



2026-2027 West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program GUIDELINES

Deadline:
Sept. 18, 2026
wvfolklife.org

Important Dates

Application Opens: July 27, 2026

Application Closes: September 18, 2026, at 11:59 p.m.

Review Panel Meets: October 2026

Notification of Award: November 2026

Apprenticeship Time Period: November 2026 – October 2027

Showcase Dates: Fall 2027; Exact dates TBD

About the West Virginia Folklife Program:

The West Virginia Folklife Program facilitates the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program. West Virginia Folklife is a project of the West Virginia Humanities Council. West Virginia Folklife is dedicated to the documentation, preservation, presentation, and support of West Virginia's cultural heritage and living traditions. Learn more at www.wvfolklife.org

What Is Folklife and Traditional Arts?

Folklife and traditional arts, often defined as "the art of everyday life," refer to art and cultural expressions that are based in and reflective of traditional knowledge and connection to cultural communities. Folklife and traditional arts are generally passed down from one generation to another through community-based activities, observation, practice, and apprenticeships.

What Is the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program?

Since 2017, the West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship Program has supported expert traditional artists working with dedicated apprentices on yearlong apprenticeships to teach traditional music, dance, craft, foodways, storytelling, and more. This popular program follows the time-tested model of one-to-one teaching so that apprentices may carry on techniques, artistry, stories, and traditional knowledge of communities from throughout the Mountain State.

Hosted biennially, the apprenticeship program supports one year of teaching artists and apprentices working in pairs on a self-designed work plan. Participants have expressed appreciation for the trust and flexibility built into the process, allowing them to follow through on their own set goals at their own paces. Please note, the program does not provide job training qualification. See **Participation Expectations** below for more.

Funding

The West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship program is funded by the West Virginia Humanities Council (WVHC) with support from a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant. Use of logos and acknowledgment must be given to West Virginia Folklife/WVHC and the NEA in event promotion and work related to the apprenticeship program.



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Stipends: Teaching artists receive \$3,000 paid in two installments: \$2,000 at the beginning, and \$1,000 at the end of the formal program year. Apprentices are supported with \$800, also to be paid in two installments: \$500 at the beginning, and \$300 at the end. (These stipends do not require an itemized budget.)

Please note the West Virginia Humanities Council will issue an IRS Form 1099 to each recipient, and funding is subject to federal taxation.

Reimbursement for Expenses: Apprenticeship pairs may request an additional \$400 to reimburse for apprenticeship-related expenses. This includes costs related to your public component (e.g., presentation expenses, travel, printing, venue rental), documentation supplies (e.g., audio recorder, journal/logbook), and/or necessary supplies, tools, or travel.

IMPORTANT: You must save and submit itemized receipts for reimbursement. Tip: Take a photo of your receipts. Reimbursement forms will be provided. For mileage reimbursement, calculate expense using the federal rate found at: www.gsa.gov

If your expected budget exceeds \$400 and the amount of the stipends, please adjust your work plan so that your apprenticeship plan will be feasible.

Participation Expectations

1. Documentation

The state folklorist will visit each apprenticeship pair during the program year to conduct a recorded interview and take photographs. Documentation will be archived in the West Virginia Folklife Collection housed at West Virginia University Libraries for educational purposes.

Participants are highly encouraged to document their own experiences together. We will host a virtual workshop for program participants on documentation. Additional funds (up to \$400) can be budgeted in your application for recording devices or other supplies such as logbooks, etc.

2. Virtual Meetings

Following a virtual orientation meeting, the cohort of participants attend virtual meetings throughout the program year. Feedback has informed us that these meetings promote social engagement among the cohort of apprenticeship pairs, as participants get to learn about traditions practiced across the state. These show-and-tell sessions allow the pairs to share their latest successes, works-in-progress, and challenges.

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3. Public Component

Pairs are required to participate in at least one public component to present about their work, such as a performance for their local communities at a public library or school, or other ideas as appropriate. Previous participants have hosted a community gardening event, performed at storytelling swaps, led repair workshops, called and played music for square dances, and made reading materials and short films.

4. Showcases

The West Virginia Folklife Program will host public showcases for the cohort of apprenticeship pairs at the end of the program year. These events will be recorded for our archival collection and published online.

5. Final Report

Pairs are required to submit a final report detailing their activities, work, and skills gained. All final report materials will be deposited in the West Virginia Folklife Collection, and information may be used for the program funder reports.

Eligibility

It is preferred that the teaching artist and apprentice share common cultural experiences, such as being members of the same family, immigrant community, social scene, or religious group, to name a few examples. Featured traditional art forms must be relevant to current communities of West Virginia. Applications from marginalized groups or traditions having few remaining practitioners are especially encouraged.

Previously funded apprenticeship pairs may participate more than once, but reviewers will consider their prior participation when making recommendations, especially if there is a competitive applicant pool.

Teaching artists must:

- Demonstrate excellence or mastery of their traditional art forms.
- Be established and recognized (formally or informally) by their community for their skills, knowledge, and cultural practice.
 - o *Tip: One way to demonstrate this recognition is by submitting a letter of support with your application.*
- Be a resident of West Virginia for at least one year prior to the application deadline.



