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**BUDGET, FINANCE, AND CONVENTION CENTER STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY
Friday, December 13, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.**

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES OF THE BUDGET, FINANCE & CONVENTION CENTER STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT:	David Arakawa (Chair), Kimberly Agas (Vice-Chair), Roy Pfund, James Tokioka (Ex Officio, DBEDT Director), Mike White
MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:	Blaine Miyasato
NON-VOTING MEMBERS:	Todd Apo
HTA STAFF PRESENT:	Daniel Nāho'opi'i, Kalani Ka'anā'anā, Isaac Choy, Talon Kishi, Caroline Anderson, Jennifer Bastiaanse, Lindsay Sanborn
GUESTS:	Jay Talwar, Jeffrey Eslinger, Tyler Gomes, Ka'i'ini Aranaydo, Aaron Salā
LEGAL COUNSEL:	John Cole

1. Call to Order and Opening Protocol

Chair Arakawa called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m., and Mr. Nāho'opi'i conducted the opening cultural protocol.

2. Roll Call to Announce Name of Participating Board Members and to Identify Who Else is Present with Board Member if Location is Nonpublic

Mr. Kishi conducted the roll call. All confirmed that they were in attendance and were by themselves apart from Chair Arakawa who was in the HTA conference room.

3. Motion, Presentation, Discussion, and Action on the Hawai'i Tourism Authority's (HTA) November 2024 Financial Report; Recommend Approval

Chair Arakawa proposed a motion to approve the November 2024 Financial Report, and Ms. Agas seconded the motion.

Mr. Kishi noted that the presentation was not included in the committee information package but would be provided via handouts containing detailed financial statements. He began with the FY25 budget, year-to-date up to November 30, 2024, reporting that \$7.363 million had been paid out, with an encumbrance balance of \$12.778 million and a \$6.3 million budget restriction. The sum of these three items was \$26.441 million, leaving a remaining budget of \$36.558 million. Mr. Kishi was in the process of developing a report to show the extent to which the HTA's current financial status conformed to expectations.

The distribution of the FY25 budget was illustrated by a pie chart showing the following breakdown:

- Branding and marketing 62%
- Sports and signature events 12%
- Destination stewardship and community . 12%
- Regenerative tourism development..... 6%
- Administration and governance 6%
- Workforce development 2%

Chair Arakawa asked whether it would be possible to separate sports from signature events, as had been discussed during the previous day's meeting of the Branding Standing Committee. Mr. Nāho'opi'i commented that some community events were sports-related and assured the Chair that before the next meeting, he would work with the chairs of the Branding and the Ho'okahua Standing Committees to improve definitions, including some signature events whose categories seemed ambiguous.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā noted that the August 24, 2024, staff report for sports contained the detail that Chair Arakawa requested. He promised to update the August report before the January meeting of the committee and would identify sports events related to community enrichment, those defined as signature events, and standalone sports events such as those that had been discussed the previous day.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā for his contribution and asked if the updates could be shown on the pie chart. Mr. Ka'anā'anā expressed the hope that this would be agreeable to the Finance Department, since the categories in the pie chart were aligned with Program IDs. The Chair's request implied that Program ID 115 would be split up.

Mr. Isaac Choy, the HTA Vice President in charge of Finance, responded that these labels were tied to the Program IDs that had been presented to the legislature, but he understood that the committee might need more granular information, although it would involve additional work for staff.

Chair Arakawa asked whether the provision of Program IDs was new. Mr. Choy replied that the intention was to consolidate the Program IDs to three the following year to avoid definitional issues.

Chair Arakawa responded that sports and signature events would be represented by two separate sections of the pie chart. At present, both were under Program ID 115, and could remain as they were. However, perhaps the legislature could be asked to define two separate Program IDs for sports and signature events.

Mr. Kishi had provided a line-by-line budget breakdown, and this enabled various sports and signature events to be identified on pages 17 and 18 of the financial statements. He agreed that the pie chart could be broken down into more detail.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā pointed out that some sports programs were supported as community enrichment under the SEP program, which was completely separate from signature events and standalone sports events. This meant that sports projects might form part of three separate categories.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā for this reminder.

Mr. Kishi presented a bar graph comparing the FY25 and FY24 budgets to illustrate the changes in allotments of the various programs.

The summary of the various funds and expenditures to date included:

- Fiscal Year 2024 Tourism General Funds Year to Date Expenditures: \$7,547,556
 - Funds:\$693,248
 - Encumbrances:.....\$690,301
- Tourism Special Fund Year to Date Expenditures: \$131,299
 - Cash balance:\$8,395,250

- Encumbrances:.....\$852,025

Mr. Kishi reminded committee members that only the encumbrance could be spent, as the cash balance was unavailable at the time.

- Tourism Emergency Special Fund Year to Date Expenditures: \$195,368
 - \$157,749 remaining from Maui Disaster Response Plan #1 of \$5,000,000
 - \$40,000 remaining from Maui Disaster Response Plan #2 of \$130,000

Chair Arakawa inquired whether the HTA was not subject to the Tourism Special Fund.

Mr. Kishi confirmed that this was the case, adding that it was still being spent down.

Chair Arakawa referred to the \$8.395 million that could not be spent because the fund was no longer operational but noted that the \$852,000 that had been encumbered for contracts was still available.

Mr. Pfund inquired about the status of the efforts to refresh the Tourism Emergency Fund, mentioning that the HTA had intended to encumber the balance in order to request an additional \$5 million.

Mr. Choy replied that a letter had just been sent to the Director of the Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) to request release of the fund, and this was the second letter to be sent. However, it appeared the B&F Director was finding it difficult to release the additional \$5 million at that time.

Chair Arakawa asked whether the remaining balance had been spent up or encumbered.

Mr. Choy responded that there was very little money left since most of the balance had been spent up.

Chair Arakawa reassured Mr. Pfund that nearly all the balance had been spent, and the HTA had now made two requests to B&F for the additional \$5 million. He noted that Mr. Pfund had raised an important issue which should be revisited during the following month's meeting, as well as at the meeting of the full Board.

Dir. Tokioka expanded on Mr. Choy's comments, stating that the legislature was concerned about the extension of the emergency proclamations in terms of the definition of an emergency. Dir. Salaveria had hoped to resolve this issue. Dir. Tokioka believed that this request would be approved, but it was likely to be the last emergency fund to be released in response to the Maui wildfire.

Chair Arakawa acknowledged the situation, noting that the emergency fund statute provided an example in terms of the need to move visitors off an island or out of an area during an immediate emergency, not two years later. He thanked Dir. Tokioka for the warning that the legislature might be doubtful, but also pointed out that Maui still had a shortage of visitors. On the other hand, the \$5 million might be needed if there were a new emergency.

Mr. Kishi informed members that Mr. Apo was now taking part in the meeting.

Chair Arakawa referred to the federal Economic Development Administration – American Rescue Plan Act (EDA-ARPA) State Tourism Grant.

