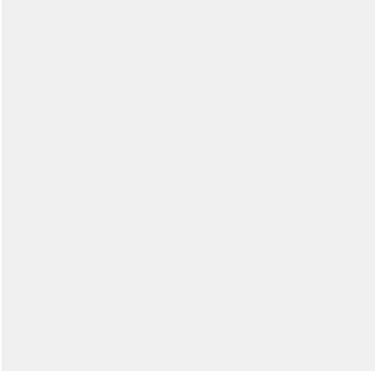
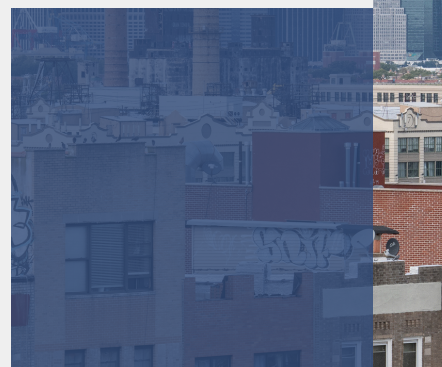
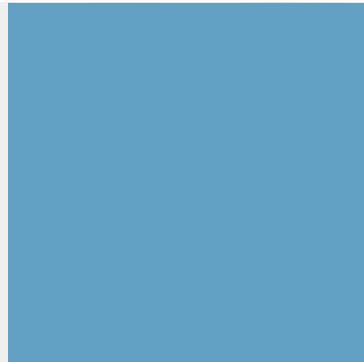


Brooklyn Communities Collaborative

2025 Annual Report

We envision a Brooklyn where all communities are healthy, economically sound, culturally vibrant and civically engaged.



Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends and Partners,

In a year of profound uncertainty, Brooklyn Communities Collaborative met the moment with clarity, purpose, and an unwavering commitment to health equity for every Brooklynite.

Our neighbors and community partners continue to report pressing needs, and, with their direction, we launched initiatives addressing the maternal health crisis, mental health and wellness, and access to healthcare. Through new and expanded partnerships with community-based organizations, we created a directory of Brooklyn clinics offering telehealth services, supported a new Community Health Worker training, and deepened relationships with institutional purchasing partners. We also celebrated a milestone: the graduation of participants from our Brooklyn Small Business Accelerator – a program that puts economic opportunity at the center of community health.

BCC amplifies community voice through community led workgroups, and develops ways to address residents' most pressing concerns. This approach was instrumental in BCC's founding, and is a cornerstone of our commitment to collaborative health equity. As you will see, we are turning community input into impactful programs that are genuinely for and by Brooklyn.

Brooklyn Communities Collaborative would not be possible without the partners, funders, and individuals that share our vision for a Brooklyn where all communities are healthy, economically sound, culturally vibrant and civically engaged. We thank you for your continued support as we look towards the future.

In partnership,

Shari Suchoff

Executive Director



Strengthening Communities

Maternal Health Program

BCC’s community partners and research have consistently identified maternal health as a crisis requiring attention in vulnerable Brooklyn communities. Launched in 2024 under BCC’s Strong Communities Fund, the Maternal Health Program (MHP) grant program addresses persistent disparities in maternal and infant health across Brooklyn, with a focus on Central and Eastern neighborhoods in the borough.

The Strong Communities Fund has proven to be an effective, participatory grant-making model that funds and strengthens community-based organizations, and the MHP is no exception. Guided by a cross-sector Maternal Health Review Committee – comprising leaders from community-based organizations, health care providers, and social service partners – the program is designed to ensure that funding priorities, outcomes, and evaluation metrics reflect the complexity of maternal health inequities and the experiences of communities most affected.

The grant period began in early 2025 with a convening designed to build collaboration among the program’s ten awardees. Grantees presented their projects, identified areas of intersection, and explored opportunities for collaboration. The gathering set the tone for the year ahead and surfaced the types of tailored technical assistance grantees would need to strengthen implementation and outcomes.

In Focus - Maternal Health

Between 2018 and 2021, Black birthing New Yorkers faced life-threatening complications at a rate 2.5 times higher than white birthing New Yorkers (192.5 vs. 77.9 life-threatening complications per 10,000 delivery hospitalizations)¹.

Brownsville had the highest three-year average infant mortality rate in all of New York City, at 10.4 deaths per 1,000 live births — more than double the citywide average².

Black non-Hispanic women and birthing people in Brooklyn experience alarmingly high rates of pregnancy-associated and pregnancy-related mortality^{3,4}.

