



# NEWS FROM TCA: DECEMBER 2025

[arts.texas.gov](https://arts.texas.gov)

[State of the Arts License Plate](#)

[Art Jobs](#)



*TCA will be officially designating the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor & Cultural District this month. Read more about this new Austin cultural district below!  
Photo: James San Miguel.*

## Applications Open for Texas Touring Roster Inclusion



TCA is accepting applications for the 2026-2028 Texas Touring Roster. The application deadline is February 2, 2026.

The program is designed to ensure that all Texans have the ability to enjoy work done by outstanding Texas-based companies and artists in their own communities. Artists from throughout the state apply to be included on the Texas Touring Roster. Touring artists offer

performances as well as optional services that may include workshops, master classes, lecture-demonstrations, arts education components, residencies, or short performances. These artists must have a history of touring and must be willing to travel outside of their community to do a performance or other work. They are also

required to maintain a reasonable fee range. Evaluators with expertise in touring arts evaluate applications to this highly competitive program.

TCA has prepared a wealth of application resources, all linked in the program [guidelines](#). We recommend that potential applicants review all these resources. TCA staff will also be offering live online Q&A sessions. The next session will be held on **Wednesday, December 17** at 2 PM Central. Registration is required, and can be done [here](#).

## Upcoming TCA Application Deadlines

TCA has several upcoming application 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 Project**

Arts Respond Project grants provide project assistance grants to nonprofit arts organizations on a short-term basis and may include administrative costs directly related to the project. Projects must address one of the following priority areas: economic development, education, health & human services, public safety & criminal justice, or natural resources & agriculture.

**Activity dates must be:** Between April 1, 2026 and August 31, 2026

**Application deadline:** Midnight on January 15, 2026

**Application form:** [Online](#)

Application Limit: Organizations may submit one application for this deadline.

Organizations should not submit more than one application addressing the same priority area per fiscal year.

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

### **Designation Program: Cultural District Designation**

This program designates special zones in cities and Texas communities that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization.

**Application deadline:** Letter of Intent to apply due February 2, 2026; application due June 15

**LOI form:** On [Cultural Districts Program page](#)

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

### **Designation Program: Touring Roster Inclusion**

Texas-based nonprofits, individuals, universities, and unincorporated/for-profit groups providing arts performances apply to be included on the 2026-2028 Texas Touring Roster.

**Application deadline:** February 2, 2026

**Application form:** On [Submittable](#)

**Resources:** [Program guidelines](#), [FAQ](#)

### **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. These applications are funded based on a percentage of contracted fees.

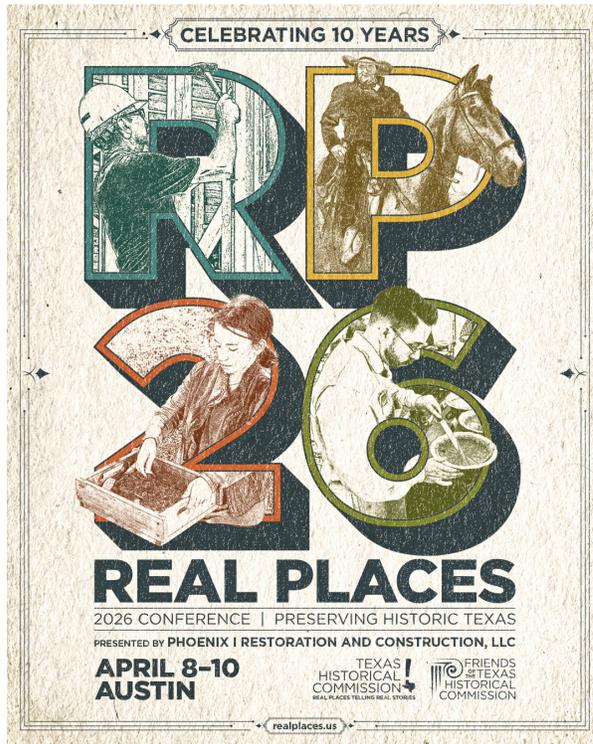
Activity dates: Best start between March 15 and June 14, 2026

Application deadline: Midnight on February 2, 2026

Application form: [Online](#)

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

## Real Places 2026



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.

The Texas Historical Commission's Real Places 2026 conference will take place both virtually and in person, in Austin, April 8-10. 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](https://realplaces.us). Early bird pricing is available through **December 5, 2025**.

## High Schools: Sign Up Now for Poetry Out Loud

Time is running out for high schools across the state to participate in the Poetry Out Loud program. Interested educators should sign up [here](#) to conduct the program during the fall semester. Full information on the national program is online [here](#).

