



PILLSBURY HOUSE + THEATRE

Application Guidelines for the 2026 McKnight Fellowships for Community-Engaged Artists

Administered by the Pillsbury House + Theatre (PH+T)

Deadline: **Monday March 23, 2026, at 5:00pm (CST)**

IMPORTANT LINKS:

FELLOWSHIP INFORMATION:

<https://pillsburyhouseandtheatre.org/programs/mcknight/>

FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION PORTAL: (OPENS Jan. 26, 2026)

<https://pillsburyunited.submittable.com/submit/340610/mcknight-fellowships-for-community-engaged-artists-2026>

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1. Fellowship Overview

Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists and culture bearers thrive, the McKnight Foundation's arts and culture program is one of the oldest and largest of its kind in the country. Support for individual working Minnesota artists and culture bearers has been a

cornerstone of the program since it began in 1982. The McKnight Artist & Culture Bearer Fellowships Program provides annual, unrestricted cash awards to outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists in 15 different creative disciplines. Program partner organizations administer the fellowships and structure them to respond to the unique challenges of different disciplines. Currently, the foundation contributes about \$2.8 million per year to its statewide fellowships. For more information, visit mcknight.org/artistfellowships.

This fellowship is limited to Community-Engaged Artists who are at a stage beyond emerging. Community-Engaged Artists, as defined for the purposes of this fellowship, are artists who use their artistic practice to engage relationship aimed at producing social or cultural transformation. And this intention drives choice and process throughout the conception, design, stewardship, and implementation of their work.

The fellowship program supports established mid-career artists by providing significant financial assistance, by working with the fellows to engage their professional development, or in support of piloting new creative initiatives.

The Pillsbury House Theatre-administered fellowship program uses an independent panel of arts specialists to competitively award **two (2) fellowships**. The fellowship runs for one year, *June 1, 2026– May 31, 2027, and includes:

- \$25,000 (unrestricted) Fellowship award may be used to enhance any aspect of the artist's life, such as overhead costs, the purchase of materials, travel, and other living expenses. Awards are subject to state and federal income tax guidelines.
- \$3,000 in additional professional development funds.
- Access to PH+T's facilities and equipment.
- Support from PH+T staff and community resources and services.
- 8 hours of consultation time, support, and resources from Springboard for the Arts.
- Access to national/international Artist Residency programs developed between McKnight and the [Artist Communities Alliance](#).

2. Application Selection and Process

Jury Panel:

A three-member panel consisting of experienced and well-respected arts & cultural specialists selects the McKnight Fellows. The jurors uphold an appreciation for and knowledge of diverse community-engaged art practices. All panelists are from outside Minnesota. PH+T intentionally seeks to build a review panel that includes members representing diverse racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, geographic perspectives and worldviews.

The McKnight Community-Engaged Arts Fellowship panelists remain anonymous during the selection process. The names of the panelists are revealed once the fellowship recipients are announced in June 2026.

Review Process:

Applicants are evaluated and selected based on submitted materials and work samples. Consideration is given to accomplishments to date. The panel will also be asked to consider the breadth of artistic practices among Minnesota community-engaged artists, which include a wide range of media, aesthetic considerations, social engagement, relationship to defined community, and cultural traditions that might be influenced by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, range of ability, and geography.

Panelists will use the following criteria when reviewing all submitted application materials:



Creative Integrity: The artist's work demonstrates integrity and ethical use of material with specific cultural origins and context, demonstrates responsible social and/or environmental practice, disrupts and challenges inequitable norms or standards, and models new forms of creative action.

Engagement with defined communities: There is a clear articulation of the role and relationship of the artist with the communities in which they are engaged. The artist engages in equitable creative practice which seeks to build social/structural/systemic equity.

Artistic Merit: The artist presents an 8+ year sustained commitment to community-engaged art practice, risk-taking, and clear concepts and creative methodologies that advance social and artistic purposes beyond individual perspective or experience.

