

June 30, 2025

Mr. Benson Medina
Director of Research & Development
County of Hawai'i
25 Aupuni Street, Suite 1301
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
808-961-8366
chresdev@hawaiiicounty.gov

Regarding the Department's Request for Qualifications for Professional Services in the area of RD.2) Community Planning (Grant Writer)

Aloha e Director Medina,

Thank you for the opportunity to express my interest with the Department of Research and Development for Professional Services in the area of RD.2) Community Planning (Grant Writer). Enclosed with this cover letter is a Statement of Qualifications and a copy of my professional resume for your review.

In reviewing my qualifications you will find that I possess the expertise and versatile capabilities required to serve the grant writing needs of the Department. I have 12 years of experience preparing grant applications that have secured over \$20 million in funding from public and private sources for small business, nonprofits, and government agencies in Hawai'i. In my previous role as Rural Economic Development Supervisor at The Kohala Center, I was responsible for carrying out research and technical assistance projects supported by funding from the Department of Research and Development.

Thank you for considering me for future opportunities to work with your agency and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at 808-313-0904 or mblazak@gmail.com

Mahalo,

Megan Blazak

Megan M. Blazak, MBA
Megan Blazak Consulting LLC
404 Olu Street
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
808-313-0904
mblazak@gmail.com

Statement of Qualifications
Megan Blazak Consulting LLC
Prepared on June 30, 2025

County of Hawai'i
Department of Research and Development
Professional Services Area: RD.2) Community Planning (Grant Writer)

1. The name of the firm or person, contact information including email address, the principal place of business, and location of all of its offices:

Megan Blazak Consulting LLC
Megan M. Blazak, MBA
Sole Member
404 Olu Street
Hilo, Hawai'i 96720
808-313-0904
mblazak@gmail.com

2. The age of the firm and its average number of employees over the past five years:

Date of Incorporation: July 12, 2023

Average number of employees over last five years: 1 employee (non-owner)

3. Education, training, and qualifications:

Statement of Qualifications

Megan M. Blazak, MBA, is a professional grant writer and development consultant working with small businesses, community organizations, and government agencies in Hawai'i since 2012. Based in Hilo, Ms. Blazak provides technical assistance and grant application packaging services to clients across the State of Hawaii to obtain grant awards and other sources of funding for operations, capital projects, community services, and new initiatives. Ms. Blazak has experience preparing applications for projects in a variety of sectors and issue areas, including, but not limited to, rural community development, small business development, workforce development, agriculture, conservation, cultural stewardship, climate change, tourism, clean energy, value-added manufacturing, and capital improvements.

Ms. Blazak has over 12 years of experience as a professional grant writer and technical assistance provider. Since 2015, Ms. Blazak has personally prepared over 100 applications for

grant and loan funding for beneficiaries in Hawai‘i and the Western Pacific region, securing over \$20 million in funding. Ms. Blazak has a track record of success in the area of grant writing and is recognized by stakeholders in Hawai‘i as a leading provider of grant writing services for federal programs, with a specialization in grant writing for U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Bill Programs.

Ms. Blazak holds an Executive Master of Business Administration degree from The University of Hawai‘i at Manoa Shidler College of Business and a Bachelor of Arts from Rutgers University in New Jersey. Ms. Blazak possesses the Experience and Education Requirements to provide Grant Writing services to the Department in accordance with the Administrative and Management Positions GS-1082 Writing and Editing and GS 1109 Grants Management contained in the United States Office of Personnel Management’s Qualifications Standards Handbook. A copy of Ms. Blazak’s professional resume is appended to this Statement of Qualifications for review.

Education & Fellowships

Megan M. Blazak

2024-2025

Certificate, Accounting Principles and Accounting Specialist

University of California, Davis – Division of Continuing and Professional Education

2020–2022

Master of Business Administration, Executive Program, *summa cum laude*

University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Shidler College of Business

2012–2013

U.S. Fulbright Scholar, Institute of English, University of Lodz, Poland

U.S. Department of State and The Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission

2008–2012

Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude*

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and Douglass Residential College

Double major: English Language and Literature; Women’s Studies

Key professional accomplishments and qualifications:

- Possesses 12 years of grant writing experience with a track record of success preparing grant applications to secure over \$20 million in federal, state, and private funding for small businesses, nonprofits, and public agencies in Hawaii;
- Proven experience as an independent consultant providing professional services to government agencies including U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development, State of Hawaii Department of Agriculture, and University of Hawai'i at Manoa;
- Previously served as Rural & Cooperative Business Development Services Manager with nonprofit agency The Kohala Center as lead grant writer and contract administrator for agreements with federal, state, and county agencies; and
- Strong working knowledge of grant contract lifecycle management with 10 years of project management and financial management experience in the for-profit and nonprofit sectors with a focus on rural community development, agriculture, small business, and clean energy.

