

**THE THIRTIETH LEGISLATURE**  
**APPLICATION FOR GRANTS**  
**CHAPTER 42F, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES**

Type of Grant Request:

☐

Operating

☒

Capital

Legal Name of Requesting Organization or Individual: Db:

DIGS

DIGS

Amount of State Funds Requested: \$ 800,000

Brief Description of Request (Please attach word document to back of page if extra space is needed):

DIGS is requesting funds for procurement for a permanent facility that will serve as an affordable center to assist Oahu residents with educational courses and professional mentorship in the pursuit of non traditional athletic careers. The goal is to provide affordable and sponsored lessons for athletes who desire to pursue careers and/or higher educational opportunities. Due to the high cost of membership fees and limited academy space athletes have been inconvenienced with training in multiple locations and irregular schedules. Equipment and instructors have been moved between facilities on a regular basis due to no permanent training location. Funds will be used to procure a permanent facility, rehab the currently unusable building at 123 Mango St, and furnish the academy with proper equipment.

Amount of Other Funds Available:

State: \$ 380,000

Federal: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

County: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Private/Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total amount of State Grants Received in the Past 5

Fiscal Years:

\$ 380,000

Unrestricted Assets:

\$ 5,000

New Service (Presently Does Not Exist): ☒ Existing Service (Presently in Operation): ☐

Type of Business Entity:

☒

501(C)(3) Non Profit Corporation

☐

Other Non Profit

☐

Other

Mailing Address:

23 WESTERVELT ST

City:

WAHIAWA

State:

HI

Zip:

96786

Contact Person for Matters Involving this Application

Name:

ASHLEY WATANABE WONG

Title:

DIRECTOR

Email:

DIGS.HILIFE@GMAIL.COM

Phone:

(808) 256-8570



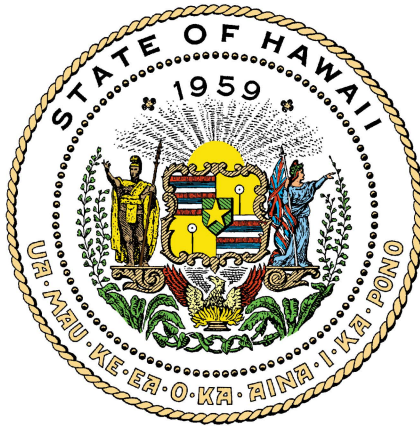
Authorized Signature

DIRECTOR

Name and Title

1/1/2025

Date Signed



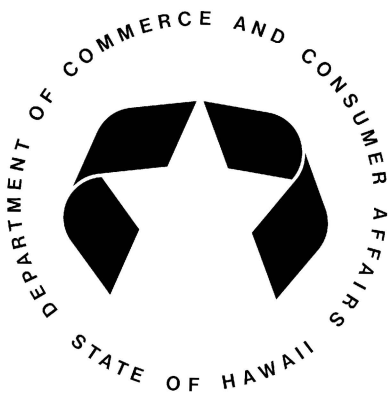
## Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

### CERTIFICATE OF GOOD STANDING

I, the undersigned Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs of the State of Hawaii, do hereby certify that

DIGS

was incorporated under the laws of Hawaii on 02/01/2023 ;  
that it is an existing nonprofit corporation; and that,  
as far as the records of this Department reveal, has complied  
with all of the provisions of the Hawaii Nonprofit Corporations  
Act, regulating domestic nonprofit corporations.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
my hand and affixed the seal of the  
Department of Commerce and Consumer  
Affairs, at Honolulu, Hawaii.

Dated: January 02, 2025

Director of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**DECLARATION STATEMENT OF  
APPLICANTS FOR GRANTS PURSUANT TO  
CHAPTER 42F, HAWAII REVISED STATUTES**

The undersigned authorized representative of the applicant certifies the following:

