



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number: [20260324-012]: Budget for Mini Grants

Date of Approval: March 24, 2026

Recommendation:

The City of Austin's Equity Office Mini Grant program is one of the most direct, community-rooted investments the City makes in the residents most harmed by systemic inequity. At a moment when federal funding is being cut, displacement is accelerating, immigration enforcement is intensifying, and homelessness continues to grow, the need for flexible, low-barrier funding for grassroots organizations has never been greater. The City must maintain and increase funding for this program.

Description of Recommendation to Council

- Provide ongoing funding of \$400,000 for the Equity Office Mini Grant Fund, maintaining the current funding level and preserving the program's three-tier grant structure of \$10,000, \$20,000, and \$30,000 awards, with priority focus areas of immigrant inclusion, solidarity with unhoused people, and anti-displacement and displacement prevention.

Rationale

The Equity Mini Grant Fund has been offered annually since 2018, created in response to a City Council ordinance directing the Equity Office to develop a funding framework for equity initiatives, beginning with an initial allocation of \$75,000. Since then the program has grown substantially in both funding and scope, and has become a vital lifeline for the grassroots organizations doing the most essential work in Austin's most vulnerable communities.

What makes this program distinct is its design philosophy. The Equity Office explicitly recognizes the problematic operations of traditional community funding and seeks to foster alternative ways to support and respect the vision of individuals and organizations working alongside communities most affected by historical inequities. The Equity Office facilitates access for those who have not historically been able to participate in City programs like this, and highlights community-led solutions. Recipients are expected to understand the root causes of disparities and share the goal of community liberation rather than creating dependencies. Applications are accepted in English

and Spanish, and priority is given to grassroots organizations and community-driven initiatives with annual operating budgets of \$500,000 or less, the organizations that traditional grantmaking most often leaves behind.

The three priority areas the program has focused on reflect Austin's most urgent and intersecting challenges. Each of these areas has grown more critical in the current climate. Austin faces escalating federal immigration enforcement, a homelessness crisis that affects thousands of residents on any given night, and displacement pressures that are pushing low-income residents further from the city's core. The grassroots organizations supported by this program are frequently the first and only point of contact for residents navigating these crises. This investment is now under threat. If the Equity Mini Grant program is reduced or eliminated, the organizations it supports, many of which have no other reliable funding source, will lose the capacity to serve Austin's most vulnerable residents precisely when the need is greatest. At the same time, federal retrenchment on immigration, housing, and social services is pushing more responsibility to local government and local communities. The City cannot fill that gap by cutting the very programs that sustain the community organizations doing the work.

Maintaining \$400,000 in ongoing funding for the Equity Mini Grant program is a modest investment with an outsized return. It is an investment that keeps faith with the communities Austin has committed to serving and keeps the City's equity infrastructure intact when it is needed most.

Motioned By: Chair Afifi

Seconded By: Commissioner Ruiz

Vote: 8-0

For: Chair Afifi, Vice Chair Ramos, Commissioners Castañeda, Flores, Galvan, Perales, Morales, Ruiz

Absent: Commissioners Peña and Moya Fábregas

Attest: *Nekaybaw Watson*, Staff Liaison