



**Economic
Development**
CITY OF AUSTIN

Tourism Commission Meeting

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

October 11, 2023

Economic Development Department – *Leadership Team*



Sylnovia Holt-Rabb

Director

Economic Development Department



Van Jobe

Interim 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.



Overview

- Cultural Arts
 - Cultural Funding Review Process
 - Thrive
 - Elevate
 - Nexus
- Heritage Tourism
 - Heritage Preservation Grant
 - Heritage Preservation Grant Review Process
 - Tourism
- Improvements and Support
- Resources

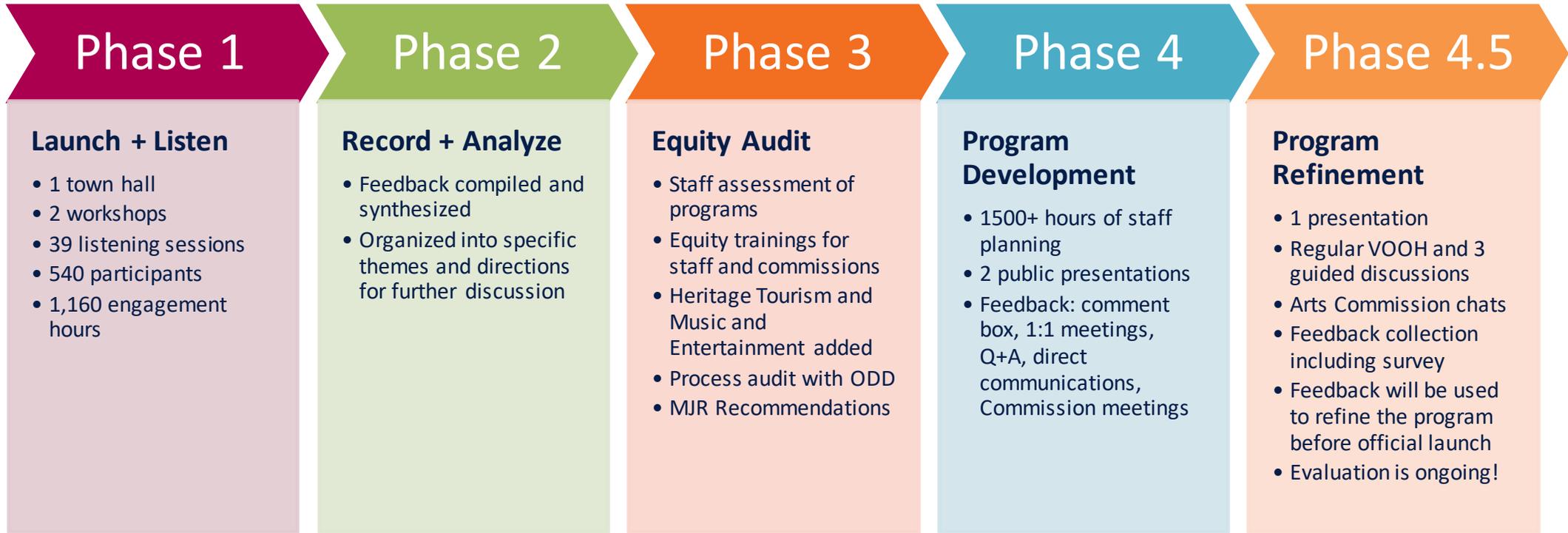
Cultural Arts



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Cultural Funding Review Process

