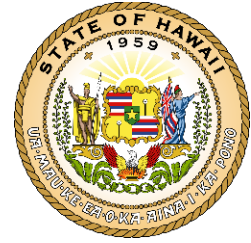




HOUSING
INNOVATIONS



Housing First and Ohana Zones Implementation Key Recommendations

YEAR 4: DECEMBER 2022

Acknowledgments

How many hours, weeks, or even years, did it take to get to this appointment at the Honolulu DMV? That is what I wondered when these two sat down. It might have been an inconspicuous scene to most, but when I saw that Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction lanyard, I knew I saw magic happening. Homelessness was getting solved right in front of me.

Vital documents, such as identification cards, are essential for accessing supportive housing and benefits that keep vulnerable people housed. That is why ensuring that members of this population get to appointments and collect official records is key to the Housing First approach. Federal entitlements, like Social Security Insurance and Social Security Disability Insurance, provide fragile residents with access to consistent ongoing federal support and save the state millions in emergency costs at the same time. How is that for magic?

Sitting behind them, I was struck by the power of the moment and the skill of the social worker who made it happen—one of countless episodes of superior practice I have observed over the last four years. Thank you for allowing me to share part of your path to ending homelessness. I am honored to serve as your evaluator and share the groundbreaking resource you’ve achieved together. The solution is happening because of you.

Mahalo nui loa.

Jillian Okamoto	Catholic Charities of Hawaii
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Ashton Varner	County of Kauai
Phillip Anderson	County of Maui
Lori Tsuhako	County of Maui
Phil Anderson	County of Maui
Ana Piloton	Department of Human Services, Homeless Programs Office
Lydia Pavon	Domestic Violence Action Center
Nanci Kreidman	Domestic Violence Action Center
Makana Kamibayashi	Family Life Center
Anna Ordonez	Family Life Center, Huliau
Alika Campbell	Hale Kipa
Mahealani Goo	Hale Mahaolu
Toni Symons	Hawaii Affordable Housing
David Shaku	Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center
Thomas Robin Zeller	Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center
Denise Ogumo	HOPE Services Hawaii
Trystan Lyman	HOPE Services Hawaii
Beverly	Huliau resident

Kimberly	Huliau resident
Shayla	Huliau resident
Chief Master Sergeant Alexander Wilson	Innovative Readiness Training
Connie Mitchell	Institute for Human Services
Darrell	Kealaula resident
Jason	Keolahou resident
Tamber Miller-Garcia	Kumuwai Director
Carol Napierski	New York Housing Resource Center
John Maltby	New York Housing Resource Center
Laura Thielen	Partners in Care
Wallace Engberg	Partners in Care
Dr. Anna Pruitt	Department of Psychology, University of Hawaii at Manoa
Alton Kimura	US Department of Agriculture
Cynthia Jackson	US Department of Agriculture
Denise Salmeron	US Department of Agriculture
Robert Machado II	US Department of Agriculture
Scot Kakakihara	US Department of Agriculture
Mark Chandler	US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Gregory Williams	US Vets
Kevin Cook	US Vets
Michael Rath	US Vets
Macy Sevaaetasi	US Vets, Kamaoku
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Executive Summary

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Hawaii now emerges at a critical juncture: embrace the lessons learned during these tumultuous times and plan for the future or continue with ways of the past. In the context of today's housing situation, returning to business as usual would be self-destructive. As we celebrate the housing-focused accomplishments of the Ige administration, the work continues as Josh Green's administration inherits the state's homelessness crisis. Learning from current efforts to address the issue is instrumental in guiding the next steps to solving it. This report supports that process.

The purpose of this evaluation is to understand the impact of the Housing First approach and the Ohana Zones initiative on increasing access to permanent housing, as well as what is further required to end homelessness in Hawaii. The evaluation is grounded in best-practice implementation science—Active Implementation Frameworks. This model organizes the messy business of policy implementation into five frameworks: context, stages, drivers, improvement cycles, teamwork and communications. These frameworks provide the structure for this evaluation. This report is the fourth in a series of five between 2018–23 and builds on previous research and findings. A practice assessment is included as well.

While the Ohana Zones served as a catalyst for cascading success at its initial implementation stage, those wins are deflating at the close of the demonstration period. Short-term pilots have an extensive history in social services, and they can have a helpful place in a continuum of long-term funding options. Without intersecting support, however, they undermine progress, as communities lose trust in government services. Overall, leaders made every effort to leverage the Ohana Zones funding with other sources. Ohana Zones, as a whole, is successful in increasing access to permanent housing and provides a laboratory of extraordinary innovation and valuable lessons in ending homelessness.

Analysis of the three implementation drivers reveals further lessons. Leaders demonstrate exceptional capacity for collaborative problem solving but are crippled by regulation and misaligned jurisdictions. Among this dedicated and talented workforce, professional development is prioritized, though approaches vary. While organizational systems and structures present barriers, great strides have been made in alignment and sharing the data of separate client information databases, and there are further opportunities to align these systems for improved efficiency and effectiveness.

To strengthen services using improvement cycles, Homeless Programs Office (HPO), the largest contractor for homeless services in the state, is implementing Continuous Quality Improvement practice. Teams continue to leverage digital technology for strengthened internal communication and information sharing. There is an opportunity to build a unified external communications plan to share progress and engage the public in participating in the solution.

Building on last year's recommendations for increased and sustained funding for housing initiatives, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Coordinate the implementation of the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness 10-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.
2. Promote high-fidelity Housing First practice with competency-based professional development.
3. Streamline administrative processes to improve efficiency.

The following report informs these findings. Let's take a look.

Evaluation Overview

Purpose

The purpose of this four-year evaluation (2018–23) is to understand:

- The impact of Housing First policy and the Ohana Zones initiative (Act 209) on increasing access to permanent housing
- What further is required to end homelessness in Hawaii

Methodology

Theoretical Approach: Active Implementation Frameworks (AI)

Implementation Science (IS) is the study of making change in complex systems. Even though IS has great potential in public services, it is underused due to the disconnect between academic research and real-world social services. As a result, it takes an average of 30 years to implement new systemic ideas, which explains why more than 70 percent of system change efforts fail (Gleeson, 2017).

Implementation Science helps expedite the transfer of knowledge into practice to make the improvements we want to see in the world. Active Implementation Frameworks (AI) is best practice Implementation Science and is used for this evaluation because it reflects the ongoing activities and relationships among stakeholders in the homeless service system. The Active Implementation Frameworks model continues to evolve with research. The Frameworks reflected in this report include (Metz, 2021):

1. **Context** – Relationships and regulations that impact change
2. **Stages** – Categories of development-appropriate tasks required to make change
3. **Drivers** – Core operational components: leadership, competencies, organizational infrastructure
4. **Improvement Cycles** – Feedback loops that reduce barriers to sustainable, high-fidelity practice
5. **Communications** – Focused support and consistent messaging

The alignment of these AI Frameworks is proven to produce effective strategies that solve problems like homelessness.

