



Program: *LIFT – Early Career Support for Native Artists*

Application Deadline: Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Pacific time.

Overview: The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation’s (NACF) *LIFT – Early Career Support for Native Artists* program supports emerging Native artists through one-year awards to develop and realize new projects. These awards are a crucial investment in cultivating fresh voices and envisioning the future of our respective Native practices.

Now in its fourth iteration, LIFT builds upon extensive research and strategic planning to expand opportunities for early-career Native artists. The program encourages artists to uplift communities, advance positive social change, point courageously toward environmental sustainability, and foster communal meaning-making. Through their projects, LIFT artists address critical issues around cultural sovereignty, environmental and social justice, healing and well-being, and systemic change.

LIFT provides a comprehensive suite of services, including \$15,000 awards, artist professional development, mentorship, project evaluation, documentation, and communications/marketing support – designed to nurture the growth and potential of emerging Native artists as they refine their craft, advance their careers, and establish their place as vital creative voices in their communities.

This opportunity is designed for emerging Native artists who are shaping their practices and for whom the award may serve as a launching point in their career. We encourage eligible artists to apply and become part of this transformative program.

Award Amount: \$15,000 with at least \$5,000 for the artist’s benefit and wellbeing.

Number of Awards: 10 total.

Milestone	Date
Application Opens	Jan 28, 2025
Application Closes	Apr 8, 2025
Applicants Notified	Jul 2025
Award Recipients Publicly Announced	Aug 2025
Award Period	Aug 1, 2025-Jul 31, 2026

PROGRAM SERVICES

- **GRANTMAKING:** One-year awards of \$15,000.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:** Artist awardees will participate in trainings facilitated by NACF in partnership with experts and organizations that are designed to provide education around project management, small business development, career advancement, and artistic development.
- **MENTORSHIP:** We encourage artists to select a mentor of their choice—such as an established artist, elder, teacher, or community leader—who can provide guidance and act as a sounding board periodically throughout the planning and implementation of their projects. While mentorship is an optional program component, artists should ensure their mentors are compensated appropriately by allocating a portion of their budget to provide a fair stipend for the mentor’s time and expertise.
- **EVALUATION:** NACF will help define project deliverables, track progress, and complete internal and external grant reports. Awardees will participate in regular check-ins and provide project documentation, a mid-year report, and a final report detailing their project’s development and outcomes.
- **COMMUNICATIONS and MARKETING SUPPORT:** NACF will amplify the project’s visibility through social media and e-communications. Additionally, we will help document the project through photography and videography when possible and appropriate.
- **ADVOCACY:** NACF will assist awardees in presenting their work at relevant conferences and public events, to provide a platform for conversation around the impacts of their projects and Native voices to effect change around vital issues.

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for the LIFT program, applicants must:

- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Be a US-based resident.
- Be an enrolled member or citizen of a US federally-recognized or state-recognized American Indian tribe or Alaska Native corporation, or of Native Hawaiian ancestry. Applicants will be asked to provide documentation of their Native citizenship or ancestry in the application.
- Be an individual practicing artist working dance/choreography, fiction/poetry writing, film/video, multi-disciplinary arts, music, performance art, theater and screenplay writing, traditional arts, or 2D + 3D visual arts.

- Be emerging artists or early in their artistic careers. NACF defines "emerging" as follows:
 - Experience: Artists with less than ten years of experience in their artistic career.
 - Note: Changing artistic disciplines does not “restart” a career. Artistic practice is considered in aggregate. For example, an artist who has been a musician for 12 years but has recently started working in film is not considered emerging simply because they are working in a different discipline.
 - Age: There is no age restriction. Early career may refer to an artist who is 18–30 years old or someone over 30 who began their arts career later in life.
 - Funding History: Artists must not have received a singular award of \$15,000 or more in their artistic career.
 - Other Definitions: An artist may also be considered "emerging" if they have yet to develop a substantial body of work or have limited to no experience exhibiting or presenting their work to the public.
- NOT BE enrolled in a university or higher education institution during the 12-month award period (Aug 1, 2025-Jul 31, 2026).
- Propose a *new* project that can be developed and presented publicly within one year of the award, or before July 31, 2026.

