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A New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Role for the Town of Acton: Final Report

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A New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Role for the Town of Acton

Final Report

30 June 2022

Prepared by the
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Project Background

In June 2021, the Town of Acton's Annual Town Meeting approved an FY22 capital budget request for a study of a Diversity Officer position and for follow-up implementation work. This action followed the establishment of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC) in Acton and several incidents of bias and hate experienced by residents and elected leaders in Acton and occurred amidst a racial reckoning in the United States.

In September 2021, the Town of Acton's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC) submitted a report with recommendations to the Select Board. The Commission was charged with "assessing the state of diversity and inclusion in Acton," and its stated aim was to "dismantle structural and cultural barriers and offer recommendations to improve equity and empower underrepresented groups, especially racial, ethnic, and religious groups." Among the Commission's recommendations was to "Hire a Diversity Officer." The Commission's report included potential features and responsibilities of the position. Following the report, the Select Board authorized moving forward with the study to assist in the creation of the position.

In January 2022, UMass Boston's Collins Center for Public Management and Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy jointly launched a study to help guide the implementation of a new diversity, equity, and inclusion position for the town of Acton.

The Town requested a study to be conducted for the development of recommendations about the position to be constructed. Some of the key questions underlying the study included:

- Where in the organizational structure does the position best fit?
- What impacts, if any, could this new position have on the existing organizational structure of the Town? What should the position's title be?
- To whom should the position report?
- What should the specific responsibilities be?
- For compensation purposes, how should the position be classified?

This report offers major findings of the study and recommendations following a brief snapshot of the geographic, demographic, and governance features of the Town of Acton and a detailed summary of the methods used for data collection and analysis.

Community Overview

The Town of Acton is in Middlesex County about 25 miles northwest of Boston and 14 miles south of Lowell. Bordered by Carlisle and Concord to the east, Sudbury to the south, Maynard and Stow to the southeast, Boxborough to the west, and Littleton and Westford to the north, the Town was incorporated in 1735. The Town occupies a land area of about 20 square miles and is home to approximately 24,021 residents according to the 2020 U.S. Census. Acton retains a quintessential New England town character, with a well-maintained town center and green, historic architecture, and tree-lined country roads and fieldstone walls.

Originally part of Concord as the first inland colonial town established by the Massachusetts Bay Colony, the first European homestead within the current boundaries of Acton was built in 1639 after an epidemic killed the vast majority of Native Americans living in Eastern Massachusetts introduced by Europeans. Acton established itself as an independent town in 1735.

During the 19th century, Acton became a producer of barrels, gunpowder, flour, and lumber during the Industrial Revolution. It was also during this time that the Fitchburg Railroad was built through Acton to accommodate industrial activity, and later became passenger centric as the Town grew less due to industrialization and more as a result of becoming a residential community.

The Town's population has increased by 50% in the last several decades and has also grown in racial and ethnic diversity. Based on 2020 Census data, approximately 24% of Acton residents identified as Asian compared to 7.2% in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Just under four percent (3.8%) of Acton's residents identify as Black/African American and 4.3% of the population identify as two or more races in addition to residents who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.2%) and Native Hawaiian or Native Pacific Islanders (0.1%). More than half (53.2%) of Acton's residents are female; approximately one quarter are under 18 years of age, and 15.3% percent are 65 years of age and older.

Acton's town government is composed of an executive branch with a Town Manager and a five-member, elected Select Board. Other elected offices include but are not limited to: School Committee members (seven), Town Moderator, Library Trustees (three), and Housing Authority (four). Legislative functions are empowered through open town meetings; all registered town voters are eligible to attend meetings and vote on proposed actions.

Methods

The study was guided by several principles. The team worked to:

- Recognize that every municipality is unique and reflect that uniqueness in the recommendations;
- Obtain diverse points of view, to the greatest extent possible, on relevant issues related to the study focus;
- Focus on the study's purpose and future opportunities, and refrain from passing judgments on past occurrences; and
- Make recommendations that are pragmatic and adaptable.

The six-member team began the study in mid-January 2022 with the aim of preparing a report to help guide the implementation of a new diversity, equity, and inclusion position in the Town of Acton, initially referred to as "Diversity Officer." As detailed below, the team collected data from various sources that informed the development of recommendations.

The team determined that using the acronym DEIA to refer to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism was the most inclusive and appropriate term to use throughout this report.

Interviews

Acton Town Government

The UMass Boston team completed 26 interviews with individuals from town departments, boards, commissions, and other government entities including departmental directors, staff members from a range of departments, and individuals serving in elected and appointed leadership roles on boards, committees, and commissions. The team developed a list of department heads and individuals serving in volunteer and/or leadership roles and reached out via email with interview invitations. Additionally, the team welcomed all town employees to provide input through a virtual individual meeting and/or via email.

Interviews generally lasted 40-50 minutes and covered the following topics:

- functions/duties of the town's new diversity position;
- interaction of the position with [interviewee's] department and/or community-at-large;
- suggestions for title and placement of position in the town's organizational structure;
- supports needed for the position to be successful;
- town government and community climate regarding DEIA;
- town's response to past incidents;
- measuring effectiveness and/or success of the position;
- background/skills needed for the position; and
- anticipated challenges/roadblocks for the person in the position.

The interviews were conducted via Zoom and notes were taken during each interview, aggregated by topic, and coded in Airtable according to general themes, with specific points categorized by theme. Three individuals contacted for an interview did not respond to the team's request.

Municipal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professionals

The team also conducted four informal interviews with individuals serving as diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals in other Massachusetts communities to learn from the experiences of others working in such positions. Interviews generally lasted between 40-60 minutes. Topics covered included functions and priorities of their role; available supports and resources; organizational structure and context; background/skills/experiences helpful for this type of role; and advice to municipalities as well as those hired into this type of position.

All interviewee lists and interview questions are contained in Appendix B.

Public Engagement

The team had initially proposed two public engagement events. To ensure individuals had multiple options for providing input, the team determined that offering more opportunities in various modes to provide input was critical.

Consequently, the team held three listening sessions for community input; one was virtual and two were in-person. Flyers were posted in multiple locations around town in addition to electronic announcements via regular town communication channels. The flyer content may be found in Appendix C. The team also provided options for emailing input and/or connecting with a team member on the phone and extended the deadline for doing so. In addition, to keep the community apprised of the status of the project and key community findings, the team decided to hold a community update session to review major findings from data collection approximately one month prior to submission of the final report to the Town.

The team compiled a list of Acton-based organizations, groups, faith communities, and coalitions, for publicizing public engagement events; please see Appendix C for the list. The team made efforts to connect with leaders and/or members of these entities to identify communication and outreach mechanisms to reach as many residents of the community as possible, particularly population members who may be underrepresented, marginalized, and/or not familiar with opportunities for engagement with town government. One team member met with several organizational leaders via Zoom and corresponded with others via email to explain the study, identify the most effective ways for reaching subpopulations in Acton, and asking that the organization share information about opportunities for input.

The April 26th session held for 2.5 hours at the Acton Human Services and Senior Center Facility included seven community members who offered feedback, with four participants convened in the conference room and three others in the dining room.

The April 27th virtual session was held as a Zoom webinar and lasted two hours with between 30-40 in attendance over the course of the session.

The April 30th session at the Acton Memorial Library was held for four hours; 18 residents participated in some or all of the session led by two team members. Both in-person sessions provided options for meeting one-on-one with a team member in addition to a group setting and several community members opted for offering input individually.

The team solicited additional public input via email and/or a phone conversation following the sessions and through a follow-up notice made available through the town's communication channels. Ten individuals emailed input which includes notes from feedback provided verbally at one of the listening sessions, social media posts, and/or video recording links from related meetings held by a town entity. The community input period was extended and additional input from seven individuals was submitted; six individuals offered feedback via email and one community member provided input over the phone.

The team also hosted a listening session for the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC) on 16 March 2022 for input from seven members of the DEIC which lasted approximately fifty minutes.

Team-generated notes taken during all listening sessions were compiled by team members who listened to community members; both general themes and specific points were summarized. Team members also took notes to summarize major points offered via emailed input. Additionally, the team utilized Zoom recordings and transcripts from the virtual community listening session and DEIC listening session.

The team held a virtual community presentation on 31 May 2022 to offer an update to the community on the study and solicited feedback through a brief online survey on community outreach and engagement as well as how to ensure that the team's report is effectively disseminated to all community members. Sixteen individuals completed the survey and offered suggestions that are summarized in Appendix D.

Organizational Structure and Background

The team collected relevant town documents including the town's organizational chart; salary and classification charts; charter, bylaws, annual reports, and budget books; staff Diversity and Inclusion working group goals and related presentation; and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Commission agendas, minutes, and report. The team utilized this information as context for recommendations regarding the location of position in the town government structure, office location, title, job classification, qualifications, and salary range.

Best Practices and Common Practices

Scholarship and Applied Sources

The team compiled a comprehensive inventory of sources on best practices regarding the advancement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism aims in municipalities, from both scholars and practitioners in the field, and others associated with organizations and think tanks with expertise in this area. The team reviewed best practices for information from other municipalities and settings that would be relevant to the establishment of a new role in the Town of Acton, including the scope, functions, and community contexts for roles established in other places.

Position Descriptions and Salary Information

The team collected job descriptions and salary information for similar roles in Massachusetts communities. It's important to note that with relatively few roles established in towns and cities across

the Commonwealth – approximately 20 across the state – there is limited information available for comparative purposes.

Findings and Recommendations

The findings and recommendations are detailed below in the Summary Table. The team offers both broad and specific recommendations with varying levels of prescription. It is important to note that the process of advancing goals related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism is a long-term process that may involve more immediate aims and tasks as well as longer-term activities. Therefore, in terms of responsibilities outlined in Table 1 below, the team offers suggestions that distinguish short-term or more immediate from mid-term and longer-term recommendations. Short-term is intended to reflect aims and duties that are appropriate for the role to address (begin work on, not necessarily complete) during the first year or two and mid-term relates to aims and duties that may make the most sense to take up after the initial year or two in the job. Longer-term refers to duties and goals that may be most appropriate for addressing and/or accomplishing after the first two years of the role's existence. The letters S (short-term), M (mid-term), and L (longer-term) are included in Table 1 under the *Scope and Responsibilities* section as indication of the team's suggestions on the timing and potential sequencing of goals and duties.

