# Midwest Culture Bearers Award

## About Midwest Culture Bearers Award

The Midwest Culture Bearers Award will honor and amplify the work of nine Midwestern folk arts and cultures practitioners each year We recognize that these individuals are deeply rooted in the practice and preservation of their cultural traditions through craft, storytelling, dance, performance, visual arts, language and more.

Selected individuals will each receive a $5,000 unrestricted, non-matching award. Additionally, we will offer professional development and networking opportunities, and create feature stories about the awardees and their work.

Eligibility Requirements

Through this award, we seek to recognize the work of Midwestern culture bearers, folk and traditional artists, folk arts and culture practitioners, taproot artists, elder artists, and ancestral knowledge bearers. We invite these individuals to apply for this award.

This award may be a fit if you:

* Are based in the Arts Midwest region of: North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, or the Native Nations that share this geography.
* Have an arts and cultural practice rooted in your own heritage and ancestry that you have engaged in for 10+ years.
	+ Practices may include, but are not limited to, craft, storytelling, dance, performance, visual arts, language preservation, foodways, and more.
* Are connected to your community and involved in the exchange and sharing of cultural knowledge and practice.
* Prioritize sustainability, leadership and the next generation in your work.

This award is not a fit if:

* You are based outside of the Arts Midwest region.
* Your practice is rooted outside of your own heritage and cultural ancestry.

## How to Apply

Arts Midwest uses SmartSimple grants portal for applications. You must register in the system before you apply. Please follow the steps below to complete your registration and your application.

You may enlist assistance from another person to complete the application. We also allow nominations with consent from the individual being nominated.

Informational Overview Video: <https://youtu.be/TJ8xjnj8xmc>

SmartSimple Registration Instructions: <https://artsmidwest.org/get-support/smartsimple/>

SmartSimple Application Walkthrough video: <https://youtu.be/tHgPPAEOiw4>

### Step 1: Registration

1. [Register in our SmartSimple grants portal](https://artsmidwest.us-1.smartsimple.com/s_Login.jsp)
2. On the registration page, click “Individuals”
3. Input your information. If you are nominating someone, please input your information as the nominator; you will share the nominee’s information in the application.
4. Once you have filled out your registration and submitted, you will receive an email with a login link. Click on the login link.
5. The link will take you to a screen where you will create a new password for your account. Then click submit.
6. Once you have created the password, you will receive a verification code in your email. Copy the verification code from that email, and paste in the box on the login page.
7. Now you’re in the SmartSimple portal! Make sure your profile is correct. Go to the top right corner with your name letter symbol and click on Personal Profile. Confirm the info is correct from your registration.

### Step 2: Application

1. Navigate to the to Individual Portal Home. To begin the application, click on “Funding Opportunities.” Click “Apply Now” on Midwest Culture Bearers Award.
2. Click save and begin your application.
3. For the first question:
	1. If you completed the registration for yourself, click “I’m filling out this application for myself.” Your registration information will appear.
	2. If you registered yourself as the artist and are getting assistance with the application, you may click “I’m getting assistance filling out this application for myself” and it will prompt you to share your assistant’s contact information.
	3. If you registered to nominate an artist with their consent, click “I’m nominating someone” and it will prompt you to fill out the artist’s contact information.

Accessibility

We want this opportunity to be accessible to all and will work with applicants who need to use other means to apply. Alternative application options may include:

* Using an adapted form in Microsoft Word (available upon request)
* Sharing a video application responding to application questions and demonstrating work as a culture bearer (available upon request)

Please contact Crystal Celeste Price, program manager, as early as possible with accessibility requests. We may not be able to accommodate requests made after Thursday, July 25, 2024. Crystal can be reached at MCBA@artsmidwest.org, or you can sign up to attend an informational session or office hours (see schedule and details below in ‘Timeline’ section).

You may also enlist assistance from another person to complete the application. Our system is already set up to accept applications filled out by another person – see the “How to Apply” section for more information.

## Application Questions

* Contact Information
* Demographic Information (optional)
* **Culture Bearer Practice and Intentions Statement:** Please describe your work. How does your work contribute to your culture? 200 words or fewer.
* **Community Connection Statement:** What does your practice do for your community? How do you exchange and share ancestral knowledge through your practice? 200 words or fewer.
* **Sustainability Approach Statement:**  How are you committed to the next generation through your work? How do you contribute to intergenerational leadership? 200 words or fewer.
* Please upload **3-5 images of your folk arts practice** that you’d like to be considered by the panel. You may alternatively upload one video file no longer than 3 minutes. Files are preferred, but if you don’t have those, you may share a website or social media link that displays your work instead.
	+ The following file types are allowed: jpg, gif, tiff, png, mov, mp4.
	+ Once you have uploaded the files, please rename the files with the title, year, and medium. You can do this by toggling over the three vertical dots on each file you upload in the File Manager, and click “Rename.” Example: “Berry Basket, 2020, woven ash wood strips.”
	+ Please acknowledge if AI is part of your practice/samples.
* Please note that if you are selected, the work you submit will be featured on Arts Midwest’s website starting in the Fall of 2024. Staff will confirm selected pieces with awardees before posting.

Panel Review Process & Criteria

You will receive an email confirmation to confirm receipt of your application. Arts Midwest staff will contact you if we have any questions.

