

**YOU ARE INVITED TO APPLY
FOR A 2026 INDIVIDUAL ARTIST FELLOWSHIP
GRANT GUIDELINES
PROGRAM OPENS: April 2, 2026
DEADLINE: May 15, 2026
Grant Awards Range from \$5,000 – \$50,000
For Artists Whose Residential Address is in
Region VII: Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino Counties
Fellowship Period: August 1, 2026 – July 31, 2027
Apply at <https://artsoc.org/individual-artist-fellowship>**

Background & Purpose

Through regionally based Administering Organizations (AOs), the Individual Artists Fellowship (IAF) program uplifts and celebrates California artists across all disciplines and traditions, highlights their excellence and acknowledges their leadership in shaping traditional and contemporary cultures.

For this grant, excellence is defined by:

- A unique artistic vision
- A sustained commitment to creative practice
- Engagement with and impact on the cultural ecosystem

ArtsOC, Region VII’s Administering Organization and Collaborative

California Arts Council has contracted with Arts Orange County (ArtsOC) as the lead Administering Organization in Region VII, comprised of the counties of Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino. ArtsOC has joined with the Riverside Arts Council (RAC) and Arts Connection, the Arts Council of San Bernardino County, to create a collaborative that will serve the diverse geographies and communities across Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

The Program

By providing unrestricted funding, the fellowship empowers artists at pivotal moments in their careers, enhancing their ability to contribute meaningfully to California’s diverse communities. Investing in individual artists and culture bearers through this program strengthens artistic expression, creative practice, and community collaboration statewide.

Funding Structure

This grant program identifies three career tiers at which artists may benefit from this support:

Emerging Artist Fellows - \$5,000

Emerging artists are those in the beginning stages of making their work public and engaging the larger community in their practice. Individuals at this career stage may have had a few public showings of their work, but do not yet have ongoing resources or support.

Established Artist Fellows - \$10,000

Artists in the Established tier regularly make their work public and engage the larger community

in their practice. Individuals in this tier can give multiple examples of artistic and/or cultural works that have made significant social impact.

Legacy Artist Fellows - \$50,000

Artists in the Legacy tier can point to a significant body of work, produced over a substantial period of time, that has engaged their communities and that has made significant social impact. Artists in this tier may be able to point to Emerging and Established Artists that they have mentored or otherwise positively influenced.

- Individuals may submit an application in one career tier only.
- The judging panel may shift an applicant to an alternate tier during the review process if it is believed that reclassification would make them more competitive. However, an applicant may ask to be considered **ONLY** for the tier they are applying for.
- Fellowship awards support individual artistic practice through unrestricted funding.
- Awards will be funded at the full dollar amount for each tier; partial awards will not be made. This grant is not intended to support artist groups or collectives.

As an additional means of recognizing and elevating Artist Fellows, convenings (in-person or virtual) will be held so fellows may engage with one another and be celebrated publicly for their distinction as California Artist Fellows.

Eligibility Requirements

California-based artists, 18 years of age and older, working in any artistic discipline, whose residential address is in the counties designated as Region VII, are eligible to apply. Applicants need to provide proof of residency (when providing proof of residence, please redact any sensitive identifiable information such as social security number, financial account numbers, email, phone numbers, user login IDs and passwords). Such proof can include:

- Government issued ID such as Driver's license or state ID
- Lease agreement or mortgage bill
- Deed or title to residential property
- Government issued mail (i.e. letters from federal, state or local agencies) that can be tax documents, tax returns, DMV notice, car registration, or jury duty summons
- Employment records (i.e. paystubs)
- School records or documents
- Phone or utility bill
- Insurance documents
- Bank and financial documents
- Change of address confirmation by Postal Service

Artists residing in other counties of California are eligible to apply for the Individual Artist Fellowship Program in their region. If you do not reside in Orange, Riverside or San Bernardino counties, but are a resident of California, please apply through the appropriate regional Administering Organization below:

Region 1: Upstate

[Nevada Arts Council](#), serving Butte, Colusa, Del Norte, Glenn, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou, Sutter, Tehama, Trinity, and Yuba Counties

Region 2: Capital

[Teatro Nagual](#), serving Alpine, El Dorado, Sacramento, Solano, and Yolo Counties

Region 3: Bay Area

[Kala Art Institute](#), serving Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Sonoma Counties

Region 4: Central Valley & Eastern Sierra

[Kern Dance Alliance](#), serving Amador, Calaveras, Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Mono, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne Counties

Region 5: Central Coast

[Arts Council Santa Cruz](#), serving: Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, and Ventura Counties

Region 6: Los Angeles County

[Los Angeles Performance Practice](#), serving Los Angeles County.

