FOUR COUNTIES SUSTAINABILITY NETWORK (4CSN)

Activity 8: Summarize 4CSN Convening

July 31, 2025

Table of Contents

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Strategic Planning Session Notes - Day 1

Four County Sustainability Network (4CSN)
Date: July 2025
Location: Lumeria Maui
Focus: Grounding the Network – Values, Protocols, and Structure

Session 1: Welcome & Framing the Day

- Facilitators: Hannah Peila & Alex de Roode, Hā Sustainability

- Overview of the two-day purpose:

    - Day 1: Reflect on history, revisit mission/vision, develop protocols, discuss structure.

    - Day 2: Define priorities, inclusivity, and actionable commitments.

- Icebreaker: One word participants associate with Hawaii's sustainable future.

    - Words shared included: **connection, innovation, independence, equitable, adaptable, biodiversity, diversity, funding, collaborative, grounding, community, excellence, restricted, local, and responsibility.**

Key Takeaways:

- **Reconnection of Relationships**: The session emphasized the importance of reconnecting and reinforcing relationships to ground the group in shared values for moving forward.

- **Mission & Vision Alignment**: The group revisited the mission and vision, ensuring alignment with the collective values of the community.

- **Charter Acknowledgement**: It was acknowledged that the Charter from prior years had not been fully adopted, creating an opportunity to revisit and update.

- **Shared Values**: The icebreaker highlighted the diversity of perspectives but also underscored common threads of connection, responsibility, and collaboration, which will guide future actions.

Figure 1: strategic planning session

Session 2: 4CSN Storytelling & Timeline

- Haley, Christina, Kendra, and others shared key milestones:

  - 2017: Energy managers met at USDN conference in San Diego; idea for 4CSN was born.

  - Monthly calls began to maintain momentum and build relationships.

  - Successes:

    - Oct 2017: Four County energy managers meet at USDN Annual Meeting in San Diego

- Dec 2017: Commitment of all four Mayors to transition to 100% renewable ground transportation by 2045. Additionally, the mayors of Honolulu and Maui pledged to transition their entire fleet vehicles to 100% renewable power by 2035.
- Dec 2018: First in-person 4CSN Convening on Oahu
- March 2019: USDN State-wide Game of Extremes Exercises & Resilience Hub Meetings
- April 2019: USDN Climate Communications Training
- Sept 2019: County of Kauai, HEPF, & USDN organized M-R-E (Mitigation Resilience Equity) Convening in Maui on shoulder of HCPO
- December 2019: 4CSN goes to the Capitol to meet legislators and share legislative package
- Summer 2020: Meetings go from monthly conference calls to weekly Zoom meetings
- 2022 or 2023 (Kendra can't specifically remember): Drafted 4CSN Network Charter
- Winter 2023: Collaborated with CCMAC to submit an application for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (both planning & implementation components)
- Fall 2024: 4CSN co-presented at HCPO and the USDN Annual Conference
- Spring 2025: 4CSN is awarded USDN Catalyst Funds to host convening
    - COVID period increased meeting frequency and support during crisis.

    - Charter work started post-COVID but stalled due to staff turnover.

Key Takeaways:

- **Strength of Relationships**: Building strong relationships and trust has been the foundation of the 4CSN network, enabling collaboration and momentum over time.

- **Peer Support & Knowledge-Sharing**: The network serves as a valuable resource for peer support, enabling counties to share knowledge, experiences, and solutions.

- **People-Centered Focus**: Recognizing the political and structural context of counties is important, but maintaining a focus on people- and community-centered work is crucial for long-term success.

- **USDN Membership**: The value of USDN membership is significant, offering resources such as education, funding, and national connections that have supported 4CSN's growth.

Session 3: Revisiting Vision, Mission & Purpose

- Current draft statements (pre-charter) were reviewed interactively with red/blue pens and sticky notes.

- Discussion themes:

  - **Vision:**

    - General support for including *Native Hawaiian culture,* but with caution about being performative, suggesting to consider **ʻŌiwi** or Hawaiian cultural practices as more appropriate framing.

    - Desire to ensure cultural values are reflected throughout all statements and actions, not just vision.

    - Question about whether the vision speaks to the network's internal functioning or the external impact.

  - **Mission:**

    - Debate over phrasing "strives to transform", some want language to be more actionable and immediate ("achieve" rather than "strive").

    - Clarification that "transforming local government" may not always align with ultimate goals; perhaps focus more on transforming outcomes and supporting communities.

    - Agreement that emphasizing the *network's horizontal, collaborative nature* is important , "network" implies shared leadership rather than hierarchy.

  - **Purpose:**

    - Agreement with collaborative/relationship-focused language.

    - Desire to define shared values clearly and potentially tie terms like "sustainability" and "resilience" to agreed definitions.

    - Suggestion that "staff" language could be broadened to include others whose work aligns with sustainability principles.

- Noted tension: Aspirational vs. action-oriented language and inclusivity of cultural context vs. accessibility for all members.

Vision

Equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities grounded by Native Hawaiian Culture and prepared to thrive in the face of a changing climate across Hawaiʻi.

Revised Vision Statement:

Equitable, sustainable, pono, and resilient communities across Hawaiʻi, grounded in ʻŌiwi values, prepared to thrive in the face of a changing climate.

Mission

The Four County Sustainability Network (4CSN) is a collaborative network of county sustainability staff in the state of Hawaiʻi that strives to transform local government in support of equitable, sustainable, and resilient communities.

Revised Mission Statement:

The Four County Sustainability Network (4CSN) is a collaborative network of county staff across Hawaiʻi, whose work is rooted in sustainability principles, committed to achieving equitable, sustainable, and resilient outcomes. Grounded in ʻŌiwi values, we empower local governments through inclusive, community-led action, emphasizing shared leadership and collective impact to address Hawaiʻi's climate and sustainability challenges.

