

Michigan State University

Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program

APPLICATION GUIDE

About the program

The Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program (MTAAP) is a statewide program of the Michigan Traditional Arts Program designed to encourage and preserve traditional knowledge and cultural practices in the state of Michigan. Stipends of \$4000 are awarded through a competitive review process to mentor artists to teach their traditional skills, techniques, and knowledge in a one-on-one learning context to an apprentice during a seven-month period, March-September. The number of apprenticeships awarded each year varies depending on the amount of grant support from outside funding agencies like the NEA. Apprentices also receive a stipend of \$1000 for their participation.

What are traditional arts?

Every group with a sense of its own identity is made up of individuals who share in what they traditionally *believe, do, know, make, and say*. Over time, these beliefs and activities become traditions.

These traditions are often learned informally from members of a group and they connect group members to each other. When informal learning isn't able to happen because of various barriers (finances, distance, time, etc.), a formalized apprenticeship helps create the time and space for knowledge transmission.

Participating in traditions also connects people to their past, is a central part of life in the present, and provides a means to carry cultural knowledge into the future. These traditions are at the heart of all cultures—including those represented in America—throughout the world.

[adapted from "What is Folklore," American Folklore Society. <http://www.afsnet.org/?page=WhatIsFolklore>]

Traditional arts are often deeply tied to a sense of place. The natural and cultural resources of a location are interconnected with the creation and meaning of traditional arts. Traditional arts help link people to place and community; they strengthen a sense of identity and uniqueness. Traditional knowledge and skills typically are learned by one individual teaching another. This teaching often takes place in informal settings such as family homes, religious centers, community centers, studios, and workplaces. Many masters of traditional arts are also excellent teachers. These artist/educators help ensure that skills and knowledge about the art and culture are learned and perpetuated by others.

[adapted from "Extraordinary Ordinary People: American Masters of Traditional Arts," an exhibition co-produced by the Michigan State University Museum and Documentary Arts, Inc.]

What kinds of traditions are supported by MTAAP awards?

Apprenticeships may incorporate a wide range of ethnic, cultural, regional, familial, religious, community, and occupational traditions. Applications are welcomed for all forms of traditions practiced by Michiganders—from old-time fiddling to spoken word poetry, from trapping skills to beekeeping, from musical instrument making to sauna building, and from Ukrainian egg decorating to African American quilting, from ballet folklorico to hula dance.



Find a list of apprenticeships awarded since 1988, here:

<http://traditionalarts.msu.edu/programs/michigan-traditional-arts-apprenticeship/>

Who can apply?

Both the mentor artist and the apprentice must either be residents of Michigan.

Mentor artists should be recognized by their communities as dedicated practitioners with significant expertise within a tradition and display exceptional skill and knowledge. Experience sharing this knowledge with others (workshops, teaching, apprentices, students) is preferred.

Apprentices should have some experience in the tradition they wish to study, awareness of its significance, and must be willing to make a commitment to learn it well and continue the tradition.

Apprentices are encouraged to study with mentor artists within their own communities, families, or ethnic or cultural groups whenever possible. Mentor-apprentice teams who are already working together informally are also encouraged to apply, if MTAAP support will help them to continue or create more space for their work.

How to apply

The following must be submitted to the Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program. Send to:

Micah Ling, MTAP public programs coordinator, at Lingmica@msu.edu

- or -

msu.mtap@gmail.com

Send paper applications to:

**Michigan Traditional Arts Program
MSU Residential College in the Arts and Humanities
362 Bogue St
East Lansing, MI, 48825**

Please note: if you are a repeat applicant feel free to reuse and update a previously submitted application. However, updated letters of recommendation are required unless arrangements have been made with MTAP staff. Be sure to check with MTAP staff in case the application forms have changed. If you have applied in the past or have been documented by MTAP staff as part of our fieldwork efforts and would like any of these materials to be included in your application (images, video, interviews, etc.), please get in touch with Micah Ling (lingmica@msu.edu) to make the appropriate arrangements *at least two weeks prior to submitting your application.*

A. Completed MTAAP form

The mentor artist and apprentice must complete and submit the MTAAP application form. Before you complete this application, it is important for the two of you to meet with one another and talk about your ideas for the apprenticeship. Without a clear, shared understanding of what is to take place, many problems can result, not only in the application but also in the apprenticeship itself.

Questions to consider include information about your backgrounds, why you qualify for this support, what you will do if you receive an apprenticeship grant, the importance of the tradition to be shared, and why you wish to work together.

It is important that you be specific. Use additional pages if necessary. Strong applications typically have a clear plan of work including location, frequency, and duration of your meetings as well as material to be covered during these meetings. We strongly suggest weekly or bi-weekly meetings of at least one hour if geography and scheduling permit. Meeting this often will allow for the richest possible partnership. If this is not possible, applicants are encouraged to attempt to complete a similar number of hours over the course of the seven-month apprenticeship.

