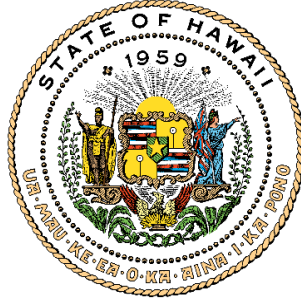




STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAII

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**HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY INVESTS IN PERPETUATING THE
HAWAIIAN CULTURE THROUGH ITS KŪKULU OLA PROGRAM**

HTA Awards \$980,000 to 26 Native Hawaiian Cultural Programs Across the State

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 11, 2025

HONOLULU – The Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) has awarded \$980,000 in funding to 26 community-based organizations through its Kūkulu Ola program, as part of its commitment to supporting and strengthening Native Hawaiian culture by providing genuine experiences for residents and visitors statewide.

“The Kūkulu Ola program enables us to invest directly in the people and organizations who are keeping Hawai'i's culture thriving,” said Caroline Anderson, interim president

and CEO of HTA. “These efforts enrich the lives of Hawai‘i’s residents while giving visitors an opportunity to connect more deeply with our island home.”

The Kūkulu Ola program supports organizations that perpetuate Hawaiian cultural practices, provide educational programming, preserve cultural sites and build community pride. Many of the funded programs offer intergenerational learning opportunities, mentor emerging cultural leaders and present authentic experiences that are accessible to both residents and visitors.

The program is one of HTA’s destination stewardship programs, administered in partnership with Kilohana, a division of the Hawaiian Council (formerly named the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement).

The following 26 programs and organizations are being supported through the Kūkulu Ola program:

Statewide

Kani a Ola: Economic Resilience for Mele Practitioners, organized by Kāhuli Leo Le‘a, supports the financial sustainability of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi mele practitioners by increasing earning potential, offering royalty training and creating paid performance opportunities, free public performances and workshops in resort areas, thus preserving mele as a cultural and economic resource for both residents and visitors.

Queen Lili‘uokalani Keiki Hula Festival, organized by Kalihi-Pālana Culture and Arts Society, honors Hawai‘i’s last monarch and perpetuates Hawaiian culture through the hula that features 25 hālau from Hawai‘i and Japan competing in three categories.

Hawai‘i, Kaua‘i, O‘ahu

Mo‘olelo Matters Speaker Series Screenings, organized by Aloha Kuamo‘o ‘Āina, will offer four free film screenings on O‘ahu, Kaua‘i and Hawai‘i Island, featuring the “‘Ai: Responsibilities and Privileges of Eating” series. The project explores the cultural, spiritual and environmental roles of food in Hawai‘i, engaging residents and visitors through storytelling and discussion.

Hawai‘i Island and O‘ahu

Kaulele “Ho‘onui ‘Ike” (Expanding Knowledge), organized by the Institute for Native Pacific Education and Culture, provides culturally grounded STEM learning for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander youth through mobile exhibits on kapa, kaulana mahina and loko i‘a on display on O‘ahu and Hawai‘i Island.

Hawai‘i Island

E ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i Kākou, organized by EA Foundation, is an introductory Hawaiian language program offering immersive, in-person monthly two-hour sessions at hotels and community centers, integrating ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i instruction with hands-on activities,

storytelling and chant/song to foster responsible tourism and deeper connections to Hawai'i.

Holomua Imu Mea 'Ai, organized by Men of Pa'a, is a cultural food program focused on the traditional Hawaiian imu. Through monthly community events, it fosters cultural stewardship, healing and reintegration for kāne.

Hula Arts at Kīlauea, organized by Volcano Arts Center, continues from July 2025 to June 2026 in Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, featuring free monthly hula performances, weekly cultural classes, bimonthly talk story sessions and a May Day celebration.

The Puakalehua Project, organized by Pōhāhā I Ka Lani, offers monthly cultural workshops in Waipi'o Valley and Mahiki rimlands focusing on chant, hula, song and area-specific history, educating residents and visitors on cultural significance and environmental threats like invasive species and Rapid 'Ōhi'a Death.

Kaua'i

An Interpretive Plan for Limahuli Tours, organized by the National Tropical Botanical Garden, creates new interpretive tools — signage, guidebooks and tour content — based on Hawaiian cultural values and practitioner collaboration, enhancing visitor understanding of the Limahuli Garden and Preserve.

Hihikālāhau, organized by Pihana Ka 'Ikena, revitalizes a 4.4-acre wahi pana along the Wailuā River into a cultural sanctuary for practitioners, residents and visitors. Formerly known as Kamokila Village, the site will feature traditional hale, gardens and educational spaces.

