



Hispanic Quality of Life Commission Meeting

Sylnovia Holt-Rabb
Director, Economic Development Department
City of Austin

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Economic Development Department – *Leadership Team*



Sylnovia Holt-Rabb

Director

Economic Development Department



Susana Carbajal

Deputy Director

Economic Development Department



Morgan Messick

Acting Assistant Director

Economic Development Department

The Economic Development Department's mission is to promote a competitive, sustainable and equitable economy for all.



History of Cultural Funding

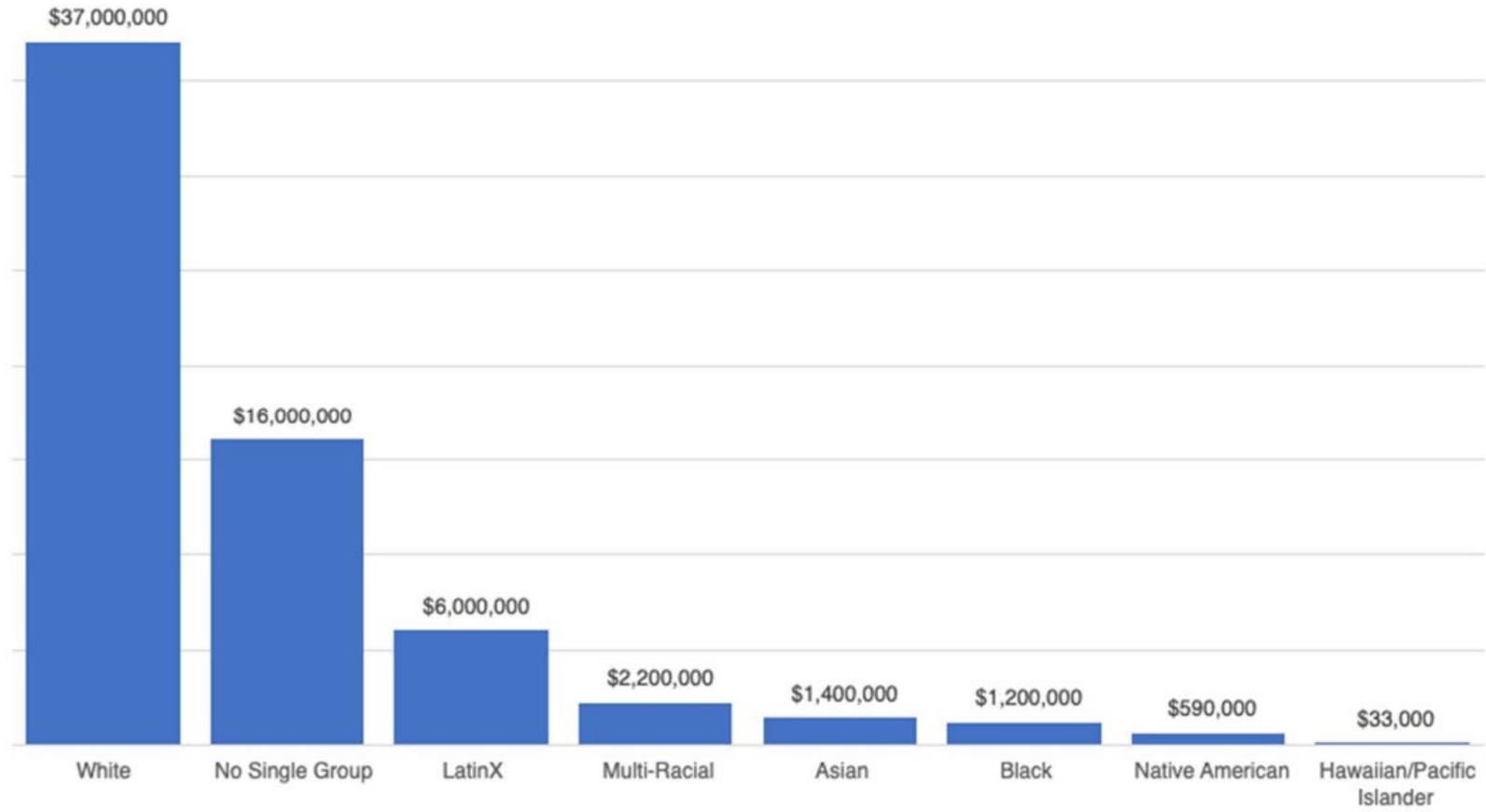


Cultural Arts Division – *Cultural Funding Program Background*

- Since 1981 through Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) authorized by state law
 - Over \$125 Million to 870+ artists/arts & culture organizations
 - In 2019, 5 staff managed 600 contracts in one year
 - Explore the City's [Open Data Portal of all HOT Cultural Funding Recipients](#)
- 2003: Cultural Funding moved from the Parks and Recreation Department to Economic Development Department.
- 2013 – Present: Arts Commission works with staff to update and approve program guidelines.