- 1) The applicant meets and will comply with all of the following standards for the award of grants pursuant to Section 42F-103, Hawaii Revised Statutes:
  - a) Is licensed or accredited, in accordance with federal, state, or county statutes, rules, or ordinances, to conduct the activities or provide the services for which a grant is awarded;
  - b) Complies with all applicable federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, creed, sex, age, sexual orientation, or disability;
  - c) Agrees not to use state funds for entertainment or lobbying activities; and
  - d) Allows the state agency to which funds for the grant were appropriated for expenditure, legislative committees and their staff, and the auditor full access to their records, reports, files, and other related documents and information for purposes of monitoring, measuring the effectiveness, and ensuring the proper expenditure of the grant.
- 2) If the applicant is an organization, the applicant meets the following requirements pursuant to Section 42F-103, Hawaii Revised Statutes:
  - a) Is incorporated under the laws of the State; and
  - b) Has bylaws or policies that describe the manner in which the activities or services for which a grant is awarded shall be conducted or provided; and
- 3) If the applicant is a non-profit organization, it meets the following requirements pursuant to Section 42F-103, Hawaii Revised Statutes:
  - a) Is determined and designated to be a non-profit organization by the Internal Revenue Service; and
  - b) Has a governing board whose members have no material conflict of interest and serve without compensation.
- 4) The use of grant-in-aid funding complies with all provisions of the Constitution of the State of Hawaii (for example, pursuant to Article X, section 1, of the Constitution, the State cannot provide "... public funds ... for the support or benefit of any sectarian or nonsectarian private educational institution...").

Pursuant to Section 42F-103, Hawaii Revised Statutes, for grants used for the acquisition of land, when the organization discontinues the activities or services on the land acquired for which the grant was awarded and disposes of the land in fee simple or by lease, the organization shall negotiate with the expending agency for a lump sum or installment repayment to the State of the amount of the grant used for the acquisition of the land.

Further, the undersigned authorized representative certifies that this statement is true and correct to the best of the applicant's knowledge.

**DIGS, ASHLEY WATANABE WONG**

(Typed Name of Individual or Organization)



(Signature)

**01/01/2025**

(Date)

**ASHLEY WATANABE WONG DIRECTOR**

(Typed Name)

(Title)

Verification of grant will be used for a public purpose

This document serves as written evidence that all monies acquired through the State of Hawaii in regards to grants for the time period of fiscal year 2025-2026 will be used for only public purposes. DIGS is a non-profit organization with focus on non-traditional sports. All monies will be in conjunction with official business in support of a public purpose.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ashley Wong', written in a cursive style.

Ashley Watanabe Wong, Director 01/01/2025

Typed Name, Signature, Title, Date

## Applicants Background

Ashley Watanabe Wong is a former collegiate athlete, current high school athletics coach and successful entrepreneur with international experience. She was a member of the University of Hawaii's Wahine Volleyball team from 2001-2005. She is currently coaching at her Alma Mater Aiea High School.

In her professional life Ashley has a successful career in real estate. She was mentored by Eric Watanabe, her father and owner of local real estate company Watanabe International. She has international experience formerly living and operating businesses in Hong Kong, Guam and Puerto Rico.

Connor Alike Wong is a Black Belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu with international experience. He is a former Jiu Jitsu academy owner and has coached athletes to World Championships. He is also an experienced competitor with grappling and MMA experience holding National and Intercontinental titles in the amateur ranks.

In his professional life Alike was a 22 year veteran in the Hawaii Air National Guard. He served the majority of his military career with the 203rd Air Refueling Squadron as an Instructor Pilot at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam. He is also a former pilot at Aloha Air Cargo and is currently employed by FedEx as a First Officer.

## Goals and Objectives

DIGS was created to guide Hawaii's upcoming athletes in achieving goals for post secondary education. The world of athletics is a rapidly changing environment. Whether collegiate scholarships, NIL endorsements, or non traditional athletic careers young up and coming athletes need to balance skill acquisition in their field of expertise with media relations to make themselves marketable for endorsements and sponsorships. The objective of DIGS is to provide education and mentorship that local athletes can use to create sustainable living conditions.

As we are well aware the state of Hawaii has economical and geographical challenges that their competition on the contiguous 48 states do not face. By creating training facilities and educational services specializing on the professional side of athletics DIGS aims to mitigate the challenges that are present for all Hawaii athletes. This will allow athletes to pursue their main passions in life and focus their energy into their fields of expertise.

## Public Purpose and Needs

There are currently limited resources in the state of Hawaii that an athlete can go to educate themselves about careers in non traditional athletics. Seminars from established athletes aren't easily accessible. Local athletes are usually forced to relocate to the mainland to pursue their athletic endeavors. Unless you play one of the popular mainstream sports there is a limited chance to create a career in athletics. Hawaii is having a talent drain due to this.

Zach Kaina is a local submission grappling athlete from Hawaii. In 2024 he won the No Gi World Championship at the black belt level. He makes a living doing Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. He had to leave Hawaii to create his own opportunities so that he could follow his dreams. He has stated that he doesn't believe he would be where he is at today if he didn't leave Hawaii. The state of California now benefits from Zach's talents. There are many similar cases of athletes who have done the same or are considering making the move.

