



Nexus Guidelines

www.austintexas.gov/nexus

Nexus: nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community

Opens Tuesday, January 28 at 10 am

Deadline to apply Thursday, March 6 at 7 pm

Program Overview

The Nexus grant is designed to nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community. Funds support creative public activities for the city and its tourists.

- \$5,000 award amount
- Approximately 100 grants are awarded per year (This is not a limit)
One opportunity per fiscal year to apply
- Funds may be used for expenses related to proposed activities
- For activities occurring between May 1, 2025 and April 30, 2026

Nexus Funding Priorities:

- Nurtures new and emerging applicants in the creative community.
- Funds arts and culture activities of all kinds.
- Support economically disadvantaged applicants. This may include applicants that are economically disadvantaged because of their status as a veteran or applicants who have suffered the effects of discriminatory practices.
- Applicants who have never received City of Austin Cultural Funding awards in the last five years.

Eligible Applicants

Funding is not guaranteed if you meet all the minimum requirements. Funding will be awarded to the top scoring applicants

Applicant Type	Maximum Annual Expenses	Request Amount
501(c) nonprofit arts organization	\$150,000	\$5,000
An individual aged 18 or older*	\$150,000	\$5,000
Creative Business*	\$150,000	\$5,000

**May apply directly or with a Fiscal Sponsor*

- Arts Focused Business: The primary artistic goal or creative mission of the Creative Business, Individual Artist or Nonprofit organization must include the production of arts and culture activities. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives or arts service organizations.
- Headquarters Must be in Austin/Round Rock Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): Minimum of one year of operating history in the Austin/Round Rock MSA. The MSA includes:
 - Travis,
 - Bastrop,
 - Caldwell,
 - Hays,
 - and Williamson Counties.
- Production History Must be in Austin: Over 50% of your creative productions have occurred WITHIN the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or Austin's [extraterritorial jurisdiction \(ETJ\)](#)
- Fiscal Sponsorship is not a requirement for applicants. Applicants who prefer to work with a Fiscal Sponsor may do so. Learn more: Fiscal [Sponsorship](#) Guide

Applicants cannot

- Accept more than one grant award per City of Austin fiscal year from the Elevate, Thrive, Nexus, and Austin Live Music Fund cultural funding programs.)
- Be full-time City of Austin employees

Detailed eligibility criteria is provided at the end of the document.

What Nexus 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 \(ETJ\)](#)

Eligible Activities*

- Exhibitions
- Performances
- Workshops and classes (MUST include a public performance or exhibition)
- Public art projects that are installed on public or private property and accessible by the public (see Page 12 for more information on public art projects)

The purchase of equipment is **NOT** allowed with HOT Funds.

* See Page 9 for a more detailed list of eligible and ineligible activities and expenses.

Award Amounts

The Nexus award is \$5,000.

- If awarded, the applicant will submit a budget as part of their grant pre-contract materials to show how they will use the funds.
- If awarded, the applicant can choose to decline any portion of funds that are not needed.
- Applicants are not required to find matching funds, although it is encouraged.
- We encourage grantees to pay all who work on the project.
- Any unused funds must be returned with the final report.

Funding Availability

- Applicants may submit only one Nexus application per City of Austin fiscal year.
- Funding from this program cannot be used for activities already funded through other City of Austin departments, contracts, grants, or Cultural Funding programs during the same fiscal year.
- Program availability and the total funding amount depend on the availability of revenue from the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT).

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 grant applications.

Timeline

Proposed Activities must Occur:	May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026
Application Opens	January 28, 2025 at 10 AM Central Time
Application Workshops	January/February
Application Deadline	March 6, 2025 at 7 PM Central Time
Awards Announced	April
Grant Agreement Materials Due	April/May
Payment 1 of 2 - 90% of Award	Up to 4 weeks after entering into grant agreement
Final Report Due	May 31, 2026 – latest possible
Payment 2 of 2 (Final 10% of Award)	Upon approval of final report

Application Materials

You will need to upload the following required documents to the Nexus application. Document templates will be available online at www.AustinTexas.gov/Nexus.

Up to 4 Work Samples:

Required not scored, used to verify eligibility

1. At least one work sample must demonstrate the applicant has been doing work in Austin for at least a year prior to application deadline.
 - Work sample could include an artist CV, past flyer/social with dates that include year/venue, links to past events (including Facebook and Eventbrite event pages), program materials, etc.
 - Work sample must include the year and venue.

***Optional* not scored**

2. One work sample that demonstrates the applicant's past work.
 - Work sample could include images, links to audio/video files that are less than 5 minutes TOTAL, writing sample, etc.

