

Nexus

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Revisions to pilot guidelines and rubric since October 2021:

- Reworked scoring rubric and guidelines language, in keeping with community feedback, Equity Office consultation, and legal guidance.
- Important terms and definitions added to the glossary in the Program Details Document.
- Request amount revised to reflect current HOT funding budget.
- Program description better reflects the origins and purpose of the program
- General guidelines language updates to clarify program goals.

Nexus

Pilot Year Draft Guidelines - REVISED

FORMATTING WILL BE ADDED ONCE TEXT IS APPROVED

[Cover page]

Nexus: nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community

Pilot Program

Project Support, two opportunities to apply.

Approximately 40-50 contracts awarded per cycle.

\$5,000 award amount.

Pilot Guidelines

For projects taking place between DATE and DATE

[Web page link]

[logo] City of Austin [logo] Economic Development Department

nexus

(noun) a connection or series of connections linking two or more things

Program Overview

Annual term, two opportunities to apply

\$5,000 contracts

Nexus: nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community

The Nexus program is designed to nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community in support of creative public programming for the city and its tourists through community activation and collaboration. Collaborations might include projects that involve artists, culturally specific groups, groups representing LGBTQIA and disability communities, non-profits, social advocacy organizations, and similar. Applicants who are new to City funding, particularly those who have been at immediate risk of cultural erasure and displacement within Austin and/or have been institutionally marginalized will be prioritized.

Key Elements

- This program is intended to nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community.
- This program funds community-centered art projects of all kinds.
- This program highlights community voices and encourages resourcefulness of applicants by centering the program around partnerships, in which all collaborators share decision-making power in the creative direction of the projects.
- Applications are reviewed and scored by an internal panel of City of Austin staff.
- Applicants who prefer to work with a Fiscal Sponsor may do so. Fiscal Sponsorship is not a requirement for applicants.

Who can apply

Applicant eligibility criteria is outlined below, with greater detail provided in the Scoring Rubric. Funding is not guaranteed if you meet all the minimum requirements; rather, funding will be awarded based on the overall score of your application which includes consideration of our funding priorities.

Eligible applicants:

- An individual or collaborating individuals over the age of 18*
- 501(c) non-profit organization
- A community-based organization
- A creative group*

**May apply directly or with a fiscal sponsor*

Priority will be given to:

- Applicants that 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.
- Applicants who have never received City of Austin Cultural Funding awards in the past or have not received funds in the last five years.

What Nexus Funds

While Nexus supports a breadth of creative projects, *all* contracts funded by Hotel Occupancy Tax revenue are required to:

- be 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 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

Eligible Expenses*

- Administrative expenses and artist fees (including staff hours and contractor costs)
- Space rentals
- Equipment rentals (not purchases)
- Supplies and materials
- Marketing and promotion expenses
- Insurance (expenses related to required insurance coverage)
- Fiscal sponsor fee, if applicable

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

Other Eligibility Criteria

- one year of operating history in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA)
- 51% or more of the application's creative production is within the Austin 10-1 districts or extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ)
- applicant's most recently completed fiscal year's budget is under \$150,000
- not already received or are currently receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying

Funding Availability

Nexus operates on the City's fiscal calendar, which is October 1 – September 30. The pilot year will have one opportunity to apply; the next application cycle will fall on fiscal year 2023.

The dates of applicant's proposed activities will determine when to apply. Successful applicants can receive funds once per fiscal year.

Funding awards allocated from this program may not be used toward activities funded by any other City of Austin departments/contracts or other cultural funding programs within the fiscal year. Program availability and the total amount available are subject to the availability of funding from HOT revenue. Only one contract per organization is allowed (sponsored projects do not count toward this limit). 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.

Timeline

	Fall/Winter Cycle	Spring/Summer Cycle
Activities Occurring	October 1 - March 31	April 1 – September 30
Deadline	August	February
Application Opens	July	January
Application Workshop	July	January
Awards Announced	September	March
Contract Materials Due	September	March
Payment 1 of 2 - 75% of Award	Upon Entering into contract	Upon Entering into contract
Report Due	April 30	October 31
Payment 2 of 2 - Final 25% of Award	Upon approval of final award	Upon approval of final award

Award Amounts

- The request amount in Nexus is \$5,000.
- Applicants will submit a project budget as part of their application demonstrating how they will use the funds.
- If awarded, you can choose to decline any portion of funds that you 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 austincreates.com for links to all open program application portals.

