



MAXIMIZING IMPACT

A COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF PROGRAMS FUNDED BY AUSTIN'S HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX REVENUE

a lived-experience data black paper

LaCole Fouts, M.S.
Tiffany Ricks, PhD
Hanna Chun, BBA

DECEMBER 2024

3	About Measure
3	About the City of Austin's Economic Development Department
3	Hotel Occupancy Tax and Funded Programs
5	Executive Summary
18	Background
19	Historical Timeline
21	Timeline of Evaluation and Parallel Efforts By the City
22	Program Evaluation Methodology
24	Focus Group Recruitment
25	Focus Group Participants
27	Focus Group Questions
28	Thematic Analysis
29	Qualitative Analysis Findings
41	Quantitative Analysis Findings
60	Recommendations
62	Conclusion
63	References
64	About Our Measure Evaluators



ABOUT MEASURE

Measure is a Black woman-led research and data activism organization that transforms the stories of impacted communities into data that drives real social change. We provide equitable evaluation tools to transform powerful data into actionable strategies and village support for social change.

ABOUT THE CITY OF AUSTIN'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The City of Austin's Economic Development Department (EDD) is dedicated to fostering a vibrant and diverse economy that benefits all residents of Austin. The department plays a critical role in creating opportunities for local businesses, cultural organizations, and creatives to thrive in a rapidly growing and dynamic urban environment. Through strategic initiatives and funding programs, the EDD aims to support economic resilience, equity, and sustainability across the city.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX AND FUNDED PROGRAMS

The Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) is a vital source of revenue for the City of Austin, collected from guests staying in hotels, motels, and other short-term rental accommodations. This tax, imposed on overnight lodging stays, is crucial for supporting the city's tourism, cultural, and heritage initiatives [1]. The revenues from HOT provide financial support to a wide range of arts and cultural organizations in Austin and are specifically allocated to programs that promote tourism and preserve Austin's unique cultural and historical assets, ensuring that the city remains a top destination for visitors from around the world. The Economic Development Department administers several key programs funded through HOT, each designed to support and enhance Austin's cultural, creative, and historical landscape. By funding cultural projects, the EDD helps to enhance the quality of life for residents and attract tourists, contributing to the local economy. These programs include:

- **Thrive:** Thrive is a program designed to support historically marginalized and underrepresented cultural organizations. By offering grants and resources, this program aims to build the capacity of these organizations, ensuring they have the tools necessary to grow and sustain their operations over the long term.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX AND FUNDED PROGRAMS CONT.

- **Nexus:** The Nexus is a program that focuses on fostering collaborations between different cultural and creative sectors in Austin. By encouraging partnerships and interdisciplinary projects, Nexus aims to spark innovation and create new opportunities for creative expression and economic development.
- **Elevate:** Elevate is a capacity-building program that provides technical assistance, training, and financial support to small and emerging cultural organizations. The program's goal is to strengthen these organizations' operational capabilities, helping them to achieve long-term sustainability and impact within the community.
- **Live Music Fund Event Program:** Recognizing Austin's reputation as the "Live Music Capital of the World," this program supports live music events that drive tourism and contribute to the city's vibrant cultural scene. The Live Music Fund Event Program provides grants to musicians, promoters, and event organizers to create and promote live music experiences that highlight Austin's rich musical heritage.
- **Heritage Preservation Grant:** This grant program is dedicated to preserving and promoting Austin's historical and cultural landmarks. By providing funding for restoration and preservation projects, the Heritage Preservation Grant ensures that the city's rich history is maintained and celebrated, contributing to the overall cultural and economic vitality of the community.

Collectively, these programs reflect the City of Austin's commitment to fostering a thriving cultural ecosystem that supports economic development, enhances quality of life, and preserves the unique character of the city. The Economic Development Department's efforts are instrumental in ensuring that Austin remains a vibrant, inclusive, and economically resilient city for all its residents and visitors.

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from a comprehensive evaluation that includes quantitative analyses of applicant data and qualitative insights from focus groups. The executive summary presents these findings and examines how targeted funding translates to community enrichment and cultural vitality. By exploring the program's theory of change—that municipal arts funding directly enhances community experience, economic growth, and social dynamics—the summary provides a nuanced evaluation of the initiative's effectiveness and opportunities for improvements.

THEORY OF CHANGE

If the City of Austin provides funding to artists and cultural organizations, then the community will be enriched and affected.

If the City of Austin provides funding to artists and cultural organizations



Creates programs



Advertises programs



Receives applications



Approves applicants



Provides funding



Then the community will be enriched and affected



Funds received and used by artists



Predictions of impact will be made by artists



Artists will create art and artistic expressions in Austin



Actual impact will be documented



City of Austin analyzes program impact



City of Austin communicates the impacts



CREATES PROGRAMS TO FUND ARTISTS

Current

The City of Austin has several programs, including Thrive, Nexus, and Elevate, designed to support underrepresented cultural organizations, encourage interdisciplinary collaboration, and provide technical and financial assistance. These programs are part of a larger effort funded by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) to enhance the city's cultural ecosystem and support its diverse creative community.

Concerns

Despite the availability of these programs, artists from marginalized communities often struggle with the application process due to its complexity and the significant resource requirements. Many small or emerging artists and organizations lack access to professional grant writers or legal and financial advisors, which makes it challenging to meet the stringent criteria of these programs. The lack of simplified processes and accessible resources can lead to an inequitable distribution of funds, favoring larger, more established organizations.

Recommendations

To create a more equitable funding landscape, the city should simplify the application process by providing clear guidelines, templates, and resources for applicants. Offering workshops on grant writing, financial management, and other relevant skills could help level the playing field for smaller organizations and independent artists. Peer support networks and mentoring could also provide valuable guidance for first-time applicants.

Progress and the Path Ahead

The Economic Development Department has made significant strides in simplifying and streamlining the application process for several programs, resulting in a more efficient and user-friendly experience for applicants. Additionally, the department offers various ways for the community to learn about the HOT grant application process and eligibility.

The department transitioned to a different grant management software (Submittable), allowing applicants to submit their materials easily and securely.

The department continuously revisits and revamps its grant application guidelines to be more clear and user-friendly. The updated instructions provide step-by-step guidance and precise criteria to improve the application experience for potential applicants.

2

ADVERTISES PROGRAMS

Current

The city's advertising for these programs primarily utilizes digital channels, social media, newsletters, and community outreach efforts. Although these methods reach some audiences, they often miss the most marginalized groups, who may not engage with these platforms regularly.

Concerns

There is limited awareness of funding opportunities within underserved communities, as traditional advertising methods may not be sufficient to reach all eligible artists and organizations. Marginalized groups often rely on word-of-mouth or chance encounters to learn about these opportunities, leading to low application rates from diverse communities.

Recommendations

Expanding outreach efforts through targeted and culturally sensitive strategies could improve awareness. This may include door-to-door engagement, multilingual communications, partnerships with local community organizations, and in-person outreach events in diverse neighborhoods. The city could also consider hiring a street team or cultural ambassadors to disseminate information and answer questions directly within communities.

Progress and the Path Ahead

To keep community informed, the City partners with organizations like, Almost Real Things, to spread the word and about grant opportunities in addition to providing technical assistance. Community Amplifiers, who are artists themselves and members of the arts community, work daily to keep artists engaged, connected and aware of HOT program opportunities.

3

RECEIVES APPLICATIONS

Current

Applications are submitted and reviewed based on criteria specific to each funding program. The application process involves extensive documentation and adherence to technical requirements, which may be manageable for experienced applicants but challenging for newcomers and small organizations.

Concerns

The complexity of the application requirements can be prohibitive for artists and organizations without professional grant writing support. The data shows that approval rates vary significantly by race and access to technical support. For example, Hispanic applicants with technical assistance through The Long Center (TLC) have an 84% success rate, compared to just 43% overall. This disparity underscores the advantage of technical support, which many marginalized groups lack access to.

Recommendations

Providing targeted technical support resources, such as free grant-writing assistance, financial advising, and access to legal guidance, could mitigate these disparities. Additionally, offering informational sessions on the application requirements and creating accessible templates could make the process less daunting and more inclusive.

Community-Based Grant Application Workshops Led by Peer Mentor: By using peer mentors who have successfully navigated the process, this approach would offer culturally relevant and trusted guidance, making the process more accessible. It builds trust within the community and fosters a sense of solidarity, which can be more impactful than formal technical assistance from external experts.

Text-to-Apply Option or Mobile Application with Real-Time Support: This option supports the goal of making the application process more accessible and less intimidating. A text or mobile platform would provide an alternative, easily accessible format, especially for those with limited internet access. This tool could streamline application steps, offer reminders, and provide real-time support, which aligns with the recommendation for simplifying the application process and providing applicants with step-by-step guidance.

3

RECEIVES APPLICATIONS

Progress and the Path Ahead

The department offers weekly virtual and in-person open office hours opportunities (for all HOT programs) throughout the grant application open window. Information sessions, virtual office hours registration information, and links to Community Navigators and third-party administration assistance is available at any point on the COA website. There are also numerous grant application workshops (in both English and Spanish) aimed at providing application support and technical assistance. A total of 51 free assistance hours were available for Thrive & Elevate applications during the 2024 cycle. Workshops are offered on various days and timeslots to accommodate applicants who may work unconventional hours.

4

APPROVES APPLICANTS

Current

A panel reviews applications based on predetermined criteria, with an emphasis on technical proficiency and adherence to guidelines. However, the review process may unintentionally favor applicants with professional grant writing resources, placing grassroots and under-resourced applicants at a disadvantage.

Concerns:

Despite guidelines emphasizing support for BIPOC and women-led initiatives, the lack of proactive outreach and genuine support inclusivity. There are also perceptions of "checkbox" equity without substantial impact, further disadvantaging those in need of genuine assistance.

Further, there are stark differences in approval rates across racial groups, particularly in relation to technical assistance. Using the 2023 Elevate data as an example:

- Asian applicants with TLC support have an 83% success rate, compared to an overall rate of 63%, a 21% improvement.
- Black or African American applicants see a 28% improvement with TLC, achieving an 80% success rate compared to 51% overall.



APPROVES APPLICANTS

- Hispanic or Latino applicants experience a 40% improvement with TLC, with an 84% success rate compared to 43% overall.
- Multi-Race applicants benefit by 50% with TLC, reaching a 78% success rate versus 28% overall.
- White applicants have a 51% improvement with TLC, reaching an 88% success rate compared to 37% overall.

This means, the support received by TLC statistically significantly affects the outcomes of all applicants but disproportionately benefits White applicants.

Recommendations

To improve equity in the approval process, the city should enhance the availability of technical assistance for marginalized communities. Further, if technical assistance continues to predetermine success rates, the city should consider mandating technical assistance for all applicants and ensure all technical assistance providers are trained in equitable practices and community engagement. Additionally, the evaluation criteria could be revised to balance technical proficiency with an appreciation for creativity and community impact, allowing applicants from diverse backgrounds to compete on a more level playing field.

Progress and the Path Ahead

The City is committed to providing the necessary resources to all applicants in order to help them take advantage of the grant opportunities available. The department has looked at how to best provide technical assistance to applicants that are not as proficient in grant writing. Office hours, Information sessions, workshops, and Community Navigators have been instituted as ways to help reduce the gap in grant writing proficiency.

Review panels are comprised of individuals who represent a broad range of artistic and cultural viewpoints, as well as wide geographic and ethnic diversity.

Review Panels include:

- A mix of local and out of town Reviewers
- A mix of arts administrators and practicing arts professionals
- A mix of artistic discipline expertise
- Equity expertise
- Community-based artistic practice expertise
- Nonprofit expertise

5

PROVIDES FUNDING**Current:**

Once approved, artists and organizations receive financial support to execute their projects. This funding is typically distributed as a one-time grant, which supports immediate project costs but may not sustain long-term growth.

