Nexus Grant Application Breakdown

CONTENTS

Nexus is a City of Austin grant designed to nurture new and emerging applicants in the creative community. Funds support creative public activities for the city and its tourists through community-centered arts activities and collaboration. It offers $5000 for eligible artists, creative businesses, and non-profits.

This guide is here to help walk you through both the application content. Please see the complete Nexus Grant Guidelines and Additional Program Details produced by the City's Cultural Arts Division for a more detailed information on eligibility requirements, review processes, and allowable grant activities.

The Economic Development Department has also brought on the organization Almost Real Things as a Community Amplifier for the Nexus grant. They are an excellent resource for grant writing support and application training.

Before You Apply – FAQ

I want to make sure Nexus is the right grant for me

When applying to a grant, it is important to think about the size of your activity or organization, what arts industry you are in, the timing of your activity, and whether that timing fits within a specific grant window.

To make sure you are applying for the grant that best fits you, see our Guide to Choosing Your Grant. While you are allowed to apply for multiple grants, keep in mind that you can only be awarded once per year from any of the collective HOT grants. We encourage people to apply for the grant that suits them the best.
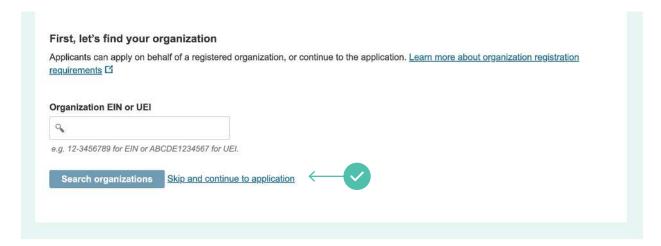
I want to use a Fiscal Sponsor, what should I do?

Before you begin the application process, please read this Guide to Fiscal Sponsorship. Your relationship with your Fiscal Sponsor must be in place before you begin the application process. This is for two reasons: the fiscal sponsor must be account holder in Submittable, and you must submit a signed Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement with your application.

Who should create my Submittable Account?

Our Guide to Account Holders vs Collaborators breaks down exactly who can and should be the account holder in Submittable, and who should be brought in as a collaborator. See Submittable's Guide to Inviting Collaborators for a full tutorial on the process!

I'm an Individual Artist. Before I start my application, I'm being asked to enter an EIN. What should I do?

Submittable gives the option for organizations with an Employee Identification Number (EIN) to enter it before they begin their application. This allows Submittable to verify the organization is who they claim to be. However, this is not a required step! If you do not have an EIN, you can easily choose to skip straight to the application.

First, let's find your organization

Applicants can apply on behalf of a registered organization, or continue to the application. Learn more about organization registration requirements

Organization EIN or UEI

🔍

e.g. 12-3456789 for EIN or ABCDE1234567 for UEI.

Search organizations   Skip and continue to application ⟵ ✓

Nexus Eligibility Quiz

Below is a copy of the Nexus Eligibility Quiz. This helps the City double-check that you fit all of the eligibility requirements of the Nexus Grant before you begin an application. Once you complete the quiz, if you are eligible, you will be taken directly to the application page. If you are ineligible, you will be prevented from moving on to the application.

If you receive an ineligible message and think you filled out the form incorrectly, you can simply go back to the home page and try again. If you have any questions about how to fill out this quiz that are not answered by the Nexus Program Guidelines, please email culturalarts@austintexas.gov.

Do you have "Delinquent Status" with the City of Austin Economic Development Department?
Someone has 'Delinquent Status' if they have failed to comply with or complete all requirements of another Economic Development Department funding program. This could include contracts that have not been closed out by an EDD staff member.
- Yes
- No

Are your annual expenses greater than $150,000?
- Yes
- No

Are you currently receiving City funding in the fiscal year you are applying?
- Yes
- No

Are you a City of Austin Employee?
- Yes
- No

Do you have a minimum of one-year of operating or event production history in the Austin Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)?
Ensure your address is in the Austin-Round Rock MSA by using the lookup tool. Enter your address in the text box on the upper left-hand side of your screen. As you type your address it will auto fill with address options. Select your address. If you live in the Austin MSA, the row labelled 'MSA/MD Name' will say "AUSTIN-ROUND ROCK-SAN MARCOS, TX"
- Yes
- No

Is 51% or more of your creative activity production history within the 10 Austin Council Districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)?

