

Hawai'i Island Tourism Road Map

Building Connections

OLA KA 'ĀINA, OLA KE KĀNAKA!

HEALTHY LAND, HEALTHY PEOPLE!

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by Islander Institute



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hawai'i Island Tourism Strategic Plan 2006-2015 (Hawai'i Island TSP) is built around powerful and enlightened ideas:

The county and its residents strongly believe that if Hawai'i Island is a good place to live, it will also be a good place for people to visit... (T)he visitor industry is also expected to contribute in a positive manner to the quality of life for residents."

In other words, the visionary model of the Hawai'i Island TSP looks like this:



This disruption of old models and assumptions has led to positive innovations and projects. Now at the end of the period covered by the Hawai'i Island TSP, the question is this: How should we work—as policymakers, businesses, workers, organizations, neighbors, and families—to enhance quality of life? This road map is designed to answer those questions and to guide actions that will continue the legacy of the Hawai'i Island TSP.

The contributors to the Hawai'i Island TSP had a firm grasp on the concept of “quality of life” and they put forth this clear goal: *Ola ka 'Āina, Ola ke Kānaka!* (*Healthy Land, Healthy People!*)

This goal makes us acutely aware that the typical ways of measuring tourism—visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction, dollars spent, etc.—are insufficient. So how do we know how healthy we are, and how do we pursue it? In our conversations with Hawai'i Island tourism stakeholders, the Connections Framework emerged as useful guide to create a healthy place, healthy community, and healthy tourism industry.

- **Connection to place** – To have a kinship with the 'āina
- **Connection to past and future** – To have kuleana; a purpose in the world
- **Connection to others** – To love and be loved; to understand and be understood
- **Connection to your better self** – To find and know yourself

By making the island more connected, we create healthy land, healthy people, and a healthy visitor industry. Hawai'i Island can develop an island-based visitor industry that both flows from a great community and helps to feed a great community by following these four steps:

1. **Authenticity** – The first step is to ensure that the visitor experience truly flows from the community such that residents have ownership and a real stake in success.
2. **Readiness** – The next step is to invest in the people and places that will host visitors; to take care of our connections “at home” sufficiently such that we can host others effectively.
3. **Connecting** – We then need to ensure that the activities and attractions we are providing to visitors create, rather than destroy, the four connections.
4. **Reciprocity** – Finally, we need to ensure reciprocity in the visitor industry such that visitors aren't just taking resources, and residents are strengthening their own connections because of the existence of the visitor industry.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 AN ENLIGHTENED IDEA

In 2006, a powerful and enlightened idea was put at the very core of the Hawai'i Island Tourism Strategic Plan 2006-2015 (Hawai'i Island TSP):

The county and its residents strongly believe that if Hawai'i Island is a good place to live, it will also be a good place for people to visit.

This simple statement describes a pioneering approach to tourism in Hawai'i. It challenges a long-standing way of thinking about tourism that has generated frustration and often pits the interests of the visitor industry against the interests of residents. For many people, the message typically heard about tourism in Hawai'i looks like this:

TYPICAL MODEL



In this model, the focus is on bringing in more visitors and having them spend more money. Tourism growth is supposed to translate into more economic activity and more jobs, which in turn, is supposed to translate into an improved quality of life for residents.

Most planning and policy is built around this model. But in their TSP, the people of Hawai'i Island challenged this notion, which so often seems inconsistent with people's experience. When the Hawai'i Island TSP was written, fewer than half of Hawai'i Island residents felt that tourism brought more benefits than problems to the island, and a growing number of people felt that "the island is being run for tourists at the expense of local people."

