



# Funding Programs Update

Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment | January 7, 2026

# History of Cultural Funding in Austin

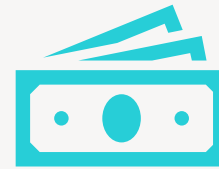


- **Since 1981:** Funded through Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) authorized by state law
- **Impact:** Over \$125M invested in 870+ artists and arts organizations
- **2019 Snapshot:** 5 staff managed 600 contracts in one year
- **Transparency:** Explore all HOT Cultural Funding recipients on the City's [Open Data Portal](#)
- **2003:** Cultural Funding moved from Parks & Recreation to Economic Development Department
- **2013–Present:** Arts Commission collaborates with staff to update and approve program guidelines
- **2019:** Austin Live Music Fund Established through Ordinance No [20190919-149](#)

# Impetus to Revise Funding Guidelines



**2017:** Cultural Funding  
Program Responsiveness  
Working Group



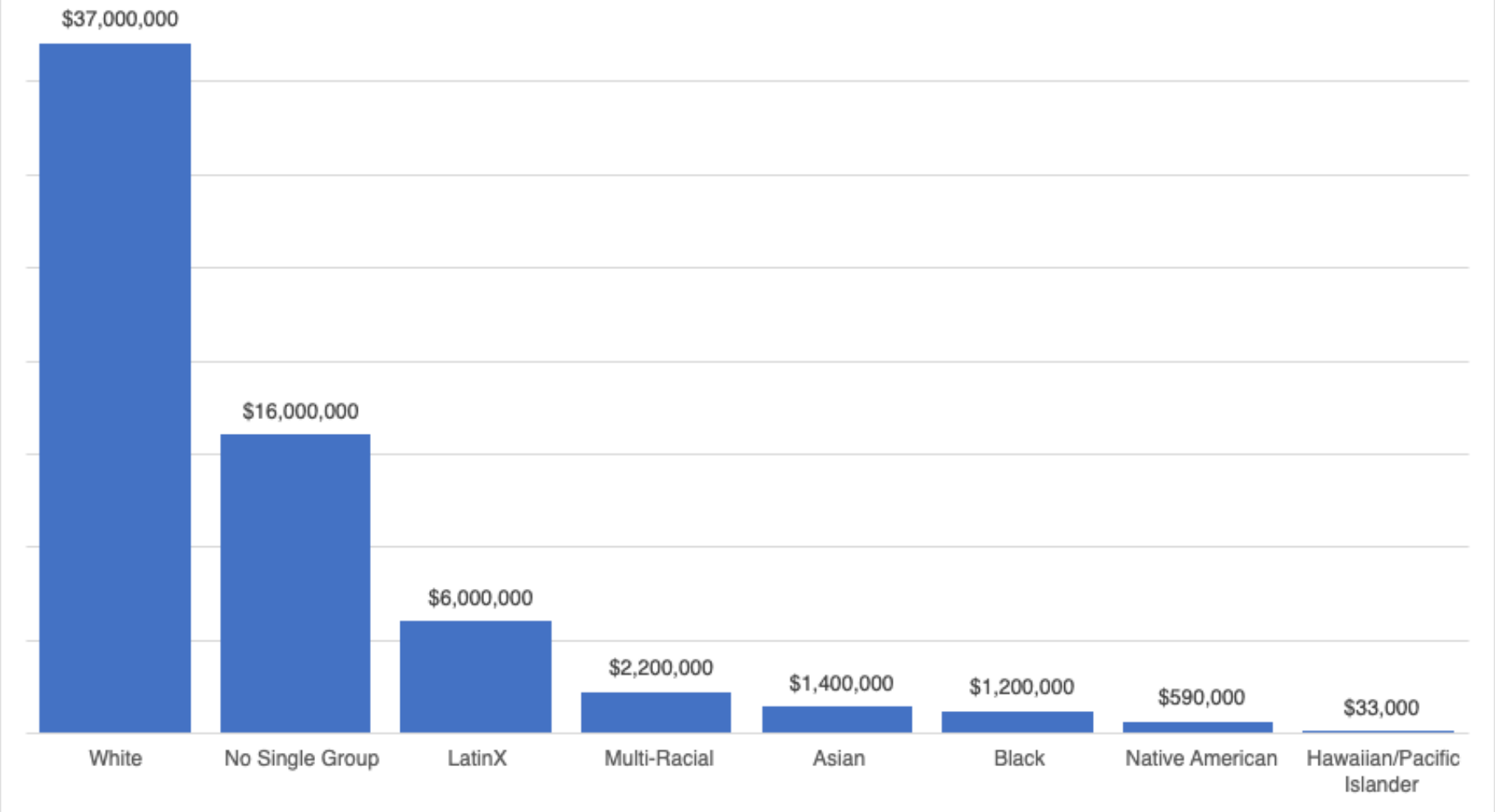
**2018:** Funding cuts for the  
first time (11%)



