

Produce & Protein (PRx) Prescriptions

Hawai'i's Landscape, Opportunities, and Needs

This session will explore current efforts to expand and sustain produce & protein prescription (PRx) programs across the state. Partners will highlight strengths, challenges, and opportunities for Federally Qualified Health Centers, food aggregators, and farmers to work together to center community voice and prioritize culturally relevant foods.



HPCA

HAWAI'I PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION



WAIMĀNALO
HEALTH CENTER



**HAWAI'I
GOOD
FOOD
ALLIANCE**

COMMUNITIES UNITED TO GROW, EAT, AND SHARE



**Friday
December 5th**



1:15 - 2:15 PM



RM 301AB



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Today's Discussion

- **Hawai'i Primary Care Association & Hana Kihāpai:**
 - Produce Prescriptions Landscape: Needs, Opportunities, and Challenges
- **Waimānalo Health Center:**
 - 'Ai Pono: Locally Sourced PRx Pilot
- **Hawai'i Good Food Alliance:**
 - Opportunities to Expand and Sustain Locally Sourced Food is Medicine Programs
- **Q/A**

PRODUCE PRESCRIPTIONS LANDSCAPE: NEEDS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES



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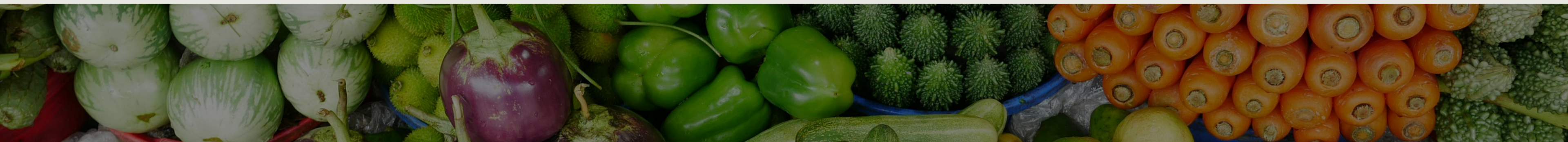
**HANA
KIHA PAI**

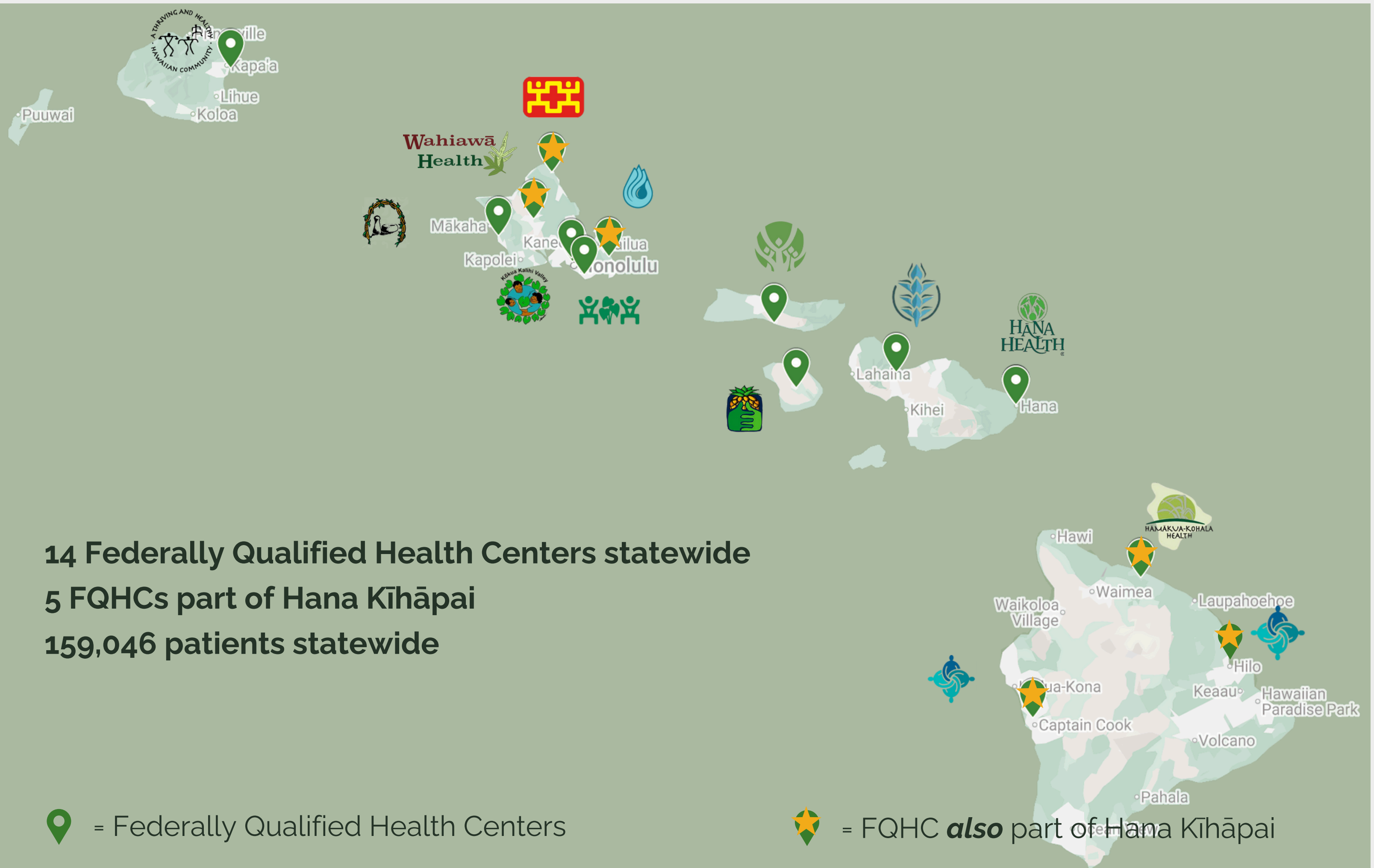


The Hawai'i Primary Care Association improves the health of communities in need by advocating for, expanding access to, and sustaining high quality healthcare through our statewide network of Community Health Centers.



