



# Massachusetts Municipal DEI Coalition

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DEI Guide  
2022

## Introduction

Since the summer of 2020, many municipal governments have created or strengthened diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts. After the murder of George Floyd, a period of social unrest caused organizations across numerous sectors—local government included—to examine how they could take a stand against racial injustice. Through this reflection, many municipalities realized they were not equipped to discuss issues of race in the workplace. This period of self-examination also caused many local governments to reckon with their own roles in constructing and maintaining oppressive and exclusive systems, and their responsibilities to correct injustice in the face of such histories. The result was a surge in job opportunities for DEI consultants, officers, specialists, coordinators, and other DEI professionals to help municipalities and other organizations incorporate DEI values into their practices, policies, and cultures. According to data from Indeed.com, job postings in DEI rose 56.3 percent between September 2019 and September 2020 (1).

For municipalities, the real work begins now. In this moment, when so many people understand the importance of DEI, we must push toward structural and sustainable change in our municipal governments. We must create spaces of belonging for those that have been left out of governmental policies and institutions, or actively and intentionally harmed by them. We must reimagine DEI as a core function of government, not an afterthought or the job of just one individual. We must come to think of DEI as everyone's responsibility.

In service of these goals, we present this guide as a collection of lessons gathered by municipal DEI practitioners throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We hope this document provides you with strategies, ideas, and tools that help you become more impactful in your DEI work, regardless of where you are working or what your title might be.

### What is DEI?

While Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, also known as DEI, are interconnected concepts, **they are also distinct values that municipal leaders should**

**actively seek to understand, define, and incorporate into their daily practice.** An individual's definition and understanding of diversity, equity and inclusion will reflect how that person approaches their role in the workplace and in the world. To that end, we recommend working as a community to establish shared language around what diversity, equity and inclusion mean in your local context. We have provided resources in this guide's appendix that you can use to get started.

Everyone plays a role in DEI. Each person's role depends on their own perspectives and awareness, as well as the perspectives of those leading DEI efforts. At its best, DEI is a part of everything we do, every environment we create, every transaction and interaction that we have. It is a lens through which we see the world, make choices, and build relationships. DEI must be an integral part of how we do our day-to-day work.

## Who is this for?

This guide is written by and for municipal DEI practitioners. Often, there is an expectation that DEI leaders arrive in their role knowing everything they should know. However, we understand that every DEI leader is on a continuous journey of discovery, analysis, and reflection. As a group of DEI practitioners ourselves, we are also in the process of learning even as we write this document. Rather than presenting this guide as a definitive collection of DEI best practices, we want it to reflect an emerging conversation about lessons learned in the field of municipal diversity, equity, and inclusion work. We hope that you are able to use this document to inform your practice and to start new conversations with the people around you.

**Although DEI practitioners are the intended audience for this guide, we hope you engage with this content even if you do not consider yourself a DEI practitioner.** As we will illustrate later in this guide, DEI work and DEI practitioners cannot succeed in isolation. We hope this guide helps you think creatively about how you can contribute to DEI work within the unique context of your role, your community, and your identities.

## Who made this guide?

The Massachusetts Municipal DEI Coalition is a group of professional DEI practitioners in the local government space that share experiences, compare best practices, and support each other through common challenges. After the summer of 2020, it became apparent that many of these practitioners were starting with very minimal direction and building their programs from scratch. The DEI Coalition emerged as a way to bridge this gap.

