



Youth Engagement
and Advancement

2025 OYEA IMPACT REPORT



“Uplifting Boston’s Youth”

2025 OYEA IMPACT REPORT

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FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PEDRO CRUZ
Executive Director

Dear Friends, Partners, and Members of the Boston Youth Community,

It is with great pride that I share the Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement's 2025 Impact Report, highlighting the collective work, data, and accomplishments of 2025. This past year reaffirmed what we know to be true in Boston: when young people are trusted, resourced, and meaningfully included in decision-making, they drive powerful change for our city.

In 2025, our office deepened its commitment to centering youth voice, expanding access to opportunity, and strengthening pathways for leadership, civic engagement, and advancement. From supporting young people in shaping city programs, to connecting families to critical resources, to building strong partnerships across departments and communities, our work was guided by equity, accountability, and care. The data in this report tells an important story—but just as meaningful are the relationships built, the trust earned, and the young leaders who continue to rise.

This impact report reflects the dedication of our staff, the leadership of young people across Boston, and the collaboration of community-based organizations, city colleagues, educators, and advocates who show up every day for youth. Together, we have made measurable progress while remaining clear-eyed about the work ahead.

As we look toward 2026 and beyond, we remain committed to advancing systems that work for young people and to ensuring that Boston continues to be a city where youth are seen, heard, and empowered to thrive.

Thank you for your continued partnership and belief in the power of young people. I invite you to explore this report and join us as we build on this momentum together.

In partnership and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pedro Cruz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Pedro" on the top line and "Cruz" on the bottom line.



ABOUT OYEA

The Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement (OYEA) works to uplift young voices in decision-making processes and help advance the lives of young people across Boston through programming and resources. We feel it is crucial to have young voices actively engaged in the policies and decisions that impact their lives, and our mission is to provide the platform for them to do so. All Boston youth should have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive.

We aim to serve as a central hub connecting young people to these resources and opportunities across City Hall and in their communities. We also value the youth workers who are on the ground with Boston's young people each day. We aim to provide the necessary support and development opportunities to uplift their work. Our goal is to create and support spaces that empower our next generation to become community leaders and agents of change.



TEAM OYEA



PEDRO CRUZ
Executive Director



LINDSEY BOOZER
Deputy Director



MAYA BRAVO
Communications &
Outreach Manager



DANIEL BRYAN
Strategic Partnerships
Manager



KARMA FREEMAN
Community Engagement
Coordinator



LEENA GHRICI
MYC Program
Coordinator



PATRICK NUGENT
MYC Program
Coordinator



ASH CARDINAL
Communications
Fellow



CHLOE CHICK
Resource Fellow



KYLA BARBOSA
MYC Fellow



ZAVIA DICKERSON
YLC Fellow

OYEA MODEL

Our strategic model is centered on supporting the three essential levels of youth engagement: (1) spaces and programs for young people, (2) the adults and professionals who work in those spaces, and (3) young people themselves.

Our vision is to create a city where every young person has the resources, relationships, and opportunities they need to thrive. This strategic plan is our roadmap to achieving that vision, ensuring our initiatives empower not just youth but the ecosystems that nurture them. Below, we outline the key pillars of our approach and highlight the progress we've made together.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1:

Youth Programs and Spaces



Ensure that youth-centered spaces and programs are accessible, inclusive, and designed to inspire growth and learning.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2:

Youth-Serving Partners and Adult Allies



Equip youth-serving professionals with the tools and support needed to build meaningful relationships with young people and foster positive development.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 3:

Young People



Empower young people to lead, advocate, and shape the future of Boston through their voices and actions.

LOOKING AHEAD

Since its launch three years ago, OYEA has made significant strides, yet our mission continues to evolve. As we look ahead, OYEA is translating its Youth Speaks Boston findings into action steps to bridge critical gaps in mental health, safety, mentorship, and access to resources. We look forward to expanding our Boston After Dark initiative into a year-round program, offering even more late-night spaces for young people. In the coming year, OYEA aims to create new opportunities and support systems for the 18-25 year old population. We will continue uplifting our Partner Network and building spaces for networking, connection, and learning - including a new Professional Development certification series. Ultimately, OYEA's roadmap centers on developing creative and sustainable pathways that support all three levels of youth-work: youth programs and spaces, youth serving adults, and the young people themselves.