**COA Equity Statement:**  
Strategic Direction 2023

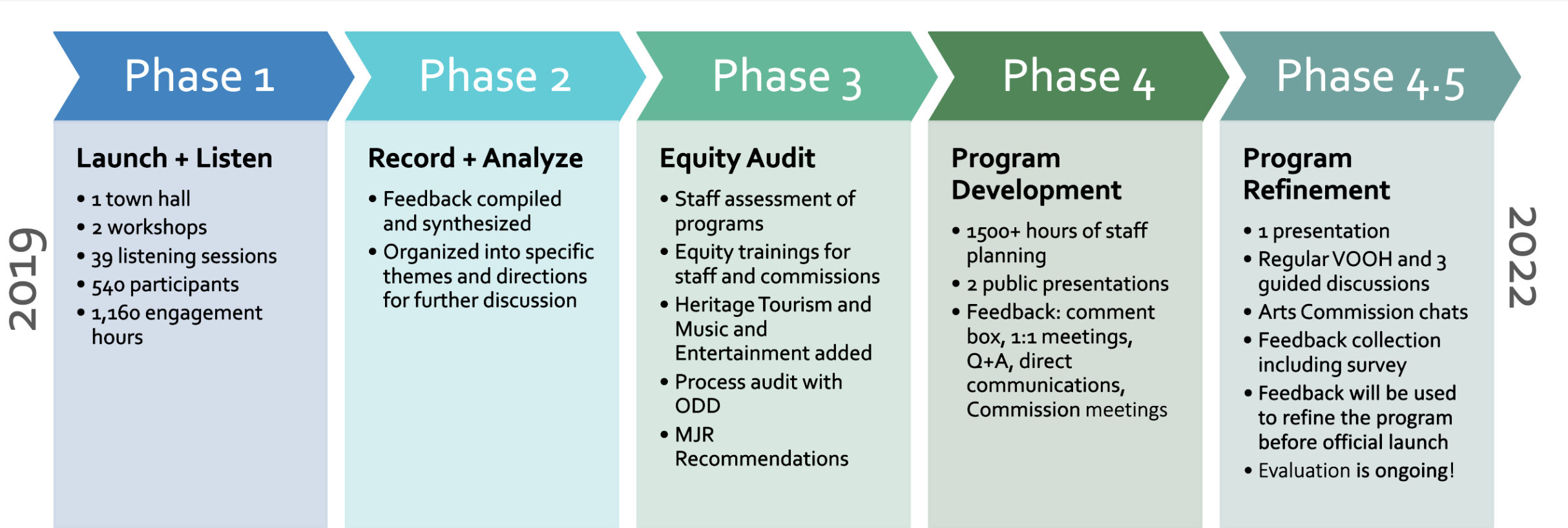
***Problem:*** Address 50 years of inequitable funding distribution.

# Concerns of Inequitable Distribution\*



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

# Cultural Funding Review Process



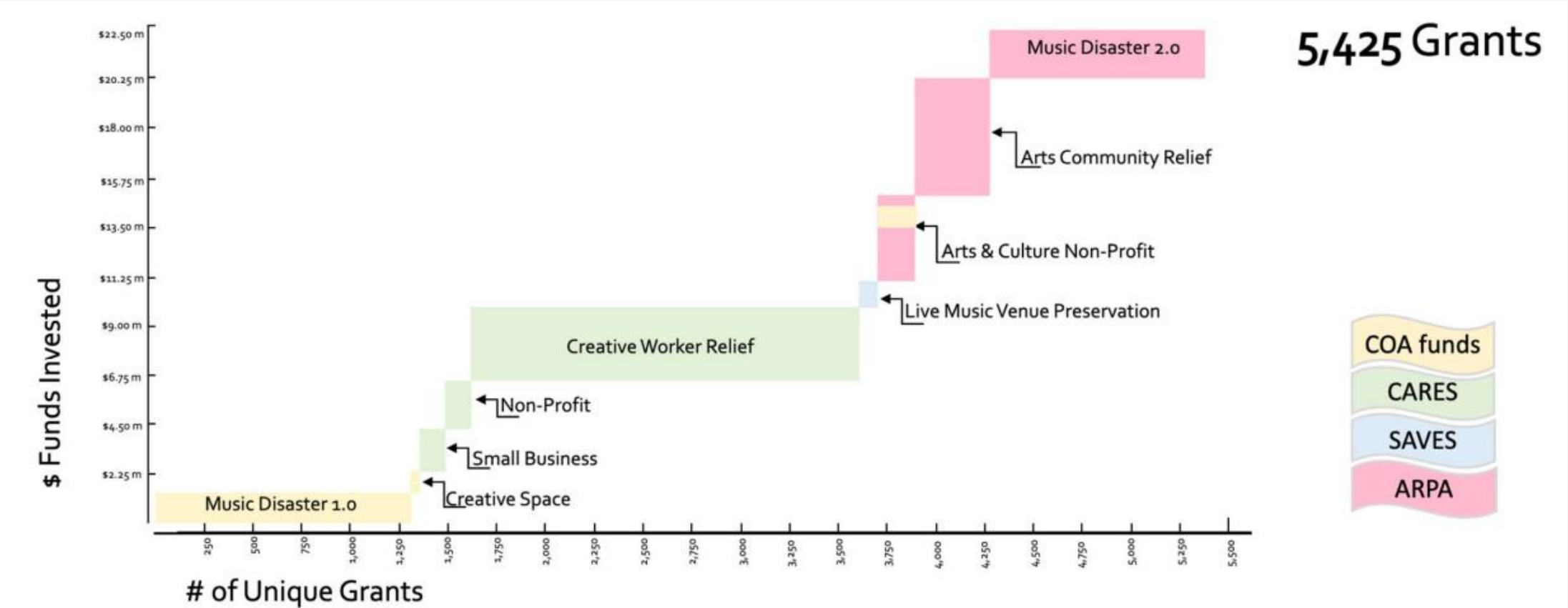
Feedback informed every aspect of program development including program priorities, application scoring, rubrics, and process improvements.