- **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 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 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.

Staff Contact for Nexus

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

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

How Applications Are Reviewed

Applications will be reviewed and scored by an internal panel of staff from the Cultural Arts Division. 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](#).

NEXUS RUBRIC

ELIGIBILITY – reviewed by COA staff

Applicant Type	<p>Applicant is either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual or collaborating individuals over the age of 18* A community-based organization A 501(c) non-profit organizations A creative group* <p>*may apply directly or with a fiscal sponsor</p>
Existing City Support	Applicants who have not already received or are currently receiving City funding for the same activities in the fiscal year in which they are applying
Geographical Eligibility	<p>Applicants that demonstrate a minimum of one year of operating history in the Austin metropolitan statistical area (MSA).</p> <p><i>Address is verified as in the MSA using this link: https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder</i></p>
Production History	51% or more of the applicant’s creative production is within the Austin 10-1 districts or extra-territorial jurisdiction (ETJ).
Operating Budget	Applicant’s most recently completed fiscal year’s budget is under \$150,000
Project Date	<p>Project dates fall within the upcoming contract term.</p> <p><i>Fall/Winter Cycle: October 1 – March 31</i></p> <p><i>Spring/Summer Cycle: April 1 – September 30</i></p>
HOT Compliance	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.

Category	Criteria
<p>Operations</p>	<p><u>Key Constituencies</u> <i>25 points</i></p> <p>What is your mission or artistic vision? Identify and name your key constituencies.</p>
	<p><u>First-time applicant</u> <i>10 points</i></p> <p>Are you a first-time applicant? This would not include relief or recovery funding.</p> <p>If the application is on behalf of a sponsored project, we would like to know the number of times the sponsored project has received funding from the Cultural Arts Division.</p>
	<p><u>Budget</u> <i>5 points</i></p> <p>How will you use these funds to produce your events? Provide details on specific expenses. Be sure these expenses are reflected in the budget table.</p> <p>Your budget must balance. This means that the TOTAL INCOME should be the same as the TOTAL EXPENSES.</p>
	<p><u>Accessibility & Language Access</u> <i>15 points</i></p> <p>Does your proposal include specialized programming or accommodations for audience members with disabilities?</p> <p>Does your proposal include specialized language access accommodations or programming for non-English speaking communities?</p> <p>To receive points be sure to include the expenses required to offer specialized programming in your proposed budget.</p> <p>Accessibility accommodations that are “upon-request only” are admirable but will not be considered a specialized service.</p>
<p>Cultural and Social Impact</p>	<p><u>Cultural Activities</u> <i>10 points</i></p> <p>What are your proposed activities?</p>

Your answer could address:

- How equity work is centered in your proposal
- Tourist accessible activities that you produce
- Description of proposed activities, participant(s), etc
- Working with diverse communities

Creative Collaboration

10 points

Provide the name(s) of creative collaborators(s). Describe your collaborator's role in the development and implementation of your proposed activities.

Write "N/A" if you are not applying with a collaborator.

Community voice

10 points

What communities are represented in your project content? In what ways are they involved in the creative direction? In what ways are voices from those communities being amplified through your project?

Programmatic Reach

10 points

How will the requested funding help you expand your programmatic reach and amplify Austin's diverse arts and cultural sector?

Your answer could address:

Marketing / Audience Development

Information on how funding will directly support the diversity and equity of the City's cultural community.

Community Investment and Relationships

5 points

In what ways does your community invest in your organization?

Examples of contributions include but are not limited to:

- Audience participation
- Cash donations
- Collaborations with community members/leaders
- Donations of goods
- Mentorships or partnerships
- Paid services
- Ticket sales
- Volunteers
- Other

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Possible Points Available	
Operations	55
Cultural and Social Impact	45
Total	100

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