2019



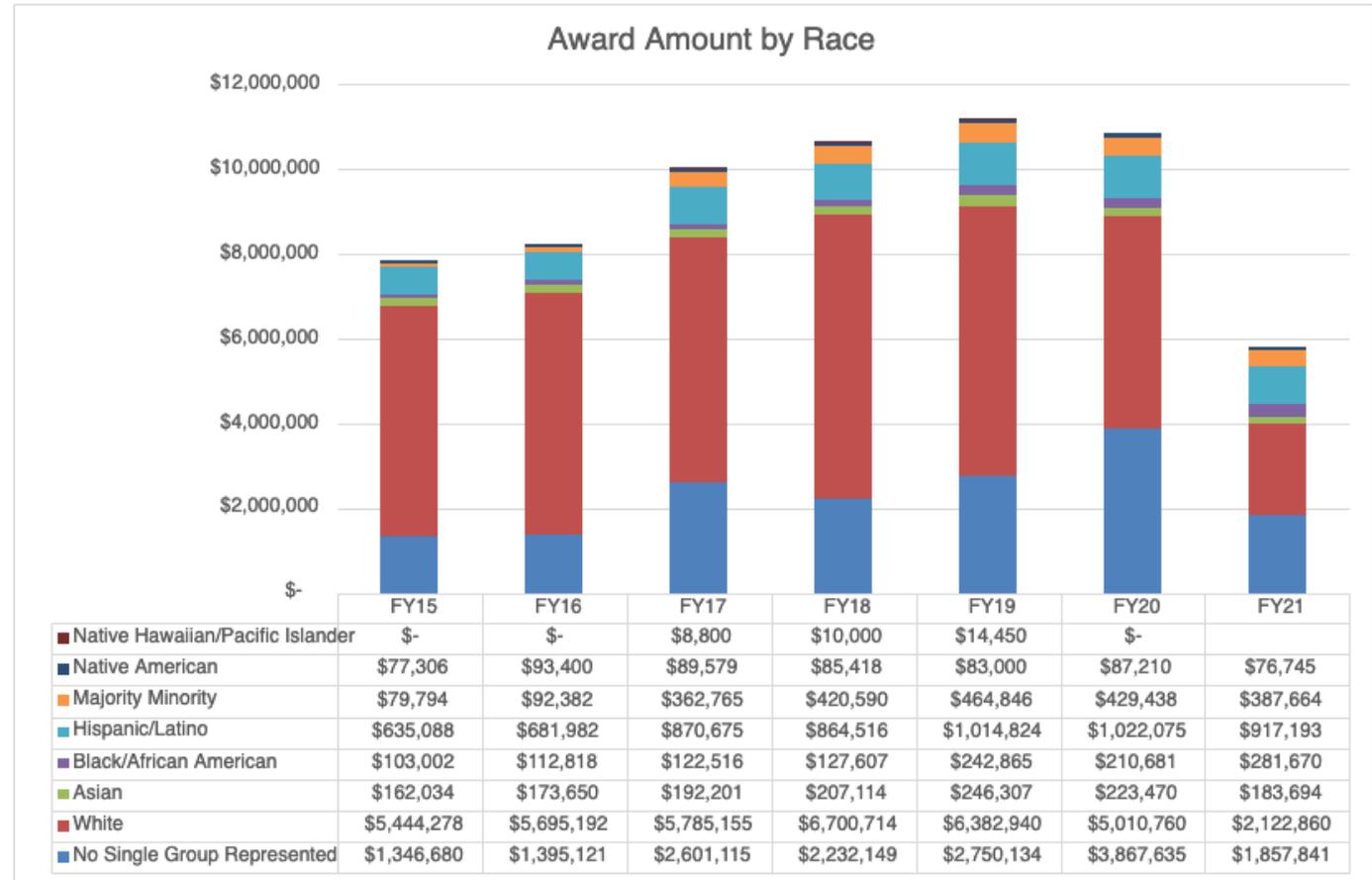
2022

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

Historical Systemic Inequities

Fiscal Year 2015 – Fiscal Year 2021 Cultural Funding Investment

- \$37 million: White (57%)
- \$16 million: No Single Group (25%)
- \$1.4 million: Asian (2%)
- \$1.2 million: Black (2%)
- \$6 million: LatinX (9%)
- \$2.2 million: Multi-Racial (3%)
- \$590k: Native American (1%)
- \$33k: Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (0.1%)



Holistic Funding Ecosystem

Nexus

Nurture new and emerging applicants by funding creative public projects developed through community activation and/or collaboration

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.



Thrive

Thrive 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.

www.AustinTexas.gov/Thrive

The Thrive program was audited and was found to be in compliance.



Thrive Application Summary

206 applications started

154 applications successfully submitted

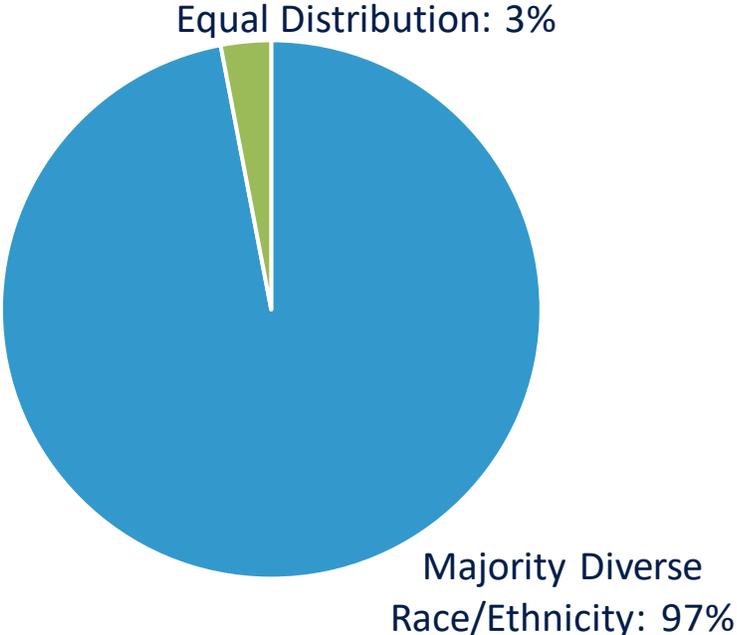
**146 applications met Eligibility requirements;
went to Readers**

59 applications went to full Panel Review

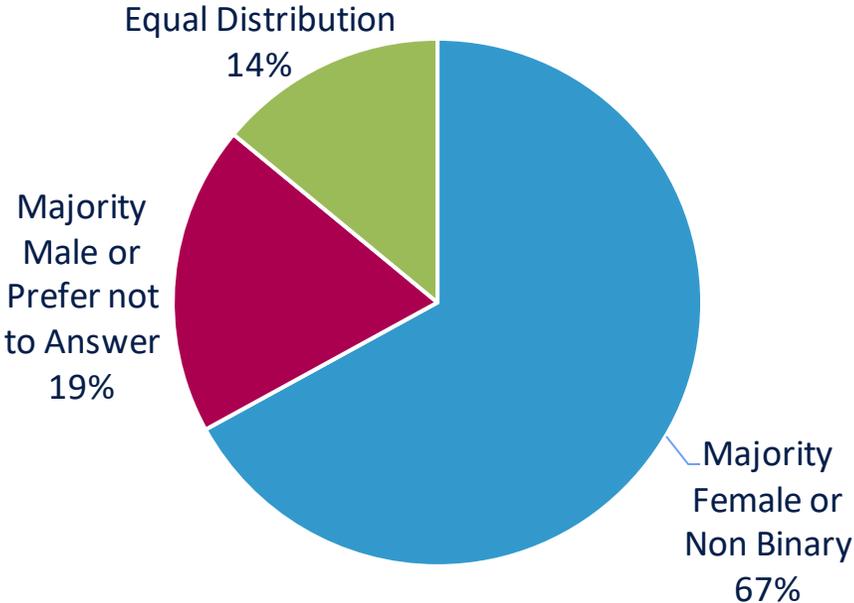
36 applications will receive awards (\$85-150k)

