took the time to share their perspectives and experiences with us to develop this summary of learnings. Over the past year, we spent time listening to more than 40 nonprofit service providers, private-sector funders, and government leaders to capture those insights.

Based on what we heard, our team identified common themes and supplemented these findings with our direct experiences supporting community partners to create the following summary of perspectives.

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Mahalo the following organizations:

Nonprofit Service Providers

- AARP Hawai'i
- Achieve Zero
- Aloha Harvest
- Catholic Charities Hawai'i
- Child & Family Service
- Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement
- Hawai'i Foodbank
- Honolulu Habitat for Humanity
- HOPE Services
- Lanakila Pacific
- Legal Aid Society of Hawai'i
- Maui Food Bank
- Parents And Children Together (PACT)
- Partners In Care
- Partners in Development Foundation
- People Attentive to Children (PATCH)
- Read To Me International
- Susannah Wesley Community Center
- The Food Basket
- Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health Center
- Waikiki Community Center

Private-Sector Funders

- Aloha United Way
- Bank of Hawaii Foundation
- Consuelo Foundation
- Harold K.L. Castle Foundation
- Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation
- Hawai'i Community Foundation
- Hawai'i Medical Services Association Foundation
- HT Hayashi Foundation
- Kamehameha Schools
- Queen Lili'uokalani Trust
- The Harry & Jeanette Weinberg Foundation

We would also like to thank the numerous government agency representatives for providing their perspectives and experiences that informed the insights on government shared in this report.

From Better Data to Better Outcomes

Data is useful because it informs our understanding of what is happening, why it is happening, and what we should do about it. This enables us to make better decisions which will lead to better outcomes for Hawai'i.

Better Data
What is happening?

Better Information
Why is it happening?

Better Decisions
What actions should we take (if any)?

Better Outcomes
Did our actions have the expected outcomes?

“

Understanding more about the communities we serve is a critical need for Hawai'i Foodbank and our partner agencies. However, the lack of a centralized, coordinated system that could provide a comprehensive picture of those we serve has made it difficult for us to ensure we are fully meeting the needs of our community—both in terms of what we are providing for those we are currently serving, as well as identifying those who are food insecure but not currently receiving support.

— Amy Miller Marvin, President & CEO
Hawai'i Foodbank

What We Learned

While the pandemic brought Hawai'i's data challenges to the forefront, our team heard a persistent need for bringing timely, quality data to bear on pressing challenges even as the state looks towards recovery and beyond.



Overview

To understand this better, listening to service providers, private-sector funders and government leaders allowed our team to gain a well-rounded view of the current challenges relating to the local data ecosystem.



Service providers are challenged to develop desired data capacities.

Due to resource constraints, service-providing organizations are challenged with making best and highest use of data to assess community need, target services, and measure long-term impact of programs. There is a widespread shortage of funding for data capacities for the service-providing community, including data collection, management, analysis, sharing, and strategy. As a result, service providers are limited in their ability to share data insights with partner organizations, and funders gain very little insight from data beyond reporting requirements.



There are few forums for sharing data and developing collective insight across service providers.

Service providers serving the same population often lack the means to share client-level data. While there have been attempts to do this, there remains a dearth of capacity and platforms for service providers to share client-level and aggregated data with each other.¹ Consequently, the service provider community's ability to share insights and learn from one another is currently limited. Beyond technical platforms, there are also few convening forums and engagements on key issues that are supported by timely, local data. Finally, there is a sense of competition among funding for those serving the same populations that inhibits data sharing for collective action and collaboration.

¹ The Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), managed by Partners In Care, is a notable exception.

