



**BIPOC
Arts
Network
& Fund**

**Houston Cultural Treasures
Guidelines and Information**

BIPOC Arts Network & Fund

Thank you for your interest in the 2023 BIPOC Arts Network & Fund (BANF) Houston Cultural Treasures initiative. The following document details the grant application process, requirements, and key dates and shares a little about us.

On behalf of the BANF Steering Committee and our Accountability and Advisory Council, made up of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and LGBTQ+ arts community leaders, we are grateful for your participation in building a thriving arts ecosystem in Houston.

About BANF

The Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) Arts Network & Fund (BANF) is a revolutionary arts ecosystem that empowers BIPOC artists, organizations, and communities in the Greater Houston Area with transformative opportunities to dream, connect, collaborate, and create.

Established in 2021 as a collaborative community effort, BANF revolutionizes the local funding landscape, breaks down silos within the arts ecosystem, and welcomes everyone to support and learn from BIPOC arts communities.

BANF continues a process that listens and then acts on the needs of BIPOC arts organizations and artists. We utilize equity-focused and community-participatory funding initiatives; community-informed evaluation and learning practices; and asset-based network building strategies to inform leadership, advocacy, and action.

BANF is a multi-year initiative guided by the very artists, nonprofit organizations, and local leaders it seeks to serve. BANF was created in a time of crisis to provide resources and networks that support the vibrant Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern and other communities of color of Greater Houston in fully displaying their power, values and traditions.

How We're Funded

BANF is one of eight regional initiatives that are part of the Ford Foundation's America's Cultural Treasures (ACT) national initiative created to address structural discrimination and inequities in arts funding. With lead funding from Houston Endowment and the Ford Foundation, this grant is made possible with early commitments of four other local foundations, including The Brown Foundation, The Cullen Foundation, Kinder Foundation, and Powell Foundation.

Crisis Relief: \$2M Invested in 2021

At its launch, BANF invested \$2 million into BIPOC-founded and -led organizations and fiscally-sponsored artist collectives that promote, preserve, and celebrate Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian, and other communities of color through arts and cultural programming. This one-time investment was an effort to provide direct and urgent support for Houston's BIPOC arts ecosystem in the face of the pandemic and compounded crises.

\$1M to Artists

The Artist Award initiative is a \$1M, three-year investment directly to artists. Fifty artists, through two rounds of funding (2023/2025), will each receive \$20,000 and engage in an eighteen-month learning community. Through investing in artists whose creative actions and service invests in communities of color, BANF strengthens the city and region with greater possibilities.

HOUSTON CULTURAL TREASURES

In 2020, the Ford Foundation launched America's Cultural Treasures to acknowledge and honor the diversity of artistic expression and excellence in America and to provide critical funding to organizations that have made a significant impact on their cultural landscape despite historically limited resources. As part of the program, nine regional partners joined in the \$116M initiative. Houston Cultural Treasures (HCT) is BANF's version, informed by our previous grant rounds and our community leadership, and shaped to invest \$5M in the future thriving of our own treasures.

Houston Cultural Treasures invests in the arts organizations that have anchored our communities of color and shaped Houston's dynamic and diverse culture that we benefit from today. We honor their survival, persistence, and resilience.

BANF will award up to eight organizations multi-year, general operating grants ranging from \$100,000 to a maximum of \$500,000. Additional technical support will be available through the cohort experience.

The Houston arts community has touted its ability to collaborate and connect. We celebrate that connectedness as a Houston strength and have built that network approach as an essential part of the BANF experience. The HCT recipients will be part of a two-year learning cohort aimed to develop mutual support, shared and expanded expertise, and offer ecosystemic learnings.

To be a Houston Cultural Treasure is to make a commitment to strengthen the Houston BIPOC arts ecosystem

Eligibility Overview

- BIPOC History and Leadership – Founded, led by, and serving Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander and/or other communities of color
- BIPOC Focus – A strategic focus on stewarding and sustaining artistic and/or cultural traditions rooted in a specific/defined community of color and elevating awareness of that community's contribution to regional culture
- Arts and Culture Focus – A history of and a focus on the creation, presentation, and/or production of arts and culture that is significant to their organizational programs and budget
 - at least 40% of annual operating expenses (after capital expenses), and/or
 - an arts/culture program budget that is at least 50% of all programmatic expenses
- History of Community Impact – A demonstrated history of supporting and engaging with their specified or defined community of color
- BIPOC Cultural Legacies – A recognized source of inspiration, support, and/or contribution to the history, culture, vibrancy, and identity of BIPOC artists and Houston residents
- 501c3 organization incorporated at least 15 years ago (in 2008 or before)
- Organization must be located and serve the 9-County Region of Greater Houston

Who should apply?

