



For the People: Exploring Living Traditions for Engaged Learning

**A Hybrid Course for Teaching Artists and Classroom Educators
from the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage**

The Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage is a research center of the Smithsonian Institution. Our mission is to connect communities across cultures—cultivating curiosity, understanding, and belonging for all people.

Program Description

“For the People” is a nine-month professional development pilot program for teaching artists and middle school classroom educators that uses local festivals as experiential learning laboratories. We’ll work with six cohorts of participants from Tucson, Arizona; Detroit, Michigan; Jackson, Mississippi; Montclair, New Jersey; Washington, D.C.; and Wisconsin (location TBD).

The program takes place from February to November 2026. In the first half of the program, participants will access the Center's diverse resources through online coursework and build connections with cohort members. The second half will include a multi-day workshop at a local festival (site TBD) and continue through the development of activities for classrooms and/or learning environments using related content.

The course aims to support participants and their learning communities to develop culturally connected learning plans that inspire curiosity, empathy, and mutual respect, while cultivating understanding and belonging for and by all people. The participants in this inaugural program will inform future educational resources and contribute to the Center's efforts to sustain a thriving educational ecosystem within the institution and with community partners.

Participant Benefits

Through this program, participants will:

- Work with the Center's network of folklorists, educators, cultural experts, and artists to explore resources for classroom instruction
- Gain confidence integrating living traditions into their teaching practice by creating and testing engaging activities that bring authentic cultural learning experiences directly to students
- Become part of a professional learning community for peer support and collaboration
- Inform the Center's educational resource priorities for future educators, teaching artists, and learners

Participants will receive a \$4,000 honorarium upon the successful completion of the program and development of a new educational activity for their classroom. Costs for travel will be covered.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be assessed based on demonstrated interest, teaching story, and commitment to fulfilling all project requirements. We aim to work with both experienced and emerging educators.

Program Expectations

- Commit to not more than six hours monthly (three hours online sessions + three hours independent study) between February and June 2026.
- Attend a five day in-person professional development enrichment in late spring or early summer 2026.
- Work with your local cohort to develop and test a new educational activity based on living traditions with your students in fall 2026 and share through online sessions. Participants will also provide feedback to peers.

To Apply

Please apply using one of these links:

- [**Classroom Educators**](#)
- [**Teaching Artists**](#)

Be sure to complete all the prompts and upload your current CV or résumé, and for teaching artists, also your artist statement. Applications are due by 11:30 p.m. ET on November 30, 2025.

Participants will be notified of their status by early December 2025.

For more information or to send any questions, please contact Folklife-Education@si.edu.