



**Economic
Development**
CITY OF AUSTIN

Updated May 22, 2024

Thrive Grant Guidelines

Thrive: Organizational investment for arts and culture non-profits

- Request amounts between \$85,000 and \$150,000 per program year. (\$170,000 - \$300,000 total over two year)
- 2 Year Contract Term.
- Estimated 35 contracts awarded. This is not a cap.
- For activities taking place January 2025 – December 2026

Program Overview

Request amounts between \$85,000 and \$150,000 per year.

2 Year Contract Term. Estimated 35 contracts awarded. This is not a cap.

This program seeks to address a long-term need for intentional investment to support and develop arts organizations and cultural institutions of, by, and for 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. Through funding, peer leadership, and networking, this program will make Austin's diverse cultures more widely visible and accessible by providing funds to sustain and grow organizations that are deeply rooted in and reflective of those communities

To directly address historic inequities in our own funding models and meet our goals of advancing equity, priority will be given to arts and culture organizations that are significant contributors to the City's creative heritage. This may refer to arts organizations predominantly led by, and inclusive of, a combination of Black/African American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander individuals. Organizations that show a deep commitment to serving and representing the LGBTQIA+ and disability communities through their work will also be considered.

Key Elements

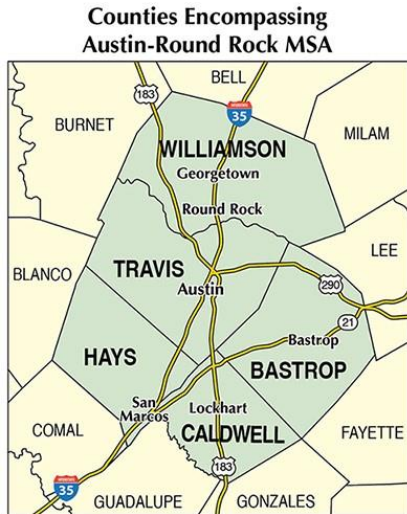
- Thrive funds organizations that are community-centered and responsive to current social and cultural needs of Austin's diverse communities.
- Applicants who show investment from and into their communities are encouraged to apply.
- Intersectionality in proposals is encouraged.
- Thrive offers a cohort experience to support organizations in obtaining cultural institution status through:
 - peer leadership
 - networking opportunities
- Organization improvement goals will become part of the contract deliverables.
- All eligible applicants who apply for Thrive but are not awarded will also be considered for Elevate

Who can apply

Funding is not guaranteed. Funding will be awarded to the top scoring applications.

Eligible Applicants:

- 501(c) non-profit arts organization whose primary mission and over 50% of their body of work is the production of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
 - 501(c) status can be new but must be active at the time of application.
 - Minimum of five years 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 the applicant's 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 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.
 - City of Austin employees are not eligible to apply for funding.

Detailed eligibility criteria is provided in the Scoring Rubric below.

Priority will be given to:

- Organizations that serve and are accountable to communities that are at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin. This may include organizations that directly serve Black/African American, Native American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Middle Eastern, and Pacific Islander communities.
- Organizations that are representative of communities that experience other forms of institutional marginalization. This may include organizations that directly serve LGBTQIA+ and/or disability communities.
- Organizations that embody a commitment to equity through representation in leadership and program development.
- Applicants that have faced systemic barriers in obtaining institutional assets.
- Applicants that show a critical need for meaningful investment.
- Applicants that are ready for investment in long-term sustainability.

This program is *not* a fit for organizations that do not have long-standing relationships with the communities described above.

What Thrive Funds

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

- Produce activities that are open and advertised to Austin residents and tourists
- Promote and enhance the City of Austin as a cultural destination
- Occur in Austin or its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)

This program will offer additional investment in organization improvement. Examples of organization improvement include:

- Expanding public programming and audiences
- Establishing a reliable space for planning and presenting work
- Establishing new and/or more diversified revenue sources
- Cohort participation to advance organization improvement goals

Eligible Activities*

- Activities related to the sustainability and growth of the organization. EXAMPLES:
 - Expanding public programming and audiences
 - Establishing a reliable space for planning and presenting work
 - Establishing new and/or more diversified revenue sources
 - Operations related to the production of public events
- 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

Eligible Expenses*

- Payments to administrators and artists.

