

July 25, 2018

Aloha Friends,

In response to our most recent Partner satisfaction survey, someone asked if we could talk more about how and why partners are selected by the Foundation. We think it's a great question and wanted to take a moment to share some thoughts. Backing up just a step, it may help to clarify that since the Foundation received its full funding and hired its first staff in 2008, it has been referring to organizations with which it has a funding relationship as partners. It is a purposeful choice. It reflects the Foundation's goal that our funding relationships be more than a grantor/grantee relationship. Our hope is that these relationships represent a real exchange and collaboration between two organizations who share goals, are respectful of and candid with each other, and commit to shared learning. The Foundation's benefactor was the kind of person who was curious about others and wanted to get to know them and understand their work. She carried that practice into her philanthropy. She rarely wrote a check and walked away. Instead, she followed the work of the group, getting to know the people and understanding the work being done. We strive to emulate some of those same practices when we engage with our Partners.

So how and why are partners selected by the Foundation?

First, the Foundation identifies an issue, opportunity or problem derived from our mission that we want to work on; something we believe, with our resources and our expertise and interests, we can impact positively. Mostly, with our current program areas, those issues that we have decided to work on have been chosen based on feedback from many "experts" in the specific field, including community folks, practitioners, policy makers and other funders. Then we identify a strategy, a road map of sorts, which seems to have potential to produce the kind of impacts we have identified. Next, we begin looking for organizations that are carrying out work that is in-line with our strategy. We ask a lot of people for ideas. We try to be clear about what we are looking for both in the kinds of work that is being done, how the work is being done, and the organization's appetite to learn and share. We triangulate the answers we get from



various sources and that generally leads us to talk to one or more possible partners about the idea of working together. We strive to be clear about what we are asking of the possible partner. We generally share our strategy and how we might track our progress over time. But, we often are learning as we go, so we know that our knowledge and our activities are likely to evolve. We hope we are candid and clear about that as well. It is then up to the organization to decide if they want to partner with us. We know it is an important question and we don't take "yes" for granted.

That's an overview of why and how we have found our way to the partnerships that we are currently engaged in. The issues we decide to tackle and strategies we develop tend to be fairly long term, so our partnerships don't turn over quickly. We also have learned that with a longer term relationship comes multiple years of support. Generally, we have found when we can make multi-year funding commitments trust and openness grows. Experience also tells us it is important to try to stay on a course for a meaningful number of years as change does not often happen quickly around the issues that philanthropy and the nonprofit sector are concerned. As a foundation, we have the opportunity and, we believe, the responsibility to stay with an issue until we make progress.

We have a genuine commitment to learning from and improving our practice of partnering. We seek input from our partners regularly and value when they offer the kinds of suggestions a "critical friend" might offer. We know those kinds of suggestions come from the heart and are ideas that can help us grow in our work. Suggestions about how we can do our work better don't just come from our partners. If you have thoughts about how we can more effectively engage with our partners, we hope you will share them with us also. You can reach me at janis@hauolimauloa.org.

And, thank you to the partner who raised this question and caused us to reflect on the answer.

Warmly,



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