

About This Sample Application

This sample application is **entirely fictional**. The artist, career history, and narrative content were created solely for instructional purposes and do **not** represent a real applicant, funded project, or actual review outcome.

This example is provided to help applicants understand **what a strong Artist Fellowship application looks like** under the current guidelines. It demonstrates how an established artist might reflect on their career, articulate artistic maturity, and describe future creative exploration without proposing a specific project.

Applicants should use this sample as a **guide—not a template**. There is no single correct approach to a Fellowship application, and panelists do not expect applicants to match this structure, tone, or artistic discipline.

Why This Sample Scores Highly

This sample demonstrates the key qualities panelists look for in a strong **Artist Fellowship** application:

- **Sustained artistic accomplishment** shown through long-term commitment, consistent practice, and a clear professional trajectory
- **Thoughtful reflection and artistic maturity**, focusing on how the artist's work has evolved over time rather than on short-term projects
- **Credible future creative direction** that grows naturally from past experience and artistic inquiry
- **Strong alignment across sections**, with the artist's bio, statements, and narratives reinforcing one another

Together, these elements show why fellowship support is meaningful **at this stage of the artist's career** and how it will enable deeper artistic exploration.

How This Differs from a Career Development Application

Artist Fellowship applications focus on **reflection, artistic maturity, and future creative direction**, rather than outlining specific activities or projects. Panelists are looking for evidence of **sustained accomplishment**, clarity about where the artist is in their career, and how fellowship support enables exploration or deeper growth.

In contrast, Career Development applications are expected to describe **specific goals or activities** and explain how the grant will support a clear next step. Fellowship applicants do not need to propose a work plan or deliverables.

Artist Overview

Overview Instructions

All applicants must answer the narrative questions. You may either write your answers in the form (recommended length: 1,000–1,500 characters per question) or upload one document, no more than one page, that responds to all the same prompts. Be sure to stay within the character limits.

Overview Questions

Artist Bio (limit 1,500 characters)

Provide a brief biography describing your background, influences, and major achievements or experiences as an artist.

Jesse “JD” Danner is a musician and songwriter based in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. For more than fifteen years, JD has written, performed, and recorded original music rooted in the rhythms, humor, and tensions of life in the Upper Midwest. After studying music composition and performance at the University of Minnesota–Twin Cities, he spent a decade performing in punk and DIY bands throughout the region.

Since returning to South Dakota in 2015, JD has focused on building a body of work that reflects place-based storytelling and community connection. As founder and lead vocalist of Undercurrent of Animosity, he blends punk energy with modern rockabilly structure, creating songs shaped by small-town experiences, regional history, and lived observation. His work has been featured at festivals, community events, and regional showcases, and he remains deeply engaged in mentoring emerging musicians and supporting South Dakota’s independent music ecosystem.

Artist Statement (limit 2,000 characters)

Describe your artistic practice—what you create, why you create it, and how your work reflects your personal or cultural perspective. Panelists evaluate clarity of artistic identity and connection between your ideas and your work.

My artistic practice is rooted in listening—to people, to place, and to the patterns that emerge when you stay somewhere long enough to notice them. Growing up and living in eastern South Dakota has shaped not only the stories I tell, but how I tell them. My songs are built from small details: a conversation overheard in a bar, the quiet between towns, the humor people use to endure long winters and hard years.

I began in punk music because it valued directness and truth. Over time, my work evolved toward a rockabilly-influenced sound that allows more space for narrative and reflection while maintaining urgency and energy. This evolution mirrors my own growth as an artist—moving from reaction to intention, from speed to structure.

My process is collaborative and iterative. Songs develop through rehearsal, performance, and revision, often shaped by audience response and community context. I am interested in how music functions as a shared experience—how it reflects collective memory and creates connection. As my practice has matured, I am increasingly drawn to slowing down, listening more deeply, and exploring how restraint, space, and subtlety can carry as much meaning as volume and speed.