Total Investment - *Concerns of Inequitable Distribution**



*Data shows self-reported leadership/staff demographics FY15-FY 21 only. We recognize this is only one indicator.

Impetus to Revise Cultural Funding Guidelines

2017

- Arts commission established the **Cultural Funding Program Responsiveness Working Group** on August 21, 2017.
- The purpose was to make funding more responsive to the community and address specific priorities for all funding program guidelines.
- Initiated conversation to address the inequities in funding, idea of a complete overhaul of the cultural funding programs.

2018

- Austin's expanding population + Successful program retention + outreach = increased community participation in funding programs.
- Programming funds did not increase in proportion to this participation.
- Broad/deeper funding cuts for the first time (11%).
- Community feedback at Arts Commission meetings regarding the reduction in funding and lack of communication from City of Austin staff.

COA Equity Statement

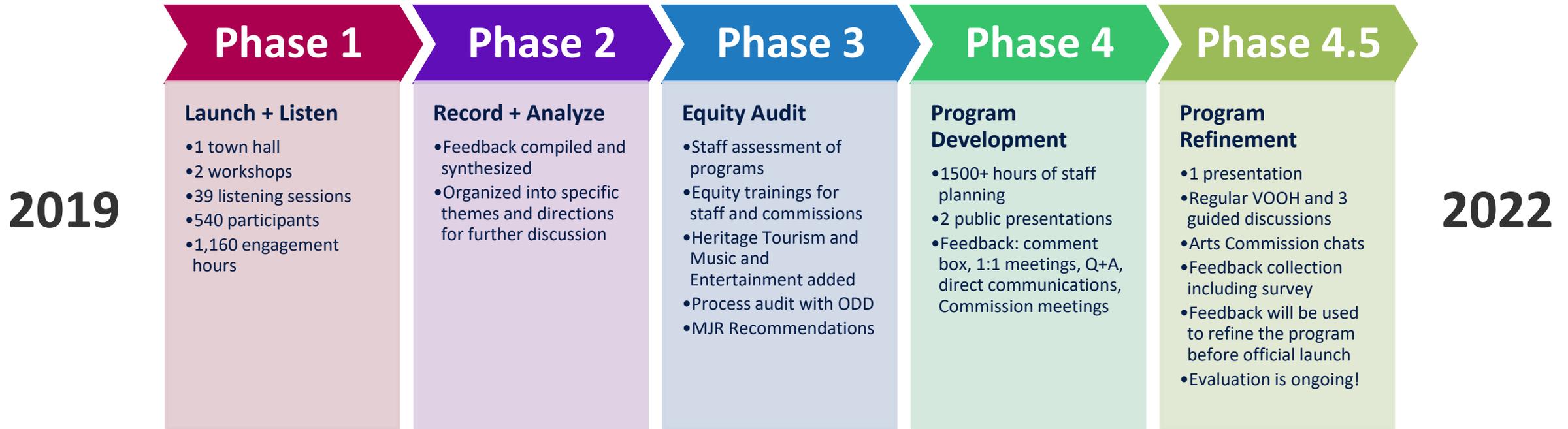
- Strategic Direction 2023: Racial equity is the condition when race no longer predicts a person's quality of life outcomes in our community.
- The City of Austin recognizes historical and structural disparities and a need for alleviation of these wrongs by taking a disruptive stance to critically transform its institutions and create a culture of equity.

Cultural Funding Review Process



Cultural Funding Review - 36 Month Community Process

Goal: The desired goal is to **sustain** and **grow** Austin's **cultural infrastructure** so that all may share in the **economic** and **employment** benefits of the heritage preservation and creative sectors, as well as upholding the city's **commitment** to racial **equity** per the City of Austin's equity office standards and goals.



