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Kingdom Pathways will lead a \$198,634.20 tree planting and maintenance project in Waiʻanae, Oʻahu, bringing new jobs and relief from extreme heat, flooding, and food insecurity.

January 26, 2025, Waiʻanae, Oʻahu – Kingdom Pathways was just awarded \$198,634.20 to plant and maintain tree cover in Waiʻanae, Oʻahu, increasing community access to nature while also helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

As a result of this funding, residents in Waiʻanae can expect a significant increase in green spaces, with a focus on planting native trees that enhance both the environmental and cultural landscape. The project seeks to enhance food security and sovereignty by cultivating fruit-bearing trees integrated with laʻau lapaʻau plants, offering the community resources. Educational programs will encourage homeowners to plant trees on their properties, promoting wider participation in environmental stewardship. Na Ala Hoʻoulu Hana (Pathways to Career Growth) will engage community members and youth, offering opportunities to learn about forestry and environmental conservation while preparing them for meaningful careers in these fields. Increased tree cover will beautify the area, offer cooling shade, improve air quality, and help mitigate climate impacts, creating a more resilient, sustainable Waiʻanae community for future generations.

Trees help keep communities cooler during the summer, when more days of extreme heat are expected due to climate change. Trees also help the ground absorb more rainfall during severe storms, meaning that less water floods into homes and roadways.

"This is an incredible opportunity for Waiʻanae," said Joseph Simpliciano, Founder of Kingdom Pathways. "In partnership with the Division of Urban Forestry (DUF), the Department of Parks and Recreation, Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Hawaiian Homestead Association, local organizations, and schools. We are not just planting trees; we are planting the seeds of hope for a brighter, more resilient future. Together, we will address the deep-rooted inequities in our community, restore food sovereignty, and reintroduce and increase native plant species that have been a part of our culture for centuries. This project will create pathways for our youth to reconnect with the land, learn valuable skills, and draw on ike kupuna (ancestral knowledge) to mālama our ʻāina (land), honor the traditional ahupuaʻa systems, and become stewards of our future. We will also revitalize public spaces, which currently lack native plant species, helping to restore ecological balance, increase biodiversity, and provide much-needed resources for the community. We are building more than just a forest; we are building a community that thrives in harmony with nature, creating pathways to a stronger, more sustainable, and united future for Waiʻanae."

This project is part of the Rooting Resilience Program, led by River Network and funded by the [Urban & Community Forestry Program](#) of the Forest Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Rooting Resilience supports community-based forestry projects by funding programs and offering technical guidance to local organizations and Indigenous communities, helping build resilience against climate change. This program is specifically meant to increase trees in communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment.

"I'm thrilled to support Kingdom Pathways through this program. While many know River Network as a leader in the water sector, forestry work is directly tied to our 35+ year history of water work. We know that trees provide important water filtration services, slow the flow of rainwater, and mitigate heat in cities and communities. Supporting these projects is an interconnected and exciting way to work towards healthy rivers, clean drinking water, and climate-resilient communities," shared Stephanie Heidbreder, River Network's Director of Urban and Community Forestry.

To learn more about how this program will benefit the Waiʻanae community, visit www.kingdompathways.info or contact Carmen, Co-Founder of Kingdom Pathways, at kingdompathways.info@gmail.com for an interview.

About River Network

River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of 3,000+ water, justice, and river advocates representing 1,000+ organizations working for clean water, healthy rivers, and climate-resilient communities. We believe equitable and enduring solutions start with community – created with, by, and for the people most impacted. U.S. Learn more at rivernetwork.org. River Network and USDA are equal opportunity providers.

About Kingdom Pathways

Kingdom Pathways is a Native Hawaiian nonprofit organization based in Waiʻanae, Oʻahu, dedicated to fostering environmental sustainability, cultural preservation, and community empowerment. Through collaborative projects, we engage local communities in hands-on solutions to address environmental challenges, while promoting the revitalization of traditional Hawaiian practices and values.