

A Conceptual Model of Well-Being

Ka Huaka'i is based on a conceptual model of well-being that emphasizes interconnectedness. Internationally, the concept of well-being has been used to describe global health, quality of life, and overall sustainability. According to the *Oxford American Dictionary*, well-being refers to being healthy, comfortable, and happy, although its uses extend to people, environments, wildlife, communities, nations, and so on. For the purposes of this assessment, we use a conceptual model based on our review of the research, which indicates five distinct but overlapping areas of well-being as follows:

Social and cultural well-being

This term indicates how individuals or groups function in relation to others in society and often refers to characteristics such as family composition and interaction, social networks and support, community dynamics, and social behavior, including lifestyle, risk-taking, and deviance. For Native Hawaiians and other groups, this area includes cultural practices, language, and traditions that form the contextual underpinnings of social functioning and lifestyle.

Material and economic well-being

This term refers to access to monetary and material resources such as housing, land, employment, occupation, income, and other dimensions of socioeconomic status. In the Native Hawaiian context, *'āina mole* refers to land as both a resource and an ancestral foundation.

Physical well-being

By physical well-being, we refer to characteristics such as life expectancy, wellness, nutrition, disease incidence, health risk factors, maternal and child health, and access to health care. In Native Hawaiian perspectives, physical well-being is inseparable from other sources of well-being and relies on being in balance spiritually and in relation to the natural environment.

Emotional well-being

We define emotional well-being to include characteristics involved with feelings or the subconscious, such as perception, attitudes, spirituality, intimacy, self-esteem, and mental health. Important in this area for Native Hawaiians is cultural identity, a sense of place, ties to the land, and spiritual connections to ancestors as well as the living.

Cognitive well-being

We operationalize the concept of cognitive well-being through its more specific educational proxies that encompass learners and learning systems. These proxies include characteristics of schools, groups, and individuals, such as school readiness, instructional quality, achievement test scores, special education rates, attendance, high school completion, and educational attainment. Taken together, these provide a picture of overall cognitive development, intellectual functioning, knowledge—including indigenous knowledge—and human capital in individuals and groups.

