



BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

JOINT INCLUSION COMMITTEE

Recommendation Number: [20260325-015]: Recommendation on the FY 2026-27 Budget AARC (Asian American Resource Center) Unmet Needs

Recommendation: The Joint Inclusion Committee recommends that the City of Austin allocate additional funding in the FY 2026–27 budget to address **critical unmet needs at the Asian American Resource Center (AARC), including staffing, temporary workforce support, and senior nutrition services.**

Description of Recommendation to Council:

The Asian American Resource Center has experienced significant growth in programming, facility use, and community demand since its opening in 2013. To sustain and expand its impact, targeted investments are needed in the following areas:

- Pavilion Staffing: Funding for additional full-time staff to support the activation and ongoing operations of the AARC Pavilion, enabling expanded cultural, educational, and community programming.
- Temporary Staffing Budget Increase: Increased funding for temporary staff to support programming and operations. Current temporary staffing allocations are not aligned with the level of programming and service delivery provided at AARC compared to cultural centers across the division and department.
- Meals on Wheels Support: Increased funding to support senior nutrition services, including Meals on Wheels, to meet the needs of a rapidly growing senior population served by AARC. Senior transport administered by the Parks department is dependent on seniors being registered for the meal program as well.

Rationale:

The Asian American Resource Center is already operating at a scale comparable to larger City facilities—without equivalent staffing and operational resources.

Since its establishment, the Asian American Resource Center has grown into a vital cultural and community hub serving one of Austin’s fastest-growing populations. Data from the FY 2024 Annual Report demonstrates both the scale and continued growth of its programming and services.

In FY24 alone, AARC:

- Served over **38,800 visitors** to the center
- Hosted **154 rental events** and facilitated **258 community room reservations**
- Supported **178 artists** and presented **9 new exhibits**
- Engaged **753 volunteers** across programs and events



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AARC's senior programming has experienced particularly significant growth. This year, the Congregate Meals program serves **80 meals daily and is estimated to reach 16,000 meals by the end of the fiscal year, a 60% increase from FY24.**

Within 2 months of the current fiscal year, the Senior meal program hit its Meals on Wheels contract cap of \$38,000. This amount and overages were covered post-pandemic with American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funding administered by the Austin Parks senior programs division.

This level of activity reflects a high-demand, high-impact facility operating at or near capacity. With the anticipated opening and activation of the AARC Pavilion, programming, attendance, and community use are expected to increase further.

Additionally, findings from the City of Austin Quality of Life Study on Aging indicate that older adults are the fastest-growing age group in Austin, with Asian American older adults representing one of the fastest-growing subpopulations. This trend underscores the increasing demand for culturally responsive senior services at AARC. The AARC is the only site in Central Texas providing significant Asian language interpretation for programs to Asian senior populations.

However, allocated resources for staffing and operations have not kept pace with this demonstrated growth in usage and demand. This gap reflects broader City budget decisions rather than a lack of identified need, and it continues to limit the Center's ability to fully meet community demand.

The planned use of the Pavilion presents a major opportunity to expand cultural, educational, and community programming. Without dedicated staff, the City will be unable to fully activate this space or realize its intended public benefit.

Additionally, AARC relies heavily on temporary staff to sustain its programming and operations. Current temporary staffing allocations are not aligned with the volume of programming, number of visitors, or level of service provided, creating operational strain and limiting program expansion.

Finally, the rapid growth in senior participation has significantly increased demand for nutrition services. The existing Meals on Wheels allocation is insufficient to meet current and projected need, creating a risk of reduced access for older adults who rely on these services for daily nutrition and community connection.

Addressing these unmet needs would:

- Enable full utilization of the AARC Pavilion and expand programming capacity
- Align staffing resources with demonstrated service levels and community demand
- Sustain and expand senior nutrition services for a growing aging population
- Support equitable access to culturally responsive programs and services

These investments are necessary to ensure that AARC can continue to meet the needs of Austin's growing and diverse communities.



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Date of Approval: March 25, 2026

Motioned By: Commissioner Laake-Stanfield

Seconded By: Commissioner Parsons

Vote: 10-0

For: Vice Chair Bondi, Commissioners Alvizo, Benson, Castaneda, Chang, Laake-Stanfield, Kanawati, Oliva-Martínez, Parsons, Thakkar

Against: None

Abstain: None

Recuse: None

Off the dais: None

Absent: Chair Afifi, Commissioners Bullard, McNary, Melendez

Attest: *Ryan Sperling*
(Ryan Sperling, Staff Liaison)