Ke'ena Kuleana Ho'opipa O Hawai'i
1801 Kal ā kaua Avenue
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96815
kelepona tel 808 973 2255
kelepa'i fax 808 973 2253
hawaiitourismauthority.org

BRANDING STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING
HAWAI'I TOURISM AUTHORITY
Monday, December 12, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting

MINUTES OF THE BRANDING STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Blaine Miyasato (Chair), Kimberly Agas, David Arakawa, Mufi Hannemann, Roy Pfund
MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:	Chris West
HTA STAFF PRESENT:	Daniel Nāhoʻopiʻi, Kalani Kaʻanāʻanā, Isaac Choy, Caroline Anderson, Jadie Goo, Iwalani Kūaliʻi Kahoʻohanohano, Trishia Mendoza
GUESTS:	Jay Talwar, Aaron Salā, Kaʻiʻini Aranaydo
LEGAL COUNSEL:	John Cole

1. **Call to Order**

   Chair Miyasato called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m.

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

   Ms. Kahoʻohanohano did the roll call, and members were confirmed in attendance by themselves.

3. **Opening Protocol**

   Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi did the opening cultural protocol.

4. **Approval of Minutes of July 23, August 19, September 9, and November 21, 2024 Branding Standing Committee Meetings**

Mr. Hannemann moved to approve the minutes, and Mr. Pfund seconded the motion. Ms. Kahoʻohanohano conducted the roll call, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. (Agenda Item 6) Presentation, Discussion, and Action on the LA Rams 2025 Program

Chair Miyasato stated that he intended to take Agenda Item 6 first because he believed that this item would require more discussion than Item 5. He explained that both items aligned with his idea of branding, which consisted of starting with a vision and continuing with a message to drive a strategy and a plan. Financial input would follow these processes, reflecting how the real world and the legislature operated.

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano introduced Agenda Item No. 6, a presentation on the LA Rams 2025 Program given by the HTA Chief Stewardship Officer, Mr. Kalani Kaʻanāʻanā, to be followed by discussion and action.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā expressed gratitude for being back in the Branding Standing Committee since Sports fell under Program ID 115, which was within his purview as CSO. He was seeking approval for a two-year partnership with the LA Rams, with a total budget of $3.8 million. He outlined the three pillars of the HTA sports strategy: brand extension and alignment, community benefits, and economic benefits.

This proposal contained a large marketing component with the premium associations, "LA Rams At Home in the Hawaiian Islands," "Official Island Getaway of the LA Rams," and other marketing partnerships.

It was hoped that the Rams' Organized Team Activities (OTA), their term for pre-season practice, would take place in Maui in Year One of the program. Community engagement and benefits would include a football camp, a girls' flag football clinic, refurbishment of the locker room of a local high school, and an athletic trainer workshop focused on health and player safety, aiming to share the Rams' excellence with Hawaiʻi athletic staff and trainers. With girls' flag football now an official sport, this presented a good alignment for the HTA.

Game day entitlements for branding would include social media and stadium activations, a Hawaiʻi Day, and Hawaiian-themed gameday elements such as lei music. Media inclusions and pregame activations at the stadium were also planned.

The proposal included year-round digital amplification, such as sweepstakes. International expansion aimed to leverage the Rams' global presence in Japan through a partnership with digital channels, making the HTA an official partner of the LA Rams in Japan.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā pointed out that the main value of this proposal was an extension of the HTA brand, bringing alignment and awareness not only to the key source market in the U.S. but also to other demographic areas during the postseason.

The community benefits of the proposal were focused on Maui as the island continued to recover from the wildfires. Regarding economic impact, the Rams' team was expected to travel with about 150 staff, players, support teams, family members, and other supporters. The Rams were already collaborating with their partners to develop tour passages.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā had discussed the proposal both with Mr. Jay Talwar, the Senior Vice President of Marketing of the Hawaiʻi Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB), and his team, and with Mr. Eric Takahata, the Managing Director of Hawaiʻi Tourism Japan (HTJ), and his team to ensure that they were also aligned. These leaders were already working on written positions, which Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā had asked them to prepare. OMB, the media buyer, was also asked to make their own assessment to ensure everything was verified.

Budget implications:

The base investment was to be $1.5 million per year with a 3% annual escalator.

There were to be some incremental costs above this base investment, but they would be capped at $360,000 per year and would depend on whether the team engaged in post-season rounds.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā stated that payments were to be made on April 30 and September 30 of each year as follows:

	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. Kaʻanāʻanā also presented a table summarizing the expenditure in both years:

	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**

The base costs were to cover all the elements of the proposal, excluding the playoff contingency, which referred to marketing-related expenses if the Rams were to reach the Playoffs.

Miscellaneous costs were program evaluation, travel, activations such as photography, leis, and musicians, and travel for the HTA representatives.

The budgets for each year were $1.9 million and $1.95 million for a total of $3.865 million.

The recommendation of the HTA staff was to adopt this proposal so that they could conduct more detailed work on the proposal.

Chair Miyasato thanked Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā and opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Arakawa asked whether this agenda item was a 2025 proposal, and Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā confirmed it was Agenda Item No. 6.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā added that in the heading for the proposal, he had corrected a typographical error, which had given the budget as $3.7 million rather than the correct amount based on the detailed budget.

Mr. Hannemann had been able to ask questions the previous day when the proposal had been presented to the Hoʻokahua Standing Committee. He believed it was a solid proposal addressing the current policy to encourage national, state, and local sports. The HTA has already achieved notable success with similar initiatives. This proposal followed up on the successful saturation activation conducted in Los Angeles with Governor Green, Mayor Bissen of Maui, and Senate Tourism Chair Lynn DeCoite. These leaders had heard the Rams' sincere interest in partnering with Hawaiʻi, especially Maui.

Mr. Hannemann recalled that the Pro Bowl had formerly taken place in Hawaiʻi with 50,000 people in the stands and regretted that there was now no stadium that could accommodate it. This proposal was the next best thing and would maintain the relationship with the NFL while providing an opportunity for sports tourism from Hawaiʻi's number one base market, Southern California. Mr. Hannemann anticipated questions about economic impact but believed it was a program worthy of support, aligning positive comments from the Governor, the Mayor, and Sen DeCoite.

Mr. Hannemann noted that Maui needed this initiative since visitor numbers had not rebounded as expected. The proposal also had a regenerative tourism aspect in terms of community engagement. He noted that girls' flag football was to be designated a statewide sport for the first time and would have a clinic in addition to the boys' clinic for regular football.

He also noted that the proposal presented an opportunity to link with HTJ since the Rams hoped to strengthen their relationship with Japan. This aspect was discussed with Mr. Takahata, who considered it a means of encouraging Japanese travel.