Concerns:

Short-term funding cycles limit the ability of organizations to plan for sustainability and growth. Many recipients rely on continued funding to keep their operations viable, but one-time grants do not provide the stability needed for long-term planning. This is particularly challenging for smaller organizations and artists who lack other funding sources.

Recommendations

Introducing multi-year funding models with staggered support that gradually reduces over time but provides resources for capacity-building could help organizations become more self-sustaining. The city could also facilitate networking opportunities and resource-sharing among grant recipients to strengthen their operational foundations.

- **Collaborative Project Funding Model (Revenue-Sharing or Fund Contribution):** This approach aligns with the recommendation for multi-year and capacity-building funding. A revenue-sharing model or small fund contribution from successful projects would create a self-sustaining funding ecosystem, allowing resources to be reinvested back into the community. This approach also fosters a collaborative culture among grant recipients, emphasizing long-term sustainability and financial stability within Austin's arts community.
- **Create a Self-Sustaining Ecosystem through Reinvestment for Future Projects:** This step complements the collaborative funding model by encouraging organizations to contribute to a collective fund that supports future applicants. It reinforces the goal of building long-term financial stability and community resilience. By reinvesting resources back into future projects, the program can continuously support new applicants, helping to establish a sustainable.

Progress and Path Ahead

This presents a strategic opportunity for growth for the department.

THEN...

FUNDS RECEIVED AND USED BY THE ARTISTS**Current**

With the funding, artists can hire staff, produce work, and engage with the community through events, workshops, and performances. This direct financial support enables creative professionals to contribute meaningfully to Austin's cultural landscape.

Concerns

While funding helps artists in the short term, the lack of sustained support makes it difficult for them to plan beyond the immediate project. Many artists face financial instability when their projects end, limiting their ability to continue contributing to the community in the long term.

Recommendations

Providing opportunities for multi-year funding or support to cover operational expenses could allow artists to build stability. This might include offering stipends for community engagement or funding for recurring projects to ensure sustained community presence.

Progress and the Path Ahead

Through the current funding model for these HOT programs, the department looks to feed the city's creative ecosystem, creating opportunities for artists and organizations to grow from new and emerging to community staples. With HOT programs being highly competitive, guaranteed funding year over year isn't a realistic goal. However, the city works to promote collaboration in projects for artists. Fostering collaboration between artists can open up new avenues for funding and support. Additionally, the department offers a variety of business resources and classes aimed at helping artists and organizations sustain and scale beyond the initial grant investment.

THEN...

PREDICTIONS OF IMPACT WILL BE MADE BY THE ARTISTS

Current

Artists are encouraged to forecast the potential reach and impact of their projects as part of the application and reporting process. This includes predicting audience size, community engagement, and other measurable outcomes.

Concerns

Traditional impact metrics, such as attendance numbers or economic impact, may not fully capture the broader cultural and social contributions of these projects. Many artists feel that such quantitative metrics are inadequate to represent the intangible impacts of their work, such as fostering a sense of belonging or cultural pride.

Recommendations

Adopting a mixed-methods approach to evaluation that includes both quantitative and qualitative metrics could provide a more accurate assessment of the projects' impact. For example, artists could submit testimonials, community feedback, or creative documentation to convey the deeper effects of their work.

Progress and the Path Ahead

This presents a strategic opportunity for growth for the department.

THEN...

ARTISTS WILL CREATE ART AND ARTISTIC EXPRESSION IN AUSTIN

Current

With funding support from the City of Austin's HOT programs, artists develop and showcase a wide range of creative projects, including performances, visual arts, installations, festivals, and other forms of cultural expression. These artistic endeavors enhance the city's cultural landscape, attract local and tourist audiences, and celebrate Austin's diverse heritage and community identities. Artists often engage with different communities through these projects, creating spaces for cultural exchange and community building.

Concerns

While the funding allows artists to initiate projects, limitations in the scope and amount of support can restrict the scale and reach of their work. Artists from underrepresented communities may face additional challenges, such as limited access to high-profile venues, difficulty securing additional resources, or barriers in reaching broader audiences due to lack of marketing and promotional support. Additionally, the pressure to align with quantifiable outcomes (like audience numbers or economic impact) may detract from the authenticity and experimental nature of their art, as artists may feel compelled to focus on mainstream appeal rather than innovative or culturally specific expression.

Recommendations

To foster a thriving and inclusive artistic environment, the City could offer additional resources specifically for project expansion, marketing, and logistical support, helping artists reach larger and more diverse audiences. Creating partnerships with local venues and media outlets would further amplify the visibility of these projects. Additionally, establishing a funding track that emphasizes experimental and community-driven art could provide artists with the flexibility to pursue culturally specific or avant-garde projects without needing to prioritize mainstream metrics of success. The city could also implement feedback loops to capture audience and community responses, offering artists insights into the broader impact of their work.

Progress and the Path Ahead

Awardees are given access to marketing courses and resources to help with promotion and expansion of their projects.

THEN...

ACTUAL IMPACT WILL BE DOCUMENTED**Current**

Artists submit reports documenting the outcomes of their projects, focusing on attendance, media coverage, and other quantifiable measures.

Concerns

Many artists struggle to demonstrate the full impact of their work through traditional reporting. Metrics such as ticket sales or social media reach do not necessarily reflect the personal and cultural transformations facilitated by their projects.

Recommendations

The city could encourage alternative forms of impact documentation, such as video testimonials or narrative reports, to capture the nuanced outcomes of these projects. Periodic check-ins with artists after their projects are completed could also help to document long-term community impact.

Progress and the Path Ahead

This presents a strategic opportunity for growth for the department.

THEN...

COA CAN ANALYZE THE PROGRAM IMPACT

Current

The city compiles data from individual projects to assess the overall impact of HOT-funded programs, focusing on broad indicators of success.

Concerns

Aggregated data may overlook the specific needs and achievements of individual communities, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. This can lead to an incomplete understanding of the program's effectiveness in fostering cultural equity.

Recommendations

Implementing a participatory evaluation process that includes feedback from artists and community members can provide a richer, more holistic view of the programs' impact. Additionally, disaggregating data by demographic categories could help the city identify specific areas for improvement.

Utilizing the theory of change framework in this executive summary as milestones, create process metrics that detail journey for the artist and gives a pipeline view of how candidates are succeeding or finding areas of concern. This can also help to ensure equity in implementation and support.

Progress and the Path Ahead

This presents a strategic opportunity for growth for the department.

THEN...

COA CAN COMMUNICATE THE IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMS

Current

The city reports on the impact of its programs through public updates, presentations, and community meetings.

Concerns

Communication may not reach all demographics effectively, particularly underserved groups, limiting the visibility of program benefits in marginalized communities.

Recommendations

Partner with local organizations for grassroots communication and use diverse media to improve outreach. Ensuring that messages resonate with a wide audience could help increase awareness of program outcomes and the positive impact on Austin's cultural landscape.

Progress and the Path Ahead

This presents a strategic opportunity for growth for the department.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

City grants supported by the HOT are part of a broader effort to use public funds to bolster cultural initiatives that might otherwise lack the necessary resources to thrive. By doing so, these programs intend to address systemic inequities and provide platforms for marginalized groups to share their stories, celebrate their heritage, and contribute to the cultural landscape of Austin. Understanding the lived experiences of the communities served by these programs and quantitatively measuring the outcomes are essential steps in assessing the impact and effectiveness of these investments.

While cultural programs funded through the HOT have received significant support, the broader impact on the communities they aim to serve has not always been fully explored. For example, some programs might showcase their successes through participation numbers or events held, but there is often less information available about the deeper, longer-term outcomes for community members, particularly those from marginalized groups. This can make it harder to fully assess whether these programs are achieving their equity goals and where improvements could be made to enhance their effectiveness.

Additionally, existing data collection methods may not fully capture the lived experiences of participants, which are essential for a comprehensive understanding of impact. Without a balanced approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative assessments, it can be difficult to fully recognize the transformative effects of these programs or identify potential areas for enhancement. This project aims to address this by integrating community voices with data-driven analysis, providing a more complete evaluation of the funded programs' successes and opportunities for growth.



HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The need for cultural arts funding and the unique challenges related to this funding as it relates to equitable support are rooted in the city's history of displacement and segregation.

Over the past 50 years, Austin's cultural funding practices, rooted in policies established in the mid-to-late 1900s, disproportionately favored large, established institutions, often excluding smaller and minority-led organizations. This inequity led to the marginalization and displacement of underrepresented communities, erasure of cultural traditions, and distrust in the system. Recognizing these disparities, the city has taken steps to undo these inequities by removing structural barriers, improving cultural competence of decision-makers, and reimagining eligibility criteria for funded programs.

In 2019, Austin launched its Cultural Funding Review Process, coinciding with broader equity initiatives and the establishment of the Heritage Tourism Division. Over the following three years, the city engaged in consultations, public feedback, and program redesigns, culminating in 2022 with new funding frameworks designed to address past inequities and redistribute resources more equitably across Austin's diverse cultural communities.

A Timeline of The Historical Context of Arts Funding Inequities in Austin [2] highlights the key events that have contributed to the ongoing inequities exacerbated by continued socioeconomic changes, both globally and within the city itself.



Source: [Historical Context of Arts Funding Inequities in Austin](#)

HISTORICAL TIMELINE CONT.

Additionally, focus group attendees highlighted multiple themes across history that contributed to the problem of equitable funding today, which can be summarized in the following themes:

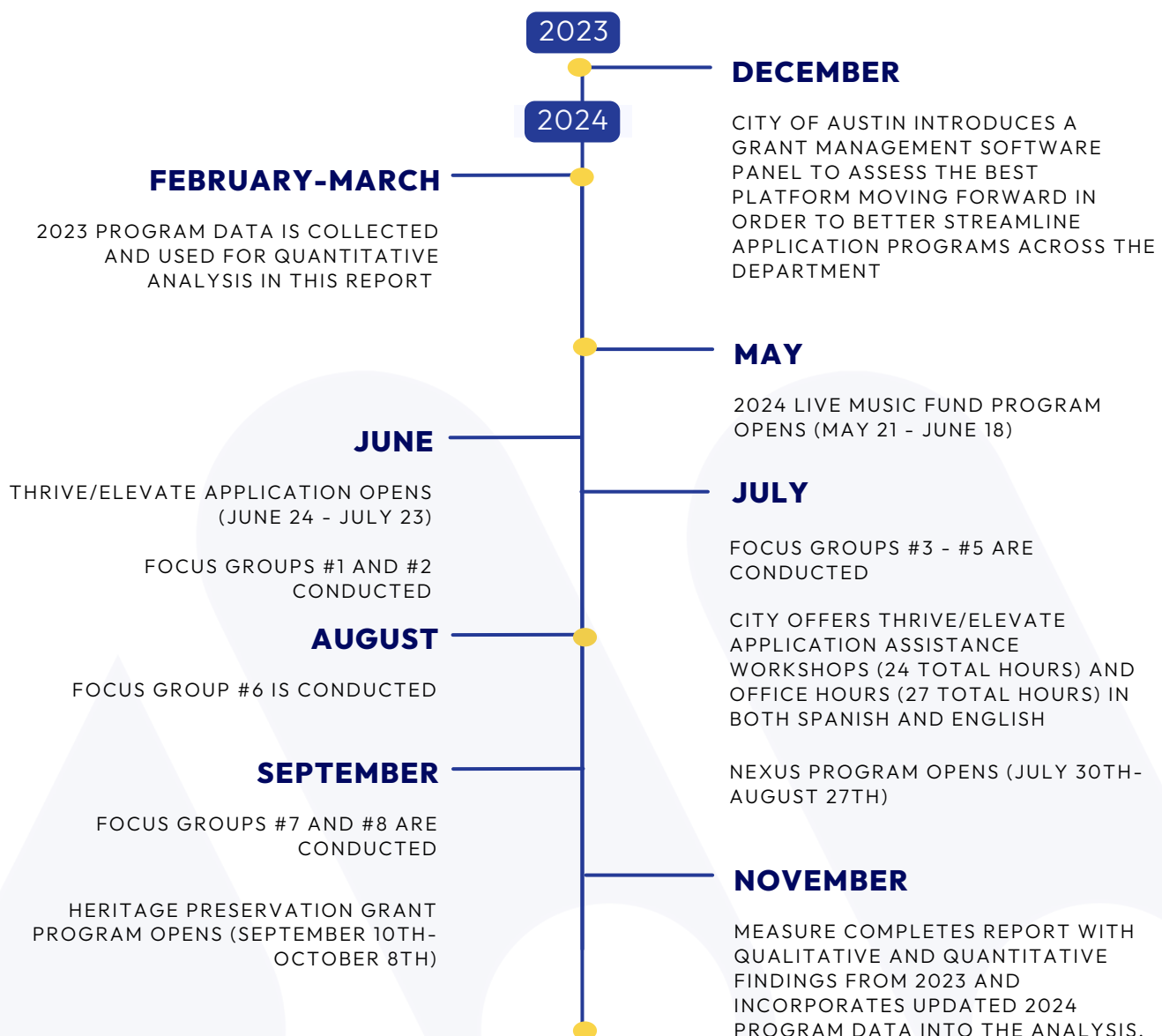
- Lack of access to education leads to unawareness of available resources and funding opportunities
- Gentrification pushes out marginalized communities, erasing cultural contributions and histories
- Rising costs of living and low wages create unsustainable conditions for artists, limiting their ability to thrive
- Predominantly white institutions receive disproportionate funding, leaving Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) organizations under-resourced
- The histories and contributions of diverse communities are often overlooked, leading to a lack of representation in cultural programming
- Policies limit access to news and information about funding opportunities