Proposal Narrative

Narrative Instructions

Your answers should match the type of grant you chose. If you need a reminder, look at the box you checked on page one of the application.

Answer the following narrative questions with concise, clear responses or upload one document, no more than one page, that addresses the same prompts. You may either write your answers in the form or upload one document, no more than one page, that responds to all the same prompts. Be sure to stay within the character limits.

Panelists evaluate how clearly you connect your proposal to your artistic goals and demonstrate commitment to your practice.

Narrative Questions

Artist Fellowship (limit 3,300 characters (≈ 450–500 words)):

Reflect on your career as an artist. What have been your most significant artistic accomplishments? How will this fellowship help you grow creatively or explore new directions in your work.

Over the past fifteen years, my artistic career has been defined by steady commitment rather than rapid visibility. I have built a sustained practice rooted in writing, performing, and recording original music that reflects South Dakota's cultural landscape. Through Undercurrent of Animosity, I have performed consistently across the region, released original recordings, and developed a distinct voice that blends punk's urgency with rockabilly's narrative structure.

My most significant accomplishments are not singular milestones, but the accumulation of work over time: maintaining an active performance schedule, releasing self-produced recordings, mentoring younger musicians, and helping create spaces where original music can thrive locally. These experiences have allowed my work to mature while staying grounded in community.

At this stage in my career, I am seeking time and space for deeper reflection and creative exploration. Rather than focusing on production or output, I want to examine the underlying questions that drive my songwriting: how place shapes identity, how stories change as communities age, and how music can hold complexity without losing accessibility. I am interested in experimenting with form, pacing, and arrangement—allowing songs to breathe and exploring quieter, more deliberate approaches to storytelling.

Fellowship support would provide the flexibility to slow down and listen more closely—to my own work and to the environments that inform it. This period of exploration will influence future compositions, recordings, and performances, shaping the next phase of my artistic practice. The fellowship represents an opportunity to deepen my work rather than expand it outward, ensuring that what comes next is thoughtful, intentional, and grounded in the experience I've built over time.

Purpose, Process, and Impact

Narrative Instructions

All applicants must upload a Record of Work (1–2 pages).

All applicants must answer the narrative questions. You may either write your answers in the form (recommended length: 1,000–1,500 characters per question) or upload one document, no more than one page, that responds to the same prompts.

Record of Work (required)

Upload a 1–2-page document that shows your artistic experience. This can be a résumé, a CV, or another format that clearly lists your work, training, or accomplishments.

(SEE PAGES 9 – 10: Record of work)

Why This Résumé Works

This résumé effectively supports an **Artist Fellowship** application by emphasizing **sustained artistic practice, depth of experience, and long-term contribution**, rather than short-term goals or project planning.

It works because it:

- Demonstrates **consistency and longevity** in artistic work over time
- Highlights a **distinct artistic voice** grounded in place and lived experience
- Shows **leadership and community contribution** alongside personal practice
- Aligns past accomplishments with the reflective, exploratory focus of a Fellowship

Applicants should note that a strong Fellowship résumé centers on **artistic maturity and continuity**, helping panelists understand why fellowship support is meaningful at this stage of an artist's career.

Narrative Questions

Why Your Art Matters

Explain the broader purpose or impact of your work. How does your art engage, reflect, or contribute to your community or artistic field?

Panelists consider the alignment between your artistic purpose and your proposed activities, as well as your potential impact on the arts in South Dakota.

(recommended 1,000–1,500 characters)

My work matters because it reflects lives and places that are often overlooked in contemporary music. Much of my songwriting centers on ordinary moments—work, humor, endurance, and belonging—that resonate deeply with audiences who see their own experiences mirrored in the songs.

By performing and sharing music rooted in South Dakota, I help reinforce the value of local stories and regional voices. Music becomes a way for communities to recognize themselves and for artists to remain connected to the places that shape them. Through mentoring and community-based performances, I also contribute to sustaining a creative ecosystem where emerging musicians feel supported and encouraged to stay engaged.