Community-rooted initiative building the systems Hawai'i needs to reduce inequities, strengthen care, and improve health outcomes.





PRODUCE PRESCRIPTIONS (PRX)

Health care providers “prescribe” fruits and vegetables to patients facing food insecurity or diet-related conditions.

Patients receive vouchers or benefits to redeem fresh produce at grocery stores, farmers markets, or food hubs.



Flow of a Produce Prescription Program



* Not all produce prescription programs require an education component

** Some programs use third party evaluation

Who PRx Is Intended For

Health centers consistently identify PRx as most valuable for:

- People managing or at risk for diabetes and hypertension
- Households screening positive for food insecurity
- Families with young children
- Pregnant and postpartum individuals
- Kūpuna

What PRx Looks Like in Hawai'i

Programs take shape based on community context, including:



Credits redeemable at local stores or farmers' markets



Clinic-based produce distribution



Voucher or coupon-based models



Home-delivered produce



Partnerships with food hubs and community pantries

There is no single model — flexibility is a strength.

A photograph of a healthcare worker in green scrubs and a lanyard with a badge, smiling and talking to an elderly patient with grey hair. The patient is wearing a grey shirt and has their hands clasped. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery.

WHAT'S WORKING WELL

FQHCs report positive results where PRx is implemented:

- Increased fruit/vegetable intake
- Improved engagement in chronic disease management
- Reduced food insecurity
- Better alignment with SNAP/WIC resources
- Strong patient satisfaction
- Reinforces local agriculture and cultural food practices

WHY PRX IS HARD TO SCALE

Health centers highlight consistent structural challenges:

- Funding uncertainty and short-term grants
- Limited staff capacity to manage referrals + distribution
- Storage, refrigeration, and space constraints
- Transportation + timing barriers for patients
- Workflows that are manual or inconsistent
- Variability in documentation practices
- Limited ability to track participation and outcomes
- Lack of standardized evaluation tools

WHAT HEALTH CENTERS NEED TO SCALE PRX

Health centers consistently name these priorities for growth:

Standardized workflows across
screening, referral, benefit
delivery, and documentation

Clear, predictable reimbursement
structures to replace grant
dependence

Integrated EHR tools (templates,
referral orders, decision supports)

Reliable procurement pathways
that prioritize locally grown
produce

Strong partnerships with
community food hubs and CBOs

Transportation solutions or more
flexible distribution options

Workforce support (CHWs, care
coordinators, nutrition educators)

Shared evaluation frameworks to
demonstrate clinical value

These elements form the foundation of a scalable statewide model.