- Costs related to improving the organization’s ability to produce cultural events.
- Insurance costs.
- Subscription costs or license fees for software needed to complete contracted activities.
- Capital expenditures. Any single capital expenditure over \$2,000 must be pre-approved by the staff contract administrator to ensure compliance with the contract and City policy.
 - 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. Please contact your contract administrator for further questions about specific expenses.

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

Cohort Participation

Cohort participants will:

1. **Meet with staff:** Meet with Cultural Arts Division (CAD) staff to discuss their organization improvement goals and path to becoming a cultural institution. Additional meetings may occur as goals evolve. See [Additional Program Details](#) for a definition of “cultural institution”.
2. **Receive tailored support:** Attend optional trainings, networking events, and other opportunities as relevant to identified goals. Each opportunity will be developed based on interests of cohort participants. Attendance in learning opportunities is not required but will be tracked to assess the areas of improvement for the program.
3. **Share expertise:** Participate in peer leadership opportunities by sharing expertise with others in the cohort. Cultural Arts Division staff will also seek new ways to promote the work and expertise of the Thrive cohort to audiences within and outside of Austin.
4. **Provide feedback:** Participants will be asked to give feedback on the Thrive program upon completion.

Award Amounts

The Thrive award amounts range from \$85,000 - \$150,000 per year of the 2-year contract.

- Applicants will submit a budget as part of their application to show how they will use the funds.
- If awarded, applicants can choose to decline any portion of the funds that they don’t need.
- Applicants are not required to find matching funds, although it is encouraged.
- We also encourage contractors to pay all who work on the project an equitable wage.
- Any unused funds will have to be returned with the final report.

Funding Availability

- The Thrive 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 cannot 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.
- Only one application per applicant will be considered (Sponsored Projects do not count toward 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.
- Thrive operates on the calendar year, and it has a two-year cycle:

Year one: January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

Payment 1: 50% of award amount can be invoiced once contract is executed

Payment 2: 40% of award amount can be invoiced once initial report is approved

Payment 2: 10% of award amount can be invoiced upon approval of interim report

Year two: January 1 – December 31, 2026

Year One awardees will receive the same award in Year Two. There is no application process in Year Two. An awardee can decline Year Two funding if they wish.

Interim reports and contract updates for Year Two must be approved by Cultural Funding staff before Year Two funds are disbursed.

Payment 1: 90% of award amount can be invoiced once contract is in place

Payment 2: 10% of award amount can be invoiced upon approval of final report

Program Timeline	
Spring	Guidelines available
Spring	Application opens
Spring	Application workshops begin
Summer	Application deadline
Summer	Panel reviews begin
September	Notification of award decision

Reporting Requirements

Grantees will be required to submit a report annually. To ease reporting requirements, grantees will have the option to participate in conversation-based assessments and reporting with their dedicated City staff person.

Year 1: Initial Report*

An initial report will be used by Cultural Arts Division staff to establish a baseline of data and information about the organization's self-identified goals. This assessment is developed through a conversation about the organization's existing areas of expertise and interest in sharing those skills through collaborative learning opportunities, as well as any possible networking connections the organization hopes to leverage during the cohort time period. This assessment will be used in the planning of Thrive cohort opportunities and to track progress during the interim and final reporting stages of the grant.

Year 1: Interim Report*

The interim report will be used by Cultural Arts Division staff to update and revise your goals as necessary for any Year Two changes. Disbursement of the remaining 10% of that year's goals will not be issued without approval of the submitted interim report.

Year 2: Final Report*

A final report is due within thirty days of the final program date in Year Two of the contract. Workshops on how to complete your report will be made available and supporting materials can be found in the Contractor Library.