OYEA *Programs and Initiatives*



MAYOR'S YOUTH SUMMIT

The Mayor's Youth Summit is an annual event designed to celebrate and build connections across Boston's young people. This flagship event creates a space for youth to showcase their talents, connect with City leaders, and build community with their peers. The 2025 Mayor's Youth Summit marked the second time this event has been held since being re-established as an annual event in 2024 following a 20-year hiatus. This event brought together youth and community members at the Artists for Humanity Epicenter to celebrate the contributions of young people to our City's culture. It featured performances from local youth organizations, including 617Peak, Beat the Odds, Boston Music Project, and Teen Empowerment. Two Youth Leader Awardees were honored for their commitment to civic engagement, as well as two youth-serving organizations, Chica Project and Hey Sam, were recognized for their service to Boston youth. The Mayor's Youth Summit provides an intentional space to uplift the talents of young people and foster deeper connections between youth and the City of Boston.

“We are honored to offer Artists for Humanity as the venue for this important annual event, which celebrates and brings together youth voices and leadership. We hope the space inspires creative collaborations. We are so grateful that the City of Boston continues to invest deeply in youth engagement and youth employment.”

- Anna Yu, Artists for Humanity Executive Director

BY THE NUMBERS



346

Youth In Attendance



452

People In Attendance



106

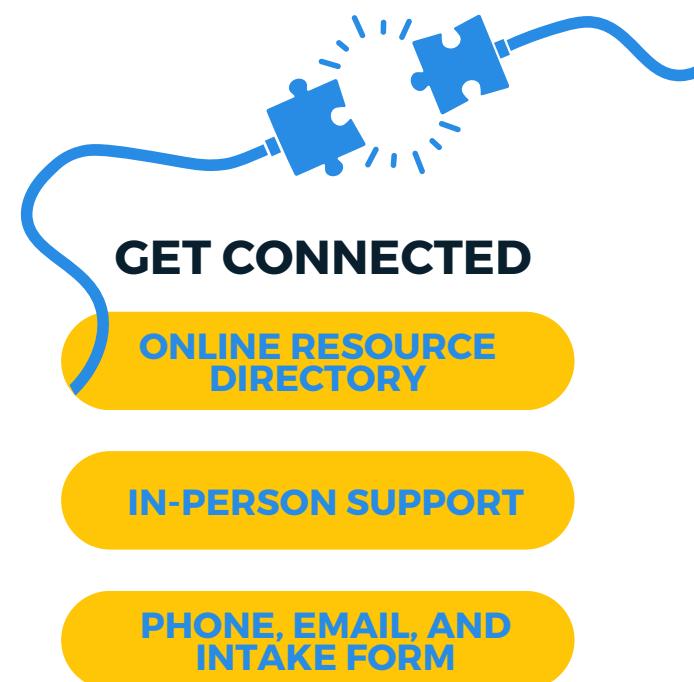
Adults In Attendance





YOUTHLINE

OYEA believes all Boston youth should have access to the resources and opportunities they need to thrive. We aim to serve as a central hub connecting young people to these resources and opportunities across City Hall and in their communities. The YouthLine Resource Hub is a virtual platform showcasing resources for youth and young adults across Boston. This tool aims to organize the variety of supportive resources, programs, and opportunities available to youth and families in Boston through City agencies and community based partner organizations. The purpose of YouthLine is to connect Boston's young residents to the services and resources available to help them thrive. Through this initiative, residents are able to independently navigate vetted resources through the online directory, or contact the OYEA office for more individualized support. OYEA additionally maintains the Community Events Calendar, a live and up-to-date calendar showcasing over 100 events across the city each month that are free and open to Boston teens and young adults.