# Creative Sector Pandemic Relief 2020-2022



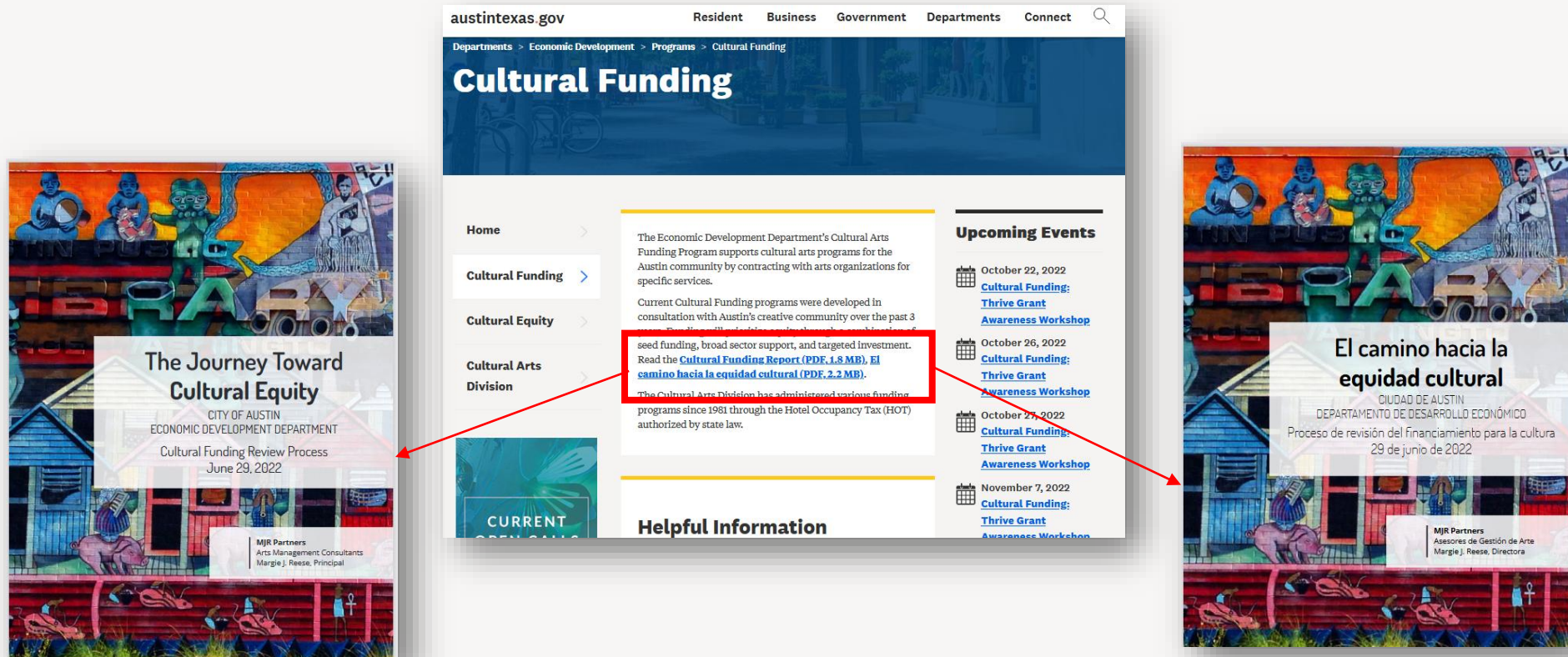
\$23,042,284 Funded

5,425 Grants



# Cultural Funding Review Process Report

- June 29, 2022 – Arts Commission Approved Pilot Program Guidelines
- Summer 2022 QOL Commissions and Council briefed



The screenshot shows the City of Austin website's Cultural Funding page. The main content area includes a navigation menu on the left with options for Home, Cultural Funding, Cultural Equity, and Cultural Arts Division. The main text describes the Cultural Arts Funding Program and mentions a report. A red box highlights the text: "Read the [Cultural Funding Report \(PDF, 1.8 MB\)](#), [El camino hacia la equidad cultural \(PDF, 2.2 MB\)](#)." To the right, there is a section for "Upcoming Events" listing workshops and grants. Two informational graphics are overlaid on the page: one on the left titled "The Journey Toward Cultural Equity" and one on the right titled "El camino hacia la equidad cultural". Both graphics feature colorful illustrations and text about the review process. Red arrows point from the highlighted text in the website screenshot to the two informational graphics.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/cultural-funding>