Mr. Kishi explained that the primary purpose of the grant had been in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and it was being used by the HTA and the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) to develop outdoor tourism-related activities. He presented the following information about this grant:

- EDA-ARPA State Tourism Grant Year to Date Expenditures = \$2,780,000
 - Funds.....\$8,776,717
 - Encumbrances.....\$5,720,345

Mr. Nāho'opi'i stated that Ms. Anderson would give a detailed presentation of the EDA-ARPA grant in Agenda Item No. 8.

Mr. Kishi presented the following information about the HCC funds for FY24:

- Convention Center General Funds = \$2,078,262
 - Encumbrances = \$2,078,262
- Convention Center Enterprise Special Fund Year to Date Revenue = \$11,666,348, including \$11 million TAT and some operating revenue and miscellaneous items.
 - Cash balance \$59,421,037
 - Reserved for Fiscal Year 2025 operations \$34,000,000
 - Reserved for transfer to B&F \$11,000,000

Mr. Kishi explained that the \$11 million had been spent in respect of FY24 HCC operations and the transfer would probably be completed in FY26.

Mr. Kishi explained that the HCC Rooftop Repair Project had two main sources of funds as follows:

- Act 248, SLH 2022, appropriated \$15,000,000 for the rooftop terrace deck repair project.
 - Year to date Expenditures\$171,944
 - Remaining Funds.....\$14,400,444
 - Encumbrances.....\$716,345
- Act 230, SLH 2024 appropriated \$64,000,000

Mr. Kishi added that the HCC was to request \$13.8 million from the legislature during the current year.

Chair Arakawa stated that he had already informed legislators that \$13 million from the HCC funds had lapsed. The money could be reissued as a substitute not an addition. It was hoped that on this occasion the application would be successful with a different definition.

Chair Arakawa recalled that in 2022 funding of \$15 million had been allocated for a temporary rooftop terrace deck repair project. The HCC had now been awarded \$64 million for a long-term renovation. Mr. Choy reminded Chair Arakawa that there was no such thing as a permanent repair, so this had to be termed a "long-term renovation". The use of the word "permanent" would have created questions from B&F.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Choy for the explanation but pointed out that there would always be questions. The purpose of the \$64 million was to execute a long-term fix. The HTA was to request the lapsed \$13.8 million as part of a long-term renovation of the rooftop terrace.

Mr. Kishi added that the allotment of \$64 million for the roof repair had been approved by the Governor so the project was back on schedule.

Chair Arakawa understood that there were no questions about the monthly financial report from committee or Board members, or the public. He reminded the online public that the financial slide deck had been posted in the committee materials as "Slide Deck."

Mr. Kishi added that the Governor's approval of the release of the 2025 allotment of \$63 million would have a 10% restriction of \$6.3 million, resulting in an operating allotment of \$56.7 million from which the HCC would be able to start processing payments.

Chair Arakawa pointed out that the capital investment project (CIP) allotment for the roof repair had also been released and asked Mr. Kishi to remember to mention this to the full Board. Mr. Kishi reminded committee members that the ability to pay invoices might be limited because the full allotment had only recently been approved.

Chair Arakawa reminded committee members that both the operating allotment of \$63 million and the CIP allotment of \$64 million for the roof repair had been approved in November 2024.

Mr. Kishi conducted the roll call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

4. Motion, Presentation, Discussion, and Action on the Hawai'i Convention Center's (HCC) November 2024 Financial Report and Update on the HCC's 6-Year Repair and Maintenance Plan; Recommend Approval

Mr. Choy requested the deferral of Agenda Item No. 4 because the HCC staff was not prepared to provide the information at that time. He pointed out that the present BFCC meeting was earlier in the month than usual, and the HCC staff were working hard on contracts and other items. However, the report would be ready for the meeting of the full Board the following week, or it could be deferred to the subsequent month if necessary.

Chair Arakawa agreed to defer the HCC report and hoped that it would be ready for the meeting of the full Board. He agreed that the report could be addressed in the subsequent meeting if it were not ready by that time. He noted that the BFCC Standing Committee usually met during the third or fourth week of each month, so this meeting was taking place one week early. The HCC report had to be compiled from many different sources, and it usually took at least three weeks to do so, so the team's difficulties were understandable.

Chair Arakawa stated that the submission of the HCC financial report would be deferred until the January meeting.

5. Presentation, Discussion, and Action on the L.A. Rams 2025 Program

Chair Arakawa explained that this was a program for 2025/2026 which had recently been approved by the Branding Standing Committee. He proposed a motion to approve the L.A. Rams 2025 program, subject to review by the HTA Finance and Procurement Department.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā noted that the other two standing committees (Branding and Ho'okahua) had approved the staff report, which proposed a two-year partnership for calendar years 2025 and 2026.

Chair Arakawa commented that the HTA could not bind itself to 2026 because that budget had not yet been approved, but the review by the Finance and Procurement Department would inform the Board whether finances would be available.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā was concerned to ensure that motions were consistent across the three committees.

Mr. Pfund seconded the motion.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā presented the information about this project, noting that Mr. White was the only committee member who had not yet seen the presentation. The staff requested the adoption of a two-year partnership with the L.A. Rams, with an annual base investment of \$1.1 million with a 3% escalator. The total investment would be \$3.865 million for the entire two-year partnership. Noting Chair Arakawa's comments about procurement, the staff's request included the statement that they would seek sourcing and procurement operations (SPO) approval for a sole source, subject to the availability of funds.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā recounted some highlights of the project, including premium associations with the L.A. Rams, "L.A. Rams At Home in the Hawaiian Islands," and "Official Island Getaway of the L.A. Rams," with the use of brand marks and marketing campaigns across the key platforms of the L.A. Rams. The project was to include a pre-season organized team activity (OTA) on Maui, including two public practices, a community day, and the creation of content related to the activities on Maui which would be distributed across the Rams' digital and social platforms. The project would also involve year-round marketing and end-game components.

Community enrichment was to be provided by youth-focused activities, including a football camp, a girls' flag football clinic, locker room refurbishment for a Maui high school, and brand integration in community events, as well as digital promotion. There would also be a workshop for athletic trainers with the L.A. Rams training staff, focusing on health and player safety, which was a timely topic given the issues with sports in general in Hawai'i.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā added that game-day entitlement would include an activation at one of the home games with high visibility of the brand, including LED displays, activations such as giving away lei to the first 500 attendees, music, and pre-game events outside the stadium. Year-round digital applications were important not only to Maui but also to marketing the whole of Hawai'i. An international expansion had also been negotiated aimed at leveraging the global presence in Japan, and this overlapped well with the Japan Global Marketing Team (GMT) as well as the U.S. West, Los Angeles, and California GMTs.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā considered that the partnership upheld the HTA Board's strategy, standing on the three legs of brand expansion and awareness, community benefits, and economic impact.

In terms of budgetary implications, the annual investment would be \$1.5 million with a 3% annual escalator, which would also include incremental payments for playoff games capped at \$360,000 per year, a contingency dependent on the Rams qualifying for the

playoffs. Payments were to be in two equal installments on April 30 and September 30 of each year. The source and amount of each payment over the two years of the partnership had been identified. For the first year, the payments would come from FY25 Program ID 115, budget line item (BLI) 346 amounting to \$955,000, along with a second payment from FY26 funds, Program ID 116, and BLI 346, also \$955,000. For the second year, assuming funds would be available, the breakdown would be the same: April 30, 2026, \$977,500 including the escalator. This was shown on a summary table.

