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IA-0000000318

Individual Application

Application ID	IA-0000000318	Account	
Application Status	Submitted	Contact	U'ilani Jesse Kealanahahele

ACT 310 - Application for Grants

Legal Name of Requesting Org/Individual	Kupu	DBA	
Type of Business Entity	501 (C)(3) Non-Profit Corporation	Existing Service(Presently in Operation)	Yes
Mailing Address	55 Merchant Street, Suite 3100 Honolulu, Hawaii 96813 United States	Amount of State Funds Requested	\$3,513,521.00
Island	Oahu		

Program Overview

Program 1 Overview	Kupu's environmental workforce development programs are entry-level training that introduces young adults (ages 17+) to the field of conservation. Through immersive hands-on experiences, members are placed individually or with a team at various host sites to gain the necessary skills to advance their learning and eventual career in conservation. Members are compensated, earning up to \$20/hour including health benefits while serving full-time (40 hours a week) with host sites across Hawai'i and the Pacific; such as: The Nature Conservancy, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, DLNR's Division of Forestry and Wildlife, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. For the purpose of this grant, Kupu is only applying for funds to support members placed in Hawaii. Members directly support projects in native habitat restoration, invasive species control, cultural and natural resource management, and environmental education. Through this program, members gain foundational conservation skills, mentorship, and personal growth opportunities while contributing to the health of Hawai'i's ecosystems and communities. Kupu experienced a significant reduction in federal funding following the non-renewal of our AmeriCorps grant anticipated to begin September 1st, 2025 for the current program year. The loss of AmeriCorps funding directly affected Kupu's Environmental Workforce Development programs, which are central to several of Kupu's training and services initiatives, including the Conservation Leadership Development Program, which was most directly impacted.
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Program 2 Overview

Program 3 Overview

Department Notes

Agency Eligibility

Recipient of Terminated Federal Funding	Yes	Able to Provide Documentation Evidence	Yes
Serves Negatively Impacted Populations	No	Narrative	Kupu had anticipated AmeriCorps funding to continue at a level consistent with previous years. The reduction in the federal AmeriCorps budget very likely contributed to Kupu's application not being funded. In the Application Review Feedback letter, AmeriCorps noted that Kupu's application was of high quality with no identified weaknesses, but that

there were insufficient funds to support many strong applicants (attached for reference).
While our current 2024-25 AmeriCorps funding remains active through 2026 (via a no-cost extension), Kupu applies for AmeriCorps funding annually and the new AmeriCorps grant anticipated to begin September 1st, 2025 for the current program year was not funded. As a result, Kupu was impacted by a reduction in federal funding after August 31st 2025, which has inhibited Kupu's ability to offer any new AmeriCorps positions after August 2025, impacting overall member placement and staffing.

Date Funding Stopped 9/1/2025

Amount of Other Funds Available

State Fund Total Amount	\$2,634,528.00	County Fund Total Amount	\$150,000.00
Federal Fund Total Amount	\$6,364,528.00	Private/Other Fund Total Amount	\$3,535,107.00
Total Amount of State Grants	\$168,988.00	Unrestricted Assets	\$4,793,663.00

Contact Person for Matters Involving this Application

Applicant Name	Kaulana McCabe	Applicant Title	Vice President of Programs
Applicant Phone	8087351221	Applicant Email	kaulana.mccabe@kupuhawaii.org

State of Hawaii Eligibility

Organization is Licensed or Accredited	Yes	Nonprofit is a 501c3	Yes
Complies with Anti-Discrimination Laws	Yes	Nonprofit has Governing Board	Yes
Will not Use State Funds for Lobbying	Yes	Is Incorporated Under Laws of State	Yes
Will Allow Access to Audit Records	Yes	Has Bylaws and Policies	Yes

Account Information

Organization Name	Kupu	Organization DBA	
EIN	██████████	Street	55 Merchant Street, Suite 3100
Account Email	info@kupuhawaii.org	City	Honolulu
Account Phone	8087351221	State	HI
Website	https://www.kupuhawaii.org	Zip	96813
Mission Statement	Established in 2007, Kupu is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization in Honolulu with a mission to empower youth to serve their communities through character-building, service-learning and environmental stewardship opportunities that encourage pono (integrity) with ke Akua (God), self and others.		