Thrive Grantee Data (36 Recommended)

Race & Ethnicity of Leadership



Gender of Leadership



- **28** returning applicants (78%)
- **22** Median Years in Operation (oldest org: 1974)
- **\$119k** Median Annual Revenue (range: \$20k - \$1.6m)

Elevate

Elevate seeks to provide funding in support of arts and cultural organizations, individual artists, and arts groups that produce culturally vibrant and diverse artistic content for the public.

www.AustinTexas.gov/Elevate

Elevate Highlights

5 Facilitators trained by June 20

Panel Training

- 100 people trained
- Orientation Materials (pre-work)
- 3 hrs long; Independently
 - 10 Group Training Meetings
- June 21-30
- 2 hours; led by Facilitator
- "Congratulations on a great rubric and how you addressed nuances...wow... I feel like you all listened very carefully to organization feedback through the years"

4 Spanish Applications Received

Applicant Assistance

- Weekly Open-Office Hours 10-Noon (hybrid)
 - 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

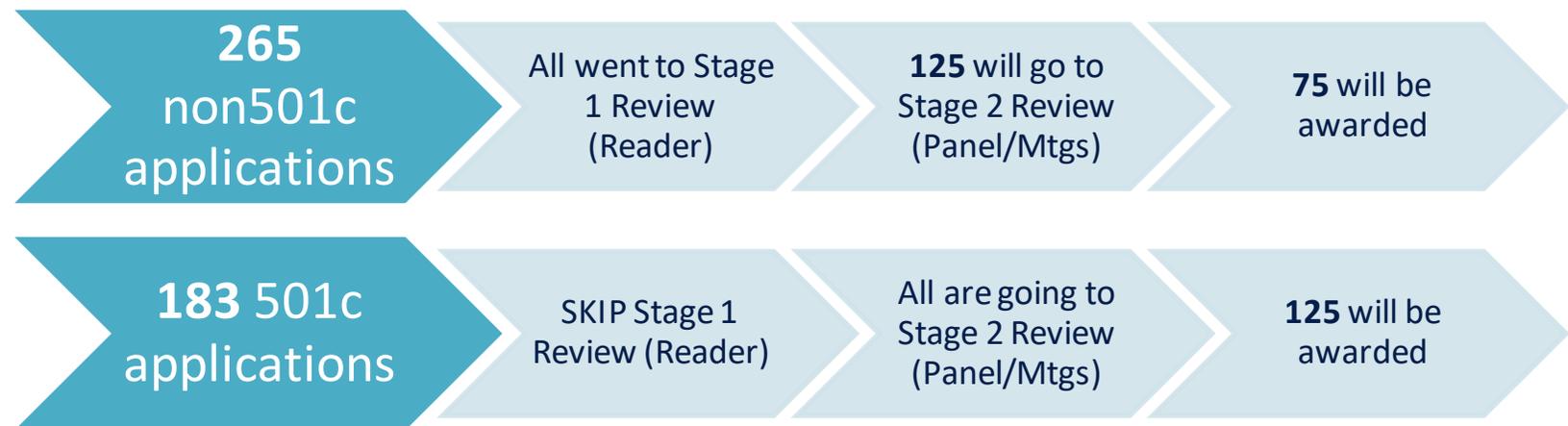
Elevate Application Summary

762 applications started

487 applications successfully submitted

448 Unique/ Eligible applications (duplicates removed)

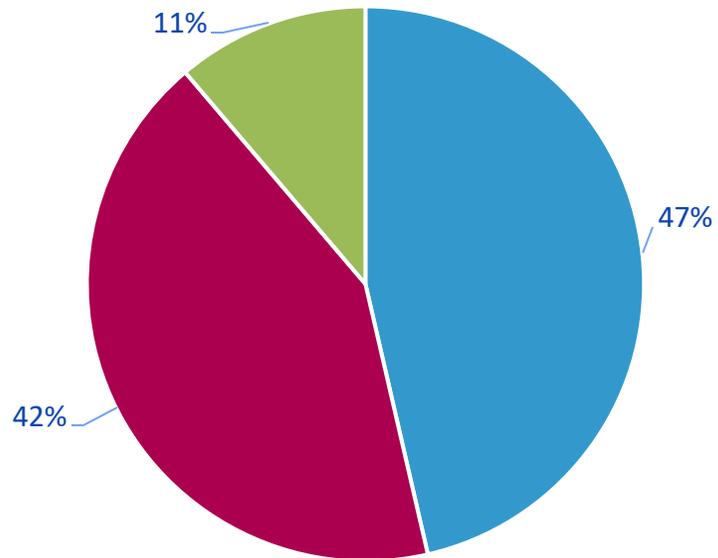
Review Process



Elevate Organization

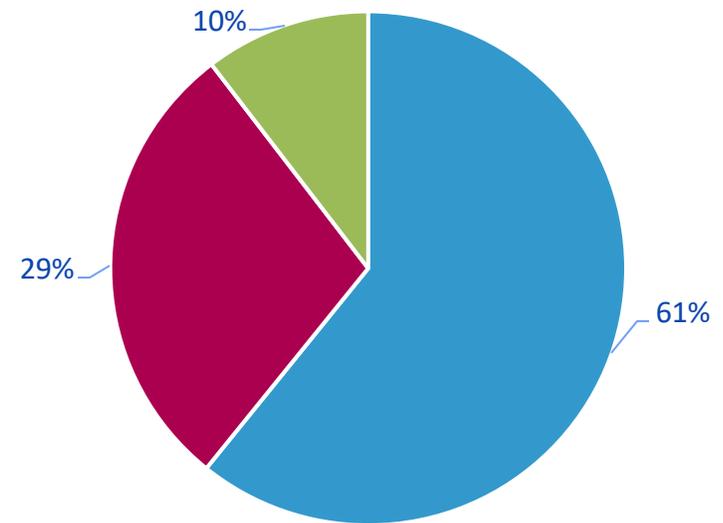
Recipient Data (125 Grantees)

Race/Ethnicity of Leadership



- Majority White or Prefer Not to Answer
- Majority Diverse Race/Ethnicity
- Equal Distribution

Gender of Leadership

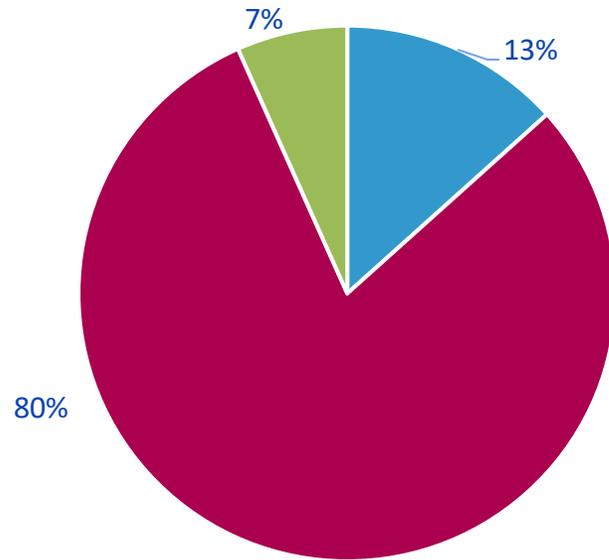


- Majority Female or Non-Binary
- Majority Male or Prefer not to Answer
- Equal Distribution

Elevate Individual/Creative Businesses

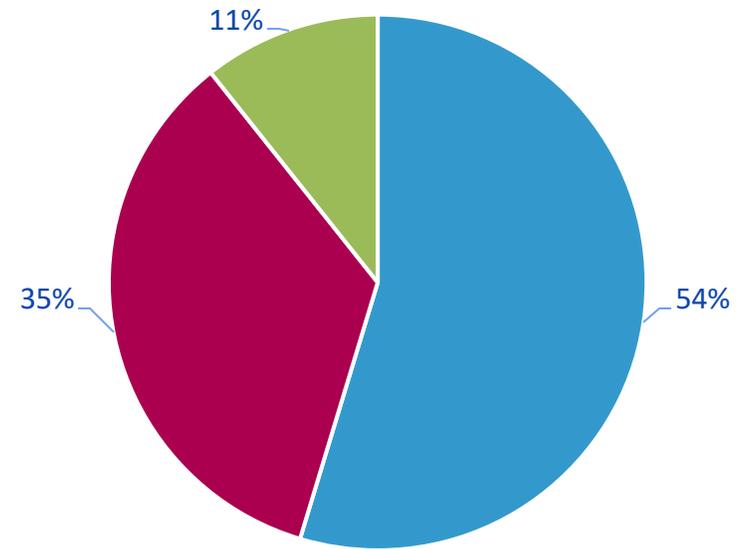
Recipient Data (75 Grantees)

Race/Ethnicity of Leadership



- Majority White or Prefer not to answer race or ethnicity
- Majority Diverse Race or Ethnicity
- Equally Led by White and Diverse Race or Ethnicities

Gender of Leadership



- Majority Female or Non-Binary