Drawing on the expertise and expectations of its stakeholders, the Hawai'i Island TSP adopted a different model. This new model doesn't devalue tourism. Rather, it switches the causal relationship and recognizes the importance of the host:

HAWAI'I ISLAND MODEL



This model says that the best way to draw tourists, enhance their experience, and cause them to return, is to start with a high quality of life for residents. This seemingly simple change in viewpoint has the potential for profound impact. By valuing authenticity over superficial imagery, the Hawai'i Island TSP encourages investments into the human capital and natural assets that already exist on the island. It says that

our places can be better cared for, our people can become more willing hosts, visitors can have a positive symbiotic relationship with communities, and interactions can be more genuine. This model also envisions a more democratic approach to tourism—rather than experiences being produced and marketed by a few with residents and communities as mere backdrops for visitor experiences, the Hawai'i Island TSP opened the door for people to participate in and benefit from the visitor industry in deeper ways.

In fact, the Hawai'i Island TSP goes further to say that, "(T)he visitor industry is also expected to contribute in a positive manner to the quality of life for residents." In other words, a complete vision for tourism on Hawai'i Island looks like this:



This disruption of old models and assumptions has led to positive innovations and projects that generate social benefits for residents and visitors alike. This shift in thinking continues to spark conversation about how county government, businesses, and community members can collaborate to pursue this shared vision.

1.2 DEVELOPING A ROAD MAP

Now at the end of the period covered by the Hawai'i Island TSP, the question is this: How do we continue this vision and commitment that so strongly connects with the will of our residents? How should we work—as policymakers, businesses, workers, organizations, neighbors, and families—to enhance quality of life? This road map is designed to answer those questions and to guide actions that will continue the legacy of the Hawai'i Island TSP.

The process used to develop this road map is grounded in the belief that good strategy must be informed by those who are impacted. In order to ensure relevance and meaningfulness of this report to industry stakeholders and communities, the Hawai'i Island Tourism Roadmap was developed by the County of Hawai'i Department of Research and Development, with the help of Islander Institute, through a process of ongoing dialogue with state and county agencies, hoteliers, tour companies and operators, destination management companies, marketing and PR firms, local businesses, and nonprofit and community based organizations, particularly festival and event organizers and program managers.

These conversations revealed how residents define a healthy visitor industry. They also provided observation and analysis of what is already working well in their agencies, businesses, programs, festivals/events, and communities.

2 QUALITY OF LIFE AND TOURISM

2.1 WHAT IS “QUALITY OF LIFE”?

The contributors to the Hawai'i Island TSP had a firm grasp on the concept of “quality of life” and they put forth this clear goal:

Ola ka 'Āina, Ola ke Kānaka! (Healthy Land, Healthy People!)

This goal makes us acutely aware that the typical ways of measuring tourism—visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction, dollars spent, etc.—are insufficient to measure the full scope of industry health that matters to the people of Hawai'i Island. The model adopted in the Hawai'i Island TSP requires a broader array of data to evaluate the health of the industry and the effectiveness of the strategies being employed. In this section, we look at what available data can tell us about our goal, as well as blind spots in data that need to be filled with other forms of evidence.

2.2 WHAT DATA TELLS US

How we choose to measure progress has a significant impact on what we choose to focus on in our strategies. Typically, visitor industry strategies look directly and solely at visitor industry numbers. The Hawai'i Island TSP requires a different set of measures that assess the health of land and people as precursors for a healthy tourism industry.

How healthy is our land?

Despite the critical importance of Hawai'i's environment in all aspects of life, efforts to effectively, consistently, and comprehensively measure the health status of the 'āina are still in a developmental stage. However, promising practices exist. For example, in 2014, the Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation produced a useful overview of indicators that can be used to track environmental health over time (http://hauolimauloa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/environmental-indicators-for-hawaii_final.pdf).

More specific data collection efforts are possible. In 2013 The Kohala Center produced a paper titled, “Resource Use and Waste Generation by the Tourism Industry on the Big Island of Hawaii” which suggested ways to track the environmental impact of visitors to the island (http://kohalacenter.org/archive/pdf/Research_BI_ResourceUseWasteGenerationTourism.pdf).