Role of Evaluators

Our team contributes diverse expertise to the evaluation process:

Collaborative Quality Consulting DBA Focalize – Specializes in putting research into practice through evidence-informed policy implementation and quality-improvement consulting with more than 25 years of social service experience. Learn more at focalizechange.com.

Housing Innovations – Offers executive guidance, subject expertise, and international perspective with more than 35 years of leadership in homeless services.

Policy Implementation Assessment

Context

National and Global

As the global rollout of COVID-19 vaccines continues, 2022 has seen restrictions lift and international borders reopen. However, as the world yearns to move forward, pandemic-related inflation is the highest it has been in more than 20 years. A resulting increase in interest rates triggered a decrease in home sales, which are now 43 percent lower than just a year ago (Alloway & Weisenthal, 2022; Schaefer, 2022). A consequential increase in demand for rentals has fueled rent spikes (Lopez, 2022). As the economy recalibrates, job postings have grown 60.5 percent above pre-pandemic baseline, yet wages are not keeping up with the skyrocketing cost of living. As pandemic-related subsidies sputter out, more people are sliding into poverty and becoming homeless (Bhattarai & Seigel, 2022).

Further rebalancing is needed. After the last five years of the warmest temperatures in history, fossil fuel emissions are rising above pre-pandemic rates (World Meteorological Organization, 2022). In response, Congress passed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), allocating \$40 billion to address climate change (The White House, 2022). US news toggles between a growing list of natural disasters and more than 531 mass shootings this year (New York Times Staff, 2022). Worldwide, the Russian invasion of Ukraine displaced 14.9 million Ukrainians, and the passing of Queen Elizabeth marks the end of an era for the longest-reigning British monarch.

Local

At home on the islands, the sun sets on Governor Ige's second term (2014–22), marking a time of change and a legacy of great achievement, including maintaining the lowest rates of COVID-19 in the nation, addressing homelessness, and setting environmental goals. However, post-pandemic Hawaii faces great extremes. The average cost of a home topped \$1 million. In response, the state legislature dedicated nearly \$1 billion for affordable housing initiatives (Mason, 2022). Yet is that enough to make a dent in the 50,156 units needed by 2025 (SMS, 2019)?

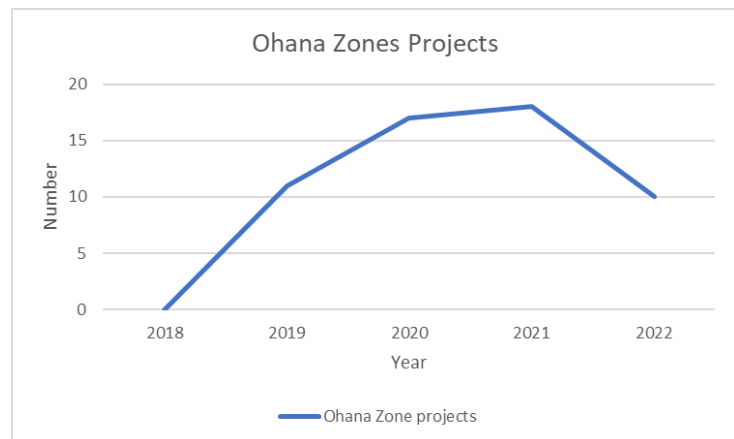
Hawaii is the least affordable state in the country, with the highest gap between income and cost of living, as well as a slow-to-rebound economy (DeJournett, 2022). About 85 percent of food is imported on a tenuous and costly infrastructure (Sustainability Hawaii, 2021). Electricity costs and excise taxes are the highest in the nation (Spangler, 2021; Mason 2022). Hawaii is also the slowest state for a post-pandemic employment rebound (Peterkin, 2021). It is no surprise that 42 percent of people live in or near poverty (Aloha United Way, 2022).

Crises are lurking. While a COVID-19–related hold paused Thirty-Meter Telescope construction, the struggle to protect sacred places is alive. The challenges extend to mental health concerns, especially for youth, as indicated by the 23 percent surge in requested services (Ordonio, 2022). There is reason for hope as Josh Green, the state's newly elected governor, is focused on addressing Hawaii's housing issues. He is joined in this vision by newly elected Mayor Richard Bissen of Maui and re-elected Mayor Derek Kawakami of Kauai, along with last year's mayoral winners, Mitch Roth of Hawaii and Rick Blangiardi of Honolulu.

Implementation Stages

Implementation Stages refer to the sequence of events that take place over two to four years—from inception (exploring an idea) to completion (making the change a reality). Last year’s report established that the Ohana Zones initiative serves as a catalyst for implementing the Housing First model. One asset of Ohana Zones is that it provides unrestricted funding for local priorities. This is a monumental shift from deferring strategic guidance to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As Ohana Zones funding and contracts end in 2022, last year’s successes are deflating. To date, 7 of 18 Ohana Zones programs have closed, with more likely to follow by the end of 2022. Of closed programs, only two shut down for underperformance—the other five were closed due to contracting issues or eviction from a program site. While there is a second Ohana Zones allocation, it is only 50 percent of the original budget and will not go into effect until six months after the original law ends,



leaving programs scrambling. Declining Year 4 Ohana Zones outcomes demonstrate the limitation of short-term investments in making long-term progress.

Across the country, most policymakers use “pilots,” or short-term contracts, for social service programming. Legislators operate under the false notion that long-term support is an incentive for idleness, so they cut funding, allow inflation to erode benefits, and make social programs harder for people to access (Hanna, 2019). Pilots can be a helpful component of a funding continuum that includes long-term financial support for successful “pilot” programs. However, when funding for housing programs stop, formerly homeless people are displaced, and trust is lost in government services, which becomes a barrier to re-engaging the same people again (United Nations, 2021).

Without long-term funding options, intermittent “pilot” funding can make homelessness worse by:

- Undermining local leaders by removing support for local priorities
- Removing incentives for collaboration across government divisions
- Compromising high-fidelity, housing-focused practice

Implementation planning accompanied by adequate long-term financial investment provides a guide for more effective, efficient, and sustainable programs. As previously reported, experts propose including HPO allocation as part of the base budget and providing ongoing Ohana Zones funding (S. Moriwaki, personal communication, 2021; S. Morishige, personal communication, 2021). For unrestricted funding streams, it is more helpful to conduct a thorough analysis of multiple programs, select the best fit based on standardized program and site criteria, and issue a smaller number of longer contracts to sustain long-term progress.

Implementation Drivers

Implementation Drivers help us understand the interconnections among leaders, practitioners, and organizations—the key components of day-to-day implementation activities—as seen below (Fixsen, et al., 2015). Alignment of the drivers promotes effectiveness of the strategies we use.