As seen in Table 1, some of the functions of the role are expected to be a primary responsibility of the new role, in which the person in the role is charged with serving as the lead and/or the one primarily responsible for the function, while some functions are more consultative in nature and may involve guiding and/or supporting another town staff person who has primary responsibility for a particular function. It is important to keep this distinction between primary and consultative responsibility in mind at the outset as this new role is filled and the work begins. While there are likely to be modifications to the primary versus consultative aspects of the new role as time passes, recognizing that the person in this role is intended to be the point person in some ways and supportive/consultative in other ways may be beneficial to the person in the role and colleagues across town government. Furthermore, among the input received were several specific suggestions about how to ensure effective collaboration that seem critical to mention here:

- Collaboration with department heads is essential; get to know all departments, maybe shadow colleagues, sit one on one with all department heads; offer guidance to department heads through trainings and seminars; a listening tour may be helpful to determine how to work together
- DEIA role could help: strengthen staff relations and morale; build relationships: see each other's capabilities
- DEIA role is not the "sole planner, but driver of plans"
- Where there is a need for change, the DEIA role would create and own the action plan

It is important to note here that some community input indicated that the new role should be expected to resolve existing divisions and conflict in the community. While serving the community and working to advance DEIA goals, the role should not be expected to be responsible for bridging community divides and/or resolving all of the town's challenges related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism.

Table 1: Summary of Findings and Recommendations		
	Finding	Recommendation
<i>Scope and Responsibilities</i>		
	Overall feedback indicates that the scope of the role could be expansive and broad, with a range of focus areas and duties that are both internal and external in orientation.	<p>The role should be hybrid, with both internal and external aims and duties.</p> <p>The role should be charged with several broad areas of focus and responsibility along with some specific functions as needed.</p>
	Role clarification is important to determine and communicate, with an explicit understanding that the role may be modified over time in response to identified needs, concerns, and opportunities.	Once the role is established and hired, the Town Manager should develop a communications plan to inform the community-at-large, town staff, and all of those involved in town governance, including boards and committees, about the role, its scope, and overall expectations regarding initial areas of focus and responsibilities.
<i>Strategy and Planning</i>		
	The role should have as its primary area of responsibility oversight for the development, implementation, and evaluation of strategy and initiatives for advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA) goals in the town. The role will involve both taking the lead when appropriate and offering guidance and support in other cases.	<p>The role will serve as point person to facilitate the implementation of DEIA goals set by the Select Board and under the authority of the Town Manager.</p> <p>The overarching and primary function of the role should be to oversee a strategy for developing, implementing, and evaluating goals to advance values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in Acton across all departments and disciplines, policies, procedures, and practices.</p> <p>The role will guide, advise, support and partner with all departments, serving as an “internal consultant.”</p> <p>The role will work collaboratively with boards, committees, and commissions across town government.</p>
<i>Equity Review of Policies, Procedures, and Practices</i>		
S	The role should prioritize a review of town policies, procedures, and processes, including bylaws, with an equity lens.	The role should oversee the development of recommended amendments to policies and procedures using an equity lens, which may require external consulting services.
<i>Diversity of Town Workforce and Governance</i>		
M	Input received indicated that the role should have a focus on workforce diversity. Another aspect seen as important for the role was to provide the town staff with supports and resources to ensure the advancement of equity, diversity,	The role should serve as a partner and resource to the Human Resources Department regarding outreach and recruitment as needed.

	and inclusion in an anti-racist framework across town government, including all internal and external aspects.	<p>The role should identify best practices and benchmarks related to diversifying the town workforce and strengthening employee engagement and retention.</p> <p>The role should, in partnership with the Human Resources Department, be involved in coordination of professional development and training opportunities related to DEIA, including securing independent, external trainers when feasible.</p>
<i>Complaint/Bias Incident Reporting System</i>		
M	The creation and implementation of a system for the reporting of bias incidents were considered critical responsibilities of the DEIA role by many and included responding to incidents and data tracking and analysis.	<p>The role should recommend and support the formalizing and enhancement of a process for receiving and addressing complaints and/or bias incidents that is accessible to all who live, work, and study in the Town as well as those who visit and own businesses in the town.</p> <p>The role should identify best practices regarding the establishment, implementation, and evaluation of a bias incident reporting process.</p> <p>The role should serve as the primary town staff person for receiving complaints from staff and/or community members and evaluating the process over time to measure volume as well as the type of complaints and resolutions and make recommendations for changes as needed.</p> <p>The role should advise town leadership on responding to reports and incidents of bias, discrimination, and hate, including how to ensure effective and timely town communications and outreach regarding incidents.</p> <p>The role should determine the need for data availability, collection, analysis, and reporting on incidents, and work with other town departments as well as other agencies and entities.</p>
M	Interest in having the role involved in the collection and analysis of data about the town's population, including demographic data to better understand the community was expressed by some.	The role should become knowledgeable about existing data sources regarding the Acton community, including demographic data on the town staff, boards and committees, and population.

<i>Acton-Boxborough Regional School District</i>		
S	Ensuring that the role works in partnership with the school district to coordinate efforts regarding DEIA, including but not limited to incident reporting, prevention, and responses received considerable interest.	The role should regularly liaise with the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District administration to ensure effective communication and coordination with the Town of Acton to notify the community about incidents as warranted and more broadly to coordinate efforts regarding DEIA initiatives when appropriate.
<i>Boards, Committees, and Commissions</i>		
S	The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC) needs a designated staff person.	The role should serve as the designated town staff person for the Commission for purposes of liaising, meeting attendance, collaboration, and assisting with the coordination of activities and initiatives.
S	The Commission on Disabilities has existing staff support that should be maintained.	The role should liaise with the Commission on Disabilities and other boards and committees, both existing and future, that focus on and/or work closely with residents of the town, including but not limited to: Acton Boxborough Cultural Council Acton Housing Authority Acton Nursing Services Advisory Committee Council on Aging Board Economic Development Committee Memorial Library Trustees Recreation Commission Volunteer Coordinating Committee
<i>Community Outreach, Engagement, and Facilitation</i>		
S	Playing an essential role in helping to bring the community together to address DEIA-related issues and tensions through community conversations and in other ways was identified as important.	The role should identify, promote, and when feasible, coordinate opportunities to engage community members on DEIA-related issues and topics.
	The identification and consideration of the multiplicity of identities and experiences in DEIA efforts and initiatives were seen as critical.	The role should consider the needs, concerns, and talents of persons and groups with attention to a deep and broad range of identities and experiences including but not limited to: race, ethnicity, income, age, disability, gender identity, language, veteran status, parenthood, noncitizens, new citizens, renters/housing, religion, and sexual orientation, and cultural background.
M	Input demonstrated a need for the role to help build and strengthen connections between town government, broadly defined, and residents in an inclusive and equitable way.	The role should work to identify and understand barriers to participation in town government bodies and processes, and to devise feasible solutions to reduce barriers and encourage participation. The role should serve as a resource to advise and assist in the development, promotion, and assessment of

		<p>community engagement efforts, participation and inclusion in town-wide and departmental programs and events, working in collaboration with departments, boards, committees, and commissions.</p> <p>The role should support the town’s efforts to forge and strengthen connections between the role and community groups; build collaborative partnerships with diverse people and organizations to include community groups, nonprofits, community-based organizations, faith communities, businesses, and service providers, including those that serve traditionally underserved, vulnerable, and/or overburdened populations.</p>
L	Having the role involved in helping to build community in the town and increasing opportunities for community members to interact was discussed by many.	The role should, as warranted, help to identify and promote opportunities for residents to interact with one another and to enhance connections between community members.
M	Having the role involved in helping to ensure more effective communications from the town was expressed.	The role should serve as a resource for identifying ways to enhance the communications systems and modes of the town to ensure inclusion and accessibility, including language access, website upgrades, improved mechanisms for communicating and reaching various resident groups who may be underserved, vulnerable, and/or overburdened.
<i>Organizational Structure and Title</i>		
	<p>Many professional DEI positions in Massachusetts municipalities report to the chief administrative officer (Town Manager/Administrator or Mayor).</p> <p>The majority of those interviewed indicated that the most effective location in the organizational structure was reporting directly to the Town Manager</p>	The role should report directly to the Town Manager.
	Some professional DEI positions in other Massachusetts municipalities have other departments or positions reporting to them such as Human Resources or Social Services while others are the head of a separate DEI department or division. There were no other departments or positions identified as appropriate to report to this position.	The role should not have any departments reporting to the role.

