



Master–Apprentice Artist Award Guidelines (2026)

At a Glance

- **What this is:** Funding for Master traditional artists in Arizona to pass on cultural knowledge to an Apprentice through one-on-one mentorship and hands-on learning.
- **Award amounts:** Master Artist: \$5,000 · Apprentice: \$500
- **Use of funds:** The Master Artist’s award is primarily to sustain them as an artist, and to provide materials, essential travel, and items directly tied to the teaching–learning process. The apprentice fee is intended to cover costs such as travel, materials, child care and lower the barriers to learning from the master artist.
- **Who should apply:** Master traditional artists recognized by their cultural community, working with a committed Apprentice (intermediate-level skill).
- **Priority:** Masters and Apprentices from the **same cultural community**, and **underrepresented** art forms with **few remaining local practitioners**.
- **How to apply:** Two steps — **Nomination** (can self-nominate) and, if invited, **Full Application** (via Submittable).
- **Contact:** Denise Uyehara, Program Manager, Artist Services — (520) 230-2807 (text/voice) · duyehara@arizona.edu

Need help? Join our orientation on April 1, 2026, 12–1 PM — *How to Nominate an Artist* (Zoom workshop):
<https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81261658502>

Program Purpose

The Master–Apprentice Artist Award supports the transmission of community-based traditions throughout the Southwestern United States by funding **Master artists** (also known as **tradition bearers**) to mentor **Apprentices** in a close, practical learning relationship. The goal is to strengthen cultural continuity through **authentic, community-rooted** teaching and practice.

Our priority is to support Master Artists and Apprentices who share the same cultural identities or who belong to the same **cultural community**. This helps prevent **cultural appropriation** and protects the communities whose traditions are being passed on. We also recognize that **culture is fluid**, and that cross-cultural learning sometimes grows from real-life relationships that don’t fit fixed categories. Above all, we look for **sincere, transparent** cultural transmission rooted in **authentic relationships**—whether through kinship, friendship, solidarity, or long-standing study. Applicants should show these connections through **lived experience** and meaningful **networks of care and respect**, not only by stating an identity.

What We Fund

- One-on-one mentorship and hands-on cultural transmission.
 - **Eligible costs** may include:
 - **Compensation** for Master Artist and Apprentice(s)
 - **Materials and equipment** (including regalia when applicable)
 - **Essential travel** related to the mentorship
 - **Not funded:** Presenting/touring or project work **without** a clear **Apprentice educational component**.
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Who Should Apply

We welcome a wide range of traditional artists and culture bearers, including but not limited to:

- **Visual Arts/Material Arts/Handcrafted art:** weaving, basketry, jewelry, mask making, ritual objects, textiles
- **Occupational folklife:** adobe, leather, ironwork, foodways
- **Oral traditions:** storytelling, spoken word, poetry
- **Performing arts:** dance, vocals, music

Traditional arts are learned informally within cultural communities and reflect shared values, experiences, and worldviews—not typically taught through formal institutions.

Eligibility

Artist Eligibility (Master Artist)

- **Residency:** Must be **Arizona residents**, having lived full-time in Arizona for **at least one year before applying**, and remain residents for **one year after receiving the award**.
- **Citizenship/Work Status:** U.S. citizen, lawful permanent resident, or have U.S. work authorization.
- **Age:** At least **18 years old**.
- **Art form:** Must be **traditional** as defined by Southwest Folklife Alliance (SFA)—primarily learned **informally** within a cultural community.
- **Community context:** Practitioners are generally from the **same cultural community**, and the mentorship centers on **informal**(non-institutional) teaching.

Apprentice Eligibility

- **Skill level:** At least **intermediate-level** experience in the art form.
- **Age: 16+** (May be younger **only** if an **immediate family member** of the Master Artist.)

- **Commitment:** Demonstrated dedication to the art form and ability to meet the time and learning demands of the apprenticeship.
- **Priority:** Pairs from the **same cultural community**, and **underrepresented** traditions with **few local practitioners**.
- **Note:** Apprentices do **not** need to be named at nomination, but **artists should have one in mind** before applying.

Repeat Awardees

- We **do not** consider **repeat awardees** (artists who have already received this award).
Please check annually for policy updates.

Panel Review Criteria

Applications are evaluated on:

1. **Artistic Excellence & Community Engagement (60%)** Master Artist's artistic excellence (understanding of the art form and process, depth of engagement with their cultural community, and work samples)
2. **Apprentice Readiness & Commitment (20%)** Apprentice's commitment to the art form and demonstrated readiness.
3. **Strength of the Work plan (20%)** Clarity and feasibility of how the Master Artist and Apprentice will work together, and their commitment to the work plan.

How to Apply

The process has **two parts**: **Nomination** and, if invited, **Full Application**.

1) Nomination

- **Who can nominate:** A peer familiar with the Master Artist's work, **or** the **Master Artist** may **self-nominate**.
- **What happens next:** SFA staff will notify nominators and artists about **invitations to the Full Application** phase.
- **Need help writing a nomination?** Contact Denise at duyehara@arizona.edu.

