



**Economic  
Development**  
CITY OF AUSTIN

# Thrive Grant Guidelines

Thrive: Organizational investment for arts and culture non-profits

- Pilot Program.
- 2 Year Contract Term.
- Request amounts between \$85,000 and \$150,000 per pilot program year.
- Estimated 35 contracts awarded. This is not a cap.

Guidelines: For activities taking place March 2023 – December 2024

**Thrive** - (verb) grow or develop well or vigorously; to prosper

## Program Overview

**2 Year Contract Term. Estimated 35 contracts awarded. This is not a cap.  
Request amounts between \$85,000 and \$150,000 per year.**

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 a combination of funding, peer leadership, and networking model, 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 key constituencies.

To directly address historic inequities in our own funding models and meet our goals of advancing racial equity, priority will be given to arts and culture organizations that are significant contributors to the City's creative vibrancy and 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 demonstrable 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 that includes peer leadership and networking opportunities. The goal of the cohort is to support organizations in obtaining cultural institution status.
- Successful applicants will select organization improvement goals that will become part of their contract deliverables.

## Who can apply

Applicant eligibility criteria is provided in the rubric. Funding is not guaranteed. Funding will be awarded based on the amount of funding requested and application scores.

## Eligible Applicants:

- 501(c) non-profit arts organizations that have been in operation for 5 years or more.

## 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 includes organizations that directly and substantively 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 includes organizations that directly and substantively serve LGBTQIA+ and/or disability communities.
- Organizations that embody a measurable commitment to the equity goals and principles of the City of Austin’s Equity Office through representation in leadership and program development.
- Applicants that have faced barriers in obtaining institutional resources and assets.
- Applicants that show a critical and timely need for meaningful investment.
- Applicants that are ready for investment to ensure 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:**

- Culminate in programs or events that are open and advertised to Austin residents, visitors, 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

## Cohort Participation

The cohort model will:

- Center the expertise/experiences of the funded organizations
- Prioritize organizations’ time and availability
- Limit burdensome reporting requirements

**Cohort participants will:**

1. **Meet with staff:** Meet with Cultural Arts Division (CAD) staff within the first six months. Awardees will discuss their organization improvement goals and path to becoming a cultural institution. Additional meetings may occur as goals evolve.

The Cultural Funding programs define a “cultural institution” as an entity whose primary mission is to present and produce arts and cultural activities, has a high degree of financial sustainability, and is seen as an indispensable part of a community. It is important to note that an organization can be an indispensable part of the community but has not received the historical financial support necessary to achieve cultural institution status as defined here.

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. Community has expressed interest in the following topics, and more can be considered as requested:
  - donor cultivation
  - grant writing
  - strategic planning
  - audience development
  - lease negotiation
  - marketing
  - leadership development
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:** See “Reporting Requirements” for more details.

### Eligible Activities\*

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

### Eligible Expenses\*

- Administrative and creative costs incurred in the preparation and implementation of cultural activities that are open to and marketed to tourists.
- 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.](#)

## Other Eligibility Criteria:

- Applicant's primary mission and over 51% of their body of work is the production, presentation, or promotion of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
- Applicant's address is in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA).
- 51% or more of the applicant's creative production is within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and a minimum of 5 years of creative production within Austin.
- Proposed activity meets all program requirements as outlined by the Hotel Occupancy Tax. All events are open to the public and marketed to tourists, or applicant is an arts service organization.
- Applicants who are not receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying.

## Reporting Requirements

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

### Year 1: Interim Report\*

The interim report will be used by CAD staff to update and revise your contract as necessary for any year two changes. Disbursement of the remaining 10% of that year's contract 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.](#)

## Funding Availability

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

## Funding Timeline

Thrive operates on the calendar year, and it has a two-year cycle:

**Year one:** October 12, 2022 – December 31, 2023

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

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 interim report

**Year two:** January 1 – December 31, 2024

Year one awardees will receive the same award in year two, or higher (as funding allows); 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	
<b>10/5/22</b>	Guidelines available
<b>10/12/22</b>	Application opens
<b>10/13/22</b>	Application workshops begin
<b>11/23/22</b>	Application deadline
<b>Late January 2023</b>	Panel reviews begin
<b>February 2023</b>	Notification of award decision

## Award Amounts

- The award amount in Thrive ranges from \$80,000 - \$150,000 per year of the 2-year contract.
- Applicants will submit a project budget as part of their application demonstrating how they will use the funds.
- If awarded, applicants can choose to decline any portion of funds 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 at the time of reporting.

