

Project#3: Grant Application for Further Evaluation of Hawai‘i’s Healthy Default Beverage (HDB) Law

In the United States (US), healthy default beverage (HDB) laws have gained momentum as a means to reduce children’s access to sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). These laws require restaurants that serve children’s meals to include a healthy beverage (e.g., water, milk) as the default option. There are several US jurisdictions, but only three states with a HDB law (California, Hawai‘i, Delaware). On January 1, 2020, Hawai‘i’s HDB law went into effect.

This project sought to expand on Healthy Hawai‘i Initiative Evaluation Team’s (HHIET) 2019-2020 Project #1: Hawai‘i’s Healthy Default Beverage Law for Children’s Meals: Baseline Findings. Project #3 entailed the development and submission of a grant application to further evaluate HDB law in collaboration with the two other states with HDB laws. The initial intention for the project was to submit to a call from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for “Time-Sensitive Obesity Policy and Program Evaluation.” However, after establishing partnerships with the research teams evaluating California and Delaware’s HDB laws and developing project research aims, HHIET learned that NIH was already funding a very similar proposal under that funding mechanism and were unlikely to fund another. As a result, HHIET and partners pursued two alternate funding opportunities from American Heart Association (AHA) and Robert Wood Johnson’s Healthy Eating Research (HER). Unfortunately, neither of these submissions were funded, predominantly because of the COVID-19 pandemic which shifted priorities and reduced grant funding for these organizations. Despite being unable to secure funding, the efforts conducted by the HHIET in this grant submission process and the collaboration established with the University of California Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) and University of Delaware (UD) Center for Research in Education and Social Policy were invaluable, enhancing both the evaluation and implementation of Hawai‘i’s HDB law. Specifically, the proposal developed for AHA outlined an evaluation framework that can guide further evaluation of Hawai‘i’s HDB law, and a protocol that can be used to convene other jurisdictions and stakeholders to share lessons learned and glean implementation strategies around HDB laws. Additionally, the HHIET continued to explore collaboration opportunities with NPI and UD after Project #3 was completed, and has since submitted additional grant applications to support the Hawai‘i’s HDB implementation, enforcement, and evaluation.

Between December 2019 and June 2020, the HHIET:

- held 24 meetings with stakeholders, potential partners, and the Department of Health’s HDB implementation team in the pursuit of grant funding,
- developed two separate grant proposal research aims,
- developed one grant proposal with a budget and justification in collaboration with NPI and UD to AHA’s request for a proposal, and
- submitted COVID-19 specific aims and estimated budget costs to HER in search of funding.