Leadership

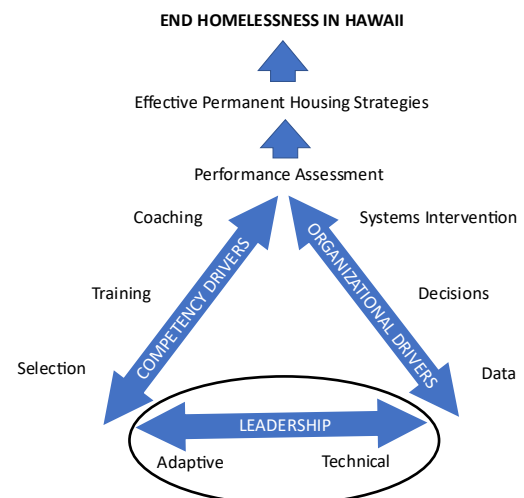
Leaders navigate challenges on the way to achieving a goal (National Implementation Research Network, 2021). As established in previous reports, Hawaii’s homeless services system operates in a collective with multiple leaders across a segmented system. However, the establishment of the Statewide Office of Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS) in 2022 signals a long-term investment in unified leadership. Designated financial backing will improve its influence.

This office operates within the most highly regulated state in America (Hawaii State Legislature, 2021). To further complicate matters, jurisdictional and contracting boundaries do not match up for: county council districts, HPO, the Department of Health, parks, police districts, school districts, and other public services. This disconnect fuels fragmented planning and contracting, as evidenced by the more than 15 “strategic plans” active across the state. The most inclusive of these is the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness 10-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness. While priorities are identified in each document, necessary elements, such as financing, implementation, performance measures, communications, quality improvement, and timeline specifics, are often left to be defined. Limited goals are explained by limits in authority, and stakeholders regularly defer to guidance from federal oversight entities like the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

During the height of COVID-19, Hawaii’s leaders transcended this complicated infrastructure and achieved extraordinary results, including the lowest sustained rates of COVID-19 in the country and the highest rates to placement in permanent housing, as previously detailed. Three lessons from the decision-making process used during this time hold valuable guidance for future success:

- All stakeholders shared one common goal
- Teams used collaborative problem solving rather than positional authority to create solutions
- There was allowance to make changes along the way
- Teams operated under an immediate and specific timeframe

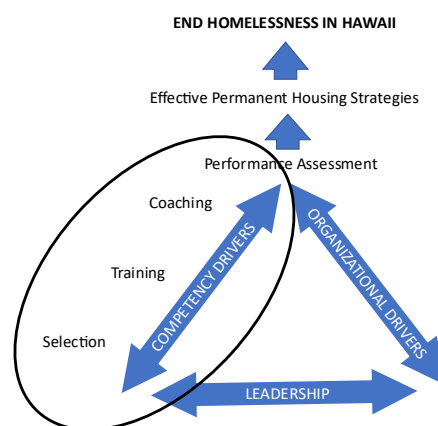
As we step out of crisis mode, collaboration can continue to be used to guide continued progress. Collectively naming a common, measurable goal that aligns with the governor’s priorities, as well as designing the strategies and specific timeline to achieve desired results, can mimic the immediacy of the context that fostered leaders’ success during the pandemic.



Competencies

Job-specific competencies are the observable and teachable skills needed to be successful at a job. Last year, we surveyed people across the system about the skills required for housing-focused casework. One highlight of the survey was that service providers across the board cited "compassion" as an essential part of practice. This is particularly notable, as it is a value rather than a skill, like others that were commonly named:

- Cultural competence
- Engagement
- Assessment
- Documentation
- Prioritization
- Service planning



With pay as low as \$37,000 per year, challenging conditions, and public critique, it's easy to see why there is a staffing shortage of case workers, and it is just as clear that the people in these roles are mission-driven. The passion for helping people in need is also evident in the desire to learn, as evidenced by the high attendance at conferences and learning opportunities across the state.

There are ongoing opportunities for professional development. All agencies have an onboarding process and an organized approach to training. Supplemental information sharing and guest speakers are also available, more often on Oahu. Trainings tend to be conducted in presentations. Increased reliance on digital platforms allows more people to participate. Larger agencies with administrative support have comprehensive training plans that allow for consistent training across islands. Smaller nonprofits struggle to train workers—not for a lack of expertise but a lack of resources.

Most of workforce development occurs within organizations, with Kauai as the only county government to provide learning opportunities. Of the two Continuum of Care, Partners In Care on Oahu offers ongoing training. Statewide, HPO provided kick-off Housing First training opportunities across the state and now recognizes a need to strengthen and unify its approach to training practitioners to deliver the standard of Housing First practice envisioned.

Managers expressed the importance of providing ongoing coaching to workers to support practice in the face of safety concerns, mental illness, legal complexities, and other time-sensitive matters. Coaching and performance evaluation were often explained as an ongoing combination rather than two components of workforce development with different frequencies. This was particularly true for those serving specialized populations like domestic violence victims and people with severe mental illness. In the face of underperformance, supervisors commonly relayed the importance of helping workers embrace self-care as part of improving performance.

To build on the talent and network of resources in place, comprehensive skill-based training in all the housing-focused competencies can prepare workers, and people in all roles, for greater job success. A competency-based training approach helps more people learn key job skills than the traditional lecture method because it focuses on how to perform job-related tasks. Defining a housing worker profile is a step toward clarifying roles across a continuum that includes several specialized case workers—see example below. The profile is a reference that can be used to promote a shared understanding of each competency, key tasks where competencies are applied, and corresponding training topics that prepare workers to conduct the task.

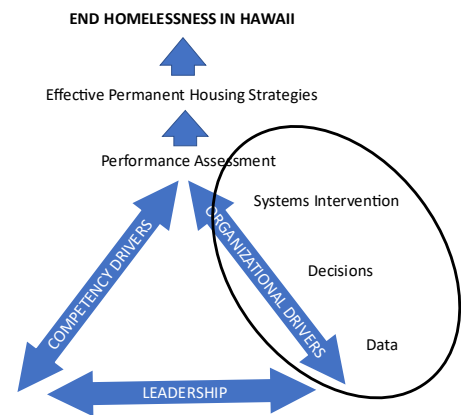
Housing Focused Competencies	Definition	Training
assessment	The thoughtful examination and analysis of data for meaningful interpretation involving multiple perspectives. (Walker, Farley, & Polin, 2012).	SPDAT Eligibility screening Diversion Mental health basics
engagement	Active participation by the client. (Domecq, Prutsky, Elraiya, 2014)	Confidentiality Ethics Compassionate engagement Intake process Trauma informed care Harm reduction
service planning	A short term support that includes planning, implementaton and management of individualized package of resources designed to meet person-centered goals. (O'Brien-Pallas, Birch, Baumann, Murphy, 2003)	Program orientation and system overview VI-SPDAT Motivational interviewing Coordinated Entry System (CES) Vital documents and General Assistance MedQuest Housing Plan/subsidies/applications Fair Housing Law Safety Plan Discharge Plan Ohana Nui wraparound: health, social capital, econ/ed and food
cultural competency	The integration of knowledge about groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used to improve outcomes. (CDC, 2022)	Hawaiian values and local context Domestic Violence Elderly Street culture Young people Veterans Symptoms of severe mental illness
data collection	A process by which information is gathered to provide a range of useful elements to support decision-making and assure effective program implementation. (Bandy, Burkhauser, & Metz, 2009).	HMIS DHS statewide database Case notes Time sheets/agency admin
prioritization	A structured and objective approach can assist in achieving consensus and balancing the needs of multiple stakeholders. A transparant and structured process facilitates a goal achievement (Gosenheimer, 2012).	Housing First/housing-focused approach

