



SPERLING CENTER  
FOR RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION



CASE STUDY:

## Building Capacity and Sustainability in Nonprofits Serving Native Hawaiian Youth

### PROJECT SNAPSHOT

In the fall of 2018, Sperling Center for Research & Innovation (SCRI) and Kamehameha Schools (KS) launched a collaborative partnership to support the capacity building and continuous improvement of local youth-serving organizations in Hawaii. Through strategic coaching, SCRI has supported four overlapping cohorts of programs (17 total) to set and achieve goals for their organization and strengthen the connection between KS community partners/intermediaries and the education and workforce systems they aspire to influence. After years of coaching, participating organizations report being more focused, sustainable, and effective.

### THE BACKSTORY

Kamehameha Schools creates educational opportunities to improve the capability and well-being of people of Hawaiian ancestry. Ke Ali'i Bernice Pauahi Pākī Bishop, the last descendant of the Kamehameha royal family, witnessed the rapid decline of the Hawaiian population along with the loss of Hawaiian language, culture, and traditions. To maintain and renew those cultural touchstones, she willed her estate to establish and endow the Kamehameha Schools upon her death in 1884.

According to its mission statement, "By operating world-class Hawaiian schools and engaging with communities to transform educational systems, KS will raise 'ōiwi leaders who are empowered and unified, and who will solve the issues of our people and communities."

One of KS's goals in its 2025 strategic plan is to enable resilient communities where Hawaiian students succeed in education and careers in "fields of impact" such as education, business, civics, health, and agriculture. To that end, KS engages in strategic partnerships with youth-serving organizations and schools that educate and support 'ōiwi leaders.

In the fall of 2018, SCRI and KS launched a collaborative partnership to support the capacity building and continuous improvement of a subset of those youth-serving organizations and schools in Hawaii. Goals of the partnership included:

- **Strengthen the connections** between KS and their community organizations
- **Help support native Hawaiian culture and tradition**
- **Identify/build influential systems** that create effective workforce pathways and opportunities for 'aina, 'ōiwi, and 'ōiwi leadership
- **Create sustainable programs** that encourage natives to contribute to the growth of their communities

## CASE STUDY APPROACH

SCRI established strategic coaching relationships with leaders from each participating organization. Coaching included:

- **Development of goals** and individual coaching/learning plans
- **Monthly, 60-minute coaching sessions** with program leaders
- **Creation of tools/processes** related to goal setting, outcomes measurement, and organizational/programmatic efficiencies and sustainability. Examples include:
  - Logic models and goal setting
  - Quality standards/rubrics and tools
  - Defining and measuring outcomes
  - Internal and external reports
  - Developing staff climate and culture
  - Telling the story of program impact
  - Funding sustainability
  - System influence
  - Staffing and internship models
- **Regular touch-points** with the KS regional team to ensure SCRI's work was aligning to KS strategic goals

Since 2018, 17 organizations have participated in coaching with SCRI, with their engagement ranging from 1-4 years, depending on on-going needs and alignment to KS goals and strategy. This case study spotlights the coaching journey of leaders from three KS partner organizations:

- Kaleo Wong and Maya Saffery from Kauluakalana (cohort I, II, III, IV)
- Mailelailii "Maile" Vickery from Hui Malama o Ke Kai (cohort II, III, IV)
- Melissa Mano, Trisha Kim, and Rachael Aquino from Windward Academy for Career and Technical Education (CTE) (cohort III, IV)



**Kauluakalana's** mission is to restore and grow healthy relationships between people and place through aloha 'āina practices of retelling our Kailua- specific stories, replanting and eating our ancestral foods, and caring for sacred sites, lands, and waters of our beloved ahupua'a of Kailua.

<https://www.kauluakalana.org>.

---



**The Hui Mālama o ke Kai Foundation** was created as a grass-roots effort in 1998 by volunteer community members of Waimānalo and now offers culture-based youth, family, and community development programs. The organization started with an afterschool program and has expanded to offer a summer program and a dual enrollment pathways program with the local community college and high school.

<https://www.huimalamaokekai.org>.

---



**Windward Academy for CTE** formed a partnership between Hawaii Workforce Pipeline and the Windward School District on Oahu to develop work-based learning experiences for K-12 students across 30 schools. Representatives from the district provide professional development to teachers and assist them with hands-on learning, while HWP serves as a bridge between schools and employers to support high school students with internships and job shadowing.