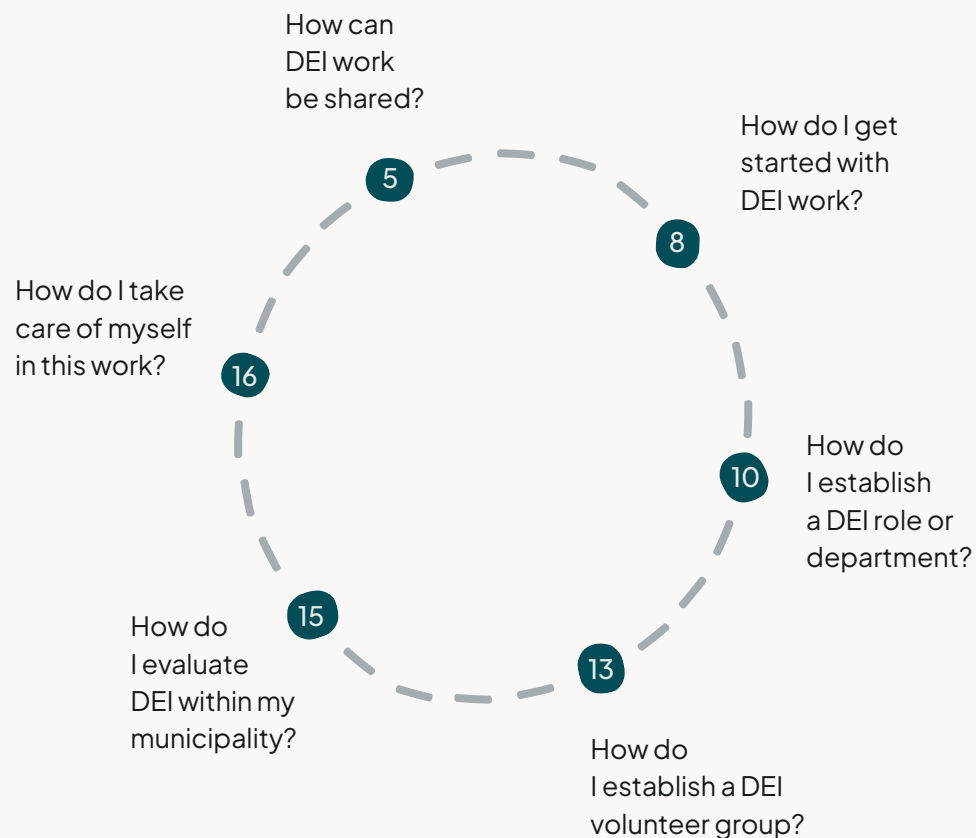
In order to share our learnings with other municipal DEI practitioners, the DEI Coalition created a working group, which met from the fall of 2021 through the spring of 2022 to pull together a simplified guide for current and future communities to use. This working group included:

- Dr. Maritsa Barros, City of Revere
- Jillian Harvey, Town of Arlington
- Martha Duffield, Town of Lexington
- Tina Los, City of Newburyport
- Dr. Kimal McCarthy, Town of Nantucket
- Joan Courtney Murray, Town of Westwood
- Johnny Shively, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
- Emily Torres-Cullinane, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

This guide was copyedited and designed by Metropolitan Area Planning Council communications team members Elise Harmon-Freeman and Ellyn Morgan.

# DEI Guide Contents

The illustration below outlines the six core questions addressed in this guide. Although they are presented in a sequence that may be useful for some municipalities, it is not necessary to answer these questions in order. We have imagined the questions here as a recursive pathway to highlight the idea that **diversity, equity, and inclusion are not “end goals” that an organization will achieve by taking a certain set of actions.** They are values and behaviors that municipal employees, community leaders, and elected officials must practice **forever**. If your municipality implements all of the recommendations outlined in this guide, you may choose to revisit the first step in your process and start over again.



## How can municipal staff share DEI work?

For many municipalities engaging with DEI, the first step is to identify an individual or a group who will lead this effort. This might be a DEI Coordinator, a task force, or even an informal group of municipal employees. This person or group can coordinate DEI efforts across departments, serve as a thought partner to other municipal leaders, and advise on equitable policies and practices. However, it would be a mistake to think that this person or body is (or can be) solely responsible for implementing DEI values across the organization.

### The business case for shared DEI work

Better decision-making with expanded perspectives

Municipalities can better serve their residents

Increased innovation

### The legal case for shared DEI work

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) or religion.

