

Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant Program

Program Overview

NDCA Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026)

Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Grant Program

The Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program honors and encourages the preservation of North Dakota's diverse living traditions by providing funding of up to \$4,500 for master traditional artists to pass on their skills and knowledge to an apprentice(s) over an extended period of time.

Program Deadlines

APPLICATION SUBMISSION DEADLINE	Earliest Project Start Date	Latest Project End Date	Final Report Due Date
Wednesday, April 30, 2025, 4:30 p.m. CST	July 1, 2025	April 30, 2026	30 days after project end date or May 30, 2026, whichever comes first

Incomplete or late applications are not accepted.

Program Officer

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Contact the program officer for application support or questions.
 Alternate application formats available upon request.

Contents

Program Overview -----2

Before Applying -----4

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program

The Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program honors and encourages the preservation of North Dakota's diverse living traditions by providing funding of up to \$4,500 for master traditional artists to pass on their skills and knowledge to an apprentice(s) over an extended period of time.

Traditional and folk arts are shared creative expressions of identity passed from generation to generation within a family, community, region, tribe, ethnic group, occupation, or religion. Forms of traditional expression include craft, technical skill, music, dance, and ritual celebration. These art forms are usually passed from one individual to another informally, by word of mouth or by example.

Potential applicants are encouraged to work with people they already know within their own tribal, ethnic, or occupational group or community. Proposals may include unestablished master/apprentice partnerships or already established informal teaching/learning relationships. Most apprenticeships are based on a one-on-one teaching and learning situation. However, for traditions like dance that might require group instruction, a master artist may have up to four apprentices in one application. The Apprenticeship Program also encourages multiple apprentices from the same immediate family learn from a master who is not within the immediate family.

A master may apply for and receive more than one grant if circumstances warrant, especially if the projects involve different artforms.

The grant awards are to be used for a master artist's instruction fee and the cost of supplies and travel for the master and/or apprentice. The length of each apprenticeship will vary according to the proposed work plan, but most apprenticeships last between four and ten months.

Program Outcomes

- Folk and traditional art forms are passed on between two or more individuals in an ongoing, structured relationship between a master and an apprentice(s).
- North Dakota communities are enriched because folk and traditional art forms are practiced, preserved, and shared.
- Greater public awareness, increased knowledge, and documentation of folk arts is achieved.

Eligibility

Master Artist

- Is an individual artist who is among the finest tradition bearers in their respective community or region
- Must be 18 years of age or older
- Must be a North Dakota resident or from neighboring states
- Must be a United States citizen or have attained permanent resident status

Apprentice(s)

- Is an individual artist (or artists) who already possess some skills in the traditional art they wish to study
- Must demonstrate a commitment to mastery of the art
- Must be a North Dakota resident for at least two (2) years prior to the start of apprenticeship activity and continue to reside in North Dakota throughout the contract period
- Must be a United States citizen or have attained permanent resident status
- Apprentices under the age of 18 must be accompanied by their legal guardian

Examples of Proposals

Strong proposals include:

- The continuation of rare and endangered art forms;
- Teaching and learning more about the applicant's own cultural traditions;
- Teaching and learning more about traditions that have been continuously maintained rather than recently revived;
- A highly skilled master who learned in an informal, traditional way.

Examples:

- An apprentice, with some experience or knowledge of blacksmithing, saddle making, Polish papercutting, or Swedish weaving, works with a respected master artist in learning additional decorative techniques.
- An apprentice works with a respected master artist in refining their skills in ethnic fiddling, button accordion playing, polka, Ukrainian Easter eggs, Native American basketry, quillwork, hide tanning, or storytelling.

Ineligible Applications:

- Projects completed in previous fiscal years
- Payment of project costs incurred before the project start date
- Applications that are not complete and received by the application deadline
- Applicant has any overdue reporting requirements as specified in a previous grant agreement with NDCA

Grant Award Amount

Maximum Award Request: \$4,500

- No matching funds are required for this program.
- Grants to individuals are taxable income.
- All grants are subject to available funding from the North Dakota State Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Before Applying

Before applying, the master artist and apprentice(s) must discuss with each other the apprenticeship, including goal(s), schedule/work plan, supplies required, and budget.

