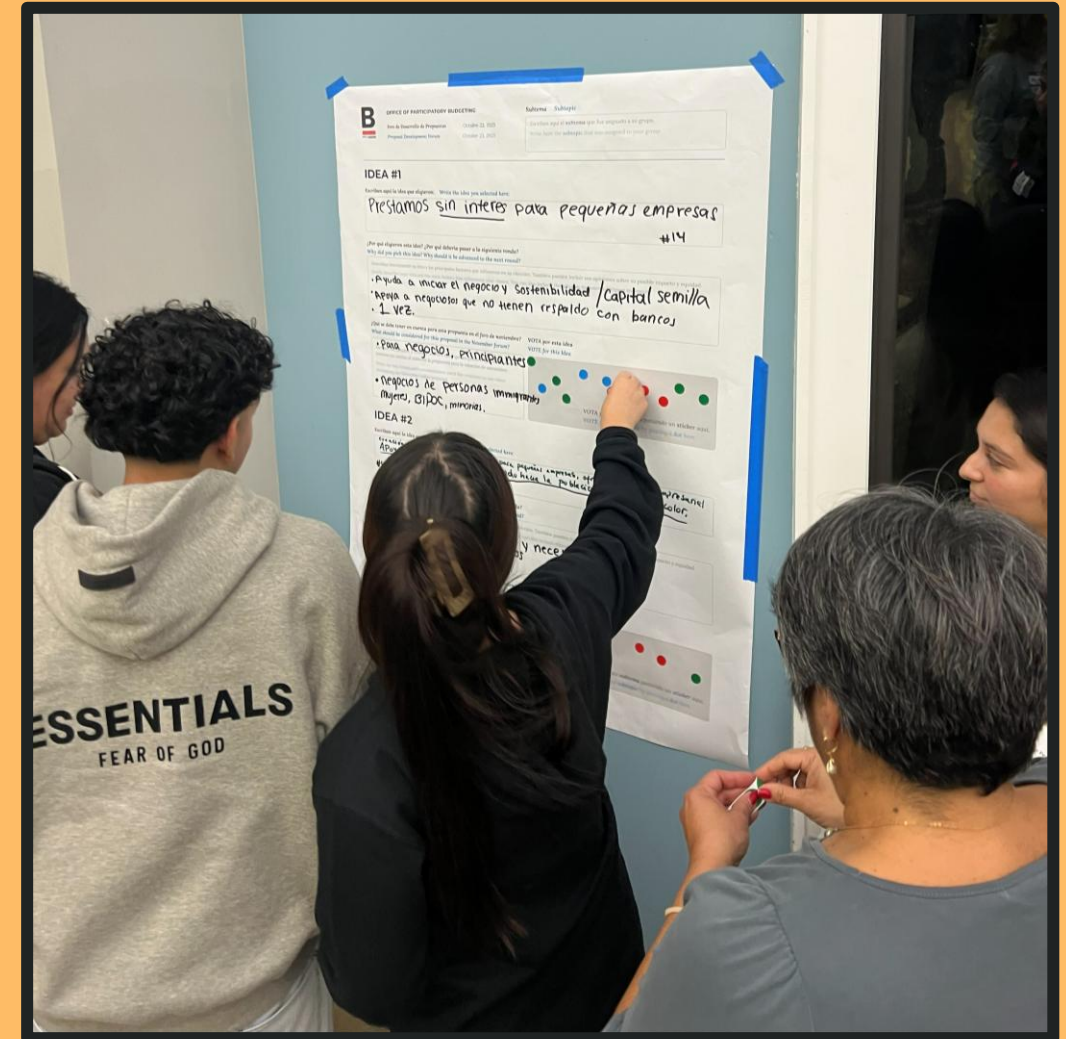


Ideas in Action Cycle 2 Evaluation 2025-26

Office of Participatory Budgeting
January 2026
Proposal Development Report, pt. 2



Proposal Development Forum at
Maverick Landing Community Services in East Boston
October 23, 2025.
Photo credit: OPB



Evaluation Question 1

**Who participated and how? To what extent did Forums
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



Residents from at least 17 neighborhoods participated in forums. Individual n=137; Neighborhoods n=147

Some neighborhoods were well represented relative to their population, especially East Boston and Allston.