***Optional* Up to 5 points**

3. One work sample that demonstrates the applicant has hosted events in an Austin [Qualified Census Tract](#) (see glossary) or applicant has received a quote or initiated a conversation to reserve a venue within a qualified census tract.
 - Work sample could include flyer with venue name, invoice from past event, or email with a venue, etc. For podcasts, you could provide an invoice for your current recording location.

***Optional* Up to 5 points**

4. One work sample that demonstrates the applicant has previously provided expanded ADA services and/or have previously provided accommodations for non-English speaking communities

- Work sample could include: A flyer/social media advertising services from a past event, an invoice from a service provider, or a letter from a community who has utilized services provided by grantee.

Additional Required Uploads for Non-profit Applicants

- IRS Determination Letter
- Most recent 990 if applicable. If you do not have a 990 or 990EZ, you can submit your most recent financial statement.

Application Assistance

Application assistance, workshops, and other grant information will be shared on our website.

Drop into Virtual Open Office Hours (see schedule below) or email City staff your questions at any time. Follow us on [social media](#) or [sign up for our newsletter](#) to stay in the loop about upcoming workshops.

General information

www.AustinTexas.gov/Nexus

Application Workshops

Visit the [Nexus Website](#) for information on application workshop opportunities.

Virtual Open Office Hours on Zoom

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month and every Tuesday when the grant is open
10 am –12 pm
No appointment necessary!
Get the link: <https://bit.ly/EDDopenoffice>

Staff Contact for Nexus

Anne-Marie McKaskle-Davis
Cultural Funding Specialist Senior
Annemarie.Mckaskle@AustinTexas.gov
512-974-7854

Maya Williams-Britton
Cultural Funding Specialist
Maya.Williams-Britton@AustinTexas.gov
512-974-7704

Additional EDD Staff

CulturalArts@AustinTexas.gov

For general and/or technical application assistance:

- Reach out to Create Austin's application assistance team at applicationhelp@thelongcenter.org or call 512-457-5161.

- View our [Submittable Applicant and Technical Assistance Guide](#)
- Click 'Technical Help' at the bottom left of this page

The City of Austin is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Reasonable modifications and equal access to communications will be provided upon request - including translation and interpretation services. For assistance, please contact the Economic Development Department at 512-974-7819. The City receives and accepts Video Relay Service (VRS) calls from people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing through Relay Texas by dialing 711.

How Applications Are Reviewed

- Applications will be scored automatically through the application platform and scores will be reviewed by City of Austin staff and/or third-party administrators.
- 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.
- **All Nexus decisions are final and can not be appealed**

NEXUS RUBRIC

ELIGIBILITY – reviewed by program staff

All applicants must complete the eligibility quiz and a short answer response to demonstrate they meet the minimum program eligibility. In addition, applicants must upload at least one work sample that proves that they have been doing creative work in Austin for at least one year.

Eligibility questions and work sample will not contribute to the overall application score but will be reviewed and used to verify program eligibility and that applicant’s proposed activity aligns with the HOT Statute.

Short Answer Question (500-character limit) Not Scored:

Provide a summary of your proposed creative public activity*. This should include the title of your activity, proposed date/venue, and a brief description of what will happen at the public event.

*See page 9 for eligible activities

Use checklist below to determine if you are eligible for the Nexus Grant:

<p>Creative Mission or Primary Body of Work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant’s primary artistic goals and creative mission is the production of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives. <input type="checkbox"/> Over 50% of their body of work is the production of arts and culture activities.

Applicant Type	<p>Applicants must meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not a full time City of Austin employee; and is: <input type="checkbox"/> An Incorporated, tax exempt, 501(c) arts organization or a creative business or individual artist <input type="checkbox"/> Individuals and creative businesses may choose to apply with a Fiscal Sponsor, but it is NOT required.
Annual Expenses	<p>What were your total annual expenses for your artistic practice in your most recently completed fiscal year?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant’s most recently completed fiscal year’s annual expenses are \$150,000 or less
Geographical Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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: https://geomap.ffiec.gov/ffiecgeomap/</i>
Production History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Minimum of one (1) year of creative production within Austin <input type="checkbox"/> 50% or more of your creative activities are within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)
HOT Compliance	<p>Will the proposed activities be open and accessible to tourists?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All proposed activities are open to the public and marketed to tourists. View Hotel Occupancy Tax Statute
Existing City Support	<p>Applicant must meet all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not receiving a grant for the same proposed Nexus activity from another City of Austin department in the same fiscal year <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant has not accepted another Cultural Arts Fund Award (Elevate, Thrive, Nexus, Heritage, or Austin Live Music Fund) from the same fiscal year they are applying (check online application to confirm program fiscal year)
Activity Location	<p>Where will your proposed activities occur?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Applicant’s proposed activities must occur within the Austin 10-1 districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

Project Date	When will your proposed activities occur? Project dates fall within the upcoming grant term. <input type="checkbox"/> May 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026
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SCORED QUESTIONS – Up to 105 Points

All multiple-choice questions are automatically scored by the Submittable Application Platform. Short-Answer responses will be reviewed by program staff and/or third-party administrators.