	Date of payment	Fiscal Year	Program ID	Budget Line Item	Amount
For the 2025/2026 Season					
Payment 1:	April 30, 2025	FY25	115	346	\$955,000
Payment 2:	September 30, 2025	FY26	116	346	\$955,000
For the 2026-2027 Season:					
Payment 1:	April 30, 2026	FY26	116	TBD	\$977,500
Payment 2:	September 30, 2026	FY27	116	TBD	\$977,500

Mr. Ka'anā'anā gave a detailed breakdown of the costs as follows:

	2025–2026 Season	2026–2027 Season	Total
Base	\$1,500,000	\$1,545,000	\$3,045,000
Playoff Contingency	\$360,000	\$360,000	\$720,000
Miscellaneous Costs	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$100,000
Total	\$1,910,000	\$1,955,000	\$3,865,000

He explained that miscellaneous costs were costs to be incurred by the HTA for the oversight and implementation of the program, including costs associated with travel for the HTA representatives and activations such as photography, leis, and musicians.

The recommendation of the HTA staff was the adoption of the proposal.

Chair Arakawa asked whether any committee or Board members had questions for Mr. Ka'anā'anā.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā added that in the meeting of the Branding Standing committee the previous day, Mr. Choy had made clear that procurement forms had to be submitted by program

staff on or before January 15 2025 at the latest to comply with the April 30, 2025 date for the first payment.

Chair Arakawa asked whether Mr. Ka'anā'anā would be able to amend the staff report to include mention of this deadline before its presentation to the full HTA Board

Mr. Ka'anā'anā agreed to do so.

Chair Arakawa stated that during the previous day's meeting of the Branding Standing Committee it had been made clear that the legislature had not yet approved the budget with respect to the 26/27 payments. Therefore, approval of the partnership would be subject to the legislature approving the total budget, and any contract with the Rams which the Board approved must be "Subject to funding" because the HTA had no control over funding for FY26/27.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā agreed and pointed out that, for clarity, this should be added as a note below the proposal. Chair Arakawa responded that this information was in the committee Minutes, so they were aware of the issue, but the deadline of January 15, 2025, had to be added to the proposal. He emphasized for the benefit of the public, and for this to be noted in the Minutes, that FY26 and FY27 funding was not guaranteed and was subject to the will of the legislature.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā pointed out that this disclaimer appeared at the top of the request section of the staff report, in the second paragraph, and asked if he should repeat it in the budget section. Chair Arakawa asked for the opinion of other committee members.

Chair Arakawa mentioned that the HTA's core messaging and the 2024 Rams game event had been discussed during the previous day's meeting. He had been concerned that before, during, and after the game, and on television, no images of Hawai'i had appeared, and the Mayor of Maui had not even attended the game. Chair Arakawa asked if Mr. Ka'anā'anā could include a requirement for images of Hawai'i to be displayed in the language about the game-day entitlement.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā asked if Chair Arakawa was referring to the staff report or to the actual proposal.

Chair Arakawa clarified that these details must be in the staff report so that they would be included in the contract.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā asked whether Chair Arakawa implied that footage of Hawai'i should be included in the game-day entitlement and the digital amplification.

Chair Arakawa assented, and added that the core messaging, "The people, the place, the Hawaiian Islands" must also be included. He knew Dir. Tokioka considered that both marketing and presence at such events, in the U.S. and also overseas, were important, and asked Dir. Tokioka if he had any suggestions about what should be included to obtain the best value for investment.

Dir. Tokioka responded he had heard references to previous meetings, but he was concerned that in two previous Board meetings he had asked, firstly, whether this project was to be funded by emergency money and secondly, if not, where the funds had come from because the project had not been included in the 2024 budget.

Chair Arakawa explained that Dir. Tokioka was referring to the L.A. Activation, which had been discussed at the previous day's Branding Standing Committee meeting. The Chair noted that there were two L.A. Rams agenda items: one was this future partnership contract, and the other was the after-the-fact approval of the prior event during the September L.A. Activation. He explained that Dir. Tokioka's questions were the reasons why certain issues had been specified in detail in the current document, to avoid future confusion. The Chair asked Mr. Ka'anā'anā if he could clarify the report by answering the questions.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā stated that he understood the questions related to the source of the funds. Staff had identified available funds in terms of the FY, Program ID, and BLI. Additionally, regarding the execution of the contract, staff had defined a process and timeline leading to a deadline of January 15, 2025, for submission of SPO forms 17 and 55 as well as a procurement planning worksheet for solicitation. This documentation would clarify that funds had been identified and the correct process of application had been followed. Mr. Ka'anā'anā would specify in the staff report that the sports program would be a new contract, distinct and separate from the L.A. activation.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā, but reminded him that Dir. Tokioka's questions related to the source of the funds for the 2024 L.A. activation.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā stated that this was not his responsibility and deferred these questions to Mr. Nāho'opi'i as the Chief Brand Officer for the L.A. activation.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i stated that the answers to these questions would be presented at the meeting of the full Board.

Dir. Tokioka apologized for confusing the two different activations and looked forward to the detailed explanation at the full Board meeting. When Mr. Ka'anā'anā had been

reviewing the deliverables, the Director had become confused because he had assumed the discussion related to the September 2024 L.A. Activation.

Chair Arakawa commented that Dir. Tokioka's posing these questions at two previous Board meetings had caused staff to clarify the budget implications of the new project, ensuring that funds were not drawn from the emergency fund or other sources.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i believed that these questions from members of the BFCC committee would enhance the presentation of the project before the full HTA Board.

Mr. Choy believed that Mr. Pfund would appreciate his comment regarding the contingency of \$720,000 in the staff report. He noted that when budgetary accounting was done, \$360,000 would be reserved each year as a contingency. Mr. Choy advised program staff to avoid this type of contingency because if this amount were reserved in the budget and the Rams did not make the playoffs in December/January, it would be difficult for staff to redeploy the funds that were no longer needed. He recommended that contingencies should not be budgeted in the future because this prevented the HTA from utilizing the full number of available resources.

Chair Arakawa suggested that the playoff contingency should either be removed or expressed in different languages. He proposed that \$720,000 should be reserved for any sporting events taking place between November and February since the Rams might make the Super Bowl. The Chair added that he hoped that Mr. Ka'anā'anā would work with the procurement staff to determine how funds for contingencies should be defined.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā explained that the constraint in seeking SPO approval for procurement exemption was that they had to request the ceiling amount for the exemption. That was why he had included the contingency as well as the miscellaneous cost so that the entire annual amount of \$1.9 million would be SPO approved before further work was done. If the contingency were handled separately, there would have to be a separate set of procurement exemptions, doubling the administrative burden.

Chair Arakawa acknowledged that they had until January 15, 2025, and suggested discussing this later to avoid risking the \$720,000 lapse if the Rams did not make the playoffs. He expected that staff would work on the language in the interim,

Mr. Ka'anā'anā noted that \$360,000 was the annual amount in a given fiscal year, so \$360,000 out of an approximately \$7 million budget for sports was less than materiality.

