



Hawai'i Internship Excellence Awards

Nomination Criteria and Application Form

Nomination Period: January 16, 2026 to February 11, 2026

Awards To Be Presented: March 4, 2026 during the 2026 Hawaii Internship Summit

I. PURPOSE OF THE AWARDS

The Hawai'i Internship Excellence Awards recognize outstanding interns, employers, agencies, nonprofit partners, and individuals who exemplify excellence in work-based learning. These awards highlight high-quality internship experiences that contribute to talent development, workforce readiness, and meaningful career pathways across Hawai'i.

Awards are presented at both the island level and statewide level to reflect local impact and statewide leadership.

II. ELIGIBILITY & GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Nominations may be submitted by employers, agencies, educators, internship coordinators, supervisors, or peers.
- Self-nominations are permitted **only** for organizational and program awards.
- Internship experiences must have occurred within the **past 12 months**.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Award recipients will be selected by a review committee based on the criteria outlined below.

III. AWARD CATEGORIES & CRITERIA

Note that the Outstanding Public Sector Agencies (Hele Imua Ho'okele Award) and the Outstanding Interns in the Public Sector Agencies (Hele Imua Ka Liko Lawelawe Awards) have already been selected in an earlier process, but they will be also recognized during the awarding ceremonies on March 4, 2026 during the first Annual Hawaii Internship Summit to be held at the Japanese Cultural Center from 8:30 am to 3 pm.

ISLAND-BASED AWARDS

(One award per county)

1. Internship Excellence Award (Organization)

Eligibility:

Private-sector employers (business or non-profit organizations) that hosted one or more interns.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Provided meaningful, skill-building work aligned with industry needs
- Demonstrated commitment to mentorship and supervision
- Created a supportive and inclusive learning environment
- Showed measurable benefits to interns and the organization

2. Intern of the year/Island – Private Sector*

Eligibility:

Interns placed within a private-sector organization.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Demonstrated professionalism, initiative, and reliability
- Made meaningful contributions to projects or operations
- Showed growth in skills, confidence, and workplace readiness
- Positively impacted the host organization

*The Hele Imua interns for each island were already chosen earlier but they will be recognized at the Summit event.

STATEWIDE AWARDS

1. Internship Champion of the Year (Individual)

Eligibility:

An individual who has demonstrated leadership and advocacy for internships statewide.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Led or supported efforts to expand internship opportunities
- Advocated for quality, equity, and access in work-based learning
- Built partnerships across sectors
- Demonstrated sustained commitment to workforce development

2. Most Outstanding Internship Coordinator of the Year (School-based)

Eligibility:

Open to internship coordinators from Hawaii Department of Education, University of Hawaii, and University of Hawaii Community Colleges

Evaluation Criteria:

- Effectively connected students with high-quality internship placements
- Demonstrated strong coordination, communication, and partnership-building
- Supported student success and employer engagement
- Advanced work-based learning opportunities within the education system

3. Internship Program of the Year

Eligibility:

Public, private, or nonprofit internship programs operating statewide or across multiple locations.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Demonstrated excellence in program design and implementation
- Provided consistent, high-quality internship experiences
- Achieved positive outcomes for interns and employers
- Showed innovation, scalability, or sustainability

4. Intern of the Year (Statewide)

Eligibility:

All county level winners from both the public and private sector will be automatically advanced for consideration for the State Intern Award.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Demonstrated exceptional performance and leadership
- Made significant contributions to their host organization
- Showed professional growth and initiative
- Served as a positive role model for peers