*Feedback informed every aspect of program development including program **priorities**, application **scoring**, **rubrics**, and process **improvements**.*

Cultural Funding Review Process - *Outcomes*

Pilot Program **Guidelines** formed through a robust community engagement in coordination with the arts commission and as part of the [cultural funding review: arts, heritage, music](#) (includes [Interim](#) and [Final](#) Reports).

Approved 9-0 by Arts Commission at Special Called meeting on [June 29, 2022](#). [Watch the meeting](#).

The screenshot shows the website austintexas.gov with the navigation menu: Resident, Business, Government, Departments, Connect. The main heading is **Cultural Funding**. The page content includes:

- Home** >
- Cultural Funding** >
- Cultural Equity** >
- Cultural Arts Division**

The main text reads: "The Economic Development Department's Cultural Arts Funding Program supports cultural arts programs for the Austin community by contracting with arts organizations for specific services. Current Cultural Funding programs were developed in consultation with Austin's creative community over the past 3 seed funding, broad sector support, and targeted investment. Read the [Cultural Funding Report \(PDF, 1.8 MB\)](#), [El camino hacia la equidad cultural \(PDF, 2.2 MB\)](#). The Cultural Arts Division has administered various funding programs since 1981 through the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) authorized by state law."

Upcoming Events

- October 22, 2022
[Cultural Funding: Thrive Grant Awareness Workshop](#)
- October 26, 2022
[Cultural Funding: Thrive Grant Awareness Workshop](#)
- October 29, 2022
[Cultural Funding: Thrive Grant Awareness Workshop](#)
- November 7, 2022
[Cultural Funding: Thrive Grant Awareness Workshop](#)

Helpful Information

The two flyer images on either side of the website screenshot are titled "The Journey Toward Cultural Equity" (left) and "El camino hacia la equidad cultural" (right). Both flyers are from the City of Austin Economic Development Department, dated June 29, 2022, and mention MJR Partners as the arts management consultants.

Cultural Arts Division – *2023 Cultural Funding Pilot Program Solutions*

- **Open to Everyone**— everyone in the arts/culture ecosystem should see themselves somewhere regardless of discipline or business structure
- **No Matching Funds Required**
- **Award Not Based on Existing Budget** – this practice is disproportionately limiting to historically marginalized groups
- **Competitive Process** – the community expressed a desire not to fund 99% of applicants
- **Transition Plan** – Pandemic Relief funds provided stabilization to all cultural contractors (per an Arts Commission recommendation).

Pilot Programs



Cultural Arts Division – *2023 Cultural Funding Pilot Programs*

Holistic Funding Ecosystem - **\$10,435,000**

Nexus

Nurture new and emerging applicants by funding creative public projects.

Elevate

Creative and administrative expenses of cultural producers that amplify equity and prioritize inclusive programming.

Thrive

Focused investment to sustain and grow arts organizations that are deeply rooted in, and reflective of Austin's diverse cultures.

Cultural Arts Division – 2023 Cultural Funding Pilot Program Overview

	Nexus	Elevate		Thrive
		Elevate (Non-501c)	Elevate+ (501c only)	
Goal	Encourage new talent	Support established cultural producers		Invest in diverse cultural institutions
Contract Term	6 Months	1 year	1 year	2 years
Type of Funding	Project Funding Only	Flexible: Project/Operating	Flexible: Project/Operating	Flexible: Project/Operating (+Optional Networking/ Coaching/ Classes)
Who can apply?	Individuals/ Groups* (*cooperatives, non-profit organizations, businesses, partnerships, etc.)	Artists; Arts/Culture Groups* w/ budgets <\$500k	Arts/Culture 501(c)s	5-year history in Austin Arts/Culture 501(c)
Selection Process	COA Staff + Rubric	Panel	Panel	Panel
Available Funds	\$500,000	\$1,250,000	\$5,000,000	\$3,935,000 per year
Award Amounts	\$5,000	\$10,000 - \$25,000	\$30,000 - \$75,000	\$85,000 - \$150,000 per year
# of Awardees	100 (50 per cycle; 2 cycles/year)	75	125	36