WHAT HEALTH CENTERS NEED TO SCALE PRX

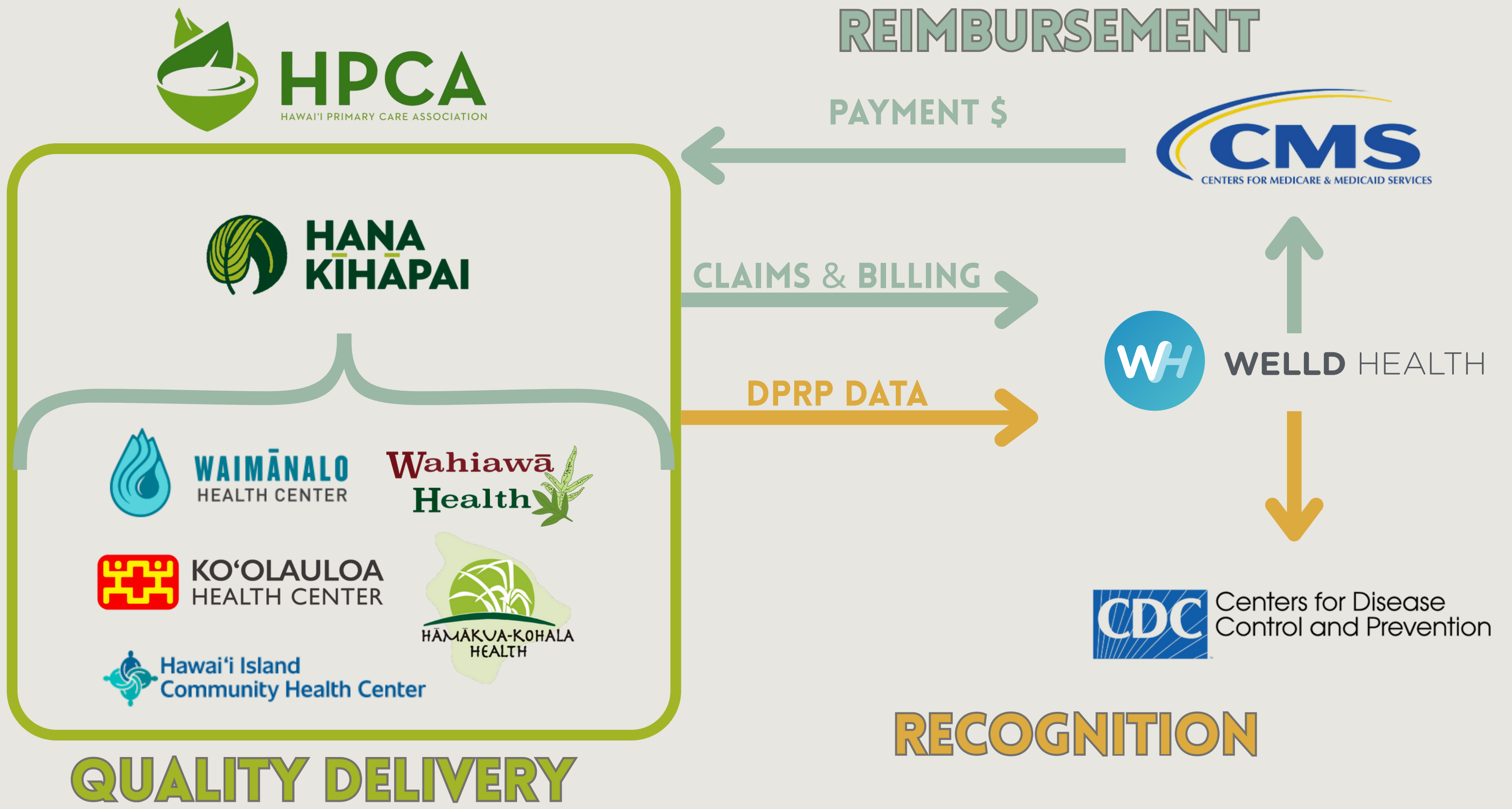
Strengths

- Clear alignment with chronic disease care
- Culturally grounded models
- Emerging evidence of impact
- Strong food system partners
- High interest across clinics

Needs

- Consistent workflows
- Sustainable funding
- EHR + data infrastructure
- Workforce capacity
- Clear operational guidance
- Accessible distribution options

Building on What Already Works: A Model That Could Support PRx and Food Is Medicine (DPP Context)



THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

If we build the right infrastructure, Hawai'i can:

- Move PRx from pilots to a durable statewide model
- Reduce administrative burden on clinics
- Strengthen local agriculture
- Improve chronic disease outcomes
- Advance equity for communities most impacted by food insecurity





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Jennifer Conway

MPH, RD, LDN

Director of Health Promotion
and Disease Prevention

*Aloha, Mālama I Ka Pono, Mālama I Ka 'Ohana, and
Mālama I Ka 'Āina*



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HARRY & JEANETTE WEINBERG BUILDING



‘Ai Pono Program

Advancing Health Equity Through Culturally Relevant Food
is Medicine Programs in Hawai‘i

24 Week 100% Locally Sourced Produce and Protein Prescription Pilot

- **Goals:**
 - **Expand WHC Produce Prescription Pilot Program**
 - Double the # of Medicaid/Medicare patients served
 - **Strengthen Local Food Systems**
 - Provide stable market opportunities for NHPI farmers and food hubs
 - **Inform Braided Funding Mechanisms**
 - **Foster Holistic Health Outcomes**
 - Address food security, chronic disease prevention, and overall well-being



Photos courtesy of Farm Link Hawai‘i

Local Farmers



MA'O Organic Farms

Weekly 8lb boxes of 100% locally sourced produce and protein

Local Food Hubs & Aggregators



Community Care Hub



40 → 80+ Patients
Increased Capacity
Improved tech piloting
Greater patient customizability

Pilot
Expansion

- Nutrition and Health Indicators
- Food Security Metrics
- Program Satisfaction
- Farm-Level Impacts

Admin
Duties

Closed Loop Referral
Invoicing/Billing
HIPAA Compliance
Monitoring and Evaluation
Braided Funding

FQHC



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Pilot

Improved Health
Outcomes, Empowered
Farmers & Stronger
Local Economies



‘AI PONO

Patient Outreach

- Onboarding eligibility
- Referrals
- Reports

Challenges/Considerations

- SDOH factors
- FQHC workflow

Activation Plan Timeline

Sep - Feb 2026

Pilot runs; collect testimonials and feedback
Program promotion thru SM, Video, & Earned Media

March - May 2026

Pilot review and learnings

Sep 2026 - TBD

Full integration with
Medicaid 1115 waiver

September 2025

Pilot launch;
Patient Survey 1

February 2026

Patient Survey 2

March - Sep 2026

Pilot expansion, Cohort 2
Pilot runs; collect testimonials and feedback
Program promotion thru SM, Video, & Earned Media

Measures of Success

Outputs

and

Outcomes



OUTPUTS

- Patients served
- Produce prescription boxes distributed
- Number of participating healthcare providers
- Number of participating food distributors
- Media mentions
- Social media metrics

OUTCOMES

- Change in patient physical and mental health measures
- Increased local food production and distribution
- Increased awareness and consumption of local and culturally relevant foods
- Increased dialogue amongst stakeholders about food, culture, and community impacts on health
- **Widespread adoption of food as medicine services, reimbursed by Medicaid starting in 2026**



