

Minutes

Remote Housing and Economic Development Committee

November 18, 2025

NOTE: This meeting was held via Zoom and can be viewed at this link:

<http://www.portlandmaine.gov/1695/Economic-Development-Committee> These Minutes provide a record of those in attendance, general discussion taking place, and motions made.

A remote meeting of the Housing and Economic Development Committee (HEDC) of the Portland City Council was held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. Present from the HEDC were Chair Councilor Pious Ali, and members Councilors Regina Phillips, Sarah Michniewicz, and Kate Sykes. Also present from the City Council were Councilors Benjamin Grant and Wesley Pelletier. City staff present were Housing and Community Development Division Director Mary Davis, Corporation Counsel Michael Goldman, Office of Economic Opportunity Director Melissa Hue, Assistant City Manager Greg Jordan, Planning and Urban Development Director Kevin Kraft, Assistant City Manager Dena Libner (arriving as noted herein), Health and Human Services Director Margaret McLoughlin, Principal Administrative Officer Lori Paulette, and Housing and Economic Development Department Director Greg Watson.

Item #1: Review and accept Minutes of previous meeting held on October 21, 2025.

On a motion made by Councilor Michniewicz and seconded by Councilor Sykes, the Committee voted 4-0 to accept the minutes from the October 21, 2025 meeting.

Item #2: Review and vote on a recommendation to the City Council regarding proposed entertainment license – Councilors Grant and Michniewicz

Councilor Michniewicz introduced this item noting that Live Nation had offered a \$1.00 fee per ticket, but this proposal being reviewed today would codify fees in the City Code at a 1.5% or 2% fee on the base price of per ticket sold. That fee would go into a community sector benefits fund that would be utilized for small music venues.

Chair Councilor Ali, noting this item as a vote on a recommendation to the City Council, opened the meeting for public comment.

Alex Silver of Scarborough noted he was against this proposal, and that he is a musician supported by small venues in Portland. Mr. Silver felt this should be taken up after the Live Nation issue is settled.

Mary Costigan of Bernstein Shur, representing Portland Music Holdings, noted that she sent in a letter with edits to the proposed order. She also noted that Portland Music Holdings supports paying into the fund in support of the performing arts community.

Margaret Metcalf of 110 Dana Avenue supported the fee but noted it does not address the possible loss to local arts if there is direct competition between Merrill Auditorium and the new music hall.

Seeing no further public comment, the Chair closed the public comment session.

Mr. Goldman noted the review of Ms. Costigan's letter and suggested edits, with some incorporated into the proposed order, while additional clarity was provided for definitions. An additional ordinance would be created for the trust fund which will hold funds per agreements.

Councilor Sykes generally supported the proposal but felt fees were too low - \$2.00 would be more in the ballpark where the City should be, but could be even higher at \$3.00 to \$7.00. This could be further discussed when it goes to the City Council.

Councilor Pelletier agreed with Councilor Sykes.

Councilor Michniewicz noted that feedback, and would work on this, in consultation with Councilor Sykes, between now and when it goes to the City Council.

Chair Councilor Ali said that he would support this, and thanked Councilors Michniewicz and Grant for their work on this.

A motion was then made by Councilor Michniewicz, seconded by Councilor Sykes, to forward this to the City Council for approval; a vote was then taken on it and it passed 4-0.

Item #3: Discussion regarding proposed Large Venue Ordinance – Chair Councilor Ali and Councilor Pelletier.

(Ms. Libner joined the meeting at this time.)

Councilor Ali introduced the item and indicated that since the Committee would not be taking action on this item, there would be no public comment at this time. The Committee will discuss the proposal, receive feedback from staff, and would bring the item back to the Committee for a vote. Councilor Ali asked Councilor Pelletier to give an overview of the proposed ordinance.

Councilor Pelletier explained the rationale behind the proposed ordinance, particularly regarding concerns that may arise with the close proximity of two large venues. The current buffer zone is 100 feet. The proposal would remove that requirement for entertainment venues with fewer than 1,000 attendees in the B-3 and WCZ zones and add a 750 feet buffer zone for large entertainment venues (seating capacity of 1,000 or more).

Councilor Michniewicz raised concerns with the removal of the 100 foot buffer for small venues and asked that staff and the Committee review and evaluate the issues and concerns that were raised when the 100 foot buffer was put in place.

