



Folk & Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program Guidelines

Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27)

Application Deadline: March 19, 2026



This program is supported with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts

The Arts Board's Folk Arts staff is available to provide grant proposal assistance throughout the year.
Call or email Kaitlyn Berle, (608) 266-8106 / kaitlyn.berle@wisconsin.gov

Purpose:

Folk Arts Apprenticeships are designed to strengthen and encourage the continuity of Wisconsin's diverse cultural traditions by supporting distinguished traditional artists, referred to as Mentor Artists throughout these guidelines, in passing their skills and knowledge on to committed and talented apprentices.

Art Forms:

Apprenticeships must involve art forms that are rooted in a community where they have value and a traditional place. Any form of traditional art - from basketry to old-time music, from beadwork and embroidery to ethnic dance and singing, from instrument building to traditional foodways - as carried on by members of Wisconsin's various cultural groups, is eligible. These cultural groups are communities that emerge from shared ethnicity, language, religion, occupation, recreational pursuit, or geographic region. Traditional arts are often carried with immigrant and migrant communities as they establish themselves in new homes. Priority will be given to instruction in art forms that are in danger of being lost or that help to preserve or revitalize an endangered language. Both the Mentor Artist and apprentice should be committed to sustaining and advancing the art form in their shared community.

Mentor Artists:

Mentor Artists should be recognized as exemplary practitioners of their art form within their cultural community - held in high regard by their peers for their skill, knowledge, and community-based practice. Their mastery of the art form should have developed within a traditional context, which can include learning from an elder, through observation of peers, or by self-instruction. Mentor artists will work as instructing artists in the apprenticeship. Prior teaching experience is not required but is an asset.

First time applicants must have a conversation with Arts Board staff about their application before submitting. Returning applicants are not eligible to apply if they have received an apprenticeship award for three consecutive years; they may reapply after waiting one year.

Apprentices:

Apprentices should have some experience in the proposed art or a related art form, display motivation to enhance their skills and cultural understanding of the art form, and care about the practice continuing in the community. The Mentor Artist should have confidence and see potential in the apprentice. Preference will be given to apprentices who are from the same cultural community as the Mentor Artist. WAB recognizes that the standard one-on-one mentor-apprentice partnership might not fit the framework of some traditional art forms. If the nature of the art form allows, more than one apprentice may work with the same Mentor Artist at one time. Please contact Folk and Traditional Arts staff with any questions regarding alternative models.

If the apprentice has been part of a prior award with the Mentor Artist, be sure to explain why the team needs another year of working together. Apprentices cannot be immediate family members under the age of 18 or living in the same household as the Mentor Artist. If an apprentice is a family member and there have been special circumstances that affected cultural transmission from occurring naturally (adult child living somewhere else; family of divorce; child raised in foster care, etc.), please explain the situation. Other apprentices who are minors must have their parent's or guardian's written permission to be a part of the program.

Both the Mentor Artist and Apprentice(s) should be Wisconsin residents. If you have questions about this, or would like to discuss a specific circumstance, please contact WAB's Folk and Traditional Arts Coordinator, Kaitlyn Berle at (608) 266-8106 or kaitlyn.berle@wisconsin.gov.

Note: If, during the course of the apprenticeship, the Mentor Artist and apprentice agree to end the apprenticeship and the Mentor Artist wishes to involve other artists, the instructing artist must contact the Wisconsin Arts Board for approval before doing so.

Award:

The Mentor Artist is the applicant and awardee. Folk Arts Apprenticeship awards are \$3,500, the majority of which typically goes to support the Mentor Artist's time. Remaining funds may be used for supplies, materials, or travel. The award is made in two payments to the Mentor Artist: an initial \$2,500 followed by the remaining funds when the final report is submitted to and accepted by the Arts Board. \$3,500 is the maximum award possible. Often there are more requests than funds available. It may not be possible to fund all the deserving applicants in a particular year or to fund all awards at the maximum amount.

If the Mentor Artist works closely with a local non-profit agency, they may wish to work through that agency for the apprenticeship. Payments can be made to a fiscal receiver on behalf of the Mentor Artist. Please contact WAB staff if you prefer to work with a fiscal receiver.

Funds awarded through this program may be taxable as income to the Mentor Artist. If this is a concern, please ask a tax professional or the Internal Revenue Service about how receipt of this award may affect your tax situation.

Work Plan and Final Public Presentation:

Priority is given to apprenticeships that will help ensure the continuation of a traditional art form in a community where it has value and a traditional place. Successful apprenticeships very often are based upon close and frequent personal contact; responses to the questions in the 'Work Plan' section of your application should reflect this. The apprenticeship requires the Mentor Artist and apprentice(s) to do a **public presentation** in their community at the end of the working year. Include ideas for a final presentation in this section. The presentation should be appropriate to your art form, such as a small exhibit, a performance, or a workshop/demonstration in a local community setting. Notify WAB of your plans (via phone or email) **at least a month before** the presentation date.