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- In the case of cultural communities that exist across state lines, an apprenticeship with someone living outside the state may be considered, but a compelling reason must be established in the application.

An apprentice must:

- Demonstrate engagement and basic competency in the art form (or a closely related art form) prior to the apprenticeship.
- Demonstrate a commitment to learning and practicing nuances of the tradition.
- Demonstrate a commitment to sustaining the art form in West Virginia beyond the apprenticeship period.
- Be at least 18 years of age; minors can participate with written permission from a parent or guardian.

Note: There are significant public components to the program, which include participation in presentations, archived interviews, published online features, press releases, and more. Please consider if these activities are appropriate for an apprentice under the age of 18 before applying.

The program does not fund the following activities:

- Staged productions, reenactments, or representations of historical folk arts.
- Reproductions of historic objects that are no longer in use.
- Classroom-style instruction.
- Production of crafts and other art forms that are not part of the living heritage of West Virginia communities.

How to Apply

The application is available at <https://wvfolklife.org/category/apprenticeships/> where you can also read about previously awarded apprenticeship pairs and their projects.

Teaching artists and their proposed apprentice must submit their applications together. The pair should discuss the skills to be taught and establish a work plan. Questions on the application may help guide this discussion. *Tip: The most promising applications come from a traditional artist and an apprentice who already know each other and have begun working together.*

Please answer all questions thoroughly. Applications should be typed or written in legible print.

Incomplete applications may result in rejection of the application.

Use of artificial intelligence (AI) is NOT PERMITTED. *We want to hear your story in your own words, regardless of typos!*



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Required Application Materials:

- Part A: Teaching Artist Questionnaire
- Part B: Apprentice Questionnaire
- Part C: Work Plan
- Part D: Budget
- Part E: Work Samples
- Part F (Optional): Letter of Support
- Part G: Required Signatures

Work Sample

Both teaching artist and apprentice can submit up to 10 work samples (images, video, and/or audio). **The majority of work samples should be from within the past 5 years.**

For audio and video samples: Individual samples should not exceed 10 minutes (if clip exceeds 10 minutes, indicate which portion of the <10 minutes the panel should review).

For image work samples: Please submit no more than 10 images per artist.

Please include the following information in the Work Sample List:

- Year/date that the work was created.
- Media format: Website, YouTube link, MP3, MP4, CD/DVD track number, etc.
- For a video or audio sample, please include the length of work(s) and time stamp for where the panel should review.
- Title or description about the work, including artist's role in development of work, location(s) recorded, artistic style, form, content, and/or process. Please include any contextual information that will help the review panel understand the work samples.

Please organize work samples as an email attachment or via a file sharing website (e.g., Dropbox, Google Drive), and then email State Folklorist Jennie Williams at williams@wvhumanities.org

If you are unable to submit your application electronically, please mail the printed application and a thumb drive containing your work samples postmarked by September 18, 2026, to:

West Virginia Humanities Council
Attn: WV Folklife Apprenticeship Program
1310 Kanawha Blvd. E
Charleston, WV 25301

Letter of Support (Optional)

We welcome one letter of support (1-2 pages in length) written by a person who can speak to the



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excellence or mastery of the teaching artists, commitment to their cultural community and traditional art form, and suitability for this program. A letter writer could be a mentor, community leader, colleague, or fellow practitioner of the traditional art form. *Tip: A letter of support may offer important information not covered in the application questionnaires.*

Review Criteria

A panel will review each application based on the following criteria:

- **Traditionality**—The apprenticeship is centered on an art form or cultural expression based in traditional knowledge of a cultural community in West Virginia. (20 points)
- **Teaching Artist Excellence**—Teaching artists are recognized by their community for having the training, technical ability, and knowledge of the traditional art form. They demonstrate a commitment to the apprenticeship. (20 points)
- **Apprentice Fit**—The apprentice has a basic technical competency of the traditional art form and is committed to learning and carrying on the practice. (20 points)
- **Potential impact**—The proposed apprenticeship shows potential for continuation or increased community participation in the traditional art form. (20 points)
- **Work Plan Feasibility**—The work plan is realistic and feasible. It includes proposed goals, learning approaches, meeting schedule, and an appropriate budget. (20 points)

Application Assistance and Draft Feedback

Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their proposed apprenticeship *in advance* of the deadline. Contact Jennie Williams at williams@wvhumanities.org or call (304)346-8500. Please understand our time will be limited as we approach the application deadline.

2026-2027 Apprenticeship Timeline:

July 27, 2026	Application and Guidelines become available
September 11, 2026	Last day to request feedback on application draft
September 18, 2026	APPLICATION DUE
October 2026	Review panel meets and makes recommendations
November 2026	Award letters distributed and apprenticeships begin
November TBD 2026	Virtual orientation meeting
Jan. 2027 - October 2027	Apprenticeship site visits, local public presentations
Fall 2027	Apprenticeship showcases (locations and dates TBD)
Winter 2028	Apprenticeship activities completed, final report due

The next West Virginia Folklife Apprenticeship program year will occur in 2028-2029, contingent on funding.