

Funding Review Process: Arts Commission Report (talking points)

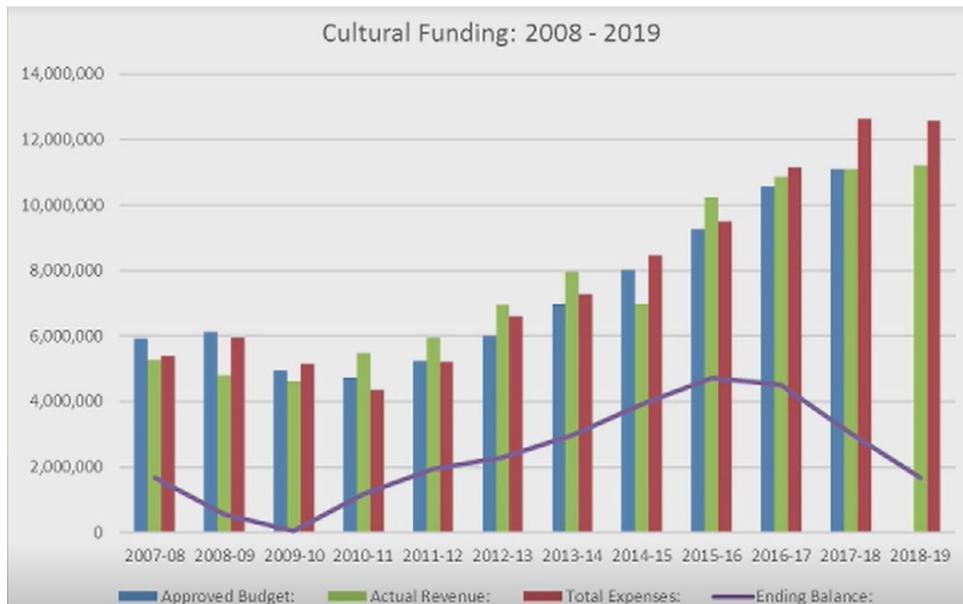
HOW WE GOT HERE

Cultural Funding Responsiveness WG

The Cultural Funding Responsiveness Working Group was established in AUG 2018 in response to misalignments by funding working groups unable to communicate with each other. The prevailing assumption that the “community agreement” directed the city and the Commission to fund “everyone” and the successful outreach efforts by CAD staff to underserved as well as new artists, created a strain on available funds.

After meeting 5 times, the WG concluded that a decision must be made. But neither the Arts Commission nor CAD staff could make it. “Do we fund everyone with less money? Or fund less groups with more money?” The WG introduced two action items at the 2018 Arts Commission retreat: the 4 pillars to guide all WG discussions regarding funding programs and a survey to begin community outreach.

2018 HOT funding plateau



The plateau in HOT funds plus the increase of successful applicants reduced available funds. Technically, HOT funds increased from the previous year (see green bar in the graph). But the

percentage of growth was less than in previous years. And the rollover amount was also less than previous years.

Issues to fix, identified by cultural contractors

At both the regular September Arts Commission meeting and the Special Called Joint Music & Arts meeting in 2018, citizen communications speakers identified issues with the funding program that needed to be addressed.

1. Historic Inequities
2. Over 90% acceptance
3. Peer panel
4. Inconsistent Scores
5. Better, more timely communication of changes or issues that affect the community

At the conclusion of the Special Called Joint Music & Arts meeting, CAD staff and the Arts Commission both committed to a complete review of the cultural funding process.

2018 Audit Report: Cultural Arts Contract Monitoring?

http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Auditor/Audit_Reports/Cultural_Arts_Contract_Monitoring_September_2018.pdf

CONSULTANT

What did they do (what was their scope)?

CAD staff committed to reviewing the whole cultural funding process and took the opportunity to look at all CAD programs historically and recently. This was done with the hope of identifying values for aligning CAD processes, multiple Working Groups' conversations, community engagement, and the scope of work for the consultant.

The proposed scope of work (as heard on the recording 1 of 2, of February 2019 [meeting @ 18:00](#)) would include:

Guide the process of evaluation, facilitate dialogue, look at best practices, compare Austin to those for context, and then help guide the discussions on Arts Commission level, staff level, and community level to ensure feedback is representative of the community. Prepare a report on the findings with recommendations for future programs & operations. These changes will ultimately align with Strategic Directions 2023, generate a higher degree of effectiveness, and reflect CAD's commitment to equity.

Gathering input

Presentation at Joint Arts Commission & AIPP panel meeting on 1/13/20 revealed what was heard during MJR listening sessions from the latter half of 2019 ([Slides 19-24](#)) ([listen to the recording. Start at about 42:00](#)):

- Disconnected & Diverging Views

- Vision & Leadership
- Effectiveness in the Grantmaking process
- Role of the Arts Commission
- The meaning of “diversity” and “equity”

Challenges

Identified alongside opportunities by MJR. Presented after working with all 3 divisions (Cultural Arts, Music and Entertainment, and Heritage Tourism) on 10/7/20 ([slide 6](#)) ([watch the recording](#))

1. Overly Complicated grant processes
2. Cultural Equity and Access
3. Bureaucracy
4. Acknowledging Bias within the Cultural Sector

Recommendations

Contextualized by MJR, “Three high-level recommendations are derived from community listening conversations, assessment of current grant making programs and contracts against the City’s commitment to achieving racial equity across all departments.” ([slides 9-16](#)) ([watch the recording](#))

- A. Invest in the creative sector to nurture and protect the artistic expressions of Austin’s racially and culturally diverse communities.
- B. Build upon Austin’s existing cultural infrastructure.
- C. Operationalize a policy-based plan to redistribute the City’s financial resources designated for arts, culture and heritage, with an intentional focus on equity and inclusion. A City Council approved policy would give explicit directions for the distribution of public resources.

