ALOHA is Intelligence: A Case Study of a Culturally Responsive Framework for Evaluation Capacity Building

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Abstract

The *Aloha Evaluation Framework* is a culturally responsive evaluation approach that has been developed for use in Indigenous communities. Guided by the concept of Aloha (love) as conceptualized by kūpuna (elder) ʻAnakē Pilahi Pāki, the framework is based on the values of respect, empowerment, collaboration, and sustainability, and emphasizes the importance of building evaluation capacity within the community. Aloha is defined as Akahai (gentleness), Lōkahi (harmony), ʻOluʻolu (agreeableness), Haʻahaʻa (humility) and Ahonui (patience); the synthesis of which describes different attributes of love and ultimately the spirit of Aloha. This paper describes the use of the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* as an approach in an evaluation capacity building effort within a Native Hawaiian serving organization. The positive feedback from the evaluation training series demonstrates the value of incorporating Aloha and its various forms of love into evaluation as a practice. The results have implications for ways to privilege the values and voices of Indigenous communities in evaluation.

Indigenization Statement

Indigenization, for me, is the practice of centering ʻike kupuna and Indigenous values as the foundation of wellbeing, ensuring that research, evaluation, and care reflect cultural resonance, reciprocity, and community voice. My positionality is that of a native Hawaiian, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, researcher, evaluator, and grandmother shaped by the values of aloha, mālama, kuleana, and haʻahaʻa; I recognize both the privileges and responsibilities of my role and commit to listening with humility, amplifying community voice, and remaining accountable to past and future generations. – Melinda Lloyd

I am a white researcher residing and working on the unceded lands of the Kānaka ʻŌiwi (Native Hawaiian people). I serve the Trust of Queen Liliʻuokalani, the last reigning sovereign of Hawaiʻi, and work to support Native Hawaiian youth across the pae ʻāina (Hawaiian archipelago). My work is grounded in respect for the cultural values, histories, and sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian community. Previously, I worked with the Ojibwe and Dakota Nations in Minnesota, where I collaborated with Indigenous social service and human service tribal entities. I hold power both as a white person and a researcher and understand oppression and historical trauma as a Jewish, non-binary, female-presenting person with a disability. – Laura Schauben

I live and work in Hawaiʻi on the lands of Kānaka ʻŌiwi, where I hold responsibility as a guest. Grounded in my Midwest roots and positionality as a non-Native evaluator, I approach this work as a learner—listening to community wisdom to know when to step in and when to step back. I seek to be accountable to the communities I work with by upholding reciprocal relationships and ensuring data remains with those to whom it belongs. – Sena Sanjines

I am not Native Hawaiian nor am I part of an Indigenous community. I am originally from Thailand and received an American focused international education. I recognize my Western and academi-oriented positionality having been educated as thus but I also bring a global perspective to my research. I continue to learn Indigenous ways of k(nowing) through my work with a Native Hawaiian serving organization and as a settler ally living on the lands of the Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i. – Penn Pantumsinchai

I am Native Hawaiian, born and raised by my ʻohana, kūpuna, and kaiaulu on the east side of Hawaiʻi Island in the moku of Hilo and Puna. I am privileged to have experienced exceptional education from both a Hawaiian and Western lens. Being a first-generation college going student, I always saw it as my kuleana (responsibility) to come back to Hawaiʻi and contribute what I learned to my community. While I use Hawaiian values to inform how I move through life daily, it is especially important for me to incorporate them in my work as a public health practitioner, evaluator, and researcher. – Jaysha Alonzo-Estrada

Introduction

"Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life" (Meyer, 2004, p.4). Hawaiʻi's Dr.

Manulani Meyer expands on Kumu Hula Olana Kaipo Ai's quotation, identifying Aloha as a

Native Hawaiian epistemological truth rooted in Indigenous philosophy and scholarship. Tacit

ancestral knowledge and Indigenous sensibilities are inspiring and enduring resources for

wellbeing. Dr. Meyer states that "Aloha is a statement of mature intelligence nested in

Indigenous epistemology and life-ways. Aloha as our true intelligence is about loving" (Meyer,

2016, p. 1). Aloha, or loving, is a Native knowledge system. Aloha is a guiding value and a way of knowing, being, and doing.

Applying this concept of Aloha to the evaluation discipline, the Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment (CREA) Hawai'i's *Aloha Evaluation Framework* (CREA Hawai'i, 2019) asserts that:

> Aloha is the foundational intelligence we must activate in evaluation and that it has primacy over all other values or competencies: without a commitment to evaluation with Aloha, strengths in all other competencies fall short of fulfilling our kuleana (responsibility). (p. 9)

Kupuna (Elder) 'Anakē Puanani Burgess is quoted in the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* introduction, "Make no mistake: Aloha is hard to do, to achieve, to internalize, to practice every day with each interaction. Aloha is my way of prayer, my challenge, my practice, my Way." (CREA Hawai'i, 2019, p. 3). 'Ike kupuna (knowledge from the elders) directs and guides the idea of Aloha as a kuleana (privilege and responsibility) to help navigate through the modern world. Aloha is both a kahua (foundation) and decolonizing salve helping to heal through the 'eha (pain) of historical oppression and marginalization of Native Hawaiians. Further, Aloha illuminating the "Way" as 'Anakē Puanani Burgess shared as a "measure of certainty, consistency and peace in spite of the complexities, turbulence and mysteries of modernity, change, injustice, and history" (CREA Hawai'i, 2019, p. 3). Aloha is the intelligence and way to heal, to connect to and relate to others with 'oi'a'i'o, or genuine truth and positive regard. (A glossary of Hawaiian words is provided in Appendix A).