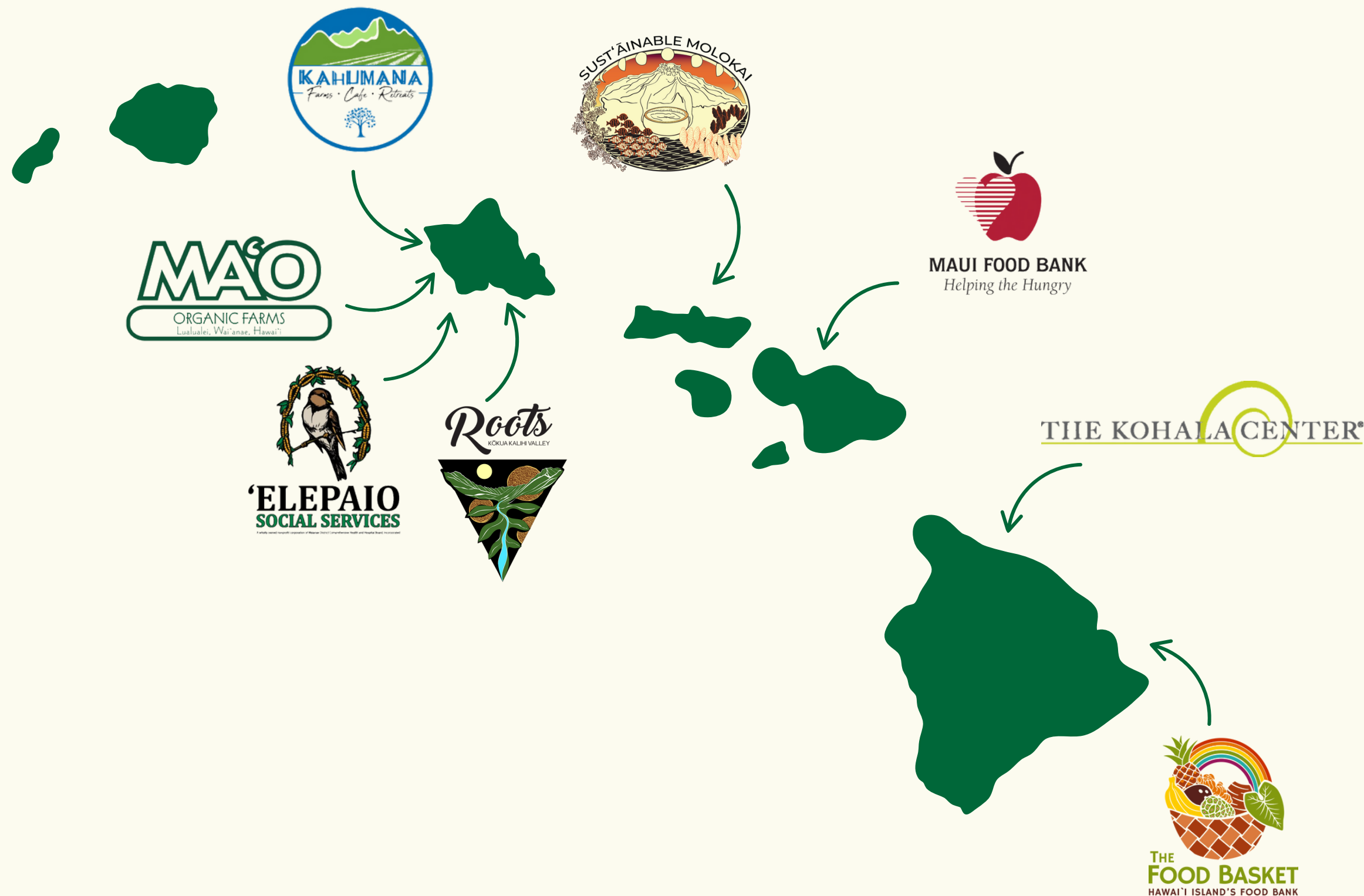
Jordan Smith
'Aiaola Food is Medicine
Program Manager

Opportunities to Expand and Sustain Locally Sourced Food is Medicine



The Hawai'i Good Food Alliance (HGFA) is a diverse hui of individuals and organizations that engage in the **production, aggregation, and distribution** of food, and the **practice of mālama 'āina to rebuild thriving community food systems.**

We join together—**with a sense of urgency**—to raise community voice and support one another in the belief that each and every person in Hawai'i can share in healthy, locally produced food.



Good Food Pillars



CULTURAL GROUNDING

Food is a direct connection to our spirituality, culture, community, heritage and to each other.



FOOD IS MEDICINE

Good food provides a strong foundation for the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.



EQUITY

Everyone deserves easy and reliable access to nutritious food as a matter of fairness, equity, and social justice.



COMMUNITY-BASED

Sharing aloha and knowledge, along with building capacity, supports community abundance.



MĀLAMA 'ĀINA

Our relationship with land is one of reciprocity, not ownership - we care for 'āina and so it provides.

"Food is Medicine" reflects the deep connection between food, 'āina, and health, emphasizing that food is both nourishment and a vital link to cultural wellness, rooted in centuries of indigenous practices.

Historically, for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, food has always played a central role in healing and community, and today it continues to inspire collaboration between health care and communities to promote healing and prevent disease through nutritious food, education, and supportive policies.



Food is Medicine/Nutrition Supports Pyramid



Bridging healthcare with:

- Local food systems
- Traditional knowledge
- Cultural relevance



He aha ka wai wai?

