

John De Fries Accomplishments

September 2020 – December 2021

Leading Through Uncertain Times

- Took the helm at HTA in September 2020, six months after the pandemic caused a pause in travel to the Hawaiian Islands, and guided the agency through the recovery of the visitor industry.
- Navigated a 2021 legislative session that resulted in the fundamental reconstruction of HTA. Over 200 community members and organizations rallied in opposition of legislation that removed HTA's dedicated funding from TAT revenues.
- Led the executive team that transitioned HTA from a dedicated-funding, procurement-exempt agency to an agency subject to procurement and the restrictions and reporting requirements of federal American Rescue Plan funds.
- Guided HTA's support of the community-generated Destination Management Action Plans, including adoption by the board followed by implementation of priorities in communities across the Hawaiian Islands.

Supporting Industry & Community

- Coordinated closely with senior policy leaders, executive leadership, health officials, and emergency management to reopen the visitor industry while protecting the health and safety of Hawai'i residents.
- Created collaborative environment between industry and local government by convening monthly meetings with mayors from each of the four counties and the visitor industry. These county-specific meetings allow for individualized direct engagement, by county, in an effort to raise awareness, improve communication, and strengthen these important relationships.
- Worked to increase HTA leadership presence in community, including public speaking engagements, participation in virtual community events, the integration of video messages in HTA's monthly e-bulletin, and convening the Mālama Ku'u Home Update in October 2021.
 - Interviews & Panels: ABC News, Civil Beat, CNN, Hawai'i Business Roundtable, Hawai'i Public Radio, Honolulu Star-Advertiser, KHON, KHVH FM, KITV, Kupuna Power, Midweek, NHK News, Nippon TV, Pacific Business News, Spotlight, Travel Weekly, and more.

- Presentations: Chamber of Commerce Hawai'i, East-West Center, Environmental Funder Hui, Hawai'i Conservation Alliance, Hawai'i Green Growth Local2030 Hub, Hawai'i Island Sustainability Summit, Hawai'i Society of Business Professionals, Skift, TEDxCountyOfHawai'i, UH Dept. Of Urban & Regional Planning, UH School of Travel Industry Management, and more.
- Led the executive team in meeting with state legislators ahead of the 2022 session, to present HTA's vision and address their concerns. Also participated in Senate Ways & Means site visits on Maui to discuss hotspot mitigation and economic development opportunities.
- After a pause for 2020, resumed the Kūkulu Ola, Aloha 'Āina, and Community Enrichment programs to engage community groups in advancing HTA's strategic pillar goals in Hawaiian Culture, Natural Resources, and Community respectively.
- Reactivated global marketing teams in key source markets as travel begins to return to pre-pandemic levels, with a focus on messaging responsible travel on a foundation of **mālama**.

Reinventing For The Road Ahead

- Established **mālama** as the organizing principle and touchstone for HTA's work. Developed the **Mālama Ku'u Home** vision into a strategy that advances our work to care for our beloved home through the principles of regenerative tourism.
- Led the development of the **Papahana Ho'okele Huliau** (Change Management Plan) to make HTA a more efficient organization, more responsive to the needs of our community. Notable changes in the plan include the appointment of a Chief Brand Officer, and the reassignment of staff into Brand Manager and Senior Brand Manager roles for flexibility in addressing issues between HTA's four interacting strategic pillars.
- Actively engaging with government agencies and industry partners to explore the development of technological infrastructure to make Hawai'i a smart destination, including health entry requirements, reservations, and more.