This paper is a descriptive case study of an evaluation capacity building (ECB) project incorporating the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* conducted within a foundation located in the Pacific that provides services and programs for the benefit of orphan and destitute kamali'i (children), with preference given to Native Hawaiians. All authors work at this organization

serving the Native Hawaiian community within the internal Research & Evaluation (R&E) team. Two of the authors identify as Indigenous (Native Hawaiian and Native American – Pechanga Tribe); the remaining three authors are not Indigenous. The organization is committed to developing research and evaluation capacity among its staff to enable them to continually assess and improve their programs.

Initial findings suggest that the ECB program increased staff's evaluation knowledge, understanding, and comfort with key concepts. In addition, results demonstrated an unexpected appreciation for and positive feedback about the training by those who attended, and comments aligned with design decisions informed by the Aloha framework. This also demonstrates that the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* may be an effective and culturally responsive approach for building organizational evaluation capacity in Indigenous contexts.

Methodology

In 2022, mid-way through a five-year organizational strategic plan, the R&E team developed an ECB training project aimed to improve staff's ability to report the outcomes of their programs. From November 2022 through January 2023, the R&E team conducted in-person ECB trainings for staff across seven regional kīpuka (units) statewide in Hawaiʻi. The primary purpose of the training was to increase the completeness and quality of evaluation data submitted to the online reporting system, as well as improve staff use of evaluation to make decisions about their programs. The trainings focused on aspects of program planning related to evaluation, defining outcomes, selecting measures, and reporting results.

The R&E team used the value and intelligence of Aloha to inform and guide the ECB process and to engage direct line workers, many of whom were social workers or youth development workers who did not have a strong sense of efficacy in evaluation prior to training.

During and immediately after the training, the R&E team drew on quantitative (post-training survey; see Appendix B) and qualitative (staff feedback, observations during training) data to assess the success of the project.

Seventy-one staff who work directly with program planning, implementation, or both participated in one of the trainings. At the end of the training, a QR code was posted for an on-line evaluation survey. Sixty-one staff completed the evaluation for a response rate of 86%. We did not collect demographics (e.g., gender identity, race) for this survey in order to protect anonymity of participants.

Indigenous Research, Past and Present

Drawing from our kūpuna (elders), scholars and works, the positioning of Aloha is a critical element of evaluation within Native Hawaiian contexts. This is important considering the power differential and historical damage of research and evaluation in Indigenous communities across the globe, from the United States, to Canada and Australia (Craig, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2008; Lovo et al., 2021; Simonds & Christopher, 2013). As an extension of colonialism, researchers and evaluators have historically come from dominant, non-Indigenous cultures and have held more power and control over the research process and the interpretation of results (Canadian Alliance for Healthy Hearts and Minds First Nations Cohort Research Team, 2019; Craig, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2008; Mataira, 2019; Simonds & Christopher, 2013). Studies that have been conducted without the free, prior, and informed consent of Indigenous communities and their traditional leaders are common and further violate their rights as Indigenous peoples (Lovo et al., 2021; Simonds & Christopher, 2013; Smith, 2021). Indigenous communities have been treated as subjects of study rather than active participants and collaborators in the research

process. The continued power imbalance has led to cultural historical trauma and damage in

Indigenous communities, engendering mistrust (Lovo et al., 2021; McElfish et al., 2019).

Research conducted on (not with) Indigenous communities was rarely for their benefit

and findings were not brought back to help the communities. Research and evaluation have often

been used to justify the oppression and marginalization of Indigenous peoples, by disregarding

Native knowledge systems and perpetuating negative stereotypes about Indigenous cultures and

ways of life (Hall & Tandon, 2017; Love & Hall, 2020). This has resulted in a loss of cultural

and traditional knowledge, and at its worst, epistemicide, "the killing of knowledge systems"

(Hall & Tandon, 2017, p. 6). As Smith (2021) notes, "The academy played a very significant role

in upholding Western intellectual superiority: the discipline of Western knowledge were used as

a platform for dismissing or denying the existence of Indigenous knowledge, a view that still

exists in some parts of the academy today" (p. 279). The exploitative top-down approach to

research, which often excludes Indigenous voices, thus hinders the ability of Indigenous

communities to assert and maintain their sovereign rights (Canadian Alliance for Healthy Hearts

and Minds First Nations Cohort Research Team, 2019; Love & Hall, 2020; Mataira, 2019).

Research and evaluation can and should be conducted in a way that is inclusive of

Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and knowledge systems. Decolonizing knowledge and

practices means centering Indigenous voices and epistemologies while conducting research and

evaluation with ethical protocols of respect and reciprocity (Jardine & Furgal, 2010; Lovo et al.,

2021; McElfish et al., 2019). This can occur by actively involving Indigenous peoples as

collaborators in the design and implementation of research and evaluation, and by ensuring that

the results are used to benefit Indigenous communities (Jardine & Furgal, 2010; McElfish et al.,

2019). Moreover, building capacity and allowing for Indigenous voices to be experts in their own lives could generate more Indigenous-driven research that is meaningful and beneficial for all.

