



Participatory Budgeting Evaluation *2024-25*

Office of Participatory
Budgeting

October 2024
Mid-cycle Report

In 2024, Boston's Office of Participatory Budgeting launched its pilot year of participatory budgeting, called Ideas in Action.

Ideas in Action is an opportunity for Bostonians to unite in open dialogue about budget priorities, engage in identifying community-initiated project ideas, and take collective action to help decide what projects get implemented for the benefit of the City.



This evaluation explores 4 questions



We address three in this mid-cycle report

1. **Participation.** Who participated, and how?

To what extent has Ideas in Action (especially the workshops) engaged priority populations?

2. **Impact.** What impact did PB have on those who participated?

What is the impact of Ideas in Action so far on residents and community organizations?

3. **Process.** What was the process used in the pilot year and how can it be improved? (especially operations, resources)

What lessons can we take into the phases and cycles of Ideas in Action?

4. **Equity.** Is Boston's PB process equitably distributing resources?



Mixed Methods, Embedded Approach

- Surveys with residents* (270 Workshop participants; 36 online portal)
- Observation during Idea Collection Workshops
- Debriefs with contracted community partners
- Reflection conversation with the EOB
- OPB staff monthly retrospectives

**Note: This report focuses on survey responses from workshops.*

Data+Soul Research (formerly known as MXM Research Group) is a research and evaluation consulting firm based in Boston that specializes in **design, strategy, and evaluation** for social impact. We support organizations to co-create solutions with the communities they serve by facilitating planning, data management, and organizational learning through evaluation.

This project was led by Evan Kuras and Min Ma with support from Kayla Benitez Alvarez, Outlaw, Bobbie D Norman, and Elizabeth Witcher.



Phase

1

Idea Collection

Idea Collection

1,238 ideas for addressing local needs were submitted by 789 Boston residents across every neighborhood.

Residents shared their ideas through:

- **The online portal** (758 ideas)
- **City-sponsored workshops** (312 ideas)
- **Individually organized community meetings** (98 ideas)
- **PB Corners** at City Hall (15 ideas) and Boston's Libraries (52 ideas)
- **PB Phone Line** (3 ideas)

