



City of Boston
Mayor Michelle Wu

MAYOR MICHELLE WU AND THE OFFICE OF RETURNING CITIZENS ANNOUNCE GRANT AWARDS SUPPORTING PROGRAMS THAT REDUCE YOUTH RECIDIVISM

City will award \$250,000 in participatory budgeting funds to organizations serving youth returning from incarceration

BOSTON – DATE – Mayor Michelle Wu, in partnership with the Office of Human Services (OHS) and the Mayor’s Office of Returning Citizens (ORC), announced the allocation of \$250,000 in grant funding provided through the City’s annual operating budget to community-based organizations focused on youth recidivism and reentry support. This funding opportunity is a direct outcome of resident-led decision-making through the City’s Participatory Budgeting (PB) process established through a voter-approved ballot initiative in November 2021. The grant aims to empower organizations with a proven commitment to supporting Boston’s justice-involved youth—both those currently incarcerated and those transitioning back into the community.

“Through the City’s participatory budgeting process, we’re able to directly engage residents in discussions and execute ideas that best benefit our community – this grant is a direct outcome of that,” said **Mayor Michelle Wu**. “Supporting our youth as they overcome hardship and challenges fosters resilience and empowers the next generation to succeed. We look forward to working alongside our partners to support our young residents as they reenter their communities.”

“It is exciting to partner with organizations that offer specialized support to young people who have been directly impacted by the criminal legal system,” said **José F. Massó, Chief of Human Services**. “I look forward to learning from this cohort of grantees about how the City can better meet the needs of this population.”

The Youth Reentry Grant underscores the City’s commitment to community engagement and holistic approaches to reentry. Grant recipients were selected based on their experience serving youth, particularly those disproportionately represented in the Massachusetts carceral and juvenile justice systems, such as Black men and women, LGBTQI+ individuals, and youth impacted by mental health or substance use disorders.

“Our Office is proud to lead a yearly PB process where residents can propose, prioritize, and fund projects that are important to them,” **said Renato Castelo, Director of the Office of Participatory Budgeting.** “Working in partnership with the Office of Returning Citizens to deliver on the vision that residents had for this funding has been our uppermost priority.”

This grant is one of the six proposals that received the most votes by residents during cycle one of Ideas in Action, the City’s Participatory Budgeting (PB) initiative. Ideas in Action is a democratic process where Boston residents can directly decide how to spend a portion of the City’s budget by sharing, prioritizing, and voting for project ideas that benefit our communities.

“The number of groups that applied for this funding shows just how deep the need is for real youth reentry support and how much further the funding needs to go,” **said Sukhai Rawlins, member of the Better Budget Alliance.** “Participatory Budgeting shows what’s possible when the people most impacted get to decide where our money goes. We need to expand PB so more ideas like this can get funded and we need to keep investing in housing, youth jobs, food access, and immigration support - all the things that actually keep community members safe and supported.”

“On behalf of the Boston Lesbian Gay Urban Foundation, we are thrilled to be awarded with the ORC Youth Reentry Grant, **said Curtis Santos, Executive Director of Boston Lesbian Gay Urban Foundation Inc.** “This Youth Grant fuels our mission to uplift LGBTQIA2S+ youth impacted by the justice system. Together, we’re turning barriers into bridges and helping young people reimagine what’s possible. This support allows us to provide culturally and linguistically responsive care that meets youth where they are, helping to reduce recidivism and build pathways toward stability, empowerment, and belonging.”

“Working with the City of Boston’s Office of Returning Citizens has strengthened our impact and validated our mission. We’re grateful to Mayor Wu and the ORC team for their partnership and support in helping youth successfully return to their communities,” **said Abrigal Forrester, Chief Executive Officer of the Center for Teen Empowerment.**

“Where we come from, second chances don’t get handed out; they get fought for! This grant ain’t just money, it’s momentum. It’s power in the hands of people who never gave up on the hood, and never will,” **said Derrel Weathers, Executive Director of Heal the Hood INC.** “At Heal the Hood, we don’t just feed kids, we feed minds. Empty stomachs don’t mean empty potential. Our Healing Grounds is a space where youth tap into tech, storytelling, filmmaking, and futures they were never supposed to imagine. This work is how we break from the plantation mindset, by giving the next generation Purpose, not pity. Innovation, not incarceration. It’s for the ones who made it out, and the ones who still can.”

“We are grateful to the Office of Returning Citizens for their investment in YouthConnect and the young people we serve. This partnership recognizes that meaningful reentry support requires collaboration and compassion. For nearly three decades, YouthConnect has worked alongside

the Boston Police Department and community partners to address the root causes of youth justice involvement while supporting entire families, **said Kevan Barton, Executive Director of YouthConnect - Boys and Girls Club of Boston.** “This grant will help us continue providing the flexible and free mental health services and wraparound support that young people need as they heal and rebuild their lives when returning back into the community.”

“Straight Ahead Ministries is thrilled to receive this grant from the Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens. This investment ensures we can immediately ramp up our programming, providing the intensive job training, resource navigation, and life skills instruction that our returning youth and young adults need most. This is about more than just second chances; it's about giving them the tangible tools to rewrite their narratives and achieve long-term success,” **said Ivy Long, Director of Boston Reentry, Straight Ahead Ministries.**

“This grant enables us to strengthen our efforts in supporting youth impacted by the justice system—providing them not only with a second chance, but with meaningful opportunities to succeed,” **said Ashley Montgomery, Executive Director, Mayor's Office of Returning Citizens.** “By engaging young people with targeted support and resources, we can help reduce the likelihood of future justice involvement.”

Below is the list of organizations receiving grants:

- **Heal The Hood**
Provides community-based healing through art, education, and life skills training, fostering emotional wellness and personal growth.
- **Boston LesbianGay Urban Foundation**
Delivers case management and workforce development programs with a focus on empowering the LGBTQIA community.
- **Promoting Conflict Resolution**
Offers family reunification counseling, life skills education, and wraparound support services to strengthen family and community bonds.
- **Straight Ahead Ministries**
Provides individualized case management, hands-on skills training, apprenticeship preparation, soft skills development, and financial literacy education to support successful reentry and employment.
- **BHA Charlestown Education**
Delivers education, career, and college preparation, housing stability assistance, and mental health support, while providing stipends to participants.
- **Haley House**

Combines culinary and nutrition education with peer mentorship and case management to promote wellness, employment readiness, and community engagement.

- **Center for Teen Empowerment**
Supports youth through mental health services, group mentoring, job readiness training, and career exploration programs that build confidence and leadership.
- **BoYouth Connect**
Provides comprehensive mental health services to youth and their families, fostering resilience and emotional stability.
- **A Year and A Day Foundation**
Offers literacy services, tutoring, GED preparation, workforce development, and soft skills training to promote academic and career success.
- **The Modern Mentor**
Empowers girls through mentorship, group workshops, healing circles, and peer discussions focused on self-awareness and leadership development.
- **Building Brothers**
Provides mentorship and personal development opportunities for young men, fostering accountability, confidence, and community responsibility.
- **Transformational Prison Project**
Facilitates restorative justice circles, reentry planning, and mentorship to support healing, reconciliation, and successful reintegration after incarceration.

To learn more about supporting Boston's returning citizens, visit [here](#). For more information about other grant opportunities with the City of Boston, visit [here](#).

###