Organizational Drivers

Organizational Drivers are the administrative parts of services that support practice: data systems, decisions, and intervention with other systems. At the foundation, the integrity of data is critical, as it provides the essential reference for policy and practice.

Data

The system of record for homelessness, the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), is guided by HUD data standards and is split into two databases run by the two Continuum of Care (CoC). This design presents ongoing barriers to implementation that are important to overcome. If left unaddressed, bifurcation of HMIS databases has the potential to perpetuate misalignment in methodology and definition of terms.



Documentation is limited because HMIS does not account for programs that serve homeless people without HUD funding. For example, HMIS predates new federal policies like healthcare reform, which spawned a generation of databases—such as the Hawaii Web Infrastructure for Treatment Services (HI-WITS) at the Department of Health—to capture clients’ electronic health records. This can leave workers confused about where to document their work and creates great potential for gaps and duplication of service across government contracts. Though these challenges exist, it is important to uphold HUD data standard measures in performance analysis, as it is best practice to align with the recognized system of record.

Though such issues compromise statewide data, all stakeholders work diligently to overcome these barriers—an additional and ongoing process as technology systems evolve. HPO and both CoCs have agreed on a statewide data sharing agreement, which has, in turn, opened the door to regular statewide performance reporting this year. In addition, this agreement provides a platform to promote a common definition for specific data elements common to both systems and invites opportunities for further alignment that would:

- Improve the validity and reliability of data used for statewide reports
- Provide greater capacity to automate reports
- Reduce turnaround time for required tasks and reports

The resulting cost savings, efficiency, and effectiveness are the motivating factors that can inspire leaders to collaborate.

While challenging, there are groundbreaking examples where data has been defined, sourced, scrubbed, and shared across divisions and organizations. First, the Statewide Office on Homelessness and Housing Solutions (SOHHS) created the fiscal mapping of government-funded homeless services, which is publicly posted on their website (State of Hawaii, 2022). This is the first effort to calculate costs across funding streams and jurisdictions, a complex and highly valuable data set. Second, HPO generates a daily vacancy report, which provides outreach providers with timely information about shelter vacancies at specific facilities across provider agencies (Homeless Programs Office, 2022).

Decisions

Disconnected databases represent siloed government functioning that perpetuates inefficiency. As the speed of global technology plows on, Hawaii's compliance-oriented decision-making processes will stumble further behind unless a change in approach occurs. Leaders have demonstrated superior success using collaboration during emergencies. Though the COVID-19 emergency has subsided, a common goal among government departments, especially within the Department of Human Services (DHS), can inspire new collaboration across government divisions as offered in the following examples:

1. **Access federal relief by supporting access to personal benefits** – Social Security Insurance (SSI) is an entitlement for people with a qualifying illness or disability. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is an entitlement for people with a work history of at least 40 quarters during a specific time and a qualifying illness or disability. While there are homeless people who qualify for these benefits, relatively few make it through the difficult application process to receive them. In recent years, the HPO program budget of \$400,000 provided 421 people with access to vital documents—essential for benefit applications. If just 20 percent qualified for SSDI, that's \$1.3+ million/year in federal support (H. Brackeen, personal communication, 2022; Social Security Administration, 2022).
2. **Strengthen case coordination to expedite access to services and supports** – In addition to HPO, other entities provide case management services. For example, the Department of Health (DOH) provides Housing and Community-Based Services (HCBS) for elderly and disabled people, and Community Integration Services (CIS) offers pre-tenancy and tenancy support to formerly homeless people. With better coordination, case workers can focus on a designated portion of individualized supports and improve access to benefits. Ohana Conferencing, the case conferencing model used in Hawaii's child welfare system, is a helpful reference to draw from.
3. **Upgrade government-owned buildings to solar power** – With the highest electricity rates in the US, Hawaii pays substantially to keep the lights on at homeless shelters, offices, schools, libraries, and police stations statewide. While converting homeless shelters to solar power was previously explored by the HPO administrator, it was ultimately rejected because of a regulatory issue.
4. **Co-locate services to increase opportunities for access** – As the result of a recent lawsuit, homeless people's belongings that are retrieved at cleanups must be stored, which is paid for by the City and County of Honolulu. Ironically, few homeless individuals have the auto transportation required to pick up their things from the storage facility. Co-locating storage

lockers at access points, like designated shelters and drop-in centers, turns a dead-end into an access point for service.

5. **Coordinate priorities of overlapping interest groups** – There are multiple groups focused on addressing affordable housing and homelessness issues. Greater impact may be achieved by joining together and embracing a collective vision where each group can play a specific part in expanding the body of knowledge. Such groups include the Supportive Work Group, the Homeless Funders Workgroup, the Hawaii Housing Alliance, the Hawaii Housing Affordability Coalition, and other housing-focused groups.
6. **Explore partnerships with stakeholders focused on common populations** – Aligning the intersections and scopes of service can leverage greater impact among programs that serve vulnerable people, including but not limited to:
 - Adult Protective Services
 - Business Improvement Districts
 - Child Protective Services
 - Department of Aging
 - Department of Education
 - Department of Health
 - Faith-based communities
 - Intellectual/Developmental disabilities services
 - Hawaii Housing Affordability Coalition
 - Hawaii Medical Association
 - Hawaii Realtor Association
 - Head Start
7. **Align strategic planning using common methods and language** – Increased county-level funding has given way to a new generation of strategic planning efforts to address homelessness across the state. Using a common theoretical framework, data collection methods, timelines, and language can help promote a shared understanding of the overall efforts to end homelessness and increase opportunities to scale successful programs, processes, and tools.