1. *Multiple Choice* – Up to 10 Points

In the last 5 years, how many City of Austin HOT Grants have you received? (This includes Thrive, Elevate, Nexus, Austin Live Music Fund, Heritage Preservation, Core, Community Initiatives, or Cultural Heritage Festivals Program.)

If the application is on behalf of a sponsored project, the response should be based on the sponsored project’s funding history, not the fiscal sponsor’s.

2. *Multiple Choice* – Up to 10 Points (each question worth 5 points)

a. **How many years have you been producing arts activities for the public or been a practicing creative in general?** *This could include your work outside of Austin.*

b. **Of those years, how many have been in Austin?**

3. *Multiple Choice* – Up to 5 Points

What percentage of your total annual income comes from your creative practice?

4. *Multiple Choice* – Up to 15 Points

What is your annual Creative Practice Income from the most recently completed fiscal year? *If your revenue is over \$150,000, you are not eligible to apply for the Nexus Grant*

5. *Multiple Choice* – Up to 5 Points

What percentage of your project budget do you anticipate putting towards paying creative workers living in Austin’s MSA (administrative and/or artistic staff), including yourself?

6. *Select all that Apply*– Up to 5 Points

What best describes how your past activities have supported Austin’s economy, including creatives, tourism, and local businesses?

7. *Select all that Apply* – Up to 11 Points

What best describes how your past activities have expanded audiences and amplified Austin arts and culture sector?

8. *Select all that Apply* – Up to 17 Points

Have you provided any of the following expanded accessibility services for individuals with disabilities

9. *Select all that Apply* – Up to 7 Points

What accommodations have you provided for non-English speaking communities?

10. *Short Answer (250-character limit)* – Up to 5 Points

What is the full address of your primary workspace?

This should be wherever you currently produce the majority of your creative work, could include a studio, office space, or resident. If you are an individual artist, please list your residential address.

11. *Short Answer (250-character limit)*– Up to 5 Points

What is the full address of your ideal venue for your proposed Nexus activity?

All public activities funded by this grant must take place in the Austin 10+1 council districts or Austin ETJ.

Optional – Up to 10 Points for Work Samples that demonstrate the following

- Up to 5 Points - Applicant has hosted events in an [Austin Qualified Census Tract](#) (see definition in glossary) or have documentation of quote or conversation initiated to reserve a venue within a qualified census tract
- Up to 5 Points - Applicant has previously provided expanded ADA services and/or accommodations for non-English speaking communities

ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

All projects funded by HOT revenue are required to:

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

Examples of eligible activities for all Cultural Funding programs

- Operations related to the production of cultural events (For Nexus - Operations *directly* related to the funded project(s))
- Exhibitions
- Performances

- Workshops, classes, and camps that include a performance or exhibition that is open to and marketed to tourists
- Public art projects that are installed on public or private property and accessible by the public
- Educational workshops and classes by art service organizations that are both:
 - in service to artists and/or art organizations within Austin or its ETJ; and
 - open to and marketed to tourists

Ineligible activities

Due to restrictions on the funding source for this program, the following activities are ineligible:

Tourism

Programming that is not both open to and marketed to tourists

Geography

- Activities that occur outside Austin's 10-1 City Council Districts or its extraterritorial jurisdiction
- Programs and/or services of Austin-based arts and cultural organizations that primarily benefit other cities or regions

Fundraisers

- Fundraisers, benefits, or activities offered for the sole purpose of raising money in excess of the value of programs or services delivered

Regranting and Scholarships

- Regranting awarded funds is not an allowed expense, including to individuals as a microgrant
- Grant funds may not be used to provide scholarships (*The grantee is allowed to offer sliding scale, discounted fees or free programming to their program participants.*)

Educational Activities

- Any programming that is advertised as a program of an educational institution such as Austin Independent School District or a university
- Curriculum development or curricular activities such as creation of textbooks or classroom materials
- Scholarly or academic research, tuition, and activities which generate academic credit or formal study toward an academic or professional degree

Religious and/or sectarian programming

- Religious and/or sectarian programming or any programming and/or services that are solely for the promotion of or consumption by a specific religious order and/or a particular sect

Fiscal Sponsor activities

- Sponsored Projects that are programs or services of the Fiscal Sponsor

Previously completed activities

- Grant money must be used for activities occurring within the contract period. Awardees may reimburse themselves with grant funds on expenditures made up to 60 days before the contract period begins.

