

Ohio Entrepreneurs Hit the Road for Black Tech Week

The "HustleBus" initiative and subsidized Startup House lodging are expanding access to Black Tech Week

CLEVELAND, OH, UNITED STATES, July 15, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Every year, founders attend conferences where investors write checks, partnerships are formed, and careers change. Too many never make it—not because they lack the talent or ambition, but because the cost of access stands in the way.

This July, a coalition of Ohio startup organizations is working to close that gap.

Ohio Startup Network's HustleBus, EPIC Learning Today's Startup House initiative, and Lightship are partnering to help entrepreneurs from Columbus and Cleveland attend Black Tech Week in Cincinnati by providing chartered transportation, subsidized lodging, and community programming that makes participation more accessible while helping founders begin building relationships before they ever arrive.

Held July 14–16 at Cincinnati's Aronoff Center for the Arts, Black Tech Week convenes founders, investors, innovators, and corporate leaders for three days of networking, education, and business development. Organizers say the goal isn't simply to help more people attend the conference—it's to ensure more Black founders have access to the relationships, resources, and opportunities that begin in rooms like these.

Today, Black founders receive just 0.4% of venture funding, down from 1.3% in 2021.

Columbus entrepreneur Beverly Ochieng said this initiative has made it possible to attend Black



Tech Week after years of hoping to go.

"I've had Black Tech Week on my radar for years, but the timing and finances never seemed to line up," Ochieng said. "Because of HustleBus and Startup House, I finally have the opportunity to attend. The relationships, knowledge, and connections I'll build there will benefit both my family and my business for years to come."

Shanna Greathouse, Head of Founder Programming at Ohio Startup Network, said the mission is simple: remove barriers to opportunity.

"The HustleBus was created around one simple idea: opportunity shouldn't depend on whether you can afford to get there," Greathouse said. "Black Tech Week is our first multi-day experience, and we're excited to bring entrepreneurs from across Ohio together to learn, build relationships, and strengthen our startup community."

Building Connections Before the Conference Begins

Two chartered HustleBus routes—one departing from Columbus and one from Cleveland—will bring entrepreneurs together on the journey to Cincinnati, while Startup House provides subsidized lodging designed to extend networking beyond conference hours.

By the time participants arrive at Black Tech Week, many will have already built relationships with fellow founders, investors, entrepreneur support organizations, and ecosystem partners. Organizers say the journey itself becomes part of the conference experience.

The Columbus delegation will also kick off the experience with a HustleBus Send-Off hosted by Rev1 Ventures' Startup Studio, where founders can connect with entrepreneur support organizations, capital partners, and community leaders before heading to Cincinnati.

Expanding Access to Opportunity

For organizers, the partnership is about more than transportation or lodging. It's about ensuring more entrepreneurs can participate in a conference built to elevate Black innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic opportunity.

"At Lightship, we believe access creates opportunity," said Candice Matthews Brackeen, Founder and CEO of Lightship Foundation. "Programs like HustleBus and Startup House help ensure talented founders aren't left out of important conversations simply because of the cost of participating."

Dr. Erika Pryor, founder of EPIC Learning Today and organizer of Startup House, said the partnership reflects what can happen when organizations work together to eliminate barriers.

"We're proud to partner with organizations across Ohio to help remove barriers that keep entrepreneurs from participating in experiences like Black Tech Week," Pryor said. "When more founders have access to relationships, resources, and knowledge, our entire entrepreneurial ecosystem becomes stronger."

Registration

HustleBus operates July 13–16, and space is limited. Entrepreneurs interested in joining the Ohio delegation can reserve their spot at:

Columbus HustleBus: luma.com/du41v0tg

Cleveland HustleBus: luma.com/0rxxohmo

Black Tech Week registration: blacktechweek.com

About Ohio Startup Network

Ohio Startup Network connects founders with the people, programs, and resources they need to grow across Ohio's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Learn more at www.ohiostartupnetwork.com.

About Startup House

Startup House, organized by EPIC Learning Today, provides subsidized lodging and networking experiences that make entrepreneurship events more accessible. Learn more at www.smashingyoursalesgoals.com.

About Black Tech Week

Black Tech Week is a national conference celebrating Black innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology. The 2026 event takes place July 14–16 in Cincinnati. Learn more at www.blacktechweek.com.

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