

Boston Lesbigay Urban Foundation

FOUNDED: 2020

CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET: \$450,000

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The Boston Lesbigay Urban Foundation (BLU) increases awareness of and provides support for Boston's Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community through education and creating spaces for learning and growth, with integrity and pride.

Since its founding in 2020, BLU has become a trusted community anchor, delivering health equity and economic stability programming, as well as cultural engagement platforms, that address systemic inequities affecting LGBTQIA+ populations.

Despite progress in LGBTQIA+ rights nationally, disparities persist, especially for people of color and economically marginalized individuals. The findings from a report by The Fenway Institute in Massachusetts (Cahil, Crebase, and Knox, 2025) include:

Housing instability: LGBTQIA+ adults were more likely to rent than their straight, cisgender peers (37.8 % versus 24 %).

Food insecurity: The Greater Boston Food Bank found that 56% of LGBTQ+ households experienced food insecurity in 2023, compared with 34% of all households surveyed.

Systemic barriers to healthcare: LGBTQIA+ adults in 2020–2022 were 1.8 times more likely than straight, cisgender adults to report being unable to see a doctor in the previous year due to cost.

Two-Year Goals

- Increase the number of youth mentees from 8 to 24 to strengthen youth leadership pipelines
- Strengthen operations by establishing HR policies, payroll systems, staff/volunteer training, hire a project manager to support sustainable growth
- Increase Boston Black Pride investments by creating a year-round marketing plan, expanding advocacy platforms, and increasing guest participation
- Double partnerships from 30 to 60 to enhance program delivery and community reach

Investment Opportunity

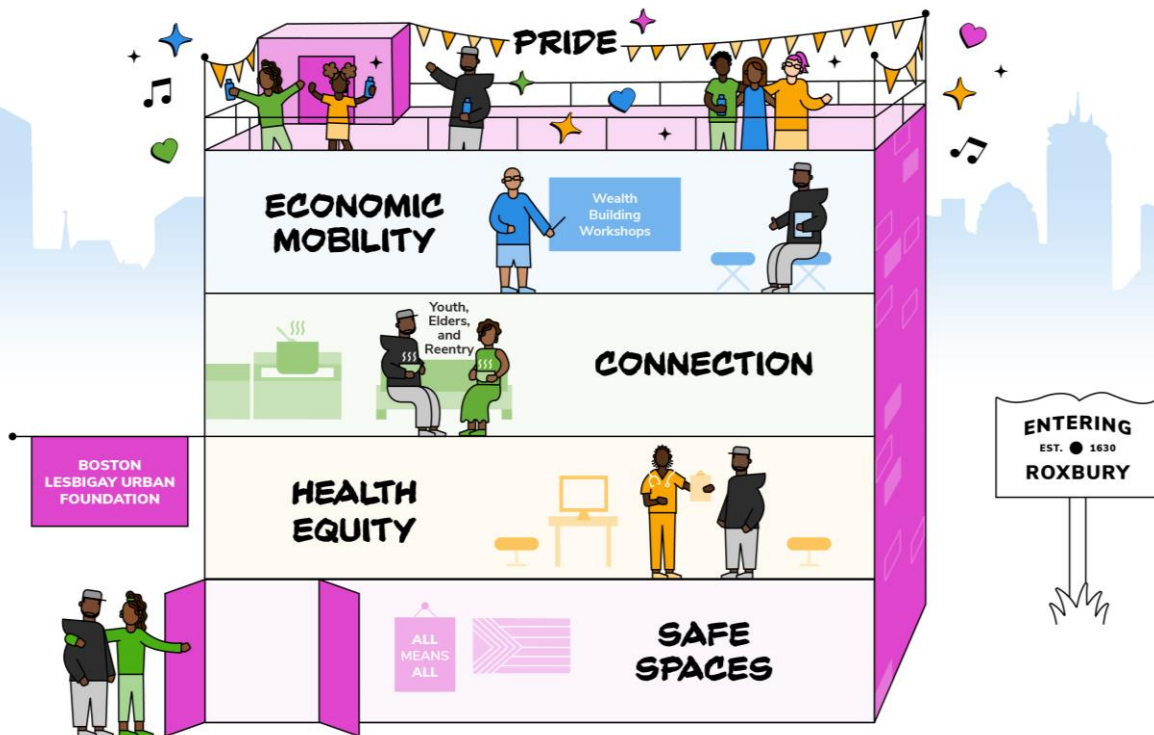
BLU has built trust and credibility and demonstrated impact at the grassroots level. The next step is scaling responsibly while maintaining the community-driven approach. A two-year, \$1.5 million investment will accelerate this transition as BLU aims to become a regional hub for LGBTQIA+ BIPOC leadership and advocacy.

