

FEB 2024

E&I Academy Pilot

Building a network of equity and inclusion advocates across City Hall



City of Boston
Equity and Inclusion

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EQUITY & INCLUSION CABINET

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS:

BOSTON PUBLIC HEALTH COMMISSION (BPHC)

DISABILITIES COMMISSION

MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR IMMIGRANT ADVANCEMENT (MOIA)

MAYOR'S OFFICE FOR LGBTQ+ ADVANCEMENT (MOLA)

FACILITATOR PROFILES AND PARTNERS OF E&I ACADEMY



City of Boston
Equity and Inclusion

The Equity and Inclusion Cabinet's mission is to transform City policies, programs, and practices so that every resident has full access to what the City of Boston has to offer.



City of Boston
Disabilities Commission

The Disabilities Commission's mission is to increase opportunities for people with disabilities by facilitating full and equal participation in all aspects of life within the City of Boston.



City of Boston
Immigrant Advancement

The Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement's mission is to strengthen the ability of immigrants and Boston's diverse cultural and linguistic communities to fully participate in the economic, civil, social, and cultural life in Boston.



City of Boston
LGBTQ+ Advancement

The Mayor's Office for LGBTQ+ Advancement's mission is to empower, protect, and promote the rights, dignity, and advancement of Boston's LGBTQ+ residents.



The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)'s mission is to work in partnership with communities to protect and promote the health and well-being of all Boston residents, especially those impacted by racism and systemic inequities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the summer of 2023, the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet initiated the pilot E&I Academy, a voluntary facilitated learning program comprising six in-person sessions for City of Boston employees. The program aimed to equip participants with skills to serve residents through an equity lens, building trust with historically underrepresented communities. The goals included providing foundational equity and inclusion knowledge and practices, increasing awareness of unconscious bias and systemic inequities, fostering dialogue on sensitive topics, promoting collaboration among staff, and informing the future delivery model of the E&I Academy.

The pilot implementation involved two cohorts, with a total of 45 participants spanning across 19 departments, with six in-person facilitated learning sessions held between September and December 2023. The program featured sessions led by Chief Solis-Cervera and Chief of Staff Martinez, along with learning sessions conducted by internal Equity and Inclusion Departments and an external partner.

Results indicated a positive participant experience, increased awareness of equity issues and biases, successful delivery of diverse facilitated learning sessions, and valuable insights for the development of a future, expanded E&I Academy. The overall success of the pilot reflects Boston's commitment to racial justice and improving social determinants of health. By equipping staff with equity knowledge, the program aims to enhance service delivery, particularly for historically underrepresented communities. The pilot's success lays the groundwork for the development of a larger-scale E&I Academy, further advancing equity and inclusion within the City of Boston.

WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO

In early 2023, the City of Boston Equity and Inclusion Cabinet began to operationalize Chief Solis-Cervera's vision for a city-wide facilitated learning program for Boston employees. With the Mayor's backing, the first E&I Pilot Academy recruitment was launched in the summer of 2023 and the first two cohorts of 45 participants ran from September through December of that year.

PILOT E&I ACADEMY MISSION AND GOALS

E&I Cabinet's Mission

The mission of the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet is to transform City policies, programs, and practices so that every resident has full access to what the City of Boston has to offer. With the goals of achieving racial justice and improving social determinants of health through systemic change for historically excluded communities, the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet directly improves outcomes with and for residents; counsels all City departments to better address issues of equity, inclusion, and access, and creates the conditions for residents to build their collective power.

E&I Pilot Academy's Mission

The mission of the E&I Pilot Academy is to create a unifying curriculum that equips staff to best serve the residents of Boston through an equity lens. The Pilot Academy aims to achieve this mission through multi-facilitated learning sessions. The Pilot Academy will foster learning, critical thinking, relationships, reflection, and collaboration. Participants will build on their knowledge and understanding of equity issues to directly apply their learnings to their everyday work and better serve the residents of Boston. The pilot academy will inform the future delivery model of the E&I Academy.

Purpose

A city for everyone requires an awareness of our individual internalized biases and how we interact with our world. Therefore the purpose of the E&I Pilot Academy is to create a unifying curriculum that equips staff to best serve the residents of Boston with an equity lens. By creating and equipping our staff with well-designed, thorough foundational equity knowledge and practices, we will be able to build greater trust with residents of historically underrepresented and excluded communities.

