

2026-27 Grant Guidelines

City's Initiative



Amanda Phingbodhipakkiya,
'Find Hope Here' (detail) (2022).
Asia Society Texas Center,
Houston, TX. Acrylic latex on
panel. 18' x 36'



Contents

About	3
Application Deadlines	4
I Would Like More Assistance / Quisiera Más Asistencia	5
Program Overview	6
Applying to Multiple Programs	9
Funding Area	11
Application Checklist and Process	13
Fiscal Sponsor Requirements	14
Public Presentation	15
What May Not Be Funded	17
Required Documents	19
Application Questions	21
Review Process	26
After Decisions Are Made	28

About

Houston Arts Alliance

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a local arts and culture organization whose principal work is to implement the City of Houston's vision, values, and goals for its arts grantmaking and civic art investments. HAA's work is conducted through contracts with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs.

HAA also executes privately funded special projects to meet the needs of the arts community, such as disaster preparation, research on the state of the arts in Houston, and temporary public art projects that vitalize neighborhoods.

City's Initiative Grant Program

Use this guide as a resource to assist with your application to the City's Initiative grant program. It contains all the information prospective applicants need to apply.

The City of Houston provides all funds for this program. The specific source of funds is the **Hotel Occupancy Tax**. It is important to note that legal, contractual requirements state the City's Initiative grant program must be administered separately from other HOT-funded grants overseen by HAA.

Funds dedicated for the City's Initiative grant program cannot be diverted in any way to other grant programs, including SACI (Support for Artists and Creative Individuals), Festival, Support for Organizations, and Let Creativity Happen.

Funding for the City's Initiative grant program will support arts and cultural programming that is accessible to the Houston community and its visitors.

Spanish language assistance is available upon request, and HAA grants staff are available to provide technical assistance to people with disabilities. If you have any questions or need assistance, please email through the [Support Desk](#) or call Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m. CDT, 713-527-9330.

Asistencia en español está disponible a petición. El equipo de subvenciones está disponible de proveer asistencia técnica a personas con discapacidades. Si tiene alguna pregunta o necesita ayuda, envíe un correo electrónico a [Support Desk](#) o llame de lunes–viernes, 9:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m. CDT, 713-527-9330.

Application Deadlines

This application has multiple deadlines each year.

In fairness to all applicants, we cannot accept late or incomplete applications. If the applicant does not provide the complete set of information in the appropriate format by the deadline, the application may be deemed incomplete and ineligible. No deadline extensions will be granted. Once applications are submitted, they cannot be revised in any way.

Round 1

OPENING: March 23, 2026, at 9:00 AM CDT

CLOSING: April 21, 2026, at 11:59 PM CDT

Application submissions for this deadline should only include arts and cultural activities taking place August 1, 2026 – August 1, 2027.

Round 2

OPENING: May 25, 2026, at 9:00 AM CDT

CLOSING: June 23, 2026, at 11:59 PM CDT

Application submissions for this deadline should only include projects taking place October 1, 2026 – October 1, 2027.

Round 3

OPENING: August 28, 2026, at 9:00 AM CDT

CLOSING: September 26, 2026 at 11:59 PM CDT

Application submissions for this deadline should only include projects taking place January 1, 2027–December 31, 2027.

I Would Like More Assistance / Quisiera Más Asistencia

HAA provides full application support via informational workshops, scheduled meetings, phone calls, and email when requests or questions are submitted.

On deadline dates, the HAA Grants team is only available for technical assistance with the online application due to high volume of calls, [Support Desk](#) inquiries, and emails.

Spanish language assistance is available upon request, and HAA grants staff are available to provide technical assistance to people with disabilities. If you have any questions or need assistance, please email through the [Support Desk](#) at grants@haatxhelp.zendesk.com or call Monday–Friday, 9:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m. CDT, 713-527-9330.

Asistencia en español está disponible a petición. El equipo de subvenciones está disponible para proveer asistencia técnica a personas con discapacidades. Si tiene alguna pregunta o necesita ayuda, envíe un correo electrónico a [Support Desk](#) at grants@haatxhelp.zendesk.com o llame de lunes a viernes, 9:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m. CDT, 713-527-9330.

Workshops include instructions for applying and information on writing a competitive application. [Workshop schedules and registration information](#) are on the HAA website.

To request a meeting or ask questions, email the Grants Team through the [Support Desk](#) or call 713-527-9330, ext. 6. Support Desk messages are monitored by several staff to ensure a quicker and more thorough response, and each inquiry receives a response within three business days.

All grant notifications are sent solely via email to the applicant and/or the application's primary grant contact designated in the [HAA Online Grants Portal](#).

Program Overview

The City's Initiative grant program provides funding to individual artists, creatives, and nonprofits for strategic and creative opportunities to engage visitors and residents while building upon Houston's cultural identity and tourism.

