ANCHORED IN ACTION

DEVELOPED BY PORT HOUSTON

PORT HOUSTON™

Anchored in Action: A Community Investment Plan

AAPA 2026 Lighthouse Award Submissions for:

Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach

&

Excellence in Print or Digital Media Communications

Submitted June 12, 2026

Background, Purpose and Goals

Briefly describe the port, company and the context for the program, project, or innovation. Include relevant history or prior work, and any research or studies that informed the initiative. Explain the overall purpose, broad goals, and specific objectives of the initiative.

Port Houston is the public port authority responsible for the stewardship, operation, and advancement of one of the world's busiest maritime gateways. Operating a network of public terminals along the Houston Ship Channel, Port Houston connects Texas businesses to global markets, drives $906 billion in economic activity, and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs across the region. Beyond cargo movement, Port Houston is committed to strengthening our local communities through environmental stewardship, workforce development, infrastructure investment, and meaningful partnerships that ensure sustainable growth for generations to come.

Port Houston's Anchored in Action is a first-of-its-kind, community-led investment roadmap designed to guide partnerships and investments across 14 port-adjacent communities and cities along the Houston Ship Channel. Rather than relying on isolated projects or reactive community relations efforts, this initiative created a shared framework that aligns resident priorities, industry resources, nonprofit expertise, and public-sector collaboration into a coordinated strategy for long-term community impact.

Developed through an extensive listening campaign and engagement process, the plan identifies more than 500 potential programs and projects spanning parks and greenspaces, mobility, workforce development, education, environmental quality, public safety, and community identity. More than 10,000 residents were engaged through meetings, surveys, and direct outreach (conducted in both English and Spanish) ensuring that the resulting priorities were inclusive and reflect the lived experiences of communities located along the Houston Ship Channel.

Anchored in Action proudly demonstrates how a port authority can move beyond traditional outreach strategies to become a convener, catalyst, and partner for regional community investments and lead true transformational impacts.

Implementation & Resources

Outline how the program, project or innovation was implemented, including methodology, timeline, key activities, and any implementation challenges addressed. Include resources used—financial, human, technological—and note efficiency measures, value engineering, or alternative funding mechanisms.

The Houston Ship Channel is one of the nation's most important economic corridors, yet many surrounding communities face long-standing infrastructure, mobility, environmental, and quality-of-life challenges. Prior to Anchored in Action, community investments were often fragmented across multiple organizations, making coordination a challenge and creating the risk of duplicated efforts or unmet priorities. Port Houston recognized the need for a unified, resident-informed roadmap that could connect community goals and aspirations with industry and philanthropic resources.

The initiative was implemented through several phases:

1. Listening Tour & Outreach

Throughout all of 2025, Port Houston conducted extensive engagement activities across the 14 communities and cities along the HSC, including a variety of community meetings, surveys, and direct outreach. More than 10,000 residents were engaged and had the opportunity to participate in either English or Spanish.

2. Data & Priority Development

Community feedback was organized into focus areas including parks and greenspaces, mobility, infrastructure, workforce development, education, environmental quality, public safety, and community identity.

These focus areas were presented to each community, who methodically worked to prioritize and rank each initiative to create a comprehensive roadmap of each community's key priorities and needs.

Projects and programs were then meticulously researched to identify key stakeholders, costs and processes associated to implement each initiative.

3. Regional Investment Planning

Tailored plans were created for 14 communities and cities grouped into four regions along the Houston Ship Channel and Galveston Bay. The communities include Denver Harbor, Port Houston, Pleasantville, Clinton Park Tri-Community, Galena Park, Jacinto City, Oak Meadows/Meadowbrook/Allendale, Magnolia Park/Manchester/Harrisburg, Pasadena, Channelview, Deer Park, Baytown, La Porte/Shoreacres, and Seabrook.

4. Resource Alignment

Port Houston committed $1 million in 2026 to invest in Anchored in Action projects and invited industry, philanthropic, and public-sector partners to align investments with the community-led roadmap and connect with our neighbors in an innovative way.

Innovation and Relevance

Describe new ideas, approaches, technologies, or practices introduced, and their practical application. Demonstrate how the initiative addresses current challenges or gaps within port operations, infrastructure, or maritime industry needs.

Ports nationwide face increasing pressure to maintain strong relationships with neighboring communities affected by industrial activity, transportation congestion, and environmental concerns. Anchored in Action addresses this challenge by creating transparent, ongoing engagement processes that build trust and give residents a meaningful voice in identifying priorities and shaping solutions in their communities. The initiative also invites industry partners of all sizes to collaborate through a common set of priorities, creating opportunities for volunteerism, workforce programs, environmental projects, and larger capital investments.

Additionally, Anchored in Action proudly demonstrates innovation and relevance by filling a significant gap within the maritime industry by creating a scalable, replicable model for strategic community investment that directly supports port operations, workforce development, resilience, and stakeholder trust. By aligning community priorities with Port Houston's long-term business objectives, this initiative demonstrates how ports can serve as catalysts for economic prosperity while fostering stronger, healthier, and more resilient neighboring communities. This innovative approach positions Port Houston as a leader in community-centered port development and provides a blueprint for ports seeking to strengthen their relationship with the communities they serve.