Key outcomes



1,238

idea submissions



789 residents

contributing ideas



19 workshops

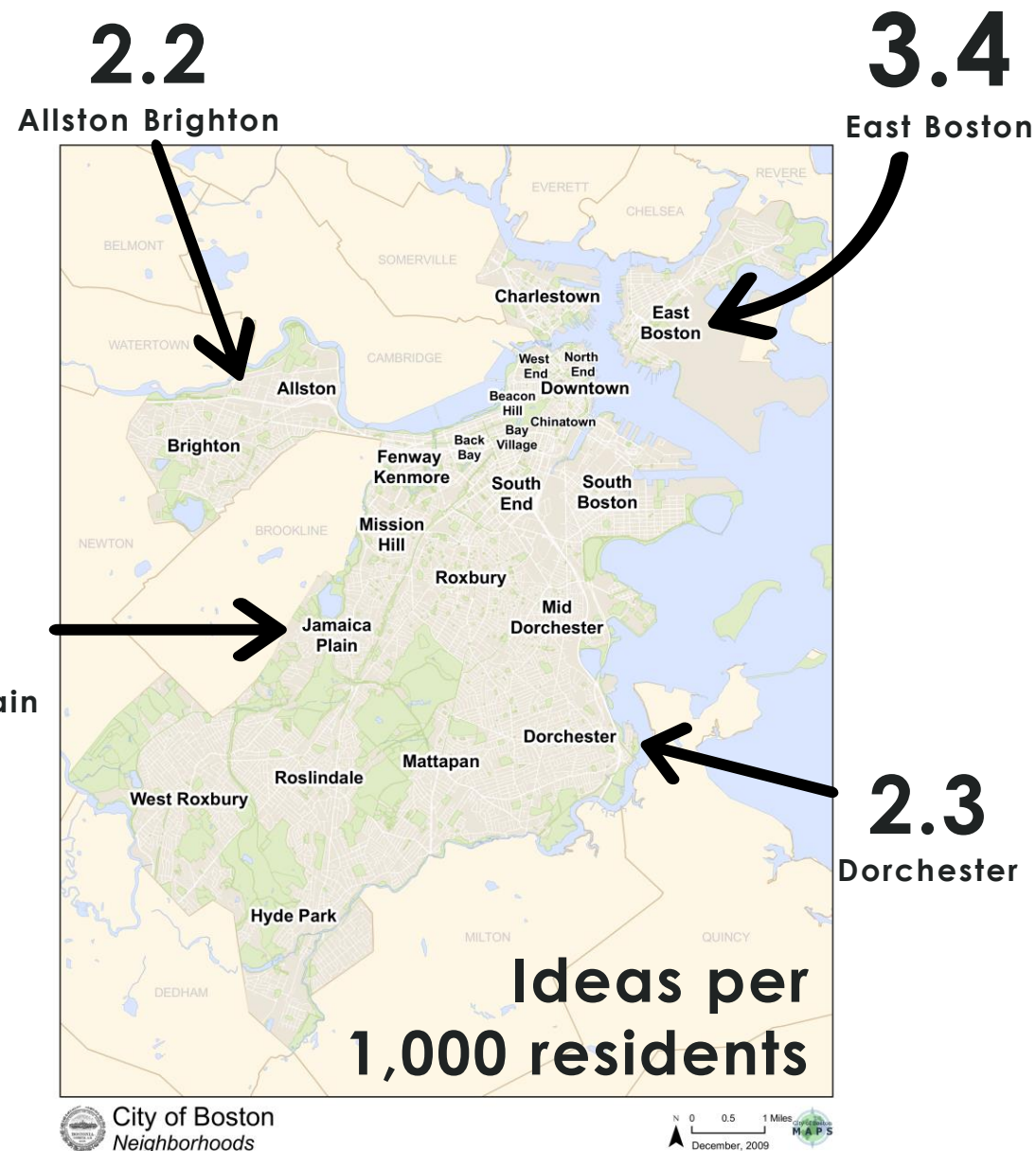
sponsored by the city

Ideas in Action engaged residents from **every neighborhood**.

Some neighborhoods shared **more ideas per capita** than others.

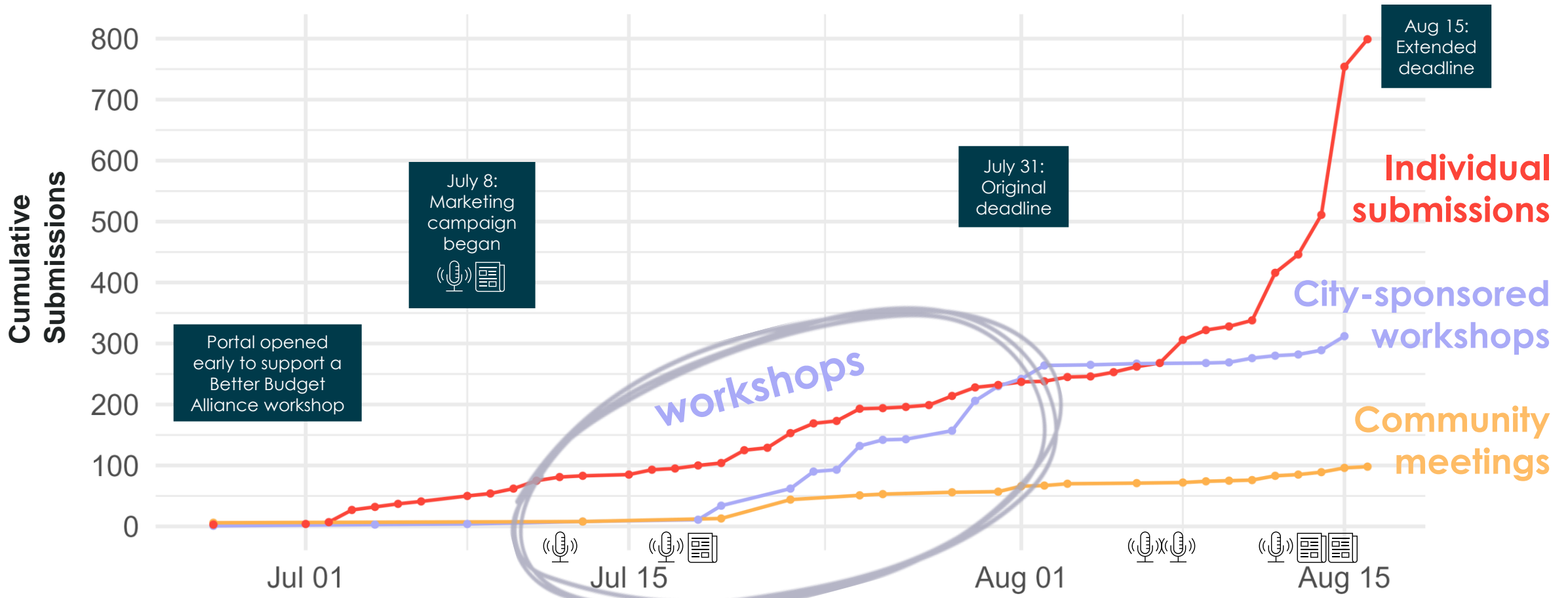
"I think that Ideas in Action went very well. Everyone had something to speak on based off their neighborhoods. It was good seeing everyone connect"

