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Title: Leading from the Sales Floor: How Hawaii's EV Expert Certification Program is Driving Change

Abstract: The automobile market is evolving rapidly, and electric vehicles (EVs) are receiving increased attention as zero-emission alternatives to gas-powered cars that can also be fueled by renewable energy. However, studies have shown that the adoption of EVs is hampered by a lack of awareness of car sales associates to effectively sell the vehicles. Sales associates are often unsure of the technology, infrastructure, benefits, incentives, and laws regarding EVs, and that unfamiliarity discourages them from engaging with customers about EVs. Blue Planet Foundation, a Hawaii-based nonprofit committed to ending the use of fossil fuels, developed and launched the Electric Vehicle (EV) Expert Program in 2018 to break down barriers to EV adoption at the point-of-sale and ensure that EV buyers have the best possible dealership experience. The program provides sales associates in Hawaii with the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in the EV marketplace and is influencing the way that sales associates engage with EVs and their potential buyers. Thus far, there are 70 active EV Experts from 23 dealerships across Oahu, Maui, Hawaii Island and Kauai. The feedback we've received from participants so far includes: "I just wanted to say thank you for the excellent class. It paid off yesterday, I sold a leaf with the additional knowledge you provided." "My favorite thing about the EV Expert Program is the sharing of information. Being connected to other professionals in the industry during the vital shift from ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles to plug-in hybrids and battery electric vehicles is invaluable." and

We have recently developed the [Find an EV Expert](#) tool—an easy-to-use, interactive map where users can select an island or specific car brand to find a qualified EV Expert nearby. One step further and they can find a profile of each certified EV Expert including contact information. The tool is being marketed to the public via web-based and print ads to connect the EV Expert network with potential EV buyers. We also plan to integrate an "Ask the Expert" video series into the outreach strategy in the future. At BECC, we will report results from the first year of program implementation, including engagement and relationship-building with dealerships and their staff, the impact the program has had on participants, and how we plan to leverage the EV Expert Network to create a larger shift in dealerships' relationships with EVs. We hope our experiences can inspire others to find creative ways to encourage the behavior shifts necessary to scale the transition to a clean transportation future.