



STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU 'ĀINA O HAWAII

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**HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY SUPPORTS HAWAII'S CULTURAL
AMBASSADORS THROUGH ITS HO'OKIPA MALIHINI INITIATIVE**

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HONOLULU – To foster meaningful cultural experiences in Hawaii's visitor hubs, the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) is investing \$397,000 in seven Hawaiian cultural programs and practitioners through its Ho'okipa Malihini Initiative. Ho'okipa malihini means to "welcome guests" and true to its name, this program funds projects that enhance the visitor experience while fostering meaningful interactions between residents and visitors in resort areas and harbors statewide.

"The Ho'okipa Malihini initiative supports Hawaii's host culture while enhancing the experiences of our guests," said Caroline Anderson, interim president and CEO of HTA.

“These programs are an essential part of how we ensure that the values, traditions, and stories of our people remain at the forefront of Hawai‘i’s visitor experience.”

Funding supports Hawaiian programs and cultural practitioners, including craftspersons, musicians, linguists and other artists. These practitioners offer regularly scheduled, free entertainment and cultural awareness programming in designated resort areas and harbors. The Ho‘okipa Malihini program is an HTA destination stewardship program administered through a partnership with Kilohana, a division of the Council for Native Hawaiian Advancement.

A committee of community leaders, industry experts, business representatives, and Hawai‘i Tourism Authority staff, representing each island, evaluated proposals for events happening across the state from July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. The committee selected the following seven programs based on cultural impact, community engagement, organizational capacity and feasibility. Priority was given to efforts that best support Hawaiian culture, natural resources, local communities and responsible tourism marketing.

The Kūhiō Beach Hula Show and Torch Lighting offers free, authentic Hawaiian music and hula performances by top hālau hula on select Saturdays and Tuesdays. Held outdoors at the Kūhiō Beach Hula Mound, the show welcomes locals and visitors with casual seating and a vibrant cultural experience. Organization: Aloha Week Hawai‘i.

The Aloha Greeting and Cultural Program transforms routine cruise ship arrivals into a moment of genuine cultural connection. It offers authentic, Native Hawaiian-led welcome ceremonies that feature hula, mele (song), cultural talks and teachings on ocean stewardship. Organization: Kona Coast Heritage Foundation-Destination Kona Coast.

The Hilo Gateway Information and Hawaiian Culture Program presents Hawaiian music, cultural demonstrations and live hula performances in the heart of historic Downtown Hilo, creating an unforgettable venue for visitors to shop, dine and experience the rich layers of Hawai‘i’s culture, past and present. Organization: Destination Hilo Foundation.

The Hilo Harbor Pier Greetings Program welcomes cruise ship passengers with authentic Hawaiian music as they step onto Hilo Pier and then inspires them to explore downtown Hilo through personal interactions and information at the Aloha Information Center. Organization: Destination Hilo Foundation.

Maui Ola: Cultural Practitioner Initiative presents live cultural performances by Maui-based practitioners — musicians, hula dancers, weavers and storytellers — to resort venues on Maui and O‘ahu. It ensures these artists are compensated while sharing authentic Hawaiian traditions through mele, hula and hands-on demonstrations. Organization: Kāhuli Leo Le‘a.

The Return of Kapaemahu, directed by Kumu Hula Patrick Makuakane, brings to life the story of four māhū who sailed from Tahiti to bring healing arts to Hawai‘i. The weekly live hula performances at the Kūhiō Hula Mound foster respect for long-suppressed Hawaiian traditions while deepening understanding of Hawai‘i’s history, culture and values. Organization: Na Lei Hulu I Ka Wekiu.

Waikīkī By Moonlight features traditional mele and hula celebrating Waikīkī’s rich history and cultural significance. Each week, Waikīkī by Moonlight brings traditional mele (song) and hula performances that celebrate the story of Waikīkī to the Kūhiō Beach Hula Mound. Performances are free and open to the public. Organization: Hawaiian Music Perpetuation Society.

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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 hawaiiitourismauthority.org or follow @HawaiiHTA on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Threads](#), and [X](#).

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