E&I ACADEMY GOALS

The overarching goal of the Pilot was to provide foundational knowledge and skills that equip and mobilize Boston employees to collectively advance equity in the city of Boston and equitably serve Boston residents.

01

Foster a positive experience with facilitated learning sessions centered around unconscious bias, equity and inclusion.

02

Allow for **dialogue/engagement** around **sensitive topics**.

03

Increase awareness about equity and **uncover our internalized biases** to help our workforce **better serve constituents**.

04

Deliver 6 learning sessions

- Introduction into the Equity & Inclusion Cabinet
- 4 Departments facilitated a session
- An outcome harvesting session with a closing ceremony with shared learnings and art

E&I ACADEMY - THE PILOT JOURNEY

WHAT?

The E&I Pilot Academy is a series of facilitated learning sessions with foundational equity & inclusion knowledge and practices for City staff. The sessions showcased content primers and calls to action by the Mayor's Office of LGBTQ+ Advancement (MOLA); Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA); The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) and The Commission for Persons with Disabilities (CFPD). The pilot facilitated learning sessions will inform the future delivery model of the E&I Academy.

WHEN?

The Equity and Inclusion Cabinet hosted two pilot cohorts. Each cohort was provided with six in-person, two-hour sessions between September and December 2023. The sessions all took place in-person at the City's newly inaugurated Civic Pavilions, the first session as well as the closing ceremony were held jointly with both cohorts.

WHO?

A total of 45 self-selected participants joined the pilot. The facilitation team included three equity and inclusion departments and one external department (BPHC) as trainers coordinated by the equity chief of staff and core team members

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Total
Participants

45

She/Her



He/Him



They/Them



She/They



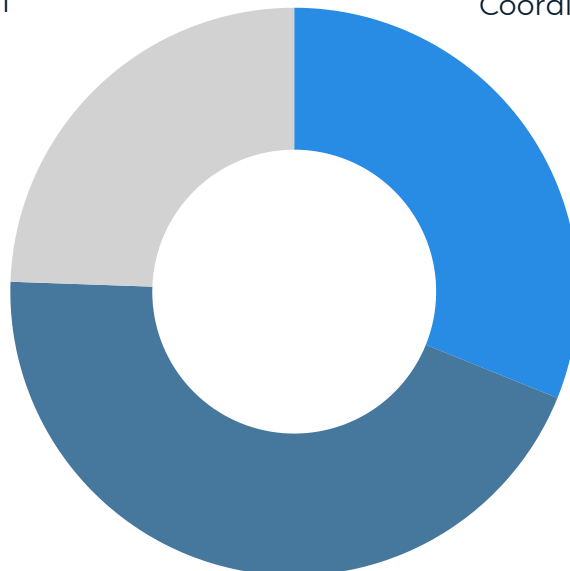
Declined to provide pronouns



Seniority Breakdown

Director or Higher (senior)
11

Coordinator/Specialist (early)
14



Manager (mid)
20

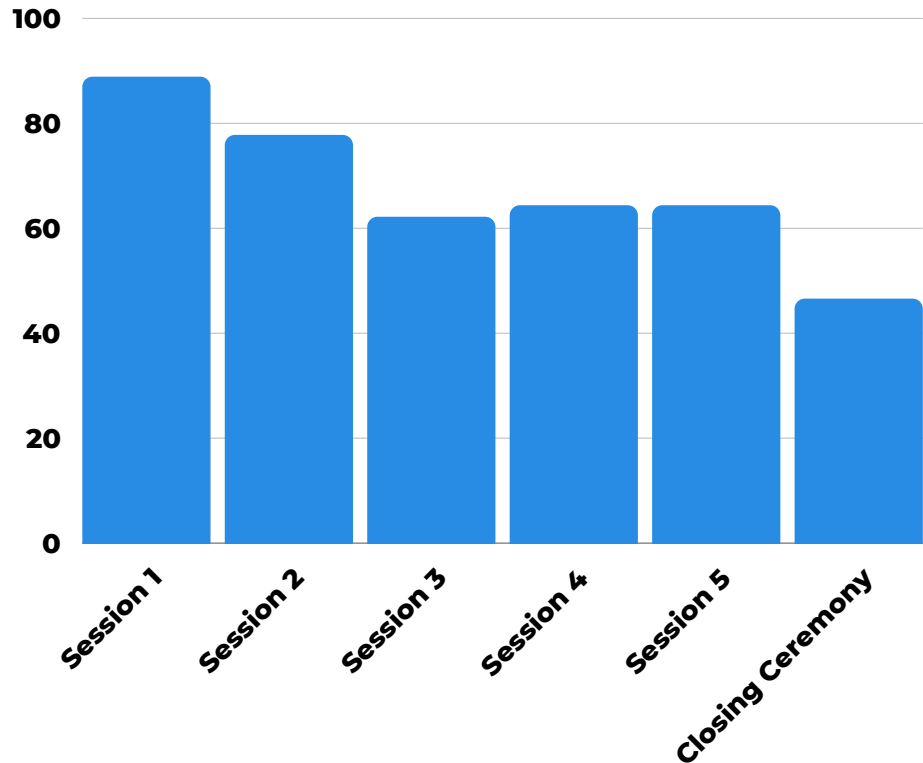
**Total # of Participating
Departments**

