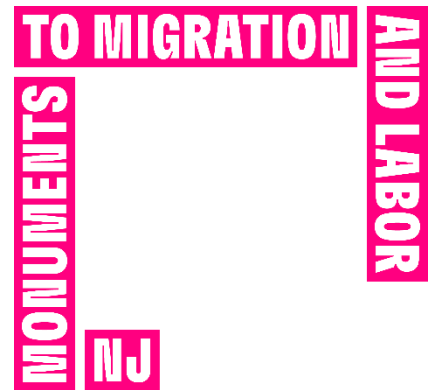


Monuments to Migration and Labor: The New Jersey Im/migrant Laborers' Monument Project

Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Monument Artists



Opportunity

Monuments to Migration and Labor: The New Jersey Im/migrant Laborers' Monument Project invites artists to apply to create one of three temporary Monument Installations that honor immigrants' and migrants' contributions to the state of New Jersey as laborers. Each selected artist will be assigned to one of the state's three regions (North Jersey, Central Jersey, or South Jersey) and will create a temporary monument installation that is responsive to and inspired by extensive community dialogues that will be conducted by trained facilitators in each region. Each region's monument will reflect that region's specific histories, and address the unique concerns, perspectives, and stories that participants in the community dialogues have identified as relevant to the present moment.

Monument installations must have a physical presence in a publicly accessible outdoor location and must remain on view for at least four months.

This opportunity is open to artists and artist teams residing in the United States with an interest in and/or previous work relating to labor, immigration, and migrant communities. Artists who are part of migrant and immigrant communities are encouraged to apply. The selected artist will also have experience executing ideas from concept to completion and meeting a specified budget and timeline. Previous experience creating work for the public realm is preferred.

Project Background

The Mellon Foundation has awarded Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, a multi-year grant for *Monuments to Migration and Labor: The New Jersey Im/migrant Laborers' Monument Project* to support research, engagement, and public installations commemorating migration and the labor that immigrants and migrants perform. This grant is part of the [Mellon Foundation's Monuments Project](#), a multi-year initiative, which aims to transform the nation's commemorative landscape, ensuring our collective histories are more completely and accurately represented. The Mellon Foundation's Monuments Project supports efforts to

express, elevate, and preserve the stories of those who have often been denied historical recognition, and explores how we might foster a more complete telling of who we are as a nation.

Monuments to Migration and Labor is led by a diverse team including Rutgers' faculty, leaders from arts and cultural organizations from across the state. and the following Regional Partners: [the Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center](#) and Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University (Atlantic City site [Noyes Art Garage](#)) (South Jersey), [coLAB Arts](#) (Central Jersey), and [Newest Americans](#) (North Jersey).

For more information about the Project see: <https://njmml.com/>.

Project Context

In 2021, Monument Lab, in partnership with the Mellon Foundation, produced [a National Monument Audit](#), which studied approximately 50,000 conventional monuments across the United States to assess the monument landscape. The audit's key findings were that the subjects of monuments are overwhelmingly white and male, the most common features of American monuments reflect conquest and war, and the story of the United States as told by our current monuments misrepresents our history.

Data from the [2023 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau](#), shows that 24.2% of residents of the state of New Jersey are foreign-born. At a time when immigration to the United States is being questioned, and immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and visa holders face political attacks, deportation raids, family separation, and the denial of citizenship, we invite the public to ask questions and share stories, informed by historical evidence and firsthand accounts, about how migrants have contributed to New Jersey economically, socially, and culturally. *Monuments to Migration and Labor* aims to address gaps in the monument landscape and disrupt assumptions built into current commemorative landscapes about who deserves credit for economic progress and the production and circulation of goods and services more generally.

This project will promote dialogues about how progress gets defined in economic, environmental, and social terms, and encourage workers and migrants, in collaboration with project artists, to assign their own meaning and significance to their experiences and to sites of memory where labor occurred. Through this process, together we will work to make monuments to migration and labor that are visible features of New Jersey's commemorative landscapes, and that challenge audiences to reconsider what they know about migrants and their labor.

The monument installations will celebrate immigrant and migrant laborers, past and present, while also interpreting their complicated stories and exploring what it has meant to face the hostility, exploitation, and exclusions groups migrating for work have historically encountered and continue to face. Ultimately, the Project will give the public the chance to confront art and

history commemorating the unglamorous, often unnoticed, but essential labor that immigrants and migrants perform.

