

2025 Signature Event Grant Policy

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Section 1 - About

The City of San Marcos' Public Events Grant Program provides funding to organizations to assist with their events that enrich the quality of life, engage our visitors and residents, and provide artistic quality while promoting tourism and improving the economic well-being of San Marcos.

This grant program is administered by the City of San Marcos' Destination Services Department. Final grant awardees and amounts are decided by the Public Events Grant Panel which is comprised of recreation, planning and tourism staff.

CULTURAL EQUITY STATEMENT

To support a full creative life for all, the San Marcos Destination Services staff commit to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, and equitable city.

ACCESS STATEMENT

City of San Marcos Public Events Grant program is open to all people regardless of race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, and socioeconomic status. The City of San Marcos ensures meaningful access to City programs and services by reasonably providing translation, interpretation, and other accommodations upon request. To request any of these services contact the Destination Services staff at GrantFunding@sanmarcostx.gov or at 512-393-5937. Providing at least 72 hours' notice will help ensure availability of your request.

Section 2 - Program Overview

The City of San Marcos awards grants annually for events that that bring people together to celebrate and enjoy different forms of artistic expression, music, food, sports and/or traditions in San Marcos. Funding is dependent upon eligibility and the availability of funds.

Events receiving Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) allocations must directly enhance and promote tourism and the hotel and convention industry in San Marcos to be eligible for Hotel Occupancy Tax funding.

General funds are available for events that benefit the local community but do not attract visitors.

Grant expenses are restricted to event related costs and may not be used for venue operations, administrative salaries, or parts of an event that are not directly related to arts, culture and events.

Section 3 - Program Funding

Source of Event Funds

The City of San Marcos allocates two sources of funding for its public events grants.

- 1) City General Fund revenue is allocated to fund community focused events that enhance San Marcos residents' quality of life.
- 2) Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) revenue is allocated to arts and events to support organizations, as permitted by the Texas Tax Code.

All grants funded by HOT revenue are required to:

- Produce activities that are open and advertised to visitors and San Marcos residents
- DIRECTLY enhance and promote tourism AND the convention and hotel industry
- Promote and enhance San Marcos as an art, cultural and event destination
- Occur in San Marcos-based venues in the 78666-zip code - Events occurring outside of this area are not eligible

State of Texas Hotel Occupancy Tax Code can be read at <http://www.statutes.legis.state.tx.us>.

Grant Funding Category

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT

A signature event is a well-branded, well-marketed event that brings people together to celebrate and enjoy different forms of artistic expression, music, food, sports and/or traditions in San Marcos. The annual in person event, must have an attendance of over 5,000 people, been successfully held for more than three consecutive years and more than fifty percent of its participants and attendees are from outside the area. This grant is funded by Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). State law sets the rules on how this money may be spent; HOT funds must be used to directly enhance and promote tourism and the hotel and convention industry in San Marcos. Fifteen percent of the grant award must be used for paid advertising outside a 50-mile radius of the San Marcos city limits. Grant recipients must provide paid advertising samples and receipts in their final reports.

Which Grant is Right for Me?

Applicants cannot use the same event proposal to apply to more than one grant program. Applicants should decide which grant best aligns with their event and apply for that specific event grant.

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT

- Event primarily targeted to bring visitors to San Marcos
- Applicant is a nonprofit organization or an event production business
- Annual event with more than 5,000 people in attendance
- Has held a successful event for more than three years

Funding Limits

Grant requests for an event can be up to 50% of total expenditure budget. Awards may only pay for eligible event expenses. All budgeted expenses must be real cost. In-kind donation value of goods and services are not eligible to be included in the expense budget.

Funding Payments

Awardees will receive 85 percent of their grant after the official notification and execution of contract. First payment can take up to four weeks to disburse after City receives signed contract from applicant. The final 15 percent will be released upon completion of event, final report submission, review and acceptance of the report by City of San Marcos public event grant staff.

If an event requires funding above and beyond the City award, it is the responsibility of the applicant to secure those funds. Additional funds may not be solicited from the City or any of its departments even as in-kind donations or sponsorship.

Grant awards are dependent on available funding. Funding is contingent on annual budget allocations as approved by City Council.

Funding Cycle

Events grants are administered annually by the City. Contracts are for the calendar year and events must be completed by December 31 of the award year.