Mr. Kishi suggested that if the Rams were not doing well in the middle of the season, staff could make recommendations to the Board.

Chair Arakawa appreciated that these issues were already being considered to ensure that the HTA provided as much funding as possible to all programs throughout the year.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i commented that Hawai'i would be part of the Super Bowl for a relatively small contribution if the Rams did well.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā asked Chair Arakawa to clarify his request for the timetable to be added to the section dealing with the budget because this task would fall to the finance and procurement team. Chair Arakawa confirmed that this was correct.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā also committed himself to updating the facts section to ensure it included core messaging, such as "The people, the place, the Hawaiian Islands," or other applicable core messages from the GMTs. Since Japan was also included in the partnership, Japan-specific messages such as, "It's got to be Hawai'i" could be included. He assured committee members that the requirement for Hawai'i footage to be included would also be incorporated.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā for his presentation.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā noted that a motion had been prepared for the meeting of the full HTA Board.

Chair Arakawa asked for any further questions or comments from committee members, Board members, or the public. Mr. Kishi confirmed that there were none.

Chair Arakawa asked Mr. Kishi to conduct the roll call vote. The motion included the phrase "subject to Finance and Procurement Department review." Mr. Kishi conducted the roll call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

6. Update on HTA Destination Manager Vacancies

Mr. Ka'anā'anā gave the presentation to Ms. Lindsay Sanborn, who had been helping manage the recruitment process.

Ms. Sanborn referred to a staff report in the committee packet. She pointed out that the HTA destination managers were key contributors in advancing projects aligned with the HTA strategic plan and the destination management action plans (DMAPs). As of September 10, 2024, recruitment had been taking place for the five positions for O'ahu, Hawai'i Island, Kaua'i, Maui and Lāna'i together, and Moloka'i. These positions would be supervised by the Chief Stewardship Officer (CSO), Mr. Ka'anā'anā, and they would be on-island in each case.

As of December 9, 2024, 31 applications had been received for the five established positions as follows:

- O’ahu 11
- Hawai’i Island 4
- Kaua’i 1
- Maui 2
- Moloka’i 3
- Unspecified 10

Ms. Sanborn noted that O’ahu and Hawai’i Island were more popular, while Kaua’i, Maui and Moloka’i received one, two, or three applications.

Ten out of the 31 applicants had been selected for interviews as of December 9, 2024, and five interviews had been completed. Two applicants had accepted other job offers, and one interview had been finished the previous afternoon. Three other applicants were pending schedule confirmations.

Ms. Sanborn listed the following interviews per island:

- O’ahu 5
- Hawai’i Island 1
- Kaua’i 1
- Maui 1
- Moloka’i 3

Again, O’ahu and Moloka’i were more popular than the other islands.

Meagan DeGaia and Patti Ornellas had already been hired on October 16, 2024, as Destination Managers for Maui/Lāna’i and Kaua’i, respectively.

The remaining destination managers were to be hired by February 2025 or earlier.

Dir Tokioka clarified that Ms. DeGaia and Ms. Ornellas had already done the job on the islands before the change was made to bring them into the HTA. They had previously been on TBB and MBB.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā added that a conditional offer had been made for the Hawai'i Island destination manager to be employed in January 2025, contingent on the completion of a background check.

Chair Arakawa asked whether there were any questions for Ms. Sanborn and thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā for the information about the Hawai'i Island manager. The Chair asked whether this was a person from the island bureau.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā replied that the person had been recruited through the recruitment process.

Chair Arakawa thanked Ms. Sanborn for her presentation and looked forward to filling the remaining positions.

7. Presentation and Discussion on the Progress of the Reservation System Report

Mr. Ka'anā'anā informed committee members that original plans for a smart tourism program had been paused when the legislation began to discuss this issue, and Kilohana had been asked to prepare a report. Mr. Ka'anā'anā asked Mr. Ka'ini Aranaydo, Kilohana's Senior Director of Operations, to lead the presentation.

Mr. Aranaydo greeted the Board members and stated that he had enjoyed his time with them during the previous three days' meetings. His presentation would provide an update on the status of the Hawai'i Smart Tourism app.

Chair Arakawa explained that detailed information was given in the handout for committee members.

Mr. Aranaydo stated that Kilohana had partnered with Sassato and its CEO, Mr. Dan Wacksman, to assess the feasibility and strategic approach for developing an app that would better manage Hawai'i as a destination. The HTA aimed to enhance visitor and resident experiences through a destination app that would leverage digital services to improve engagement, streamline operations, derive economic benefits, and manage the destination more effectively.

Mr. Aranaydo explained that the scope of work had been split into five different sections:

1. Gathering input from key industry stakeholders to complete about 100 interviews.
2. Evaluating related systems currently in use in Hawai'i.
3. Analyzing successful practices and challenges in similar apps both in and beyond Hawai'i.

4. Assessing potential marketing strategies, user acquisition approaches, and associated costs.
5. Identifying business requirements as well as technical and operational considerations.

Using this information, Sassato had analyzed and synthesized their findings to provide recommendations and actionable next steps. Mr. Aranaydo introduced the six members of the Sassato team, a group of experienced consultants with more than 100 years of experience in the travel and travel technology space and the Hawai'i market. Each person led a specific area, all contributing to each section. The project had been on an accelerated timeline of three months, and the team had worked hard to ensure that the final report would be delivered by December 31, 2024.

Mr. Aranaydo explained that Sassato had used a four-phase approach:

1. Research and discovery
2. Analysis
3. Functionality and technology
4. Final documentation and presentation

The team was currently in phase 4.

Mr. Aranaydo commented that Phase 1, research and discovery, was the most important phase, and a key goal had been to complete as many interviews as possible as early as possible. The results of the interviews would enable Sassato to assess the views and opinions of stakeholders, allowing them to appreciate the overriding issues better and conduct follow-up and integration during the remaining phases.

The greatest challenge had been to conduct all 100 interviews promptly. Mr. Aranaydo presented an outline of how the interview process had been arranged, noting that it had taken longer than expected. The scheduled starting date for the project had been September 1, 2024, but they had actually started on September 9, 2024. Interview letters had been sent out about two weeks later than expected. Although some people were quick to schedule interviews, many did not respond even after three attempts to contact them. However, Kilohana and the HTA were able to substitute a number of people, some of whom had been suggested by other stakeholders during their interviews.

The target date for completion of all 100 interviews had been set for November 15, 2024, but by the first week of December, just 72 interviews had been conducted. Mr. Aranaydo presented a pie chart to show the status of the interviews. Out of the 102 stakeholders

who had been invited to interviews, 72 interviews had been completed. He noted that they were to make a final attempt to conduct the last interviews earlier in the present week, so the number of completed interviews was expected to increase slightly.

Mr. Aranaydo presented the breakdown of interviewed persons by category. He displayed two pie charts illustrating the 102 listed stakeholders: one showing those who had been invited and the second showing those who had been successfully interviewed. Stakeholders were divided into five categories as follows:

- Tourism
- Government
- Community
- Suppliers such as hotels and car rentals
- Apps and technology

The team had a good rate of completion of the pre-interview survey and managed to complete the interview process with at least 60-70% of those in each category. This information helped to direct the research and analysis sections of the project.