Investing in BLU will support efforts to increase health equity and public health outcomes; workforce and economic development; youth leadership and civic engagement; cultural vitality; and community resilience.

Ways to Invest

- \$200K: increase capacity from 2 to 4.5 FTEs
- \$65K: annual lease for office space
- \$50K: expansion of Boston Black Pride and community-based initiatives
- IT support, computer hardware, security, and data software

Boston Lesbian Gay Urban Foundation's Model



A Community-Driven Model

Over the past six years, BLU's approach has been centered on lived experience, cultural competence, and community leadership.

CORE PROGRAM AREAS

The Mentorship Program launched 3 years ago and has served a total of 25 LGBTQIA+ youth (ages 13–25), including 8 mentees in the current cycle. The mentees are matched with identity-aligned mentors. The program includes bi-monthly events, monthly check-ins, and leadership/life skills development.

Youth Ambassadors is a school-year program serving LGBTQIA+ youth of color four days a week. The program provides training in public speaking, outreach, and civic engagement, empowering youth to lead workshops and advocate in their communities.

Digital Equity provides technology training to 70+ elders, improving digital literacy and cyber-safety. It is offered three times a week for six months, spanning summer and winter.

Hot Food/Meal Sharing provides meals to 900+ LGBTQIA+ elders and families to reduce food insecurity. The food is sourced from local supermarkets and distributed by LGBTQIA+ community volunteers. We also offer low-cost cooking classes and opportunities for volunteers to pair with a senior individual or family to share a meal and help reduce isolation.

Reentry & Economic Stability is a program that is peer-led by formerly incarcerated individuals, supporting 60 LGBTQIA+ adults and 15 youth who are returning citizens, with housing, employment, and trauma-informed reentry services.



Fostering Affirmation, Connection, and Resilience

Black Pride is an annual weeklong celebration in July, led by the BLU Foundation, that honors the joy, resilience, and culture of Black LGBTQIA+ communities. Events include panels, wellness workshops, nightlife, and family gatherings. Over the past 7 years, BLU has engaged 3,000+ individuals, families, and visitors. The celebration supports entrepreneurship and economic mobility by hiring LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC businesses. It is a powerful movement rooted in community, healing, and collective liberation.

Networking offers culturally relevant activities addressing evolving LGBTQIA+ needs, including coalition convenings, town halls, and outings. These efforts launched the Evolve Care Together Coalition with 14+ partners composed of community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and advocates that promote health equity across Greater Boston, especially for BIPOC youth and elders. Programs include safety and identity discussions, job fairs, a transgender men’s group with annual retreats, and family support spaces. These connections led to the Urban Unity Collective, a membership program that creates pathways for community connection.

BLU amplifies LGBTQIA+ voices by centering community leadership in shaping services, events, and partnerships.

“The BLU Foundation plays a critical role in Greater Boston’s diverse LGBTQIA+ community, amplifying the experiences of Queer, Trans BIPOC individuals and families and celebrating community strength.”

— Scott Knox, Executive Director, Equality Fund, The Boston Foundation

Leadership & Governance

Executive Director Curtis Santos and Deputy Director Eilakeisha Spencer co-founded the Boston Lesbian Gay Urban Foundation, and both bring professional expertise and personal connection to the work. The five-member board of directors comprises community advocates and leaders with longstanding relationships within Boston’s LGBTQIA+ communities, ensuring that strategic decisions are shaped by those closest to the issues. Curtis and the board frequently seek out and incorporate direct input from participants, creating a collaborative culture and treating service users as partners in the work.

Financial Stability

BLU became a registered 501(c)(3) organization in 2020. As a young organization with a small team, BLU has successfully cultivated funding from government contracts, foundation grants, and individual contributors. BLU is focused on diversifying and increasing its funding to grow the organization and ensure its sustainability.