	<p>Feedback on the title of the position included several expressions of concern about including the term “officer” in the title due to connotations of policing.</p> <p>The title “Director” was suggested by many who felt it was important to have the role serve as the head of the department, empowered to make decisions, and have a seat at the table with others in leadership positions. There was minimal feedback regarding the best title for the role.</p>	<p>The title of this role should include “Director” on par with other similarly situated positions in the town.</p>
	<p>DEI professional titles in other municipalities include “Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion,” “Chief Equity Officer,” “Human Rights Executive Director,” “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coordinator,” “Chief Officer of Talent and Culture,” and other similar titles.</p> <p>Some feedback indicated an interest in making sure that the title was clear and descriptive to reflect the nature and focus of the role.</p>	<p>The recommended title of the role is “Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”</p>
	<p>The physical location for the role should allow for effective communication and collaboration with the Town Manager.</p>	<p>The role should have an office located in Town Hall.</p> <p>The role should have access to meeting space in other key town government locations to help facilitate relationship-building with other town staff as well as community members.</p>
<i>Experience/Background/Skills</i>		
	<p>The most important desired qualifications were knowledge related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism as well as the ability for the person to listen, interact with a wide range of people, and foster relationships. Individuals expressed a wide range of possible qualifications for the role.</p>	<p>The Town should recruit and hire a person with good listening and interpersonal skills, a background and experience in bringing diverse groups of people together, and knowledge of DEIA, conceptually and practically.</p>

	<p>Other municipalities typically require a DEI professional to have a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field with 3-5 years of related experience.</p> <p>Government experience, while not required, is a plus due to organizational structure and governance processes of municipalities, the dynamics of constituents and communities, and the policies and procedures as well as pace of change compared to other sectors.</p>	<p>The role should require a Bachelor's degree in a relevant field with 5 years of related experience, or equivalent experience, and include the opportunity to consider a broad view of the related field, education, training and experience of candidates.</p>
<i>Administrative Support</i>		
	<p>The need for providing administrative support was identified.</p>	<p>The role should receive administrative support from within the Town Manager's office as warranted.</p>
<i>Additional Considerations</i>		
	<p>Some feedback noted that there should be recognition that existing procedures and processes may not allow for quick fixes or immediate policy or procedures changes.</p>	<p>The role should be provided ample opportunity to gain knowledge of the governance of the Town and of processes for changing policies and procedures.</p>
	<p>There are varying levels of openness to and acceptance of a new DEIA professional role in town.</p>	<p>The role should be provided adequate time for building both internal and external relationships, including one-on-one meetings with all department heads, and listening sessions with boards, commissions, committees, and community groups. For the initial six months of the position, the role should have the capacity to meet with as many individuals and groups as possible.</p>
	<p>A growing body of practical and scholarly resources for DEI professionals in municipalities exists and is available to municipalities.</p>	<p>The town administration should become familiar with the professional resources available for guidance on how to best prepare for and onboard the person hired.</p> <p>The role should be provided access to available DEIA tools and resources from various associations, institutes, centers, and other entities; funds should be made available for toolkits or other publications that require a fee. (Please see selected resources in Appendix E).</p>

Appendix A. Recommended Draft Job Description

TOWN OF ACTON

Present Incumbent:	Date of last revision: June 2022
Title: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director	Reports to: Town Manager
Salary Chart:	Job Grade: 17

SUMMARY: Responsible for administrative and managerial work in directing the Town’s diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA) programs and initiatives. Ensure that a full range of programs and services equitably and inclusively address the needs and interests of Acton’s employees, potential employees, residents, community groups, and businesses. Serve as a resource for other town departments. Work closely with Town officials to ensure that the DEIA needs are being addressed. Perform related work as requested by Town Manager.

SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY:

While the DEI Director does not directly support personnel, the position has responsibility to direct the work of the Town’s DEIA initiatives, programs and policies, and will work collaboratively with key staff. May supervise analysts, interns, and other staff on a project basis.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITION:

Supervisory controls: Town Manager sets overall objectives at the Town level. The DEI Director is responsible for daily overall management of DEIA activities and programs; discusses issues or concerns with Town Manager. The Director keeps Town Manager informed at a management level. The Director interprets policy on own initiative in terms of established objectives, keeping Town Manager informed of progress and potential implication(s) of decisions. If new policies are developed, the Director will discuss and receive approval from Town Manager. Town Manager will approve budgetary changes.

Guidelines: Employee adheres to the guidelines as provided by the Town of Acton Personnel Administration Plan. Town Manager must authorize any major deviations. On a daily basis, employee uses judgment in interpreting and adapting these guidelines and all other pertinent Town and State laws, policies, and procedures.

Complexity: Employee is responsible for supervising all DEIA initiatives, programs, and policies. These different areas of responsibility are key to the proper functioning of the DEI role as a whole. The Director must prioritize the importance of situations and make decisions based on various choices.

Scope and Effect: Work requires the assessment of a variety of conditions and situations, formulating solutions, making judgments, and evaluating the effectiveness and quality of projects and programs. Errors in judgment could seriously affect the accuracy, reliability, and acceptability of department operations and services, and poor public relation outcomes.

Personal Contacts/Purpose of Contacts: Contacts are with other employees and other Town departments. Contacts are also with the general public, residents, boards and committees, resident groups, cultural, religious, and community organizations and with officials from state, town and regional agencies. Contacts require knowledge, articulation, patience, and diplomacy to obtain or furnish information; to explain programs and initiatives; to provide technical or related assistance; and to work effectively with other Town departments and agencies. Frequent contacts with recipients of services, stakeholders, community members, employees, and coworkers are key to the smooth and successful operation of the DEIA function.

Physical Demands/Work Environment: Work is typically office-type, but includes walking, standing, bending, and carrying light items. Frequent trips to other Town Buildings and other locations across the municipalities. Environment involves everyday risks or discomforts which require normal safety precautions.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND ABILITY:

Knowledge: Knowledge of local and state statutes, bylaws, regulations, policies, procedures, and best practices relevant to provision of DEIA programs and initiatives. Knowledge of DEIA-focused community and regional resources. Familiarity with sources of bias, discrimination, and exclusion.

Skills. Must have interpersonal, public speaking, and organizational skills. Computer skills are needed to develop reports, maintain relevant and necessary statistical information, create budgets, and correspond by email. Excellent writing skills. Ability to recognize town-wide priorities and work cooperatively to support their accomplishments. Facilitation skills.

Ability. Ability to work effectively with a diverse range of residents and town volunteer committees, as well as elected officials. Ability to read, understand, interpret, and apply town and state laws, regulations, policies, and standards. Ability to identify and analyze issues and make appropriate decisions and, when appropriate, recommendations to Town Manager. Ability to communicate effectively and efficiently verbally and in writing. Ability to work effectively under time constraints to meet deadlines. Ability to develop and manage DEI budget. Ability to identify DEIA issues and needs. Ability to listen, learn, and encourage all stakeholders to participate in DEIA initiatives, programs, and priorities.

MINIMUM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS: Bachelor's degree in a human services, social services, or related field and five (5) years of experience working on DEIA-related issues; or any equivalent combination of education, training, certification, or experience. Certifications or formal training on DEIA strongly preferred.

DETAILED JOB DUTIES:

1. Develop a comprehensive set of DEIA goals to benchmark and track progress over time.
2. Partner with the Human Resources Director on developing policies, procedures, and practices that build in DEIA priorities, including job recruitment, employee onboarding and retention, orientation, and inclusion.
3. Partner with department heads to review internal operations with a DEIA lens. Oversee the development of recommended amendments to policies and procedures using this lens.

Foster collaboration and provide support to all departments/divisions with communications and interactions with local, state, and federal government agencies and related organizations. Foster collaboration between departments to assess, track, and reach DEIA goals.

4. Advise town leadership on responding to reports and incidents of bias, discrimination, and hate, including how to ensure effective and timely town communications and outreach regarding incidents.
5. Determine best practices for data collection, analysis, and reporting of incidents of discrimination, hate, and bias, and work with other town departments as well as other agencies and entities.
6. Develop, prepare, and present a wide variety of written materials for the purpose of documenting and conveying information, events, and other related activities. Support overall town communications to help enhance outreach and engagement with underserved populations. Aggregate information from multiple resources to effectively disseminate information to the public.
7. Establish and maintain partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies and groups that can help facilitate and implement DEIA programs and activities.
8. Liaise with the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District administration to ensure effective communication and coordination with the Town of Acton regarding DEIA issues and initiatives.
9. Participate in local, regional, and/or state public sector groups of DEI professionals.
10. Serve as staff support to the DEI Commission keeping it informed about issues impacting DEIA programs and initiatives, following up on requests, and addressing issues and concerns of the Commission.
11. Liaise with the Commission on Disabilities and other boards and committees, both existing and future, that focus on and/or work closely with residents of the town.
12. Help support Town efforts to build community in the town and increase opportunities for community members to interact with the town as well as identify, promote, and when feasible, coordinate opportunities to engage community members on DEIA-related issues and topics.
13. Work with Town Manager and Finance Office to develop and monitor budget allocations, expenditures, fund balances, and related financial activities for the purpose of ensuring that allocations are accurate, revenues are recorded, expenses are within budget limits and/or fiscal practices are followed.
14. Participate on committees of town staff addressing issues of interest and in need of input from a wide variety of staff.
15. Perform related work as required.

Appendix B. Interviews

Interviews Conducted with Town Staff; Town Leadership; Members of Boards, Commissions, and Committees

List of Interviewees

Bettina D. Abe, Natural Resources Assistant, Natural Resources Division
Marie Altieri, Deputy Superintendent, Acton-Boxborough Regional School District
Anita Arnum, Deputy Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director
Francesca Arsenault, Member, Select Board
Sheryl Ball, Health Director
Andrea Becerra, Sustainability Director
Jo-Ann M. Berry, Town Moderator
Richard Burrows, Police Chief
Dean A. Charter, Vice Chair, Select Board
Austin Cyganiewicz, Director, Intergovernmental Affairs
Laura Ducharme, Community Service Coordinator
Marianne Fleckner, Director, Human Resources
Lisa Franklin, Chair, Commission on Disabilities
Kristen Guichard, Planning Director and Zoning Enforcement Officer
Robert Hart, Fire Chief
James MacRae, Veterans' Services Officer
John S. Mangiaratti, Town Manager
David Martin, Chair, Select Board
Sharon Mercurio, Council on Aging Director
Himaja Nagireddy, Member, Select Board
Julie Pierce Onos, Economic Development Director
QinRui Pang, Town Engineer
Melissa Rier, Recreation Director
Jim Snyder-Grant, Member, Select Board
Corey York, Department of Public Works Director
Heather York, Nursing Services Director

Interview Questions

Thank you for participating in this interview as part of a study to help guide Acton's implementation of a diversity officer position. As mentioned in our email invite, the Collins Center and Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy have been hired by the Town of Acton to prepare recommendations regarding the creation of this new position to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism goals.