19

Most represented departments were:
BPS (6), OWE (5) and Streets (5)

RETENTION

While attendance was highest on the first session (nearly 90%) and remained high for the rest of the sessions (over $\frac{2}{3}$ attendance every session), it dropped for the closing session to just under half of all enrollees.



Why? (*speculation*)

1. Seasonal **holidays interfering** with the last couple of sessions
2. Closing session was **not a regularly scheduled hour** (Thursday or Friday as participants had been accustomed to).
3. **Length of the session combined with the in-person attendance** requirement might mean that individuals had a **work meeting conflict** and therefore chose to miss one session.
4. While no feedback was received in this note, **it might be that there was an attendance fatigue.**
5. **Participants may have reasoned that there would not be content** for closing ceremony and decided not to attend.
6. **Participants may have thought they would not get a certificate of completion** having not attended all sessions.

OUTCOME HARVESTING

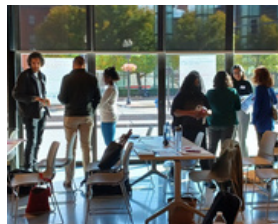
In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this pilot program, the E&I team decided towards the end of the program to implement an evaluation (in future, we will plan evaluations before cohort launch). Given that **Outcome Harvesting** is particularly useful when outcomes, inputs, activities and outputs, are dynamic and changing throughout the intervention, the E&I team determined it was well-suited for **our goal of determining the impact of E&I Academy on individual participants' personal and professional growth as well as the impact on facilitators**. Participants engaged in a Outcome Harvesting interactive activity in the last session. Facilitators and E&I staff participated in joint and individual exit interviews.

Participant Questions Asked

1. Think back on day one of the Academy, what did you hope to learn?
2. What are key takeaways you have from the sessions? Did a particular session impact you and why?
3. What have you learned and what do you plan to incorporate into your work?
4. Are there any partnerships you will build as a result of the Academy?
5. What are you curious about as a result of E&I Academy? Do you want to learn more about something that was discussed?

Facilitator Questions

1. What was your first reaction when you heard about E&I Academy?
2. When you started to plan your presentations, what were your goals?
3. Did you meet your goals or would you revise them?
4. Was the time/timing of your presentation well selected? Do you have any feedback on time or timing?
5. What did you learn as a result of E&I Academy?
6. Would you do anything differently?
7. How has the E&I Academy shaped how you engage with constituents and other departments? Have you seen any partnerships already?



QUESTION 1

As participants entered the room for the Final E&I Academy Session, they were asked “**Think back on day one of the Academy, what did you hope to learn?**” and handed post-it notes to fill out and place anonymously onto a front graphic.

Responses followed four main themes:

- External resources
- Behavior
- Becoming a resource (knowledge)
- Becoming a changemaker (execution)

Mostly, participants had come to E&I academy with the expectations of learning about external resources and behaviors.



I hoped to learn about ways to be more inclusive in our work and with our teams.

