



**Economic  
Development**  
CITY OF AUSTIN

REVISION DATE: May 2, 2024

# Elevate Grant Guidelines

Elevate: Funding for Cultural Productions

- Elevate for 501(c) Arts Organizations:
  - Grants funded between \$40,000 and \$80,000
  - Estimated 125 grants awarded. This is not a limit.
- Elevate for Individual Artists and Creative Businesses:
  - Grants funded between \$15,000 and \$30,000
  - Estimated 100 grants. This is not a limit.
- For activities occurring October 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025
- Annual Term
- Funds may be used for expenses related to proposed activities
- All awards are dependent on Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) funding.

## Grant Webpage

[www.austintexas.gov/elevate](http://www.austintexas.gov/elevate)

## Additional Program Details

[https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/EDD/CulturalArts/Nexus\\_HOT/Nexus%202024/UpdatedProgramDetail\\_Appendix.pdf](https://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/EDD/CulturalArts/Nexus_HOT/Nexus%202024/UpdatedProgramDetail_Appendix.pdf)

## Program Overview

### Annual Term

Grants funded between \$15,000 and \$80,000

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

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

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

### Key Elements

- Minimum of one-year history of producing arts and culture activities in the Austin metro area
- Must produce over 50% of public arts/culture activities within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction ([ETJ](#))
- Applicants who prefer to work with a Fiscal Sponsor may do so. Fiscal Sponsorship is not required.
- Awards will be based on alignment with Elevate’s funding priorities.
- Annual operating budget is not a factor in determining award amounts.
- Applications will be reviewed and scored by trained outside review panelists.

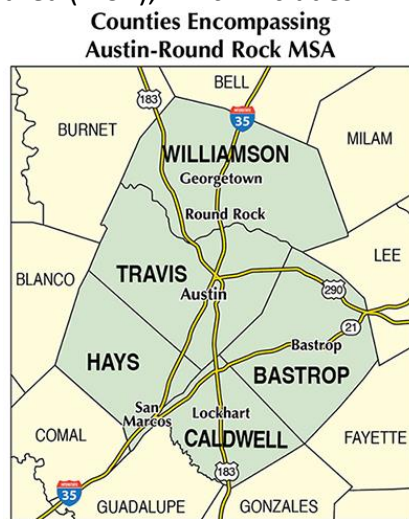
### Who can apply

Funding is not guaranteed if you meet all the minimum requirements. Funding will be awarded to the applicants with the highest scores.

### Eligible applicants:

Applicant Type	Maximum Annual Expenses	Maximum Request Amount
501(c) nonprofit arts organization	none	\$80,000
An individual aged 18 or older*	\$500,000	\$30,000
Creative Business*	\$500,000	\$30,000

- Your artistic goals or creative mission is the production of arts and culture activities. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
  - Minimum of one year of operating history in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which includes:



Source: Texas Real Estate Research Center at Texas A&M University

- Travis
  - Bastrop,
  - Caldwell,
  - Hays,
  - and Williamson Counties.
- Over 50% of your creative production is within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or [extraterritorial jurisdiction \(ETJ\)](#).
  - Proposed activity meets all program requirements as outlined by the Hotel Occupancy Tax.
    - All events are open to the public
    - Occur within Austin or the Austin ETJ
    - Marketed to tourists
    - Or applicant is an arts service organization
  - Applicants cannot accept more than one Cultural Arts Fund Grant (Thrive, Elevate, Nexus, or Austin Live Music Fund) per City of Austin Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30 annually). Sponsored Projects do not count towards this limit.

- City of Austin employees are not eligible to apply for funding

Detailed eligibility criteria is provided in the Scoring Rubric below.

\*May apply directly or with a Fiscal Sponsor

### Priority will be given to:

- Activities that pay local artists and artistic administrators
- Activities that engage in community-based partnerships
- Applicants and activities with a commitment to equity
- Equity is represented in leadership
- Applicants who represent the diverse cultures of Austin, particularly those who are from backgrounds that have been historically under-represented in Austin's Cultural Funding programs
- Applicants that are representative of, serve, and are accountable to communities that are at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin and/or have been institutionally marginalized and under-funded by the City of Austin Cultural Arts Division. This may include applicants that directly serve Black/African American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander communities or LGBTQIA+ and/or disability communities.