Some background on our collaborative team from UMass Boston:

The Collins Center was established in 2008 at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies to further the public service mission of UMass Boston. The Center provides technical assistance to municipalities, school districts, regional governments, and state agencies on all aspects of public management.

The Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy aims to promote diverse women's leadership to achieve more just, equitable, and responsive public and institutional policies and meaningful inclusion. The center brings extensive experience addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA) challenges and opportunities and is committed to supporting municipalities in DEIA.

- Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your role in Acton?
- Are you familiar with the town's establishment of this new position?
- What do you see as the most important function(s) for the new role?
 - Follow-up/clarification: What can this role help accomplish in town? What does it need to be able to do to address existing needs and advance DEIA goals?
- How might this position interact with your department/your community?
- Where do you think this role fits best in the departmental structure of the town (town government?)?
- What might be the best title for this role? Do you have title suggestions?
- In order to be effective what supports would this person need; what does this person need to succeed?
- How might you describe the climate in terms of diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism (DEIA) in town hall/town government?
- What about the DEIA climate in the community?
- How have incidents been addressed? What are your thoughts about town responses to such incidents?
- Can you comment about your perception of the needs and concerns of community members? What comes to mind as important aspects of identity for the person in this role to address in terms of the town's population?
- How do you think the community might define success for the person in this new role?
- How might the person in this new role most effectively interact with the community?
- What do you think effectiveness would look like for this new DEIA role?
- How would you define success for this role?
- For the person in this role to be effective, what kind of experience, skills, or background would be helpful?
- What training, tools, resources, or other support might this person need?
- What challenges and/or roadblocks do you anticipate?
- Is there anything else you might want to share about this new role that is important for our team to know?

Interviews Conducted with Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Professionals in Massachusetts Municipalities

List of Interviewees

Dr. Maritsa Barros
Chief Officer of Talent and Culture
City of Revere

Martha Duffield
Chief Equity Officer
Town of Lexington

Lloyd Gellineau
Chief Diversity Officer
Town of Brookline

Jillian Harvey
Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Division
Health and Human Services
Town of Arlington

Interview Questions

- Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your position?
- What are the most important elements of your position?
- How much of your work is internal and how much is external? Has that changed or do you see that shifting in the months and years to come?
- Do you collect data? What types?
- How do you balance the varying demands that the role involves?
- What do you spend the most time doing?
- What do you wish you could do but don't have the time to do?
- What might you be working on several years from now?
- What are the challenges or roadblocks you have faced in this role?
- What type of background, skills, and experiences do you think are important in filling this type of role?
- Do you have any advice for someone starting in this type of role?
- Is there anything else that would be helpful to know about establishing this kind of role?

Appendix C. Community Outreach and Input

Community Input Notice [\[https://www.acton-ma.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=1423\]](https://www.acton-ma.gov/civicalerts.aspx?aid=1423)

A New Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Role for the Town of Acton *Listening to and Learning from the Community*

The Town of Acton has hired a UMass Boston team to develop recommendations regarding a new position to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism goals.

The team welcomes residents to offer input at an upcoming community listening session.

VIRTUAL LISTENING SESSION:
Wednesday, 27 April, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Calendar Zoom link available at: <https://actonma.gov>



Residents are encouraged to consider the following questions in their feedback:

- What do you see as the most critical needs regarding diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in Acton?
- What should be the primary functions of this new role?

Residents participating in the virtual session are kindly requested to keep comments and suggestions to three minutes to ensure participation by all interested residents. The team looks forward to hearing from the Acton community and incorporating residents' insights and suggestions in the report being prepared for the Town. Input collected during the listening session will be reported in the aggregate, and not identifiable.

IN-PERSON LISTENING SESSIONS:
Tuesday, 26 April, 4:30-7:00 p.m.
and Saturday, 30 April, noon-4:00 p.m.

Residents are invited to meet informally with members of the UMass Boston team to offer input. Team members will be available at the following times and locations:

Date: Tuesday, 26 April
Time: 4:30-7:00 p.m.
Location: Acton Human Services and Senior Center Facility (30 Sudbury Road, Rear)
Conference Room
Date: Saturday, 30 April
Time: Noon-4:00 p.m.
Location: Acton Memorial Library Meeting Room

UMass Boston Team

The team includes directors and associates of the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management and Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy.

For more information, please contact Christa Kelleher, Project Coordinator, Christa.Kelleher@umb.edu

List of Community Organizations

The following list of organizations and coalitions was primarily used for outreach for community input. While the team worked to develop a comprehensive list of community groups and reached many of the entities listed below, there are likely groups missing from this list and not all groups were ultimately reached. The team recognizes the limitations of its community outreach efforts, particularly as an external entity working to connect with community-based groups and doing so largely remotely. The team thanks the individuals from community and religious organizations who assisted in efforts to identify and connect with organizations for outreach purposes.

AB Racial Justice Collaborative
AB Regional High School ECARES
Acton Boxborough Community Resource Network
Acton-Boxborough Cultural Council
Acton Boxborough United Way
Acton Chinese American Civic Society (ACACS)
Acton Chinese Language School
Acton Congregational Church
Apple Valley Catholic / St. Elizabeth of Hungary
Coalition for Anti-Racism, Equity & Justice in Education
Congregation Beth Elohim
Faith Evangelical Free Church
Fostering Racial Justice Group
Highrock Acton
Housing & Climate Justice for Acton
Indivisible Acton-Area
Mt. Calvary Lutheran
Racial Justice for Black Lives
St. Matthews United Methodist Church

Appendix D. Summary of Input and Summary of Survey Responses following Community Presentation

Summary of Input

The following synopsis includes information collected through community input opportunities and interviews conducted with 30 individuals (see Appendix B for list). The team sought to present needs, concerns, thoughts, and suggestions that were most relevant to the development of recommendations for the new role and recognized the value of input that reflected overall, shared sentiments as well as input offered by individuals. In doing so, the team intended to provide a summary inclusive of a variety of perspectives and opinions. As explained to all of those offering input, all information collected from individuals during interviews and community input sessions and interactions would not include identifiable information in the summary developed for this report. Nonetheless, quotations without attribution are used in the summary below to preserve the integrity of the feedback by not paraphrasing but offering thoughts and suggestions that came directly from individuals, while preserving anonymity in the report.

It's important to note that the following is a summary of qualitative data which makes it possible to express the depth and richness of information but does not allow for any quantitative analysis. However, what follows provides context for the findings and recommendations listed in Table 1 and offers an in-depth exploration of some of the key topics and responsibilities most relevant to the new role. It is the team's intention that the detailed summary below provides information that may be useful to the community, the town government, and the person hired for this new position.

GOALS

At the core of this study is the Town's intention to ensure that equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism are realized for all who live, work, and spend time in Acton and that these principles guide all of the functions and operations of town government. Taken in the aggregate and in its various forms, input about the new DEIA role centered on five overarching goals considered critical for this new role. Individuals discussed the need to:

- Make the town more welcoming and inclusive
- Ensure equitable policies, procedures, and processes
- Create systems to collect, analyze, and address reports of bias and discrimination
- Strengthen town government's community connections and increase engagement and diversity of residents in local government
- Increase diversity of the town's workforce

While some of these goals are broad and some more specific, taken together, they offer a sense of what was seen as the most important areas of focus for the DEIA role. Most of the goals are interrelated and some may be more short-term-oriented, while others may be long-term.

SCOPE AND NATURE OF ROLE

Multi-level and Multi-faceted

Feedback indicated that the role should serve both internal and external, public-facing functions, with one person characterizing the role as “hybrid.”

As one person explained, the person would both “work with community and internally with staff and departments.” This individual explained that the internal work would include both assisting with department efforts and having their own DEIA initiatives. Another commented that the internal functions would include “working with all departments utilizing a DEIA lens.”

Some individuals mentioned the need to have both micro and macro functions. Several considered how much individual-level (one-on-one) interaction would be appropriate for the role and weren’t certain about what would make the most sense. Policy change for the long-term was mentioned as a critical macro-level area of responsibility.

DEIA professionals mentioned that they spend considerable time working with various departments and committees, but also highlighted work they do making community connections.

Role Clarity

While there may not have been clear consensus or precision about the DEIA role scope and areas of responsibility given the range of aims and duties suggested, there was a strong sense that clarity in the role was very important, particularly given that it’s a new role and vital to advancing DEIA goals of the town. Being definitive about what the role entails and ensuring that the role’s aims, scope, and responsibilities are communicated well to all in the community, including town government staff and leaders, were understood as essential to setting appropriate expectations and to ensuring the role’s effectiveness. Some spoke about the need to clarify the prioritization and/or sequencing of goals and tasks, particularly in terms of what might be addressed in the first year of the role.

While making a distinction between internal and external aspects of the role may be challenging given that many internal elements of the role—such as creating and implementing a reporting system for incidents of bias and discrimination—also have external elements, it is helpful to distinguish internal from external elements here to understand the complexity and multi-faceted nature of role functions.

INTERNAL

The more internal components of the role were generally oriented around three main areas of focus: town workforce (diversifying and retaining, training, supporting/collaborating in various ways); policies and procedures; and an incident reporting system.

TOWN WORKFORCE

Workforce Diversity

There was considerable consensus among those interviewed that the town's workforce needs to be more diverse, broadly defined, and some mentioned the need for the town staff to better reflect the diversity of town residents. There was less consensus on precisely what the related responsibilities and duties would be in this area of increasing workforce diversity. Finally, several individuals mentioned the importance of not seeing the role as limited to the area of human resources or only focused on town staff.

In terms of the DEIA role, it was suggested by several individuals that the person in the role participate in recruitment and hiring processes and that the DEIA role would work with the Human Resources Director in a collaborative and supportive way to work toward increased diversity in town staff.