Other City Funds

- Applicants can accept only one grant award per City of Austin fiscal year from the Elevate, Thrive, Nexus, and Austin Live Music Fund cultural funding programs.
- Activities concurrently receiving funding for similar or identical activities through another City of Austin program
- Collaborators may not combine their HOT funded grants for the same activity, even if they are co-producers

ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

ALLOWABLE expenses for all programs:

Costs incurred in the preparation and implementation of cultural activities that are open to and marketed to tourists including:

- Administrative expenses and artist fees (including staff hours and contractor costs)
- Travel for visiting artists
- Mileage reimbursement
- Space rentals, equipment rentals, costume rentals (not purchases)
- Expendable supplies and materials used only during the contract period
- Marketing and promotion expenses
- Production costs
- Insurance
- Fiscal Sponsor fee (10% is the maximum allowable fee), if applicable, and other contract management costs
- Licensing fees or subscriptions for computer programs or software needed for the implementation of contracted activities

Ineligible project costs include, but may not be limited to, the following:

- Awarded funds may not be expended outside of the designated funding period
- Capital expenditures, including but not limited to the purchase of equipment, instruments, real estate, etc.

- Costs associated with previously completed activities
- Costs associated with the start-up of a new organization
- Operating costs not associated with the contracted project
- Direct project costs incurred more than 60 days prior to the contract starting date. Also any direct project costs incurred after the contract end date.

Exception: venue deposits showing booking dates that fall within the contract period, with contract administrator approval. Entry fees to festivals or events that occur in the Austin 10-1 City Council Districts or ETJ (or streaming) within the contract period are also eligible, with contract administrator approval.

- Fundraising expenses, including but not limited to entertainment, reception, or hospitality expenses
- Consultants who are members of an applicant's staff or board
- Payments to students or interns whose employment is tied to class credit
- Contributions or donations to external causes or organizations, including re-granting to external causes, organizations, or individuals
- Existing deficits, fines, contingencies, penalties, interest, or litigation costs
- Property Taxes or any other tax except for sales or payroll tax
- Travel of contractor's administrative staff is not usually eligible but may be pre-approved by Cultural Arts Division staff on a limited basis
- Purchase of Fuel

Exception: Mileage is allowed at the approved per diem rates. Include a completed mileage reimbursement form with your report to be reimbursed. Travel activity must be essential to contracted activities.

Public Art Projects

Artists and organizations proposing to do public art projects, which are defined as permanent or temporary visual art installations in locations that are visible and accessible to the public, **must obtain written permission from the property owner *prior* to submitting an application.**

Privately Owned property – If a private project (or a public project other than the City of Austin) owns the property, the applicant must obtain a formal letter of support from the owner allowing the applicant to install the proposed artwork. This letter must be included with the application. Without the property owner's written consent, the application cannot be reviewed.

City of Austin Property – Applicants proposing to install public art on City of Austin property must submit an [Artwork Donation/Loan Review application](#) for review by the Arts Commission. The Arts Commission must approve the donation prior to entering into the contract and in no case later than 3 months prior to the contract end date. To arrange the Arts Commission review, please contact Cultural Arts Funding Program staff.

If awarded funding, this does not guarantee approval of Artwork Donation/Loan application by the City of Austin for the proposed artwork.

Austin Center for Events- If your event will be on public land or involving public Right-of-Way closure, please use the [Austin Center for Events Planning Guide](#) and [Special Event Application](#) to initiate approval processes with the appropriate City Departments.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The below terms are provided to assist program applicants in better understanding our program application and priorities. Some of these terms are directly referenced within the program guidelines. These terms and definitions were developed for the Cultural Funding programs by Cultural Arts Division staff unless otherwise stated.

Arts and Cultural Organization

An organization that either has Federal 501(c) status or is incorporated within the State of Texas, and its primary mission is to produce, present, or promote arts and culture. Over 50% of its programming must be arts and cultural activities.

Arts Focused Business

The primary artistic goal or creative mission of the Creative Business, Individual Artist or Nonprofit organization must include the production of arts and culture activities. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives or arts service organizations.