BY THE NUMBERS



600+

Resources listed
in the directory



4017

Community members
engaged



194

Hours spent in the
community



Youth Speaks Boston is the first-ever citywide needs assessment that collects information directly from Boston's young people about what they are experiencing and how the City of Boston and its partners can better support them outside of school and work. The goal is a clearer understanding of the factors that influence the lives of young people and of how we can help Boston's youth thrive. Through November 2024 and August 2025, OYEA conducted a survey of Boston residents between the ages of 14 and 25 years old. In addition to the survey, youth designed and led focus groups to engage their peers in discussions on the themes addressed in the survey and further understand their perspectives. The findings from this survey are shared publicly in an interactive data dashboard that allows providers and partners to view deeper results for each question in the survey. Viewers can filter these results by individual demographic groups, including neighborhood, race, ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+ identity, and more. This dashboard allows youth providers to better understand the needs of the specific communities they serve, and apply these insights to their work as they make decisions on how best to support their young people.

SURVEY THEMES

BELONGING

SAFETY

TRANSPORTATION

MENTAL HEALTH & MENTORSHIP

COMMUNITY EVENTS & SPACES

BY THE NUMBERS



1650

Survey responses



100+

Youth engaged across
6 feedback sessions

YOUTH LEAD THE CHANGE

Youth Lead the Change (YLC) is a groundbreaking participatory budgeting program that empowers young people ages 14 to 25 to decide how to spend \$1 million dollars of the City of Boston's capital budget. YLC first began in 2014 and has since allocated over \$10 million in funding to physical improvement projects imagined and voted for by Boston youth. As the first youth participatory budgeting initiative in the United States, this program invites young people to identify community needs, propose innovative solutions, and vote on projects that will positively impact their neighborhoods. Through this process, participants gain valuable civic engagement experience while fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for their community. By involving youth in the decision-making process, the program not only empowers them to take an active role in shaping their communities but also helps build a more inclusive, responsive, and equitable city. Through Youth Lead the Change, Boston is setting a new standard for youth engagement and civic participation, ensuring that the voices of young people are heard and valued in shaping the future of the city.



2024-2025 WINNING IDEA

WICKED FREE WIFI PARKS EXPANSION

Expanding Boston's Wicked Free WiFi network to public parks and spaces across the city. Free high-speed internet in Boston's parks would facilitate outdoor learning and promote digital equity.

BY THE NUMBERS



407

Ideas collected



4755

Votes received



The Mayor's Youth Council is a citywide program designed to empower and engage the young people of Boston in civic leadership and community development. The Council provides a platform for high-school aged youth to voice their opinions, collaborate with city officials, and develop solutions to the challenges facing young people across the City of Boston. Through active participation, members gain valuable leadership skills, experience in public service, and a deeper understanding of local government processes. The Mayor's Youth Council is a vital component of the City's commitment to empowering young people and fostering a vibrant, inclusive community. By engaging Boston's youth in meaningful ways, the Council helps shape a future where young voices are heard, respected, and influential in the civic landscape.

GOALS

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



BY THE NUMBERS



20

Youth on the Council



10

Schools represented



11

Neighborhoods

TESTIMONIALS



SAM FALKE

MAYOR'S YOUTH COUNCILOR, 2023-2026

"The best part of the Mayor's Youth Council year was learning way more about the City of Boston [...] I really felt way more connected to my community and the overall City of Boston."



MIRACLE EBBI

MAYOR'S YOUTH COUNCILOR, 2024-2025

"On the Mayor's Youth Council, you'll make the biggest memories and meet the greatest friends you'll keep forever."



BRIDGET BLAIR

MAYOR'S YOUTH COUNCILOR, 2023-2026

"My favorite part of the Mayor's Youth Council year was getting to learn more about different departments in the City and what they do, and getting to see how willing different departments are to work with youth."

BOSTON AFTER DARK

In Summer 2025, OYEA partnered with Boston Centers for Youth and Families, YMCA, and the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to host free teen nights between the hours of 5PM and 9PM every Friday all summer long. From the first Friday of summer recess to the last, OYEA coordinated multiple events each week in different neighborhoods across the city to ensure young people had access to fun and safe opportunities to connect with one another. Since the initiative launched in the Summer of 2024, Boston After Dark saw a 50% increase in attendance and was able to reach more neighborhoods and communities than before.