Purpose

Recognizing that no one county can achieve the vision alone, 4CSN was established to collaborate and leverage the knowledge and joint capacities of the four counties' sustainability staff to advance individual county and shared network sustainability, climate action, and resiliency priorities.

Revised Purpose Statement:

Recognizing that no single county can achieve the vision alone, 4CSN was established to collaborate and leverage the collective knowledge and capacities of the four counties' staff, whose work is rooted in sustainability principles. Our shared goal is to advance both individual county and network-wide sustainability, climate action, and resilience priorities. By focusing on collaboration, shared leadership, and aligning our work with clearly defined values, we are uniquely positioned to drive meaningful policy and systemic change across Hawaiʻi's counties.

Key Takeaways:

- **Cultural Sensitivity**: There is strong support for including Native Hawaiian culture, but care is needed to avoid being performative. The group favors using terms like ʻŌiwi to ensure authenticity.

- **Internal vs. External Focus**: The vision needs clarity on whether it addresses the network's internal dynamics or its external impact. This distinction is important to ensure the vision resonates with both internal and community-facing goals.

- **Collaborative Nature**: Emphasis on the network's collaborative, horizontal leadership structure is key. It is crucial that the language reflects shared leadership and the non-hierarchical nature of the network.

- **Broader Inclusivity**: The need to expand the definition of "staff" to include others working in alignment with sustainability principles highlights a commitment to inclusivity and collaboration.

Session 4: Developing Network Protocols (breakouts)

- Participants divided into four groups to draft protocols for:

  - **Communication**

  - **Decision-Making**

  - **Onboarding/Engagement**

  - **External Partnerships**

- Each group was tasked to identify:

  - Current challenges and pain points.

  - Best current practices.

  - Ideal future-state protocol.

  - Actionable next steps and who is responsible for finalizing protocols.

- **Communication**

    Notes :
    - Cultivate Relationships
    - Fully supported by the network
    - Define how to support transitioning staff.
    - Creation of an alumni network.
    - Work grounded in community data.

    Group Answers to prompt Questions:

    1.What are the current challenges in communication with the network?

    A.:- People don't know each other: need to cultivate relationships.

    - Need to share goals annually.

    - Gatekeeping.

    2.What's working well in communication?

    A.: - Note taking and sharing notes.

    - Supported.

    3.What would an ideal communication protocol look like?

    A.: - How do we support transitioning government staff? New groups/staff rely on 4CSN to understand pastwork.

    - Alumni network? Continued collaboration: how would they interact while maintaining safe space?

    - Strategies on how to communicate to the public: Perspective shift, other counties highlight work.

    - Ground data in the community so when admin changes, community needs are still seen.

    4.How do we make requests of each other and ensure follow-through?

    A.: - Direct request.

    - Communication infrastructure: tools, digital communication (ie. 4CSN Q&A tool)

    - Staff support.

    5.How can we ensure communication fosters respect and trust?

    A.:(Not answered on paper; group didn't see the question on the back page)

Poster Notes:

- Alumni network. Still part of - not apart.
- Open communications platform. Similar to USDN Q&A
- Making more time outside of monthly meetings
- Visually simple for the community. E.g. thermometer.

- **Decision- Making**

  notes :

  - Lack of time to dedicate - based on the nature of work and broad topics.
  - Need of a decision-making framework.
  - Keep a living list of collective actions.
  - Design responsibility for each county.
  - Set agenda for the meetings, set the needs.

  Group Answers to prompt Questions:

  1.What challenges have we faced in decision making as the network has grown?

  A.:- Broad subject matter invites multiple interpretations -> Lack time to create clarity.

  - 4 mayors that change = conflicting priorities -> lack time to build consensus

  - Lack of time, each county has its own "flagpoles" = too slow for things like testimony.

  2.How can we ensure decision making is inclusive, clear, and efficient?

  A.: - Research sociocracy = decision making tool.

  - Use values to create decision making frameworks, list of collective actions, and act as a priority filter.

  - Everyone is afforded space/time/ability to bring/share their own priorities. (rooted in ho'oponopono.

  3.What does an ideal decision-making process look like?

  A.: - 4 collective actions, each led by 1 county.

  - Each county has their own priorities but also agree collectively.

  - Asynchronous vs. synchronous - more strategic use of "together" time.

  - Put ideas through framework - strategic vs. task decisions.

  4.How do we create agendas for meetings to ensure decisions are

made effectively and inclusively?

A.: - How do we follow up - where do thoughts/ideas live the rest of the time(outside the context of mtg agendas).

- use technology to help prompt (AI?)

- Clarity on what is relevant for agendas.

5.How can we pursue political moves or advocate for the network effectively and respectfully?

A.: - Values should inform decision making frameworks.

 - Aim for legislative packages (state and council)

- Policy is meant to an end, we will collectively agree and work with community partners to elevate when we can't.

Poster Notes:

- For each county, thinking of resiliency of structure. (political appointees; one office represented)

- **External Partnership**

    notes :

    - Respect and collaboration.
    - Keep the core values so connections will feel safe and trustable.
    - Community goals and priority have to be reflected in our work.
    - In the network we are all equal and share horizontally.
    - At the end of the day, our job is to make sure the plan will work out.
    - Be careful with the translation of the community input.

    Group Answers to prompt Questions:

    1.What challenges have we faced when partnering across counties on political and policy initiatives?

    A.:- Varying priorities - getting on the same page.

    - Coordination & capacity for current staff/tasks.

    - Lack of political will.

    2.What has worked well in past inter-county collaborations and should be preserved?

    A.: - Planning ahead and focus on work.

    - Sharing draft testimonies & documents, starting points.

    - Sharing challenges so the other counties are prepared.

- County - spreadsheet track (create resources that others can tap into)

3.What does an ideal inter-county partnership project look like?

A.: - Set time/agenda items - open discussion

- Consistent messaging priorities.

- Channel resources & standard formatting (google drive)

- Common goals & purpose/ Shared values - respect for others' commitment.

- Clean communication of goals, and timeline expectations.

