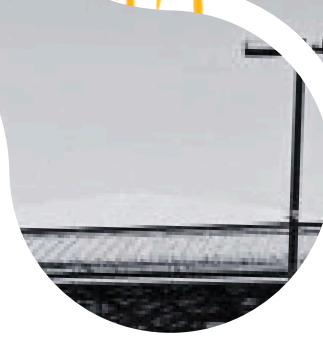




BLACK MALE EQUITY STUDY

in the City of Boston

HOUSING,
HEALTH,
EDUCATION
AND
ECONOMIC
EQUITY



BOSTONIA
AD

TR TURY
RESEARCH

PHASE 1 BRIEF
APRIL 1ST, 2026



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*Black Male
Advancement*



**BLACK
MEN & BOYS**
Commission

CITY of BOSTON



Black Male
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**HOUSING,
HEALTH,
EDUCATION
AND
ECONOMIC
EQUITY**



BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Boston faces a population-specific, place-based crisis for Black males, rooted in inequitable conditions that shape health and opportunity. Black males in Boston are concentrated in specific neighborhoods, and longstanding inequities in education, economic stability, housing and wealth, health and health care access, and criminal legal exposure continue to limit opportunity across the life course. These inequities are not experienced as separate problems. They operate as a linked system in which instability in one domain increases risk and constrains progress in others.

The City of Boston established the Office of Black Male Advancement (OBMA) to reduce structural barriers and expand opportunity for Black men and boys. To support this mandate with defensible, community-grounded evidence, OBMA commissioned the Black Male Equity Study (BMES). This report presents BMES Phase 1, a triangulated community needs assessment designed to identify community-defined priorities and barriers, clarify how conditions interact across domains, and provide an evidence-informed foundation for planning, reporting, and accountable action.

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WHAT WE DID

Tury Research Institute developed a Boston-specific evidence base in two ways. First, we synthesized Boston-focused contextual evidence describing conditions and documented inequities affecting Black males across health, housing, education, and economic opportunity. Second, we synthesized peer-city evidence from eight major U.S. cities across seven outcome areas to characterize common inequities, program approaches, and persistent evaluation gaps.

We then conducted a trauma-informed, community-based participatory research-informed community needs assessment using four complementary primary data components:



Empowerment Summit stakeholder survey (March 2025): brief survey of summit attendees (N = 20 usable surveys after data cleaning).



Citywide community needs assessment survey (March to November 2025): cross-sectional convenience survey of eligible Black males who live or work in Boston and stakeholders whose roles directly affect Black males (N = 547 eligible respondents; response rate 20.6% among individuals reached).



Stakeholder qualitative interviews (June to August 2025): semi-structured interviews with Black male community leaders and cross-sector stakeholders (N = 20).



Deliberative engagement sessions (July to August 2025): four facilitated group sessions focused on economic, health, education, and housing equity (N = 63).



City wide community outreach efforts grounded in the engagement of 2,659 Black men and community stakeholders.



WHAT WE FOUND

Across the Empowerment Summit stakeholder survey, participants most consistently prioritized economic and workforce development, education and mentorship, and they also elevated housing and homeownership, community violence and trauma, and health and wellness. The most frequently reported barriers were lack of awareness about programs, financial constraints, and limited trust in institutions. Mental health and education were commonly described as “overlooked” issues.

Across the citywide survey, community violence and trauma was the most frequently selected first-ranked priority issue. Fatherhood and parenting support, economic and workforce development, and education and mentorship repeatedly appeared among top priorities alongside housing and homeownership and health and wellness. Barriers closely mirrored the stakeholder survey, with lack of program awareness, financial constraints, and mistrust most common.

More than half of respondents reported they were not aware of programs available to support Black males in Boston. Respondents endorsed service needs that included support for Black-owned businesses and entrepreneurship, affordable housing and homeownership assistance, vocational training and education pathways, improved mental health services and accessibility, and criminal justice and reentry support.

In qualitative interviews, participants described Boston as resource-rich but difficult to access in practice for Black men because of systemic barriers, bureaucracy, low visibility of resources, and persistent racism.

