



E&I ACADEMY

2025-2026 Annual Report

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1. INTRODUCTION

The 2025-26 E&I Academy entered its third year of a transformative series of meticulously crafted learning experiences designed by the Equity and Inclusion (E&I) Cabinet and partners. City of Boston staff embarking on this transformative journey enrich their comprehension of equity and inclusion matters, and translate these insights directly into their daily responsibilities, thereby enhancing their capacity to serve the diverse residents of Boston, more effectively.



By participating in the E&I Academy - including one Cohort, the E&I Summit, and one Impact Presentation session - City of Boston staff became E&I Ambassadors. The goals of the E&I Academy are to:

- Equip our City of Boston colleagues with appropriate tools to better serve our diverse populations.
- Build trust and belonging across lines of difference.
- Connect collaboratively to create a City for Everyone as E&I Ambassadors.

During Cohort sessions, City experts shared their invaluable knowledge on topics such as:

1. Equity and Inclusion: Laying the Foundation and Calls to Action
2. Social Determinants of Health with a Racial Equity Lens
3. LGBTQIA2S+ 101
4. Boston, Em↑powered By Immigrants
5. Disability 101
6. Better With Age: Creating an Age-Friendly City

The E&I Summit then brought together all Cohorts and alumni E&I Ambassadors for a day of additional conference-style learning sessions, community building activities, and a graduation ceremony. Lastly, the Impact Presentation sessions brought participants back together to present their Capstone Projects to share learnings and creative reflections on the E&I Academy, as a way to more fully

process and embody the knowledge and tools gained from the E&I Academy Cohort and Summit.

Once a part of the E&I Ambassador community, alumni engagement opportunities are available on a quarterly basis to continue to learn, connect, collaborate, and apply equity in action.



2. FACILITATOR PARTNERS OF THE E&I ACADEMY



The Equity and Inclusion Cabinet's mission is to improve social determinants of health for Bostonians, centering racial justice and the historically excluded constituencies we represent.



The Mayor's Office for LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement's mission is to empower, protect, and promote the rights, dignity, and advancement of Boston's LGBTQIA2S+ residents.



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



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.

AGE+

The Age Strong Commission's mission is to enhance the lives of people 55+ with meaningful programs, resources and connections so together we can live and age strong in Boston.



The Office of Racial Equity and Community Engagement (ORECE)'s mission is to establish and sustain racial and health equity as core principles in the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)'s policies, operations, and decision-making.

3. CITY OF BOSTON EQUITY STATEMENT

The City of Boston has played a role in causing and perpetuating the inequities in our society. To break down these barriers, we are embedding equity and inclusion into everything we do.

We define equity as ensuring every community has the resources it needs to thrive in Boston. This requires the active process of meeting individuals where they are. Inclusion is engaging every resident to build a more welcoming and supportive city. We are building a city for everyone, where diversity makes us a more empowered collective.



4. 2025-2026 E&I ACADEMY DESCRIPTION



In its third year, the E&I Academy continues to demonstrate the importance and impact of equity-driven leadership. Through collaboration of the E&I Cabinet and their partners, the E&I Academy was a heartfelt success.

In last year's report, we noted that 76 participants across 30+ different departments participated in the E&I Academy this year. This year, that number went up by 31.6%, with 100 participants who participated and became E&I Ambassadors, with almost 40 departments represented.

The E&I Academy's goals are to:

- Equip our City of Boston colleagues with appropriate tools to better serve our diverse populations.
- Build trust and belonging across lines of difference.
- Connect collaboratively to create a City for Everyone as E&I Ambassadors.

With the aid of quantitative and qualitative data, evaluations were done to inform continuous improvement, guiding adjustments to the curriculum and facilitation methods. This evaluation also helped to see if the E&I Academy goals were met throughout the entirety of the program.

