

Individual Folk Arts Support

CONTACT INFORMATION

Jean Tokuda Irwin, Folk Arts
Chase Home Museum of Utah Folk Arts
801.245-7288
jirwin@utah.gov

DESCRIPTION

Individual Folk Artist Grant Eligibility

Because this category is broad and evolving, before applying, individual folk artist's qualifications must be reviewed by the Utah Arts & Museums' Folk Arts Program.

Contact: jirwin@utah.gov or (801) 245-7288.

Folk & Traditional Arts: <http://heritage.utah.gov/arts-and-museums/folk-traditional-arts>

Folk and traditional arts encompass traditional artists and communities, from rural cowboys, immigrant populations from around the world, American Indians living in urban/rural areas and on reservation lands to the many cultural, occupational and ethnic groups living in Utah. Focus is centered on perpetuating artistic traditions and skills and maintaining unique cultural identities. Traditional arts include crafts, music, dance and stories passed down through families and communities or within tribal, ethnic, religious, geographical or occupational groups. These artistic skills, which reflect the values and shared identity of earlier and current generations, are a vital component of community culture and heritage.

Examples of Utah traditional folk arts include but are not limited to: saddle making, rawhide braiding, and poetry for working cowboys; pioneer crafts and wagon making; American Indian baskets, rugs and beadwork, dancing and music celebrating ethnic roots.

It is important to emphasize that the art/tradition must come from a specific community, and that the "folk artist" belongs to that community. The art form is usually learned informally, and passed down from another person within that same shared community. Those who learn "folk arts" from a book, video, or on their own are not considered for a folk artist grant. There must be an evident tradition of the art form within the folk artist's community.

Individual folk artist grant are intended for:

1. Emerging folk artists trying to establish and document their art forms. For those who need assistance to gain legitimacy within their community within a set of shared values and beliefs; and to raise awareness within the context of the larger community.

2. Preserving an art form that is diminishing or dying in the knowledge of the public or hasn't yet emerged.
3. Supporting traditional arts coming from discrete shared community values and emerges from a distinct community base.

Utah Arts & Museums criterion for individual folk artists aligns with the National Endowment for the Arts. Their description is as follows: *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 values and standards of excellence 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.*

– National Endowment for the Arts

<http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/discipline-descriptions#sthash.lpLATiRG.dpuf>

Characteristics of traditional folk arts

From a historical perspective, traditional folk arts had these characteristics:

- They were transmitted through an oral tradition. Before the 20th century, ordinary farm workers and factory workers were usually illiterate. They acquired songs, stories and poetry by memorizing them. Primarily, this was not mediated by books, recorded or transmitted media. Singers may extend their repertoire using broadsheets, song books or CDs, but these secondary enhancements are of the same character as the primary songs experienced in the flesh.
- The music, dance and stories were often related to national culture. It can be culturally particular; from a particular region or culture. In the context of an immigrant group, folk arts acquire an extra dimension for social cohesion. It is particularly conspicuous in immigrant societies, where Greek Australians, Somali Americans, Punjabi Canadians and others strive to emphasize their differences from the mainstream. They learn songs, stories and dances that originate in the countries from which their grandparents came.
- They commemorate historical and personal events at certain times of the year, such as Easter, May Day, Chinese New Year, Passover, and Obon. Particular songs, stories and dances celebrate the yearly cycle. Weddings, birthdays and funerals may also be noted with songs, stories, dances and special costumes. Religious festivals often have a folk music, dance and storytelling component. Performances at these events bring together children and non-professionals to participate in a public arena, giving an emotional bonding that is unrelated to the aesthetic qualities of the art form.
- These arts have been performed, by custom, over a long period of time, usually several generations.