Narratives emphasized displacement and exclusion, constrained pathways to stable employment and entrepreneurship, school experiences shaped by bias and under-resourcing in Boston Public Schools (BPS), mental health needs and medical mistrust, and housing unaffordability that undermines stability even for middle-income professionals. Mentorship and networks were repeatedly described as protective.

In deliberative engagement, participants consistently emphasized structural conditions over individual blame. Across sessions, participants highlighted housing instability and displacement, gatekept job pathways and hiring inequities, limited wealth-building pathways, health access and health education barriers, mental health stigma and lack of culturally safe services, violence and safety concerns, and weak civic voice and accountability. Participants repeatedly described information asymmetries and program invisibility as core barriers, even when resources exist.



TRIANGULATED COMMUNITY NEEDS AND CONVERGENCE

Triangulation produced a standardized list of 14 community needs. Eleven needs demonstrated convergence across all four studies and formed the highest priority tier:

- 1 LIVING-WAGE JOBS, WORKFORCE PATHWAYS, AND CAREER MOBILITY**
- 2 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, STABILITY, ANTI-DISPLACEMENT, AND HOMEOWNERSHIP PATHWAYS**
- 3 PRACTICAL ACCESS BURDENS INCLUDING AFFORDABILITY, TRANSPORTATION, TIME, AND CHILDCARE**
- 4 MENTORSHIP, ROLE MODELS, GUIDED PATHWAYS, AND NETWORKS**
- 5 TRUST, CULTURAL FIT, RACISM, CIVIC VOICE, AND BELONGING**
- 6 COMMUNITY SAFETY, VIOLENCE EXPOSURE, AND TRAUMA BURDEN**
- 7 CRIMINAL LEGAL EXPOSURE INCLUDING CORI AND REENTRY BARRIERS**
- 8 MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS THAT FIT BLACK MEN'S REALITIES**
- 9 COMMUNITY SAFETY, VIOLENCE EXPOSURE, AND TRAUMA BURDEN**
- 10 PHYSICAL HEALTH ACCESS, PREVENTION, AND HEALTH LITERACY**
- 11 PROGRAM VISIBILITY, NAVIGATION, AND "KNOWING WHERE TO START"**



Entrepreneurship, business ownership pathways, and access to capital demonstrated strong convergence across three studies. Fatherhood and parenting support and healthy neighborhood environments were important but surfaced with more limited convergence, suggesting either method-specific emphasis or measurement limitations in shorter survey instruments.





WHAT THE RESULTS MEAN FOR BOSTON

The results indicate that Boston's Black male equity challenge is best understood as a systems problem, not a set of isolated service gaps. Needs are linked and mutually reinforcing. Economic mobility is repeatedly constrained by opaque hiring pipelines, records-based exclusion, and housing instability. Housing stability is constrained by insufficient income, displacement pressures, and limited wealth-building pathways. Violence and trauma operate as immediate harms that also reduce daily functioning, disrupt school and work trajectories, and compound stress and health risk.

A second implication is that access to opportunity in Boston is experienced as fragmented and difficult to navigate. Across both surveys, lack of program awareness was the most common barrier, and mistrust and cultural misalignment were widely reported. Qualitative evidence adds a clear mechanism. Even when resources exist, visibility, bureaucracy, and unclear entry points function as barriers in themselves. This suggests that Boston's institutional density does not automatically translate into usable opportunities for Black males.

Third, the community's framing is structural. Participants repeatedly described exclusionary policies and systems, rejected personal-deficit explanations, and emphasized racism, displacement, and gatekeeping. This matters because it shapes what approaches will be perceived as legitimate and what will be perceived as superficial.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our recommendations are organized as a stepped plan because the results from the community needs assessment demonstrate a linked system problem and because OBMA's ordinance and planning responsibilities require foundations that make reach, equity, and impact visible and measurable over time. For brevity, we provide the first pillar of the plan in this Executive Summary, which focuses on making the ecosystem supporting Black males in Boston legible and measurable. The intent is to move from fragmented activity to a coordinated, accountable portfolio that can demonstrate benefit for Black males in Boston.