- Majority Male or Prefer not to Answer
- Equally led by Genders

Nexus

Nexus 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.

www.AustinTexas.gov/Nexus

Other Grants Announced Soon

Nexus

- 49 - \$5,000 Awards
- 191 Eligible Applications
- Staff reviewed applications

Arts Education Relief Grant

- 19 - \$25,000 Awards
- 58 Eligible Applications
- 8 External Panelists Reviewed Applications

State of the Arts 2023

- 37% of nonresident overnight leisure travelers in Texas engage in cultural tourism
- 25% of all travelers engage in cultural tourism
- [2023 State of the Arts Report PDF](#)

Sampling of Cultural Funding Recipients

Thrive

- AZTLAN Dance Company
- Ballet East
- Capitol View Arts
- Great Promise for American Indians
- Mexic-Arte Museum

Elevate

- Art Spark Texas
- Austin Tejano Music Alliance
- Blue Lapis Light
- Spectrum Theatre Company
- ZACH Theatre

Nexus

- Asian in Austin
- Austin Sister Cities International
- Comal Theater Group
- Connie Arismendi
- Tuff Enuff: The Real Story of the Fabulous Thunderbirds

Demand for Funding

- 795 applications received across all three pilot programs
- 285 applications funded
- 36% of applications funded



National League of Cities

- 2023 City Cultural Diversity Award recipient
- Awarded for:
 - Developing innovative programs demonstrating cultural diversity
 - Promoting inclusive resident involvement
- 2nd Place for population of 500,001 and above
- For the Cultural Funding Review Process
- Evaluated on:
 - Creativity
 - Community Impact
 - Program scope



CITY OF AUSTIN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release Date: Apr. 07, 2023

Contact: Morgan Messick [512-974-7636](tel:512-974-7636)

Contact information: Morgan Messick, Morgan.Messick@austintexas.gov, [512-974-7636](tel:512-974-7636)

AUSTIN, TX – The City of Austin Economic Development Department received an award from [The National League of Cities](#) for excellence in its 2023 Cultural Diversity Awards program.