Director Kraft shared information and preliminary comments and thoughts from staff in the Planning Department, Police Department and Permitting and Inspections Department. (Director Kraft's presentation is attached to the minutes).

Committee members followed up with questions for Director Kraft regarding the distinction between a license and land use conditions, clarification of the current buffer zone workings, and whether the proposed ordinance would be moving the City in the right direction.

Councilor Ali requested direction from Corporation Counsel Goldman on potential next steps and then asked Committee members for input on moving this item forward. Councilor Michniewicz indicated she would like to see the 100-foot buffer zone issue separated out and brought back to the Committee for further discussion in 2026. Councilor Sykes indicated support for further discussion but said she would not want this topic to die in Committee. Councilor Phillips would like to see more research before the item is brought back to the Committee.

Councilor Ali thanked the staff and Committee for their input and indicated that Corporation Counsel and staff would bring back revisions to the proposed ordinance, including separating out the removal of the 100-foot buffer and the proposed 750 buffer, for the Committee to consider at a future meeting.

Item #4: Presentation: Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), part of the Housing and Economic Development Department, overview of programs and services – Melissa Hue

Ms. Hue thanked the Committee for this opportunity and then described the various programs and their successes in OEO, including the Natural Helpers Leadership Program, the Natural Helpers Webinar Series as part of Welcoming America, Shelter Health Access Program, the Immigration Legal Aid Clinic, the ESOL Collaborative, Portland Professional Connections, and newest Climate Resiliency Needs Assessment. Her presentation is attached.

Councilor Michniewicz thanked Ms. Hue for OEO's work, including the engagement and community building being done through the Natural Helpers program; Councilor Phillips agreed.

Councilor Sykes also applauded the work of OEO and asked about keeping track of how the programs are helping people and communities, with Ms. Hue noting they have a "Where are they now study?". This includes re-engaging the Natural Helpers alumni group.

Regarding questions of how OEO is funded, Mr. Watson noted that its staff and programs are funded through TIF funds. OEO has also been successful in obtaining various grant opportunities to assist with program funding.

Chair Councilor Ali thanked Ms. Hue for the update on OEO's programs of service.

(Councilor Phillips had to leave the meeting at this point.)

Item #5: Review and vote to forward the FYE2025 TIF Annual Report to the City

Council as a communication item – Greg Watson

Mr. Watson said that this is an annual communication item for the Committee and City Council regarding Tax Increment Financing (TIF) activity. The City's TIF activity is centered around Affordable Housing TIF projects. In general, TIF is a flexible and powerful tool to leverage further investments, and, for Affordable Housing TIF projects, the TIF revenue assists with annual operating costs over the life of the TIF.

TIF also provides cost savings for the municipality due to its tax sheltering benefits.

Councilor Michniewicz thanked Mr. Watson for the work put into this annual report.

Councilor Sykes also appreciated the detail in the report, and questioned future uses of TIF revenue for perhaps Franklin Arterial.

Mr. Watson noted that the area-wide Bayside and Downtown TIFs touch portions of Franklin Arterial but that the TIF revenue associated with the area-wide TIF Districts could not fund the overall work that is envisioned for Franklin Arterial.

Chair Councilor Ali thanked Mr. Watson for the Report.

The Committee consensus was to forward the Report to the City Council as a communication.

Item #6: Review and vote to forward the Housing and Economic Development Committee's 2025 Annual Accomplishment Report to the City Council as a communication item – Greg Watson

Mr. Watson provided an overview of the Committee's annual accomplishment report.

Councilor Ali thanked Mr. Watson for the Report.

Item #7: Communication: Quarter 3 Rent Control Report.

Mr. Watson noted this is a routine quarterly report for the Committee.

Councilor Pelletier asked about quality control, i.e., proactive verification of data supplied to Permitting and Inspections. He was curious how many were quality and how many were issues.

Mr. Watson said that he would check in with his colleagues in Permitting and Inspections regarding this for their response.

Item #8: Executive Session: Pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. 405(6)(C), the Committee will go into executive session to provide staff direction and guidance regarding lease negotiations for 166 Riverside Industrial Parkway.