Who will this benefit?

**Health
Workers**

**Populations
with diet-
related
disease**

**Food
Insecure
Households
&
Individuals**

**Farmers &
Food Hubs**

**Local
Economy**

**'Āina &
Ecosystem
Health**



'Aiaola Food is Medicine Center

Our Vision for the Food System



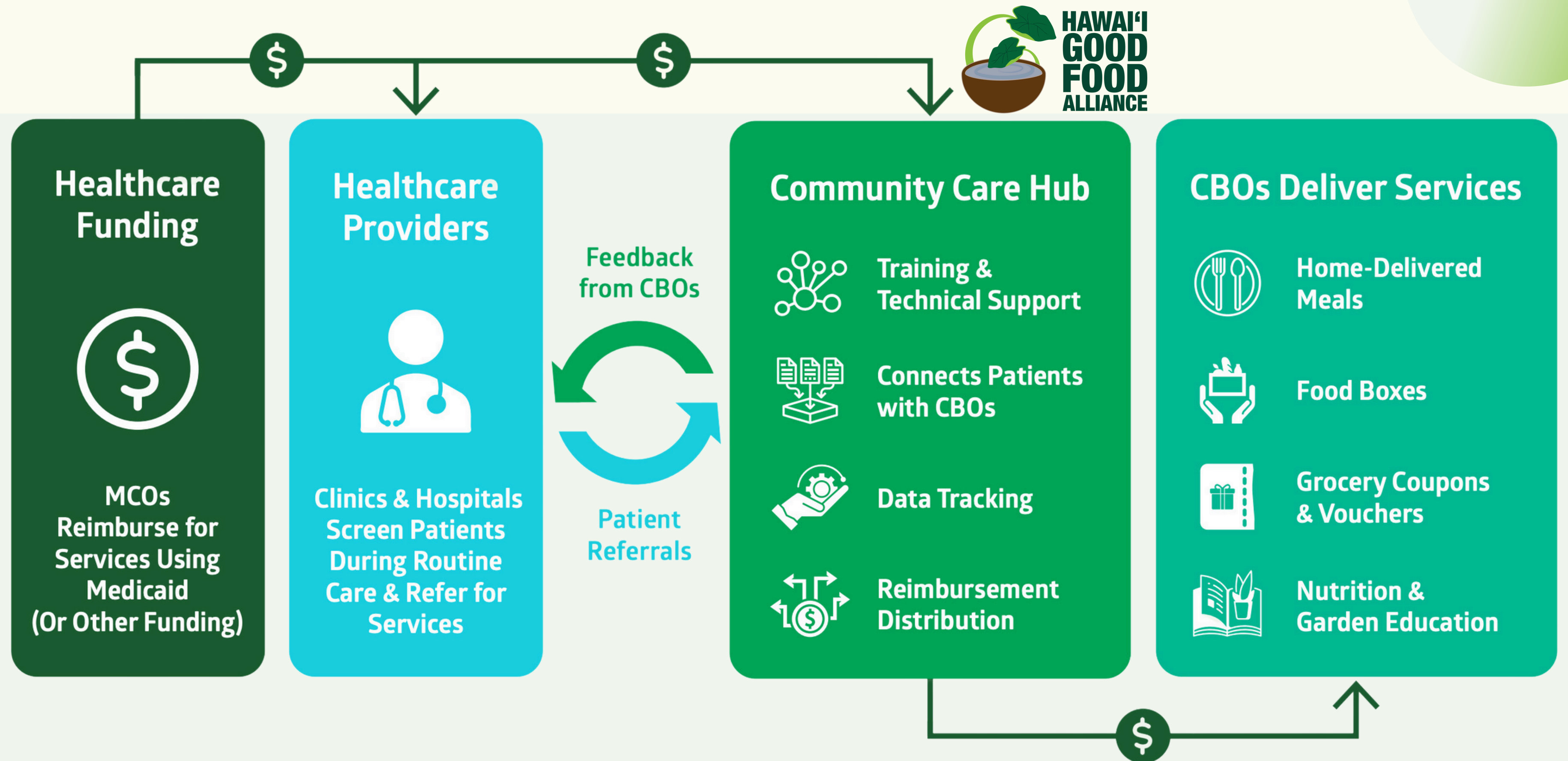
**Sustained Funding for
Nutrition Support Services**



**Training & Continuing
Medical Education**



**Place-Based Evaluation &
Community of Practice**



Sustained Funding for Nutrition Support Services

What is the 'Aiaola Growing Justice Community of Practice?



The **'Aiaola Growing Justice Community Practice (CoP)** is a year-long statewide learning and action network that brings together local producers, food aggregators, and health centers across the state that are committed to their community and working to advance justice across food systems and public health.