Systems Intervention

The homeless services system requires resources to operate, and there are several barriers to adequate funding. First, the Faircloth Amendment is a 1990s-era rule that prevents the expansion of public housing in the United States. Repealing this legislation will unleash a series of ambitious housing plans that can make use of HUD's \$32 billion in new construction resources. With new federal dollars dedicated to housing and infrastructure in the Inflation Reduction Act and HUD's 2023 budget, it is also likely that these funds will be distributed in existing channels, like the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). However, such federal funding streams have yet to be released.

Beyond traditional sources, sustainable financing requires a concert of local, state, and private resources—though it is extremely challenging to cobble together comprehensive development and construction costs across timelines, requirements, and mission of each funding source. To make matters worse, lack of publicly owned, available, developable land is scarce. Increased funds are required to end homelessness, and the following information illustrates the wide range of local initiatives co-occurring and introduces additional sources and approaches to explore.

Generating Local Funds

There is a wide range of local policies and proposals designed to generate new funding to address homelessness with a variance in approach and allocation across counties:

- City and County of Honolulu (CCH) – New 3 percent tax increase on visitor accommodations. Part of these funds may be allocated to homelessness (Hawaii News Now Staff, 2021).
- CCH – Proposed increase to overall property tax allocation for affordable housing from .5 percent to 1 percent.
- CCH – Proposed Empty Home Tax for approximately 85,000 unoccupied housing units as an incentive for conversion to year-round rentals.
- CCH – Increasing the minimum stay for vacation rentals to 90 days and providing increased enforcement (Harlow, 2022).
- County of Hawaii – Bill 111 allocates no less than 75 percent of the property tax on homes \$2+ million. Projected to generate \$45 million (2023–27) (Christophel, 2022).
- County of Kauai – Passed a charter amendment for 2 percent of all real property tax revenue to be allocated to the Housing Development Fund (HDF) for affordable housing and services.
- County of Maui – Affordable Housing Fund increase to 3 percent of property tax.
- State of Hawaii – New legislation prohibits discrimination against voucher holders by eliminating anti-voucher language from advertisements (Legiscan, 2021).

In addition to real estate, taxing luxury transportation to Hawaii, like private planes and chartered flights, may be another opportunity for revenue.

Increasing Access to External Funds

While a comprehensive discussion of affordable housing funding is beyond the scope of this evaluation, the following text builds on the learnings from SOHHS' Supportive Housing Workgroup:

1. **Strengthen written grant proposals** – In recent years, HUD's funding allocation process has transitioned from a pro rata method to a competitive process in which funds are distributed by region. Using a pro rata method to distribute funds, Hawaii received higher funding than it does through today's competitive process. This reduction is not because there is less need; it is a lack of capacity to be competitive against states with stronger grant writers (M. Chandler, personal communication, 2022). With increased funds available in 2023, there is incentive to improve Hawaii's competitive edge by contracting housing proposal experts from other states in the region and submitting stronger proposals.
2. **Share a project template to demonstrate how multiple funding sources can be comingled** – Building on the momentum of Kamaoku Kauhale, the Ohana Zones co-housing project promoted by Governor-elect Josh Green—a development template for Kauhale that includes all assessment, planning, permitting, gradating, infrastructure, sewer, information technology, and construction costs and related funding sources—can be a blueprint for scaling this initiative. Because each funding source operates with unique criteria and timelines, templates can be a helpful way to illustrate how these sources can be comingled. Many of Hawaii's rural communities qualify for USDA programs like:
 - Multifamily Housing Program
 - Off-Farm Labor Housing Grants and Loans
 - On-Farm Labor Housing
 - Community Facilities Program
 - Denali Commission on High Energy Cost Grant
 - Telecom Program
 - Rural Development Broadband ReConnect
 - Solid Waste Management
 - Business and Energy Programs
3. **Leverage Hawaii's military presence to access Innovative Readiness Training (IRT)** – The United States military's IRT Program connects non-profits with identified construction needs with select military units engaged in construction training to execute building and development projects at minimal cost. These building projects can be awarded through an application process or working with a particular military unit on a specified project of interest. Exploring the extensive military connections in Hawaii's homeless service system may provide opportunities to access this resource.

Engaging Private Partners

Ongoing partnerships with private resources holders and employers leverage public investment. Recommendations include:

1. **Partner with local businesses to construct housing units** – HPM Building Supply, a locally owned construction supply company, is the first local producer of factory-built housing, which expedites construction and maintenance by utilizing accessible supplies. HalePlus homes are locally constructed, factory-built, fully permitted, and built to code with smaller footprints. Using this resource can expedite construction and maintenance at lower costs than imported materials.
2. **Explore workforce housing and employment opportunities with the hospitality industry** – Hawaii has the highest earning hospitality industry in the country. High revenues and an average vacancy rate of more than 20 percent signal an opportunity to explore workforce housing possibilities (Fox, 2021).
3. **Engage philanthropists as co-creators in strategic planning** – Efforts of philanthropies like the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation and Hawaii Community Foundation, among others, are important partners in serving vulnerable people and ending homelessness. Instead of co-occurring initiatives, increased alignment of strategic priorities and timeliness can result in greater impact.

Teamwork and Communication

Teamwork is required to make change, and communicating promotes collaborative problem solving to overcome barriers to implementation (National Implementation Research Network, 2021). Last year's report explored two parts of communication—internal and external—that are complementary pieces of one clear message and goal.

Internal communications to team members continue to be strong across the service system, with well-attended monthly and quarterly forums for practitioners and funders. The use of digital platforms for hosting these meetings are very helpful in increasing meeting attendance and participation across the state. Increased distribution of meetings notes for a wider range of forums provides helpful references and standards as teams discuss services and contracts.

External communications include all the ways in which members of the homeless service system communicate with people outside the system, including with the public, media, and lawmakers. While homelessness in Hawaii receives elevated media attention, as previously reported, response tends to be segmented across the state. The greatest source of ongoing public contact is complaint calls. Honolulu Police Department alone responds to more than 400,000 homeless-related calls a year (Lambert, 2021). This puts first responders in a reactive mode—they respond to the most frequent complaints, not necessarily the most severe situations.

Proactive external communication planning can help transform complaints into contributions. Communications planning templates, like the sample below, help all stakeholders share consistent and clear messages aimed at a common idea and share individualized content to promote their own work at the same time. There is a role for the public to play and including a defined call to action in social media posts, articles, and television announcements lets people know how to get involved in the solution. What is needed? Votes? Landlords? Volunteers? Creating clear access points for helpers is critical to engaging new partners.

