



Join Boston's largest network of inclusive leaders.

LeadBoston, YW Boston's signature leadership program, meets organizations' demand for more inclusive leadership by equipping mid- to senior-level professionals with the knowledge, skills, and network necessary to increase equity within their organizations and communities.

LeadBoston at a glance



IDEAL APPLICANTS

Mid- to senior-level professionals with 15-30 years of experience



DURATION

11 months, January through November; time commitment includes ten full-day, in-person program days with monthly pre-work



COHORT SIZE

Approx. 40-45 leaders per class



COHORT COMPOSITION

Cohorts welcome diversity with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, ideology, life experience, professional background, industry, and sector.



INVESTMENT

Organizations support employees by covering tuition and time away from the office for programming

87%

of LeadBoston graduates attest to gaining leadership skills and a robust support network within the LeadBoston alumni community.

Did you know?

LeadBoston participants show increased ability to lead and communicate across difference and implement policies more equitably.

HOW TO APPLY

Applications for the class of 2027 open on May 1, 2026 and are reviewed on a rolling basis. Admission is competitive, so applicants are encouraged to apply early. Apply or refer a colleague at ywboston.org/leadboston.

The deadline to apply is October 12, 2026.

Program Overview

Throughout the program year, **LeadBoston** participants undertake a candid exploration of Greater Boston's inequities. With LeadBoston's experiential learning model, curated content, and responsive programming, participants gain direct insight into key institutions and levers for change. The program culminates with a leadership commitment—an organization-focused capstone action project.

PARTICIPANTS WILL GAIN...

- a deepened understanding of and commitment to equity
- a strengthened ability to lead inclusively in the workplace
- collaboration, communication, decision-making, and strategic thinking skills
- leverage to utilize their influence for greater impact
- a deep network of support amongst their cohort
- access to our alum community of over 1,000 diverse leaders
- tailored organizational development resources, action plan support, and thought partnership for up to a year after graduation

CURRICULUM ELEMENTS

- Examination of systemic inequities and how they impact and are impacted by Boston's institutions, neighborhoods, and industries
- Root cause analysis of equity-related challenge areas
- Integration of a broad range of perspectives
- Facilitated dialogue, experiential learning, expert speakers, online modules, and peer learning



LeadBoston forever changed my life trajectory, personally and professionally. It is we alums who have the LB program to thank for the richness, depth of insight, learning and inspiration it gave to all of us.

Sean Driscoll, Class of 2021





2026 PROGRAM STRUCTURE

LeadBoston is unique due to its experiential learning approach and cohort-based structure. Participants undertake a candid exploration of Boston’s inequities and envision how to leverage their influence for greater impact.

Through curated content and responsive programming, LeadBoston participants gain direct insight into key institutions and levers for change, strengthening their skills as leaders committed to advancing equity.



DATE	TOPIC
January 13	Orientation
January 20	Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods
February 11-12	Advance
March 10	Class & Poverty
April 14	Education
May 12	Immigration
June 9	Environmental Justice
July 14	Healthcare
August 11	Housing & Transportation
September 8	Arrest & Prosecution
October 13	Incarceration & Re-entry
November 10	Presenting Leadership Commitments
November 17	Commencement

Application Information

STEP 1: APPLY ONLINE

Early decision deadline – Monday, August 25, 2026

Final application deadline – Monday, October 12, 2026

To apply for LeadBoston, complete the online application form at ywboston.org/leadboston. The form consists of personal and demographic questions, and will ask you about your leadership philosophy and reasons for applying to LeadBoston. Selection decisions are communicated on a rolling basis through early December 2025.

STEP 2: INTERVIEW

Invitations are extended to candidates on a rolling basis. Qualified applicants will be invited for an interview with a LeadBoston alumni. The interview is a great way for us to get to know applicants and for them to learn more about the program.

STEP 3: EMPLOYER COMMITMENT

Your employer must submit a completed employer commitment form within five business days after your interview. To be eligible for acceptance, you must submit an employer commitment form. You will receive a copy of this form after completing the online application. The form states that your employer will support your participation in LeadBoston and finance your tuition.

