

TCSL Receives \$2 Million Grant from Richard King Mellon Foundation Foundation for MLK Center for Scientific Excellence

TCSL receives a \$2M grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, funding Pittsburgh's new MLK Center for Scientific Excellence and TCSL operations.

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*Sam Reiman, Director of the
Richard King Mellon
Foundation*

[Lab](#) (TCSL), a leader in community-based scientific education, is honored to announce the receipt of a \$2 million grant from the [Richard King Mellon Foundation](#). \$1.6 million of this substantial gift, the largest in TCSL history, will support the establishment of the new MLK Center for Scientific Excellence— a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to advancing scientific understanding and education in the Hill District in Pittsburgh, and beyond. \$400,000 of the grant will be used for TCSL operating support.

Dr. Andre Samuel, President and Founder of TCSL, shared his vision for the new space, "Thanks to the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the MLK Center for Scientific

Excellence will equip our community with five cutting-edge life science laboratories, a digital learning hub, and spaces designed to nurture both educational and community activities. This facility is not just about science; it's about building a future where everyone has access to the tools they need to succeed in STEM!"

Highlights of the space will include:

-Life Sciences Laboratories: Advanced teaching spaces with top-tier equipment

-Digital Learning Hub: Technical resources to support online learning for residents without home or school internet access

-Community and Study Spaces: Areas designed for concurrent program activities, quiet study, social interactions, and public computer access.

-Food Science and Sustainability: A greenhouse and chicken coop to provide organic food, alongside a green, energy-efficient building design

Innovative Educational Tools: The building itself will serve as a living laboratory, showcasing water and energy savings, and featuring an outdoor air quality monitor

"In a community where far too many children and youth graduate or drop out of high school with zero or minimal proficiency in the life sciences, The Citizen Science Lab has demonstrated over years its ability to change that narrative through hands-on learning," said Sam Reiman, Director of the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

"The stories of kids who have entered TCSL's programs with no background in the life sciences to then go on to compete in the most prestigious science competitions in the world, earn a degree in biology at top tier universities, or obtain knowledge to earn a job in the life sciences, continue to inspire us. And having TCSL's programs headquartered in the Hill District will only advance their efforts to help children and youth achieve economic mobility within Pittsburgh's growing life sciences economy."

Dr. Samuel added, "With the MLK Center, we envision a future where every aspiring scientist, regardless of background, has access to the tools, mentorship, and resources needed to succeed!"

Groundbreaking for the new site is expected to begin in November 2024. More information about the project and upcoming programs will be shared in the coming months.

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About The Citizen Science Lab:

Founded in 2015, The Citizen Science Lab (TCSL) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that has become a city leader in providing interactive STEM programming for the residents of Pittsburgh. Located in the Hill District neighborhood and South Hills region, TCSL provides an accessible space to connect young people with opportunities to increase STEM knowledge, academic achievement, and self confidence. TCSL incorporates state-of-the-art laboratories that provide hands-on exposure to life science, biomedical, robotics, and biotechnology education for students, teachers, biomedical startups, and adult citizens of the Pittsburgh region. TCSL's programming has a focus on increasing urban students' interest in STEM but is available to all citizens of Pittsburgh.

TCSL has served over 8,000 students from communities including, but not limited to, the Hill District, Homewood, The North Side, Penn Hills, Peters Township, and Upper St. Clair.

About the Richard King Mellon Foundation

About the Richard King Mellon Foundation: Founded in 1947, the Richard King Mellon Foundation is the largest foundation in Southwestern Pennsylvania, and one of the 50 largest in the world. The Foundation's 2023 year-end net assets were \$2.9 billion, and its Trustees in 2023 disbursed more than \$176 million in grants and program-related investments. The Foundation focuses its funding on six primary program areas, delineated in its 2021-2030 Strategic Plan.

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