
PHASE 4 COMPREHENSIVE FEEDBACK

Cultural Funding programs

This document is **comprehensive**, with questions asked in multiple events/surveys combined. View the outline in the navigation pane to see document organization. [Blue text is staff notes.](#)

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Questions received during 8/9 Launch Presentation

- Can a currently fiscally sponsored project / nonprofit apply to both programs?
- Is the Elevate program going to be introduced at a later time? Thrive and Nexus are the opportunities y'all are focusing on now?
 - Is there ANY chance that will be in FY22?
- How are we defining "meaningful"?
- Is this info going to be in one online place? Where?
- Who defines "equity"?
- Can we submit questions after this meeting once we get more familiar with the program?

Questions received via email / phone / VOOH

- our event is in November and it seems that the application process will not open till sometime in October. What does that mean for our event? No funding at all?
- Am I understanding correctly that the Core program has been eliminated and replaced with Nexus and Thrive?
- I enjoyed viewing the webinar on the new program. I plan to review the written materials as soon as possible. As I'm absorbing the new focus, I am excited for the new opportunities. Our organization has wanted to serve a more diverse community for quite some time. I had attempted to reach out to various entities that might share our interest but I was unable to connect with other community leaders. I am hoping that your department might be able to connect me to other interested folks or resources
- My question is -- I can think of two kinds of tourists. Tourists as I describe above -- i.e. who come to Austin because we are having something. Tourists who are ALREADY vacationing in Austin and discover we are here. Are both types of tourists of interest to this grant?
- Regarding SECTION 2: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL IMPACT (page 17), specifically Investment Potential. After (almost) two years now of limited programming our immediate goal -- when COVID allows -- is to get back to ALL we were before COVID limited us. We were already doing ***** a lot ***** for the size of organization we are. What exactly is this line item looking for?
- I have a few questions for you:
 - Guidelines are prioritizing orgs that are 51% or more BIPOC. Is the composition judged just on W2 staff? Or does it include contractors? And/or Board of Directors? Or even extend to audiences and participants? Who will this percentage include?
 - Can we as an org apply for Thrive, AND simultaneously serve as a fiscal sponsor for individual artists / informal orgs in Nexus category IF they/we want to do that? Or are we only allowed to apply for one track? (i.e., if we want to go for org support through Thrive, we would not be able to support any groups that fit more into Nexus)
 - IF we can and do serve as a fiscal sponsor in FY22 in any shape or form, will our organization's representation/DEI score factor into their score and affect their

chances (i.e. does the racial equity emphasis favor someone like X applying directly more)?

- In particular, we hope to get some clarity so that we can communicate appropriately with our current sponsored projects. Individuals like X have expressed a desire to continue as a sponsored project, but we're unsure whether that would be to his or our disadvantage.

Questions received via the comment box

- Can these questions be answered?
 - Given the dire condition that many artists and art organizations are facing, can staff explain why \$4.2 M in additional funds given to the Cultural Arts Division from the City Council has been held back and earmarked as “emergency funds”. Are the arts not in an emergency now? Is the argument of “fiscal responsibility” a sound one given the impact of COVID 19 on the entire arts community in the past and the uncertain future for the arts caused by COVID’s current resurgence.
 - In its new funding guidelines, the Cultural Arts Division staff proposes viewing funding priorities through an intentional focus on equity and inclusion. They state they will view BIPOC artists and art organizations as well as LGBTQ and disability communities through an equity lens. Can staff explain why women artists and art organizations are excluded from being prioritized with LGBTQ and disability communities and viewed through this equity lens? Is this an oversight since the City of Austin has recognized this need for equity and inclusion in its special program over-seeing city contracts for “Minority and Women Owned Businesses” ?
 - Can staff explain why for-profit organizations can be eligible for funding through the NEXUS program?
 - Can staff show data that the THRIVE Program is desired by the community that it is ostensibly created to serve?
 - Why is there no plan yet made public for how the \$4M in ARPA (federal COVID relief) funds will be distributed?
 - Why is the ELEVATE program not expected to be funded until 2024? Has staff collected any data on the impact this loss of funding will have on hundreds of artists and art organizations?

Questions received via the survey

- How, exactly, would the proposed outsourcing of contract payments speed up the payment process?
- Why do we have to endure dealing with you?
- What is the total budget for Cultural Arts staff and how many staff members does that include?
- Will there ever be funding that looks anything like it did for organizations that have been contractors for years and rely on the funding to survive? Especially those who are fiscally sponsored and, as part of their mission, champion the work of BIPOC artists but aren't run or weren't founded by someone who identifies as part of that group.
- when will the window open Will it be fair for ALAANA folks
- Will there be programs available for long-time standing arts organizations?
- How are you prepared to respond to allegations of reverse racism with your focus on diversity in your evaluation criteria?

GENERAL COMMENTS

Comments received during 8/9 presentation

- **Need more time to digest the information/Need to look at the guidelines once posted**
 - I need to read up on all provided information. As of right now, I am completely UNCLEAR as to what Nexus is
 - I look forward to the guidelines tomorrow. The no match helps a lot.
 - I need to read the expected published materials tomorrow
 - Do not have any questions at this moment but will visit the site to learn more and I probably will have questions in the future

- I didn't have time to digest all the aspects. Thrive seems to have changed significantly from the first draft
- Extremely limited
- These programs aren't building or spreading equity it's killing diversity
- I'm not sure that our program model fits into this funding program

Comments received via email / VOOH

- Re: Thrive cohort: "Wow - so I always feel so alone, I would have similar people with me! No matching?! (yes.) WOW - very good opportunity, finally. Thrive would enable me to do more events. Perfect timing for me, after 10 years, we have just survived and I always wanted to do more. I am ready to focus on this organization and have always been stressed out about matching funds. This would enable me to hire staff and have a better website. THIS IS EXCITING NEWS. I feel like ten years of surviving will pay off for my organization. Thank goodness budget size of the organization is not considered! A true equal opportunity for us!! Those bigger organizations are not doing better events than us and we are doing more with less staff. This news is so bright. "
- "Thank you for answering my questions and sharing comments. I started my current position in 2017 and have been so pleased with the level of support that the entire Cultural Funding team offers our organization. I appreciate all the work everyone has put into this new program. (...) Our team is determined to stay intact and already thinking about how we can improve [our event] and make it an even better experience for visitors. We are also busy working on other events and creating new opportunities. So thank you for the information and I'm excited about the new Thrive program."
- Guess it's time to talk about what this all means for the smaller companies that will not be able to survive without CAD funding and don't qualify for these two programs discussed tonight without some major infrastructure changes...
- I have some questions about equity. The statistic that was shared last night included racial breakdown of most recent grant dollars with the numbers 9% african american and 68% white. Those numbers were presented in order to illustrate inequity in funding distribution, however, Austin's racial makeup is 73% white, 8% black. I do not see how funding has been inequitable given the racial makeup of Austin.

