



**New Jersey State Council on the Arts
New Jersey Heritage Fellowship
Fiscal Year 2026 Grant Program Rules and Instructions**

This document is also [available in Spanish](#).

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts will award up to ten (10) New Jersey Heritage Fellowships to exemplary folk and traditional artists. These Fellowships, which come with an award of \$20,000 each, recognize **lifetime achievement, artistic excellence, and contributions to our state's living traditional arts heritage**. See eligibility criteria on page 3. Fellows may self-nominate or be nominated by a member of the public.

KEY DATES FOR THE FY26 NEW JERSEY HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP AWARD

Monday, October 28, 2024	NJ Heritage Fellowship Award Rules and Instructions released
November 2024 – January 2025	Online and In-Person Information Sessions. <i>Please see the full schedule on page 8 for session dates and to register.</i>
Thursday, January 9, 2025	Early Deadline to submit Nominations for Review by 12:00 PM ET (noon). <i>Nomination Forms submitted by this date will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility, with all changes due by the February 6 deadline. Nominations submitted after January 9 at 12:00PM ET (noon) will be considered final and not offered feedback on completeness or eligibility.</i>
Thursday, February 6, 2025	Final Deadline to Submit Nominations by 12:00 PM ET (noon). <i>No late submissions will be accepted. Nominators are encouraged to submit before the deadline.</i>
March – June 2025	Arts Council convenes Review Panel, which reviews and scores Nominations. Council Grants Committee reviews the Panel's scores and makes funding recommendations to the Arts Council.
Late July 2025	Arts Council votes to approve and announces grant awards at its public Annual Meeting. All applicants notified of their result.
September 2025	Heritage Fellowship Award Recipients will receive a contract and instructions for payment through SAGE , the State's online grants management system.

NOMINATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The following assistance is available to help you:

1. **Staff Support:** Sally Van de Water, Program Officer for the Folk & Traditional Arts is available to help with questions specific to your nomination by telephone at 609-875-4948 and email at sally.vandewater@sos.nj.gov.

- 2. Online Technical Assistance Office Hours:** Nominators can attend ZOOM Office Hours to ask questions pertaining to the nomination. Participation is free; however, registration is required. See the schedule on page 8 for workshop times and registration information.
- 3. In-Person Nomination Assistance:** Nominators can attend free workshops hosted by one or more of the New Jersey Folklife Network partner organizations. See the schedule on page 8 for workshop times and locations, or check the [Arts Council's website](#) for more information.

ABOUT THE NEW JERSEY STATE COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts (Arts Council), created in 1966, is a division of the New Jersey Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. The Arts Council was established to support, encourage, and foster public interest in the arts; enlarge public and private resources devoted to the arts; promote freedom of expression in the arts; and facilitate the inclusion of art in every public building in New Jersey. For more information about the Arts Council, visit: www.artscouncil.nj.gov.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Arts Council is committed to ensuring its programs are accessible to all people. For accessibility services related to filing a nomination, please contact Accessibility Coordinator Lindsay Dandeo at 609-984-7020 or via email at lindsay.dandeo@sos.nj.gov.

COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC BENEFIT AND EQUITY

In New Jersey, we know that diversity is one of our greatest strengths. The New Jersey State Council on the Arts embraces the principles of diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in all aspects of our work. With a focus on learning, data, and accountability, we will continue to assess and challenge inequities, identify gaps in engagement and service, and focus on the details that shape change.

WHAT ARE THE FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS?

As defined by the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), 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 IS THE NEW JERSEY HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP?