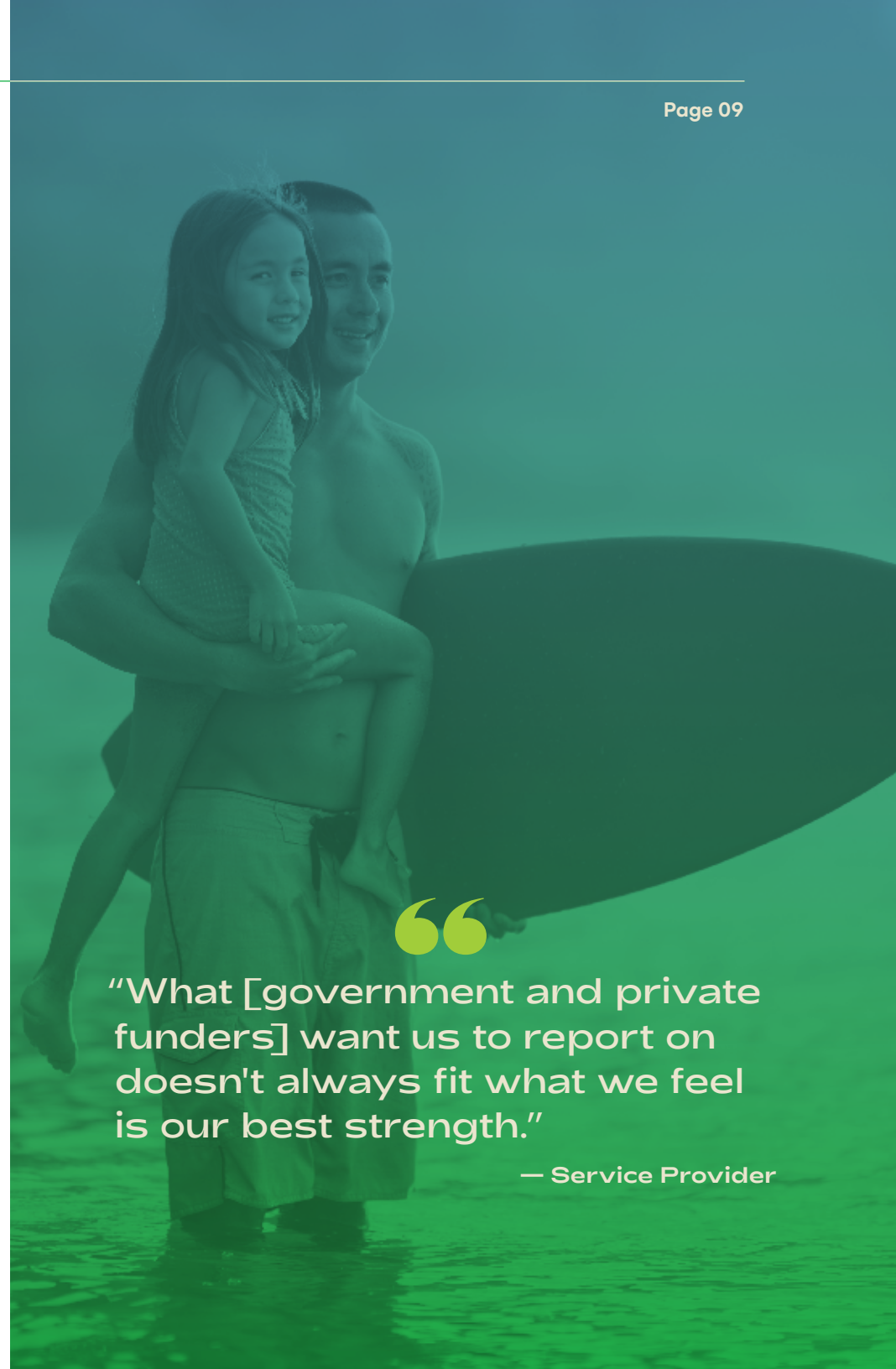


Overview



Private and government funders miss opportunities to learn and adapt based on service provider feedback. Given their limited data capacity, service providers' data collection priorities are driven by government contracts and private funder requirements which are often misaligned with the work occurring in the community, limiting service providers' discretion for data collection and internal insight potential. And while service providers have trusting relationships with the communities they serve, the constraints above inhibit their ability to share timely, relevant insights with funders and decision makers.

With limited timely insights from community, funders and government agencies are challenged with leveraging data to establish funding priorities, deploy funding strategically, and assess long-term impact. As a result, reported data often prioritizes stewardship of the funds — monitoring if funding was spent as directed — while underutilized in ways that would guide strategic allocation of funds for impact. Overall, there are missing opportunities for service providers to offer their unique perspectives gained from serving the community to drive funding decisions and develop data feedback loops that enable timely adaptation to the needs of households.



“What [government and private funders] want us to report on doesn't always fit what we feel is our best strength.”