Capacity Building For All

In academic practices, community capacity building (CCB) or community-based participatory research (CBPR) have gained traction as a fundamental way to mend the broken bridges and build trust between Western researchers and Indigenous communities (Craig, 2007; Fletcher et al., 2008; Hardy et al., 2020; McElfish et al., 2019). The movement is now about what research should be or the right way to do research (Jardine & Furgal, 2010). Building the capacity for research among Indigenous peoples also makes way for a new generation of Indigenous researchers who can hold their cultural values, practices, and ways of knowing at their center of practice.

Bringing Indigenous peoples and communities into the center of research is a two-way street; Western or academically oriented researchers must open themselves up to Indigenous ways of knowing and more effort needs to be put into building the capacity of those stakeholders. "More Indigenous control of research processes with commitment to inclusion, reciprocity and research excellence…shifts from *us and them* to collaborative research" (Ewen et al., 2019, p. 2). Research and evaluation practices should thus be more culturally-responsive, to bring balance and equity (Hood et al., 2015, p. 283; see also Clarke et al., 2022). Privileging the voices of the people and community and allowing them to speak for themselves highlights the importance of moʻolelo (stories) in research and evaluation work (Anderson et al., 2012; Oliveira & Wright, 2015).

Much of the literature on capacity building focuses on research in the health equity field, and there remains a dearth of publications on working with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander

communities specifically. One of the key publications, an article by McElfish et al. (2019), provides a review of best practices to working with Pacific Islander Communities. In it, they state that "community-based participatory research…collaborating with Pacific Islanders offers the promise of mitigating the effects of historical trauma, ensuring cultural safety and relevance, and achieving health equity in these communities" (McElfish et al., 2019, p. 11). Engaging authentically and respectfully with communities can help make research and evaluation more beneficial to all parties involved and build bridges for the future (Lovo et al., 2021; McElfish et al., 2019). This article extends the literature to include the Native Hawaiian community through the use (e.g., values, methods) of the *Aloha Evaluation Framework*.

Aloha Evaluation Framework

The frameworks and best practices from the capacity building literature provides "tools and strategies needed to implement a culturally responsive evaluation in Indigenous communities" (Clarke et al., 2022, p. 486) while addressing "concerns about relevance, trust, and use in evaluation" (Fetterman et al., 2017, p. 1; see also Clarke et al., 2022). As we learned from Indigenous community building best practices, "evaluations of projects in Indigenous communities must…promote and practice an Indigenous worldview and…facilitate collaborations that embrace both cultural and academic perspectives" (Kawakami et al., 2007, p. 319). To bring more spotlight on working with Native Hawaiian communities, we build on the previous works of our kūpuna and foundational works by the Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment (CREA) Hawaiʻi chapter.

CREA-Hawaiʻi's *Aloha Evaluation Framework* is a culturally responsive evaluation framework designed to support the evaluation of programs and initiatives in Hawaiʻi. The framework is based on the principle of Aloha, the Hawaiian word that represents a way of life

characterized by love, compassion, and respect for all life. The framework emphasizes the importance of understanding the cultural context of a program or initiative to effectively evaluate its impact. It also emphasizes the importance of involving community members in the evaluation process to ensure that the evaluation is responsive to the unique needs and perspectives of the community. The framework uses a strengths-based approach and multiple methods for data collection (such as moʻolelo, or stories as evidence) to ensure that the evaluation is comprehensive and inclusive. Overall, the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* aims to support the development of effective and culturally responsive evaluations in Hawaiʻi.

The *Aloha Evaluation Framework* centers on the value of Aloha as described by kūpuna ʻAnakē Pilahi Pāki. ʻAnakē Pilahi Pākiʻs ALOHA acronym stands for the five attributes of the Hawaiian concept of love:

- A: Akahai (gentleness)

- L: Lōkahi (harmony)

- O: ʻOluʻolu (agreeableness)

- H: Haʻahaʻa (humility)

- A: Ahonui (patience)

The ALOHA acronym is a synthesis of the traditional Hawaiian concept of love, which emphasizes the importance of nurturing and promoting loving emotions and relationships with others. Each letter of the acronym represents a different attribute of love, and together they form a holistic understanding of what it means to truly love and connect with life in a meaningful way. The attributes of Akahai, Lōkahi, ʻOluʻolu, Haʻahaʻa and Ahonui all together describe the spirit of Aloha.

The Aloha spirit represents a way of living and being in the world. Its holistic understanding of love and connection goes beyond romantic or familial relationships and encompasses all aspects of life. The Aloha spirit exemplifies the Hawaiian worldview about the reciprocal dynamism of treating life with respect, compassion, and kindness, and living in harmony with the natural world. It is about recognizing that we are all interconnected, and that our actions have an impact on others and on the environment surrounding us.

Authentically, the Aloha spirit is not just a touristy gimmick, but a way of life that is deeply ingrained in the culture and traditions of Hawai'i and 'ike kupuna. It is a value system that has been passed down through generations and is a fundamental, foundational aspect of Hawaiian identity. The Aloha spirit is not just about niceness or politeness, but about actively working together to create a more compassionate and just society. It is about being in lōkahi, or harmony/unity, with the land, culture, and people, and about creating a sense of kaiaulu (community) and interconnectedness.