The Arts Council will award up to ten (10) New Jersey Heritage Fellowships to exemplary folk and traditional artists. These fellowships recognize **lifetime achievement, artistic excellence, and contributions to our state's living traditional arts heritage.**

Heritage Fellowships are New Jersey's highest honor in folk and traditional arts, and are one-time, \$20,000 awards each to individual New Jersey folk and traditional artists to help them pursue their artistic goals. Fellows are selected through an evaluation process by an independent panel of peer reviewers. Panelists review the nominations submitted, including letters of support and work samples, and score the work based solely on the evaluative criteria of lifetime achievement, artistic excellence,

and contributions to traditional arts heritage. *An individual may receive only one Heritage Fellowship in their lifetime.*

HOW HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP FUNDS MAY BE USED

Artists may use their New Jersey Heritage Fellowship funds to pursue work in their artistic discipline, including purchasing supplies, renting studio space, or otherwise freeing their time. Heritage Fellowship funds are not granted on the basis of need or to undertake specific projects. Funds may not be used for travel outside of the country, for study as a matriculating student in either a graduate or undergraduate program, or to purchase permanent equipment (equipment with a resale value exceeding \$350 or having a life span over three years). Submissions that express the artist's financial need or describe projects needing funding will not be considered.

Heritage Fellowship Rules

WHO CAN BE NOMINATED FOR A HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP?

Nominees must have a demonstrated track-record of continuing artistic accomplishment, and must be actively participating in their art form, either as practitioners or as teachers.

Eligibility Requirements

1. Nominations must be for an individual artist only. Nominations will not be accepted for groups, duos, ensembles, etc.
2. The nominee must be at least 18 years of age.
3. The nominee must be a United States citizen, or legal permanent resident. Individuals with working visas are not eligible to be nominated for this Fellowship.
4. The nominee must be a current, permanent New Jersey resident at the time of nomination (the date the nomination is submitted) *and* at the time of award (July 2025).
5. Individuals may receive the Fellowship only once in a lifetime.
6. Nominations of deceased individuals will not be considered. No payment will be made to the estate or heirs of a deceased recipient.

WHO CAN NOMINATE?

Nominations may be submitted by an individual, and artists may also self-nominate. Nominators will be responsible for all communication with Arts Council staff regarding the nomination.

An individual may nominate more than one artist for consideration; each nomination must be made with a separate Nomination.

Should an artist receive multiple nominations, the Program Officer will inform each nominator so that they may work together on a single nomination for that artist.

Submission of a Nomination does not guarantee eligibility or that all requirements have been met. Submissions that do not meet the eligibility criteria or are deemed incomplete will not move forward to the panel process.

FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS: ELIGIBILITY GUIDANCE

Please use the following definitions and “eligibility help” questions below to help guide your nomination.

The folk and traditional arts are learned and shared through direct, often informal, communication within groups. Folk and traditional arts are artistic expressions that are shared informally within a specific community and are essential to that group’s cultural identity.

- Eligibility help: *Is this art form taught directly through informal, person-to-person interaction? Is the art form relevant to the community’s identity?*

Folk and traditional arts 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.” Members of a folk group usually share aesthetics, insider knowledge, language, and a similar worldview.

- Eligibility help: *Is this art form rooted in a community? Is it clear that the art form the nominee practices is rooted in a folk group? Is the artist engaged deeply with their folk group?*

New Jersey Heritage Fellows should be exemplary practitioners of a folk group’s art forms. Their artistic excellence and mastery of the tradition is determined by other members of the group, and has been earned over time.

- Eligibility help: *How does this community or group define artistic excellence, and does this nominee meet those criteria? Are there members of their own folk group/community who will recommend and provide support for the nomination? Is the nominated artist truly exemplary? Do other practitioners turn to them for guidance or advice?*

New Jersey Heritage Fellows should be part of a continuum of community members who help ensure that the art form not only survives but thrives. They learned from exemplary artists before them, and they help the next generation of practitioners learn the art form. Traditions change over time, and often these leading artists are the ones who help innovate within the tradition and keep it relevant for new generations.

- Eligibility help: *Is their experience in their art form measured in decades, not years? Have they learned their skills from informal training with predecessors who were also working at the highest level? Have they taught others how to do this art form?*

What Happens After the Nomination is Submitted?

All Nominations will be reviewed for completeness and eligibility, and against the Evaluation Checklist and Scale (below). Nominators who submit their nomination prior to the January 9, 2025 (12:00 PM ET) deadline will receive feedback on the completeness and eligibility of their nomination on or before January 30, 2025 and will have an opportunity to re-submit their nomination if necessary. Nominations received after January 9, 2025 at 12:00 PM ET will be considered final and nominators will not have the ability to make corrections or re-submit.