Why can't we have local talent remain local? The opportunities don't exist. Hawaii's youth needs a facility.

## Target Population

The target population for DIGS is young up and coming athletes that want to pursue a career in non traditional athletics. Specifically DIGS plans to focus on Volleyball and Submission Grappling due to the founders areas of expertise.

## Geographic Coverage

The island of Oahu is the initial area that DIGS will focus their resources. We are targeting Central Oahu so that services will be accessible to as many people as possible.

## Service Summary and Outcomes

To acquire a new skill at an above average level takes approximately 3 years. To maximize your potential in a subject it would take approximately 5 years. This timeline assumes that the student trains like a professional and dedicates the appropriate time. The math behind this is based on the 10,000 hour rule formed by Malcolm Gladwell.

DIGS goal is to make it possible for local athletes to train full time and create viable careers within their athletic endeavors. Compared to a part time athlete the amount of training that could be accomplished is incomparable. The ability to solely focus on their training and become masters of their crafts would greatly increase our athletes chances of success.

Years one and two would focus on skill acquisition. By year three most athletes should possess enough ability in their field to start to separate themselves from their counterparts. Time can then be divided into public relations and brand building.

In sports we have quantifiable means to measure success. By the end of year two we project that our full time athletes will be winning local competitions and having success in scholastic team sports.

By the end of year three we will have realistic long term goals for athletes to meet. One aspect of athletics that you can't control is what is referred to as "God given talents." You either have it or you don't. If our athletes maximum potential indicates that odds are not in their favor to be competitive professionals we can guide them to other aspects of their sports that will still allow them to create viable careers. Examples of this would be coaching, teaching, gym ownership, media related fields, conducting seminars, etc.

Years four and five would focus on creating income. This would be on an individual basis depending on what direction the athlete chooses to take.

To evaluate DIGS program's effectiveness we will be tracking and monitoring our athletes performance. In volleyball we have the ability to compare statistics on a year to year basis. We also have the scholastic season and the club season to monitor year round progress. In submission grappling we have tournament results. We also have statistics that can be compared in these tournaments and in crossover sports like Judo and Wrestling.

An objective way for the state to measure the success of DIGS program is to look at our athlete's performance on a year to year basis. Another metric to compare would be against similar athletes who are not participating in our programs. And lastly looking at financial numbers, scholarships acquired and endorsements and sponsorships secured versus similar peers.

# BUDGET REQUEST BY SOURCE OF FUNDS

Period: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ DIGS \_\_\_\_\_

BUDGET CATEGORIES	Total State Funds Requested (a)	Total Federal Funds Requested (b)	Total County Funds Requested (c)	Total Private/Other Funds Requested (d)
A. PERSONNEL COST				
1. Salaries	0			0
2. Payroll Taxes & Assessments	0			
3. Fringe Benefits	0			
TOTAL PERSONNEL COST	0			
B. OTHER CURRENT EXPENSES				
1. Airfare, Inter-Island	0			
2. Insurance	0			
3. Lease/Rental of Equipment	0			
4. Lease/Rental of Space	0			0
5. Staff Training	0			
6. Supplies	0			
7. Telecommunication	0			
8. Utilities	0			0
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				
TOTAL OTHER CURRENT EXPENSES				
C. EQUIPMENT PURCHASES	40,000			
D. MOTOR VEHICLE PURCHASES				
E. CAPITAL				
<b>TOTAL (A+B+C+D+E)</b>	<b>40,000</b>			
<b>SOURCES OF FUNDING</b>		Budget Prepared By:		
(a) Total State Funds Requested	800,000	Connor Wong (612) 875 0728		
(b) Total Federal Funds Requested	0	Name (Please type or print) Phone		
(c) Total County Funds Requested	0			
(d) Total Private/Other Funds Requested	0	Signature of Authorized Official Date		
<b>TOTAL BUDGET</b>	<b>800,000</b>	Connor Wong, Co Director		
		Name and Title (Please type or print)		



## BUDGET JUSTIFICATION - PERSONNEL SALARIES AND WAGES

Period: July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ DIGS \_\_\_\_\_

POSITION TITLE		FULL TIME EQUIVALENT	ANNUAL SALARY A	% OF TIME ALLOCATED TO GRANT REQUEST B	TOTAL STATE FUNDS REQUESTED (A x B)
Manager		60000	\$0.00	0.00%	\$ -
Instructor		40000	\$0.00	0.00%	\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
					\$ -
TOTAL:					
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS: No funds are being requested for the operations of DIGS. Founders will be volunteering their services until the business is established.					