Openness: The artist and creative practice is characterized by an emphasis on transparency and collaboration. The work deepens impact by remaining open, fluid, transparent, subject to influence, and able to hold contradiction.

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First Round: The jury panel reviews submissions for the first round. Their decisions will be tabulated and the 8 applicants with the highest numerical scores will move on to the next round.

Second Round: In a conference call the three panelists discuss all 8 applicants and selects 4 finalists to give in-person presentations.

Final jury presentations for 4 Finalists: The Program Director will notify the artists identified for final review by **late April - early May, 2026**. For the final round of jurying, the panel convenes virtually to review presentations facilitated by the **4 finalists**. Finalists will be given \$200 in resources to prepare their presentations. Following the final presentations the committee selects two fellowship recipients.

Notification: Upon completion of the final presentation, the Program Director will call the two fellowship recipients, and email the other finalists of the results. The Fellowship Program Director will notify all applicants via email of the jurors' final decision by the end of **May, 2026**.

PH+T staff who oversee the McKnight Fellowship program do not contribute to the decision-making process or the selection of the McKnight Community-Engaged Artist Fellows. The role of the staff is to provide clarity for the review process and to ensure that the panel review and discussion proceed in accordance with the program's guidelines.

3. Eligibility Requirements

Please read carefully. Applicants who do not meet all of the following criteria and expectations will not be considered and should not apply.

***The online eligibility checklist must be completed before proceeding to the full application in submittable.**

The intent of the McKnight Artist and Culture Fellowship Program is to recognize and support artists and culture bearers who are beyond emerging and have sustained experience in their area of practice. Fellows demonstrate accomplishment, commitment, and excellence that contributes to their field and that impacts and benefits people in Minnesota.

Artists who are eligible for these fellowships:

1. MN Residency: Applicants must have or maintain MN residency for at least one year prior to application (i.e. since March 23, 2025) and for the duration of the fellowship year.

2. Exclusive Application: Applicant may only apply to **ONE** McKnight Artist and Culture Bearer Fellowship discipline within the 2026 program year. For a list of all McKnight Artist and Culture Bearer Fellowships visit: <https://www.mcknight.org/programs/arts-culture/mcknight-artist-culture-bearer-fellowships/#apply>

3. Applicants are beyond emerging and have sustained experience: Are mid-career with a body of work that demonstrates a sustained level of accomplishment, commitment, and artistic excellence. Have at least eight (8) years of professional experience implementing community-

engaged art. Community-engaged projects, public exhibitions, or initiatives undertaken as part of a degree-seeking program at an institution of higher learning will not be considered, i.e. senior or thesis exhibitions, juried student shows, etc.

4. No Full-Time Student Status: Applicants may not be enrolled full-time in any academic program.

5. No Conflict of Interest: Applicants may not be staff, board, or immediate family of the McKnight Foundation or Pillsbury House + Theatre/Pillsbury United Communities. For the purposes of McKnight Artist and Culture Bearer Fellowships, program partner faculty and independent contractors are not considered staff and may apply, even to a Fellowship from an organization for which they work.

6. Prior Recipients: Wait 5 Years and New Body of Work: Anyone who received a fellowship in any discipline in or before 2020 is now eligible to apply and must demonstrate growth in creative practice and a new body of work.

7. Program Participation: Be willing to participate in all aspects of the fellowship program, including some meetings, and scheduled dialogue with national experts.

*The Fellowship Program Director screens applicants to ensure eligibility.

4. Application Instructions/How to Apply

Application Deadline: Monday March 23, 2026, at 5:00pm (CST)

Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

How to Apply:

We strongly recommend that you assemble all of the application components in advance. We have provided an **application worksheet** at the end of this document to use as a reference if needed.

Upload all work samples and documents via Submittable. Go [HERE](#) to access the online application site.