- Many thanks to you and CAD for the great presentation on the THRIVE Program yesterday. We do have an artist program which directly serves POC constituents, and we'd love to grow this through THRIVE's funding.
- There are economies of scale that we can all benefit from [so the networking aspect of Thrive is really important.] I really appreciate you all being cognizant of reducing burdens on us. (...) I'm very interested in working on districting, bringing people together rather than fragmenting. (...) I know you guys have our backs.
- Summary of 1 Virtual Open Office Hours session:

Speaker 1

- You've done a yeoman's job over the last 2 years.
- What support will staff provide for meeting tourism requirements?
- The application and reporting process are overly [burdensome]
- (after email follow-up) I appreciate you taking the time to reach out to me. At the Council meeting, I was led to believe the primary factor is determining eligibility was the ethnicity of the executive and board leadership. That disability and women owned were recognized, but BIPOC took precedence. This has been an ongoing issue with the proposal for many years. We are asked to give the ethnic make-up of the board, but there is no place to record other distinguishing characteristics. I also have added disability to my charts and narrative, but this can often be overlooked. It took several years of advocacy to have disability communities recognized as underserved community when the Capacity Building contracts were offered. However, I appreciate that disability is being considered as a priority community and the intersectionality of this community cannot be overlooked.

Speaker 2:

- I find the emails hard to read. Of course our arts institution is inequitable. I'd love there to be more sharing from the consultant and your team in the work. (...) what lead to this inequity?
- How does one get from Nexus to Thrive? There is a missing piece.
- What are ways we can reduce bottom-line costs for artists? Can we buy insurance through the City?

- Would be very helpful if could paint of picture of where you see this heading past this two pilot year. How will we know we are successful in terms of addressing equity? And I would like to see funding range for the Elevate program

Speaker 3:

- The prioritization of Nexus and Thrive just makes sense to me. To me, it's a non-negotiable (...) to give funding to organizations that might not have had access to funding in the past, to allow new things to grow that might not exist yet. The only thing I can think of is that we have to find more money.
- Summary of email from an Arts Commissioner:
 - More data from both MJR and from CAD for funding statistics for various demographics.
 - Goals/metrics not just for success but also for best use of limited funds and for sustaining the arts ecosystem
 - Use of HOT funds, including broader interpretation of HOT statute, no match, and a question on what the future contract period will be (calendar year?)
 - "As a long-term contractor:
 - The survival of midsize core contractors that support and are the foundation of much of the diverse Austin arts ecosystem, is imperative. Budgets do matter now. So does loss of income and receipt of other funds.
 - FY22 Contracts should not be focused on programming in this uncertain Covid crisis.
 - I don't believe this is a good time to open up funding for new applicants."
 - "I realize not everyone will be happy, with whatever decisions are made, but the total arts community needs to be the focus. Who can breathe? Who is underwater? And who is drowning? As well, who is out there in the arts community that has resources; has been doing equitable work and can help. If they disappear, many will."

- Summary of one email containing feedback:
 - The proposed programs and funding amounts will “eliminate 450+ cultural contractors from receiving any funding. There are no budget restrictions in place and no matching dollars required to show that the organization being funded is in need of or can utilize the funding dollars given.”
 - Thinks the program names are too corporate.
 - New artists should not be funded.
 - “...priority given to organizations of color, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ groups with no consideration of sustainability, financial ability, women led or other important factors.”
 - Thrive “funding is limited to programmatic funding only and not operational.”
 - “Consideration should also to be given to lowering the award ceiling in” Thrive.
 - “There should not be a change in the funding models for 2022-2023.”
 - No 3rd party

- Summary of one email containing feedback:
 - Likes that we increased the number of proposed Thrive contracts from 10 to 25-45 but doesn’t like that the request/award amount decreased from \$175,000 to \$30,000 - \$80,000 as that will take their organization back to funding levels from the 1990s.
 - “ “Major” arts organizations have had the privilege to apply, receive up to \$250,000 since the 1980s.. It is not fair or equitable – that now when there is a program to help BIPOC organization that there will be a limit of \$80000 for services.”
 - “We must create a category for BIPOC Legacy Arts Organizations that can apply for and receive equitable opportunities like others have had in the past.”
 - “Please help in supporting a Legacy Arts Organization of Color program to save our organizations where we can apply for funding levels at a level of \$175000 to \$250000 like the mainstream organization did for over forty years.”
 - More/better community engagement and communications.
 - No 3rd party.
 - Arts Commission needs a voice.

- Prioritize funding for existing cultural contractors of color as well as other “non-major arts organizations” currently receiving Cultural Funding.
- “It has been fun seeing you over zoom in all the COA presentations for all the upcoming funding. We really appreciate all the work you and the entire team at the Cultural Arts Division is putting into getting funding out to the arts & cultural organizations in Austin. The effort that goes into explaining everything and taking questions and suggestions from the community is a lot and all of you are so in sync when presenting!! Super grateful for everything you do! Thank you!!... I think the thrive grant will definitely help us to not only ride out this pandemic and this phase but keep us growing into a solid cultural organization in Austin. SO we are looking forward to that application being available.”
- Concerned and upset that with white dominate leadership on the board and staff of their organization, they will not be competitive for Thrive funding. Thought Thrive’s emphasis on representation in leadership seemed “radical” in it’s approach to racial equity. Shared that Nexus funding would not be enough.

Comment box submissions

- Headed in the right direction. Please continue, at each stage, engage in significant public/community input...with priority of that input given to those who are most directly affected by the proposed programs!
- These initiatives are not straight forward, and are poorly represented.
- Listen to the artists and arts community!
- Such short sighted decision making which will impact COA arts forever - and, possibly, decimate some organizations. One more important note—in 2019, the last funding cycle under the old rules, over 600 artists and art organizations were funded and 4 were denied. It seems that virtually everyone who wanted to receive money from the city got it. We have only one misleading chart to refer to from the consultant about why such drastic changes are needed. We must have more information. It's time to slow down and make sure that decisions are accurate. COA should stop worrying about how they

"look" to the general public and be concerned with how they actually serve the general public. STOP WORRYING ABOUT OPTICS AND LOOKS AT THE FACTS. Thanks

- All of the arts are under immense financial strain because of the pandemic. Maintaining appropriate levels of funding for all arts organizations, rather than changing your funding structure while in the middle of a crisis, would be the responsible thing to do.
- Hobson's Choice. No fault of Cultural Arts office.
- Hopeful that the new programs will allow funding for those from underrepresented communities who may have not received it in the past, instead of the "usual suspects" that regularly receive funding!
- "How are you feeling about the proposed funding programs?"