Proposed activities should not be a part of the applicant's regular programming or annual schedule of activities or events.

Houston is a true international city, linked by both commerce and culture to countless places around the world. Its growing populations show that Houston is now the single most ethnically diverse major metropolitan area in the entire country. One in four residents is foreign-born, contributing to an ever-changing culture that spurs creative innovation. It is one of the best places in the world for arts, and its creative community represents a strategic opportunity for Houston's civic identity and tourism.

Grant expenses are restricted to project related costs, which include artist fees, and marketing costs. Typical awards are between \$5,000 and \$10,000.



Elizabeth A. M. Keel, *Moving Myths* (2022). Photograph by Lynn Lane. Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, Houston, TX. Courtesy of Houston Contemporary Dance.

Who Can Apply?

Eligibility

All applicants must provide official documentation demonstrating a physical address within the City of Houston limits, which is verified by HAA staff through the [online Council Member verify mapping tool](#). P.O. Boxes are not accepted.

- An individual applicant must be at least 18 years old, which will be verified by the applicant's submission of an official state-issued identification card, passport, or other official document.
- Organizations or fiscal sponsors must be tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), as verified by the [IRS Tax Exemption Organization Search](#).
- International non-U.S. residents may apply so long as they: 1) have a domestic U.S. checking account, 2) have an active SSN (Social Security Number), and 3) can independently accept grant funds from a 501(c)3 public charity without the need for modification(s) to their grant agreement. Please consult with your legal and tax advisors on your personal tax status and any associated tax/legal risk prior to submitting your application. If you submit an application and are awarded, you accept the legal and tax implications of your grant award.
- Applicants' scopes of work must have a clear public presentation component, verified by staff review of the application.
- Applicants may submit only one application for each individual grant program. In other words, applicants cannot send multiple applications to the same grant program.

Applying as...

Part of a Collaboration, Collective, or Participating in an Organizational Led Programming?

Please also read the eligibility rules under Collaborations, Collaboratives, & Collectives Policy before submitting your application.

Collaborations, Collaboratives, & Collectives Policy

DEFINITIONS

ARTIST COLLECTIVE

(ONGOING SHARED PRACTICE)

Two or more artists sharing ongoing creative authorship under a shared identity or recurring practice.

COLLABORATIVE PROJECT / COLLABORATION

(ONE-TIME PROJECT)

A project-specific, one-time collaboration between generative contributors to the creative work. Vendors or contractors (e.g., venue rental, printing) do not qualify as collaborators.

Participating in Organization Led Programming?

If you are an individual artist or collective whose work will be presented through or as part of an organization's program — such as exhibiting in a curated show or premiering a commissioned composition— you may still apply for an individual grant, as long as you are also presenting that work to the public yourself.

Simply being booked, scheduled, or listed as a participant in an event does not qualify.

Your application must show:

- A distinct public engagement component — this does not have to be a large-scale event; it just needs to be artist-led and accessible to the public.

HAA is funding your creative process and your direct engagement with the public — not just your appearance in someone else's program.

Organizations participating in another organization's programs may not apply to Festival, LCH, Support for Organizations, or CI solely for participation in another HAA-funded organization's programming.

Organizational applicants must independently own at least one other project in their application for which they are seeking funding.

In summary, under the Collaborations, Collaboratives, & Collectives Policy, applicants will need to adhere to the One Application Per Cycle Rule:

- Applicants must choose which single project to participate in. For this project, each applicant (individual, organization, lead applicant, or listed collaborator) may only submit one application per grant cycle/deadline.
- All collaborators and collective members are considered awardees.

Applying to Multiple programs

How Many Grants Can I Apply For and Receive?

Pick & apply to only one annual grant.

There are three Annual Grant Programs

- Festival
- Support for Organization (SO)
- Support for Artists and Creative Individuals (SACI)

You may only apply to one of these three programs per grant cycle. Choose the program that best fits your project – you cannot apply to more than one, even if you have different projects for each.

City's Initiative (CI) and Let Creativity Happen (LCH) – Apply Multiple Times, Win Once. CI and LCH have multiple deadlines throughout the year, so you can apply more than once.

- You can only receive (1) LCH award per year
- You can only receive (1) CI award per year

Once you've been awarded either of these, you cannot receive another award from that same program until the next grant year but you can still apply to other programs you haven't maxed out yet.

The Maximum You Can Receive in One Year: **3 Award**

- LCH Award
- CI Award
- Annual Award

Please note: If you are awarded a Support for Organizations 3 grant, you are not eligible to apply for CI or LCH.



The Flow: A Night of Monologues during "Fade to Black Play Festival" (2023). MATCH, Houston, TX. Courtesy of Shabach Enterprise.

Applying to Multiple programs

Applying to multiple programs in the same grant cycle year?

Requirements

You may apply to more than one HAA grant program in the same grant year — but each application must be for a different, distinct project. You cannot use the same project to apply to multiple programs.