Chair Councilor Ali noted for the public that after the executive session, the meeting would be over – the Committee would not come back in public session. He then opened the meeting for public comment. Seeing none, the public comment session was closed.

On motion made by Councilor Michniewicz, seconded by Councilor Sykes, the Committee voted 3-0 at 7:22 p.m. to go into executive session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A. 405(6)(C) to provide staff direction and guidance regarding lease negotiations for 166 Riverside Industrial Parkway.

At approximately 7:45 p.m., the Committee came out of executive session and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully, Mary Davis and Lori Paulette

Performance Hall & Theater Moratorium



*City of Portland, Maine
Sustainability and Transportation Committee*

November 18, 2025



Existing 100 ft. Buffer



-  100 ft. buffer – venues over 1,000
-  Live Nation Site

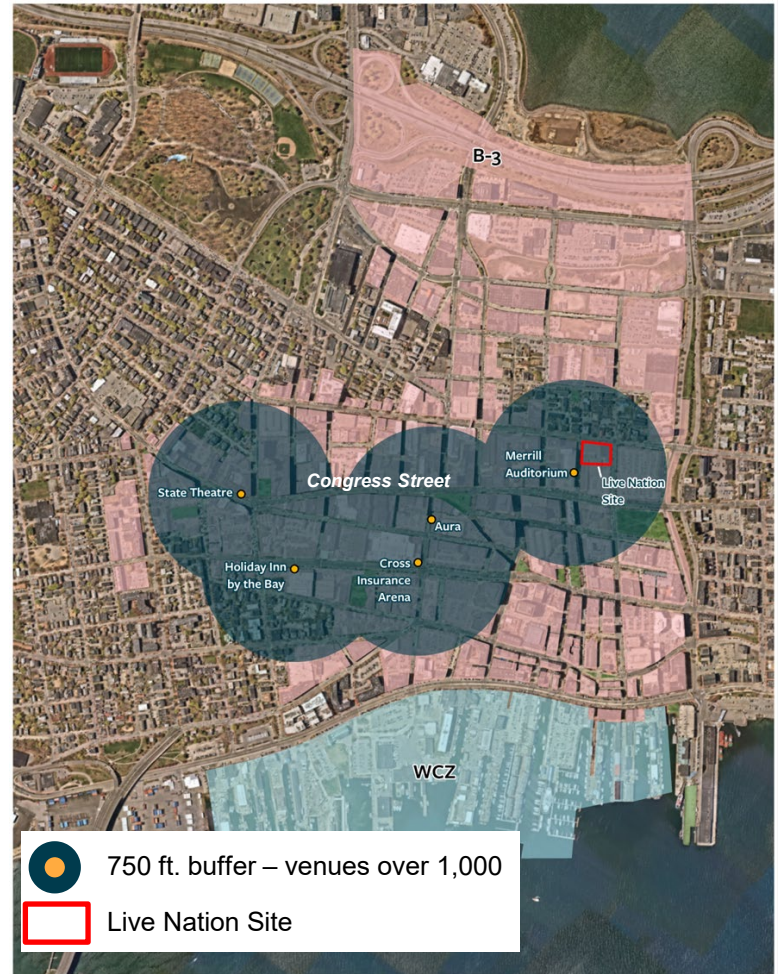
Current Regulations

- Applies in B-3 zone
- Current Buffer: 100 feet
- Measured along or across public ways from the main entrance.
- Applies to businesses with an entertainment license. Occupancy not a consideration.
- Buffer intended to address bar/nightclub impacts in Old Port

Proposed Regulations

- Applies in B-3 zone
- Proposed Buffer: 750 feet
- Applicable to “*large entertainment businesses*”, with a seating capacity of 1,000 or more
- Measured as the shortest straight-line distance between the two main entrances at issue, measured in a geometrically straight line, without regard to intervening structures, uses, or other topographical features
- Intended to address perceived impacts associated with large entertainment venues