The award honors community leadership in developing creative and effective programs to improve cultural diversity. Submissions for the program were grouped by population and evaluated for creativity, community impact, and program scope. The City of Austin was awarded second place in the population of 500,001+ category for its innovative program: Cultural Funding Review Process.

The Economic Development Department's rigorous three-year Cultural Funding Review Process involved deep community conversations and self-analysis to dismantle racist institutional systems, re-imagine what transformational change looks like in the local cultural ecosystem, and re-define the City's role in supporting culture more equitably. The new funding programs that grew out of this Cultural Funding Review Process signal a necessary paradigm shift in the City's investment in arts and culture.

"Over the years, Austin has gained an international reputation for its vibrant cultural scene. At the same time, our city has seen a cultural divide. If this is left unabated it can damage the diversity of our cultural ecosystem and city. Our team has worked hard to re-imagine what a thriving cultural system looks like and what our role is to support it. The Cultural Funding Review process consisted of 36 months of engaging with Austin's creative community with a willingness to embrace the change that will allow Austin to live up to its reputation as a world-class creative capital for all. We are honored to receive an award from the National League of Cities acknowledging this process that highlights our continued work to build a more equitable Austin." - City of Austin Economic Development Director, Synovia Holt-Rabb.

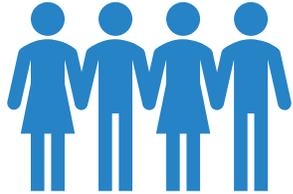


Heritage Tourism



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Revisions to the Heritage Preservation Grant Guidelines



2017: Interagency Visitor Impact Task Force & 2018 Heritage Grant Working Group



People-centered preservation that honors the full diversity of the ever-evolving American story – *National Trust for Historic Preservation*



City of Austin Equity Statement:
Strategic Direction 2023



2023-24: Heritage Tourism Division Annual Assessment and Historic Preservation Plan Update

Heritage Preservation Grant Review Process

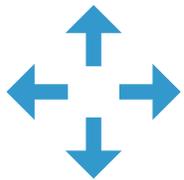


Heritage Preservation Grant Guidelines: www.AustinTexas.gov/Heritage-Preservation-Grant

Heritage Preservation Grant Overview

Per [Visitor Impact Task Force](#) (2017) and [Heritage Grant Working Group](#) (2018) recommendations, Resolution No. [20181004-033](#) allocation of funding:

- **70%** for City of Austin historic facilities and sites in accordance with Texas Tax Code Ch. 351;
- **15%** reserved for potential future historic acquisitions approved by Council that would be frequented by tourists and convention delegates;
- **15%** for the Heritage Preservation Grant.



The [Heritage Preservation Grant](#) promotes tourism by **restoring** historic sites, **and through planning, educational, or marketing projects**. Projects must have a historic designation, benefit tourism, and tell inclusive stories on historic places rooted in Austin's history and heritage.

Heritage Preservation Grant Review Process

- Interdepartmental Review: Economic Development Department, Parks & Recreation Department, Planning Department Historic Preservation Office, External Panel Review
- Architectural Review Committee (capital proposals only)
- Historic Landmark Commission

Recommendations are reviewed by the Historic Landmark Commission who make recommendations to City Council.

City Council approves Historic Preservation Fund uses over the City Manager's Spending Authority.

- [FY23 Heritage Grant Awards](#)
- [FY21 Heritage Grant Awards](#)
- [FY20 Heritage Grant Awards](#)

Program Highlights

- Awards: \$30K to \$250K
- Historic Designation Required
- Non-profit and For-profit eligible
- No match required
- Tourism Marketing Training
- *Optional Eligible Expenses:*
 - Project Insurance
 - 10% PM Fee, not to exceed \$10K (for capital projects)

Project Types Supported

- Creative spaces (venue, theater, museum, or gallery)
- Historic districts
- Historic heritage sites
- Parkland, greenspace, or trails
- Small businesses

2023 Heritage Preservation Grant

Does not include \$7.9M contributed to City-owned historic sites.
 Read about the [Heritage Preservation Grant Guidelines](#)

Application Status

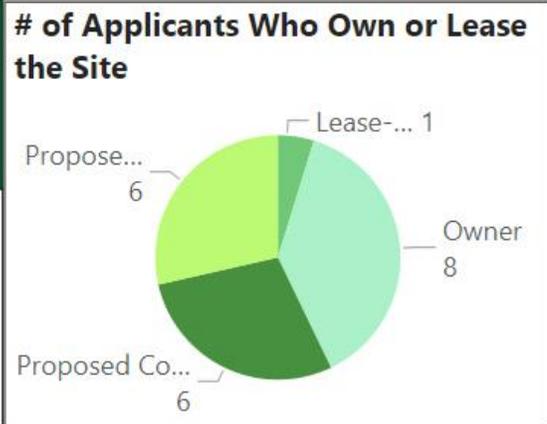
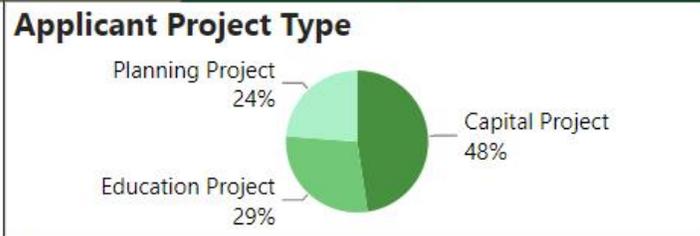
- Awarded
- Declined