For example, you cannot submit the same project to different grant programs (e.g., LCH, CI, and SACI) simultaneously. Each application needs to represent its own project, with its own creative scope, timeline, budget, and public presentation.

HAA will consider two or more applications the same project if they share most of the following:

- The same or very similar scope of work
- The same title or theme
- The same timeline
- The same budget and expenses
- The same public presentation or deliverables

If your application meets the criteria above during staff review, the application will be considered ineligible. Once a project has been funded in one grant program, it cannot be funded again in a separate grant program.



Babatunde and Friends, 'Village Wordsmith' (2023). SAID Institute, Houston, TX. Courtesy of the artist.

Funding Areas

Art + Disaster Resilience Awareness

Your proposed project should center on heightening awareness and preparedness concerning environmental risks such as the climate crisis, flooding, food deserts, hurricanes, tropical storms, environmental justice, electricity disruption, and related subjects, using your chosen artistic medium. We encourage you to consult [Resilient Houston \(Chapter 2\)](#) and [the Climate Action Plan](#) to better understand and align the proposed project with the city's goals in utilizing arts and culture to increase risk awareness and readiness. These documents highlight the city's commitment to collaborate with artists and creative professionals in educating and engaging the public in flood and climate risk education, mitigation, and adaptation strategies within Greater Houston. And that information should guide proposals for funding.

Your project should create public engagement events or opportunities that focus on preparedness, mitigation behaviors, adaptive capacity, and post-disaster lessons. Successful projects find ways to assist people in preparing for possible disasters, dealing with environmental justice problems, improving their ability to handle such challenges, or learning what steps to take after a disaster occurs.

Example Project

Houston Climate Justice Museum, *"Climate Migration: Displacement, Travel, Home"*, 2022
Round 2 City's Initiative Grantee.

"This is a series of art installations, expert panels, and public engagements that aim to deepen understandings and experiences of climate migration in Houston. As the climate crisis worsens and accelerates, researchers expect unprecedented migration of humans and non-humans from de-stabilized environments to more resilient places. There is currently no legal designation for refugees displaced due to climate change. The Museum seeks to broaden understandings of this emerging phenomenon through engaging multiple sites — The Museum, Rice University Solar Studios, CHAT, and Baker Ripley — to ensure a diverse and varied audience including students, migrants, long-time Houston residents, families, citizen-scientists, and activists."

Funding Areas

Art + Neighborhood Cultural Destinations

Projects must have a primary goal to engage residents of a specific neighborhood or community. Proposed projects should incorporate at least one arts and culture event taking place in the selected neighborhood. This event should actively involve and celebrate the community and residents of that area, highlighting their distinctiveness, history, or contributions to the Greater Houston landscape. Successful projects will strive to aid community growth by using arts to bring people together, foster stronger connections, and celebrate the areas where we reside, labor, and innovate.

Art + Conference Tourism

Your proposal should entail collaborating with a planned conference or hosting a conference to offer conference attendees, locals, and visitors an activity showcasing Houston artists or cultural attractions. The objective is to broaden the artistic dimensions of the conference's programming.

Example Project

José Hernández López, *"East End Echoes: Houston's Latinx Immigration Through Sound"*, 2023 Round 1 City's Initiative Grantee.

"The East End Echoes project will immerse listeners in the rich history and humanity of the Latinx community in Houston's East End through a GPS-enabled soundwalk experience. By weaving together interviews with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd generation Latinx immigrants, live music performed by local musicians, and sound design, the project empowers East End residents to be the primary voices in sharing their stories, culture, and experiences with the wider community."

Example Project

Christy Poisot, *"2024 Filipino American National Historical Society Conference"*, 2023 Round 1 City's Initiative Grantee.

"The Filipino American National Historical Society Conference is held every two years and Houston has been chosen for 2024! As chair of the conference, author of the *Filipinos in Houston* book, I want to showcase Houston by lining up educational lectures, performances, a museum exhibit of local Filipino artists, and food. 40+ chapters from all over the United States will converge onto the city to share their stories with Houstonians."

Application Checklist & Process

How to Apply

Grants Portal

Applications must be submitted online through the [HAA Online Grants Portal](#).