TIMELINE OF EVALUATION AND PARALLEL EFFORTS BY CITY

The research outlined in this paper covers findings from applicants and awardees for 2023 programs. Since then, the city has made significant progress on improvements to the programs, many of which overlap with the learnings uncovered as part of the research process, which both validates the need for said changes and highlights the city's understanding of the problem.

Due to the concurrent timing of this research and the city's implementation of operational improvements, the analysis did not capture the outcomes of these changes. For reference, see Figure 1 which provides a timeline that illustrates this overlap:

Figure 1. Timeline of Evaluation and HOT-Funded Programmatic Events



PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Quantitative Analysis: Metrics for Analysis

The HOT program leaders provided data on the applicants and participants of three respective programs for the year 2023. Analysis was conducted to gain insights into overall programmatic successes. The analysis utilized a combination of demographic data and program-specific metrics to evaluate the diversity and inclusion within Austin's arts and culture funding programs. Data was collected from applicant submissions, including racial, gender, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) representation, as well as age distribution. Key metrics such as acceptance and award rates were calculated for each demographic group. Comparative analysis against the city population was conducted to assess whether certain groups were under or overrepresented. The analysis also included data on technical assistance providers and council district breakdowns, offering insights into geographical distribution and external support's impact on success rates. Additionally, the study accounted for the composition of awardee organizations by gender and leadership, as well as cross-referencing with other marginalized communities. The findings were visualized using tables and charts to clearly represent the proportional differences between applicants and awardees across multiple programs.

Qualitative Analysis: Focus Groups

This evaluation included a series of focus groups aimed at gathering in-depth insights into participants' experiences with city-funded programs. The purpose of the focus groups was to gather lived experience data that could reveal themes and perspectives beyond the scope of quantitative methods. The goal was to collect vital insights to inform long-term strategic planning, ensuring that Austin's cultural funding initiatives remain adaptable, sustainable, and effective in meeting the community's evolving needs over the next decade and beyond.

- **Expanded, Equitable Accessibility:** To identify barriers to accessibility and develop strategies that ensure all communities, particularly those historically marginalized, have equitable access to grant opportunities, creating a more inclusive grant-making infrastructure.

PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODOLOGY CONT.

- **Increased Awareness of Program Benefits:** To enhance awareness of the benefits provided by HOT-funded programs among Austin's diverse populations, with a goal of ensuring all eligible entities are informed and encouraged to participate in these funding opportunities.
- **Community Impact of Funded Programs:** To evaluate the broader community impact of HOT-funded programs, particularly in terms of their ability to foster economic growth and community development.
- **Long-Term Pipeline of Support for Historically Marginalized Communities:** To build and sustain a long-term pipeline of support for marginalized communities through strategic investments in cultural initiatives. The city of Austin endeavored to better understand the needs of these communities and ensure that HOT-funded programs are designed to provide enduring benefits, including opportunities for growth, capacity building, and cultural preservation.

The focus groups were conducted using the Measure Equity Focus Group (EFG) Tool, which uses community-based participatory action research principles and is designed with a racial-equity lens, emphasizing the inclusion of individuals who have been historically and systematically affected by social inequities. Using the EFG Tool, our initial focus group helped co-design the research questions with participants. This equity-focused approach prioritized participants from communities that are directly impacted by social inequities, ensuring their lived experiences shaped our understanding and subsequent investigation of the issues at hand. Focus groups, in general, offer valuable insights and create a feedback loop with individuals who have firsthand experience with social justice challenges and the hardships that arise from them.



FOCUS GROUP RECRUITMENT

The outreach and selection process for focus group recruitment aimed to ensure diverse representation across several factors:

- Experience with HOT-funded programs (past/current awardees, unsuccessful applicants, potential future applicants)
- Representation across different programs (Thrive, Elevate, Nexus, Live Music, Heritage Preservation)
- Demographic diversity to capture a range of perspectives
- A mix of organizations and individual artists/practitioners

Participants were recruited from the Austin area to participate in one of eight virtual focus groups. Participants were recruited by the City of Austin and Measure leaders and community partners. Recruitment involved creating fliers, emailing past awardees and applicants, and promoting through social media. The recruitment process for these groups involved revisiting past participant lists, targeted invitations, vetting registrants for legitimacy, and leveraging recommendations from the City of Austin and Measure's network connections to the target population.

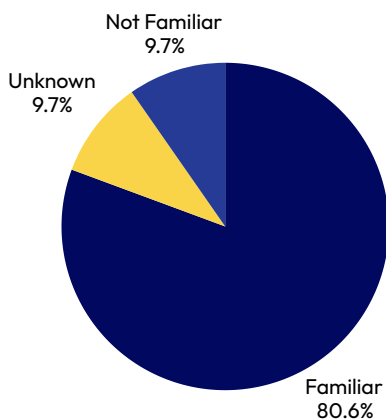
The research team conducted eight focus groups, with the first group co-creating the research protocol with participants. The fourth focus group's results were discarded due to unexpected registrations and participant legitimacy concerns. Later focus groups emphasized increasing representation from diverse communities, including historically underrepresented groups. Participants were invited to share their experiences and provide insight into their perceptions of the impact of cultural arts grants funded by the HOT. Each focus group was 90 minutes in length and took place on June 11, June 19, June 25, July 20, July 21, August 14, August 16, and September 11 of 2024. A team of two Measure Evaluators facilitated each focus group, fostering an environment where participants were encouraged to share their experiences and perspectives openly and authentically. The City of Austin provided each participant with a \$125 electronic gift card for their time.

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic information was collected from most of the attendees of the focus groups. Each attendee was asked to self-identify via an online form, when registering for a focus group. For attendees recruited ad-hoc for sessions, their responses were solicited after the session completed. Therefore, for some, the form was not completed and the demographic information is listed here as “Unknown.”

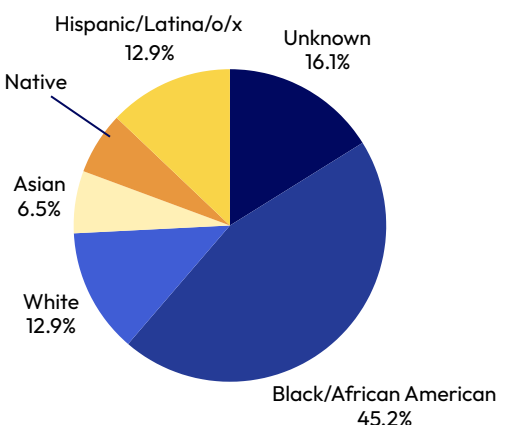
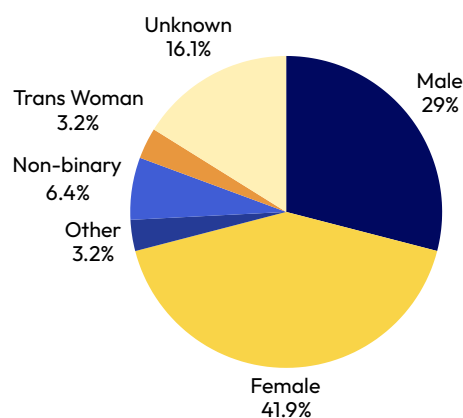
Attendees were asked about their racial and gender identity, as well as role in the community and familiarity with HOT programs. A total of 8 focus groups were conducted, with a total of 31 attendees across roughly 10 different community roles. The majority of attendees were familiar with HOT programs and over half have applied for one or more.

Qualitative research such as the Equity Focus Group model is unlike quantitative studies that require large numbers for statistical significance, so while 31 participants is a relatively small percentage of the total number of applicants and awardees of these programs, across 8 diverse focus groups the findings reached data saturation and no new themes emerged, rendering the focus group findings sufficient for valid insights.



