

What Makes A Good Grant Application?

This guide aims to provide helpful tips and insights to assist you in crafting a successful grant application. It is generalized for all the grant programs administered by Create Austin (The Long Center) and run by the Economic Development Department.

Understanding the Grant

Research: Begin by thoroughly researching the grant you're applying for. Make sure you understand its purpose, eligibility criteria, deadlines, and funding priorities. Each Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) grant program run by the Economic Development Department has its own specific Grant Guidelines. These documents are available on the [Create Austin Resource Hub](#) and the [Economic Development Department Website](#).

Choose the Right Grant: The most important step is choosing the grant whose eligibility best fits you. 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 compare each grant program and their eligibility criteria, Create Austin has developed a [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 first.

Attend Information Sessions: Attend training, information, and assistance sessions by the City of Austin, Create Austin, or Community Navigators. These sessions are designed to support you no matter what application stage, or familiarity with grant processes, you are at. You can also contact Create Austin or the Cultural Arts Division if you need advice!

- To see a list of sessions occurring within the application window for your preferred grant, go to the [Create Austin website](#).

Developing the Content

Starting Early: Begin the application process well before the deadline to allow ample time for research, writing, and feedback.

Clarity of Purpose: Clearly articulate the objectives and goals of your project, specifying what you aim to achieve and how you plan to do so.

Avoid ambiguity or vague statements that may leave reviewers unsure of your intentions. Use data to back up your claims.

Creating your Scope of Work: It is okay if the logistical details of your award evolve over time. However, the Scope of Work (the programmatic goals, proposed activities, and intended audience) should remain solid from the application through to the reporting stage. You are scored and awarded largely for this scope of work (depending on the program). Changing the scope could change how you would have originally scored, which is unfair to the declined applicant pool.

Engaging Narrative: Craft a compelling narrative that highlights your goals, artistic vision, and the impact of your project on the communities you serve. The highest-scoring applications establish a strong connection between the craft, artist(s), audience, and mission.

Contextualizing your work: Art does not exist in a vacuum. Locating your funding request in the cultural, historical, or social context surrounding your discipline, audiences, or personal narrative can also create a more nuanced application.

Demonstrate Impact: Grants are all about impact. The reviewers want to see you provide tangible evidence of how your work has been successful in the past and how it has the potential to do so in the future. Information on audience reach and community engagement can bolster your claims and demonstrate the real-world significance of your artistic endeavors. By grounding your goals in tangible outcomes, reviewers are more likely to understand the feasibility and value of supporting your work.

New and Emerging Artists: If you're a new artist, creative business or organization without a high volume of impact data to draw from, displaying well-thought-out, concrete impact intentions can greatly bolster your application.

Creating your Budget: While a draft budget is required for your application, it will not make or break your success. We want to meet you at whatever level you are at with budget planning. However, we urge you to spend time on this piece, for yourself more than anything else.

Think about what these grant funds can help you achieve. How might the money these grant funds interact with any other funding streams connected to your activities?

Make sure any insurance or tax costs are integrated into your plan. Even if some details of your budget shift once you are awarded, a thought-out budget will reflect highly on the applicant.

At the most basic level, reviewers must see your budget match up with any narrative descriptions within your proposal.

Writing Style

Clarity and Conciseness: Reviewers want to understand the substance of your proposed project, activity, or funding request. They also want to see it linked effectively to the grant guidelines. Try to avoid overly flowery, lengthy, or complex language that may be difficult for reviewers to process. Bullet point lists are welcome.

Authenticity and Originality: While there is a learned formula for many successful grant applications, try not to lose authenticity in your writing. Conveying your own or your organization's specific character and artistic values can keep an application from seeming lifeless.

Editing and Revisions

Getting Feedback: Don't hesitate to get feedback from mentors, peers, or those in your professional circle. Ask them if they understand what you are trying to convey. If they get it, then a reviewer will understand it too.

Revising your Work: Give yourself ample time to edit your answers and get feedback from those in your professional circle. While you can easily edit your application within Submittable, some people find it easier to develop their answers in a separate document and copy them over once completed.

Attention to Detail: While none of these mistakes will negatively affect your score, a lesser number of grammar or spelling errors can lead to a smoother application read for reviewers. Limit abbreviations or acronyms, and if you have to use them be sure to spell out what they mean.

Aligning with Grant Guidelines: Before you submit, take one more look through your application content to make sure you are fully aligned with the grant guidelines. Because these grant funds come from the Hotel Occupancy Tax, many of the guidelines are in place for legal reasons, and you are required to follow them by State Statute.

Submitting Before the Deadline: We know you're busy. We know that working up to the last minute can sometimes spark a little more creative inspiration... That being said, we really (really) encourage you to apply well before the deadline. The last thing we want is for you to experience some degree of technical difficulties, delays obtaining any required supporting documents, or questions about the guidelines – and not be able to get in your application on time as a result.

Up until the close of the submission window, you do have the option to make additional edits to your application after you have sent it in. To request access to your submitted application email cityofaustingrants@thelongcenter.org



Building Support and Revenue for Austin's Creative Sector
Programmed and Produced by the Long Center

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