



## *In These Mountains* NC Folklife Apprenticeship

### FY 2026–27 Grant Guidelines and Application

#### About

The *In These Mountains* North Carolina Folklife Apprenticeship program supports 12-month apprenticeships in the folk and traditional arts of the many cultural communities within [North Carolina's Appalachian Regional Commission counties](#). The apprenticeship program application will focus on the traditional folk arts and culture of North Carolina's Appalachian communities as part of the [In These Mountains](#) initiative sponsored by South Arts.

#### About Folklife and Traditional Arts

Folklife is the expressive arts, practices, and lifeways that emerge from within a community. Folklife that is passed through generations grows into the traditional arts of that community. Traditional arts are often deeply rooted in a geographic location and its religious, ethnic and occupational groups, or they are carried with immigrant and migrant communities as they establish themselves in new homes. Folklife and traditional arts are typically taught through one-on-one interaction in a community setting. Folklife is an essential and enduring part of how communities form their identity, learn from their pasts, and decide their futures. Folklife is a living and dynamic experience expressed through art, music, dance, celebration, work, story, dress, sense of place, and belief. No community is without it, and we are all its carriers.

#### What is a mentor artist and an apprentice?

A *mentor* artist is a tradition bearer committed to the perpetuation of a traditional art form or practice of his or her cultural heritage. Mentor artists are recognized by fellow artists and their own community members as skilled and dedicated practitioners. Applying mentor artists should demonstrate expertise, teaching experience, long engagement with their art form or practice, and deep knowledge of their tradition.

An *apprentice* is a dedicated student who has been chosen by a mentor artist for a sustained period of study in the mentor's art form or practice. The apprentice should have some past experience with the mentor's tradition before beginning an apprenticeship, so that the time together will help develop the apprentice on their own path to mastery. Apprentices and mentors may be family members, and apprentices may have studied

under the mentor artist previously. The strongest pairings will share a common community or religious, ethnic, or occupational group. The strongest applicants for apprenticeships will also have the intention to continue the transmission of their art form by training others in the future. Teams of two or three apprentices are eligible to study with one mentor artist if such a learning style is preferable within the tradition.

## Application Dates

- **Application Deadline:** Friday, July 17, 2026 by 11:59 p.m. EST
- **Award Announcement:** August 2026

## Grant Award Amount

- **Mentor:** \$7,000
- **Apprentice:** \$3,000

Alternative distributions of funding may be considered upon request.

## Who may apply

The *In These Mountains* NC Folklife Apprenticeship program is designed to encourage the continued transmission, practice, and development of the region's many folklife traditions, especially those that face endangerment. Only apprenticeship pairs within Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) counties are eligible to apply. In North Carolina, these counties are: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Cherokee, Clay, Cleveland, Davie, Forsyth, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, McDowell, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, Yadkin, and Yancey Counties.

Ineligible art forms and activities include the work of contemporary studio craft artists and revivals by mentor artists from outside of the activity's originating cultural community. While mentors must represent a tradition known and practiced within their North Carolina community, apprentices may come from different backgrounds or cultural communities.

## Requirements

- Mentors must represent a tradition known and practiced within their NC community. Please consult with NC Folklife Institute staff about eligibility of art forms and activities before applying.
- Master and apprentice must both reside in a North Carolina Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) county, and be able to provide proof of US and NC residency. Please contact NC Folklife Institute staff directly to discuss possible exceptions for residents of ARC counties outside of NC.

- Pairs must submit a work plan as part of their application that sets clear and achievable goals that can be completed within the 12-month grant period.
- Pairs should meet on a regularly scheduled basis. Most pairs meet weekly.
- Pairs must track their meetings and progress through either written evaluations, a photographic record, audio recordings, or video clips. NC Folklife Institute staff are available to discuss appropriate tracking methods.
- All pairs must share their accomplishments in a public presentation within their community at the end of the apprenticeship. Presentations may take the form of performances, exhibits, demonstrations, web and social media presentations, or other formats appropriate to the tradition. NC Folklife Institute staff can assist in preparations for such presentations.
- Applicant pairs are welcome to receive assistance from family members, advocates, translators, or other collaborators in preparing application materials. However, all mentor and apprentice applicants must review and approve the final application contents before submission.
- If an application is submitted online by a collaborator on behalf of the mentor and/or apprentice, the mentor and apprentice must sign the Application Review & Signature Form by hand, and the fully completed form must be uploaded with the application submission. Applications completed directly by mentor and apprentice applicants may use electronic signatures in the online application portal.
- Mentors and Apprentices must be 18 years of age or older.

## **Scope and allowable expenses**

The mentor receives a grant award of \$7,000. The apprentice receives a grant award of \$3,000. Alternative distributions of funding may be considered upon request. Multiple mentor artists or multiple apprentice artists are permitted. In such a situation, the grant award is shared among the recipients (for example, if there are two apprentices, each would receive \$1,500). Applicants will describe who is responsible for any supply costs. Typically, the apprentice is expected to cover the cost of supplies.

## **Project period**

Apprenticeships will take place from July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027.

