



## HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

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FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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### SHEILA SARHANGI OF THE HAWAI'I COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCED AS 2024-2025 OBAMA FOUNDATION LEADER

*The program supports Leaders in making tangible, sustainable progress toward a better world.*

**HONOLULU, HAWAI'I** — Today, the Hawai'i Community Foundation (HCF) announced that Sheila Sarhangi is among 205 leaders selected to join the Obama Foundation Leaders program. The program trains participants around the world in leadership development and civic engagement to help build their skills and scale their work across public, private, and nonprofit sectors. Sarhangi was selected as one of the 100 Leaders participating in the Leaders United States regional program.

“Sheila is a gifted storyteller and a passionate change-maker; this is a well-deserved honor,” says Michelle Ka’uhane, HCF Senior Vice President and Chief Impact Officer. “The program’s focus on investing in leaders to achieve systems change and building collective voice is directly aligned with the Hawai'i Community Foundation’s strategic focus. We are excited for this incredible opportunity that will support Sheila and her dedication to make a lasting impact in our communities and beyond.”

As the Vice President of Strategic Communications at HCF, Sarhangi plays a vital role in advancing the organization’s mission to cultivate a more equitable and vibrant Hawai'i. She joined HCF in 2020 and has supported the organization in driving progress across its major initiatives and programs, including the foundation’s immediate disaster response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating Maui fires.

For more than 20 years, Sheila has supported community-driven initiatives throughout Oceania by building and leading coalitions and nonprofit programs that preserve cultural heritage and enhance biodiversity. Of note, she was the campaign director and coalition lead for the successful expansions of Papahānaumokuākea & Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monuments, both designated by President Obama (2016 and 2014)—and among the largest marine protected areas in the world.

An award-winning journalist and author, she harnesses her storytelling expertise to distill complex issues into compelling narratives that shift mindsets and spark action. She has penned more than 500 cover stories, features, columns, and op-eds in local, regional, and national publications, as well as an award-winning, 144-page hardcover book, *Honolulu Then & Now*. She is a proud Iranian and first-generation American, dedicated to creating space for diverse perspectives and deep collaboration, ensuring that everyone has a role and voice in shaping a stronger future.

As part of the six-month Obama Foundation Leaders program, these dedicated changemakers will convene virtually each week for interactive sessions designed to help them drive change by honing their leadership skills, building deep relationships with their peers, and engaging with thought leaders and members of the Obama Foundation community. They will also have an opportunity to participate in various virtual experiences and special events, including one-on-one conversations with experienced mentors in the Foundation’s global network.

The Obama Foundation Leaders USA Program, now in its second year, was inspired by the leadership values and approach of President and Mrs. Obama. The program draws on the Foundation’s ‘Hope to Action’ curriculum to support Leaders in engaging diverse perspectives, building collective power, and making tangible, sustainable progress towards a better world. The Leaders USA Program has a particular focus on strengthening democratic culture.

The Obama Foundation Leaders program is designed to further inspire, empower, and connect emerging leaders from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, and the United States to change their respective communities and the world. To learn more, visit [obama.org/leaders](https://www.obama.org/leaders).

To see the official announcement, visit <https://www.obama.org/programs/leaders/usa/>

**\*\*\*VISUALS\*\*\***

A photo of Sheila Sarhangi can be found [here](#).

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### **About the Hawai’i Community Foundation**

The vision of the Hawai’i Community Foundation is to create an equitable and vibrant Hawai’i in which all our Island communities thrive. With our more-than-107-year history, our trusted expertise, and the generous support of donors, we are working to address the root causes of our state’s most difficult challenges, including expanding access to affordable housing, conserving fresh water resources, and ensuring the healthy development of Hawai’i’s young children. We focus our efforts through the CHANGE Framework, which identifies six essential sectors affecting the overall well-being of these islands and its people. HCF works in communities across Hawai’i, with offices and staff located statewide. In 2023, HCF stewarded more than 1,160 funds, established by individuals, businesses, and organizations who share our passion for a better Hawai’i. We distributed over \$107 million in grants to the community from funds at HCF, contracts, and private foundations statewide, including scholarships assisting more than 1,000 Hawai’i students. For more information about HCF, please visit [hawaiicommunityfoundation.org](https://hawaiicommunityfoundation.org) and follow our social media channels on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).