Chair Miyasato stated that he would take questions in the order in which hands had been raised.

Mr. Isaac Choy, the HTA Vice President in charge of Finance, reminded committee members that the Finance Department would give the final approval for this program. Mr. Choy added that the Finance Department could not do so at present as there were issues with programs that lacked funds. He requested time to ensure funds would be available and asked about the staff lead if the program was approved.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā confirmed that he would be the staff lead.

Mr. Choy asked when the paperwork would be presented to the procurement department.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā replied that this would occur as soon as the Board approved the proposal.

Mr. Choy noted that the first payment had been scheduled for April 30, 2025. He reminded the committee members that all the procurement documents should be completed before that date. He pointed out that the payment deadline would not be met if the application had not been started by January 15, 2025. Mr. Choy mentioned that the recommendation stated,

> "Note that for each year of the agreement, HTA staff shall seek sourcing and procurement operations (SPO) approval for a sole source."

Necessary studies by the procurement department could be expected to take two to three weeks. Mr. Choy emphasized the importance of submitting paperwork by January 15 if the project were to move forward.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā thanked Mr. Choy, referred to a conversation between them on the previous day, and assured him that the deadline would be respected.

Mr. Choy expressed concern about the financial aspect and asked about funding for the first payment on April 30, 2025.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā replied that this was from Program ID 115, BLI 346.

Mr. Choy asked whether the money had already been allocated.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā referred to the Board meeting report related to sports, prepared by himself and Ms. Mendoza, noting that the available balance was $1.2 million from the combined sports opportunity and sports opportunities line items. Subtracting $955,000 from $1.2 million would leave $317,717.

Mr. Choy confirmed this but reminded committee members that the sports opportunity fund might have already been promised to another program. However, he assured them that he would ensure the money was available by the time he approved. He also noted that the second payment was scheduled for September 30, 2025, and asked if this had been included in the budget that had been submitted.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā confirmed it was in the same sports opportunity budget line item.

Mr. Choy reminded committee members that this was for the following year's budget, which the legislature had not yet approved, and Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā confirmed this.

Mr. Choy pointed out that this was a contingency. Referring to the playoff contingency in the presentation, he asked if AG Cole knew how to include this in a contract.

AG Cole had noticed the issue when reviewing the plan but believed the playoff contingency could be included in the contract.

Mr. Choy commented that money seemed to be allocated that might not be used. He asked for details about the $50,000 defined as Miscellaneous Costs.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā responded that this referred to costs assumed by the HTA for evaluation and implementation, which might include gameday activations such as the provision of musicians and dancers or leis for the first 500 attendees. He promised to provide details later.

Mr. Choy emphasized the importance of specificity, noting that while it might not be required by the Chair and the Board, it was essential for the Finance Department to be able to move forward. The Finance Department reserved its approval until it could verify that the money would be available. It was also important for paperwork to comply with procurement schedules and deadlines.

Chair Miyasato appreciated Mr. Choy's presence in the discussion. He noted that committee members were on record discussing the process and its conduct, and he applauded the transparency of these public meetings. Chair Miyasato believed this was a good opportunity that should not be missed, and he appreciated Mr. Choy's positive attitude, which is necessary for the HTA organization. Chair Miyasato acknowledged that Finance was where the process ended and noted that this was often where stumbles occurred.

Reacting to Mr. Hannemann's comment, Chair Miyasato mentioned that he had been present at the LA Activation as a representative of Hawaiian Airlines, and the proposal had been presented in real-time. Chair Miyasato pointed out that the function of the Branding Standing Committee was to develop these ideas.

Mr. Pfund apologized for having to leave shortly for another appointment. During his years in the visitor industry, he noted that sports tourism was a major factor in attracting visitors to Hawaiʻi. Previous successful association tie-ins, such as the Pro Bowl, demonstrated that tie-ins with professional sports benefited Hawaiʻi, not just for residents but also for attracting visitors and sports supporters. Mr. Pfund would support any type of sports marketing activity, such as the Honolulu Marathon, which had attracted thousands and had been another HTA grant initiative. From a historical standpoint, his experience had been positive, and he believed that it was important for the HTA to be involved in sports marketing, whether football or baseball. He mentioned that the San Francisco Giants had been in Maui the previous week. He noted that such events attracted sports teams and their supporters to Hawaiʻi, keeping Hawaiʻi in people's eyes and serving as a good marketing technique.

Chair Miyasato thanked Mr. Pfund for this contribution.

Mr. Arakawa apologized for arriving late and expressed his agreement and support for the program, which he believed would be suitable for Hawaiʻi, the community, and the Rams. As a former high school football coach and assistant basketball coach, he supported athletics and sports activities that gave back to the community.

Mr. Arakawa asked about the LA Saturation Activation, inquiring if the Governor, Mayor, and Sen DeCoite had attended the game and when the Rams' presentation had taken place.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā responded that the Governor had done the coin toss.

Mr. Arakawa asked whether this had been televised and how much television exposure the Governor, the Mayor, and the Senator had been at the game.

Mr. Hannemann stated that the mayor had not attended the game but had been given a special tour of the facilities for which Mr. Hannemann had also been present. The Rams had made a presentation to Mayor Bissen about their desire to return to Maui. The Governor had attended the game and did the game ball, not the coin toss.

Mr. Hannemann added that there had been press coverage on the day of the game. Rob Fukuzaki, originally from Hawaiʻi, who had a major sports program in LA, had interviewed the Governor and Mayor Bissen, creating a special program on his radio station. The Rams had used the Governor's presence at the game to give a presentation to him similar to that given to Mayor Bissen. The Governor and Mayor thanked the LA Rams for donating almost $450,000 to the Maui wildfire effort. The Rams had coordinated a major campaign with other LA sports franchises as their way of saying thank you. There were many reasons why the Rams appreciated their visits to Hawaiʻi.

Governor Green had met the owner of the Rams, who was a regular visitor to Maui, as were the Rams' President and coach. Mr. Hannemann also mentioned the ties to Hawaiʻi of "Puka" Nacua.

There had been no pre-arranged contract specifying maximum TV coverage; it simply came as part of the saturation coverage. Mr. Hannemann recalled that the last NFL game in Hawaiʻi had taken place at the Aloha Stadium between the Rams and the Cowboys and had been arranged by the HTA when Chris Tatum was the CEO. The partnership with the Rams presented an opportunity to maintain Hawaiʻi's relationship with the NFL, hoping to get back on either the pre-season schedule or having games in Hawaiʻi as had been the case with the Pro Bowl.