Houston Cultural Treasures are organizations whose mission and leadership that:

- Are committed to strengthening the Greater Houston BIPOC arts ecosystem.
- Are committed to network-building through participation in a two-year learning cohort.
- Are aligned with BANF's cohort model values: openness to transformational opportunities; process-based experimentation; collaboration; and shared learning.
- Have the capacity to accept and absorb a sizeable, one-time infusion of dollars without endangering organizational health and standing.

Expectations of Awardees

Upon acceptance as a Houston Cultural Treasure, organizational leadership makes a commitment to actively participate in a two-year learning community with the other organizations. This would require the time and commitment of the organizational leadership team including executive and programmatic leadership, board members, and/or community supporters. The cohort process is in development, but currently includes quarterly in-person meetings, monthly check-ins with cohort facilitator(s), and other topic/theme specific conversations from January 2024 to December 2025.

This award is intended as a transformational investment into the organization’s future. It is not tied to a specific project or any particular outcomes. However, BANF is designed as a learning initiative, and as such, participation in the cohort will ask for consistent reflection, shared learning, and collaboration with evaluators/storytellers. Though there will be no official “Final Report,” there will be surveys and reflection opportunities to help narrate the impact of the organization’s involvement with the Houston Cultural Treasures initiative.

We require this level of engagement not to create additional burdens on the participants, but as an opportunity to share process and learning o strengthen the broader ecosystem.Review Criteria

Awardees will share these characteristics and experiences:

- History of transformative support to BIPOC arts ecosystem in Houston including its artists, arts organizations, and the communities of color in the 9-county region of Greater Houston
- Sustained history of presenting, producing, and/or creating arts programming that celebrates, uplifts, explores, and/or gives authentic voice to BIPOC communities
- Capacity to accept and absorb a sizeable, one-time infusion of dollars without endangering organizational health and standing
- Demonstration and articulation of alignment with HCT cohort values:
 - openness to transformational opportunities
 - process-based experimentation
 - collaboration
 - shared learning

Inherent to BANF's Listen-and-Learn approach, other criteria may surface as we experience the stories our community shares with us through the application process. We will update the [Help Desk](#) with any such clarifications.

Use of Funds

Allowable	Ineligible
The following is a nonexclusive list of costs that are eligible expenditures for this award:	The following is a nonexclusive list of expenses that would not be eligible expenditures for this award:
The grant is for general operating funds and can be used for (and not limited to) administration, overhead, programs, or any expenditures of the organization that is within organization values, vision, and mission, and legal compliance of the statutes for non-profit corporations.	Activities that promote or engage in violence, terrorism, bigotry or the destruction of any State.
	Activities that attempt to influence the outcome of any election or legislation including but not limited to, activities in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.
	Services to any person/entity on OFAC sanction list.

Community-Engaged Review

BANF is committed to building processes informed by and inclusive of community members. BANF’s Steering Committee and Accountability & Advisory Council will be joined by community-nominated reviewers (independent artists, educators, patrons, community leaders and organizers) who help our review panels be more reflective of the Greater Houston BIPOC arts ecosystem.

Panelists are asked to disclose all potential conflicts of interest so that no panelist can unduly advocate for proposals from which they may benefit or have a perceived benefit. [See Conflict of Interest Policy.] We will share the names of all panelists and readers at the end of the review process.

Grant Application Review Process

Applications undergo a multi-step community review process as follows:

Step 1: Eligibility Review – BIPOC Arts Network and Fund Administration

Applications are reviewed by BANF Administration team to verify eligibility.

Step 2: Panel Review

All applications will be reviewed and scored in relationship with the criteria. A general panel will review all the applications to determine its list to invite to conversation.

Step 3: Leadership Conversations

In recognition of the importance of relational dynamics when building a network, the panel will invite the leadership teams of selected organizations to a 45-60 minute conversation.

Step 4: Verifications, Approvals, and Acceptances

After Leadership Conversations, the review panel will finalize a list of Houston Cultural Treasures, with invitations to the first HCT convening in November 2023.

Key Dates

APPLICATION OPEN:	10 a.m. Central Monday June 12, 2023
APPLICATION MATERIALS DEADLINE:	11:59 p.m. Central Monday July 31, 2023
APPLICATION REVIEW:	August 1 - October 2, 2023
CONVERSATIONS:	Estimated first two weeks of October 2023
NOTIFICATIONS:	Beginning of November 2023

LETTER OF INTEREST

We ask interested organizations to share a letter (or an audio or video recording) expressing why you and your organization are interested in being part of the Houston Cultural Treasures cohort. We are holding space to ask you to be honest, transparent, and maybe even a little vulnerable. Your response need not be formal or perfect but should be authentic to your organization, its leadership, and the moment.

