

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.

**Funding through the
folk & traditional
arts program,
1975-2015:**

\$122.4 million

ADVANCING LEARNING

Through the folk and traditional arts, the National Endowment for the Arts funds apprenticeships.

- Between 2006 and 2015, the NEA awarded \$2.6 million to support apprenticeship programs.
- Apprenticeship programs have led to community scholar training, digital storytelling programs, and activities used in fields other than folk and traditional arts.

National Endowment for the Arts-funded learning opportunities for the public encompass widely diverse traditions.

- Hands-on learning programs cover traditions such as Cambodian dancing, Mariachi music, Haitian drumming, Native American basket-making, and Chesapeake decoy duck-carving.

- Between 2006 and 2015, the NEA awarded more than \$6 million to support folklife festivals across the nation, providing learning programs such as workshops, craft demonstrations, and facilitated conversations.

National Endowment for the Arts funding of school-based activities bring folk and traditional arts into the classroom.

- Programs instruct teachers and students in basic fieldwork and oral history methods, empowering them to identify and document folk arts and traditions in their own neighborhoods.
- Folk arts have broad relevance and can be integrated into a school's arts, social studies, and English language arts classes.

FUELING CREATIVITY

Through folk and traditional arts statewide partnership grants, the National Endowment for the Arts funds innovative projects among traditional artists, cultural institutions, and ethnographers.

- To engage the nation's rural, mountain, occupational groups, inner-city, working-class, and immigrant communities, the NEA developed the state folklife programs in 1974.

- Folk and traditional arts partnerships serve to engage traditional artists in arts-based community development through public art, museum exhibitions, festival programming, documentary film, and music productions.



CONNECTING AND CELEBRATING

The National Endowment for the Arts' grantmaking program provides critical support for the smallest of communities and least known of artistic or cultural forms.

- NEA's folk and traditional arts funding is the only federal support available for this kind of artistic and cultural expression.
- NEA's folk and traditional arts grants are awarded to communities that are often rich in culture but poor in resources.
- NEA's folk and traditional arts funding helps revitalize cultural traditions, guaranteeing they remain an active part of a community's history, identity, and future.

National Endowment for the Arts' folk and traditional arts funding celebrates America as a nation of nations, supporting ethnic and cultural diversity as a strength of national character.

- The community engagement activities supported by NEA funding help forge unity, understanding, and acceptance among immigrant communities.

The National Endowment for the Arts supports field research that identifies cultural practices.

- The results of fieldwork are placed in public archives, creating lasting resources for the nation's cultural communities and the public.
- Fieldwork enables state arts agencies and nonprofits to engage in meaningful ways with the nation's underserved communities.

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 NEA has awarded more than 400 fellowships in 50 states and three U.S. territories, recognizing more than 204 distinct artistic traditions.
- The NEA National Heritage Fellowships validate folk and traditional cultures here at home and promotes worldwide recognition of folk arts.
- The NEA National Heritage Fellowships help to maintain artistic traditions of culturally-distinct communities and promotes the vitality of those traditions.

The NEA National Heritage Fellowship program is one of the most public of the NEA's program.

- The annual free concert featuring each year's fellows is a well-attended and much loved event with many people attending every year.
- Anyone can nominate an artist to be considered for a fellowship.

BUILDING THE FIELD

The National Endowment for the Arts folk and traditional arts program has had a major impact on the folk arts field, strengthening its infrastructure and seeding programs.

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

Since 1982, the NEA National Heritage Fellowships have inspired the creation of state and local awards.

- There are currently 16 states with folk and heritage awards and 14 states with governor's or individual artists awards that feature a folk arts recipient.