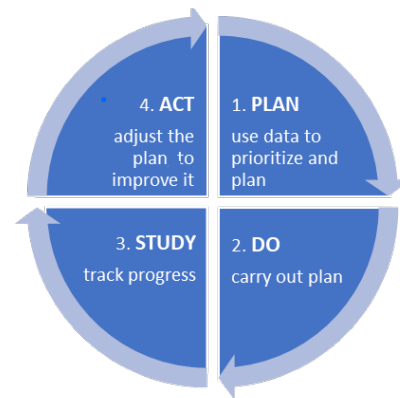
Communications Planning Template						
BIG IDEA: Together, we can end homelessness.						
	Special Events	Key Theme	Story	Compelling Statistic	Call to Action	Media Channel
Jan	New Year	Goal setting	Strategic planning of the homeless service system	HICH performance goals	Volunteer for PIT	Social media, press release, website
Feb						
March	Prince Kuhio Day	Prince Kuhio established the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act to provide homesteads for Native Hawaiians.	DHHL efforts to address homelessness and housing	Native Hawaiians are the fastest growing group of homeless people.	Learn about new DHHL housing opportunities	Social media, email, website

Improvement Cycles

Improvement cycles, or “feedback loops,” support teams to overcome implementation barriers and make improvements. Feedback loops occur any time we “circle back” to an idea, and a more formal approach to this process is the universally recognized Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle. PDSA cycles are preferred for making lasting change over compliance methods, as detailed in previous reports.

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) model puts the PDSA cycle into practice, supporting teams to make incremental change with a low-pressure approach. While this best-practice model has been a private industry staple for more than 50 years, it is newly emerging in public service programs (Wulczyn, et al., 2014).

Continuous Quality Improvement



While Hawaii’s government contractors tend to monitor contracts using compliance-based methods and financial information, lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic illustrate a better way. A major shift occurred when the state’s largest contractor of homeless services, HPO, included performance measure outcomes (PMOs) in their 2016 contracts. This was the state’s inaugural effort in performance-based social service contract management. To spur better outcomes, HPO proposed quarterly payments of 80 percent of the program budget, with 20 percent contingent on achieving PMOs.

This practice was met with challenge from providers, intermittent implementation from 2016–20, and was ultimately discontinued during the pandemic. During the time PMOs were suspended, providers achieved elevated rates of housing placement, disproving the theory that the payments were incentivizing high performance. Taking this evidence under advisement, HPO suspended the compliance-oriented 80 percent/20 percent payments and began to design and implement a Continuous Quality Improvement system, which is planned to launch in June 2023.

The CQI approach to contract monitoring features:

- Updated performance measures that align with program purpose
- Streamlined and standardized data collection tools to promote comprehensive assessment
- Simplified financial reporting to improve efficiency
- Uniform CQI practice guidelines to ensure high-fidelity practice
- Templates to improve timeliness and comprehensiveness of reporting
- A collaborative approach with HPO and providers working together as one team with one goal: improving service.

This approach streamlines the arduous work of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of programs and leads to more positive outcomes in people’s lives.

Practice Assessment

Ohana Zones (2018–23) has sparked great achievement and invaluable lessons for the State of Hawaii. Ongoing, adequate funding is required for those achievements to be sustained. At the close of 2022, only 11 of 18 Ohana Zone programs are operational, and just a few have a sustainable financial plan to remain open. Roof repairs at two shelters, Kumuhonua and Onelauena, are complete. Of the service and housing programs that remain open, all share important features:

- Commitment to a long-term vision
- Collaboration with new partners

Ohana Zones closures also reveal gaps in organizational drivers. The seven programs that closed were forced to do so due to contracting issues or eviction from a program site. Only two programs closed due to underperformance. These two programs also had the shortest contracts and limited implementation support.

Ohana Zones 2022						
Location		Project	Type	Open	Closed for Contract	Closed for Performance
Hawaii	1	LEAD	services			
	2	Hale Hanakahi	services			
	3	Ka Lamaku	services			
	4	Keolahou	housing			
	5	Kukuioia	services			
	6	Uluwini	services			
Kauai	7	Keaula	housing			
	8	LEAD	services			
Maui	9	Huliau	housing			
	10	LEAD	services			
Oahu	11	Kumuwai	housing			
	12	Hale Maluhia	housing			
	13	Kamaoku Kauhale	housing			
	14	HONU	services			
	15	Vouchers: unsheltered	voucher			
	16	Vouchers: youth	voucher			
	17	RYSE Emergency shelter	services			
	18	Villages of Maili	services			
	19	Kumuhonua	repair			
	20	Onelauena	repair			

closed	
funding uncertain	
scheduled to open	
open	

Supportive Housing

Group	Project	Location	Lead Agency	Contractor	New Beds
Capital Development	Keolahou	Hawaii	County	HOPE Services	18
	Kealaula	Kauai	County	Women In Need	29
	Huliau	Maui	County	Family Life Center	12
	Kumuwai	Oahu	City and County	WORK Hawaii Division	20
	Hale Maluhia	Oahu	City and County	Domestic Violence Action Center	20
	Kamaoku Kauhale	Oahu	City and County	Hui Aloha	37

SERVICE PROVIDED: New construction or renovation with on-site wraparound services.

NOTE: For Keolahou, the 18 beds (studio apartments) completed in the second phase of this project were made possible by Ohana Zones funds used to expand the shelter portion of this program in the first phase.

Findings

Capital development projects are the living legacy of Ohana Zones and an essential building block of ending homelessness. Overall, these supportive housing solutions reflect long-term, interdisciplinary commitment to the Housing First model, as there is no Housing First without housing. While this is a testament to the commitment to affordable housing development, the positive impact of the Ohana Zones Emergency Proclamation on development obstacles also signals the distress of an overly regulated capital development process.

Across the state, a Kauhale-inspired theme is emerging, with many projects featuring smaller units with common grounds and resources. They are part of a growing investment in alternative housing models, where flexibility of local dollars can be a great asset. There is also flexibility for housing friend groups as well as individuals. These county-led projects also gave way to individualized site design and operations. While all are “supportive housing,” there are variances in: leasing, rent, house rules, staff, residents, operating budget, programming, resources, accommodation type, and style. These differences reflect a cultural phenomenon of Hawaii’s governance where each island embraces a unique context. To balance this individuality, creating guidelines for Kauhale development and operations across the state would promote equitable access and streamline future replication.

Ohana Zones Supportive Housing							
County		Hawaii	Kauai	Maui	Oahu		
Project		Keolahou	Kealaula	Huliau	Kumuwai	Hale Maluhia	Kamaoku Kauhale
Operations	Type of units	Single-room occupancy studios; central kitchen and bath	1-bedroom apartments and studios with kitchen and bath	2-bedroom apartments with kitchen and bath	studios with kitchen and bath	studios with kitchen and bath	studios; central kitchen and bath
	Number of units	18	29	12	20	20	37
	Population served	Single males	All welcome	All welcome	Elders 62+	Domestic violence victims and children	All welcome
	Rent	\$500 or 30% of income	1 bdrm=\$700 Studio=\$500	\$25/month or 30% of income	30% of income	30% of income	30% of income
	Time limit for tenancy	None	2 years	None	Moving people due to insecure funding	None	2 years
	House rules	Lease agreement	Lease agreement	Quiet hours	House rules	Curfew; no guests	Lease agreement and community rules

These 136 supportive housing units represent less than 1 percent of the projected 50,156+ total housing units needed by 2025 (SMS, 2019). These targets are steep; however, there is reason for hope as the Hawaii State Legislature has allocated more than \$1 billion in affordable housing initiatives in 2022 (Tsai, 2022). All counties are focused on creating new housing, with CCH embracing the most ambitious goals. Honolulu Mayor Blangiardi is determined to reduce the time of affordable housing production, announcing 972 affordable units within five years (Nakaso, 2022).