By strengthening the capacity of trusted community-based organizations, MHP is extending its reach well beyond what any single program could achieve. Mid-year results include:

Tangible goods & essential resources

- 500+** Mothers received produce, diapers, baby equipment & more
- 4,000** Pounds of free produce distributed
- 300** Received monthly essential resources

Organizations: Little Essentials, Seeds in the Middle, Expecting Relief

Health insurance & care access

- 850** mothers enrolled in health insurance
- 300+** pregnant women & families connected to medical care
- 350+** referrals made for social service support

Organization: Brooklyn Perinatal Network

Workforce & leadership development

- 3** Young mothers earned certification as doulas and were offered comprehensive mental health support, educational resources, and career advancement opportunities

Organization: The Alex House Project

Community education & awareness

- 5** Events held: Maternal Health Fair, a four-week Maternal Health Lecture Series, a Prematurity Awareness event, a Mother’s Day celebration, and a Haitian Women Parents Café

- 100** Total event participants

Organizations: Anne Kastor Brooklyn Free Clinic, Christopher Rose Community Empowerment Campaign



- Strong Communities Fund Maternal Health grantees (clockwise) Little Essentials, the Anne Kastor Clinic at SUNY Downstate, Seeds in the Middle, Brooklyn Perinatal Network, and Expecting Relief demonstrate funded programs and resources (Sept - Oct 2025)

Expanding Access to Telehealth

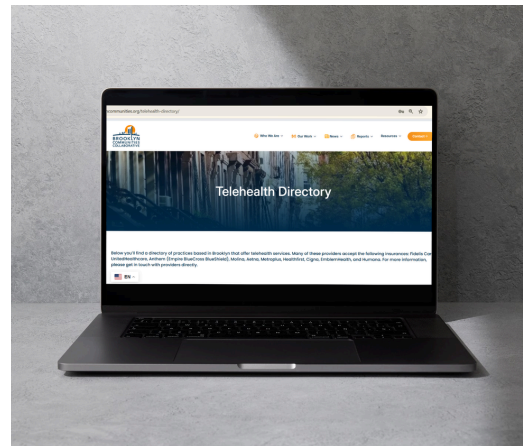
Many communities across Brooklyn face barriers to accessing healthcare and may be hesitant to seek these essential, health-related services – a pattern that risks triggering a health crisis.

In response, BCC consulted with the Community Advocacy and Action Workgroup (CAAW), the main convening body for BCC’s collaborative activities, about trends CBO partners were observing. Based on these insights, BCC launched the Safe Access Initiative, designed to expand awareness and utilization of telehealth services. Telehealth removes barriers like transportation, scheduling conflicts, physical accessibility, and childcare – offering a more flexible path to care. Yet it remains underutilized by the populations that most stand to benefit, including older adults, lower income residents, and those from racial and ethnic minority communities or who prefer a language other than English.

To ensure awareness of, and improve access to, these services, BCC – in partnership with Community Care of Brooklyn Independent Practice Association and CAAW – launched the Safe Access Telehealth Directory.

This easy-to-use, convenient tool helps Brooklyn residents find and access medical care on their own terms. Users can filter by practice type, adult or pediatric care, virtual service options, and whether new patients are being accepted. Where possible, multiple scheduling methods are provided to ensure the greatest accessibility.

To further increase awareness and understanding of telehealth as a viable option for healthcare needs, BCC developed a Telehealth Ambassador program that launched in late 2025. Select staff from participating Brooklyn CBOs will be trained and serve as Telehealth Ambassadors beginning in 2026. Ambassadors will educate community members about telehealth and assist with scheduling virtual appointments.



Community Led Mental Health

BCC launched the Brooklyn Roundtable on Community-Led Mental Health Practice (Brooklyn Roundtable) in June 2025 to address reports and data from partners that illustrated a deepening mental health crisis across Central and East Brooklyn. In partnership with the Billion Minds Institute, BCC and the Roundtable focused on methods to strengthen existing community-led, community-facilitated mental health interventions.

Inspired by the Friendship Bench model, a community-led health program with proven results in a variety of places across the world, the group developed a three-year work plan and began recruiting and training an intergenerational cohort of 15. In the coming year, pending funding, BCC will pilot this initiative, called the Brooklyn CaLM (Community-Led Mental Health), placing this cohort of trained counselors in safe, judgment-free community settings to provide culturally grounded, non-clinical mental health support to community members.



Roundtable on Strengthening Community-Led Mental Health Practice in Central, East and Red Hook held at the Brownsville Community Culinary Center (June 2025)

In Focus - Mental Health

56.2% of NYC residents had trouble accessing children's mental healthcare (ages 3-17); 64.6% of youth with both parents born outside of the US had trouble accessing mental healthcare; 69.3% of New Yorkers with a first language other than English had difficulty accessing mental healthcare⁵.

In 2023, nearly half (48%) of New York City teens surveyed experienced at least mild depressive symptoms, with up to 25% experiencing persistent anxiety. Disparities are stark: Black and Latinx students, as well as LGBTQIA+ youth and those facing food or housing instability, report higher rates of depressive symptoms, attempted suicide, and barriers to care. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death for teens ages 15 to 19 in NYC⁶.