— Service Provider



Opportunities—

Increase data capacity building support for service providers

A central theme we heard across stakeholders is the need for data capacity boosts in the service provider community. It is widely recognized that increasing service provider data capacities would enhance organizational effectiveness as well as data communication and collaboration across sectors.



Opportunities

“The pandemic really highlighted for funders, that we have to pay attention to [grantee] capacity.”

— Private Funder

1.

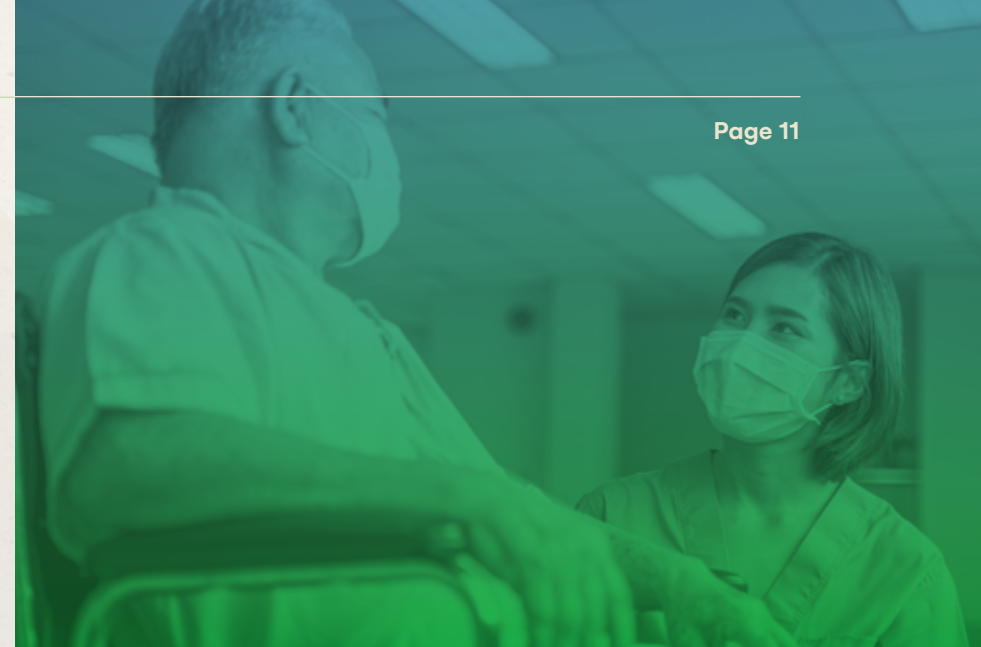
Foster data cultures within organizations

▶ A great place to start for service-providing organizations is to begin to foster cultures that normalize the use of data as fundamental to organizational strategy. In parallel, we heard the need to boost data capacity – for example with dedicated, technical staff, electronic client intake processes, and adoption of data systems that are easy to use and accessible to staff – while committing, over the long term, to a focus on organizational outcomes and impact over just service deliverables (outputs). This can start with a small-scale data capacity project to learn, refine processes, and develop a proof-of-concept before undertaking a major project requiring additional funding and operational disruptions.

2.

Focus more funding on catalyzing data innovations

▶ Private funders are uniquely positioned to lead in supporting service providers to enhance their data capacities through funding and collaboration. These organizations desire to receive investments in data capacity that can enhance their ability to gain, act on, and share data insights about the communities they are serving and the outcomes they are achieving. Private funders can also collaborate with service providers to update their reporting requirements to better align with community work. These updates to reporting would ease the burden on service provider data collection while freeing up capacity for service providers to focus on internal data needs. Furthermore, there is a desire within the private funder community for more coordination around data strategy and funding. Funders can collaborate to standardize reporting requirements and systems across organizations to reduce duplication and enhance comparability of outcomes tracked by those working on similar issues and populations.



Opportunities

3.

Streamline government systems and processes

► Changes to the state's current procurement system could lead to improvements in service providers' data capacities. Currently, while the state Procurement Office falls within the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) and is responsible for administering rules, the development of and bidding for request for proposals (RFP) is decentralized. Each state agency has its own procurement officer, resulting in a lack of standardized data language and data reporting requirements that is a burden on service providers who contract with these agencies. One challenge is the procurement system is unable to recognize when different agencies request the same or similar services. As a result, if the same service provider responds to three RFPs for the same service, they could be required to report three different variations of data requirements. Another challenge is that state government contracts often require service providers to use their proprietary data systems for reporting. While this is a means of government providing data capacity by providing data management systems for reporting, the inability to integrate or make use of new and modernized systems creates an additional burden for service providers. Overall, the structure of the current procurement system creates inefficiencies for service providers and agencies alike, while missing data insight opportunities that would result from standardized data requirements.