Please reflect on and answer the questions below within your response:

- **What does making a commitment to strengthen the Houston BIPOC arts ecosystem mean to your organization?**
- **What is it about this initiative and the various support resources that make it the right opportunity for your organization at this time?**

We ask that you keep your written responses to no more than 4 pages single-spaced total. If you choose an audio or video response, please keep your recorded responses to 7 minutes total.

Guiding Questions

The following are guiding questions for HCT Cohort criteria. Please consider these ideas as you answer the questions above in your Letter of Interest.

Building A Learning Community

We are inviting participation into a cohort that creates space for these values: *openness to transformational opportunities; process-based experimentation; collaboration; and shared learning*. How do these values align with your current organizational priorities?

Reciprocal Network Relationships

What prior successes in your organizational history speak to mutually beneficial collaborations and partnerships? How will further investment in reciprocal network relationships support your organization's contributions toward strengthening Greater Houston's BIPOC arts ecosystem?

Attention To Transformation

What is a transformational priority that you have not yet had enough money in order to enact that HCT funding might be able to help you address? How do you determine that as a priority in the first place? With the additional (transformational) resources of HCT funding, what would be transformed?

The completed Letter of Interest will be uploaded into Submittable along with the other required documents. A detailed list of the items required for Submittable follows.

SUBMITTABLE APPLICATION

Once applicants register for the Houston Cultural Treasures in Submittable, they will go through the first Eligibility Form that ask Yes/No questions directly linked to the eligibility criteria as articulated above.

Once applicants have successfully completed the Eligibility Form and are found eligible, they will need to complete the following within the Submittable portal:

- **Letter of Interest** – Upload a digital file (.pdf or .doc or acceptable audio or video file formats) or share a weblink to an audio or video recording.
- **Mission Statement**
- **History & Vision** – A brief description of your organization’s history, including the founder(s) of the organization, date of founding, mission, and why you were organized. (Maximum word count is 500 words, suggested word count is 250.)
- **Current Financials** – An approved organizational budget for your current fiscal year. This does not need to be in any specific format, but a copy of the budget as approved by the organization’s board. Please note, we may request copies of audited financials and/or 990s.
- **Advocate Statements of Support** – Please provide names of two advocates who will submit a letter or an audio or video recording that provides support for your letter of interest (500 words or 3 minutes maximum).
 - We offer these guiding questions:
 - Why do you believe in the work of the applicant organization?
 - How have you witnessed or benefited directly from their work?
 - What is a hope you have for the applicant organization?

The advocates will receive an email invitation to submit their statement of support. For full descriptions of the Submittable forms, please see: *APPENDIX A: ARTIST ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT STATEMENTS*

- **Workplace Demographics**
Please see the Workplace Demographics Worksheet.
- **Additional Information**
 - Names of your Key Leadership as noted in the chart.
 - Primary Grant Contact/Email/Phone
 - Organization Name/Legal Name
 - EIN
 - Organization Authorizing Official/Email/Phone
 - County of residence
 - Organization Address
 - Mailing Address
 - Social Media: Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/Website

WORKPLACE DEMOGRAPHICS WORKSHEET

This spreadsheet will be available in the Submittable platform. We provide it here to help with offline calculations.

Please fill out the spreadsheet with the information that reflects your organization’s staffing, leadership and Board. Individuals in your organization who multi-identify should represent their multiple ethnic, cultural, or racial identities in the chart.

- **Staff** – Members of your collective, volunteer, or paid full-time/part-time staff
- **Key Leadership** – Director-level and above; also identified by all who have authority over spending/expenses
- **Board:** Current Board of Directors

	Staff Members	Key Leaders	Board Members
Total Number of			
ETHNICITY/CULTURAL HERITAGE	Number of Staff Members	Number of Key Leaders	Number of Board Members
Black, Afro-Caribbean or African American			
Indigenous/First Nations/Native American			
Asian or Pacific Islander			
Latina/o/x/e or Hispanic			
Middle Eastern or Arab			
White or Euro-American			
Multi-Ethnic			
Other			
Age Range	Number of Staff Members	Number of Key Leaders	Number of Board Members
18-25			
26-44			
45-55			
55-65			
65+			
GENDER IDENTITY	Number of Staff Members	Number of Key Leaders	Number of Board Members
Female			
Gender Non-Binary or Non-conforming			
Male			

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

BANF is structured as a collaborative, multi-phase fund and a resource network guided by the region's funders, artists, and nonprofit leaders. Acknowledging historical underinvestment in Houston BIPOC cultures and art communities, the initiative aims to increase philanthropic support to collective grantmaking and facilitate new connections between funders and prospective grantees through shared decision-making authority.