Can help organizations avoid litigation

### The moral case for shared DEI work

Local governments have contributed to legacies of oppression

Responds to institutional discrimination

Provides a fair chance to those underrepresented in governmental institutions

**For DEI work to be successful, it must be treated as a collective effort across the municipality.** This is because DEI work is not a single policy or action that can “solve” discrimination, oppression, or injustice. It is a mindset and a set of behaviors that must be practiced over and over, in every department, forever. Treating DEI work as a collective effort will ensure that these behaviors are taking root throughout an organization. It will mean that when one person leaves, the municipality’s DEI work will not disappear with them. Most importantly, it means that we are doing what our constituents are asking of us.

DEI work is not something that one person can do alone, and everyone within a municipality has a role to play. In this illustration, we present the idea of shared DEI responsibilities and specific DEI responsibilities. Shared responsibilities are tasks like hiring, community engagement, and training where DEI values can be incorporated that are held by multiple departments. Specific responsibilities are practices that one person or department has the unique power to implement.

How can you incorporate DEI values into the responsibilities you share with other departments?  
 What are your department’s specific responsibilities?



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## Tips for making DEI shared work in your municipality

There are many ways to establish DEI work as a collective responsibility in your organization. Steps to take may include:

**Create space for dialogue.** Hold space within the organization to discuss diversity, equity and inclusion as a set of shared values, and to discuss why these values matter.

**Establish top-down leadership.** Ensure DEI values come from the top of the organization, and that they are reflected in the words and actions of municipal leaders and department heads.

**Create departmental roles.** Identify a DEI leader within each department, and unite these people through an internal DEI committee. Note: this person doesn't have to be a director.

**Update hiring practices.** Incorporate DEI practices into hiring practices for every department. This could include using interview questions such as "What do you know about DEI?" and "What have you done to advance DEI where you worked before?"

**Evaluate.** Use DEI-related metrics in staff evaluations, and to determine promotions and raises.

**Practice patience.** Understand that while institutional culture change is urgent, it is also slow and persistent work. Recognize that many people within the organization will be slow to change.

**Meet people where they are.** Prepare for the fact that people will be at different places in their journeys. Plan for how you will meet people where they are while ensuring that they engage with this work.

**Treat DEI work as cultural work.** Remember that DEI work means a change in behavior as well as policy.

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## How do I get started with DEI work?

### Doing the internal work

Changing systems starts by changing the individuals who govern them. This process begins at the level of the self, and takes place from the inside out. DEI work is a constant and ongoing act of learning and unlearning, and every person must be responsible for

developing and exercising a DEI “lens” through which they see their work. Building and exercising this lens daily will allow us to activate ourselves when we are needed most.

Here are a few questions you may choose to ask yourself or a close group of peers at multiple points throughout your DEI journey. If your response is “I don’t know,” what steps can you take to begin answering this question?

### Finding your people

As previously discussed, successful DEI work does not happen alone. Whether you’re a DEI Director or an employee with no formal DEI responsibilities, finding support will help you stay motivated, solve challenges, and navigate political and cultural mazes.

This does not have to be a complicated process. **Start by identifying cultural leaders in your community, the people who have expansive networks and know who is who.** Ask them, “Who cares about DEI work around here?” Sooner or later, someone will tell you.

As you begin finding your people, don’t ignore the importance of cultivating your one-on-one relationships. These will be pivotal in getting people to the table, raising awareness, and creating deep change over time. It will also help you to work with people who might otherwise try to make your work more difficult.

### Questions for doing the internal work

1. "Am I getting into DEI work as a reaction to something that happened? How will I sustain my interest in this work when that animating incident feels farther away?"
2. "How do I define wellbeing in my community, and what conditions allow for wellbeing?"
3. "Do the conditions in Question 2 exist equally for all community members? Why or why not?"
4. "What do I consider deep, structural change to look like? What am I willing to give up for deep change to happen? What am I not willing to give up?"
5. "What identities do I bring with me into this work? How do those identities influence how I view the world and the experiences of others?"
6. "Why do I care about DEI work? What is at stake for me in this work?"