Among the feedback received about diversifying the workforce was the need to focus not only on hiring and having a clear hiring policy, but retention and promotion as well as adequate resources and outreach mechanisms to ensure a more diverse workforce and subcontractors, potentially including outreach in different languages. One person spoke of the potential for the role to be involved in "guiding the employment recruitment teams and HR to a new town brand that appeals to diverse applicants."

Beyond town staff diversity, several individuals identified the ways in which the DEIA role could "help identify and facilitate new approaches" to ensure that town government leaders better reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the town. From this person's perspective "schools, town, and volunteer boards and committees do not reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the town and have not for decades [and] although hiring decisions belong in the departments and with the Volunteer Coordinating Committee, these bodies clearly need help or incentives to recruit applicants from a broader, more representative set of candidates." Others agreed about the need for the role to offer support and/or training for the Select Board and other boards, committees, and commissions. In the words of one individual: "the position needs to have some oversight of the more than 20 volunteer boards and committees which advise the Select Board and impact how the town functions on a daily basis." Another suggested that the volunteer boards, committees, and commissions need education and resources.

In terms of data and metrics related to town staff and volunteer boards and commissions, one person identified the "benefit of this position is that it can be measured through increased employee retention and efficacy and through an increase volunteer board and committee efficacy."

Equipping Town Staff with Resources and Supports

Providing town staff with supports and resources to ensure the advancement of equity, diversity, inclusion in an anti-racist framework across town government, including all internal and external aspects, was seen by many of those interviewed as an important function of the role. The most overarching sentiment focused on the need to be more inclusive and to have a lens to catch errors or oversights that would be offensive and/or negatively impact residents and/or groups. Guidance on addressing the needs related to residents' cultures and backgrounds was specifically mentioned by several individuals. Several people spoke of the good intentions of town staff but the necessity for more awareness and perspective. One person mentioned limited competency in terms of inclusive and

equitable practices. Such practices were seen as critical both internally and externally—that is, in terms of town staff relations with a focus on employees, and town leadership, as well as the community-at-large. In the words of one individual: “new levels of employee engagement and effectiveness can be achieved when DEIA is championed and valued because unnecessary barriers and micro aggressions will be removed from the environment.”

Individuals cited specific ways that the DEIA role could support staff with information and resources. A few people mentioned the importance of knowing “where we’re falling short” and others commented about the need for resources about how to best interact with the public and manage situations that might arise. Knowing “what’s appropriate to say” and knowing how to handle situations without escalating were mentioned along with the interest in learning how to understand resident needs and seeing how residents may perceive or experience something differently from how intended or perceived by town staff.

As one person mentioned, the role would help facilitate the application of a “new lens” and help to “reframe thinking.” The phrase “[we] don’t know what [we] don’t know” captured the sentiment that was shared by several others—that information and resources would lead to increased awareness and understanding of how to advance DEIA aims.

One individual suggested the DEIA role could serve town staff as a resource, as someone available for town staff to “run by matters with them” in order to consider what the best practice might be. Another person noted the engagement of the role as not limited to town staff but that the DEIA role provides an opportunity for “someone who can get into the weeds with boards and committees, police, school district, etc. to identify problems and best practices to effect change.”

In this way, the DEIA role could guide staff and equip all departments with resources to better understand and address community needs. Examples of this kind of support included:

- Investigating the background and culture of [proposed] names and getting feedback from groups for using a historical town property for community space
- Identifying and informing town government staff, boards, committees, and commissions about whether there are holidays and/or cultural or religious days during which it wouldn’t be appropriate to knock on a resident’s door
- Ensuring that all residents can access recycling, including multi-family homes that may not currently have access
- Helping to remind staff about equity goals (i.e., how does public transportation advance equity goals?)

Training and Professional Development

Input about the extent to which and how the DEIA role should be involved in training and/or professional development activities related to DEIA varied, with some seeing the DEIA role taking on this responsibility, in a coordinating/implementing role, including creating a professional development curriculum, and others suggesting that this be a primarily Human Resources function with collaboration and expertise from the DEIA role. For instance, one person suggested that the DEIA role be involved in internal training delivery so that there’s not a need to hire out for training needs. Another indicated that perhaps the role shouldn’t be involved in diversity training and if they aren’t “leading diversity training

sessions, they should be in contact with anyone who is running diversity training sessions and should give these diversity trainers data about bias incidents in Acton and examples of these incidents that the trainers can use in their sessions.” Another commented that the role would be “promoting anti-bias training of employees” and that training employees belongs in Human Resources. In this way, the role may have valuable input on such trainings, but wouldn’t be a primary function of the position.

Several of those interviewed reflected on the need to improve annual mandatory staff trainings with limited active participation by some staff. One person commented about skepticism and concern by some coming into the training and suggested potential restructuring of such trainings, including potentially smaller groups which may be better for teaching and learning purposes. It was noted that some elected officials, such as Select Board members, were included in a training session for the first time.

It’s important to note that while there were many individuals interviewed who saw DEIA trainings a fundamental aspect of the DEIA role, with some specifying that trainings “can help tune into biases” and “raise awareness of unconscious biases,” there were others offering input who were not in favor of mandatory training, raising concerns about effectiveness, appropriateness, and content.

One DEI professional discussed the ability for some trainings and interventions to come from the staff person and the need for other trainings or interventions to come from an outsider or person with more expertise in an area. They stressed the importance for the municipality to provide the needed resources either in the form of money to pay for outside trainers or staff time to conduct these trainings.

Additionally, a few individuals suggested that there be coordination with the DEIA role in regard to purchasing and subcontractors.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Another focus area seen as important for the DEIA role related to the town’s policies and procedures. Individuals identified two distinct but overlapping sets of activities in this area. The first would entail reviewing town policies, procedures, and processes, including bylaws, with an equity lens and the second would involve modifying or implementing policies with an equity lens and grounded in best practices across town government. Some suggested that the DEIA role would have an emphasis on policies and procedures. A few indicated that the role may be able to help identify what can be done in terms of laws and regulations immediately, suggesting that this be a central aspect of the role early on. For instance, one person suggested “getting the house in order first.” Individuals discussed the range of policies that should be examined, from the charter, to bylaws, to policies and procedures—both existing and future. In the words of one person, the DEIA role could, “review all town employee and student handbooks and workplace policies and procedures to ensure up to date DEI language are all inclusive.” Others mentioned the importance of completing an audit of bylaws, with one person suggesting that zoning bylaws be reviewed. Another individual spoke of the need to audit town hall processes: “what ways, unwittingly, are residents excluded or individuals discouraged from participating?” This person suggested that recommendations follow such an audit and that the DEIA role may be involved in the recommendations process. As mentioned above, some individuals saw the DEIA role as not just overseeing a review of existing town policies and procedures, but also “involved in helping to facilitate processes to modify policies and procedures.” Another commented that the DEIA role should help make sure that any new bylaw doesn’t perpetuate discrimination. A few individuals offered specific suggestions about the nature of this component of the DEIA role with one wanting to “ensure that

people of color have input into [new policies].” Another suggested that the DEIA role work to “facilitate building a culture to incentivize boards, commissions, and committees to use a DEI lens when writing policies and procedures because it’s good for the whole community, with focus on race, ethnicity, disability...everyone [all aspects of identity].”

Other individuals identified the need to establish a system and process for reporting and addressing incidents of discrimination and bias as a top priority for the new role.

BIAS INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM

The creation and implementation of a system for the reporting of bias incidents were considered critical responsibilities of the DEIA role by many of those who offered input on the functions and duties of the role. Furthermore, responding to incidents was also identified as a critical role component. Finally, data analysis of reported incidents was also seen as important to several individuals.

Receiving and Tracking Incidents

One person suggested a broad scope of responsibility in the reporting of incidents. The DEIA role “should keep track of incidents of bias taking place anywhere in the town, including on the street, in stores, in workplaces, in the schools, in town offices. It should include any incidents involving town employees. It is important that this person be resourceful in gathering data, analyzing data (or having someone analyze it for them), and publicizing data.” As someone suggested, “we need that reporting mechanism to know what's going on in town.”

Aside from setting up, and facilitating the system’s implementation, it was clear that many individuals saw the DEIA role as the primary resource in the town for people to approach with concerns and issues related to discrimination and bias. In the words of one individual, “the victim of bias should have a place to go and someone who understands those kinds of issues and tracks them.” Furthermore, as someone mentioned, for those who may feel uncomfortable talking about incidents they’ve experienced, it’s helpful for there to be someone who “collects information and reports on ongoing bias.” As one person explained, this can be a “neutral body that can record and be accessible to understand what's happening and to educate and create a culture of listening and respect which would be very valuable and anticipate problems in the future.”

Having someone to go to who is knowledgeable, approachable, accessible, and helpful was important to many who discussed this potential aspect of the DEIA role. As one person mentioned, “there's a sense that there's nowhere to go if you're experiencing an incident of hate or you're feeling discriminated against. The kids feel like there's nowhere to go and adults do too. I think that's a problem and I think that part of what we're talking about here is having a trusted resource in the town that's clearly identified and accessible.” Another explained that individuals “need to have access to someone who can listen to and address these issues and that they need anonymity.” Similarly, one individual mentioned that “there needs to be outreach to residents in terms of where they need to go to address their concerns and asked “how do they access the person in this position?” One person commented that “accessibility includes English language ability, transportation, and other barriers that need to be addressed.”

Responding to Incidents

Beyond the reporting function, the DEIA role should “respond to the person reporting an incident and assess what needs to be done” including helping them understand “what actions they could take.” Finally, one person noted that it was “tricky to have someone hired for the town to help with complaints against town.”

In addition to having a way to report and discuss an incident, the broader need for the town to respond to incidents in a collective, coordinated, consistent, and timely manner was seen as an essential aspect of the DEIA role. One person commented that it was important to “compile info before acting on incidents” and there was also a suggestion to ensure a “proper investigation into matters before they are decided.” Additionally, several individuals recommended that the town also improve its communication about how it responds to incidents and what is being done to address incidents.