FAMILIARITY WITH
HOT PROGRAMS

GENDER IDENTITY

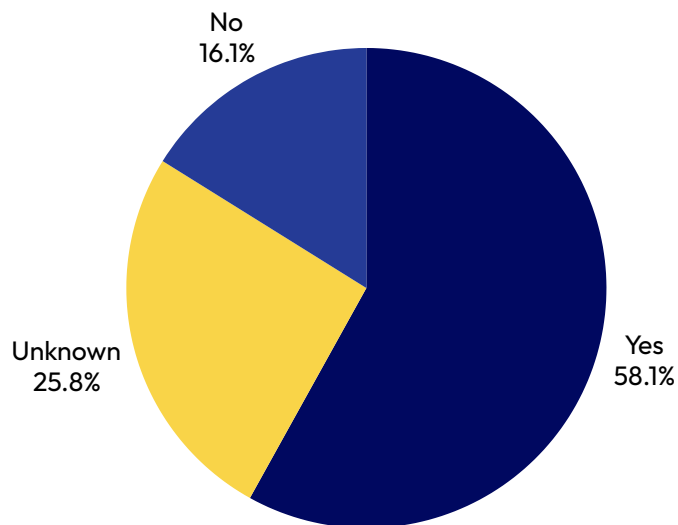


ETHNICITY/RACIAL
IDENTIFICATION

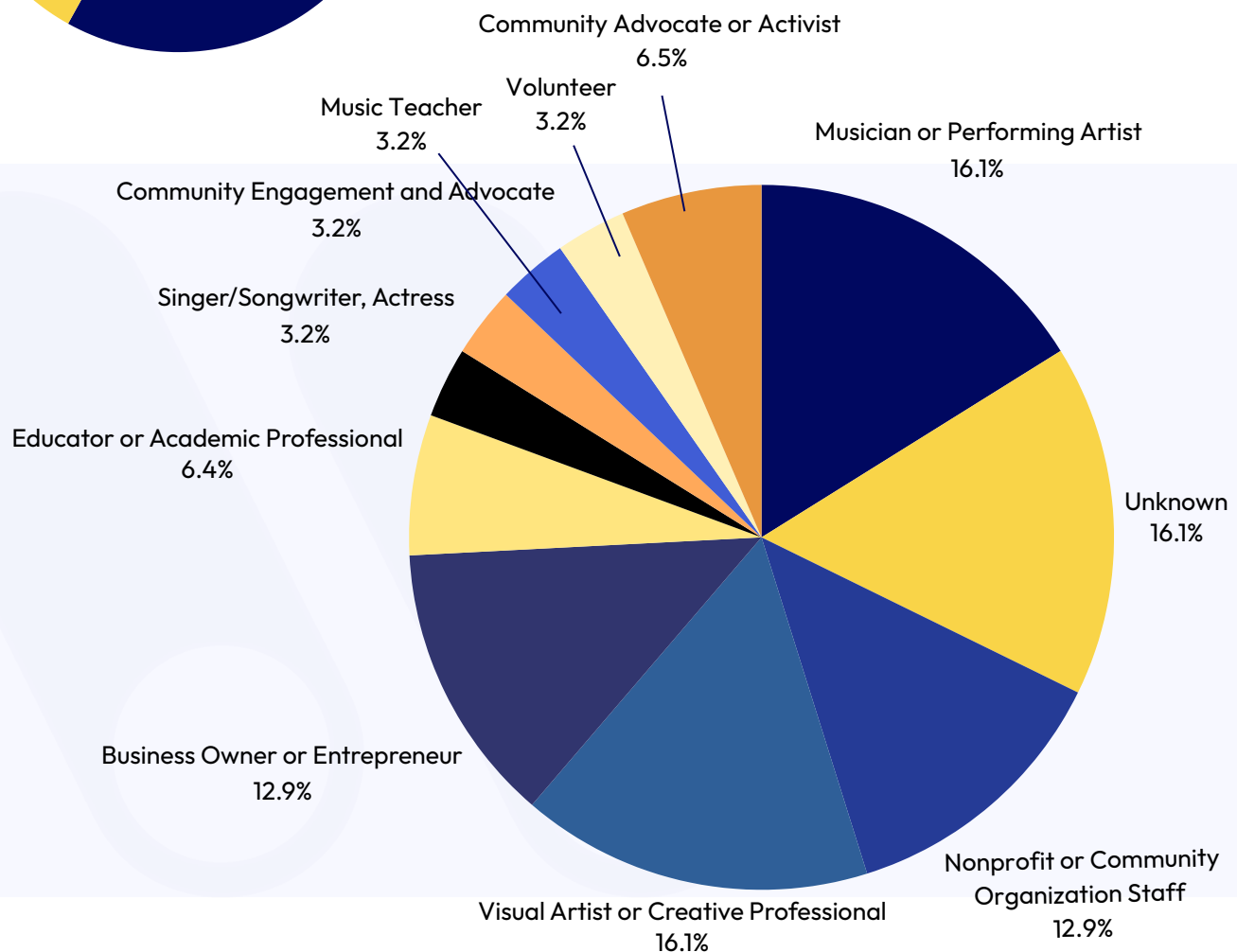
FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS CONT.

Application Status

We asked applicants whether they had applied to one of the HOT programs.

APPLICATION STATUS**Award Status**

At least 38% of attendees were awarded funds via one of the HOT-funded programs.

ROLE

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

It is important to note that the focus group questions were carefully crafted to elicit meaningful insights from participants, ensuring that their experiences, perspectives, and recommendations could be explored in depth. The questions were designed with input from City of Austin partners, as well as the Measure research team, to be open-ended and flexible, allowing for natural conversation flow while addressing key areas of interest related to the programs' impact and future direction. Below is the full list of focus group questions used in this evaluation.

1. How did you first learn about these funding programs?
2. Have you encountered any challenges when trying to access information or apply for these programs? Can you describe these challenges?
3. Before applying, were you aware of all the potential benefits offered by these programs? Which benefits were the most appealing to you?
4. Can you share a specific example of how this funding has helped your organization hire full-time staff or foster new community partnerships?
 - a. Since receiving funding, can you quantify the increase in your organization's activities, such as events held, staff hired, or partnerships formed?
5. How well do you think these programs address the needs of marginalized communities? What improvements would you suggest?
6. What are some barriers that marginalized communities might face when accessing these programs? How can/What can we do to address these barriers?
7. How can we improve our communication about the benefits of these programs to ensure more organizations and communities are aware of them?
8. How important is continuous support from these programs for your long-term operations?
9. What kind of ongoing support would be most beneficial for your organization to thrive over the next 10+ years?
10. What metrics or indicators do you consider most important in evaluating the success of our funding programs?

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's approach, was employed to identify, organize, and report the key themes that emerged from the discussions [3]. Evaluators began by coding relevant excerpts from participants' stories, which were then grouped to form overarching themes. Through ongoing weekly discussions and careful refinement, four major themes were identified.

LIMITATIONS

Despite the rich data collected, there are several limitations to the focus group methodology that we must acknowledge. First, the sample sizes of groups two and three were relatively small (2 and 3 participants, respectively). Focus groups typically consist of 6 to 12 participants. This size range is considered ideal because it allows for a balance between encouraging active participation and managing the group dynamic effectively, ensuring all voices are heard without overwhelming the discussion [4]. The other focus groups adhered to this standard, with participant numbers falling within the typical range of 6 to 12. Second, the focus groups were conducted in English only, potentially excluding non-English-speaking participants or those for whom English is not a first language. Finally, the virtual format may have influenced participant engagement or comfort levels, as some individuals may have experienced technology-related challenges or found it difficult to connect fully in a virtual environment. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results of the focus group findings.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Theme #1: Barriers to Access: Bureaucratic Hurdles and Limited Opportunities

This theme captures the barriers that various stakeholders, including artists, cultural organizations, and community groups, faced when trying to access and fully benefit from the grants funded by HOT. Despite the availability of funds aimed at supporting cultural preservation and promotion, many potential applicants struggled with navigating the complex processes involved in applying for these grants, which led to perceptions of underutilization of available resources and inequitable distribution of funds. However, these challenges also sparked conversations about creating more inclusive and streamlined grant processes.

Sub-theme: “Difficulty Navigating Grant Processes/Complex and Intimidating Process” (i.e. “Too many hoops”) focuses on the specific challenges related to understanding and navigating the grant application and management processes.

The complexity of these processes were a significant barrier for smaller organizations, individual artists, and community groups, particularly those with limited experience in grant writing or limited access to resources that can aid in the application process. Many potential (and actual) applicants found the grant application process daunting due to the complexity of the requirements. Detailed proposals, extensive documentation, and strict adherence to guidelines were overwhelming, especially for those without professional grant-writing experience. This complexity deterred some smaller organizations or individuals from applying, even if they had projects that aligned with the goals of the grant.

Navigating the grant process often requires access to resources such as professional grant writers, legal advice, and financial expertise, which are not readily available to all applicants. Smaller organizations and individual artists may lack the financial means to hire such professionals, putting them at a disadvantage compared to larger organizations with more resources. This can lead to an inequitable distribution of funds, where only those with the means to navigate the process successfully receive grants.

For some applicants, language and communication barriers can further complicate the grant application process. Non-native English speakers or those unfamiliar with bureaucratic language may struggle to understand the application requirements fully. This can result in incomplete or incorrectly filled applications, which can disqualify otherwise deserving projects from receiving funding.

LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Throughout this Black Paper, we will incorporate quotes from focus group participants to inform our understanding of the challenges they face, providing firsthand insights into barriers to access and the complexities of the application process, as well as the need for long-term, equitable support and innovative impact metrics.

"There should be more education on how to apply for this grant process .. it can be a little bit unnerving to feel like you're not providing all the documentation needed or being confused about the process in general."

- Musician

"Too many hoops. Too many hoops. Something that's supposed to be a "Here you go." You gotta jump through 50 hoops to get to it. And then they make it unrealistic for entry level artists to use the funds."

- Musician



our experience
makes us
EXPERTS

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Theme #1: Barriers to Access: Bureaucratic Hurdles and Limited Opportunities

Sub-theme: “Lack of Awareness” focuses on the challenges many applicants face due to limited awareness and outreach about the availability of HOT tax-funded grants and related resources. Many participants learned about opportunities through word of mouth or by chance; hence, a significant challenge is ensuring that all potential applicants are aware of the availability of HOT tax-funded grants. Often, information about these grants may not reach underserved communities or small grassroots organizations. Limited outreach efforts can result in a lack of diversity among applicants, which in turn affects the types of projects that receive funding.

LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

“There are pockets of the community that don't have any awareness that there's funding programs available that could serve them. And so when we look at the nuances and the differences between marketing and outreach, that marketing is just sort of spraying it out into the ether and hitting and reaching people that, you know, may or may not need those services or operating in an echo chamber, and if they're relying on things like newsletters and Facebook groups and social media, that unless you're already following and cognizant of the opportunities coming from the city, you're not going to be touched by those materials that copy. The opportunities aren't going to reach you. And so there needs to be more.”

- Singer/Songwriter, Actress

“There needs to be a more... deeper sensitivity to the fact that there's, you know, while the City may be reaching a lot of people, they're not reaching everybody. And there are sub communities and smaller communities that need to have more effort put into being reached. And that's beyond, you know, putting one ad in Univision or in the Spanish language newspaper, that there are pockets of these communities that need to be, you know, we need to go door to door to ensure that they know that these opportunities exist. And then when we talk about things like language access, the reality is these applications are really challenging in English for college graduates, for people that are trained, and it is a full time job to write competitive grants and get monies from outside sources.”

- Community Advocate



CASE STUDY: ELEVATE GRANT APPLICATION PROCESS - APPLICANT EXPERIENCE

In 2024, a creative artist applied for an Elevate Grant. Despite being denied, they provided critical insights into the application process based on their firsthand experience. The applicant raised concerns about the structure, flexibility, and evaluation criteria of the grant process, identifying areas that could hinder applicants' ability to effectively convey their artistic vision.

FINDING 1: CHARACTER LIMIT DISCREPANCY

The application template did not mention word count limits, leading the applicant to create detailed multi-page responses. However, the actual application imposed a 2000-character limit, forcing the applicant to severely condense their content, compromising the quality of the submission. The recommendation is to update the template to clarify that character limits exist within the actual application to avoid misaligned expectations and unnecessary work.

FINDING 2: RESTRICTIVE TEMPLATE STIFLES CREATIVITY

The rigid template structure hindered the applicant's ability to creatively express their project. The broad and poorly defined categories made it difficult to balance innovation with meeting the application's technical requirements. The recommendation is to redesign the application to include both short-answer questions for explicit criteria (e.g., project audience) and long-form responses for more detailed descriptions of the project. This would allow for creative freedom while still addressing core evaluation criteria.

FINDING 3: FORMULAIC JUDGING CRITERIA

Panelists were purportedly trained to identify buzzwords rather than fully engage with an artist's vision. The emphasis on technical proficiency over creativity led to innovative projects being scored lower, particularly when applicants did not seek technical assistance. Data suggested that artists who received such assistance were more likely to be approved, potentially creating barriers for artists of color. The recommendation is to enhance panelist training to focus on both technical and creative merit. Introduce a binary evaluation for

meeting core requirements, while leaving artistic judgment to panelists' discretion. This would promote a more balanced approach and mitigate biases in the process.

FINDING 4: LACK OF APPLICANT RECOURSE DURING JUDGING

The applicant observed the panel misinterpreted key aspects of their project during the review process. Without an opportunity to clarify or respond to questions, they were unable to defend their submission, ultimately leading to its rejection. The recommendation is to Implement a process where applicants are allowed a brief (60 seconds) opportunity to address any questions or misconceptions raised by the panel during the review discussion. This would provide clarity and ensure projects are evaluated more accurately.



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Theme #2: Austin's Enduring Inequity: Barriers of Exclusion and Representation

Participants emphasized the invisibility and lack of support for Black and Brown communities who have been marginalized and oppressed by structural inequities and policy. Discussions highlighted the perceived lack of diverse cultural representation in Austin, especially as the city evolves post-pandemic with increased migration and economic development. Concerns were raised about historical favoritism in grant distribution, often benefiting certain groups while leaving others out, particularly marginalized communities such as transgender individuals and African and Caribbean communities. Issues of gatekeeping and racism persist, raising questions about the equitable allocation of resources. However, participants also acknowledged and appreciated the city's efforts to address its history of inequity. Despite these efforts, a perceived disconnect remains between city leaders and these communities, with many feeling excluded from meaningful involvement or feeling left out of important decisions. While outreach efforts have been made, they are often seen as performative, lacking the genuine understanding and long-term commitment needed to address these disparities.



QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Lived-Experience Data from Focus Group Participants

"I feel like there is an inequity happening as far as how funds are distributed typically with these programs, because there are great programs that are happening, but they're either underfunded or they're unseen, and they're not one of the larger nonprofits. You know, some of the larger nonprofits have been grandfathered into this funding. So there are times when there should be an evaluation of how the program is working. And because there's such a long history with their established, you know, incumbent program, they're not looking for others to potentially augment that programming or replace that programming in the future. So I just feel like sometimes smaller groups, especially groups that are run by people of color, are overlooked because they're not part of these established programs."

- Musician



"But if you're going to ask people to show up for your thing, be it given money or just like a community partnership, what does that mean? Like, if you invite somebody to your party but never go to theirs, why would they do that? So I don't know if those community ties are so strong that they're getting people to apply to grants or, like, how far their community reach goes, but I don't know if they really should be the person doing that. I think I'd once again just advocate paid people, pay people who have long term community trust, because that's valuable."

- Community Organization Staff Member

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Theme #3: Insufficient Long-Term and Equitable Support Hinders Sustainability

This theme addresses the critical issue of the lack of sustained and equitable support for cultural initiatives, which ultimately limits the long-term sustainability of programs funded by Austin's HOT. Participants acknowledged that the grant funds had a significant impact, enabling many to work in the creative space full-time, hire personnel, and pay artists and staff a living wage. The funds also allowed for the expansion of programming, reaching more communities and fostering creative growth. However, while these grants were invaluable in the short term, many expressed concern that the support was not sustainable for long-term growth, making it difficult to plan beyond the immediate future. Participants reported that many HOT-funded programs operate within short-term funding cycles that provide limited financial support, often only covering the initial stages of a project or program. This short-term focus creates challenges for organizations that require ongoing resources to build capacity, scale their efforts, and ensure the long-term viability of their work. Without continued investment, these initiatives are at risk of becoming one-time events rather than sustainable programs that contribute to Austin's cultural landscape over the long term. Participants expressed a belief that the distribution of HOT funds has historically favored larger, more established organizations, leaving smaller, grassroots initiatives—particularly those led by or serving historically marginalized communities—struggling to compete for resources. Participants expressed that this inequitable allocation exacerbates existing disparities and limits the ability of underrepresented groups to sustain their cultural programs. Ensuring equitable access to funding is crucial for fostering a diverse and inclusive cultural environment in Austin; sustainable cultural programs require not just financial resources, but also the ability to build long-term capacity within organizations. This includes developing the infrastructure, skills, and networks necessary to maintain and grow initiatives over time. However, the lack of consistent support appears to hinder organizations and individuals from investing in capacity-building activities, such as hiring permanent staff, creating stable community partnerships, or expanding their outreach efforts.

LIVED-EXPERIENCE DATA FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

"But I do know that if we didn't get it the next year, probably no way to do what we're planning to do, you know, in 2025 and 2026 with no grant support. So we've got to really make it count."

- Business Owner



our experience
makes us
EXPERTS

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHUTTERSTOCK

"I know that the problem, one of the problems is that HOT tax is the only thing used to fund our culture and our creatives and heritage, and that's a tax. It varies depending on how many people travel to our city and spend the night in hotels. And so that not having a budget item, not having a constant flow of money, not having another funding mechanism, having every single creative and every single arts organization in Austin fighting for that little tiny bit of money is insane, especially if we call ourselves the "Live Music Capital of the World."

- Community Engagement Advocate

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Theme #4: Rethinking Success: The Need for Innovative Impact Metrics

Participants who received funding found it challenging to quantify or evaluate success beyond immediate outcomes. They felt that traditional metrics, such as event tickets sold, didn't fully capture the nuanced outcomes of cultural initiatives. While participants acknowledged that grant funding often requires the use of certain quantitative metrics, they found these measures limiting, as they do not fully account for the deeper impacts of these programs. They emphasized the need for a more innovative approach to evaluation—one that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data, incorporates diverse perspectives, and adapts to the unique goals of each project. Many participants highlighted the difficulty in measuring the success of community-driven programs, particularly those that fostered deeper, intangible impacts like feelings of belonging, connection, and long-term change, which are not easily captured by standard metrics.

Lived-Experience Data from Focus Group Participants

“When I submitted my final reports there's always, like, how many people attend that? How many people did, like, and that's, like, all quantifiable, but that doesn't necessarily measure success. You know, it's like, when you're, like, most of my work, the community work that I do is with the trans and gender non conforming community in Austin. And so, like, I think many times, it's just, like, sort of what you were talking about. It's like, once someone is able to open the door and do something, the ways that project creates are immeasurable. And so a lot of the time...it's just, like, being able to open those doors and to expand the horizon of possibility for people is something that, like, it's just. I don't know how you quantify that, but it's like, it's also something that has to come from the community.”

- Performing Artist

“I would say that a tool of upholding white supremacy culture is quantitative: bigger, more, scale up. But we're talking about art and culture. And so I would just say to consider as the funder, deep versus wide and quality over quantity and limit some of this evaluation and trust people and organizations, especially grassroots organizations and artists.”

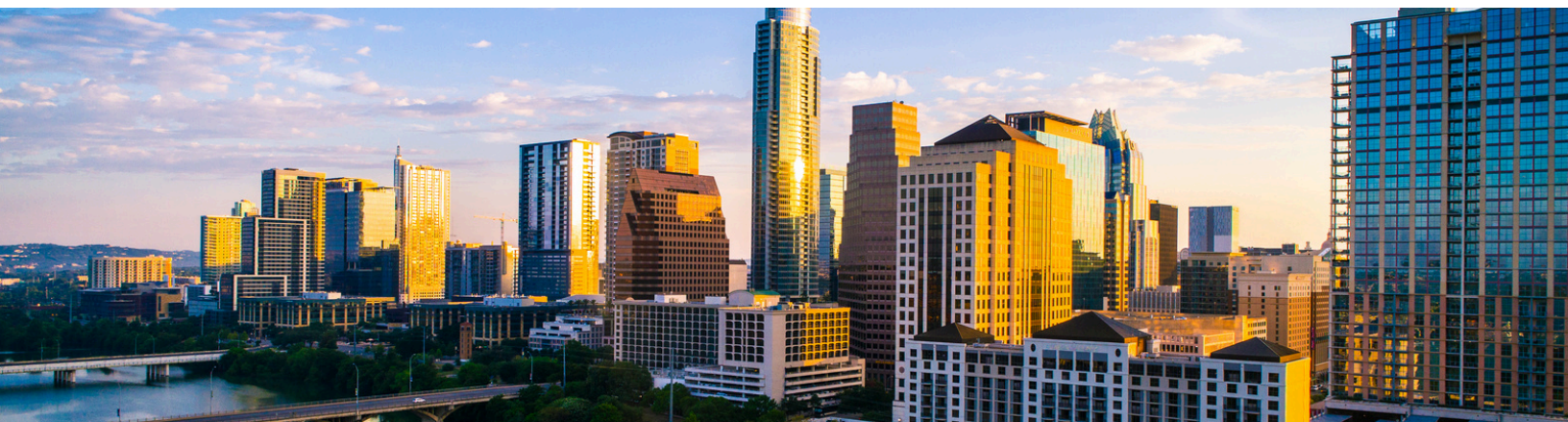
- Community Advocate

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

THEME #5: CULTURAL ARTS FUNDING OPENS NEW ROUTES FOR ARTISTIC ENDEAVORS

For awardees, the funding has contributed to maintaining growth in their artistic endeavors through the following areas:

- **Hiring of Staff:** Grants have allowed organizations to hire local artists and staff, providing financial stability and reducing the burden on founders to manage everything alone. This has included the development of part-time positions for musicians, graphic designers, and event staff.
- **Artistic Production and Showcase:** Funding has allowed organizations to produce new works, host events, and showcase local talent, including traditional performances and art installations.
- **Sustainability and Growth:** Financial support has helped organizations establish a foundation for ongoing activities, allowing them to transition from relying on personal funds to creating sustainable business models. This includes hosting recurring events and maintaining staff, although often, this comes with the challenge and fear of losing funding, and no longer being able to support growth and maintain staff over time.
- **Professional Development:** Funding has provided opportunities for artists to develop professionally, gain experience, and build confidence in their craft. This is especially important for entry-level artists who might not otherwise have the chance to perform.
- **Resilience During Challenges:** Cultural funding has been vital in helping organizations survive tough periods, such as closures due to the pandemic, and has enabled them to plan for future recovery and community re-engagement. On a personal level, individual artists were able to stay afloat during these challenging times due to the funds received.



Lived-Experience Data from Focus Group Participants

"Having the money to pay people for their time, for their art, and for their creativity just feels really good because it builds that sense of community, too. Like, they do belong. We do belong here, and we're able to take up space here and get paid and be acknowledged and, you know, I think. Yeah, the money and the access."

- Nonprofit or Community Organization Staff



"So it allowed me to keep my car. [...] That was a big thing, right? If you don't have transportation, it's really hard to go drive to [events].. And I was able to direct funds to sustaining my business. [...] I was able to allocate what little other funds I did have to keeping my advertising and marketing. And so that was super helpful. It also allowed me to keep my artists on staff. I employ about six to ten artists. I was able to keep four of my main artists, and I do employ a very diverse team, so it did really impact a lot of people. Being able for me to write off payroll did allow me to continue hosting my charity event."

- Visual Artist or Creative Professional



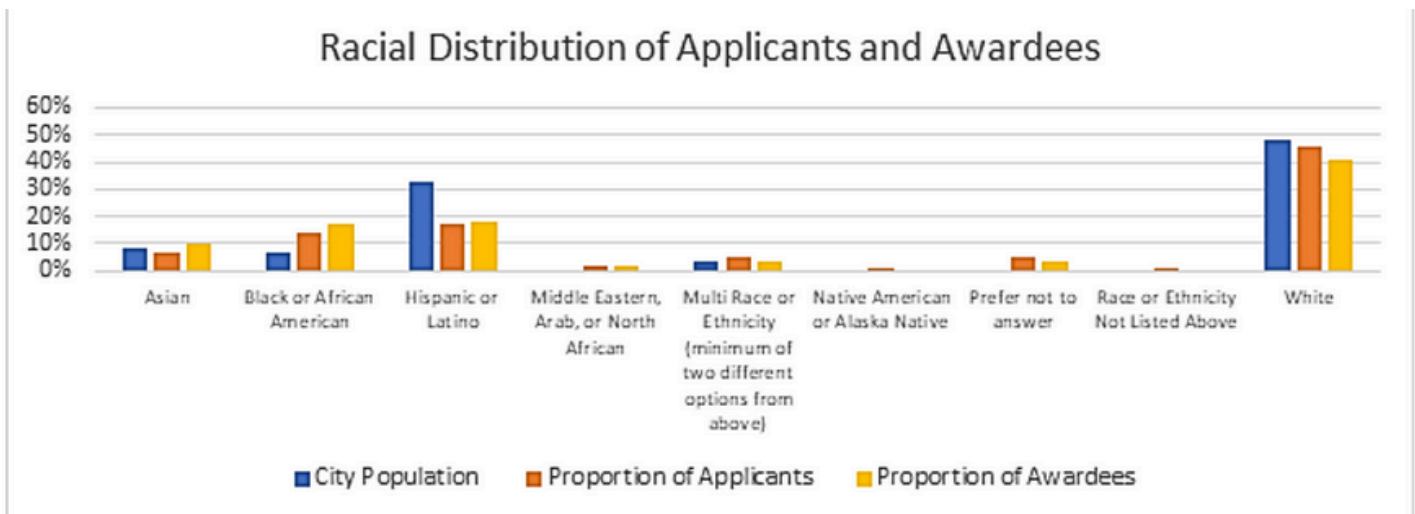
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS

Elevate Program Findings

Racial Demographics

- **Asian Applicants:** Despite representing 8% of the city population, Asians make up 7% of applicants, which is lower. However, their acceptance rate is notably high at 63%, higher than their proportional representation. Awardees proportion is 10%.
- **Black or African American Applicants:** Black or African American individuals constitute 7% of the city's population, yet they account for 14% of applicants. Their acceptance rate is 51%, and they are awarded at a rate of 17%.
- **Hispanic or Latino Applicants:** With a significant 33% of the city population, Hispanic or Latino applicants are 17% of the applicant pool. Their acceptance rate is 43%, and they are awarded at a rate of 18%.
- **White Applicants:** Despite making up 48% of the city's population, they are overrepresented among applicants at 46%. Their acceptance rate is 37%, and they make up 41% of the awardees.

