



**Economic  
Development**  
CITY OF AUSTIN

# Elevate Grant Guidelines

Elevate: Funding for Cultural Productions

- Pilot Program
- Annual Term
- All awards are dependent on Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding.
- 501(c) Arts Organizations:
  - Grants funded between \$30,000 and \$75,000
  - Estimated 125 grants awarded. This is not a limit.
- Individual Artists and Creative Businesses:
  - Grants funded between \$10,000 and \$25,000
  - Estimated 75 grants. This is not a limit.
- For activities taking place September 2023 - September 2024

## elevate

(verb) raise or lift (something) up to a higher position

## Program Overview

Annual Term

Grants funded between \$10,000 and \$75,000

### Elevate: Amplifying equity in Austin's diverse arts and cultural sector

This program seeks to provide funding in support of arts and cultural organizations, individual artists, and arts groups that produce culturally vibrant and diverse artistic content for the public. This funding broadly supports the creative, administrative, and operational expenses incurred in the production of creative activities and events for the people of Austin and its tourists. This investment in Austin's cultural producers will elevate the City's diverse arts and culture tourism sector, amplify equity, and prioritize inclusive programming.

Priority will be given to those who have been at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin and/or have been institutionally marginalized and under-funded by the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division.

### Key Elements

- Applicants must have a one-year history of operating in the cultural sector in the Austin metro area and must produce public arts/culture activities, within the Austin 10-1 districts and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), that add to the City's diverse arts and culture tourism sector.
- Applicants who prefer to work with a Fiscal Sponsor may do so. Fiscal Sponsorship will not be a requirement for applicants.
- Awards will be based on the application and alignment with the program's funding priorities. Operational budget will not be the primary factor in determining award amounts.
- Applications will be reviewed and scored by review panels, reflective of the program's priorities.

### Who can apply

Applicant eligibility criteria is outlined below. Funding is not guaranteed if you meet all the minimum requirements; rather, funding will be awarded based on the overall score of your application, which includes consideration of our funding priorities.

### Eligible applicants:

- 501(c) nonprofit arts organization
- An individual aged 18 or older with an annual operating budget \$500,000 or less\* +
- A creative business with an annual operating budget \$500,000 or less \* +

*\* May apply directly or with a fiscal sponsor*

*+ Individual Artists and Creative Businesses, which include unincorporated arts groups, may apply for up to \$25,000*

## Priority will be given to:

- Projects that invest in local artists
- Projects that engage in meaningful community-based partnerships
- Projects that elevate creative innovation
- Applicants and projects that demonstrate a measurable commitment to the equity goals and principles of the City of Austin's Equity Office through representation in leadership and program development
- Applicants who represent the diverse cultures of Austin, particularly those who are from backgrounds that have been historically under-represented in Austin's Cultural Funding programs

## What Elevate Funds

While Elevate supports a breadth of creative projects, *all* projects funded by HOT revenue are required to:

- be open and advertised to Austin residents, visitors, and tourists
- promote and enhance Austin as a cultural destination
- occur in Austin or its ETJ

## Eligible Activities\*

- Operations related to the applicant's ability to produce public events
- Exhibitions
- Performances
- Workshops, classes, and camps that include a performance or exhibition that is open to and marketed to tourists
- Public art projects that are installed on public or private property and accessible to the public

## Eligible Expenses\*

- Administrative and creative costs incurred in the preparation and implementation of cultural activities that are open to and marketed to tourists (including artists' salaries)
- Costs related to improving the applicant's ability to produce cultural events
- Insurance costs
- Subscription costs or license fees for software needed to complete contracted activities
- Fiscal sponsor fee, if applicable

\* See [Additional Program Details](#) for a more detailed list of eligible and ineligible activities and expenses.

## Other Eligibility Criteria

- Applicant's primary mission and over 51% of their body of work is the production, presentation, or promotion of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
- One year of operating history in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA) which includes Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, and Williamson Counties.
- 51% or more of the application's creative production is within the Austin 10-1 districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).
- Proposed activity meets all program requirements as outlined by the Hotel Occupancy Tax. All events are open to the public and marketed to tourists, or applicant is an arts service organization.
- Applicants who are not receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying.