Visit the [Austin City Council District map](#) to find your Council District. Click the button labeled 'I want to' at the top left of the map. Select 'Find my Council District'. Enter your address in the text box on the upper left-hand side of your screen. As you type your address it will auto-fill with address options. Select your address and click submit.

- Yes
- No

Will your proposed activities occur within the 10 Austin Council Districts or extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ)

Visit the [Austin City Council District map](#) to find the Council District of your activities or verify they take place in the Austin ETJ.

- Yes
- No

Will your activities occur between June 1, 2024 and September 30, 2024?

- Yes
- No

Will your proposed activities be open and accessible to tourists?

- Yes
- No

Did you start your non-profit/professional creative practice on or before April 1, 2023?

- Yes
- No

Do you understand that it is not the City or Create Austin's responsibility to advise on how a grant award might impact my individual tax situation?

Receipt of grant funds may result in a significant tax liability in the year of benefit. It is the responsibility of the grant recipient to consult with a tax adviser to understand impact based on individual tax situations.

- Yes
- No

How is the Application Set Up? Section by Section Breakdown

Section 1: Contact Details and Activity Information

This section is purely informational. It asks you to enter the name of your proposed activity and your contact details. If you are applying with a Fiscal Sponsor (and remember, the Fiscal Sponsor must be the account holder), it will ask for those contact details as well. Finally, if you are applying as a Creative Business or Non-Profit organization, it will ask for contact and informational details about your entity.

Section 2: Demographic Questions

None of the details you share will be visible to anyone reviewing your application, nor will they impact the outcome of your application. Each question has a 'Prefer not to answer' option.

In the first half of this section, the City will ask demographic questions about you as the applicant. This includes questions about your economic situation.

If you are applying on behalf of a legally formed entity, the City will ask for details about your organization. This includes how big your organization is, how many years it has operated, and what type of business structure you have. You will then be asked demographic questions about the leadership of your organization.

If you operate a legally formed business, the questions asked by the City about your economic situation will be about your business, not you as an individual applicant.

Section 3: Scored Program Questions

This section holds the narrative questions that will be scored by reviewers. You will be asked about previous city funding, your key constituencies and creative mission, your proposed activities, any collaborations you will undertake, any accessibility features you will offer, details on your marketing strategy, and a draft budget. A more in-depth explanation of each question can be seen below.

Section 4: Required Documents

This is the section where you will upload your supporting documentation. Everyone will upload three work samples. Fiscal Sponsors will upload their sponsorship agreement. Fiscal Sponsors and Non-profits will upload a copy of their 990 and an IRS Determination Letter. A more detailed explanation of each requirement is seen in the last part of this document.

Section 5: Acknowledgements and Attestations

This is the final section of the application. You will be asked to agree to several things, most of which you will have affirmed in the eligibility quiz.

You will attest that:

- You are not a City of Austin Employee

- You understand you cannot receive grant funding from both the Austin Live Music Fund and a Cultural Arts Fund (Nexus, Elevate, or Thrive) in the same year.

- There can only be one application to the 2024 Summer Nexus Grant submitted per applicant.

- You do not have 'Delinquent Status' with the City of Austin's Economic Development Department.

- Your grant-funded activities will take place in a City of Austin Council District or in the Extraterritorial Jurisdiction (ETJ).

- Your grant funds may result in significant tax liability in the year you are awarded, and that it is your responsibility to consult with a tax advisor to understand the impact of your tax situation.

- You understand that the City of Austin has brought the Long Center on as a third-party administrator and that the Long Center won't use this information for any other purposes.

  - This is a City of Austin grant, so your application materials are subject to the Texas Public Information Act and might be released to the public if it is requested in a Public Information Request.

- You agree to receive communications from the Economic Development Department and Create Austin/ The Long Center.

- All the information you provided in the application and the eligibility quiz are true and accurate at time of submission.

Scored Application Questions

This section provides a word-for-word copy of each question asked in the scored part of the application. There are 9 questions asked. Seven of them are narrative, one is a multiple-choice selection, and one is a budget table.

Most questions have a separate text box labelled 'COA Insights'. COA Insights provide additional context, tips, and information from the City that may be useful when answering that specific question. All narrative questions have a 2000-character limit. It is important to be conscious of that as you write application drafts. To download an editable template for drafting your application questions, click here.

Create Austin has a Guide to Writing a Good Grant Application, which offers general advice that can be used by applicants across all the grant programs we administer.