# Holistic Funding Ecosystem



Nexus

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

Elevate

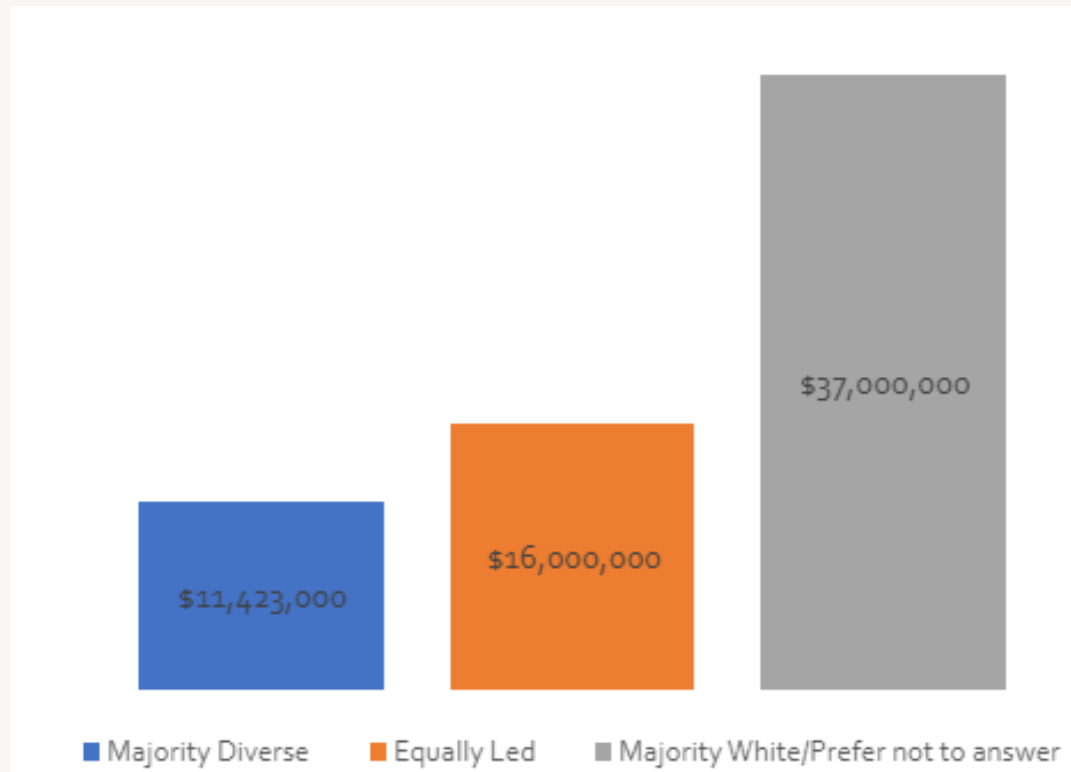
Creative and administrative expenses of cultural producers that amplify equity and prioritize inclusive programming.

Thrive

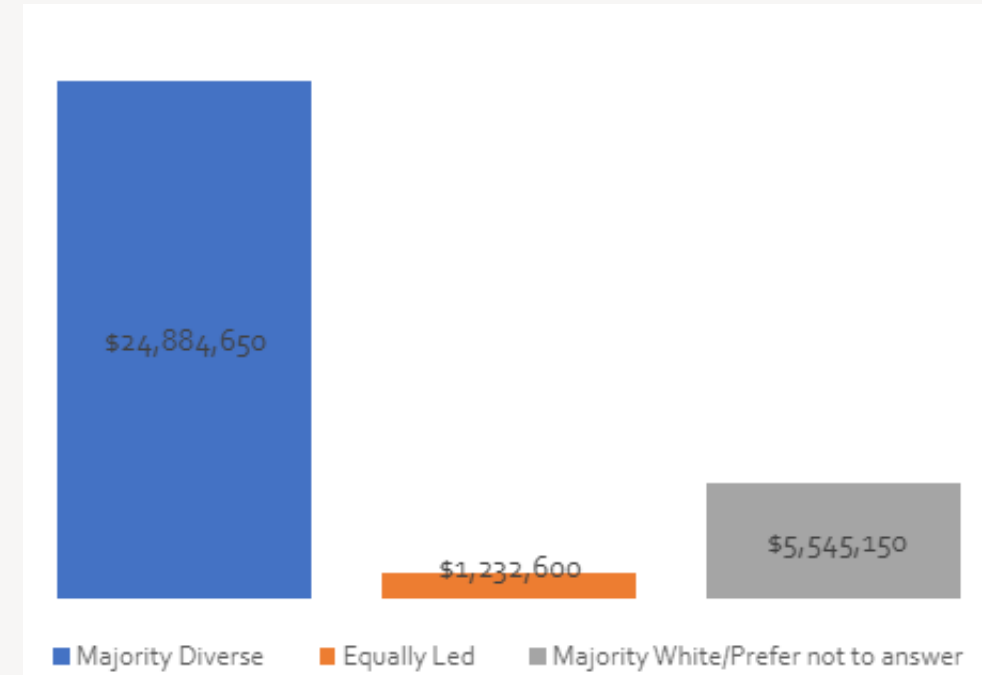
Focused investment to sustain and grow arts organizations that are deeply rooted in, and reflective of Austin's diverse cultures.

# Pilot Program Investment Outcomes

Grantee Investment by Demographics  
FY2015 - 2021



Grantee Investment by Demographics  
FY 2023 - 2024





**Constant Change!**




- Established February 24, 2025
- AACME focuses on sustaining and growing Austin's creative sector
- AACME acts as a central hub for City's cultural ecosystem and provides resources (funding, institutional support, special permits, access to cultural spaces).

# The Creative Reset: Phase I



AACMEs  
Engagement  
Approach &  
Analysis



**Six-Part, Iterative Feedback Cycle:** Engagement unfolded in six steps — from historic data review to public presentations. Community input shaped each stage, making it a co-creation with Austin’s creative community.

**Multiple Engagement Channels:** 1:1 meetings, surveys, citywide sessions, focus groups, and community-hosted events where ACME listened.

**Community-Led Contributions:** Draft guidelines were co-written with community members, and their ideas were directly incorporated.