The Poetry Out Loud recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts. 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. **For this year,**



**Poetry Out Loud will focus on America 250 in celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, featuring poems celebrating the rich tapestry of American stories.** Each participating high school will hold its competition to determine its school winner by December 15, 2025. The school winner will go on to compete at the state competition in February 2026. At the state level, the winner and runner up receive cash awards and their school libraries receive money to help them buy poetry books. The state winner will represent Texas in the national competition, which has a pool of \$50,000 in scholarships for students and cash awards for schools. More information on the state competition is [here](#).

## 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 excludes evaluators from reviewing and scoring an application that they submitted or have any other conflict of interest with.

## 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!

## Get to Know the 5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor & Cultural District

At their September meeting TCA Commissioners approved the designation of four new [cultural](#)

[districts](#). Cultural districts are special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community vitality. These districts can be focal points for generating business, attracting tourists, stimulating cultural development and fostering civic pride.



The Texas Commission on the Arts is the only body able to officially designate cultural districts on behalf of the State. Cultural districts are marketable tourism assets that highlight the distinct identity of a community and encourage in-state, out-of-state, and international visitors. Cultural district development helps a community boost its economy while realizing other cultural and civic benefits. The outcomes of cultural districts extend beyond the arts and benefit all members of a community. Official designation allows cultural districts and qualifying resident arts organizations to be eligible to apply for significant Cultural District Project funding through TCA.

The **5th Street Mexican American Heritage Corridor & Cultural District** is centrally located in downtown Austin from Republic Square to Plaza Saltillo, spanning both sides of IH-35. This walkable district bridges Austin’s historically segregated east and west communities and is surrounded by museums, live music venues, creative businesses, artist studios, gift shops, restaurants, historic sites, parks, and plazas. Within the district are cornerstone assets including the Downtown Austin Space Activation’s flagship storefront, Mexic-Arte Museum, La Peña Latino Arts Organization, O. Henry Museum, Susanna Dickinson Museum, the Austin Toy Museum, and the Austin Visitors Center. The district is also home to live music and arts-related businesses such as Antone’s Nightclub, a legendary blues venue. Locally owned restaurants and bars help anchor the area’s cultural economy, alongside annual festivals like South by Southwest, Viva la Vida Festival, Khushfest-Austin Color Festival, El Grito Mexican Independence Celebration, and the O. Henry Pun-Off World Championships. The district also recognizes and honors the original Indigenous Tonkawa people, as well as the Mexican and Black communities whose historic and cultural contributions shaped downtown Austin. The cultural district will be officially designated at the Mexic-Arte Museum on Thursday, December 11, 2025 at 5 PM. TCA staff will present a proclamation marking the official designation.

*Photo: Emily Risinger*

## Grantee Spotlight: Trains Help Students Write and Make Connections

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.

This month, we’re spotlighting **The Writer’s**



**Garret**, a nonprofit in Dallas that fosters the education and development of readers, writers, and audiences through a variety of programs. In 2025, The Writer's Garret was awarded a TCA Arts Respond Project grant in Public Safety and Criminal Justice in support of their Rail Writers program. Through Rail Writers, The Writer's Garret conducts free, guided trips to museums, historic districts, parks, and cultural institutions for small groups of at-risk or disadvantaged youth via Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). At each stop, teaching artists lead writing exercises inspired by the spaces they visit, helping students create original poems and essays that reflect their experiences.

Rail Writers served more than 230 young writers in 2025, completing 19 rides across Dallas to institutions such as the Dallas Museum of Art, the Nasher Sculpture Center, the Crow Museum of Asian Art, and Discovery Gardens. For many participants, these outings provided their first exposure to large-scale artworks, outdoor installations, and public history sites. It also helped young people better understand how Dallas was shaped by its historic communities. For example, during a visit to the ballroom of the historic Pittman Hotel in Deep Ellum, once a central hub of African American commerce and designed by Texas's first Black architect, William Sidney Pittman, students learned about the area's artistic legacy and wrote their own blues-inspired poems. Many later shared their work at a local independent bookstore, with several choosing to sing their poems aloud.

This program continues to see participants strengthen their writing skills while grounding themselves within Dallas' past and its present. These moments, forming friendships, stepping away from phones, and exploring their connections, are among the most lasting outcomes of Rail Writers. For 2026, the program is projected to run 40 rides and serve 400 young writers, igniting imaginations across Dallas and further strengthening connections between youth, their communities, and the cultural life of the city.

TCA is proud to be able to support The Writer's Garret and so many other wonderful organizations across the state who bring the arts to our fellow Texans.

*Photo: Sharon Mansfield*

---

Texas Commission on the Arts  
1801 Congress Avenue  
Austin, TX 78701  
512-463-5535  
800-252-9415  
[arts.texas.gov](https://arts.texas.gov)



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



Try email marketing for free today!