BANF is led by Project Director Sixto Wagan with a Steering Committee that currently guides core programmatic goals and sets immediate priorities. The Accountability and Advisory Council (AAC), a diverse group of artists, curators, scholars, and organizational leaders, advises the Project Director on the strategic vision, language, and community impacts. BANF engaged members of its network – including grantees, artists, and community partners – as programmatic design teams and primary consultants to co-design guidelines, criteria, and support mechanisms. BANF leadership utilizes dialogue and collective process to engage thought leaders from different sectors of Greater Houston's BIPOC arts ecosystem to better educate ourselves, each other, and build a more cohesive and powerful community.

The following describes primary roles for each group in relationship with this award opportunity and process:

Community Consultants

- Artists, creatives and BIPOC community advocates who read and review applications using review criteria
- Some community consultants will join with Steering Committee and AAC members to identify the HCT cohort

Panelists

- Review applications using the review criteria
- Comprised of Steering Committee, AAC, and Community Consultants
- Engage in Conversations with the selected HCT applicant organizations

Steering Committee

- Review applications using the review criteria
- Finalize allocations
- Approve for funding

Houston Arts Alliance

- HAA is an operational partner to BANF
- HAA acts as the initiative's fiscal sponsor; thus all financial and legal documents are executed by and with HAA.
- HAA has no decision-making power within the BANF grantmaking process.

ASSISTANCE

The BANF Team provides application support via information sessions, written guidance and FAQs, and by phone and email.

- **Scheduled live and recorded information sessions** will cover a range of topics, including a general introduction to the award, a demonstration of Submittable, and the application.
- **BANF's Support Desk** provides written guidance for applicants, answers to FAQs, and links to recorded information sessions. Please visit support.houstonbanf.org If you have a question not already addressed at the Support Desk, please submit it by clicking "New Support Ticket" no later than **Monday, July 24, 2023, 5 p.m.** CST to have it answered before the submission deadline. Questions received, and the answers provided, will be shared at the Support Desk. The Support Desk is updated once a week.
- Visit www.houstonbanf.org to learn more about dates and registration for information sessions and to sign up for email updates. We will also provide information there to connect to community-based information hubs and other kinds of support.
- To be sure BANF provides transparent support to all substantive questions and because the volume of inquiries will likely grow, BANF staff will be able to provide only technical support with the online application in the week before the application deadline.
- BANF staff is available to provide technical assistance to people with disabilities or who require language accommodations.

Starting June 22, BANF staff can be contacted by email or phone about this award opportunity, generally **from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. CST Monday through Friday**. We will aim to respond within one business day or will propose a time to connect.

info@houstonbanf.org, 713-581-6125

Note:

Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) is a term adopted to expand on the more recognized term "People of Color" to acknowledge the historic anti-Blackness and Native American/Indigenous erasure that has shaped much of U.S. history. In our current utilization of BIPOC, we include Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Asian American, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and other communities of color.

APPENDIX A: ARTIST ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT STATEMENTS

Please provide the names and email addresses for two advocates who can best speak to your contribution and service to Houston's BIPOC Community.

These individuals can be community members, former board members, presented artists, or others who have benefited from your organization's programs or services. The advocates should be selected on their capacity to advocate for your organization and provide additional perspective to your organization and your organization's application narrative.

Once you submit the advocates' names and emails through Submittable, they will receive an invitation from Submittable to fill out the reference form that appears below:

ONLINE REFERENCE FORM: HCT Statement of Advocacy and Support

Thank You!

You have been named as an advocate for an organization that is applying to the BIPOC Arts Network and Fund's Houston Cultural Treasures initiative. Please choose one of the options below to submit your statement of support by **11:59 PM MONDAY July 31, 2023**.

Please see the **Guidelines** at [HoustonBANF.org](https://www.houstonbanf.org) for a description of the opportunity. Please find further guidance, including useful questions to consider, at the [Support Desk](#).

We suggest your response should incorporate answers to these questions:

- Why do you believe in the work of the applicant organization?
- How have you witnessed or benefited directly from their work?
- What is a hope you have for the applicant organization?

If you need to return to this form at another time, you can save your work. Scroll to the bottom of this page to find the "Save Draft" button. You can return to this form using the link from the email you received.

Submittable fields for completion:

- **Advocate Name/Phone Number**
- **Please describe your relationship with this organization.** (100 word max)
- **How will you submit your statement of support?**
 - **Upload a PDF, Word, or video or audio file (500 words or 3 minutes maximum)**
 - Acceptable file formats: PDF, .DOC, DOCX, TXT, aac, .m4a, mp3, wma, .avi, .m4v, .mov, .mp4, .mpg
 - **Paste or type a response (500 words maximum)**
 - *Guidance: We suggest that you write your responses in a program like Google Docs or Microsoft Word, check the word count there, and paste it into the Submittable form.*
 - **Provide a link to an audio or video recording (3 minutes maximum)**
 - Please provide YouTube or other link.