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Telugu Fine Arts Society

A tax exempt not for profit corporation - Tax Id# 22-2534166

Election Manual-2026

Nominations/Election Committee Email: electioncommittee@tfas.net	
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1. Introduction

Telugu Fine Arts Society, Inc. (TFAS) conducts elections every two years for electing the President and eight (8) trustees. The Nominations/Elections Committee (NEC) has the responsibility to conduct the elections in a fair and open democratic process. The election manual gives details of the election process. Its objectives are:

- a) to make the election process transparent and understandable to all the members,
- b) to make it easy for the trustee candidates to comply with all the rules governing the elections,
- c) to enable the TFAS election process to comply with the TFAS Bylaws.

See Articles [2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 16](#) from [December 2025](#), version of Bylaws (TFAS is referred as Corporation in Bylaws document at multiple places). This manual provides clarifications and interpretations of the Bylaws. When there is a conflict between the Bylaws and the Election Manual – the Bylaws will override the Election Manual. Any clarifications required about the manual should be obtained from the Bylaws committee.

Board Of Trustees (BOT) shall remain neutral in the election process. However, the cooperation of President, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Committee, and IT is needed in conducting the elections. For example, the Membership Committee must provide NEC promptly with the addresses in the prescribed format to Email the members, calling for Nominations and election ballots.

2. Nomination & Election Process

A master list of all TFAS members as of [December 31, 2025](#), will be provided to NEC by Membership Committee chair. The list includes the effective date of membership, home address, email address, and telephone number of each member and spouse (where applicable). The master list shall be verified and certified by the Membership Chair included with the master list and sent to the NEC chair by [January 31, 2026](#). The Master list should be in Excel version.

As of [December 31, 2025](#):

- a) Nominee shall meet a minimum of two years membership requirement.
- b) Proposer and Seconder shall meet a minimum of two years' membership requirement.
- c) Voting members shall meet a minimum two-year membership requirement.

NEC shall create eligible voting members list, membership as of [December 31, 2025](#), containing the city and state to be posted on website. All address changes shall be the responsibility of the Membership Committee and must be certified by the Membership Chair.

2.1 Budget

NEC provides invoices/receipts related to election expenses to Treasure during or after the election process. Expenses needed reimbursed in reasonable time by current/new Treasurer. Electronic balloting expenses including additional software and consulting/vendor costs may be included.

2.2 Election Schedule

NEC prepares a schedule for the elections to be posted on TFAS website by [January 11, 2026](#). A tentative

schedule is shown in Appendix A. The schedule shows various activities, due dates, and responsible parties. The schedule may be revised, if necessary, by NEC.

3. Membership Data Access and Updates

- a) NEC Chair shall be notified of all membership address/email changes as an ongoing process with a copy of the members' request included. If in doubt, the NEC may contact the members and verify the address/email changes.
- b) NEC Chair shall be notified of the membership data periodically to identify the changes being made. NEC may request verification of the address change. Documents utilized to validate the address change are the recent utility bill or Driver's license or signed and notarized letter stating the address change. Notifying the address changes with an email is acceptable. NEC chair approval is required for all address changes after [January 31, 2026](#). Any email addresses updated after [February 15, 2026](#), will not be considered for 2026 elections.
- c) NEC shall obtain Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) from the nominees pertaining to the intellectual property of the Corporation. NDA shall state Membership list, email data, and such intellectual property of the Corporation shall not be misused by the candidate during the election. When a candidate misuses membership addresses, e-mail database, telephone numbers or when election committee receives complaints from members for excessive calling and/or emailing with campaign materials, such candidates may be disqualified.
- d) When the Membership Committee chair or current trustee or any member with access to membership data (postal address or email address or telephone number) decides to contest in the upcoming elections, he/she shall notify the NEC immediately of the intention. NEC shall remind the potential candidate of the NDA referred above. Any deviation from the By-laws or NDA or usage of the TFAS membership data during elections shall be considered as breach of contract and disqualifies the candidates.

