



NEWS FROM TCA: SEPTEMBER 2026

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TCA is welcoming four new cultural districts, including the Mitte Cultural District in Brownsville and the Edinburg Arts District. Both of these districts will be designated in October. Read on for more information! Photo of the Mitte Cultural District by Carlos A. Bravo.

New Cultural Districts, Grants Approved

On September 3, TCA Commissioners approved funding of 1,143 grants in the first funding round for fiscal year 2027. The grants total over \$17 million and will go to nonprofits and units of government in 131 Texas cities. These grants include the Arts Create program, which provides operational support to established arts organizations; the Cultural District Project program; the first of two funding rounds for the Arts Respond Project program; the quarterly Arts Respond Performance Support program; and the quarterly Commission Initiatives and Designated Funding program. TCA's full list of fiscal year 2027 grants is [here](#).

TCA Commissioners also 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 new cultural districts are the **Edinburg Arts District**, the **Galveston African American Cultural Heritage District**, the **Lufkin Cultural District**, and the **Mitte Cultural District** in Brownsville. Please see below for more information on the Mitte Cultural District. We'll profile the other new cultural districts in future newsletters. These designations bring the total number of [cultural districts in Texas](#) to 61.

[Arts Create](#) grants provide year-round operational support to Texas arts organizations with budgets over \$50,000. For fiscal year 2027, **473 Arts Create grants totaling over \$6.8 million are allocated to 473 organizations in 91 Texas cities.**

[Arts Respond Cultural District Project](#) grants provide support to projects that use the arts to diversify local economies, generate revenue, and attract visitors and investment. These grants are available to arts organizations and government entities verified as based in TCA-designated cultural districts. For fiscal year 2027, **131 applicants from 36 different cultural districts in 24 Texas cities will receive funding totaling over \$7.9 million.**

[Arts Respond Project](#) grants fund arts-based projects that address one of the priority areas of economic development, education, health and human services, natural resources and agriculture, or public safety and criminal justice. For the first round of these grants in fiscal year 2027, applications from **403 arts organizations in 82 cities will receive funding, for a total over \$1.7 million.**

Arts Respond [Performance Support](#) grants provide partial support to help applicants host an artist from the [Texas Touring Roster](#) in their community. **The 125 grants for this quarter total \$204,368 and will go to 98 organizations and units of government in 55 Texas cities.**

The [Commission Initiatives and Designated Funding](#) program for this quarter distributed \$110,000 received from the National Endowment for the Arts via one \$25,000 grant to conduct the Poetry Out Loud high school competition in Texas, and one \$35,000 grant to conduct folk arts apprenticeships and related programs and documentation. A third grant for \$50,000 will provide art experiences to young patients and their families at hospitals in Houston and McAllen. Seven grants of \$20,000 each will go to regional hosts of the Artist INC professional development training program for Texas artists. Finally, a \$25,000 grant will support a statewide gathering of visual art curators.

Grant Reports and Revised Budgets Due

If your organization was approved to receive an Arts Create grant, a Cultural District Project grant, or an Arts Respond Project grant for fiscal year 2027 (September 1, 2026-August 31, 2027), you will have some paperwork to do before your new grant(s) can be paid.

Note that all forms and supporting materials should be completed and provided in TCA's online grants system. This **excludes direct deposit authorization forms**, which must be faxed or mailed to protect sensitive information.

Revised Budgets

Each funded FY27 Cultural District Project and Arts Respond Project grant will have a revised budget that should be filled out and submitted online.

Grant Reports: Due September 30, 2026

Reports are due for grant activities that ended as TCA's prior fiscal year (September 1, 2025-August 31, 2026) concluded.

- Plan ahead—the September 30 deadline is firm and there are no extensions.
- Grant reports must be submitted, and then successfully closed out by TCA staff, before new grants will be paid.
- To help ensure timely payment of your FY27 grants, submit your reports and supporting materials well before the deadline.
- Please note that the data collected from these reports is provided to the State of Texas and the National Endowment for the Arts as TCA's main funders. Receiving your complete report on time with appropriate supporting documentation helps TCA make a case for its grants budget.

Top five problems that prevent reports from being approved:

1. Payments made outside of the period of the grant (check your TCA contract for dates)
2. Missing data or typo in spreadsheet (check number, date, total amount of check, etc.)
3. Amounts in expense categories do not match the grant budget page of the online report
4. Check sequence variance--if you are using multiple checking accounts, include a note for staff
5. Payments to people are included in categories other than administrative or artistic salaries, contracts, benefits categories.

If you have any questions, please contact our program staff for help (scroll to the bottom of this page to see artistic discipline/program assignments by staff member). <https://www.arts.texas.gov/about-us/staff/>

State Artist Nominations Open

On behalf of the Texas State Legislature, the Texas Commission on the Arts is currently accepting nominations for the 2027 and 2028 Texas State Artists. Nominations are accepted for Texas State Musician-Nonclassical, State Musician-Classical, Texas Poet Laureate, Texas State Two-Dimensional Artist (visual arts), and Texas State Three-Dimensional Artist (visual arts).

Any Texas citizen can nominate a living artist in any of the five categories, and self-nominations are welcome. Nominees must be native

Texans or have resided in the state for at least five years, as well as having US citizenship. They must have attained the highest levels of excellence and success in their respective disciplines and earned a statewide, regional or national reputation for their high caliber work. Nominations will be accepted



online through October 15, 2026. The Texas Poet Laureate, State Musician and State Artist Committee, composed of members appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, will make the final selections for the Legislature's consideration and approval in 2027.

