

# Brighter Boston

**FOUNDED:** 2014

**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$562,615

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Brighter Boston's goal is to guide young adults to discover meaningful work and personal success through access to careers in the event production industry. More than just a training program, Brighter Boston provides economic mobility through paid vocational training, real-world work experience, and professional network building.

There is a significant labor shortage in this industry, including an increasing number of available jobs that do not require a college degree. Given that only 53% of Boston Public School students go to college after graduating, there is an opportunity to create direct pathways to life-changing careers.

Targeting youth and young adults aged 16 to 24, Brighter Boston's program provides a needed college alternative pathway, enabling participants to acquire valuable skills and embark on careers in a high-level industry. The organization offers wraparound services needed to holistically support young adults such as individualized coaching, personal wellness and financial training, and connections to health care and other needed resources. Through its bidirectional model, Brighter Boston has collaborated with 20 different producing organizations and venues, including Live Nation, The Huntington and Boston Symphony Orchestra, meeting industry needs while providing opportunities to young people.

## Two-Year Goals

- Develop a technical training facility to enable program growth and increase annual number of youth served by 400%
- Create a new tier of arts career exploration services for 14- to 15-year-olds
- Increase Boston Public Schools partnerships from 11 to 20
- Launch programming at Cambridge Public Schools
- Add three new career pathways, including museum and corporate installation