Participants will engage in peer learning, shared leadership, and collaborative action to build collective capacity and community-rooted solutions to support a **locally sourced Food is Medicine (FIM) expansion in Hawai'i.**

'Aiaola Growing Justice Community of Practice

We bring together community-based organizations from each county via a hybrid cohort to:



Build relationships across sectors that provide a foundation for farmers and food hubs to participate in good food institutional procurement

Host community conversations and co-learning to increase capacity and identify system changes needed for locally sourced FIM in healthcare

Increase capacity among NHPI and BIPOC producers, food aggregators, and local CBOs to engage in institutional food procurement with healthcare partners

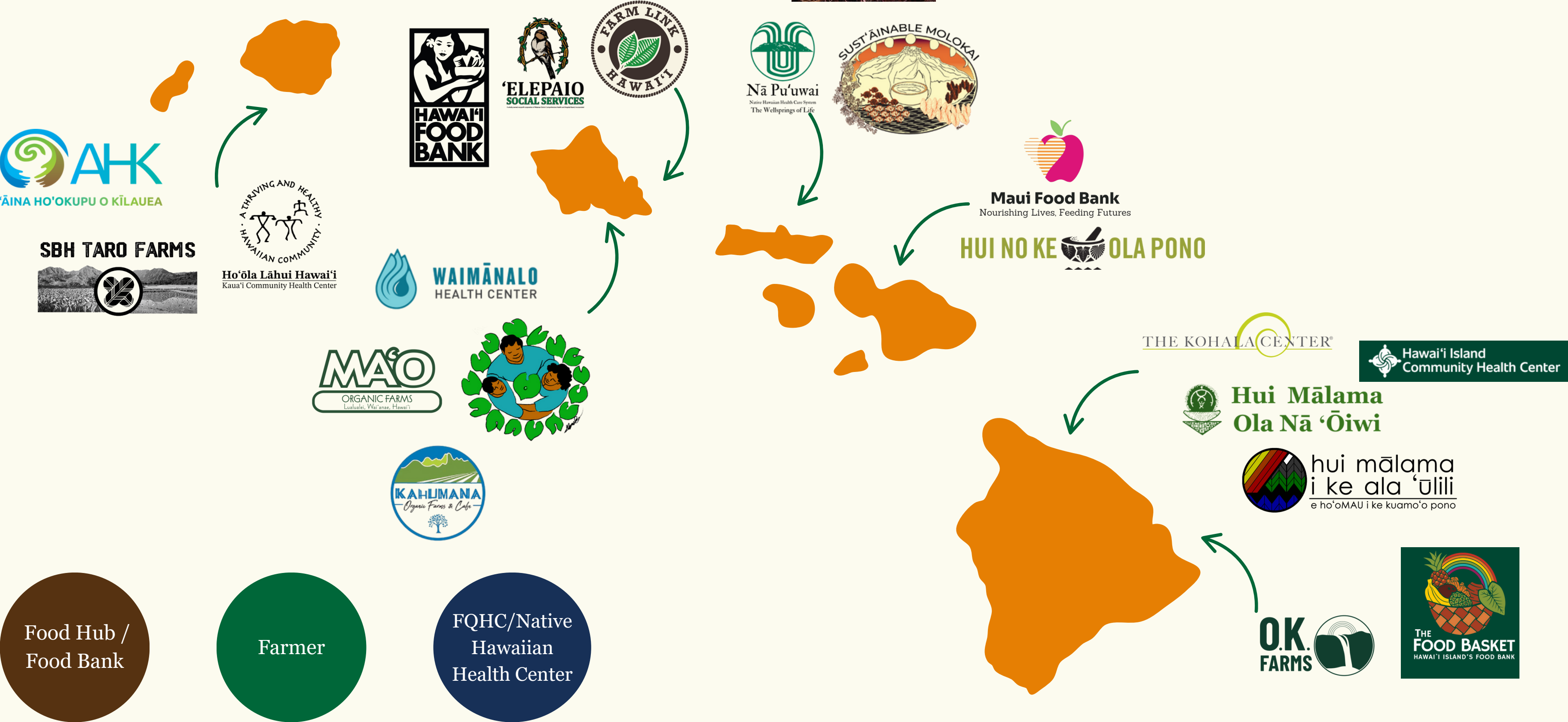
Cohort Makeup



A total of 5 island level cohorts are invited to participate (21 organizations) statewide. Cohort members represent one or more of the following organizations (Farm, Food Hub, Food Bank, and/or Federally Qualified Health Centers/Native Hawaiian Healthcare System) and islands (Hawai'i, Maui, Molokai, Oahu, Kauai).

Islands with larger populations may have more than one of each organization in their island cohort. Participating Federally Qualified Health Centers must reside in or service Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) communities.

Cohort Makeup



What to Expect

- In-person convening to build island and statewide FIM relationships
- Regular virtual learning circles for FIM community conversation and co-learning
- Cross-sector connections with healthcare, agriculture, and public health partners
- Support understanding and implementing Good Food procurement principles
- A \$4,000 stipend to honor participation



Learning Circle

Key Topics

SEPTEMBER 2025

Screening and Referral

Connecting patients to care through community-rooted supports



NOVEMBER 2025

Collaborative Relationships & Partnerships for Nutrition Supports

Building fair, lasting partnerships across health and food systems.



DECEMBER 2025

Food is Medicine in Hawai'i: Priorities & Opportunities in 2026

Aligning health and food efforts to guide Hawai'i's 2026 priorities.



JANUARY 2026

Scaling Up for Institutional Demand

Growing capacity to meet local and institutional demand.



MARCH 2026

Food is Medicine: The Financial Picture

Exploring funding models to sustain Food is Medicine work.



MAY 2026

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Data Sharing

Tracking outcomes, storytelling, and sharing data to drive change.