Failure to complete the event as presented within the contract period may result in the organization being deemed ineligible to apply for future grant funding.

Section 4 - Application Help and Workshop

Mandatory Informational Workshops

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT

In coordination with the Arts and Cultural Grant program staff, several workshops will be held during the grant cycle that detail eligibility, requirements, restrictions, and application instructions. Attendance to at least one workshop is mandatory to be eligible for grants. Dates, times and locations of the workshops can be found in section 11 of this document and sign up will be posted [here](#).

Still Have Questions?

Please contact us at GrantFunding@sanmarcostx.gov if your questions are not answered in the Frequently Asked Questions section on our website [here](#). Additionally, one-on-one coaching for those that meet grant eligibility requirements will also be made available on an as-needed first come, first served basis. After Wednesday, September 11, 2024, 5:00pm, CST the Grants Team is only available for technical assistance with online application technology.

Section 5 - Applicant Eligibility

Who is Eligible

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT

- Organization must be in good standing with the Texas Comptroller's Office as verified by the [Texas Comptroller Search](#).
- If a nonprofit, Organizations must be tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), as verified by the IRS Tax Exemption Organization Search. Applicants' names must appear on an IRS letter of determination.
- Applicants' scopes of work must have a clear public presentation component.
- Event manager must provide official valid state-issued identification card, US passport, or other official document with photo with current address.
- Applicants must have fulfilled contractual requirements of previously funded events, including final reports.

Who is Not Eligible

- Schools/universities
- Religious institutions and/or programs to support a religion
- Government institutions and departments
- Students work intended for undergraduate or graduate academic credit or as part of an academically supported event, program, or residency

Section 6 - Event Eligibility and Restrictions

SIGNATURE EVENT ELIGIBILITY

- Organization must be in good standing with the Texas Comptroller's Office as verified by the Texas Comptroller Search
- Must bring people together to celebrate and enjoy different forms of artistic expression, music, food, sports and/or traditions in San Marcos
- Must occur within the San Marcos 78666 zip code
- Exclusive annual San Marcos event
- Minimum attendance of 5,000 people
- 50% of attendance must be out of town guests
- Proven record of a successful event for three consecutive years; excluding pandemic years
- Must be open to public participation or attendance
- Accessible and inclusive event
- Respectful of the environment
 - Must work towards a 'Zero waste status' 90% landfill diversion
 - Collaborate with Resource Recovery or like organization
- Must be held in-person and advertised to visitors and San Marcos residents

- Must be completed within the time period set in contracted award year
- Applicants must have fulfilled contractual requirements of previously funded events, including final reports
- Applicants may not receive funding or donations from any other City board, commission or department

Event Restrictions

Applicant events may not receive funding or donations from any other City board, commission or department in addition to the public events grant. In addition, City of San Marcos Public Events Grant Funding cannot be used to support:

- Lobbying: Per the City’s ethics policy, grant applicants are prohibited from directly or indirectly communicating with City Council members regarding their qualifications or any department matter related to the eventual award of a Contract. Any violation of this provision will result in immediate disqualification of the applicant from the selection process.
- Political activity – including any activity supporting the current elected public office, election, or defeat of any candidate for public office; or to influence the passage, defeat or final content of legislation.
- Events that include or promote obscene material as defined in Section 43.21, Penal Code of Texas
- Religious and/or sectarian programming
- Applications that are incomplete or fail to adhere to the eligibility requirements

Ineligible Expenses

Though part of your event budget, certain costs are ineligible to be paid with funding from grants. Ineligible expenses include:

- To reduce/eliminate a deficit
- An event that occurred before the grant award year
- Regranting awarded funds is not an allowed, including to individuals as a microgrant
- Scholarships (The grantee is allowed to offer sliding scale, discounted fees or free programming to their program participants.)
- Award ceremonies, recreation activities, or parties and private celebrations.
- Events that are primarily fundraisers, benefits, or activities offered for the sole purpose of raising money in excess of the value of programs or services delivered
- Costs of food and drink for receptions
- Rental costs of hotel/motel rooms
- Cash prizes or items purchased for resale, use as prizes or gifts, or awards
- Transportation to exhibits/field trips
- Programs that are essentially recreational, rehabilitative, or therapeutic
- Building space, real property, or supplies and equipment that is purchased and owned by, or could be used by, the applicant
- Long-life items and permanent fixtures (excluding permanent public art)
- Organizations’ monthly/seasonal/annual operational costs

