

Big Island's Olohana Foundation Awarded USDA Grant to Develop Fruit Puree Products for Local Market

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*Carly Wyman & Keahi Tajon,
project co-directors*

[Foundation](#), a Hawaii island based 501(c)(3) non-profit, is pleased to announce a grant award of \$101,000 from the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP). The grant will fund Hawai'i Tropical Fruits: Adding Value for Shared Abundance for one year and aims to prototype two minimally processed fruit puree products utilizing locally grown, soft-skin fruit that might otherwise go to waste in the absence of a market for them. The fruit puree products will be delivered through Hawai'i Farm to Car and Hawai'i Island Food Basket's CSA DA BOX to local residents including recipients of SNAP. The project promotes food self-sufficiency on the Big Island and increased market access and economic opportunity

for local fruit growers.

For more than a decade, Olohana Foundation has focused on cultivating community resilience around food, energy, water, and knowledge systems. Through its agroforestry program, Olohana has helped to increase food security in Hawai'i, in the Pacific, and in the Caribbean Islands where food insecurity is especially prevalent due to extreme weather events and a dependence on shipping which make these populations uniquely vulnerable.

In 2021, Olohana recognized an opportunity to realize its focus on food self-sufficiency in Hawai'i by acquiring legacy industrial aseptic juicing equipment which led to a feasibility study being conducted by project co-directors Carly Wyman and Keahi Tajon in partnership with Arizona State University. The study examined strategies for re-establishing this equipment on the Big Island in the interest of adding value to locally grown fruit, vegetables, and other crops, with a specific focus on harnessing a cooperative business model for supporting small-scale

producers.

“The opportunity to develop fruit puree products using locally grown fruit that doesn’t currently have a market – in particular for local folks who seek out such locally-produced foods – is very appealing to all who hear about the project,” said Wyman and Tajon, who are delighted with the news about the award.

“These grant programs provide crucial funding for projects, including farm to institution efforts, that will improve community access to fresh, locally sourced food and strengthen market opportunities for local and regional food producers,” said USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Lester Moffitt, in a [press release](#) on Oct. 19, 2022.

With this aspect of the project funded by the USDA, Olohana now invites local partners and investors to submit proposals that will expand and strengthen the project and increase impact.

“This is an opportunity to leverage our investments,” said Sarah Purgus, Executive Director of the Olohana Foundation. “It’s an economic opportunity that bodes well for all involved,” she said.

In August, the Olohana Foundation [announced](#) its participation as a sub-awardee under a new \$20 million project spearheaded by Haskell Indian Nations University and funded by the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF). The project, Rising Voices, Changing Coasts: The National Indigenous and Earth Sciences Convergence Hub, brings together Indigenous knowledge-holders from diverse coastal regions and university-trained social, ecosystem, and physical Earth system scientists and students for transformative research to address coastal hazards and create more resilient communities.

“Supporting programs that improve food security and access is part and parcel to community resiliency development needed for coastal communities,” said Purgus. “These two federally-funded projects will move us forward.”

Parties may submit collaboration proposals to info@olohana.org.

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Tropical fruit, including mamey sapote, mango, orange, papaya, pineapple, and sapodilla |
Agricultural Research Service, USDA

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