1. Click [HERE](#) to begin the application process. **Please note that the link will only be active during the specified application period: January 26, 2026 at 12:00pm to March 23, 2026, at 5:00pm (CST)**

2. Create an account for your online application with Submittable. When you click the “Apply Now” button below, it will take you to the Submittable “Sign In/Sign Up” page. You will be prompted to create a Submittable account or to log in if you already have an account.

3. To create your account you will need to provide your email address, a password, and your first and last names. Once you create your account, you will be taken to the “Welcome to Submittable” page. This page contains information about Submittable. To enter the McKnight Fellowship application, click “Continue.” If you already have an account, once you sign in you will be taken directly to the application.

4. Upload your application materials. Required fields are marked with an asterisk. When you are finished, **do not forget to click the “Apply” button to submit your application.** You must agree to the Terms of Use by checking a box prior to submitting.

All applications must include the following:

***The eligibility checklist must be completed before proceeding to the full application.**

- 1. Completed Entry/Contact Information Form**
- 2. Proof of MN residency**
- 3. Résumé**
- 4. Artist Statement**
- 5. Work samples (1 required image file, up to 10 allowed) including Work sample descriptions for each file submitted.**
- 6. One (1) Video Interview (3 min.)**

Applications may include the following optional materials:

- 7. Up to three (3) Video and/or (3) Audio files (direct upload or hyperlinks)**
- 8. One (1) PDF work sample (5 page max)**
- 9. Community diagram/map (recommended)**

1. Completed Entry/Contact Information Form (required)

2. Proof of MN residency (required)

Applicant must have or maintain MN residency for at least one year prior to application deadline (since March 23, 2025). Please upload a copy of one of the following: MN driver's license (or MN identification card); a Tribal identification card; a utility bill in the applicant's name; lease; or other supporting documents. Any personal identifying information will remain confidential and not visible to the jurors.

3. Résumé (required)

Submit a current résumé that highlights accomplishments and achievements that are most important to you and/or your community, including arts and cultural activities, projects, awards, and grants. Save your résumé as a PDF (.pdf).

4. Artist Statement (required)

Submit a current artist statement about your work (1000 words max). It may provide information about your background, the development or current direction of your work, or other information you would like to present to the panel.

We highly recommend that you:

- Make sure your statement relates to the work samples you are submitting.
- Consider speaking to the 4 criteria the panel will use to score applications which are; *Creative Integrity, Artistic Merit, Engagement with defined communities, and Openness.*
- No two neighborhoods, cities, communities, or regions across the state of MN are uniform or the same. Consider providing information to help jurors understand the unique community context in which you are engaged as an artist.

5. Work Samples: Images - (1 required, up to 10 allowed)

Provide documentation of up to TEN recent work samples (preferably within the last six to ten years) in JPG format. You may choose to include full and detail shots, but each file counts as one of the ten total images.

Image specifications:

- Images must be in JPG format.
- Composite images are allowed, with no more than 3 combined images in 1 work sample.
- Individual files should not exceed 5 MB.
- Upload files in the order you would like them to be viewed. Each juror reviews applications individually, one image at a time, on a personal computer monitor.
- When uploading work samples, you will be required to add metadata descriptions with each file submission.

6. Up to three (3) Video and/or Audio Work Sample (optional)

Video/Audio specifications:

- Video or audio will be accepted as URL links to an external site, or as a standalone video files in aac, mp3, wav, mp4, avi, mpg, 3gp, flv, webm, wmv, mkv, or m4v files.
- 3 minutes maximum in length per video submission.
- files should not exceed 250 mb.
- Please leave ample time for the upload.
- Please include metadata descriptions for each Audio and/or Video work sample.

7. Additional work sample PDF (optional)

For artists' work that involves text, artist books, book spreads, didactics, or text that is unreadable in the images submitted. There is an option to upload an additional PDF. **Five page maximum. Limited to 5 MB.** The PDF attachment should supplement, not replace or extend, the ten still images. Therefore, any work referenced in the PDF must be associated with at least one still image in the sequence of ten.