Awardees will be selected by a compensated panel of nine individuals. The panel will represent perspectives of culture bearers and folk arts and cultural workers, as well as regional arts leaders of historically marginalized identities (BIPOC, LGBTQIA+).

Review Criteria

The panel will use three criteria in the review process: **culture bearer intentions, community connection, and sustainability approach**. Each of these criteria have corresponding application questions that inform scoring, in addition to work sample review. Each criterion is on a scale of 1-5 points for a maximum of 15 points per application.

* Criteria:  Cultural Bearer Intentions (5 points max)
	+ The connection between the purpose of the folk arts and culture practice and the work example is clear, the culture bearer’s mission ties into work samples, and skill is evident.
	+ Support: Culture Bearer Practice and Intentions statement and work samples
* Criteria: Community Connection (5 points max)
	+ The relationship, and value of relationship, between applicant’s practice and community is clear.
	+ Support: Answer to questions “What does your practice do for your community? How do you exchange and share ancestral knowledge through your practice?”
* Criteria: Sustainability Approach (5 points max)
	+ The considerations and connection of the folk arts and cultural practice to supporting future generations, as applicable.
	+ Support: Answers to the questions “How are you committed to the next generation through your work? How do you contribute to intergenerational leadership?”
* \*This award prioritizes culture bearers with 10+ years of experience in their practice. We acknowledge that this timeframe may look different for applicants across experiences.

Timeline

* July 1, 2024: Application opens
* July: Office Hours
	+ 12:30-1:30pm CST, Tuesday, July 9, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMlcu2hqzkrGdGEQGH97zFf5Ro3NX7bIzap#/registration).
	+ 4-5pm CST, Wednesday, July 17, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsceCuqjssE9x0v05tji2tKzdOsqjUDIU5#/registration).
	+ 3-4pm CST, Thursday, July 25, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkc-6upzkuE9ePpju3PYLXPI4WHinpvjKm#/registration).
* July 29, 2024: Application closes at 11:59 pm CST
* August 2024: Applications reviewed by an independent panel
* September 2024: Applicants notified + awards made +awardees announced
* December 2024 – April 2025: Awardees featured on Arts Midwest website and stories
* February – April 2025: Virtual professional development and networking
* Summer 2025: Application round 2 opens

## Office Hours + Resources

To begin, we ask that you watch this detailed informational video: <https://youtu.be/TJ8xjnj8xmc>

If you have additional questions, we invite you to join Program Manager Crystal Celeste Price for office hours. You can sign up for office hours at the links below:

* 12:30-1:30pm CST, Tuesday, July 9, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMlcu2hqzkrGdGEQGH97zFf5Ro3NX7bIzap).
* 4-5pm CST, Wednesday, July 17, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAsceCuqjssE9x0v05tji2tKzdOsqjUDIU5).
* 3-4pm CST, Thursday, July 25, 2024. [Sign up here](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZIkc-6upzkuE9ePpju3PYLXPI4WHinpvjKm).

You can also always email Crystal with your questions at MCBA@artsmidwest.org.

Other resources you may find helpful:

* SmartSimple Registration Instructions: <https://artsmidwest.org/get-support/smartsimple/>
* SmartSimple Application Walkthrough video: <https://youtu.be/tHgPPAEOiw4>

## Funders and Supporters

The Midwest Culture Bearers Award is supported by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts for project management.

Arts Midwest is also generously supported by the Illinois Arts Council Agency, Indiana Arts Commission, Iowa Arts Council, Michigan Arts and Culture Council, Minnesota State Arts Board, North Dakota Council on the Arts, Ohio Arts Council, South Dakota Arts Council, Wisconsin Arts Board, 3M, and individual donors and partners.

Frequently Asked Questions

* What is a culture bearer?
	+ Individuals who are deeply rooted in the practice and preservation of their cultural traditions. They may identify as folk and traditional artists, folk arts and culture practitioners, taproot artists, elder artists, ancestral knowledge bearers, or culture bearers, among other titles.
* If I practice a cultural tradition that is outside of my own heritage or ancestry, am I eligible for this award?
	+ No. While we honor the role of guests within lineages, this opportunity is intended for individuals and cultures that are from the cultural and heritage lineage that they practice.
* Are collectives, duos, or organizations eligible?
	+ No, only individual artists are eligible for this award.
* Am I still eligible to apply if I’ve received an award from Arts Midwest or my state arts agency?
	+ Yes
* What should I do with the award?
	+ There are no expectations or requirements for how you spend the award, though we encourage awardees to use it toward furthering their career.
* Can I apply on behalf of someone else?
	+ We recommend assisting the applicant in filling out the application if possible. But yes, nominations are also welcome. Please get consent from the person that you want to nominate. Fill out the application with the person’s information and indicate that it’s a nomination.
* Is there a match required for the $5,000 award?
	+ No match required
* What are the final reporting requirements?
	+ None
* How can awardees expect to be featured and celebrated by Arts Midwest?
	+ Arts Midwest will make a public announcement of awardees in September 2024. Additionally, working with awardees on content focus, we will feature each awardee through Arts Midwest’s website and channels from December 2024 through April 2025.
* What else will awardees receive?
	+ In addition to the award money and storytelling work, awardees can take part in relationship building, group conversations, and other opportunities for connection and discussion. These opportunities are encouraged but not required. We anticipate gathering ideas from the group in fall 2024 and offering sessions virtually from February – April 2025.