COA Insights – General

- Make sure you are utilizing helper text to make sure you understand the question and are answering it completely

- Don't assume that all the reviewers will be familiar with your work/art form – if what you are doing is new or hard to describe make sure your work sample demonstrates clearly the activity you are proposing

- Those doing panel reviews will not have access to demographic questions asked in the early part of the application. If some of your application is about your own lived experience in marginalized and/or underserved communities, make sure to include some narrative about that lived experience in the questions that are scored by panelists below.

- Your budget should tell the same story that your narrative does. For example, if you state that the majority of the funds go to paying the administrative team, then the budget amount should also show the same in the line item about Administrative Staff.

- City Staff who wrote these grants are available if you have questions, don't be afraid to contact them and ask questions early in the process.

- Attend the application workshops offered and be sure to ask questions.

1: Previous City Funding - Up to 10 Points

In the last 5 years (2019-2024), how many City of Austin Economic Development Department Cultural Arts Division Grants (Thrive, Elevate, Nexus, Core, Community Initiatives, Capacity Building, or Cultural Heritage Festivals Program) have you received? This does not include other City of Austin Economic Development Department Grants.

If the application is on behalf of a sponsored project, the response should be based on the sponsored project's funding history, not the fiscal sponsors.

Select from the Dropdown
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

2: Key Constituencies & Creative Mission - Up to 15 Points

Identify your key constituencies. How do you serve them through your artistic goals, creative mission, and experience producing public events?

For the purposes of this program, key constituencies that will be prioritized are community groups 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.

Key constituencies are not necessarily just your audience. They may also include others who are deeply impacted by your work, like participating artists, staff, creative advisors and/or community groups, etc.

Answer must include:
• Your key constituencies (see Additional Program Details for definition)
• Your creative mission and/or artistic goals

COA Insights

• Think through your response to this question deeply because many of the application questions will reference your key constituencies listed here.

• Be specific in describing your key constituencies.

3: Cultural Leadership - Up to 15 Points

Who holds decision-making power in your creative practice and how do you/they represent your key constituencies?

Your answer could include:
• You, the individual artist applicant
• Executive and Creative Leadership
• Advisory Board
• Creative Advisors

COA Insights

• Name your decision-makers (including yourself) and their role within your organization/ project

• Make sure to describe your decision-makers' lived experience and how it represents your named key constituencies.

4: Cultural Activities - Up to 10 points

What are your proposed public activities?

Your answer should address:
- Description of proposed activities (who, what, when, where)
- Desired outcome or impact of your proposed activities, including how equity is centered.
- How key constituencies are involved in the development of the activities

To see list of eligible and ineligible expenses please look at pages 4 & 5 for the Nexus Grant Guidelines.

COA Insights

- Make sure a reviewer can fully understand what your public activity will be. Dates, times, places, and a description are particularly helpful.

5: Creative Collaboration - Up to 10 points

Provide the name(s) of creative collaborator(s) and their role(s) producing your proposed activities.

COA Insights

- Successful responses will include a detailed description of the collaborator's role

6: Accessibility - Up to 10 points

Describe the specialized accommodations and/or programming for individuals with disabilities that you intend to provide at your proposed activities, if any.

Your answer should address:
- Specific services or adaptations you will provide
- Name(s) of service provider and/or participation of a trained professional in administering services or adaptations

Accessibility accommodations that are "upon-request only" are not considered to be specialized.

Hosting activities in an ADA accessible facility, by itself, is also not considered to be specialized.

See Additional Program Details for more information on accessibility resource.

COA Insights

- If you have never provided accessibility services or have concerns about providing a service, please refer to ATX Go! for resources on providing accessibility to all audiences
- If you are going to be offering these services, it is important to consider how you are going to market to audiences that would benefit from these services
- Make sure to include costs for accessibility services in your budget if you indicated services in this narrative.

7: Language Accessibility - Up to 10 points

Describe the specialized language access accommodations or programming for limited or non-English speaking communities that you intend to provide at your proposed activities, if any.

Your answer should address:
- Specific services or adaptations you will provide (including the language(s) they will be provided in)
- Name(s) of service providers and/or participation of a trained professional in administering services or adaptations

Accessibility accommodations that are "upon-request only" are not considered to be specialized.