The applications for the E&I Academy opened early August 2025, with Cohort sessions beginning in late September, going into early November. Participants had the choice to either join in-person at the Civic Pavilion or virtually. Cohorts provide the foundational learning for participants to become E&I Ambassadors.

After Cohorts were finally concluded, participants gathered at the Boston Public Library on November 17th to participate in the E&I Summit, a day of workshops to expand understanding of equity topics. This year, the theme was “Sustaining Ourselves & Our Work.” This annual event brings together City employees in community with other City employees who participated in both prior and current E&I Academy Cohorts.



This year, the E&I Cabinet introduced a new third section to the Academy: the Capstone Project. The Capstone Project gives participants an opportunity to showcase what they’ve learned, either through a creative art form or a practical application. Participants were given two options:

1. Select a resource / tool / best practice from the E&I Academy, create a plan to apply/model it in real life, and implement the plan!
 - At the Impact Presentation, share about your plan, and if you implemented it, how it went (depending on the timeline).
2. Select something you learned from the E&I Academy, and create art to reflect on, process, and share that learning for what it means to you.
 - At the Impact Presentation, teach your learning back to us in your own words / through your own artistic expression.

A rubric was created to evaluate the projects on different parameters: Connection to Personal Experience/Context, Level of Understanding of their Teaching Content, Integration of Equity & Inclusion Principles/Tools, and either Real World Application (if choosing option 1) or Creativity & Innovation (if choosing Option 2). These parameters allowed us to evaluate how our participants' application of E&I Academy learnings meet the E&I Academy goals. These Capstone Projects were presented at Impact Presentation Sessions in late January 2026.



5. 2025-2026 E&I ACADEMY EVALUATION: RESULTS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ITERATIONS



The E&I Academy used the following surveys before and after the program sections for the evaluation, in addition to the Capstone Project rubric evaluation, all analyzed by MSW Fellow Makesha Mercedat and E&I Program Administrator Florence Glynn:

- Application
- Anonymous Pre-Survey
- Cohort Feedback Survey
- Summit Feedback Survey
- Anonymous Post-Survey

The surveys gathered a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, including the following information.

I. WHO WERE THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE 2026-2026 E&I ACADEMY? (APPLICATION / PRE-SURVEY DATA)



Out of the 110 participants who applied, 100 participants attended the E&I Academy Cohorts.

Participants lived across the City of Boston in the following neighborhoods:

- Allston
- Back Bay
- Beacon Hill
- Brighton
- Chinatown
- Dorchester
- East Boston
- Fenway-Kenmore

- Hyde Park
- Jamaica Plain
- Leather District
- Mattapan
- Mission Hill
- North End
- Roslindale
- Roxbury
- South End
- West Roxbury

The majority of participants came from the neighborhoods of Roslindale, Jamaica Plain and Dorchester.



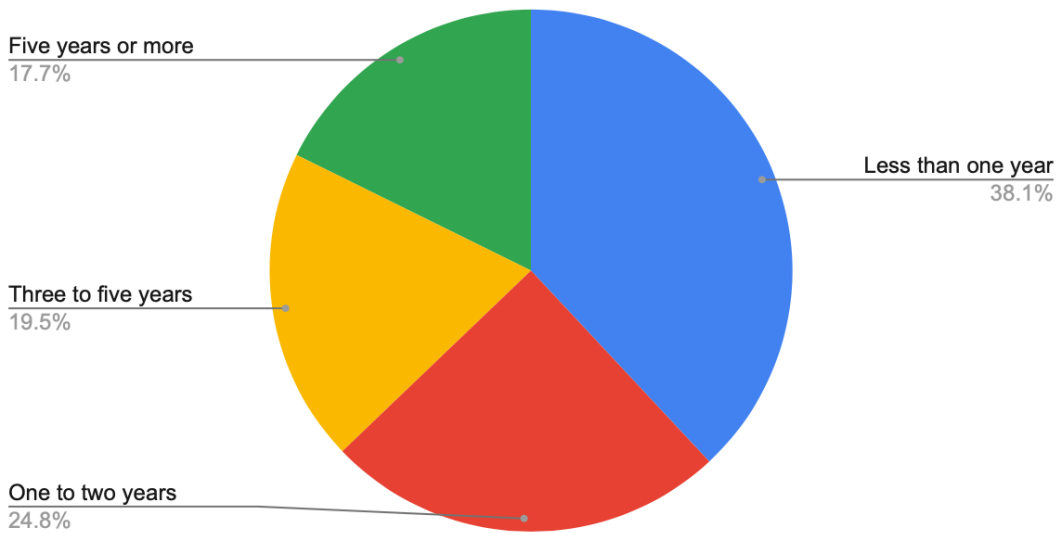
45.3% of the participants were white, 39.5% were Black or African-American, 10.5% were Asian, 1.2% were American Indian/Alaska Native, 4.7% racial identity was not listed, and 3.5% preferred not to answer.