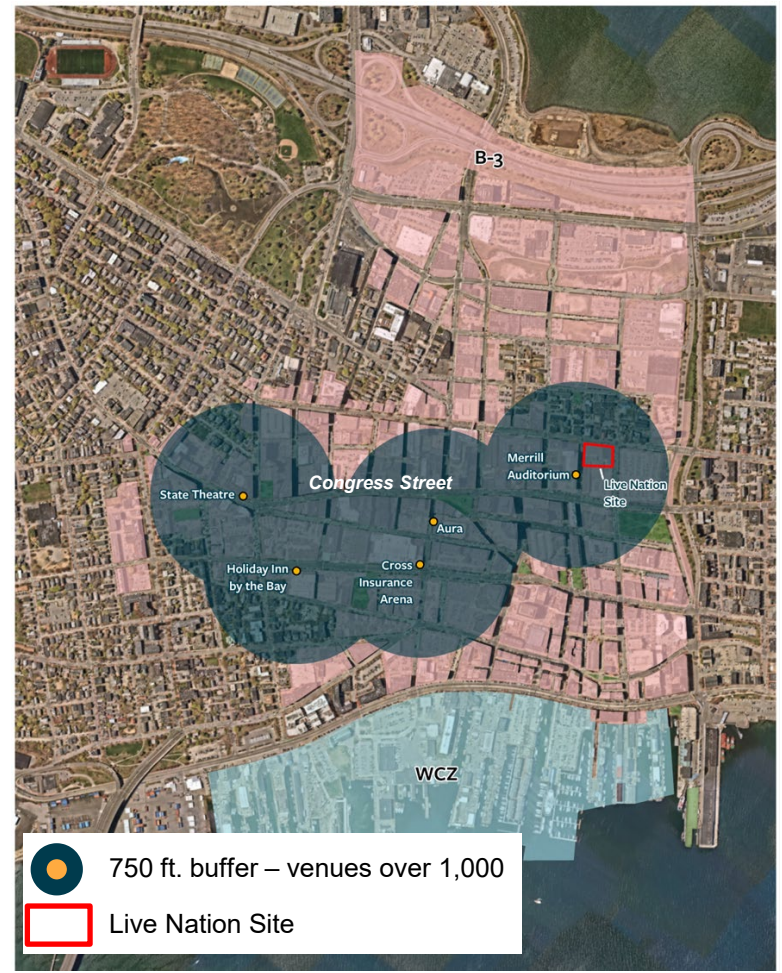
Proposed 750 ft. Buffer



Existing 100 ft. Buffer



Proposed 750 ft. Buffer



Considerations

Code Implications

- **Definitions:** Using “Seating Capacity” conflicts with building code standards that use occupancy. If the concern is venue size, the standard should be based on total occupancy rather than seating capacity.
- **Section C:** Measuring by radius inflates the range of the buffer (impact zone) even though sites may be separated by other buildings, or topographical features.
- **Section D:** Proposal conflates building use with licenses, which are non-transferable.
- Likely block ownership changes and prevent new entertainment licenses downtown.
- Unclear if the proposal is concerned about uses or entertainment licenses
- Discontinued provision should be one year not two years.
- **Section F:** Chapter 15, Section 15-10 is only about hearing *notices*.

Outdated References

- Recommend striking paragraph 2 in Exhibit B, as it is no longer applicable (B-3c zone obsolete)

Considerations

Citywide + Economic + Cultural Implications

- Likely impacts on downtown venues – environmental, economic, and cultural.
- Pushes larger venues to less accessible areas of city.
- Contrary to national trends – Cities actively allow and encourage downtown cultural venues.
- Entertainment license be granted to any business/use – may not just impact theaters.
- Staff does support eliminating the entire entertainment buffer, with further input from PD.

Next Steps

- If the committee is interested in advancing or considering this proposal, staff recommends conducting a policy review and welcomes any comments or questions you would like that review to address.
- Return with policy review at future HEDC meeting.



Thank you

Contact kkraft@portlandmaine.gov



housing
& economic
development

City of Portland

Office of Economic Opportunity

11/18/2025 HEDC Presentation





Natural Helpers Leadership Program

Investing in Community Leaders for
Transformative Change

City of Portland Maine, Office of Economic Opportunity



Community Impact

As a part of the Natural Helpers Program, each Natural Helper commits to Impact 5 and Teach 10 people throughout the Fellowship. Natural Helpers tend to exceed this, impacting **30 people on average**, and sharing information with many more.