CONCEPT PROGRAMS

Who designed these?

Designed by CAD staff with considerations for aligning with Music and Heritage divisions, so that programs are familiar to applicants. Staff consulted with MJR so that decisions considered community feedback.

Do they replace existing? Or supplement? Or is this a “re-brand”?

These concepts are intended to replace existing funding programs.

What info was used to design?

Staff built upon the good parts of Community Initiatives and Core. Used community feedback and an equity lens to improve the processes.

How do we know they will accomplish our stated goals?

The goals were to support the City’s priorities in leading with a lens of racial equity and to advance the goals of the Strategic Direction 2023 ([slide 3](#))([watch the recording](#))

NEXUS: Creative Collaboration Fund (compare to [Community Initiatives](#))

Purpose: Invests in creative public programming developed through community activation and collaboration between artists and such community-based entities as culturally specific groups, LGBTQIA and disability communities, parks, non-profits, and public housing.

Grows the creative economy by prioritizing historically under-represented applicants who haven't yet received cultural funding through the City.

Funding & Contracts:

- \$500,000 Fund
- Contracts for \$3,000-\$6,000, including ADA Services & Insurance
- Contract Term: 1 Year
- Two Application Opportunities per Year

Key Elements: Supports innovative community-centered art projects.

Highlights community voices and encourages resourcefulness through focusing on partnerships where collaborators have an equal share in the project's creative direction.

Nurtures new and emerging talent, leaders, and organizations.

Applicant & Contractor Support:

- Application Feedback, Support & Training
- Professional Development Resources
- Fiscal Sponsorship Optional

Priority: Artists or artist groups collaborating with such neighborhood or community-based entities as public housing, cultural centers, senior centers, and neighborhood associations.

Community-centered or place-based entities collaborating with artists.

Applicants representing the rich and diverse cultures of Austin, especially those historically under-represented in the City's Cultural Funding programs.

Eligibility:

- Applicants who have never received Cultural Funding or have received Cultural Funding for less than 5 years
- Individual Creatives, Artist Collectives, and Organizations (incorporated and unincorporated) based in Austin for at least one year

ELEVATE: Cultural Production Support (compare to [Core](#))

Purpose: Supports organizations, individuals, businesses, and unincorporated groups that produce culturally vibrant and diverse artistic content for the public.

Amplifies cultural producers' programmatic reach and elevates the City's diverse arts and culture tourism sector.

Funding covers the creative, administrative, and operational expenses incurred in the production of creative activities and events for Austin's tourists and residents.

Funding & Contracts:

- Contract Term: 1 Year
- Application & Peer Panel Cycle: 2 Years
- Contract Amounts: \$10,000 to \$100,000
- Total number of contracts & award amounts dependent on peer panel scores and available funding

Key Elements: Awards based on the merit of applications and alignment with funding priorities. Operational budget is not the primary factor in determining award amounts.

Applications are reviewed and scored by peer panels, reflective of the program's priorities. Application criteria and request amounts will vary based on business or organizational structures.

Priority: Applications investing in local artists, engaging in meaningful community-based partnerships, elevating creative innovation, and demonstrating a measurable commitment to racial equity through diverse leadership and community centered program development. Applicants representing the rich and diverse cultures of Austin, especially those historically underrepresented in the City's Cultural Funding programs.

Eligibility:

- Non-profit Organizations
- Individuals, Unincorporated Groups, and Businesses
- Fiscal Sponsorship Optional
- Produce public arts/culture activities that add to the City's diverse arts and culture tourism sector
- One-year history of operating in the cultural sector in Austin

THRIVE: Cultural Growth Fund

Purpose: Promotes Austin's diverse cultures to tourists by supporting the programs, operations, and leadership development of small to mid-sized African American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander-led arts and cultural organizations that are significant contributors to the city's creative vibrancy and heritage. Invests in organizational stability, sustainability, and growth to strengthen applicants as cultural tourism and economic drivers for Austin.

Supports professional development for applicants deeply rooted in, and reflective of, Austin's historically marginalized and underfunded communities to amplify and honor their work.

Funding & Contracts:

- Production expenses for arts & culture activities marketed to tourists, convention delegates, and residents
- Contract Term: 2 Years
- Up to 10 contracts awarded per 2-year cycle for \$50,000 to \$175,000 per year

Key Elements: Provides funding, professional development, staff support, and mentorship & networking opportunities to foster growth, leadership development, and expansion of organizational and financial capacity.

Requires deliverables tailored to specific capacity goals and needs of contracted applicants.

Contracted applicants must continue producing cultural events during the contract term and will be supported in finding ways to grow their engagements with tourists.

Contracted applicants provide organizational growth plans for audience development that attract new tourists and visitors to Austin

Priority: Applications with plans for how funding will be used to improve programmatic capabilities while broadening audience development, marketing reach, and impact on the tourism economy.

Producers of public art & culture programs with a lived experience in, and reflective of, African American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander communities.

Historically underserved communities that consistently encounter barriers to obtaining the institutional resources necessary for capacity development.

Applications that demonstrate an urgent need for organizational growth and investment to ensure long-term sustainability.

Eligibility:

- Non-Profit Organizations that provide ongoing or recurring accessible programming marketed to tourists and visitors to Austin
- 5-Year history of operating in Austin's cultural sector
- Produce public arts & culture activities that add to the City's diverse arts, culture, and heritage tourism sectors