- Workshop participant



Source: Online portal data + Boston 2020 census data
Overall per capita = 1.8 ideas per 1,000 residents

The number of ideas grew thanks to workshops and community meetings, an accumulation of marketing, and an extended deadline



Source: online portal data

Marketing campaign



Earned Media

- 8 placements (like op-eds) across mainstream and ethnic media outlets



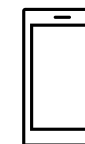
Radio

- 883,200 Impressions
- 400 radio spots aired, including on 6 major ethnic stations



Print + Digital Newspaper

- Print ads and digital banners placed with local publications
- 225,940 impressions
- 2,758 clicks



Mobile + Transit

- Transit ads on bus tails and interiors
- 1,137,535 Mobile Impressions
- 2,832 Mobile Clicks

The campaign ran from July 8 through August 15, 2024.

Contracted Community Partners outreach methods



In-person outreach

- Word of mouth
- Pop up tables
- Announcements at events



Calls + texts

- Phone calls and phone banking
- Text outreach and text blasts



Email + social media

- Email blasts
- Social media and posting on Facebook groups



Passive outreach

- Event flyers

Some hosts incorporated workshops into existing programming.

Idea Collection Workshops

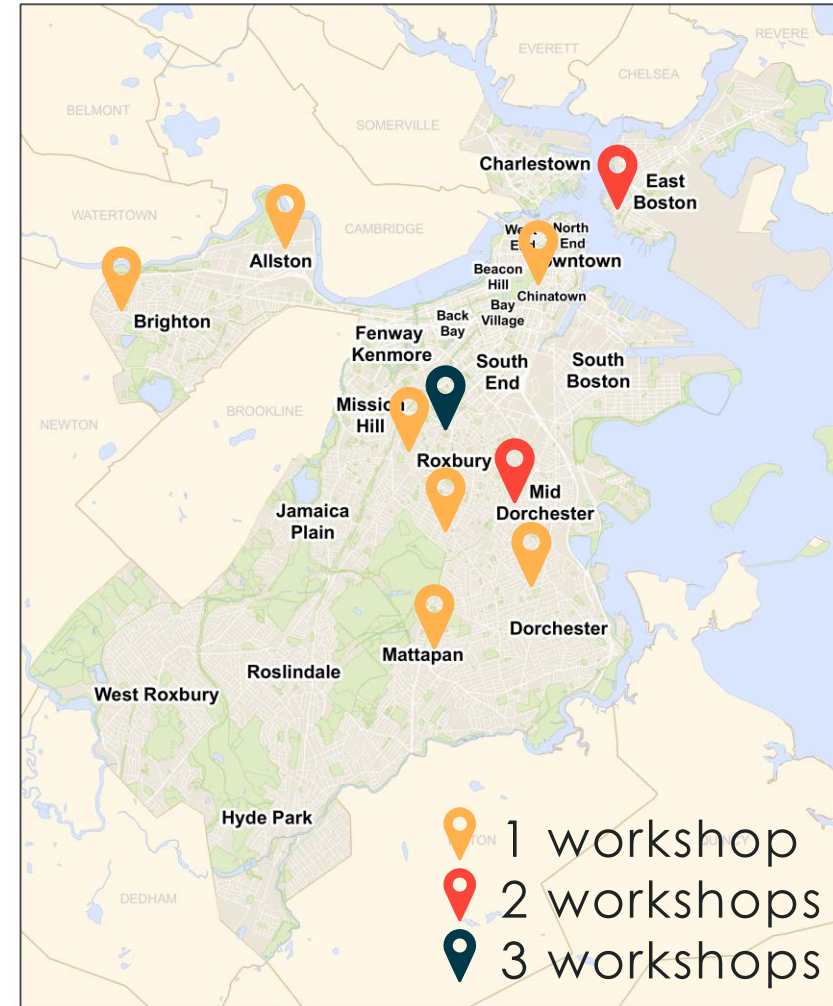
...a closer look



Idea Collection Workshop, July 31, 2024
hosted by Union Capital Boston

Contracted Community Partners hosted **14 in-person workshops** and **5 virtual workshops** to engage priority populations:

- Residents who cannot or do not participate in civic life
- Residents with historically excluded or underrepresented identities
- Residents living in historically underserved neighborhoods



Spotlight

Allston Brighton Health Collaborative

engaged Allston Brighton residents who are not typically civically engaged, BIPOC residents, residents with immigrant backgrounds, and renters.

Maverick Landing Community Services + Neighbors United for a Better East Boston

engaged residents in East Boston, including residents who can't vote, youth, first-generation American-born Latinx residents, and undocumented residents.

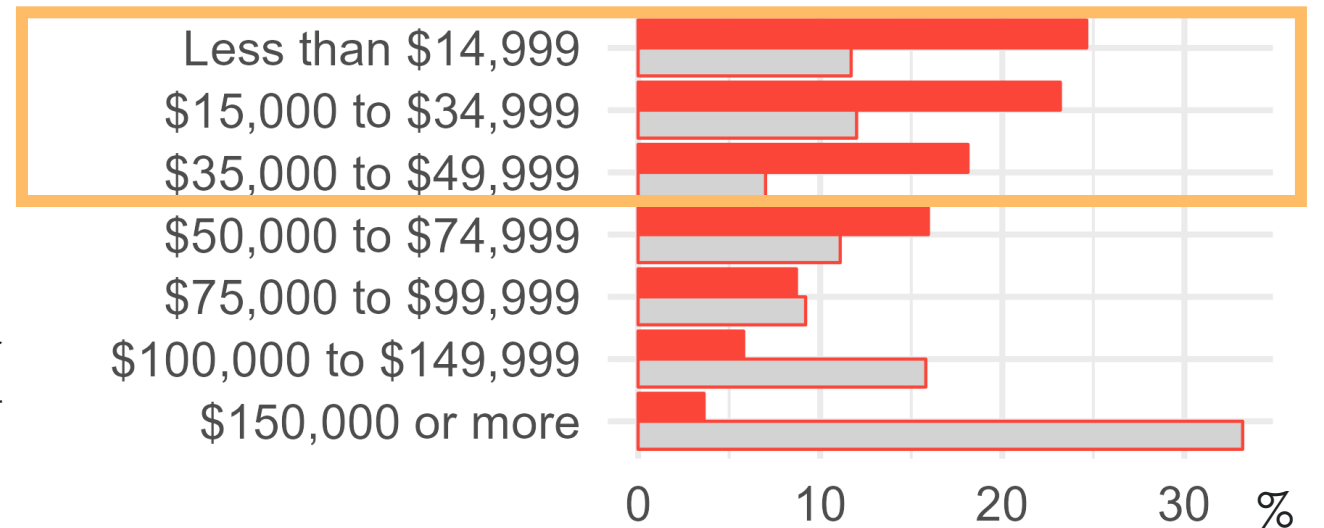
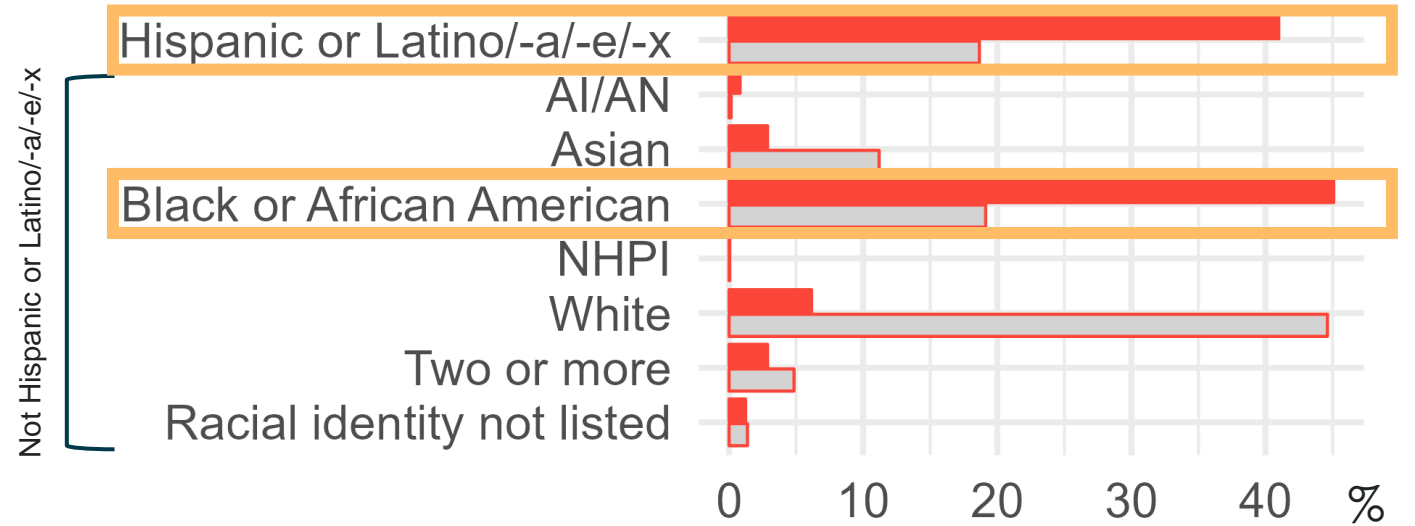
Workshops engaged more residents who identify as Latinx and Black and reported lower-incomes relative to their share of the Boston population.