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

Note: Some individuals selected multiple neighborhoods

Boston-wide participants per 10,000 = 2.2

Neighborhood RR = 85% (137/161)

★ Physical location of a Forum

Neighborhood	Forum Participants*	Participants per 10,000
East Boston ★	37	8.6
Dorchester	22	1.8
Allston	15	6.0
Brighton ★	12	2.3
Roxbury	10	1.8
Roslindale	7	2.4
Hyde Park	7	2.0
Jamaica Plain	7	1.7
West Roxbury	6	1.9
Fenway	6	1.6
Mattapan ★	5	2.1
Downtown ★	3	2.2
Back Bay	3	1.6
Mission Hill	2	1.1
South End	2	0.6
South Boston	2	0.5
Beacon Hill	1	1.1



**Two out of the five
Mattapan participants
attended the Mattapan
Forum.**

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

Note: Some individuals selected multiple neighborhoods

Boston-wide participants per 10,000 = 2.2

Neighborhood RR = 85% (137/161)

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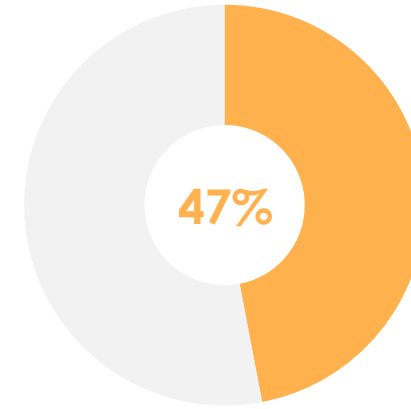
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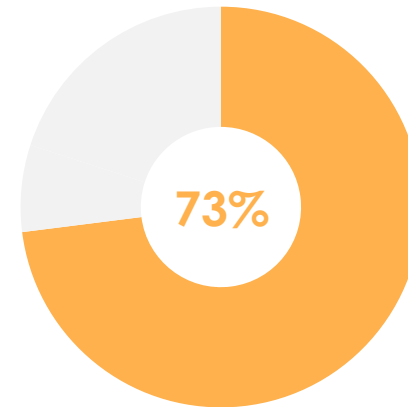
Forums were split between first time participants and returners who have previously engaged in Ideas in Action.

Most participants identified as civically engaged.

Source: Forum Evaluation Survey (2025)
first time participant RR = 88% (142/161);
civic engagement RR = 86% (138/161)



First time participating in
Ideas in Action
n=142



Identify as civically engaged*
n=138

*In the past 12 months, did:

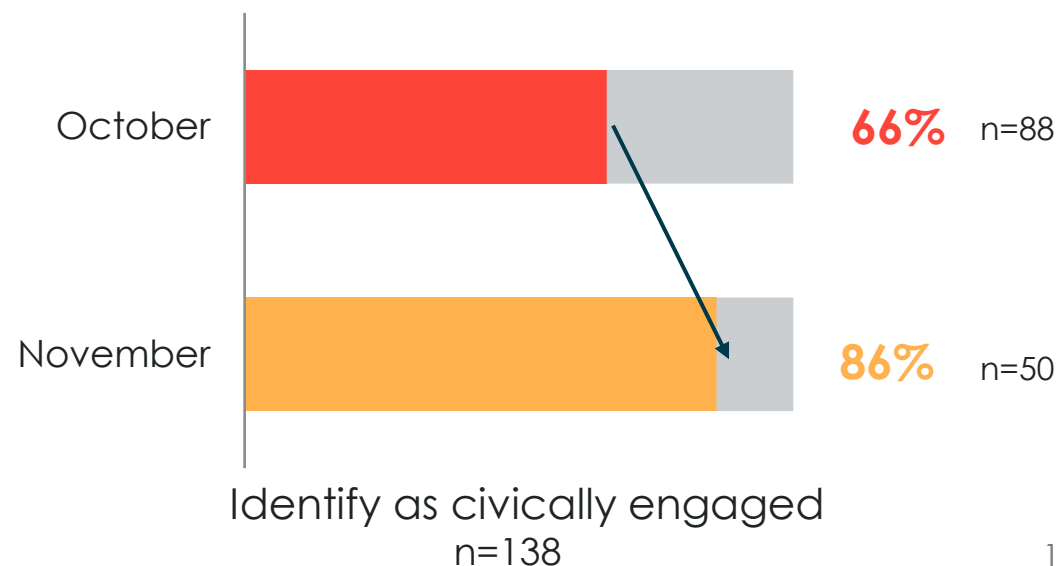
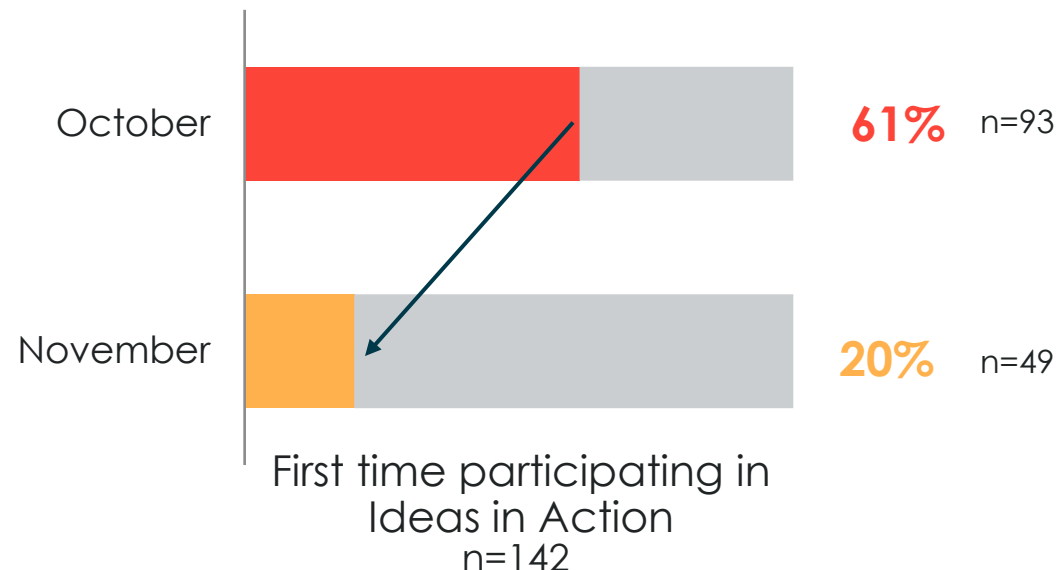
- ❖ attend public meetings
- ❖ advocate for a local issue or candidate
- ❖ work with others to improve your neighborhood or city



Most participants were first timers in October (+41%) suggesting that many decided to continue participating. In fact 39 people came back!

More participants identified as civically engaged in November (+20%), potentially due to participating in October.

Most first timers did not identify as civically engaged (68%).





We looked at first timers and returners in terms of race / ethnicity and age and did not find any notable patterns.

The lack of patterns suggests first timers were representative of overall participants.



Preliminary Findings

It is likely that the two-part structure of Proposal Development Forums between October and November motivated participants to return and continuing participating in *Ideas in Action*.

Repeat engagement in *Ideas in Action* may be helping participants identify as civically engaged.