While the application deadline is July 17, 2026, and award notifications will be made in August 2026, any mentorship activity that takes place on or after July 1 will be counted retroactively toward fulfilling the grant requirements. Apprenticeship pairs are encouraged to begin working together during this window if appropriate, and should document any early activity accordingly.

## How we make funding decisions

Applications will be reviewed by a panel, and three mentor/apprentice pairings will be selected in this FY2026–27 application cycle.

## Application information

Submit your application at: <https://form.jotform.com/261265938756168>). The mentor(s) and apprentice(s) must submit all materials as a single application. If you are not able to access Jotform and need to submit a hardcopy through mail or email, please contact the NC Folklife Institute at (336) 223-5956 or [apprenticeship@ncfolk.org](mailto:apprenticeship@ncfolk.org).

## What Makes a Strong Application?

When your application is reviewed by a panel, they will consider both your application materials and the context of your proposed apprenticeship.

- Is the mentor artist well regarded in their community as a practitioner of this tradition?
- Is the apprentice committed to living and practicing among the regional, cultural, or artistic community from which this tradition comes?
- Is there a sense that the apprenticeship will lead to an ongoing relationship between the mentor and the apprentice?
- Is there interest among others in your regional, cultural, or artistic community in seeing this tradition practiced and taught?
- Is this grant a unique opportunity for the mentor and the apprentice to do something not otherwise possible?
- Is there urgency in supporting this mentorship opportunity (for example, age or health of mentor artist, timing of participant schedules, convergence of other opportunities?)
- How culturally specific is the knowledge being passed on? Will this time together allow for deep transmission of knowledge? For example, a proposal to teach the specific nuances of a music style from your community, accompanied by teachings about that community's history, will be stronger than a proposal to learn the basics of a commonly practiced instrument, even if that instrument is part of your music tradition. If the tradition is endangered and not widely practiced, however, beginner instruction can make for a strong application.

## Submitting Support Materials

Please submit work samples for each individual included in this application. Select work samples that clearly demonstrate the nature of your practice. Applicants are welcome to submit supporting video of themselves at work or in conversation together. For all individual work samples, indicate which artist each sample refers to.

- For audio and/or video work samples and website links:
  - In the JotForm application, upload a Word (.doc, .docx) or PDF document to provide links to online audio and/or video samples, and provide links to articles, websites, or other online materials. Provide descriptions and indicate time markers for which portions of longer audio and/or video samples the panel should view; up to 10 minutes of total listening and viewing time per artist. Audio and video samples must be submitted as URL web links. Maximum PDF/doc size for links to documents is 10MB.
  
- For image work samples:
  - Use the upload field in your Jotform application to provide image work samples, with descriptions. For visual art forms, please provide at least 5 images per artist that clearly show examples of your finished work. Maximum image size is 1000x1000 px. Formats accepted: .pdf .jpeg .png

If you need assistance uploading work samples, or need to provide work samples through email or mail, please contact the NC Folklife Institute at (336) 223-5956 or [apprenticeship@ncfolk.org](mailto:apprenticeship@ncfolk.org).



## *In These Mountains* NC Folklife Apprenticeship

### FY 2026-27 Mentor Application

#### MENTOR CONTACT AND BASIC INFORMATION

Mentor First and Last Name:	
Mentor Street Address:	
Mentor City, State, Zip:	
Mentor Home Phone:	
Mentor Mobile Phone:	
Mentor Email:	
Mentor Place of Birth:	
Mentor Date of Birth:	

#### MENTOR NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

It is recommended that each question be answered in at least one full paragraph. Enter your responses in the open/blank space provided below the question boxes.

1.	What is the traditional practice or art form that you will be teaching?
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2. How has this tradition been part of the cultural life, history, or heritage of your community?

3. For how long have you practiced this tradition, and how did you first learn?

4. Tell us about any previous teaching experience.

5. Tell us about your relationship with the applying apprentice.

6. Please describe how a funded apprenticeship would facilitate an opportunity for you that may not otherwise be feasible. For example: financial compensation for time taken from other responsibilities; expense of materials or travel; urgency for mentor artist to pass on knowledge.



## *In These Mountains* NC Folklife Apprenticeship

### FY 2026-27 Apprentice Application

#### APPRENTICE CONTACT AND BASIC INFORMATION

Apprentice First and Last Name:	
Apprentice Street Address:	
Apprentice City, State, Zip:	
Apprentice Home Phone:	
Apprentice Mobile Phone:	
Apprentice Email:	
Apprentice Place of Birth:	
Apprentice Date of Birth:	

#### APPRENTICE NARRATIVE QUESTIONS

It is recommended that each question be answered in at least one full paragraph. Enter your responses in the blank spaces provided below the question boxes.

1.	What is the traditional practice or art form that you will be learning?
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2. Please describe your current skill level in this tradition and your need for intensive training with a mentor.

3. What does this tradition mean to you personally? What role does it play in your life or the cultural life, history, or heritage of your community?