Chair Arakawa apologized for not responding to the interview request and affirmed that there would be at least one more Board member to interview. He emphasized that all the Board members supported creating a Smart Tourism app and asked for a deadline to respond to the interview. He was convinced that the Smart Tourism app would increase visitors' enjoyment of the islands.

Mr. Aranaydo responded that the team had sent out the final reminders on December 11 and that another two interviews would ensure the completion of the interview phase.

Mr. Aranaydo explained that the team had focused on six different areas:

- Benchmark and best practices for the app
- Current systems – developing a list of relevant Hawai'i apps
- Potential partners
- Business requirements – developing a list of requirements for participating businesses
- Technical and operational aspects
- Recommendations and next steps

Mr. Aranaydo gave a preview of the four slides to be presented to the full HTA Board on December 19, 2024. The Kilohana team met with Sassato that morning to review the entire presentation and ensure that the best possible product would be presented to the HTA Board. During the project, the Sassato team met with Kilohana staff every week to provide weekly updates and ensure they were on task and on schedule. Mr. Aranaydo gave an example of a slide presented by Sassato at a weekly update session.

After this meeting, Mr. Aranaydo informed committee members that the next step would be to finalize the report to be presented to the HTA Board on December 19. In addition, he was happy to report that the team was on track and on time to present the final report by December 31, 2024.

Chair Arakawa thanked Mr. Aranaydo and asked whether any committee or Board members had questions.

Dir. Tokioka thanked Mr. Aranaydo for the presentation and noted that the committee chairs in the House and Senate had asked to be interviewed since they had been instrumental in funding the app project. He inquired if the Sassato team had reached out to these chairs to understand their mindset during their approval of the funding for this app.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā replied that Rep. Quinlan and Sen. DeCoite had been consulted throughout the process. Dir. Tokioka pointed out that the process was nearing its end and expressed the hope that these legislators had been consulted initially.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā confirmed that the team had also spoken with the chairs of the finance committees, the Speaker, and the Senate President.

Dir. Tokioka thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā. He commented that this was a praiseworthy project but would like to know its cost.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā responded that the cost was \$207,253.

Dir. Tokioka asked how much had been budgeted to develop the entire app, and Mr. Ka'anā'anā replied that it was a little over \$3 million.

Dir. Tokioka then inquired about annual maintenance costs after the start, and Mr. Ka'anā'anā replied that the initial allotment would be about \$1.5 million.

Dir. Tokioka commented that he had not heard anyone say that this was not a good idea, but while not wishing to criticize either the CNHA or Kilohana, he was concerned about the amount of money that had been spent, both on the governance report and on this process of app development. The Director felt that a few people, including those funding the project, could have accomplished much of what had been achieved through the interviews

by being locked in a room together. He did not intend to diminish any of the work done because Dan Wacksman and his team had worked very hard, but it was incumbent on him to make this comment.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i responded that, beyond the interviews, much data had been collected regarding a literature review of existing technology, which would be helpful in writing up the request for proposal (RFP) and evaluate the potential bidders. The team had been concerned to ensure creation of the most appropriate app and evaluate the procurement process to select the right person for the project.

Dir. Tokioka thanked Mr. Nāho'opi'i, and repeated that he had felt it necessary to voice his concerns. The Director hoped that this project would lead to the development of a better app and that everyone could stop guessing how it should be.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā mentioned that the report to be presented to the Board on December 19 would be a robust document comprising over 240 pages. As Mr. Nāho'opi'i had mentioned, everyone interviewed had different opinions, so it was important to understand the requirements before entering the procurement phase. His suggestion would be to conduct a request for information (RFI) before conducting an RFP. He believed this needed to be done slowly because the development of the app would be a significant investment. It would also involve a long-term commitment in terms of continual security upgrades of the app and regular updates of the content to ensure that it would be of value and use to visitors.

Chair Arakawa referred to the section of the report listing areas of focus and mentioned a search for potential partners. He noted that apps drove visitors into specific destinations or commercial visitor areas, which could be described as potential vendors. Vice Chair Agas, who operated a visitor industry business, and Mr. White had both asked whether this would be covered. Mr. Ka'anā'anā mentioned the long-term operation, maintenance, and upgrades costs. The Chair asked whether possible partners had been contacted and whether they had expressed interest in partnering or funding part of the app.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā explained that there were two types of partners. One set of partners would be mentioned on page 111 of the report to be presented to the Board, and the partners who could build the app would be included. Different companies had different strengths, so once there was clarity around the requirements for the app, a team might have to be assembled to ensure hiring the right partners.

The second set of partners operated activities, hotels, restaurants, and other visitor-based businesses. This group had not yet been considered on the list of potential partners. Mr.

Ka'anā'anā felt that it would be premature to include them now since the team was still trying to gauge from the interviews whether there would be an interest in partnering. Mr. Ka'anā'anā also noted that the study did not include end-users, meaning that potential travelers to Hawai'i had not been interviewed.

Chair Arakawa suggested discussing this offline, noting it might be a missed opportunity. Mr. Ka'anā'anā commented that it might be a future phase to be planned for, but it had not been part of the present remit for Sassato.

Chair Arakawa stated that if there were to be an RFI and companies were to bid on this contract, it would be beneficial for them to be aware of the user and industry perspectives. Mr. Nāho'opī'i mentioned that this could be a part of the scope of work for the potential RFP.

Chair Arakawa asked Ms. Agas if she had been interviewed for the project. Mr. Ka'anā'anā requested Ms. Agas to repeat her comments as they were inaudible.

Ms. Agas responded that discussions took a bricks-and-mortar approach when she joined the Board in 2022. She understood that this app was much more elevated than that approach. She understood Dir. Tokioka's point of view was that the costs were astonishing. However, she had been amazed by what had already been accomplished and the amount of data that had been collected from various users. She realized that carrying out these exercises was costly since she had been involved in a process similar to creating a storyline of experiences. The technology was fabulous but very expensive to produce and maintain. Once the app was operational, Ms. Agas believed that it might be possible to mitigate the maintenance costs, but it was important to establish a broad base before getting into further developments. Ensuring that their stories were accurate and visitors received the best stories was necessary.

Ms. Agas had participated in the survey and believed there might be components that could mitigate long-term costs, but the basic steps had to be completed. She agreed that the project was expensive but believed it would be amazing once the product was completed. Ms. Agas wholeheartedly applauded this project.

Dir. Tokioka asked whether the goal was to commercialize or monetize the app so that the upgrades could be financed. They were all aware that the app would be outdated in three years.

Mr. Aranaydo replied that all the points that committee members had mentioned were discussed in their report. He agreed that this would be a significant investment. The study also examined how Disney managed visitors to their attractions, but the team realized that

there was a major difference between Disney and this app. Disney resorts had a controlled environment, whereas this app would be statewide with less control. All these points were to be addressed in the report to be presented to the full HTA Board. The report would also contain recommendations by Sassato and Kilohana for the next actionable steps.