**PILLAR 1 (0–6 MONTHS):
BUILD THE FOUNDATION
FOR AN ORDINANCE-
READY, EVIDENCE-DRIVEN
SYSTEM**

**GOAL: MAKE THE
ECOSYSTEM LEGIBLE,
MEASURABLE, AND
GOVERNABLE SO OBMA
CAN REPORT CREDIBLY
ON BLACK MALES AND
MANAGE TOWARD
OUTCOMES.**



Establish an OBMA Theory of Change and Logic Model

- Develop a clear Theory of Change that links the convergent needs from this assessment to intermediate outcomes and longer-term outcomes for Black males in Boston.
- Build an associated logic model that specifies inputs, core activities, outputs, and measurable outcomes across domains (economic stability, housing stability, education pathways, health and mental health, safety and justice, and cross-cutting navigation and trust).



Create a shared measurement and reporting framework aligned to the ordinance

- Define a small set of core indicators (with clear timelines for measurement across the span of the program) that all OBMA-funded activities must report, including reach (who), geography (where), outputs (what was delivered), and outcomes (what changed).
- Require race-by-gender disaggregation as a default and specify minimum demographic fields, service dose fields, and follow-up time points.



Launch a “city program registry” to capture all programs that the city funds or operates that is intended to benefit Black males

- Establish a city-wide single inventory of City of Boston programs, budgets, and grants that impact outcomes for Black males in Boston (i.e. economic stability, housing stability, education pathways, health and mental health, safety and justice)
- The goal is to answer what exists, who it reaches, what it costs, and what evidence exists.
- Retrospectively assign program effectiveness by standardized methodology that focus on accountability such as:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start by asking “What change did this program contribute to?”
- Extract 3-5 outcomes and indicators for each program from reports by grantees and implementors
- Check alignment of these program outcomes and indicators with desired outcome and indicators using quantitative metrics.
- For e.g., Number of young adults who completed the 2-year educational program.
- Not: 12 classes conducted, 120 youth attended training, 12 partners engaged.
- Optional: Use outcome harvesting (a 6-step process to collect evidence of outcomes and retrospectively assess contribution).

Conduct a “citywide service ecosystem” inventory to develop a dynamic living asset map for the city of Boston

- Build a living asset map of community-based organizations, service providers, informal support structures relevant to Black males.
- Include: eligibility criteria, capacity, service model, referral pathways, languages, cultural fit, hours, location, cost, wait times, and contact workflows.

Set evaluation standards that scale with funding and risk

- Define a tiered evaluation requirement: basic monitoring for small grants, outcome tracking for mid-level grants, and independent impact evaluation for large or strategic investments.
- Specify that “evaluation” means more than satisfaction. It includes documented outcomes, equity reach, and retention, with external or independent evaluation when scale or political salience is high.

RECOMMENDATIONS



PILLARS 2&3

Pillars two and three focus on redesigning the program portfolio based on evidence and fit and finally scaling what works with independent evaluation and disciplined reallocation of funding.

Core elements include a retrospective review of current programs, tiered monitoring and evaluation requirements scaled to investment size, and a sustained learning agenda that reallocates funding toward interventions that demonstrate reach and measurable benefit for Black males.

BOTTOMLINE

Boston now has a defensible, community-grounded baseline of Black male priorities and barriers, supported by convergence across four complementary data sources. The evidence is clear on what Black males identify as most urgent and on why existing resources are often not experienced as reachable or trustworthy. The next step is not more fragmentation.

It is a disciplined infrastructure for coordination, measurement, and evaluation, paired with a focused portfolio that reflects community-defined needs and can demonstrate impact over time.





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BLACK MALE EQUITY STUDY

The Numbers Behind the Data *in Boston*

90,000 Black men & boys in the City of Boston

71%

Black boys that graduates at Boston Public Schools.

82%

Black boys are not meeting expectations at English Language Arts at Boston Public Schools.

33%

Black men pay more than half their household income in rent.

11%

Black men are homeowners.

18%

Black men over the age of 60, have more than \$20,000 annually in retirement income.

94%

Black men over the age of 35 with no investments.

60%

Black men work full-time and make under \$50,000 a year.

\$7,800

The median net wealth of a Black families in Boston compared to white families who's median is **\$549,000**.



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