In 2025:



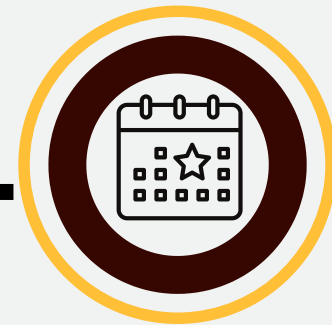
Over **1,700** touch points were made in the community



600+ people attended NH speaking engagements



880+ people were reached via media communication



500+ people attended events hosted by Natural Helpers

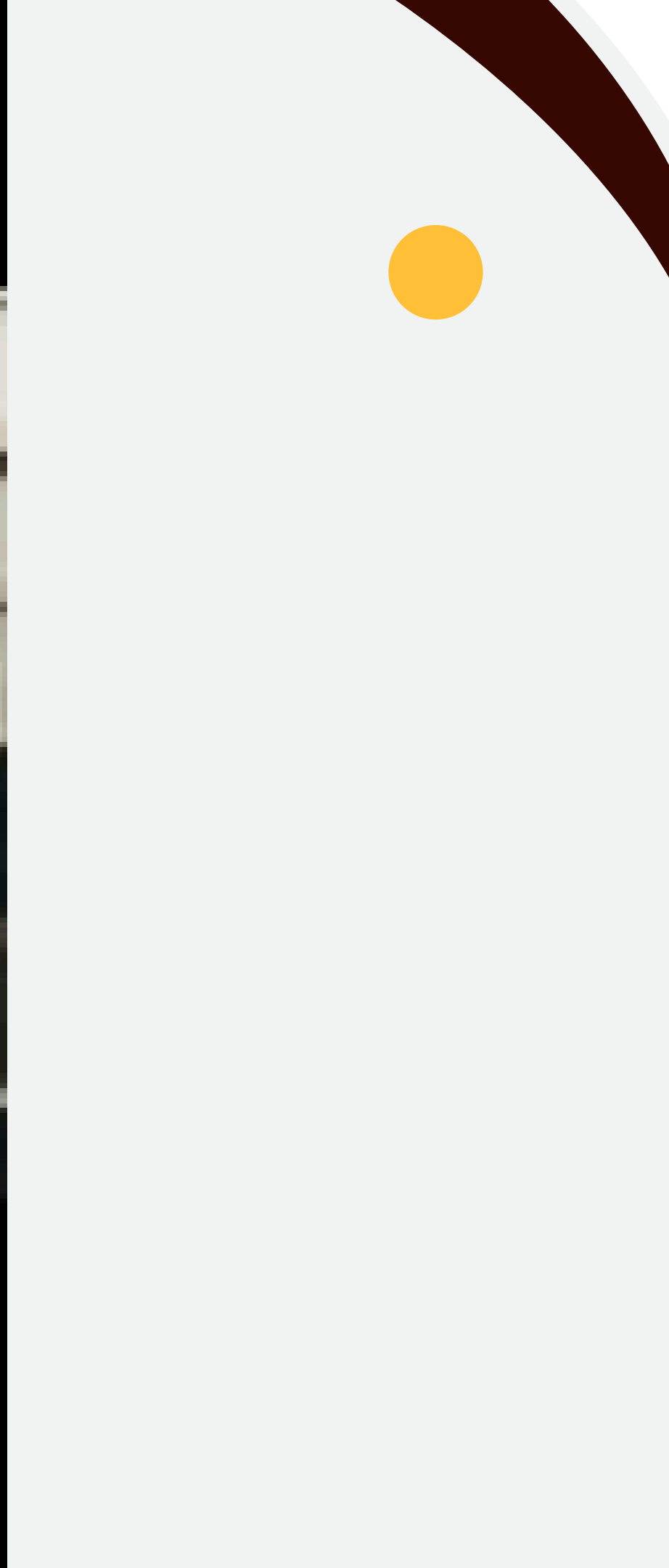
Example Stories:



João and the Shelter



Francys's Multicultural Festival



Natural Helpers Webinar Series

WELCOMING AMERICA 



Melissa Hue
Director



Aram Guptill
Project Specialist



Portland Office of Economic Opportunity
City of **portland** **WELCOMING AMERICA**

Online
**NATURAL HELPERS FELLOWSHIP
NATIONAL WEBINAR SERIES**
Strengthening Communities from Within

- Part 1** - October 28, 2pm ET: Who are your Natural Helpers?
- Part 2** - November 11, 2pm ET: From Idea to Impact
- Part 3** - December 9, 2pm ET: Caring for Natural Helpers
- Part 4** - January 15, 2pm ET: Navigating Systems
- Part 5** - February 12, 2pm ET: Advocacy and Collective Impact
- Part 6** - March 12, 2pm ET: Learning from Communities Across the U.S.