Region 8: Far South

[City of San Diego](#), serving: Imperial and San Diego Counties

Prior recipients of the 2021 and 2023 California Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship are eligible to apply, but only for a higher tier than the one in which they were previously awarded (i.e., Emerging may apply for Established or Legacy, while Established may apply for Legacy; prior Legacy Fellows are not eligible to apply).

Applicants must comply with the requirements below. All applications must include the listed items at the time of submission in order to be reviewed, ranked and considered for funding.

- Artist's narrative - Applicants must provide a brief description of their background and focus.
- Artist work samples - Applicants must include examples of their work.
- Support materials - Applicants must supply a resume or curriculum vitae (CV). Applicants may also submit up to two additional supporting documents such as press materials, flyers, brochures, programs, newsletters and other marketing pieces. More recent materials are preferred; however, we recognize that COVID-19 has impacted the amount of work created in the past three years.
- **LEGACY ONLY:** Letter of support or testimonial - Applicants in the Legacy Tier must provide a written signed statement from an individual or organization familiar with their

body of work that can substantiate the artist's practice, relevance, and impact in their community. The letter must include the writer's name, title, and contact information.

- Signatures on required attachments - Letters and other attachments requiring signatures must include completed wet, digital or scanned signatures in order to be considered for funding.

Non-eligible applicants include:

1. Previous recipients of fellowship awards in the Legacy tier
2. Previous recipients of fellowship awards in the Emerging or Established tiers may only be considered for awards in higher tiers
3. Partnerships or collaboratives
4. Fiscally sponsored individuals
5. Individuals without a Social Security Number or Tax ID Number
6. Individuals who have not resided within the State of California for a minimum of two consecutive years at the date of application
7. Individuals who do not currently reside within the California counties of Orange, Riverside or San Bernardino
8. Individuals who are under the age of 18

Online Application Portal

Applications will be available online through Arts Orange County's online grants management system at <https://artsoc.org/individual-artist-fellowship>. Only applications submitted through the system by the deadline will be accepted.

Application Review Criteria

Applications from individual artists and culture bearers will be adjudicated by peer review panels convened by Arts Orange County and its Region VII Collaborative, and based on the following review criteria:

- Creative Vision: Artist effectively communicates their personal story, artistic medium or practice, and long-term aspirations for their work.
- Aesthetic Excellence: Artistic work and/or examples of cultural practice demonstrate should demonstrate strong alignment with the components of the Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change as defined in the link below: <https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/Aesthetic%20Perspectives%20Full%20Framework.pdf>. These components include "commitment, communal meaning, disruption, cultural integrity, risk taking, sensory experience, emotional experience, openness, coherence, resourcefulness, and stickiness."
- Community Engagement and Social Impact: Artist effectively communicates their engagement with their community(ies) and the positive social impact their work has had locally, regionally, and/or statewide, addressing themes including but not limited to race, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Panel Adjudication and Ranking Scale

Panelists will review and rank applications, identifying final cohorts at each tier that represent the diversity of Region I’s arts landscape and geography. The following 6 point scale will be used:

6 Exemplary	Meets all of the review criteria to the highest degree	A model for field or discipline with essentially no weaknesses
5 Outstanding	Very strong with some minor weaknesses	Meets the review criteria to a high degree
4 Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses	Meets the review criteria to some degree
3 Fair	Some strengths, but some moderate weaknesses	Meets some elements of the review criteria to some degree
2 Marginal	Very few strengths and some major weaknesses	The review criteria is only marginally satisfied
1 Poor	Does not meet the review criteria	

Program Timeline

Application Opens April 2, 2026

Application Deadline May 15, 2026 11:59:59 PM

Panel Review May 20 – June 19, 2026

Funding Notification June 24, 2026

Funding Issued Approximately July 1 – 15, 2026

Fellowship Period August 1, 2026 – July 31, 2027

Grantee Requirements

Awarded grantees must comply with all requirements as stipulated in the grant agreement, including but not limited to the following:

- Complete contract documents - Upon notification of grant award, complete all required contract documents in order to receive payment.
- Consistent activities - Maintain communication with Arts Orange County throughout the duration of the fellowship, and participate in program activities as scheduled by Arts Orange County and the Region VII collaborative. Program and support activities will include virtual and in-person gatherings, and Fellows will be strongly encouraged to attend.
- Final Report - All Fellows are required to submit a one-page narrative, as well as images telling the story of what your fellowship meant to you and your community.

Please note: It is recommended that you consult with a tax professional regarding any tax liability incurred with a fellowship.

Arts Orange County staff is available to offer guidance and clarification in preparing your proposal. We recommend that you contact staff well in advance of the deadline to ensure you can be accommodated. People who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, or have difficulty

speaking may dial 711 to reach the California Relay Service (CRS). Large print is available upon request. For assistance, please contact Patrick Brien – pbrien@artsoc.org, or Nicholas Thurkettle – nthurkettle@artsoc.org or 714.556.5160 ext. 14.