last updated: 10/5/2023

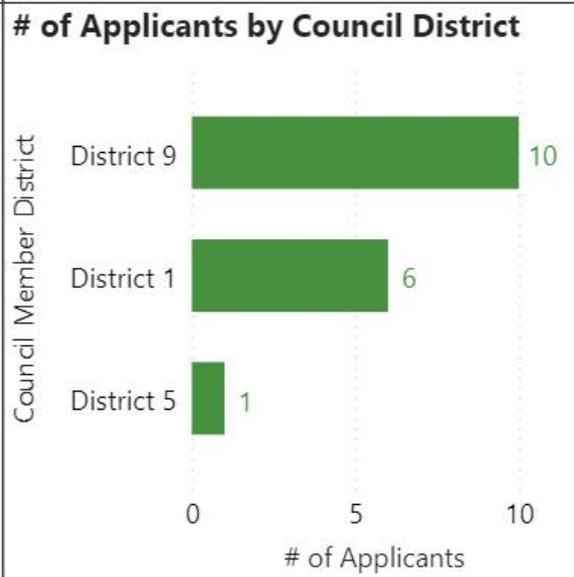
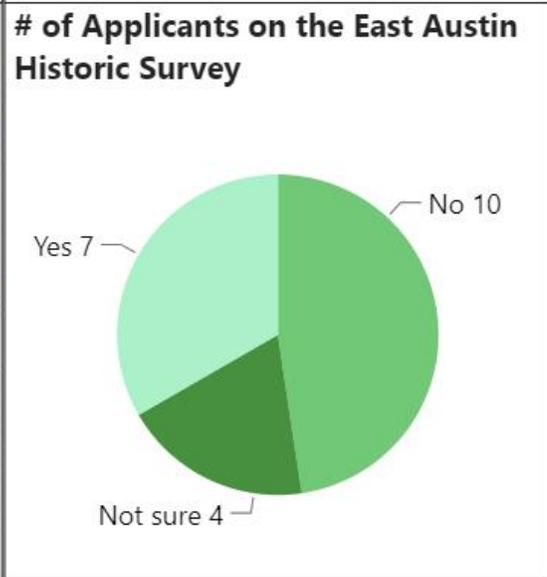
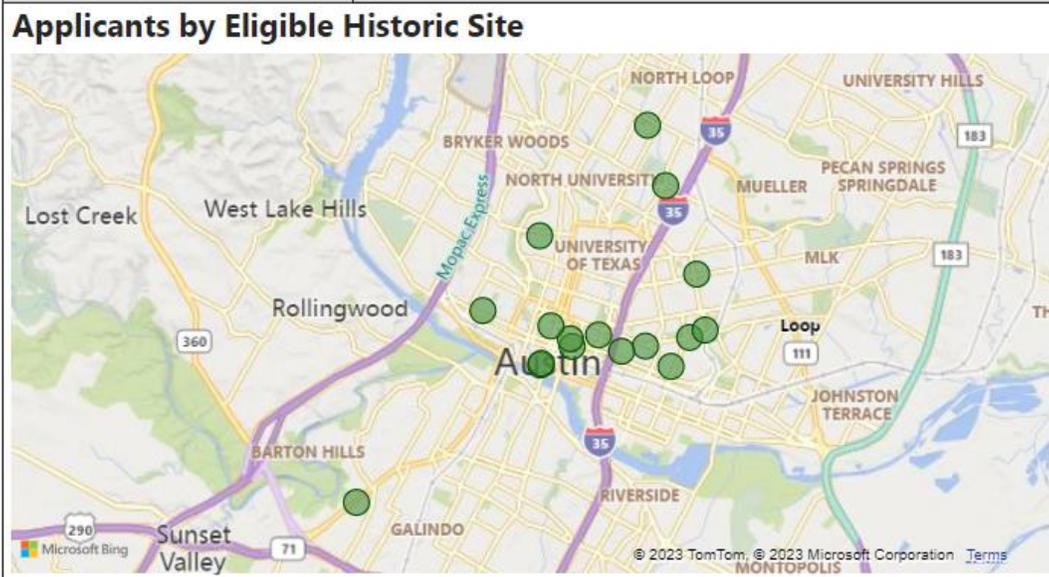


\$2.2M

Total Amount Awarded



Facility Type of Site Specific Applications	# of Applicants
Creative Space	6
District	2
Historic Heritage Site	4
Parkland, Greenspace or Trail	3
Small Business	2



FY23 Heritage Preservation Grant [Dashboard](#)

Heritage Preservation Grant Project Profile



RESTORED and New Tourism Anchor: **Uptown Sports, 1200 E Sixth St**

Heritage Preservation Grant Project Profile



REHABILITATED and New Event Space: Pease Park Conservancy Tudor Cottage, 1100 Kingsbury St