Measures of Success

Outputs

and

Outcomes



Strengthened Cross-Sector Relationships

1. Increased trust and collaboration between healthcare, agriculture, and community-based sectors
2. New or deepened partnerships formed at the island and/or state level

Increased Organizational Capacity for FIM Implementation

1. Participants report increased knowledge, confidence, or readiness to engage in FIM efforts
2. New or improved organizational practices related to procurement, data collection, evaluation, or advocacy

Shared Learning and Peer Support

1. Participation in monthly learning circles and in-person convenings
2. Number of organizations contributing to peer learning (e.g. sharing tools, leading sessions)

Participant Satisfaction and Continued Engagement

1. 85%+ of participants report positive experience and value in participating
2. Cohort members remain engaged in related statewide initiatives beyond the formal cohort year
3. Feedback mechanisms (e.g., surveys, exit interviews) show perceived impact on their work

Medicaid coverage for

**Emerging
Opportunity
for Hawai'i**

Nutrition Supports

**Leveraging Healthcare to Address Health-Related Social Needs and
Support Whole-Person Care**

What is Medicaid?

A federal and state partnership that provides health coverage to eligible low-income children, adults, and other vulnerable populations

Federal Agency

CMS:
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
(CMS)

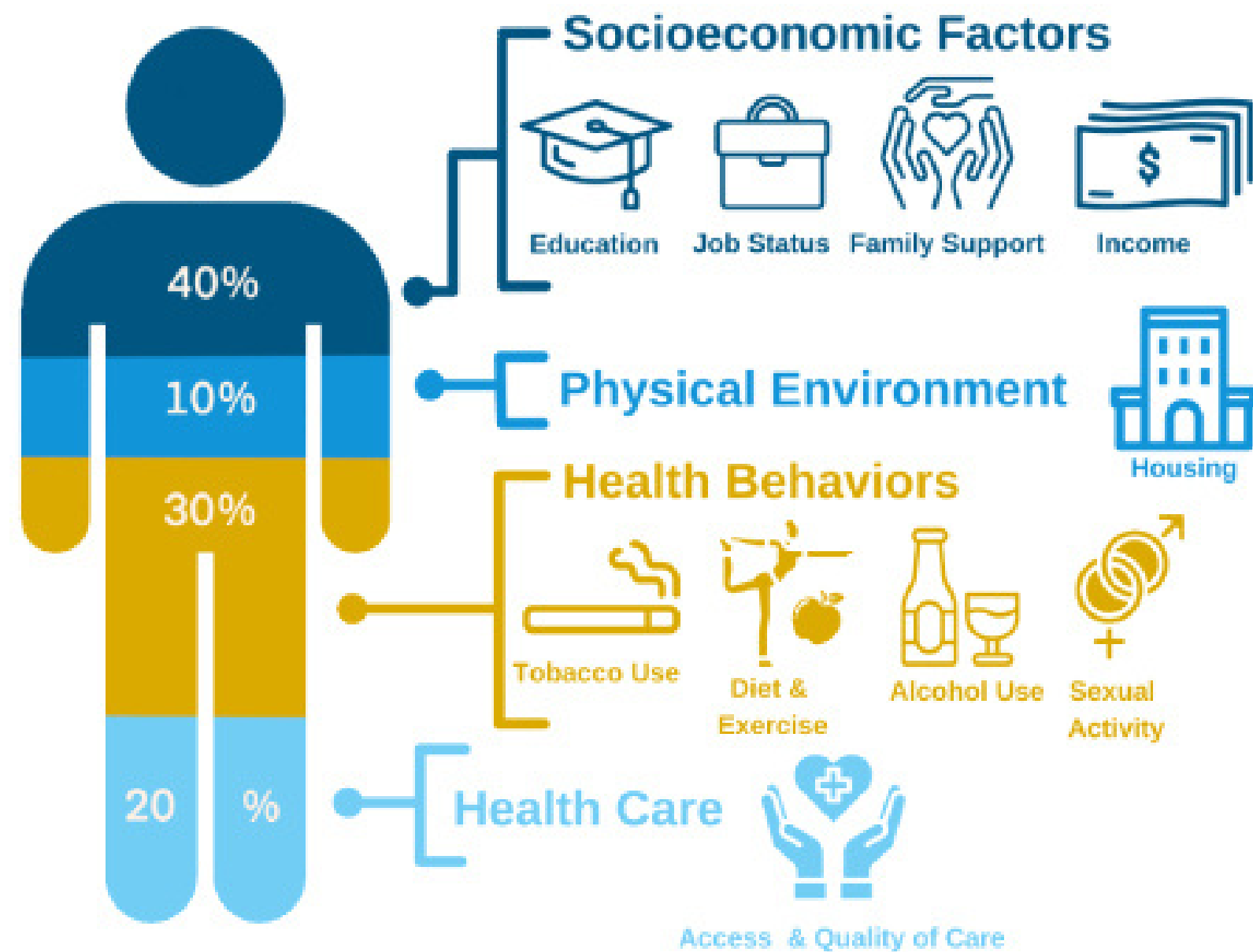


State Agency

DHS/MQD:
Department of Human Services' (DHS)
Med-QUEST Division (MQD)



Med-QUEST Division



Western Medicine Movement to Address Health-Related Social Needs

- Improve health outcomes and maintain a managed care delivery system that leads to **more appropriate utilization of health care while addressing health related social needs** in ways that are culturally appropriate and nurture well-being
- Health-related social needs (HRSN) refer to social and economic factors that influence an individual's health and well-being. These needs can include:
 - Housing
 - Food
 - Transportation
 - Utilities
 - Personal Safety