### What Elevate Funds

All grants funded by Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue are required to:

- Produce activities that are open and advertised to Austin residents and tourists
- Promote and enhance Austin as a cultural destination
- Occur in Austin or its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) - Events occurring outside of this area are not eligible

## Eligible Activities\*

- Operating expenses
- Exhibitions
- Performances
- Workshops, classes, and camps that include a performance or exhibition
- Public art projects that are installed on public or private property and accessible to the public
- **ALL ACTIVITIES MUST OCCUR IN AUSTIN or its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)**

## Eligible Expenses\*

- Payments to administrators and artists
- Space rentals
- Equipment rentals (not purchases)
- Travel (not hotel stays or gasoline purchases)
- Supplies and materials
- Marketing and promotion expenses
- Insurance costs
- Costs related to cultural event production
- Subscription costs or license fees for software needed to complete contracted activities
- Fiscal Sponsor fee, if applicable

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

## Award Amounts

Elevate for Non-Profits \$40,000-\$80,000

Elevate for individuals and creative businesses \$15,000-\$30,000

- You will submit a budget as part of your application demonstrating how you will use the funds.
- If awarded, you may choose to decline any portion of the funds that are not needed.
- You are not required to find matching funds, although it is encouraged.
- We encourage grantees to pay all who work on the activity an equitable wage.
- Any unused funds will have to be returned with the final report.

## Funding Availability

- The Elevate program and the total award amount is subject to the availability of funding from Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue.

- Participation in this program is not guaranteed.
- Applicants can not accept more than one Economic Development Department Grant (Thrive, Elevate, Nexus, or Austin Live Music Fund) per City of Austin Fiscal Year (October 1 – September 30 annually). Sponsored Projects do not count towards this limit.

## Funding Timeline

- The program application opens to the public in Spring 2024.
- Applicant eligibility is reviewed by staff.
- Eligible and complete applications are scored during a panel review process.
- Award amounts are based on the total available funds and applicant scores.

Elevate Program Timeline	
Spring	Application opens
Summer	Application deadline
Summer	Panel reviews
September	Notification of award decision

## How to Apply

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

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

## Application Materials

You will need to upload the following required documents to the Elevate application. Document templates will be available online at [www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate](http://www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate).

### Eligible Applicant Types

All Applicants

### Required Application Uploads

3 Work Samples  
2 Letters of Support

501(c) nonprofit arts organization

IRS Determination Letter

Most recently completed 990. If you are a new 501c and do not have a 990 or 990 EZ, you can submit your most recent financial statement

An individual aged 18 or older applying with a Fiscal Sponsor

Signed Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

Creative Business applying with a Fiscal Sponsor

Signed Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

## Application Assistance

### Workshops and Videos

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

### Cultural Arts Division Virtual Open Office Hours

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month

Every Tuesday while the grant applications are open

No appointment necessary

[Request Virtual Open Office Hours Zoom link](#)

10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

### City Staff Contacts for Elevate

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Cultural Funding Supervisor

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512-974-7854

For language access support contact Carlos Soto at (512) 974-9313 or by email at

[carlos.soto@austintexas.gov](mailto:carlos.soto@austintexas.gov)



## Community Navigators

Austin Revitalization Authority - Email Brandy Davidson at [bdavidson@austinrev.org](mailto:bdavidson@austinrev.org) or call (512) 469-1705.

On the Money Finance – Email Catalina Landon at [catalina@onthemoneyfinance.com](mailto:catalina@onthemoneyfinance.com) or call (512) 839-8462 for Spanish-speaking assistance.

## How Applications Are Reviewed

- Applications will be reviewed and scored by trained outside review panelists.
- Applications that meet the requirements outlined in these guidelines and receive the highest scores will receive an award.
- The number of awards that are approved is subject to the availability of funds.
- We anticipate that most applications will not receive the maximum number of points available.

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

# ELEVATE SCORING

ELIGIBILITY – reviewed by program staff

<p><b>Creative Mission or Primary Body of Work</b></p>	<p><b>501(c) applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant’s primary <b>artistic goals and creative mission</b> is the production of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Creative Business and Individual Applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Over 50% of their body of work is the production of arts and culture activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Applicant type</b></p>	<p>Applicants must meet the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not a City of Austin employee; and is:</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> An Incorporated, tax exempt, 501(c) arts organization; or</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A creative business or individual artist with annual expenses of \$500,000 or less. These groups may choose to apply with a Fiscal Sponsor, but it is NOT required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Geographic Eligibility</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The business address is in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA). This may be your personal residence <i>Address is verified as in the MSA using this link: <a href="https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/">https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/</a></i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Production History</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Minimum of one (1) year of creative production within Austin or the metropolitan statistical area.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 50% or more of your creative activities are within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)</li> </ul>
<p><b>HOT compliance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> All proposed activities are open to the public and marketed to tourists. <a href="#">View Hotel Occupancy Tax Statute</a></li> </ul>