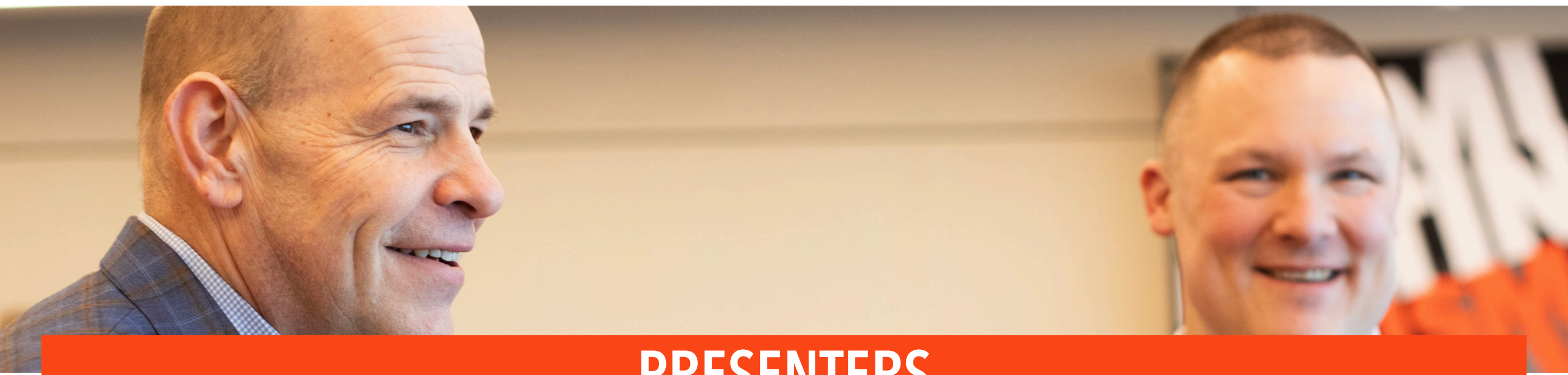
STEP 4: ENROLLMENT CONFIRMATION

Accepted applicants will be given a deadline to respond to their email offer and confirm their seat in the class.

2026 TUITION STRUCTURE

Organization Size	Number of global employees	Tuition
Private		
Large	350+	\$9,000
Medium	16-349	\$8,000
Small	1-15	\$4,500
Nonprofit/Public		
Large	350+	\$7,500
Medium	16-349	\$4,500
Small	1-15	\$2,750

Every participant is also required to submit a personal tuition contribution of \$300.



PRESENTERS

LeadBoston participants engage with key thought leaders in intimate, provocative, and in-depth conversations about the major socio-economic and systemic challenges facing Greater Boston. Participants gain speakers' behind-the-scenes insights and best practices for leading change.

Our presenters have included the following outstanding leaders from a variety of sectors:

GOVERNMENT

Former Governor Deval Patrick
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Former Mayor Martin J. Walsh
City of Boston

Stephanie Pollack (LB '98)
Deputy Administrator, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Marc Draisen
Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Michael Cox
Commissioner, Boston Police Department

Turahn Dorsey
City of Boston

Kevin Hayden
Suffolk County District Attorney

Celina Barrios-Millner
Chief of Equity and Inclusion, City of Boston

Segun Idowu
Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion, City of Boston

EDUCATION

Barry Bluestone, PhD
Founding Director of the Dukakis Center, Founding Dean of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University

Christine Letts
Rita E. Hauser Senior Lecturer in the Practice of Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School

FINANCE

Shawna Ferguson
Chief Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Officer, Wellington Management

Wendell Chestnut (LB '99)
Senior Vice President, Bank of America

Steven Young
Former Senior Vice President of Marketing, Eastern Bank

Bruce Figueroa
Executive Vice President, Not-for-Profit Banking, M&T Bank

Sherry Riva
Founder, Compass Working Capital

SOCIAL SERVICES

Wendy Foster (LB '10)
Former CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern Massachusetts

Rahsaan Hall
Director of the Racial Justice Program, ACLU of Massachusetts

Audrey Morrissey
Co-Executive Director, My Life My Choice

Nia Evans (LB '16)
Director, Boston Ujima Project

Jim Rooney
President & CEO, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce

Gilad Rosenzweig
Founder, Smarter in the City

HEALTHCARE

Azzie Young, PhD (LB '13)
Former President & CEO, Mattapan Community Health Center

Sandro Galea, MD
Professor and Dean, Boston University School of Public Health

Thea James, MD
Associate Professor, Associate Chief Medical Officer, and Vice President of the Mission, Boston Medical Center