**Extended Timelines:** Engagement periods were lengthened based on community requests.

**AI + Human Analysis:** Advanced tools identified themes and provided an analysis of all data collected; staff ensured context and nuance were preserved. [Scan QR Code or click this link to view community feedback analysis.](#)

# The Creative Reset - <https://publicinput.com/a88770>



Spring-Summer 2025 Community Engagement



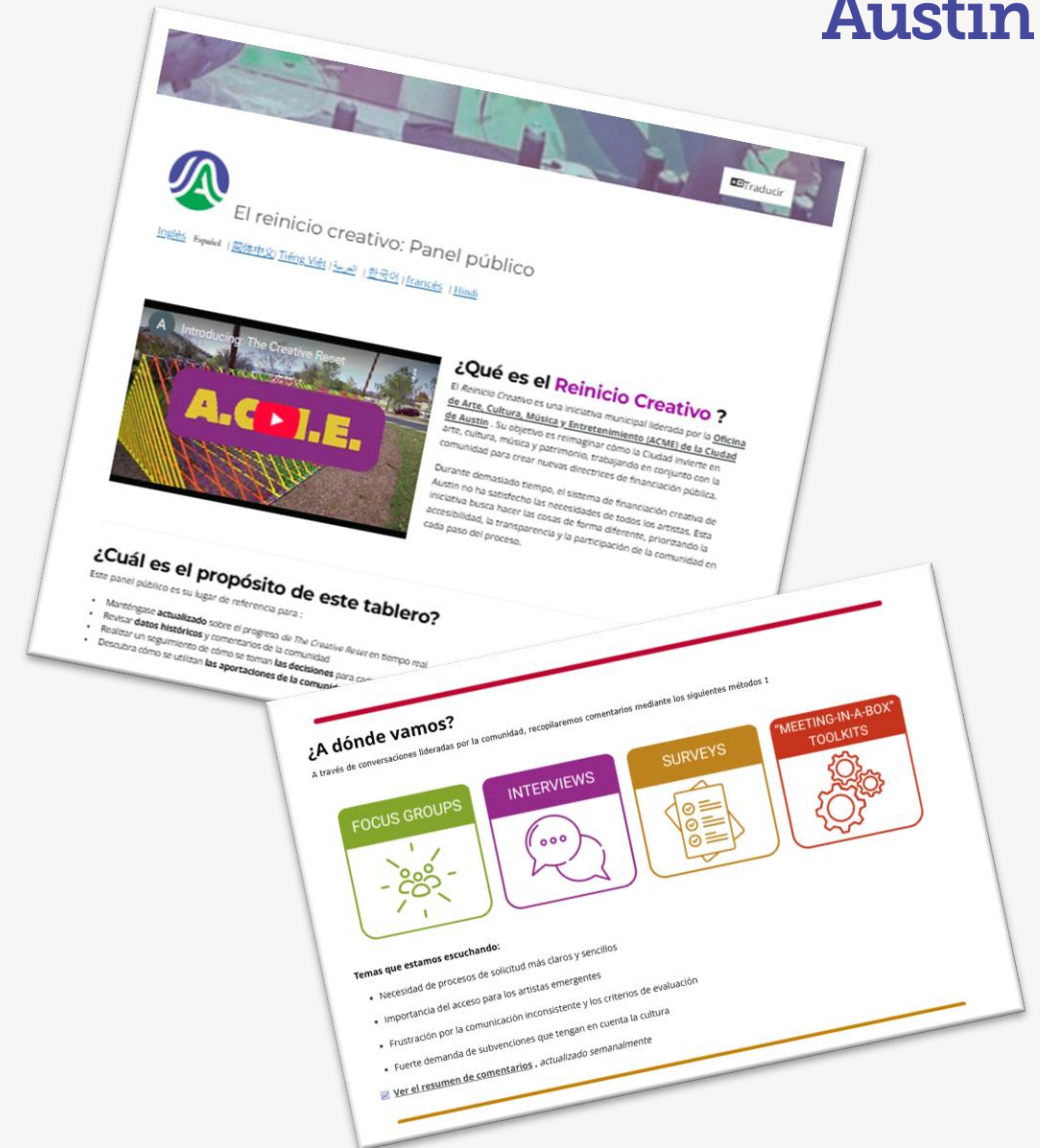
Phase 1 Goal: to improve funding programs



11,801 Comments



Updated AACME Funding Programs Guidelines

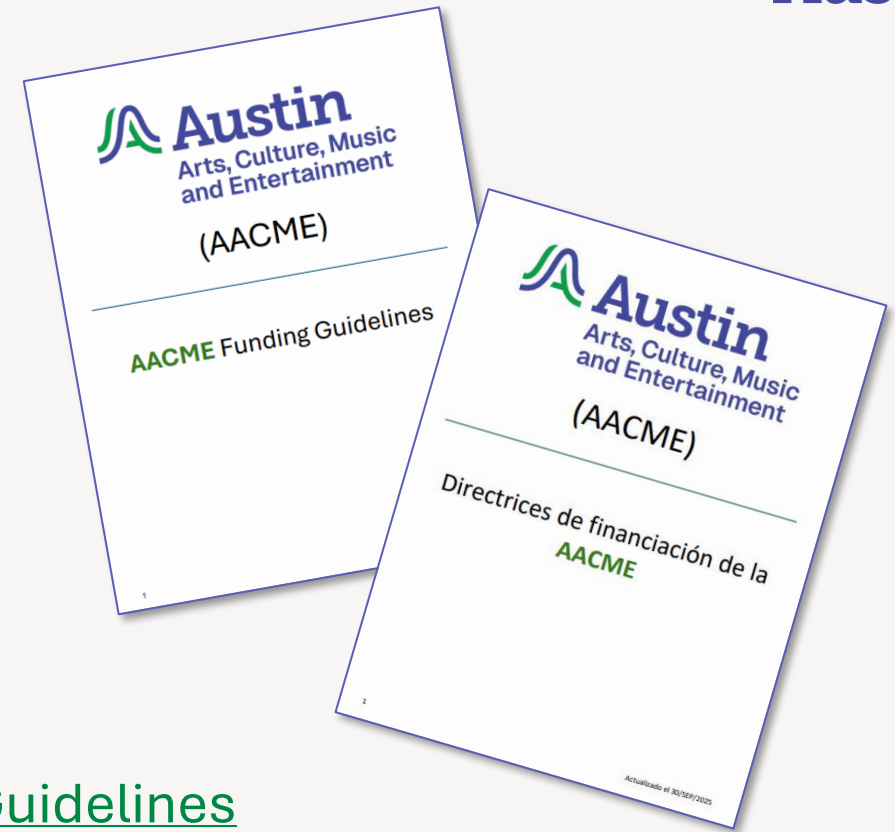


# Funding Programs: Guidelines

- Clearer **definitions**
- Clearer **criteria**
- Simplified **processes**
- More accessible **resources** across all programs
- Learn More: [austintexas.gov/acme/grants-funding](https://austintexas.gov/acme/grants-funding)

