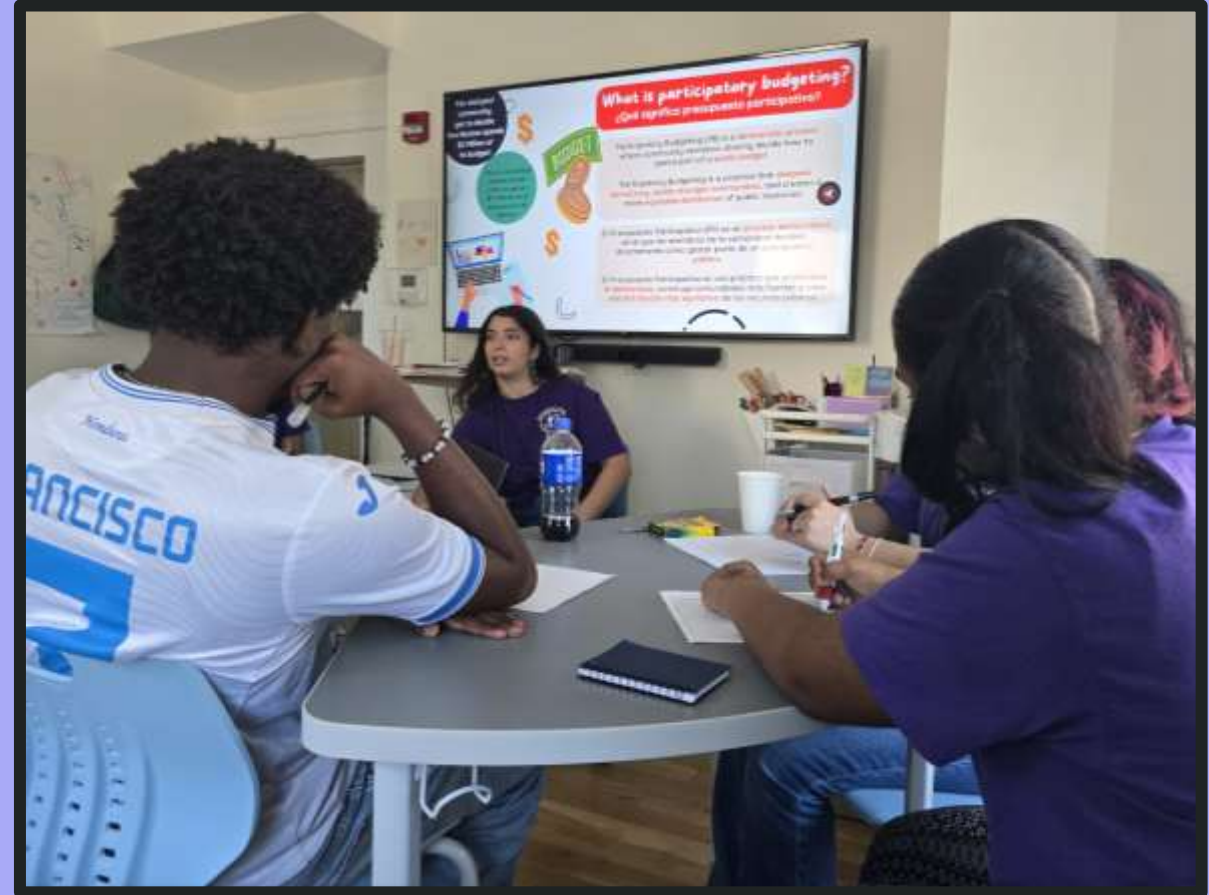


Ideas in Action Cycle 2 Evaluation 2025-26

Office of Participatory
Budgeting

September 2025
Idea Collection Report



Idea Collection Workshop during
Sociedad Latina Workshop on July 29, 2025.
Photo credit: OPB

The evaluation explores 4 questions

1. **Participation.** Who participated, and how?
2. **Impact.** What impact did *Ideas in Action* have on those who participated?
3. **Process.** What was the process used and how can it be improved? (especially operations, resources)
4. **Objectives.** How are the selected projects meeting the objectives of the PB Ordinance in terms of uses of funding and populations served?

