



Montana Circle of American Masters

Program Guidelines

About the Montana Arts Council

The Montana Arts Council is the agency of state government established to develop the creative potential of all Montanans, advance education, spur economic vibrancy, and revitalize communities through involvement in the arts. The Montana Arts Council is governed by 15 individuals appointed by the Governor. It is funded by state and federal government.

Program Description

The Montana Circle of American Masters (MCAM) celebrates the contributions of Montana's master artists in traditional and folk arts. A member of Montana's Circle of American Masters is a person who throughout their lifetime of work in the traditional arts has created a notable body of work. Of significant cultural and artistic stature, their work is representative of the historic, traditional, and innovative arts distinctive to the State and is worthy of note on both a state and national level.

The folk and traditional arts are rooted in a community (ethnic, geographic, linguistic, religious, occupational) or family. They reflect the aesthetics and values of the community in which they arise and are often symbols of a group's identity. Examples of visual (or material) folk arts include, but aren't limited to, quilting, beading, saddlemaking, tole painting, ledger art, or calligraphy. Examples of intangible folk arts include, but are not limited to, dance, songs, instrumental music, storytelling, foodways, and local architecture, all of which are forms of traditional arts not designed as visual. All these grassroots ways of knowing have woven Montana's rich heritage.

Traditional arts are learned informally, through careful observation and practice, usually from elders and masters and often passed on from one generation to the next. They can be self-taught within a tradition wherein the folk practitioner or artist is of the cultural background that the practice originates.

Guiding Principles

This award honors those who have spent a significant portion of their lives advocating for and/or creating traditional art forms significant to Montana. MCAM honorees..

1. Are recognized as exemplary practitioners of traditional art forms, and their work reflects a high level of technical proficiency and artistic excellence in their craft or art form.
2. Have listened to the heartbeat of their community, learning their art form through informal study and by carefully watching, listening, and doing.
3. Actively participate in their art form, as a practitioner, a mentor, or teacher, in order to promote public awareness and visibility of traditional arts, crafts, and artists.
4. Are guided by traditional methods and techniques to preserve the integrity of their art form.
5. Understand that as a reflection of their culture, their art is a living form that continues to be shaped by creativity and innovation.
6. Act as a model for excellence, inspiring and influencing other generations of artists working within the region and beyond.

Application Deadline

Applications are due on September 15, 2023 at 11:59 PM. Applications must be submitted electronically; hardcopy applications will not be accepted.

Eligible Applicants

- Individual artists at least 18 years of age, U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents, and residents of Montana for at least one full year before the application deadline. if requested, applicant can provide proof of residency.
- An individual must currently be a practicing artist in folk and traditional arts.

Ineligible Applicants

- This award aims to honor those who have dedicated themselves to their craft as a primary pursuit or profession, rather than individuals engaging in the activity as a leisurely pastime or recreation; therefore, hobbyists, historical reenactment actors, and individuals who produce their work using craft kits or who assemble purchased commercial objects will not be considered for this award.
- Groups of artists, arts collectives, businesses, or nonprofit organizations.
- No posthumous awards are given.
- High school and degree-seeking students.
- MAC staff or members of its current governing body, or anyone connected to them by one degree of relationship, marriage or shared household.
- Applicants with outstanding overdue final reports on other Montana Arts Council grants.

Review Criteria

1. **Mastery of their art form:** The artist should demonstrate a high level of technical proficiency and artistic excellence in their craft or art form, including a deep understanding of its techniques and aesthetics. **Attention to detail and quality:** The artist should have an eye for detail and a commitment to quality craftsmanship or performance, ensuring that their work meets the highest standards of excellence.
2. **Cultural authenticity:** The artist should demonstrate a deep understanding and respect for the cultural heritage of their art form, including knowledge of its historical context, traditions, aesthetics, and symbolism. Their work should reflect the values, techniques, and materials that are characteristic of their cultural tradition.
3. **Contribution:**
 - a. **Teaching and mentoring:** The artist has mentored others in their art form, passing on their knowledge, skills, and passion to future generations. They demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively, inspire and motivate students, and foster a love for the art of their respective field.
 - b. **Impact on the community:** The artist's work should have a positive impact on their community, whether by preserving and promoting cultural traditions, providing economic opportunities, or enhancing social cohesion and mutual understanding.
 - c. **Creativity and innovation:** The artist should show an ability to innovate and experiment within their art form, pushing the boundaries of tradition while still maintaining its integrity and authenticity.

Award Amount and Program Benefits

Artists inducted into MCAM receive a \$3000 award.

Additional benefits of induction include a feature article in MAC's quarterly newspaper *State of the Arts*, representation on MAC's website, professional photography of the artist's work, and a public ceremony at the State Capitol in Helena.

Contacts and Accessibility

For questions or concerns about the application process or technical assistance, or to request a large-print or alternate format guidelines, contact Brian Moody at brian.moody2@mt.gov or 406-444-4700 or Taylor Burby at folkloristburby@gmail.com or 406-209-8839.

Nomination and Review Process

- 1) Nominations are submitted by someone who knows the nominee well; family members, friends, community members, or students of honorees may submit a nomination form on behalf of the artist. To nominate an artist, submit the information requested on page 3 of this form via email to folkarts@mt.gov. You can also call 406-444-4700 to complete a nomination over the phone.

- 2) Nominations will be reviewed by Montana Arts Council staff. Approved nominees are invited to submit a full application.
- 3) Complete applications received by September 8, 2023 will be reviewed by a peer artist with expertise in the medium, and then a panel consisting of Montana Arts Council members and local and national folklorists.
- 4) Applications recommended by the panel are sent to the full Montana Arts Council governing board for final approval.

Application Form Questions

1)Folk and Traditional Arts Medium

What type of art do you make?

- 1. How does your art form connect to your culture or community?**
- 2. How did you learn your art form? Who taught you?**
- 3. Have you taught your art form to other people? Who have you taught?**
- 4. Describe some notable milestones and accomplishments from your career in the arts.**

Include awards, achievements, innovations, community recognition, articles, etc.

- 5. Describe how you have contributed to your community or your art form.**

Examples could include: contribution to excellence and public appreciation of the art form through teaching, preserving, or advocacy; innovation or experimentation with the art form; work to build awareness of the art form by significantly increasing public visibility of the folk and traditional arts.

- 6. How will receiving this award benefit you as an artist, and how it will benefit your community?**

Application Form Supplemental Materials

In addition to response to the questions above, applicants must provide the following supplemental materials:

- **Resume or bio**
- **2 Letters of Support**

Letters of support should be from the applicant's community, peers, or mentors.

- **Work Samples**

Images, video or audio recordings, or articles that help demonstrate the applicant's artistic form, skill, contributions, and authenticity