17.2% of participants identified as Hispanic or Latino/-a/-e/-x, and 75.9% participants identified as non-Hispanic or Latino/-a/-e/-x.

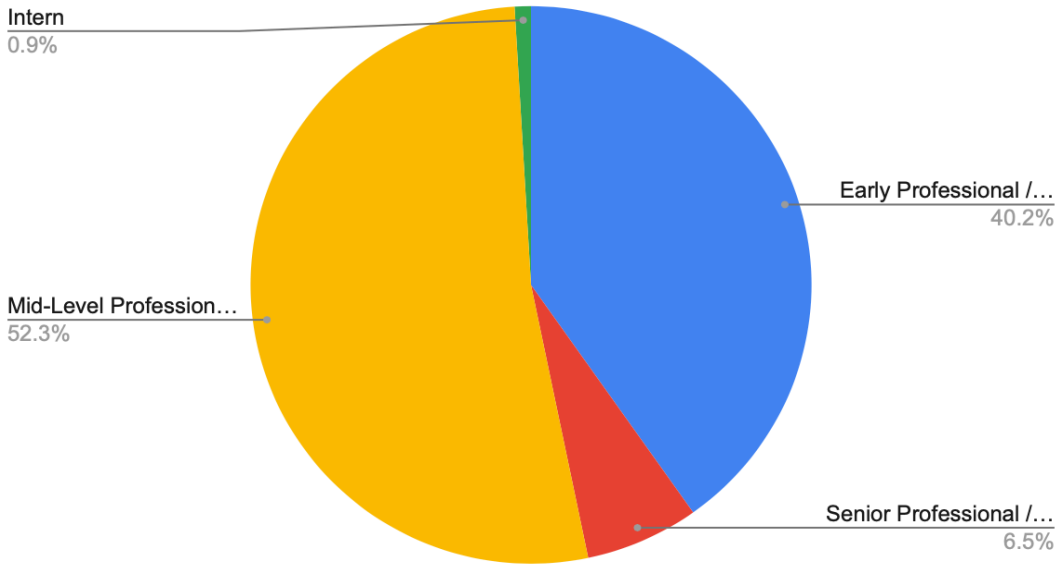
Women made up the vast majority of participants at 70% (63 participants), followed by men who made up 24.4% (22), and 8.9% of participants identified as non-binary or genderqueer.

The majority of participants worked in the City of Boston for one year or more (62%), while 38% had worked for the City for less than one year. Also, the majority of participants were mid-level professionals (49.6%) or early career professionals (37.2%), while only 6.5% were senior professionals.

Count of How long have you been employed with the City of Boston?