Process

Community Dialogues (prior to Monument Artist selections)

The Project will facilitate community dialogues in each of the three regions of the state (North Jersey, Central Jersey, and South Jersey). The dialogues will take place from March 1 through August 31, 2025. The Project is training im/migrants and second-generation members of those communities to serve as dialogue facilitators who will guide different publics in conversations about labor histories in their region, while also soliciting responses that feature personal narratives and perspectives. Community Artists, recruited separately from Monument Artists, will also be selected to participate in the dialogues and document the conversations and stories shared, ultimately creating smaller-scale artworks that will be displayed at partnering community organizations in each of the three regions and online.

Finally, dialogue facilitators are being trained to document themes, topics, and key perspectives shared during community dialogues, and will be synthesizing responses and comments from the dialogues so that they can be shared with the selected Monument Artists to draw on to develop their monument installation concepts.

Public Events (after Monument Artist selections)

The selected Monument Artists will develop their installations working in close partnership with community stakeholders over multiple stages, including a series of three Public Events for each region that artists will help plan.

The first Public Event, to take place by mid-October 2025, will introduce the Monument Artist to community and regional stakeholders and allow the artist to engage attendees in discussions about migration and labor. At the second Public Event, to take place by the end of February 2026, the artist will share an initial concept for a monument installation and receive feedback from community stakeholders. At the third Public Event, to take place by the end of May 2026, the artist will present their revised design for the monument installation, incorporating earlier feedback, and receive final comments and suggestions from community stakeholders.

Throughout this process, [Via Partnership](#), the Project's public art consultant, will work with the artists to identify and secure monument installation sites and serve as a liaison for the artists.

Monument Installation Programming and Activation

Programming and activation that engages the public will be key to the success of the monument installations. As part of their scope of work, Monument Artists will work with the Project Team to propose a Community Engagement Plan. The Project Team will help facilitate and support agreed-upon programming and activations.

NJ Monument Project Symposium

The Project will host a symposium at Rutgers University once the monument installations are unveiled, to take place in the fall 2026. The project team, in collaboration with the Mellon Foundation, will invite artists, scholars, and community organizations from the United States and New Jersey, to learn from project participants and to workshop their own plans and ideas. Monument Artists will participate in the symposium. Travel costs, lodging and meals for the symposium will be covered separately by the Project.

Monument Installation Sites

Sites for the Monument Installations will be selected in collaboration with the Monument Artists from a list generated by the community partners and project stakeholders. Via Partnership, the project's public art consultant, will help determine viability of sites, including helping to secure permissions, and assist the artist with site-related technical concerns.

Monument Installation Goals

The overarching goals for the Monument Installations are to:

- Draw on the work done in the Community Dialogues, recognize and honor im/migrant laborers' histories and stories, and bring visibility to the significance of im/migrant laborers and their contributions to New Jersey.
- Offer entry points for the public to engage with stories of im/migrant laborers and develop a deeper understanding of migrants and workers' experiences and this aspect of our society.
- Foster conversations about the role of im/migrant laborers in our society, and their experiences, putting history and the present day in dialogue with each other.
- Generate national interest and serve as a model for other communities to pursue similar projects and conversations.

Regional Context and Parameters

In addition to the overarching goals stated above, each region has a unique context and specific factors that should be considered in the development of monuments.

North Jersey

The immigrant labor force in Northern New Jersey has historically been extremely diverse, both in terms of occupations and countries of origin. Im/migrant labor was an essential component of the Industrial Revolution, which in the U.S. arguably began in Northern New Jersey at the [Great Falls](#) in Paterson, and then flowed down the Passaic River to Newark and Jersey City. The public dialogues in North Jersey will engage the wide variety of immigrant communities, past and present, whose labor built New Jersey's three largest cities. At each stage of this history different im/migrant communities arrived to work in the factories and construction sites, provide domestic care and nursing, staff restaurants and other service industries, and start the businesses that give the state its distinct character. African American, Arab, Eastern European, Jewish, Latine, and South Asian migrants all contributed to this labor history, will

contribute to the public dialogues, and will have a stake in the monument design. For this reason, our goal will be for the selected artist to create a monument that can be activated to attract and serve multiple im/migrant communities.