City of Portland

Shelter Health Access Program

A community approach to mental and physical health and wellness as a pathway to belonging, opportunity and integration



A Citywide Collaboration

This program is powered by collaboration across city departments and partners working toward a shared goal. The City of Portland's **Parks & Recreation** Department provides space and transportation, the **Social Services** Department coordinates with residents and shelter operations, and the Department of **Housing and Economic Development** brings together partners, programming, and local work opportunities.

✓ Space + Transportation Shuttles

✓ Resident Coordination + Support

✓ Work + Volunteer Opportunities



Pilot 1 Community Partnerships



Hearts of Pine

Portland's Professional Soccer Team organizing weekly soccer pick up games



Maine Afro Yoga Project

Culturally rooted local organization offering trauma informed yoga and zumba classes



Men Connect New Mainers Program

Maine-based program promoting healthy masculinity and cultural integration for men



In Her Presence

Portland non-profit focused on empowering immigrant women through education

Proven Impact

The impact of this pilot, as reflected in participant feedback, engagement levels, and observed shifts in confidence and community connection, highlights the power of investing in holistic wellbeing as a pathway to long-term integration



34 Shelter Residents participated in the first Pilot



87% reported an increased ability to manage stress



87% reported developing a more positive self view



93% reported feeling more connected to others

Example Stories:



