REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL for a Part-Time Folklore Field-Worker

The Susquehanna Folk Music Society (SFMS), a folk and traditional arts presenting organization located in New Cumberland, PA, seeks to hire a part-time contracted folklorist to do fieldwork and ethnographic documentation in Dauphin, Cumberland, and Lebanon Counties between January 15, 2020, and August 31, 2020. The folklore field-worker position is part time and temporary, with a possibility of annual renewal and expansion pending funding and a successful completion of the duties described below.

SFMS has recently become a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA) Folk Arts Provisional Partner, and is charged with initiating a survey of folk and traditional artists living and working in Dauphin, Cumberland, and Lebanon Counties. The folklorist will help to guide this initiative and be tasked with identifying, interviewing, and documenting at least four traditional artists from each of these counties (12 total).

The folklorist’s duties will include the following: (1) identifying and interviewing folk and traditional artists and documenting their work through photography, interview transcriptions, completed fieldwork forms, and other means; (2) developing and maintaining a folk and traditional artist directory, to be housed on SFMS’s website, which will include biographical information about each identified folk and traditional artist; and (3) preparing an interim report with accompanying fieldnotes and a final descriptive report/essay. The folklorist will be expected to keep SFMS’s Executive Director regularly informed on the project’s progress.

SFMS is interested in the folklorist’s consideration of a broad range of traditional artists including musicians, craftspeople, storytellers, dancers, and other guardians of cultural heritage. The results of the folklife field survey will become part of PCA’s statewide traditional artist database, contribute to an increase in artist applications to PCA’s apprenticeship program, and provide cultural information to local cultural and arts organizations which may lead to public programming.

Resources to help support this position are available at Penn State - Harrisburg’s Pennsylvania Center for Folklore, located in Middletown, PA. SFMS will provide folklife fieldwork forms, including audio and photo logs, general releases, and artist data sheets. SFMS’s webmaster will assist with the directory.

Applicants must have at least a Masters degree in folklore or related discipline, such as cultural anthropology or ethnomusicology, and a minimum of two years’ experience in public folklore and folklore documentation/archiving. Applicants must have access to, as well as experience and technical competence with, digital equipment (camera, audio recorder, and computer/laptop) or cellphone/tablet equivalents. Priority will be given to applicants with a strong commitment to the Central Pennsylvania region.

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Applicants must supply the following:
(1) a cover letter detailing qualifications and experience;
(2) a proposed work plan showing how the project tasks will be carried out;
(3) a project budget;
(4) a curriculum vitae and three relevant references; and
(5) representative work samples such as recorded interviews, photography, field notes, and professional writing. Sharing samples through Google Drive is preferred.

When constructing the project budget, applicants must consider all costs including funds for disks, memory cards, batteries, and other supplies; travel expenses (at the prevailing state rate); and a fee for services commensurate with experience.

The maximum budget for this position is $6,300. Applicants must demonstrate that they can successfully identify, interview, and document 12 traditional artists without exceeding this budget.

Submit applications to Jess Hayden, SFMS’s Executive Director. Completed applications must be emailed or postmarked before January 1, 2020. The position is scheduled to begin January 15, 2020. For questions, please call Ms. Hayden at (717) 319-8409.

Applicants may choose one of these submission methods, which are listed in order of SFMS’s preference:
(1) share a Google Drive folder: set sharing to “Anyone with the link can view” and send notification to concerts@sfmsfolk.org
(2) email a PDF attachment (recordings or videos may be linked from the PDF) to concerts@sfmsfolk.org
(3) send printed material to SFMS, 378 Old York Road, New Cumberland, PA 17070

This position is funded through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), a state agency. By establishing the Folk Arts Partnerships, PCA works to preserve and promote the folk and traditional arts throughout Pennsylvania. Folk and traditional arts are defined as those artistic characteristics of specific ethnic, religious, linguistic, occupational, or regional groups. These arts are shaped and shared with families, neighborhoods, and communities. They are passed down from one generation to another and learned through ongoing participation in community-based activities, and through observation, practice, or apprenticeships with elders or master practitioners.

SFMS is a nonprofit education and arts organization dedicated to the advancement, promotion, and preservation of traditional, contemporary, and international folk music and folk culture. SFMS presents the annual Susquehanna Folk Festival, concert series, world music and dance events, workshops, jams, coffeehouses, and school residencies, all for the cultural enrichment of South Central Pennsylvania.