Point of Contact

Point of Contact First Name	Kaulana	Point of Contact Last Name	McCabe
Point of Contact Title	Vice President of Programs	Point of Contact Email	kaulana.mccabe@kupuhawaii.org
Point of Contact Phone	8087351221		

Leadership

Leadership First Name	John	Leadership Last Name	Leong
Leadership Title	CEO	Leadership Email	john.leong@kupuhawaii.org
Leadership Phone	8087351221		

Background and Summary

Applicant Background	Kupu is a Hawai'i-based nonprofit organization, founded in 2007, dedicated to developing the next generation of environmental and community leaders through hands-on service, education, and workforce development programs. Since its founding, Kupu has partnered with government agencies, nonprofits, and private organizations across the Hawaiian Islands and Pacific region to provide meaningful opportunities in conservation, sustainability, and cultural stewardship. Kupu's initiatives equip young adults with practical skills, mentorship, and professional experience while addressing critical community and ecological needs.
Funding Request Purpose	The goal of this request is to sustain Kupu's core programs and organizational capacity in 2026, with a focus on maintaining the member service positions that have been most impacted by the loss of \$3.5 million in AmeriCorps funding. This request offsets a \$3.5 million reduction in AmeriCorps funds that traditionally supported member stipends and host site service capacity. Act 310 funds will support Kupu operations by providing participants with program benefits and career readiness, while ensuring continued engagement with partner host sites to continue receiving critical support. Kupu will support up to 52 full-time members, each providing up to 2,030 hours of service at more than 25 host sites statewide. These members advance habitat restoration, invasive species control, cultural resource management, and environmental education while gaining meaningful, paid workforce experience. Kupu will continue providing living allowance, benefits, mentorship, and workforce development to prepare young adults, particularly underrepresented youth for sustainable careers in conservation and environmental education. Funding will also help retain essential staff and maintain organizational infrastructure necessary for program delivery; including, recruitment, training, supervision, fiscal management, and compliance. Sustaining host site partnerships, some who may have been affected by federal cuts as well, will ensure that Kupu's conservation and cultural restoration partners can also continue vital work across Hawai'i. Kupu will use this bridge period to pilot diversified revenue streams—through Hawai'i's emerging Green Fee program, new public-private partnerships, and fee-for-service models—to sustain program delivery beyond 2026.
Geographic Coverage Served	Based in the Hawaiian Islands and U.S. Pacific Islands (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Rota, and Saipan) For the purpose of this grant, Kupu is only applying for funds to support positions within Hawaii unless given permission to do otherwise.
Public Purpose or Need Served	Kupu exists to empower youth and young adults to serve their communities through environmental stewardship, education, and hands-on service. Since 2007, Kupu has engaged more than 6,500 participants, generating over 380,000 hours of service annually and contributing an estimated \$36.6 million in economic benefit to Hawai'i in FY 2024 alone. Collectively, Kupu's programs have provided over \$265 million in statewide economic value through restored natural resources, strengthened workforce pathways, and increased community resilience. The organization provides accessible opportunities for individuals, particularly those from underrepresented and underserved backgrounds, to gain skills, mentorship, and experience that prepare them for meaningful careers in conservation, sustainability, and community leadership. There is an ongoing and urgent need in Hawai'i to provide youth and young adults with accessible, hands-on training that leads to stable, locally based employment. Many young people face barriers to entering the workforce, including limited job experience, financial hardship, and lack of access to professional networks. Kupu addresses this gap by offering structured workforce development and service-learning programs that build job readiness, leadership skills, and career pathways in conservation, sustainability, and community-based fields. By connecting participants with paid training, mentorship, and real-world experience, Kupu helps young adults gain the confidence, skills, and networks needed to enter Hawai'i's workforce and contribute meaningful impact to the well-being of their communities.

The public purpose of this request is to sustain these critical workforce and service opportunities in the wake of AmeriCorps funding losses. Act 310 funds will ensure Hawai'i's retains essential conservation capacity

while enabling young people, particularly those most affected by economic hardship, to develop the skills, confidence, and leadership necessary to protect natural and cultural resources and contribute to the betterment of the state's future.

Target Population Served

Kupu serves youth and young adults ages 17 and older from across the Hawaiian Islands.

Participants represent a wide range of ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, with the majority identifying as Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Asian, or multiracial. Seventy percent of Kupu participants identify as Indigenous or from minority groups, including 38% Native Hawaiian and 18% Pacific Islander, with many identifying with more than one ethnicity. Economically, more than half of participants live in ALICE or low-income households, with over 50% earning less than \$30,000 annually. These communities experience disproportionate economic and educational barriers, limiting access to meaningful employment and career pathways. Kupu's model is intentionally designed to reduce those barriers by providing a living allowance, mentorship, and culturally grounded support that honor participants' identities and values. Kupu reaches youth at varying stages of development; 13% of participants enter without a high school diploma, 41% hold a diploma or GED, and 35% have some post-secondary education but no degree. Kupu's participants are drawn from all islands statewide, including rural and urban communities. Many are first-generation college students or individuals with limited prior work experience, seeking paid, hands-on training in conservation, sustainability, and community-based careers. These demographics reflect Kupu's mission to empower Hawai'i's underserved youth with equitable access to education, workforce experience, and meaningful service opportunities. This aligns with Act 310's purpose to mitigate adverse impacts from federal funding reductions, ensuring that critical workforce and conservation programs remain operational statewide.

