

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary Artist in Residence Program Request for Qualifications: Mentor for Artists

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE) is pleased to announce a Request for Qualifications for a pilot [Artist in Residence \(AIR\) program](#) from January 2025-Spring 2026. The pilot initiative will address critical water quality challenges and was developed in response to President Biden's Executive Order (EO) on Arts and Humanities (EO 14084 Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services, October 5, 2022). The AIR pilot is a partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), and select [National Estuary Programs](#) and [Urban Waters Federal Partnership locations](#) (UWFP). The Delaware River location is one of 6 participating in the pilot project.

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary is seeking a single (1) qualified mentor to guide four artists who will each create art projects focused on the intersection of water quality, climate change, that will include community input and engagement. These projects will respond directly to community input from the four urban cities (Camden, Philadelphia, Chester, and Wilmington) that face distinct water and climate challenges. The selected mentor will work closely with the artists to help them develop and refine their projects while ensuring they are responsive to both the artistic process and the concerns and interests of the communities involved.

About Partnership of the Delaware Estuary

PDE is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to lead collaborative, science-based efforts to improve the Delaware River and Bay, which covers portions of Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. This diverse natural resource not only provides clean drinking water for millions of people but also supports a thriving industrial region that contributes an impressive \$12 billion to our local economy each year. Beyond its economic importance, the estuary offers abundant recreational opportunities—whether you enjoy hiking scenic trails, fishing, observing wildlife, or paddling through serene creeks, there's something for everyone to appreciate. It is the home to a wide range of plants and animals who are dependent upon a healthy environment for their survival.

PDE's passionate team is committed to exploring every corner of this ecosystem, doing hands-on work in the region's marshes and waterways to make exciting discoveries. Through science-based initiatives, we work to prevent pollution, protect wetlands, and restore essential species like mussels and oysters.

We collaborate with a diverse network of partners—including government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and community members—to nurture the waters that sustain our communities. Through festivals, workshops, river cleanups, and various other events, we cultivate a sense of appreciation, ownership, and stewardship for the entire estuary.

PDE is host of the Delaware Estuary Program, one of 28 National Estuary Programs designated by Congress, who work tirelessly to enhance the health of estuaries across the coastal United States. In addition, PDE coordinates the Delaware River location of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) program that includes the cities of Camden, Philadelphia, Chester, and Wilmington. This

location is one of 21 in the country and was established in 2012. The UWFP exists to reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies. UWFP also collaborates with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.

Our efforts to create clean waters, healthy habitats, and strong communities in the watershed are met with several challenges, including stormwater management, erosion and flood control, safeguarding source water, restoring lost habitats, and enhancing the overall health of our waterways. PDE's work also focuses on protecting community investments, pursuing environmental justice, and promoting public access to these vital resources. Given the vast reach of the Delaware Estuary and the array of environmental and social issues we encounter, effective restoration requires both a broad strategic approach and targeted, on-the-ground initiatives. Balancing this work is essential for meaningful progress.

Project Summary

The Delaware Estuary Artist-in-Residency Program is seeking to contract a mentor to provide guidance and support to four (4) artists as they develop and create art projects focused on water quality and climate change. These projects will be shaped by community input and will reflect the environmental priorities and concerns of four UWFP cities (Camden, Philadelphia, Chester, and Wilmington) in the Delaware Estuary region. The selected mentor will work with the artists from January 2025 through June 2026.

The selected mentor will support the artists in developing their projects, ensuring they are responsive and inspired by community input, address pressing environmental issues, and are artistically impactful throughout the entirety of the program. It is envisioned that the mentor will meet collectively with the 4 participating artists once a month over the 18-month project period. Four of these meetings will be in-person (one in each of the urban water cities) and the remaining meetings can be conducted virtually. The selected mentor should also intend to implement weekly individual meetings between the mentor and each artist individually. These meetings will provide an opportunity for the mentor to offer personalized guidance, address any challenges, and ensure the projects are progressing smoothly.

The Delaware Estuary is a vital ecosystem that faces challenges related to water quality, climate change, and urbanization. This program aims to engage local communities in addressing these challenges through art. Each artist will develop a unique project inspired by the concerns and perspectives of the community members in one of four cities along the Delaware Estuary. The mentor will guide the artists through the creative process, providing professional mentorship, feedback, and support, while ensuring that the final projects are grounded in both environmental themes and community-driven input.

