

Writing a Strong Nomination Narrative

Goals for your narrative

Your primary goal should be to explain **Why** — why your nominee deserves the prestigious Raleigh Medal of Arts, based on their achievements and contributions to art, artists, and/or the Raleigh community. Support your case by answering these questions:

- **What** your nominee has done? What are their accomplishments?
- **How** have their accomplishments impacted the arts in Raleigh and the community?

Impact may take several forms:

- Benefits to residents and participants.
- Helping the City realize its vision for “a community connected through arts and culture, where every person is empowered to lead the creative life they envision and where the arts are a part of everyday life.”
- Improving community engagement with the arts.
- Furthering equity, access, and inclusion for all people to enjoy the arts; helping to create a sense of belonging.
- Introducing a new or visionary way of making art or supporting the arts.

Developing your narrative

Read the application questions and keep them handy as you gather your thoughts and information that supports your nomination. You can access the “[Call for Nominations Checklist](https://raleighnc.gov/arts/call-nominations-2022-raleigh-medal-arts),” which lists the application questions, through the City’s Medal of Arts webpage at <https://raleighnc.gov/arts/call-nominations-2022-raleigh-medal-arts>.

Gather your background materials. These include facts, data, and authoritative opinions about your nominee. Strengthen your case with supporting details that come from:

- Your nominee and others who can supply specifics (“Paying tribute to North Carolina’s cultural heritage by including genres like bluegrass and gospel in symphony performances”), facts (“The theater dedicated Sunday performances for autistic audiences twice a year”), and data (“Audiences increased by 50% during her tenure as executive director”).
- News articles and reviews, which can supply background information and the nominee’s influence on the arts and the community.
- Authoritative sources who recognize the nominee’s work and influence (“The Washington Post called him the most influential festival organizer on the East Coast”).

Fill in the blanks. Pretend your readers know nothing about your nominee — flip your perspective to answer questions they might have about Who, What, Why, and So What:

- If you feel you don’t have enough supporting details, do some extra research to strengthen your case. You can start with the sources listed above; remember that Google is your friend. If you’re having trouble articulating Why your nominee should be honored, a little digging can also help get your writing juices flowing.

- Give a little background in the overview (Question 1) about your nominee and the importance of their work — don't assume that name recognition will be enough.
- Focus on the difference your nominee has made to the arts here. What would the Raleigh community be like without your nominee's work?

Organize and categorize. Sort your material, slotting it under the appropriate application questions. For example, “Audiences increased by 50% during her tenure” could be part of your answer to Question 3 about community engagement (and remember to explain **How** she increased attendance).

Write and polish your answers. Use only your very best facts, data, arguments, and stories. Remember: it's easier to write several drafts than try for immediate perfection (see Tips below).

Double-check before hitting Submit. You can save the draft in the portal and log back in to work on it as many times as you need.

Writing & Editing Tips

Remember the 5 W's and the H. You will, of course, name your **Who** (the individual/group/project you are nominating), but concentrate on **Why**, **What**, and **How** as you write your application, and use **Where** and **When** to flesh things out.

Answer Questions 2–5 first. Save Question 1 for last — it's easier to write the overview/summary last, after you've gathered your supporting details. Answer Question 1 from a 30,000-foot perspective: “This project enabled the community to develop emotional wings.” The other questions tell your reviewer **How** the project accomplished this.

Write, THEN edit. Don't edit while you write; trying to write polished prose right out of the gate is a sure-fire way to frustrate and slow you down. It's faster to write five drafts, polishing each iteration, than try to produce perfection in one go. Edit, in order, for content, flow, grammar, and “sparkle.”

TIP: People (even trained writers) often bury their most important thought at the end of a paragraph or argument — if you're struggling to craft a more impactful beginning, try switching your beginning and ending thoughts.

Use a word-processing program. Write and edit in **Word**, then copy and paste into the answer fields of the application portal. The portal has character limits for each answer, so you can use **Word's** character count to monitor length. (Apple's **Pages** app also has a character-count feature.)

Avoid:

- Extraneous information, “spinning” your answers, or overly flowery language. Make it easy for the reviewer to understand why this nominee deserves special recognition.
- Saying more than you need to. Answer the question completely and as thoroughly as you can. Then stop. Don't feel you have to use the entire character count allotted.
- Inconsistencies. Don't use terms like “program” and “project” interchangeably. Pick one term to describe what you're talking about and stick with it.
- Opinionated, unsubstantiated claims. A statement like “She changed Raleigh arts for the better” is fine, but back it up with **How** (facts, data, opinions from authorities on the subject).