



CALL FOR APPLICATIONS: VANS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM 2026 - 2027

APPLICATION DEADLINE: 5pm on JULY 15, 2026.

BACKGROUND

In 2006, the VANS Mentorship Program was created in response to the growing requests from visual artists in Nova Scotia for additional support beyond VANS' already successful workshop series, information sessions, panel and peer discussions and other educational programs. Basing its structure on similar programs such as MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art) in Winnipeg, CARFAC Saskatchewan's Visual Arts Mentorship Program and the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia's Mentorship Program, the VANS Mentorship Program joined the ranks of a handful of such programs Canada-wide.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The VANS Mentorship Program is designed to support the individual artistic methods and professional ambitions of emerging artists in Nova Scotia by providing access to the skills and experience of selected mentors. Mentees are selected from a pool of applicants based on their demonstrated commitment to their practice, the clarity and level of ambition outlined in their goals for the program, and the ability of the applicant to utilize the program to its fullest potential.

Over the course of the program, mentors will meet with mentees one-on-one, at least once a month, and additionally four times as a group. The mentors may be asked to provide support in any one or more of the following areas: proposal development for exhibition in public galleries or artist-run centres, grant writing assistance, artist statement development, documentation of work, technical advice, skills development, critiques of work, research assistance, and thematic development of work, networking, budgeting, organizational tips, and creative brainstorming.

The VANS Mentorship program is tailored to support the needs of selected emerging artists' methods and ambitions, and is shaped by the skills of participating mentors. Its impact depends on participants' enthusiasm, openness and initiative in the program and their commitment to the development of their art work.

The goal of the program is intended to support emerging visual artists who seek additional career development, or technical guidance to develop their practice as visual artists in Nova Scotia. The program requires that mentees make a focused commitment to their visual arts practice and dedicate a significant portion of their time to their work throughout the program. The mentorship program is best

suited to emerging artists who maintain an active studio practice and have created a body of work outside of formal training environments.

By investing intensely in a few individuals each year, the VANS Mentorship Program contributes on a wider scale to the overall strength, sustainability and vibrancy of the visual arts community in Nova Scotia.

ELIGIBILITY

Only artists living in and around the Annapolis Region are eligible to participate in the 2026 - 27 Mentorship Program.

Mentees are artists in the early stages of their career as a professional artist; of any age over 19 years; a resident of Nova Scotia for at least one year previous to the application; and a member of Visual Arts Nova Scotia (artists may join at time of application). **Individuals enrolled in post-secondary study are ineligible to participate.**

Mentors are professional artists with at least ten years professional experience (extensive knowledge and experience with grant writing, juries, curatorial resources, and exhibitions in public, commercial, or artist-run galleries is an asset); they are recognized by their peers as a mid-career or established artist as defined by the Canada Council for the Arts; they are great communicators and demonstrate the ability to educate through an informal, one-on-one, adult-based learning experience; they are living and working in Nova Scotia; and a member of Visual Arts Nova Scotia (artists may join at time of application).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Mentee artists must submit:

- **a letter of application** - Describe your art practice/ studio activity over the last year. What are your goals for this program? How would your current work benefit from support of the program? What kind of support are you looking for in the program? How will you devote adequate time to the development of your work while balancing other commitments? What challenges do you have in your practice and what are your strategies to overcome those challenges? (max 2 pages)
- **10 jpeg images** or short videos (max 5 minutes) with accompanying image list (including title, date, media, dimensions).
- **one letter of reference** from an established artist and/or curator who has experience with your work. This letter should demonstrate that you are a good candidate for the program. Also include the names and contact information of two additional references who have experience with your work.
AND
- **a link to your website**
OR
- **a resume/cv** (max 2 pages)

Mentors must submit:

- a **cover letter** which outlines who you are, the reasons for wanting to participate in the program; highlighting the applicants specific eligibility to participate - professional and personal skills, experiences and qualities that the applicant will bring as a mentor to the program (coaching, communication skills, experience, etc.) (400 words max);
- a **CV** detailing your training/education, exhibitions, and other related experience and information (3 pages max);
- 10 JPG (500 kb max) **images** (or a maximum of 5 minutes of media in standard definition) of previously completed work;
- a corresponding **numbered image list** (01, 02...10,) describing in order: title, media, dimensions and year;
- an **artist statement** (300 words max)
- names and contact information for **three references** (reference letters not required);

Email a copy of your Application Proposal by 5pm on July 15, 2026 to:

communicate@visualarts.ns.ca

SELECTION PROCESS

The jury first selects mentee applicants for the program. The jury will then match each selected emerging artist with a mentor that the committee feels would benefit the emerging artist's work based on their demonstrated goals, working methods and geography. If necessary, the jury will solicit the participation of an eligible established artist who they feel would best support a selected mentee, but who may not have formally applied to act as a mentor.

The jury is composed of professional artists and art educators, including past participants of the Mentorship Program. The selection committee will review emerging artist applications, check references and then select three or four mentees based on their demonstrated commitment to their practice, the clarity and level of ambition outlined in their goals for the program, and the ability of the applicant to utilize the program to its fullest potential. Applicants may be contacted with questions.

Acknowledging the lack of diversity in our Mentorship Program in the past, the jury will give special consideration to artists who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) as well as artists from rural areas of Nova Scotia.

NOTIFICATION OF THE RESULTS

Notification of results will take place approximately one month after the deadline by email.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program Duration: 10 months, from September to June.

Mentors will be paid an honorarium for their participation in the program (\$3125). The program is free for mentees.

PROGRAM INFORMATION SESSIONS:

There will be a Mentorship Program info session over Zoom on **Wednesday, June 24, 2026 at 7pm AT**. Register in advance for this meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/join/6zpqy23vR_qxlygLP-Sjg

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Please visit our website under Programs for further details of past program participants and answers to Frequently Asked Questions when applying for the mentorship program:

<https://www.visualarts.ns.ca/programs/mentorship-program/>

For inquiries, please contact:

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