<b>Existing City Support</b>	Applicant must meet all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not receiving Elevate fund in the same fiscal year as Thrive or Nexus funds</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not receiving a grant for the same proposed activity from another City of Austin department in the same fiscal year</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> If the applicant is receiving a grant from other Economic Development Department programs, it must be for other activities and expenses unique to that award</li> </ul>
<b>Activity Location</b>	<b>Where will your proposed activity occur?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant’s proposed activity must occur within the <a href="#">Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Project Date</b>	<b>When will your proposed activity occur?</b> Project dates fall within the upcoming grant term. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>October 1, 2024 – December 31, 2025</i></li> </ul>

## Elevate RUBRIC – 100 Possible Points

### Key Constituencies & Creative Mission *Up to 15 Points*

**Identify your key constituencies. How do you serve them through your artistic goals, creative mission, and experience producing public events?**

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

Key constituencies are not necessarily just your audience. It may also include others who are deeply impacted by your work, like participating artists, staff, creative advisors and/or community groups, etc.

Answer must include:

- Identify your key constituencies (see [Additional Program Details](#) for definition)
- Artistic goals and/or creative mission
- [Operationalized equity](#) work within your creative practice/organization

### History of Service *Up to 10 Points*

**How have you met the needs of your key constituencies?**

Your answer should include:

- Your specific history in service to key constituencies
- Your founding history and community service goals

- Description of how you have directly improved access to opportunities for your key constituencies
  - Examples of opportunity creation:
    - leadership roles
    - jobs
    - social services
    - career development
    - networking
    - education
    - mentoring or partnerships
    - providing free or low-cost spaces

**Cultural Leadership**  
*Up to 15 Points*

**Who holds decision-making power in your creative practice and how do they represent your key constituencies through their lived experience?**

Your answer could include:

- You, the individual artist applicant
- Executive and Creative Leadership
- Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board
- Creative Advisors

**Cultural Activities**  
*Up to 10 Points*

**What is your proposed public activity?**

Your answer must address:

- Description of proposed activities (who, what, when, where)
- Desired outcome or impact of your proposed activities, including how equity is centered.
- How key constituencies are involved in the development of the activities

**Intersectionality And Inclusion**  
*Up to 10 Points*

**Describe how intersectionality is incorporated into your activities?**

The City values intersectionality and inclusion.

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Intersectionality is where different parts of an individual's identity, like their race, class, and gender, can overlap and result in that person experiencing special challenges or discrimination that's unique to their lived experience.

Your answer should include:

- Identify the intersectional identities participating in your activities
- How those identities are included in the creation and presentation of your activities

## **Accessibility** *Up to 10 Points*

**Describe the specialized accommodations and/or programming for individuals with disabilities that you intend to provide at your proposed activities, if any.**

Your answer should address:

- Specific services or adaptations you will provide
- Name(s) of trained service provider and/or participation of a trained professional in administering services or adaptations

*Accessibility accommodations that are “upon-request only” are not considered to be specialized.*

*Hosting activities in an ADA accessible facility, by itself, is also not considered to be specialized.*

## **Language Accessibility** *Up to 10 Points*

**Describe the specialized language access accommodations or programming for non-English speaking communities that you intend to provide at your proposed activity, if any.**

Your answer should address:

- Specific services or adaptations you will provide (including the language(s) they will be provided in)
- Name(s) or service providers and/or participation of a trained professional in administering services or adaptations

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

## **Marketing** *Up to 10 Points*

**Describe how you will market your proposed activities.**

Your answer should include your **marketing platforms** (ex: social media, web, newsletter, print, radio/tv, etc.) and specialized marketing efforts to reach:

1. Audiences within **your** key constituencies

2. **New** audiences within the City of Austin’s Priority Key Constituencies
3. Audience members with disabilities and/or audience members whose primary language is not English
4. Tourists

*An applicant’s key constituencies are **NOT** required to align with the City’s priority key constituencies (as defined in the [Additional Program Details](#)) to receive points for Item 1. **HOWEVER**, Item 2 requires the applicant to reach **NEW** audiences within the City’s priority key constituencies that are **not reached through Item 1**.*

*Utilizing two or more forms of social media (ex: Facebook and Instagram) will only count as **ONE** marketing platform.*

**BUDGET**  
**(NOT A**  
**NARRATIVE -**  
**Just the budget**  
**table)**  
*Up to 10 Points*

[budget table]

**How will you use this grant to produce your proposed activities?**

Your answer should address **payment to artists and/or administrators** and:

1. Estimated expenses related to providing specialized accessibility and/or language access services
2. Estimated expenses related to marketing to current or new audiences
3. Explanation of expenses to produce your activities
4. Budget should be reflective of this application