



NEWS FROM TCA: FEBRUARY 2025

arts.texas.gov

[State of the Arts License Plate](#)

[Art Jobs](#)



Poet Naomi Shihab Nye and TCA Executive Director Gary Gibbs stand with the students who competed in the 2024 Texas Poetry Out Loud finals. The 2025 finals are on February 22. Photo by Amanda Klaus.

Legislative Session Update

The 89th Session of the Texas Legislature began on Tuesday, January 14. Since the Texas Legislature meets biennially, it will make decisions on two years' worth of State budgeting, including TCA's budget for fiscal year 2026 (September 1, 2025-August 31, 2026) and fiscal year 2027 (September 1, 2026-August 31, 2027). As part of the budget process, TCA filed a Strategic Plan and Legislative Appropriations Request (LAR). The format of the LAR allows TCA to request the amount of its current two-year budget as the Base Appropriations Request, and to ask for Exceptional Items as additions to the budget for the coming two years.



TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request is available in full [here](#).

Base Appropriations Request: **\$31,935,146 over the biennium**
Exceptional Items: **\$11,570,192 over the biennium**
(detailed below)

In addition to the Base Appropriations Request, TCA is requesting increased funds (Exceptional Items) of \$9 million over the biennium for arts organization grants, \$2 million over the biennium for cultural districts, and \$570,192 for staff retention and two additional staff members over the biennium.

The Senate Finance Committee and the House Appropriations Committee will review TCA's LAR and discuss all requested amounts. The Legislative Session will end on June 2, 2025.

TCA's Legislative Appropriations Request will be considered as part of **House Bill 1**. Texans for the Arts Foundation will host an Arts Advocacy Summit at the Capitol on February 5, 2025. More information on that event is [here](#).

TCA has started providing testimony, starting with a January 29 Senate Finance Committee meeting. The recording of that meeting is [here](#). TCA testimony begins at 2:55:00; public testimony in support of TCA begins at 4:20:28.

The **Senate Finance Committee Chair** is Joan Huffman (Houston) and the Vice Chair is Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa (McAllen). The Committee's additional members are: Carol Alvarado (Houston), Paul Bettencourt (Houston), Donna Campbell (New Braunfels), Brandon Creighton (Conroe), Pete Flores (Pleasanton), Bob Hall (Edgewood), Lois Kolkhorst (Brenham), Robert Nichols (Jacksonville), Angela Paxton (McKinney), Charles Perry (Lubbock), Charles Schwertner (Georgetown), Royce West (Dallas), and Judith Zaffirini (Laredo).

Members of the [House Appropriations Committee](#) are expected to be named soon by Speaker Burrows.

Texas Poetry Out Loud Competition Finals February 22

The 2025 Texas Poetry Out Loud finals will be held in person at the Texas Spirit Theater in the Bullock Texas State History Museum on Saturday, February 22 at 1:00 PM Central. The finals will be open to the public and free to attend. This year's finals will bring together the top ten competitors from across the state to determine the state champion and runner-up. As well, the program will recognize each school winner for the year. The event will be hosted by internationally-renowned Texas poet Naomi Shihab Nye.



The [Poetry Out Loud](#) recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. This exciting program helps students master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. High school students memorize poems and perform them in competition. At the state level, the winner and runner up receive cash awards and their school libraries receive money to help them buy poetry books. Each state champ

will compete in the virtual national competition in early May for a pool of \$50,000 in scholarships for students and cash awards for schools. TCA is proud to be a part of Poetry Out Loud, which helps high school students explore poetry interpretation and find new modes of self-expression while refining their public speaking skills. The finals event is graciously hosted by the Bullock Texas State History Museum.

Support Texas Arts with the *State of the Arts* License Plate



TCA's chic black-and-silver *State of the Arts* minimalist design license plate is available to order at

<https://www.myplates.com/go/arts>.

This plate design can go on a passenger car, motorcycle, trailer, or private bus (attention, Texas bands!). TCA will receive a portion of the sales of the plate. Note that this plate is

part of MyPlates' "Lone Star Series," but only the *State of the Arts* plate supports TCA. There is a price break for those ordering their plate for multiple years. Make a long-term commitment to the arts!

Upcoming TCA Deadlines

TCA has several upcoming deadlines. As always, the TCA staff is happy to discuss your goals and eligibility to determine which programs are right for you. You may also request that a TCA staff member review your application and provide feedback. Ideally, these requests would be made at least two weeks before the application deadline.

Grant Program: Arts Respond Performance Support

This program provides professional artist fees to Texas nonprofits, schools, colleges, and units of government for hiring an artist from the [Texas Touring Roster](#) to do a performance or conduct a workshop. These applications are funded based on a percentage of contracted fees.

Activity dates must start: Between March 15, 2025 and June 14, 2025

Application deadline: Midnight on February 3, 2025

Application form: [Online](#)

Resources: [Grant guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

Grant Program: Arts Create

This program provides multi-year operational support to arts organizations with established cash budgets over \$50,000.

Support dates must be: Between September 1, 2025 and August 31, 2026

Application deadline: Midnight on March 3 or March 17, 2025. **Note:** deadline varies depending on organization classification. Your organization's specific deadline will be shown in your online account with TCA.