[www.windwardcte.org](http://www.windwardcte.org)

<https://www.hawaiiworkforcepipeline.com>

## THE EXPERIENCE

### 1. Setting Goals

Each organization's strategic goals are the north star of the coaching experience. Coaching begins by solidifying and prioritizing those goals.

---

“We start the school year with goals. Our coach helps by incorporating those goals into our individual meetings. She helps facilitate our conversations, provides advice based on her experience, and helps us develop next steps in between our coaching sessions.” - Trisha, Windward Academy for CTE

---

Across the cohorts, goals for coaching included **growing and strengthening partnerships** with community colleges, employers, intermediaries, and internship programs as well as **defining impact and planning for sustainability.**

“Our top goal was to help us build our work-based learning system,” said Windward Academy for CTE's Trisha Kim. “We set out to sustain and strengthen our relationship with Hawaii Workforce Pipeline (HWP), and that's still the goal. We have smaller goals that SCRI is helping us with, too, like how to collect data in a way that tells the story of our program.”

Windward Academy for CTE's coach facilitated meetings between the district and HWP and introduced new tools and strategies for making decisions.

“The tools our coach brought to us opened our eyes to different ways to map out ideas and connect our goals, objectives, and success metrics,” said Windward Academy for CTE intermediary Rachael Aquino. “It was a new way to lay out organizational strategy that we can use for any program or partnership.”

While Windward Academy for CTE was in a position to sustain and strengthen its program, both Kauluakalana and Hui Malama o Ke Kai were in need of support to build from the ground up.

“I was a new ED and it was an abrupt transition,” said Hui Malama o Ke Kai's Maile Vickery. “With that transition, 90% of the staff left within six months.”

Maile began her coaching relationship with SCRI after her first year on the job.

“It seemed like there were fires everywhere at the time. There wasn't a focus,” she said. “My coach was a sounding board to help me prioritize.”

## 2. Taking a Leadership Journey

For Maile, the coaching from SCRI began with a focus on organizational structure. The first priority was a hiring campaign to re-staff the organization. Once they met that goal, they quickly needed to shift to staff training and onboarding.

“Maile had a vision for the direction she wanted to take the organization, and we brought it to life by establishing clear goals and values grounded in the organization’s rich cultural history,” said Jess Banks, SCRI Partner of Consulting Services.

Unsurprisingly, COVID-19 presented challenges for the organization and its new leader.

“I really leaned on my coaching support to get our pilot summer program in collaboration with Kailua High School and Windward Community College off the ground in 2020. My coach was a great sounding-board through all of the changing mandates. She’d listen to me share everything that needed to happen, and then she’d reel me back in and help me back-map from our program start date to plan all of our benchmarks.”

Together, they persevered to offer a new service to the community.

By defining goals, desired outcomes, and quality in the summer programming, guide rails were created to ensure they could navigate the ever-changing landscape without sacrificing their vision for the youth they were serving.

As a new ED, coaching gave Maile clarity and confidence that extended to her staff.

“It’s allowed me to grow personally as a leader as well as help the organization grow,” she said. “We’re all in the same canoe. If I’m better able to do my job, then I can better support my team, which helps them better execute their tasks and responsibilities. It trickles down.”

## 3. Building a Strong Foundation

Kaleo Wong from Kauluakalana had a similar experience while establishing a brand new organization. After supporting a local elder with a restoration project and experiencing rapid growth and interest, Kaleo needed to start his own nonprofit with scale in mind from the beginning. He started working with SCRI in fall 2018.

“We were just about to develop our first fall and spring intersession program for middle school students, and that was the focus of coaching,” he said. “SCRI helped us develop a rubric and indicators to answer the question, what does quality programming look like to us?”

Guiding Kaleo and Maya to translate their vision for quality into program design and staff training rooted in the organization’s values, SCRI’s goal was to ensure that their voice - and their focus on reciprocal kanaka-aina relationships - was at the heart of every tool and document they developed.

After using the rubric for the middle school program, Kaleo’s team quickly realized they could benefit from creating a framework that would guide any current or future program.

SCRI supported Kauluakalana to develop a logic model as a living tool they could draw on for a variety of purposes. The new tool (and skill) fit the bill.

"I had never even heard of the term 'logic model' before," he said. "But that's what we needed. We worked for a year to develop a logic model, social change goal, and short- and long-term outcomes and measures."

Kauluakalana's Board Chair Maya Saffery benefited from the coaching as well.