Notes:

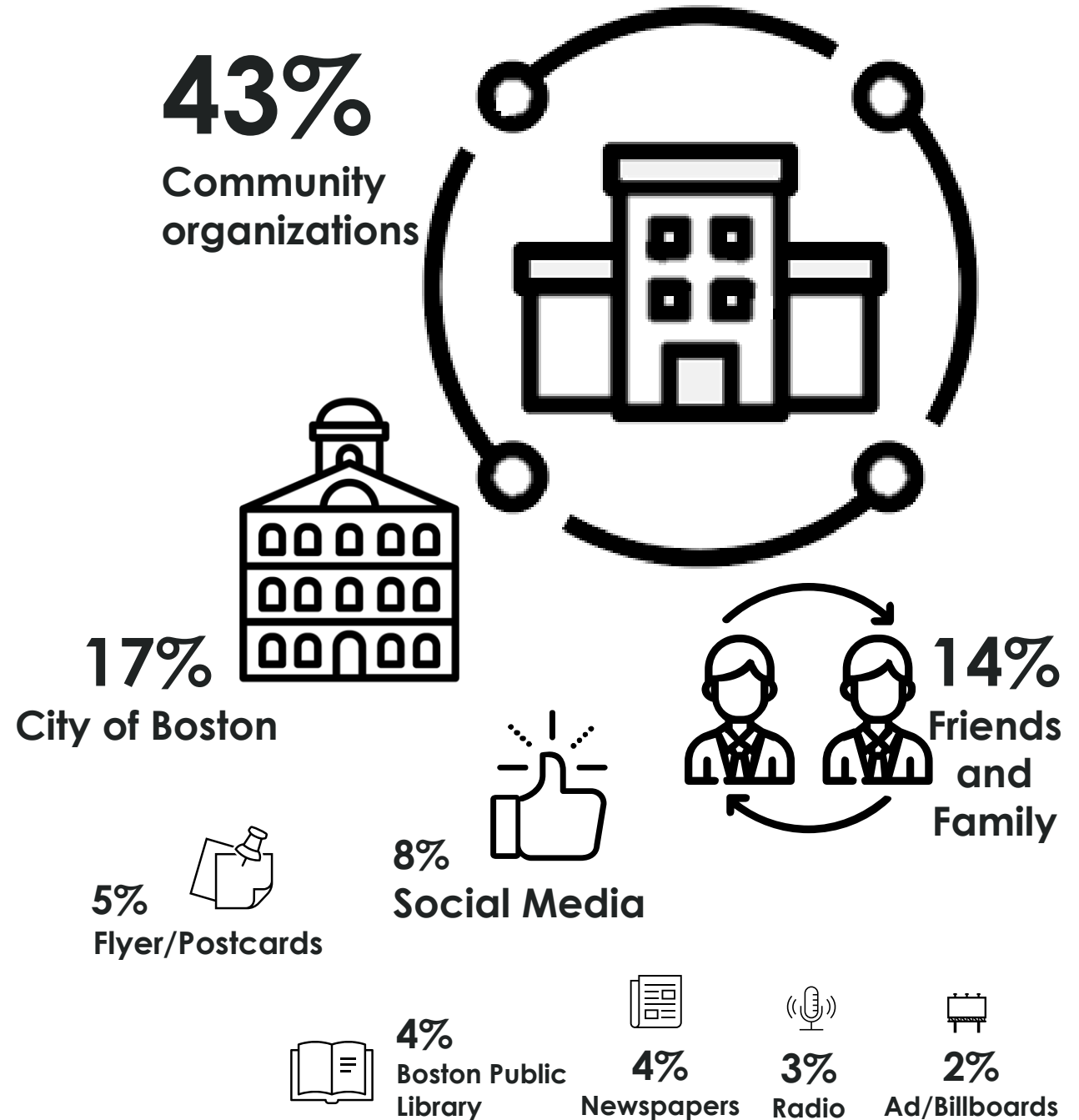
- Hispanic or Latino/-a/-e/-x... of any race
- AI/AN = American Indian or Alaska Native
- NHPI = Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Source: : Idea Collection Workshop surveys (2024) + Boston 2020 census data