Engaging others with Aloha is foundational and informed by Native Hawaiian contexts in evaluation. This is exemplified by the following core beliefs: 1) honoring ea (personal sovereignty) of individuals; 2) highest responsibility as evaluators is to intended beneficiaries and communities; 3) evaluation should (minimally) support or (optimally) advance the perpetuation of Native Hawaiian culture and ways of being and knowing; and 4) evaluation practitioners and practice must be pili, or closely entwined in relationship to key stakeholders. This requires striking a pono (right) balance. First, we privilege and ground methodologies in Hawaiian ways of knowing. Second, we then incorporate the viewpoint of Western social sciences. At this Hawaiian serving organization, staff who lead programming for kamali'i (direct service staff) are required to record information regarding their program plan, implementation,

evaluation plan, and evaluation results in an online record-keeping system. The organization's

R&E team support these efforts and are responsible for increasing staff capacity to conduct

evaluation as well as aggregating data across programs to identify outcomes and opportunities

that emerge across the organization.

Phases of ALOHA

While ECB training is common, the approach to these trainings was unique in its

centering of the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of

the trainings. Table 1 outlines how the four phases of the Aloha framework were applied

throughout the ECB training as well as the pros and cons of this approach.

Table 1*: Phases of ALOHA in ECB*

ALOHA Framework Phase	What this looked like in ECB	Pros of Indigenous ECB Approach	Cons of Indigenous ECB Approach
Pilina Hoʻohana a me ka Hana Hilinaʻi: Building Relationships and Creating Trust	-Using collaborative language in invitation - "let's learn together" - Centering relationship-building in communication with staff before, during, and after training - Eating meal together - Starting with icebreaker	-Increases buy-in to the training, credibility of the information provided, and the likelihood participants will engage	-May require additional resources and time

Hoʻokahua: Setting the Foundation	-Covering basic concepts so more advanced concepts can be understood - Emphasizing evaluation concepts that are rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing	-Ensures staff have the information and context they need to understand the concepts provided -Roots learning in Indigenous ways of knowing	-Takes more time to cover fundamentals -Need ways to keep more experienced staff invested (e.g., having these staff share examples)
Moʻolelo: Sharing Stories	-Framing the training as a story, starting from the foundation and ending with the moral, and grounding this story in Native Hawaiian values - Having staff and R&E team share stories during training to explain concepts	-Promotes cultural sensitivity and respect for Indigenous knowledge systems -Helps staff understand the information being shared and its application.	-Requires an understanding of the cultural context and practices of the community, which can be challenging for non-Indigenous staff or staff not raised in Indigenous cultures
Hōʻike: Showing knowledge and skills	-Staff engaging in hands-on application activities to expand on and show what they learned. -Using learnings from each year's trainings to improve the next year's training -Assessing whether training objectives were met by R&E team reviewing staff's evaluation efforts between training	-Ma ka hana ka ʻike: in doing, one learns -Staff show their knowledge and learn from each other. -R&E team sees what has/hasn't been learned and can reinforce concepts and celebrate successes	-Takes time and this time for fun and teamwork can be seen as "wasteful" in a Western context

Thus, the four core aspects of the Aloha Evaluation Framework approach applied in the ECB

project were: pilina (connections between others), hoʻokahua (setting the foundation), moʻolelo

(story), and hōʻike (applied learning/demonstration of learning). We will next review in more

detail how each phase was reflected throughout the training.

Pilina

The *Aloha Evaluation Framework* begins with, and centers throughout, the importance of

building relationships and creating trust (Pilina Hoʻohana a me ka Hana Hilinaʻi). The R&E team

who conducted the training were aware of their perceived and actual positional power both as

trainers and as evaluators of the training participants' programs. As trainers, our goal in prioritizing trust and relationships was to create a training space in which participants felt comfortable making mistakes, sharing their wisdom, and asking questions. As evaluators, our goal was to increase the likelihood that staff would come to us for help after the training and to make our future work more effective.

For the training, pilina and trust were built in several ways. First, the training was designed with respect for participants' humanity, time, and knowledge. Time for building relationships, interactive activities, talk story, and even "bio breaks" were as important as the team members sharing their knowledge. Second, invitations for the training were designed to reflect a friendly, joint learning opportunity with clear goals and time to build relationships. We dubbed the evaluation training series "Evaluation HYPE!" to increase approachability. Third, throughout the training, participants were reminded that the evaluation is not focused on their job performance, but on the impact of the programming. They were also reminded that a critical assessment of programming is essential to determine program improvements to best serve kamaliʻi (children). The team emphasized that mistakes are important as they are the only path to growth. Fourth, before and after the training, the R&E team provided food for training participants (pastries to start and lunch at the end), and eating time was used to 'talk story' – a local Hawaiian pidgin phrase referring to talking casually and catching up with old friends. It allowed us to learn about each other's personal and professional lives and build relationships.

Hoʻokahua

The second component of the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* is Hoʻokahua or setting the foundation. In evaluation, this includes design and instrumentation. In the training, Hoʻokahua meant teaching concepts starting with the basics (i.e., their definition and relation to other

concepts being taught) so that everyone, regardless of their level of evaluation knowledge, could understand and use the learning. From the basics, the training continued until direct service staff had hands-on experience with the application of each main concept to their work. Ho'okahua also meant honoring different learning styles. The training included videos, oral presentations, discussions, computer work, artistic and interactive exercises, and listening components, as well as individual, small group, and large group activities. In addition to how the trainers taught, Ho'okahua entailed respecting and making space for direct service staff's expertise. Our direct service staff are experts on their programs, which is as critical to the success of an evaluation as is knowledge of evaluation. Acknowledging that everyone in the room has something to teach creates more opportunities to learn. In addition, this respect for each person helps create a safe space for making mistakes and admitting what one does not know, as well as asking questions or clarification.

