



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Chair Fuentes and Members of the Public Health Committee

**THROUGH:** Stephanie Hayden-Howard, Assistant City Manager  
Ed Van Eenoo, Chief Financial Officer

**FROM:** Robert Kingham, Court Administrator, Downtown Austin Community Court  
Kerri Lang, Director, Office of Budget & Organizational Excellence

**DATE:** May 30, 2025

**SUBJECT:** **Staff Update regarding Resources and Mechanisms to Partner with Community Organizations (Resolution No. 20240530-112)**

---

**This memorandum was previously distributed to Mayor and City Council on May 30, 2025. There are no changes to this committee copy.**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide an update on [Resolution 20240530-112](#) which asked the City Manager to implement the Downtown Austin Community Court's (DACC) Mobile Court program and find ways to formally partner with and support local community organizations.

### **Background**

The City Council funded the Mobile Court program's full launch in the Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget which provided for additional case managers and service expansion. The program is now moving forward with staff working to bring court services to more people across the community. DACC staff are also working with advisory groups to ensure services are easy to reach and meet the needs of people who are unhoused or in need of resource navigation assistance. These groups often bring trust, experience, and close relationships with people who struggle to access traditional City services. However, the City does not always have systems in place to support the time, skills, and resources of our partner organizations in a clear or consistent way. In response to the resolution, staff explored how the City can fairly partner with and compensate community organizations that support City outreach and services. The Office of Budget & Organizational Excellence (BOE) began by evaluating partnerships that have worked in Austin and in other cities.

### **Local and National Models**

In Austin, several small grant programs have shown how trusted organizations can help the City connect with residents. During the 2020 Census, the Austin-Travis County Census

Collaborative partnered with local nonprofits and offered flexible funding to help reach communities that are often undercounted. The Equity Mini Grant Fund, through the Office of Equity and Inclusion offered larger grants of up to \$30,000 to fund community-led projects working toward improving various quality of life outcomes. The Food and Climate Equity Grants, through the Office of Climate Action and Resilience offers \$3,000 for community-led solutions enabling transformative change in the areas of food, climate, and resilience.

Other cities provide helpful examples too. The City of Portland, Oregon offers quarterly mini grants to help with clean energy outreach while prioritizing small, culturally rooted groups. The City of Seattle hires community liaisons to lead outreach and serve as bridges with local communities. Liaisons help plan engagements and share feedback from the people they serve – essentially empowering hyper-local leaders to directly inform municipal outreach strategies.

### **Proposed Pilot**

Building on past work and to align with City goals, BOE and DACC are designing a pilot to test a new idea. DACC has identified an opportunity to connect more individuals with court services by training staff at partner organizations to help people navigate the court system. This pilot, planned to run through the fall of 2025, builds on the same values as the Mobile Court, in that it meets people where they already are and supports trusted relationships between community organizations and the people they serve.

The DACC Court Navigation Training will:

- Equip service providers and clients with knowledge and tools to:
  - Identify open cases and warrants with DACC and Austin Municipal Court
  - Learn how to meet case requirements to resolve cases
- Increase capacity, transparency, and empowerment in court processes
- Help individuals resolve cases successfully without disrupting their services, stability, or housing journey

DACC plans to pilot this training over the summer and fall months to assess its performance and has identified \$25,000 in its FY25 budget to support a total of 10 mini-grants. This funding will help up to 10 partner organizations participate in the training, share feedback, and track results. The goal is to test one approach to partnership before considering a larger investment, through a pilot that will enhance collaborations with community partners and expand pathways to access DACC's Court Services for members of the Austin community.

### **Next Steps**

This pilot aims to help the City improve its tools and processes when working with community organizations, including simplifying paperwork, measuring success, and making sure partnerships like this are clear and accessible. BOE will continue to support DACC as a consultative partner during the pilot to help design for feasibility, track learning, and document what works before recommending broader adoption.

**PAGE:** 3 of 3  
**DATE:** May 30, 2025  
**SUBJECT:** Staff Update regarding Resources and Mechanisms to Partner with Community Organizations (Resolution No. 20240530-112)

This partnership supports the Citywide Strategic Plan goal of providing equitable outreach and collaborative engagement activities to improve service delivery. It is designed to build trust, remove barriers, and improve services for people who face the greatest challenges in accessing support.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact Robert Kingham, Court Administrator, Downtown Austin Community Court, at [Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov](mailto:Robert.Kingham@austintexas.gov) or 512-974-1394.

cc: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager  
Erika Brady, City Clerk  
Corrie Stokes, City Auditor  
Mary Jane Grubb, Municipal Court Clerk  
Judge Sherry Statman, Municipal Court  
CMO Executive Team  
Department Directors