"Watching SCRI facilitate meetings over and over helped us learn by example," she said. "We learned how to prepare and organize information, how to listen, and how to ask ourselves the right questions. Now we apply those techniques when we run our own board and staff meetings."

## **THE RESULT: MORE SUSTAINABLE PROGRAMS**

Through regular coaching sessions and interim follow-up, organizations made real progress to strengthen their programs, partnerships, and overall organizational health.

Coaching helped Windward Academy for CTE both broaden its work-based learning offerings to meet the needs of all students and collect the right data (career awareness, readiness, school performance, alumni tracking) to tell its story.

Rachael put together the program surveys, and SCRI reviewed them and offered suggestions. With the data they collected, Rachael created an infographic of the program's results and drafted short vignettes of students' experiences. Surveys showed that more than 75% of students felt they had benefited from the program. She then shared the results with school and district leaders whose buy-in is essential to the program's success.

"Coaching helped us to demonstrate that what we're doing is working," Trisha said. "It helps to sustain the program."

Throughout three years of coaching, Hui Malama o Ke Kai has rebounded from a leadership transition and rebuilt the organization on stronger ground.

"We went from surviving to thriving with a lot of executive coaching and direct support on our organizational structure," Maile said. "Now we are fully staffed, and we can focus on professional development. We're clear on our goals, so we can deepen our focus on fundraising and signature events."

For Kauluakalana, the logic model they developed through coaching has become a foundational document for everything they do.

"The SCRI team was able to refer to it when they helped us draft a position description," said Kaleo. "We gave our strategic planning consultant the logic model, and she turned it into the start of that plan. It's helped us in grant writing and anytime we introduce ourselves to a new consultant or partner. It helps our staff set goals for the year. It gives us a way to filter through requests and assess fit and alignment. We don't say yes to everything anymore, so our work is more sustainable. That benefits the young people in our programs."

## **EXTENDING THE WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE TO TEACHERS**

"Wendy is a veteran fashion design teacher, and Rachael connected her with two externships with fashion design companies. As a result, her excitement for teaching has grown. She's able to make connections to what she's teaching that strengthen her lessons. Her relationship with the industry mentor can in turn help her students build their own relationships. It was a bright spot in a time of burnout due to the pandemic." - Trisha, Windward Academy for CTE

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Several themes emerged across interviews with coaching participants.

### 1. Smaller and mid-sized nonprofits can especially benefit from coaching support.

“What SCRI has provided are the extra hands that a lot of smaller and mid-sized nonprofits don’t have the luxury of having on staff. We don’t have it written into a grant. You don’t realize you’ll need a consultant until something pops up midstream.” - Maile

### 2. Coaching can help partners find strategic alignment.

“Our coach asked Melissa and Trisha questions that I wouldn’t have asked on my own, getting into the district’s overall goals. It was good to see how my role as intermediary fits into their larger plan.” - Rachael

### 3. Organizations should be able to decide what they use coaching for, and change direction as needed.

“We were fortunate with the way Kamehameha Schools set this up. We’ve never felt like it was prescribed, like we had to use the coaching for a specific thing. It was more like, where do you guys need support right now? We could go in whatever direction we needed, and that made it more valuable.” - Maya

### 4. New skills on foundational topics like organizational structure and outcomes evaluation can be transferable to multiple programs and contexts.

“What I appreciate is that it’s proactive. The coaching isn’t just focused on your current systems and practices. We’re making sure this is built for the future. Trying to predict our needs makes the effort pay off in the long-term.” - Melissa

### 5. Third-party coaching and facilitation can build stronger leaders and stronger organizations.

“That slightly removed perspective can help us rise above. We wouldn’t have done half of the things we’ve done without having regular meetings with time carved out to focus on those things.” - Kaleo

## UP NEXT FOR SCRI

We have learned so much from our work with the talented grantees of Kamehameha Schools. Our priorities for continuously improving our coaching practice include:

- Identify opportunities and work products that position partners for long-term growth, scalability, and sustainability—creating tools, systems, and processes that can evolve with them on their journey and be responsive to changing conditions and opportunities.
- Find more opportunities to develop cohorts/coalitions of smaller and mid-size nonprofits to reach organizations, like those in Hawaii, who are doing phenomenal work and may not always have access to capacity-building opportunities on their own.
- Continue to complement our services with customized, just-in-time coaching to meet and support our partners where they are in meeting their goals.
- Continue to lead projects with a focus on empathy, equity and inclusivity, understanding that trust and cultural awareness are essential to a successful coaching relationship.

©2022. All Rights Reserved.