4. Eligibility to contest to be a Trustee

Eligibility requirements to contest to be a trustee in different categories are shown below. See Bylaws for additional details. Most requirements are mandatory (M), but some are categorized as Desirable (D).

The following requirements are applicable to contest as a President, a Senior Trustee (Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer), and a General Trustee (Annual Events Chair, Membership, IT, Community Services, and Youth Services).

- a) Any member of the Corporation who completed 2 full years of membership by [December 31, 2025](#), with a permanent residency or US citizenship. Trustees shall be residents of New Jersey state and shall be present in New Jersey during their tenure and available to attend to Corporation matters promptly as needed. (M)
- b) Did not serve as a trustee for two successive terms immediately prior to the election. Serving for more than 365 days shall be considered as one full term. (Not applicable for President.) (M)
- c) As individuals, they did not serve as a trustee for 6 years or longer. As husband and wife together, they did not already serve as trustees for 8 years or longer. (M)
- d) President candidate must have served as a trustee for 4 years and shall contest for the President position directly and independently. (M)
- e) Candidates who previously served as trustees shall qualify to contest for the position of senior

- trustee (three positions). Other candidates contest for the remaining five trustee positions. (M)
- f) A current or a previous trustee who attended less than 50% of the trustee meetings and TFAS programs in his trustee term may be disqualified. (M)
 - g) A trustee who did not complete the term without a valid reason may be disqualified to contest as a trustee for another term. (D)
 - h) Trustees should be able to speak fluently and read, in Telugu. Trustees should have interest in fine arts and Telugu literature (D).
 - i) Members of the same family (husband and wife, and children as independent members) shall not serve as trustees and/or a member of the Advisory Board during the same period. (M)
 - j) Candidates shall declare that, at the time of nomination and during their tenure, they will not hold any important position or participate in any capacity (like Executive Committee, Advisory Board, Board of Director, Regional/State Vice President, Regional/State Coordinator) in another community/religious based organization which is promoting activities that conflict with the interests of the Corporation. (M)
 - k) Any candidate who has active affiliation with a political party in the United States or other countries shall not qualify to serve as a trustee. Office bearers of any sectarian organization are ineligible to become Trustees. (M)
 - l) A member who served on the Corporation Advisory Board is not eligible to become a trustee. (M)
 - m) Candidate with proven misconduct at his/her place of work or other organizations resulting in disciplinary action, shall be disqualified to become a trustee. Candidate with proven misconduct, dishonesty, fraud, misappropriation of funds shall be disqualified. (M)
 - n) Familiar with the objectives, structure and events of TFAS and legal issues related to non-profit organizations. (D)
 - o) Trustee candidates shall contest and campaign as individuals. Formation of groups or panels, canvassing as a group for votes is prohibited and may result in disqualification. NEC has the authority to disqualify such candidates. (M)
 - p) Candidates should sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) pertaining to the intellectual property of TFAS. (M).

Since members are distributed all over New Jersey, equal opportunity shall be given to all members to become trustees. NEC has designed the election process to elect trustees balancing the geographical spread and concentration of members in New Jersey. NEC will review all the nominations received, and if more than 3 are from the same township, NEC may use their discretion to select up to 3 nominees based on the selection criteria:

- (a) Previous TFAS experience,
- (b) Duration of TFAS membership,
- (c) Past contributions to TFAS service,
- (d) Service for TFAS as donor / volunteer, and
- (e) Diversity of the candidate exposure and experience.

5. Nominations and Requirements

The Election Manual shall be updated by the NEC prior to [January 5, 2026](#), with input from Advisory board and Bylaws Committee. The number of trustee positions in each category is posted on TFAS website by [January 11, 2026](#).

Nomination forms for the position of trustee are prepared by NEC. The “Call for Nominations” are emailed to membership. The candidate eligibility requirements per the current Bylaws and Nomination Form are

posted on the TFAS website by the due date. Call for Nominations and Nomination Form are posted on TFAS website.