Mr. Hannemann reminded committee members that this partnership constituted the spring pre-season training activity, allowing players to bring their families and circulating dollars in the Hawaiʻi economy. He noted that this had been the case for the Maui Classic sponsored by the HTA at Lahaina, where eight basketball teams had competed, watched by 7,000 people. Kuhio Lewis and the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement (CNHA) had associated this event with the Royal Lahaina Festival, during which 60 businesses had engaged in Pop-Up Mākeke. The HTA had been part of the publicity efforts directed and funded by CNHA, and the businesses involved had generated over $400,000 in three days. Mr. Hannemann believed that the LA Rams partnership was a similar opportunity in football with a much greater economic impact.

Mr. Arakawa was impressed but did not recall his question being answered.

Chair Miyasato stated that this partnership fitted the definition of recognizing and leveraging opportunities. He reminded committee members that the origin of the LA activation had been an initiative to inform potential visitors that Maui and Hawaiʻi were open and welcoming. The LA Rams had played an ancillary role in the initiative, which had been leveraged into an opportunity for a future partnership.

Mr. Arakawa commented that the concept of the West Coast activation had arisen from a proposal by Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi to circumvent the lack of effect of the “shoulder season” on Hawaiʻi hotels. Mr. Arakawa followed up this comment by suggesting an activation for the West Coast, Hawaiʻi’s primary market. He supported the opportunities represented by the activation but complained that his questions had not yet been answered. He also asked about the cost of the entire activation exercise.

Chair Miyasato responded that the agenda item related to the LA Rams partnership. He added that the subsequent presentation from the HVCB would deal with the return on investment (ROI) of the West Coast activation.

Mr. Arakawa stated that ROI was a continuation of his question, but his present question had been whether there had been television coverage of the activation.

Chair Miyasato confirmed that the answer was yes.

Mr. Arakawa asked who attended the activation and how their visits were financed.

Chair Miyasato replied that this would be explained in the subsequent presentation.

Mr. Arakawa accepted this response and asked where sports marketing fits into the overall core branding and marketing plan. He commented that he had been surprised to discover that, on Googling “best destinations” or “best destinations for Japanese,” he had found that Hawaiʻi was not in the top five. Maui might have ranked 7th, 8th, or 9th as the most favored destination for the U.S. Mainland. Mr. Arakawa asked what percentage of the core market was represented by sports tourism and said that he believed that the HVCB might be able to answer. His disappointment had stemmed from his belief that Hawaiʻi would be in the top five for both Japan and the mainland U.S. He believed the goal of the HTA should be to try to get into the top five for both areas, in addition to sports marketing.

Chair Miyasato agreed, noting that focusing all the HTA’s energy on one demographic segment would not be realistic. His point of view was that sports tourism had been missing, so the intention was not to replace everything with sports marketing but to diversify the

HTA's resources to leverage the demographics making up travel. He appreciated Mr. Arakawa's point of view and believed that the HTA's partners in HTJ and HVCB would be able to conduct more detailed data analyses. Chair Miyasato emphasized that this was about diversification rather than replacement.

Mr. Arakawa reminded committee members that Mr. Hannemann had mentioned partners and asked Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā to include them in his report. Ms. Agas raised the issue of the marketing budgets of hotels and the advertising budgets of other visitor-related companies. Partnerships seemed to have worked well for the LA trip.

Chair Miyasato agreed and stated that it was important to remember that the activation had been a collective effort.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā thanked Mr. Arakawa and Chair Miyasato for this reminder.

Ms. Agas gave semi-inaudible comments, and Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā interrupted, stating that she was inaudible.

Ms. Agas commented that private/public partnership programs were listed in the committee handout. She suggested that in future discussions about partnerships, all the partners should be part of the venture, and all partnerships should be maximized in relation to the ROI.

Chair Miyasato appreciated Ms. Agas' comments, noting that this was how collective effort was defined. Participation had to be leveraged to promote and diversify tourism in Hawaiʻi, with everyone coming to the table.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi referred to Hawaiʻi's ranking and noted that general statistics showed a lower rank because Hawaiʻi was a smaller destination prioritizing long-haul, higher-spending travelers. However, Hawaiʻi ranked higher within that market segment. HTJ and HTUSA had previously given presentations about Hawaiʻi's ranking within the target demographic, and while the islands ranked well, there was always room for improvement. Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi pointed out that the conversion rate was also an issue and promised to provide more data in subsequent meetings.

Chair Miyasato added that the function of contractors such as HTJ and HVCB was to provide expertise. While marketing and branding are not exact sciences, accurate data can assist in making logical decisions.

There were no questions or comments from members of the public. Chair Miyasato asked for a motion.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā stated that a written motion had not been drafted, but staff recommended the adoption of the proposal and its referral to the full Board.

Chair Miyasato proposed a motion to recommend the adoption of the proposal and its referral to the full Board. Mr. Arakawa seconded the motion but noted that he had questions that he expected to be answered later, and he would ask for deferral until the questions had been answered and Mr. Choy had reviewed the proposal.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā explained that Agenda Item No. 6 mentioned a future partnership to be undertaken beginning in the calendar year 2025 to cover the 2025/2026 and 2026/2027 seasons with the LA Rams, which was distinct and separate from the LA Activation to be discussed in Agenda Item No. 7.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi pointed out that the motion in the present committee would move the item out of this committee and into the full Board, where full discussion would take place. The proposal was also to be presented at the Budget, Finance, and Convention Center Standing Committee (BFCC), where more detailed questions about the financial aspects of the proposal would be asked and answered.

Chair Miyasato asked Mr. Arakawa if he was comfortable with the present motion and its branding and marketing implications.

Mr. Arakawa suggested that the motion could state "pending approval of the Finance Department."

Chair Miyasato amended this addition to "pending review by the Finance Department."

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā responded that although he felt the addition was redundant, it was clear that the process to undertake any procurement would follow the HTA procedures, which included financial reviews and signatures on solicitation paperwork, contract paperwork, micro-encumbrances, and other documents. Micro-encumbrances referred to the internal financial system, and paperwork referred to the internal forms that moved the contract through the HTA process. Multiple points of review were built into the procedure and were applicable to every HTA activity.

Mr. Choy agreed with Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā and added that, for this particular program, none of these processes had so far taken place.

Mr. Arakawa acknowledged this, explaining that he was nervous about the program but would support the motion subject to budget review and recommendation. He had been concerned that for the previous LA Rams activation item, everything had been done after the fact with no contract, and this had violated procurement procedures. His concern was amplified by the HTA being under audit and the legislative session was about to start. However, he would support the present motion if the procurement timeline laid out by Mr. Choy could be complied with. Mr. Arakawa added that the motion would be amended as suggested, and approval would not be included because it was part of the process.