- Accountability.

4.How can we ensure that all counties are aligned on key issues like climate action, resilience, and regional planning?

A.: - Direct request.

- Clear communication - goals and timeline

- Shared goals.

- Sharing interdepartmental messaging.

5.How We can effectively pursue joint grants and funding opportunities across counties?

- Common goals.

- Establish a process when pursuing grants. - working group.

- Challenges on distributing grants. (per capita)

- Equitable budget distribution.

6.How do we ensure mutual benefit and respect in our political advocacy and policy decisions across counties?

- Understanding different projects and priorities between local governments.

- Finding shared goals.

- Not a one size fits all -> flexibility

- Shared priorities.

- More feedback/surveys between network members. - shared values.

Draft Protocol -> Engaging external partners w/ mutual understanding + respect of all 4 counties priorities.

- Shared priorities, values, timeline (real!)
- Open communication/ transparency

- Developing a process for engaging as a network; who do we ask permission?

Poster Notes:

- Network need to be reflective of community voices and that's what should be reflected in external partnerships. A possible part of achieving this is a public "cafe". Sharing out what we're working on. Could be a quarterly online public meeting.
- Bringing in local groups to present on work they do to inform priorities.
- Question of reflection of community effects: who network is accountable to .. our community, our mayor, or each other?
- Note: USDN uses the Chatham House Rule to create safe space for members.
- Insert spot for a lot of projects is plans, so important to have awareness and that community voice is heard.
- Responsibility of translation / communicating what the county does even with an increasingly centering community voice.

- **Onboard and Engagement**

  notes :

  - The process for onboarding is basically inexistent.
  - Breakout groups could be utilized for engagement.
  - Be more specific about protocol.

  Group Answers to prompt Questions:

  1.What is the current process for onboarding and engaging new members?

  A.:- Calendar invite.

  - Round robin intros.

  2.How can we make the onboarding process more inclusive and thorough?
  A.: - Having a schedule - helps to understand time commitment.

  3.What information should be included in onboarding for new members?

  A.: - One pager or slide deck with history and general info for how to.

  - Membership list.

  - Forward facing about it being a "therapy" safe engage space.

- Collaborative efforts happening + past successes.

- Resources and data gap.

4.How do we ensure new members are invited and welcomed effectively?

A.: - finding way to hold space for "non sustainability" staff

- Anyone in the network can invite anyone out, take responsibility

- Map of work areas covered

- Network blog

- Incorporate 'Ōiwi practices in a meaningful way

- Appropriately ground the space.

- Welcome email with onboarding information.

5.How can we keep new members engaged and involved over time?

A.:- Opening space for community voices.

- Invite CBOS to share.

- Empower people to have offline conversations.

- Add legislative strategy sessions to each agenda.

- add 30 min?

- Use breakout groups during calls to talk about specific subjects.

- Once a quarter subgroup meetings.

- Quarterly all network calls and monthly subgroup meetings?

- Clarity in mtg purposes ie strategic, brainstorming, specific project collab.

Poster Notes:

- Outboarding & Succussions.

Key Takeaways:

Communication:

- **Relationship Cultivation**: Strong emphasis on the importance of building relationships and fostering trust within the network.

- **Transitioning Staff**: There is a need for strategies to support transitioning government staff, ensuring new staff understand past work and the history of the network.

- **Alumni Network**: The idea of creating an alumni network to maintain connections with past members while ensuring continued collaboration was highlighted.

- **Data-Driven Communication**: Grounding communication efforts in community data ensures that community needs remain visible even with changes in administration.

- **Tools and Infrastructure**: Communication tools, like a Q&A platform and a centralized system for note-taking and follow-ups, are essential for effective communication and follow-through.

Decision-Making:

- **Challenges in Decision-Making**: Time constraints and broad topics complicate consensus-building, particularly when priorities shift due to political changes.

- **Sociocracy**: Exploring tools like sociocracy to create a decision-making framework that is inclusive, clear, and efficient was suggested.

- **Collective Actions**: Agreement on having 4 collective actions, with each county responsible for leading one, allowing for both individual county priorities and collective decision-making.

- **Clear Agendas**: The need for clear meeting agendas that define priorities and focus was emphasized, along with better follow-up mechanisms to ensure decisions are acted upon.

- **Asynchronous Decision-Making**: More strategic use of "together" time, combining synchronous and asynchronous decision-making to improve efficiency and clarity.

External Partnerships:

- **Respect and Shared Values**: External partnerships should be built on respect, collaboration, and shared values, with a clear understanding of community goals.

- **Political Alignment**: Varying priorities between counties and the political will to support initiatives can pose challenges. Clear communication and respect for each county's priorities are essential for successful collaborations.

- **Joint Funding Opportunities**: To pursue joint grants effectively, there is a need for common goals, a clear process, and equitable distribution of resources.

- **Community Reflection**: The network must remain reflective of community voices, ensuring that external partnerships align with community needs and priorities. A quarterly public meeting could be a way to share progress and engage the public.

- **Flexibility**: Partnerships should remain flexible, recognizing that each county's situation may require unique approaches.

Onboarding & Engagement:

- **Lack of Formal Onboarding**: There is currently no formal onboarding process, but the group recognized the importance of developing one to ensure new members feel welcomed and informed.

- **Inclusivity and Clarity**: Ensuring that new members understand time commitments, network history, and ongoing projects will improve engagement. The onboarding process should be clear, inclusive, and welcoming, with resources like a membership list and a one-pager on network history.

- **Ongoing Engagement**: To keep members engaged, the network can create space for offline conversations, add legislative strategy sessions to meetings, and have regular subgroup and network-wide calls.

- **Incorporating ʻŌiwi Practices**: Emphasizing the inclusion of ʻŌiwi cultural practices in the onboarding and engagement process to ground the space and foster inclusivity.

Figure 2: strategic planning session

Session 5: Strengthening Steering Committee & Structure

Current State:
 Honolulu has historically carried much of the organizing and leadership burden.