The positions, created by SB 1043 of the 77th Legislature and-- in the case of the Texas State Musician-Classical designation-- SB 281 of the 88th Legislature, are filled for one-year terms. Appointees are selected for the exceptional quality of their work and for their outstanding commitment to the arts in Texas. Each Texas State Artist reflects the state's diversity and high-quality artistic offerings. Need an example of who gets selected? Read on for a short profile of a recent designee.

Designated in 2025, **Alecia Lawyer**, of Houston, is the inaugural **Texas State Musician-Classical**. She is the Founder, Artistic Director, and Principal Oboist of ROCO, a professional music ensemble in Houston that has been called a trailblazer and arts disrupter and is leading the sector in innovation. Named by Musical America as one of classical music's Top 30 Influencers for 2015, Lawyer has recorded for John Cage, soloed with Rostropovich, given a recital at Carnegie Hall, recorded with the Sorbonne Orchestra, and performed with various orchestras and chamber groups in France and Germany. She has received numerous awards and recognitions, including the Sigma Alpha Iota Musician of the Year, and Outstanding Chamber Orchestra Founder from the Houston Chronicle.

To learn more about the Texas State Artists nomination process, and to submit nominations, go [here](#).

Photo: Daniel Ortiz

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!

High Schools: Sign Up Now for Poetry Out Loud

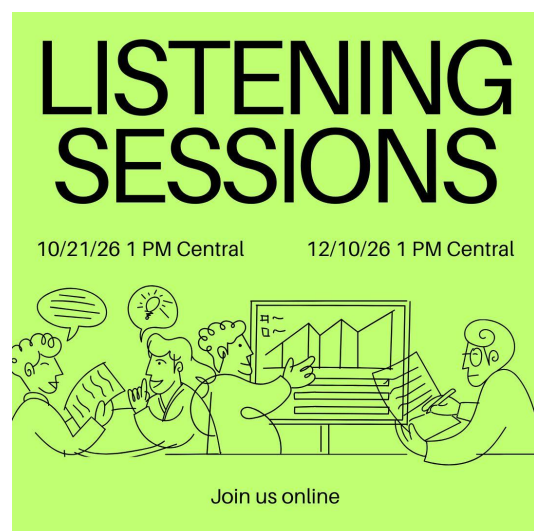
The school year is in full swing, which means that TCA is signing up high schools across the state to participate in the [Poetry Out Loud](#) program. Interested educators should fill out [this form](#) soon to sign up and to receive materials to help them conduct the program during the fall semester.

The Poetry Out Loud recitation contest is a national project of the National Endowment for the Arts. This exciting program helps students become close readers, master public speaking skills, build self-confidence, and learn about their literary heritage. High school students memorize poems and perform them competitively. Each participating high school will hold its competition to determine its school winner by December 15, 2026. The school winner will compete at the state competition in February 2027.



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.

Speaker Series: Join Us for Listening Sessions



In August, TCA held the **Engaging New Audiences through Partnerships** Speaker Series professional development webinar! We were thrilled to hear and learn from our esteemed colleagues Lynn Barnett and Casey Chavez about their experience, methods, and perspectives for making and fostering strategic partnerships across industries and disciplines to attract new audiences.

In **October** and **December**, TCA is holding **free, online listening sessions** for the last installments of

this year's Speaker Series, which explores and discusses topics important to the arts that support arts organizations and artists in Texas. These listening sessions are an opportunity for you to connect with new and familiar colleagues and provide a clearer picture of the successes, challenges, and needs facing the arts across the state. Help TCA assess the needs of our field and guide the next year's slate of Speaker Series professional development events by joining us for either of these sessions! TCA will also give an update on agency programs and upcoming activities and deadlines.

There is no difference between the contents of these two opportunities, with both sessions following the same agenda. They will be held on:

Wednesday, October 21, 2026 at 1 PM - 2:30 PM Central (register [here](#))

Thursday, December 10, 2026 at 1 PM - 2:30 PM Central (register [here](#))

Note that registration does not guarantee a spot in this event, as spaces are limited. Be quick to join us on the day-of to be part of this conversation in real time!

You can find this year's past Speaker Series events at the following links:

Get to Know the Mitte Cultural District

As noted in the article above, TCA has approved the designation of the **Mitte Cultural District**. At the southernmost tip of Texas, where the United States and Mexico meet, the Mitte Cultural District celebrates the rich history, creativity, and cultural heritage of the borderlands. The district fosters a vibrant and collaborative arts ecosystem encompassing visual arts,



performing arts, dance, music, film, literary arts, public art, culinary arts, and heritage traditions. Major cultural assets include the Mitte: the Cultural Center, the Children's Museum of Brownsville, Camille Playhouse, the Brownsville Historical Association, the George Ramirez Performing Arts Center, and numerous galleries and creative spaces. Public art is a defining feature of the district, highlighted by *Murals in the Mitte*, a collection of twenty murals connected through an interactive bilingual GPS-guided audio experience. Home to more than twenty collaborating arts and cultural organizations, the district showcases artists whose work reflects the history, resilience, and vibrant culture of the border region.

The cultural district will be officially designated during the weekend of October 24. Concurrently, the **Edinburg Arts District** will be designated as well. TCA staff will present a proclamation marking the official designations.

"We are pleased to highlight the wonderful work the district is already doing to attract visitors to their community, and to enhance the quality of life in our great state," said Gary Gibbs, executive director of TCA. "Their application to the designation process provided extensive information on their qualifications, and was considered through a highly rigorous review process. We congratulate them on this achievement." For complete information on the Cultural Districts Designation Program, please visit <https://www.arts.texas.gov/initiatives/cultural-districts/>.

Photo: Carlos A. Bravo

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