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ DIGS \_\_\_\_\_

DESCRIPTION EQUIPMENT	NO. OF ITEMS	COST PER ITEM	TOTAL COST	TOTAL BUDGETED
Electrical Installation	1.00	\$65,000.00	\$ 65,000.00	65000
Sewer Installation	1	\$45,000.00	\$ 45,000.00	45000
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
TOTAL:	2		\$ 110,000.00	110,000
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS: Target facility has no utilities. Electricty and Water must be repaired before operations can begin.				

DESCRIPTION OF MOTOR VEHICLE	NO. OF VEHICLES	COST PER VEHICLE	TOTAL COST	TOTAL BUDGETED
SUV	1.00	\$0.00	\$ 5,000.00	0
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
			\$ -	
TOTAL:	1		\$ 5,000.00	
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS: DIGS currentlty has a company vehicle to conduct operations.				

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ DIGS \_\_\_\_\_

FUNDING AMOUNT REQUESTED						
TOTAL PROJECT COST	ALL SOURCES OF FUNDS RECEIVED IN PRIOR YEARS		STATE FUNDS REQUESTED	OTHER SOURCES OF FUNDS REQUESTED	FUNDING REQUIRED IN SUCCEEDING YEARS	
	FY:2023-2024	FY:2024-2025	FY:2025-2026	FY:2025-2026	FY:2026-2027	FY:2027-2028
PLANS	0	0	0	0	0	0
LAND ACQUISITION	0	380000	620000	0	0	0
DESIGN	0	0	30000	0	0	0
CONSTRUCTION	0	0	110000	0	0	0
EQUIPMENT	0	0	40000	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>380000</b>	<b>800,000</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
JUSTIFICATION/COMMENTS: Once the facility is built there is relatively low maintenance. Only funds for reasonable wear and tear will be required after initial set up costs.						

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, GRANTS, AND / OR GRANTS IN AID

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_ DIGS \_\_\_\_\_

Contracts Total: -

	CONTRACT DESCRIPTION	EFFECTIVE DATES	AGENCY	GOVERNMENT ENTITY (U.S./State/Hawaii/ Honolulu/ Kauai/ Maui County)	CONTRACT VALUE
1	N/A				
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					
21					
22					
23					
24					
25					
26					
27					
28					
29					
30					

## Financial

Please reference attached budget via attachments.

For fiscal year 2025- 2026 the initial funding requested is \$800,000. This is in addition to last years GIA for \$380,000. This would be a capital improvement project funds to secure a permanent facility to conduct training. Estimate for purchase of the target property on 123 Mango St, Wahiawa HI is \$1,000,000. The remaining funds will be used for construction that is required to repair the damaged utilities, planning for the academy, securing equipment, and creating a training facility. Estimate is as follows

Quarter 1  
\$1,000,000

Quarter 2  
\$110,000

Quarter 3  
\$45,000

Quarter 4  
\$25,000

Initial costs are associated with the purchase of the facility. Once a permanent facility is secured then repair and construction would be the next substantial costs. Estimate 90-120 days for the project to be complete.

Additional funds are being solicited through private donations. Currently we have built interest in the athletic community. Also membership fees for training will assist in funding for the program.

DIGS has not received or applied for a state or federal tax credits at this time. There are no previous request for state or federal tax credits

DIGS has not received or applied for a federal,state, or government contracts. There are no previous requests for any federal, state, or government contracts.

DIGS currently has no unrestricted assets. The Balance is \$0.

## Experience and Capability

Ashley Watanabe Wong is a former Division 1 athlete for the University of Hawaii's Wahine Volleyball team. At the conclusion of her collegiate career she held multiple all time records for UH. She pioneered the position of libero for local players. Her influence can be seen in the recruitment of local players to mainland colleges specifically at the libero position to this day.

In addition to her on court skills Ashley also has over 10 years of coaching experience. She was the head coach for the middle school team at St. John's Private School in Guam from 2009-2012. She also has club experience with Hawaii Elite coaching girls in the ages of 11-15. In addition to head coaching experience she has also served as an assistant coach in Guam and Hong Kong. She is currently the Head Coach at Aiea High School's Girls Volleyball team.