PROCESS

- Artists will apply using the online application form in Submittable by the deadline of Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Pacific time.
- NACF staff will review each submitted application for eligibility, adequacy of work samples and supporting materials, and completeness.
- A review panel of art peers and professionals will evaluate applications and recommend up to ten (10) artists to receive support with approval from NACF’s Board of Directors.
- NACF will notify all applicants via email and Submittable in July 2025.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Please allow plenty of time to complete your submission. The application deadline is **Tuesday, April 8, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Pacific time.** The LIFT application includes six sections:

1. **Eligibility:** Applicants will answer a list of questions to determine their eligibility for the LIFT program before proceeding to the remainder of the application questions.
2. **Contact Information:** Applicants will provide their best contact information.
3. **Demographic Survey Questions:** Optional, confidential questions to help NACF better advocate for Native artists.
4. **Project Narrative:** In this section, you will be asked to provide a written description of your proposed project, which includes: (1) short project description; (2) background or context for the project; (3) project themes; (4) project activities and the role of the artist applicant; (5) your previous work; (5) plans for community engagement or public presentation of the project; (6) mentorship component (optional); and (7) a twelve-month timeline for the project (to be completed by Jul 31, 2026).

5. **Project Budget:** In this section, you will complete a budget form showing how you will allocate the \$15,000 award funds towards your proposed project.
6. **Work Samples and Supporting Materials:** In this section, you will provide the following: (1) artist work samples; (2) artist website(s), if available; (3) artist's resume or CV; (4) artist bio; (5) artist headshot; (6) one letter of recommendation; and (7) documentation of Native citizenship or ancestry.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Panelists will review applications using the following criteria:

Project Explorations

Applicants should describe the project's style, format, themes and creation process. Projects must involve the development of new work and include a public presentation. Applicants should describe the issue(s) the project will address, its significance to the community or communities, and the anticipated impact of the project in addressing these issues. The project should be feasible in scope and achievable within the available resources.

Artistic Experience

Artistic experience is demonstrated through technical skills, originality, innovation, inspiration and the unique niche of the artist(s). This can be indicated by work samples, resume/CV, letter of recommendation, as well as any relevant training, apprenticeships, or education.

Financial Capacity

Financial capacity is demonstrated by the viability of the project budget. If the total project budget exceeds the \$15,000 award, applicants must show other sources of support (e.g., additional grants, in-kind contributions, earned income, etc.). The proposed project should be realistic in scope, with a budget that aligns with the planned activities. It must also include appropriate compensation for the artist (minimum \$5,000), as well as for any collaborators and mentors.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can a Native artist or curator from outside the US apply?

- Applicants must be enrolled members or citizens of a US-based federally or state-recognized American Indian tribe or Alaska Native corporation or of Native Hawaiian ancestry. Applicants are required to provide documentation of their Native citizenship or ancestry.
- Applicants must also demonstrate US residency.
- Applicants from US territories and Indigenous communities outside the US are not eligible to apply.
- *NACF understands that there are also unrecognized tribes, a myriad of uncounted and undocumented Native people, people of complex mixed-heritage identities, and a wide range of Indigenous peoples living in the U.S. from throughout the Americas. There is no Native American monolith. However, these eligibility requirements are essential to*

remaining steadfast to the objectives of this organization's founders and its intent to serve Native peoples from the US.

Can I submit more than one application?

NACF will accept only one submission per applicant.

Can I apply if I have already received a NACF award in previous years?

Previous NACF awardees who received support before 2023 are eligible to apply. However, former LIFT awardees are not eligible to receive the LIFT award again. Additionally, artists who have received a single award of \$15,000 or more at any point in their artistic career—whether from NACF or other funders—are not eligible to apply for LIFT.

Can I apply if I am currently a student and/or enrolled in an education program?

No, the applicant must not be a student during the award period. (Aug 1, 2025 – Jul 31, 2026).

What if I accidentally submitted my application before it was completed?

If you submitted your form in error, please email Amber Ball, Grantmaking Specialist, at apply@nativeartsandcultures.org. You may request to edit your submission up to 24 hours before the deadline or no later than Mon, Apr 7, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. Pacific time.

Will I receive feedback about my application?

Due to the large number of applications we expect to receive, we cannot provide individual feedback.

For technical support with the online application form, click the "Technical Help" button on the application webpage or complete Submittable's support request form, here: . You may also contact Amber Ball at apply@nativeartsandcultures.org or 971-417-4835 Ext. 435.

For inquiries about the LIFT program eligibility or content, please contact Laura (Cales) Matalka at grantsupport@nativeartsandcultures.org or 360-334-7285.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO APPLY:

<https://nativeartsandcultures.submittable.com/submit/db122644-f611-4eac-9e81-3008eff154b8/lift-early-career-support-for-native-artists-2025-application>