Ms. Blazak has over 10 years of applied experience providing services in the following areas related to grant writing:

1. Pre-Planning & Preparation

- Identify suitable grant opportunities
- Review eligibility requirements and guidelines
- Gather background information on the funding agency
- Assemble relevant organizational documents
- Meet with stakeholders to define project scope and goals
- Develop a detailed project plan and timeline
- Collect supporting data (i.e., needs assessment, statistics, and community impact)

2. Proposal Development

- Draft a statement of need or problem statement
- Write clear, measurable project goals and objectives
- Describe the project methodology or approach
- Outline a detailed work plan or timeline of activities
- Develop a budget (including justification or narrative)
- Identify project personnel and write their qualifications
- Draft sustainability plan
- Prepare evaluation plan to measure project success

- Gather letters of support or commitment from partners
- Ensure alignment of the proposal with funder's priorities

3. Writing & Editing

- Write a complete, concise, and compelling narrative
- Format the proposal according to funder specifications
- Edit for clarity, grammar, and consistency
- Review for compliance with all requirements
- Tailor language and tone to the target funder

4. Review & Finalization

- Obtain internal approvals (such as leadership, finance, legal)
- Conduct peer review or third-party review for feedback
- Final proofreading for errors and completeness
- Confirm all required attachments are included

5. Submission

- Complete online portal requirements (if applicable)
- Convert documents to required file formats
- Ensure all deadlines are met
- Submit application and confirm receipt

6. Post-Submission Follow-up

- Track submission confirmation and correspondence
- Prepare responses to potential funder questions
- Archive a copy of the proposal and related materials
- Monitor timeline for award notifications

7. Post-award Administration

- Review award agreement and conditions
- Set up project tracking and reporting systems
- Communicate success to stakeholders
- Begin project implementation

In addition to her education and professional work experience, Ms. Blazak has participated in the following trainings and professional service activities to develop her skills as a grant writer:

2025	Member, Hawai‘i Island Chamber of Commerce, Young Professionals Committee
2025	President, Board of Directors, Hilo County Farm Bureau (from 2023)
2023	Treasurer, Board of Directors, Hilo County Farm Bureau (from 2021)
2021	Grant Application Panel Reviewer, J.M Kaplan Fund J.M.K. Innovation Prize
2020	Grant Application Panel Reviewer, Healthy Food Financing Initiative
2019	Grant Application Panel Reviewer, Healthy Food Financing Initiative
2019	Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Pacific Region Training & Technical Assistance Center Grant Writing Workshop, Hilo, Hawaii
2018	Grant Writing USA Workshop, Hilo, Hawaii
2018	Grant Application Panel Reviewer, O‘ahu Resource Conservation & Development Council Women Farmers Grant
2018	Grant Application Panel Reviewer, Fruit Guys Community Grant Program
2018	Advisor, Hamakua Institute, <i>Hamakua Assessment: Community strengths, needs, and opportunities</i>
2017	Sustainability Leadership for Organizations, University of Hawai‘i Maui Community College
2017	U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement Grantee Conference, Grant Writing Best Practices, Savannah, GA
2017	Co-chair, Planning Committee, Hawai‘i Island Community Food Summit in collaboration with County of Hawaii Department of Research and Development
2016	Hawai‘i-Pacific Evaluation Association, Evaluation Design and Practice Training, Honolulu, HI
2016	Grant Writing Made Easy, Lifetime Professional Member

4. A list of recent projects and the names of up to five clients who may be contacted, including at least two for whom services were rendered during the preceding year:

Recent Projects

1. U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Technical Assistance Grant

Client: U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Business Cooperative Service

Project Period: October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2025

Region: State of Hawaii and Western Pacific

Contract Award: \$193,000

Project Description: Megan Blazak Consulting LLC is the recipient of a cooperative service agreement with USDA Rural Development to implement the project titled “REAP Grant Technical Assistance for Small Businesses and Agricultural Producers in the State of Hawaii.” Ms. Blazak is the executive official responsible for managing and administering all aspects of this federal contract and the contract is in good standing. Through this federally-funded project, Ms. Blazak provides public education and outreach to assist targeted applicants in the State of Hawaii with preparation of applications for funding from the USDA Rural Energy for America (REAP) Program. The REAP program covers up to 25% of the cost for an eligible small business to install a renewable energy system or energy efficiency improvements in their business operation. The objective of the project is to provide a suite of technical assistance services to at least 30 eligible small business and agricultural producers in the State of Hawaii with the aim of preparing successful applications for REAP grant funding. To date, grant writing services rendered by Ms. Blazak have resulted in 20 applications requesting \$2,313,455 in grant funding since October 2023. As of this submission, \$1,245,370 in requested funds have been approved for grant awards, while \$1,068,085 in requests are pending USDA review.