- Funding for litigation or litigation related activities
- Consultants who are members of an applicant’s staff
- Payments to students or interns whose employment is tied to class credit
- Property Taxes, payroll tax or any other tax (sales tax excluded)

Section 7 - Required Documents

The following documents are required to be uploaded in the grant portal for completion of the grant application. *(Documents with an asterisk to be presented in person at mandatory applicant workshop.)*

NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION

- Event manager resume
- List of board members and paid staff (not contracted professionals)
- IRS letter of determination
- Financial statements for the organization showing activity for one year – most recent year available
- *Proof of organization headquarters location*

EVENT PLANNING BUSINESS

- Event manager resume
- List of paid management staff (not contracted professionals)
- Financial statements for the organization showing activity for one year – most recent year available
- *Proof of residency/organization headquarters location*

Section 8 - Budget Table How-To

To ensure the applicant demonstrates the ability to steward public resources, budget details must show appropriate preparation to complete proposed activities, and demonstrate investment in artists, creatives, and local talent.

Use the income and expenses table example in the following pages as a reference for how to report the full cost of your proposed arts and cultural programming through the Grants Portal. Budget expense template can be downloaded [here](#).

Budget Revenue/Income Section

In this section, you will list all funding sources for the event. Category totals will need to be entered in the table. All amounts are for category income received/anticipated and not for in-kind services. Enter whole dollar amounts. If there is no income for a category enter 0.

- **Admission Charges:** Anticipated income earned from admission
- **Registration Fees:** Anticipated income earned from vendor fees, competition fees, participation fees, etc.
- **Sponsorships/Donations:** Anticipated/received contributions from sponsorships, donations, fundraising
- **San Marcos Public Events Grant Request:** Requested grant amount
- **Texas Commission on the Arts Grants:** Anticipated/received grant from Texas Commission on the Arts
- **Other Grants:** Anticipated/received grant total from all other agencies
- **Sales:** Anticipated income earned from concessions, merchandise sales, parking fees, etc.
- **Organizational Funds Available:** Amount of internal funds budgeted for this event
- **Other:** Anything that does not fit in one of the above categories

Budget Expense Section

In this section, you will list all expenses for the event. The budget expense template can be downloaded [here](#). You will need to download, fill out, and save the document, then upload it in the Budget Expense and Grant Request section of the online grant application. Category totals will also need to be entered in the table of the online grant application. Enter whole dollar amounts. If there is no income for a category enter 0.

- **Contracted Services:** *This is not employees that receive a W2 from your organization. Actual monetary amount paid, not in-kind or sponsorship value. Examples include administrative, technical, consultant, CPA, lawyer, event coordinator, artist, photographer, videographer, set up/tear down labor, etc.*
- **Venue Rental:** Actual monetary amount paid, not in-kind or sponsorship value
- **Equipment Rental:** *Rental only-grant cannot be used to purchase equipment.* Projectors, sound system, portable toilets, chairs, tables, linens, installation equipment, etc.
- **Supplies/Materials:** Materials that are used for proposed event only and not for general daily use. Art materials, set up/tear down cleanup, paper goods, etc.
- **Advertising/Promotion:** Actual monetary amount paid, not in-kind or sponsorship value. Traditional, digital, and social media, collateral printing, influencer, etc. Tourism Grant and Spark Tourism Grant requires 15% of awarded funds be used for paid advertising targeted at least 50 miles outside the San Marcos city limits.
- **Transportation/Shipping/Postage:** Travel for event's out of town featured artists, musicians, director, speaker, etc. that isn't already included in their contracted fee. Shipping, postage and delivery fees for sending related materials.
- **Lodging:** *This is part of your total budget but cannot be paid by grant funds.* Accommodations for event's out of town featured artists, musicians, director, speaker, etc. that isn't already included in their contracted fee.
- **Food/Beverage:** *This is part of your total budget but cannot be paid by grant funds.* This does not include in-kind or sponsorship value.
- **Other:** Anything that does not fit in one of the above categories. Items like City Event permits, security, insurance, licensing and royalty fees to use musical scores or plays, costumes, etc.

