

Established by Congress in 1965, the **National Endowment for the Arts** is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector, the Arts Endowment supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America’s rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America.

The National Endowment for the Arts is the only funder, public or private, to support the arts in all 50 states, U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. The agency awards more than \$120 million annually with each grant dollar matched by up to nine dollars from other funding sources.

**Economic Impact of the Arts**

The arts generate more money to local and state economies than several other industries. According to data released by the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the arts contributed \$804.2 billion to the U.S. economy in 2016, more than agriculture or transportation, and employed 5 million Americans.

**FUNDING THROUGH THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS FOLK AND TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM:**

**Funding nonprofit organizations and National Heritage Fellowships, 1975-2018:**

**\$132 million**

**Funding nonprofit organizations and National Heritage Fellowships, 2018:**

**\$3 million**

**2018 FUNDING EXAMPLES**

*Providing critical support for the smallest communities:* **Hopitutuqaki, the Hopi School in Hotevilla, Arizona**, to support learning opportunities for Hopi students in arts, culture, and language. Master Hopi artists teach students customs, language, and traditional and contemporary arts.

*Helping sustain cultural traditions through apprenticeships:* **Connecticut Historical Society in Hartford, Connecticut**, to support the Southern New England Traditional Arts Apprenticeship program, offering instruction for apprentices from master artists in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

*Celebrating our diverse national character:* **National Council for the Traditional Arts’ National Folk Festival in Salisbury, Maryland**, to support the free public festival offering a wide array of traditional music and dance performances, as well as presenting traditional artists from the region surrounding Salisbury. For the 2018 festival, 63,000 people attended.

*Teaching students about traditional arts practices:* **Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, Mississippi**, to support an arts education program to teach students how to play the blues on guitar, bass, drums, piano, and harmonica. Students make a recording of their blues ensembles while learning the history and heritage of the tradition.

*Providing opportunities for young people to celebrate their families’ stories:* **Texas Folklife Resources in Austin, Texas**, to support Stories from Deep in the Heart that trains high school students to create short, broadcast-quality podcasts about the stories, folklore, arts, and cultural traditions of their families and communities.



## NATIONAL INITIATIVE

The **NEA National Heritage Fellowships** showcase our nation's folk and traditional artists so that the public gains a greater understanding of their contributions to America's culture. The fellowships—the highest honor our government bestows in the folk and traditional arts—are awarded annually to master folk artists who receive a \$25,000 award and are honored in Washington, D.C. at an awards ceremony and at a free concert. The nine 2018 recipients range from an Appalachian old-time fiddler, to an African-American quilter, to a rodeo tailor.

## BUILDING THE FIELD

The National Endowment for the Arts Folk and Traditional Arts program was invited to create programming for the second day of Building Bridges: A Symposium on International Cultural Heritage Preservation, a program of the Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee. From October 23 to the 24th, 2018, participants shared recent/current projects addressing cultural heritage protection and brainstormed strengths and weaknesses of current programs.

The Folk and Traditional Arts program held its first national convening as part of the 2018 National Assembly of State Arts Agencies conference. This convening provided a national scale and opportunity to discuss the value and impact of the folk and traditional arts, to consider strategies for increasing support and awareness, and to envision a robust future for the field.

The Arts Endowment piloted the first state folklife programs at state arts agencies in 1974, leading to a robust network of state folklife programs and partnerships with deep regional resources and archives.

In 1966, the agency's first year of funding, support for national and regional folk festivals was identified as a priority with the first grant made in 1967 to the National Folk Festival Association.

## RESEARCH

**Qualitative Analysis Findings: Folk & Traditional Arts Partnerships (2017)** analyzes the work of the nation's Folk Arts Partnerships or state folklife programs managed through the state arts agencies, identifying how these programs strengthen cultural heritage while connecting underserved communities to state arts agency resources.

## RESOURCES

Each year, through the Folk and Traditional Arts program, the Arts Endowment funds organizations to conduct fieldwork that identifies cultural practices. The results are made publicly available through broadcast, recordings, and/or placement in public archives, creating lasting resources for cultural communities and the public.

2018 examples include:

- The Consultancy and Professional Development Program of the American Folklore Society involves nonprofit folk arts organizations, independent folklorists, and government agencies engaged with the traditional arts to learn best practices.
- The Four Rivers Cultural Center and Museum in Ontario, Oregon, has a staff folklorist who oversees fieldwork, public programs, exhibits, and technical assistance for folk and traditional arts in Eastern Oregon.

For more information on folk & traditional arts at the NEA, go to [arts.gov/artistic-fields/folk-traditional-arts](https://www.arts.gov/artistic-fields/folk-traditional-arts). For more information on the NEA and its programs, go to [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov). The NEA is on Twitter @NEAarts as well as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and iTunes.