11 responses, average answer 2.6

THRIVE

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Rating (survey result)

14. Based on what you've read on our web page or heard at our presentations, how well do you think this program supports our goals of achieving greater cultural equity?

15

Responses



3.80 Average Rating

Minimum award amount

- During 8/9 presentation, 35/76 respondents (46%) answered \$50K, 19 respondents (25%) answered \$30K, 22 (29%) said more.
- Survey results:
 - 6 @ \$30K
 - 1 @ \$50K
 - 5 @ \$80K
 - 1 @ \$10K
 - 2 @ \$100K
 - 1 @ \$200K
- Combined results (99 respondents total, so # of responses = % share):
 - \$10K – 1
 - \$30K – 25
 - **\$50K – 36**
 - \$80K – 12
 - Higher than \$80K – 25

Questions received during 8/9 Presentation
(grouped by similar questions)

- **What about sponsored projects?**

If the pool of applications can not be sponsored, what happens to those long-term presenters who have been sponsored. They are no longer in the pool, which may widen the disparity gap.

- **Disability groups were not specifically mentioned for Thrive. Are they able to apply?**

Will Thrive include the disability community? (Debbie, Imagine Art)

- **What does cohort model mean?**

Cohort??

- **Why is Thrive only open to Non-Profits?**

Why is nonprofit/for profit a consideration

So individual artist will not be able to apply? They will be relegated to smaller award associated with Nexus?

Why are fiscally sponsored projects not available when that leaves out a lot of minority organizations

What is the reasoning for not allowing fiscally sponsored groups apply?

Why no fiscal sponsorship

Individuals can not apply and fiscal sponsors are not allowed. Please elaborate further

- **When will my organization be eligible to apply for Thrive?**

Currently applying for NP status but have been producing/CAD funded for over 5 years.
When would my org be eligible to apply for Thrive?

Why five year minimum? What about newer nonprofits that meet these requirements and need funding?

Years in operation with or without 512c? As in, we have been in existence for X year and just got non-profit status

Five years in business or five years as a city contractor?

If an organization has been serving Austin for 5 years and is currently seeking non-profit status (waiting for approval from the IRS) are they eligible?

Why do groups need to be 5 years old?

- **Where do I fit in?**

When did being a female lead organization stop mattering to the city? Women are still an underserved group and subject to great inequality.

If an organization has successfully weather the pandemic and offered programs to the public, does it have any chance to secure thrive money in 2022?

Thrive seems to have eliminated smaller ongoing organizations that don't qualify for Nexus and function on smaller budgets than \$30k mind

What happens to all the current smaller sponsored organizations?

Based on Thrive and Nexus, it seems many CAD contractors will be left without funding.
What can we expect to help us fill the hole?

Where do individual artists who were receiving the \$20k max award fall under now?
Nexus?

Can arts Groups that are not led by, or directly serve, underrepresented groups receive funding through Thrive?

- **How can the funds be used?**

Can you use it for salaries

Can it be used to rent equipment?

Can it be used to pay subcontractors?

Would this fund some operational overhead more so than any previous funding programs?

- **Can you apply for Thrive and Nexus both?**

Will non-profits be able to apply/receive funds more than once? Cohort seems to imply not, seems to imply emerging only

- **What is the Thrive Deadline?**

How many deadlines/cycles are to apply for Thrive?

When is the application due?

- **What is the request amount for Thrive?**

Why are the request amounts so vastly different? \$30k-80k is that based on something?

Not sure I understand the time line and award amount – is it up to \$80k per year for 2 years starting in 2022? Or it is a maximum of \$80k over two years. And if this grant is more like capacity building grant? Thanks

- What is the minimum award amount in Thrive?
- Can 2-4 nonprofits apply together in a collaborative project/programming season?
- How do you assure equity?
- Are you sure this is constitutional?
- Where does the artistic programming fall into place in this rubric?
- How are many programs in Thrive able to produce without venues?
- How many applications do you expect to receive for this program?

Questions received during Thrive guided discussion

- So did CAD not envision any place for "traditional" CORE contractors in the funding universe of the next two years?
- What had you choose to move forward on Thrive ahead of Elevate when it seems the latter would fund more organizations and more orgs would be eligible?
- What is the maximum budget for mid size nonprofits?
- Does the funding disappear if it is not used due to another quarantine or any other disaster?
- What are mid size non profits?
- Why is diversity defined as 51% of all one group, rather than 51% non-white or some other combo that acknowledges the demographics of Austin?
- If you apply for Thrive and get funding can you apply later for Elevate?
- So there is no maximum ask through thrive. Just what is needed for your program?
- Please define "community-centered"
- If we are working with artists, can we give them award money through the funding?
- "How does the rubric determine the % of arts vs % community engagement -
- If you lean more towards community engagement - would that be a low score?"

Questions received via email, VOOH, survey

- For the "Community Voice" question: 'other intersectional groups as described by the applicant' would this include low income constituents? We serve all musicians in the community but specifically low income has been our underserved majority.
- What percentage of the governance of the org need be BIPOC to be eligible? Do board members count? What if the org is so lean they have one part-time white manager/founder but the artists contracted are majority BIPOC? What if they have been funded by the city in the past five years but they are just now undergoing the process to become a standalone non-profit? Why can't these projects be fiscally-sponsored?
- 2-Has information been collected about the number of BIPOC, more specifically African Americans meet the 501-C-3 qualification for Thrive? And that the number non-BIPOC lead organizations will benefit more significantly from their 501C3 status. Will this not be a disparate application of the regulations? 3- I understand this is a pilot program but

is there a way to insure that BIPOC/ African Americans will not be shorted during this process.