The Aloha+ Challenge Dashboard aims to track six interconnected sustainability targets for the state and counties in clean energy, solid waste reduction, natural resource management, local food production, smart sustainable communities, and green workforce & education. Some of this data is collected at the county level including these:

	Hawai'i County 2009/10	Hawai'i County 2014/15
% Solid Waste Reduction ¹	36.0%	35.4%
% Renewable Energy ¹	33.7%	48.7%
% Energy Savings Through Efficiency Efforts ¹	5.3%	13.5%
Tons of Recycling ¹	87,354	94,305
Increase Fresh Water Capacity	Consistent county-level measures needed	
Watershed Areas	Consistent county-level measures needed	
Restoration of Native Species	Consistent county-level measures needed	
Local Food Production	Consistent county-level measures needed	
Local Food Consumption	Consistent county-level measures needed	

¹ <https://dashboard.hawaii.gov/aloha-challenge>

Although consistent measures are still in development, by participating in the Aloha+ Challenge and partnering with entities like Hawai'i Green Growth, Hawai'i Island is well positioned, not only to measure the health of the land, but also to help lead the state in many aspects of protecting and preserving the natural environment. Besides measures monitored by the state, Hawai'i Island may seek its own measures uniquely important to the health of its precious natural resources.

How healthy are our people?

With the growing understanding that wellbeing and happiness of a population has many dimensions—including wealth, income, health, and education—public interest institutions are beginning to track broad sets of indicators. For example, CFED looks at wealth, income, housing, education, business ownership, and health insurance in its assessment of assets and opportunity (https://cfed.org/assets/pdfs/municipalprofile_hawaii.pdf). The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation looks at health status, behaviors, education, social factors, and the physical environment when ranking health outcomes (<http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/hawaii/2016/rankings/hawaii/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>).

Hawai'i Island can choose its own measures to track—measures that best indicate *ola ke kānaka* as defined by its people. Possible indicators could include the following:

	Hawai'i County 2009	Hawai'i County 2014-15
Unemployment Rate ¹	10.2%	4.6%
Median Income, Families With Children ²	\$61,174	\$55,292
Children Living In Poverty ²	18.2%	27.8%

18-24 Years Old, Less Than High School ²	13.4%	13.7%
Fair/Poor Health ^{3 4}	15.3%	14.1%
Poor Health Limited Activity In Last 30 Days ^{3 4}	25.8%	19.4%
Heavy Drinking ^{3 4}	9.0%	10.1%
Drive Alone To Work ²	68.8%	72.5%
30 Or More Minute Drive To Work ²	34.8%	35.5%

¹ <http://www.hisbdc.org/BusinessResearchLibrary/HawaiiCountyDataBook2015.aspx>

² http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml

³ http://health.hawaii.gov/brfss/files/2014/01/HBRFSS_2009results_131.pdf

⁴ https://health.hawaii.gov/brfss/files/2016/07/brfss15_results.pdf

In general, the data seem to indicate that residents of Hawai'i Island continue to face economic and other challenges, though there are some indications of health improvement and a much better job outlook since the financial crisis of 2008.

How healthy is the tourism industry?

The State of Hawai'i through the Hawai'i Tourism Authority has consistently collected a core set of statistics to assess and understand the visitor industry. Some of these data appear below. Given the unique approach of the Hawai'i Island TSP, the question to ask is: How do these tourism numbers correlate to the health of Hawai'i Island's land and people?

	Hawai'i County 2006	Hawai'i County 2014
Average daily visitors ^{1 2}	28,011	30,008
Total visitors ^{1 2}	1,597,056	1,449,070
Occupancy rate (up .5%) ^{1 2}	71.1%	61.5%
Total visitor expenditures ^{1 2}	\$1.652 billion	\$1.868 billion
Avg spending per person/per day ^{1 2}	\$161.60	\$170.50
Visitor Days ^{1 2}	10,223,937	10,952,958
Average length of stay ^{1 2}	6.40 days	7.56 days
<i>Statewide</i> resident sentiment "Tourism has brought more benefit than problems to the Islands- AGREE" ³	74%	66% (2015)
<i>Statewide</i> resident sentiment: "Tourism has been mostly good for you and your family. AGREE" ³	44%	40% (2015)