Heritage Preservation Grant Project Profile



ADA Accessible Ramp for Cultural Destination: **Laguna Gloria, 3809 W 35th St**

Historic Preservation Fund Project Profile

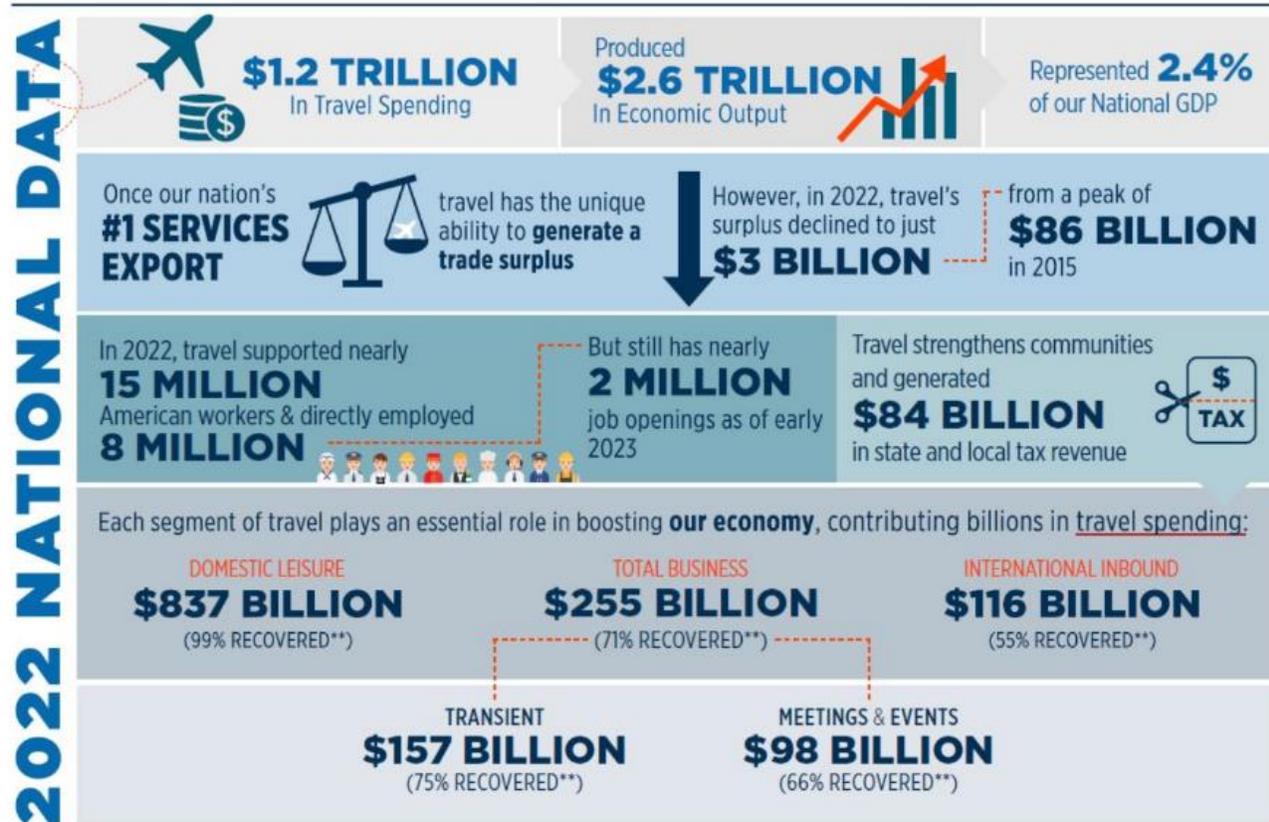


City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department RESTORATION (Phase I):

Repurposing of the Decommissioned Seaholm Intake Structure for future public use and recreation

Note: FY23 Approved Historic Preservation Fund included funding for a Downtown Historic Survey

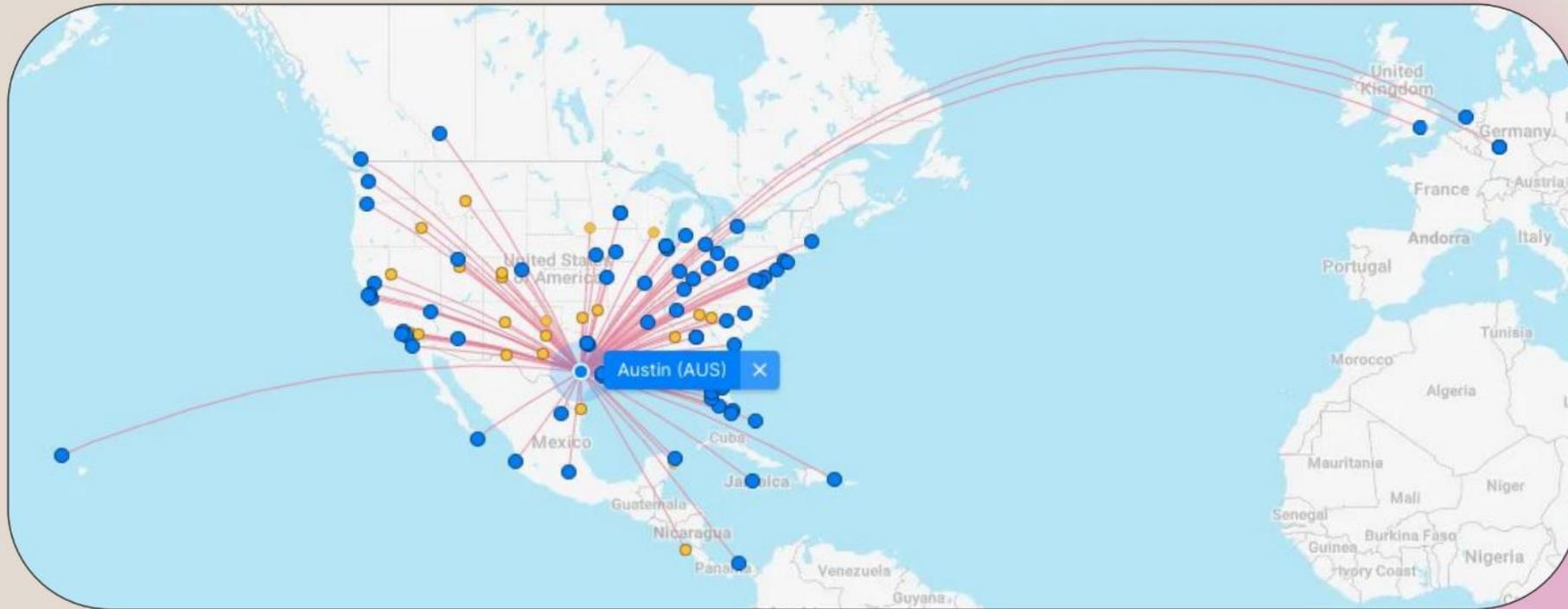
When The Travel Industry Thrives, America Thrives