- “Intersectionality” in the Thrive rubric comes out of nowhere. Not mentioned anywhere else in the guidelines.
- Is a company who is waiting for word from the IRS about their 501c3 application eligible to apply for Thrive? (assuming they have been serving Austin for 5 plus years as a sponsored project).
- “From my understanding, That would qualify us to ask for operations support of our facility that is used as a training ground and performance venue. As well as our one head count who is doing the work to make it happen. The tourist attracting performances cannot happen without our facility and one employee. Without either of these we cannot continue. My question is that I am hearing from the arts community that the thrive program does not support operations. I am not understanding those concerns when it looks clear in the document. Can you clarify this important point?”

- Cohort

- What is expected of the cohort
- Who leads this cohort
- What services are provided
- No acknowledgement of differing experience levels, sizes and needs of an organization

- How does equity work?

- My experience is different within the system through the lens of racial equity than it looks on paper

- Why LGBTQ and Ability ranked as the same?

- Is this geared toward smaller orgs or larger orgs

- Investment potential

- Why is there value being given to things being new and vastly different versus long term success?
- What does smaller activities mean?
- Why can't an applicant improve on what they are currently doing?
- The ask doesn't align with the intentions

- Financial history

- What does demonstrate potential for growth?

- Why qualify loss of income as a financial history or trajectory?
- The implications of this inherently implies that organizations as they exist don't have value, implying that orgs of color are losing or need change or growth
- Community Investments and Relationships
 - Does meaningful mean dollars and labor? How do you define meaningful? Diverse funders?
- Responsiveness/relevance
 - Who determines relevance?
 - What does classic format mean? If my organization is a classic organization?
- Community voice and intersectionality
 - Lack definitions of what intersectionality means?
 - Is this trying to foster collaboration across different racial/ethnic heritages?
- 96 max points, 53 total in identity, 43 in application
- All three of us support what you are doing 100%.

Other Menti responses from Thrive guided discussion

- **Rate your organization's interest in each topic (ranked on scale of 1 – 10):**
 - DEAI – 8.7
 - Board development and donor cultivation – 7.4
 - Strategic marketing / attracting tourists – 6.9
 - Strategic planning and partnerships – 6.9
 - Budgeting and grantwriting – 5
 - Finding affordable space – 5
 - Legal support – 3.9
 - Virtual events – 3.7

- **Are there other topics or resources that would be valuable, that were missing from the previous list?**
 - Love the cohort idea. It's like advisory boards members. Would like to add perhaps one COA official could be an advisory board member
 - Corporate funding
 - Austin Energy, Food, Food Trucks, CTFood Bank
- **What partners would provide added value to this type of program?**
 - TALA
 - GSDM Mission_Squared Nonprofit_Mgmt_Ctr_ACC
 - Huston_Tillotson ACC Mission_Capital
 - Froswa_Booker_Drew HT
 - large_business_support_ - Tech_firms_diversity_prog

Other survey question responses

- **What do you like about this program proposal?**
 - 1. The inclusion of access to professional development and audience development for growth; and 2. The additional investment in reliable physical space for planning and presenting work. Space is the most unaffordable aspect of office, rehearsals, workshops and performances. 3. Management of fewer organizations by the City to be able to focus on growing each one to a center of excellence.
 - The amounts are more significant
 - I think this program encourage cultural groups to apply and current organizations will be encouraged to be more diverse and give a voice to others who perhaps haven't been clearly heard before.
 - I applaud the direction and the decision to not allocate resources based on revenue of the organization. I also applaud the decision to have a truly competitive process with a limited number of grantees. And I applaud the decision to have scoring based in part around EDI metrics.
 - I am not sure yet, as I haven't been able to fully grok the new framework.

- I like the attempt to reach underserved organizations. There is no mention of multi-racial people or how they identify.
 - Nada.
 - That it provides historically marginalized and underserved/underfunded populations in the cultural arts sector.
 - Hyper-focused
 - The City's deliberate outreach to minority organizations to reduce disparity in funding.
 - Taking some of the implicitly discriminatory restrictions off of funding awards
 - Thrive will give organizations such as ours, the opportunity to expand our theater efforts by assisting us with rental/store front space, additional staffing and the opportunity to better serve the community.
 - Love the fact that the cultural funding can be available to support and help grow capacity for boots on the ground organizations that are lead and organized by folks of color, LGBTQ, and female. We really could use the support and funding platform to produced some incredible initiatives for the city.
 - That it helps with capacity building goals.
 - This program shows a definite commitment to preserving the cultural fabric of Austin with a real vision of cultural equity and inclusion.
- **Was any of the information in the draft guidelines confusing? What questions did you have that you did not find the answer to?**
 - I was surprised that organization that apply cannot be sponsored. Some great organizations have been working under the sponsorship of say "Women and Their Work" or "One World Theatre." They may have over five years and not yet complete with their 501c3 designation. This might exclude many great candidates ([This comment was submitted under Nexus feedback but seems to be about Thrive](#))
 - No but I need to really read the entire guidelines.
 - What, if anything, do you plan to do to resource existing art organizations that don't meet these programs requirements? It sounds like nothing. Having served this arts community for 20+ years I can't imagine a single more disappointing solution.
 - I haven't read the draft guidelines yet.

- A lot of it is confusing. Mostly concerning leaving up to 550 arts service organizations without funding entirely.
- It's confusing why you think of yourself as leaders rather than public servants. Stop trying to impose your faulty, ill informed vision of social justice on the arts community. What you are doing will actively hurt institutions that promote Black and Latino culture. There's a reason great Black artists like Zell Miller and Harold McMillan chose to stop applying for City funding - your idiocy.
- My concern is the same as with your Nexus program in regards to your scoring metrics.
- Slightly. What percentage of the governance of the org need be BIPOC to be eligible? Do board members count? What if the org is so lean they have one part-time white manager/founder but the artists contracted are majority BIPOC? What if they have been funded by the city in the past five years but they are just now undergoing the process to become a standalone non-profit? Why can't these projects be fiscally-sponsored?
- The guidelines were clear.
- "1-As currently proposed I am concerned the program will not have the intended impact. There is the possibility for an organization might install or reorganize so a BIPOC as leader so the organization qualifies. 2-Has information been collected about the number of BIPOC, more specifically African Americans meet the 501-C-3 qualification for Thrive? And that the number non-BIPOC lead organizations will benefit more significantly from their 501C3 status. Will this not be a disparate application of the regulations? 3- I understand this is a pilot program but is there a way to insure that BIPOC/ African Americans will not be shorted during this process."
- I do not have any questions, as the draft guidelines were clear and concise.
- No
- No
- "Yes. I want to make sure that I understand the timeframe and window of covered activities. I am assuming that for Year 1 of the Thrive program, activities from Oct 1 2021 to Sep 30 2022 are covered. Year 2 would be Oct 1 2022 to Sep 30 2023. I know the term ""fiscal year"" is used but it would be helpful to be very clear. Funding would then not be available till maybe March or April of 2022.