¹ <http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/visitor/visitor-research/2006-annual-research-r.pdf>

² <http://files.hawaii.gov/dbedt/visitor/visitor-research/2014-annual-visitor.pdf>

³

<http://www.hawaiitourismauthority.org/default/assets/File/reports/2015%20Resident%20Sentiment.pdf>

The Hawai'i Island TSP analyzes more than just visitor bodies and dollars when measuring the health of the visitor industry. Hawai'i Island is particularly interested in resident views

of tourism and how they relate to the influx of visitors. More consistent, county-level data would help to track this important factor in the future.

2.3 WHAT DATA DOESN'T TELL US

Understanding data is important to track progress, but it is limited in two important ways. First, it is clear from conversations with industry stakeholders that data alone cannot capture the nuances of stories and anecdotal evidence shared by people “on the ground.” Second, from a practical standpoint, data is too distant from the experiences of individual businesses and residents for them to feel like they have the power to make a positive impact. In other words, one business practice or community activity might not have the impact to move data in a positive direction, but those practices and activities should be encouraged nonetheless. So in addition to data-driven policy and practice, we need an additional framework that implementers can understand and affect. The people of Hawai'i Island aren't bystanders to the TSP strategy; *they are the strategy*. Therefore, there needs to be opportunities for them to measure through observation, and relay experiences through story.

3 CONNECTIONS FRAMEWORK – WHAT IS HEALTH?

3.1 “HEALTHY” MEANS “CONNECTED”

Ola ka ‘Āina, Ola ke Kānaka! is an excellent goal in that it is clear, concise, and meaningful. But how do people begin to develop programs, businesses, events, and leadership around this goal? For that, we need a workable framework to design, implement, and evaluate different kinds of work.

In 2015, Kōkua Kalihi Valley, a community health center on O‘ahu, worked with Islander Institute to understand the meaning of health through the eyes of its constituency, and to develop a framework of health that was more useful, accurate, and relevant to island people. In a series of formal and informal conversation held over a period of four months, they collected stories to answer basic questions such as, “When was the last time you felt healthy?”

The central importance of four connections emerged repeatedly from the stories and practices of island people. When people talk about good health, they refer to feeling connected in one or more of these four ways. When sharing stories of bad health, they talk about momentary or chronic loss of one or more of these connections.

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In our conversations with Hawai‘i Island tourism stakeholders, these same four connections emerged as the things people are looking for in a healthy place, healthy community, and healthy tourism industry. We found that this framework can be refined and applied at all levels—policy, program design, community activities, providers of care, and individuals. The “Connections Framework” is simple to understand and widely applicable. Once explained to them, people find it intuitive and relevant.

Thus, if the people of Hawai‘i Island want healthy land and healthy people—*Ola ka ‘Āina, Ola ke Kānaka!*—a useful way to think about achieving this is by making the island more connected. We can do this when individuals, families, businesses, government agencies, and even visitors actively build these four types of connections.

3.2 CONNECTIONS AND THE VISITOR INDUSTRY

Central to the Connections Framework of health is the use of stories and data to assess where people are, and the identification of practices, both as expressions of the things people value and as tools for helping individuals and communities become healthier.

In the context of the Hawai‘i Island’s visitor industry, there are a number of questions to ask to assess connectedness, as well as many practices that can build connectedness. Below are some examples:

Connection to Place

Examples of questions for assessing connection to place

- What places on Hawai'i Island are special to the residents of Hawai'i Island? What are the stories they tell of these places, and how widely are these stories told?
- Can residents access the places that are important to them, and can they share these places in ways that least infringe on others enjoyment?
- What are the healing places of Hawai'i Island—places where people feel healthy, happy, and at peace? Are these places protected and accessible to those that need them?
- How do residents feel about their built environment? Does it make them feel comfortable and connected to their communities? Does it serve the community's needs? Does it make them feel proud and create an ownership in the wellbeing of the built environment?
- Are people engaged with the natural environment in ways that are respectful and regenerative? Are they leaving places in good condition, or are they degrading them for future generations?
- Do visitors see Hawai'i Island as merely a playground for them to use, or are they getting a taste of the respect and care and most island residents feel for their places?