## How to Apply

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

## Application Assistance

### Workshops and Videos

Information on 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 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 or sign up for our newsletter to stay in the loop about upcoming workshops.

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#### Staff Contact for Thrive

Sarah Corpron  
Cultural Funding Specialist  
[Sarah.Corpron@AustinTexas.gov](mailto:Sarah.Corpron@AustinTexas.gov)

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#### Virtual Open Office Hours on Zoom

Every 2nd and 4th Tuesday each month  
No appointment necessary  
<http://zoom.us/j/94549263216>  
Meeting ID 912 1807 0093  
10 am – 12 pm

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## How Applications Are Reviewed

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

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

## Thrive Rubric

Initial Eligibility Screening – reviewed by Cultural Arts Division staff

Mission statement	Applicant's primary mission and over 51% of their body of work is the production, presentation, or promotion of arts and culture. This includes organizations that provide professional support to creatives.
501(c) status	501(c) non-profit organizations registered with current 990s and an active volunteer board that meets three or more times per year. <b>501(c) status can be new but must be active at the time of application.</b>
Geographic eligibility	Applicant's address is in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA). <i>Address is verified as in the MSA using this link: <a href="https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder">https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder</a></i>
Production History	51% or more of the application's creative production is within the Austin 10-1 City Council districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) and a minimum of 5 years of creative production within Austin.

HOT compliance	Proposed activity meets all program requirements as outlined by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). All events are open to the public and marketed to tourists, or applicant is an arts service organization.
Current City support	Applicants who are not already receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying.

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

## Application Scoring – reviewed by the panel

Category	Criteria
Operations	<p><b><u>Mission and Key Constituencies</u></b>  <i>15 Possible Points</i></p> <p>What is your organization’s mission, vision, and primary production history?  Please identify your key constituencies and provide information about applicant’s service to them.</p> <p>For the purposes of this program, key constituencies <b>that will be prioritized</b> 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.</p> <p>Mission, vision, and production history will be used to verify this answer.</p>
	<p><b><u>History of Service</u></b>  <i>15 Possible Points</i></p> <p>How did the needs of your key constituencies inform the founding of your organization? In what ways has your organization maintained a responsive approach to their interests?</p> <p><b>Your answer should include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your organization’s specific history in direct service to your key constituencies.</li> <li>• Your organization’s founding history and community service goals.</li> <li>• Clear description of how the applicant has directly improved access to opportunities for key constituencies.</li> </ul>
	<p><b><u>Cultural Leadership</u></b>  <i>30 Possible Points</i></p> <p>Who holds power in your organization and how do they represent your community?</p> <p>Your answer could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive and creative leaders in your organization</li> <li>• Board of Directors</li> </ul>
	<p><b><u>Cultural Activities Relevance and Responsiveness</u></b>  <i>10 Possible Points</i></p>



## Cultural and Social Impact

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

Your answer could address:

- Tourist accessible activities that you produce
- Description of proposed activities, participant(s), etc.
- Working in collaboration with the community

### Intersectionality and Inclusion

*5 Possible Points*

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

The City values intersectionality.

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw. Intersectionality is where race, class, gender, and other vulnerabilities overlap. It describes the many ways in which various forms of discriminations can intersect, creating special vulnerabilities for some.

### Community Relationships

*5 Possible Points*

**Describe the non-financial ways your community supports your organization and how that support has short and long-term impact on your organization's success.**

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

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

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

**Examples of financial support include but are not limited to:**

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

### Opportunity Creation / Community Benefits

*5 Possible Points*

**Describe the ways your organization invests in your community.**

Include information on the systemic and long-term benefits your organization's programming has for the community.

Examples of investment into your community can include but are not limited to:

- leadership roles
- job creation
- social services
- career development
- networking

- education
- mentoring or partnerships
- providing free or low-cost spaces
- other (describe)

**Accessibility**

*5 Possible Points*

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

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

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

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

**Cultural Institution Status**

*10 Possible Points*

a) [budget table]

b) How will these funds be used to move your organization closer to becoming a cultural institution?

This may include bringing back operations and activities reduced during the pandemic, improving and sustaining existing operations, and/or developing new initiatives and operations.

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.

Possible Points Available	
Operations	60
Cultural and Social Impact	40
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>