Figure 1: Asian and Black participants over represent their demographics in the city for 2023.



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Elevate Program Findings

Table 1: Racial Distribution of Applicants and Awardees.

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall ²			41%	
Asian	8%	7%	63%	10%
Black or African American	7%	14%	51%	17%
Hispanic or Latino	33%	17%	43%	18%
Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African	0%	2%	44%	2%
Multi Race or Ethnicity	3%	5%	28%	3%
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	1%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer	NA	5%	29%	3%
Race or Ethnicity Not Listed Above	NA	1%	17%	0%
White	48%	46%	37%	41%
(blank)	NA	3%	57%	4%

2 Numbers in red represent higher than overall average or proportional representation.

Gender Demographics

- **Female Applicants:** Females make up 48.7% of the city's population, slightly lower than their 52% representation among applicants. They have a higher acceptance rate of 53% and constitute the majority at 53% of the awardees.
- **Male Applicants:** Representing 51.3% of the city's population, males are underrepresented among applicants at 36%. Their acceptance rate is 30%, and they make up 30% of the awardees.
- **Non-Binary Applicants:** Non-Binary individuals have a representation of 6% among applicants, slightly above their proportion in the city. They have an acceptance rate of 10%.

Table 2: Gender Demographics

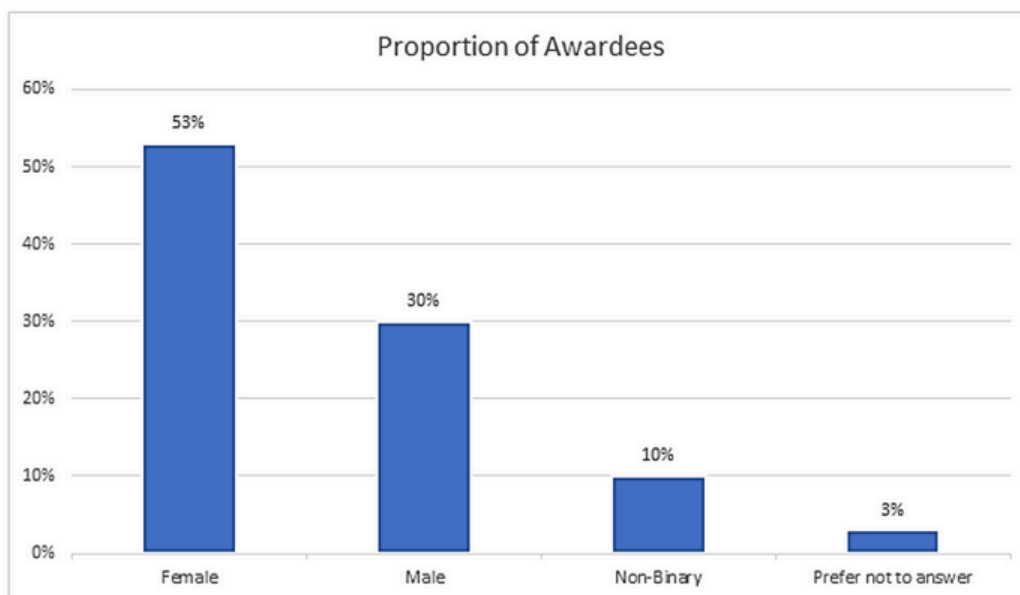
	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall ³			41%	
Female	48.7%	52%	41%	53%
Male	51.3%	36%	34%	30%
Non-Binary	NA	6%	63%	10%
Prefer not to answer	NA	2%	45%	3%

3 Numbers in red represent higher than overall average or proportional representation.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Elevate Program Findings

Figure 2: Female population is slightly over represented compared to City composition.



Age Representation

- **Young Adults (20-29):** This group represents 19% of the city's population and 7% of applicants, with a high acceptance rate of 58% and 10% being awarded.
- **Middle-Aged (30-49):** Individuals aged 30-39 and 40-49 represent 21% and 14% of the city population, respectively. They make up a significant portion of applicants at 29% and 26%, with acceptance rates of 41% and 39%. Both groups are overrepresented in awardees.
- **Older Adults (50+):** Individuals aged 50-59 and 60 or older make up 10% and around 15% of the city's population, respectively. They are underrepresented among applicants, with acceptance rates of 40% and 36%. Awardees are also slightly underrepresented in these age groups.

Note: Age representation data found here: <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US4805000-austin-tx/>

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Elevate Program Findings

Table 3: Age Representation

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall ⁵		41%		
18-19	~21%	0%	0%	0%
20-29	19%	7%	58%	10%
30-39	21%	29%	41%	29%
40-49	14%	26%	39%	24%
50-59	10%	17%	40%	17%
60 or older	~15%	15%	36%	13%
Prefer not to answer		2%	40%	2%

5 Numbers in red represent higher than overall average or proportional representation.

LGBTQIA Representation

- LGBTQIA Applicants: Those identifying as LGBTQIA make up 27% of applicants, with a higher acceptance rate of 52%. They are awarded at a rate of 34%.
- Non-LGBTQIA Applicants: Representing 57% of applicants, non-LGBTQIA individuals have a lower acceptance rate of 37% and make up 52% of the awardees.

Table 3: LGBTQIA Representation

	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall	41%		
No	57%	37%	52%
Prefer not to answer	11%	29%	8%
Yes	27%	52%	34%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Elevate Program Findings

Additional Observations

- There were 489 applications and 201 were “Awarded” or within “Execution” giving the application an overall success rate of 41%.
- Technical Assistance Providers had a strong correlation with acceptance. There were 27 Technical assistance providers listed. The Long Center was the most prolific assistance provider. Of the 241 applicants that listed them as a resource, 201 were Awarded or within Execution, meaning the center had an overall success rate of 83%. None of the other providers had a single awardee, giving them a success rate of 0%.

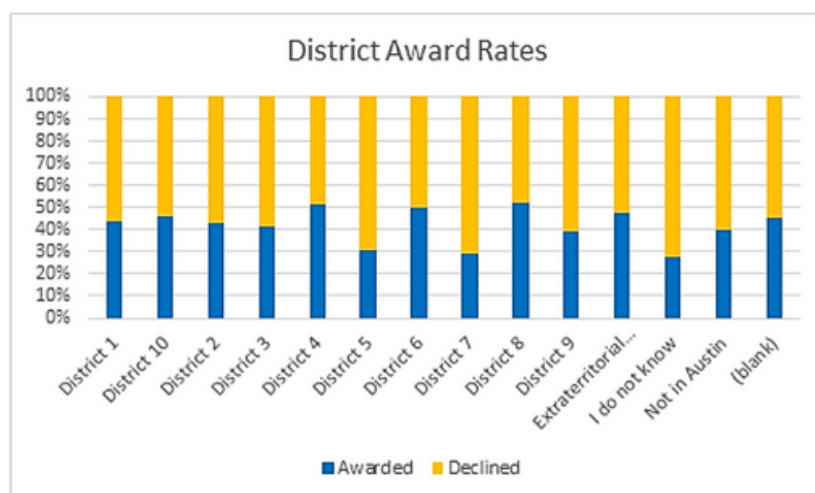
Table 5: Ownership Composition of Awardees

Organization Composition	Proportion of Applicants	Award Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program		41%	
Equally led by Genders	9%	48%*	10%
Majority Female or Non-Binary	53%	46%*	59%
Majority Male or Prefer not to answer	32%	36%	28%
N/A or Blank	7%	16%	3%

City Council District Breakdown

- The average acceptance rate by Council District was 41%.
- District 4 applicants had an acceptance rate of 51% and District 7 had the lowest identified district acceptance rate at 29%.
- People who identified as “I don’t know” had an acceptance rate of 28%.

Figure 3. District Award Rates



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Heritage Preservation Grant Program Findings

Racial Demographics

- The applicant pool is quite small, so the 2 Hispanic applicants' denial created a 0% representation amongst awardees. White candidates made up a considerable amount of the applicant pool (43%) with people who left this question blank comprising nearly 20% of applicants.
- Intentional recruitment of candidates of color will be critical in ensuring their representation in the awardees.

Table 6: Racial Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program			81%	
Asian	8%	10%	100%	12%
Black or African American	7%	10%	100%	12%
Hispanic or Latino	33%	10%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer	NA	10%	100%	12%
White	48%	43%	78%	41%

Due to small population size, "Blank" answers were a considerable amount of awardees with 24%.

Gender Demographics

- Female applicants are slightly disproportionately represented and yet fall below city-wide proportions in terms of awardees.
- A considerable number of candidates selected "Prefer not to answer" which has had an effect on the ability to glean insights into participants.

Table 7: Gender Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program			81%	
Female	48.7%	52%	73%	47%
Male	51.3%	24%	80%	24%
Prefer not to answer	NA	5%	100%	6%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Heritage Preservation Grant Program Findings

Age Representation

- Probably due to the nature of the program, participants are considerably older than the city median age of 33. However younger applicants are disproportionately under-represented in terms of Awardees.

Table 8: Age Representation

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
18-19	~21%	0%	0%	0%
20-29	19%	0%	0%	0%
30-39	21%	14%	0%	0%
40-49	14%	33%	100%	41%
50-59	10%	24%	100%	29%
60 or older	~15%	0%	0%	0%
Prefer not to answer		5%	100%	6%

Gender Demographics

- Female applicants are slightly disproportionately represented and yet fall below city-wide proportions in terms of awardees.
- A considerable number of candidates selected “Prefer not to answer” which has had an effect on the ability to glean insights into participants.

Table 9: LGBTQIA Representation

	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall		81%	
No	48%	90%	53%
Prefer not to answer	14%	100%	18%
Yes	14%	0%	0%

Similar to the gender question, the amount of “Prefer not to answer” greatly affects the ability to contextualize the results.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Heritage Preservation Grant Program Findings

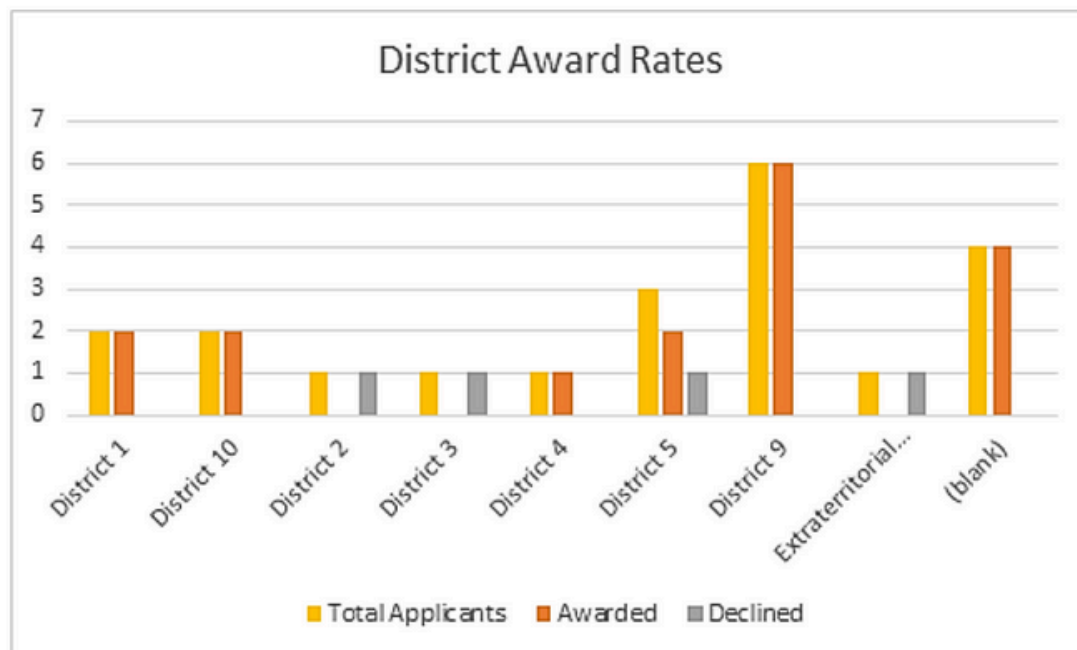
Table 10: Organizational Ownership

Organization Composition	Proportion of Applicants	Award Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Equally led by Genders	14%	100%	18%
Majority Female or Non-Binary	43%	89%	47%
Majority Male or Prefer not to answer	33%	86%	35%
N/A or Blank	10%	0%	0%

City Council Breakdown

- Districts 2 and 3 have a 0% award rate.

