



Expanding Economic Opportunity LGBTQ+ Economic Empowerment Initiative

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Mission

The Office of Business Opportunity provides equal representation and advocacy for all small businesses by providing pathways to partnerships, capacity expansion, and growth.

Vision

OBO will be a national leader in the small business community for fostering partnerships and driving equitable economic growth across the Houston region.



Houston LGBTQ+ Economic Snapshot

- Approximately 194,000 LGBTQ+ adults live in the Houston metropolitan area
- 3.5% of the adult population in Houston identifies as LGBTQ+
- 71 LGBTBE-certified firms currently registered with the City of Houston
- The Greater Houston LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce has more than 500 registered members, including businesses, partner organizations, and individual members. Monthly Chamber Breakfasts typically draw between 125 and 150 attendees, providing strong engagement opportunities for outreach and program participation.

How it started...

CM Castillo proposed a LGBTQ+ Community Engagement Coordinator

Approved for funding to OBO

Key Areas of Focus

- **Connecting LGBTQ+ job seekers with workforce development resources and career readiness programs**
- **Supporting LGBTQ+-owned small businesses and entrepreneurs with business development guidance**
- **Increasing awareness of OBO certification opportunities, including LGBT Business Enterprise (LGBTBE) certification**
- **Expanding participation of LGBTQ+-owned businesses in City of Houston contracting pathways**

The Role

Community Engagement Specialist

- Hired October 2025
- Houston's LGBTQ+ community includes thousands of residents, job seekers, entrepreneurs, and small business owners who contribute to the city's economic growth and workforce.
- This role connects LGBTQ+ residents, job seekers, and entrepreneurs to workforce development resources, small business support programs, certification opportunities, and City contracting pathways.

A group of diverse people, including a woman in a blue shirt and a man in a white shirt, have their hands raised in a meeting or workshop setting. The background is blurred, showing green plants and a window.

What Does Success Look Like in Year One?

- Increase the number of LGBTBE-certified firms beyond the current 71
- Expand workforce readiness workshops
- Strengthen partnerships with community organizations
- Increase awareness of City contracting opportunities
- Grow engagement with LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs and small businesses

First Six Months at a Glance



Impact Story – Jha Allen, CEO – Endless 8 Marketing

- Jha Allen recently participated in an interview with the Office of Business Opportunity highlighting LGBTQ+ entrepreneurs in Houston.
- “Houston has a lot of people quietly doing the work.”
- “Moments like this are reminders of how much collaboration and leadership already exists within this city.”





Upcoming Initiatives & Strategic Partnerships

- Resume Workshops and workforce programming with community partners (Ongoing)
- LGBTBE Certified Firms Mixer and business engagement events – April 6, 2026
- Continued outreach at LGBTQ+ business and community events (Ongoing)

Strategic Partnerships & Coordination:

- Engagement with Houston-area Chambers of Commerce and LGBTQ+ Chamber events (Ongoing)
- Collaboration with Montrose Center workforce and entrepreneurship programs (Ongoing)
- Coordination with Thrive Small Business Summit and Chamber 2026 calendar (February 2026)
- Coordination with City programs including job fairs, and youth entrepreneurship initiatives (Ongoing)

Program Development:

- Development of a dashboard to measure program impact
- Exploration of grants and additional funding opportunities



QUESTIONS



Connect With Us:



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