Chair Arakawa thanked Dir. Tokioka and asked him to explain what he meant by monetizing the app. Dir. Tokioka responded that Mr. Aranaydo had already answered one part of his question, but the second part was whether the app would be subsidized by paid advertising.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā stated that discussions were going on about the mechanism to monetize the app to pay for its ongoing maintenance. He was uncertain how the legislature would regard the ongoing support of the app, but he commented that if the app came into operation, its maintenance would become a budget line item in the base budget.

Mr. Choy commented that the idea of monetizing the app was to encourage commercial entities to support the app so that it would pay for itself.

Chair Arakawa added that this corresponded to the practice of government departments setting aside money to upgrade or replace computers. In the same way, a line item in the HTA budget would relate to the maintenance and upgrades of the app.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā mentioned that the team had discussed this. The study attempted to determine the cost per download, the cost of building and maintaining the app and attracting people to download it. The total cost per download came to more than \$4 per person. This meant that achieving the type of adoption they hoped for would require a significant investment. Sassato had studied other apps across Hawai'i and found that one of the best and most downloaded apps in Hawai'i was the Hawaiiinewsnow app, with around 144,000 downloads. This number was minuscule compared to what might be desired as a visitor destination, given the volume of visitation.

Chair Arakawa appreciated that these issues were to be covered in the final report. He thanked Mr. Ka'anā'anā for considering asking for an RFI, and for proposing a line item in the budget to cover ongoing costs of the app. Partners could be sought to mitigate the costs. He congratulated the team on the technology and agreed with Ms. Agas that it was the way of the future.

Chair Arakawa thanked everyone involved in the presentation and said he looked forward to hearing more details at the Board meeting on December 19.

Mr. Ka'anā'anā stated that this rounded up the stewardship items and thanked committee members for their attention.

8. Presentation and Discussion on the Progress of EDA’s Non-Competitive State Tourism Grant under the American Rescue Plan Act

Chair Arakawa stated that Agenda Item No. 8 was to be deferred.

9. Presentation, Discussion, and Action on HTA Budget Issues, Comments, and Suggestions Raised by Legislators, Board Members, Staff, Stakeholders, etc., including:

Chair Arakawa introduced Agenda Item No. 9, which had several subdivisions relating to requests for updates by the finance department. The Chair called for Agenda Item No. 9e.

a. Status Update on the Fiscal Biennium 2025-2027 Budget Request to the Legislature

b. HTA Policies and Procedures for Communications Regarding HTA Budget, including Prompt Transmittal to Board, Timely Responses, and Follow-up Actions

c. 2023 Legislative Audit Pursuant to HRS 23-13

i. Status and Budget, Finance, and Accounting Issues

d. Tourism Emergency Special Fund

i. Status of Use of the Tourism Emergency Special Fund

ii. Policies, Procedures, and Reports Relating to the Use of the Tourism Emergency Special Fund

e. Wildfire Incremental Budget Requests

i. Update on Campaign Effectiveness, Cost/Benefit Ratio, and ROI for Wildfire Incremental Budget Requests

Dr. Aaron Salā, the President/CEO of the Hawai’i Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB), gave a presentation on the campaign effectiveness, cost/benefit ratio, and return on investment (ROI) for the wildfire incremental budget requests. He began by thanking committee members for allowing him to present this summary of the results of the incremental funds for wildfire recovery made available by the HTA to HVCB. Details of the report had been made available to the HTA staff and, through the staff, to Board members. Dr. Salā acknowledged the work done by Mr. Jay Talwar and Mr. Jeffrey Eslinger from the HVCB team to ensure that all the details of this report were accurate.

Dr. Salā reminded committee members that three separate U.S. marketing Maui recovery plans (MRP) had been sponsored by the HTA as follows:

Plan	Total amount	Source of funds
MRP I	\$2,600,000	FY24 in Emergency Special Funds

MRP II	\$2,950,000	
	1. \$1,350,000	General Funds (FY24)
	2. \$1,350,000	Emergency Special Funds (FY24)
	3. \$250,000	General Funds (FY25)
MRP III	\$100,000	Emergency Special Funds for FY24

Maui Recovery Plan I ran from August to November 2023. Dr. Salā presented a graph showing interest in visiting Hawai'i in the following two years, beginning from 2015 as a baseline until the Maui fires in August 2023. The graph showed the effect of the fires on reported interest in a visit to Hawai'i.

Dr. Salā noted that the baseline for 2015 took into account the role played by different types of accommodation. Airbnb was launched in 2008 in San Francisco, and in April 2014, the enterprise received a \$450 million infusion from TPG Capital in addition to a \$10 billion infusion around 2014/2015. Short-term rentals such as Airbnb and VRBO have become important in the visitor industry in that environment. This new type of accommodation made it easier to travel to various destinations worldwide, and from 2015 and 2016, it created a level of volatility in the travel industry.

By 2018, interest in visiting Hawai'i in the next two years had leveled at around 64%. However, in August 2023, this interest was reduced to 62% owing to the Maui fires. Dr. Salā noted that MMGY, the source for these data, generally engaged with visitors who traveled by car, and Mr. Eslinger had culled information relevant to Hawai'i as a destination.

Dr. Salā explained that these data had been further distilled to examine U.S. travelers' interest in visiting Hawai'i, specifically Maui, on a two-week rolling average between August 1 and November 19, 2023. This showed a dramatic decrease in intent to travel to Maui due to several factors.

Dr. Salā summarized the timeline as follows:

- August 8 The wildfires occurred.
Acting Governor Sylvia Luke issued an emergency proclamation extending the emergency to all counties, suspending all marketing, discouraging all non-essential travel to Maui, and asking all visitors to leave Maui.
- August 13 Proclamation#5 stated that all travel to Maui was strongly discouraged.

- August 16 Proclamation#6 stated that all non-essential travel to West Maui was strongly discouraged until August 31.
- August 21 The HTA was asked to resume marketing using the Mālama messaging.
- August 22 Governor Green asked visitors to avoid West Maui but emphasized the importance of travel to the rest of Maui and other Hawaiian Islands.
- August 31 The HTA Board approved \$2.6 million for funding Maui recovery.
- September 8 Governor Green announced an October 8 reopening of West Maui.
- September 27 Mayor Bissen announced a phased reopening of West Maui.
- October 24 Mayor Bissen announced that phases 2 and 3 would begin on November 1.

Dr. Salā added that challenges in bringing visitors back to Maui included different types of communications from the State government, County government, and the community and resident population through social media, coupled with influencers like Jason Momoa and The Rock advising visitors not to come to Maui. A volatile environment was created by large quantities of conflicting information.

The ideas about visiting Maui that were shaped by social media created an environment where visitors were confused. At one point, the following situation occurred:

- 45% of those who intended to travel to Maui had not yet booked their trip but intended to do so
- 29% said that they would not be booking a trip
- 11% reported that they would still travel as planned.

Those who had not yet booked a trip to Hawai'i gave the following reasons for no longer traveling to Hawai'i:

- High costs of changing fees.....45%
- Respect for victims and residents of Lahaina38%
- Concern for family and personal safety.....17%.

The overall approach to the ecosystem was volatile, with people making decisions based on noise rather than a sustained message.