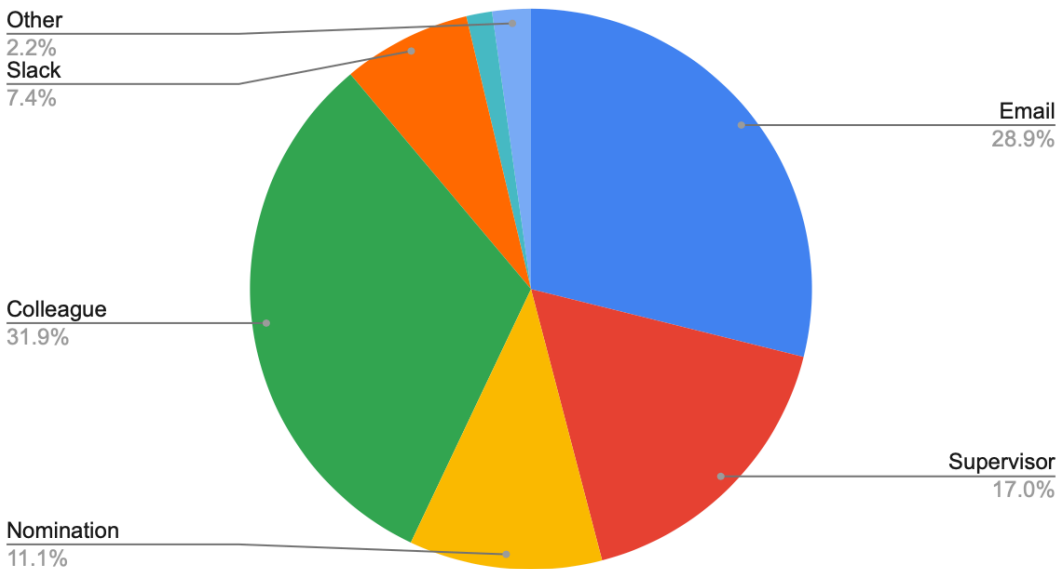


Count of What position do you hold professionally?



Participants heard about the E&I Academy through various channels, but the one most frequently cited was direct encouragement from colleagues, at 31.9%, and emails, at 28.9%.

How did you hear about the E&I Academy?



The data paints a picture of participants who were diverse across all demographics collected, revealing the program is reaching the communities who both reflect the

City's demographic complexity and who are most connected to equity challenges. In short: the E&I Academy is building a community of E&I Ambassadors that mirror Boston being a City for Everyone.

However, the data also shows that senior leadership in the City of Boston are the least engaged in the E&I Academy, suggesting more intentional outreach to and engagement with senior leadership is needed.

II. WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED IN THE COHORTS? (OPTIONAL COHORT FEEDBACK SURVEY DATA)



Participants found the topics presented at the sessions eye-opening, informative, and timely, and they appreciated meeting fellow colleagues.

“My overall experience with the E&I Academy has been very positive. It’s been a great opportunity to learn from real-world examples and connect with others who share similar interests.”

Participants also overall enjoyed the space created by the Cohort facilitators, who modeled what a space can look like to build trust across difference, the core goal of the E&I Academy.

“Flo and Coach Justice created such a safe space for us to learn and grow, and that’s the kind of space I want to create wherever I go now.”



Participants agreed these sessions all included important learnings.

“It was so illuminating! I learned a ton.”

Participants found the sessions engaging with storytelling and tools, where they could take some practical strategies to apply in their work, and participants also appreciated the stim tools, breaks, and energizers.

“I like the breakdown of the information, true examples of lived experiences, the empathy of each of the instructors, and the ability to network.”



Overall, participants were grateful to be a part of the E&I Academy and to learn and work to build a City for Everyone.

“I think what I liked best was the authenticity and emotional honesty of everyone involved. I found it inspiring to be surrounded by so many people from so many different departments (presenters and Cohort alike) who were uniformly committed to making Boston a city for all where we truly all belong. I learned so much, but really the thing that continues to blow me away is that something shifted in my heart that was really beautiful.”