Mo'olelo

Mo'olelo (story) is the next stage of the *Aloha Evaluation Framework*. In the training, this included viewing the training as a story and making room for stories throughout. Trainings are a story about protagonists going through a journey to get to an end goal. In this case, it meant the ability to use key evaluation concepts in their work. The R&E team needed to consider the path to this goal, the supplies (i.e., information and materials) needed for the journey, the role of each character, and how to make sure the trip was entertaining and retained people's interest, while being informative. We also considered what type of story we wanted to create; in our case one that was about Aloha. We wanted the training to be a positive, welcoming, beneficial experience for participants, rather than something they had to endure. In honoring mo'olelo, the training also had room for stories within it. As mentioned, researchers and direct service staff

built pilina through personal storytelling right before and after the training. The training began

with introductions by all attendees and an exercise to learn about direct service staff's feelings

about evaluation. Throughout the training, time was allotted for the R&E team and direct service

staff to share their successful and less successful experiences of evaluation. To help make the

training more relatable, the team created a mock program inspired by a real one from the

organization for participants to respond to. The familiar but mock program was helpful as a

common storyline for participants to draw on as they wrote sample outcomes and analyzed data.

At the end of the training, direct service staff were asked to complete a survey to evaluate

the training and identify successes and opportunities for improvement, to tell their story of the

evaluation. The R&E team also met after the trainings to discuss what worked, what did not, and

to capture lessons learned.

Hō'ike

Hō'ike in the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* refers to demonstration of knowledge

through applied practice, as well as reporting and use of the findings. In the case of the ECB

training, Hō'ike exists in two ways. First, the evaluation training was intended to improve direct

service staff's reporting of their own evaluation results, which in turn helped the R&E team

identify, share, and support the use of cross-program findings. The team included activities in the

training that allowed participants to demonstrate immediate learning. For example, after

reviewing SMART outcomes (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-Bound),

participants reviewed outcomes for their existing programs and worked to align them with

SMART goals. Another example was having participants share out what they created during the

section on reporting (see Figure 1). In addition, the R&E team used a pre/post rubric assessment

of evaluations entered into the online reporting system prior to and after the training to determine

the extent to which participants improved their program evaluation skills. Results of the

assessment can also be used as the primary measure of the training's success. The other way

hōʻike was used for this project is this very article. Here, the R&E team are sharing lessons

learned from the evaluation (e.g., in this paper) and using findings to inform our plans for future

evaluations (i.e., a demonstration and application of our learning).

Figure 1: Training Participants Sharing out Their Creative Presentation of an Evaluation Report

Figure 1 illustrates the Aloha framework in practice within the training. The participants

in the photo are performing a skit they created (hōʻike) as part of a creative exercise designed to

let participants play (pilina), while applying what they learned about reporting results

(hoʻokāhua). The way this group decided to share what they learned was in the form of a story
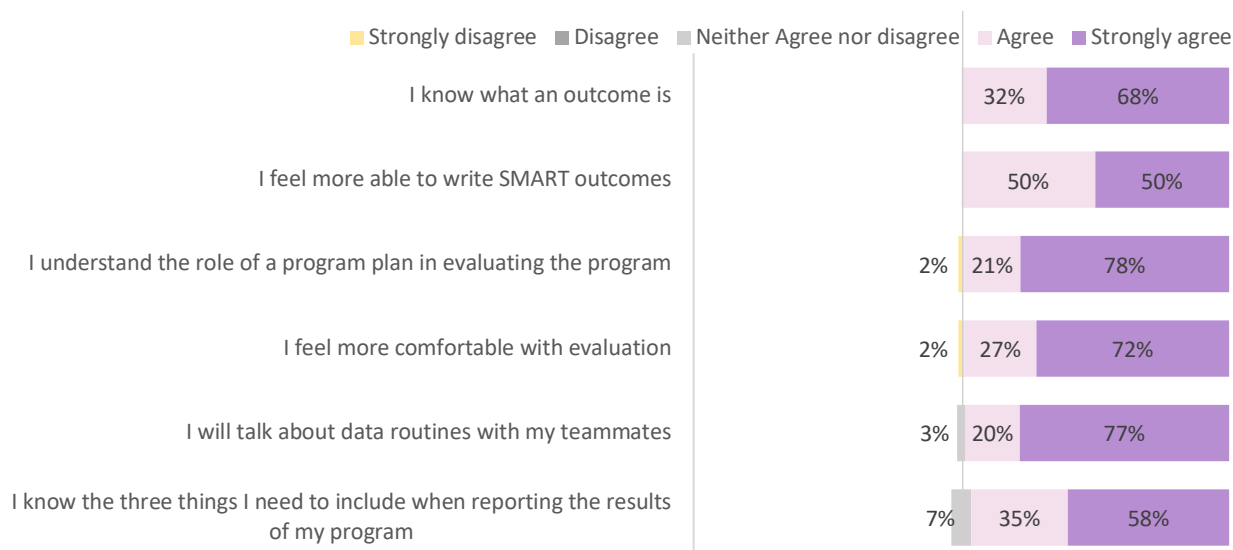
(moʻolelo).