COA Insights

- If you are going to be offering this kind of service, it is important to consider how you are going to market to audiences that would benefit from these services
- All projects lend themselves to opportunities for language accessibility - even music, instrumental, and dance performance
- Make sure to include costs for language access services in your budget if you indicated this service in your narrative.

8: Marketing - Up to 10 points

Describe how you will market your proposed activities.

Your answer should include your **marketing platforms** (ex: social media, web, newsletter, print, radio/tv, etc.) and specialized marketing efforts to reach:
1. Audiences within **your** key constituencies
2. **New** audiences within the City of Austin's Priority Key Constituencies
3. Audience members with disabilities and/or audience members whose primary language is not English
4. Tourists

An applicant's key constituencies are NOT required to align with the City's priority key constituencies (as defined in the Additional Program Details) to receive points for Item 1. HOWEVER, Item 2 requires the applicant to reach NEW audiences within the City's priority key constituencies that are not reached through Item 1.

Utilizing two or more forms of social media (ex: Facebook and Instagram) will only count as ONE marketing platform.

COA Insights

*   To receive full points for this question, you need to address all five aspects listed in the helper text, even if the grant funds are not being used to afford them. Use the budget form to indicate planned expenses in all 5 aspects

9: Budget - Up to 10 points.

Complete the budget table with ways you will use this grant to produce your proposed activities.

Your answer should address payment to artists and/or administrators and:
1. Estimated expenses related to providing specialized accessibility and/or language access services
2. Estimated expenses related to marketing to current or new audiences
3. Explanation of expenses to produce your activities
4. Budget should be reflective of this application

The table below is where you will state your predicted budget details. It is important to match your numbers to the descriptions you gave in earlier questions. For example: if you told us in Question 4 that you would spend most of your money on production, but the budget shows most of the money going to marketing, it will confuse the reviewers. **Your total expenses should equal (and not be greater than) $5000**. Please use the description column of the budget table to explain how personal funds/in-kind donations will be used in the proposed activities.

COA Insights

- To receive full points for this question, you need to address all five marketing aspects listed above

- Be as detailed as possible in your budget description. Explain how funds are being used, and how your own funds are being used to cover expenses.

- Explain how you arrived at dollar amount listed in budget – a panelist may not give you full credit if they don't understand how that dollar amount was arrived at (ex: $500 in artistic fees = two artists paid at $250 each)

- Payments to artists and/or administrators will be required to receive full points

- Only list expenses paid for by the Nexus grant in the "Grant allocation" column.

- If you plan on using additional funds to produce your event beyond the Nexus grant, these can be listed in the "Detailed Description of proposed expenses" box

- Be sure to indicate which expenses are paid for by grant funds versus additional funds

- You can write out descriptions in a word or excel document and paste them into the application

Expense Categories	Grant Amount Allocation	Detailed Description of proposed expenses (how many people/items will be paid for and at what rate)
Payments to Artists		
Payments to Admin Support		
Marketing		
Venue/Office Rental		
Production Fees		
Supplies/Materials		
Accessibility Services		
Equipment Rental		
Fiscal Sponsor Fees		
Grant Total	5000	

Details on Required Supporting Documents

Section 4 of your application is where you will upload documents related to your eligibility and application details.

Three Applicant Work Samples: Required For - All Applicants

Work samples help illustrate an applicant's artistic skill, style, and professional history. It provides reviewers with direct insight into the narrative descriptions provided in Section 3 of your application and helps them assess the potential impact of your proposed activity.

The City of Austin has provided an optional Work Sample Template for you to use. Work samples can be uploaded as three separate documents or combined into a single document.

If any of your work samples are video or audio files that can be accessed by web-links, you will be able to paste them into a text box.

Sponsorship Agreement: Required For - Fiscal Sponsors

Your Sponsorship Agreement is the contract between the Fiscal Sponsor and the Sponsored Project. In this document, both parties will be asked to detail how and when the funds for a Sponsored Project will be distributed and how any sponsorship fees with be deducted from a Sponsored Project's award. This document also outlines the responsibilities and limitations of each role.

IRS Determination Letter: Required For - Fiscal Sponsors and Non-Profits

An IRS Determination Letter is an official document issued by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) confirming an organization's tax-exempt status under specific sections of the Internal Revenue Service. It is required of both Non-Profit applicants, and Fiscal Sponsors supporting a Sponsored Project.

Most Recent 990: Required For – Fiscal Sponsors and Non-Profits

A 990 is a form used by tax-exempt organizations in the United States to report their financial information to the IRS.