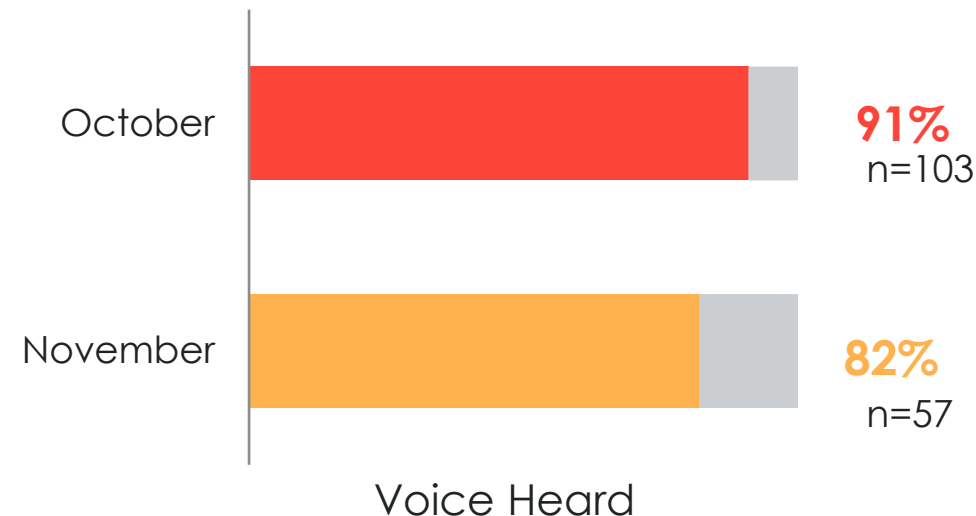
Evaluation Question 2

What impact did Ideas in Action have on those who participated? How did it affect:

- Trust in city government
- Civic knowledge (especially budgeting)
- Interest in future civic engagement, including future cycles of Ideas in Action



Across Forums in **October and **November**, most participants agreed that *Ideas in Action* allows for their voice to be heard by the city of Boston.**



*1. Do you agree with the following statements?

- ❖ I believe participating in Ideas in Action allows my voice to be heard by the City of Boston



In **October, almost all participants agreed that forums helped them consider other viewpoints.**

In **November, most participants agreed that forums helped them better understand how Boston's budgeting process works.**



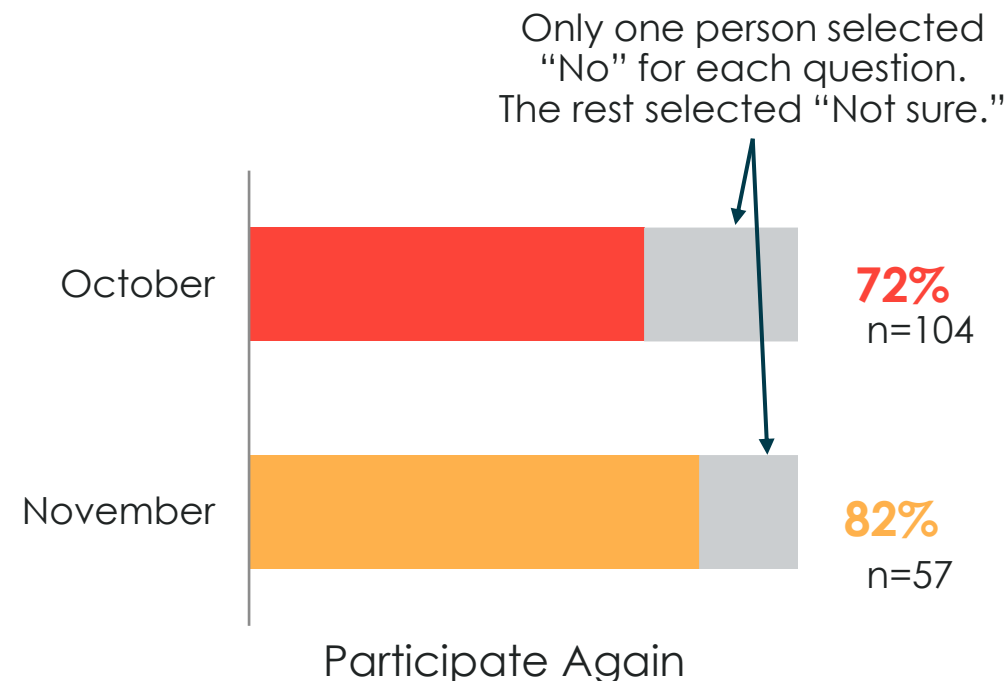
*1. Do you agree with the following statements?