Data Collection and Analysis

When the collection of data came up in feedback on the DEIA role, it tended to be related to the tracking and analysis of incidents. However, several people noted that data on town demographics and diversity would also be appropriate foci of the DEIA role. The specific suggestion to “collect, analyze and report town diversity data” was offered. Another person remarked “we need the assessment of the state of DEI in Acton.”

In terms of incident data, several raised questions about the usefulness and applicability of having quantifiable data. “Why care what the numbers are?” Another person discussed the need to understand the “state of things” and “clarify that the problems are,” suggesting that there be a scientific, and not self-selective survey. Rather than “jumping to solutions” it was important to “get problem statement right.”

One individual commented that the “DEI Commission survey demonstrated people didn’t come forward.” Additionally, there was concern that, without long-term data on incidents, it was impossible to compare the current situation with previous time periods. One person explained that there’s not been any collection of “experiences over time” so “we don’t know if there are fewer or more incidents.”

Others identified the need to collect qualitative data and stories, indicating that numbers may not be indicative or able to tell the whole story of incidents that have occurred and how individuals have experienced them. In the words of one person: the DEIA role “needs to be skilled at what data can be gathered and presented without sacrificing individual privacy in a town the size of Acton. While townspeople want quantifiable data and measurable outcomes, these issues involve complex interactions that may not easily lend themselves to numeric analysis... [the role will need to] explain these challenges to a skeptical audience.”

In terms of the role of data as related to the DEIA position, someone reflected how “a lot of decisions can be made based on data, so we can do a baseline when we start, and then we can track the progress and we set some goals for us on what we’re going to do and track how we do against them.”

One DEI professional stressed the difficulty of standing up and maintaining any sort of tracking system. Since most of this data does not currently exist and the forms, software, privacy systems, and centralized locations do not already exist, it will be a substantial undertaking to get this started. They mentioned that people also need to know where to report incidents and trust that these incidents will be handled appropriately.

SCHOOLS

For some individuals, the DEIA role should not only address incident reporting and responses in the town but also extend to school incidents. One person spoke about incidents of bias and hate in schools as a “community-wide problem that must be dealt with as a town,” indicating that the “town needs to own it” and that everyone “needs to be responsible, including the Town Manager, Select Board, and other leaders in the town.” In this way, working together to address such issues reflects an approach as a “community of responsibility.”

Among those who cited the need for the DEIA role to be connected to the schools, there was clear interest in seeing collaboration between the town and regional school district on DEIA issues and initiatives. As one person noted, there needs to be collaboration with schools in terms of DEIA and while the town-school distinction should be respected, there should be coordination nonetheless.

First, several individuals addressed the need for incidents occurring in school settings to be communicated to the broader community when appropriate. As one person mentioned, there may need to be community letters at times rather than limited such communications to parents or the school community. A coordinated school-town response may be necessary. Further, one person suggested that school incident data be made available to the town DEIA role, including “data regarding the number of incidents and the nature of the incidents [in schools]. Hopefully, they would also get information about whether the perpetrator was identified and the nature of the resolution—including how satisfied the target was with the resolution.” This individual also explained that it would be good to have notices posted prominently in the schools (in the bathrooms and in school offices, including advisors’ offices) listing both in the in-school person to contact about incidents of bias and bullying and also the town DEI role’s contact information. The notices should be clear that these are two separate avenues so that students understand that they can go to the town DEI role without going to the school resource and/or go to the town DEI role if they are not satisfied with the response of the school resource.”

Other suggestions included having “specifically designated responsible adults to address bias incidents in schools the schools,” such as “victim advocates to walk [students] through each step of process.” Furthermore, there needs to be a “transparent reporting process” and an “age-appropriate way to educate.” Finally, “retention, understanding, execution of DEIA policies” should be part of teacher and staff evaluations. As noted, “kids see how adults react; when adults do nothing, kids know it.”

Finally, some individuals spoke about not only the need to address such incidents but to prevent them. Additional topics and issues identified in regard to schools included the need to ensure that schools were accessible to new families coming into the district and that all students of color felt invested in.

Liaising between the school DEIA and town DEIA roles was seen as critical. It was explained that the individuals needed to “work together well,” “bounce ideas” off each other, and “leverage each other's strengths.”

One person suggested that the “Acton Leadership Group, a coordinating committee that includes schools and town officials, be considered a model for school/town DEI coordination.” Other specific suggestions for how to work together was that the Town Manager and Superintendent set expectations to work together, the two DEIA roles meet regularly—perhaps several times a month, and that the DEI role participate in the “school administration opening day sessions for all teachers and staff.”

COMMISSION SUPPORT

Additional duties mentioned for the DEIA role included providing staff support for two commissions: the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (DEIC) and Disabilities Commission. Several individuals mentioned the need for staff support for the commissions and there were differing perspectives on whether the DEIA role should serve as staff for the commissions. A few people thought that the DEIA role should staff DEIC meetings and offer staff support to the Commission more generally.

While there was a suggestion that the DEIA role support the Disabilities Commission as a staff person, someone else thought that the existing staff support of the Disabilities Commission was appropriate and that there was a good connection between the commission and the Town.

EXTERNAL

While there is overlap between the internally and externally focused aspects of the DEIA role, it is possible to summarize the primarily external functions. The following summary of the more public-facing duties related to the community-at-large demonstrates the emphasis that so many individuals placed on the need for more inclusive and robust connections between the town and community members.

Many of those who offered feedback cited the priorities of the DEIA role as “making Acton a more welcoming community” and various aspects of community engagement and participation were discussed by individuals. Four distinct aims, which entailed different responsibilities and activities, were addressed. Specifically, the DEIA role would help to:

- Facilitate community connections
- Coordinate community conversations
- Increase and facilitate more inclusive resident engagement in town government
- Enhance communication between the town and community members

Even though these four aims are not mutually exclusive, it is useful to consider them separately here, recognizing that they relate to each other in various ways.

FACILITATE COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

One overarching area of focus mentioned by many of those who provided input was creating opportunities for residents to interact with one another and enhancing connections between community members. Learning about different cultures, getting to know more people in town, and increasing the potential for strengthening the community were central for several of those who thought that the DEIA role could help advance such community connections.

As one person noted, “many people don’t really know people of other groups very well...[if we] get to know each other better, we can appreciate each other more and help each other as one big community.” Helping to “build bridges to communities” was seen as important and the DEIA role could help facilitate this. One individual suggested that the new role “could support the creation of opportunities for people in town to come together and learn about different groups,” explaining that there is a general interest in understanding town residents, offering positive outlets would be beneficial for the community.

Others spoke about opportunities to come together as a community and have fun together. One individual mentioned the need for “fun community-building events,” and another suggested events where people could eat together, and share in each other’s culture through food, and perhaps watch a movie outside together. One specific example of this was for the DEIA role to “work with the town departments and centers to promote ethnic festivals, fairs and potluck celebrations across town.” Others similarly addressed the potential for the DEIA role to create and/or assist on cultural programs and activities, with one mentioning opportunities for grant-funded events. One person cited the role of cultural sharing in building community by having people meet and interact with one another. Examples were offered from the past, including a Chinese event to which the entire community was invited, as well as the Essence of India, and recreation department events. Several spots in town were mentioned as places for community events: Narrow Park, the town center, and the Acton Arboretum.

In many cases, fostering community connections and creating opportunities for resident interaction were discussed in the context of a community in need of increased understanding between and among residents, and a way forward to address divisions that have emerged over the past few years.

COORDINATE COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

The DEIA role was frequently identified as playing an essential role in helping to bring people together to address issues related to DEIA through community conversations and in other ways. As one person said, “there is crosstalk and misunderstanding in the community.” One individual identified the need for the DEIA role to help “change our pernicious, toxic culture.” Another stated, that “if you have different views outside of the mainstream of Acton you are labelled very negatively.”

In addition, another person remarked that “the majority of people are good-hearted and want to address implicit bias.” One individual suggested that the DEIA role may be able to facilitate “gentle education.” Another called for recognizing the strengths of the town, and both “positive and negative aspects.”

Another cited the importance of creating venues and opportunities for “having residents talk about issues without repercussions either way.” Several individuals suggested community building circles which provide an opportunity to “learn a lot about each other” in response to certain prompts. One individual explained that there needs to be “real dialogue and discussion” and there was a similar comment about the need for “open dialogue and respect.” In the words of one person, the DEIA role can help ensure that “a broad spectrum of residents are able to meet for civil honest exchanges about race racism and racial justice.” As one person explained, there is “a lot of polarization and people are feeling very strongly on both sides to the point where some people are still in denial that inequity exists and bias exists, so we really need somebody who can bridge that divide.” One community member cited the need for “strategies for reconciliation.”

Several individuals discussed how important it was for the DEIA role to make connections to community organizations, both formal and informal, including clergy and churches. As someone explained, the DEIA role should work with organizations involved in advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism goals “keep on listening to what their aspirations and goals are, what the pain points are, and helping to overcome them.” Another person stated that the DEIA role “should try to establish relationships with clergy in Acton. Because of anti-Semitic incidents that happen in the schools, it is especially important to have relationships with the rabbis at Congregation Beth Elohim and Kerem Shalom.” Another person suggested that the DEIA role liaise with, respond to, and participate in community groups. One individual remarked that as the DEIA role comes on board “they're going to interact a lot with the community at first to learn about who we are, what we do, and what are some of the issues.” Another spoke of the need for the DEIA role to engage in “lots of public interaction.”

While many who provided input on the DEIA role identified the aim of bridging divides in Acton as a focus area, if not priority, for the role, several individuals explained that this aim should not be the responsibility of the DEIA role. In the words of one person “the job of healing animosities created by prior discussions of the DEIC, on the high school mascot, on the existence of the Diversity Office...should be beyond the scope” of the DEIA role. Another stated, “it is not fair for an incoming person to feel as though they have to be able to bridge all of the community gaps.”