Examples of practices for deepening connection to place

- Sharing stories of places with visitors through interaction—this practice is as important to the storytellers as it is to the listeners.
- Protecting and stewarding places that, because of their special value, are reserved for the enjoyment and use of residents, so that the people of Hawai'i Island don't feel so encroached upon such that it creates resentment of visitors.
- Creating fun and meaningful opportunities for residents and visitors to mālama 'āina—to care for the land through restoration, gardening, and sustainable practices.
- Having place-based celebrations—events that highlight stories, remember histories, celebrate community pride, etc.
- Sharing and eating food that comes from the island helps people feel more appreciative and connected to the land and ocean.

BUILDING CONNECTION TO PLACE

KapohoKine Adventures and its partner Zipline Through Paradise focus on environmental preservation and provide students opportunities to learn about the rainforest and to preserve it. They create profound experiences for residents and visitors alike. As one visitor from Manhattan excitedly declared, "This is the first time I've stepped on dirt in 5 years!"

Connection to Past and Future

Examples of questions for assessing connection to past and future

- Do residents share stories of their ancestries and histories? Are there elements in their community histories that generate pride or deeper understanding of who they are?
- Do residents use traditional languages in various ways—languages that make them feel connected to people in the past?
- Do elders have any role or presence in the visitor industry such that there is an awareness that a past generation in Hawai'i exists and must be cared for?
- Do children have any role or presence in the visitor industry such that there is an awareness that a future generation in Hawai'i exists and must be cared for?
- Do communities have a shared vision for what they want in the future?

Examples of practices for deepening connection to past and future

- Sharing authentic stories and traditions with visitors so that culture and heritage are perpetuated and honored.
- Eliminating practices that denigrate, demean, or exploit cultural practices and heritage that are important to the people of Hawai'i Island.
- Creating events and activities that involve kupuna in ways that don't exploit, but that educate people on why Hawai'i Island is the great place that it is.
- Creating opportunities for young people to be engaged in visitor experiences so that the island feels less like an adult playground, and more like a community for all.

BUILDING CONNECTION TO PAST AND FUTURE

Island Breeze Productions started a "Culture Business Internship Program" to engage young adults interested in working in the visitor industry, but wanting to change how tourism often "objectifies" culture. Interns work with mentors and learn from prominent cultural practitioners to guide them on how to express the relevance of culture, and how to share it with visitors appropriately.

Connection to Others

Examples of questions for assessing connection to others

- Do workers in the tourism industry have time and resources to stay connected to the ones they love? Are they stuck in long commutes and multiple jobs that isolate them or keep them from investing in healthy relationships?
- Do residents and tourism-focused businesses trust each other and work together to create things of value in their community?

- Do residents and visitors co-exist harmoniously on the island, or do they find each other at odds?
- Are visitors integrated with residents, or are they increasingly segregated and separated so as not to know that residents exist and have needs?
- Do residents feel good about their role as hosts, or do they resent the presence of visitors?

Examples of practices for deepening connection to others

- Creating activities and events that have value and enjoyment for both residents and visitors; these activities can be carefully designed so that the presence of the other is seen as a positive rather than a nuisance.
- Creating activities and events that intentionally involve positive interaction between residents and visitors—eating together, working together, learning together, playing together—in ways that humanize the other and reduce segregation.
- Supporting workers in the tourism industry through policy and practice that help them maintain strong families.
- Holding events open to visitors that are created by communities working together; where the process of creating the event has as much value as the event itself.

BUILDING CONNECTION TO OTHERS

The Hawaii Horse Owners Association marketing strategy for the Pana'ewa Stampede Rodeo focuses on building partnerships, nurturing these relationships, and approaching other businesses and organizations whose missions align with the event. Through these person-to-person connections, they have developed over 100 sponsors in the past five years.