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“We're not giving any money for data collection, we just provide program dollars. I think we need to take a hard look at that, and offer funds towards what service providers are really asking for. We all have to start working on this together.”

— Private Funder



Opportunities—

Enable more effective platforms for data sharing and collective insight

We heard a general recognition that greater impact can be achieved when stakeholders come together to tackle an issue, and a willingness to engage in more of these types of opportunities when convened with purpose.



Opportunities

When adequate data capacity is in place to support these forums effectively, data insights across programs and organizations can begin to “roll up” to serve the broader information needs of those working to support struggling households.

4.

Build capacities for cross-organization data sharing

▶ Service providers expressed a need for shared data systems that would provide a more complete picture of household and community need. Ensuring that service-providing organizations are supported with sufficient data systems is a critical first step that can then lead to opportunities for scaling successful models of data flows “rolling up” to provide shared insights into trends over time, with the ability to project future scenarios based on historical data. When data insights are shared broadly, service providers are equipped to make data-driven cases for new funding initiatives relevant to larger, higher-resourced programs and smaller, lower-resourced programs alike, reducing competition for limited available funds.



5.

Convene and fund data-guided collective action

▶ Private-sector funders can serve as conveners for broader collective action — connecting work across domains and sectors — resulting in a reduced sense of competition among peer organizations, while creating the conditions to facilitate data connections that benefit everyone working to address similar issues. Coordination in these forums would streamline community data collection efforts — often an onerous task — and deploying data sharing platforms would close existing data gaps resulting in a more complete shared understanding of household and community need. While there are several recent examples of the philanthropic community working to bring stakeholders together around common goals and shared data in service of collective action, opportunities remain to iterate and improve on these models of convening.

Opportunities

6.

Account for the outcomes of government contracts

▶ Government and service providers developing a mutual understanding of the role of government data in social service provision could lead to collaborations that would set the stage for deeper discussions about the outcomes resulting from government human services contracting. Streamlining procurement processes and contract reporting requirements — while developing longer-term data governance solutions — would be an important first step toward developing more robust data-guided programs and policies adapted to residents' greatest needs.

“

“I think the power that funders have is the ability to convene and bring folks together. If there is data to share, a foundation could be a good place to share across and between - if organizations want their data to be shared.”

— Private Funder

“If we can help set the foundation for others to learn from us, it's incredibly helpful to collect all this data and prove that our programs work. It can save others time and money.”

— Service Provider



Opportunities—

Build stronger data connections between direct support and higher-level decision making

Through their work, day in and day out, service providers are the eyes and ears in our community and, when supported with sufficient data capacities, are well-placed to share insights with those working to address household and community need.



Opportunities

Community stakeholders coming together to co-develop, and execute, a thoughtful data strategy that enables meaningful data communication across partners, supports better decision making around household and community need.

7.

Elevate service provider data as critical to broader insight

▶ Service providers have the greatest potential for data insight on household need. They are on the frontlines developing trusted relationships with the communities they serve, uniquely positioned to gain, act on, and share data insights that can inform the responses of government and private funders. When service providers are supported with resources and funding to invest in data capacities and systems, they are not only equipped with the information they need for more effective provision of resources, but are also enabled to share their insights broadly at all levels, resulting in more effective resource provision informed by *actual need*.

“

“There are opportunities at a systems level to discuss what other data is needed. In the groups that are convening, we need to see what others are doing in terms of collecting data, and new ideas on data sovereignty, data justice, data decolonization.” — Service Provider

8.

Co-develop a coordinated cross-sector data strategy

▶ Private funders and service providers can partner to co-develop systems-level data strategies that identify the types of data being collected and by whom, as well as where there are gaps. A collaborative, strength-based approach would create the conditions for stronger data communication between funders and service providers, and better align reporting requirements with work being done in the community. With service providers positioned as the conduit of effective feedback loops, government and private funders can be more responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Opportunities

9.