Central Jersey

The Central Jersey region will be focusing culturally and geographically on the experiences of the Latine community in New Brunswick. Predominantly Oaxacan, the Latine community in Central Jersey is also comprised of immigrants from Colombia, Guatemala, Peru, the Dominican Republic, and other Latin American and Caribbean countries. The Central Jersey project will consider these communities' experiences working with staffing agencies and as warehouse labor and restaurant workers, as well as the experience of trying to find work as a new arrival. Through the dialogue facilitations, we will have the opportunity to contrast these experiences with those of the City's older immigrant groups including Hungarian and Puerto Rican communities.

South Jersey

South Jersey is the most rural part of New Jersey, and the population is dispersed across multiple areas that each have different centers and regional orientations. For this reason, the monument installation for South Jersey should be able to travel to or take place at multiple sites. The Project has partnerships with cultural and arts organizations in Atlantic City, Seabrook, Bivalve, and Millville, which may be available to help find venues or locations for the resulting artwork and - and help strengthen connections and relationships between different communities within South Jersey. The Project is especially interested in monument installations that explore the region's long history of seasonal migration, involving Black, Italian, and Caribbean workers, for jobs in agriculture, oystering, and service industries catering to tourism on the Shore, and how these communities were established as more permanent over time – as has been the case with more recent immigrants as well.

Artists' Scope of Work

In each region the selected artist will be responsible for developing a community engagement plan and designing, fabricating, and installing the artwork, including:

- Participating in and helping design the three Public Events for their assigned region.
- Developing and presenting initial concept and final designs for monument installation at the Public Events and to the Project Team and site owners for final approval.
- Working with the Project Team to select and finalize site selection.
- Executing the final design on schedule and in budget, and in a manner that conforms to the approved concept.
- Managing all aspects of the installation of the artwork.
- Providing maintenance instructions for the completed artwork.
- Working cooperatively and maintaining effective communication with all parties involved in the project.
- Assisting with the promotion of the artwork and attendance at dedication event.
- Participation in the *Monuments to Migration and Labor* Symposium at Rutgers in the fall 2026. (Travel costs, lodging, and meals to be covered separately by the Project.)
- Participating, as requested, in media interviews.

- Managing and facilitating the removal of the artwork from the site at the end of the exhibition period and the return of the site to its original condition.

Monument Installation Budget

The art budget for each region is \$75,000 to include all costs associated with monument design and creation, development of a Community Engagement Plan proposal, and installation and de-installation of the monument.

The Project is committed to working with artists and will apply for additional funding from the state, counties, Rutgers, and other sources devoted to the public arts and humanities, to support community-engaged programming surrounding the completed installations. The Project aims to raise at least \$10,000 per installation to support activation programming,

The Project Team may develop publications, educational curricula, conference presentations, and other materials inspired by the monuments.

Artist Selection and Review Process

Prospective applicants will be able to attend a virtual Pre-Application Workshop on March 28, 2025, at 12:00pm – 1:00pm Eastern. The Project Team will talk about the opportunity and walk through the application process. The workshop is optional. Advanced registration for the workshop is required through this [link](#).

Responses to this Request for Qualifications will be reviewed by an Artist Selection Committee representative and knowledgeable of New Jersey's diverse population, composed of seven visual arts and public humanities professionals with expertise in the discussion around monuments in contemporary life and connections to the im/migrant communities within North, Central and South New Jersey.

The Artist Selection Committee will review artist qualifications based on the following criteria and select up to three finalists to interview for each region:

- Quality of the artist's past work and relevance to the project.
- Ability to create an artwork that responds to the goals of the project and the Regional Context and Parameters, as described above.
- Artist's understanding of the Project and compatibility with the Project.
- Demonstrated experience designing, fabricating, and installing artworks on time and on budget.
- Demonstrated ability to listen to, engage with, and collaborate with stakeholders and the Project Team.

Based on the interviews, submitted qualifications, and reference checks, the Committee will select one artist for each region to put under contract to develop a concept and complete the above Scope of Work.