4. Why do you want to work with this mentor artist in particular?

5.	In which ways do you plan to continue working in this tradition in the future? How will your participation in an apprenticeship impact your community or the continuation of the tradition?
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6.	Please describe how a funded apprenticeship would facilitate an opportunity for you that may not otherwise be possible. For example: need for financial compensation for time taken from other responsibilities; expense of materials or travel; urgency for mentor artist to pass on knowledge.
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North Carolina  
**Folklife**  
I N S T I T U T E

## *In These Mountains* NC Folklife Apprenticeship

### FY 2026-27 Mentor & Apprentice Work Plan

Mentor and Apprentice should fill out this section together. Enter your responses in the blank spaces provided below the question boxes. Attach extra sheets of paper if needed.

1.	List the skills and techniques that will be taught during the apprenticeship (for example, which tunes, forms, concepts, or styles do you want the apprentice(s) to learn, which objects do you want them to make?)
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2.	What will the apprentice be expected to do between sessions? Please be specific.
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3.	What will the finished product of the apprenticeship be? (For example: build three ceramic pieces; make one finished quilt; develop a repertory of twenty songs or tunes; learn three complete dances)
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4.	How often will you meet, where will you meet, and for how long will each session last?
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5.	What supplies and tools will be required for the apprenticeship, and who will be responsible for providing them?
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6.	How will you track your experience together? (Examples: Photo log, video or audio recordings, blog, social media, written chart or log book) Documentation will help communicate the success of your partnership.
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7.	Describe your ideas for 1 – 2 possible public presentations that you would like to offer at the end of the apprenticeship, and where they might take place in your own town, city, county, or region. (Examples: exhibit, demonstration, performance, web presentation) Please contact NC Folklife Institute staff for help with this question if needed.
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## In These Mountains NC Folklife Apprenticeship Application Review & Signature Form (FY 2026-27)

This form must be completed and signed by all mentor and apprentice applicants. If another person assisted in preparing or submitting this application, that person must also complete the "Application Collaborator" section below.

The North Carolina Folklife Institute welcomes assistance from family members, advocates, translators, cultural workers, or other collaborators who help applicants complete or submit applications. This process helps ensure that all applicants have reviewed the contents of the application and agree that it accurately represents their work, goals, experiences, and voices.

**Was this application prepared or submitted with assistance from another person acting on behalf of the mentor and/or apprentice?**

**No.**

If No, please complete the Mentor & Apprentice Acknowledgement section below.

**Yes.**

If Yes, Please complete both the Mentor & Apprentice Acknowledgement and Application Collaborator sections below.

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### **Mentor & Apprentice Acknowledgement**

By signing below, we acknowledge that:

- We have reviewed the contents of this application in full.
- We understand the proposed apprenticeship work plan and grant expectations.
- We agree that the application accurately represents our work, experiences, goals, and intentions.
- We understand that this apprenticeship may be documented for educational, archival, reporting, and promotional purposes related to the NC Folklife Apprenticeship Program and the North Carolina Folklife Institute.

**Mentor Artist**

**Apprentice**

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Application Collaborator (if applicable)**

*If an application is submitted online by a collaborator on behalf of the mentor and/or apprentice, the mentor and apprentice must sign this Application Review & Signature Form by hand, and the fully completed form must be uploaded with the application submission. Applications completed directly by mentor and apprentice applicants may use electronic signatures in the online application portal.*

Collaborator Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Applicants (friend, family member, translator, advocate, organization staff, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please briefly describe the assistance provided: *(Examples: writing assistance, translation, typing responses, internet access, uploading files, application submission assistance)*

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**Application Collaborator**

By signing below, I affirm that:

- I assisted the applicants at their request.
- I reviewed the completed application with the mentor and apprentice before submission.
- To the best of my knowledge, the application accurately reflects the applicants' own experiences, intentions, and voices.

Collaborator Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Collaborator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Work Samples

*Please see guidelines for work sample requirements.*

Use this space to describe each sample submitted, including titles of work, artist's name, date of work, and location for event video submissions. If video submissions total more than ten (10) minutes per artist, please indicate which portion of each video the panel should review.

### Mentor's Work Samples

### Apprentice's Work Samples

## Hard Copy Work Sample Return Options

*Please select only ONE option for your submitted physical work samples.*

*If all work samples are digital, you may skip this page*

### Mentor Artist

\_\_\_\_\_ Please return all physical work samples to me. I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope with postage for their return.

\_\_\_\_\_ By signing this form, I give my permission for my work samples to be kept by the North Carolina Folklife Institute and stored in the NC Folklife Institute Archives. I understand that these archives are for educational and research use only. Any commercial use must be approved in advance by me on a case-by-case basis.

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not return my work samples. I authorize their disposal.

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Mentor Artist Signature

Date

### Apprentice

\_\_\_\_\_ Please return all physical work samples to me. I have enclosed a self-addressed envelope with postage for their return.

\_\_\_\_\_ By signing this form, I give my permission for my work samples to be kept by the North Carolina Folklife Institute and stored in the NC Folklife Institute Archives. I understand that these archives are for educational and research use only. Any commercial use must be approved in advance by me on a case-by-case basis.

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Apprentice Signature

Date