



Office of Arts, Culture, Music
and Entertainment (ACME)

Austin's Creative Heartbeat

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The Profound Impact of Arts & Culture

\$5.59B

Economic Impact

Arts and culture contribute \$5.59 billion annually to Austin's economy, supporting over 41,000 jobs.

78%

Mental Wellbeing

Percentage of Austinites reporting improved mental health through arts participation.

23%

Academic Performance

Higher graduation rates for students with arts education compared to peers.

Austin ranks in the top 5 creative cities nationally and top 20 globally for cultural vibrancy and creative output per capita.



Birth of ACME: Answering Austin's Call

Born from Community Passion

ACME was established after decades of community advocacy for prioritizing arts and music in Austin's identity and governance.

Perfect Timing

Created during a critical funding shortage for the arts, when traditional sources like bank loans, donations, and federal grants were diminishing.

Preserving Austin's Soul

Art, music, and culture represent the heart of Austin—the unique vibe that retains locals and attracts visitors.





ACME's First Year: Building Trust Through Action

1 Community-Centered Approach

Established transparency, active listening, and consistent availability to all stakeholders as core operational principles.

2 Effective Advocacy

Successfully mediated resolutions during the controversial Airport expansion and Convention Center demolition projects, protecting local artists and artwork.

3 Research & Benchmarking

Analyzed historical community data and conducted national/state benchmarking to identify best practices and industry standards.



The Creative Reset: Strategic Vision

One-Year Strategic Planning Process

Launched The Creative Reset (TCR) to establish ACME's mission, vision, goals, and measurable outcomes.

Comprehensive Program Evaluation

Reimagining our funding programs, cultural facilities, and special events through a data-driven approach.



PHASE 1: Enhanced Funding Programs

Austin Live Music Fund, Historic Preservation, Nexus, Elevate, Thrive, Creative Space Assistance Program and Art in Public Places (AIPP)



Our Foundation: Listen First, Act Second



ACME revolutionized our approach to community outreach, resulting in unprecedented participation in **only 3 weeks!**

1,200+

Survey Responses

We gathered a broad spectrum of community perspectives.

200

Citywide Attendees

Our citywide sessions saw active participation from over 200 individuals, fostering widespread dialogue.

50+

Staff Participants

Dedicated staff members actively engaged in the process, ensuring internal alignment and expertise.

70

Targeted Focus Groups

Through focused discussions, individuals contributed valuable insights in our targeted focus groups.

100

Personalized One-on-One Sessions

We conducted personalized one-on-one sessions, offering tailored opportunities for individual input.



What We Heard: Community Voices Shaping Our Path

Affordability & Cost Barriers

Addressing rising costs and financial barriers to participation.

Process & Transparency

Streamlining the grant application process and enhancing organizational accountability.

Funding & Sustainability

Ensuring adequate funding levels, fair distribution, and long-term financial health.



Venue Access, Transportation, Parking & Geographic Equity

Expanding access to spaces with geographic equity.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (DEI)

Ensuring diverse voices, traditions, and communities are fully represented.

Awareness, Communication & Outreach

Improving public knowledge and access to opportunities.

Moving Forward: Community Recommendations



Honor Cultural Legacy

Respond to specific needs of cultural groups and legacy holders



Simplify Applications

Create more accessible funding processes with reduced barriers



Ensure Fairness

Eliminate conflict-of-interest concerns in funding decisions



Support New Voices

Invest in emerging creatives and underrepresented communities



Build Transparency

Develop clear scoring and feedback mechanisms



Program Enhancements: Key Changes



Thrive—Enhanced for Long-Term Growth

Empowering Austin’s cultural organizations to grow and sustain their work. Improved Cohort design.

New in 2025: Increased funding opportunities, simpler application, strategic and focused approach



Elevate—Reimagined for Community Power

Backing high-impact cultural projects that center community.

New in 2025: More accessible with a streamlined application and improved evaluation criteria.



Nexus—Refreshed for Austin’s Creatives

Helping creatives take bold steps—Now with more funding levels.

New in 2025: Refreshed with lower barriers, enhanced support, and microgrant options.



Responding Directly to Community Feedback

What's New

- User friendly process
- One simple application
- Tiered funding
- New microgrants for individual artists
- Mentorship program for first-time applicants
- Operations support
- Transparent scoring and feedback
- Universal appeals process
- Internal process improvement
- Simplified process for smaller requests



Access For All

Who Can Apply?

- Individual artists and collectives
- Musicians and promoters
- Nonprofit organizations
- For-profit creative businesses
- Legacy and emerging organizations



Programs prioritize inclusivity, ensuring all communities have opportunities to participate in the arts.

Funding Sources

Hotel Occupancy Tax

Funds Nexus, Elevate, Thrive, Austin Live Music Fund, and Historic Preservation Grants.



General Fund

Finances the Creative Space Assistance Program for artists and organizations.

Bonds & Capital Projects

Support Art in Public Places Program for landmark and heritage projects.

The Creative Reset: ACME's Road Ahead



Phase 1: Strategic Planning

- Develop comprehensive 5-year strategic plan
- Establish measurable goals and KPIs
- Create implementation timeline

Phase 2: Program Evaluation

- Conduct thorough review of all existing programs
- Assess cultural facilities management
- Identify gaps and opportunities

Phase 3: Resource Development

- Launch public-private partnership initiatives
- Develop corporate sponsorship program
- Explore new revenue streams

Phase 4: Implementation

- Roll out enhanced programs
- Launch new communication platforms
- Present progress report to stakeholders



Our Vision: Art for All

A city where every person, in every neighborhood, has access to creative opportunities and cultural expression.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/acme>

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Program Guidelines