Dr. Salā presented separate graphs showing the effect of this lack of sustained information on Maui and West Maui. Tabulations of room nights booked showed reductions of 40%, 60%, and 47% in future bookings of rooms, indicating a dramatic reduction of activity in the tourism space.

Dr. Salā reported that the budget of the Maui recovery plan No.1 (MRP#1), running from mid-August to November 2023, amounted to \$2.6 million, distributed as follows:

- Consumer messaging.....\$1,700,000
- Travel trade.....\$300,000
- Meetings, conventions, and incentives (MCI)\$600,000

The recovery campaign utilized consumer direct, organic, and paid social media on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The tactic was never to respond point for point; for instance, when Jason Momoa posted on Facebook, “Don’t come to Maui,” the response had not been to counter him directly but to revert to tried-and-true messaging that was ultimately Hawai’i. The campaign focused on consumer direct, virtual media announcements, e-newsletters, and GoHawai’i Mālama Maui content and updates.

The team had worked with Ms. Lynn Whitehead and her team at Meet Hawai’i to retain and develop existing businesses. There had also been the education of travel trade wholesalers and potential visitors. Dr. Salā emphasized the importance of Meet Hawai’i and MCI because tourism started in the State with group travel, allowing them to curate the type of traveler needed during a recovery period.

Dr. Salā explained that it was important to consider redesigning and reinvigorating the visitor industry for an ROI in the meeting space that would be exponential for the kind of activity in the Hawai’i visitor industry moving forward into 2025/2026. The work of Ms. Whitehead and the Meet Hawai’i team would be vital for this campaign.

Meeting the expectations of the *Kama’āina* was a challenge. Dr. Salā recalled a conversation with a matriarch of the Hula Island of Maui, who, after the fire, expressed the need to “Bring joy back to Maui.” She saw joy as tied to the visitor industry, and this was a reminder that the events in Maui were a human tragedy.

While travel industry professionals were examining graphs and numbers, the wildfires had ultimately affected their *Kanaka*, their people, and their *āina*. Team members asked the residents to speak about their experiences and their desires for how Maui should recover. These voices had been used to quiet the noise and represent Maui residents.

This approach has led to outstanding results on social media:

- **Consumer Messaging via Social Media:**
 - Placements on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X:
 - Cumulative Targets: 142,626,141 Total Impressions Gained and 31 posts
 - Cumulative Actuals: 145,416,599 Total Impressions Gained and 67 posts
 - Overall Targets hit and exceeded by an average of 158.99%
- **Consumer Messaging via Public Relations:**
 - Media interactions, media visits, and earned placements:
 - Cumulative Targets: 327 Measures
 - Cumulative Actuals: 352 Measures
 - Overall Targets hit and exceeded by an average of 107.96%
- **Travel Trade Cooperative and Messaging through Airline/Hotel Cooperative:**
 - Partners: Hawaiian, Alaska, Southwest, Marriott, Hilton
 - Cumulative Actuals: 278,893,175 total Impressions
- **Trade Media:**

Due to the limited availability of quality inventory, the budget had shifted to training and education:

 - Cumulative Actuals: 445,388 Total Impressions
- **MCI Programs & Partnerships:**
 - Ms. Whitehead, Ms. Orton, and their teams collaborated to move meetings to different locations and ensure no business was lost. They minimized the loss of scheduled groups and retained contracted meetings, representing \$70 million in economic impact to the State.
They had engaged with six strategic partnerships on integrated sales and marketing recovery plans.
 - There had been partnerships with NorthStar, SITE, Helms Briscoe, HPN Global, CEMA, and IRF:
 - Cumulative Actuals = 1,773,486 Total Impressions

This had been a team effort for which the HVCB and HTUSA could not take sole credit. For instance, United Airlines flew empty planes with supplies as part of a community effort to

ensure the entire ecosystem's success. This was made possible due to the directive and support from the HTA, which enabled the HVCB to leverage the community to unite for the success of a purpose greater than themselves.

The Maui Recovery Plan No. 2 (MRP#2) had run from January to June 2024. Dr. Salā presented graphics to illustrate the two-week rolling average of intent to travel to Hawai'i and Maui between January and May 2024. HTUSA had been responsible for developing effective messaging to elevate the entire travel industry. In March 2024, they had launched in-market paid digital and social campaigns, followed by a cooperative campaign in May 2024, which influenced the intent to travel among U.S. target travelers.

A graph illustrates interest in traveling to Hawai'i between 2015 and 2024. The base platform showed approximately 64% interest, which decreased to less than 60% during the pandemic. Immediately after the pandemic, in February 2021, pent-up demand led to an increase in travel. However, after the Maui wildfires, interest in traveling to Hawai'i and Maui declined. MMGY, which examined U.S. traveler behavior, attributed the subsequent increase to the marketing program.

Dr. Salā stated that Maui was still recovering and presented a tabulation of Maui room nights booked as of June 23, 2024. This data showed that bookings for January 2025 had decreased less significantly, indicating an increase. This was believed to be a result of the impact of the marketing campaign on the marketplace, and the intention was to sustain this over time. The same information for West Maui was also tabulated, showing that, particularly in the first quarter of 2025, there had been an upward trend. The work commissioned by the HTA and carried out by the HVCB had proved effective in mitigating the downward trend.

The budget for MRP#2 from January to June 2024 was as follows:

- Consumer Direct: \$2,200,000
- Public Relations:..... \$350,000
- Travel Trade: \$400,000
- Total: \$2,950,000

MRP #2 utilized similar approaches to MRP#1, including proactive pitching, international media marketplaces, virtual media blitzes, Bay Area blitzes, a San Francisco experiential event, consumer engagement activities, the *Kupa'āina* series, and the Ola Maui campaign. These efforts focused on creating awareness that Maui was ready to welcome visitors. The team also continued to conduct travel trade education.

Dr. Salā mentioned that the marketing campaign avoided the concept that “Maui was open,” which appeared to compare Maui to a 7/11 store. However, Maui was again open to receiving visitors, and these efforts were conducted through Governor Green's and Mayor Bissen's leadership.

Dr. Salā gave details of the targets and results for MRP#2 (January to June 2024):

- **Consumer Messaging via Social Media:**
 - Cumulative Targets: 83,342,650 total impressions and 38 posts
 - Cumulative Actuals: 241,495,943 total impressions and 10 posts
 - Overall Targets: Exceeded by an average of 173.33%

Dr. Salā noted that marketing efforts successfully created awareness that Hawai'i welcomed visitors, including Maui, while maintaining appropriate caveats about precautions. Visitors were still encouraged to travel to Hawai'i and Maui.

Dr. Salā informed committee members that Maui Recovery Plan No. 3 (MRP#3) ran from mid-October to mid-November 2024 and continued to maintain awareness in the marketplace. 67% of those polled expressed interest in visiting Hawai'i. There was a dramatic improvement in the number of total room nights booked and consumed for Maui, showing that the reduction in visitor numbers decreased due to the effectiveness of marketplace messaging.

The perception that the HVCB represented the industry had presented a significant challenge for the team. On the contrary, the actual function of the HVCB was to execute strategies determined by the HTA, to elevate the entire visitor industry ecosystem. Dr. Salā commented that many hotels charged a very high average daily rate (ADR), and the HVCB had advised these hotels to consider the impact of such high ADRs on visitor numbers, particularly for Maui. This feedback effected a reality check for the industry, resulting in a reduction of ADRs after the saturation of the Los Angeles activation.