## BRIGHTER BOSTON

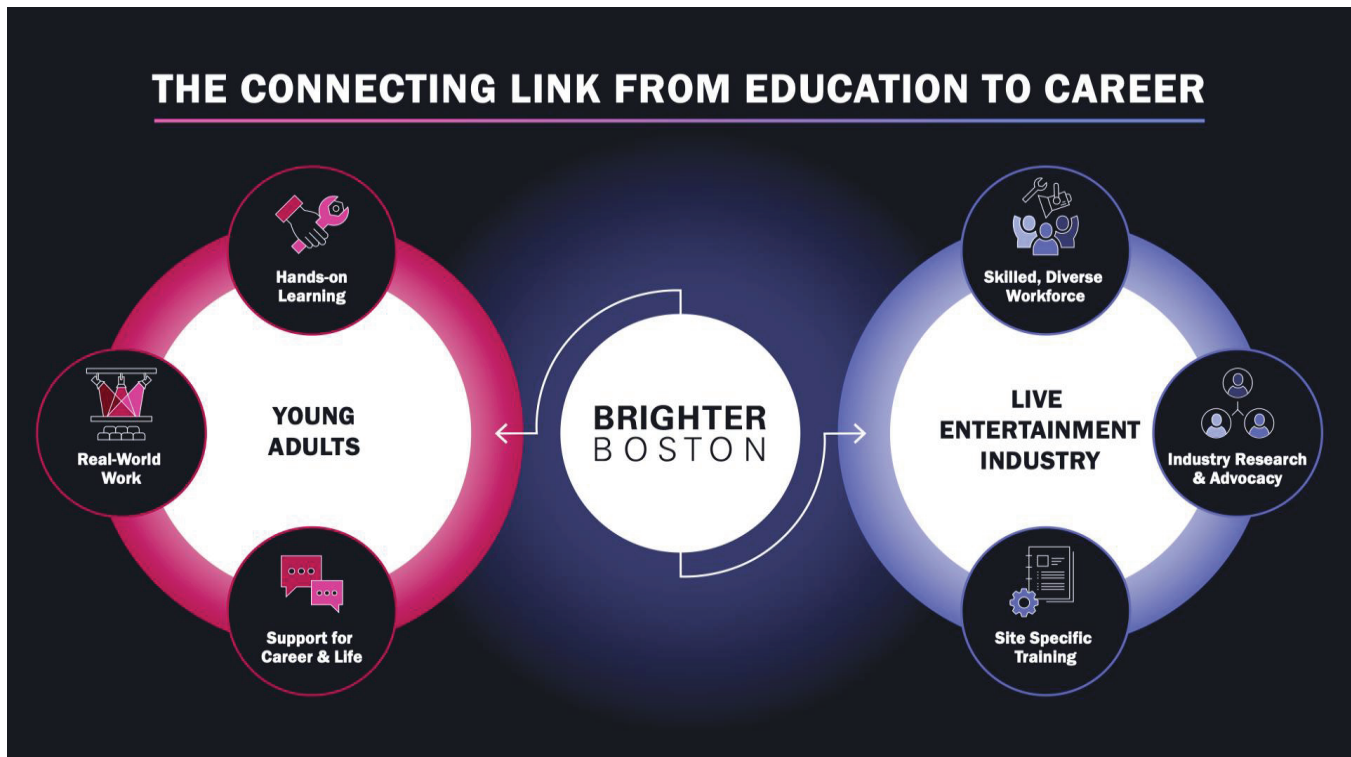
### Investment Opportunity

Brighter Boston is seeking \$1,800,000 over two years to 5x its annual impact while strengthening the quality of its vital programs. This includes \$1,000,000 to renovate/rent a space and \$800,000 to expand programs. The organization currently does not have a dedicated training space. This investment will enable Brighter Boston to broaden its services, deepen its impact, *and* increase earned revenue from industry partnerships and professional development services, offering a unique investment opportunity for scaled impact in the workforce development and arts/culture space.

### Ways to Invest

- \$250,000 to cover first-year occupancy costs in technical training facility
- \$100,000 to hire four part-time industry-specific mentors
- \$75,000 to fund a new Development position
- \$50,000 to hire a new Community Outreach specialist
- \$25,000 to enhance impact evaluation/CRM system

## Brighter Boston's Unique Bidirectional Model



### Young Adult Engagement

Currently in the live entertainment industry, 92% of designers on Broadway identify as white. Brighter Boston's 11-month program prioritizes equity and access to careers in the arts to those historically excluded from these pathways. By removing financial barriers and offering direct pathways to work paying well above the living wage in Boston, this organization is breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty for the young adults it serves, 84% of whom are non-white. Brighter Boston currently offers two tracks: one for Boston Public Schools students ages 16+ and one for young adults 18-24 who are not enrolled in college or do not have a degree. This program includes the following key components:

**Paid hands-on training:** Over 100 hours of training in lighting, audio, video, scenic, and stage management for live entertainment in working venues.

**Paid internships:** 100-350 hours (dependent on age) working alongside industry experts on theater, concerts, and special events.

**Social Capital Building:** Young adults immediately begin to build a strong industry network and are matched with a professional mentor.

**Support for Career and Life:** By focusing on what a young adult identifies as their barriers to success, Brighter Boston tailors its support with one-to-one coaching, financial and wellness training, and connections to needed resources.

Graduates leave with valuable experience, professional connections, and a strong foundation for success in live event production and beyond.



## Industry Engagement

Brighter Boston's unique bidirectional model supports both young adults and employers in the live events industry, addressing a labor shortage while generating revenue through employer services. Many employers no longer require college degrees, making Brighter Boston's industry-approved training essential. Brighter Boston's employer services include the following:

**Training Curriculum:** Aligns with sector standards, ensuring graduates are job-ready with accelerated paths to senior roles.

**Annual Employer Roundtable:** Employers share insights on in-demand roles, pay rates, and career pathways.

**Annual Mentor Training:** Partners learn strategies for teaching backstage skills and supporting new workers.

**Curriculum Development:** Brighter Boston co-develops training and internship programs, offering paid hands-on experience.

**Union Membership:** Supports interns 18+ in joining the union, providing access to skilled jobs with starting wages 65% above Boston's living wage.

*"Part of the success of our collaboration with Brighter Boston is that our basic needs complement each other. Celebrity Series needs lighting for our Neighborhood Arts Series, while youth in Brighter Boston need work experience to hone their skills."*

— Israel Gutierrez, Celebrity Series of Boston

## Leadership & Governance

Brighter Boston is led by a dedicated team of industry professionals, educators, and community leaders. The Executive Director, Ann Sousa, joined Brighter Boston in 2019, bringing her extensive experience as an advocate for Boston Public Schools and her work in policy for the Boston City Council Chair of Education. Its governance structure includes a Board of Directors of 8 people who provide strategic oversight, ensuring the organization's mission aligns with its impact. Leadership prioritizes equity, industry access, and career development for underrepresented young people.

## Financial Stability

Brighter Boston generates ~40% of its operating revenue from earned income and government contracts, enhancing the impact of foundation and individual/corporate funding. Earned income comes from employer partners paying for internship placement and for production support. By investing in a new space and expanding its staffing, Brighter Boston will be able to continue scaling earned income and retain a well-balanced, sustainable revenue mix.