Mr. Arakawa reiterated that Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā would confirm that no contracts had been drawn up for the LA Activation before the funds were disbursed.

Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā clarified the approval process of a proposal for a given program: he would come to the Board, make presentations to the committees, and the committees would make their recommendations. The proposal would pass through the Hoʻokahua, Branding, and Budget & Finance Standing Committees before being discussed by the full Board. Assuming the full Board approves moving forward with the program, Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā would generate paperwork in compliance with Mr. Choy's January 15, 2025, deadline.

Chair Miyasato reminded committee members that the matter under discussion was not the LA saturation.

For the benefit of members of the public who were online, Mr. Hannemann clarified that, ultimately, approval of the LA Rams partnership or any other proposal depended upon the approval of the HTA Board by at least seven votes out of the twelve members. Committees could make recommendations, but the Board had the final say. The Branding Standing Committee gave its input from the brand-marketing perspective, the Hoʻokahua Standing Committee gave feedback from the destination management point of view, and the Budget, Finance, and Convention Center Standing Committee gave input from a fiscal point of view. Ultimately, the Board would weigh all these recommendations and either approve or deny the proposal.

Mr. Arakawa agreed with Mr. Hanneman's summary but noted that sometimes, things were not done entirely according to procurement, budget, and fiscal rules and regulations. Sometimes, all these committees approved a program, but in the course of a subsequent audit questions were asked. Mr. Arakawa thanked Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā for his proposals to avoid such situations. He mentioned that the professional licenses of Board members could be in jeopardy for fraud, waste, abuse, or post-facto approval of a measure violating State procurement and budgeting laws. The standing committees should not approve actions after the fact since this might endanger Board members' professional licenses. Mr. Arakawa appreciated the phrasing of the motion and the explanations that Mr. Kaʻanāʻanā and Mr.

Hannemann had given of the approval process, which was intended to ensure compliance with the laws.

Mr. Hannemann repeated that the proposal was to be discussed by the BFCC committee. Mr. Arakawa, as the chair of that committee, would have every opportunity, along with VP Choy, to address any issues that might have been overlooked by staff, even though they always did their best to comply with the rules and regulations in force. This underscored the importance of the budget review, and it was important for the Board to be informed about such issues.

Mr. Choy assured committee members that he was committed to working with Mr. Arakawa to ensure this was done.

Mr. Arakawa had wished to consult AG Cole regarding Mr. Hannemann's comments on Board approval, but AG Cole had already left the meeting. The issue will be discussed in a subsequent meeting.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi explained that he was working with AG Cole and would present this topic at the next Board meeting. A review of the role of the Board and the limits of its authority and actions was given at a previous Board meeting and would be presented again at a subsequent Board meeting.

Chair Miyasato appreciated that this conversation was taking place in public, with all comments recorded, so that committee members or the public could review the discussions. The HTA aimed to do the best for the State of Hawaiʻi.

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano restated the motion proposed by Chair Miyasato and seconded by Mr. Arakawa to recommend adopting the proposal and refer it to the full Board pending review by the Finance Department.

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano conducted the roll call vote, and the motion was carried unanimously.

6. (Agenda Item 5) Presentation and discussion on a "Powered by the HTA" Campaign and Initiatives

7. Presentation, Discussion and/or Approval on the Findings from the LA Saturation Activation and Plans for 2025 Market Saturation Activation

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano introduced Agenda Item No. 7, involving the presentation, discussion, and/or approval of the findings from the LA saturation activation and plans for the 2025 market saturation activation. She introduced the HVCB President/CEO Aaron J. Salā and Hawaiʻi Tourism USA's Senior Vice President of Marketing and Chief Marketing Officer Jay Talwar.

Dr. Salā greeted Chair Miyasato, Mr. Hannemann, and the entire HTA, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to present at this activation. He proposed reviewing the LA activation timeline regarding the correspondence between the HTA and HTUSA, including the plan, execution, and implementation. He hoped to provide the committee with important insights and findings that would influence decision-making.

Dr. Salā stated that the two questions to be addressed were as follows:

- Had the activation been successful?
- Should it be done again?

He believed that both questions invited affirmative responses and hoped to provide context to substantiate the engagement of the HTA and the State of Hawaiʻi.

Dr. Salā summarized the timeline as follows. On September 23, 2023, the Branding Standing Committee challenged the global marketing teams (GMTs) to propose ideas to stimulate travel to Maui. The HVCB had referred to data from post-recession 2008. The recession had led to a series of activations from 2009 onward to create a recovery period for Hawaiʻi's visitor industry. The pandemic had posed another challenge. The difference between the pandemic and the Maui fires was that the pandemic had shut everything down, but afterward, there had been pent-up demand and a desire to travel, leading to an over-tourism situation in 2020–2022 because everyone wanted to travel to safe, beautiful Hawaiʻi. The Maui wildfire disaster presented a different challenge, coupled with a sentiment from Maui residents that tourists should not come, which fortunately changed. Dr. Salā was grateful that the current response no longer involved a resident community saying, "Do not come."

Key timeline points included:

- September 15, 2023: Challenge to GMTs.
- September 28, 2023: HTUSA recommended a series of market saturations at a $10 million budget level.
- July 12, 2024: In a meeting with industry partners, HTUSA presented LA activation ideas, and the HTA approved a $1.67 million plan.

- August 13, 2024: HTUSA submitted the final LA activation plan and key performance indicators (KPIs) to the HTA. On the same day, 2,760 industry partners were emailed about participation in the activation scheduled for September. The pillars of this activation included advertising, consumer activations, high-impact messaging platforms, public relations, travel trade education and training, and HVCB cooperative/partner marketing.

Dr. Salā noted that the original plan was not to move to December. The HTA had challenged the HVCB to conduct an activation in September to coincide with an LA Rams game and to position the LA Rams for the partnership project that had previously been discussed.

The HTA Board approved the project in July 2024, and the following month, HVCB was challenged to execute it in 30 days or less. Given the timeline, the HVCB believed the project had been a leaps and bounds success.

The following table summarizes the details of paid digital exposure, with non-skippable brand spots of 15–30 seconds recorded between September 1 and 30.

Channel	Target number of impressions	Actual number of impressions	Percent of target
YouTube	24.5 million	18.6 million	76%
LG	14.5 million	14.5 million	100%
TripAdvisor	5.34 million	5.5 million	103%

Dr. Salā explained that LG and TripAdvisor digital media ran in apps and full-screen video interstitials across mobiles, tablets, and desktops to encourage a visit to the GoHawaii website. YouTube was an anomaly that was under delivery because the YouTube purchase had been auction-based. By the time the contractor entered the market, the cost per thousand impressions had been greater than expected.