- ❖ Today's event helped me consider other viewpoints
- ❖ Today's event helped me better understand how Boston's budgeting process works



Across Forums in **October and **November**, a majority of participants said they planned to participate in *Ideas in Action* again.**

Note: 86% of Visioning Forum participants in Cycle 1 said they planned to vote



*1. Do you agree with the following statements?

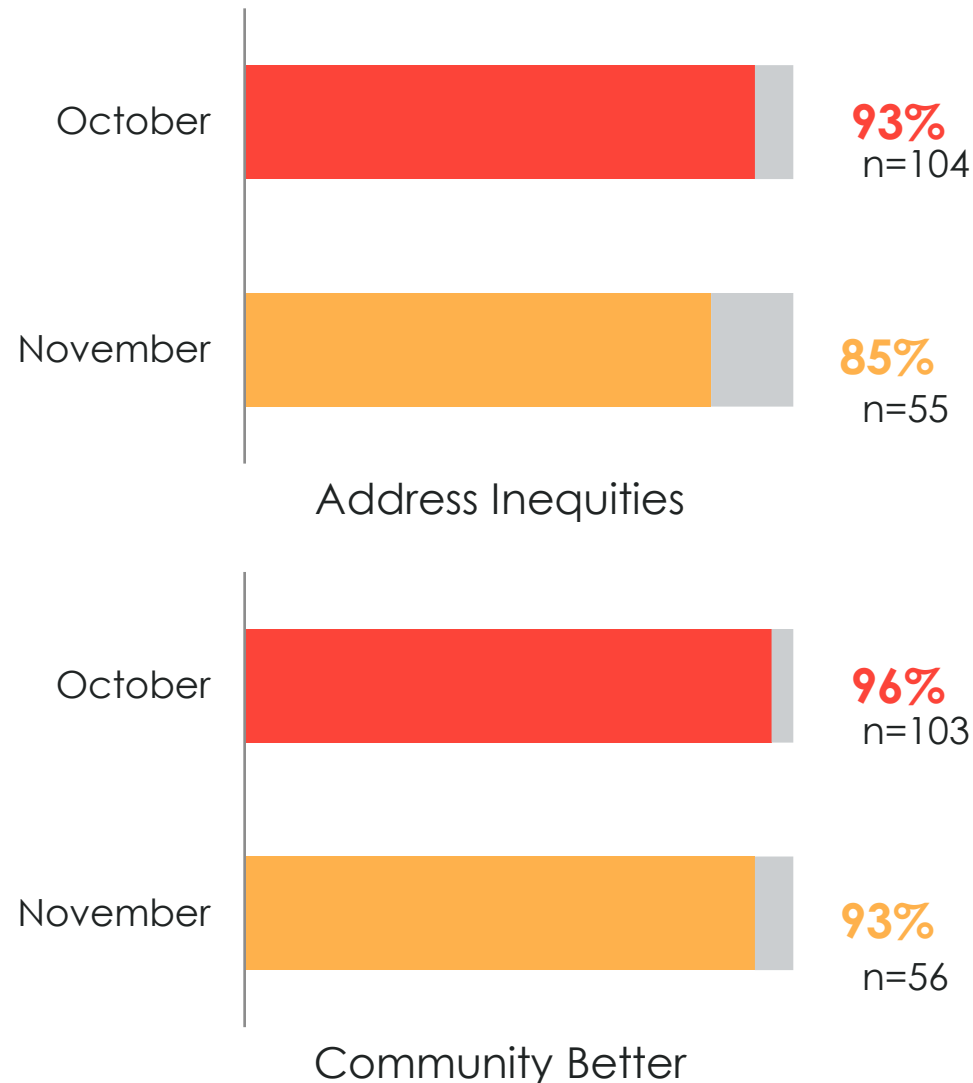
- ❖ I plan to participate in future phases of Ideas in Action.



Across Forums in **October and **November**, most participants agreed that *Ideas in Action* has the ability to address inequities and make the community better.**

*1. Do you agree with the following statements?