Cultural Arts Division – 2023 Cultural Funding Pilot Program Status

	Nexus	Elevate		Thrive
		Elevate (Non-501c)	Elevate+ (501c only)	
Website	www.AustinTexas.gov/Nexus	www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate		www.AustinTexas.gov/Thrive
Application Open	July 11 – August 15, 2023	May 23 – June 30, 2023		October 12 – December 2, 2022
# of Applicants	295	259	182	154
# of Semi-Finalists	--	125	--	59
# of Awarded	50 (pending)	75 (pending)	125 (pending)	36
# of Panelist reviewing	6 COA staff + rubric	Stage 1: 60 Readers Stage 2: 15 Panelists	Stage 2 only: 21 Panelists	Stage 1: 3 Readers Stage 2: 5 Panelists
Status	Evaluation begins now. Award announcements by end of September 2023.	Webinar Panels start on August 24, 2023 (3 Panels; 1.5 days each) Award announcements early September 2023. (1st Payments in Sept.)	Webinar Panels start on August 23, 2023 (3 Panels; 2 days each) Award announcements early September 2023. (1st Payments in Sept.)	Awardee details on Thrive website. Payments distributed (90% of Year 1 funds; Milestones 1,2)

Cultural Arts Division – *Panel Process Overview*

- Recruitment for several months (local and national; all artistic disciplines)
- Selection/ Approval by Arts Commission
 - Thrive Panel (12 Panelists)
 - October 17, 2022 - Arts Commission Meeting ([staff presentation](#) | [panelists bios](#) | [watch](#))
 - Elevate Panel (105 Panelists)
 - May 15, 2023 - Arts Commission Meeting ([staff presentation](#) | [panelist bios](#) | [watch](#))
- Robust Training Modules, developed with Equity Office, included:
 - Multi-Module [Panel Orientation](#) deck (English or Spanish; interactive, reading, videos)
 - Equity and Unconscious bias (including Austin context and Equity in Arts Philanthropy)
 - Panel Expectations, Program Guidelines, Rubrics, Cultural Tourism requirements
 - Technical Training for using the portal system to score applications
- 2-Hour Facilitated Zoom Meeting
- Paid opportunity (up to \$1,500)
 - \$300 – Training Completed; \$300 – Applications Reviewed/Scored; \$300/day – Panel Meetings

Cultural Arts Division – *Accessibility Strategy*

- Prior to the relief grants EDD issued during the pandemic (2020), no applications and supporting materials were issued in a non-English language.
- Since 2020, EDD has developed a Language Access plan to establish priorities for accessibility of resources, with an emphasis on the Spanish-speaking community. With every application we have launched since then, we have worked on continuous improvement in accessibility for our application, content, and support.
- **Note:** There is no City-wide comprehensive language plan, support, or established funding for content accessibility.

Here are some tactics we used with the Elevate Application launch to support potential applicants:

Application Assistance	Outreach and Marketing
<p>Weekly Open-Office Hours 10-Noon (hybrid)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 hours total • Virtual/In Person Workshops • 5 hours Virtual Info-Workshops 4 hours In-Person Info-Workshops • 30 Hours of Hybrid Drop-In Assistance • 3-hour session with ASL Interpreters • 15+ hours of dedicated Spanish support • 263 people assisted in public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press release in English and Spanish • Social media campaign in English and Spanish • Flyers at Cultural Centers & Libraries in English and Spanish • Spanish Language ads on KLZT-FM (through June 25) • Informational Webinar available on demand in English, Spanish, and with subtitles

We received 4 completed applications in Spanish for the Elevate Grant.

Cultural Arts Division – *2023 Cultural Funding Programs*

- Sourced from State of Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue from Austin's hotel and convention industries, awarded projects are marketed to potential and visiting tourists, conventions delegates, and local audiences by the Awardees and the City of Austin.
- Cultural Tourism Marketing classes offered at no cost to Awardees through Miles Partnership.
- Visit Austin & Cultural Arts Division Marketing Collaboration:
 - All grantees post events to Visit Austin
 - Digital and Print ads promoting City-funded activities

Next Steps for Improved Application Process Post Pilot-Year

- Newly hired Equity & Inclusion Coordinator supporting Economic Development Department's work.
- Hiring a consultant to evaluate our economic development workplan and vision to better support our programs.
- Hiring a consultant to evaluate impact/effectiveness of Pilot HOT Programs.
- City Council approved an increase to EDD FY24 budget for translation/language access support.
- Fall 2023: "Pilot Year Application Process Review" is underway to evaluate how we support accessibility needs, wraparound support for Spanish-language application processes, user experience, and other process improvements.



Questions?