Capital Expenses

Money spent by a business or organization on acquiring or maintaining fixed assets such as equipment, instruments, etc. Capital expenditures include but are not limited to the purchase, repair, or renovation of equipment or property like speaker systems, theater seats, artwork, etc. These are examples and not an exhaustive list. Nexus does **NOT** fund Capital Expenses of any kind. Please contact your contract administrator for further questions about specific expenses.

Commercial

An arts/project activity prepared, done, or acting with sole or chief emphasis on salability, profit, or success of a product or service.

Community Outreach

A demonstrated commitment to extending services or benefits to communities traditionally underrepresented by the arts, defined by:

1. participation drawn from the underserved community,
2. providing resources, and

3. collaborating with existing community artists.

Creative Business

A creative business is an individual or a group whose primary activities are arts and culture based and does not have 501(c) nonprofit status. Creative businesses with annual operating budgets \$500,000 or less can apply as an individual or arts group in Elevate. Creative businesses with annual operating budgets \$150,000 or less or less can apply in Nexus.

Creative Public Activity

An arts or culturally focused public event that is marketed and open to Austin residents, visitors, and tourists. For examples of eligible creative public activities, see Page 9.

Cultural Arts

The conscious use of skill and creative imagination, especially in the production of aesthetic objects (music, dance, theater, folk art, literature, performance art, visual art, media, etc.).

Cultural Destination

A cultural destination is a place that offers visitors an experience of a different culture through its art, music, cuisine, and other experiences.

Cultural Tourism

The use of the performing and visual arts, as well as food, festivals, architecture, and other phenomena that contribute to the cultural vitality of a city, in order to attract tourists to a specific city/geographic region.

CV

a written description of your education, achievements, and previous employment, used esp. to show someone who may employ you in a new job, or to qualify for an honor

Economically disadvantaged

Economically disadvantaged individuals are socially disadvantaged individuals whose ability to compete in the free enterprise system has been impaired due to diminished capital and credit opportunities as compared to others in the same or similar line of business who are not socially disadvantaged.

Extra Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ)

The unincorporated area that is contiguous to the corporate boundaries of Austin and is located within five miles of those boundaries. Use [this map](#) to determine if a location is located in Austin Full Purpose and/or Austin ETJ.

Fiscal Sponsor

A nonprofit corporation with 501(c) status that applies for financial support on behalf of another organization or individual in order to enable the latter to receive the benefits of tax-exempt status. There are several forms that Fiscal Sponsorship can take, but in every case, the Fiscal Sponsor takes responsibility for external parties that the funding will be utilized for tax-exempt, charitable purposes as defined in the Internal Revenue Code.

Hotel Occupancy Tax

A tax is imposed on a person who, under a lease, concession, permit, right of access, license, contract, or agreement, pays for the use or possession or for the right to the use or possession of a room or space in a hotel costing \$15 or more each day. [View Hotel Occupancy Tax Statute](#)

Individual Artist Project

Artistic work, activities, or services created/performed by an individual artist, or a collection of artists not formally organized as a group. A group of artists collaborating on a project is not necessarily considered a formally organized group. Examples of formal organization include incorporating as a nonprofit organization or forming a Limited Liability Corporation.

New Applicant

An organization or artist that has not received funding through the City of Austin, Cultural Arts Division's Cultural Funding programs within the last five fiscal years.

New Audiences

A public event attendee that was not already being reached through the applicant's current channels (i.e. growth in subscribers, followers, online listeners, or public activity attendees)

Non-Arts Organization

A nonprofit 501(c) organization whose primary mission and purpose is not related to the arts even if the organization has a documented history of providing arts programming and/or services within the City of Austin and/or its Extra Territorial Jurisdiction.

Note: Non-Arts Organizations are not eligible for any Cultural Funding program. Applicants concerned about their eligibility should contact Cultural Funding staff for assistance in determining eligibility.

Non-Commercial

An activity that is not commercial as defined under Commercial under this Section.

Nonprofit Organization

An organization with tax-exempt status under Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended (501(c) status) which ensures no part of net earnings benefits a private individual. Status may be in process at time of application but must be confirmed by the application deadline.

Qualified Census Tract

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a Qualified Census Tract (QCT) as a census tract where: At least 50% of households have incomes below 60% of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or the poverty rate is at least 25%. Find a map of QCTs [here](#).

Sponsored Project

The individual or group that is under the umbrella of the 501(c) organization, or Fiscal Sponsor.
Note:] Sponsored Projects are eligible to apply for Nexus.

Tourist

An individual who travels from the individual's residence to a different municipality, county, state, or country for pleasure, recreation, education, or culture (Texas State Tax Code Chapter 351(p.1)).