- Our event (...) occurs every first Saturday in November. The Travis County Expo Center is likely to cancel our event here in the next couple of weeks and there is no talk of refunding any of our money. We are left without a venue and inadequate funds to find another (even if we could in this short time frame). So this puts us at a disadvantage when applying for Thrive - Year 1 because our signature event will likely not happen within Year 1. We are grateful for all the work that has gone into this program and looking forward to it. However, we are hoping that someone understands the enormous difficulty in bridging this huge gap and that Year 2 will most likely look much better for us."
 - What if an organization has been operating here for 10 years and is in transition to become a 501c3? Can this organization still apply?
- **What types of non-funding resources would help cultivate organizational growth and capacity?**
 - Space affordability.
 - mentorship, reduced rental of space or free use of space, coaching, access to training about marketing, staffing, preservation, board member growth, etc
 - Finding highly qualified board members who can help cultivate organizational growth and capacity.
 - You getting out of the way. Morons.
 - "Provide training for Board Development, roles, and financial responsibilities.
 - Provide individual consultants to support the Executive Directors with Board Development deliverables."
 - Access to space.
 - Marketing; social media experts; resources to databases, posting sites; resources for funding for the arts; resources to take a look at my organization specifically to offer improvement opportunities and help develop a plan of action for audience development and growth
 - "Marketing strategies
 - Business processes
 - Organizational development and staffing
 - Financial issues
 - Networking/pitching
 - Volunteer time, donated materials, real estate,

- Office space
- We absolutely need a venue that is feasible and affordable. The future of our organization depends heavily on this. The Travis County Expo Center has become completely tone deaf to the needs of the community. They cancel event dates with no warning, consultation, or communication with organizations. In addition, the facilities are usually dirty and lack proper maintenance. It is clear that we must find another venue and need help with that.
- **What partners (other organizations, City departments, or businesses) would provide added value to this type of program?**
 - Major corporations and employers. MBA programs.
 - board recruitment in underserved communities
 - Autonomy, not your paternalistic, insulting determination that we don't know what we are doing. have any of you idiots actually worked in the arts sector in a substantive way? Morons.
 - City of Austin Convention and Visitor's Bureau, as well as, professional accountants associations for pro bono services and volunteers.
 - Partners that can provide affordable, safe space for meeting, rehearsing/making, and presenting. Parking and access to public transportation would also be a must for such spaces.
 - Austin tourism bureau; convention center
 - Sorority/Fraternity organizations, Links organizations, chamber of commerce.
 - Marketing, event logistics, rental venues
 - Event venues.
- **Are there any organizations you'd refer for this program (your own organization or others)?**
 - well, us, the South Austin Museum of Popular Culture that works to preserve Austin music culture and educate the public about Austin's uniqueness.
 - Apple, Dell, Seton, UT Austin, just about any organization large enough to have senior leadership.
 - yes, since it seems to be the only option
 - God no. Why would I hurt my community like that? You are the problem. all we want is for you to get out of the way.

- I've worked for and volunteered with La Pena in the past and it is an organization that is worthy of funding because it is the longest running grass-roots Latino arts organization that has been around working within the cultural arts community since the early 1980s.
 - Not that meet the rigid criteria
 - Women in Jazz Association, Inc., Dancin Jazzy, Capital City Black Film Festival, SaulPaul
 - BIG Austin
 - Spectrum Theatre Company
 - Raasin in the Sun
 - Austin Sister Cities International and all the individual 14 sister city committees
- **How else can we improve this pilot program?**
 - Opening to individual artists through a fiscal sponsor like CORE previously did. But I understand it is hard times.
 - Make it equitable, inclusive and diverse instead of exclusionary.
 - money. you need to find the funding to fund long standing organizations and organizations that actually generate revenue for this community.
 - Center the community, not your own stupid ideas. Start by getting rid of the laughable program names. We are all talking about how stupid they are.
 - The key to a successful program is getting a high number of participants to apply and do not make accessibility to the online information and application so difficult to find. The program is hidden within the City's bureaucracy and it shouldn't be that way. Use social media to disseminate information regarding these funding opportunities.
 - Stretch the focused limits to include legacy organizations who have a recognized, intentional, and proven track record for supporting/hosting/presenting BIPOC artists and their work, not solely orgs who are run by BIPOC individuals. The focus is understood as important but seems misplaced and almost like a slap in the face to long-time allies who will not be eligible for this imperative funding at this juncture.
 - Post the application process on minority social media sites (e.g., Soulcity)
 - Ensure applicants are clear and comfortable on all aspects of the program.
 - Provide assistance throughout the funding including an interim review of it at the one year anniversaries

- We are excited about it!
- The goal of cultural equity that this program is intended to champion is incredibly important. However, funding this program to the exclusion of other programs (especially sponsored project programs) means many POC artists will lose work when the companies not eligible for this program close down Austin programming.

NEXUS

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Rating (survey result)

7. Based on what you've read on our web page or heard at our presentations, how well do you think this program supports our goals of achieving greater cultural equity?

11
Responses


3.91 Average Rating

Award amount

- Aug 9 presentation – 32 out of 85 Menti responses (38%) voted for \$5000
- Survey – 3 said \$5000, 3 said \$7000, 2 said \$10,000

Questions received during 8/9 Presentation (grouped by similar questions)

- **How can the funds be used?**
 - Can the funds be used for salaries?
 - Can the funds be used to hire subcontractors?
 - Can the funds be used for setting up for profit artists markets?
 - Are there limitations to how we can use the funds?
 - To be sure: this is more event-based funding for festivals, shared events, etc, correct?

- **What is the application deadline? How many times can I apply?**

Two deadlines, but one application per year per applicant?

How many times a year can you apply?

Are the two deadlines the pre contract materials and then the final report?

You mentioned 2 application available per year. If awarded in one application cycle, will award be penalized or dismissed in second application?

Two deadlines but one application per year?

- **What does “community focus” mean?**

Define community focus more

Can a community be focused on the appreciation of arts from outside of Austin as a way to encourage artists excellence within Austin?