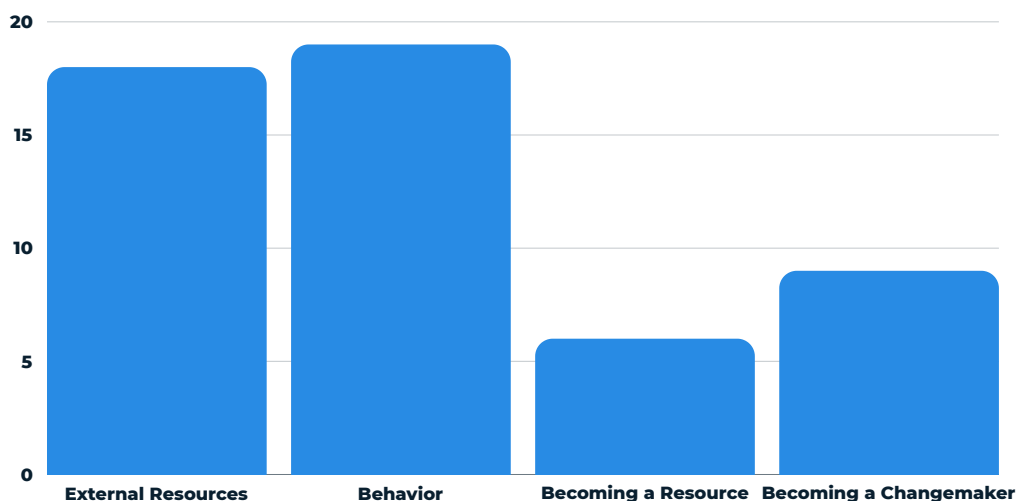


Some responses that reflected that expectation of resources and behaviors were:

“I hoped to learn about ways to be more inclusive in our work and with our teams.” In that sense, participant reflected on wanting to learn inclusive behaviors and to find ways to use that with their team (becoming a resource). Another participant reflected, “[I hoped to learn] what we’re advancing as a city and how I can plug in/help.” This goal highlights the desire to learn about external resources of what the City is doing regarding this work and how they can become a resource and change maker to assist in the process.

Interpretation:

The goals participants reflected on hoping to learn during E&I Academy met the goals of the program. This means that during the outreach and enrollment, expectations were clear.



QUESTION 2

The second question participants were asked was **“What are key takeaways you have from the sessions? Did a particular session impact you and why?”** The responses also followed four main themes:

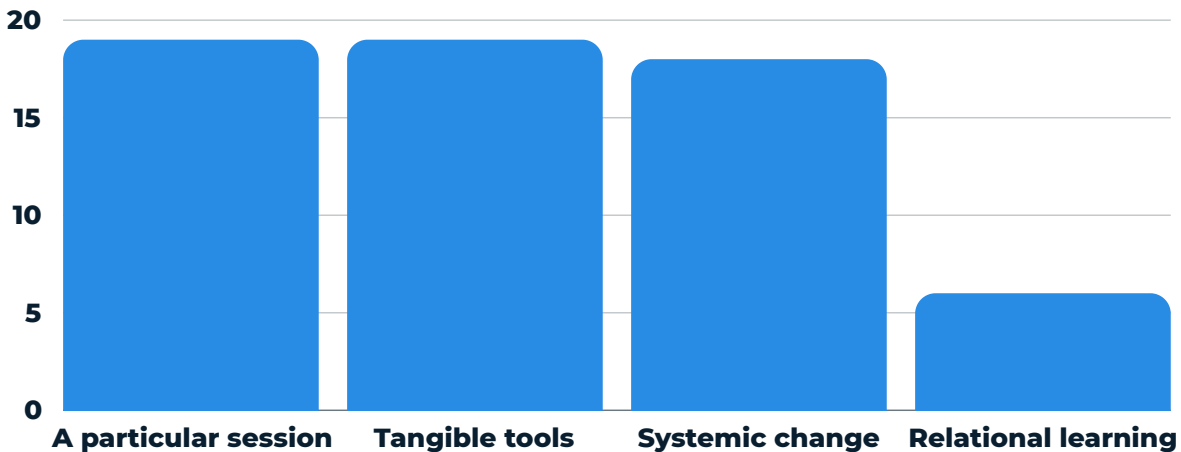
- A particular session
- Tangible tools or language use recommendations
- Systemic change (from negative to positive or recognition of an opportunity)
- Relational learning

Takeaways from the sessions primarily focused on either a particular session, tangible tools or language use recommendations, and systemic change. Some examples of what participants valued as takeaways are: “The session on disabilities made me aware that disabilities may not be visible/perceivable. Similar with gender.” Similar to the previous quote, many participant referenced how a particular session produced an interest in building a systemic change. Furthermore, tangible tool to use in their work were highly prized. Relational learning was also important. For example, one participant stated: “Our colleagues have so much wisdom to share!” Participants learned from each other throughout the sessions and continued to share expertise afterward.

“Our colleagues have so much wisdom to share!”

Interpretation:

The takeaways participants reflected on having from E&I Academy, met the goals of the program.