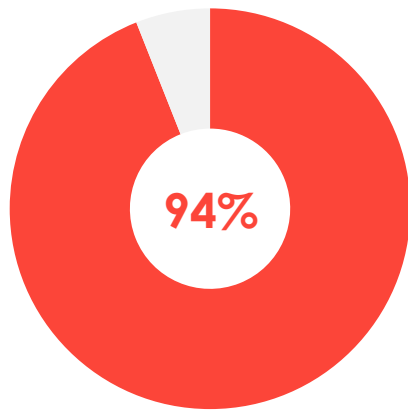
n=244 for race/ethnicity; n=138 for income



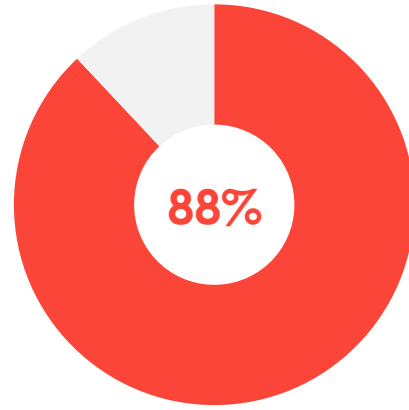
Workshop participants overwhelmingly heard about Ideas in Action from Contracted Community Partners.



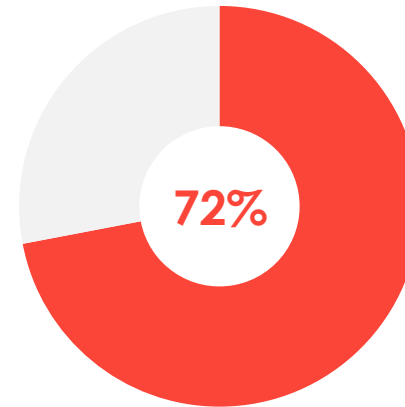
Participants enjoyed the workshops, especially discussing and building community around local issues



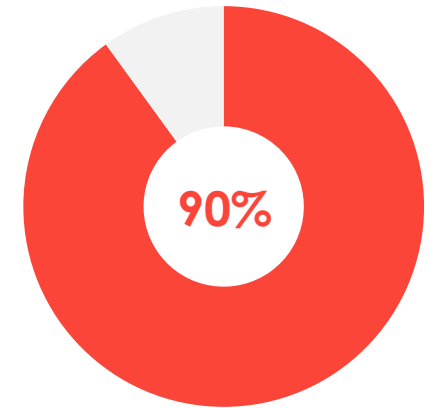
Workshop helped me consider other viewpoints



Workshop helped me submit a better idea



Plan to submit more ideas



Recommend the workshop to other residents

Thank you

Acknowledgements: Residents who participated in Ideas in Action, Contracted Community Partners, EOB members, and OPB staff.

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