Connection to Better Selves

Examples of questions for assessing connection to better selves

- Are we healthy? Do we feel strong, self-aware, and free from illness? Are you getting enough sleep?
- Do we feel good about our roles as providers for our families and communities? Are we building assets and improving on our lives?
- Are we proud of who we are as island residents?
- Do workers in the tourism industry have high job satisfaction?
- Do visitors actually feel like their visit to Hawai'i enhanced their lives in ways that make them want to return?

Examples of practices for deepening connection to better selves

- Ensuring that residents and workers in the tourism industry have the health care, education, and financial means that they need to be good hosts of visitors.
- Engaging visitors in ways that enrich them in unique and authentic ways that could only happen on Hawai'i Island.

BUILDING CONNECTION TO BETTER SELVES

A leader of the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival puts her life philosophy into the very essence of her work:

“Passion carries our events. You gotta give up your ego and live and be humble. It’s not about me, it’s about us. People have a sense of something special on Hawaii Island and people come to heal.”

4 FROM “OLA KA ‘Ā INA, OLA KE KĀ NAKA” TO ACTION

The following four steps comprise a road map that can be followed at all levels to create a great tourism industry in the form laid forth in the Hawai'i Island TSP. Following these steps can develop an island-based visitor industry that both flows from a great community, and helps to feed a great community.

4.1 AUTHENTICITY – WHO IS THE HOST?

The first step is to ensure that the visitor experience truly flows from the community rather than being imposed on the community. The most important question to ask is who controls the experience: Is the experience authentically from the community, or is it disconnected such that residents feel no ownership or stake?

Inputs

- Investment and activities that build community capacity to work together and engage with one another civically to develop community-based plans and visions
- Investment and activities that generate community produced events, products, and experiences
- Investment and activities that build workforce development for tourism industry workers

Expected Outcomes

- Fewer residents feel that the island is run for tourists
- Diversity of Hawai'i Island is recognized and celebrated
- Strong sense of community identity and pride

4.2 READINESS – DO WE HAVE STRONG CONNECTIONS OURSELVES?

A critical part of healthy tourism is investing in the people and places that will host visitors. The question to ask is are we taking care of our connections “at home” sufficiently such that we can host others effectively.

Inputs

- Investment and activities that build health, education and economic strength of communities
- Investment and activities that protect and preserve important places
- Investment and activities that build cultural identity and practice

Expected Outcomes

- Healthy families and individuals

- Strong educational opportunities
- Capable and willing tourism workforce
- Improved visitor satisfaction

4.3 CONNECTING – WHAT ARE THE BEST ACTIVITIES AND ATTRACTIONS?

We then need to ask ourselves, are the activities and attractions we are providing to visitors creating or destroying connections? With good planning and investment, Hawai'i Island can generate visitor experiences that intentionally cultivate the four connections.

Inputs

- Investment and activities that enhance the quality (as opposed to the quantity) of visitor experiences
- Investment into visitor education so that they can feel connected to the people and places of Hawai'i Island in a positive way

Expected Outcomes

- Increased satisfaction among visitors
- Improved stewardship of natural resources
- Increased practice of cultural traditions and language

4.4 RECIPROCITY – HOW CAN WE ALL BENEFIT?

Finally, we need to pay attention to the way Hawai'i Island is shared. Are visitors simply taking or is there a give and take—whether conscious or not—whereby residents are strengthening their connections in the process? In the end, the people of Hawai'i Island should feel stronger because of the existence of the visitor industry.

Inputs

- Investment and activities that create opportunities for all stakeholders to regularly reflect on, evaluate and improve the visitor industry
- Investment and activities that gather more engaged feedback from visitors about their experiences on Hawai'i Island.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased support of the visitor industry among residents; positive correlation between visitor experiences and resident experience of visitors
- Increased pride and work satisfaction among workers in the visitor industry