



Emerging Traditional Artists Program

Program Guidelines 2026-2027

| Application Opens | Application Deadline | Decision Notification By | Award Period |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, February 10, 2026 | Thursday, April 30, 2026 | Friday, July 10, 2026 | September 1, 2026 - June 30, 2027 |

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ACCESSIBILITY

These guidelines are available in .PDF format and as an accessible Word file at midatlanticarts.org/opportunities/calt-etap/.

To request accommodations during your application process, reach out to Program Associate, Folk & Traditional Arts, Joel Chapman at jchapman@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2488 x 117. Please request accommodation **at least 10 business days** before the application due date so we can best serve your needs.

Si desea ver esta guía de aplicación en español, por favor envíe un correo electrónico a edassler@midatlanticarts.org tan pronto como le sea posible para hacer una solicitud.

CONTACT US

Our Folk & Traditional Arts staff are available to help you build a strong application. We recommend you get in touch **more than 48 hours** before the due date, so we have time to answer your questions. We'd love to discuss your application with you!

- Ellie Dassler, Program Director, Folk & Traditional Arts: edassler@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2587 x 115
- Joel Chapman, Program Associate, Folk & Traditional Arts: jchapman@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2488 x 117

See [Application Support Resources](#) for webinars and office hours.

ABOUT FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS

Often defined as the “art of everyday life,” folk and traditional arts reflect the aesthetics, practices, values, and beliefs of community groups, such as families, geographic communities, occupational groups, ethnic heritage groups, faith communities, and more.

Traditional arts are often learned orally or by observation and imitation, rather than in institutional or academic settings. All traditions are connected to the history of the communities that practice them, but they are not just art forms of the past. Instead, they are “living traditions” that adapt to remain relevant in a changing world. Individuals and communities use traditional arts to build collective power, engage in healing, and strengthen their identity.

Central Appalachia is home to diverse folk and traditional cultures. Examples include blues, folk, and old-time music; basketmaking; instrument building; woodworking; quilting; weaving and spinning; cultural traditions of new immigrant communities; diverse gardening and foodways traditions; and much more.

The people who practice, sustain, and steward these traditions may call themselves “folk artists” or “traditional artists,” but they may not call themselves “artists” at all. They may instead think of themselves as tradition bearers, knowledge keepers, cultural advocates/activists, musicians, cooks/bakers, craftspeople, artisans, farmers, dancers, storytellers, and others. We welcome whatever words feel best to describe yourself and your traditions.

ABOUT CENTRAL APPALACHIA LIVING TRADITIONS

Central Appalachia Living Traditions (CALT) is a multi-part program that invests in communities, seeds new folk and traditional arts experiences, and honors under-recognized practitioners of Central Appalachian traditions. CALT serves the counties of Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC). For a full list of eligible counties, see [Eligibility](#).

ABOUT THE EMERGING TRADITIONAL ARTISTS PROGRAM

The Emerging Traditional Artists Program (ETAP) matches Central Appalachian traditional artists with resources to take their practice to the next level. Artists should be in the early stages of their practice and demonstrate a strong commitment to and understanding of their traditional art form.

ETAP funds are intended to support an important learning opportunity for each awarded artist. Artists have the freedom to choose their own learning opportunity—on their own or, if they wish, with help from Mid Atlantic Arts staff or mentors/leaders within their community.

Awarded artists will receive \$5,000, with few restrictions, for expenses related to their learning opportunity. They will also participate in personalized, cohort-based professional development, including virtual workshops, connecting with peers, and an in-person convening in Spring 2027.

ARTIST LEARNING OPPORTUNITY EXAMPLES:

- Travel to meet other practitioners/potential mentors
- Travel to an invited opportunity to learn, present, exhibit, or perform
- Enroll in an in-person or virtual class, workshop, or apprenticeship
- Research related to your traditional art form
- Purchase supplies and equipment needed for new work
- Rent practice or recording space
- Purchase software/services to build an online presence or enhance marketing
- Engage professional services such as an accountant, attorney, manager, producer, or marketing service

Artists are not required to submit a final report, produce a commissioned work, or engage in a public program. Over the course of the award period (September 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027), artists will participate in a recorded interview with a Mid Atlantic Arts representative about their work and the learning experience resulting from their ETAP award.