Options Discussed:

- Each county will take on the responsibility of leading a quarterly meeting, rotating the role among the counties.

- Subgroups or subcommittees will meet monthly to address ongoing tasks.

- A paid position for a network manager was suggested to oversee agenda tracking and meeting facilitation (funding required).

- A facilitator will be identified to manage meetings and track agendas.

Key Takeaways:

- Need for an equitable workload and active participation from all counties.

- Desire to maintain momentum while fostering buy-in and ownership from all counties.

Next Steps:

- Rotate leadership responsibility for the quarterly meetings among counties until external funding and a dedicated facilitator are secured.

- Create subcommittees as needed for specific tasks or projects to support ongoing efforts.

- Formalize the move to quarterly meetings with ad-hoc educational meetings in between when needed.

- Transition the leadership structure next quarter and continue discussions on funding and finding a permanent facilitator.

Strategic Planning Convening – Day 1: Excursion Notes

Date: July 2025
Locations Visited:

- Skyline Seed Orchard

- Haleakalā Biochar Facility

- Kula Community Watershed Alliance (KCWA)

Skyline Seed Orchard

- Hosts a living seed orchard preserving Kula genetics of native species.

- Seeds collected from this orchard are used in restoration projects at the KCWA nursery.

- Over 600 native trees have been planted here; thousands of seeds are distributed annually.

- Erosion control techniques demonstrated:

    - Use of harvested tree trunks to create terraces on steep slopes.

    - Effective in Kula's mountainous burn scar but less applicable to Lahaina due to its flatter terrain and different fire conditions.

- Kula fire context:

    - High burn severity, with underground smoldering lasting months.

    - Abundance of woody biomass provided material for terraces and biochar.

Figure 3: Skyline Seed Orchard

Haleakalā Biochar Facility

- Founded to turn invasive species into high-value biochar products, addressing wildfire risk and soil health.

- Support from Maui County was critical for scaling up operations:

    - Grants funded grinders, kilns, and skid steer machinery.

    - Plans for a future industrial grinder and mobile kilns to scale operations and restore more land.

- Biochar process:

    - Hardwood feedstock is heated in low-oxygen kilns (not burned outright).

    - Produces biochar, wood vinegar (liquid smoke used as an insecticide/fungicide), and carbon sequestration benefits.

    - Kilns operate as closed systems: capture syngas to self-fuel and prevent emissions.

    - Each batch sequesters carbon indefinitely while improving soil and filtering pollutants.

- Applications:

    - Agriculture: retains soil moisture, supports microorganisms.

    - Fire recovery: mitigates heavy metals in burned soils.

    - Stormwater management: used as a natural filtration medium.

- Current feedstock comes from a 60-acre harvest lease of eucalyptus and black wattle.

- Long-term vision:

    - Clear invasive species from fire-prone areas and restore native habitat.

    - Expand biochar production to more sites and larger scales with sufficient funding and support.

Figure 4: Haleakalā Biochar Facility

Kula Community Watershed Alliance (KCWA)

- Formed after the 2023 Kula fire to restore burned watershed areas and protect remaining homes and infrastructure.

- Fire impacts:

    - 26 homes lost, 71 properties burned.

    - Fire behavior influenced by steep gulches, invasive wattles, and strong winds.

    - Soil burned to a powdery, unstable condition, with erosion threatening properties.

- KCWA's mission:

    - Community-led and governed by a council of fire survivors.

    - Executes a 4-step process:

1. Stabilize slopes with wattles and invasive trees (mulched in place).

2. Install fencing to control deer and protect young plants.

3. Restore with natives propagated in the community nursery.

4. Long-term maintenance through paid contractors and volunteers.

- Nursery:

  - Propagates Kula-native species from Skyline seeds.

  - Being developed as a *resiliency hub* with solar, satellite internet, tool library, and community training programs.

- Funding & Structure:

  - Operates under a fiscal sponsor to manage grants and accounting.

  - Mix of grants, contracts, and volunteer support funds the work.

  - Long-term goal to become an independent 501(c)(3).

- Challenges:

  - Managing erosion on private land with limited government intervention.

  - Balancing chemical use (e.g., stump treatments) with environmental sensitivity.

  - Securing sustainable funding for ongoing maintenance and scaling to other vulnerable gulches.

Takeaways

- **Community-led recovery**: Residents organized quickly to restore land and advocate for resources.

- **Public-private collaboration**: County and federal grants enable work on private land to protect public resources.

- **Invasive species management**: Removing and repurposing invasives is both an ecological and economic opportunity.

- **Innovation & Resilience**: Combining traditional stewardship with modern technology and creative funding strategies.

- **Scalability & Replicability**: The Kula model shows potential for broader application, but site-specific conditions (topography, vegetation, community) matter.

Notable Quotes & Insights

- *"If I go out of business because there are no more invasive species, I'll die a happy man."*

- *"This work isn't just removing weeds — it's protecting our watershed and our future."*

- *"We learned to match community expertise and energy with government and philanthropic resources."*

- *"Every gulch on this mountain is vulnerable — what we do here needs to happen everywhere."*

Day 1 Evening: Networking Trivia & Dinner

Date: July 17, 2025
Time: 5:30 PM – 8:00 PM

Overview:

The evening of Day 1 focused on fostering connections and encouraging cross-county collaboration. The networking trivia event provided a fun and engaging way for participants to hangout in a relaxed, interactive setting. Each team was carefully formed to ensure that there was at least one person from another county, encouraging participants to step out of their usual circles and build relationships across the network. This activity not only helped break the ice but also set the tone for future collaborative efforts.

Networking Trivia:

- Teams participated in a lively trivia game that included questions about sustainability, local culture, pop culture, and fun facts about the counties involved in the Four Counties Sustainability Network (4CSN).

- The trivia promoted team-building and helped members get to know each other's backgrounds, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration among participants from different regions.