## Funding Availability

Participation in this program is not guaranteed, nor is there a commitment to fund this program at previous or current levels. If the applicant applies to and is approved for funding in multiple Cultural Funding programs, they may receive only one award. Awards received from this program may not be used toward activities funded by any other City of Austin programs. Program and funding availability is subject to Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue. Only one application per applicant is allowed (sponsored projects do not count toward this limit).

## Funding Timeline

The program application opens to the public May 23, 2023. Applications are reviewed for eligibility by staff. Eligible and complete applications are scored during a panel review process. Award amounts of approved applications are then determined using a funding matrix.

Elevate Program Timeline	
<b>5/23/23</b>	Application opens
<b>6/27/23</b>	Application deadline
<b>August 2023</b>	Panel reviews
<b>September 2023</b>	Notification of award decision

## Award Amounts

- The award amounts in Elevate range from \$10,000 - \$75,000
- Applicants will submit a project budget as part of their application demonstrating how they will use the funds.
- If awarded, the applicant may choose to decline any portion of funds that are not needed.
- Applicants are not required to find matching funds, although it is encouraged.
- We also encourage grantees to pay all who work on the project an equitable wage.
- Any unused funds will have to be returned at the time of reporting.

## How to Apply

All Cultural Funding program applications are submitted online; there is no paper application. Visit [austincreates.com](https://austincreates.com) for links to all open program applications.

- **If you are applying *without* a fiscal sponsor**, you may begin your application as soon as the application is open.
- **If you are applying *with* a fiscal sponsor**, please see your fiscal sponsor before beginning your application.

## Application Materials

You will need to upload the following required documents to the Elevate application. Document templates will be available online at [www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate](https://www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate). Acceptable file formats include: .csv, .doc, .docx, .odt, .pdf, .rtf, .txt, .wpd, .wpf, .gif, .jpg, .jpeg, .png, .svg, .tif, .tiff. Max file upload: 10MB

- Organization and Project Budget Form
- 3 Work Samples
- 2 Letters of Support
- IRS Determination Letter if applicable
- Most recent 990 if applicable. If you do not have a 990 or 990EZ you can submit your most recent financial statement.

## Application Assistance

### Workshops and Videos

Application assistance, helpful workshops, and other information will be shared on our website as soon as it is available. Visit [www.austincreates.com](http://www.austincreates.com) for the latest updates. You can also drop into Virtual Open Office Hours (see schedule below) or email staff your questions at any time. Follow us on social media or sign up for our newsletter to stay in the loop about upcoming workshops.

### Long Center Contact

[CityofAustinGrants@TheLongCenter.org](mailto:CityofAustinGrants@TheLongCenter.org)

### Cultural Arts Division Virtual Open Office Hours

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month

No appointment necessary

[Request Virtual Open Office Hours](#)

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### City Staff Contacts for Elevate

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512-974-7978

## How Applications Are Reviewed

Applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel. Applications that meet the requirements outlined in these guidelines and receive the highest scores will be recommended for funding. The number of awards that are approved is subject to the availability of funds. Applicants will only receive points that apply to their project; we anticipate that most applications will not receive the maximum number of points available.

For more information about this process, see [Additional Program Details](#).

# ELEVATE SCORING

ELIGIBILITY – reviewed by program staff

<b>Mission and Vision statement</b>	Applicant’s primary mission and over 51% of their body of work is the production, presentation, or promotion of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
<b>Applicant type</b>	Applicants must be one of the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An Incorporated, tax exempt, 501(c) arts organization</li><li>• A non-501(c) arts organization (but registered as a nonprofit with the Texas Secretary of State Office as evidenced by the Certificate of Formation)</li><li>• A creative business or individual artist. These groups may choose to apply with a fiscal sponsor, but it is NOT required. These groups must have annual operating budget BELOW \$500,000.</li></ul>
<b>Geographic Eligibility</b>	Applicant’s address is in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA). <i>Address is verified as in the MSA using this link: <a href="https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/">https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/</a></i>
<b>Production History</b>	51% or more of the applicant’s creative production is within the Austin 10-1 districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and a minimum of one (1) year of creative production within Austin.
<b>HOT compliance</b>	Proposed activity meets all program requirements as outlined by the Hotel Occupancy Tax. All events are open to the public and marketed to tourists, or applicant is an arts service organization.
<b>Existing City Support</b>	Applicants who are not already receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying.