INCREASED AND MORE INCLUSIVE RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT IN TOWN GOVERNMENT

The goals of increased diverse representation in town government bodies, more inclusive government processes and decision-making, and increased awareness and utilization of government resources and services were understood by many to be within the purview of the DEIA role. Several individuals spoke about the need for more community outreach to increase representation and to realize more inclusivity in Town Meeting and on boards, committees, and commissions.

One major aspect of this focus area was identifying barriers to involvement in town government processes and opportunities to increase participation of community members in local issues, particularly by those who might be disproportionately impacted by decisions, and those who are under-represented across the town government. As one person noted, “it is hard to reach the different minority groups, and many nonprofits in the area have the same issue.” This individual concluded that they hoped “that together with the DEI role more people can be reached.”

Several individuals offered suggestions for how the DEIA role could facilitate improved community outreach efforts.

One suggestion was to tag team between department head and DEIA role to reach under-represented and/or marginalized groups.

The following identity aspects and groups were mentioned by individuals in the context of outreach to and inclusion for the purpose of community engagement and were seen as important for the DEIA role to consider in the broader work and activities of the DEIA role:

- Immigrant families
- Persons with disabilities
- Residents who are not English speakers
- Outsiders — “those who are disconnected”
- “Noncitizens and new citizens can be engaged locally and make sure their voices are heard and they are represented.
- Renters
- Seniors, particularly those who may be “on the brink of poverty and who may have lost resources after a move to Acton”
- Socioeconomic status; as one person remarked, “there are the haves and have nots”
- The new position should look at diversity in all areas and not just race; it should include diverse incomes, abilities, languages and cultures; one person mentioned the “continual exemption of queer community”

One individual cited how important it was “not to overlook specific needs, especially for targeted demographics” and residents whose intersectional identities require understanding their particular needs.

Finally, another person explained that the DEIA role could serve as “a conduit of information from the community to the town between boards.” Someone discussed formal public input sessions and the “shopping around to other committees in town allows an early kind of feedback...from the point of view of other committees,” indicating that there are different mechanisms for public engagement and opportunities for ensuring that different perspectives and voices are included.

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION

Many individuals offering input identified improved communication in the town as an aim that may involve the DEIA role. Some of the feedback regarding communication was focused on DEIA topics and issues, and some of the input was broader and focused on increasing the capacity of the town to most effectively serve its residents. One individual remarked, for instance, that the “town gives information but there’s not too much two-way interaction with residents.” Another person mentioned that the DEIA role could serve as a “go-between” for town staff and residents.

The DEIA-specific suggestions included having the DEIA role hold regular office hours, issue a monthly newsletter, appear on Acton TV, and have other public-facing components to the position. One person suggested that the DEIA role be introduced in the town’s monthly e-newsletter. Another explained that the DEIA role could help to ensure that “all Town websites are DEI friendly” with another suggesting that the DEIA role oversee a “webpage where reliable DEI information could be found: events, information, information, status and next steps on incidents,” including incidents that happened on school grounds.

The need to address the town’s capacity to “address communication needs to reach all populations, with attention to language, disability” accommodations was mentioned by several individuals. For example, one individual identified limited language access for some residents who call town hall.

Another person explained, “there are populations that are limited English speaking. What are the languages that they need? How do we bridge those gaps to be able to communicate with members of the community? In terms of public-facing communications, they need to be in the languages of the population.”

Related to the commonly cited need for increased and more inclusive communications from the town was the necessity of making the functions of the town more known and accessible to more people. Increasing public awareness of how to access and use resources, particularly with respect to English language learners, wheelchair users, hearing and/or vision impaired persons, and other aspects of identity was seen as vital. One person remarked that the Town has a lot of resources and services and the DEIA role could help facilitate ensuring that the resources and services get to people. Another individual encouraged thinking “creatively in terms of what are other resources that are available after normal working hours” and “thinking outside the box.”

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES

Input received also touched on challenges that the person hired in this new role may face.

Community

Individuals offering input addressed a range of challenges and some of the anticipated roadblocks included:

- Concern that “they made the decision about this position without a lot of community input”
- General resistance to change
- Sense that “without additional legwork, whoever gets hired could have an uphill battle to earn trust and support”; “different levels of arms open”
- Concerns related to existence of a problem: “do we have problem to begin with?”
- Sense that “not everyone welcoming of a diverse community”
- Pushback from some residents
- Emotionally charged nature of topic/issues
- Potential “lack of empathy”
- Challenges with measuring and/or quantifying impact and/or success

Town Government/Staff

Some feedback related to specifically to potential challenges/obstacles in town government/staff:

- May be staff concern regarding resources going elsewhere
- Some town department heads may feel that “this isn’t a DEI role area” where DEIA role is engaged
- Some in town government may think about how this new role might negatively affect their department rather than see opportunities
- Fear of unknown
- Concern about duties and responsibilities requiring 40 hrs/week and whether there’s enough work for a full-time role
- Layout; various staff locations and facilities spread out across town
- Concern by some staff about seeing the town or behaviors as discriminatory

SUCCESS

How might success be envisioned for the new DEIA role? What would constitute appropriate indicators of success? Individuals who were interviewed were asked about what success might look like for the DEIA role and both broad and more specific, concrete changes and outcomes were offered.

There was a general sense that defining and measuring success was a complex matter given the scope and nature of the work and how much it could cover—from broader cultural or social changes to more practical, quantifiable outputs. One individual remarked that equality and inclusion are such big concepts that what they mean may not be so clear. Another commented that the individual in the DEIA role will face “lots of pressure to make everything all better.” This sentiment was shared by others. One individual stated, “this cannot be like a savior role; it is unfair for it to be seen that way.” Another person suggested that the person in this role would need to “get into weeds to be effective.”

[please note that direct phrases from individuals are maintained below, rather than standardization for grammatical consistency]

Some of the specific indicators of success mentioned include:

Town as Welcoming and Inclusive

- People of color would recommend friends and family to live in Acton
- Ensure enough inclusion in town activities
- More diversity and cultural awareness events
- Encourage elders of diverse backgrounds to come to the Senior Center
- Ensure that everyone can participate in public meetings, with resources such as hearing devices
- That people feel heard if there’s something to report

Town Government Policies, Structures, Processes

- Facilitate policy changes
- Retention of individual in the DEIA role
- More diverse composition of boards and committees as well as Town Meeting participation
- Zoning changes
- Identification of metrics for this role and measuring them, including small wins
- Work with the DEI Commission
- DEIA role to serve in advisory role on boards, commissions, committees
- Increased diversity in town staff would be realized
- List of suggestions based on the UMass Boston’s team study would be followed

Based on input received, setting clear expectations regarding the role is critically important. This requires, as one person suggested, facilitating “awareness that there are goals in the town to advance diversity and equality, and anti-racism goals, and define what they are.” Further, who defines success needs to be clarified. As one individual commented, “we’ll have to very clearly define who’s going to determine success.”

Finally, DEIA professionals highlighted the relationship that the person in this position should have with a DEIA commission or committee, indicating that such a group would have a major role in guiding the goals and defining success.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Individuals interviewed overwhelmingly stated that the best place in the organizational structure for this position to sit was reporting to the Town Manager. Several department heads, other town employees, and other DEIA professionals stressed the importance of this position being an upper-level department head. There was less input from the public regarding organizational structure.

The reasons people cited for this structure primarily involve the importance of this position being included in high-level decision making, being around the table as information is shared, and having a close working relationship with the Town Manager. As one person noted, “this person needs to be sitting in a place that is closest to being able to support the sharing of information to drive decision making...so as close to the decision-making head as possible.”

Several people noted the relatively new Sustainability Director as a model for where in the structure the position would fit as well as how the person might interact with other departments, boards, committees, and the public.

Additionally, many town employees and others stressed the need for cross-departmental collaboration with the DEIA role. In essence, if the DEIA role works as a sort of consultant to all departments and has a broad range of duties, they would need to be unencumbered by being positioned within an existing department. There were occasional comments that the DEIA role might either be embedded within Human Resources or Social Services, but even most of the employees identifying these possibilities ultimately did not think these were the best locations. Similarly, input did not indicate that any existing departments or positions should be located under this new position.

DEIA professionals stressed that the best way to conceptualize this role in relationship to other departments and efforts was as a sort of coach or consultant that had the backing and ear of the chief administrative officer (the Mayor or Town Manager). Several highlighted the need for other departments to come to this person to integrate DEIA values and strategies into their initiatives, rather than the other way around.

QUALIFICATIONS, EXPERIENCE, BACKGROUND, AND SKILLS

Feedback regarding the qualifications, experience, background, and skills of the ideal candidate for this role was broad. A major theme was that this person should be knowledgeable about diversity and equity, likely through formal training, although possibly through lived experience and on the job training. Some individuals mentioned degrees or experience that would be helpful, but there was no consensus regarding necessary qualifications. Soft skills such as the ability to listen and interact with people who are underserved, marginalized, and/or in a place of vulnerability were often mentioned. There was interest in having the person be a quick study of personalities as well as how the town’s government functions. As there was a desire from a segment of interviewees and participants for the position or department to respond to reported incidents, several people mentioned a need for the person to be trained in how to respond to these incidents.

Other job descriptions for municipal DEIA professionals often list a Bachelor’s degree in an area such as public or business administration, law, social work, human resources, or organizational behavior with higher degrees preferred. Typically, municipalities are looking for a minimum of 3-5 years related experience and knowledge of municipal government, capacity to develop and/or oversee trainings, and other related experiences.

SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

Those interviewed for the study were asked what type of support the DEIA role would need. The most consistent response was that the DEIA role would need support and backing from the Town Manager and buy-in from other departments and individuals. Some people mentioned that role would necessitate physical support such as an office, budget, and possibly administrative support.

The DEIA professionals interviewed also emphasized the importance of having the support of the Mayor or Town Manager. They also pointed out that having a budget was important, even if it was built over time. A budget would allow for the hiring of consultants for trainings of town employees and members of the public, studies, or administrative help, as needed. A budget may also be necessary for events, travel, and own professional development.