Boston After Dark events are completely free and include food from local businesses, ice cream trucks, giveaways, and exclusive merch. Every Friday night also features a live youth DJ in partnership with Youth Options Unlimited (YOU) Boston, and centers on a different theme with a unique set of activities.

“

"Hosting Boston After Dark at Gallivan Community Center has been nothing short of legendary. Every Friday night, Boston After Dark is creating a safe, high-energy space where teens can vibe, connect, and just be themselves. This ain't just a program — it's memories in the making, and every young person should get to feel that love."

- Jose Rodriguez, Site Director of BCYF Gallivan

BY THE NUMBERS



1500+

Youth Engaged



15

Neighborhoods



24

Events Hosted





OYEA

PARTNER NETWORK

One of OYEA's main priorities is to break down the silos that exist in Boston's youth work ecosystem. The OYEA Partner Network is a group of community partners and city agencies focused on advancing the lives of youth in Boston. This group meets bi-monthly in-person to connect, network, share resources, meet with City leaders, and discuss the issues facing the city's young population. One of OYEA's priorities is to break down the silos that exist in Boston's youth-work ecosystem. The Partner Network addresses this issue by creating a consistent space to build connections and share information both in-person and virtually, creating ongoing opportunities for collaboration. As a result, OYEA serves as a central hub to organize and coordinate youth-related work across the city, amplifying the impact of programs and initiatives through stronger partnerships and shared knowledge.

GOALS

REDUCING SILOS

NETWORKING & CONNECTION

HIGHLIGHT AND UPLIFT ORGANIZATIONS

RESOURCE SHARING

BY THE NUMBERS



527

Partner Organizations



1678

Individuals



OYEA

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The OYEA Professional Development Series plays a crucial role in advancing the mission of OYEA by supporting the adult professionals and providers who work directly with Boston's young people. This is a series of high-quality drop-in style workshops and trainings offered at no-cost to adult professionals working in youth-centered spaces. By engaging in this series, youth workers gain valuable insights, expand their expertise, and build meaningful relationships that contribute to both their personal growth and the success of the young people they serve. This program creates a space for youth serving professionals of all ages and experience levels to learn new tools and sharpen their skills to better support the youth in their communities.

GOALS

SKILL BUILDING

NEW PERSPECTIVES &
KNOWLEDGE

NETWORKING &
COLLABORATION

CAREER
GROWTH

BY THE NUMBERS





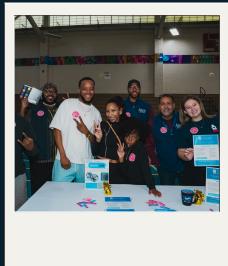
CELEBRATING THREE



Youth Engagement
and Advancement

Office of Youth Engagement
and Advancement created
by Mayor Wu

January 2023



First meeting of the OYEA
Partner Network

June 2023

May 2023

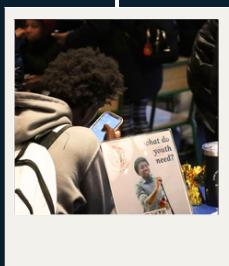
YouthLine resource
directory published

YOUTHLINE



Youth Speaks Boston needs
assessment launches

November 2024



June 2025

30 years of the Mayor's
Youth Council celebrated



YEARS OF OYEA



Annual Mayor's Youth
Summit reinstated after 20
year hiatus



February 2024

October 2023

Professional Development
series launches



June 2024

First Boston After Dark
event hosted



Tenth year of Youth Lead the
Change completed

July 2025



December 2025

OYEA codified



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS:

We are deeply grateful to the hundreds of community organizations, city agencies, and individual partners who helped make 2025 a success. Partnerships drive our work forward and are at the heart of everything we do, and we couldn't be more thankful for each and every one of our incredible collaborators. It is through the collective energy, support, and dedication of our community that OYEA is able to positively impact the lives of Boston's young people. Thank you for being an essential part of our mission!



City of Boston
LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement



City of Boston
Immigrant Advancement



Cummings
Foundation



Black Male
Advancement

artists for.
humanity



N
Northeastern
University

CITY of BOSTON



Youth Engagement and Advancement



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