What are the practical examples of the community voice rubric scoring categories

How do individual artists approach the community organization as required? If the community orgs are involved, its only fair they receive funding as a collaborator. Only allows for small scale projects

How do new groups get arts funding if they aren't creating neighborhood-based art? Isn't that an unnecessary control of the content and speech? Prioritize minorities but don't make us create specific types of art.

- **Is Nexus only for new applicants?**

Will organizations still be limited to 2 or 3 years participation – as was the case with Community Initiatives?

Is this program intended for creatives who have never gotten funding before?

Does being new help?

- **Who is NEXUS for? Where do I fit in?**

What role does the presentation of artists or arts groups from outside of Austin play in Nexus scoring?

Are we supposed to have an umbrella organization to apply or can this be an individual application?

Is there any way a theatre group that presents classic works, with diverse casting, could receive Nexus funding?

As a white man who is a solo artist that focuses on bringing African musicians and culturally diverse programming I hope that will be able to be considered in the grading somehow as opposed to only what race/gender I am personally.

Do arts groups without underrepresented leadership or focus have a chance of being funded under nexus?

I have been sponsored (CORE), unclear how this applies to me & can I apply here as well?

Is this the only grant individual artists (without fiscal sponsorship can apply for?)

Individual artists will have less chance of producing work. This will kill off artists.

If the pool of applications can not be sponsored, what happens to those long-term presenters who have been sponsored. They are no longer in the pool which may widen the disparity gap.

- **The maximum award amount doesn't seem like enough**

How are professional organizations who wish to pay multiple members fairly for their work going to produce quality work on a project with \$5k? This limits the project's capacity.

Would the base amount be changed in coming funding cycles?

\$5,000 is very wonderful but it seems so hard to do an entire project for that much

We have applied/received a CI grant so this might be very standard but to I understand correctly that this grant is for a small project. One which aligns with the organizations mission/vision and is completely funded by this \$5,000?

So if I am not wrong \$5,000 is the highest you can apply for correct?

- **Questions regarding representation**

Why only give points for the race of the artists but not the race of the audience served?

Clarify what the impact of race as different from LGBTQ+ as is different from disability and which impacts score most.

Do arts groups without underrepresented leadership or focus have a chance of being funded under nexus?

Is an organization's racial identity tied solely to the applicant/CEO/Staff? And does the creative work have to align with that racial identity?

Why aren't BIPOC groups be listed in either size of population or alphabetical order?
Ditto for disability and LGBTQ lists
When are you going to include other BIPOC cultural center reps to be on the internal review process?

- **What does Nexus stand for, if anything?**

Why choose a brand new name like "nexus" instead of a direct name that describes the program. Such consumer style branding has been proven to hamper equitable access because it requires additional self education to learn if the program applies to oneself

- **I have questions about the application review**

What if there is a tie?

How will you judge an application by maturity. There could be a great application with a not so great content. Will there be resources to help?

- **If you receive Nexus funds can you apply for any other CAD funding?**

Questions received during Nexus guided discussion, email, Virtual Open Office Hours

- when would be the final report due for nexus
- If I am a visual artist, and my practice is usually very personal... how am I supposed to find people to collaborate with? Just not sure how I well I would score on the rubric without changing my artistic practice completely...
- If applicants must choose between Nexus or Thrive, does that mean that an organization must choose Nexus over Thrive in order to be able to be a sponsoring organization?
- Is this only for new events?
- Timeline for projects funded"
- Is there an limit to the amt an organization can request?
- If we show a film series must every film have a collaboration?

- Can the two funding cycles be for an extension for the same project - for nexus
- The community panel should have a representative from the ESB-MACC as Latinos “have a larger population with greater need.”

Other Menti responses from Nexus guided discussion

- **Audience question: What else would be helpful to you in your art business? (share this with Small Business Division)**
 - Fundraising workshops (6.6/10)
 - Access to affordable venues (6.6/10)
 - Marketing training (4.6/10)
 - Business planning (3.7/10)
 - Networking opportunities (3.6/10)
 - Business coaching (3.3/10)
 - Budgeting and financial workshops (3.2/10)
 - Team and volunteer management training (1.8/10)
- **Same question, open-ended:**
 - not sure at this moment but definitely more funds.
 - Extra funds for marketing like we had in 2020.
 - Workshop for others in the same art form - film.
 - Kindness and fairness
 - It’s been covered before during thrive - but would love peer interaction would be awesome if the COA can initiate organizations (or artists) in the same field to work together
 - Analytics and audience building
 - Lists of vendors who provide services, e.g. insurance.
 - Access specific professions - Facebook / newsletters
 - No match

- **What do you like about this program proposal?**
 - no_match individual_applicant umbrella_applicant
 - Culture
 - I_like_that_it_gives_cha
 - Simple Easy Collaboration
 - Small_budget
 - No_matching_fund

Other survey question responses

- **What do you like about this program proposal?**
 - no fiscal sponsor/cash match requirement
 - nothing about it is really innovative or exciting. Does provide an opportunity for culturally diverse events and exhibits.
 - It sounds ok
 - Nothing. Idiocy.
 - Serves the historically underserved and under funded populations in the arts community.
 - Will be helpful for new arts organizations - what about the organizations established over decades?
 - I like the fact that this program is focusing on specific cultural acts of a specific ethnicity. This specific group tend to struggle financially, physically and emotionally.
 - Love the fact that the cultural funding can be available to support and help grow capacity for boots on the ground organizations that are lead and organized by folks of color, LGBTQ, and female. We really could use the support and funding platform to produced some incredible initiatives for the city. [\(this response was submitted for both programs\)](#)
 - I appreciate that it supports artistic events that are targeted at tourists, since we want to encourage more tourism from our sister cities from around the globe.
 - proposed support for under-represented communities

- **Was any information in the draft guidelines confusing? What questions did you have that you did not find the answer to?**

- Name origin
 - I haven't read them yet.
 - I am concerned that focusing on communities of color and other presumed marginalized cultures new to Austin and then expecting them to offer programming for tourists without any stated support from the CAD is a formula destined for disappointment. I trust that the staff, especially if the job of contract management is being outsourced, will have a much needed hands-on involvement with this new CAD program area, providing one-on-one support to the funded entities.
 - Why is the name so stupid? You aren't marketing a consumer product. Morons.
 - How will the applicants be scored?
 - No
 - I do not have any questions, as the information in the draft guidelines were very clear and specific.
 - Nothing confusing.
 - No
- **What support might you need in preparing your application?**
 - Staff support as provided currently is excellent.
 - Possible pre-review of the application
 - Not having to deal with you idiots.
 - This depends on the scoring metrics but narrative and budget preparation support seems appropriate.
 - Knowledge when staff is available - which is in place.
 - Documentations needed as well as questions relating to specific eligible programs.
 - Same as what you provide for the cultural heritage grants
- **How else can we improve this pilot program?**
 - not sure yet
 - Continue to provide these walkthroughs and opportunities for feedback; and modify aspects that clearly inhibit participation in a new CAD arts funding model.
 - an established menu of meaningful technical assistance and training for all Nexus grantees.