In order to support any data that the town would like to gather as well as any incident reporting that could be placed upon this position, one DEIA professional emphasized the importance of resources to gather and analyze this data. Another person noted that, “the position needs to be well-resourced and supported by the organization in terms of tracking the data needed to make decisions around inclusion and diversity strategies and to measure the impact of such programs.” This could include partnerships, funding for consultants, or staff time.

Summary of Survey Responses following Community Presentation

Following the May 31st Community Update Presentation, the team invited feedback through an online survey form which was available through June 15th. Sixteen individuals completed the six-question survey and two people watched the presentation on May 31st while eleven individuals watched a recording of the presentation at another time. Summarized below are the most relevant responses pertaining to the survey questions.

Clarity of Methods

Individuals were asked if the study methods and data collection were clearly described in the presentation and 11 respondents indicated “yes,” with five indicated “don’t know.” When asked what information may help to clarify study methods for the final report, several respondents offered feedback. One suggested that “it seems very thorough.” Another explained that it “feels like this will limit participation. More online surveys/polls, and less requirements for in-person meetings. If the goal is to get as much representative input from the community, then you should use online tools to gather the same kind of data you are looking for in your very limited in-person and virtual sessions.” One person stated that there was “a lot of verbal anecdotal feedback” and other indicated that the team “did not seem to ask in your interviews if the position were needed but assumed it was.”

Community Outreach and Engagement

Another survey question addressed community outreach and engagement: *Our team has made efforts to reach as many community members as possible through two in-person listening sessions, one virtual session, and opportunities to provide input via email and/or phone. We worked to connect to community organizations, including nonprofit groups and agencies as well as churches. We recognize that robust and inclusive community engagement will be critical as the diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism role becomes implemented in Acton. Do you have any suggestions for ensuring that community engagement includes a broad and diverse range of community members in the future? Specific suggestions would be most welcome.*

One individual stated that “the DEI Director should work with the DEI Commission to brainstorm on community outreach.” Another mentioned that they “hope that diversity efforts focus more on lowest income people and renters. ...maybe it would help to have office hours.”

Several people wrote about the importance of mailing to all residents directly. As one person explained, “Please paper mail residents of multi-family homes where renters have the highest population. This would also be where the highest percentage of lowest income people and people of color and diverse cultural communities. These diverse communities are usually left out of planning activities in the town because they are held in person or online, which can be difficult for people who either are working multiple jobs, single moms, or who don't have a computer. Perhaps leave paper surveys on the public transportation shuttle, and in Laura Ducharme's office, and at the library, and senior center.” This person suggested that “a paper mailing to all residents would go to renters too. 1/3 of Acton is renters. but only about 5% of renters show up at Town Meeting.”

Two individuals discussed the need to “communicate through schools.” As one individual explained, “even though the School District is a separate and distinct organization from the municipal government, so many people just view it all as being part of the Town. Perhaps sending an email through school email lists to encourage community engagement.”

One respondent suggested that the Town “hold meetings/information sessions where people naturally gather and live...that means the senior center and community spaces for the various condo developments.”

Another person described the importance of having “feet on the street” and getting out and talking “to people at playgrounds, the AB Farmer's Market, the train station at rush hour, baseball and soccer fields, the Acton Arboretum; in front of the supermarkets, and at the Town Transfer Station/Swap Shop on Saturday mornings.”

In terms of virtual opportunities for community engagement, one person suggested that the Town “offer several day/time options for a zoom meeting. One day/time does not suit everyone, especially those with young children. It can also be difficult for that same group to attend in-person meetings.” One survey respondent expressed that they didn’t “feel like I was reached to at all. If I didn't subscribe to the town website email notices, I wouldn't have known this was happening at all.”

Finally, one individual spoke about “how the concerns of residents are going to be measured. For example, will there be a publicly available log maintained about the type of complaints that arise and the resolution. These should be done in an anonymous manner, but the issues should be categorized into a report that is maintained and communicated to residents of Acton.”

Accessibility and Availability of DEI Role Final Report

The final survey question focused on how “the Town of Acton might help ensure that the UMass Boston report to be released at the end of June is most accessible and made available to all residents, including those who may not typically know about and/or access Town news items.” Respondents were asked to consider what avenues of communication might be used to reach all community members who may have an interest in reading the report.

Many respondents addressed both the need to reach residents and groups with the report link, from the town website to social media venues, as well as to provide paper copies of the report, particularly for those who might have trouble accessing and/or reading the report in an electronic format.

One person indicated that “after being published on the town website it should be made known to a variety of community groups.” Another mentioned that “links to the report in multiple languages that could be shared virtually would be great, including asking area businesses to help share these links.” Another person suggested asking “the school district and library to link the information to their newsletters (to reach young parents) in addition to posting fliers at the libraries and senior center (to reach the senior community) and adding information boards to playgrounds and place posters inside. If the aim to be inclusive, most newcomers to town are young parents, with young children. You’ll find them at the playground!” Similarly, one individual offered the following: “Hand out flyers with a link and a code to scan at all the places mentioned earlier: playgrounds, the AB Farmer's Market, the train station at rush hour, baseball and soccer fields, the Acton Arboretum; in front of the supermarkets, and at the Town Transfer Station/Swap Shop on Saturday mornings.”

Several respondents identified the need to provide hard copies of the report to residents in various ways. As one person noted, “copies of the report can be made available at public places such as Town Hall, the Library, and the Human Services facility.” Another suggested that the Town should “offer to mail a paper copy to people who have mobility issues or don't have a printer. A lot of people can't read publications online. The number of people asking will probably be low, and paper copies might mean a lot to people, especially those who have mobility issues or are strapped by multiple jobs and/or single

moms.” Similarly, “There are some older community members who are not well connected digitally. Sharing hard copies of the final report to the Acton Senior Center for distribution may help as would asking them to include a blurb in their monthly newsletter to alert seniors.” Additionally, an individual suggested that the Town “provide printed copies at the town clerk’s office, the Memorial Library and WACL, ABUW offices, and at apartment/condo sites.”

Appendix E. List of Selected Sources: Best and Common Practices

- Municipal DEI Professionals’ Job Descriptions: Arlington, Beverly, Concord, Framingham, Lexington, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Newton, Provincetown, Revere, Worcester
- Selected Bibliography: Best and Common Practices
 - ICMA Equity & Inclusion Toolkit. 2018. <https://icma.org/sites/default/files/Equity%20and%20Inclusivity%20Toolkit%20Web%20Final.pdf>
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Organizational Assessment Tools: A Resource Guide. 2021. Prepared by Trinidad Tellez, MD, Principal, [Health] Equity Strategies, LLC, in partnership with the Institute for Economic and Racial Equity, Brandeis University. https://heller.brandeis.edu/iere/pdfs/dei_organizational_assessment_tools.pdf
 - Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity. 2016. Government Alliance on Race and Equity. https://racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/GARE-Racial_Equity_Toolkit.pdf
 - Equity Audit for Massachusetts Communities: Internal Report. 2021. UMass Boston’s Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy. Unpublished.
- DEI Guide. Massachusetts Municipal DEI Coalition. 2022. https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/61547?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

Appendix F. List of Documents: Town of Acton

- Town Charter
- Town Organizational Chart
- FY23 Budget Book
- Classification and Compensation Data, Similarly Situated Job Descriptions
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission Report: Recommendations to Select Board. 23 September 2021.
- Diversity and Inclusion Working Group, Town of Acton, Draft Goals, 12 March 2020.
- Learning Together: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, PowerPoint Presentation, Marta T. Rosa, MTR Consulting Services, 11 December 2019.

Appendix G. UMass Boston Team: Brief Biographies

Mary Aicardi leads the human resources practice for UMass Boston's Collins Center for Public Management and has thirty years of experience in public sector human resources administration and labor relations. Prior to joining the Center in 2009, she served as the Personnel Director for the town of Watertown, Interim Human Resources Director for the Town of Braintree, Assistant Personnel Director for the Town of Barnstable, Recruiter of Volunteers for a nonprofit agency, and Labor Relations Analyst for the Massachusetts Department of Public Works. She holds an MPA and a BA in Political Science from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a Certification in Diversity Equity and Inclusion from Cornell University.

Christa Kelleher has worked in nonprofit, legislative, and political settings and currently serves as Research and Policy Director of UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy. In this role since 2007, she has enjoyed building and managing diverse teams to conduct collaborative action research on public leadership and a range of public policy issues. She recently co-led a project to develop equity tools and resources for Massachusetts municipalities. She earned her PhD in Sociology from Brandeis University.

Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson, PhD, MPH, MA, an expert on the intersection of race, class and gender in health, health care and social policy, has experience in multiple sectors and settings, including municipalities, nonprofits, public and private schools and universities, advisory boards, and health care institutions. As Director of UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy and Graduate Program in Gender, Leadership, and Public Policy, she is committed to equity and inclusion in her work as a faculty member, executive leader, and researcher.

Tanya Shallop is an Associate with the Edward J. Collins Jr. Center for Public Management at UMass Boston where she works with Massachusetts cities and towns on many aspects of local government including charter and organizational change, communications, human resources, and operations. She has worked on the local level, including roles as an Assistant Town Administrator and Human Resources Director. Tanya has a JD from Case Western Reserve University School of Law and earned her BA from Bates College.

Kelly D. Smith, EdD, is the owner of AEWAS Consulting, with expertise in data, analysis, and equity. In her role as a Research and Policy Associate at UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy, Kelly provides research and writing support to equity-related projects. Kelly also serves as a Data Coach with Achieving the Dream, supporting community colleges reform work for improved student success.

Angesom Teklu is a doctoral student in the Department of Public Policy and research assistant at the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMass Boston. Angesom has worked as a practitioner, helping community organizations design and implement programs that add value to community members, specifically in capacity building, civic engagement, workforce, and organizational development. He earned his MA in Sustainable International Development from Brandeis University.

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