This report focuses on two of them

1. **Participation.** Who participated, and how?
2. **Impact.** What impact did *Ideas in Action* have on those who participated?
3. **Process.** What was the process used and how can it be improved? (especially operations, resources)
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Phase

1

Idea Collection

Evaluation methods for Idea Collection

Method	Learning goal	Response Rate (RR) or Sample Size (n)
Embedded questions in the Online PB Portal	demographics (age, race/ethnicity, income)	age RR = 69% (827 /1203) race/ethnicity RR = 78% (939 /1203) income RR = 30% (356 /1203)
Optional evaluation surveys for participants	civic engagement, overall feedback	n = 233
Observation during Idea Collection events	context, process feedback	~half of all events were observed by OPB, the evaluation team, or the marketing team
Online debrief forms with contracted community partners	activities, overall feedback	RR = 71% (10/14)
OPB staff quarterly retrospective	process feedback	N/A



Evaluation Question

Who participated and how? To what extent did Ideas in Action engage priority populations? These are:

- residents living in historically underserved neighborhoods
- residents who identify with historically excluded or underrepresented groups
- residents who cannot or do not participate in civic life

What difference did Contract Partners make in engaging residents?

Half of resident ideas (46%) came through Contract Partners

The other half of ideas were independent (37%) or came through an activity hosted by a non-Contract Partner organization (16%)

Those who did not hear about Ideas in Action from a Contract Partner heard about it through:

Social media (29%)

Boston Public Library (19%)

Non-Contract Partner organization (19%)

Bus advertisement (14%)

n = 21 relative to 645 ideas (RR ~ 3%)

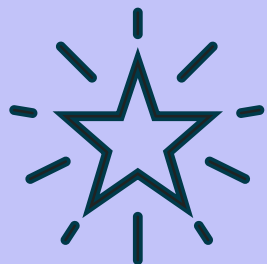


Sample of events where
Contract Partners tabled

Contracted Community
Partners hosted over
30 activities across Boston,
including:

- ❖ in-person and virtual
workshops
- ❖ tabling at community
events





Spotlight



Greater Boston 中華耆英會
Chinese Golden Age Center

“We primarily sought to engage **Chinese-speaking residents**, including both older adults and caregivers, many of whom are immigrants and **face language and cultural barriers when accessing resources**. The community is largely made up of **working-class families and seniors**, with a mix of Mandarin and Cantonese speakers.

By focusing on this group, we aimed to ensure their voices and ideas were represented in the process, especially since **they are often underrepresented in mainstream outreach efforts.**”

Residents from every neighborhood submitted ideas.

Six (6) neighborhoods submitted ideas at rates higher than Boston's overall rate.

Contract Partner activities map onto neighborhoods with high participation.

Chinatown and East Boston submitted the highest rate of ideas relative to their populations.

Neighborhood	# Ideas	Submitters per thousand	Contract Partner Activities ¹
Chinatown	★ 96	15.5	WW
East Boston	★ 267	6.2	TTTTWW ²
Jamaica Plain	★ 102	2.6	
Allston	61	2.5	TTTT ²
Downtown	30	2.2	
Roslindale	53	1.8	
Roxbury	★ 89	1.6	TWWW
Brighton	78	1.5	TTTT ³
Dorchester	★ 178	1.5	WW
Fenway	53	1.4	
Mattapan	32	1.3	

Source: Online portal data + Boston 2020 census data

Boston-wide submitters per thousand (1,000) = 1.8

¹As of reporting, includes data from 10 of the 14 Contract Partners

²East Boston Community Council integrated Idea Collection into pre-existing classes

³The Brighton Farmers Market serves Allston and Brighton



Idea Collection engaged more residents who identify as **Latinx** and **Asian** 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

