



## The Foundation's "DNA"

*Every foundation has its own history and culture, its own ways of implementing its mission. We think the essence of ours is a special "genetic code" inherited from our founder. As applied over time – we refer to this as "our DNA." DNA applied to an organization is a metaphor. We think our benefactor, Helga, would have liked it as a model. With great foresight and trust in the Foundation's future leadership, she wanted her vision and principles applied with flexibility so as to adapt as appropriate to changes in the world around us.*

### **Helga's Legacy**

Always we remember and honor the hopes and aspirations of our founder, Helga. We regularly and constructively seek to interpret her vision and principles even as they are applied to new challenges and new situations. "What would Helga do?" we often ask ourselves. We intentionally aspire to ensure our DNA she left behind continues, while at the same time adapting in response to new challenges and circumstances.

### **Abiding Love of Hawai'i**

Helga cared deeply for Hawai'i. She was given the name, *Kalehuamakanoē*. The people and the place touched her. It is the same with us. People and place matter and figure in all of our decisions. We cherish Hawai'i and do our best to honor its island culture by respecting and caring for place, our partners and each other.

### **Partnerships**

Partnerships are integral to our modus operandi. Yes, we are grant makers, but we are not one-off check writers. Mindful of the power imbalance that is often present between funding organizations and those that receive funds, we work to mitigate this imbalance by engaging the organizations with whom we have funding relationships, not as grantees, but as partners and colleagues. We much prefer long-term relationships that carry mutual aspirations and multi-year commitments. We give fewer grants, but we tend towards making larger grants and over longer periods of time. This means our grant relationships are not just financial, but also intellectual and interpersonal where building mutual trust and respect are primary objectives. We believe much of our success derives from the success of our partners.

Partnership not only refers to how we work with those with whom we have a funding relationship, but we apply this approach also to our work with members of the local and national philanthropic community and the community at large.

Being mindful and respectful of our partners' time, we take our obligations to our partners seriously and aspire to be helpful ongoing "thought" partners, jointly dedicated to achieving the highest levels of success and impact.

### **Consensus Driven**

Internally and externally, we work towards consensus. It's the way we do business at all levels: within our board, within our staff, between our board and staff, with our partners, and with everybody else with whom we work and interact. This often unspoken but continuous commitment to making consensus-based decisions can seem slow to others, but we have learned that being deliberate, developing collective insight, and trusting our collective intuitions pay greater dividends in the long run. In practical terms, this means we carefully inform ourselves on the topics and issues at hand and deliberate fully so that the decisions we make and the actions we take are well-conceived.

### **Impact Driven**

We are interested in meaningful impact that advances the lives of people and gets things done. We believe that by being focused in our program work, we have greater and farther reaching impact in the geographic communities and communities of interest with which we work. We gather information from many sources and deliberately develop the knowledge we need. We strive to learn from each action by reflecting upon and then advancing work based upon the lessons we have learned. We also believe that by focusing our work, over time we develop important information and knowledge bases that enhance our efforts and enable us to be more effective. We generally try to identify and then work within fairly specific niches in which we feel we can have impact. We don't want to do everything. We want to do a few carefully selected things and do them with excellence.

### **Staying Nimble**

We balance strong structure and sound process with flexibility. When required, we can turn on a dime and undertake out-of-the-box initiatives. We try not to become arbitrary or hidebound so when circumstances require it, when sudden, unexpected and urgent needs arise, we can promptly and creatively respond. These become exceptions to our standard rules and playbook. They are not quixotic or un-thought out. They are unusual and not everyday affairs for us, but they are always intentional.