8. One (1) Video Interview (required)

Submit an informal summary video where you provide a glimpse of your artistic orientation, how your work engages community, and what issues or ideas you are engaging through your practice. We encourage you to keep this informal and low-tech. Don't worry about fancy editing, interviews shot via cell phones are perfectly acceptable.

Video specifications:

- Videos will be accepted as URL links to an external site, or as a standalone video file in mp4, avi, mpg, 3gp, flv, webm, wmv, mkv, or m4v files.
- 3 minutes maximum in length.
- files should not exceed 250 mb.
- Please leave ample time for the upload.

9. Map of My Community diagram - (optional)

Artists may submit a “map of my community” a PDF formatted diagram of how your engagement work intersects with broader community context, or how you are situated in relationship to the community/communities you engage. This can be a sketch, a wireframe, a collage, a network map, or other visual representations. *Panelists have found this very useful during the review process.

- Submit as a single page 8.5”x11” diagram (both portrait or landscape layouts are acceptable)

Applying as a Collaborative Team

While the McKnight Artist Fellowships are traditionally awarded to single artists, we recognize that there are many community-engaged artists who work as collaborative teams. If you are applying as a collaborative team, make sure each artist involved meets the eligibility requirements. If one member of the collaborative team does not meet eligibility, the entire application will be ineligible. The images you submit should be of work created by the collaborative, not by the artists individually. Please include one résumé for the collaborative, plus one résumé for each of its members, in a single multi-page document. The Fellows Program administrator can help guide groups interested in applying as collaborative teams.

5. Information Sessions and One-on-One Meetings

You are welcome to attend a McKnight Information Session with Program administrator Mike Hoyt.

INFO SESSIONS WILL BE POSTED ON THE [MAIN FELLOWSHIP SITE](#).

Applicants are also welcome and encouraged to schedule one-on-one meetings (in person, over the phone, or via video conference) with the Program administrator before submitting their applications online. To schedule a meeting please call 612.787.3655 or email mikeh@pillsburyunited.org . Please note we will not be able to schedule one-on-one meetings the week prior to the deadline **Monday March 23, 2026, at 5:00pm (CST)**

6. FAQs

DO I HAVE TO PROPOSE A PROJECT FOR THIS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?

This is NOT a project grant, therefore applicants do not have to outline or propose what new work they wish to produce or engage in if awarded a Fellowship.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTIST?

Community Engaged Artists, as defined for the purposes of this fellowship, are artists who use their artistic practice to engage relationship aimed at producing social transformation. This intention drives choice and process throughout the conception, design, and implementation of their work.

I AM AN ARTIST THAT MIGHT FIT MULTIPLE MCKNIGHT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM DISCIPLINES, HOW DO I KNOW IF THIS IS THE RIGHT FIT FOR ME OR MY PRACTICE?

Please reach out to the program administrator to talk through your questions, or to help better determine what discipline is the best fit for you to apply under.

DO I HAVE TO LIVE IN THE TWIN CITIES?

No! The Fellowship is open to all Minnesotans, and artists from all areas of the state are encouraged to apply.

WHAT IS A MID-CAREER ARTIST?

For the purposes of this fellowship, a mid-career artist is someone who has a body of work that demonstrates a sustained level of accomplishment, commitment, and artistic excellence. They will have at least eight (8) years of professional experience implementing community engaged art. Community engaged projects, public exhibitions, or initiatives undertaken as part of a degree-seeking program at an institution of higher learning will not be considered, i.e. senior or thesis exhibitions, juried student shows, etc.

7. Resources

Photo Services:

Springboard for the Arts has a great site to locate local professionals to document and digitize your work. Visit it online at their [Art Service Directory](#).

Arts Advocacy Organizations:

Film North

Film North provides free scanner access for mnartists.org artists. They also rent film, photo and editing equipment to members. Call for an appointment.

