

**Texas Women for the Arts
Grant Proposal
2026**

ExxonMobil Discovery Series
Arts Experiences that Advance
Learning & Opportunity

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts respectfully requests a grant of \$30,000 from Texas Women for the Arts in support of the ExxonMobil Discovery Series.

This proposal outlines the program's impact, growth, and educational outcomes, and details how investment **will expand access to FREE live performing arts experiences for students across Greater Houston**—advancing Texas Women for the Arts' mission to awaken and nurture the artist in every Texas child.

We are grateful for your consideration and for Texas Women for the Arts' continued commitment to supporting arts access for young Texans.

About the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts is one of Houston's leading cultural institutions and a central gathering place for live performance, education, and artistic collaboration. Since opening in 2002, the Hobby Center has become a cornerstone of Houston's Theater District, welcoming more than 450,000 visitors annually to a wide range of performances that serve audiences from across Greater Houston and beyond.

Strategic Vision

In 2023, the Hobby Center affirmed a new mission, vision, and strategic plan that reimagines our identity, operating model, and role within Houston's arts ecosystem. Building on more than two decades of success, strong leadership, and sound financial stewardship, the organization is expanding its artistic and educational programs while strengthening partnerships and increasing access to the performing arts across Houston's diverse communities.

Our Mission

The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts deepens understanding of our shared humanity. We serve as a connector, convener and incubator for all Houston audiences, artmakers and arts organizations. By presenting engaging performances and educational programs, we strengthen our sense of belonging to shape a more cohesive and connected Houston community

Our Role in Houston

Each year, the Hobby Center welcomes thousands of audience members for performances presented through the Memorial Hermann Broadway Series, principal resident company Theatre Under The Stars, 12 partner arts organizations, Hobby Center-presented programming, and a wide range of rental engagements. These partnerships help sustain Houston's performing arts ecosystem while bringing diverse artistic experiences to audiences throughout the region.

Focus on Education

Education is a central part of the Hobby Center's mission. Through student matinees, school partnerships, and initiatives like the ExxonMobil Discovery Series, the organization connects tens of thousands of students each year with live performing arts experiences that support classroom learning and creative exploration.

ExxonMobil

**DISCOVERY
SERIES**



The ExxonMobil Discovery Series welcomes tens of thousands Houston-area fifth graders to the Hobby Center each year for **FREE** professional performing arts experiences, including transportation, that connect classroom learning with live artistic expression. Performances are aligned with TEKS standards and supported by educator guides.

THE
HOBBY CENTER
FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS





Access

Many participating schools do not have consistent access to arts programming. We have **partnership agreements with 18 school districts including more than 160 Title I schools** to ensure that students from diverse communities across Greater Houston have the opportunity to experience world-class performing arts regardless of school resources.

The program connects students with a broad spectrum of artistic disciplines including **theater, music, dance, and interdisciplinary performance.**

“The performance was wholly captivating, and it delivered a vital message of representation and connection. Students were visibly moved to see performers who reflected their own identities on stage, especially those who often struggle with behavior and rarely see themselves celebrated outside of sports. The performers’ authentic portrayal of diverse emotions helped many students personally relate to the characters and their experiences.”

Sierra Hodges, Art teacher
Haude Elementary School, Klein ISD

Student Outcomes

- 76% of teachers reported that most or all of their students were **attending a live performance for the first time.**
- 95% of teachers said **students saw themselves represented on stage.**
- 90% of teachers said the program **supported academic learning goals.**
- 94% of teachers reported the experience opened **new pathways toward college and career readiness.**
- Performance **boosted student engagement** by 26 percentage points.



Impact during the 2025-2026 Season

67

**Student
Performances
Offered**

40,000

**Fifth-Grade
Students
Welcomed**

18

**School
Districts
Served**

11

**Arts
Partners
Engaged**

Growth

Since launching in the 2023–2024 Season, the ExxonMobil Discovery Series has expanded from serving 10,000 students in its first year to reaching 40,000 students in the current 2025–2026 Season, a nearly **300% increase in just three years**. The program also has expanded geographically, **growing from three school district partners to 18 (and counting!)**, a 500% increase in participation.

As the expansion continues, **the Hobby Center plans to reach all 90,000 students in the Region 4 Education Service Center annually by the 2027–2028 Season**, impacting full generations of Texans.



Commitment and Projected Growth

300%

Student growth in three years
from 10,000 to 40,000

500%

District Partner expansion in three
years from 3 districts to 18

800%

projected growth from launch
to serving 90,000 students in
the 2027-2028 Season



“My students have never experienced anything like this. They were amazed that dance could be related to science.”

Kelley Norris, Teacher
Pine Forest Elementary, Humble ISD

2025-2026 District & Arts Partners

Aldine ISD
Alief ISD
Channelview ISD
Crosby ISD

Dickinson ISD
Fort Bend ISD
Galena Park ISD
Houston ISD

Humble ISD
KIPP Texas Public
Schools
Klein ISD

Lamar CISD
Pasadena ISD
Sheldon ISD
Spring ISD

Stafford MSD
Texas City ISD
YES Prep Public
Schools



Open Dance Project
September 24 – 26, 2025



Ars Lyrica Houston
October 6 – 9, 2025



The Ensemble Theatre
October 21 – 24, 2025



Son Kiss'd / Yung Chris
October 28 – 30, 2025



Cirque Mechanics
November 11 – 13, 2025



Houston Contemporary Dance
November 17 – 19, 2025



Musiqua / Noble Motion
January 20 – 22, 2026



Mercury Chamber Orchestra
February 4 – 6, 2026



Urban Souls
February 17 – 19 & 23 – 26, 2026



Chapman Dance
March 24 – 26, 2026

Strengthening Houston's Arts Ecosystem

Platform

The series provides a powerful platform for small and mid-size Houston arts organizations to present work for thousands of students across the region, dramatically expanding their reach and impact.

Resources

The Hobby Center leverages our resources on behalf of our partners, including managing all administration, funding, logistics, and operations for the series, allowing partner organizations to focus on artistic excellence and meaningful engagement.

Collaboration

We work closely with partner organizations to shape performances that are developmentally appropriate and resonate specifically with fifth-graders, supporting the creation of content and resources that deepen learning and strengthen each organization's educational outreach.

By the 2027–2028 Season, the ExxonMobil Discovery Series will reach 90,000 students annually—**nearly one-quarter of all fifth-graders in Texas.**





Thank you!