BCC Bridge

Localizing and Diversifying the Supply Chain

Anchor institutions in Brooklyn spend billions of dollars annually, with little circulating back into the communities where they are located. The Bridge aims to shift this dynamic by encouraging our partners with contracting opportunities to invest in local, diverse businesses that employ community members. BCC takes a two-pronged approach to solving this problem by training and connecting businesses with anchor institutions, and convening anchor institutions to share best practices for finding businesses to support.

BCC Small Business Accelerator

In January, 13 Brooklyn-based small businesses graduated from the BCC Small Business Accelerator, a cohort-based program that ran throughout 2024. The celebration honored the graduates and showcased the work of several participating businesses, including catering by Brooklyn Food Guild partner George Howell of Georgi Caterer NYC, a station where attendees could create stuffed animals by Bear Magic Workshops, and floral arrangements by Mwah Flowers. BCC continues to meet with graduates to troubleshoot challenges and support contracting opportunities with large institutional vendors.



Graduates of the BCC Small Business Accelerator; demonstration of stuffed-toy making from Accelerator participant, Bear Magic Workshop (January 2025)

Workforce Development

Community Health Worker Training Program

Investments in Brooklyn’s workforce are in alignment with ongoing efforts to address systemic inequality, as living in high-poverty neighborhoods makes it difficult to access health care and other resources that promote health. BCC conducts extensive research with our institutional hiring partners when planning workforce trainings in order to optimize job opportunities and long-term, meaningful employment for our participants. In Fall 2025, BCC partnered with the 1199 Training and Employment Fund and the College of Staten Island to recruit participants for a Community Health Worker (CHW) training through the Career Pathways Training program. CHWs offer a critical bridge between healthcare providers and the people who need them most – helping patients adopt healthy habits, navigate complicated systems, and advocate for their own care. The program enrolled 20 Brooklynites in Fall 2025, and ended with an impressive 100% completion rate.



100% of enrollees completed the training program



60% of trainees were employed at the conclusion of the program

In Focus – Workforce Opportunity in Brooklyn

Poverty and low-income status are associated with various adverse health outcomes, including shorter life expectancy, higher infant mortality rates, and higher death rates for the 14 leading causes of death⁷.

Brooklyn has the highest concentration of low-paying jobs in NYC, with 59% of all jobs in paying less than \$3,333 a month⁸.

In Brownsville, 29% of residents live in poverty, compared with 18% of NYC residents. 60% of Brownsville residents are rent-burdened⁹.

Convening BCC's Anchor Institutions

Procurement and supply chain teams from across BCC's large, institutional anchor partners remain dedicated to the anchor model, an approach that harnesses their economic power to invest in the communities they serve. On October 16, BCC convened leaders representing its network of anchor institutions – Brooklyn Public Library, Downstate Health Sciences University, Maimonides Health, and One Brooklyn Health – to explore opportunities to advance their mission.

As BCC's largest gathering of anchor institutions to date, the convening offered a unique chance to share best practices for increasing local procurement. The group examined opportunities to grow non-clinical procurement from small local businesses, reviewed local procurement data and trends, called out specific businesses that met the procurement needs of their peers, and identified areas for collaboration. Our anchor partners expressed eagerness in meeting quarterly to discuss recent data and share recommendations of small businesses. We look forward to continuing this work together.

References

¹ <https://nyhealthfoundation.org/resource/disparities-in-maternal-health/>

² <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/vs/2023sum.pdf>

³ <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doh/data/data-sets/maternal-morbidity-mortality-surveillance.page>

⁴ A pregnancy-related death is one directly caused or worsened by the pregnancy itself, such as hemorrhage or preeclampsia. A pregnancy-associated death is any death occurring during pregnancy or within one year of delivery, regardless of whether it was medically connected to the pregnancy.

⁵ NYC Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health. 2025. Bridging the Gap: Challenges and Solutions for a Thriving Behavioral Health Workforce

⁶ Office of the NYC Comptroller. Classrooms, Counselors, Clinics: Building a Mental Health Care Continuum in New York City Public Schools BUREAU OF POLICY & ORGANIZING DECEMBER 2025

⁷ <https://www.aafp.org/about/policies/all/poverty-health.html>

⁸ www.anhd.org/report/racial-jobs-gap-who-benefits-new-yorks-economic-growth/#brooklyn

⁹ <https://a816-health.nyc.gov/hdi/profiles/>



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BCC recognizes with gratitude the funders that have helped to make this work possible:

1199 Center for Workforce Development

Altman Foundation

Billion Minds Institute

New York Health Foundation

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Samuel I Newhouse Foundation

BCC also extends thanks to the partners, supporters, and team members who have worked alongside us over the past five years. Without their support and dedication to a healthier and more equitable future in Brooklyn, none of this progress would be possible.



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