* See [Additional Program Details](#) for more detailed reporting information.

How to Apply

All Cultural Funding program applications are submitted online; there is no paper application. Visit www.austincreates.com for links to all open program application portals.

Application Materials

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

Required Application Uploads

- 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
- 3 Work Samples
- 2 Letters of Support
- Insurance Assessment

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 for the most current information. 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.

Staff Contact for Thrive

Jesús Varela
Cultural Funding Specialist
Jesus.Varela@AustinTexas.gov
512-974-2444

Virtual Open Office Hours on Zoom

No appointment necessary

Every Tuesday while the grant application is open, and every 2nd and 4th Tuesday once the application closes.

[Request Virtual Open Office Hours Zoom link](#)
10 am – 12 pm

Additional Cultural Funding Staff

Peggy Ellithorpe
Peggy.Ellithorpe@AustinTexas.gov
512-974-7978

Jesús Pantel
Cultural Funding Supervisor
Jesus.Pantel@AustinTexas.gov
512-974-9315

For language access support contact Carlos Soto at (512) 974-9313 or by email at carlos.soto@austintexas.gov

Community Navigators

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

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

How Applications Are Reviewed

- Applications will be reviewed and scored by a panel.
- Applications that meet the requirements outlined in these guidelines and receive the highest scores will 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](#).

THRIVE SCORING

Initial Eligibility Screening – reviewed by Cultural Arts Division staff

Mission statement	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant's primary artistic goals and creative mission is the production, presentation, or promotion of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
501(c) status	<input type="checkbox"/> 501(c) non-profit organizations registered with current 990s and an active volunteer board that meets three or more times per year. 501(c) status can be new but must be active at the time of application.
Geographic eligibility	<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant's address is in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA). <i>Address is verified as in the MSA using this link: https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder</i>
Production History	<input type="checkbox"/> Minimum of 5 years of creative production within Austin or the metropolitan statistical area. <input type="checkbox"/> 50% or more of the application's creative production is within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)
HOT compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> All proposed activities are open to the public and marketed to tourists. View Hotel Occupancy Tax Statute
Existing City support	Applicant must meet all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Applicant is not receiving Thrive fund in the same fiscal year as Elevate or Nexus funds<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<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

Throughout the rubric “key constituencies” will always refer to the communities identified by the applicant during the Missions and Key Constituencies response.

Thrive RUBRIC – 130 Possible Points

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

Identify your key constituencies and how 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 15 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

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

Your answer could include:

- Executive and creative leadership
- Board of Directors and/or Advisory Board
- Creative Advisors

Cultural Leadership *Up to 30 Points*

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
- 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)
- 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 Form should be reflective of this application

Cultural Institution Status

Up to 10 Points

What steps will you take over the two-year grant cycle that will move your organization closer to becoming a cultural institution in Austin?

- Provide 2 to 3 goals for each funding year
- Describe how these goals move you closer to becoming a cultural institution

Your answer could include:

- Bringing back operations and activities reduced during the pandemic
 - Mission revision
 - Re-launching programming from before the pandemic
 - Stabilizing and/or expanding administrative resources and staff

- Improving and sustaining **existing** operations by developing systems to diversify revenue streams
 - Cash donations/grants
 - Paid services
 - Ticket sales
 - Donations of goods
 - Capacity building/training/certification
- Developing **new** initiatives
 - Hiring new staff
 - Developing new programming
 - Creating a strategic plan
- Asset acquisition
 - Acquiring or maintaining a long-term lease
 - Purchase of equipment valued under \$2,000
- Deepening relationship-oriented contributions from community
 - Board development
 - Volunteers
 - Mentorships or partnerships
 - Collaborations with community members/leaders
 - Audience participation

A cultural institution will have reliable and consistent access to multiple types of sustaining financial and physical assets. See [Additional Program Details](#) document for full definition of cultural institution.