According to the **US Travel Association**, domestic leisure travelers took nearly **2 million trips**, spending **\$837 billion** in the US economy in 2022

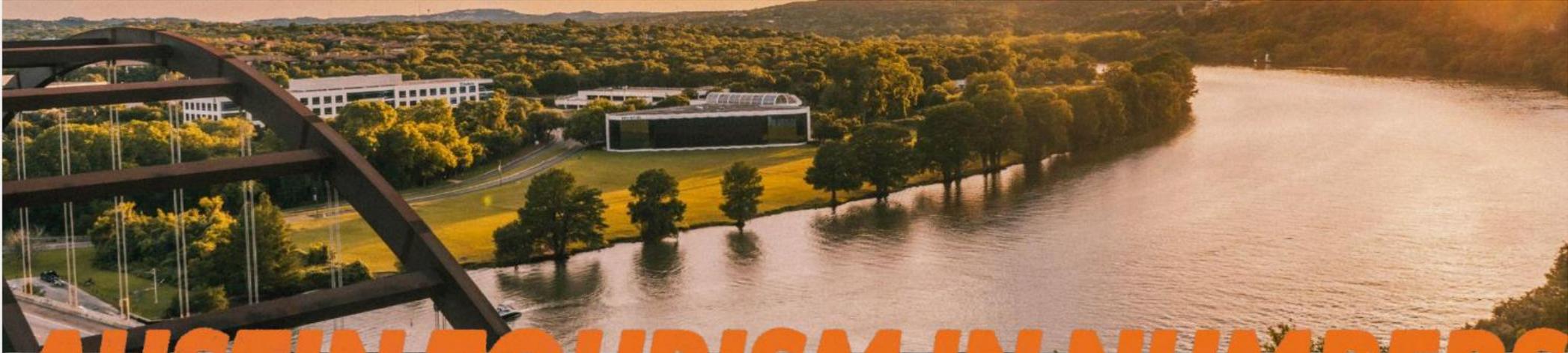
Expanding Flight Services

Expanding Flight Service



Source: Tourism Marketing Training Digital Acceleration Program Presentation by Visit Austin

Austin Tourism in Numbers



AUSTIN TOURISM IN NUMBERS

- Total Annual Visitors (MSA): **23.7 million (2022)**
- Annual Visitor Spending (Economic Impact): **\$10.2 billion (2022)**
- Tourism Supported Leisure and Hospitality Jobs: **146,000 | #4 Employer (2022)**
- State and Local Taxes Generated by Tourism: **\$1.04 billion (2022)**
- Hotel Occupancy Tax produces an estimated **\$21 million** to support local Arts and Preservation Efforts

Source: Tourism Marketing Training Digital Acceleration Program Presentation by Visit Austin

Improvements and Support

- 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.
- Hired two consultants to support a process improvement project, looking at our software options and our internal project processes.
- Requested and received an increase to Economic Development Department Fiscal Year 2024 budget for translation / language access support.
- Planning process underway to better address accessibility needs and implement a stronger baseline for wraparound support for Spanish-language application processes.
- Launched Tourism Marketing Training Digital Acceleration Program with Miles Partnership for awardees in English and Spanish
- Training our review panelists with tourism subject matter experts to ensure we are looking at applications from that angle.

Resources Slides

- **Historic Landmark Commission, August 2023**
[Heritage Preservation Grant Briefing](#)
- **Historic Landmark Commission, April 2023**
[Fiscal Year 2023 Heritage Grant Project Briefing](#)
- **Audit and Finance Committee, June 2022**
[Heritage Preservation Grant Guidelines Update](#)
[Parks and Recreation Department Allocation of Historic Preservation Fund](#)
- **African American Resource Advisory Commission, June 2022**
City of Austin Economic Development Department Cultural Funding Review Process ([audio here](#))
- **LGBTQIA+ Quality of Life Advisory Commission, July 2022**
[FY23 Cultural Funding Programs / EDD Hot Fund Updates](#)



Resources Slides

- **Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Commission, June 2022**
[Hotel Occupancy Tax Funded Programs – Economic Development Department](#)
- **Asian American Quality of Life Commission, June 2022**
[HOT Programs Update by EDD](#)
- **Arts Commission, April 2022**
[Cultural Arts Funding Review Process Update](#)





Questions?