QUESTION 3

The third question participants were asked was “**What have you learned and what do you plan to incorporate into your work?**” Responses followed three main themes:

- Concrete learning
- Behavior changes
- Teaching others/motivating systemic change

Participants overwhelmingly identified with learning and planning to incorporate behavior changes. The following response highlights this,



PARTICIPANT

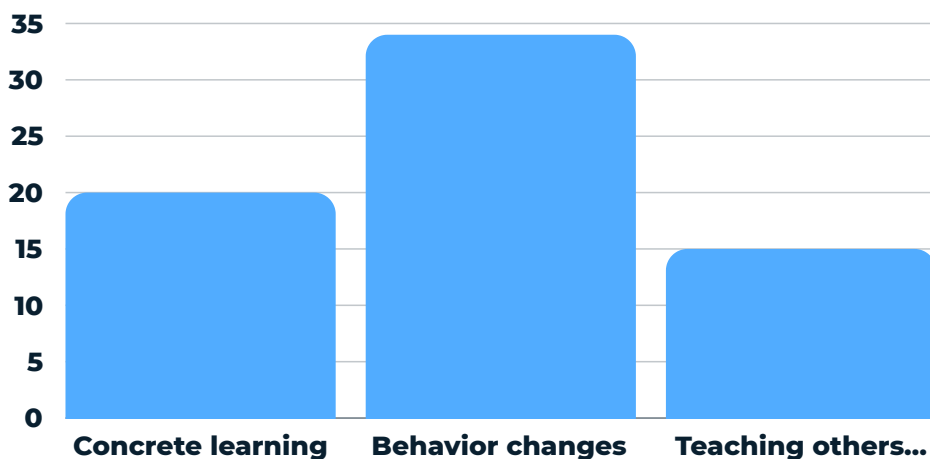
*I felt like all the content was helpful. I had my brain working on **how I can get members of my team and other depts on getting involved in work. All hiring managers, targeted audience, should take on all of this work.** How do I get more of my colleagues and dept engaged in this work, particularly those whose work does not engage.*



This participant reflected on their desire to engage more people in this work, highlighting a behavior change and motivating systemic change. Other participants reflected on a subject from a particular session, “How to better treat coworkers/constituents by inclusively asking about pronouns.” This participant reflected on something they learned, that is also a behavior change.

Interpretation:

The learning outcomes participants reflected on met the goals of the E&I Academy. However, there was a large gap between the three themes that could be addressed in future iterations of the Academy.



QUESTION 4

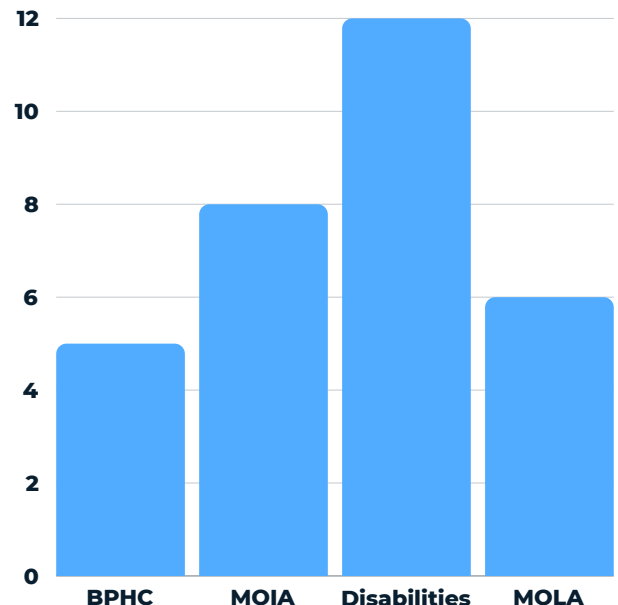
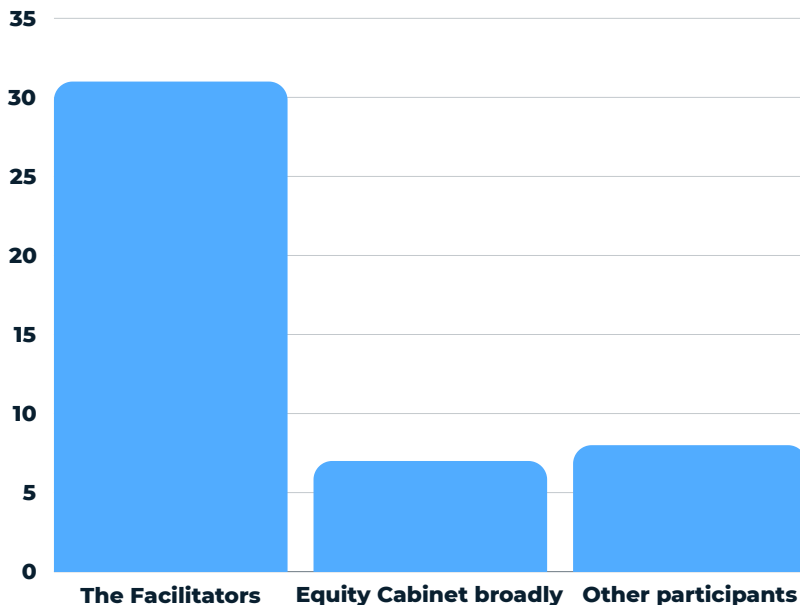
The fourth question participants were asked was “**Are there any partnerships you will build as a result of the Academy?**” Partnerships noted by participants are as follows:

- The Facilitators (BPHC, Disabilities Commission, MOIA, MOLA)
- Equity Cabinet broadly
- Other participants in the Academy (peer-to-peer)

Partnerships that participants hope to build are primarily with the Facilitators of E&I Academy sessions. Among the facilitators, many participants want to partner with the Disabilities Commission. One participant reflected on hoping to build partnerships with the Disabilities Commission and Immigrant Advancement (MOIA): “I would like to work closely with the disabilities + immigrant advancement team because a lot of my departments work is community facing and we have not had a lot of opportunities for collaboration.” While some people reflected on partnering with the Equity Cabinet generally, “For the Mayor’s Office of Housing: House people in a more equitable way.” These responses represent the wide array of next steps for continuing the work.

Interpretation:

Participants are hopeful to build partnerships after the E&I Academy. This meets the goals of E&I Academy, however, moving forward, we can help facilitators connect with each other to share feedback and receive similar outcomes.



QUESTION 5

The fifth and final question participants were asked was **“What are you curious about as a result of E&I Academy? Do you want to learn more about something that was discussed?”**

Responses followed two main themes:

1. Curiosity about other departments
2. Curiosity about action or next steps

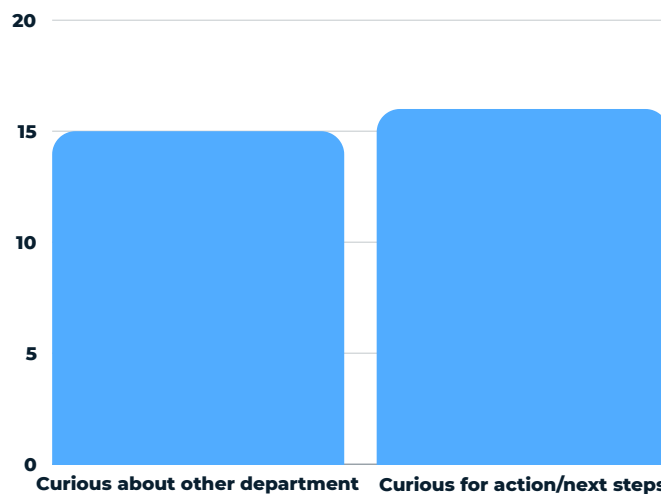
Responses from participants were almost equally split among curiosity about other departments and curiosity about action or next steps. The following response highlights participants’ curiosity about next steps,

“We heard about amazing programs, I'm curious how staff can be more involved. There wasn't specific calls to action on how staff can be involved. I'd love to learn more about how staff can be involved.”

“We heard about amazing programs, I'm curious how staff can be more involved. There wasn't specific calls to action on how staff can be involved. I'd love to learn more about how staff can be involved.” Many participants were curious about where to go next or how to continue their learning. Some participants also reflected on specific departments or sessions that they still have questions about, “[I] want to learn about the best practices for engaging with immigrants.” This shows the curiosity this participant still had regarding Immigrant Advancement and the specific item they are looking for more information on.

Interpretation:

E&I Academy was not clear with participants on their outcomes or how they should be engaging with this work moving forward. Also, sessions may need to be longer to address the questions participants still had from specific departments/sessions/facilitators.



FACILITATOR FINDINGS

Facilitators of the E&I Academy sessions met in two meetings. One meeting consisted of MOIA, MOLA, and the Disabilities Commission and the second meeting was with BPHC (the meetings were split due to scheduling). During those meetings, facilitators were asked to share their goals (intentions), takeaways (learning), and outcomes (what will you do next/ do differently).