BUDGET SAMPLE

Expense category totals are calculated in applicant's detailed budget template. Totals are then input in the online grant application budget expense form section. In the expense sample below, the total event budget is \$7,000. Grant request can be up to \$3,500. Actual award amount requested is not guaranteed. If a Tourism Grant or Spark Tourism Grant, 15% of grant award needs to be included for paid advertising.

Expense type	Amount
Contracted Services	\$ * 2700
Venue Rental	\$ * 500
Equipment Rental	\$ * 700
Supplies/Materials	\$ * 275
Advertising/Promotion* TOURISM GRANT: MUST BE 15% of AWARD/REQUEST	\$ * 525
Transportation/Shipping/Postage	\$ * 0
Lodging	\$ 0
Food/Beverage	\$ 300
Other	\$ * 2000
Totals	7000

Section 9 – Review, Evaluation Criteria and Scoring

Applications are reviewed by grants staff to verify eligibility and application completeness.

Step one – Application Review

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 via email. All grant notifications are sent solely via email to the applicant and/or the application's primary grant contact designated in the Online Grants Portal. The email notification will provide applicants with the opportunity to resubmit the missing or incorrect documentation within four business days from the date of notification.

Applications will not be reopened to correct narratives, work samples, responses to questions, or budget tables.

No information will be accepted after the 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.

Once the application is officially accepted by event grants staff, the Public Events Grant Panel will review all eligible applications and score them according to the following criteria.

Step two – Grant evaluation and scoring

Must have a minimum score of 60% or better to qualify:

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT:

- TOURISM IMPACT: 10
- HOTEL AND CONVENTION INDUSTRY IMPACT: 10
- ARTISTIC/CULTURAL QUALITY: 10
- DEMAND FOR EVENT: 10
- ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH: 10

DIVERSITY IMPACT POINTS: 10

Additional points that can be assigned to applications in all grant categories.

Step three –Award projection

Public Events Grant Panel enter a suggested award for each event based on evaluation scores. The average of these amounts will guide the final award amount, if any.

Appeals

Declined applicants who requested grant funds may appeal only for the reasons listed below:

- Review panelist or staff error - incorrect information by staff or reviewers at the time of scoring, despite the presence of the correct information as part of the original application.
- Conflict of interest - influence of Public Events Grant Panel who willfully failed to disclose conflicts of interest

The following reasons are NOT subject to appeal:

- The subjective opinions of application reviewers
- The scores assigned in the application review process
- Award amount
- Issues of eligibility, guidelines, or policy

Section 10 - Funded Grant Requirements

- **Credit to City of San Marcos:** Grant funded events are required to acknowledge the support of the City of San Marcos to demonstrate how City funds support of public events. Recipients receiving funds are required to use the provided City of San Marcos logo and/or credit line on all printed and electronic materials that advertise funded events. Instructions and San Marcos branding elements will be provided if a grant application is funded.
- **SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT paid advertising:** 15% of grant award must be used for paid advertising to potential visitors outside a 50-mile radius of the San Marcos city limits.
- **SIGNATURE EVENT submission to Visit San Marcos website:** All details in addition to an image and website address for more information to be submitted a minimum of 60 days prior to event to <https://www.visitsanmarcos.com/events/submit-your-event/>
- **SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT: send event/opening reception/program invitation to City Council and Public Events Grant staff:** Date, time, description of event, reception, exhibit, etc. emailed two weeks in advance to citycouncil@sanmarcostx.gov and grantfunding@sanmarcostx.gov.
- **Animal shelter promotional opportunity:** If feasible, the City of San Marcos asks that grant-funded events provide the opportunity for San Marcos Animal Shelter staff/volunteers to set up an area to help educate attendees about animal adoptions and services. The applicant will coordinate directly with the Community Engagement Coordinator at 512-805-2674.
- **Organizers are responsible for following all City permitting requirements:** Destination Services staff can help applicants find information about City permitting requirements, including the City's Special Events Permitting policy. It is up to the applicant to ensure all permits are secured and safety requirements are met.