- Center the actual arts community, not some mythical cohort of unserved people who think of themselves as artists. One must actually have an artistic practice to be an artist. You are about to waste so much money. Idiots.
- Provide enough staff support so that the applicant and city staff successfully fulfill the mutual cultural arts contract requirements on a timely manner.
- Have options for currently established arts organizations that helped 'BUILD' Austin as an arts community.
- It is not clear what resources the City has for training in audience development, fundraising, obtaining partnerships and capacity planning. It might be good to state some of the resources you have to develop the selected organizations.
- Allowing a "grace period" for application submittal
- We are excited about it!
- This is not realistically enough funding to put on a professional event if it must be shared between multiple organizations.

Other Nexus comments received via email, VOOH:

- I'm not exactly sure what the community collaboration is supposed to be. Do we have to collaborate with the community to produce content? Do we need to collaborate with a non-profit? Would collaborations with other area musicians be considered a collaboration?
- The hurdle of meaningful community partnerships
- Why is collaboration emphasized so much if the budget is so small
- Extra points if you collaborate
- Punishing people who have done good work if it's not a first time applicant?

REVIEW PANEL FEEDBACK

Audience questions submitted during 8/9 Presentation

- Who chooses the community members for the panel?
- How are panelists selected?
- Will panels still meet applicants prior to scoring?
- Is staff the only ones to review the application?
- Will there be a call for internal reviewers?
- Will there be community panelists that get to review apps from their own communities (who do not have a conflict of interest)
- Who makes up the panel?
- How do you serve as a panelist? Who can serve?
- How is the review panel comprised?
- How will judges be chosen?

Notes from Review Panel guided discussion

- “meaningfully” is used throughout the rubrics. Feels very subjective. Important to clarify that especially if we are eliminating people based on section 1 scores.
- In Philly, panelists did 5-10 site visits in advance.
- Training panelists on looking out for budget issues – really more about training artists
- **Thoughts on minimum score to advance to full review panel:**
 - Not quite sure what you mean by this question because I don't think there should be a minimum score.
 - What is the score based on?

- I would have to know exactly what you were scoring in the pre panel review to have an opinion on the subject,, thanks for asking tho :)
 - What is the criteria for scoring?
 - They should then score a minimum of 70%
 - I completely trust Jesus, Anne- Marie and the rest of you at CAD to make these decisions, thank you for asking.
 - Our proposal becomes stronger when our video is watched. If the first panel does not see our video, we might be at a disadvantage.. perhaps the first panel will look at the video submitted by applicants?
- **Thoughts on no direct interaction with the review panels:**
 - I've served on review panels for the City of Philadelphia but we were assigned arts organizations to visit prior to the review panel meeting. Here in Austin it is awkward to have interactions with grantees.
 - I think the interaction is key, especially because it sounds like you might have panelists over seeing applications of multiple disciplines and might not have the specialize knowledge to fully understand the project otherwise.
 - How many applications are you looking for each panel us to review? So I don't
 - Are panelists going to be reviewing applications of a particular discipline or would they be reviewing multiple disciplines?
- **What sort of experience should review panels have?**
 - Experience should be in the arts sector especially in Austin
 - Austin based
 - DEI
 - I've recently moved back to Austin from Philadelphia, does it exclude me?
 - I'm concerned about people who don't know about creative and cultural eco system on the panels
 - Arts or Historical Preservation Background and emphasis on challenging existing historical narratives
 - I think people from other cities might bring a fresh perspective tho
 - Implicit bias, measuring "impact" by the numbers

- **What training should we provide to review panelists?**
 - Training should include budgetary issues, cultural diversity and arts administration.
 - DEAI
 - Implicit bias in funding
 - How will the panelists be scoring? Using the same rubric in the guidelines?
 - Marketing plans
 - Measuring for “impact”
 - Make the rubric objective so it's easy to be objective
 - Narrative storytelling and numbers served

- **Where might we recruit relevant and diverse review panelists?**
 - Arts_organizations, Churches, Community_Centers, Local_News_Media, word_of_mouth
 - Huston_Tillotson_educatrs
 - Music_organizations
 - Libraries
 - Local arts listservs

- **How else can we improve the review panel process?**
 - Meet and Greet Sessions especially after COVID. People work better when they know who they are dealing with.
 - Good job, y'all.
 - If an application is denied, could we receive feedback?

Survey responses

- **How do you feel about having direct interaction with the peer review panel as part of the peer panel process? How might you feel if applicants did not have that option?**
 - I do feel there needs to be a vetting process with a slightly higher standard for intended impact on the community. Especially with funds being sparse.

- I think direct interaction would be helpful to the review panel as the panelists could ask questions and visiting in person would allow them to get a more thorough sense of what the applying organization is all about. I've been through a process without any interaction and it worked fine but I like having interaction with the review panel better.
 - As a former chair of a peer panel for several years, and an applicant for many many years, I feel the peer panel process can be valuable to the funding decision, but it is complicated and complex to implement and manage. I believe that all applicants must have a direct action with a reviewer as part of the review process. There have been several methods employed in the past, and I am sure that CAD can envision a process that will not be burdensome to either party. I am happy to have further conversation about this.
 - It's not a "peer" panel if no one on it is our peer.
 - Direct interaction is key to understanding the applicant and I propose assigning applicants to each peer panelist to do site visits before the panel meets to disburse funds. Individual applicants can invite the panelist to a performance or an exhibition or simply sit down with them to explain or answer questions from the panelist about their application. The applicant should not be present when the final panel meeting meet to award the grants.
 - "Depends on the panel. In the past, the panel has seemed inconsistent, underqualified, and ill-informed. I wonder if the peer review could perhaps be less of a final factor in overall scoring than in years past; it's so subjective.
 - I understand the need for a more subjective element of the scoring process; otherwise, where could parody exist? "
 - Having direct interaction would be helpful - and the opportunity to ask directly about their scores. It would be helpful to know so that organizations would know what areas they need to improve, what areas are meeting current requirements.
 - Yes, it is helpful
- **Do public panels impact whether or not you would be willing to serve on a panel?**
 - **Would you be more inclined to serve on a panel if they were not conducted publicly?**
 - no
 - Panels should be public. I would be fine participating on a panel that was conducted publicly.

