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The Office of Hawaiian Affairs Announces New Strategic Plan

HONOLULU (September 23, 2009) -- The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) announced today that it is launching a new strategic plan to better serve Hawaiians, while transforming OHA into a more streamlined, performance-based organization. OHA will shift its focus from serving individual needs to applying its resources to programs and activities that will lead to systemic change and maximize its impact on all Hawaiians. OHA's decision to change direction comes at a critical time as OHA, like the state of Hawaii, has been hit by the severe economic downturn. This has reduced OHA's asset base and operating budget, and made it imperative that the organization become more efficient to better serve its beneficiaries.

"It is essential that OHA continue to grow and evolve to aid the Hawaiian people and to perpetuate our unique Hawaiian heritage and culture," said Haunani Apoliona, Chairperson for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs Board of Trustees, "The Board of Trustees and staff are committed to doing the hard work that needs to be done, knowing that those we help today will help us build a stronger and more viable community of Hawaiians."

Since it was established in 1978 through a state Constitutional Convention, OHA has grown to be a strong advocate for Hawaiians and the Hawaiian community at the local, state and federal levels. The strategic plan recognizes the fact that OHA can maximize its impact for Hawaiians if it prioritizes its efforts in a few key areas, rather than broadly dispersing its resources.

Under the plan, OHA will shift its focus to advocacy and promoting systemic change in six priority areas: economic self sufficiency, health, education, culture, land & water ('āina) and governance. By sharpening its efforts in these areas and managing performance, specific results will be achieved that will result in a measureable improvement the conditions of all Native Hawaiians.

The strategic plan identifies three critical roles for OHA: advocacy, research, and asset management. In addition, OHA will institute strict performance based criteria that will enable the organization to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs on Hawaiians..

"While many organizations would be content at this point in their lifecycles to stick to business as usual, we believe that we must change our focus and our organization if we are to truly to have an impact on issues facing Hawaiians," stated Clyde Nāmu'ō, Administrator of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. "Our new strategic plan is the culmination of an extensive effort to listen to the community, and going forward, we will continue to rely upon the community's feedback to guide us."



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OHA will continue to partner with organizations that work toward its goals and will look for new ways to grow its assets so that it can better meet the needs of the Hawaiian community.

Over the past 30 years, OHA has taken on the responsibility of providing the opportunity for a better life and future for all Hawaiians. Through hard work, perseverance, and core values to guide OHA's initiatives, thousands of people have benefited from the work of OHA.

"We have enjoyed a mutually beneficial partnership with OHA primarily due to their financial support that has proven to be successful in equipping our families towards homeownership, job training and employment opportunities for hundreds of our families," said Kaulana Park, Chairman of the Commission and Department of Hawaiian Homelands. "We look forward to building upon our success and will continue to work together to identify critical needs and implement creative solutions to advance our Native Hawaiian communities towards sustainable and healthy lifestyles through OHA's new road map and sharpened focus."

The new strategic plan was developed after OHA administrators determined in 2008 that it was crucial to evaluate the progress of the organization and decide how to best meet the challenges on the horizon for Hawaiians. The plan was based on extensive research and several thousand interviews with Hawaiians across the state of Hawaii and the United States, as well as with all key stakeholders.

The new priorities focus on measurable results requiring a realignment of OHA's organizational structure and a significant change in the way in which OHA conducts its work. OHA plans to work quickly to develop and implement a new structure focused on advocacy, knowledge and asset management so that the organization is positioned to move forward with the Strategic Plan at the beginning of 2010.

More information on OHA's strategic plan can be found at www.oha.org/stratplan.

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