Still, while participants enjoyed the sessions across the board, some participants suggested the following could be improved upon:

1. More networking opportunities to provide more chances to meet and greet other staff members across different departments.
2. More applied learning to make some sessions/frameworks less abstract and more applicable to their work, having participants reflect on real-life examples and how this learning could impact their role.



3. More interactive practices, more time to engage deeply with certain concepts/tools and to share their personal experiences in small groups, and less overall presentation content.
4. More inclusion of historical and present-day experiences across different intersectional communities, including Black American, Asian American, and Native American communities.
5. More senior leadership to be present and engaged as participants in the E&I Academy.
6. More frequent breaks.
7. More food and refreshments.



Additionally, adjustments were made to the Cohorts as they took place to ensure clarity of content and supportive facilitation for difficult topics, such as on racial justice, and also, this year, the E&I Academy facilitators piloted Office Hours with the facilitators of each department. These Office Hours were offered to provide space for participants to ask any follow-up questions and receive inspiration or help with their Capstone Projects. However, due to low participation, the Office Hours will not be offered next year. Rather, participants will be encouraged to reach out directly to departments on an individual basis.

III. WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED IN THE SUMMIT? (OPTIONAL SUMMIT FEEDBACK SURVEY DATA)



Overall, participants enjoyed the Summit. The general collected feedback reflects a day that was filled with healing and education about social change, community, and how to sustain the work that we do here at the City of Boston.

“Focused on positivity, welcoming, building us up as a team, education, and growth at every stage of our knowledge. Congratulations to Flo, the coaches, and the whole team on carrying out what has definitely become a highlight of the past few months for me as a city employee. It was urgently necessary for us to be reminded that there's a massive workforce all around us, sharing many of the same goals and eager to learn from one another. This has been a TREMENDOUS boost to morale.”

People enjoyed the physical space and the activities throughout the day.

“I liked the space (Rabb Hall). I liked Ky's presentation and appreciated hearing my peers' shareouts. The testimonials at the end were powerful.”

“I liked the social change ecosystem roles group discussion and self reflective piece. I also liked that the fact that the Kahoot was anonymous. Additionally, I enjoyed connecting with other participants.”

Participants highlighted the healing-centered spaces, including the breakout sessions on “Healing Liberation: Using the Power of Healing Circles for Grounding and Connection” by Coach Justice Roe Williams and “Why Sleep Isn't Enough: The 7 Types of Rest We All Need” by LaTasha Harris, as an essential part of processing oppression, burnout and the emotional weight of equity work.



“[I liked] the ability to continue healing from years of oppression and all the education surrounding my identities.”

Participants also felt a renewed sense of connection and belonging among their colleagues across the E&I Academy Cohorts, all committed to the work of building a City for Everyone.

“I loved the fact that it brought all of the different cohorts together in the same space and in-person!”

“I really enjoyed meeting other people. I have only been with the City for a year and have not had many opportunities like this.”



“Being in a space with colleagues from various departments, all working toward the same mission of equity and inclusion was truly meaningful. I left the summit with a strong sense of belonging.”

Despite overall feedback indicating people enjoyed the Summit, participants shared useful recommendations for future improvements. One individual thought that the day was too long or that certain activities did not fully connect to their day-to-day work, while several others actually wanted longer breakout sessions or more time for testimonials and learning. Participants asked for more networking opportunities across departments, especially for staff that consider themselves to be introverted. Logistically, participants asked for refreshments to be served throughout the day such as coffee, food and/or snacks. Lastly, several participants again mentioned the need for senior leadership to be in these spaces:

“In discussing with fellow participants at the Summit, a recurring sentiment was that we feel like there is not much we can do to effect social change in our workplaces, because we are lower in seniority. It seemed like not many of the

participants are managers, directors, and more senior staff. They set the example and from what I have heard from some colleagues, efforts to call out problems and create change have not been received well by managers. I think the E&I Academy should be required for directors/managers, if not required as part of onboarding with the City for all employees (though I know logistically that would be a challenge).”