Dr. Salā requested committee members to examine these data in context, noting that the number of impressions bought was always the desired number. The situation was the same for all the GMTs, and was not unique to HVCB.

The message “The people, the place” had been promoted on paid social media with statewide content in the Los Angeles and San Diego areas on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Maui had been given additional TikTok exposure in the Los Angeles market with the Maui status update series.

The following results were achieved for paid social media over September 1 – 30.

Platform	Target number of impressions	Actual number of impressions	Percent of target
Facebook	10.46 million	5.8 million	55%
Instagram	3.3 million	4.9 million	111%
TikTok	3.9 million	4.6 million	118%
YouTube	10.5 million	11.6 million	149%

Dr. Salā explained that the underdelivery of Facebook resulted from the fact that the partnering contractor had built the target on a national basis rather than a purchase for this particular market. This caused the target to be set at a high level. It would have been exceeded if the target had been based specifically on the Southern California market area. The challenge was that the target could not be changed after the fact. Additionally, since Facebook and Instagram were both part of Meta, they were subject to the method Meta used to aggregate information about impressions, whereby the better-performing platform was prioritized. In this case, Instagram proved to be the most popular platform.

Dr. Salā commented that he had made a nuanced effort to explain how paid digital and social media operated to give committee members a picture of the brand.

The HVCB partnered with Marriott Resorts to create opportunities with KTLA and LA Unscripted for Governor Green and Mayor Bissen to give interviews, ensuring they were in front of the messaging. Three primetime airings meant that this venture was an unqualified success, with the following results:

- 1,018,357 viewers overall,
- 502,766 total social impressions,
- 525,499 total digital impressions

Dr. Salā added that there had also been a consumer pop-up activation in coordination with Mana Up Hawaiʻi Partnership. The Los Angeles Aloha Market with Mana Up and Meli James and their team ensured that Maui and the Hawaiian Islands were kept in mind, with engaging activations, panel discussions, entertainment, and sales of food and beverages. The site of this event had been the heart of Abbot Kinney Boulevard, a busy neighborhood with much foot traffic. Former colleagues had informed Dr. Salā that this was the perfect location because it contained the exact type of people Hawaiʻi hoped to welcome as visitors.

The event included VIP receptions with media, influencers, travel advisors, and MCI (meetings, conventions, and incentives) clients. Governor Green and Sen. DeCoite also attended. The committee members' handout contained a complete list of the businesses that took part in the exercise, but Dr. Salā gave the following summary of the results:

- 57 Hawaiʻi brands, 11 from Maui
- 31 activations included workshops, demos, and panels
- Attendance 9,328 (expected attendance was 5,000)
- $145,000 in sales

The HVCB was proud that Mana Up managed to organize the event within the deadline, mobilizing a strong public/private partnership to support the activation's goal to bring visitors back to Hawaiʻi, particularly to Maui.

Governor Green gave two interviews for KTLA and LA Unscripted, and a main news segment discussed the response to Maui. Mayor Bissen gave a major interview for KTLA. He also attended high-level meetings with LA Rams and Pleasant Holidays executives.

Governor Green and Mayor Bissen were at the game between the LA Rams and the 49ers. Governor Green presented the game ball and offered a message of "*mahalo*" for the Rams' $450,000 donation to Maui wildfire recovery efforts in partnership with American Airlines, which themselves had provided over $1 million.

Dr. Salā suggested that the Rams' potential engagement on Maui might be an opportunity for a partnership with American Airlines, and the entire package might be part of the program.

ABC7 had covered the Rams/49ers match with the headline "Rams join efforts to boost Hawaii's tourism industry as Maui recovers from a devastating wildfire."

Governor Green, Senator DeCoite, and Senator Wakai attended a meeting with LA Rams executives, during which a presentation about the proposed partnership was given.

Dr. Salā reminded committee members that a media blitz was an event that could not be planned. He pointed out that media blitzes happened at the moment and could only be taken advantage of. The HVCB had scheduled and facilitated one-on-one in-person meetings with seven staff writers, editors, contributors, and 20 media outlets, including the top 100 publications, and these were listed in the handout.

The HVCB also worked with private industry partners to establish media in Maui. As a result, a Maui episode for Season Five of the food series "From Scratch" was to air in 2025, with filming completed the previous week. ABC worked with Ritz, Weston, and Trun to complete the filming of a West Maui segment that will air early next year. Entertainment Tonight featured Wailea for a whole week in November. Dr. Salā commented that these activities had taken place as a result of the ripple effect of the LA activation.

He added that the present task of the HVCB was to maintain exposure in the market through travel trade education and training. Webinars, training sessions, and in-person sessions had been conducted, reaching thousands of travel advisors, with 20 Hawaiʻi supplier partners joining the effort. The Los Angeles education blitz has been organized in partnership across the bureau, with events on October 15–17 in Irvine, Woodland Hills, and Pomona, California, to maintain the momentum. One hundred forty-five travel partners participated in evening programs, trade shows, networking, and dinner, with 168 participants. 20 Hawaiʻi suppliers participated, with island offices giving comprehensive destination updates. The message for this travel trade education program was "the people, the place, the Hawaiian Islands." The program also included travel industry updates and an overview of the Mālama Hawaiʻi program.

Entertainment had been provided by Nā Hōkū Hanohano award winner Mailani Makainai and former Miss Hawaiʻi USA Aureana Tseu. Nā Hōkū Hanohano award winner Amy Mahaialee was also present at the activation. Hawaiian Airlines had partnered with the HVCB for these events, and Dr. Salā thanked Chair Miyasato for his coordination.

Dr. Salā reminded committee members that the HVCB was a non-profit organization dedicated to elevating the entire visitor industry ecosystem. During the LA activation, it invested $268,500 from its funds to enable one-to-one cooperation with industry partners. This investment resulted in a total investment of $493,500 in the program. Details of this cooperation were displayed in the grid provided to Ms. Kahoʻohanohano for the Board. The HVCB's goal was to elevate the entire visitor industry ecosystem by cooperating with partners willing to provide benefits such as rebates of 20% or more from rates, a fourth night free, activities with a minimum of 20% off, rental cars, or free upgrades upon availability. Such cooperation allowed the HTA to create public/private partnerships.

Dr. Salā apologized to the committee for any deficiencies in his presentation, acknowledging that purchasing was not a linear activity. He pointed out that shared media led to earned media, and the aim of all media—shared, earned, and paid—was to convert views to purchases. The question was whether this transition had been achieved.