[English Guidelines](#)

[Spanish Guidelines](#)



# AACME Enhancements



- **Unified Structure:** All funding programs consolidated into one division
- **Stronger Connections:** Cultural Centers & staff better integrated with Funding team
- **Community Engagement:**
  - Funding staff tabled at MACC Día de los Muertos event
  - Hosted workshops at Asian American Resource Center
- **Language Access Leadership:**
  - Collaboration with The Long Center, City-approved interpretation vendors, and internal specialists
  - Services exceeded baseline requirements and incorporated feedback from Arts Commission & Hispanic Quality of Life Commission
- **Responsive Language Choices:** Adopted “subsidio” instead of “subvención” based on feedback from Spanish-speaking community and bilingual AACME staff

# AACME Funding Program Timeline



# Funding Programs: Funds Available



## Austin Live Music Fund

- \$5,000 - \$70,000
- Music Industry (musicians, independent promoters, venues)

**\$7 Million**  
~370 awards



## Creative Space Assistance Program

- \$60,000
- Commercial creative spaces

**\$1.6 Million**  
~25 awards



## Elevate

- Up to \$30,000 - \$80,000
- Arts organizations, individual artists, creative businesses

**\$13 Million**  
~250 awards



## Heritage Preservation Grant

- \$50,000 - \$250,000
- Preservation projects and activities

**\$3 Million**  
~25 awards

# Funding Programs: Application Status



- **2,085 Intake** Forms Submitted (2,065 EN; 20 SP)

		Eligibility Forms Sent	Eligibility Forms Submitted	Eligible <i>(Application sent)</i>	Ineligible <i>(No Application sent)</i>	Applications Submitted
Austin Live Music Fund	EN	1,377	<b>1,111</b>	991	120	<b>806</b>
	SP	16	<b>6</b>	4	2	<b>3</b>
Creative Space Assistance	EN	299	<b>138</b>	72	66	<b>64</b>
	SP	10	0	0	0	0
Elevate	EN	1,399	<b>1,060</b>	855	205	<b>680</b>
	SP	25	<b>14</b>	9	5	7
Heritage Preservation	EN	247	<b>125</b>	67	58	<b>46</b>
	SP	8	1	1	0	0
<b>ALL PROGRAMS TOTAL</b>		<b>3,381</b>	<b>2,455</b>	<b>1,999</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>1,607</b>

# Funding Programs: Application Assistance



- **10 Workshops** (6 In Person; 4 Virtual)
  - **168 Attendees** (18 total hours)
  - Opportunities in English, Spanish, ASL; Recordings on website
- **14 Open Office Hours** sessions (virtual and in-person)
  - **362 Attendees** (364 total hours)
- **142+ 1:1 Meetings** via Bookings
  - **158 Attendees** (71 hours)
- **20+ Community Events**
  - **2,050 attendees** (40 total hours)
- **The Long Center:** Email [ApplicationHelp@thelongcenter.org](mailto:ApplicationHelp@thelongcenter.org); (512) 457-5161 (M-F, 9-11am)
- **17,000+ Direct Messages** sent to help shepherd potential applicants through pipeline

**493 hours**  
of assistance

**2,738 people**  
assisted

# Language Access Highlights



**Goal:** Ensure equitable access for Spanish-speaking and multilingual communities

## Key Actions:

- **Professional Translation:** Application forms, guidelines, notifications, feedback
- **Quality Review:** Native Spanish-speaking staff at AACME (including MACC) and The Long Center
- **Multilingual Templates:** Applications in **5 languages** (English, Spanish, Korean, Simplified Chinese, Vietnamese)
- **Website Translation:** Available in **14 languages** via City auto-translate tool
- **Spanish Access:**
  - Applications offered in Spanish
  - Recorded info sessions in English & Spanish (on-demand)
  - Miles Partnership videos interpreted into Spanish (for awardees)
- **Interpretation & Support:**
  - Live workshops with Spanish interpretation (incl. full Spanish workshop on Nov 18)
  - Weekly open office hours with interpretation
  - Bilingual technical assistance (phone, email, in-person)
  - Temporary bilingual staff hired for application support

# Continuous Improvement



## Areas for Enhancement

- **Outreach Timeline:** Limited promotion time may have impacted reach to Spanish-speaking and other LEP communities.
  - Action: Extend outreach timelines for future cycles.
- **Translation Quality Assurance:** Minor inconsistencies identified in vendor translations regarding terminology preferences.
  - Action: Implement enhanced quality control processes.
- **Vendor Coordination:** Need for strengthened coordination between AACME staff and Long Center translation vendors to ensure consistent terminology and formatting.
  - Action: Now there is only one Division Manager as point person holding weekly check-in meetings with the Long Center (versus three prior to AACME's realignment).