2. U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Value Added Producer Grant

Client: Sea Salts of Hawaii (for-profit small business)

Service Period: March 1, 2024 to September 30, 2024

Grant Award secured for client: \$250,000

Service Description: Ms. Blazak was contracted by this client to provide comprehensive grant application preparation for this highly competitive enterprise expansion grant from USDA. The client operates Kona Salt Farm in Kailua-Kona on Hawai‘i Island. Kona Salt Farm is a harvester of deep ocean water to make high quality sea salt and liquid magnesium chloride. Ms. Blazak prepared a competitive grant application for this applicant to request \$250,000 in working capital to produce marketing materials; execute a digital marketing campaign; and procure innovative new packaging to increase sales and customer base for the company’s new magnesium product line. Ms. Blazak developed the project budget in collaboration with the client, corresponded with the agency regarding eligible project costs and activities, developed the project work plan, and drafted over 25 pages of written narrative in response to the scoring criteria ensuring the

applicant received a high score. Ms. Blazak prepared the federal forms for the client's review and execution and compiled the final application for submission to the agency. The applicant received 100% of the requested funds and is currently implementing the project.

3. U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program - State-level Cooperative Service Agreement

Client: Hawaii Department of Agriculture with funding support from Ulupono Initiative (private charitable foundation)

Service Period: June 15, 2023 to December 31, 2023

Grant Award secured for client: \$3,289,316

Service Description: With funding support from Ulupono Initiative, Ms. Blazak provided Hawaii Department of Agriculture (HDOA) with comprehensive grant application preparation services to assist HDOA in securing federal funds from the Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant Program. RFSI was authorized under the U.S. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to provide economic stimulus to regional food systems and independent farms in response to the coronavirus pandemic; as is typical with emergency funding programs, HDOA had a tight deadline window to prepare and submit an application for RFSI funding. Ms. Blazak added critical capacity to HDOA's team and took the lead on ensuring the application was completed properly and submitted on time. Services included budget and narrative development, literature and data review, narrative drafting, evaluation criteria development, correspondence with HDOA personnel to obtain guidance and approvals, and application packaging for a timely submission. Services provided by Ms. Blazak resulted in HDOA securing 100% of the RFSI funds allocated to the State of Hawaii in the amount of \$3,289,316.

4. U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program - Subaward for Equipment Grant

Client: Kawamata Farms LLC (for-profit small business)

Service Period: January 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025

Grant Award secured for client: \$100,000

Service Description: Ms. Blazak provided this client with grant writing services to prepare a competitive application for funding for the farm to purchase specialized equipment to automate cardboard box folding at their operation in Waimea on Hawai'i Island. The implementation of this equipment would allow the farm to achieve efficiency and cost-savings in the post-harvest handling and distribution steps of the value chain. Ms. Blazak worked with the client to develop the budget, project work plan, and draft the application narrative to justify how the equipment investment aligned with program priorities and state goals. The client was approved for 100% of the grant funds requested and is currently implementing the project.

5. U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program

Client: Hawi Renewable Development, Inc. (for-profit small business)

Service Period: January 1, 2023 to June 1, 2025

Grant Award secured for client: \$1,000,000

Service Description: Ms. Blazak provided this client comprehensive grant application services in the preparation and submission of an application for grant funding that was successfully awarded in the amount of \$1,000,000 to re-power an existing wind farm on Hawai'i Island. Services included preparation of the project budget and schedule, completion required federal forms, preparation of a Feasibility Study, preparation of Pro Forma, compilation of the application package for submission to USDA, and extensive correspondence with the agency regarding application requirements to ensure the final application was complete, eligible, and competitive for funding. Ms. Blazak also provided post-award support to ensure all required documentation of project expenditures was properly submitted to USDA to ensure the grantee received 100% of grant funds awarded. This project was completed in June 2025.

