

Hau'oli Mau Loa F O U N D A T I O N



April 4, 2012

Dear Friends,

I heard the phrase “work in progress” the other day, and it struck me that it has two meanings. We see signs noting “work in progress” and immediately know to look out – there are likely to be people around us working, maybe in hard hats. These signs tell us there is activity around; things are getting done. The other connotation for “work in progress” is for a piece of work that is not yet finished. That connotation implies something is developing, but it is not yet fully formed; it is suggestive more of process than final product. It strikes me that both meanings for “work in progress” aptly describe Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation over the past year.

There is *work in progress* at the Foundation: Since making its first grants in May 1991, the Foundation has provided funding to 42 different organizations (that we call “partners”) totaling just shy of \$17 million. Most of our partners are in Hawai'i, and doing work within the state; and a few are U.S.-based organizations that are working internationally on humanitarian relief projects and in supporting environmental causes and social justice. Last year, the Foundation distributed just over \$4.2 million in grants to 27 partners. The “hard hat work” done in making good grants takes several forms:

- Clarifying what we are trying to accomplish and then assessing whether there is a good match between the partner's priorities and the Foundation's.
- Identifying ways to assist in the work of our partners that add value beyond the dollars of the grant by asking good questions and by being supportive and facilitative.
- Evaluating what has been accomplished and learning from and acting on the findings.

Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation has been engaged in that work every day over the past year. The 27 partners that we've worked with are each, in their own right, remarkable nonprofits doing very important work for the communities they serve. We feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work with them.

The Foundation itself is also a *work in progress* that is not yet fully formed: The board and staff of the Foundation continue to develop focus areas and roles for our work. For example, beginning in 2010, but with more intensity in 2011, we spent time studying how we might structure the Foundation's environmental grantmaking program in Hawai'i to have optimal impact. We gathered some basic facts and then asked a wide range of experts from community stewards to scientists to policy makers for their insights and perspectives. Based on what we heard, we narrowed the possibilities and identified our strategy. As a result, we have determined our environmental grantmaking will focus in two areas:



- Preventing invasive species in Hawai'i, thereby protecting our natural environment; and
- Developing the next generation of natural resource managers and leaders by creating better pathways for Hawai'i's youth into natural resource management careers in the state.

More information about these two strategies can be found on our website at:

www.hauolimauloa.org

As further evidence that we are a "work in progress:" We experimented in the role of facilitating a discussion among several of our partners on developing the next generation of leadership for their organization. We know this topic impacts all sizes and stages of nonprofits, but feel it's especially challenging for organizations whose leader is the founder or has been in the lead role for a long enough period of time that the organizational identity and the leader's identity are closely and positively intertwined. A summary of the insights from that meeting can be found under "Updates" at: <http://www.hauolimauloa.org/index.php/newsprojectsreports>

Our approach to grantmaking has generally been to develop longer-term, multi-year relationships with our partners, but given the economic downturn of 2008 and the impacts it has had on our neighbor island communities, the Foundation decided to provide one-time grants for general support to "Safety Net" organizations - nonprofits providing access to basic needs such as housing, food and/or health care services. We renewed our Safety Net commitments in 2011 and will be considering the possibility of another year of funding in 2012 based on a review of economic conditions. We think of these grants as part of our "work in progress," as they cause us to explore a different type of relationship with partners and a slightly different form of grant, as well.

Lastly, and still within the meaning of "work in progress," the Foundation initiated its first partner survey in 2011 to solicit feedback about how we are performing. The survey was designed on the basis of research conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy which outlines elements that contribute to a positive grantor/grantee relationship. The partners' responses to the survey helped us understand some things that we are doing well as well as some areas where we can do better in communicating the Foundation's priorities and in better understanding both the work of our partners and the communities they serve.

There is no question in my mind that both meanings of "work in progress" are going to continue to be applicable to Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation over the next year and, possibly, beyond. If you have questions about the work we're doing or how the Foundation is developing, I hope you'll contact me. The same is true if you have ideas or suggestions about how we can do our work better.

Mahalo from all of us for your interest and for your support of our "work in progress."


Jaris A. Reischmann
Executive Director