All in all, participants appreciated how organized and intentional the Summit felt, and future Summits need to have more opportunities for participants to network, to connect with senior leadership, and to make clearer connections to their job roles in the City of Boston.

IV. WHAT WENT WELL AND WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED IN THE CAPSTONE PROJECTS? (CAPSTONE PROJECT RUBRIC AND POST-SURVEY DATA)



In its first year, the Capstone Project brought forth 57 various projects. The majority of projects were done individually, though a few projects were done in groups.

As mentioned earlier, the Capstone Project gives participants an opportunity to showcase what they've learned, either through a creative art form or a practical application. Projects were assessed on the following dimensions: Connection to Personal Experience/Context, Level of Understanding of their Teaching Content, Integration of Equity & Inclusion Principles/Tools, and either Real World Application (if choosing option 1) or Creativity & Innovation (if choosing Option 2).

The Capstone Projects featured slightly more practical applications than art-based or hybrid projects, although all were creative. 35 projects were presented that offered direct relevance to City operations, whether connected to a participant's department or to municipal functions more broadly. Each project carried the potential to influence constituents at a systemic level.



Participants described the Capstone Projects as an inspiring, creative, and deeply human experience that encouraged vulnerability, reflection, and authentic expression. Many shared that initial nerves quickly shifted into motivation as they saw the diverse ways colleagues applied equity principles through art, storytelling, policy ideas, and personal narratives. The session felt uplifting and affirming, revealing how committed people across the City are to advancing equity and inclusion in their own styles and contexts. Participants valued the openness of the space, the chance to think outside the box, and the opportunity to learn from one another’s work, noting that the presentations made the Academy’s lessons feel real, actionable, and grounded in shared humanity.

“Going into the presentation, I was nervous about whether my presentation met the prompt since it was so open-ended. But once the presentations started, I saw how everyone did such a good job of meeting the prompt in their own style of working & thinking. I came out of the session feeling inspired and assured that different people all over the City are doing their best to advance equity and inclusion in their work.”



As the Academy moved toward its culminating moment, the Capstone Projects offered a natural transition from learning to application. Participants appreciated the accountability to integrate the E&I Academy into their work, now and moving forward. Moreover, participants were inspired to collaborate with other colleagues to advance the work to build a City for Everyone.

“Presenting our impact made the whole Academy feel 'real' rather than just another training. It was also just good to see the variety of work happening across the City and get some fresh ideas from other departments that I can actually use.”

Suggestions for next year’s Capstone Project mainly focused on logistics such as offering more time for presenters, providing clearer examples or more structure, and creating a more centralized space to view all the projects (such as by combining the Summit and the Capstone Projects into the same day). Additional follow up could also be helpful, with one participant who asked for a six-month follow-up check-in for those who created practical applications, creating a “part-two” to the Capstone Presentations. For the most part, participants would not change a thing

about the Capstone Presentations, calling it “engaging”, “collaborative” and “meaningful”.

“The most helpful portion of the [E&I Academy] program for me was the Impact Presentation session. I happened to be with a very impressive group of classmates who presented detailed proposals that I do believe should be enacted in COB and I hope that they are. I would like to support them in any way possible.”



V. WHAT WAS THE OVERALL IMPACT OF THE E&I ACADEMY? (POST-SURVEY DATA)



Across a 5-point Likert scale set of statements used in both the pre- and post-survey, results showed clear growth in participants' confidence, understanding, and sense of belonging. For example, confidence in reaching out to the Equity & Inclusion Cabinet increased by .83 points, suggesting that participants gained clarity about available support and felt more prepared to seek guidance when applying equity-minded practices. A similar .8-point rise in feeling equipped with tools to serve Boston's diverse residents indicates that the Academy provided an essential introduction to equity frameworks, especially for early-career staff new to this work. Even the more general statement about contributing to making Boston a "City for Everyone" showed a meaningful half-point increase, reflecting broader professional assurance. Finally, the sense of belonging rose .8 points, a modest but important shift given Boston's historical context, signaling that the Academy helped participants feel more connected and supported within the City.