Results

The primary goals of the ECB training were to 1) increase staff evaluation knowledge and 2) increase comfort with key evaluation concepts. The R&E team assessed changes in participants based on observations during the training as well as a retrospective survey capturing perceived change.

The team observed participants demonstrate a change in knowledge during multiple training activities. For example, during an activity called "Outcome/Not an outcome," participants used voting cards to vote if a statement displayed on the board was an outcome (i.e., an intended change due to participation in the program), or not an outcome (e.g., the number of kamaliʻi who attended a program session). Over the course of the activity, the team observed participants' improved understanding of what does and does not constitute an outcome based, as reflected in their voting, clarifying questions, and realizations. This was true among staff at all participating regions.

Results from the post-training survey indicated participants also perceived a change in their knowledge and comfort with evaluation topics. In the retrospective feedback survey shown in Figure 2, nearly all agreed or strongly agreed with positive statements related to knowledge and comfort with evaluation topics.

Figure 2: Survey Results for Statements Related to Knowledge and Comfort with Evaluation

Please rate your agreement with the following statements (N=60)

Legend: ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I know what an outcome is				32%	68%
I feel more able to write SMART outcomes				50%	50%
I understand the role of a program plan in evaluating the program	2%			21%	78%
I feel more comfortable with evaluation	2%			27%	72%
I will talk about data routines with my teammates		3%		20%	77%
I know the three things I need to include when reporting the results of my program			7%	35%	58%

Application of Learning

The following moʻolelo captured after the training further illustrates what some participants took from the training. It was written up by a staff member describing their experience following the training:

> The [R&E team] visited [our regional office] to conduct a training session with our team. The purpose of the training was to help the team better understand evaluation and to use it more effectively in our programs. During the session, [the R&E team] provided examples of how other teams were approaching data routines. One that stood out was another regional office's use of an online survey tool as an efficient way to compile debrief and staff observation data.

> The following day, [we] were discussing a new project which aimed to help an elementary school set up an aquaponics system, and evaluation came up. We realized that a lot of our debriefing was done in the van ride home. [My coworker] suggested that we should see if we could put the evaluation questions on her phone, so that we could debrief on the way back from the program.

> We reached out to [the R&E team] for help and they were able to set us up with debrief questions in a survey that [my coworker] could enter on her cell phone, allowing us to debrief more effectively during the van rides back from program. (Staff moʻolelo)

In this case, the staff found use in an evaluation data collection tool and reached out to the R&E team to get it set up for their debrief process.

Comfort with Evaluation

One participant came into the training believing evaluation was, at best, a waste of time and, at worst, harmful. This participant felt that it diminished the perceived impact of programs by attempting to capture immeasurable personal change "in numbers." After the training, they understood the importance of evaluation and were excited about their role in it. In their own words:

> ... For a person who cringes whenever I hear evaluation, my feelings toward evaluation have changed, especially [understanding our organization's] reasons for evaluation are to make program improvements and determine if we are on target of meeting agency goals. I really appreciate the time and effort you all put into this training, and your patience for and understanding every individual's needs. (Staff moʻolelo)

After completing training in another region, one participant expressed surprise and excitement for evaluation. She told us that evaluation was not her strong point while in graduate school and that she previously did not like evaluation. As a cultural practitioner, evaluation as a Western process did not seem to match well with Indigenous cultural values and practices. Yet through our training, she appreciated the e hō mai moments – the "this is it!" moments that gave clarity to what evaluation was about. After asking more questions about evaluation, she sat back in her chair and said with hushed realization, "I love evaluation."

The various moʻolelo provide evidence of staff feeling more comfortable with evaluation because of our training. Staff also better understood the value of evaluation in their work. Demonstrating how a change in approach (using ALOHA acronym values) with hands-on,

applied learning can help to improve program evaluations and make the process more accurate, effective, and efficient. Aloha played a crucial role in making this happen.

Demonstration of Aloha through respect, compassion, and kindness was evident throughout each training session. By building genuine pilina, or strong relationships, the R&E team was able to connect with staff and assuage their fears and trepidation about evaluation. The team was patient and understanding of individual staff needs and sought to create a comfortable and open environment for learning. This openness, inclusiveness, and understanding helped staff feel comfortable and better able to understand the purpose and value of evaluation and its importance for making program improvements, determining impact of services, and determining alignment with organizational goals, vision, and mission.

The evaluation capacity building efforts were planned and implemented from within the kahua, or foundation of Aloha. By demonstrating and living the ALOHA acronym values, the team fostered a psychologically safe, supportive, and inclusive learning environment for staff to learn and practice evaluation.

Discussion

In addition to understanding the extent to which participants increased their comfort and understanding of evaluation topics, an unexpected finding from the data (e.g., observations, surveys, moʻolelo) collected was an appreciation for and positive feedback about the training by those who attended. Though the training was not mandatory, the R&E team worked through leadership to schedule training events which essentially mandated staff participation. Based on this, as well as prior experience working with staff to develop research and evaluation capacity, the team originally anticipated a lukewarm response to the training, as had been past experiences. Instead, most (93%) strongly agreed the training was a good use of their time and most (78%)

were considered "promoters" or likely to recommend the program to other colleagues (see Figure

3 and 4).

