

**The Outdoor Circle**  
Community Awareness Report  
8/9/2021

## Background

In March of 2020 FDM was hired by TOC to facilitate a series of focus groups to help TOC evaluate public sentiment for the organization, and based on the findings, provide recommendations on ways to engage new members and community support.

The questions on the survey and in-person groups focused on:

1. Public Awareness for TOC
2. Public opinion on Hawaii's pressing environmental issues
3. Ways to engage new donor support

The recommendations in this report are based on the findings from one (1) online survey and two (2) in-person focus groups.

- Group 1 Online survey sent to 30 (15 responses) (age 30 to 50)
- Group 2 In-person focus group (9 participants) (age 30 to \*55) (2 male, 7 female)
- Group 3 In-person focus group (10 participants) (age 25 to 35) (4 male, 6 female)

Excluded: Past or present TOC members, volunteers, employees or anyone with a family member who is a past or present TOC member, volunteer or employee.

## Objective

The objective of the survey and in-person focus groups was to gain a baseline understanding of the awareness level of TOC in the community at-large and to gather insight on the giving priorities of Hawaii residents, particularly those under the age of 35.

By gaining additional insight on public sentiment of TOC, TOC can develop effective strategies designed to appeal to NEW contributors, donors and their employers.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### **Public awareness for The Outdoor Circle**

When asked to name a Hawaii non-profit environmental organization here are the number of mentions per organization by survey and focus group attendees.

### **Multiple Mentions**

Sierra Club 14  
Nature Conservancy 7  
Blue Planet Foundation 4  
Surfrider Foundation 4  
Aloha United Way 3  
Kahea 2  
Kupu 2  
Sustainable Coastlines 3

### **One Mention**

The Outdoor Circle  
Lani-Kailua TOC  
Pohahaikalani  
Hawaiian Islands Land Trust  
CC for Hawaii  
Hawaii Wildlife Center  
Heia Pier  
University of Hawaii (Foundation)  
Trail Maintenance  
Earth Justice  
Waimea Valley

**Insight:** Environmental advocacy and preservation is a crowded field in Hawaii. Fifteen environmental organizations were mentioned by respondents. More than 75% of focus group respondents said awareness of the organization they mentioned was driven by a work-related volunteer activity such as beach clean-up day, invites from their company to attend an event related to the non-profit or a friend or family sharing about the organization.

**Recommendation:** To stand-out, TOC might consider outreach to new members via their employers by creating special volunteer events targeting specific employer groups. This could be in the form of special tree planting days where employers invite employee participation.

Similarly, an activation campaign to ask current donors/members to invite their children and grandchildren to participate in TOC events.

### **Most Pressing Environmental Concern is Climate Change**

Across all groups, climate change ranked #1.

**Insight:** During focus group discussions when the subject of Ala Moana Park playground and Top Golf (Ala Wai) were discussed, there was limited negative response and those under 35 were unanimous in their support of both. Concerns surrounding climate change and ocean pollution sparked the most vocal concern and fears.

**Recommendation:** TOC must leverage its track record of accomplishments as it relates to climate change. Particularly when reaching out to the 25 to 35 demographic, TOC would do well to highlight (and remind younger generations) of its role in establishing

the Shade Tree Commission, Diamond Head State Park, Hawaii Nature Center and the Green Hawaii Coalition. Positioning TOC as a forward thinking, innovative organization that for decades has set a strong foundation for the improvement and preservation of Hawaii's natural environment is strongly advised.

Note: Recommendations here are focused on message and not to inform TOC's policy agenda.

### **Engagement of New Members**

**Online survey participants** said they would be very likely (23.5%) or likely (41.18%) to become a supporting member of an organization if asked by a friend or family member and more than 70% of respondents said they would support an organization that provides educational activities for themselves and their community.

**In the focus group discussions** when asked to complete the following "*I'm more likely to become a member of an organization if I believed in their mission and...*" The majority of respondents said either an invite by a friend/family member, employer or personal connection to the organization. Note: One person mentioned the impact of visuals in donor appeals citing the SPCA commercials featuring caged and hungry dogs. This generated much agreement from the other attendees. While she nor others in the group could recall the name of the organization they had strong visual recall of the spot.

Similar to online survey respondents, focus group attendees became highly engaged and interested when it came to questions regarding their interest in hands-on activities for members such as garden tours, how-to gardening classes and opportunities to connect socially with other members.

**Insight:** The online responses and focus group discussions reflect the high value Hawaii residents place on *ohana* and interpersonal communications. TOC as a 100+ year-old organization has a deep bench of past of members and relatives/descendants of past members that could be leveraged to reach a new generation of members whose top priority is climate change.

**Recommendations:** Opportunities to socialize outdoors - walks, gardening and interactive educational events are top-of-mind for Hawaii residents (particularly during the Covid pandemic) and this is an opportune time for TOC to create exclusive mahalo events for contributing members and to showcase to potential new members (invited by a current member) a benefit of being a TOC supporter.

## Ways to Give

**Online survey respondents** said an appeal for support would best get their attention by email (47.6%) or social channels (35.29) and least likely by mail (5.8%). **Both focus groups** when asked what triggered their last contribution to a non-profit mentioned “rounding up” checkout contributions at Long’s drugstores and automatic deductions from payroll at work. Respondents said they liked the ease of giving, no-friction aspects of payroll contributions. Examples cited where no forms to fill-out and easy to contribute.

At both sessions, one person (at each session) commented on a preference for giving to a well-established non-profit (example cited was Red Cross) due to concerns over fraud. However, these comments did not generate additional comments from the other participants.

**Insights:** Ease of giving and workplace giving are key factors to increase giving and participation from donors under 45. Employer support puts a fine point on a personal connection and conveys trust in the non-profit.

**Recommendations:** Launch a pilot workplace “adopt a tree” program structured around an employer driven TOC volunteer day combined with a contributing membership appeal. The event could be structured as team building/bonding event for the employer and a key benefit of supporting the program. The pilot program would serve as a model and framework for future workplace outreach to Hawaii employers.