# OPERATIONS

**Operations**

**Mission and Key Constituencies**

*15 Possible Points*

**What is your mission, vision, and primary production history?**

**Identify your key constituencies and provide information about your service to them.**

For the purposes of this program, key constituencies that will be prioritized are community groups that are at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin and/or have been institutionally marginalized and under-funded by the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division.

Mission, vision, and production history will be used to verify this answer.

Individual applicants and creative businesses, please provide creative mission, artistic vision and production history for this response.

**History of Service**

*10 Possible Points*

**In what ways have you maintained a responsive approach to the needs of your key constituencies?**

Your answer should include:

- Your work or practice has a specific history in direct service to key constituencies
- Your founding history and community service goals
- Description of how the applicant has directly improved access to opportunities for key constituencies

**Cultural Leadership**

*15 Possible Points*

**Who holds power in your organization and how do they represent your community?**

Your answer could include:

- Executive and Creative Leadership
- Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board
- Creative Advisors



### Community Voice

*5 Possible Points*

**In what ways are the voices from the community amplified and involved in the creative direction of your project?**

Answer may include:

- How stages of the project will include opportunity for input by the community
- How community is involved in the development of the project
- Operationalized equity work within an organization
- Any successes as a representative of community voices

## CULTURAL AND SOCIAL IMPACT

Cultural and Social Impact

### Cultural Activities Relevance and Responsiveness

*15 Possible Points*

**What are your proposed activities and how is your proposal relevant to the current social and cultural needs of the community?**

Your answer could address:

- Tourist accessible activities that you produce
- Description of proposed activities, participant(s), etc.
- Working with diverse communities
- How equity work is centered in your proposal

### Intersectionality and Inclusion

*5 Possible Points*

**In what ways is intersectionality a key component of your activities?**

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Intersectionality is where race, class, gender, and other vulnerabilities overlap. It describes the many ways in which various forms of discriminations can intersect, creating special vulnerabilities for some. See [Additional Program Details](#) for the full definition of Intersectionality.

### Community Relationships

*5 Possible Points*

**Describe the non-financial ways that your community supports your creative work, and how that support has short and long-term impact on your success.**

Examples of non-financial community support include but are not limited to:

- volunteers
- mentorships or partnerships
- collaborations with community members/leaders
- audience participation

**Describe the ways that your community financially supports your creative work and how that support has had a short and long-term impact on your success. If your community does not financially support your creative work, please explain why.**

Examples of financial support include but are not limited to:

- cash donations
- paid services
- ticket sales
- donations of goods

### Opportunity Creation / Community Benefits

*10 Possible Points*

**Describe the ways your creative work invests in your community. Include information on the systemic and long-term benefits your programming has for the community.**

Examples of investment into the communities can include but are not limited to:

- leadership roles
- jobs
- social services
- career development
- networking
- education
- mentoring or partnerships
- providing free or low-cost spaces
- other (describe)

Accessibility

5 Possible Points

**Does your proposal include specialized programming or accommodations for individuals with disabilities?**

5 Possible Points

**Does your proposal include specialized language access accommodations or programming for non-English speaking communities?**

The panel will consider how these options are represented in your budget.

Accessibility accommodations that are “upon-request only” will not be considered a specialized service.

Programmatic Reach

5 Possible Points

**How will the requested funding help you expand your programmatic reach and amplify Austin’s diverse arts and cultural sector?**

Your answer could address:

- Marketing / Audience Development
- Information on how funding will directly support the diversity of the City's cultural/arts community

Budget

5 Possible Points

**How will you use these funds to produce your events?**

Your answer could address:

- Explanation of expenses in production of activities
- uploaded Budget Form should be reflective of this narrative

**Panelists will review this response in addition to the uploaded Budget Form to review the applicant's financial history and financial practices.**

	Possible Points Available
Operations	45
Cultural and Social Impact	55
Total	100