



POWER THE FUTURE

HIP-HOP X STEM INITIATIVE

Empowering the next generation of opportunity youth and young adults 18–26 through culture, creativity, and innovation.

2.5M+

AUDIENCE REACH
ACROSS REGIONAL &
NATIONAL PLATFORMS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hip-Hop Education Center (HHEC) is honored to submit this Year One Report for the Power the Future: Hip-Hop x STEM Initiative, recognizing the distinct and vital roles of both National Grid and the National Grid Foundation. The Power the Future Hip-Hop x STEM Fellowship was supported by National Grid, while the Power the Future Cypher was supported by the National Grid Foundation. Together, this partnership represents a bold investment in culturally responsive workforce development, youth leadership, and STEM education rooted in Hip-Hop culture and community engagement.

During the first year of this initiative, HHEC focused on strategic planning, partnership development, infrastructure building, curriculum design, public engagement, and launching the Power the Future Hip-Hop x STEM Fellowship. Together, HHEC, National Grid, and the National Grid Foundation laid the groundwork for a transformative multi-year initiative designed to empower creative opportunity youth and young adults ages 18–26 across Brooklyn communities, including Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, Bushwick, Crown Heights, and Flatbush.



YEAR ONE HIGHLIGHTS



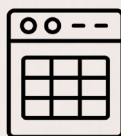
strategic
partners

15+



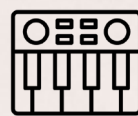
curriculum
modules

5



fellowship
applications

50+



community
events

3



audience
engagement

5K+



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION

Year One was about laying groundwork with intention. HHEC's planning, recruitment, and infrastructure work culminated in several defining milestones: a Fireside Chat with MC Lyte at the launch of the HHEC x National Grid partnership in Brooklyn, the opening of the Power the Future Hip-Hop x STEM Fellowship application during Hip-Hop Appreciation Week, and the development of the Power the Future: Hip-Hop x STEM Cypher with a second Fireside Chat with MC Lyte in Syracuse, New York.

Aligned with National Grid's commitment to workforce readiness and equitable access, the initiative connects youth to STEM, clean energy, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, leadership development, and career pathways — directly addressing the gaps in mentorship, technical training, and industry access that continue to limit opportunity in underserved communities.

To amplify the partnership's visibility, HHEC developed branded merchandise, event signage, and a documentation strategy capturing photography and video across all activations. These assets will be repurposed into ongoing promotional content that centers the stories of participating youth and communities.

“We have to show young people their creativity belongs in every space.”

— MC Lyte



YEAR ONE GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

"Power the Future connects culture to career pathways. By integrating Hip-Hop with STEM, we're equipping young people with the skills, confidence, and creative mindset needed to thrive in today's workforce while honoring who they are and where they come from."

— Martha Diaz, Founder & President,
Hip-Hop Education Center



LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR IMPACT



1 BUILT THE FOUNDATION

Established the strategic, operational, and communications infrastructure needed to launch and scale the Power the Future initiative, including workforce planning, evaluation systems, and digital development.

3 LAUNCHED THE FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

Introduced an 11-month paid Hip-Hop x STEM Fellowship for opportunity youth and young adults ages 18-26, providing mentorship, workforce training, technology access, and career exploration opportunities.

5 STRENGTHENED STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Built a powerful ecosystem of educators, artists, universities, cultural institutions, workforce leaders, and community organizations to support long-term program success.

2 DESIGNED A HIP-HOP X STEM CURRICULUM

Developed a culturally responsive learning framework that connects music, technology, entrepreneurship, environmental justice, and workforce readiness to real-world career pathways.

4 EXPANDED COMMUNITY REACH

Activated public programs, events, and digital campaigns that elevated awareness around workforce development, youth leadership, and STEM education through Hip-Hop culture.

6 ELEVATED REGIONAL & NATIONAL VISIBILITY

Positioned Power the Future as a leading model for culturally responsive workforce development through the Syracuse Hip-Hop x STEM Cypher, media coverage, and cross-sector engagement.



SNAPSHOTS

PHOTOS BY DANIELLE HARDY



The logo for the Hip-Hop Education Center is located in the top left corner. It consists of three stacked, slanted rectangular blocks. The top block is purple and contains the text 'HIP-HOP' in white. The middle block is orange and contains the text 'EDUCATION' in white. The bottom block is green and contains the text 'CENTER' in white. The background of the entire poster features a white grid with purple lines and dots, and large, expressive brushstrokes in purple and orange.

POWER THE FUTURE

FELLOWSHIP (BROOKLYN)

Empowering creative opportunity
youth and young adults 18–26
through culture, creativity,
and career pathways.



PHOTO BY DANIELLE HARDY

POWER THE FUTURE

HIP-HOP X STEM FELLOWSHIP

11-MONTH PAID FELLOWSHIP

\$3,000
STIPEND

\$3,500
TECHKIT

12
FELLOWS

18-26
AGES

One of the most significant milestones of Year One was the official launch of the Power the Future Hip-Hop x STEM Fellowship application. Designed as an 11-month paid workforce development program for opportunity youth and young adults ages 18-26 who are not currently enrolled in school or employed, the Fellowship combines workforce readiness training, mentorship, STEM learning, music production, storytelling, technology access, career exploration, portfolio development, and community engagement opportunities.