Community Component

Applicants are strongly encouraged to include at least one (1) community component that will provide greater visibility for the apprentice artist's work and promote meaningful engagement between the artist and North Dakota audiences. A public performance, exhibition, open workshop, or demonstration are examples of possible community components. The public component(s) should take place within the period of grant support when possible and within North Dakota.

Application Support

First-time applicants are encouraged to contact the program officer if they have questions while preparing the application. The program officer can assist with eligibility questions and project idea development and goals.

Application Format

Applications are accepted online (preferred) and by mail. Contact the program officer if assistance is needed.

Application Review Process

1) After Submission: Applications are reviewed by staff for eligibility and completeness.

2) Panels: Panelists are selected annually. For more information, visit: arts.nd.gov/get-involved/become-panelist. Online or in-person meetings are open to the public. Anyone may attend and listen to the discussion but may not present or participate. See arts.nd.gov/news/ndca-meetings for dates.

3) Review Criteria: The panel evaluates each application and makes funding recommendations to NDCA's Board based on how well the applicant addresses specific review criteria. Panelists individually score complete applications. Those scores are averaged to arrive at the final score with total possible points of 30, or 100%.

4) Board Approval: NDCA's Board of Directors has final authority to approve grants.

Review Criteria

1) Traditionality (0-5 points)

- The art form taught is folk and traditional art (e.g., a shared creative expression of identity passed from generation to generation within a family, occupation, tribe, ethnic group, or religion).
- The art form is rooted in the master's and apprentice's cultural background and the master learned it informally.

2) Master's Artistry (0-5 points)

- The master artist demonstrates artistic excellence. (Master artists who have previously participated in the Apprenticeship Program are not required to submit work samples or support materials; the panel will infer artistic excellence as that indicative of a master.)
- The master artist has earned recognition from their cultural community for skill and accomplishments in a folk and traditional art form.

3) Apprentice's Artistry (0-5 points)

- The apprentice(s) has a cultural connection to the art form that will be taught.
- The apprentice(s) has a baseline of skills in the art form that will be taught.

4) Apprentice's Commitment (0-5 points)

- The apprentice(s) has a dedication and commitment to learn and continue the art form.
- The apprentice(s) has goals to master the art form and to teach and share the art form with the public.

5) Plan and Clarity (0-5 points)

- The project plan is achievable and appropriate and will accomplish program goals.
- The budget is appropriate for the plan.
- The overall application is thorough and clear.

6) Funding Priorities (0-5 points)

- The artform to be taught and learned is rare or endangered.
- The artform to be taught and learned has been continuously maintained rather than recently revived.

If Funded**Notification and Agreement**

- Communication regarding the grant award is via email with the contact person listed on the grant application.
- An authorized signer for the application will need to complete an online grant agreement unless other arrangements are made with the program officer for those applicants who applied by mail.

Payment

- **Disbursement Amounts and Timing of Funds:** Folk and Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program grant funds are paid in two installments for the master artist teaching fee. The first 50% of the fee will be paid after the applicant submits the grant agreement and to coincide with the start date of the activities. The remaining 50% of the fee will be paid after submitting a satisfactory final report to the program officer. Any grant funds specified for supplies, materials, and/or travel will be paid in full to the master artist and/or apprentice(s) at the start of the grant activities.
- **Return of Funds:** Grantees are required to spend the entirety of the NDCA grant award according to budget categories indicated in the award. The final report must show expenditures at or greater than the awarded amount or funds will need to be returned.

Reporting

- **Change Reports:** Any project changes to the activities, timeline, or budget need to be approved in writing by the program officer. Note that not all project changes can be approved.
- **Final Reports:** An online final report is due 30 days after the project end date that was entered on the application or by May 30, 2026, whichever comes first. Overdue final reports will affect future eligibility to apply for and/or receive NDCA funding.