<table>
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<th><strong>ACLS Leading Edge Fellowship</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Project:</strong> Support Systems for Traditional Artists in the Southwest Creative Economy</td>
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<td><strong>Organization:</strong> Southwest Folklife Alliance (Tucson, Arizona)</td>
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<td><strong>Location:</strong> Remote</td>
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<td><strong>Stipend:</strong> $60,000 per year, plus health insurance and professional development funding</td>
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<td><strong>Start Date:</strong> September 2021</td>
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**ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION**

The Southwest Folklife Alliance (SFA) is a non-profit organization working to build more equitable and vibrant communities by celebrating the everyday expressions of culture, heritage and diversity in the Greater Southwest. SFA is the National Endowment for the Arts’ State Folk Arts Partner to the Arizona Commission on the Arts and serves hundreds of traditional artists and communities annually through festivals, research & documentation, storytelling, training, and direct cash support to heritage-based artists in the region. As a major event producer and affiliate of the University of Arizona, SFA is one among a select group of national organizations in the folklore field whose work in the traditional arts is linked to grassroots organizing for social justice. Learn more at https://southwestfolklife.org/

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Despite the popularity of southwestern art and ethnic cultural styles and events, research has revealed that the traditional artist is particularly vulnerable to ebbs and flows in the economy. The COVID pandemic has affected the artisanal economy disproportionately. In surveys across the country and from data collected by SFA, traditional artists report losing up to 75% of income over the last year. The traditional artist is more than an individual acting on her own behalf; heritage-based artists function as epicenters of community cohesion, wellness, and vitality. In many cases, they also spur multi-family and multi-generational artisanal and creative economies that ground a sense of identity, civic participation, and social justice. Support for the traditional arts depends on a web of relationships that range from the household and extended family to local financial institutions, nonprofits, tribal, and philanthropic entities.

The Leading Edge Fellow will join SFA’s staff team as a Research Manager to conduct a field scan of the existence and efficacy of support systems for traditional artists in the SW region. Using quantitative and qualitative methods, the Fellow will produce a report that will help inform strategic directions for the wellbeing of the heritage arts economy in the region, identifying patterns, gaps, networks, and opportunities. The Fellow will also work with the editor of our online journal, Borderlore, to use the data collected to help inform and craft profiles, narratives, and featured stories that can amplify advocacy efforts.

The Fellow will be exposed to and will gain an in-depth understanding of the field of the traditional arts, an arena of social action and policy making that has stood up for decades as ground zero in the struggle for social justice among the creative industries. It does this, first, by recognizing the core dignity inherent to individuals from all walks of life, status, and identities to express artfully who they are, defined by their own community standards. This pluralistic commitment runs counter to gatekeeping strategies and differential assignments of “quality” and “value” by mainstream art systems. Secondly, this work actively recognizes the power dynamics that impact the distribution of economic incentives and opportunities for artists --especially dynamics and arrangements in philanthropy, tourism, and capital investments that

This position is **only** available through the Leading Edge Fellowship program. You may **not** contact the host institution to inquire about this position.
affect artists who live in rural areas, are poor, Native American, BIPOC, immigrants, are from ethnic subcultures, sexual minorities, religious minorities, are incarcerated, disabled, young, or otherwise practice their art and cultural forms outside the normalized mechanisms of reward in the art world. This is a full-time commitment for the fellowship year, including dedicated time for professional development activities.

**Responsibilities and tasks:**

- Work closely with SFA staff and partner organizations/tradition bearers to conduct interviews, produce surveys, generate maps of institutional support/anchor institutions, mine archival sources, generate fieldnotes, and write analysis and ethnographic final report.
- Participate in strategic sessions with SFA staff and Board and contribute insights to assess effectiveness of current program offerings based on knowledge gained from data collection and mentor-directed “homework” to learn about field best practices (reports from sister organizations, other national scans, field assessments).
- Author a report that will form the base for continued advocacy for social justice as a marker in the arts ecology of the state and region (2 drafts to be submitted during the Fellowship period).

**Qualifications:**

- PhD in any field of the humanities or humanistic social sciences. Read more about eligible fields [here](https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships);
- Familiarity with basic quantitative analysis;
- Experience with qualitative methods;
- Able to work independently;
- Willing to take direction and feedback;
- Empathy for vulnerable populations;
- Excellent writing, research, and presentation skills;
- Agile problem-solving skills, persistence, and sense of humor.

**APPLICATIONS**

- Information on the Leading Edge Fellowship Program: [https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships](https://www.acls.org/Competitions-and-Deadlines/Leading-Edge-Fellowships)
- All applications must be submitted through the ACLS Online Fellowship Application System (ofa.acls.org)
- Application deadline: 9pm EDT, May 6, 2021