

National Folklife Network Values

The National Folklife Network (NFN) is an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), an independent federal agency. The NEA has engaged non-federal entities in a cooperative agreement to carry out the work of the NFN—the Southwest Folklife Alliance, First Peoples Fund, and the Alliance for California Traditional Arts.

This group of cultural workers met in Juneau, Alaska, in June 2022 and agreed to affirm the following values as north stars for the work we do together:

- We commit to prioritizing seats at the table for nascent and homegrown leaders and practices that may or may not have been in the national folk arts radar (ecosystem) up to this point.

- We invite and welcome new ways to talk about “traditional arts,” not limiting the work done in and by communities only to the known nomenclature of “folk arts” or other vocabulary that disregards how creative knowledge keepers speak for and among themselves about their work.

- We commit to interrogating and reimagining systems of resource allocation, leadership, recognition, expertise, models of equity and wealth distribution, and intellectual property rights.

- We make room for self-determination, respecting individual and collective agency, and prioritizing sustainability, both cultural and environmental, as defined by each community in their own sense of sovereignty and autonomy.

- We are motivated and driven by a spirit of service. We prioritize actions that remove barriers, facilitate learning, open doors, share resources, and expand capacity and leadership across sectors.

- We assume good intentions (especially when the learning we are asked to do grinds against assumptions and ideas we are being invited to revisit).

- We strive to build an infrastructure that is respectful, responsive, reflective and accountable.

- We commit to listen first and seek, as necessary, opportunities to pivot, alter, correct course, and learn. As the network launches and evolves, we are committed to flexibility and adaptations as the voices from the targeted regions help guide the work without preconceptions.