Jim O'Connell, MD
President, Boston Health Care for the Homeless

Peter Slavin, MD
President, Massachusetts General Hospital

Barry S. Zuckerman, MD
Professor and Chair Emeritus of the Department of Pediatrics, Boston Medical Center

Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan
President & CEO, Carequest Institute

Bill Walczak
Retired/Founding President & CEO, Codman Square Health Center

CORPORATE AND MEDIA

Shirley Leung
Columnist and Associate Editor, Boston Globe

Melodie Knowlton (LB '20)
Global Head of the Learning Lab and Executive Director of the Foundation, Vertex Pharmaceuticals

Steve Vinter
Senior Director, Technical Leadership Development, Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard

Tiziana Dearing
Host of Radio Boston, WBUR

Ready to nominate a leader or apply to LeadBoston? Get in touch with Kimara Merceron at kmerceron@ywboston.org or visit ywboston.org/leadboston for more information.



ALUMNI NETWORK

LeadBoston has been graduating socially responsible leaders for 30 years and its robust alumni network is over 1,250 local leaders strong. Alumni are invited to exclusive events including panel discussions, social gatherings, and professional development workshops. Alumni, and their employers, benefit from lifelong access to this unique network of influencers from a variety of sectors.

Some of the leaders in our LeadBoston Alumni Network include:

GOVERNMENT

Kenneth Green
Deputy Chief, MBTA Transit Police

Stephen Chan
Senior Advisor for Partnerships, Mayor Wu's Cabinet

Nam Pham
Consultant, Department of Transportation,
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Stephanie Pollack
Former Secretary, Massachusetts Department of
Transportation

Amanda Teo
Chief of Staff, Office of the Suffolk County District
Attorney

Matteo Urella
Associate Coordinator, Project Management,
National Grid

Andrew Peck
Undersecretary of Public Safety, Executive Office of
Public Safety and Security

José Massó
Chief of Human Services, City of Boston

SOCIAL SERVICES

Wendy Foster
Former CEO, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern
Massachusetts

Erin McAleer
President & CEO, Project Bread

LAW

Mark Michalowski
Executive Partner, Holland and Knight, LLP

Regina Pisa
Chairman Emeritus and Partner, Goodwin Procter
LLC

Dinesh Melwani
Member, Mintz

Damian Wilmot
Chief Legal Officer, Goodwin Procter, LLP

MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS

Doug Banks
Publisher & Editor, Boston Business Journal

Dorie Clark
Clark Strategic Communications

John Werner
Managing Director, Link Ventures

FINANCE

Wendell K. Chestnut
Senior Vice President, Bank of America

Dune Thorne
Partner, Brown Advisory

Beth Symolon
Assistant Vice President, Compliance Analyst II,
Eastern Bank

Michel Bamani
Vice President and Counsel, State Street Corporation

Kevin Hart
Head of Marketing, Boston Common Asset
Management, LLC

Joyce Kvalsvik
Program Management Director, Sovos

Peter Markell
Chief Financial Officer, Ernst & Young LLP

EDUCATION

Dr. Paula Johnson
President, Wellesley College

John Pitcher
Vice President Administration and Finance,
Bunker Hill Community College

Dr. Raul Fernandez
Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity & Inclusion,
Boston University

Joyya Smith
Vice President of Diversity, Access, and Inclusion,
Suffolk University

HEALTHCARE

Chien-Chi Huang
Founder, Asian Women for Health

Jeff Bellows
VP Corporate Citizenship & Public Affairs, Blue Cross
Blue Shield

Dr. Jessica Zeidman
Primary Care Program Director, Massachusetts
General Hospital

Daniel Dobin
Interim Executive Director, Upstream USA

CORPORATE

Marcita Thompson
Vice President, Fenway Park Tours, Boston Red Sox

Maura Banta
East Coast Regional Manager of Corporate Citizens,
IBM

Tom Burrow
Chief Digital Officer, Reebok

Kevin McCall
CEO, Paradigm Properties

Tracy Burns
CEO, Northeast Human Resources Association

Eric Kramer
Partner/Principal, Reed Hilderbrand

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Frequently Asked Questions

1 WHAT IS LEADBOSTON?

LeadBoston meets organizations' demand for more inclusive leadership by equipping mid-to senior-level professionals with the knowledge, skills, and network to propel their leadership and their organization's success. During this unique, 11-month program, participants explore barriers to inclusion through facilitated dialogue, expert speakers, communication modules, and peer learning. Our experiential learning approach focuses on the inner workings of Boston, trends and systemic issues that impact the city's social and economic vitality, and inclusive leadership. It provides an unparalleled opportunity for in-depth learning about complex issues, equipping participants with the knowledge, tools, and analytical skills necessary for effecting meaningful change in the workplace.