While funding is available, a primary barrier to housing development is the regulatory and permitting process (Tsai, 2022). One example of these debilitating delays is on Kauai, where Lima Ola, a 550-unit affordable housing project launched in 2022, had been in development for more than 20 years. Experts have also called for updating housing policy to include “by right” development, equitable creation of affordable housing across communities, to overcome community-specific barriers (Hawaii Community Assets, 2021). However logical the policy, enacting this legislation will likely be met with protest.

Affordable housing projects, like Hale Waiapuiani, continue to be rejected for infrastructure concerns (Davis, 2022). These costs cannot be ignored. Funds for grading, environmental assessment water, sewer, solar, internet service, and the like may or may not be available in traditional funding streams. In addition, differing timeframes among funding components for capital and infrastructure costs increase costs and delay development. While local funding has traditionally filled in the gaps, there is promise for federal relief from Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act (2022). These funds may likely be channeled through existing federal grant programs that fund infrastructure costs, as discussed in the Systems Intervention section of this report.

Comprehensive housing studies reveal distinct limits in publicly owned land available to develop affordable housing across the state (SMS, 2019). This calls for new partnerships with private landowners to expand available landholdings for affordable housing. Developing new housing within established communities requires overcoming Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) syndrome—opposition to the locating of something considered “undesirable” in one’s neighborhood. Plans that include density increases, like Stanley Chang’s ALOHA Homes, also fall under scrutiny (Grassroot Institute of Hawaii, 2022).

One strategy to shift community support is to include assets in new housing projects that address identified community needs, like: daycare centers, gardens, playgrounds, boutique retail spaces, maker spaces, meeting rooms, commercial kitchens, tool libraries, free stores, skate parks, and recreation spaces. In this way, the existing community receives an ongoing benefit in exchange for embracing new neighbors.

Keeping people stabilized requires more than just housing. For everyone, especially vulnerable people, a supportive community context is essential to ensure “the people of Hawaii are thriving through . . . services that encourage self-sufficiency and supports the wellbeing.” This Ohana Nui vision, promoted by the Department of Human Services is defined by specific domains: housing; health and wellness; social capital, economic support, and education; and food and nutrition. Considering these domains in the planning, design, financing, and operations is critical to ensure that people can remain housed and participate in society. In particular, the lack of access to public transportation can be a barrier for housing placement and reveals a need for innovative transportation planning.

Ohana Zones Supportive Housing							
County		Hawaii	Kauai	Maui	Oahu		
Project		Keolahou	Kealaula	Huliau	Kumuwai	Hale Maluhia	Kamaoku Kauhale
Ohana Nui Context	Ensuring safety	Staff on site 24/7	Cameras and security officers 3:00 p.m.–6:00 a.m.	Cameras	Cameras	Cameras; Security officers	Neighboring program provides oversight
	Access to food	Pantry items provided by Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP); community kitchen on site. Churches provide meals.	Groceries, take-out food, and fast food nearby	Two grocery stores and take-out food nearby	Grocery store, convenience stores, and take-out food nearby	Grocery store, convenience stores, and take-out food nearby	Community kitchen available at some hours; no grocery stores nearby
	Access to mental/health services	Registered nurse on staff and referrals made to primary care providers	Mental/health services are accessible with public transportation	Two health facilities within walking distance	Mental/health services are accessible with public transportation	Mental/health services are accessible with public transportation	Homeless Programs Office (HPO); DOH Community Integration Services (CIS) to support medical appointments
	Access to transportation	Bus stop nearby. Some bus/taxi coupons provided; Hawaii County Economic Opportunity Council (HCEOC) provides job-related transport; and CIS workers provide medical transportation	Bus stop nearby	Short walk to the central bus hub at the Maui Mall	Bus stop nearby	Bus stop nearby	Closest bus stop is 1.5 miles away, with limited operations
	Support for education and employment	Referrals to job training programs and adult education classes	Individualized support	FLC offers classes, like GED and job finding, but there is low attendance	Most residents do not work	Individualized support	Individualized support
	Social and community connection	Informal networking in common area	Informal networking among residents	Structured activities planned; informal networking; and children play together	Informal networking	Support group	Monthly town hall meetings; special events

Housing Vouchers

Group	Project	Location	Lead Agency	Contractor	New Beds
Housing Vouchers	Vouchers: unsheltered	Oahu	City and County	Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction	10
	Vouchers: youth	Oahu	City and County	Hale Kipa	10

SERVICE PROVIDED: One-year housing subsidy with individualized case management, with an option for a second-year renewal in City-owned apartments scattered across sites.

Findings

Vouchers will continue to be a significant housing commodity, as evidenced by the \$32 billion HUD has allocated to them in 2023 (HUD, 2022). In addition to being less expensive than capital development, vouchers also evade NIMBY syndrome, as voucher-holders are peppered across an area rather than concentrated in a specific development. While vouchers are far from a permanent housing solution, experts relay the value of small scatter-site programs in a portfolio of homeless services (Pruitt, McKinsey, & Barile, 2019). Instead of asking whether they work or not, it is important to continue exploring how to make them work and which populations they can most benefit.

For starters, local experts have demonstrated that the greatest financial barriers to distributing vouchers can be resolved. Many “mom-and-pop” landlords cannot wait for one to three months to receive their first rent check (Hawai'i REALTORS, 2022). However, Oahu Housing Now overcame this gap with a pass-through fund to expedite payments (L. Thielen, personal communication, 2022). Another concern is property damage (Hawai'i REALTORS, 2022). While providers often use “slush funds” to address damages, money is limited and leaves social workers managing repairs. Instead, providers might consider business liability insurance for more comprehensive coverage.

The Ohana Zones vouchers that are dedicated to young people and those with severe mental illness also reveal cues about populations to target for future voucher use. While Ohana Zones tenants were able to retain their housing, providers expressed common challenges for both (D. Shaku, personal communication, 2021–22; A. Campbell, personal communication, 2021–22):

- Responsibility for a formal lease
- Maintaining rent independently
- Social isolation

In other areas of the homeless service system, vouchers support better results. Currently, 83 percent of voucher holders are single moms and their children (Seitz, 2022). Single parents and kids, seniors, intergenerational households, and disabled people may be better suited for the responsibilities of a voucher due to their relative stability. With 43 percent of households living near poverty, the demand for support is high (Aloha United Way, 2022). Consideration for “housing-burdened” subsidies could help those with higher incomes and additional costs, like for child/elder care and medical services.