Changes and refunds

Grantees must notify the Public Events Grant staff **IN WRITING** at any point the event is changed from the way it was described in the grant application. This includes, but not limited to, substitutions in personnel, change in scope, change of event dates, change in number of performances, change of event location, change of the event from in-person to virtual, and cancellation.

Changes to key elements in the event are subject to review and may result in revision or revocation of the grant award.

If the grantee fails to inform Public Events Grant staff of changes 60 days prior to the initial event dates, staff reserves the right to withhold payment or require a refund.

Reporting

Grantees must submit a final Event Evaluation Report through the Grant Portal within 60 days of event completion. Failure to submit the report can result in forfeiture of remaining funds allocated for the event and eligibility for any future City of San Marcos grant funding.

Section 11 - Grant Cycle Timeline

SIGNATURE EVENT GRANT Application window opens: Wednesday, August 14, 2024

Application deadline: Monday, September 16, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. CST

Attendance to at least one workshop is REQUIRED to apply for these grants. Please sign up [here](#).

All workshops in the Multipurpose Room at the San Marcos Activity Center, 501 E. Hopkins.

- Saturday, August 10 MORNING 10:30-11:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, August 13 LUNCH 12-1 p.m.
- Thursday, August 15 LUNCH 12-1 p.m.
- Monday, August 19 EVENING 6-7 p.m.
- Wednesday, September 4 EVENING 6-7 p.m.

Panel Review, discussion and decision: October 7-11, 2024

Funding notification: November 2024

Funding contract processing: December 2024

Funding disbursements: Begin January 2025*

** Can be up to four weeks after the City receives a signed contract from the applicant*

Final Report Deadline: date specified in contract

Section 12 - Key Terms

Access Open to all people regardless of race, gender, gender identity, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, ability, neighborhood, and socioeconomic status.

Art Includes the following disciplines: visual (painting, sculpture, design, photography, printing, mosaic, video, film, mixed-media, textiles, etc.), performing (music, theater, dance, spoken word, etc.) and literary (poetry, fiction, non-fiction, etc.)

Award Year The time frame the event must take place. Award year is the first full calendar year January 1 to December 31 following the application deadline.

Central Texas based An individual or organization that has a physical address within the following counties: Hays, Caldwell, Comal, Guadalupe, or Travis. Exhibitions, programming, performances, and showcases must benefit residents and visitors of the city of San Marcos.

City The municipal government of the City of San Marcos.

Community Engagement Points How the event addresses interests and meaningfully connect with, listen and respond to, reflect, build and/or empower their defined community(ies).

Diversity Impact Points Additional points (maximum of 10) assigned to applications of those representing communities of color, those living with disabilities, those living/working in historically underserved areas, LGBTQIA+, non-binary, women, and veterans. This includes the following terms:

Accessibility Advances access along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meaning of compliance to include the legal provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act but also the elements of Universal Design.

Communities of Color Identity-based self-defined communities sharing racial identities and histories subject to racism. These communities include—but are not limited to—African, African American, Asian, Caribbean, Latina/o, Middle Eastern, Native American, and Pacific Islander.

Cultural Equity The values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those historically underrepresented due to race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and an equitable distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.

Good Standing Individuals and organizations current with IRS 990 filings, Federal, State, City of San Marcos, and Arts & Cultural Grants contract compliance.

Hotel and Convention Industry Impact Points An event that directly promotes or enhances overnight stays or is an added value to visitors to lengthen their stay. This activity may result from hotel or convention guests that are already in town and choose to attend the hotel tax funded arts or cultural event, or it may result from individuals who come from another city or county to stay in an area lodging property at least in part to attend the hotel tax funded event. *[See Op. Tex. Attorney Gen. Nos. GA-0124 (2003), JM-690 (1987)]*

Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) A tax paid by those staying in San Marcos hotels. The Texas Tax Code Section 351.101 (A)(4) HOT funding may be used for the “encouragement, promotion, improvement, and application of the arts.”

Promotion and Access Points How the event provides and/or expands access to arts and cultural programming, and how the event will be promoted to the San Marcos community.

San Marcos-based An event venue that has a physical San Marcos address with a 78666 zip code. Exhibitions, programming, performances, and showcases must benefit and take place at a San Marcos address.

Scope of Work Key documentation that outlines the work to be done for an event, including goals, deliverables, and timeline.

Showcase An exhibit or performance where an audience is present.