New Jersey Heritage Fellowship Nomination Evaluation Checklist and Scale

For the nomination to be considered by the Review Panel, the staff reviewer must first answer “yes” to questions #1 through #3:

1. Is the nomination complete with all items on the “Nomination Packet Checklist” (pages 6-7) submitted?
2. Is the nominee a permanent New Jersey resident?
3. Is the nominee an active and contributing member of the community and currently practicing the art form and/or teaching it in a community setting?

For questions #4 and #5, the staff reviewer will use the scale to determine scoring.

4. Is the art form appropriate for a Heritage Fellowship, and is the nominee engaged with the relevant folk group or community?

The art form is not clearly rooted in a community or folk group.	The art form/artist is loosely rooted in a community or folk group.	The art form is rooted in a community/folk group but it is unclear how the artist is part of the community mentioned.	The artist and art form are clearly and deeply engaged with the community/folk group
0	1	2	3

5. Is the artist likely to be considered an exemplary artist in this art form?

The nomination packet does not demonstrate that the artist is truly exemplary; or the information provided does not demonstrate achievement/engagement with the community	The art form was learned randomly, self-taught, and/or for no extensive time or depth of study. Or, the artist does not exhibit, perform, publish, teach or share their work to the highest level.	The learning of the art form is well documented. But, it is unclear how the artist has demonstrated community engagement.	The artist is truly outstanding; long-term investment in the art form and in the community is clearly demonstrated in the nomination.
0	1	2	3

All Nominations that receive a score between 1 and 3 will not be considered by the Review Panel. Nominations that receive “yes” answers to questions 1 through 4 and a score between 4 and 6 will advance to the Review Panel.

Note: If the Arts Council identifies less than eight eligible Nominations that can move to the panel process, the Fellowship program may be cancelled.

New Jersey Heritage Fellowship Nomination Instructions

HOW TO MAKE A NOMINATION

The Nomination should describe the nominee and explain why they deserve statewide recognition as a New Jersey Heritage Fellow. A strong nomination will describe the nominee, their art form, and their role in their community as it relates to their art form. Please see “Eligibility Guidance” section in the Rules and Instructions, above.

To nominate yourself or someone else, submit the following items to Sally Van de Water at sally.vandewater@sos.nj.gov, and cc: tammy.herman@sos.nj.gov. Use the subject line “Heritage Fellow Nomination [Nominee’s Name].” The Nomination Form is available [here](#).

Nomination Packet Checklist:

The Nomination Packet is composed of the following items.

- The completed Nomination Form (found [here](#))
- Nomination Letter: Please submit a letter of support that explains why this nominee is deserving of statewide recognition for their lifetime achievement, artistic excellence, and contributions to New Jersey’s living cultural heritage. In your nomination letter, you may include the following:
 - Why is this art form important to this community?
 - How long has the nominee been practicing their art form? How did they learn? Have they taught others?
 - Describe their community engagement and impact. Are there key events or activities that they have participated in? Is the tradition or art form more vibrant due to their influence?
 - How long have you known the nominee and in what context? (Friend, family member, community member, etc.)
- Artist biography/history/resume: While the format is flexible, this item should give review panel members a sense of the nominee’s history, experience, artistic excellence, and/or any other contextual information that may not be apparent from the letters of support and other nomination materials. This may include nominee’s experience and work in their community, including (if relevant) major events or activities, recognition or awards, etc.
- At least three (3) and up to five (5) additional statements of support. These materials must include at least one statement from each of the following supporters: community members, persons with expertise in the nominee’s genre, and the nominee’s artistic peers. These letters may be written or recorded and must not equal more than 20 total pages; please see below.
 - Letters may be 1-3 pages each. Each letter should be combined into one .pdf or Word document of no more than 20 total pages.
 - Audio or video statements of support may be uploaded in lieu of written letters of support. Please upload these audio or video clips, no more than 5 minutes each, and copy and paste the link to each statement as a separate page in the combined .pdf of support letters referenced above. (For more guidance, see “Additional Guidance for Video/Audio/Web Work Samples” below.)