Summary and Outcomes

Measure(s) of Effectiveness

Kupu will engage up to 52 members and provide compensation of up to \$20 per hour plus health benefits, removing economic barriers to participation. Our holistic approach integrates environmental stewardship, cultural perpetuation, education, and economic opportunity—addressing multiple priority areas of the fund while creating lasting impact for Hawai'i's communities and natural resources. These positions may be subsidized by other funding.

Kupu members will make concrete, positive contributions to the protection and enhancement of Hawai'i's flora and fauna and their habitats by collecting data report forms. Each full-time equivalent Kupu member will provide up to 2,030 service hours at up to 2 unique service sites, which will help Kupu engage with more than 25 host sites. Through this model, Kupu helps build capacity for other organizations who may have also been affected by federal cuts.

Projected Annual Timeline

Kupu operates on a year-round cycle, with planning, recruitment, and placement typically occurring prior to the program year. Participants serve in full-time placements over 6–12 months. A projected timeline for a 2026 program year would include:

Q1: Program planning, member and host site recruitment, host site coordination

Q2–Q3: Participant onboarding and deployment to host sites; ongoing mentorship and supervision.

Q4: Program completion, member evaluation, final reporting, and review of outcomes

Throughout the year, Kupu tracks participant progress, host site engagement, and completion of service objectives through data report forms and member timesheets.

Quality Assurance and Evaluation Plans

Founded in 2007, Kupu has successfully operated workforce development and conservation programs for 18 years, engaging more than 6,500 youth and young adult members across Hawai'i and the Pacific. The organization has cultivated strong partnerships with federal and state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private sector entities, and maintains extensive community engagement supported by letters of support and ongoing collaborations. Kupu's program data is reviewed quarterly through internal audits and verified through host site reports, ensuring integrity in reporting and compliance. To ensure accurate tracking and meaningful outcomes, Kupu's new, dedicated Member and Partner Care Team reviews members' reports, provides support to members and host sites, and identifies areas for improvement. By analyzing this data alongside host site feedback and internal evaluations, Kupu can make evidence-based adjustments to training, support, and operational processes, continually improving program quality and maximizing impact for participants and host sites.

Kupu closely monitors program performance through structured reporting mechanisms. Members are required to submit timesheets and detailed data report forms that track specific outcomes, including the number of native plants planted, miles of trails maintained, acres of land stewarded, number of hours of coastal restoration, number of feet of stream maintained, number of volunteer opportunities led, number of volunteers engaged, hours served by volunteers, number of environmental awareness events/presentations hosted, and total number of community members educated. This data provides a comprehensive view of member performance, project impact, and progress toward program deliverables.

Scope of Work

Kupu provides young adults with full-time, entry-level service opportunities in conservation, sustainability, and cultural resource management. Program participants are placed individually or with teams at partner host sites where they engage in hands-on projects such as habitat restoration, invasive species control, environmental education, and community outreach. Kupu staff manage program coordination, mentorship, professional development, and stipend administration, while supporting host sites in planning and supervising

members. The program ensures that participants gain practical experience, foundational workforce skills, and exposure to conservation careers.

Financial Information

Q1 Requested Amount	\$878,380.00	Q3 Requested Amount	\$878,380.00
Q2 Requested Amount	\$878,380.00	Q4 Requested Amount	\$878,381.00
Sources of Funding	Federal: \$1,288,321 State: \$1,930,146 Local: \$0 Private/Other: \$2,790,808	State and Federal Tax Credits	New Market Tax Credit
State and Federal Contracts and Grants	Federal contracts: \$0 State contracts: \$23,670,608.18 County contracts: \$94,000 Federal grants: \$28,683,832.73 State grants: \$134,017 County grants: \$173,000	Prior FY Balance of Unrestricted Assets	\$5,331,125