FACILITATOR GOALS

When asked about their goals (intentions) for the E&I Academy, responses followed four main themes:

1. Partnerships
2. What fed into their goal setting
3. Share department information/programs
4. Teach/share information about their department's community

Mostly, facilitators responded that they wanted to teach/share information about their department's community. One facilitator reflected the themes to share department information/programs and teach/share information about their department's community with their goal to "bring LGBTQ+ competency training to broader audience." Another facilitator shared that their goal was to "Build partnerships with other departments." This goal correlates to the theme of partnerships. Lastly, the theme of what fed into the facilitator's goal setting was reflected when facilitators described their thinking process for their goals and objectives. This is illustrated by the following response, "Figuring out what angle to approach from, how to reconcile multiple perspectives."



FACILITATOR TAKEAWAYS

When asked about their takeaways (learning), responses followed seven main themes:

1. Partnerships
2. Information/knowledge participants have prior to Academy/session
3. Participants interest in content
4. How information should be shared/phrased in the future
5. Participants wanted to learn more/ need more time
6. How participants use content after the session
7. Areas of improvement for facilitators/Academy in general

Mostly, facilitators shared areas of improvement for themselves or the Academy in general. The takeaways themes were demonstrated by the following responses, “Some people have never had these conversations naturally - reframe introduction of subject matter to folks.” This response reflects the theme of information/knowledge participants have prior to Academy/session, how information should be shared/phrased in the future, and areas of improvement for facilitators/Academy in general. The themes participants wanted to learn more/ need more time, how participants use content after the session, and areas of improvement for facilitators/Academy in general are conveyed in the following response, “[I] had feedback on ‘how do I work with my colleagues?’ and folks wished there was more of a deep dive. More space in between sessions to pivot and adjust in between.” As demonstrated in these examples and the other responses, facilitators had takeaways of learning how they and the Academy can improve for future iterations.

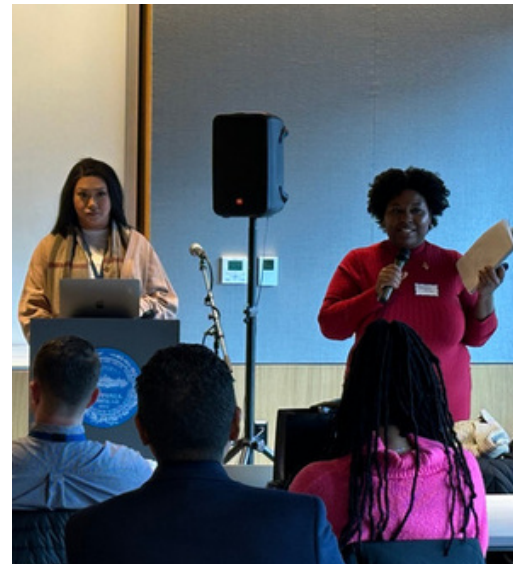


FACILITATOR OUTCOMES

When asked about their outcomes (what will you do next/ do differently), facilitator answers followed 6 main themes:

1. Partnerships
2. Facilitator communication/collaboration
3. Preparation
4. Content of session
5. Structure of session/Academy
6. Post-session communication

Mostly, facilitators responded that their outcomes and things they would do next/differently are preparation, content of the session, and the structure of the session/Academy. When reflecting on their outcomes, one facilitator said, “Make sure the thread is clear between all sessions; training is to support you, not a discussion on whether or not you’ll do these things. Bring back that this is part of a bigger picture.” This demonstrates the themes of preparation, content of session, and structure of session/Academy. Another facilitator’s outcomes were as follows, “Produced partnerships as a result → follow-ups. Being explicit with information and constantly thinking about how not everyone may not have the same base knowledge/not everything is intuitive.” This response also demonstrated the themes of preparation and content of session, as well as post-session communication. The theme of facilitator communication/collaboration was reflected in the following response, “Definitely more communication between sessions for facilitators. I think that connection aspect was missing.” Facilitators had thoughtful ideas on how to improve on their own sessions and the Academy as a whole moving forward.



INDIVIDUAL DEPARTMENT FINDINGS

BPHC

BPHC's goals going into the Academy was to introduce participants to BPHC and their work, as well as build cross-departmental relationships. They were gratified in the outcome harvesting conversation to report that this goal was met. BPHC stated that as a result of the Academy, they expanded their work to ensure that participants have support to fully understand the Commission's role and responsibilities. As of this report, BPHC has shared that they have direct programming with various departments as a result of the Academy.

