



Town of Wellesley DEI Audit Single Page Summary

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Overview

In February 2021, the Town adopted an Anti-Racism and Anti-Bias Statement to make it clear to residents that anti-racist and anti-bias values are values that the Wellesley Select Board espouses and holds very strongly. A Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Task Force was formed in December 2021, and in July 2023, the Town requested proposals to conduct an equity audit. In October 2023, using funding appropriated at Annual Town Meeting, the Town awarded Racial Equity Group (REG) the contract to assist the Town in achieving the following objectives and deliverables:

- Measure the diversity of the Town’s workforce, boards, and committees. Deliver services in an equitable, caring, fair, and inclusive manner;
- Increase cultural responsiveness, excellence in communication, and customer service regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or any other protected class;
- Work with all departments to support and integrate DEI into decision making, policies, practices, and services;
- Institutionalize equity, while reinforcing inclusion and affirming diverse identities and experiences. Support victims of hate and bias, foster respect, and celebrate differences.

REG’s methodology and approach included: facilitating **DEI training** for the Select Board Office and Town department leaders; conducting a **DEI staff survey** to establish a baseline for measuring staff perceptions of the Town’s commitment to DEI; and facilitating **focus group interviews with residents** to understand their lived experiences and hear ideas on how to make the Town a more inclusive community where all residents have a sense of belonging. REG also administered a **community wide survey** to gain insight to whether residents have equal access, equal opportunity, and experience equal treatment related to Town services, programs, employment, procurement, and volunteer opportunities; conducted a **disparity analysis** within all of Town government operations, to identify any significant disparities within representation for a particular demographic group; and conducted a **best practices gap and barrier analysis** by evaluating the Town’s current policies and practices benchmarked against evidenced-based best practices for advancing DEI.

Key Findings

Employment, Procurement, Boards and Committees

People of color are significantly underrepresented within all job categories of Town government based on availability in the relevant labor market. Females are significantly underrepresented within management roles, skilled trades, and service maintenance roles. The Town does not currently collect demographic data for vendors and contractors, or board and committee volunteers, and REG was unable to determine if there is equal opportunity to do business with the Town or serve on boards and committees.

Services and Programs

Town-wide community survey respondents were **most satisfied** with the following, indicated by 90% or greater agreement: access to public services such as fire, police, emergency, and rescue services; access to parks and recreation programs, and access to quality library services. Respondents were **least satisfied** with the following, indicated by 40% or less agreement: access to affordable and quality housing options; feedback on whether Town government policies are valued by decision-makers; and access to become a vendor or contractor doing business with Town government.

Living Experiences, Belonging and Inclusion

Residents identifying as people of color do not feel as connected, or have a sense of belonging and inclusion, due to the lack of programs and events reflecting their backgrounds. Compared to White residents, residents of color also do not feel Town Meeting and elected officials are accessible and are more likely to leave Wellesley due to encountering discrimination. Between 2022-2024, there were 64 discrimination charges filed with State Attorney General’s Office and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination against Wellesley organizations for discrimination within employment, housing, and public accommodations.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS...



SUSTAIN DEI TASK FORCE

To help address the overall findings, REG recommends the Select Board sustain the DEI Task Force to continue providing oversight and accountability of the recommended objectives and goals resulting from the DEI audit.

ATTRACT AND RETAIN DIVERSE TALENT

Expand equal employment opportunity efforts, including internships, to attract a competitive pool of qualified candidates, including females and people of color, who are significantly underrepresented. Train and equip all managers to create fair and inclusive workplaces.

MEASURE AND MONITOR EQUITY FOR VENDORS AND CONTRACTORS

Survey all bidders/contractors to identify baseline representation data and identify if equal opportunities exist. Demonstrate good faith efforts to expand outreach to all businesses, including minority and women-owned businesses, to generate a competitive pool of qualified contractors.

ENHANCE BELONGING AND INCLUSION FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Offer more diverse community events and activities and improve communication about events. Provide resources to help host culturally diverse events and support with attendance, and acknowledge diverse holidays and cultures represented in the Town. ₂