Participants rated the quality of the E&I Academy at a 4.73 out of 5, and participants would likely recommend the E&I Academy to other City of Boston staff (4.75 out of

5), reflecting not only the quality of the curriculum but also the depth of connection, honesty, and community participants experienced throughout the Academy. From impactful Cohort sessions to the culminating Summit and Capstone Projects, participants consistently described the program as transformative, well-designed, and deeply meaningful. The feedback underscores that the Academy is not only meeting its goals but setting a standard for what equity-centered professional development can look like across the City.



Finally, when asked how their leadership in operationalizing equity and inclusion for residents in your day-to-day work at the City of Boston changed, if at all, through their participation in the E&I Academy, participants shared that the E&I Academy strengthened their understanding of inequities, expanded their equity frameworks, and increased their confidence in applying equity principles at work. Many now feel more intentional, connected across departments, and equipped with tools, language, and partnerships to embed equity into daily decisions. While some noted limited changes in concrete tasks due to their workplace context, most described meaningful shifts in mindset, leadership, compassion, and strategic thinking, both professionally and personally.

“Participating in the E&I Academy has shifted my leadership from being primarily service-oriented to being more intentionally equity-driven in both strategy and execution....the Academy pushed me to more critically examine systems, access points, and decision-making processes—not just outcomes.

I now approach initiatives with more intentional questions: Who is not in the room? What barriers might exist that we are not seeing? Are we designing programs for communities, or with them? This has influenced how I think about projects....where the goal is not only to provide services, but to reduce structural barriers by physically bringing City Hall into neighborhoods....



The Academy also strengthened my confidence in using my lived experience to inform policy conversations and advocate for language access, inclusive outreach strategies, and culturally responsive engagement. I’ve become more proactive in naming equity considerations early in planning processes, rather than retrofitting them later.

Overall, the E&I Academy helped me move from practicing inclusion instinctively to practicing it intentionally and systemically."

6. CONCLUSION

Bringing City of Boston employees together, the E&I Academy calls our colleagues to serve the constituents of Boston equitably and accessibly, to build a City for Everyone. By equipping staff with both technical tools and cultural awareness, the Academy ensures that equity is not treated as an abstract value but as a daily practice. City employees are not only learning together, they are building a collective commitment to transform how Boston serves its diverse communities.



“The E&I Academy didn’t just teach me about equity; it connected me to a powerful network of colleagues who are all striving to build a "City for Everyone". It moved me beyond the basics of diversity and equipped me with practical frameworks and the Equity Lens that I now use to make better, more inclusive decisions in my daily work. The sessions challenged me to reflect on my own intersectionality and gave me the space to have honest, sometimes difficult, but always necessary conversations. If you want to build trust across departments and truly understand the diverse Bostonians we serve, join the next cohort and become part of the Ambassador community!”

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank the following people for their contributions in guiding and supporting the E&I Academy to be a successful program: Chief Mariangely Solis Cervera, An Le, Maya Getter, Martine Maingot, Kenneth Moales, Susan McCollin, LaTasha Harris, Makesha Mercedat, Natalia Espinosa Tokuhama, Guadalupe Morales Martinez, Rui Santos, Eve Neider, David Martinez, E&I Academy Ambassadors, members of the E&I Academy Working Group, & any additional consultants!

I also would like to acknowledge and thank the E&I Academy Facilitators, without whom we could not have led this program:

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- Viola Dean, Coach Justice Roe Williams, Kimberly Rhoten, and Jullianne Doherty Lee from the Mayor's Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement;
- Robbie Adams from the Mayor's Office of Language and Communications Access;
- LaTasha Harris from the Equity & Inclusion Cabinet; and
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