Dinner:

Following the trivia, a big dinner was held, bringing everyone together in a shared space to

unwind and continue building connections. The dinner allowed participants to reflect on the day's discussions and activities while strengthening bonds over a meal. This informal setting helped reinforce the collaborative spirit of the convening and provided an opportunity to discuss future steps in a relaxed environment.

Figure 5: trivia and dinner

Day 2: Service Project at Kaiāulu Initiatives

Date: July 18, 2025
 Location: Kaiāulu Initiatives, Lahaina, Maui
 Time: 9:30 PM – 12:30 PM

Overview:
The second day of our convening shifted focus from strategic planning to hands-on community engagement in the morning. Participants traveled to Kaiāulu Initiatives, a grassroots nonprofit started by Lahaina community members after the fire, dedicated to restoring Lahaina's watershed by transforming fallow lands into thriving native-plant ecosystems. This service project provided an opportunity for professionals from various counties to collaborate directly with community members, fostering deeper connections and shared purpose.

Activities:

- **Native Plant Watering:** Volunteers assisted in watering native species, contributing to the restoration of Lahaina's landscape.

- **Community Lunch:** A shared meal provided a space for informal discussions and strengthened community bonds.

Key Takeaways:

- **Community-Led Restoration:** Kaiāulu Initiatives exemplifies a community-driven approach to environmental restoration, emphasizing the importance of local leadership and stewardship.

- **Inter-County Collaboration:** The project facilitated collaboration among professionals from different counties, enhancing the network's cohesion and shared commitment to sustainability.

- **Hands-On Engagement:** Direct involvement in restoration efforts allowed participants to connect more deeply with the land and the community, reinforcing the values of mālama ʻāina.

Reflections:
This service project underscored the significance of integrating hands-on activities into professional networks, providing a tangible connection to the communities we aim to serve. The experience at Kaiāulu Initiatives highlighted the power of collective action and the impact of grassroots efforts in fostering resilience and sustainability.

For more information about Kaiāulu Initiatives and their ongoing projects, visit their website: [Kaiāulu Initiatives](#).

Figure 6: Service Project at Kaiāulu Initiatives

Day 2- Strategic Planning
Four Counties Sustainability Network

Strategic Planning Sessions Notes
Day 2: July 2025 | Lahaina

Session 6: Expanding the Tent - Redefining Sustainability & Inclusion

Discussion Themes:

- Lack of adequate representation of ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian) perspectives and cultural practitioners in sustainability work.

- Need for opportunities to learn from and with ʻŌiwi knowledge holders, with equitable compensation as technical advisors.

- Importance of systems thinking: holistic, interconnected approaches rather than siloed efforts.

- Recognized the multicultural nature of Hawaiʻi and the need to define clearly what "community knowledge" means.

- Participants suggested further exploration of how "community" is defined in future convenings.

- Concerns raised about government-centered approaches to sustainability: political constraints, silos, and short-term economic priorities overshadowing equity.

- Recommendations included fostering top-down and bottom-up relationships, improving transparency, and supporting community-led initiatives.

- Challenges discussed with integrating equity positions within county offices; staff shared that positions were underutilized or misunderstood.

- Participants shared personal observations about systemic inequities embedded in government processes and how more education and cultural grounding are needed to meaningfully address equity.

Q1. "What cultural, Indigenous, or community knowledge systems are missing from 4CSN's work?"

notes :

- if not Oʻiwi, it's hard to say what's missing. They don't have much representation in the group.
- System approach, holistic, interconnected.
- Acknowledge the multicultural formation of the community.

Poster Notes:

- Systems Approach - Holistic/ Inter connectedness
- Clarify what meant by community knowledge. How are we defining community?
- Generational knowledge and representation
- ʻŌiwi representations
- Adequately compensate cultural/ʻŌiwi advisors as technical advisors and/or consultants Opportunities to learn from and with ʻŌiwi knowledge and holders practitioners.

Q2. "How does our government-centered approach to sustainability limit us? How can we expand beyond that?"

notes :

- Time and procedure.
- We can be more positive and proactive.

Poster Notes:

- We are put in boxes but sustainability needs to be integrated as core values throughout.

- Seasons limit vs. Sustainability actions require more people in operations. Or trying to just keep things going. Not have the sustainability staff tell them what to do.

- Relationships building up-down plus bottom-up value settings.

- Government approach may make sustainability overly political; should care about everything.

- Process plus procedure can take 10 times longer versus a community taking action. Community partners execute projects instead.

- Leadership may have different priorities than your sustainability office. (Majority prioritize development, etc.)

- Narratives that we can't prioritize one culture over other. Restricts equity plus community-driven approaches.

- Systems are driven to maximize short-term economic return. Especially in R&D/OED.

- Expand beyond more transparency. Shining light into the system for the community to get involved.

Q3. "How can we better engage historically excluded voices and sectors in 4CSN?"

notes :

- Making time to ensure geographic inclusion.
- Ground rules in place.
- Talk to O'iwi, consult them, volunteer with groups to connect and learn about perspective.
- Go to the community and meet them. Not just wait for them to come.

Poster Notes:

- Historically Excluded: ('Ōiwi, ALICE, Rural/neighbor islands Niihau, Molokai, Lanai) Sectors (ag, waste, state, other depts)

- Making time to ensure geographic inclusion in what we pay attention to.

- Ensure full representation on agendas.

- Ground rules and practice to hold each other accountable to values, plus create self-spaces.

- Better allow people to know who, and will be relevant for them.

- Keeping up with CBOs.

- Uplift voices.

Q4. "What changes to our priorities or structure would better reflect everyone's values?"

notes :

- What are the core values?
- The group needs to come together and define them.
- Before defining values, we need to learn and have more learning opportunities.
- Invite speakers, learning experience and compensation for them.
- Bridge the counties to have more chances to learn and help each other. Cooperation between counties.
- Conservation conference as a possible starting point.