Application form: [Online](#)

Resources: [Grant guidelines](#), [contact TCA staff](#)

TCA Speaker Series: Marketing to Stand Out

Thank you to those who joined us for a

listening session in December or January. Informed by our listening session discussions, the Texas Commission on the Arts' next Speaker Series professional development opportunity is coming up in late March! This free, optional convening, titled **Marketing to Stand Out**, is an opportunity to brush up on marketing basics and gain insight into different strategies to attract new audiences. Arts marketing experts will share their wealth of knowledge and discuss the latest trends, providing attendees with multiple perspectives on standing out as an arts organization in Texas. We will officially open registration for the event next month. We hope to see you there!



TCA selected this topic using feedback from constituents, and we expect that future meetings in this series will address other needs expressed by members of the Texas arts field.

Real Places 2025 Conference



TCA is a member of a group of State agencies that work together under a memorandum of understanding to promote tourism. One of our partner agencies, the Texas Historical Commission, is holding a conference soon that will address the needs of museums and other cultural venues. In fact, representatives from TCA and the Governor's Office of Economic Development and Tourism Travel Texas will present a session titled The Intersection of Culture and Tourism: Understanding Designations and Their Impact.

The **Texas Historical Commission's Real Places 2025 conference** will take place both virtually and in person, in Austin, **April 23–25**. Presented by the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission in partnership with Phoenix I Restoration and Construction, LLC, Real Places is the premier historic preservation and heritage tourism event in the Lone Star State, where anyone interested in protecting our past can work directly with industry-leading experts to learn practical, actionable solutions they can apply in their community.

The packed schedule features more than 50 workshops, tours, and sessions; over 100 expert speakers from across Texas and the U.S.; several keynote presentations; and a number of fun networking events. Recordings will be available to all attendees, whether joining online or in person, so you'll be able to watch the great presentations you missed due to concurrent sessions. Learn more and sign up at realplaces.us.

Apply to Be a TCA Grant Evaluator

Each year, TCA invites roughly 200 Texans to serve as peer reviewers of the grant applications we receive. We are grateful to these members of our arts field who donate their time and knowledge to our panel review process and assess the quality of grant applications. The peer review process is central to the Commission's efforts to maintain an accountable, accessible awards system for the State of Texas.

If you would like insight into the grant evaluation process, we invite you to nominate yourself to serve on a panel. TCA is not able to pay for this work, but it will allow you to gain experience as a grant evaluator, see how other organizations present their programs and challenges, and ensure that TCA grant decisions can be made—we really can't do this without you. Nominations are accepted year-round and can be made [here](#).

Panels can be held online or in person in Austin. TCA reimburses for travel and hotel costs for in-person meetings. For online panels, TCA assigns reviewers no more than 25 grant applications to help keep the workload reasonable. **Evaluators can also be grant applicants**—TCA just excludes evaluators from reviewing and scoring an application that they submitted or have any other conflict of interest with.

Grantee Spotlight: Sowing (and Sewing) the Seeds of Creativity

Every fall, TCA staff spend many, many hours reviewing report forms that grantees submit as they close out their grants. These reports share arts organizations' trials and tribulations, challenges and solutions. Many of these stories will resonate with others across our field, so we're sharing some of them through grantee spotlights.



Today we are highlighting Kids Creativity Shell, a nonprofit dedicated to teaching children important life skills through creative arts, particularly sewing and design. In 2024, Kids Creativity Shell made full use of the Texas Commission on the Arts' [Arts Respond Project](#) grant program by applying for support during each of the program's two funding cycles. Under the Economic Development priority area, Kids Creativity Shell received support for their semi-annual Munchkin Market event, which featured 110 K-5th graders converging to celebrate and sell their artistic creations to the public. Students prepared for the market by taking classes in sewing, visual arts, and more, and then practiced being a vendor without direct participation from adults. Students gained a lot of confidence through this activity, including one student whose 3-D printed frogs garnered a client who couldn't wait for the Munchkin Market to start before they ordered fifty of the student's frogs!

By the second funding cycle, Kids Creativity Shell had expanded into a new location inside the Harris County Juvenile Justice Center in downtown Houston. Supported by an Arts Respond Project grant in the Public Safety and Criminal Justice priority area, the organization transformed former prison cells into spaces for sewing, pottery, indoor gardening, and art, while open areas became dance and yoga studios. With a full schedule of classes, incarcerated youth gained not only technical skills but also confidence, resilience, and problem-solving abilities. Many students have experienced personal growth, such as a young man who found purpose in sewing a gift for his

sister and a girl who gained the confidence to lead group projects. These stories reflect the lasting impact of creative education, equipping students with skills that extend far beyond the arts.

TCA is proud to be able to support Kids Creativity Shell and so many wonderful organizations across the state who make the arts accessible to so many of our fellow Texans.

Photo: The Creativity Shell Munchkin Market

Texas Commission on the Arts
1801 Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701
512-463-5535
800-252-9415
arts.texas.gov



Texas Commission on the Arts | 1801 Congress Avenue Suite 6.600 | Austin, TX 78701 US

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!