



At Inclusiv, we believe financial inclusion is a fundamental right. The Inclusiv network of credit unions is dedicated to closing the gaps and removing barriers to financial opportunities for people living in distressed and underserved communities. Our members serve nearly 10 million residents of low-income urban, rural and reservation-based communities across the U.S. Learn more about the Inclusiv network of Community Development Credit Unions at www.Inclusiv.org.

RALLYING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

KAUA'I GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES FCU

KAUA'I, HI



Location: Kaua'i, HI
Founded: 1947
Total Members: 7,202
Total Assets: \$120,940,384

Rallying Together: Providing Hope to an Island During a Global Pandemic

Say "Aloha" to your new Ohana—a Hawaiian term for family—because as soon as you get to know the Kaua'i Government Employees Federal Credit Union (KGEFCU) community, you will certainly feel like part of a family.

The distinct characteristics that come with living on an island help to create a unique culture at KGEFCU. It is hardly common for a credit union to ride into town on a jet ski and set up pop-up branches to provide emergency loans so people can pay their bills. But that's exactly what KGEFCU did two years ago when the north shore community was devastated and isolated due to severe flooding.



Clearly the island of Kaua'i, and the credit union in particular, are no strangers to disaster. So even before COVID-19 hit Kaua'i, the team at KGEFCU was already taking action to protect the island and its people.

The credit union was among the first businesses to close its doors and move its workers to remote locations. They were very quickly providing Skip-A-Pay options, a zero-percent emergency loan, and an island-wide webinar featuring political, financial and economic leaders to educate the community on the pandemic situation, options and resources.



Helping the Kaua'i Community Thrive with PPP Lending

At the start of the pandemic, the team at KGEFCU had heard of the Paycheck Protection Program but had not yet been involved with any PPP lending. They were approached by Luke Evslin—a community member who had been working with a bank for the previous 15 years with his canoe business, Kamanu Composites. Unfortunately, Luke was not finding the support he needed during this crucial time. Since he was faced with having to lay off employees, Luke inquired with KGEFCU about helping him apply for a PPP loan for his small business. The credit union worked around the clock and soon Kamanu Composites had its loan. The company pivoted its offerings and began making face shields to help with personal protective equipment during the pandemic.

Thanks to this creative business solution and the PPP loan, **Kamanu is producing around 3,000 face shields per week and the company has been able to hire back most of its staff**—who are able to assemble the shields at home.

Within a few months, KGEFCU made 67 PPP loans to Kaua'i businesses for a total of \$1.75 million in funded loans. Many local banks and even larger credit unions were sending KGEFCU their very small businesses. With most of its loans being under \$5,000—and the smallest being \$200—the credit union estimates that around 200 jobs were saved as a result of its PPP lending.

“At the end of the day we want to look people in the eye and say ‘you matter and we care about you’—and we’re going to

help them as best we can,” says Monica Belz, president and CEO. “Together we make it happen. We show up, we care—that’s what we do. We want to live in a community that’s thriving and happy.”

Tourism Takes a Hit, But Hope Prevails

Like all of Hawaii, Kaua'i is dependent upon tourism—but the island has been closed for months. Rental cars, restaurants, tour groups—businesses that thrive off of the tourism industry are now facing bankruptcy. Some economic experts have even projected that Hawaii will be the last area of the country to recover from the impact of the global pandemic.

The team at KGEFCU takes their role to help the island and its people very seriously. The team has come up with many new, out-of-the-box ways to not only restore the economy but also hope.

They are now offering a free COVID-19 Financial Counseling Program to Kaua'i residents designed to educate, empower, and specifically address the unique challenges Kaua'i residents are facing in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. These webinars—open to all residents—feature community leaders, as well as economic and financial experts.

KGEFCU teamed up with the county of Kaua'i, local banks and other groups to create a small business boost grant for local businesses. The grant is designed to reach the small, underserved businesses who are still in desperate need of assistance. Many of the smaller businesses haven't received enough aid required to weather this crisis.

Additionally, KGEFCU is in the process of creating a documentary illustrating the stories of healing, collaboration and hope across the island during this pandemic. The documentary features ways the credit union and its loans have impacted businesses and people in the community—showing the hope that exists in recovery. “We have been through a lot—we are a resilient community and we rally together,” says Monica.

“I have so much hope and I am so proud to be a part of this island.”