DISABILITIES COMMISSION

The Disabilities Commission's goals going into the Academy were to encourage curiosity about disability and to build partnerships with other departments. As a result of the Academy, the Disabilities Commission learned that a lot of participants assumed they knew what there was to know about disability, but had never really talked about it. After the academy ended, many individual participants followed up with the presenter and asked for future inter-departmental trainings and partnerships

MOIA

MOIA's goal going into the Academy was to primarily share MOIA's programming and offerings to participants who might not be familiar with their work. As a result of the Academy, MOIA learned that participants wanted more information about personal journey and actionable steps and that future sessions may need to be longer. As a result of the session, they are anticipating participants to reach out or engage with them after the Academy.

MOLA

MOLA's goal going into the Academy was to bring LGBTQ+ competency learning sessions to a broader audience and to make sure participants left feeling informed. As a result of the Academy, MOLA's take away from the pilot was that they would pursue greater clarity on how to ensure certain conduct and discourage others. It became clear in the sessions that, even with allies, shy of a mandatory professional conduct standard, the best practices are slow to catch on and require encouragement through platforms such as the academy

EQUITY CABINET

The E&I Cabinet's goal going into the Academy was to equip staff to address the diverse constituents that make up Boston. As a result of the Academy, the E&I Cabinet learned that there is a high appetite for these facilitated learning sessions across the city and that the pilot was a success. E&I Cabinet officials reflected that there will need to be more meetings between facilitators throughout the Academy to ensure even more alignment across teams, and more opportunities to check-in and debrief between presenters.

LESSONS LEARNED

The following are the lessons learned from the E&I Academy Pilot. These lessons highlight the successes of the Academy, as well as the areas in need of improvement. These takeaways are results of the feedback from the participant and facilitator outcome harvesting sessions.

1

Participants are curious to learn (that's why they signed up!) so providing a space for additional conversations a moments of reflection are key for personal and professional growth.

2

People want to see this continue (appetite for more learning sessions both by participants and facilitators).

3

Facilitator goals need to be set **early on** and in a **cohesive manner**.

4

Baseline data collection would have helped determine the causality of some observed behaviors in the outcome harvesting process. **In future, we would recommend hiring an external evaluator.**

5

Participants are **seeking tangible tools and best practices** to bring into their work and share with their colleagues.

6

In person worked well, but due to the **length of the cohort** might have **impacted participants to abilities to 100% of the sessions.**

7

There is an **interest and appetite for virtual sessions** (facilitators are interested in hybrid trainings and would suggest extending the time for in-person training session or having full day events)

BEST PRACTICES

A collection of meticulously curated best practices derived from extensive documentation and valuable input from participants and partners. These practices have been gleaned from the experiences of the participants as shared through the outcome harvesting exercises, as well as via exit interviews with the presenting partners and the implementation staff of the Equity and Inclusion Cabinet. These best practices will serve as invaluable guidelines for the City of Boston Equity and Inclusion Cabinet's future plans to expand the E&I Academy programming in 2024, and 2025.



Open communication channels and opportunities for questions, dialogue, and a space to speak in drafts were key to achieving a successful learning environment for participants and facilitators alike.



Maintain regular facilitator meetings for goal alignment, opportunities for peer learning, and to ensure an iterative learning process.



Documentation plans and data collection should be distributed, approved, and launched early on in the process to ensure a cohesive understanding of program goals and expectations.



Use an external evaluation team which can help resolve questions and overlapping work.



Regular assessments as well as post program conversations helped us determine that we might need to modify future iterations of the program, such as changing the closing ceremony or extending workshop formats for longer topics and to promote cross-talk and dialogue.



Open door policy for participants to learn more and continue conversations with facilitators is key. Participants might identify a need within their teams to pursue one-on-one conversation with a presenter.



Voluntary sign-up = motivated cohort. Senior leadership buy-in at recruitment period as well as at the closing ceremony is key to also ensuring that the number of self-identified allies is high.



Facilitators should have a unified structure for their presentation that allows sufficient flexibility for the model to be tailored to each team.



Provide a platform for “alumni” to still interact with each other and learn. The sense of community engendered by the Academy created a lot of momentum that can be fostered and continued beyond the facilitated learning sessions.



Make E&I Academy as accessible as possible! Opportunity for virtual setting might be explored since we know this was a barrier for some folks.