Application Eligibility Checklist

Requirements

Individuals

- Proof of Age
- Proof of Residency
- Work Samples
- Public Presentation
- One Grant Program per Project
- One application per Grant Program
- Applications submitted by Deadline

Organizations

- Proof of Headquarters
- 501(C)(3) Tax-Exempt Status
- Work Samples
- Public Presentation
- One Grant Program per Project
- One application per Grant Program
- Applications submitted by Deadline

Fiscal Sponsors

- Proof of Headquarters
(Applicant and Fiscal Sponsor)
- 501(C)(3) Tax-Exempt Status (Fiscal Sponsor)
- Work Samples
- Public Presentation
- One Grant Program per Project
- One application per Grant Program

Fiscal Sponsor Requirements

Requirements

All fiscal sponsors and their fiscally sponsored projects must adhere to the following requirements in addition to meeting the eligibility in the previous page. *Individuals are not required to have fiscal sponsorship for this grant program.*

- The individual applicant or collective seeking fiscal sponsorship and the fiscal sponsor must demonstrate residency and/or headquarters within the City of Houston limits.
 - The Sponsor's Board of Directors must adhere to the highest standards of legal and fiduciary responsibility regarding its policymaking and governance of the organization.
 - The Sponsor's Board must pass a resolution approving the fiscal sponsorship arrangement, as expressed in the written agreement, with the Project.
 - The Sponsor must have a conflict of interest policy in place that contemplates conflicts with sponsored Projects and their leadership and provides clear direction for vetting potential conflicts and otherwise implementing the policy.
 - The Sponsor must maintain sufficient financial resources to assure continuous, uninterrupted operation and employ procedures and internal controls based on Generally Accepted Accounting Principles and all regulations.
 - The Sponsor must evaluate the capability, potential, experience, and integrity of Project leaders to assure a constructive, mutually respected working relationship between the Sponsor and the Project.
- The Sponsor may only charge Projects reasonable fees commensurate with the services it will provide. Further:
 - If the Sponsor is re-granting funds to the Project and not providing additional services, the overhead fee may not exceed 7% of the City grant if awarded.
 - If the Sponsor is re-granting funds to the Project and providing additional services, such as accounting or administration, the overhead fee may not exceed 15% of the City grant if awarded.



Babatunde and Friends, 'Village Wordsmith' (2023). SAID Institute, Houston, TX. Courtesy of the artist.

Public Presentation

Public Presentation Requirements

Your project must include a public-facing event or program where an audience can actively engage with your work. This means more than just posting something online or displaying work without interaction – there must be a structured opportunity for people to participate, respond, or dialogue with the work in some way.

Your application must clearly describe:

- The format of your public presentation (live performance, exhibition, talk, screening, etc.)
- Whether it is in-person, virtual, or hybrid.
- Who your intended audience is.
- How the audience will meaningfully engage with the work.
- How you plan to reach and invite that audience.

Public presentation do's & don'ts:

Qualifies:

- Live-streamed performance with moderated Q&A.
- Virtual workshop with participant interaction.
- Scheduled premiere with artist talkback.
- Facilitated community conversation around the work.
- Hybrid exhibition with guided tours.

Does not qualify:

- Uploading a video to YouTube without live engagement.
- Posting artwork on Instagram.
- Installing a mural without an accompanying public program.
- Publishing a digital zine without a structured engagement component.

Guidance on In-Person & Virtual Events

In-person events:

- Must take place within the City of Houston city limits.
- Must be open and accessible to the general public – ticketed events are okay, but you cannot restrict who may attend. (for example, 21+ only venues are not eligible)
- If capacity is limited, everyone must have an equal opportunity to attend on a first-come, first-served basis.
- If your event requires city permits (street closures, sound amplification, murals on public property, etc.), you are responsible for securing all necessary permits, insurance, and approvals.

Virtual events:

- Must take place within the City of Houston city limits.
- Must include a structured, interactive component – a live performance, artist talk, Q&A, or similar.
- Simply posting a video or publishing content online does not meet this requirement on its own.

Examples of eligible public presentations include:

- Art exhibitions, film screenings, music/dance/theater performances, literary readings, festivals, livestreamed concerts, virtual artist talks, and virtual Q&As – among others.
-

For nonprofit- arts education-focused organization:

- If your organization's primary mission is not arts and culture, your application should focus on the specific public-facing arts program you are proposing.
- If your programming primarily takes place in K-12 schools, you must also have a public-facing program open to the general public – youth-focused programming is welcome, but it must be accessible to everyone.

What May Not Be Funded

City grant funds may not support the following:



- Any activities taking place outside of the City of Houston limits, including any activities taking place in outlying suburbs. Your program location must be represented by a Houston city council member, verified through the online Council Member verify mapping tool. All funded activities MUST take place within City of Houston city limits.
- Activities must take place within the respective grant term. Grants cannot be applied to programs outside of the grant term.
- Any activities funded by Miller Outdoor Theatre, which is also supported by the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT), as applicants may not duplicate funding support from HOT for the same program.
- City of Houston employees, elected officials, Mayor's Office staff, and their immediate family.
- Houston Arts Alliance employees, Board members, and their immediate family.
- Grants to K-12 public, private, or charter schools.
- Educational programs such as workshops or youth education programs. If you are applying as an arts educational program, your application should center around the public presentation of your programming that is open to the general public.
- Events with exclusive audiences that do not allow participation of the general public, such as "21 and up" events or programming, youth specific programming or gender specific programming.
- Competitions, award ceremonies, scholarships, cash prizes, fundraising activities and events, sports and recreation activities, or parties and private celebrations.