Client Reference (*Services provided within the preceding year)

1. Lehuanani A. Angay*

Business Programs Specialist

Hawaii State USDA, Rural Development

154 Waianuenue Avenue Suite 311

Hilo, HI 96720

808-933-8307

lehuanani.Angay@usda.gov

2. Sandra Gibson*

Founder & CEO

Sea Salts of Hawaii

560 North Nimitz Highway Suite 126B

Honolulu, HI 96817

808-333-8211

sandra@seasaltsofhawaii.com

3. Raymond Kawamata*

Founder & CEO

Kawamata Farms

66-1330 Lalamilo Farm Rd

Waimea, HI 96743

808-885-4701

kawamatafarms@gmail.com

4. Sharon Hurd
Chairperson
Board of Agriculture
Hawaii Department of Agriculture
1428 S. King Street
Honolulu, HI 96814
808-973-9550
Sharon.K.Hurd@hawaii.gov

5. Jesse Cooke, CFA
Vice President
Ulupono Initiative
999 Bishop Street Suite 1202
Honolulu, HI 96813
808-544-8978
jcooke@ulupono.com

5. Any promotional or descriptive literature which the individual or firm desires to submit:

Attachment 1: Professional Resume for Megan M. Blazak, MBA

MEGAN M. BLAZAK, MBA
404 Olu Street, Hilo HI 96720
808-313-0904 mblazak@gmail.com

EDUCATION & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2024-2025 **Accounting Principles and Accounting Specialist Certificates**
University of California, Davis – Division of Continuing and Professional Education
- 2020-2022 **Master of Business Administration, Executive Program, *summa cum laude***
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Shidler College of Business
- Certificate in Sustainability Leadership for Organizations
 - Scholarship Recipient, James P.D. Thropp and Saltchuk Company Scholarships
 - Participant, Shidler Alumni Association Executive Mentoring Program
- 2012–2013 **U.S. Fulbright Scholar**, Institute of English, University of Lodz, Poland
U.S. Department of State and The Polish-U.S. Fulbright Commission
- Competitive, merit-based grant for international education and cultural exchange
 - Independently instructed 7 intensive English writing courses for 100 Polish students
 - Presented cultural lectures at U.S. Embassy library centers and national universities
- 2008-2012 **Bachelor of Arts, *summa cum laude***
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and Douglass Residential College
- Double major: English and Women's Studies
 - English Department Essay Prizes, Academic Excellence Awards, and Rutgers Writing Tutor
 - Student Research Scholar, Institute for Women & Leadership at Rutgers

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2022–Present **Principal**, Megan Blazak Consulting LLC, Hilo, HI
- Administer a two-year \$193,000 federal contract with USDA to provide grant writing and technical assistance to applicants for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)
 - Provide grant writing services to for-profit, nonprofit, and government clients in Hawai'i
- 2022–2025 **Project Manager**, Site Constructors, Inc., General Engineering Contractor, Waimea, HI
- Manage \$70M construction contract for 200-acre Hale Kuawehi Solar Project (30 MW PV / 120 MWh Battery Storage) with total project cost of \$250M
 - Oversee commercial relations with Project Owner, building permits, contract compliance, quality assurance, progress reporting, critical path project schedule management, and budget
 - Lead 15 key staff and coordinated 70+ union workers during construction
 - Thrive in a fast-paced environment requiring strong communication skills, problem solving, decision making, risk and financial management, communication, and leadership
- 2017–2022 **Rural & Cooperative Business Development Services Manager**, The Kohala Center, Waimea, HI
- Secured \$15M+ in grant and loan funding for Hawai'i agribusinesses, co-ops, and nonprofits
 - Managed and reported on \$1M+ per year in government and private funding for projects
 - Supervised 2 staff and coordinated remote teams of employees, contractors, and partners
 - Promoted from Ag. Development Specialist and Economic Development Supervisor positions

MEGAN M. BLAZAK, MBA

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CONTINUED)

- 2014–2016 **Development & Evaluation Associate**, Center for Food Safety, Honolulu/Hilo, Hawai'i
- Fundraised \$1M+ over 2 years from foundation grants and individual donors
 - Managed complete grant life cycle process from application prep to award administration
 - Promoted from Program Manager to supervise 4 staff and 10 consultants
- 2013–2014 **Energy Efficiency & Agriculture Fellow**, Kupu and Hawai'i Energy, Hilo, Hawai'i
- Assisted rural small businesses with energy savings and cost reduction
 - Worked with a research team to present a white paper about energy efficiency in agriculture

COMMUNITY & PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- 2024–2025 Member, Young Professionals Committee, Hawai'i Island Chamber of Commerce
- 2023–2025 President, Board of Directors, Hilo County Farm Bureau
- 2021–2023 Treasurer, Board of Directors, Hilo County Farm Bureau
- 2019–2022 Member, Hawai'i Agricultural Sector Partnership
- 2019 Co-chair, Planning Committee, Hawai'i Island Community Food Summit
- 2018 Advisor, Hamakua Institute, *Hamakua Assessment: Community strengths, needs & opportunities*

SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES

- 12 years of grant writing experience securing \$20+ million in funding from public and private sources
- Skilled project manager with experience across all aspects of grant and commercial project lifecycles
- Proven ability to work with clients and the public to fund projects aligned with the General Plan and CDPs
- Professional demeanor with collaborative approach to working with diverse teams in hybrid environments
- Excellent written and verbal communication skills, organized, accountable, reliable, and client-oriented

GRANT APPLICATIONS AWARDED (2015-2025)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant, Small Business Innovation Research Grant Phase I & II, Enhancing Agricultural Opportunities for Military Veterans

USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement

Program 2501 for Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged and Veteran Farmers and Ranchers*

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Farmers Market Promotion Program, Local Food Promotion Program, Specialty Crop Block Grant*, Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program

USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research Education

Farmer/Rancher Grant, Professional Plus Producer Grant

USDA Rural Development

Rural Business Development Grant, * Rural Cooperative Development Grant, * Rural Energy for America Program*, Socially Disadvantaged Groups Grant, * Value-Added Producer Grant

MEGAN M. BLAZAK, MBA

GRANT APPLICATIONS AWARDED (CONTINUED)

U.S. Department of Commerce Small Business Administration

Minority Business Development Agency Program for Investment in Micro Entrepreneurs*

County of Hawai'i

Economic Innovation Grant,* Holomua Hawai'i CARES Reimbursement Program

State of Hawai'i

Hawaii Department of Agriculture, Hawaii Technology Development Corporation, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Department of Health and Human Services, Hawai'i Tourism Authority, Capital Improvement Program

Private Foundations

Ulupono Initiative Fund,* Atherton Family Foundation,* Bill Healy Foundation,* Kamehameha Schools, Hawai'i Community Foundation,* Freeman Foundation, Ceres Trust,* Frost Family Foundation,* Campbell Family Foundation, Hawai'i Island Business Plan Competition

SELECT PRESENTATIONS & TRAININGS DELIVERED (2015–2025)

Clean energy funding, Hawaii Small Business Development Center, Virtual
Grants 101 workshop, Slow Food USA Leader Summit, Virtual (nationwide)
State of clean energy, ThinkTech Hawaii, Virtual
Grant funding for graduate students in biology and conservation, University of Hawai'i, Hilo
Grant and microloan funding for farmers, Hawai'i Statewide Agriculture Convention, Honolulu
U.S. Farm Bill grants for farmers, Kaua'i New Farmer Expo, Kilauea
Get paid to save: clean energy funding for Hawai'i small businesses, Hilo, Kailua-Kona, and Kilauea
I Mana Ka Lahui agribusiness development, Office of Hawaiian Affairs, Hilo
Grant and loan funding for farmers, Maui Farm Apprentice Mentorship Program, Kahului
Capitalization for farm disaster recovery, Synergistic Hawai'i Agriculture Council, Kea'au
U.S. Farm Bill grants for ranchers, Hawai'i Cattlemen's Council, Waikoloa
Grant and microloan funding for farmers, GoFarm Hawai'i Alumni Conference, Honolulu
Microloan programs for farmers and ranchers, Kaua'i New Farmer Expo, Kilauea
Funding for disaster recovery, Hawai'i Governor's East Hawai'i Office, Pahoa
Microloan programs for disaster recovery, Hawai'i Floriculture and Nursery Association, Hilo
Agriculture and green building opportunities, U.S. Green Building Council, Kamuela
Career pathways for college students, Hawai'i Community College, Hilo
Local food system challenges and opportunities, Biodiversity Funders Group, Kailua-Kona
Grant and microloan funding for farmers, Hawai'i Network of Farmer Training Programs, Honolulu
Grant and microloan funding for farmers, Hawai'i Farmers Union United, Pahoa, Hilo, Hawi
Food systems advocacy evaluation training, Hawai'i Center for Food Safety, Volcano

REFERENCES

Nicole Milne, PhD, Hawai'i Good Food Fund Director, 808-987-9210, nmilne@hawaiiigoodfoodalliance.org
Denise Salmeron, Fmr. Deputy Director, USDA Rural Development, 808-933-8323, prettystardog@gmail.com
Oliver English, Director of Ag. Operations, W.H. Shipman Ltd., 808-430-0323, oenglish@whshipman.com