Selected Fellows will receive a \$3,000 stipend, a technology kit valued at \$3,500, monthly transportation support, mentorship and leadership development, field trips, industry exposure, and opportunities to participate in a final showcase. To support the Fellowship launch and broader Power the Future campaign, HHEC implemented a multi-platform communications strategy that generated strong visibility and community engagement, leveraging its Instagram audience of more than 14,000 followers to build awareness and excitement leading up to the application launch.

POWER THE FUTURE **SYRACUSE CYPHER** *HIGHLIGHTS*

The Power the Future: Hip-Hop x STEM Cypher in Syracuse, NY brought together educators, artists, students, nonprofit leaders, and community stakeholders to explore the intersections of Hip-Hop, STEM, workforce development, and educational equity — in partnership with the National Grid Foundation and hosted at Syracuse University's Community Folk Art Center.

Central to the event was the STEM4Bars challenge, which invited Syracuse high school students to demonstrate knowledge, creativity, and STEM thinking through original video submissions, using Hip-Hop lyricism as a bridge to learning, confidence-building, and public expression. Top entries were eligible to perform and receive recognition during the Cypher, extending youth participation beyond attendance and into active creative leadership.

The event generated significant reach across platforms: more than 4,954 Facebook and Instagram views through Community Folk Art Center channels, 2,477 Instagram views, and 430 accounts reached through event-related content. Notably, 66.4% of engagement came from non-followers — demonstrating real audience expansion beyond HHEC's existing community.

Attendee feedback reflected strong impact: participants rated the overall event experience at 80% satisfaction (4 out of 5), while workshop sessions received a perfect 100% satisfaction rating (5 out of 5). Additional exposure through television, radio, podcasts, and digital press contributed to an estimated audience reach of 299,000 to more than 2.5 million impressions.



A man wearing a brown jacket and a black cap with a white logo is pointing his right index finger upwards. He is holding a microphone in his left hand. The background is dark with purple and blue abstract patterns and lines.

2.5 M

**REGIONAL & NATIONAL
IMPRESSIONS**

100%
**WORKSHOP
SATISFACTION**

66.4%
**NEW AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT**

PHOTO BY LEGENDARY SOUL STUDIO

POWER THE FUTURE

FIRESIDE CHAT WITH MC LYTE

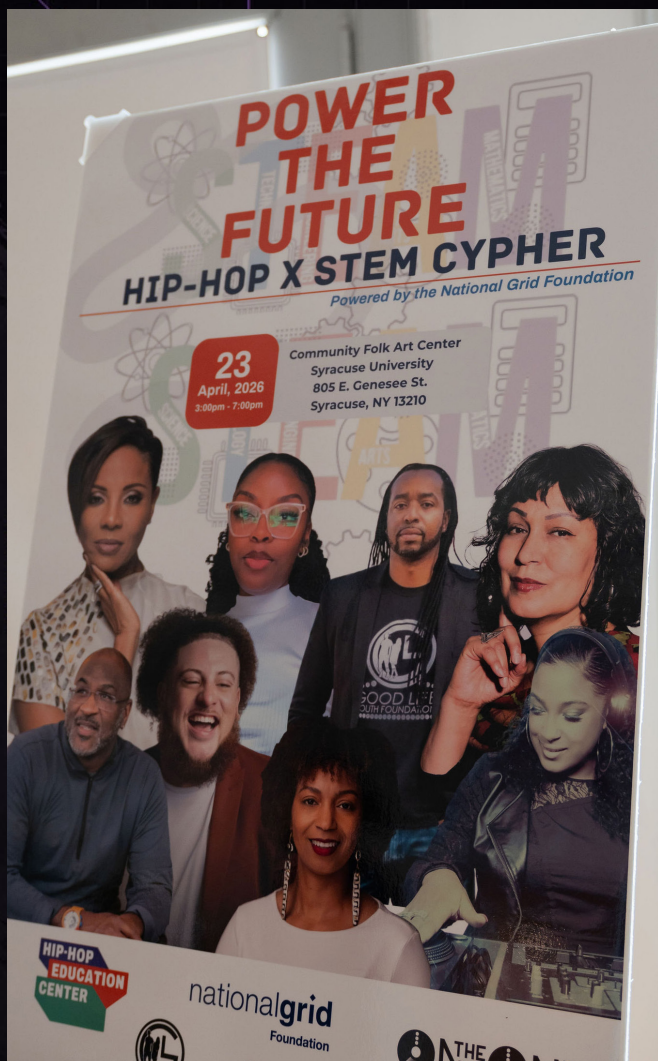
The Fireside Chat with MC Lyte brought one of Hip-Hop's most groundbreaking voices into direct conversation with the young people and community members at the heart of this initiative. Soon to be inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, MC Lyte offered more than inspiration, she offered evidence. Her career is a masterclass in the intersection of artistry, business, and technical knowledge, and she spoke candidly about how all three have shaped her journey.