HCCC Resident Artist, Qiqing Lin. Photograph by Katy Anderson (2023).
Courtesy of Houston Center for Contemporary Craft.

What May Not Be Funded

- Trade fairs, events of primarily commercial nature, or consumer shows. For-profit entities may not apply directly. For-profit applicants may apply through fiscal sponsorship with a 501(c)(3) organization. The fiscal sponsor must identify a clear charitable purpose and public benefit with the proposed programming. HAA cannot route funds to LLCs.
- Faith-based organizations using funds for any activities that have a primarily religious purpose or any activities that exist as part of religious sermons or services.
- Organizations and/or individual applicants cannot use the same project proposal to apply to more than one grant program. If your project is awarded, that specific project cannot be funded again.

Specific expenses not permitted include:

- Travel outside of the City of Houston. *
- Deficits, loans, interest on loans, fines, penalties, or cost of litigation.
- Professional development training for the applicant, such as classes, coaching, conferences, or workshops.
- The purchase of a single material or equipment item exceeding \$250, except rental costs directly affiliated with the funded project.
- Capital expenses such as the purchase of property or land, building construction or renovation, or landscape adaptations.
- Meals, refreshments, and catering expenses.

*Travel Expense Guidelines

However, HAA does allow for grant funds to be used towards Travel Expenses as follows: All travel expenses charged to the grant must be necessary, reasonable, and directly related to the funded project. Expenses must be incurred and paid during the grant period/term and supported by appropriate documentation. HAA allows round-trip airfare. Any travel paid in whole or in part with HAA funds must be booked at a reasonable fare and detailed in the budget table of your application.

In addition, these grant dollars cannot be used towards travel for any purpose outside of the City of Houston. You may bring in collaborators, talent, artists, musicians, and those equivalent to Houston, so long as the travel is aligned with the grant-funded project.



Required Documents

The following documents are required of applicants. Fiscally sponsored programs have one additional document, outlined in the next pages.

Proof of age

An individual applicant must be at least 18 years old, which will be verified by applicant submission of an official state-issued identification card, passport, or other official document.

Individuals

Requirement: Individual applicants must provide proof of age. Applicants must be 18 years or older to apply. Acceptable documents include:

- A photo ID such as a Texas driver license or Texas identification card, unexpired or expired within the last two years.
- Valid, unexpired U.S. passport book or U.S. passport card.
- U.S. Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization with identifiable photo (N-550, N-560, N-561, N-570, N-578)
- Unexpired U.S. military identification card for active duty, reserve, or retired personnel w/ identifiable photo.

Proof of headquarters or residence in the City of Houston

Applicants are required to submit paperwork demonstrating a physical address in the City of Houston limits, which is verified by staff through the online [Council Member mapping tool](#). P.O. Boxes are not accepted, as they do not establish residency or headquarters within the City of Houston limits. Applicants must upload a current image of official documentation, such as lease or utility, that includes a visible City of Houston address with the applicant or organization name. The address present on the document must match the address listed on the applicant's grant portal profile.

The residential, studio, or headquarters address you provide in your Grants Portal profile **must** match the address on the *Proof of Headquarters or Residence* document you upload. If the addresses do not match, the application will be ineligible. Should you provide Proof of Headquarters using your LLC information, please know that you cannot submit your W9 and ACH information for grant payments to your LLC.

Required Documents

Individuals

Requirement: Individual artists and creatives must provide current calendar year proof of residency within the City of Houston limits. Acceptable documents include:

- Unexpired Texas driver license or Texas identification card.
- U.S. Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization with identifiable photo (N-550, N-560, N-561, N-570, N-578).
- Unexpired U.S. military identification card for active duty, reserve, or retired personnel w/ identifiable photo.
- Current deed, mortgage, or a residential/studio lease.
- Current insurance policy or statement.
- Current bank statement.
- Utility bill or residential mail dated within 2026 calendar year. Examples include electric, water, gas, Internet, cable, telephone bills.
- Mail, dated within 2026 calendar year, from a government entity addressed to the individual.

Please note: Make sure your submitted document contains your legal name and that your legal name is what is detailed in your applicant profile in our grant portal.

Organizations

Requirement: Organization applicants must provide proof of headquarters within the City of Houston limits with current calendar year documentation addressed to the organization by name. Acceptable documents include:

- Current deed, mortgage, or a residential/studio lease.
- Current insurance policy or statement.
- Current bank statement.
- Utility bill or residential mail dated within 2026 calendar year. Examples include electric, water, gas, Internet, cable,
- Mail, dated within 2026 calendar year, from a government entity addressed to the individual.