ELIGIBILITY

To apply for the Emerging Traditional Artists Program, you must be:

- A traditional artist, practitioner, or keeper of traditional knowledge, including:
 - Visual arts such as crafts
 - Performing arts such as traditional music, dance, or storytelling
 - Food and medicine traditions such as agriculture, recipes/food preparation, or hunting/foraging.
- In the early stages of your traditional arts journey and ready to take your practice to the next level.
 - For example, you may have completed an apprenticeship with a mentor artist and now want to pursue ongoing learning to deepen your knowledge and skills.

- Located in a county designated by the [Appalachian Regional Commission](#) in Ohio, Virginia, or West Virginia. Eligible counties include:
 - **Ohio:** Adams, Ashtabula, Athens, Belmont, Brown, Carroll, Clermont, Columbiana, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, Highland, Hocking, Holmes, Jackson, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mahoning, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, Noble, Perry, Pike, Ross, Scioto, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Vinton, and Washington
 - **Virginia:** Alleghany, Bath, Bland, Botetourt, Buchanan, Carroll, Craig, Dickenson, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Henry, Highland, Lee, Montgomery, Patrick, Pulaski, Rockbridge, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe, as well as the independent cities of Bristol, Buena Vista, Covington, Galax, Lexington, Martinsville, Norton, and Radford
 - **West Virginia:** Barbour, Berkeley, Boone, Braxton, Brooke, Cabell, Calhoun, Clay, Doddridge, Fayette, Gilmer, Grant, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Hancock, Hardy, Harrison, Jackson, Jefferson, Kanawha, Lewis, Lincoln, Logan, Marion, Marshall, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mineral, Mingo, Monongalia, Monroe, Morgan, Nicholas, Ohio, Pendleton, Pleasants, Pocahontas, Preston, Putnam, Raleigh, Randolph, Ritchie, Roane, Summers, Taylor, Tucker, Tyler, Upshur, Wayne, Webster, Wetzel, Wirt, Wood, and Wyoming
- At least 18 years old by the application deadline of April 30, 2026.
 - There is no maximum age to apply for the Emerging Traditional Artists Program.
- A United States citizen, U.S. national, or permanent resident.
- In good standing with Mid Atlantic Arts, with no overdue or outstanding required reports and/or grant documents.

You do not need to rely on your traditional art form for income. You should demonstrate a strong commitment to your art form and an understanding of its history and current role within your community.

REQUIRED APPLICATION MATERIALS

To apply, visit our online application portal at midatlanticarts.smartsimple.com. Applications are due Thursday, April 30, 2026.

APPLICATION NARRATIVE

You will answer the below 5 questions in your application. You have two choices for completing the narrative:

1. **WRITTEN:** Type your responses in the spaces provided. Word limits are just suggestions—you do not need to use all available space in your responses.
2. **AUDIO:** Instead of answering written questions, you may record spoken responses and upload an audio file. You must answer all questions in the same recording. Your recording should be no longer than **10 minutes**.

Recordings should have minimal editing and instead focus on answering the questions. Audio recorded on a cell phone or computer app is more than enough! We recommend .MP3 or .WAV format. If you have questions about how to record, format, or share your responses, please contact us.

APPLICATION NARRATIVE QUESTIONS:

1. Tell us about the traditional art form you practice. Explain the process, materials, instruments, or tools involved. (250 words)
2. Why is your art form important to your community? Is it practiced by others in your family, your geographic area, or other groups? If not, explain why it is not commonly practiced. (250 words)
3. Describe your practice so far. When and how did you learn? How have you been recognized for your work? (250 words)
4. What goals do you have for your practice in the next few years? What will reaching these goals mean for you and for the future of your art form? Examples may include sharing your work with new audiences, gaining or improving your skills, or becoming a teacher/mentor for others. (250 words)
5. Tell us about the learning opportunity you will pursue if you receive an ETAP award. How will this learning opportunity help you reach the goals described in question 4? (250 words)

You are **not** required to submit a budget explaining how you would use ETAP funds.

WORK SAMPLES

Work samples are a critical part of your application. They help panelists understand your traditions and your skill as a practitioner.

Be selective. Work samples should be recent, concise, and as relevant to the project as possible. Panelists will spend no more than 15 minutes per application reviewing work samples.