Program Objectives

- Create a comprehensive, community-led investment plan for port-adjacent neighborhoods.
- Build trust through transparent listening and engagement.
- Align corporate social responsibility efforts with resident-identified priorities.
- Reduce duplication and improve coordination among public, private, and nonprofit partners.
- Establish a scalable framework for tracking progress, reporting outcomes, and highlighting achievements.

Results, Evidence & Impact

Provide quantitative and qualitative evidence of outcomes. Describe short-term and long-term impacts, lessons learned, and benefits to the port or industry.

Port Houston's Anchored in Action initiative was designed to create measurable community, workforce, and operational benefits while strengthening the port's relationship with surrounding neighborhoods along the Houston Ship Channel. The initiative combines data-driven prioritization, sustained engagement, and strategic partnerships to deliver both immediate results and long-term quality of life value.

- **Improved trust and transparency**: stakeholders reported greater confidence in Port Houston's willingness to listen and respond to community concerns. The initiative created regular, two-way communication channels rather than one-time outreach events.
- **Stronger sense of inclusion**: residents in historically underserved port-adjacent neighborhoods expressed that their priorities were being formally recognized in port planning and investment discussions.
- **A stronger maritime workforce pipeline:** Local residents gain clearer pathways into high-demand port and logistics careers, helping address industry labor shortages.
- **More resilient port-adjacent communities:** Investments in preparedness, infrastructure coordination, and community capacity-building improve the region's ability to withstand and recover from disruptions.
- **Better-aligned infrastructure and community planning:** Coordinated planning reduces conflicts, improves project efficiency, and supports sustainable growth along the Houston Ship Channel.
- **Enhanced competitiveness for Port Houston**: Stronger community relationships and a more stable workforce environment support operational continuity, talent attraction, and long-term economic growth.
- **A replicable model for the maritime industry:** The initiative demonstrates how ports can integrate community investment into core business strategy, providing a blueprint for other port authorities.

Integration, Adaptability & Scalability

Explain how the initiative integrates with existing systems, processes, or infrastructure. Describe adaptability to changing conditions, emerging technologies, or evolving port needs, and potential for expansion or replication.

Anchored in Action creates a new, innovative platform to grow and elevate Port Houston's existing outreach and engagement strategies. For instance, Port Houston Community Grants Program was created to invest and support local community projects and programs and has produced over two million dollars in meaningful and measurable impacts. Through Anchored in Action, Port Houston has the opportunity to highlight and promote this type of community centric projects with industry partners to make larger, more significant impacts. This model can be replicated by other port authorities seeking to strengthen relationships with neighboring communities. Key transferable elements include:

- Large-scale resident engagement methods to establish priorities.
- Data-informed strategic investment planning across multiple communities.
- Cross-sector collaboration with industry, nonprofits, and public agencies.
- Public commitments to funding, coordination, and outcome tracking.

Because the framework emphasizes partnership alignment rather than a single funding source, it can be adapted to ports of varying sizes and governance structures.

Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration

Highlight how the initiative involves internal and external stakeholders, community partners, tenants, government entities, or other relevant groups. Describe strategies, collaborative efforts, feedback incorporation, and relationship-building.

At the core of Anchored in Action is a commitment to listening directly to residents, cities, and partners in port-adjacent communities and transforming that stakeholder input into action. Community and partner feedback was not simply collected—it was valued, analyzed, prioritized, and incorporated into planning and investment strategies and decisions.

Rather than relying on project-specific outreach, Anchored in Action emphasizes long-term relationship building. This approach establishes ongoing channels of communication and engagement that foster trust, transparency, and mutual understanding over time. These efforts also strengthen Port Houston's role as a trusted regional partner and reinforce its commitment to being a responsible neighbor and economic engine.

Anchored in Action utilizes a variety of engagement strategies to ensure broad participation and representation, including:

- Community listening sessions and town halls

- Stakeholder roundtables and focus groups
- Surveys and needs assessments
- Neighborhood meetings and civic organization presentations
- Participation in community events and festivals
- One-on-one meetings with community leaders

These engagement efforts provide opportunities for residents to identify priorities, share concerns, and help shape investment strategies. Feedback gathered through these channels directly informs project selection, partnership development, and resource allocation.

Conclusion

Anchored in Action represents a significant evolution in how a port authority can engage with surrounding communities and ensure long-lasting quality of life investments. Rather than funding isolated projects, Port Houston created a comprehensive, resident-informed investment framework that connects community priorities with public and private resources. Through extensive engagement, cross-sector collaboration, and a commitment to implementation, Anchored in Action demonstrates leadership in community relations, strategic investment, and shared regional prosperity.

Anchored in Action proudly exemplifies the values that AAPA awards seek to recognize: innovation, collaboration, measurable community impact, and a forward-looking vision for the relationship between ports and the communities we serve.

Beacon of Excellence Award

Port Houston and Anchored in Action proudly demonstrate innovation and leadership by filling a significant gap within the maritime industry by creating a scalable, replicable model for strategic community investment that directly supports port operations, workforce development, resilience, and stakeholder trust. By aligning community priorities with Port Houston's long-term business objectives, this initiative demonstrates how ports can serve as catalysts for economic prosperity while fostering stronger, healthier, and more resilient neighboring communities.