Need for Nutrition Support Services



Food Insecurity Needs Exist
Across Diverse Populations



Nutrition Supports Improve
Health Outcomes and Wellbeing



CMS Has Approved Nutrition
Supports in 15+ State
Demonstrations

Hawai'i's 2025-2029 Medicaid 1115 Demonstration

Cooking supplies and non-medical transport also covered (subject to budget neutrality regulations)

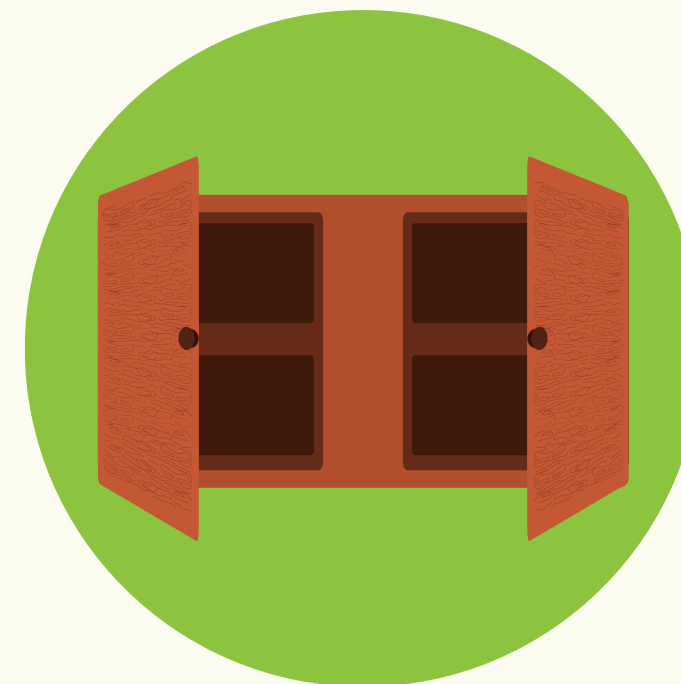
Approved Nutrition Supports Services



**Nutrition
Education**



Nutrition Prescriptions
(Fruit & vegetable & protein boxes)



**Home-delivered
meals or pantry
restocking**



**Medically tailored
meals**

“Hawaii will encourage the inclusion of local growers, community gardens, and other community-based organizations to support the purchase of locally grown food and strengthen Hawaii’s intrinsic

Projected Impacts

Locally Sourced Food is Medicine Expansion

“Hawai‘i will encourage the inclusion of local growers, community gardens, and other community-based organizations to support the purchase of locally grown food and strengthen Hawaii’s intrinsic food system.”

*Estimates based on assumed take up rates and cost of services listed in [the Hawai‘i 1115 demonstration waiver renewal submitted February 2024](#)

Public Health

1 in 3 households are food insecure. SNAP and other nutrition assistance programs are insufficient to meet community need.

Agriculture

\$100M+ available for reimbursable nutrition support services*

Economy

Locally-produced food purchases have a multiplier effect of between **\$1.32 and \$1.90**, meaning that there is an additional **\$.32 to \$.90** worth of local economic activity for each dollar spent on local food.

Healthcare

50,000+ Medicaid beneficiaries with increased nutrition security and positive health outcomes*



Values Based Institutional Procurement

Aligning with Hawai'i's Values



Nā Mana'o Nui:

A Indigenous Framework for Values Based Food Procurement in Hawai'i

Justice,
Fairness &
Thriving Local
Economies

Strong
Communities
& Healthy
People

Vibrant
Farms &
Sustainable
Ecosystems

Pilinahā,
Cultural
Connections

- Purchase locally produced food
- Support food producers and procurement that are ecologically sound, humane, ethical, and socially just
- Source food with Indigenous, diversity and cultural mindfulness goals at the center

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a forest. The path is covered in fallen leaves and leads into a dense stand of trees with green foliage. A semi-transparent white banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text 'WHERE CAN HAWAI'I GO FROM HERE?' in a green, italicized, sans-serif font.

WHERE CAN HAWAI'I GO FROM HERE?

WHERE HAWAI'I CAN GO FROM HERE

A Food Is Medicine system that strengthens health AND Hawai'i's food future.

- Health Centers, Community-Based Organizations, food aggregators, and farms working together for a healthier community
- Benefits designed with local culture and local foods at the center
- Workflows that make healthy food as routine as a prescription
- Partnerships that lift up community growers, producers, and land stewards
- Models that honor trust, relationships, and place

When we align care delivery with Hawai'i's food systems, everyone benefits.

THE OPPORTUNITY AHEAD

Hawai'i can build a Food Is Medicine approach that's grounded in community, and sourced from the community.

- Steady demand for foods grown by local farmers and food hubs
- Culturally meaningful foods reaching families who need them most
- Care teams supported with clear, practical workflows
- Community-led partnerships that reduce barriers for patients
- An 1115 Medicaid Demonstration Waiver moment that allows us to create something lasting and community led
- Stronger, more resilient community food systems in the face of shock and disaster

By centering community-driven, community-sourced foods, we support both health and the well-being of the places we call home.



MAHALO FOR YOUR TIME

Mahalo to the FQHCs that participated in the survey and all the community-based organizations participating in the 'Aiaola Growing Justice Community of Practice.

A person wearing a dark cap and a light-colored shirt is working with large bunches of green vegetables, likely bok choy, on a wooden pallet. The vegetables are arranged in neat rows. In the background, there are more green vegetables and some equipment. A green semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image.

Q&A