- i have no fear of meeting in public. We did it for years in the past. I do feel there have to be ground rules for engagement for both panelists and applicants. But transparency is always the best. And if panelists and applicants have already had an opportunity to meet, the open meetings should not provide an opportunity for surprise or ambush.
 - No transparency is everything. Morons.
 - Yes, I would be more inclined to serve on a panel if they were not conducted publicly.
 - MUCH more likely to serve.
 - No.
 - No
-
- **How else can we improve the peer panel process?**
 - pay people for their time. a small stipend goes a long way in generating good will.
 - Put actual professionals in charge of it, not overpaid, lazy idiots who fancy themselves "leaders" in the arts community.
 - Have a large enough pool of panelists to do the work with plenty of time to review applications and visit all applicants. Entice panelists to participate as a panelist by promoting the opportunity for panelists to learn and grow their grant writing skills.
 - Blind panel? Not sure what that would look like.
 - Have knowledge, and indication that the panelist has truly read through the entire application - making themselves aware of all that was proposed BEFORE scoring, and comparing it to previous applications to see that improvement was trying to be made.
 - I am not sure

3RD PARTY AND OTHER SURVEY RESPONSES

3rd Party feedback – received via email

- On a final note, the city is considering outsourcing the contract management of our contracts in the arts. This would create another reduction in HOT funding by up to 10% that would be paid to a third party. This is unacceptable. The function of this group is to administer our contracts. Do not allow this to even be considered as part of the process moving forward.
- Now the Cultural Arts staff is proposing to privatize the administration of the Cultural Arts Contracts with 10% of the bed tax fund (in this case \$300000 or 10% of \$3 million) – taking money away from the arts organizations who need the money at this difficult time. At the same time the cultural arts staff continues to add staffing. Staff is proposing paying \$300000 to an organization to run the grants program while they only want to grant \$80000 to organizations of color.)

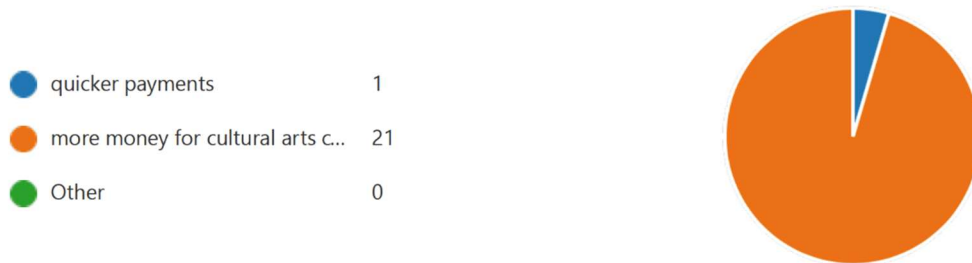
3rd party feedback from panel guided discussion

- My first knee jerk reaction to ANY third party administration is negative since funding is so, so limited for cultural contracts. Why do you need someone to handle a \$3M budget as opposed to a \$12m budget? What is the current Cultural Arts staff pay
- So how much money does 3rd party cost
- I was not a fan of the \$20k or nothing relief funding opportunity from BBB. I'm sure it made it easier for you to weed out the orgs you didn't want to fund this period, but it didn't communicate those changes well.

- Wouldn't the drastic reduction of contracts per year free up the staff substantially enough for these other or deeper operations?
- I vote to keep money available for cultural contracts.
- So can only some parts of the process be outsourced

3rd party feedback – survey results

26. The Economic Development Department is exploring third party administration options, particularly outsourcing the payment process. This may mean significantly shortened payment turnaround, but the service would be paid from HOT funds. Which is more important to you?



Other survey responses

- **Due to significant Hotel Occupancy Tax shortages, we will not be able to fund everyone at the same pre-pandemic levels. If you do not receive funding this year, in what other ways can we support you/your organization?**
 - Pie in the sky - Starting a new donor database or program that connects donors to artists, especially in the filmmaking community.
 - access to underutilized space owned by the City of Austin would help us greatly.
 - No.
 - At this stage of the pandemic, money is really the only real resource needed.
 - additional grant opportunities. many organizations will go under because of this.
 - OMG why do you always think we need training? That's your answer for everything - the lack of affordable space, lack of philanthropy, insanely stupid application for funding. You need training in what your actual jobs are - get the money council appropriates into the hands of actual arts organizations. Idiots.

- Provide training on board development, fundraising and grant writing. Provide networking opportunities.
 - Without funding, there's no programming my org can produce that would need support; so no.
 - Training in other fund resources
 - Assist with matching arts organizations with corporations.
 - "Marketing
 - Audience development
 - Organizational growth"
 - "Grant writing and funding research
 - Pitching and presentation skills
 - Marketing strategies
 - Business development
 - Budgets
 - Volunteer and team development "
 - By providing additional resources for funding
 - Reduced rates on COA rental venues
 - "[Our event] is likely to be cancelled by the Travis County Expo Center here in the next few weeks. This will be the second year that we have no proceeds from this event. So for now, we are now depending on the city's cultural funding to bridge the gap.
 - You would think that in Austin, TX there would be a lot of private interest in preserving such an important cultural event but we have yet to see it. If there is access to private funding, we sure could use help finding it."
 - What about the \$4.4 million that is being saved for a "rainy day?" Can we use that? Otherwise, a cooperatively-owned moving truck would come in handy for all the artists who will inevitably leave Austin.
- **As we launch our new programs, how can we do better reaching your community(s)?**
Who should we reach out to? What is the best way to reach them?
 - Include them.
 - you need to give more turn around time and communicate better. we usually receive emails on friday evenings. bad timing.
 - Deal with the people in front of you. There isn't some unknown, unseen arts community praying for you to rescue them.

- Social media, local multi media outlets, churches, community centers, word of mouth and easy internet access.
- send information to all cultural contractors
- Have information available at performances, concerts, etc. placed by current funded organizations.
- Soulcity, minority FaceBook groups
- Churches and community org newsletters. Social media /hashtags And sponsored ads
- Marilyn Harden, Board President, Spectrum Theatre Company
- Social media, KUT, Emails through your existing channels

ARTICLES:

[Austin Monitor Article](#)

[Austin 360 Article](#)

[Sightlines Article](#)