## Creating shared language

A vital next step involves arriving at a shared understanding of the language and terms related to DEI work among your municipal staff. If your team agrees on the definitions of common terms in DEI work, you will reduce miscommunications, discover overlaps in your knowledge and efforts, communicate consistently with the public, and present a unified front. Shared language will also help your municipality establish shared goals.

Here are a few prompts to get your organization talking about the same thing. Multiple resources to help answer these questions can be found in this guide's appendix.

## Creating shared goals

Creating shared goals will help your municipality define the conditions you're trying to create. This will help you work backward and determine the actions that best suit your objectives, whether they include hiring a DEI leader, creating a taskforce, or bringing in a consultant. Having clear goals will also allow you to evaluate your DEI efforts more effectively and to understand and communicate whether your municipality has made changes in the right direction.

When establishing shared goals, it is important to remember that DEI is not a destination. We won't be able to end the journey because discrimination and inequity are things of the past. DEI is a change in our behavior and culture that we must practice our whole lives.

## Questions for creating shared language

1. What are diversity, equity, and inclusion? Why do they matter?
2. What are individual, institutional, and systemic racism? How are they different? Where do they manifest in our daily lives and organizations?
3. What is belonging? Why is it important? How does it relate to DEI?
4. Are there any identities we're intentionally leaving out of this conversation? If so, why?
5. What are implicit and explicit biases? How are they different? Where do they manifest in our daily lives and organizations?
6. What is quality of life? Why is it important? How does it relate to DEI?
7. What values do we hold that don't fit within the definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion? How are they different?
8. What kinds of identities are we talking about in this work? Race? Class? Gender? Sexuality? Ability? Faith?
9. What is justice? Why is it important? How does it relate to DEI?

## How do I establish a DEI role or department?

There is no set definition for what municipal DEI leaders do. Many municipal DEI leaders are hired with the vague expectation that they will come in and “fix it” — that by waving a magic wand they will singlehandedly reverse hundreds of years of systemic exclusion and inequity in their city or town. In practice, this often results in DEI professionals being brought on without a clear scope of work, forcing them to define their own roles with or without the support of municipal leadership.

An unclear scope of work can also result in a DEI professional being tasked with every responsibility conceivably linked to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Either of these outcomes will limit a DEI professional’s ability to do their job effectively, whatever that job may be. It will also inevitably lead to burnout and turnover—topics we’ll cover later in this guide.

**One way of preventing this from happening is by defining a clear and achievable scope of work for your DEI leader.** This scope of work should relate directly to the needs of your municipality. It might even come out of the “creating shared goals” strategies recommended on the previous page.

**One useful question to ask yourself when defining a scope of work could be: “Should this DEI leader be more internally facing or more externally facing?”** Internally-facing DEI leaders will focus on driving organizational change, acting as a business partner to other departments, and shifting culture and policy throughout the institution. Meanwhile, externally-facing DEI leaders will focus on responding to crises and individual cases of discrimination, coordinating community outreach and language justice efforts, and working closely with volunteer groups. Consider whether the DEI leader’s scope of work should be more internally or externally facing.

If, after reading the responsibilities outlined in this section, you say “our municipality needs all the above,” it could be time to consider creating a multi-person DEI department and/or thinking through how this work can be shared by multiple existing teams.

### Internal DEI Responsibilities

- Shifting culture
- Shaping policies, especially related to hiring, recruitment, and retention
- Creating guides and trainings for employees
- Coordinating evaluations

### External DEI Responsibilities

- Working with community organizations
- Community events
- Responding to public crises
- Language access and language justice

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## 7 Things for new DEI leaders to know