Experience, Capability, and Personnel

Skills and Experience	Kupu has over 17 years of experience managing large-scale workforce development and conservation programs across Hawai'i. The following projects represent verifiable, funded initiatives administered within the past three years. 1. Conservation Leadership Development Program (CLDP) Funding Sources: AmeriCorps, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), and private foundations. 2. Hawai'i Youth Conservation Corps (HYCC) Funding Sources: AmeriCorps, Hawai'i State Legislature (GIA), DLNR, County of Maui, County of Hawai'i, and private partners. 3. Kupu 'Āina Corps / Hawai'i Green Jobs Youth Corps Initiative Funding Sources: State of Hawai'i Legislature (Act 009, SLH 2021), Hawai'i Community Foundation, and philanthropic partners. 4. MALU Project – Meaningful Arboriculture to Limit Vulnerability Funding Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture – Urban & Community Forestry Program. 5. Ho'okupu Center Community & Culinary Programs Funding Sources: City and County of Honolulu, private philanthropy (e.g., Weinberg Foundation, Marisla Fund), and earned income from social enterprise partnerships. 6. AmeriCorps State and National Program Administration Funding Source: AmeriCorps (federal), administered via the Hawai'i Commission on National and Community Service. 7. Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE) Alternative Learning Opportunity (ALO) Partnership Funding Sources: Hawai'i DOE and local philanthropic support.
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Awards and Recognitions

Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency (2025) – highest level of nonprofit transparency and accountability. Accreditation by The Corps Network's Corps Center of Excellence – national standards for governance, risk management, and program quality. Hawai'i Business Magazine Best Places to Work (2025) – recognition of organizational culture and leadership. Better Business Bureau Torch Awards for Ethics – honoring integrity, trust, and ethical business practices. These projects and recognitions collectively demonstrate Kupu's credibility, operational capacity, and proven record of managing federally and state-funded programs with measurable community impact.

Facilities	Kupu's headquarters are located at 55 Merchant Street, Honolulu, HI 96813 located in Downtown Honolulu, where the majority of the organization's programming planning and administrative activities take place. The facility includes adequate office space, meeting rooms, and technological infrastructure to support staff collaboration, program coordination, and communication with partners and participants statewide. These existing facilities are sufficient to carry out Kupu's programs and organizational operations. No Act 310 funds will be used for facility acquisition, renovation, or maintenance.
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Proposed Staffing and Service Capacity	Kupu utilizes a collaborative staffing structure to ensure the successful implementation and oversight of programs. Program operations are supported across multiple departments within the organization. Kupu's accounting department manages all program-related expenses and ensures fiscal accountability. Operations and Programs consist of five sub-teams that directly work with program sites and members; the roles and responsibilities of each team are specific to an integral part of Kupu programming. From recruitment through program completion, staff oversee member selection, onboarding, training, fiscal management, and ongoing support to ensure a high-quality experience for both participants and host sites. Program operations are
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supported by experienced personnel in administration, finance, workforce development, and member services, all of whom bring extensive backgrounds in youth development, conservation, and nonprofit management. Many staff have successfully managed complex federal and state grants, including AmeriCorps, and are trained in supervision, compliance, and mentorship. This experienced and collaborative team structure enables Kupu to provide strong oversight, consistent supervision, and effective training, ensuring that Kupu's programs continue to meet its goals and deliver meaningful workforce and service opportunities statewide.

Staff Position(s) and Compensation
 Chief Executive Officer: \$180,985
 Chief Financial Officer: \$180,336
 Chief Operating Officer: \$175,375

Other Information

Pending Litigation N/A

Special Licensure or Accreditations Kupu is accredited by the Corps Center of Excellence and was named as a 21st Century Conservation Service Corps, which signifies that Kupu's operations meet the high standards for internal operations, financial management, risk management, governance, and program quality.

Private Educational Institutions N/A

Confirmations

Documentation of Federal Impacts	✓		
Hawaii Compliance Express Certificate	✓	Active Status with the Hawaii AG	✓
IRS Determination Letter	✓	Certificate of Good Standing by the DCCA	✓
Records Retention Policy	✓	By-laws or Corporate Resolutions	✓
Authorized Representative Certification	✓	Signee Title	Vice President of Programs

System Information

Application Type	Act 310 Nonprofit Grant Application	Applied Date	10/24/2025, 3:18 PM
Owner Name		Category	Grant Application
Created By	U'ilani Jesse Kealanahele, 10/15/2025, 2:06 PM	Created Date	10/15/2025, 2:06 PM
Last Modified By	U'ilani Jesse Kealanahele, 10/24/2025, 3:18 PM	Last Modified Date	10/24/2025, 3:18 PM

Federal Grants

Kupu Environmental Stewardship

Name of Program	Program 1
Original Funding Award	\$3,581,349.21
Amount Reduced or Cut	\$3,581,349.21
Grant Cycle of Award	September 1, 2025 - August 31, 2026

Files

ELDI-C AUW 2527 BUDGET JUSTIFICATION - PERSONNEL SALARIES AND WAGES

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Budget Request By Source of Funds (1)

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Kupu - HAG Tax & Charities Division (1)

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22318_Kupu_501c3-Determination-Letter

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Kupu By-Laws

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Sustainability Plan

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Kupu FY25 ASN FINAL Application AmeriCorps

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Kupu Document Retention Policy 10.21.23

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Budget Request By Source of Funds

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