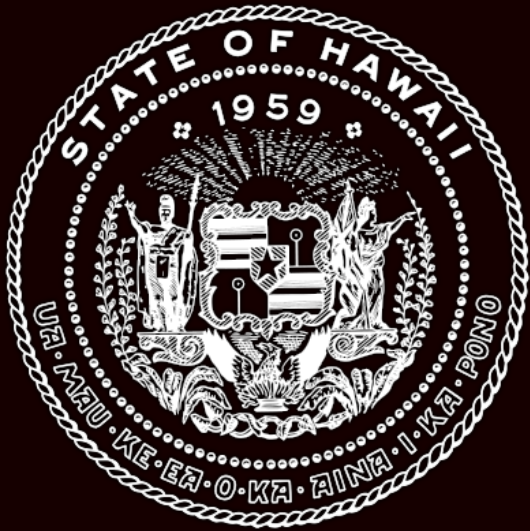


OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS  
*FYs 2026-27 Biennium Budget Proposal*



*January 6, 2025*



## THE STATE OF HAWAII'S TRUST OBLIGATION TO NATIVE HAWAIIANS

***The Admission Act of 1959*** established a public trust, reaffirmed by the people of Hawai'i in the State Constitution, to ensure the betterment of conditions for Native Hawaiians.

This trust obligation calls upon all branches of government to address the needs of Hawai'i's aboriginal people and to work actively toward their welfare.

Specifically, ***HRS §10-1(b)*** mandates that all state departments and instrumentalities actively support the goals of OHA, recognizing it as the principal agency for addressing Native Hawaiian needs.

# THE OFFICE OF HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS MANDATE AND ROLE

OHA's statutory purpose under HRS §10-3, HRS § 10H-2 outlines four key responsibilities:

1

## ***Betterment of Conditions of Native Hawaiians and Hawaiians:***

OHA is committed to improving health, education, housing, and economic opportunities for Native Hawaiians.

2

## ***Coordination of Programs:***

OHA is the principal public agency responsible for coordinating state programs relating to Native Hawaiians, ensuring alignment with the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act and other statutory frameworks.

3

## ***Policy Assessment and Advocacy:***

OHA assesses policies and practices of other state agencies impacting Native Hawaiians and conducts advocacy efforts to safeguard their rights and interests.

4

## ***Facilitating Self-Governance:***

Per HRS §10H-2, OHA is dedicated to advancing recognition and self-governance for Native Hawaiians, including promoting their culture, heritage, health, education, and welfare.

# BIENNIUM BUDGET PROPOSAL:

## *A Catalyst for Systemic Change*



**OHA's biennium budget** request represents an **extraordinary strategic investment** in addressing historical, generational, and systemic challenges faced by Native Hawaiians. It also signals the **gravity of our shared kuleana and the opportunities for impactful collaboration.**

The proposed general fund appropriations of **\$4.8M** and **\$4.9M** over the next **two fiscal years** represent **critical investments** in OHA's efforts to **meet its statutory obligations** while serving as a **critical multiplier for additional resources.**

# KEY COMPONENTS OF THE OHA BUDGET INCLUDE:



**\$1.2M**  
*(FY26)*

**\$1.2M**  
*(FY27)*

### *Strategic Coordination and Accountability:*

**Funding for 13 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions for Strategy and Implementation staff** will enable OHA to operationalize its statutory authority to coordinate efforts with state agencies, ensuring strategic alignment, execution, and accountability.

### *Priority Agency Partnerships:*

Over the biennium, OHA will prioritize **collaborations with the Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT), Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Human Services (DHS), Department of Hawaiian Home Lands (DHHL), and Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR)**. These partnerships aim to **leverage resources, align priorities, and maximize impact on Native Hawaiian communities**.

# KEY COMPONENTS OF THE OHA BUDGET INCLUDE:



Matched dollar for dollar by OHA Trust Funds

**\$3.6M**  
*(FY26)*

**\$3.7M**  
*(FY27)*

## *Native Hawaiian Beneficiary Advocacy:*

- Affordable, quality **housing** and **related infrastructure**.
- **Social services**, including **referral services and case management**, to at-risk beneficiaries to immediately **address unexpected crises**; provided further that program activities shall be designed with an overall objective to provide financial assistance to improve stability during emergency situations.
- **Educational improvement programs** for Native Hawaiian students; provided further that program shall be designed to help Native Hawaiian students **prepare for post-secondary education and economic stability pursuits** to support families and communities.
- **Protections of 'āina** (land and water), including climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies and practices.
- Cultivating resilient communities through **ahupua`a economics (regional economic development), and workforce readiness**.

# KEY COMPONENTS OF THE OHA BUDGET INCLUDE:



Matched dollar for dollar by OHA Trust Funds

**\$3.6M**  
*(FY26)*

**\$3.7M**  
*(FY27)*

## *Native Hawaiian Beneficiary Advocacy (Continued):*

- Provide for **legal services and legal representation** to beneficiaries including but not limited to:
  - Assistance with ahupua'a and kuleana tenant rights, including rights of access and rights to water;
  - Preservation of traditional and customary practices;
  - Protection of culturally significant places, including iwi kūpuna protections;
  - Home ownership retention strategies for Native Hawaiians; And
  - Family law-related matters, including adoption, foster care, child welfare, incarcerated individuals, guardianship, elder care, and similar matters.

# THE PATH FORWARD:

## *A Collaborative Approach to Achieve Transformative Results*

The challenges facing Native Hawaiians stem from decades of systemic inequities, land dispossession, historical injustices, and complex trauma. **Addressing** these deeply rooted issues **requires unprecedented coordination, collaboration, coherence and accountability between OHA and the executive branch.** By **leveraging each other's resources** and the **execution of OHA's statutory authorities**, we can create a **transformative partnership that reshapes the trajectory** of Native Hawaiian well-being across the State.

This level of coordinated systemic change and pursuit towards self-governance is a tremendous lift. It has not been attempted by OHA previously, but the stakes demand bold action. However, we believe that with **legislative support and the collective will of the Governor, the State departments and agencies**, we can begin the vital work **of collectively transforming the conditions for Native Hawaiians.**

WHAT's the PLAN?

**Framework for Collaborative Action Between OHA and the Executive Branch, FYs 2026–2027**



## CALL TO ACTION



OHA affirms its commitment to fulfilling its statutory mandate and working with the legislature and the executive branch to advancing the trust obligations of the State of Hawai'i to Native Hawaiians. With **this biennium budget and an unprecedented focus on collaboration**, we aim to honor and actualize the principles of the Admission Act, the State Constitution, and HRS Chapter 10 and 10H.



As **stewards of this shared kuleana**, we ask for your support in approving OHA's biennium budget request. **This investment represents not only compliance with statutory mandates but also a moral commitment to the betterment of conditions for Native Hawaiians.**