Poster Notes:

 - What are our priorities and values? The theme from this convening seems 'Āina-rooted, community-centered, and indigenous knowledge.

- Looking at potential funding to bring someone in who can hold us accountable to the values and create more opportunities to do that.

- Quarterly or annual checkin to ensure priorities and values are being met.

- If increased capacity, creating opportunities to connect with orgs in the field and then bring those stories and lessons back to the network.

- Establishing core values as it relates to our vision and work.

- Group values work. Word Clouds as a tool.

Key Takeaways:

Cultural Representation & Indigenous Knowledge:

- **'Ōiwi Perspectives**: The need for more representation of Native Hawaiian perspectives and cultural practitioners in sustainability work was strongly emphasized. The group acknowledged that 'Ōiwi knowledge is underrepresented

within 4CSN, and cultural advisors should be adequately compensated as technical advisors or consultants.

- **Holistic Approach**: A systems thinking approach, which recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental, cultural, and community issues, is essential for sustainability work.

- **Multicultural Acknowledgement**: Hawaiʻi's multicultural nature must be reflected in sustainability work, and community knowledge needs to be clearly defined and understood in a broader, more inclusive context.

Government-Centered Sustainability Challenges:

- **Political Constraints**: The group identified government-centered approaches as limiting, with political priorities, silos, and short-term economic goals sometimes overshadowing long-term sustainability and equity efforts. They highlighted how time and procedure within government processes can delay action, while community-led projects can often execute more efficiently.

- **Overcoming Silos**: Expanding beyond the government-centric approach means integrating sustainability as a core value across all departments, not just within sustainability offices. There is a need for greater transparency, a systems approach, and open collaboration between governmental and community efforts.

- **Leadership Alignment**: There can be a disconnect between leadership priorities (such as development) and sustainability goals. Fostering relationships both top-down and bottom-up is essential for aligning agendas.

Engaging Historically Excluded Voices:

- **Geographic & Sectoral Inclusion**: There was a focus on ensuring geographic inclusion, especially from rural areas, neighbor islands, and historically excluded sectors such as agriculture and waste management.

- **Outreach Beyond Meetings**: It was suggested to go to the community and engage directly with them, rather than waiting for them to come to the network. Additionally, ground rules should be set to ensure accountability to values, creating safe spaces for everyone to engage.

- **Culturally Grounded Practices**: The group recognized the importance of uplifting voices from historically excluded sectors and grounding practices in cultural understanding, particularly through consultation with ʻŌiwi knowledge holders.

Reevaluating Priorities & Values:

- **Core Values Definition**: There was agreement that the network needs to define core values collectively. The group discussed the importance of Aina-rooted, community-centered, and Indigenous knowledge as themes to reflect in the network's priorities.

- **Learning Opportunities**: Before defining values, the group recognized the need for more learning opportunities to deepen understanding of diverse perspectives. This could include inviting speakers and providing compensation for their time and expertise.

- **Cooperation Between Counties**: Bridge-building between counties is essential to share knowledge and lessons. Collaborative learning experiences should be prioritized to help counties learn from each other and strengthen collective capacity.

- **Ongoing Reflection**: The group recommended quarterly or annual checks to ensure that the network's priorities and values are being met, and to identify areas for growth and improvement.

Figure 7: strategic planning session

Session 7: Confirming Priorities & Defining Actions

Top Priorities Identified by Survey:

1. Food Security & Sovereignty

2. Adaptation & Resilience

3. Wastewater Management

4. Energy

5. Agriculture

Food Security & Sovereignty:

- Emphasis on supporting local food production through institutional and visitor purchasing, cooperative models, and improved procurement policies.

- Suggestions included advancing policies for county-level local food purchasing, supporting value-added products, food rescue programs, and improving access to land and water.

- Identified need to address affordability of farm inputs, and to support small farmers with tools, marketing, and succession planning.

- Cooperative models proposed for equipment, kitchens, and marketing.

   notes :

   - Diverse local production
   - Cooperative development
   - Support for small producers
   - Food rescue
   - Leverage the invasives

   Poster Notes:

   - Conserve ag lands for food production
   - Leverage the invasives
   - Spotlight / leverage how ag achieves other sustainability goals
   - Support local food getting highlighted
   - Produced-in-county procurement — walk the talk
   - Leveraging conservation funds for ag / recognizing ag lands as allowance in conservation projects
   - Incentivizing / supporting value-added products
   - Gleaning / food rescue (Need support making sustainable models not entirely grant-funded)
   - Related food waste for local ag input production
   - Nice to prioritize local food producers for local vs. consumption
   - Export / energy ag
   - Water + backing up community sovereignty
   - Help navigate the BS
   - Expand the BUX to ALICE families
   - Incentivize producers to keep products for locals Consumption (Property tax credit?)
   - County-level food purchase policies
   - Local production supported by visioning visitor industry (e.g., Jason's RFI grant proposal)

- Hawaiʻi County needs help developing food security fund ordinance + administrative rules

Adaptation & Resilience:

- Interest in sharing resources and co-learning on resilience hubs and coastal conservation.

- Suggested inviting guest speakers on sea level rise tools and resilience hubs.

- Need to focus on implementation of already-adopted Climate Action & Resilience Plans (CARPs) and track progress.

- Highlighted the importance of funding streams, such as the state green fee, to support county-level adaptation.

Poster Notes:

- Collaboration on coastal conservancy feasibility.
- Connection to vibrant Hawaii Annual Summit.
- Co-learning on long ranging planning for infrastructure + land use(ex.w/r/t SLR)
- Integration of Olelo Hawaii terms in documents (cultural knowledge)
- Assessment of draw from private wells.
- Assessment of all water usage shipped off island for profit.
- Sharing resources between counties(ie. Maui county employees training under ʻŌiwi resources)
- Co-learning about resilience hubs + partners.

Wastewater Management:

- Advocacy needed for equitable, neighbor-island-inclusive cesspool conversion assistance and education.

- Workforce development and training pathways for technical jobs were identified as critical.