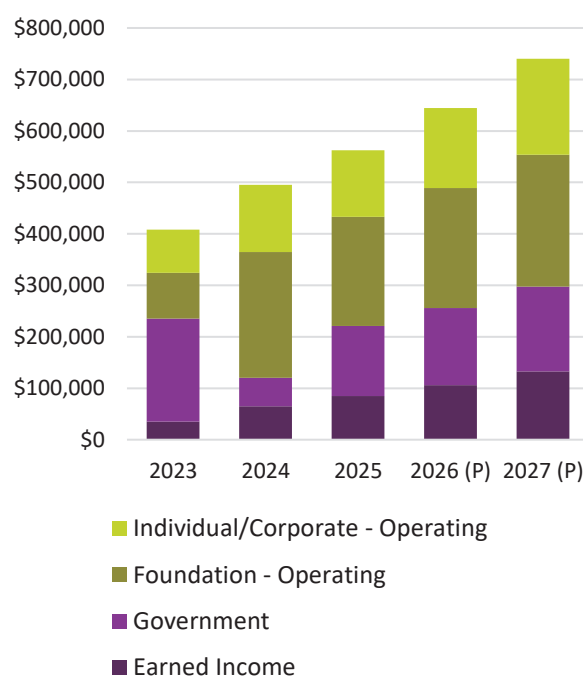
### KEY INVESTORS

- AC Ratshesky Foundation
- Audio Spectrum
- City of Boston
- Concert Stuff Group
- EdVestors
- IATSE Local 11
- Linde Family Foundation
- Mass Cultural Council
- Parker Clare Family Fund
- The Beker Foundation

### KEY SUPPORTERS

- 4Wall Entertainment
- American Repertory Theater
- Berklee Performance Center
- Boston Symphony Orchestra
- Celebrity Series of Boston
- High Output
- Live Nation
- The Huntington

## Operating Revenue by Source\*



\*Excludes capital funding



## Success Story

DILLON BROOKS

When he applied to Brighter Boston, Dillon was homeless, didn’t have health care, and crashing on friends’ couches was his only option for a place to sleep.

Through Brighter Boston, Dillon gained access to hundreds of hours of paid training in lighting and set construction, along with 10 weeks of individualized coaching, life planning, and career readiness training. Brighter Boston connected Dillon to vital health care services and set him up with paid internships at The American Repertory Theater, The Huntington, Global Arts Live, and High Output Entertainment.

Within a year of graduating the program, Dillon was renting his first apartment and is now working as a professional in the entertainment industry, including being a Brighter Boston Instructional Mentor! Dillon’s story of moving from housing insecurity to a successful career is one of many stories that capture the transformative power of Brighter Boston’s model.

## Program Performance and Organizational Health

Over the next two years, Brighter Boston will leverage a physical space and expanded staffing to deepen *and* broaden its impact, growing its services while extending its reach.

	FY 2025	FY 2026 (P)	FY 2027 (P)
Program Performance			
Total Youth Served Across 3 tracks (BPS youth 16+, young adults 18-24, and a new track for 14-to-15-year-olds starting in FY26)	40	120	200
Number of industry partnerships	21	24	30
Number of career pathways offered (lighting, audio, video, scenic, etc.)	5	6	8
Number of Boston Public Schools Partnerships	11	15	20
\$ paid out to program participants for internship and training hours	\$98,300	\$120,000	\$150,000+
Organizational Health/Capacity-Building			
Number of staff members (FTEs)	4.5	6	8
% of employers fully funding internships	89%	90%	95%
Total operating revenue (excludes capital funding)	\$562,615	\$644,581	\$740,521

## Social Impact

Boston is home to over 7,000 disconnected young people — low-income young adults who are not engaged in college or career pathways. Research shows that 80% of jobs are secured through professional networks, highlighting the importance of connection and opportunity. Meanwhile, young adults who are employed or pursuing education experience significantly higher lifetime earnings, increased rates of homeownership, and better overall health compared to their disconnected peers. To thrive, young adults need access to multiple pathways that support their growth and success. Brighter Boston believes that integrating meaningful career connections into young adults' experiences is a direct course of action to reduce racial and wealth inequities in Boston and beyond.

Indicator	Current Numbers	2027
% of career track graduates (ages 18-24) working in live events one year after the program	100%	100%
% of participants reporting increased confidence working in a theater	100%	100%
% of participants reporting that they understand different career options in the entertainment industry	100%	100%
% of participants reporting increased technical skills	100%	100%
% of employer partners hiring program alumni	79%	82%
% of program alumni hired as instructional mentors by Brighter Boston	60%	80%