MC Lyte drew direct lines between Hip-Hop and STEM that many in the room had never considered: the engineering behind music production, the mathematics embedded in writing rhymes, the technical collaboration between artists and sound engineers that makes records come to life. She spoke from lived experience, having begun her career as a teenager and making history in 1988 as the first female rapper to release a full-length solo album with the critically acclaimed *Lyte as a Rock*. To the artists in the room who were navigating their own paths, her message was clear: don't give up, experiment with music and STEM, and create your own space. The skills you are building, and the culture you carry, belong in every room, including this one.



SNAPSHOTS

PHOTOS BY LEGENDARY SOUL STUDIO





LESSONS LEARNED

YEAR ONE REINFORCED SEVERAL IMPORTANT INSIGHTS:

CULTURE INCREASES ENGAGEMENT

Hip-Hop-centered learning frameworks continue to create strong engagement among youth who may not connect with traditional educational or workforce development models.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MUST BE COMMUNITY-CENTERED

Young people benefit most when workforce readiness is connected to identity, creativity, mentorship, and lived experience.

DIGITAL EQUITY REMAINS CRITICAL

Access to technology, WiFi, and digital learning tools continues to be a major need for under served youth.

PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL

Cross-sector collaboration strengthens program quality, visibility, and sustainability.



YEAR TWO PRIORITIES

*Expanding impact.
Deepening learning.
Building tomorrow.*

LAUNCH THE FIRST FELLOWSHIP COHORT

Welcome and support approximately 12 Fellows through an immersive workforce development experience centered on Hip-Hop, STEM, and career readiness.

EXPAND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Provide hands-on training that equips Fellows with the professional, technical, and leadership skills needed for future careers.

DEEPEN INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Build relationships with employers, workforce leaders, and organizations to create pathways for internships, career exposure, and employment opportunities.

DELIVER WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMMING

Deliver workforce readiness programming that equips young adults with entrepreneurship, and STEM-related opportunities.

ADVANCE STEM LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Expand access to culturally responsive STEM education that connects emerging technologies, creativity, and real-world problem solving.

INCREASE ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Provide digital tools, technology resources, and learning supports that help reduce barriers to participation and opportunity.

STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Host public programs, community activations, and collaborative events that foster connection, learning, and civic participation.

SHOWCASE YOUTH TALENT AND LEADERSHIP

Create opportunities for Fellows to present their work, share their stories, and demonstrate their growth through public showcases and events.

MEASURE IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Implement evaluation systems and impact-tracking tools to assess program effectiveness and guide continuous improvement.

SCALE THE POWER THE FUTURE MODEL

Develop sustainable and replicable programming that expands the reach of Hip-Hop-centered STEM learning and workforce development initiatives.

CONCLUSION



BUILDING THE FUTURE THROUGH HIP-HOP & STEM

Year One proved that when culture and opportunity meet, young people show up. The Power the Future initiative didn't just build a program - it built trust, momentum, and a replicable model that communities across the country are already taking notice of.

As the STEM workforce continues to expand, the question is no longer whether opportunity exists - it's whether opportunity is accessible. HHEC, National Grid and National Grid Foundation are answering that question by creating direct pathways into those careers for young people who have historically been left

out of them.

As Power the Future moves into Year Two, HHEC remains committed to equipping Fellows with the skills, mentorship, technology, and industry connections they need to thrive in the future of work.

Together, we are proving what Hip-Hop has always known - that creativity belongs in every space, and that innovation is most powerful when it reflects the communities it's meant to serve.

THE FUTURE IS CREATIVE.

THE FUTURE IS INNOVATIVE.

THE FUTURE IS POWERED BY OPPORTUNITY.



THANK YOU

Our goal is to support programs that spark curiosity and resilience. 'Power the Future' does exactly that by blending cultural relevance with academic rigor. It's about ensuring every student has a seat at the table in the evolving energy and technology landscape."

— Dr. Robert Simmons III, Executive Director, National Grid Foundation

The Hip-Hop Education Center extends sincere gratitude to the National Grid Foundation for its visionary partnership and unwavering belief in this work, and in the young people at the center of it.

This collaboration has shown what becomes possible when institutions invest not just in programs, but in people and in culture. Because of National Grid support, young people across Brooklyn and beyond are seeing themselves as the innovators, creators, and leaders that the future of STEM needs.

We are especially grateful to the production team: Laiza Semidey and Legendary Soul Studio, the educators, artists, community partners, workforce leaders, and youth whose energy, trust, and contributions continue to shape this initiative and bring our collective vision to life.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

nationalgrid Foundation  nationalgrid

- > Dr. Robert Simmons III
- > Kelly Rubbins-Boatwright
- > Kahri Fuller
- > Aubrey Kellman
- > Karen Young

**HIP-HOP
EDUCATION
CENTER**

**EMPOWERING THE NEXT
GENERATION THROUGH CULTURE,
CREATIVITY, AND INNOVATION.**



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

nationalgrid
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