Fiscal Sponsors

Requirement: Fiscal sponsors must provide proof of headquarters within the City of Houston limits. The sponsored applicant (individual or collective) must provide current proof of residency within the City of Houston limits. Acceptable documents include:

- Current deed, mortgage, or a commercial rental/lease.
- Current insurance policy or statement.
- Current bank statement.
- Utility bill or residential mail dated within 2026 calendar year. Examples include electric, water, gas, Internet, cable, telephone bills.
- Mail, dated within 2026 calendar year, from a government entity addressed to the fiscal sponsor.

Whether you are applying as an Individuals, Organizations, Fiscal Sponsored Project, please ensure the following:

- The address present on the document matches the address listed on your profile.
- Check your address with this Verification Tool ([Who is My Council Member](#) ; Maps: [2024 to 2028 Council District Maps](#))

Required Documents

Work Samples

Applicants must upload documentation of their work meant to demonstrate consistent and confident proficiency in the proposed project or applicant's body of work. Applicants may include five individual image or audio files and five PDFs, not to exceed a file size of 100MB each. Applicants are encouraged to include text descriptions to help panelists understand work samples.

[Individuals](#)[Organizations](#)[Fiscal Sponsors](#)

Work Sample Submission Guidelines

- PDFs: Submit images; links for audio or video samples with any passwords; fiction or nonfiction manuscripts; other literary samples; and articles, reviews, and sample publications, such as PDF documents not exceeding 10 pages.
- Images: Submit images as .jpg or .png files.
- Audio or video samples: Submit files as .mp3, .mp4, or .mov files.

Additional Documents

[Individuals](#)[Organizations](#)[Fiscal Sponsors](#)

- W-9 and ACH forms are for contracts and payment processing if the applicant becomes a grant recipient.

[Fiscal Sponsors](#)

- All fiscally sponsored applicants must upload a copy of the fiscal sponsorship agreement.



Application Questions

Artistic Programming

Artistic goals, vision, and process are clearly outlined; applicant demonstrates artistic and cultural vibrancy; applicant communicates well-defined public programming that is imaginative and innovative for Houstonians and visitors.



JuJu Strolling Thru, "Barnstorm Dance Fest" (2022). Photograph by Lynn Lane. MATCH, Houston TX. Courtesy of Dance Source Houston.

Funding Area Description (10 points)

100 words max.

What is your project's designated funding area (art + disaster resilience, art + neighborhood, art + conference)? Explain why you selected this funding area and how it is connected to your project.

Detailed Project Proposal (30 points)

300 words max.

Describe your proposed project in detail. Describe what the project is, when and where it is happening, and who is involved in the project. Things to consider:

- How will arts and culture be infused into the chosen funding area?
- What are the goals of your program? What do you hope to learn, explore, or create?
- What does success look like for this work? What are your indicators for success?
- Share relevant history executing arts and cultural events and/or activities!

Event Locations + Activity Description + Date

Table with up to 10 location entries.

- Event Description
- Event Address
- Event Date

Application Questions

Public Benefit

Project connects to a defined community; applicant demonstrates effective strategies in marketing and audience engagement that are inclusive and publicly accessible; how is the project inviting to it's community and the broader public?

Community Engagement (25 points)

250 words max.

Describe your community(ies)! How does your project meaningfully connect with your defined community(ies)? Consider the following questions to help shape your narrative:

- How does your project reflect, build, and/or empower your defined community(ies)?
- How does this project include or work collaboratively with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity or special interests?
- How does your project listen and respond to your community(ies)?
- How will you promote this work? Describe your social media and/or marketing plan. Include information such as promotional mediums you will use to market your event (i.e. social media platforms, flyers, posters, newsletters, etc.)
- Consider describing how this project attracts and is marketed to audiences from outside of the City of Houston, either physically or digitally. How do you intend to measure and/or quantify this impact?
- In what ways do you create access across levels of ability, lived experience, geography, and other diversities?

Promotion and Access (15 points)

200 words max.

Access to arts and cultural programming is a key value of the City of Houston's arts investment. Describe how you will promote and expand access to your work. Consider the following questions to shape your narrative:

- How will you promote this work? Include information such as promotional mediums you will use to market your event (i.e. social media platforms, flyers, posters, newsletters, etc.)
- How will this highlight Houston as an arts and cultural tourist destination?
- How have you maintained or expanded access to your work across levels of ability, lived experience, geography, and other diversities?

Application Questions

Stewardship of Public Resources

Applicant demonstrates appropriate preparations and sound judgement to complete proposed activities; budget is feasible and demonstrates payment to artists..

Budget Table (10 points)

Using the Budget Table in the [Grants Portal](#), provide a detailed full-cost budget for the proposed arts and cultural programming. Include details about the project budget and descriptions of how City grant funds will be used.

How to Use the Budget Table

Use the income and expenses table example in the following page as a reference for how to report the full-cost of your proposed arts and cultural programming through the [Grants Portal](#).