# Continuous Improvement



## Strengths to Continue

- Multilingual application templates (5 languages)
- Bilingual temporary staff for technical assistance
- Proactive interpretation services at all public events
- Collaboration with cultural centers and commissions
- Multiple access points for language assistance (website, phone, email, in-person)

# Funding Programs: Applicant Demographics

Preliminary data across all programs



## Intake Overview - Lead Applicant Demographics

Austin Arts, Culture, Music and Entertainment  
FY26 AACME Funding Cycle

Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community?

Response	Submissions
	44
No	709
Prefer not to answer	189
Yes	326

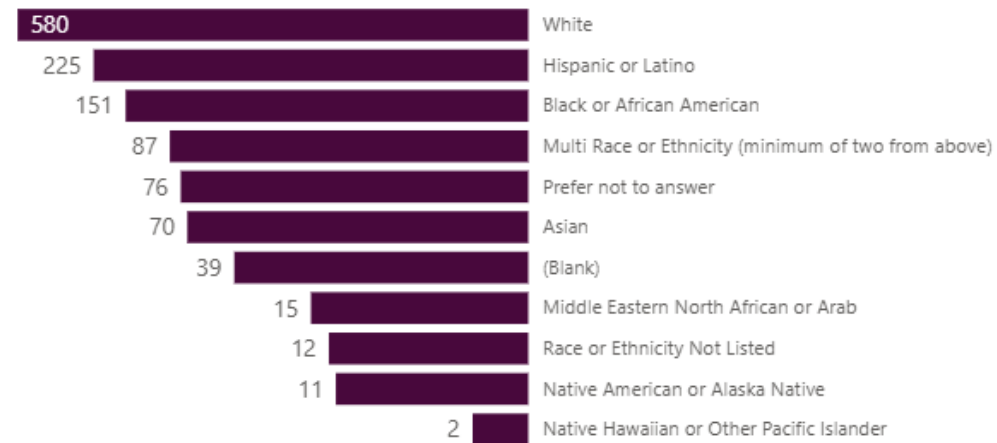
Do you identify as a member of the disability community?

Response	Submissions
No	982
Yes	147
Prefer not to answer	109
	30

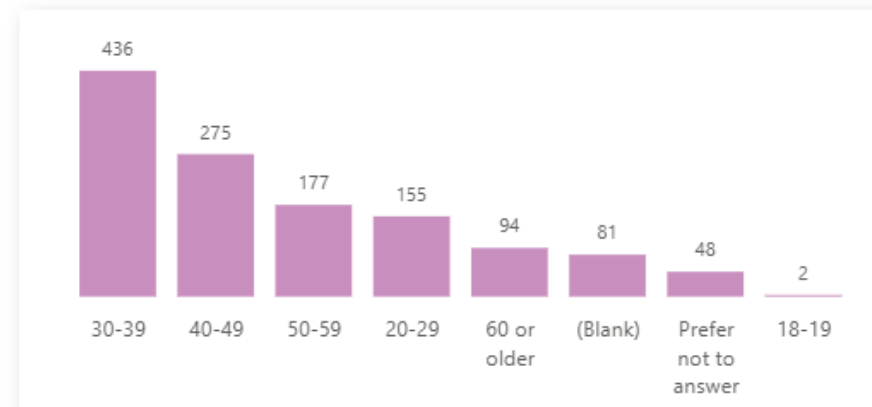
Are you a veteran of the United States Armed Services?

Response	Submissions
No	1169
	44
Prefer not to answer	38
Yes	17

## Lead Applicant Primary Race or Ethnicity



## Lead Applicant Age

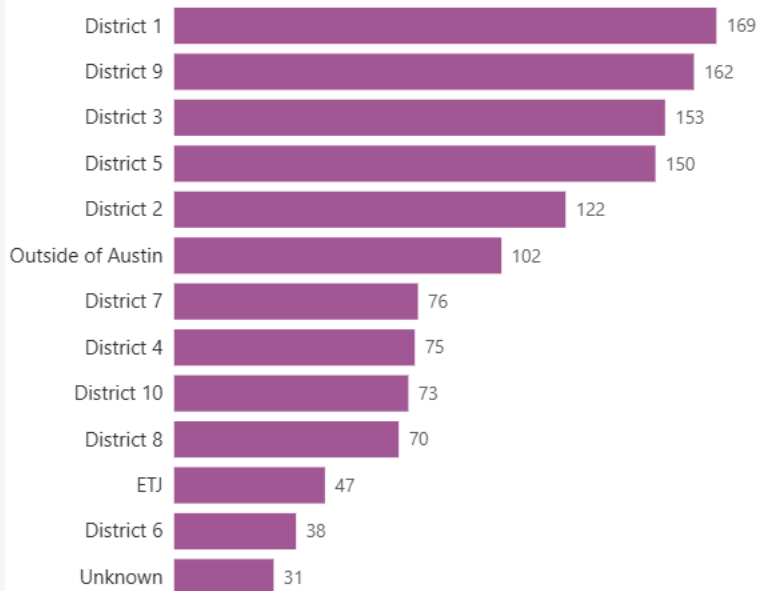


# Funding Programs: Applicant Demographics

Preliminary data across all programs



Applicants by Council District



Primary Discipline

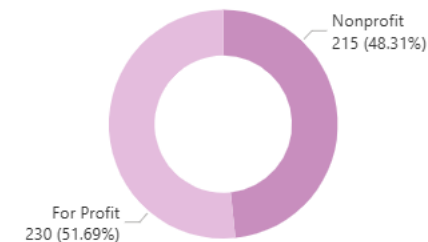
Primary Discipline	Applicants
Music	727
Multidisciplinary	108
Film, Video & TV Production	62
Visual Arts	57
Theater/Musical Theatre/Opera	50
Arts Education (public performance required)	42
Dance	41
Music Professional Services to the Creative sector	34
Arts Service Organization	28
Art/ Music Therapy	27
Cultural Heritage	16
Media Arts	15
Literary Arts	14
Other (please specify)	14
Folk & Traditional Arts	9
Cultural History/Humanities	8
Design Arts (product, jewelry, furniture, etc)	5
Heritage Events & Programming	5
Legacy and Small Business	4
Museums	2