The MRP#3 consumer-direct budget was \$100,000, with the total amount allocated to creating a partnership program intended to direct qualified consumer traffic to Hawai'i's special offers landing page. On this page, Maui was featured as the lead in a statewide promotion involving 150 industry partners representing 171 vetted offers. Of these, 43 Maui partners had participated, contributing 49 individual Maui offers. The campaign targeted West Coast markets, including Los Angeles, San Francisco, the Bay Area, Seattle, and the Pacific Northwest region.

Dr. Salā gave details of the targets and results of MRP#3 (mid-October to mid-November 2024).

- Pre-plan Estimated KPI..... 25,868,537 Impressions (estimated on industry average)
- Post-plan Delivered KPI..... 31,027,446 Impressions (actualized)

The expansion of Hawai'i Special Offers Partner Program to targeted West Coast consumers has produced the following results:

LOCATION	IMPRESSIONS
SF/Bay Area	20,389,604
Seattle/PNW	10,637,842
TOTAL	31,027,446

Dr. Salā thanked the committee members and reminded them they could obtain more details from Ms. Kaho'ohanohanoa and Mr. Nāho'opi'i.

Chair Arakawa thanked Dr. Salā and asked if he realized the Board had not specifically approved the University of Hawai'i (UH)/Chaminade basketball games. One game had been held in Maui, and the HTA had been credited for sponsoring it. The Chair inquired whether this game had been part of the Maui Recovery Project.

Dr. Salā responded that he was not certain and would need to find out.

Chair Arakawa suggested that perhaps Ms. Anderson would have more information about the UH/Chaminade men's and women's games. The Chair was unsure whether tourists would have attended or if people would have traveled from the West Coast for a UH/Chaminade game on Maui. He recalled that the Board had approved a sports event but not that particular one.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i clarified that the sports event approved by the Board had been the Maui Invitational.

Chair Arakawa asked Ms. Anderson if the game had been part of the report. She responded that it was not. The Chair commented that this could be reported separately and thanked Dr. Salā for his report.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i connected Dr. Salā's report to the Los Angeles saturation effort, which was discussed in greater detail at the Board meeting the following week. He explained that the L.A. saturation activation occurred between MRP#2 and MRP#3 and had a significant effect. Although Dr. Salā's report concluded in December 2024, data from the second quarter of 2025 and beyond showed, as Mr. Talwar and Dr. Salā had mentioned, that a slight positive

effect had extended into the first quarter of 2025. Mr. Nāho'opi'i noted the need to determine whether further intervention was necessary or if the natural progression of the market in response to the continuation of the general branding pattern would suffice. He emphasized that the data provided by HTUSA would enable the HTA staff and Board to analyze the market pattern.

Chair Arakawa thanked the HTA staff and HVCB for their responsiveness regarding the West Coast activation. He noted that this effort had begun after Mr. Nāho'opi'i had given a presentation on the past, present, and future of marketing. At the same time, Chair Arakawa had received comments from several hotels in the Kā'anapali region reporting that summer and fall bookings had not met expectations. These hotels had appealed for assistance, and this had led to the initiation by the HTA staff of the West Coast Activation. The Chair acknowledged that these hotels were now reporting improvements but remained uncertain about the full impact of the saturation program. He expressed the need for additional analysis in the coming months to determine these activities' success and return on investment (ROI). The Chair remained grateful to the HTA staff and to the HVCB for their attention to Hawai'i's largest market.

Dr. Salā stated he was proud of the team's efforts even as the HTA looked forward to analyzing the success of these activations. He commended the HTA team for their stellar performance, noting that much of the work had been completed before his appointment to the HVCB. He thanked Mr. Nāho'opi'i, Ms. Imai, Mr. Talwar, Mr. Eslinger, and their entire team. He acknowledged the time constraint, as they had been given only four weeks to organize a saturation activation. With more time, they could have engaged a larger segment of the visitor industry. He emphasized that continued success would depend on the ability to plan a series of saturation efforts.

Chair Arakawa thanked Dr. Salā for the excellent points he had made during the previous and previous day's presentations. He acknowledged that the team had been directed to execute a task within a very short time frame and noted that the HVCB team had been encouraged to redirect their attention to alternative projects. He expressed optimism about future collaboration. He mentioned that when the ROI would have been calculated, further discussions would take place.

Dr. Salā thanked Chair Arakawa.

ii. Status of Contracts and Payments for all Wildfire Branding Incremental Requests

f. HTA Budget & Finance Issues, Policies and Procedures

- i. **HTA Past Due Accounts: Status; Budget & Finance Policies and Procedures, and Reporting**
- ii. **HTA Contract Modifications: Status and Discussion; Budget & Finance Policies and Procedures, Board Approval, and Reporting**
- iii. **HTA Executive Employment Contracts and Bonuses: Status and Budget & Finance Policies and Procedures, Board Approval, and Reporting**
- iv. **HTA Travel Policies: Status and Discussion on Budget & Finance Policies and Procedures, Approval, and Reporting**

g. Hawai'i Convention Center Budget & Finance Issues

Mr. Nāho'opi'i suggested to Chair Arakawa that the committee could either discuss the Canada Agenda Item, for which he had some preliminary information, or defer it and move on to the next topic.

Chair Arakawa inquired whether any other major agenda items remained, and Mr. Nāho'opi'i replied that Ms. Anderson was scheduled to present a report about the EDA grants.

Chair Arakawa asked if Ms. Anderson would present this report at the full Board meeting the following week.

Ms. Anderson stated that she did not recall and would ask Mr. Nāho'opi'i for clarification.

Chair Arakawa remarked that it might fall under the CEO's report.

Mr. Nāho'opi'i confirmed that this item would be included in the CEO's report.

Chair Arakawa noted that everything else on the agenda, including the EDA report listed as Agenda Item No. 8, could be deferred until the full Board meeting. He stated that all other items under Agenda Item No. 9 could also be deferred. He reminded the Finance and Procurement Departments of the HTA to prepare updates on these matters for the next meeting. The Chair confirmed that all Agenda Items under No. 9 would be deferred to the following month's meeting for updates from the HTA staff.

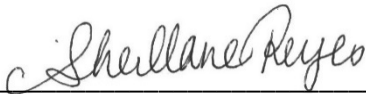
Mr. Choy referred to Agenda Item No. 9f, characterizing it as a very important agenda item for which the Finance Department would need to coordinate with the Administrative and Audit Committee. He expressed his preference that in the future, Agenda Item No. 9f should be discussed in an executive session, as it involves legal requirements that require consultation with an attorney.

Referring to all the items under Agenda Item No. 9, Chair Arakawa reminded committee members that the HTA was undergoing two audits at that time. He clarified that the audits were not due to any wrongdoing but were required by statute and State law. The Chair explained that the auditors had already raised the items under Agenda Item No. 9, which was why they had been included on the agenda.

10. Adjournment

Chair Arakawa moved to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Agas seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sheillane Reyes
Recorder