Nomination requirements are listed below:

- a) **The nomination form** should be completed, signed by a proposer and a seconder who are all members of TFAS for a minimum of 2 years as of [December 31, 2025](#). Only one member from the same family (husband, wife, children as independent members) is eligible to nominate or second a trustee candidate. If same member/spouse signs more than one candidate nomination, such nominations forms will be invalidated. Proposer and seconder for a candidate cannot be from same family (member and spouse).
 - i. Nominee shall sign in the box provided in the Nomination Form that the information submitted is accurate.
 - ii. A current Trustee / Advisor shall not be a proposer or seconder.
 - iii. The nominations must be filed electronically as a pdf file to meet the deadline, but the original paper copy with signatures must be received by NEC within three days of the deadline.
 - iv. NEC will set up a Post Office Box/address to receive the Nomination Form, filing fee (Certified Bank Check/Money Order) and any other election related documents.
- b) **A Nominee statement** not exceeding [500](#) words in English (typed not hand-written). The Nominee statement describes
 - i. Past contributions and service to TFAS
 - ii. If candidate becomes trustee, what special skills and organizational experience he/she like to bring to TFAS during the next 2 years
 - iii. Other relevant information including community service
 - iv. Nominee general expertise (e.g., financial, accounting, legal, IT).
- c) The non-refundable filing fee of [\\$300](#) in the form of a Certified Bank Check/Money Order, payable to Telugu Fine Arts Society, Inc. Fee will be refunded if the nominee withdraws the nomination or nomination is rejected.
- d) **A passport size color** photograph (need to be attached in the electronic version). When the Nomination Form is accepted by NEC, the photograph and the Nominee statement will be posted on the TFAS website for the benefit of the voting members.
- e) **A Personal email address** which shall be used throughout the election process. Each nominee shall use his or her own authentic email addresses for all election related communications. Multiple email addresses shall not be entertained.

It is important to note that Nomination shall be automatically rejected if the following are missing personal email address, photograph, nominee statement, and check/money order for \$300, and the signatures of proposer, seconder, and nominee.

Nomination Form shall include a signed declaration by the candidate that the information submitted is accurate.

Trustee candidates during their tenure shall not hold any position (like Advisory Committee, Executive Committee, Board of Director, Regional/State Representative, Regional/State Director) in another [Community/Religious](#) organization. Any such positions held or commitments made for other organizations shall be disclosed in the Nomination Form and verified by the NEC.

6. Candidates Review/Vetting/Withdrawal Process

The NEC and the Advisory board shall verify each candidate's background through a vetting process, arrange for a meeting with the candidate to finalize the eligibility.

- a. The NEC posts the list of nominations received for trustee positions on TFAS website.
- b. Voting-eligible members may send in confidence any serious concern about any candidate to the NEC (such member's identity shall be kept confidential). When a complaint includes significant and sensitive information which may require proof, more details may be obtained by further investigation by the NEC to make any decision. If the concern is related to a candidate's misconduct or credibility, character, behavior, honesty or ethics, the NEC in consultation with Advisory board may investigate such complaints. Frivolous complaints about nominees are discouraged.
- c. Nominees may be disqualified for any act of omission or unsubstantiated statements or any fraudulent information included in the nomination form; any relevant information obtained through research by NEC before or after the elections may disqualify the candidate as a trustee.
- d. NEC in consultation with Advisory board interviews the trustee candidates in person or in a virtual meeting. Candidates shall present their background, expertise, vision and goals for TFAS when elected to serve as a trustee. Candidates may be requested to produce driver's license for address verification and other documents to substantiate their statement. Advisors and NEC shall consider any other relevant factors deemed necessary like conflicts of interest, ethical conduct and character. The burden shall rely on the nominee to prove his innocence to NEC.
- e. After deliberations with Advisory Board and/or Bylaws committee, NEC may disqualify a candidate who does not subscribe to the objectives of TFAS, who presents potential harm to the organization, or who has conflict of interests.
- f. NEC will try to get assurance from the candidate that he/she will serve in the assigned position in full capacity devoting adequate time and effort when he/she gets elected. The candidate will also assure that he/she will be present in New Jersey for a minimum of 75% time during their tenure and available to attend TFAS tasks.
- g. NEC may disqualify a candidate who is an existing / past trustee based on meeting and program attendance, conduct, performance record obtained from the Secretary/President/Advisory Board and any public complaints leading to disciplinary action.