As my career continues, I see my role not only as a performer, but as a steward of shared cultural memory—using music to hold stories, foster connection, and create space for reflection.

Your Artistic Process and Skills

Describe your artistic process and the quality of your creative output. What skills, techniques, or approaches distinguish your work? Highlight past achievements, exhibitions, performances, publications, or recognition that demonstrate excellence.

Panelists evaluate artistic ability, skill, and quality of work samples relative to your career stage.

(recommended 1,000–1,500 characters)

My artistic process has evolved alongside my experience. Early work relied heavily on speed and immediacy, shaped by punk's intensity and live performance. Over time, I've developed a more deliberate approach—focusing on arrangement, pacing, and lyrical clarity.

Songs typically begin with observation: a phrase, a rhythm, or a specific moment rooted in place. From there, I refine the work through rehearsal and performance, allowing repetition and audience response to guide revisions. My technical skills in songwriting, vocal performance, and arrangement have been strengthened through years of live work and recording collaboration.

At this stage, my skill lies not only in execution, but in discernment—knowing when to add and when to subtract. This maturity allows me to approach new creative questions with confidence and restraint, supporting deeper artistic exploration.

Share My Work

Instructions

- All applicants must include examples of past work—either your own or the work of artists involved in the project.
- If you don't include materials, your application will not be reviewed.
- You may include **up to 20 total items** (links, files, documents, images, etc.).

How to Submit Materials:

Option 1: Share My Work

- Add direct links to your materials.
- Make sure links open easily (no passwords).
- You may also upload PDFs.

Option 2: Portfolio of My Work

- Upload files to the Media Library.
- Attach those files to your application to create a portfolio.

Panelists spend about 15 minutes on your materials, so choose wisely.

Preferred formats: website links, PDFs, JPEGs.

Links to videos or audio online are better than uploading large files.

What to Include (Suggestions)

- Recent work from the last 3–5 years (older work is okay with a quick explanation).
- Your strongest work first.
- Examples that show you can do the kind of project you're proposing.
- Examples of the type of work you plan to make for this project.
- Work showing you engaging with a community or audience.
- Press or articles about you or your work.
- Reviews or assessments of your work.
- Audience reactions—social posts, feedback, emails, or letters.
- Quotes or testimonials (such as survey comments).
- Photos or videos showing your process or your work in action (rehearsals, exhibits, events, etc.).

Budget

Do not complete the Fiscal Year section. We do not need your operating income or expenses.

Eligible costs include:

artist fees, staff salaries, supplies, space rental, utilities, marketing, promotion, travel.

Ineligible costs include:

fundraising activities, meals/receptions/catering (except travel meals), construction, tuition, endowments, emergency relief.

Line C (Grant Request):

Enter your chosen request amount on line C under State Arts Agency Income. Choose ONE:

- \$2,000 – Career Development Grant
- \$6,000 – Collaboration Grant
- \$5,000 – Fellowship

Awards are based on the artistic strength of your work and proposal. You will either receive the full amount you request or not receive a grant.

Sources of Project Cash Income

- A. Earned Income: \$0
- B. Contributed Income: \$0
- C. State Arts Agency Income: Grant Amount: \$5,000
- D. Local Government Income: \$0
- E. Other Income: Applicant Cash (my own money): \$0
- F. Total Project Income: \$5,000

Sources of Project Cash Expenses – Actual Cash Expenses

- A. Artist Fees: Artist time for creative exploration, research, writing, and reflection: \$2,500
- B. Production Costs:
 - a. Supplies & Materials: \$900
 - b. Recording engineer: \$500
- C. Space Rental: Studio space for experimentation and development: \$600
- D. Marketing: Documenting and sharing of work-in-progress: \$200
- E. Other Expenses: Regional travel for research, listening sessions, artistic immersion: \$300
- F. Total Project Cash Expense: \$5,000