KĀKOʻO CONNECTIONS

Program Overview

Kākoʻo Connections supports Hawaiʻi high school students in making connections that help them realize their college and career goals in the islands’ natural resources (NR) fields. Participants visit post-secondary institutions and NR organizations and agencies, engage in mālama ʻāina (caring for the land) work, and practice job readiness skills.

Program Goals

The program aims to increase participants’

- Interest and confidence in applying to and attending college
- Desire and preparedness to work in Hawaiʻi’s NR field
- Skills that will help them achieve personal and professional success

Who

- Students in grades 11, 12 & recent high school graduates
- Possess a strong interest in the NR fields
- 18 spots available per session

When

Summer and fall intersessions

Award

Upon successful completion of all program requirements, participants receive a $350 stipend.
Program Components

*Kāko'o means “to support, assist, prop-up” in the Hawaiian language. Kāko'o Connections is designed to connect Hawai‘i youth to the people, professional development, and resources that empower them to achieve their natural resource career goals.*

**People**
Participants enhance their personal network and connect with their community through engagement with a wide range of professionals in the NR field.

**Career-Oriented Site Visits**: School and NR organization visits include career talks with NR professionals who share their career journeys with participants in small group settings.

**Professional Development**
Participants engage in job-readiness activities and apply what they learn during site visits and with NR professionals.

**Interview Practice**: Participants learn and practice interview skills to prepare for their informational interview with a NR professional.

Other Professional Development Activities:
- Personal Timelines: Reflecting on interests and goals
- Relationship Mapping: Identifying areas for networking needs

**Resources**
Participants learn about key steps and related resources to assist them in pursuing pathways to NR careers.

- **Funding College Session** (e.g., FAFSA & Scholarships) with a college admissions officer
- **Community College Application** for the University of Hawai‘i system walk-through
FALL 2022 SESSION

Key Features

- **Expanded Program Structure:** Pre- and post-program sessions were added to provide 8 additional hours for college and career readiness learning and more time for site visits.
- **In-Depth Social Capital Curriculum:** Kupu worked with the Clayton Christensen Institute and Hawai‘i P-20 to engage participants in activities that support them in mobilizing relationships in pursuit of their career goals.

Impact highlights: The Fall 2022 session helped participants increase their comfort with professional networking and better understand ways to fund college.

Of participants:
- 33% expanded their network of professionals they know from a variety of NR professions
- 33% felt more confident with networking in informal settings
- 50% had a better understanding of how to find scholarships for which they are eligible
- 33% better understood the FAFSA process

Participant Profile

- 7 Participants
- 5 High Schools
- 11th Grade: 29%
- 12th Grade: 71%
- No Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 29%
- Yes Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander: 71%
- 33% felt more confident with networking in informal settings
The program included University of Hawai‘i (UH) System tours and orientations, connections with NR organizations and mālama ‘āina opportunities, and career and college readiness training. After the program, participants were connected with a natural resource professional who aligned with their personal interests for a 1:1 informational interview.

Partner Organizations

- Department of Land & Natural Resources
  - Department of Aquatic Resources
  - Ka‘iwi State Scenic Shoreline
  - Kalanimoku Office
- Elemental Excelerator
- Graduate Women in Science Hawai‘i
- Hawai‘i Conservation Alliance
- Mālama Pu‘uloa

UH System

- Leeward Community College
- University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
- University of Hawai‘i at West O‘ahu (UHWO)
  - Hawaiian and Indigenous Health and Healing Program
  - Student Organic Garden
  - The Uluniu Project

Looking Ahead

Based on feedback and evaluation of the session, Kupu is excited to grow Kāko‘o Connections in the following ways:

- Develop opportunities for families to be included and learn about the diverse careers in Hawai‘i’s NR field and resources available to support students’ pursuit of those careers (e.g., family orientation day).
- Create NR career pathway-oriented opportunities (e.g., attending the HCA conference) for bonding between program alumni and current cohort members to foster network development.
- Institute recruitment and program design changes to improve program enrollment and retention.

"This program offers a lot of opportunities to explore your career path or college path, it also revived your Hawaiian identity."
-Zjayley, Nānākuli Intermediate and High School