

APPRENTICE OVERVIEW

Mission

To encourage and invest in the continuation, advancement and creation of Tennessee craft by recognizing the role of the master craft artist-apprentice relationship as a way to preserve the state's cultural heritage. This program will contract master craft artists to offer a period of concentrated learning to apprentices who demonstrate a commitment to further develop their abilities as specialized craft practitioners.

Objectives

- Provide Tennessee craft artists with relevant and alternative educational experiences
- Promote and facilitate fine craft as a viable career path for Tennessee artists
- Foster deliberate mentoring
- Facilitate professional development of emerging Tennessee craft artists
- Increase pool of Tennessee craft artists
- Provide Tennessee craft artists with alternative means of professional funding

About Tennessee Arts Commission

When the Tennessee Arts Commission was created in 1967, it was given a special mandate by the General Assembly to stimulate and encourage the presentation of performing, visual and literary arts throughout the state and to encourage public interest in the cultural heritage of Tennessee. Through a variety of programs, the Commission has encouraged excellence in artistic expression through the state's artists and arts organizations. That commitment has continued to expand through the years to ensure that the citizens of Tennessee have access to, and the opportunity to, participate in the arts. For more information, visit tnartscommission.org.

About Tennessee Craft

Founded in 1965, Tennessee Craft is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to continuing and creating Tennessee's fine craft tradition. Through the use of craft mentorships, membership, networking, scholarships and other educational opportunities, Tennessee Craft works to encourage and develop craft and craftspeople of Tennessee. For more information, visit tennesseecraft.org.

The Master Artist Apprentice Program is funded by the Tennessee Arts Commission and administered in cooperation with Tennessee Craft.

PURPOSE OF PROGRAM & PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Master Artist Apprentice Program encourages and fosters transmission of knowledge by a master craft artist to an apprentice, allowing Tennessee craft to thrive. By contracting master craft artists to offer intensive, one-on-one training to qualified apprentices, each contract will support a period of concentrated learning for apprentices who demonstrate a commitment to, and talent, for a specific craft medium, culminating in an exhibit of completed work in the Tennessee Arts Commission gallery in the fall of 2026.

MAAP provides compensation for the master craft artist and apprentice. Most apprenticeships in this program will include a minimum of 80-120 hours of instruction. If selected, Tennessee Craft contracts the master craft artist and the apprentice to implement the work plan submitted in the application. MAAP works closely with the apprenticeship team to ensure success.

MAAP

Master Artist Apprentice Program

FY2026

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who is an Apprentice?

An individual who learns from a master craft artist. Prospective apprentices should demonstrate investment and skill in the art form they wish to continue learning.

Who Can Be Funded?

Apprentices must be residents of Tennessee and must provide a copy of proof of residency (e.g. voter registration or driver license). Priority will be given to apprenticeships that take place outside of institutional settings.

What Can Be Funded?

Eligible craft media includes traditional and non-traditional craft forms, from primitive to contemporary craft objects including basketry, clay, fiber/textiles, furniture, glass, jewelry, leather, metal, 2D & 3D mixed media, paper, printmaking, sculpture, and wood.

Minimum Apprentice Standards

- Resident of Tennessee
- Have a Social Security Number
- Minimum of 18 years of age at time of application submission
- May not be a beginner, but should be someone who has demonstrated an ability in the basic skills of a specific craft
- Working phone number and accessible email account

What Cannot Be Funded?

- Scholarly research, curriculum development, persons enrolled in an arts-related degree program, book publication, and exhibits of historical objects
- General operating expenses, hospitality, or food costs
- Travel outside of the state of Tennessee
- Any art or craft media not listed above

Funding

Selected apprentices will be awarded an honorarium of \$1,900, with funds disbursed as follows: 50% within the first 30 days; 25% at the halfway point and the final 25% when the apprenticeship concludes.

The apprentice receives a \$1,900 honorarium to be used for apprenticeship-related expenses such as craft tools and equipment, travel, supplies and the like.

Note: Honoraria is intended to partially offset expenses of time and resources incurred by the apprentice; however, it is understood that participation in the program will involve additional contributions by the apprentice in order to fulfill the program objectives.

Project Timelines

Master/Apprentice team must fit their apprenticeship into the program period from December 1, 2025 to June 15, 2026.

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SELECTION PROCESS & REPORTS

Criteria and Review Procedure

Applicants will be reviewed by the masters selected for their expertise in the field of craft. Top scoring applicants will be asked to return for an interview, with interview scheduling made via email. All decisions will be final. Notifications of those not selected will occur through an emailed notification.

Apprentice applications will be evaluated by the following criteria:

- Artistic quality of apprentice work samples;
- Evidence of apprentice's commitment to the intended craft;
- Content and feasibility of work planned for the period of the apprenticeship; and
- Quality and appropriateness of work samples (out-of-focus images, low resolution and the like are liabilities).

Award selections will be based on the following criteria:

- The quality of apprentice artwork. The apprentice must not be a complete novice, but must demonstrate a degree of proficiency satisfactory to the master;
- Sufficient time for the apprenticeship to achieve meaningful results; and a
- Demonstrated commitment by the apprentice to the proposed goals.

After the panel ranking, the Master Artist Apprentice Program will review and approve grants. MAAP may make changes — using the rank orders established by the panel — in order to achieve a cohort of grantees that is more representative of Tennessee's diverse cultures and geography.

Progress Reports: Participation & Reporting Overview

MAAP provides a minimum of 80-120 hours of concentrated learning, culminating in a featured exhibit of masters' and apprentices' artwork to be held in the Tennessee Arts Commission gallery. In event that the Tennessee Arts Commission gallery is not available, the work will be exhibit in their virtual gallery.

Progress reports will be assessed along the way to ensure success. A preliminary report will be completed by the apprentice before the 60-day mark; another report will be completed at the midway point; and a final report will be completed at the conclusion of the program.

Report forms will be in electronic format and emailed to participants approximately three to four weeks before each due date and involve written answers to questions related to the program as well as audio, video or photo documentation of participant progress. Sample report forms will also be sent at the beginning of the program for advance review.

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