- Shared best practices and challenges around grants, priority systems, and collaboration with DOH.

- Interest in innovative above-ground and culturally sensitive wastewater solutions.

- Stories shared from Maui and Kauaʻi on current wastewater reuse projects and grant-funded conversions.

    notes :

    - Workforce aspect, how long do you have to wait?
    - Clarify how DOH works, (maybe a guest speaker)

    Poster Notes:

    - Advocating and pushing for a policy that creates government assistance for cesspool conversion and making it equitable across all islands
    - Partnering and funding for educational expansion in higher education and DOE
    - Supporting diverse solutions for cesspool conversion and supporting communities with the cost.
    - More R-1 Water
    - Working with community colleges on technical programs and connecting high schools
    - Figure it out — DOH Mosaic
    - Exploration of tax-exempt financing grants
    - Hawaiʻi Water Works Association
    - Share best practice lessons on cesspool conversion grants
    - Influence CIP discussions for equitable wastewater infrastructure planning / development

Energy:

- Participants discussed federal funding opportunities for residential energy efficiency retrofits and the need to coordinate with the State Energy Office.

- Noted challenges with high costs of EV infrastructure and the need to center equity and end-of-life considerations.

- Suggested restarting county-state energy staff coordination meetings.
-

    notes :

    - Equity, and End-of-Life Issues

    Poster Notes:

- Energy Equity.
- End of life issues
- Sharing community engagement success/misses
- HOMES/HER funding via HSEO released (TBD)
- Advocate to bring back county energy and HSEO meetings
- Energy retrofits w/ HOMES/HER funding from HSEO
- True cost of installing EV charging infrastructure, especially for our projects
- CCSR 3rd year of benchmarking completed (energy + nata reporting)

Agriculture:

● Suggested supporting workforce development, succession planning, and integrating immigrant farmworker perspectives.

● Highlighted opportunities to integrate energy and agriculture through colocated renewable energy and controlled environment agriculture.

● Emphasized monitoring water availability and land use, while avoiding over-prioritization of cash crops like cannabis at the expense of food production.

● Raised need to explore ag-tourism policy frameworks and zoning issues.

   notes :

   - Water Availability Plan has to integrate, monitor, and regulate
   - Ag-tourism component on the portfolio
   - Other ways to use the ag lands to mitigate the cost of production

   Poster Notes:

   - Conserve ag land for ag production
   - Ag tourism ordinance
   - Solar on existing infrastructure — not on ag land (Especial exemptions for extremely difficult land)
   - Island-by-island holistic look at water availability
   - CWRM designation
   - Workforce development and succession planning
   - Let the farmers be farmers
   - Fund regenerative method technical assistance rooted in local knowledge

- Farmer worker and immigrant communities' perspectives need to be centered if we want to grow the ag labor arc.
- Update and try again with the Climate Resilience Equipment Grant bill in 2026 (HBI450)
- Overlap with sustainability in pesticides/herbicides usage safety

Additional notes:

- Transportation comes up as not mentioned but should be prioritized
- If getting a guest speaker, make sure to bring questions
- Make sure to take advantage of their time
- Launch some tools, digital connections, and accountability
- Gaps ???
- Assign counties for the quarterly meetings
- Volunteer to fill the position of coordination
- Decide the shared values.

Key Takeaways:

Food Security & Sovereignty:

- **Local Production Support**: There is a strong emphasis on supporting local food production, with a focus on leveraging institutional and visitor purchasing, cooperative models, and improving procurement policies at the county level.

- **Policy and Accessibility**: Participants highlighted the need for policies supporting local food purchasing, value-added products, food rescue programs, and access to land and water for small producers.

- **Cooperative Development**: Cooperative models for equipment, kitchens, and marketing were seen as key to empowering small producers and fostering community-driven food systems.

- **Farm Input Affordability**: Addressing the affordability of farm inputs and supporting small farmers with tools, marketing, and succession planning is crucial for long-term sustainability.

- **Value-Added Products & Invasive Species**: There was interest in leveraging invasive species for local ag input production and incentivizing the creation of value-added products to support local food systems.

Adaptation & Resilience:

- **Resource Sharing & Co-Learning**: A focus on sharing resources and co-learning about resilience hubs and coastal conservation efforts, with a suggestion to invite guest speakers on sea level rise tools and resilience hubs.

- **Tracking CARP Progress**: There is a need to focus on implementation of already-adopted Climate Action &/or Resilience Plans and to establish systems for tracking progress.

- **Funding for Adaptation**: Funding streams, like the state green fee, were highlighted as important for supporting county-level adaptation efforts.

- **Collaborative Planning**: Shared co-learning opportunities around long-range planning for infrastructure and land use were emphasized, particularly around sea level rise.

Wastewater Management:

- **Cesspool Conversion**: Advocacy for equitable cesspool conversion assistance and education across islands is a top priority. Participants noted that workforce development and training pathways for technical jobs are crucial for this effort.

- **Innovative Wastewater Solutions**: There is interest in exploring innovative, above-ground, culturally sensitive wastewater solutions and learning from current wastewater reuse projects.

Energy:

- **Equity & End-of-Life Issues**: The group discussed the importance of equity in energy access and end-of-life considerations for energy infrastructure, particularly with regard to EV charging and residential energy retrofits.

- **Coordination with State Energy Office**: There is a call to restart county-state energy staff coordination meetings to better align efforts, share knowledge, and pursue federal funding opportunities for energy retrofits.

- **EV Infrastructure Challenges**: The high costs of EV infrastructure were noted as a major challenge, with participants stressing the need to center equity in

infrastructure development and planning.

Agriculture:

- **Workforce & Succession Planning**: Support for workforce development in agriculture, along with succession planning and integrating immigrant farmworker perspectives, was emphasized as essential for sustaining the industry.

- **Water & Land Use**: Monitoring water availability and land use was identified as a priority, with a focus on avoiding the over-prioritization of cash crops like cannabis at the expense of food production.