Anticipated Timeline

March 28, 2025 12:00pm	Pre-Application Workshop Register here .
April 28, 2025	Submittals Due
Mid-May, 2025	Finalists Selected and Notified
Week of June 7 -13, 2025 – date TBD	Finalist Interviews (virtual)
June 2025	Artists contracts
By mid-October 2025	Public Event #1 (Artists introduced to community and engage with attendees)
By February 28, 2026	Public Event #2 (Artists present initial concepts and receive stakeholder feedback)
By May 31, 2026	Public Event #3 (Artists present revised designs and receive feedback)
March – June	Fabrication
June 1 – August 31, 2026	Monument Installation Openings
Fall 2026	NJ Monument Project Symposium at Rutgers
Late 2026	Deinstallation of Monuments

Submittal Instructions

Apply through the submission portal [HERE](#).

All materials are due by April 28, 2025.

You will be required to submit images, including:

- 5-10 images of previously completed projects that represent your body of work (jpg, gif, png).
- Corresponding image information about each work sample. Please use the fields provided, including: title, year, location, commissioning body, medium, brief description, dimensions, and project budget/price.

You will also be required to submit the following on the application form:

- A statement, no longer than 3-pages, that indicates your interest in the project and your personal interest in commemorating migration and the labor that immigrants and migrants perform; how you might approach community engagement for this project; and how you might approach creating the monument installation. Your statement should also address which region(s) you would like to be considered for and why.
- A résumé/CV or bio no longer than 3-pages, including current contact information and email address (pdf, doc or docx).
- Names and contact information for 3-5 professional references.
- Your contact information and website.

Please do not send specific proposals at this time.

If you have questions about this RFQ, please contact Aliza Schiff at schiff@viapartnership.com.

About the Project Team

Project Director, Andrew T. Urban

Andy Urban is an Associate Professor of American Studies and History at Rutgers University, New Brunswick. His research, scholarship, teaching, and public humanities work focus on labor, migration, and public memory. Andy's current book project, *Processing History: Labor, Capitalism, and Memory at Seabrook Farms*, explores the history of Seabrook Farms, a frozen-foods agribusiness in southern New Jersey.

<https://andyurban.org/>

North Jersey Partner, Newest Americans

Newest Americans is a multimedia collaboratory of journalists, media-makers, artists, faculty and students based at Rutgers-Newark telling the stories that radiate from the most diverse university in the nation and the global city of Newark, NJ. Newest Americans produces multimedia stories, gallery and museum exhibits, educational curriculum, interactive experiences and public history programming.

<https://newestamericans.com>

Central Jersey Partner, coLAB Arts

Based in New Brunswick, coLAB Arts' vision is to create more livable, sustainable, and exciting environments through art. coLAB Arts generates community-powered projects and seeks to create an art scene using new and established spaces. Its work takes place in community rooms, houses of worship, parking lots, schools, bars, and backyards. A "let's get it done" work ethic and flair for mischief colors coLAB Arts' aesthetic and an emphasis on community engagement and professional development defines its commitment to the arts.

coLAB Arts believes that artistic expression is civic engagement and that collaboration is an active and creative process. coLAB Arts draws energy and inspiration from working with emerging artists and finding new platforms and audiences for established creative voices. coLAB Arts engages communities to ask questions, develop relationships, and come together to create new work across socio-economic, ethnic, and generational lines.

<https://colab-arts.org/>

South Jersey Partner, Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center

The Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center presents the stories of relocated Japanese Americans and Japanese Peruvians from United States incarceration camps; wartime refugees from Europe; migrant laborers from Appalachia, the Deep South and the Caribbean. Seabrook was a place where people of many cultures lived and worked together and still celebrate their heritage. Seabrook Farm was called the "largest vegetable factory on Earth" by Life Magazine in 1955, and its founder, Charles F. Seabrook, came to be known as the Henry Ford of Agriculture for his industrial approach to farming.

<https://seabrookeducation.org/>

South Jersey Partner, Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University

The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University is the cornerstone of the Arts District in Atlantic City with a mission to promote education, provide resources for emerging artists, and enrich the community. The Arts Garage houses artist studios, galleries, shops, a flexible workshop/classroom, and hosts special events throughout the year. It includes a 1,200 square ft. satellite gallery of [The Noyes Museum of Art](#) of Stockton University and the [African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey](#).

<https://www.artsgarageac.com/>

Public Art Consultant, Via Partnership

Via Partnership works with public agencies, developers, cultural organizations and community groups to plan, curate, and produce public art. Operating for more than twenty-five years, Via has worked with communities and artists across the United States and Canada to develop comprehensive public art strategies and facilitate public art projects from artist selection through installation.

www.viapartnership.com