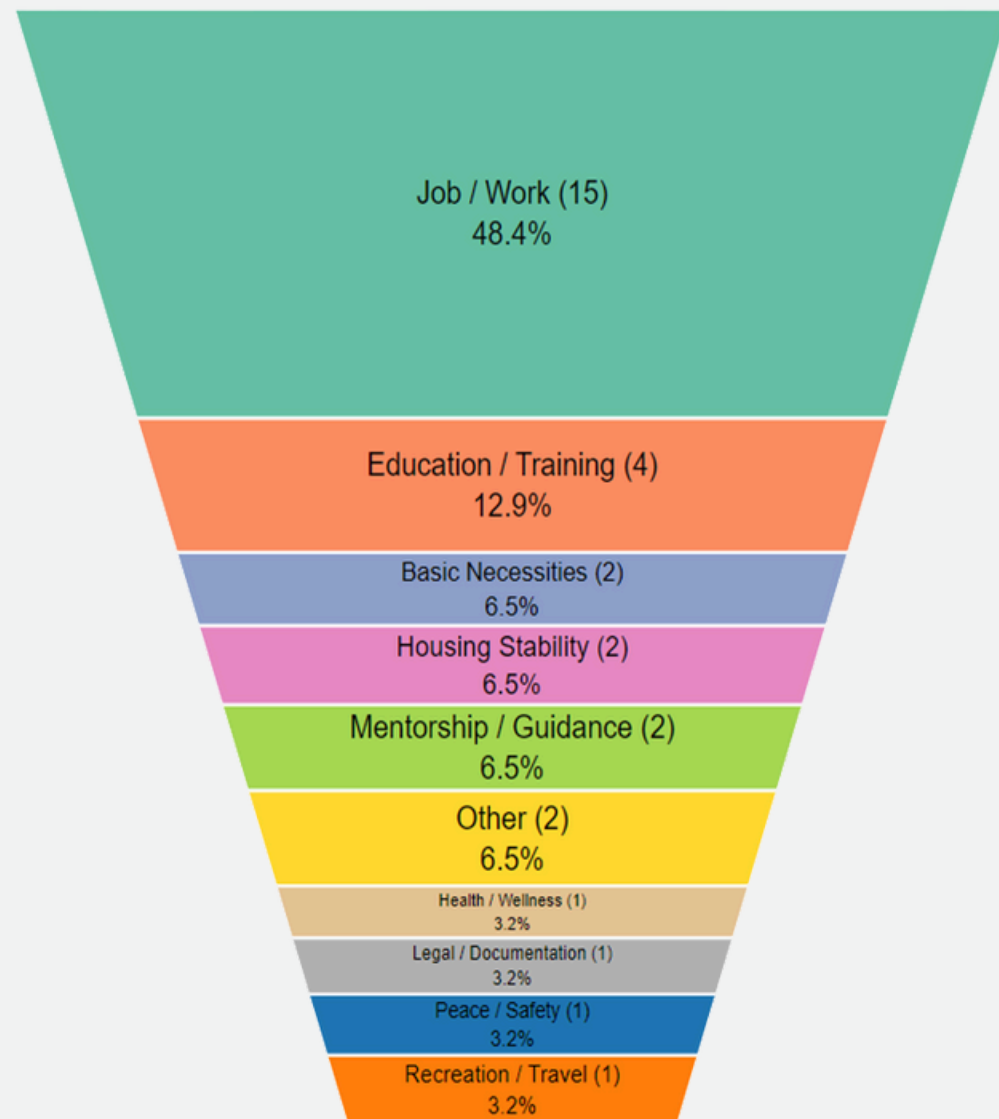
12+ Women Enrolled in Programming



Hearts of Pine Work Opportunity

Program Findings


With space to move, reflect, and release, participants gained the clarity and confidence to set goals, imagine new paths forward, and believe in their ability to achieve them. Most important to them, was accessing work opportunities.



Nearly half of respondents (48.4%) prioritized work as their top resource need, followed by education and training.




The word cloud shows that “confidence” is by far the most frequently cited emotion participants feel they’ve learned to express.




Goal Support

An overwhelming **90.6%** would like help taking steps toward a personal goal, with 9.4% unsure.




Personal Goal Setting

61.3% have developed short-term goals, while **38.7%** have set long-term goals since the program.



Future Planning

82.4% say the program helped them think about their future, 14.7% say ‘somewhat’, and only 2.9% responded ‘not really’.