- ❑ **Work Samples and Work Sample Description Sheet:** Panelists will review no more than 20 minutes total of all work samples. You may include some or all of the following, keeping in mind that the panelists will not review more than 20 minutes total of all work samples. Work samples may include the following (not all types of work samples will apply to every artist):
- A link to the artist’s website or other online location where the artist’s work can be seen. *Note: This can be a YouTube channel, a public Facebook/Instagram page, link to a public google drive or other cloud site with videos and photos of their work. You may not use a site that requires downloads (example: Dropbox).*
 - Photographs of the artist’s work or the artist at work.
 - Videos of the artist’s work or the artist at work.
 - Other examples that showcase the artist’s lifetime achievement, artistic excellence, and contributions to New Jersey’s folk and traditional arts communities.
 - **Work Sample Description Sheet:** A list of all the work samples included including file name(s) and description(s). Identify the artist and the work presented with as much detail as possible, including the date created/performed and how to identify the nominee in each sample (example: wearing a red shirt). Please include any information that explains how this sample supports the artist’s nomination for the New Jersey Heritage Fellowship.

Note: Panelists will review no more than 20 minutes total of all combined required and optional work samples, videos and other materials.

Additional Guidance for Video/Audio/Web Work Samples

You may submit a link to a video sample; most media files will be too large to send via email.

- For large video or audio files, you may upload them to a cloud site such as GoogleDrive. Please make sure the page is able to be viewed by anyone with the link.
- Submit a PDF with an active hyperlink to the video’s web address/URL. If you are including more than one web address, list them all on a single PDF. For each site, list the URLs for pages to be shown; include any necessary information on required plug-ins, passwords, or navigation paths. Do not submit links to sites that require work samples to be downloaded (e.g., Dropbox).

Helpful Hint: It is the responsibility of the nominator to frame the nominee’s work, cultural background, and lifetime achievements in their letter of nomination. While nominations will be reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of folk and traditional arts, nominators should not assume panelists will have pre-existing familiarity with the nominee or their specific cultural tradition.

Please keep these Rules and Instructions throughout the whole nomination process. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Van de Water, Program Officer for the Folk & Traditional Arts at 609-875-4948 and email at sally.vandewater@sos.nj.gov.

Successful Heritage Fellows will need to finalize their award paperwork in SAGE, the State’s online grants portal. They will receive further instructions upon finalization of the Council’s funding decisions.

Nomination Assistance: Online Office Hours

Nominators can attend online Office Hours to ask questions pertaining to the nomination. You will need to download free software to your phone or computer to participate. Participation is free; however, registration is required.

Online Technical Assistance Office Hours Dates

Wednesday, November 13, 2024 | 3:00 PM [Register here.](#)

Friday, November 22, 2024 | 12:00 PM [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 | 10:00 AM [Register here.](#)

Thursday, December 19, 2024 | 10:00 AM [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, January 7, 2025 | 10:00 AM [Register here.](#)

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 | 3:00 PM [Register here.](#)

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 | 10:00 AM [Register here.](#)

Nomination Assistance: In-Person Workshops

Nominators can attend free workshops hosted by one or more of the New Jersey Folklife Network partner organizations. Registration is required.

Wednesday, October 30, 2024 | 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM

Perkins Center for the Arts, Moorestown

395 Kings Highway
Moorestown, NJ 08057

[Register here.](#)

Tuesday, November 19, 2024 | 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Tuckerton Seaport

Folklife Center Building
120 W. Main St., Tuckerton, NJ 08087

To register, please call 609-296-8868 or email KatieM@tuckertonseaport.org.

Monday, November 18, 2024 | 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

Perkins Center for the Arts, Collingswood

30 Irvin Ave
Collingswood, NJ 08108

[Register here.](#)

Monday, December 2, 2024 | 6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Arts Institute of Middlesex County

9 Livingston Ave., 3rd Floor (workshop space)
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

[Register here.](#)

End of FY26 Heritage Fellowship Award Grant Program Rules and Instructions