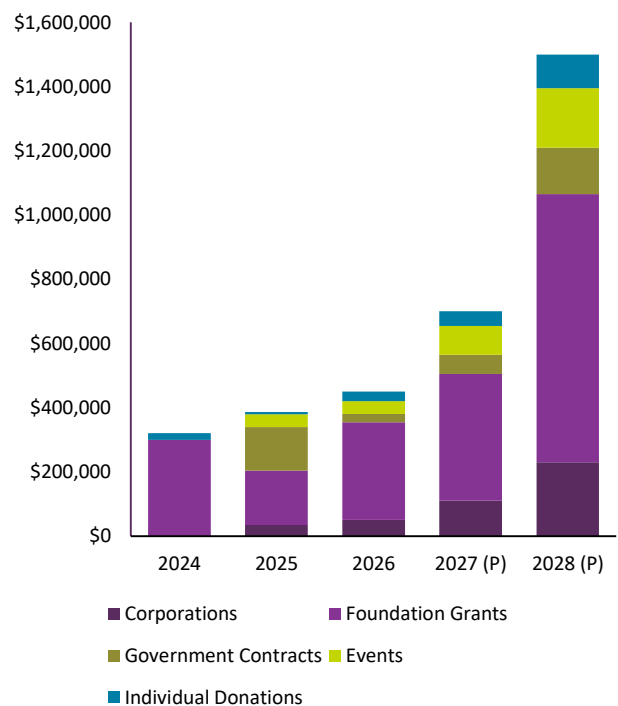
KEY INVESTORS

- The Boston Foundation
- City of Boston
- Fenway Health
- Foley Hoag Foundation
- The Lenny Zakim Foundation
- MA Department of Public Health

KEY PARTNERS

- American Civil Liberties Union
- Beth Israel Lahey Health
- Center for Black Equity
- DraftKings
- GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders
- Mayor’s Office of LGBTQIA2S+ Advancement

Revenue by Source





Success Story

BRIELLE GERMAN, BLU FOUNDATION MENTEE

Brielle found a new sense of belonging and joy through BLU’s mentorship program. The most powerful part of their journey has been connecting with their mentor. They do not have to pretend to be someone they’re not. They can talk openly about their identity, struggles, and growth, and are met with support and understanding. That kind of relationship has been rare for them and has improved their self-image.

Brielle says, “I’m still growing, still educating myself, and still figuring things out, but I now know that who I am is valid. I’m demisexual, I’m non-binary, and I don’t have to hide that. There’s nothing wrong with me. And thanks to BLU, I’ve found a place where I can finally start believing that.” Every young person deserves a place where they are valued. It is this kind of safety and acceptance that matters deeply to us.

Program Performance and Organizational Health

Boston Lesbian Gay Urban Foundation is committed to measured growth that is sustainable. Below are the key measures that BLU will track to demonstrate its commitment to addressing the systemic barriers faced by the LGBTQIA+ community.

	FY 2026	FY 2027 (P)	FY 2028 (P)
Program Performance			
Number of program participants	900	1,100	1,500
Number of service hours provided	7,000	8,200	9,400
Number of programs/initiatives	14	16	18
Number of active partners	30	36	42
Organizational Health/Capacity-Building			
Develop/Implement data management system	Hire	Pilot	Implement
Number of full-time and part-time staff members	1.5	2.5	3
Number of board members	5	6	7
Total Revenue	\$450,000	\$700,000	\$1,500,000

Social Impact

The challenges faced by the LGBTQIA+ BIPOC community are rooted in intersecting structural inequities involving race, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, and systemic discrimination. The consequences extend beyond individuals, impacting families, public health systems, workforce development, and community cohesion. BLU is building a model of collective care and resilience by tracking its impact through both qualitative outcomes and quantitative community feedback. Many participants who return to give support rather than just receive it often transition into volunteer, mentoring, or leadership roles. This is a significant indicator of success and a multiplier effect of community empowerment.

Below is a summary of the social impact BLU aspires to have on the LGBTQIA+ community and its stakeholders over the next two years.

Indicator	Current Numbers	2028
# of elders increase digital literacy	25	75
% of reentry participants receiving key benefits (shelter, employment, healthcare, & mutual aid)	25%	50%
% of youth reporting increased life skills/leadership development	50%	75%
% of participants actively engaged in psycho-social support services (mental health services, drop-in support, & cooking classes)	40%	90%