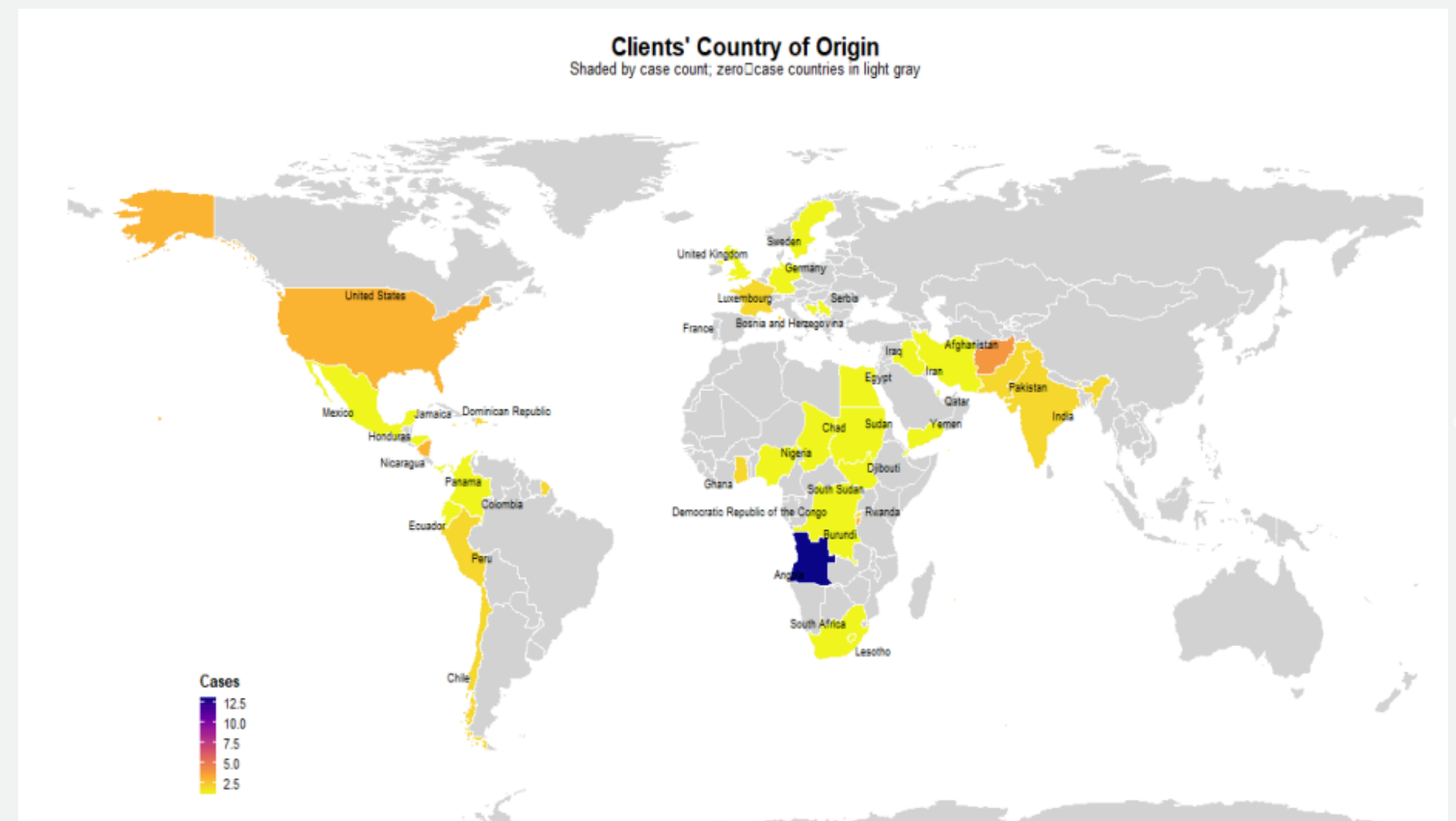


Personal Control

74.2% feel more in control of their decisions and emotions, with 19.4% reporting ‘a little more’, and just 6.5% reporting ‘no change.’

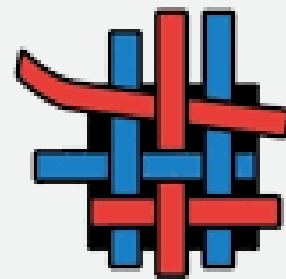
City of Portland Immigration Legal Aid Clinic

- Began in 2020
- Free, Virtual Appointments available twice per month
- Volunteer lawyers can assist with questions regarding:
 - Family Based Immigration
 - Diversity Visa Lottery
 - Temporary Protected Status
 - Work Permits
 - Becoming a US Citizen
 - Permanent Residency



**Expanded # of volunteer lawyers
to nearly double appointment
availability in 2025**

2024: 7 lawyers, 65 appointments
2025: 11 lawyers, 110 appointments



Immigrant Welcome Center
GREATER PORTLAND



The ESOL Collaborative comes together regularly to foster a multidimensional and intersectional approach to English language access, identifying gaps in access, reducing service duplication and coordinating efforts to improve individual and collective learning results. Additionally, the ESOL Collaborative strengthens inter-organizational communication and resource sharing to better serve Portland's multilingual communities.

Portland Professional Connections



Programming targeted for:



Trained Professionals

Foreign trained or highly trained individuals looking to grow their networks and align their work with their training and skillsets



Entry Level Professionals

Job seekers new to the job market, newly arrived in the US or looking to re-enter the workforce after a period away



Match

Relationship vs. Resume
Connectees are paired with connectors based on their professional goals and field of interest



Connect

Connection vs. Currency
Pairs meet to discuss local industry trends and advice for maximizing professional experiences



Refer

Network vs. Net Worth
Connectors introduce Connectees to three key contacts in their professional network

Thanks to the support of:

JOHN T. GORMAN
FOUNDATION



Climate Resiliency Needs Assessment

This project aims to assess the climate-related needs, risks, and barriers facing immigrant and low-income communities across Portland, Maine. Results will guide programming, resource development, and policy recommendations to ensure these communities are better included in climate planning, preparedness, and adaptation efforts.



housing & economic development



sustainability office

The assessment aims to capture experiences and needs related to:

1 Climate Migration

Understanding how climate pressures are driving movement into, out of, or within the city

2 Emergency Preparedness

Gauging community readiness for extreme weather and other climate-related emergencies

3 Home Weatherization + Adaptation

Exploring needs around home insulation, energy efficiency, and climate-proofing housing

4 Knowledge and Accessibility

Ensuring all communities can access climate resources, education, and have a voice in planning and policy