Applicant Types

Applicants applying on behalf of:



Business, Group, or Organization Applicants by Tax Status



501(c)(3) Nonprofit Status

501(c)(3) Nonprofit Status	Nonprofit Applicants
No - State of Texas nonprofit	16
Yes - We are a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization	198

# Funding Programs: Audience Demographics

Preliminary data across all programs



## Intake Overview - Primary Audience Demographics

Austin Arts, Culture, Music and Entertainment  
FY26 AACME Funding Cycle

Does the LGBTQIA community primarily make up your audience?

Response	Submissions
No	681
Yes	285
Prefer not to answer	269
	33

Does the Disability community primarily make up your audience?

Response	Submissions
No	867
Prefer not to answer	235
Yes	133
	33

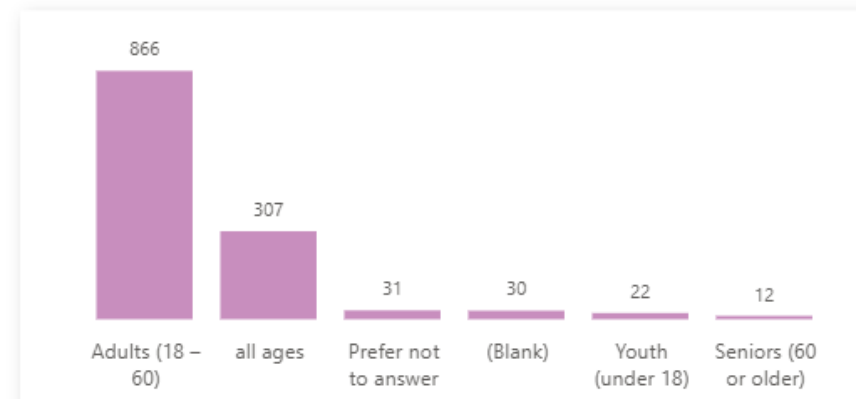
Does the Veteran community primarily make up your audience?

Response	Submissions
No	963
Prefer not to answer	211
Yes	57
	37

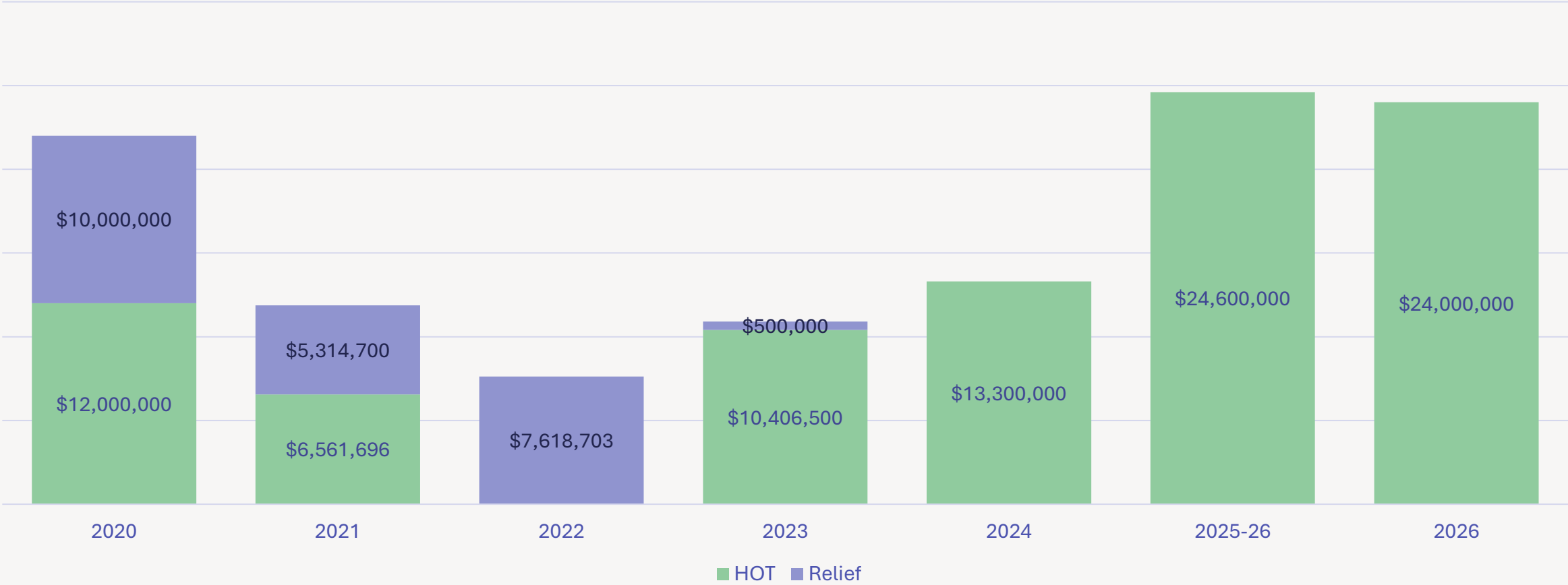
## Primary Race or Ethnicity



## Age



# Funding Distribution



# Questions?

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[www.austintexas.gov/acme/grants-funding](http://www.austintexas.gov/acme/grants-funding)