- ❖ I believe the Ideas in Action initiative has the ability to address inequities in the community
- ❖ I believe the Ideas in Action initiative has the ability to make the community better





**We compared responses
between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2
for all “impact” questions and
they look very similar (80% or
higher for all responses)**



Preliminary Findings

Proposal Development Forums achieved their goals of increasing resident trust in city government, civic knowledge (especially budgeting), and interest in future civic engagement.

Most participants appear to have high confidence in Ideas in Action, though some may be reserving judgment until they see more of the process unfold.



Evaluation Question 3

How can the process used during Forums be improved?

- What feedback did we hear from participants overall?
- From younger participants? From first time participants?
- What feedback did we hear from implementers?

Includes: OPB, ASG, Northeastern, and D+S



Participants felt forums were thoughtfully planned

Participants...

- Appreciated forums in general and were grateful for the curation of a **welcoming environment** in which participants felt safe and heard (n=45)
- Enjoyed learning from and collaborating with other community members who were **noticeably diverse** in neighborhood, age, ethnicity, and opinion (n=37)
- Thought **activities were well-facilitated and engaging**; found presentation, small groups, and insights from city staff especially effective (n=17)

“Creo que es un lugar en el que uno es libre y le dan el poder e importancia a tu voz, y te dan la oportunidad de crear diferencia”

I think this is a setting where you are free and your voice is given power and importance, and you have the opportunity to make a difference

- *Survey respondent*

Source: Forum Evaluation Survey (2025)

What worked well? RR = 75% (120/161); What could be improved? RR = 63% (101/161)



Participants shared ideas for improving the process

- Add time to expand on proposals, and further streamline idea review process (n=23)
- Increase forum visibility and attendance, e.g., incentivizes and advertising during community meetings (n=15)
- Increase facilitator familiarity with materials and provide clearer instruction (n=13)
- Improve engagement before and after, e.g., send agendas before and follow ups after (n=12)

“In the continuing steps, originators of ideas should be involved with the city depts that will draft these ideas for greater input & fidelity to the idea.”

- *Survey respondent*

Source: Forum Evaluation Survey (2025)

What worked well? RR = 75% (120/161); What could be improved? RR = 63% (101/161)



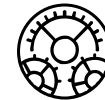
Youth participants (ages 13-19) and first time participants shared similar feedback overall.

“The time is too short for very important decision making.”

- *Survey respondent*

Some youth found forum structure and facilitation too restrictive (n=3) and others felt that facilitation, translation, and/or time management could be improved (n=4).

Some first time participants wanted more scaffolding for the activities, including strong definitions of equity and impact (n=3).



Implementers felt goals were accomplished

- Participants increased their civic knowledge through discussion and sharing resources with each other
- Table discussions stirred enthusiasm for civic engagement, inspiring participants to become more involved in *Ideas in Action* and other efforts
- Showing responsiveness to community needs (e.g., providing interpretation) helped build trust in city government

“I think table discussions may have **inspired people to become more engaged** because they saw participatory budgeting as a way for them to submit ideas in the future, and also that they could directly contribute to the process.”

- *Debrief respondent*



Implementers shared recommendations

- Continue to have city staff come with specific and responsive ideas at November forums.
- Redistribute support staff; too many observers and notetakers; more facilitation support at critical points on agenda.
- Reconsider the design of paper materials to make them more intuitive and limit materials at tables.
- Maintain relationships with community partners.

“[Participants] asked the city staff about details to ideas that their office proposed for the project. I felt that gave them a **sense of agency and ownership** to make decisions on this topic. “

- *Debrief respondent*



Preliminary Findings

Proposal Development Forums were successful in the eyes of participants and implementers.

Forums brought together diverse residents who enjoyed being civically engaged in community.

Strong preparation helps implementers support forum goals and provide participants with a positive experience.

Thank you

Acknowledgements: Residents who participated in Ideas in Action, Contracted Community Partners, EOB members, and OPB staff.

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