Income Section: In this section, you will add all your funding sources including the amount you are requesting in your grant application.

- In each row you will list other funding sources under the “Other Funds” column.
- The columns will automatically calculate the sum which will appear in the row labeled “Total”.

Expenses Section: In this section, you will list all of your expenses for the program.

- In the “Amount of Request” column, you should only list the expenses that will be covered by the HAA grant. Be sure to review the What May Not Be Funded Section of the grant guidelines to ensure only eligible expenses are listed under this column.
- In the “Other Funds” column you should list all the expenses that will be covered by other funding sources.
- The columns will automatically calculate the sum which will appear in the row labeled “Total”.

Description Column: Use the description text box in each row to provide additional details about the income or expense line item.

Application Questions

Income - HAA

Source	Description	Amount
Contributed: City of Houston	Taken from the 'Grant Amount Requested' found in the 'Project Information' Tab	\$10,000
		\$10,000

Income - Other Funds

Source	Description	Other Funds Separate from HAA
Contributed: Foundations	Houston Endowment	\$1,000
Contributed: Government	Texas Commission on the Arts	\$1,000
		\$2,000

In the Expense section of the budget table, enter your estimated cost for the category that best matches your project expenses. Use the "Description" column to add a breakdown or additional context. If none of the category options fit, select "Other Expenses" to capture and detail any remaining costs and provide a breakdown or additional context in the "Description" column.

Expenses

Source	Description	Amount Request	Amount Request of Other Funds
Promotion & Publicity	Marketing Expenses for Public Event	\$2,000	
Artist Fees	Artistic Personnel	\$3,000	
Equipment Rentals	Costumes, Set Furniture, Risers	\$2,000	
Contractors	Technical Personnel		\$1,000
Installation Costs	Production Expenses		\$500
Insurance	Event/Venue Insurance	\$3000	\$500
		\$10,000	\$2,000

After you've completed the Expenses section of your Budget Table, the application will request that you complete the required Eligible Expense Attestations to identify and remove any ineligible expenses, and also provide an assurance that your application is proposing only eligible expenses for your project.

- If you are proposing expenses that may not be funded, indicate that the proposed expense will be covered by an alternative Income Source from the Income table above the expense table.
- This step is to ensure that, as an applicant, you are submitting a fully eligible proposed budget within your project.

Application Questions

Overall Proposed Project Timeline (5 points)

100 words max.

Please describe the overall proposed timeline for your program, including the expected timeline for development, execution, and final public presentation.

Artist Fees (5 points)

The applicant demonstrates investment in individual artists and artistic practice through the payment of artist fees (collaborators, contractors, etc.), as indicated in the project budget. If this criterion is met, all five points are awarded. If it is not met, zero points are awarded.

Yes

No



Monica Villarreal, 'Reflection of Coatlicue (Reflection of our mother the creator and destroyer),' 'Overlapping Territories' (2022). Photograph by Paul Hester. Courtesy of Diverse Works.

Review Process

Applications received by Houston Arts Alliance undergo a multi-step review process, as follows.



Rama Vaidyanathan and company, 'New Dimensions to the Margam' (2022). MATCH, Houston, TX. Courtesy of Indian Performing Arts Samskriti.

1. HAA Staff

Applications are reviewed by HAA grants staff to verify eligibility, application completeness, public presentation requirements, and scores of objective criteria through the process detailed below.

Completeness & Correctness

All required documents and application fields must be completed to be considered for funding. Any applications with missing or incorrect documentation will be notified for rectification. Staff will notify those applicants with missing/incorrect documentation via email. All grant notifications are sent solely via email to the applicant and/or the application's primary grant contact designated in the HAA [Online Grants Portal](#). The email notification will provide applicants with the opportunity to cure the missing or incorrect documentation within four business days from the date of notification. Applicants may only be prompted to cure the following:

- Illegible or unacceptable proof of age documentation.
- Illegible or unacceptable proof of residency documentation.
- Unacceptable Fiscal Sponsorship Agreement

Applications will not be reopened to correct narratives, work samples, responses to questions, or budget tables. No information will be accepted after the curing deadline as indicated in the notification email. Those who fail to submit correct documentation within the allotted time frame will be ineligible and will not be considered for funding. Any concerns regarding eligibility determination must be resolved following the grants appeals guidelines, which may be requested at any time through the [Support Desk](#) or call 713-527-9330, ext. 1.

Review Process

2. Peer Panel

HAA uses the competitive peer review process to score and rank eligible grant applications—a longtime, national practice of engaging community representatives with arts expertise to make critical decisions about public funding competitions. The panel's ranked scores are then combined with the objective measures in the application to determine the final ranking on a 100-point scale. A description of each 100-point scale can be found within this document. This process removes the HAA staff and Board from the evaluation of grant applications, except for the objective scoring sections outlined above. Panels include individuals with a diversity of skills, self-identity, art forms, expertise, and experience, ensuring they are able to properly assess merit in each of the applications requesting City arts funding.