For example, you may want to submit:

- **For visual/craft artists:**
 - A photo or video of you working/your process
 - A photo of finished work that you are proud of.
- **For musicians, dancers, storytellers, or other performing artists:**
 - A short video of you performing.
 - Audio you have recorded.
- **For food practitioners, herbalists, and keepers of other traditional life knowledge:**
 - A photo or video of you working/your process.
 - A photo of a completed dish, salve, garden plot, etc.
- **For anyone:** A link to your personal website or social media that showcases your work.

Please reach out if you have questions about how to pick the right work samples for your application.

WORK SAMPLE SPECIFICATIONS:

- **For audio and video samples:** 3 per application
 - Each sample should be no longer than 3 minutes. If your clip is longer, indicate in the description which 3-minute portion panelists should view. If you do not specify, reviewers will view only the first 3 minutes.
 - Make samples available online on YouTube, Vimeo, Soundcloud, Spotify, Instagram, etc. Provide the URL for panelists to access the sample and the password, if needed.
- **For image work samples:** 5 per application
 - We recommend photos in .JPEG/JPG or .PNG format.
- **For document work samples:** 3 per application. Maximum of 6 pages total.
 - We recommend documents in .PDF format.

REVIEW CRITERIA

A diverse panel of folk and traditional arts specialists, including folklorists, cultural workers, artists, and culture bearers, will review applications based on the below criteria.

Make sure your application shows evidence of each criterion in your narrative and work samples. Each criterion is scored 1-10 for a total possible score of 20.

1. **ARTIST JOURNEY:** The applicant's knowledge of and commitment to their traditional art form is clear.
 - You will address this criterion primarily in narrative questions 1, 2, and 3, and with your work samples.
2. **PROGRAM IMPACT:** The applicant shares a thoughtful plan for their learning opportunity. It is clear how this learning opportunity will help them reach their goals.
 - You will address this criterion primarily in narrative questions 4 and 5.

AWARD LIMITATIONS, PAYMENTS, AND REQUIREMENTS

PROGRAM LIMITATIONS

You may not apply for the CALT Emerging Traditional Artists Program in the same year as a [CALT Experiences grant](#). Please contact us with any questions about which program is right for you.

PAYMENTS

If awarded, your payment will be sent within 45 days of when Mid Atlantic Arts receives and approves all necessary award documents.

TAXES

ETAP funds are taxable income. All ETAP awardees are responsible for reporting grant funds to the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#). Mid Atlantic Arts will connect you to tax support resources to help you manage your award.

AWARD REQUIREMENTS

There is no formal final report or final budget requirement for this program. If awarded, you will participate in a recorded interview with a Mid Atlantic Arts representative about your work and the learning experience resulting from your ETAP award.

Awardees are expected to participate in cohort-based professional development, including virtual workshops and an in-person convening in Spring 2027. Mid Atlantic Arts will work with awardees to schedule activities, whenever possible, and make them accessible.

READ MORE ABOUT THE EMERGING TRADITIONAL ARTISTS PROGRAM [HERE](#).

Application Support Resources

We encourage you to reach out to our Folk & Traditional Arts staff for a personalized conversation about your application. There are also several public opportunities to meet us and ask questions.

WEBINARS

ACCESSIBILITY: We will provide CART translation/live captioning in English for all webinars, and post a recording with English and Spanish captions on the [Mid Atlantic Arts website](#) and [YouTube channel](#).

To request other accommodations, or if you have any questions about webinars, please contact Program Associate, Folk & Traditional Arts, Joel Chapman at jchapman@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2488 x 117. Please request accommodation **at least 5 business days** before the webinar.

Wednesday, February 19, 2026 @ 1:00 PM ET: Emerging Traditional Artist Program: The Basics

- **Register:** https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Peg8RhQAR2SRG4uM1d_5Dw

OFFICE HOURS

Our Folk & Traditional Arts staff are available to answer quick questions without an appointment at our weekly office hours:

- **Wednesdays at 1:00pm ET:** Feb. 11, Feb. 18, Feb. 25, Mar. 4, Mar. 11, Mar. 18, Apr. 4, Apr. 8, Apr. 15, Apr. 22, Apr. 29
- **Join Office Hours via Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85894149405>
No registration is required. You will enter a Zoom waiting room and staff will see you in order of joining.

If the above times don't work for you, reach out for a conversation on your schedule:

- Ellie Dassler, Program Director, Folk & Traditional Arts: edassler@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2587 x 115
- Joel Chapman, Program Associate, Folk & Traditional Arts: jchapman@midatlanticarts.org or 667-401-2488 x 117