



New Jersey State Council on the Arts Folk & Traditional Arts Project (FTAP) Fiscal Year 2025 Special Guidance

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For additional support, contact Kim Nguyen at kim.nguyen@sos.nj.gov or at 609-292-4495.

What are the Folk & Traditional Arts?

As defined by the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), the folk and traditional arts are rooted in and reflective of the cultural life of a community. Community members may share a common ethnic heritage, cultural mores, language, religion, occupation, or geographic region. These vital and constantly reinvigorated artistic traditions are shaped by cultural values and standards that are passed from generation to generation, most often within family and community, through demonstration, conversation, and practice. Genres of artistic activity include, but are not limited to: music; dance; crafts; and oral expression.

What are Folk & Traditional Artists/Art Forms?

Folk and Traditional artists exist in communities, which can include families, geographic regions, religious groups, clubs, schools, ethnic, occupational or recreational groups, and more. Folklorists call these different communities “folk groups.” The folk group of origin is the folk group in which the traditional art form is rooted. Members of a folk group share aesthetics, insider knowledge, language, and a similar worldview.

When determining if an art form is folk and/or traditional, one should be able to answer *yes* to the following questions:

- Is this art form rooted in a community?
- Is it clear that the art form the artist practices, is rooted in a *folk group*?
- Is the artist engaged deeply with the *folk group* of origin?
- Is this art form learned only through person-to-person instruction?

The core of folk and traditional art is the way in which it is learned and shared – *through informal (as opposed to academic) modes of transmission within communities*. Folk and traditional arts are artistic expression that are shared *informally within a folk group* and are essential to that group’s cultural identity. If you can study this art form in a secondary education setting, it is most likely not a folk and traditional art form.

What are emerging to mid-career Folk & Traditional artists?

An emerging artist is one who is in the early stages of their art pursuits - they have begun learning and practicing their art form, but may not have a large body of work and/or engagements and they are not considered experts. Mid-career artists are those who are further along in their careers. They have a history of performances and/or exhibitions, and a body of work that is well-developed. They are active in their community and recognized by others as practitioners of the art form.

For the purposes of this grant program, emerging to mid-career artists are individuals with more than five years of experience in their art forms.

What is a Folk & Traditional Arts Apprenticeship?

Folk and Traditional arts apprenticeships encourage communities to continue passing on their valued traditions in traditional settings, whereby mentor folk artists and craftspeople help apprentices develop greater skill through *one-on-one instruction over time*. A master folk artist, or mentor, is someone who has learned a traditional art as part of community life and has attained a high level of excellence in the eyes of other community members. An apprentice is someone from the same cultural group who has demonstrated ability and commitment to learning and practicing the traditional art of the master.

What is a Folk & Traditional Arts Research Project?

A research project provides an artist with opportunities to deepen and broaden their knowledge by participating in field research that is non-academic and location-specific to the folk/traditional art form. An example of this would be an immersion within a community to learn hands-on artmaking skills from specific community members who are experts in the art form.

What are measurable results?

Generally, measures of results for artmaking skills are the quality, quantity, speed, or other outcomes that can be measured. Some examples would be: “My goals are to be able to play more complex songs, with faster rhythms, such as...” or “Learning the dances for funeral processions will allow me to engage more deeply with my community during these important events, by performing in at least 6 processions per year” or “Understanding this primitive firing technique used by my people will allow me to expand my skills in firing, and use native materials in my work much more effectively.”

What is meaningful community impact?

Applicants must demonstrate that they have and will continue to make positive, relevant impacts that matter to the folk/traditional communities (folk group of origin) in which they are engaged. Examples include: teaching and/or demonstrating; working in community group settings on projects, performances or exhibitions; and sharing knowledge, skills, and art with others within the community. For the purposes of this program, New Jersey communities are prioritized over those in other places.

How can I review the documents for this program in my own language?

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