Emergency Shelter: Homeless Outreach and Navigation for Unsheltered Persons

Group	Project	Location	Lead Agency	Contractor	New Beds	People Served	People Housed
Emergency Shelter	HONU	Oahu	City and County	City and County of Honolulu	150	2995	324

SERVICE PROVIDED: Individualized engagement with temporary housing and housing placement services.

Findings

The greatest endorsement of HONU is that more than 50 percent of participants exit to shelters or housing, a pivotal breakthrough. Such innovative interventions are critical, as unsheltered people are the largest segment of the homeless population (HUD, 2022). HONU is the only homeless shelter in the nation staffed by law enforcement. As such, this program defies traditional law enforcement versus social service roles in pursuit of a common solution, as well as repositions law enforcement from opponents to partners.

A key reason people enter shelters is the need for personal safety, and the value of the 24/7 security presence of law enforcement at HONU cannot be overstated. In this familiar camp-like setting, participants experience the “circle of security” needed to recover from life on the streets. Officers have a proactive intervention style and a safety-related role when engaging people in need. This is distinct from a social work approach, which promotes more allowance for self-regulation. The trauma-informed site design of HONU inspires further exploration of HONU as a Pu’uHONUa, or place of refuge, with expanded trauma-informed programming. Residents could participate in on-site therapeutic activities, which could include a range of low-cost options: wellness videos, 12-step meetings facilitated by local AA and NA chapters, or support groups facilitated by local schools of social work.

Leaders relay that extensive community outreach to community boards and local representatives ahead of HONU setup is key to generating public support for the program. The temporary commitment required by host communities is unique and helped overcome NIMBY syndrome. However, in practice, this short timeframe proves to be challenging and disruptive— just as operations are established, it is time to shut down, even if the program is working well. It may be helpful for CCH and HPD to explore shifting from a “90-day stay” to a performance-based model and allowing HONU to remain until an encampment has been resolved.

This remarkable program is also vulnerable. Such innovation can be challenging to manage within government bureaucracy. Over the course of three years, administrative leadership has changed three times from CCH, to HPD, and back to CCH. After surviving these transitions, HONU may be superseded by new priorities like C.O.R.E. and Weed and Seed—the latest focuses of new leaders. Leadership and staff changes are a perfect storm for “model drift” over time. While this makes it more difficult to replicate HONU across the state and to understand how it is working, this gap can be addressed with dedicated attention to the development of a comprehensive program, policies, and procedures.

Emergency Shelter: Family Assessment Center

Group	Project	Location	Lead Agency	Contractor	New Beds	People Served	People Housed
Emergency Shelter	Uluwini	Hawaii Island	County	Hawaii Affordable Properties	53	n/a	n/a

SERVICE PROVIDED: Safe, temporary housing for families and singles with the goal of permanent housing placement using integrated, on-site wraparound services and extensive participant engagement.

Findings

The Family Assessment Center (FAC) is an innovative application of child welfare best practice in a homeless shelter setting. The idea was born from the HPO administrator's extensive child welfare experience and the idea to leverage this approach for greater success with the same target population in homeless services. The success of FACs in getting and keeping people housed garnered the attention of the US Department of Health and Human Services and inspired replication with Ohana Zones funding (Jayanthi & Glosser, 2021).

FAC is important because it creates a forum to address the needs of homeless children distinct from their parents. In most other aspects of homeless services, children are "invisible" in the data in place of "households." Young people ages 18–24 are the fastest growing cohort of homeless people, making it imperative that the needs of children are specifically addressed (Yuan, Stern, Gauci, & Liu, 2018). Children who experience homelessness are more likely to be adults who experience homelessness (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2022). To break that cycle, housing children must be prioritized. A first step is knowing how many homeless children there are.

One benefit of using wraparound services in a residential program is that services can be co-located, which creates new opportunities to increase access and improve engagement with:

- Head Start and early childhood education
- McKinney Vento Workers school supports
- DOH Care Coordinators and Community Integration Services Workers
- Benefit, Employment and Support Services Division (BESSD)

While the FAC model is universally endorsed, it is vulnerable. Across the state, of the four FACs shared in last year's evaluation, the two on Oahu, Villages of Ma'ili and Kaka'ako, are not operational due to eviction from program sites. Ulu Wini remains open and is one of the few Ohana Zones programs with secure funding. After the end of the Ohana Zones grant, the County of Hawaii continues to sponsor the FAC at a lesser budget. Budget cuts caused staff recruitment challenges and limited client-directed funds and special programs. This signals the importance of codifying the model with a written program manual, policies, and procedures to ensure consistent high-fidelity practice. Please note, annual performance data was not counted as part of Ohana Zones totals due to the change in contractor.

Key Recommendations

Building on the key recommendations shared in previous reports in this series, the following are offered for your consideration:

1. Coordinate the implementation of the Hawaii Interagency Council on Homelessness 10-Year Strategic Plan to End Homelessness.
 - Have SOHHS lead strategic planning and management across homeless service system.
 - Establish consistent, ongoing Ohana Zone funding as part of increased and stabilized funding to address homelessness and affordable housing.
 - Operationalize the 10-year HICH plan with timelines, measurable goals, and adequate funding agreed upon across government divisions, jurisdictions, and key stakeholders.
 - Use existing communication channels—HICH, HPO monthly meetings, and CoC member meetings—as feedback loops to overcome barriers and share progress toward ending homelessness.
 - Provide ongoing opportunities to share lessons from the same type of program across counties to expedite progress and promote high-fidelity practice where possible.
2. Promote high-fidelity, Housing First practice with competency-based professional development.
 - Establish housing-focused competency profiles for workers, supervisors, and leaders.
 - Convene providers and make shared decisions about content and order of training plans for each role.
 - Explore the development of a leadership academy to develop leadership competencies, including: executive presence, strategic development, financial management, fundraising, communications, human resources, law and liability, public-private partnerships, quality improvement, information technology, and administration.
 - Align and develop a universal training curriculum for workers and supervisors.
 - Use a consistent digital platform to scale training offerings and options across the state.
 - Teach supervisors to apply best-practice coaching methods.
3. Streamline administrative processes to improve efficiency.
 - Update business processes within and across government divisions.
 - Leverage technology to expedite administrative tasks.
 - Use templates for financial and performance reports.
 - Collaborate across government divisions to improve efficiency.
 - Implement Continuous Quality Improvement to strengthen outcomes.

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