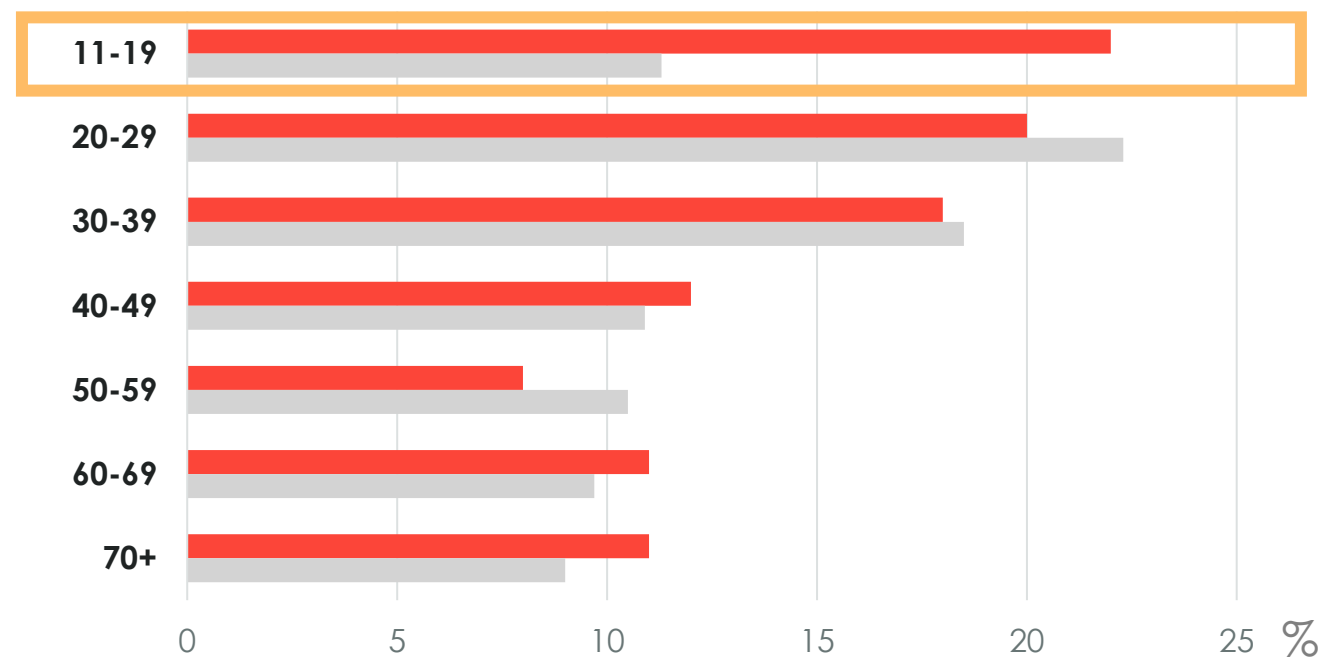
Source: Idea Collection Evaluation Survey (2025) + Boston 2020 census data

Race/ethnicity RR = 78% (939/1203); income RR = 30% (356/1203)





Idea Collection engaged younger residents effectively, relative to their share of the Boston population and was otherwise representative.



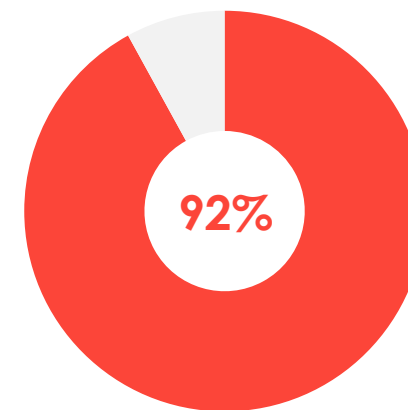
Source: Idea Collection Evaluation Survey (2025) +
Boston 2020 census data
Age RR = 69% (827/1203)



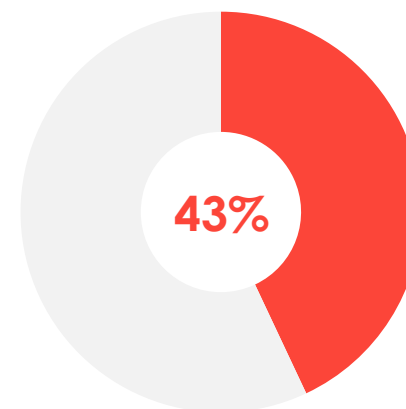
The Idea Collection phase primarily engaged residents participating for their first time.