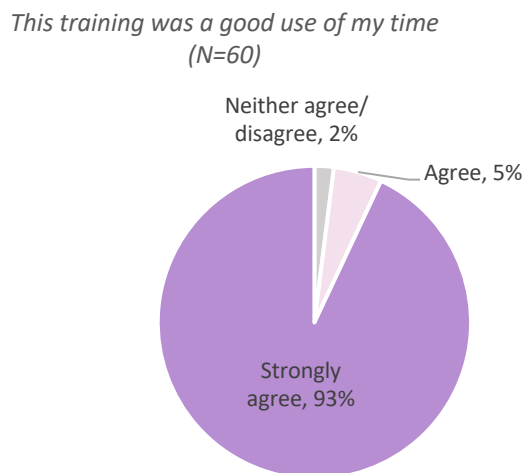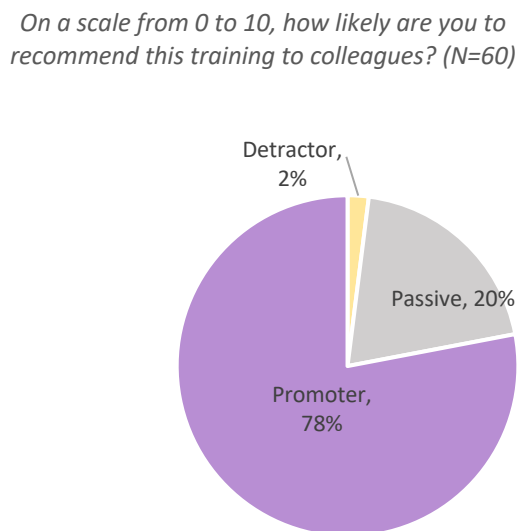Figure 3: Survey Response Rates on the Value of the Training

This training was a good use of my time
(N=60)

Neither agree/
disagree, 2%

Agree, 5%

Strongly
agree, 93%

Figure 4: Survey Response Rates for the Likelihood of Recommending the Training

On a scale from 0 to 10, how likely are you to
recommend this training to colleagues? (N=60)

Detractor,
2%

Passive, 20%

Promoter,
78%

In order to better understand the positive responses to the training we analyzed open-ended comments in response to the question, "*What worked well in today's training?*" Comments largely fell into two large buckets related to an interactive, fun, and engaging training (*pilina,* relationship) or hands-on, multiple-mode activities (*hoʻokahua*, foundational learning). Because these aligned to the Aloha Framework, we then organized comments into themes following core concepts of *pilina, hoʻokahua, moʻolelo, and hōʻike*. From this, we found that a combination of structuring the training with pilina (relationships) and hoʻokahua (establishing the foundation) may have been key to the initial success of the training (see Figure 5). Illustrative quotes from our analysis that demonstrated a positive impact included, "...[The R&E team] created an encouraging and positive learning environment. I appreciated the positive, encouraging approach to learning," and "The hands on analysis was the best. Basic step by step modules."

Figure 5: Themes for Respondent Comments to the Question "What worked well for today's training?" (N=56)
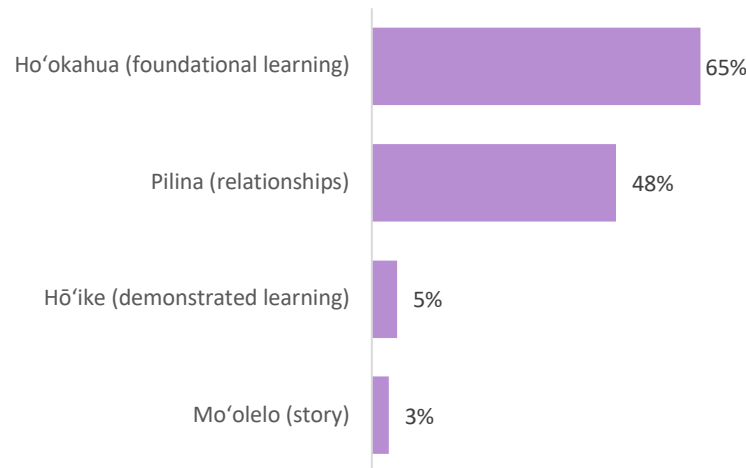
One participant shared as an additional comment in the post-training survey:

> I really appreciated the time you invested to come in person and walk us through the process. We heard it before, but you helped us connect the dots and work the puzzle. The picture is clear. The training helped us make strong connection of purpose for collecting information, remembering to refer back to the intended goal/outcome. Discussing the process as a team set up productive thinking. I feel the team had better clarity of the importance of data collection. The overall presentation was very useful for us. I believe that in moving forward it will make more sense of what the teams intend for their groups to do.

Staff expressed their appreciation for the time and effort invested by the R&E team in providing in-person training. This ECB training helped them gain clear focus, and use critical and evaluative thinking via relevant and applied, hands-on learning activities. Ultimately, this should help in the future as staff use their learnings to work on developing, implementing, and evaluating their programs.