2) Full Application (by invitation)

- **Platform:** Submit via **Submittable.com** (free account).
Tip: Draft your responses on your computer first, then copy/paste into the portal.
- **Work samples:** Upload **up to three** high-quality samples that **demonstrate the Master Artist's mastery**. (Apprentice samples are **not required**.)
- **Completeness:** Incomplete applications **will not** be considered.
- **Deadlines:** Submit on time (see Timeline below).
- **Support:** If completing the application is challenging, the Master Artist may ask their **nominator or another supporter** to help.

For feedback before submission, email Denise at duyehara@arizona.edu at least one month before the deadline so there's time to review.

Work Samples (nomination stage)

- Provide **up to five** strong examples showing the **Master Artist's mastery** of the traditional artform or practice.
 - Choose clear, high-quality images/audio/video that best illustrate technique, cultural context, and excellence.
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2026 Program Timeline

- **March 18** — Nomination form opens
 - **April 1, 12–1 PM** — *How to Nominate an Artist* (Zoom workshop):
<https://arizona.zoom.us/j/81261658502>
 - **April 30** — Nominations deadline
 - **May 23** — Invitations to Full Application sent
 - **July 17** — Full Application deadline
 - **September 15** — Award notifications & announcements
 - **October–November** — Artist paperwork; portraits taken
 - **November–December** — Award distribution
 - **Throughout 2027** — SFA staff site visits
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Award Payment Procedures

- **Before payment: Master Artist awardees must:**
 - Complete a **W-9** and **photo release**.
 - Sit for an **official portrait** by SFA's photographer (for promotional purposes).
- **Payments:** SFA will issue award payments to the **Master Artist** and **Apprentice** by **electronic or paper check**, as indicated by the awardees.
- **Taxes:** Master Artist awards are **taxable**. A **1099** tax form will be issued in **February of the following year**.
We encourage both Master Artists and Apprentices to keep records of all expenses related to their art-making practice.

Note: Interviews, filming, and other photo documentation may be requested during a mid-project site visit or at the end of the project.

Allowable & Non-Allowable Costs

Allowable

- Compensation for **Master Artist** and **Apprentice(s)**
- **Materials, regalia, and equipment** directly tied to the mentorship
- **Essential travel** for the learning process

Not Allowable

- Presentations/touring or artistic project work **without** a clearly articulated **Apprentice educational component**

Funding Note

This award is contingent upon federal funding from the **National Endowment for the Arts** and may be adjusted based on federal priorities.

Need Help? Questions?

Denise Uyehara

Program Manager, Artist Services, Southwest Folklife Alliance

(520) 230-2807 (text or voice) · duyehara@arizona.edu

Master–Apprentice Artist Award – 2026 FAQs and Definitions

What counts as a traditional art form?

Traditional arts—sometimes called **folk arts**—include practices learned informally from family, community, and cultural groups. Examples include:

- Weaving, basketry, jewelry, textiles
- Storytelling, oral traditions
- Dance, drumming, singing
- Foodways, leatherwork, adobe, or other occupational folk traditions
- Culture Bearing

If the practice is rooted in your cultural community and passed down through lived experience, it likely qualifies.

What is a cultural community?

A **cultural community** is a group of people who share a common cultural background—such as **ethnicity, heritage, or a specific geographic region**—and who participate in cultural practices that come from that shared background. These shared experiences create a sense of belonging, responsibility, and continuity within the group. A cultural community is **not** defined by broad interest areas, hobbies, or professions alone.

Why is priority given to pairs from the same cultural community?

Sharing the same cultural background helps ensure that traditions are passed on with respect, care, and cultural integrity. By cultural backgrounds, we mean people from the same ethnicity, region, or tribal affiliation. This reduces the risk of cultural appropriation and strengthens authentic relationships within communities.

What skill level does the Apprentice need?

Apprentices should have at least an **intermediate-level** of experience in the tradition and show strong commitment to learning and continuing the practice. If the apprentice is an immediate family member, they can be younger.

How does the application process work?

There are **two steps**:

1. **Nomination (open to public / self-nomination allowed)**

2. Full Application (by invitation only)

If invited, applicants use **Submittable.com** to submit the full application and work samples. Nominations are now open!

What kinds of work samples are required at Full Application stage?

Submit up to up to 10 **high-quality samples** that show the **Master Artist's mastery**.

Apprentices do **not** submit samples.

If a Master Artist has difficulty completing the application, can someone help?

Yes. A nominator, family member, or trusted supporter may assist with the application.

If you want feedback from SFA staff, contact Denise at least **one month before** the deadline.

Are the award payments taxable?

Yes.

Master Artists will receive a **1099 form** the following February.

Artists should keep receipts and records for any expenses related to their art practice.

Do awardees need to participate in photography or documentation?

Yes. Awardees must:

- Complete a W-9
- Sign a photo release
- Sit for an official portrait, which is selected by the SFA staff
- Participate in site visits (may include photos, video, or interviews)

This helps SFA honor and share your work with the public.

If you are invited to the Full Application stage, please apply here

Who can I contact for help?

Denise Uyehara

Program Manager, Artist Services, Southwest Folklife Alliance

(520) 230-2807 (text or voice)

duyehara@arizona.edu