Figure 4: City Council Breakdown



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Live Music Fund Event Program Findings

Racial Demographics

- White applicants have a proportionate representation in the city population, application pool, acceptance, and award rates.
- Hispanics/Latinos have a higher representation in acceptance rates compared to their proportion in the city population.
- Black/African American applicants have a higher representation in applications and awards but a lower acceptance rate compared to their city population proportion.
- Asians have a lower representation in applications and awards but a higher acceptance rate compared to their city population proportion.
- Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African applicants have a notably higher acceptance rate compared to their low application numbers.
- Multi-Race applicants have slightly lower representation in applications and awards compared to their city population proportion.
- Native American/Alaska Native applicants have a higher acceptance rate compared to their application numbers.
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander applicants have a proportionate representation in acceptance rates but a lower application and award rate.

Table 11: Racial Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program			53%	
Asian	8%	3.6%	52%	3.5%
Black or African American	7%	17.7%	47%	15.5%
Hispanic or Latino	33%	18.8%	62%	21.7%
Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African	0%	1.2%	88%	1.9%
Multi Race or Ethnicity (minimum of two different options from above)	3%	6.0%	46%	5.2%
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	1.0%	86%	1.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	NA	0.3%	50%	0.3%
Prefer not to answer	NA	8.0%	44%	6.5%
Race or Ethnicity Not Listed Above	NA	1.0%	57%	1.1%
White	48%	42.3%	54%	42.7%
(blank)	NA	0.1%	0%	0.0%

Note: Numbers in red represent higher than proportional representation.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Live Music Fund Event Program Findings

Gender Demographics

- Males are overrepresented in applications and awards but have a proportionate acceptance rate.
- Females have a proportionate representation in the city population, application pool, acceptance, and award rates.
- Non-binary applicants have a slightly higher acceptance rate than their application numbers.

Table 12: Gender Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall			53%	
Female	48.7%	28%	54%	28%
Male	51.3%	63%	53%	63%
Non-Binary	NA	6%	53%	5%
Prefer not to answer	NA	3%	54%	4%

Age Representation

- The age group 20-29 has the highest representation in applications and awards.
- Applicants aged 30-39 also have a notable representation in applications and awards.
- Those aged 18-19 have a very low representation in applications and no acceptance or awards in this dataset.
- The 60 or older group has the lowest representation across all categories.

Table 13: Age Representation

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall			53%	
18-19	~21%	0%	0%	0%
20-29	19%	22%	60%	24%
30-39	21%	37%	51%	36%
40-49	14%	24%	53%	24%
50-59	10%	11%	59%	13%
60 or older	~15%	5%	41%	4%
Prefer not to answer		0%	0%	0%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Live Music Fund Event Program Findings

LGBTQIA Representation

- Those who identify as LGBTQIA have a higher acceptance rate compared to non-LGBTQIA individuals.
- LGBTQIA individuals have a proportionate representation in applications and awards compared to the overall dataset.

Table 14: LGBTQIA Representation

	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall		53%	
No	63%	51%	61%
Prefer not to answer	13%	52%	13%
Yes	23%	61%	26%

Table 15: Organizational Ownership

Organization Composition	Proportion of Applicants	Award Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program	53%		
Equally led by Genders	2%	53%	2%
Majority Female or Non-Binary	9%	49%	8%
Majority Male or Prefer not to answer	14%	49%	13%
N/A or Blank	75%	55%*	77%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Nexus Program Findings

Racial Demographics

- Asian Applicants: Have a significantly higher acceptance rate (33.3%) compared to their proportion in the city population (8%). Yet, their proportion among awardees (13.2%) is lower than their application rate.
- Black or African American: Represent 7% of the city's population. Despite a higher application rate (20.8%), their acceptance rate is 14.8%. However, they have a higher proportion among awardees (17.0%) compared to their application rate.
- Hispanic or Latino: Make up a substantial 33% of the city population yet their application rate (17.1%) is lower than their city representation. Their proportion among awardees (26.4%) are both closer to their city population proportion.
- White: Represent 48% of the city's population and their acceptance rate (8.7%) is notably lower than their city representation. Similarly, their proportion among awardees (15.1%) is lower than their application rate.
- Multi Race or Ethnicity: Represent 3% of the city's population and show a relatively high acceptance rate (35.3%) compared to their proportion in the city. Their representation among awardees (11.3%) is notably higher than their city proportion.

Table 16: Racial Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program			18.1%	
Asian	8%	7.2%	33.3%	13.2%
Black or African American	7%	20.8%	14.8%	17.0%
Hispanic or Latino	33%	17.1%	28.0%	26.4%
Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African	0%	2.7%	12.5%	1.9%
Multi Race or Ethnicity (minimum of two different options from above)	3%	5.8%	35.3%	11.3%
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	1.4%	25.0%	1.9%
Race or Ethnicity Not Listed Above	NA	7.2%	23.8%	9.4%
Prefer not to answer	NA	2.7%	25.0%	3.8%
White	48%	31.4%	8.7%	15.1%
(blank)	NA	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Numbers in red represent higher than proportional representation. "Race or Ethnicity not listed above" has been excluded due to lack of data.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Nexus Program Findings

Gender Demographics

- Female: Comprise nearly half (48.7%) of the applicant pool and represent the majority (60%) of awardees.
- Male: Slightly over half (51.3%) of the applicant pool and have a lower acceptance rate (36%) compared to females, they comprise 26% of awardees.

Table 17: Gender Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall			18%	
Female	48.7%	48%		60%
Male	51.3%	36%		26%
Non-Binary	NA	9%		8%
Prefer not to answer	NA	3%		6%

Table 18: Age Representation

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall			18%	
18-19	~21%	0%	0%	0%
20-29	19%	14%	21%	21%
30-39	21%	38%	21%	21%
40-49	14%	22%	18%	18%
50-59	10%	12%	14%	14%
60 or older	~15%	8%	17%	17%
Prefer not to answer		1%	0%	0%

Table 19: LGBTQIA Representation

	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall		18%	
No	51%	18%	49%
Prefer not to answer	12%	17%	11%
Yes	33%	21%	38%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Nexus Program Findings

Table 20: Organizational Ownership

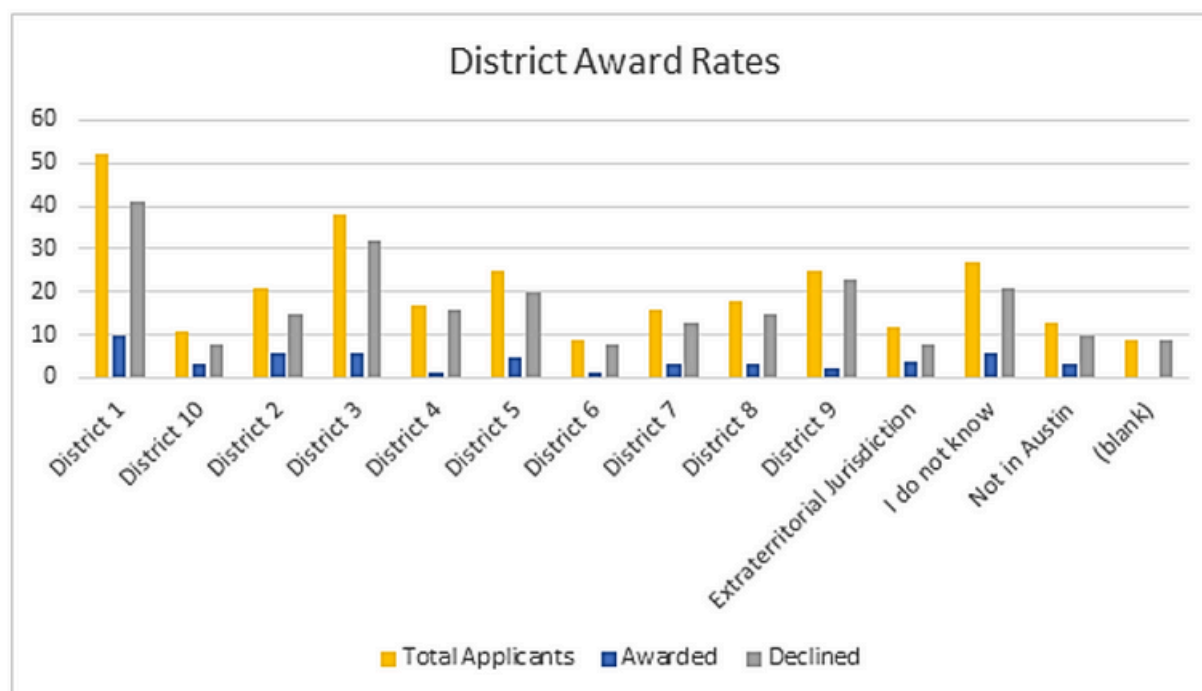
Organization Composition	Proportion of Applicants	Award Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program		18%	
Equally led by Genders	5%	13%	4%
Majority Female or Non-Binary	52%	20%*	58%
Majority Male or Prefer not to answer	30%	11%	19%
N/A or Blank	13%	27%*	19%

*Denotes an above average award rate.

City Council District Breakdown

- While District 1 had the most applicants and awardees, “Extraterritorial Jurisdictions” had the highest acceptance rate at 33%. District 4 had the lowest award rate of only 4%, considerably below the overall 18% acceptance rate for the program.

Figure 5: City Council Breakdown



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Thrive Program Findings

Racial Demographics

- Asian Applicants make up 8% of the city population, yet they represent 41.2% of the applicants for the program. However, their acceptance rate is 10.8%, and they comprise 20.0% of the awardees.
- Black or African American Applicants represent 7% of the city population and 64.7% of program applicants. They have an acceptance rate of 10.8% and make up 31.4% of the awardees.
- Hispanic or Latino Applicants are 33% of the city population, with 44.0% applying to the program. They have a 15.9% acceptance rate and make up 31.4% of the awardees.
- White Applicants are the largest racial group in the city at 48% of the population, but only 6.5% of them apply to the program. However, they have a higher acceptance rate of 49.0% and represent 14.3% of the awardees.
- Native American or Alaska Native Applicants have a smaller representation in the city (0%) and program applications (0%). However, their acceptance rate is notably high at 100%, with 2.9% of them becoming awardees.
- Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African Applicants have a 0% representation in the city population and program applicants. Yet, they have a 1.3% acceptance rate.