550 Vandalia St #120, St Paul, MN 55114

(651) 644-1912
<http://myfilmnorth.org/>

Springboard for the Arts

Springboard is a Twin-Cities based arts-advocacy organization that offers workshops, professional consultations and some technology services to working artists. Some services are free; you will have to pay for others.

308 Prince Street, Suite 270, St. Paul, MN 55101
651-292-4381
www.springboardforthearts.org

Regional Arts Boards:

These organizations are affiliated with the Minnesota State Arts Board and the McKnight Foundation. They may be able to offer you computer access and assistance or direct you to someone near you who can.

Kittson, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau counties:

Northwest Regional Arts Council
109 S. Minnesota St., Warren, MN 56762-1428
218-745-6733
<http://www.northwestminnesotaarts council.org>

Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Lake of the Woods, and Mahnomen counties:

Region 2 Arts Council
303 Railroad St SW, Bemidji, MN 56601
218-751-5447
www.r2arts.org

Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and Saint Louis counties:

Arrowhead Regional Arts Council
424 W Superior St Suite 104, Duluth, MN 55802
218-722-0952
www.aracouncil.org

Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, and Wilkin counties:

Lake Region Arts Council
133 South Mill Street, Fergus Falls, MN 56537
218-739-5780
www.lrac4.org

Cass, Crow Wing, Morrison, Todd, and Wadena counties:

Five Wings Arts Council
122 3rd St NE, Staples, MN 56479
218-895-5660
www.fwac.org

Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Kandiyohi, Lincoln, Lac qui Parle, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine Counties:

Southwest Minnesota Arts Council

114 N 3rd St, Marshall, MN 56258

507-537-1471

<http://swmnarts.org/>

Chisago, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, and Pine counties:

East Central Regional Arts Council

112 Main St S, Braham, MN 55006

320-396-2337

<http://www.ecrac.org/>

Benton, Sherburne, Stearns, and Wright counties:

Central Minnesota Arts Board

220 4th Ave N, Foley, MN 56329

(320) 968-4290

www.centralmnartsboard.org

Blue Earth, Brown, Faribault, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Sibley, Waseca, and Watonwan counties:

Prairie Lakes Regional Arts Council

22nd Ave NE, Waseca, MN 56093

507-833-8721

www.plrac.org

Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Olmsted, Mower, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, and Winona counties:

Southeastern Minnesota Arts Council

2778 D Commerce Drive NW Rochester, MN 55901

507-281-4848

www.semac.org

Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, and Washington counties:

Metropolitan Regional Arts Council

2324 University Avenue West, Suite 114, St. Paul, MN 55114

651-645-0402

www.mrac.org

2026 McKnight Community-Engaged Artist Fellowship APPLICATION WORKSHEET

- Navigate to the Pillsbury House + Theatre [Submittable page](#). Login with an existing or new Submittable account.
- Select the “McKnight Fellowships for Community-Engaged Artists 2026” application.
- Complete the eligibility form.
- If you are eligible, continue to the main application. You can click “save draft” at any time before you are finished.

REQUIRED APPLICANT INFORMATION:

- Complete contact information
- Upload proof of residency

APPLICATION MATERIALS:

*REQUIRED

- Résumé uploaded in PDF format
- Artist Statement (1000 words) uploaded
- Image work sample(s)
Uploaded (*1 required, up to 10 allowed)
- Metadata descriptions for each submitted work sample
- Video Interview - Upload or hyperlink
(3 min. maximum length)

OPTIONAL

- Audio/Video work samples - Upload or hyperlink up to three (3)
- Metadata descriptions for each submitted work sample
- PDF work sample - Upload additional (5 pages max)
- Map of My Community diagram
(1 single page 8.5"x11" diagram in either portrait or landscape layout)

Once all materials are uploaded and information is complete, **don't forget to click “SUBMIT FORM” when you are done.** You will automatically receive an email notification that your application was submitted.

Program contact: Mike Hoyt (p) 612-787-3655 (e) mikeh@pillsburyunited.org