2 WHO PARTICIPATES IN LEADBOSTON?

Since 1991, LeadBoston has competitively selected over 1,250 individuals as LeadBoston participants. Representing the gamut of Boston's professional, racial, ethnic, faith, and gender diversity, LeadBostonians are typically leaders with 15-30 years of experience and who have the ability to influence change within their organization. Participants are sponsored and financially supported by their employers. LeadBoston is not an introductory workforce training program, and participants are required to have professional experience prior to participation.

3 WHAT HAPPENS IN LEADBOSTON?

The LeadBoston year (January through November) provides participants with a unique opportunity to explore the complexity of Boston's inequities through an inclusive leadership lens. Each month, participants gather in a different location to discuss pressing issues and trends and hear first-hand from civic leaders, community organizers, business people, and academics. Through curated content and responsive programming, participants gain direct insight into key institutions and levers for change, strengthening their skills as leaders committed to advancing equity within their organizations and the broader community. The program includes opportunities to connect with classmates, as well as access to networking, educational, and social opportunities with LeadBoston's extensive alumni network.

Frequently Asked Questions

4 HOW DOES LEADBOSTON EXPLORE TOPICS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION?

LeadBoston looks broadly at systemic inequities and how they impact and are impacted by Boston's institutions, neighborhoods, and industries. We foster skills that enable leaders to analyze root causes of diversity, equity, and inclusion challenges, then devise interventions that address those challenges. After LeadBoston, 93% of participants report that they are advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organizations.

5 DOES LEADBOSTON PLAN TO MEET IN PERSON?

The program includes a combination of in-person and supplementary virtual components to provide a flexible yet impactful experience for participants. We are committed to the safety of our participants, staff, and speakers. LeadBoston facilitators are prepared to seamlessly shift in-person engagements to a virtual format as a result of updated state and CDC guideline updates regarding COVID-19.

6 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO THE PARTICIPANT?

Through hands-on experiences, topical pre-work, and facilitated discussions, participants strengthen their leadership capacities. Participants gain:

- a deepened understanding and commitment to equity
- a strengthened ability to lead inclusively in the workplace
- improved collaboration, communication, decision-making, and strategic thinking skills that support personal growth and professional development
- a deep network of support amongst their cohort
- access to our alumni community of over 1,250 diverse leaders
- exposure to influential leaders in key institutions
- tailored organizational development resources, action plan support, and thought partnership for up to a year after graduation

Participating employees will experience unique professional development opportunities outside of what their organization can typically offer. Upon graduation, participants become members of the LeadBoston alumni network, a prominent group of over one thousand leaders with access to exclusive networking and educational opportunities.

Frequently Asked Questions

7 WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS FOR THE SPONSORING EMPLOYERS?

Employers likewise benefit from their employees' participation in LeadBoston, as the program:

- equips leaders with the skills needed to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organization
- strengthens leaders' ability to understand stakeholders' needs, solve challenging problems, and make better business decisions
- broadens organizational access to key leaders, institutions, and professional contacts via the powerful LeadBoston network
- rewards high-potential individuals and prepares them for greater leadership responsibilities

Nominating an employee for LeadBoston gives organizations the opportunity to make Boston a better place to live, work, and thrive. Employers who sponsor participants will benefit from increased employee engagement and loyalty.

8 WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER'S COMMITMENT?

Employers support their employees' participation by allowing them time to fully engage in program days, encouraging the development and implementation of an action plan, staying responsive to subsequent action plan follow-up, and covering the cost of participation. There is a \$2,750 - \$9,000 sliding scale fee based on sector and size of the participant's employer. Flexible payment plans are available. Apply by August 25, 2025 for early consideration and admission to the class.

9 WHAT IS THE PARTICIPANT'S COMMITMENT?

Participants are expected to attend ten 8-hour program days, complete about two hours of monthly pre-work, respond to feedback surveys, develop their leadership commitment, stay responsive to follow-ups about their leadership commitment, and engage with classmates for the duration of the program year. In addition, the program orientation is four hours and the advance takes place during a weekend in January for eight hours each day. Participants are also required to submit a personal tuition contribution of \$300.