Scope of Work

The mentor will be responsible for:

- **Mentorship and Guidance:**
 - Providing creative guidance and feedback to each of the four (4) artists, helping them conceptualize and refine their projects in line with community input, environmental themes, and artistic excellence.
 - Offering constructive critiques and assisting the artists through the stages of development, from initial concept to final presentation.
 - Fostering collaboration and exchange of ideas among the artists, ensuring they learn from each other while maintaining the individuality of each project.
- **Community-Responsive Art Development:**
 - Advising on the integration of community input into the projects, ensuring that each piece reflects the priorities, concerns, and ideas of the local community members.
 - Helping the artists navigate the process of working with diverse communities and stakeholders, ensuring projects are culturally sensitive and contextually relevant.
- **Environmental and Sustainability Guidance:**
 - Ensuring that each project addresses water quality and climate change in a meaningful and impactful way.
 - Providing guidance on eco-friendly practices and sustainable materials, where applicable, to ensure the art has minimal environmental impact.
- **Professional Development and Career Guidance:**
 - Offering advice on public engagement strategies, exhibition planning, and career development to help the artists prepare for the presentation and professional growth of their work.
- **Logistical and Practical Support:**
 - Assisting with practical aspects of the projects, including assisting the artists with timeline management, material selection, and coordination for in-person community engagements/ presentations.
 - Helping artists prepare for installation or public art exhibitions that are tied to the community engagement process.

- **Meetings and Communication:**

- Meeting individually with each artist weekly to offer personalized guidance, address challenges, and ensure project progress.
- Conducting **18 collective meetings total** (one meeting for each month during the project period) including:
 - **Four 2-Hour in-person meetings** - one held in each of the four urban water cities to engage directly with the artists and their communities
 - **Fourteen 1-hour virtual meetings**—to review progress, provide ongoing feedback, and facilitate regular check-ins with the artists.
- Ensuring consistent communication and availability for the artists, responding to questions or concerns in a timely manner outside of scheduled meetings.

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

The ideal mentor will have:

- **Experience in community-based art projects**, particularly those that focus on environmental issues such as water quality or climate change.
- **A strong portfolio** of work that reflects an understanding of the intersection of art, environmental science, and community engagement.
- **Proven experience in mentoring artists**, with a track record of helping artists navigate creative processes, public engagement, and project development.
- **A deep understanding of water quality, climate change, and environmental issues**, especially as they pertain to urban or estuarine environments.
- **Strong communication skills**, with the ability to foster collaboration among artists and between artists and community members.
- **Project management experience**, including managing timelines, materials, and logistical considerations for art installations or public exhibitions.
- **Experience working with diverse communities**, particularly in urban settings, and an ability to navigate the complexities of incorporating community feedback into art-making processes.
- **A commitment to sustainability and eco-friendly practices** in art-making and public engagement.

Selection Process

- Responses to this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) are due by January 6, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.
- Applications will be reviewed by representatives of PDE and UWFP Delaware River Partners.
- The selection committee will evaluate submissions based on the following:

- Demonstrated experience in mentorship and community-based art projects, especially those focused on environmental issues.
- A proven track record of guiding artists through complex, socially engaged art processes.
- Understanding urban water quality and climate change issues, or the ability to quickly grasp these challenges.
- Approach to incorporating community input into the creative process.
- Quality of the proposed mentorship approach and alignment with project goals.
- Ability to work within the proposed timeline and budget.
- Selected candidates will be interviewed and selected by PDE staff.

Project Timeline

December 2024	Accepting Applications
January 2025	Review Request for Qualifications. PDE, UWFP Delaware River Location Partners, select mentor candidates
January 2025	Interviews conducted by project team, and mentor selected
January 2025	Mentor contract signed
January 2025 - May 2025	Onboarding and exploratory phase with artists. Mentor responsibilities ensue.
June 2025 - April 2026	Art Implementation Phase for artists.
May 2026	Unveiling of art projects in the cities through press events. Mentor responsibilities end.

Compensation

A stipend of \$10,000 will be provided to the mentor as compensation and for any expenses associated with mentorship.

RFQ Application Procedure

- **Letter of Interest** (no more than 1 page) detailing your experience with community-based art, your approach to mentorship, and how you would support artists working on environmental and community-responsive art projects.
- **Portfolio** or links to relevant works that demonstrate experience with environmental art, community engagement, and mentorship.
- **Résumé/Curriculum Vitae (CV)** highlighting your professional experience, exhibitions, and previous mentorship roles.
- **References:** At least two (2) professional references who can speak to your qualifications for this role, particularly in mentoring artists and working on environmental themes.



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General Submission Guidelines

- Submit what you believe is your strongest work, in the context of this opportunity
- Incomplete or illegible submissions may be disqualified; it is the applicant's responsibility to verify the completeness of their application
- The application deadline for submission is January 6, 2025, at 11:59 p.m.
- Please submit all required materials to Eve Quinones at equinones@delawareestuary.org. You may reach out to Eve if you have questions about the application process.