The Mālie Foundation Festivals honor the legacy of Uncle Nathan Kalama through hula and music festivals, workshops and the Kaua'i Mokihana Festival, fostering cultural pride and the transmission of hula and Hawaiian traditions.

Maui

Ka Hale o Ka Lā: A Restoration of the Haleakalā Visitor Center, organized by Haleakalā Conservancy, will revitalize the interior of the Haleakalā Visitor Center to create a culturally immersive and accessible entry to Haleakalā National Park.

Kaiāulu 'Ōlelo: Kula Kauwela o Hana, organized by Hana Arts, is a three-week Hawaiian language and culture immersion program for East Maui youth that culminates with weekly public performances and a final celebration where students share their learning through traditional chants, dances and stories.

The **Kapoho Loko I'a Kalo and Lo'i Kalo** project, led by the Hawai'i Land Trust, focuses on restoring local ecosystems and food production in the 277-acre Waihe'e

Coastal Dunes and Wetlands Refuge on Maui, a historically significant area that includes loko iʻa (fishponds) and loʻi kalo (taro patches).

Molokaʻi

E Hoʻi I Ka Piko Project, organized by Ka Ipu Makani Cultural Heritage Center, will facilitate the transfer of the Molokaʻi History Project into its care to continue its vital mission to celebrate community stories, collect ancestral knowledge and ensure Molokaʻi's history is shared by its people.

Me Ke Aloha Project, organized by Kalamaula Homesteaders Association, highlights Molokaʻi's authentic spirit through education on land management, conservation and cultural practices. Involving local youth, the project offers visitors a meaningful cultural experience while empowering the next generation to preserve community traditions.

Oʻahu

The Aloha Exchange: Sharing Culture. Building Community, organized by Waikīkī Community Center, is a year-long series of authentic, hands-on Hawaiian cultural experiences connecting residents, cultural practitioners and visitors through hula, weaving, place-based learning and environmental stewardship.

Deepening Cultural Understanding through Authentic Programming, organized by Mānoa Heritage Center, is a year-long program of traditional Hawaiian storytelling, hula and native plant education for students and the public, promoting cultural learning and intergenerational connection.

Kamaʻāina Sundays at ʻIolani Palace, organized by The Friends of ʻIolani Palace, is a monthly program providing free cultural experiences through audio tours, hula performances and live music, emphasizing ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi and authentic Hawaiian storytelling.

Kapu: Honoring Sacred Connections Between People and Place, organized by Hawaiian Mission Houses Historic Site and Archives, is a two-part cultural program featuring “Pilina Kapu” and “Wahi Kapu,” sharing hula, mele, oli and moʻolelo led by cultural practitioners.

Kīpuka: A Maker's Space, organized by Young of Heart Workshop dba Puʻuhonua Society, sustains and expands its Hawaiian culture-based programming through hands-on workshops in crafts like lei hulu, kapa, lauhala and net making for residents and visitors alike.

Lei Hoʻohie — Nā Moʻolelo o Oʻahu, organized by Hikaʻalani, increases access to Hawaiian moʻolelo by researching, digitizing and sharing place-based stories from Hawaiian-language newspapers. Through its educational curricula, it engages educators, communities and visitor industry professionals.

MAMo Wearable Art Show and Māhū Madness, presented by PA'I Foundation, celebrate Native Hawaiian culture and create opportunities for Native Hawaiian artists to share their work with residents and visitors.

OHCRA Racing Program, by the O'ahu Hawaiian Canoe Racing Association, supports the growth of Hawaiian canoe racing, building on a current and projected 15% increase in participation. Spanning two racing seasons in 2025 and 2026, the program will involve 22 OHCRA-affiliated canoe clubs, representing over 4,600 paddlers and 15,000 supporters.

Pili Mai 2025, organized by Kauluakalana, is a year-long program reconnecting Kailua families and educators to kalo through the traditional practice of ku'i kalo.

Urban Makahiki at 'A'ala Park, organized by the Trust for Public Land, is a cultural event aimed at reconnecting community and visitors to the park's history and surrounding ahupua'a. Scheduled for Nov. 15, 2025, with lead-up activities in the fall, the event promotes mo'olelo, wai and makahiki traditions.

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About the Hawai'i Tourism Authority

The Hawai'i Tourism Authority is the state agency responsible for representing the Hawaiian Islands around the world — and for holistically managing tourism in a sustainable manner consistent with community desires, economic goals, cultural values, preservation of natural resources and visitor industry needs. HTA works with the community and industry to mālama Hawai'i — care for our beloved home. For more information about HTA, visit hawaii-tourism-authority.org or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#) and [X](#).

High-resolution images are available [here](#).

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