- **Ag-Tourism & Zoning**: There is interest in developing ag-tourism policy frameworks and addressing zoning issues to support agriculture alongside tourism.

Session 8: Commitments & Scheduling

Draft Timeline:

- **Timeline Summary: August 2025 – June 2026**

  ### August 2025

  - ☐ Form sub-group. (discussion than pull?)
  - ☐ Looping in planners to ad-hoc network calls in this subject area.
  - ☐ Sub groups form.
  - ☐ Guest speaker : Hannah Thompson - SLR Vulnerability Assessment Tool
  - ☐ HCPO (Waikiki) Side meeting for 4CSN?
  - ☐ Identify legislative priorities
  - ☐ Explore funding (FY27) for 4CSN coordinator
  - ☐ Advocate to bring back county energy and HSEO meetings

  ### September 2025

  - ☐ Q1 meeting
  - ☐ Draft Bills for 2026
  - ☐ ESPC - ad-hoc -> guest speakers with Maui County CCIT + former Maui County staff

- ☐ Form legislative sub group -> determine leg subgroup
- ☐ CBO guest speaker (food)
- ☐ Cultural advisement
- ☐ HOMES/HER funding via HSEO released(TBD)
- ☐ Energy retrofits w/ HOMES/HER funding from HSEO

October 2025

- ☐ True cost of installing EV charging infrastructure, esp for our projects.
- ☐ CCSR 3rd year of benchmarking completed (energy + nata reparting)
- ☐ Legislative priorities communicated to potential bill introducers.
- ☐ Meet with stakeholders + legislators around 2026 session priorities.
- ☐ Guest speaker: Kamuela Enos - Government as practices.
- ☐ Kauai county presentation of final CAP.

November 2025

- ☐ Core values setting
- ☐ Guest speaker: DOH wastewater
- ☐ Discuss 4CSN goals for year (shared training?)

December 2025

- ☐ Q2 Meeting
- ☐ HI county ag+food system plan draft done
- ☐ City + county food plan done
- ☐ CCSR releases "design project for retrofit program" to support energy retrofits
- ☐ Guest speaker: EPSC: Oahu / Maui
- ☐ Pa'ina

January 2026

- ☐ Participation in coastal conservancy feasibility study steering committee
- ☐ Paina recovery
- ☐ Ensuring that short term and long term goals outlined in our respective climate action plans are being met
- ☐ CCSR/CTCH - climate action plan released (can share it)
- ☐ New Kauai Mayor (JAN 27)

February 2026

☐ Guest speaker: KCAAP - Kauai Planning Dept.

March 2026

☐ Q3 Meeting
☐ Guest speaker: Leila - Energy equity

April 2026

☐ CCH's annual sustainability report release
☐ Guest speaker: Janice Ikeda? - Resilience hubs - How can the government effectively get out of the way?
☐ CAAP - all plan tracking to hold ourselves accountable to community

May 2026

☐ Hold HOOT accountable to their navahine settlement commitments
☐ Increase in multimodal transportation infrastructure (pressure on county + state)
☐ Increase MM transportation pilot events

June 2026

☐ Q4 Meeting
☐ Network and strategic reflections
☐ CCSR completes vehicle telematics project to inform fleet EV purchases (can share at)

Key Takeaways:

- **Meeting Rhythm & Structure**:

  - **Quarterly Network-Wide Meetings**: The group agreed to shift to quarterly network-wide meetings, with ad hoc subgroup meetings held as needed to address specific topics or initiatives.

  - **Guest Speakers**: Flexibility will be built into the schedule for hosting guest speakers either during quarterly meetings or in ad hoc sessions, depending on the topic and availability.

- **Communication & Coordination**:

  - **Dedicated Convener/Coordinator**: There is a strong commitment to exploring funding options (e.g., VISTA, HGG) to hire a dedicated network convener/coordinator, which would help ensure better coordination and communication across the network.

  - **Pilot Communication Tools**: The group will pilot communication tools and resource-sharing platforms to improve engagement and information flow among network members.

  - **Clear Protocols for Guest Speakers**: Establishing clear protocols for guest speaker preparation and engagement is a priority to ensure their sessions are productive and aligned with the network's goals.

- **Legislative & Funding Efforts**:

  - A focus on legislative priorities and developing draft bills for the upcoming legislative cycle was emphasized. This includes ongoing efforts to communicate priorities to potential bill introducers and collaborate with stakeholders.

  - The network plans to explore funding opportunities for various initiatives, including energy retrofits, sustainability projects, and support for community-driven projects.

- **Guest Speakers & Knowledge Sharing**:

  - The group plans to bring in guest speakers on a variety of topics, including SLR Vulnerability Assessment Tools, coastal resilience, and energy equity, to enhance knowledge-sharing and co-learning.

  - Co-learning opportunities were highlighted with an emphasis on bringing community voices and cultural advisement into these discussions.

- **Actionable Commitments**:

  - The group discussed important actionable steps to address sustainability issues, including advocacy for energy retrofits, cesspool conversion policies, multimodal transportation infrastructure, and water usage management.

  - The commitment to community-based actions and improving public engagement was central to many discussions, ensuring that sustainability efforts are not only driven by government but also shaped by the community's needs and

       perspectives.

- **Ongoing Reflection and Accountability**:

    - There is an emphasis on accountability, with quarterly meetings and reflection periods to assess progress and realign priorities. The group also plans to conduct annual checks to ensure that core values and priorities are being met and that lessons learned are incorporated into future planning.

Closing Reflections

Participants shared one word to describe how they felt leaving the session:

- Inspired

- Hopeful

- Connected

- Energized

- Thankful

- Full

- Refocused

- Community

- Not overwhelmed

- Informed

- Reflective

- Homework

Facilitators acknowledged participants' hard work, emphasized the importance of ongoing collaboration, and committed to delivering a post-convening report and survey to continue gathering feedback and refining priorities.

Mahalo!