Almost half of participants did not identify as civically engaged.

Source: Idea Collection Evaluation Survey (2025)
first time participant RR = 97% (227/233);
civic engagement RR = 96% (223/233)



First time participating in Ideas in Action



Did not identify as civically engaged*

*In the past 12 months, did not:

- ❖ attend public meetings
- ❖ advocate for a local issue or candidate
- ❖ work with others to improve your neighborhood or city



Preliminary Findings

The Idea Collection phase engaged a diverse group of Boston residents.

The neighborhoods of East Boston and Chinatown were particularly well-represented, as were Latinx, Asian, lower-income, and younger residents.

Most participants were first timers and close to half identified as not civically engaged.



Evaluation Question 3

What was the process used in the pilot year and how can it be improved, especially via changes in OPB operations and resources?

- What facilitated participation or got in the way, especially for the priority populations?
- How well did OPB collaborate with other aspects of city government and community organizations?



Idea Collection participants appreciated Ideas in Action overall

- Shared positive feelings about the process (n=27)
- Grateful for the direct community engagement (n=24)
- Appreciated efforts to reach certain groups like seniors, youth, Chinese-speakers (n=20)
- Process was useful for learning about community needs (n=19)

Source: Idea Collection Evaluation Survey (2025)

What worked well? What could be improved? RR = 72% (167/233);

“Creating your thoughts into reality. What better way to have our ideas come to life to benefit our community and the surrounding areas.”

“积极了解非英文社区人员的想法”

“Actively understanding the perspectives of non-English speaking communities”

- Survey respondents



Idea Collection participants shared ideas for improving the process

- Increase visibility and awareness of Ideas in Action and supporting events; provide more advance notice (n=17)
- Continue partnering with community organizations (n=10)
- Share updates about project implementation from the first cycle (n=9)

Source: Idea Collection Evaluation Survey (2025)

What worked well? What could be improved? RR = 72% (167/233);

“More communication and visibility so people know what phase this is, and who was rewarded in the past. More of a conversation.”

- Survey respondent



Contract Partners shared best practices for future cycles

- Continue using effective outreach strategies: personalized outreach, social media, and tabling
- Host events in familiar spaces, with trusted staff and at convenient times (or combined with other events)
- Take time to explain the process well; give examples of past ideas and local issues
- Organize participants into small discussion groups
- Include ways for participants to **see** their ideas in real time (e.g., in the PB Portal)
- Adjust approach based on participants' ages and cultural backgrounds
- Encourage people to complete their ideas before walking away (for tabling)
- Prioritize in-person workshops rather than virtual



People were truly intrigued that this is something Boston does, and then talking about last year's success in [Allston Brighton] and how the Rat Remediation could impact our community opened up lots of discussion... Truly having a conversation about being able to make a difference and pointing at examples gave people HOPE/belief they could make a difference.



Contract Partners were satisfied with OPB support and had ideas for improvement

- Build in more time for Contract Partners to plan and host events
- Re-consider timing! (July specifically)
- Provide additional translated outreach materials, financial support, and extra staff or volunteer support from OPB
- Provide more training, especially if there are any staff transitions among Contract Partners
- Provide information about winning proposals from past cycles



A big question participants had was **what progress is being made on the projects that won from last year's cycle.** I wonder if having a progress report of sorts could better support the **building of trust** goal of the Idea in Action phase. It was great to have Renato present to speak and answer the question directly and still I think about how general public could benefit if there was report more cohesively and widely shared.



Preliminary Findings

Participants and Contracted Community Partners felt the process was implemented effectively.

Participants valued intentional engagement strategies and wished that Ideas in Action had more visibility.

Contract Partners appreciated their role and had ideas for increasing engagement and workshop efficacy, and better weaving Idea Collection with winning projects from prior cycles.

Thank you

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