Any person whose nomination is accepted can withdraw before the deadline for withdrawal. The NEC shall be neutral and shall not attempt to convince any candidate to withdraw. Withdrawal can be done by email from the nominee's email address used in the Nomination Form or by U.S. mail to be received by the NEC Chair by the date specified. A Nominee cannot withdraw after the deadline.

7. Ballot preparation and e-mailing

Before the ballots are prepared, the nominees may be given an opportunity to verify how their names will be listed on the ballot. Each person can request a slight variation of his/her name. However, the NEC may or may not accept that request. The NEC decision is final.

The candidate names and personal statements are listed alphabetically by last name on the ballot and attached information. Every member and spouse in good standing for two (2) full years by [December 31, 2025](#), will receive an e-ballot for each email address.

A member with the current residential mailing address that is validated and an email address will receive a ballot. If married, the spouse will receive a separate ballot. The member must provide the spouse's email address to receive the spouse's ballot. A member should note that voting on behalf of a deceased spouse is invalid.

Ballots are e-mailed (to members and spouses) only to the official e-mail address as per TFAS records. Updating e-mail id by [January 31, 2026](#), is critical to receive the election ballot. A sample ballot with the associated instructions is posted on website. The NEC adopts its own security measures to ensure fair election process.

8. Electronic Ballots and Voting

NEC shall work with Membership chair to initiate a process to obtain and maintain valid email ids for all eligible voters. NEC will try to use website/vendor that was used in previous elections. If previous vendor/website is not available (or not meeting the needs), NEC will use the following criteria to evaluate and select a company/vendor to perform electronic voting.

- a) **Branded Voting Website** - The voting website should be able to brand with TFAS logo, is easy to use, works with all modern browsers, and looks professional.
- b) **Authentication Methods** - You provide passwords to voting system with your list of eligible voters, system generates passwords (and optionally emails out direct voting links), authenticates voters against an external website login, NEC generates a single sign-on (SSO) link on your secure website.
- c) **Flexible Ballot Questions** – System should support attaching photos & descriptions to each candidate, allow for a single winner or multiple winners, control the minimum and maximum number of candidates voters are allowed to select, control whether voters are allowed to abstain from voting.
- d) **Voter-Verified Audit Trail** - Once the electronic ballot has been cast a printable receipt is provided to assure voters that their votes have been recorded as intended. Should you opt to publish the final results, anyone will be able to download a file containing votes and receipt codes. This serves as a Voter-Verified Audit Trail (VVAT) - an independent verification system for voting systems designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.
- e) **Duplicate Ballots** - There are no duplicate ballots with electronic voting.
- f) **Certified Results** - With the security of an independently managed server and service, voters can rest assured that their votes will be counted properly. The system should display a certificate by software company seal on your published voting results. The company selected should also provide a Letter of Certification attesting to the validity of our results.
- g) Here are a few examples of firms that provide above features:

<https://www.electionbuddy.com>,
<https://www.simplyvoting.com>,
<https://www.bigpulsevoting.com>,
<https://www.associationvoting.com>,
<https://www.opavote.com>.

Selected website/vendor information will be provided to members, before the voting day.

9. Ballot Recount, Tie Vote and Disputes

A candidate may request a recount of the ballots within one week of declaration of the results, if the margin of loss is two percent or less of the ballots returned. The request must be in writing and signed by the candidate and addressed to NEC chair with a copy to the Chairman of the Advisory board.