B. Examples of mentor artist and apprenticeship work

Both mentor and apprentice must include support materials as evidence of your abilities and experience. For material traditions (such as a craft or foodways), include five to ten photographs of each person's work, or video of pieces being created. For oral performances (such as music, song, storytelling), include approximately five minutes total of each person's performance in audio or video formats, whichever is most appropriate for the tradition. This could be multiple files, as long as they amount to approximately 5 minutes. It is okay if the samples are longer than 5 minutes, but out of respect to the review panelists only 5 minutes will be required for their review. Links to audio and video hosting sites (YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, Bandcamp, etc.), or to published materials such as albums or films are accepted. Please include a short written description for each file or link included.

*Please note that any materials submitted (flash drives, DVDs, pieces of work, etc.) will not be returned and will be added to the MTAP Archive. Please make special arrangements prior to your submission if you would like materials to be returned to you. If you have any questions about this requirement, contact the program coordinator at lingmica@msu.edu.

C. Three letters of support

Provide two letters of support for the mentor artist, and one for the apprentice (three in total). These should be from people who know you well, and who can provide information about your relationship to and expertise in the tradition you practice. These people should not be individuals participating in the apprenticeship, i.e. a mentor artist writing a letter for their own apprentice or vice versa, nor should they be the parent of the apprentice.

What happens after your application is submitted?

The Michigan Traditional Arts Program invites a panel of cultural specialists and traditional arts practitioners to review the applications and select the awardees based on the information in the answers on the MTAAP form, and on the work samples and letters of support. The panelists evaluate your application according to the following criteria:

- The mentor artist must excel in the tradition, be recognized in their community as an excellent performer or practitioner of the tradition and be actively practicing the tradition.
- The commitment of the individuals to the apprenticeship must be evident and the apprentice's commitment to and interest in the tradition must be unquestionable.
- The commitment of the mentor artist and apprentice to continue practicing the tradition after the apprenticeship has ended must be evident.
- The work plan must be feasible.

- The impact of the apprenticeship on the vitality of the tradition in the community as a whole must be evident.

The panel meets in late January or early February and the meeting is open to the public. This is not a time for public comment, but can be interesting if applicants are curious about the process. Applicants will be notified as to the date and location of the review panel meeting.

The \$4,000/\$1,000 Award

When an application is selected by the panel for funding, the mentor artist will receive a \$4,000 award and the apprentice will receive \$1000 for their participation. If the mentor artist normally charges for lessons, consider their typical hourly fee in comparison to the apprenticeship award and time spent together. Participants may have to pay taxes on the amount they receive. It is their responsibility to pay any taxes due if they receive a 1099 from Michigan State University.

What happens if your application is selected?

Notification and payment

We will notify you in writing about the panel’s decision on your application in early February and arrange for the first payment (75%) of the honorarium. Apprenticeships are expected to begin in March and be completed by the end of September. In July, arrangements will be made to make the second (25%) payment.

Site visit

During the summer, a member of the Michigan Traditional Arts Program staff will arrange a time to visit with you at the location where you typically hold your sessions. They will conduct an interview with you about your tradition and about the apprenticeship. The interview and visit will be recorded with photography, audio, and video. The documentation will be archived into the Michigan Traditional Arts Program Folklife Research Collections so that it can be used for future research, recruiting for future apprenticeships, and educational activities. It may also be used in development of social media content such as blog posts or podcasts.

Report and Evaluation

Shortly before the apprenticeship is completed, both mentor and apprentice will be sent a two-page final report form. These will be kept confidential and will be sent out separately. The questions ask you to describe the apprenticeship experience and make recommendations for improvements in future programs.

Potential Public Presentations

Some mentors and apprentices may also be invited to participate in public programs produced annually by the Michigan Traditional Arts Program. Those who participate will receive a separate small stipend for their time and travel costs. Participation could include one or more of the following: a short presentation or interview on stage, leading children’s activities at a festival, or demonstration and display of your tradition in some other public setting.

Deadlines and project activity timeline

First Monday in January

Annual deadline for applications

Mid-January

Review panel meets to review and decide on applicants



Early February	Applicants notified of awards
March	Apprenticeships begin and first payment is made to mentor artist
April-August	Site visits are made for interviews and documentation
September 15	Final reports due to coordinator
Late September	Final payment is made to mentor artist

Contact

If you have questions or want additional information, contact the Michigan Traditional Arts Program at MItraditionalarts@msu.edu

Marsha MacDowell, MTAP Director – macdowel@msu.edu
 Micah Ling, Public Programs Coordinator – lingmica@msu.edu

The Michigan Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program is one of the many activities of the Michigan Traditional Arts Program (MTAP), a statewide folklife and traditional arts program based at Michigan State University. The mission of MTAP is to “advance cross-cultural understanding and equity in a diverse society through the documentation, preservation, and presentation of traditional arts, folklife, and every day culture in Michigan.”