Dr. Salā provided a schematic illustrating that from September, promotional room nights compared with all other room nights on Maui had shown an increase. The increase peaked at 9.1% by September 30 and fell to 8.7% by the end of October. This decline was attributed to how people consumed media and emphasized the need for sustained messaging activation. Dr. Salā expressed his opinion that this significant increase in room nights with at least one of the partners was due to the LA activation.

The HVCB had also received anecdotal evidence from their partners. One partner had experienced a significant uptick in reservations starting in early October, including active bookings up to the first quarter of 2025. Another partner reported exceeding their booking pace for the first quarter of 2025, attributing this success to the LA campaign and the coordinated follow-up efforts. Inspired by the program, a partner hotel hosted a travel trade educational webinar that attracted over 200 travel agents and achieved exceptional engagement. During the weeks following the program, industry partners had begun conducting their own media appointments and had received positive feedback on the activation.

Dr. Salā believed that considering the timeline, the private sector involvement had been unprecedented and represented one of the most significant public/private partnerships in Hawaiʻi's recent history. Private industry contributions, including direct monetary contributions through cooperative programs, in-kind support, and complementary initiatives that more than matched the State's investment, amounted to about $2.25 million. Overall, there had been an almost three-to-one response.

Dr. Salā planted a seed for discussion by emphasizing the obligation of the HVCB to the HTA to maintain the Hawaiʻi brand, following the strategy and vision set by the HTA for the visitor industry. He suggested the analogy of Apple stores worldwide which conformed to the identity and culture of their local environments while still maintaining the global Apple brand.

In terms of their contractual obligation to the HTA, the HVCB saw itself as one of the keepers of the Hawai'i brand. The challenge for the HVCB was that, given the maturity of the U.S. market, they were much higher on the funnel than other GMTs. Their role was to attract the desired visitors to Hawaiʻi.

Referring to Chair Miyasato's earlier comments about exploiting contractors' expertise, Dr. Salā acknowledged Mr. Arakawa's comments about dropping down the ranks of destinations. Hawaiʻi was ranked number 6, according to a third-party data contractor. These data, from the State of the American Traveler, listed the U.S.'s top destinations as New York, Florida, Las Vegas, California, Los Angeles, and Hawaiʻi. Hawaiʻi's ranking was much higher in terms of their target traveler. Dr. Salā believed that discussions with the branding committee and the HTA Board would shed light on the role of activations such as the LA activation in achieving a higher ranking for Hawaiʻi.

On behalf of the HVCB, Dr. Salā asked the Branding Committee and the HTA to consider their strategic plan for specific activations. Data showed that the LA activation had been effective, but its impact had been short-lived. Ideally, each selected market would be covered three times per year with investment in the range of $3 million per market. Dr. Salā suggested three activations could be conducted between January and June 2025 for San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Francisco again.

Dr. Salā reminded committee members that a one-off activation had a very short-lived series of outcomes and needed to be reactivated as its impact began to diminish. He listed market priorities as Los Angeles and San Francisco, with the next tier including Seattle, Portland, Phoenix, New York, Dallas, Chicago, and Denver. This prioritization was partly related to the airlift and partly to the demographics of these locations.

As a point of comparison, Dr. Salā referred to the aftermath of the 2008 recession and gave the following details of funding:

Year	Overall budget	Market saturations
2009	$33 million	$4 million
2010	$33 million	$7.3 million
2011	$37 million	$7 million

Dr. Salā added that the HVCB's recommendation for the amount required to saturate the market was a $10 million plan. For 2025, the program could be regarded as a January to June fiscal year plan with three activations before June 2025, costing $9 million, for San Francisco, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Dr. Salā asked Mr. Talwar whether he had omitted any vital details.

Mr. Talwar responded that it was important to return to Los Angeles within the January to June period, with San Francisco as the next priority, depending on the strategy determined by the HTA. Saturations would continue during the second half of the year, which fell in the HTA's subsequent fiscal year. Mr. Talwar suggested activations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, followed by a return to San Francisco in early fall. The HVCB recommended an investment of $9 million in activation between January and June 2025. From a longer-term perspective, revisiting the entire market list and possibly making some adjustments would be desirable.

Chair Miyasato stated that the report made him proud to be Hawaiian, appreciating the *Kamaʻāina* perspective on tourism—data with heart. He valued the vision of the HVCB's role as keepers of the brand with the HTA. As far as the endgame was concerned, accurate data was essential for good decisions. He appreciated being part of the branding committee and found it a perfect blend of heart and mind.

Mr. Arakawa began his contribution by complaining that Dr. Salā did not return his calls but had been very impressed with his presentation. Mr. Arakawa had personally recommended Dr. Salā for interviews for high positions because of his reaction to local issues. He encouraged Dr. Salā to keep up his excellent work.

Mr. Arakawa supported Chair Miyasato's comment about experts and acknowledged that the HVCB were the experts. There had indeed been occasions when recommendations by HVCB staff had been rejected by Board members, but these contributions were necessary so that informed decisions could be made. It would not be appropriate to attribute Hawaiʻi's failure to achieve higher rankings to a failure to follow the recommendations of the HVCB. Mr. Arakawa always asked the HVCB to give their professional input even if Board members appeared to disagree.

Mr. Arakawa expected that during the meeting of the BFCC Committee, there would be a discussion about the source of funding for the travel of those who attended the LA activation.

Mr. Arakawa posed three requests as a follow-up to Dr. Salā's presentation.

1. He asked for data to be given in the future about the extent to which the improvements in bookings reported by partners could be attributed to the "ephemeral" benefits of the LA activation and how much of this improvement was a result of the routine work of the HVCB and the GMTs. He suggested that the

alternative was either that the HVCB was more effective when the HTA did not dictate their actions or that the HVCB's ideas were less effective.

2. Referring to sustained messaging from Apple, Mr. Arakawa questioned Hawai'i's messaging and whether Hawaiʻi was looking for a particular type of visitor. Some industry partners perceived that people should not visit Hawaiʻi unless they were a particular type of person.
3. Mr. Arakawa had received texts and emails from visitor industry businesses complaining that they had not been consulted by the HVCB. The complaint was that Marriott did not represent their organization even though it was a significant part of it. The HVCB could not claim that they consulted all the major hotels in Hawaiʻi.

Mr. Arakawa explained that he did not expect immediate answers to these questions, but he looked forward to discussing them at some point in the future. He thanked Dr. Salā and Mr. Talwar for their presentation and joked that maybe Mr. Talwar could teach him how to ask AI the right questions to get Hawaiʻi as No. 6 in rank.

