



The Original Denton District

215 E. McKinney St., Denton, TX 76201 ■ (940) 349-7776

June 15, 2026

Gary Gibbs, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Texas Commission on the Arts
Cultural District Grant Program
PO Box 13406
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Dr. Gibbs:

This letter is to express the full support of the Original Denton District for Denton's Day of the Dead Festival's application for the Arts Respond – Cultural District Project grant. Under the direction of David Pierce the Day of the Dead Festival and the events under its umbrella – the Day of the Dead Coffin Races and the Cirque du Horror – have become deeply loved fixtures in Denton's calendar of annual festivities.

In the present grant application, Denton's Day of the Dead Festival staff are requesting \$75,000 in programming support that would be divided among several functions supporting the festival – marketing, digital content creation, live stream coverage, production enhancements at the Cirque du Horror, and hiring high-quality artistic talent.

The Day of the Dead Festival is attuned to the Mexican American traditions of the Día de los Muertos, while giving those traditions a respectful Denton take. The festival initially began as an organic outgrowth of creator David Pierce's annual Cirque du Horror, a Halloween-themed cabaret show that he started performing in Denton in 2009. The festival itself began in 2011 and now incorporates Cirque du Horror as one of its key elements alongside the Day of the Dead Coffin Races. Denton's Day of the Dead Festival has quickly become a deeply popular fixture in our Halloween-season calendar.

The Day of the Dead Festival brings around 20,000 to 25,000 attendees to the Original Denton District during the Halloween season. Beginning last year, the Day of the Dead Festival was also incorporated as part of the City's extended calendar of events for Halloween. As such, all Day of the Dead events will be promoted on the City's consolidated Halloween calendar. Other promotions will include social media mentions and inclusion in print signage and Halloween-related brochures.

The Day of the Dead Festival reflects the deep artistic originality of the Denton community and provides high-quality art performances for an audience of Dentonites and for visitors to our community from the DFW metroplex and farther afield. We hope that you will agree that Denton's Day of the Dead Festival is a valuable cultural asset and one that is deserving of TCA support. This funding would help the festival grow significantly in capacity and reach.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Warm regards,

Matthew Hamilton
Chief Financial Officer
City of Denton
on Behalf of the Original Denton District