While living in Guam and coaching during the academic season Ashley also spearheaded multiple seminars and brought in legendary coaches Dave Shoji and Charlie Wade to the volleyball community in Micronesia.

Connor Alike Wong is a Black Belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu with international experience in both submission grappling and MMA. On average it takes a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu practitioner 10 years to achieve the rank of Black Belt. In many academies Black Belts are referred to as "Professor" to show the hard work it takes to achieve the rank.

Alike has won prestigious events such as the Asian Open Championship, Pan Pacific Championship, and Hong Kong Shooto Tournament. He has also competed in many local competitions as both competitor and referee. In addition to his competitive career Alike also helps to run various social media platforms that focus on the local submission grappling scene. The channels have amassed hundreds of thousands of views.

While living in Hong Kong Alike operated a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu academy in the community where he lived. While the pandemic forced the academy to close many of the students still continue to train Jiu Jitsu and the program lives on with one of his former students.

The target space we are pursuing is 123 Mango St. This building is currently unused due to lack of utilities at the property. The current owners are looking to sell the building due to debt owed to the state. DIGS plans to renovate the property and use it to add a currently unavailable service to the community. If DIGS is able to secure the property we estimate 90-120 days for renovations. Services to the community could be operational before the end of the calendar year.

## Personnel: Project Organization and Staffing

Initial staffing will be conducted by the founders of DIGS, Ashley Wong and Alika Wong. While both officers will focus on overall athletic goals Ashley will specialize on the volleyball athletes and Alika will focus on the submission grappling athletes.

The long term goal is to mentor our athletes so that they will be able to take on the roles of coaches and mentors. We currently have verbal commitments from many people within the respective athletic communities who would be willing to donate their time to DIGS.

Compensation will be for coaches and instructors on a per class basis. This will be a competitive pay based on the instruction given. Ranges for this will be from \$20-\$100 per class. Officers will not take a compensatory role for the initial year of operation with regards to operating DIGS.

Once DIGS is fully operational we expect it to be a self sufficient business. With the initial grant securing the facility and equipment we project the ability to pay competitive wages to coaches and instructors within the first year. Costs associated with the operation of the facility will be offset from membership fees.

Other

There are no current pending litigations in which DIGS is a party to.

There are no special accreditations that DIGS possesses.

This grant will not be used to support sectarian or non-sectarian private educational institutions.



## Future Sustainability

Market research shows that comparable services in the volleyball community can range from \$30-\$100 for a one hour private lesson and \$200-\$300 for monthly fees at a club team. Submission Grappling costs are similar for private lessons and \$150-\$200 for monthly fees. DIGS believes the high cost of training inhibits many local families from accessibility to the sports. We plan to offer high quality training at a fraction of the cost.

The initial high cost of obtaining a facility is the largest entry barrier which most athletic organizations face. With this grant DIGS will mitigate that challenge and be able to focus on the services provided to the community as soon as possible. Once established DIGS will also provide their athletes with opportunities to teach their own classes which will provide income to the instructor and more services to the program.

In 2024 all money donated to DIGS was reinvested back into the community. Over 300 athletes benefited from instruction, seminars, instruction and sponsorships. Two seminars were held by world champions. Ten former collegiate athletes and four professional athletes all gave their time and expertise in support of DIGS mission.

Both Ashley Wong and Alika Wong will not be taking salary from DIGS. If grant money is only available for the fiscal year 2025-2026 it should be sufficient to get the program to a sustainable financial point. If in the following years profit has not been realized both Ashley Wong and Alika Wong are prepared to defer any salaries until it is deemed financially feasible.

## Application Submittal Checklist

*The following items are required for submittal of the grant application. Please verify and check off that the items have been included in the application packet.*

- ☒ 1) Hawaii Compliance Express Certificate (If the Applicant is an Organization)
- ☒ 2) Declaration Statement
- ☒ 3) Verify that grant shall be used for a public purpose
- ☒ 4) Background and Summary
- ☒ 5) Service Summary and Outcomes
- ☒ 6) Budget
  - a) Budget request by source of funds ([Link](#))
  - b) Personnel salaries and wages ([Link](#))
  - c) Equipment and motor vehicles ([Link](#))
  - d) Capital project details ([Link](#))
  - e) Government contracts, grants, and grants in aid ([Link](#))
- ☒ 7) Experience and Capability
- ☒ 8) Personnel: Project Organization and Staffing



AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE

Ashley Wong, Director

PRINT NAME AND TITLE

01/01/2025

DATE