Table 21: Racial Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall Program			22.3%	
Asian	8%	41.2%	10.8%	20.0%
Black or African American	7%	64.7%	10.8%	31.4%
Hispanic or Latino	33%	44.0%	15.9%	31.4%
Middle Eastern, Arab, or North African	0%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%
Multi Race or Ethnicity (minimum of two different options from above)	3%	0.0%	2.5%	0.0%
Native American or Alaska Native	0%	100.0%	0.6%	2.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	NA	41.2%	10.8%	20.0%
Prefer not to answer	NA	0.0%	3.8%	0.0%
White	48%	6.5%	49.0%	14.3%
(blank)	NA	0.0%	5.1%	0.0%

Note: Numbers in red represent higher than proportional representation. "Race or Ethnicity not listed above" has been excluded due to lack of data.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Thrive Program Findings

Gender Demographics

- Female Applicants are slightly overrepresented among program applicants compared to the city population (48.7% vs. 22.3%). They have a higher acceptance rate at 56% and represent 63% of the awardees.
- Male Applicants are slightly underrepresented among program applicants compared to the city population (51.3% vs. 22.3%). They have a lower acceptance rate at 31% and represent 29% of the awardees.
- Non-Binary Applicants make up 5% of the program applicants with a 38% acceptance rate, representing 9% of the awardees.

Table 22: Gender Demographics

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall		22.3%		
Female	48.7%	56%	25%	63%
Male	51.3%	31%	20%	29%
Non-Binary	NA	5%	38%	9%
Prefer not to answer	NA	3%	0%	0%

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Thrive Program Findings

Age Representation

- The 18-19 age group in the city population is ~21%, but they do not have any applicants in the program, leading to no representation in awardees.
- The 20-29 age group represents 19% of the city population and 6% of the applicants. They have a 20% acceptance rate and represent 6% of the awardees.
- The 50-59 age group has a higher acceptance rate of 33%, despite representing 10% of the city population and 26% of the applicants. They make up 36% of the awardees.

Table 23: Age Representation

	City Population	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall			22.3%	
18-19	~21%	0%	0%	0%
20-29	19%	6%	20%	6%
30-39	21%	18%	25%	19%
40-49	14%	20%	16%	14%
50-59	10%	26%	33%	36%
60 or older	~15%	23%	22%	22%
Prefer not to answer		2%	33%	3%

Table 24: LGBTQIA Representation

	Proportion of Applicants	Acceptance Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Overall		22.3%	
No	62%	21%	56%
Prefer not to answer	7%	36%*	11%
Yes	24%	32%*	33%

*Denotes an above average award rate.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS FINDINGS CONT.

Thrive Program Findings

Table 25: Organizational Ownership

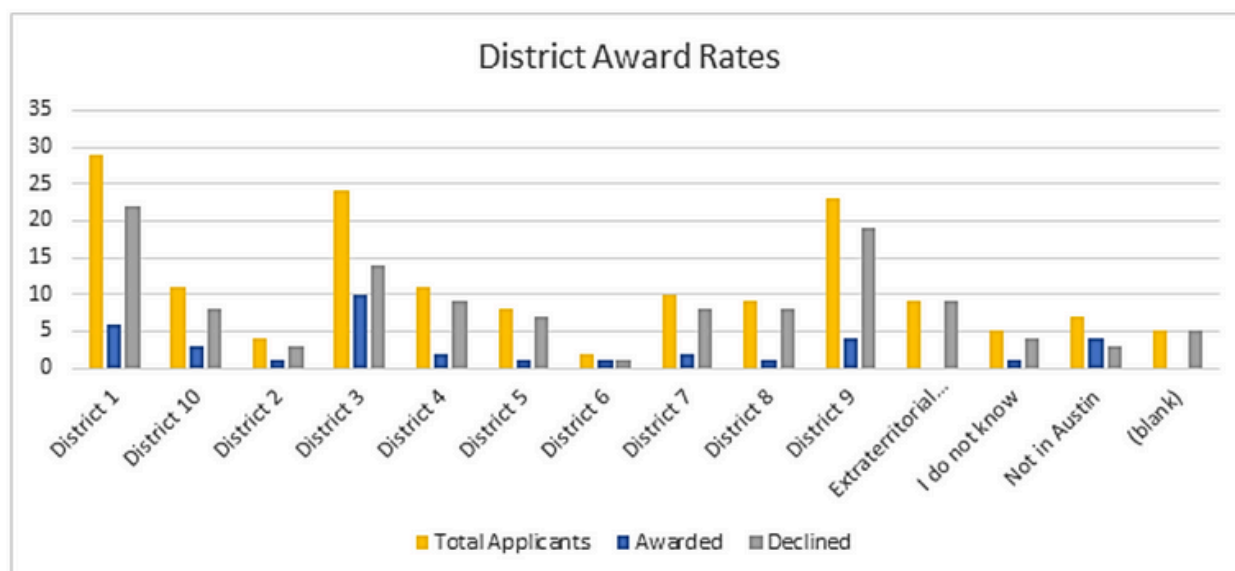
Organization Composition	Proportion of Applicants	Award Rate	Proportion of Awardees
Equally led by Genders	8%	42%*	14%
Majority Female or Non-Binary	61%	21%	57%
Majority Male or Prefer not to answer	30%	19%	26%
N/A or Blank	1%	50%*	3%

*Denotes an above average award rate.

City Council District Breakdown

- District 6 had the highest acceptance rate of 50% and District 8 had the lowest with 11%.
- District 1 was the most active; capturing 18% of the applicant pool and 21% of awardees.

Figure 6: City Council District Breakdown



MULTI YEAR ANALYSIS

The duration of this project overlapped with multiple reporting years for programs. Additional analysis was recommended for greater insights into programmatic effectiveness but was unable to be conducted in the duration of this engagement. Below are overviews of the changes between for programs between 2023 and 2024.

	Year	Applied	Awarded	Acceptance Rate
Elevate/Thrive*	2023	646	237	37%
	2024	644	302	47%
Heritage Preservation Grant	2023	21	17	81%
	2024	Data Not Available	Data Not Available	---
Live Music Fund	2023	688	368	53%
	2024	1013	137	14%
Nexus	2023 Fall	293	53	18%
	2024 Summer	241	51	21%
	2024 Winter	290	51	18%

*Elevate and Thrive data were combined for the purposes of this analysis.

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW CAN WE BETTER SUPPORT AUSTIN CREATIVES?

Feedback from the focus groups identified several strategies and opportunities for the City of Austin to improve HOT programs to ensure they are more accessible and equitable.

- **Simplification of the Application Processes:** Streamlining the application process by providing clearer guidelines, and offering template-based applications could reduce the burden on applicants and promote inclusion.
- **Capacity Building Workshops and Resource Allocation:** Offer workshops or training sessions on grant writing and management that could help potential applicants better understand the process and increase their chances of success. Providing access to resources like grant writing assistance, legal advice, or financial planning as part of the grant program could level the playing field for smaller organizations and individuals; peer support.
- **Promote Community Building:** Participants believed that the City's role is seen not just as a funder, but as a facilitator of connections and collaborations among various community organizations, leveraging their collective knowledge and experience for greater impact.
- **"Genuine" Outreach and Communication:** Expanding city outreach efforts to ensure that information about available grants reaches a broader audience is essential. This could include multilingual communications and targeted outreach campaigns; wider distribution channels, such as social media, local venues, colleges, and community centers.
- **Track Progress and Long-term Impact in Creative Ways:** Participants call for the need for long-term evaluation and better methods to measure sustained impact of HOT funded programs over time; long-term evaluation methods that go beyond immediate, quantifiable results to consider the deeper, more sustained impact of these programs on communities; The idea of delegating City representatives to observe and document the impact of grant-funded projects in real-time was suggested as a way to ensure accountability and measure long-term success.

RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW CAN WE BETTER SUPPORT AUSTIN CREATIVES? CONT.

- Address the legacy of inequitable cultural funding by promoting cultural awareness and inclusion: Austin must take a proactive and multifaceted approach to effectively promote cultural awareness and inclusion while also addressing and atoning for historical inequities. This involves recognizing past injustices, fostering inclusivity in present-day practices, and ensuring that all communities, especially those historically marginalized, have equitable access to opportunities and resources funded by the HOT. Multi-year financial support and resources were deemed essential for the long-term success of both individual artists and organizations. Participants suggested that funding models include a staggered approach that decreases over time but is supplemented by increased access to resources and networking opportunities. There was a strong emphasis on the need for equitable compensation for artists and workers involved in creative projects. Participants expressed the importance of providing financial support that reflects the true value of creative labor.
- Equitable Distribution of Funds: Ensure that the distribution of HOT funds prioritizes projects from historically marginalized communities. This could involve setting aside a percentage of funds specifically for initiatives led by or serving underrepresented groups, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
- Community Advisory Panels: Establish community advisory panels composed of representatives from diverse backgrounds to guide the allocation of grants. These panels would help ensure that funding decisions reflect the needs and aspirations of all Austin communities, particularly those who have been historically excluded from such opportunities.
- Restorative Justice Initiatives: Fund projects specifically designed to address and repair the damage done by historical injustices. This could include grants for initiatives that restore cultural landmarks, revitalize neighborhoods that have suffered from disinvestment, or support cultural practices that were suppressed or marginalized.
- Reparative Investments: Consider reparative investments in communities that have been disproportionately impacted by historical inequities. These investments could take the form of grants for economic development, real estate, educational programs, or cultural initiatives that empower these communities and promote long-term sustainability.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ATXN

BLACK ARTISTS MATTER

CONCLUSION

The Hotel Occupancy Tax-funded programs aim to preserve Austin's unique culture by supporting arts organizations in the city. While the funding provided through these programs is impactful, there are still significant challenges faced by artists and organizations in navigating grant processes. Complex application procedures, lack of resources, and historical inequities are preventing marginalized communities from fully benefiting from available funds. While grants have supported growth and resilience, there is a pressing need for more sustainable, equitable funding practices that ensure ongoing support. Additionally, the call for innovative impact metrics and more of a presence within the communities the City is attempting to serve suggests that traditional measures of success may fail to capture the true value of cultural initiatives, necessitating a more comprehensive approach that recognizes both quantitative and qualitative outcomes. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a vibrant, inclusive cultural landscape in Austin.

REFERENCES

1. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts. (n.d.). Hotel occupancy tax.
<https://comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/hotel/>
2. Chun, H. (2024, October). A Timeline of The Historical Context of Arts Funding Inequities in Austin [Infographic]. Measure. https://www.canva.com/design/DAF-q1BscRw/nndu-Ly4LH_lqyZgXJvtzg/view?utm_content=DAF-q1BscRw&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=editor
3. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
4. Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2015). *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.



ABOUT OUR MEASURE EVALUATORS

LACOLE FOOTS



LaCole is a storyteller- valuing both the rigor of quantitative analysis and the importance of lived experiences. Herself a nationally ranked slam poet, and she is the President of the newly established strategy and data analytics firm, Jodon Maclem. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, former Big 4 senior consultant, and Harvard Strategic Data fellow, LaCole brings her head and her heart into all that she does including rigorous analysis.

TIFFANY N. RICKS, PHD



Tiffany is the Associate Dean of Nursing at Austin Community College and the Founder of Health R.E.P., LLC. She earned her Ph.D. in Nursing from the University of Texas at Austin in 2013 and is deeply committed to eliminating health disparities, promoting wellness in marginalized communities, and advancing equitable healthcare practices. Outside of her professional roles, Tiffany cherishes time with her family, finds inspiration in her faith, and delights in exploring good food.



ABOUT OUR MEASURE EVALUATORS

HANNA CHUN



Hanna Chun is a Data Architect and Technology Manager with 8 years of consulting experience across various industries. Her background in software engineering and technical project management brings an analytical yet People First approach to research. She has been a Certified Measure Educator for over 3 years, and has conducted research leveraging Measure's Survey Design tool and Equity Focus Group tool in the Austin music community, affordable housing space, and for equitable healthcare providers. Hanna holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration in Management Information Systems from the University of Texas at Austin.