During the apprenticeship, an Arts Board folklorist will arrange a visit to meet the artists, observe the instruction, record an interview with the Mentor Artist, and document the apprenticeship with photographs. The Mentor Artist and apprentice(s) will also be asked to document the apprenticeship through photos, an [activity log](#), or other means.

Assistance:

Wisconsin Arts Board staff is available to answer questions and assist with the application. Staff can explain and clarify guidelines and eligibility requirements, discuss criteria and definitions, and review draft applications. Discussions with the staff do not influence funding decisions. If you have questions, or would like to request assistance, please call or email Kaitlyn Berle, (608) 266-8106 / kaitlyn.berle@wisconsin.gov. In addition, applicants can consult with someone supportive in their community to help write the application. Apprentices may write the application for the Mentor Artist.

FY27 Application Calendar	
Thursday, March 5, 2026 (First time applicants only)	Notify the Arts Board of intent to apply. Notification can be in the form of an email (kaitlyn.berle@wisconsin.gov) or phone call (608-266-8106). Include a brief description of the intended apprenticeship.
March 19, 2026	Application deadline
Late April 2026	Review panel convenes virtually to review applications
May 15, 2026	Wisconsin Arts Board meets to make grant determinations
Mid-May - June 2026	Arts Board makes grant award announcements
After July 1, 2026	Upon receipt of signed contracts, payment of 1 st portion of award <i>Please note: While funds should be available on July 1, grant checks may not arrive until as late as October, depending on State Legislative and Administrative action.</i>
June 30, 2027	Final report deadline - Upon acceptance of the final report by WAB, payment of 2nd and final portion of award

Applicants must complete the Folk & Traditional Arts Apprenticeship application form and submit it by **Thursday, March 19, 2026** to the Wisconsin Arts Board. **If you are unable to complete an electronic form, please contact the Arts Board to make alternative arrangements.**

TO APPLY:

- Access WAB's Online Application System (<http://wab.smartsimple.com/>)
- Applicants who have not applied using the new online grant system before must:
 - Click the 'Register' button under the log-in section. Select 'An Individual,' complete and submit the registration. User and log-in information will be emailed to the address provided within your registration.
 - Log-in and click 'Funding Opportunities,' select the 'Apply Now' button under Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program.
 - Complete the application form, clicking 'Save Draft' at the end of each page.
 - When finished, click 'Submit.' *Reminder: Submission deadline is March 19, 2026.*
 - You will receive a confirmation email once your submission has been accepted.

Complete the Application Form:

Before completing the application, the Mentor Artist and apprentice must talk through their ideas for the apprenticeship and arrive at a clear shared understanding of what is to take place and why. The application form may serve to guide your discussion.

The application will ask questions about the Mentor Artist, the apprentice(s), the art form and its connection to a cultural community, and a work plan. You will also be asked about your

ideas for a final public presentation of the work created during the apprenticeship, a requirement of the program.

The Application form is divided into **7 tabs**:

Applicant

Complete the applicant information fields and select the number of apprentices that will be working with you. Click 'Save Draft' and select the Project Details tab.

Project Details

When discussing the art form, give enough detailed information on the type of traditional art, its roots, and its importance in the cultural community. Consider discussing the art form's history, evolution, and current state of practice. **Assume that the reader knows little about the art form.** Apprenticeship start and end dates must be between July 1, 2026 and May 30, 2027.

Mentor Artist

Describe your work in this art form, your apprentice(s), and your work plan. All answers by both the Mentor Artist and apprentice should provide enough information so that the review panel will understand their respective experience with the art form and their relationships with the cultural community and each other.

Applicants have the option to submit their responses to this section of the application via video or audio recording. Please contact WAB staff (kaitlyn.berle@wisconsin.gov) before March 5, 2026, if you are interested in this submission method.

Apprentice(s)

If you'd like to send your apprentice these questions in advance, scroll down to 'To be completed by Apprentice 1' and click the "Open Apprentice 1 Questions" box. This will generate a downloadable/printable version of the Apprentice questions.

Budget Estimate

You will be asked to provide a budget. Figure the costs of the apprenticeship so that the total comes to **\$3,500**. The largest single item should be the fee paid to the Mentor Artist for their knowledge, time, and teaching. (Consider using a minimum of \$30/hour as the Mentor Artist's fee in the application budget.) Estimate costs of materials and supplies. If using a personal vehicle for travel, enter the number of trips and the average mileage of each trip. After clicking 'Save Draft' the form will automatically calculate the cost of mileage at 51 cents per mile and this figure will appear under "Mileage Expense." If traveling in other ways, use the "Other Travel Expenses" option. After hitting 'Save Draft,' the application form will automatically total the budget, which should equal \$3,500.

Work Samples

Along with the application, you will need to submit work samples from the Mentor Artist and each apprentice. This is supporting material that gives evidence of the instructing artist's and apprentice's skills and shows the artistic quality of the proposed apprenticeship.