In case of a tie vote, ballot recount will automatically be done for the affected candidates. If the tie is confirmed for 2 candidates, the affected candidates will share the trustee position by serving the two-year term divided equally. The order of serving will be decided by a coin toss (or a similar method).

If there is a tie among 3 or more candidates, the NEC may decide to limit the candidates to 2 candidates based on these selection criteria: (a) Previous TFAS experience, (b) Duration of TFAS membership, (c) Past contributions to TFAS service, (d) Service for TFAS as donor / volunteer, (e) Diversity of the candidate exposure and experience, and (f) Geographical spread.

This being electronic voting, it is unlikely that recounting is supported by vendor/website. If it is supported (after selecting vendor), detailed process will be communicated to such candidates.

Disputes: All election related disputes and questions or concerns which may arise during or after election process which are otherwise not covered in Bylaws or Election Manual, will be resolved by the NEC in consultation with Advisory board. The Advisory Board's recommended resolution will be final.

10. Trustee Vacancies During Elections

At times all the 9 trustee positions may not be filled during elections due to insufficient number of eligible candidates. When the vacant positions are 3 or less, the vacant positions shall be filled with suitable candidates by the NEC and the Advisory board with input from the newly elected President based on these selection criteria: (a) Previous TFAS experience, (b) Duration of TFAS membership, (c) Past contributions to TFAS service, (d) Service for TFAS as donor/volunteer, (e) Diversity of the candidate exposure and experience, and (f) Geographical spread.

When the vacant positions are more than 3 during elections, the general election may be reconducted within 3 months to fill the vacant positions.

11. Certification and Preservation of Election Results

NEC will provide the TFAS Board of Trustees and Advisory Board with the Certification of Election results after ballots are counted, including any recounts as needed. The results shall be posted on the TFAS website after the Certification of Election results.

Preservation of Election Records

- a) **Items to be stored:** Election Manual, Nominations, Ballot data, Member's list, Certification of Election Process
- b) **Storing procedure:** The items will be stored in cardboard boxes and closed with tape. Available to NEC members, TFAS Trustees, and any observers will sign across the tape.
- c) **Responsible Officer:** TFAS Secretary will be responsible for storing the ballot records.
- d) Emails will be stored for future purposes. IT Chair is responsible for creating an email box to store such information.

- e) **How long to be stored:** 2 calendar years after the election year (example: 2026 election results will be stored until [May 31, 2028](#)).
- f) **Opening the storage boxes:** If there is a need such as by court order, the boxes in which nominations/ results from vendor are stored will be opened by the NEC and any observers. After a review of the records, the boxes will be resealed and returned to the Secretary for storage.
- g) **What to do at the end:** At the end of the 2-year storage period, the contents of the boxes will be shredded by the Secretary in the presence of the representatives from the then NEC and the Advisory board.

12. Election of Officers and Chairs

NEC conducts the election of the officers of the BOT and Chairs for trustee committees in March or April following the elections. Election of the officers shall be by ballot (in case more than one candidate is interested in same position). President is elected by the members directly. Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer will be elected by the newly elected trustees from the elected senior category of trustees. Annual Events, Membership, IT, Community Services, and Youth Services committee chairs will be elected by the newly elected trustees from the general category of trustees. If there are no eligible trustees or if eligible trustees decline to be elected as the officers, the NEC in consultation with the Advisory board will elect members among the trustees with service experience in other nonprofit entities and the best available trustees for the officer positions. The Selection criteria given in Bylaws may be used. NEC shall obtain Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) from the applicants pertaining to the intellectual property of the Corporation.

Following the elections, the elected trustees shall have the obligation to complete the term, irrespective of the assigned position. If he/she decides to resign following elections before the end of the term (for reasons other than that are not avoidable such as family catastrophe or change of job), he/she will lose a 2-year term of service to serve TFAS in the future. New officers are introduced to the members by NEC at the Ugadi function (if this event is organized before election process ends) and the term starts on June 1, 2026.