Establish timely, relevant, and shareable data as a government priority

▶ Government plays a critical role in the Hawai'i data ecosystem, as a significant amount of community data is reported to the government through vendor contracts. Overall, we heard those within state government express a desire to share data with the community and between government agencies. However, many factors currently limit effective data sharing, including challenges with data governance, limited or outdated technology and systems, and an insufficient number of trained personnel. There are further opportunities for those within and outside of government to gain a deeper understanding of the laws and procedures related to government data sharing. A statewide data governance structure detailing roles, responsibilities, and practices, as well as standardized data sharing protocols, would streamline data sharing within government and with community partners, enhancing data communication with community and within government, and enabling more effective feedback loops for supporting household and community need.

We also heard a desire from community and government alike for a unifying agreement on defining race and ethnicity, as they are often aggregated into larger categories to meet federal reporting requirements. Developing more specific race and ethnicity categories to reflect the distinct needs of Hawai'i's diverse population would enhance the utility of local government data for addressing household need equitably.

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“Funders can transform the way we leverage data. A coordinated strategy would accomplish a lot. We are not coordinated right now, but need to be.”

— Private Funder

Summary of Opportunities

In order to respond to the challenges of service provider data capacity, limited forums for collective data insight, and missed opportunities to learn and adapt approaches based on data, we have identified nine actionable opportunities for moving forward.

Consistent and effective responses across each of these opportunities will work to establish and reinforce an expanded data culture, whereby increased data capacities move and are moved by demand for better data to make better decisions in response to household need.



“

While we saw organizations come together to share data at the program level, it was a challenge. The need to share data across programs, departments, organizations, and with the community is imperative as we respond to resident and business needs moving forward. Streamlining data access and analysis will provide decision-makers better situational awareness and up-to-date information.

— Amy Asselbaye, Executive Director,
City & County of Honolulu’s Office of Economic Revitalization

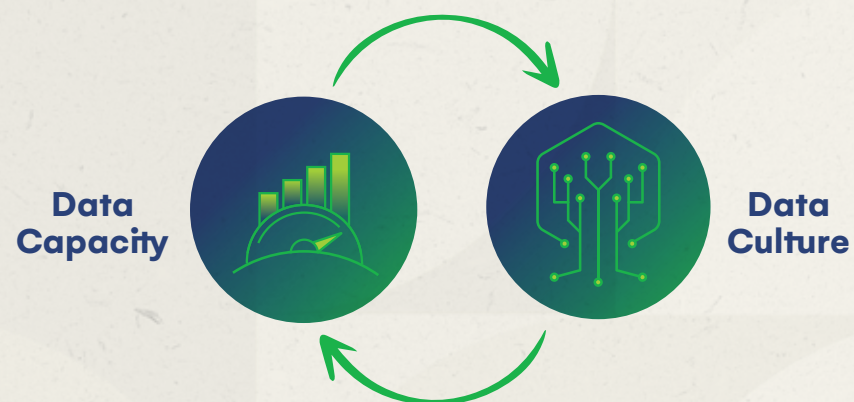
How We Move Forward

In these uncertain times, building our capacities to respond effectively to changing circumstances is critical.



How We Move Forward

Developing household need data sources and platforms for data communication and collaboration in the ways described in this report will go a long way toward strengthening our community. However, we must also work in parallel to **foster a data culture** that ensures we make best use of these data capacities to understand what is happening in our households and communities, make decisions efficiently, and adapt effectively when outcomes fall short.



Ultimately, we believe that supporting service-providing organizations to build data capacities — while developing platforms that enable more responsive data communication across these organizations, funders and higher-level decision makers — will increase the quality, relevance and timeliness of data on household need leading to a more robust data culture that guides effective decisions toward better outcomes for Hawai‘i’s households and communities. ■

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During the pandemic, it was a challenge to find real time data to better understand community needs that could inform our funding priorities. These data gaps were not only felt by us at the Foundation, but our partners across the state working to serve their communities. In parallel, our collective ability to make use of available data sets to make informed decisions was limited. More robust data capacities and local data flows were, and still remain, a crucial need for serving our communities.

— Michelle Kauhane, Senior Vice President & Chief Impact Officer
Hawai'i Community Foundation

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to Better Outcomes for
Households in Hawai'i



Hawai'i Data Collaborative is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
We partner with community to make data meaningful
for moving Hawai'i forward.

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