For Craft and Material Artists:

- 5-10 images from Mentor
- 5-10 images from Apprentice

For Performing Artists (musicians, dancers, storytellers, etc.):

- Up to 2 audio or video samples from Mentor Artist (dancers must submit video)
- Up to 2 audio or video samples from each Apprentice (dancers must submit video)

Follow the instructions provided in the application form to upload work samples. After uploading sample images/audio/video, click '**Properties**' to add the title, year, and a brief description for each document. Be sure to include this information.

Certification

All individuals involved in the apprenticeship must certify that representations made in the application are true and complete to the best of their knowledge, and that the work samples submitted accurately represent their own work. **Mentor Artists should use the 'Signature' box to submit an electronic signature.** If any apprentice is younger than 18, a parent or guardian must include their name in the certification field. If a fiscal receiver is involved, an authorized agent of that agency must sign.

To Submit:

To submit a completed application, click the '**Submit**' button at the end of the application form. After submitting electronically, a confirmation email will be sent to the email address provided within your registration. No hardcopy material is required.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

A review panel of cultural specialists and practitioners will convene in late April to evaluate the applications and make funding recommendations. Panel meetings are livestreamed via the Arts Board's YouTube channel. The panel's recommendations will be reviewed by the Wisconsin Arts Board at its May meeting. WAB staff will notify applicants as to how their application fared following the board meeting.

Applications to the Folk Arts Apprenticeship Program will be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. **Traditionality** of the art form (within the cultural community) (25%)

Application Question(s):

- Describe the traditional art form (traditional craft, music, art, dance, foodways tradition, or occupational skill) you will be teaching. What role does this tradition play in your life?
- What role does this tradition play in your community? Please describe its historical significance to your cultural community.
- What is your background in this traditional art form? How, when, and from whom did you learn your skills?
- Describe your activities and involvement with this art form in your cultural community.

2. Artistic quality of the Mentor Artist's work (25%)

Application Question(s):

- Mentor Work Samples
- Describe your involvement and expertise with this art form in your cultural community. What milestones, recognitions, awards, or other accomplishments have you achieved that relate to your traditional art form?

3. Demonstrated commitment and skill of the apprentice(s) (15%)

Application questions:

- Apprentice: What is your experience with the traditional art form you wish to study, or with a related art form? Describe your skills in this tradition—at what level do you see yourself?
- Why do you wish to participate in this apprenticeship and why with this Mentor? What do you hope to accomplish?
- What are your plans for working with this art form after the apprenticeship is complete?
- Why do you wish to mentor this apprentice? Have you worked together with the apprentice(s) before? If yes, in what capacity?
- In your estimation, how much does the apprentice(s) already know about the art form? What does the apprentice still need to learn?
- Apprentice Work Samples

4. Shared membership of the mentor artist and apprentice(s) in a cultural community (e.g., shared heritage, ethnicity, tribe, religion, region, etc.) where the tradition originates (10%)

Application Question(s):

- Please describe the ways in which you share a cultural community with your apprentice(s) (for example: tribal, familial, religious, occupational, or ethnic ties).
- What role does this tradition play in your community? Please describe its historical significance to your cultural community.

5. Feasibility of the proposed activities as evident in a clear work plan, timeline, logistics, and appropriate budget. (25%)

Application Question(s):

- The “Describe Your Work Plan” section of the application.
- Budget

If more than one apprentice is proposed, the number of apprentices should be appropriate to the art form and reflect a learning experience that would be deeper than a workshop or class.

6. **Urgency** related to endangered or marginalized art forms, endangered languages, age of culture bearers, or other relevant circumstances. (BONUS – up to 5 points)

Application Question:

- If applicable, please describe any factors contributing to the urgency of sustaining or practicing this tradition within your cultural community?

Priority is given to apprenticeships that will help ensure the continuation of a traditional art form or language that is in danger of being lost within a community.

Application Tips:

- The application requires information from both the Mentor Artist and the apprentice(s). Whoever fills out the form should get this information from the other parties first.
- Click ‘Save Draft’ at the end of each page. The questions marked with a **red asterisk *** are required. If you skip any, you will be prompted to complete them before you are able to submit.
- If it is not possible for you to work with the online form, you may request a printed copy by contacting the Arts Board.

Definitions:

Community - Communities can be geographic places or groups with shared ethnicity, language, religion, occupation, recreational pursuits, regional affinities, or affinities around a traditional practice.

Fiscal Receiver - An incorporated, nonprofit, tax-exempt organization that provides administrative and financial services to the Mentor Artist for the apprenticeship is a fiscal receiver. A fiscal receiver agrees to receive, record, and disburse the grant monies to the Mentor Artist within two weeks after receipt of the grant monies from the Wisconsin Arts Board and agrees to refrain from making or imposing artistic or programmatic decisions on the apprenticeship.

Folk and Traditional Arts - These are artistic practices that express a shared aesthetic, heritage, or tradition of a community. The art form might be folk, traditional, or classically ethnic. It will have endured through several generations with creative innovations by skilled practitioners throughout its history. It may have been revived after a cultural break due to the efforts of a committed artist.