HAA invites anyone with arts experience to be part of the panelist database through the [online application form](#). For demographic data about the panelists that HAA uses, please refer to this [dashboard](#). HAA Committee and Board peer panel recommendations are forwarded to Houston Arts Alliance's Grants Committee, which reviews and votes to ensure the panel process was followed with integrity. The Grants Committee then sends its approval to the HAA Board of Directors for its approval. The Committee and Board do not alter the recommendations from the panel's adjudication.

3. Award Determination

The HAA staff takes the panel recommendations and assesses the grant program's city funded allocation to determine the number of grants that may be funded. To learn more about how our funding works and the allocated percentages to all our grant programs visit [HAA's Funding webpage](#).

4. HAA Grants Committee

Peer panel recommendations are forwarded to Houston Arts Alliance's Grants Committee, which reviews and votes to ensure the panel process was followed with integrity. The Grants Committee does not alter the recommendations from the panel's adjudication.



After Decisions Are Made

Grant Award Notifications

HAA will email final decisions to applicants. Instructions on these awards notifications emails are as follows:

Approval Notifications

Will include instructions about setting up your award (completing contracts, payment schedules, and financial forms completion) and next steps (new grantee orientation). Be sure to read the award notification and contract for specific grant term dates. Contracts will be voided if they are not signed within **90 calendar** days of receipt.

Conditional Approval Notifications

Awards with Conditional Approval will receive a notification from grant staff with details on how to address and resolve the conditional approval. Conditional Approvals are a normal compliance step within ensuring that grantees are fully compliant prior to entering into a grant contract. Contracts with Conditional Approval status will be voided if the requested information to resolve the status is not provided within **90 calendar** days (applicants will need to resolve the Conditional Approval status in order for us to issue the grant agreement for signature). Following the completion of the Conditional Approval, the awarded applicant may begin setting up their award. Applicants who don't resolve the Conditional Approval within the Revisions Requested window of 30 calendar days risk delaying their first grant payment or possible award cancellation. Be sure to read the notification and contract for specific grant term details.

Declined Notifications

Applicants who did not get recommended for funding to the City of Houston based on their final panel score and ranking will receive a Declined Notification. These notifications give applicants the opportunity to request panel comments to get feedback on their applications and improve their chances of securing funding in future grant cycles.

Ineligible Notifications

Applicants who submitted applications with ineligible components that were not curable OR not cured during the curing period will receive an ineligibility notification to inform the applicant that their application didn't meet the eligibility requirements to move forward to the grants process. Applicants who believe that the ineligibility determination made by grant staff did not follow the correct eligibility verification process and/or was made falsely may request to meet with grant staff to conduct an Appeals Process. Details for the Appeals process can be found on the next page.

The City of Houston will publicly announce the grant recipients, and Houston Arts Alliance will echo this announcement via its own social media channels and newsletter.

Share Your Success

We highly encourage you to share the press release from the Mayor's Office of the Arts announcing grant recipients. Make sure to tag MOA and HAA in your posts using the hashtags: **#HoustonArtsAlliance #HoustonMOA #HOUcitygrants**

After Decisions Are Made

Panel Feedback

Panelists' evaluative comments are available to applicants upon request. We strongly recommend applicants request the available panelist feedback in the pursuit of preparing for future applications.

Use the [Support Desk](#) to request these comments. Please note that comments will be available 10 weeks after award notifications, as they are formatted for clarity while HAA staff balances other grants activities.

Final Reporting

Final Reports can be submitted anytime, upon completion of your public presentation. All Final Reports are due to Houston Arts Alliance within 30 days of the end of the specific grant program's term. Visit the [Final Report webpage](#) for more details.

Applicants with overdue final reports are not eligible to apply for new funding. Additionally, payments on current grants may be withheld while an applicant remains in Non-Compliant status.

Required Public Acknowledgment

Grant recipients are required to acknowledge the support of the City of Houston and Houston Arts Alliance to demonstrate how City funds support arts and culture. Recipients receiving funds must use the required logos and credit line on all printed and electronic materials that advertise performances, exhibitions, or other public events throughout their work or, for those receiving operating support, throughout the grant period. The credit line and links to logos are listed below:

- "This work [event, organization, or individual name] is funded in part by the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance."
- [Required logos](#) are available for download.

Appealing an Eligibility Decision

The appeals process aims to ensure procedural fairness and consistency. It does not override the panel's original decision but rather confirms whether HAA Grants staff conducted the eligibility verification process correctly.

To appeal an eligibility decision, applicants must submit a written request to the Grants Department at grants@haatx.com within **five (5) business days** of receiving an ineligibility decision notification. The request must clearly state the reason for the appeal. For complete details on the appeals process, please refer to the [Appeals Guidelines document](#).