Dr. Salā apologized for not answering Mr. Arakawa's calls and summarized his questions as follows:

1. Regarding the ephemeral effects, how much was the result of the activation, and how much was due to the regular routine work of the HVCB?
2. In terms of the overall brand, what was the overall message of the Hawaiʻi brand?
3. Dr. Salā could not identify the organization to which Mr. Arakawa had referred, but he would speak with his team and ensure that, subsequently they would be more representative in their engagement across the industry.

Dr. Salā promised to make an appointment with Mr. Arakawa to discuss the feedback from his team in more detail.

Mr. Arakawa added a fourth comment, saying that the HTA was under two audits at the moment, so the more details available, the better. The questions he had asked were the kind of information auditors were likely to request.

Chair Miyasato commented that he would discuss the branding "powered by the HTA" name and reputation during the next session. It was relevant to consider the roles of partners of the HTA. Chair Miyasato appreciated the symbiotic, collective manner of Dr. Salā's presentation. He believed that since the Board was charged with branding, marketing, and destination stewardship on behalf of the State for the people of Hawaiʻi, the direction, messaging, and tone started at the HTA. However, this did not negate the responsibility of the HTA partners to defend, maintain, and nurture the brand. That was their *kuleana*, but the brand began with and was powered by the HTA. Partners could not be held responsible for messaging that originated with the HTA.

Chair Miyasato reminded committee members how the message had been pivoted from "*Mālama*" to "the people, the place, the Hawaiian Islands." The new message, more inviting than admonishing, had begun from the branding committee before radiating out to the HTA partners. The Chair considered Dr. Salā's presentation a perfect blend and believed the HTA was evolving as an institution. The HTA was on the right path, and Dr. Salā epitomized that progress.

Mr. Choy asked for Slide 3 of the presentation, representing the timeline of the LA activation, to be projected. He commented that the LA activation project had been a success, but the paperwork had not been as pristine as it should have been. Mr. Choy noted that the proposal for the LA Activation had been presented on July 12, 2024, and the HTA Board approved this project on July 25, 2024. Such a 13-day timeline did not give staff enough time to prepare appropriate paperwork, especially concerning procurement if additional money was involved or there was a change in the contract or work plan. Mr. Choy reminded committee members that 13 days was not enough time to prepare all the necessary paperwork, and he urged Board members to ensure that the bare minimum time should not be given in the future, as errors could eventually be detected and reproved.

Mr. Arakawa suggested that the BFCC Committee prepare a sheet, as Chair Miyasato had requested, to show the project approval process clearly. A white paper could be prepared to inform vendors of how long the process would take and what necessary steps. This information could made available to all Board members and vendors.

Chair Miyasato responded that this would be a useful innovation.

Mr. Choy reassured committee members that 2025 would be a new year. He reminded them that the paperwork for the Rams contract, if approved, should reach the fiscal department by January 15, 2025, to meet the deadline for the first payment, April 30, 2025. Time would be an issue, and a longer lead time would be better. However, following state bureaucracy, laws, rules, and regulations were essential to avoid reproofing.

Chair Miyasato acknowledged this, adding that Mr. Choy's presence was always welcome. It was preferable to have this conversation before rather than after the event. The Chair emphasized the need for flexibility to take advantage of opportunities, with the Rams project as an example. Mr. Arakawa believed that something different had to be done to stimulate the market, and this need would be handed over to the experts at the HVCB and HTUSA, who would make it happen. The Chair believed the “opportunities fund” budget item could be pivoted, which would not be a new contract. He appreciated the transparency provided by the open forum of this public committee meeting.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi asked committee members to consider three main questions, even though answers might not be immediately available.

1. He asked about the difference between what the GMTs were contracted to do and what they discovered later that they had to pivot and do. A point might be reached where the pivot implied altering their work plan, which in turn might involve redirecting some of their existing funding towards a more focused area instead of requesting additional funding. The GMTs had to maintain their necessary core services. Such situations were difficult because the legislature had been very specific about the projects they approved at the beginning of the fiscal year. Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi wondered whether there would still be flexibility to make such pivots mid-term. In the given case, the GMTs had pivoted, and although the contract and its scope had not changed, there had been a change in the work plan. He questioned if that could still be sustained.
2. Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi referred to Mr. Arakawa’s comment on the responsibility of the GMTs to maintain and promote the brand. He questioned whether the brand sometimes needed to change to reflect the current situation. The HTA was not responsible for the products of Hawaiʻi; the HTA represented the brand of the Hawaiian Islands as a tourism destination. Market attitudes changed, so the Hawaiian Islands might not be as enticing as before, indicating the necessity for a change.
3. Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi enquired as to the extent of the involvement of stakeholders, marketing partners, and industry partners in the GMTs’ activations. He noted that quarterly stakeholder meetings were conducted in each market area to allow major players to confer with the GMTs and advise them on the success or failure of current strategies. These meetings with staff helped to develop the next round of brand marketing plans for the coming year.
   He pointed out that during the preparation of the LA saturation, multiple stakeholder meetings had taken place to develop some aspects and discuss staff input. These stakeholder meetings had begun earlier in the year, and stakeholders

had started to request rapid return movements, especially on Maui. Although the main branding efforts appeared effective, Maui still needed additional messaging and quick returns to avoid the loss of jobs and businesses. This differed from the long-term job of supporting; sometimes, a pivot was needed to reverse a situation.

Chair Miyasato thanked Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi for this contribution and promised to share it with the full Board. This was why the budget had increased from $70 million to $80 million, to allow flexibility for rapid pivoting. The Chair commented that it was important to move forward and see how the HTA's *kuleana* could be better executed. Responsibility for destination stewardship had been added, and synergy for that had to be developed from a branding and marketing perspective; the two aspects of the visitor industry were not mutually exclusive.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi referred to Dr. Salā's final slide, which showed that Oʻahu and the neighbor islands were leading while Maui was still below 2019 levels. The HTA had to play a balancing act between the markets. The strength of the Oʻahu market did not allow the HTA to build back internationally. There were many assets on the neighbor islands, and the HTA had to devise methods of using these assets in favor of Maui. A balance had to be maintained between the various islands, with more visitors to Maui freeing up capacity on other islands.

Chair Miyasato acknowledged that there was much to consider, and the branding committee needed to examine the definition of success. Success could not involve excessive visitors on a single island. Balance meant creating the right mixture, and this was an evolving process.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi replied that this related to the definition of destination management from the marketing side instead of the natural resource side.

Chair Miyasato pointed to the importance of defining the audience for messaging, noting that the *kuleana* of the HTA was to ensure the quality of life of the *Kamaʻāina* and the experience of visitors. These were two aspects that went hand in hand and had to be balanced with one another.

Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi reminded committee members that they were to consider the recommendation from the HVCB for additional saturation in 2025.

Chair Miyasato commented that this presentation should be made at a subsequent meeting of the entire Board.