Conclusion

As we reflect back on the training series, we are reminded of the quotation from Kumu Hula Olana Kaipo Ai (Meyer, 2004)) upon which we framed this paper, "Aloha is the intelligence with which we meet life" (qtd. in Meyer, 2004, p.4). Aloha is a way of approaching and understanding life that involves intelligence, awareness, and connection. In Hawaiian culture, the word Aloha is often used as a greeting, but it also has a deeper meaning of love, compassion, and mutual respect. This quotation expresses the idea that when we approach life with an open, loving mindset, we can navigate it with greater wisdom, understanding, and connection with each other and our environment.

Aloha is a rich intelligence and to truly effect Aloha, advocacy and action is necessary. Sustaining the intelligence of Aloha requires genuineness and intentional, daily practice. Aloha in evaluation requires the reciprocal and dynamic process of pilina, trust, and respect. This is particularly important when building evaluation capacity with program staff who

might lack a sense of evaluation efficacy. Results from our trainings suggest the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* may be an effective and culturally sensitive approach for increasing staff evaluation efficacy and building evaluation capacity.

In summary, the *Aloha Evaluation Framework* is a culturally sensitive approach that can effectively build evaluation capacity among program staff. By centering on Aloha as a foundation and valid form of ancestral knowledge and intelligence, this framework emphasizes the importance of trust, respect, and open-mindedness in evaluating program effectiveness. The positive feedback from the trainings showed promising results in increasing staff knowledge and comfort with evaluation. Aligning the trainings with the Aloha framework supports the framework's potential in similar capacity building efforts within Indigenous contexts. Further scholarship and research are needed to explore the effectiveness of this framework in other Indigenous contexts, by shining a light on how to work with Native Hawaiian peoples contributes k(new) knowledge to a historically Western-oriented academic field. The *Aloha Evaluation Framework* builds on the best practices of community capacity building in an Indigenous context. As shown through our work, by emphasizing the importance of approaching evaluation with love and an open, caring mindset, we as researchers and evaluators can connect with our communities and ultimately co-create greater wisdom and shared understandings.

Limitations

This case study has several limitations. First, as internal evaluators who also designed and facilitated the training, our multiple roles may have influenced both how the training was delivered and how we interpreted its outcomes. Our close working relationships with participants and investment in the training's success may have shaped our perceptions, potentially leading to confirmation bias in how we viewed participant engagement and feedback. Second, while we

aimed to foster open and honest feedback, participants may have felt hesitant to be critical in the

training evaluation because we are their colleagues and program evaluators. Third, the impact of

centering Native Hawaiian values in our training was not directly measured. Future evaluations

could benefit from incorporating longitudinal data collection and more robust measures of

capacity development and the impact of the training approach. Based on this case study, the

Aloha Evaluation Framework appears to be an effective and culturally responsive approach for

building organizational evaluation capacity in Indigenous contexts and, as such, future

evaluation is warranted.

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Appendix A

Glossary of Hawaiian Words

- ʻĀina – generally translated as land, has a broader meaning as "that which feeds"

- Ahonui – patience: waiting for the ripe moment – to persevere

- Ahupuaʻa – traditional land division

- Akahai – kindness: to act and to speak with kindness

- Aʻo – to teach or to learn, an exchange of knowledge or skills

- Ea – sovereignty (personal or political), also life, air, breath

- E hō mai – Grant us (part of a prayer "grant us knowledge")

- Haʻahaʻa – modesty, humility, openness

- Hana Hilinaʻi – to work together in trust

- Hōʻike – to demonstrate acquired knowledge or skills

- Honua – land, earth, world; also foundation, fundamental

- Hoʻokahua – lay a foundation

- Hoʻopono – to behave in a way that is moral, fitting, proper, righteous

- Hui – group, partnership or gathering

- ʻIke – knowledge; ʻIke Hawaiʻi – traditional Hawaiian knowledge; ʻIke Naʻauao – wisdom

- ʻIke Nohona – knowledge of Hawaiian worldview and lifestyle

- Kahua – foundation

- Kaiāulu – community

- Kamaliʻi – children

- Kanaka / Kānaka – person/people

- Kupuna/Kūpuna – elder/elders

- Kuleana – responsibilities and commitment privileges

- Mā'awe Pono – righteous pathway

- Makua/Mākua – parent/parents

- Mana – spiritual energy

- Mo'olelo – stories or legends, often told in the form of metaphor

- 'Ohana – family (usually extended, often includes references to members with close

  affiliation who are not related by blood)

- 'Olu'olu – pleasantness (internal peacefulness)

- 'Ōpio – youth

- Pili – entwined Pilina – relationship; Pilina Ho'ohana – working relationship

Appendix B

Evaluation Capacity Building Post-Training Survey

Note: Questions 1-7 used a 5-point agreement scale. The actual survey was completed on the internet using Qualtrics. This version represents the content, but not the full formatting.

1. **Because of this training**, I feel more comfortable with evaluation.

2. **Because of this training**, I understand the role of a program plan in evaluating the program.

3. **Because of this training**, I know what an outcome is.

4. **Because of this training**, I feel more able to write SMART outcomes.

5. **Because of this training**, I will talk about data routines with my teammates.

6. I know the three things I need to include when reporting the results (impact) of my program.

7. This training was a good use of my time.

8. On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend this training to a colleague?

9. The next set of questions will help us improve and what content for future evaluation capacity building efforts we should do.

10. What worked well in today's training?

11. How can we improve today's training?

12. Which, if any, of your questions were left unanswered by this training?

13. Please suggest a topic or two for future trainings.

14. Lastly, is there anything else you would like to share with us?