



RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

African American Resource Advisory Commission

Recommendation Number: 20260414-006: Support and funding of a Multicultural STEM Symposium in the FY 2026-2027 Budget.

**Date of Approval: April 14, 2026**

**Description of Recommendation to Council:**

**Subject:** Recommendation on the FY 2027 Budget related to Austin Multicultural STEM Symposium

**Recommendation To Council:**

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WHEREAS, the City of Austin has experienced sustained economic growth driven in part by the expansion of the technology sector, supported through public incentives, tax benefits, and partnerships intended to strengthen the local economy and workforce; and

WHEREAS, this growth has coincided with significant gentrification pressures that have disproportionately impacted marginalized communities, particularly Black residents, resulting in displacement and migration to the outer edges of the city; and

WHEREAS, Black residents in Austin remain underrepresented in the technology workforce relative to the City's overall population and continue to face historic barriers to STEM education access, workforce pipelines, and capital investment; and

WHEREAS, while economic development efforts have focused on attracting and retaining technology companies, many communities lack early exposure, culturally relevant engagement, and structured pathways into STEM and technology related careers; and

WHEREAS, early, age appropriate exposure to STEM learning and diverse career role models is a critical factor in building long term educational, economic, and workforce equity; and

WHEREAS, Mayor Kirk Watson's Gen ATX initiative prioritizes making Austin the best place to be a kid, with pillars centered on healthy kids, safe kids, and happy and successful kids, including fostering a sense of belonging and access to opportunity; and

WHEREAS, inclusive, community rooted STEM programming directly supports these goals by connecting youth and families to educational resources, career pathways, and local employers in trusted and accessible environments;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City of Austin allocate \$250,000 in the FY 2027 budget directly to the Office of Equity and Inclusion for the sole purpose of planning, convening, and executing the inaugural Austin Multicultural STEM Symposium as a city sponsored, publicly accessible initiative advancing equitable access to STEM pathways; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of Equity and Inclusion establish and lead a cross departmental working group responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of the Austin Multicultural STEM Symposium, including program design, nonprofit coordination, corporate engagement, logistics, outreach, community engagement, and evaluation, to ensure clear accountability and measurable impact; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of Equity and Inclusion formally partner with Universal Tech Movement, under the leadership of Founder and CEO Michael Ward Jr., to support ecosystem coordination, nonprofit alignment, and community activation in preparation for and during the Symposium; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Austin serve as a steward and convener of the local STEM nonprofit ecosystem by elevating, aligning, and providing visibility to organizations operating within the city, particularly those working to close representation and access gaps in STEM for Black residents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Austin Multicultural STEM Symposium be intentionally designed to address documented disparities in access to STEM education and technology careers experienced by Black residents in Austin, while remaining publicly accessible to all Austinites; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Symposium be hosted in trusted community spaces located within or immediately adjacent to historically Black neighborhoods and situated along major public transportation corridors to reduce barriers to participation and ensure meaningful accessibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City engage Austin based technology companies and employers to participate in the Symposium through workshops, demonstrations, mentorship opportunities, workforce pathway exposure, internship and apprenticeship visibility, and educational engagement, ensuring companies meaningfully show up to create access and real pathways without requiring private sponsorship of the Symposium; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the African American Quality of Life Commission serve as the primary advisory body for the initiative to safeguard its focus on closing representation and access gaps in STEM, with collaboration from other Quality of Life Commissions as appropriate to support broader engagement; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this structure of defined municipal ownership, nonprofit partnership, corporate participation, and commission level advisory oversight advance the City's commitments to equity, inclusive economic development, and the goals of the Gen ATX initiative by creating a coordinated and accountable bridge between Austin's technology sector and its historically underserved communities.

Motioned By: Commissioner Dozier

Seconded By: Vice Chair Parsons

Vote: **9-0**

For: Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Parsons, Commissioners Davis, Dozier, Harden, Hayes, Linder, Rudd, Smith

Absent: Commissioners Eugene, Horton, Jackson, Loyde, Ross, and Weisberg

Attest: *Nekaybaw Watson*, Staff Liaison