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano reminded Chair Miyasato that Agenda Item No. 5 had not been discussed, and he responded that this item should be moved to the full Board.

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

Ms. Kahoʻohanohano introduced Agenda Item No. 8, a presentation and discussion on the progress of EDA's non-competitive state tourism grant under the American Rescue Plan Act, to be presented by the HTA Director of Planning, Ms. Caroline Anderson.

Ms. Anderson explained that the State of Hawaiʻi had received a non-competitive grant from the Economic Development Administration (EDA), amounting to approximately $14 million, for travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation. The HTA had divided the grant with the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) because it was intended for outdoor recreation. The HTA Board approved some EDA projects in 2022 and 2023, and Ms. Anderson provided an update on their progress.

Ms. Anderson explained that she would focus on marketing-related projects for this committee and describe DLNR projects if time permits.

The HTA projects funded by the EDA grant included the following:

1. **Tourism Recovery Branding Campaign, $3.2 million:** This campaign was conducted by the HVCB from January to June 2024. The campaign invested in paid digital media with Amazon, LG, Roku, and Samsung and social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest. The handout provided examples of postings and the number of impressions on each platform.
2. **Travel Trade Education Initiatives:** This consisted of in-market travel advisor training, with over 4,000 advisors trained through educational events, personal equipment, and trade shows. EDA funding allowed the HVCB to participate in additional educational events, which are detailed in the handout. The funding also enabled the production of trade collateral, with some images in the handout.
3. **Tactical Wholesale Cooperative Marketing Program, $750,000:** Cooperative partners included Pleasant Holidays, Apple Vacations, Delta Vacations, and Classic Vacations. This resulted in 169,400 visitor arrivals, 77,000 room nights booked, and $45.5 million in visitor expenditures. This project included destination training and resulted in $4 million in EDA funding for brand marketing and travel trade.

Ms. Anderson stated that this program had been completed and thanked the HVCB and Ms. Kahoʻohanohano for their cooperation.

4. **Urban Trails Program:** This program focuses on creating unique and engaging experiences to connect residents and visitors to vibrant towns with rich cultural histories. One of the first projects was refurbishing the trail and the surfboard markers for the Waikiki Historic Trail. The HTA was waiting for approval of the content and an updated route. Once these were received, they would work with the County to refurbish the markers, aiming for completion by the end of 2025.

5. **Other Islands Proposals:** During the first quarter of 2025, the HTA was to seek proposals for urban trails on other islands, with a view to completion during 2026. Ms. Anderson promised to keep the Board updated on the progress of these projects.

6. **Expansion of Agritourism in Hawaiʻi:** The HTA staff reviewed agritourism proposals that had originally been intended for a community tourism collaboration (CTC) to ensure background data supported the development method. The HTA had asked the EDA to approve an agritourism study, an agritourism conference, and the creation of a Hawaiʻi agritourism plan. All of these would help design the CTC. EDA approval was awaited for these projects, with a budget of $750,000.

Chair Miyasato asked Ms. Anderson to quickly review the projects managed by DLNR, even though Mr. Nāhoʻopiʻi reminded him that Ms. Anderson was to present updates at the full Board meeting.

Ms. Anderson gave details of the seven DLNR projects that were being funded by the EDA.

1. **Recreational trail study, $1.1 million**: This was part of the State NaHele Trail program to identify high-risk trails and optimal actions to maintain trails. The study also investigated whether users would be willing to pay to use the trail. During 2024, five in-person workshops were conducted, and data studies were completed, with the project scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026. The trails in the study would be used by both *Kamaʻāina* and visitors.

2. **Namanu Elele steward program, $3.85 million:** This project aimed at ensuring community engagement by recruiting stewards for each island who would share information, including safety tips, with *Kamaʻāina* and visitors. Committee members' handouts gave details of the island locations of stewards except for Kauaʻi, where DLNR had difficulty hiring people.

3. **Ala Kahakai National Historic Trail, $300,000:** This project aimed to develop an interpretive plan to improve the trail and benefit both residents and visitors on Hawaiʻi Island. The project was scheduled for completion by 2025.
4. **Nāpu'u Recreation Plan, $400,000:** This project had already started and was due to be completed in June 2026.
5. **Purchase of equipment and outreach materials, $400,000:** Funds were to be provided for the Division of Conservation and Resource Enforcement (DOCARE) to purchase equipment for enforcement officers and educational and outreach materials for the public. Some materials had been purchased, although DOCARE had faced procurement issues. However, the project was scheduled for completion by the end of 2025.
6. **Day-Use Mooring Buoy Program, $400,000:** This pilot program aimed to develop a database of moorings and maintenance status for day-use moorings in South Maui and Molokini. The project has been successful so far, and the intention was to duplicate it in other areas with the provision of additional funds. The project was to be completed in June 2026.
7. **Oʻahu coral restoration project, $750,000:** Ms. Anderson, Mr. Choy, and Mr. Talon Kishi visited the laboratory where the coral was grown. The aim was to restore a site on East Oʻahu by planting coral. This would provide another area for the enjoyment of both residents and visitors. The project was to be completed by the end of 2026.

Chair Miyasato thanked Ms. Anderson for her presentation. He suggested that the slides she had presented could be labeled "Powered by the HTA." He explained that he saw branding as a way of getting people accustomed to phrases and noted that everything Ms. Anderson had reported seemed to have been funded by the HTA.

Ms. Anderson clarified that the HTA funding was through EDA funds.

Chair Miyasato repeated that the HTA still leveraged the funds, and he intended to say more about this at a subsequent Board meeting. He asked whether Mr. Choy had referred to DOCARE when he mentioned a program dependent on another agency.

Mr. Choy explained that the HTA had no control over half of the EDA grant awarded to DLNR, but ultimately, the HTA was responsible for reporting to the EDA about the disbursement of the funds. He and Ms. Anderson had already discussed this subject, and he acknowledged that the HTA had to ultimately be responsible for the grant even though they were not in control.

Chair Miyasato recommended moving to Agenda Item No. 10 about the reservation system, but Ms. Kahoʻohanohano pointed out that there was still Agenda Item No. 9.

Ms. Agas interjected with apologies, noting that on their calendar the meeting had been scheduled to end at 11:00 a.m. She had another meeting at 11:30 a.m. and would have to dial off.

Chair Miyasato apologized and noted that the quorum had already been lost. The committee decided to defer Agenda Items Nos. 10 and 11 to the December full Board meeting because the meeting had gone overtime and had also lost its quorum.

9. Update on the Partnership with Brand USA and Expedia

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

11. Update on HTA Destination Manager Vacancies

12. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sheillane Reyes

____

Sheillane Reyes
Recorder