1. **This job is about relationships.** Building them early and maintaining them will help you immensely, especially with people who might otherwise stand in your way. Communicate to your manager that relationship-building is a vital part of your work that takes time and energy.
2. **The culture of a workplace really matters and will influence your ability to do your work.** Get someone you trust to help you figure it out. Do people prefer emails or phone calls? What norms exist surrounding meetings?
3. **People will have all kinds of feelings about you being hired and preconceptions about what you do as a DEI leader.** They may be wary that you are there to call them out or get them in trouble. Be aware of this going in and be diligent about letting people know what you are (and aren't) there to do.
4. **Think of yourself as a business partner, not a cheerleader.** Cheerleaders leave after the game is over, while business partners are invested in a project's long-term success. Make it clear to other departments that you are there to be their partner in long-term, collaborative DEI work.
5. **Budget can be hard to find.** Utilize partnerships with other departments to get things funded and remind people that this is shared work. Let your municipality's leaders know how much it would cost to bring in a consultant to do the same work as hiring a new person.
6. **Changing systems and culture will not happen all at once, or after one or two trainings.** Inequitable systems and cultures are constructed over centuries and are not dismantled overnight. Remind your leadership of this when possible and do not be discouraged by a lack of immediate wins.
7. **Consultants can help bring a sense of outside objectivity to projects such as trainings and equity audits.** This can improve the credibility of these projects, and help you avoid eroding relationships by having to personally evaluate your colleagues and their departments.

## 9 ideas for those who support DEI leaders

DEI coordinators, directors, and officers face a unique set of challenges that other municipal leaders can help ease. Once a DEI leader's scope of work has been defined, there are many actions municipal leaders should take to set the stage for their success.

- **Create direct lines to leadership.** Put your DEI professional in a position where they are reporting directly to the municipal administrator.
- **Bring DEI leaders to the table.** Create consistent, direct contact between the DEI leader and other organizational leadership, especially the city or town administrator. This might look like a standing one-on-one meeting, a regular department head meeting, or a combination of these approaches.
- **Create capacity.** Provide the DEI leader with staff, especially if they are expected to take on both external and internal DEI work.
- **Provide funding.** Provide DEI leaders with the budget necessary to do their jobs well. This may be used to improve language access in municipal efforts, conduct staff trainings, provide professional development, or carry out evaluations and equity audits.
- **Listen deeply and show a unified front.** Back up DEI leaders when they identify areas in which the municipality's DEI goals and values are not being reflected. Don't get upset with your DEI leader for doing their job.
- **Give time to build.** Don't expect your DEI leader to "fix it" right away. Give them time to evaluate the organization's practices, build relationships, and establish a plan. In many municipalities, this takes a year or longer.
- **Disrupt racism and sexism.** If your DEI leader is a person of color, and especially a woman of color, speak up when people attempt to categorize them in racist and sexist ways. Examples of racist and sexist tropes include "the angry Black woman" or saying things like "it must be her time of the month."
- **Clarify their role.** Make sure everyone in the organization knows what the DEI leader has been hired to do. Lack of clarity around their role is a common challenge faced by DEI leaders.
- **Equip them with cultural information.** Make sure that your DEI leader has the information they need to understand and navigate the culture of your organization. Provide them with a buddy who understands your municipality's culture well.

# How do I establish a DEI volunteer group?

Volunteer groups, such as committees, commissions, and task forces, can be an asset to any municipality's DEI strategy. In municipalities where DEI staff play a more internal role, volunteer groups can fill important community-facing functions. They can support community engagement efforts, help to build and strengthen community partnerships, and mobilize the community to support DEI initiatives. In municipalities without a DEI staff person, volunteer groups may also play an important role in advising a municipality's DEI efforts.

However, not all volunteer groups are created equally. In order to determine which kind of volunteer group might work best, a municipality should consider the strengths and weaknesses of different kinds of groups.

## Committees

### pros

- Increased transparency means residents can keep up with the discussion and notes

- More likely to have a designated budget for trainings, speakers, and other services

### cons

- Being accountable to open meeting law makes them less nimble in regard to problem-solving

## Commissions

### pros

- Often called on to respond to instances of hate and discrimination in the community

### cons

- Being in a primarily reactionary role means less proactive work
- Volunteers may not be able to respond to incidents as quickly as paid staff

## Task Forces

### pros

- Not subject to open meeting law: more nimble
- Action-oriented

- A temporary group with a specific end date
- Potential to turn into a committee or commission after their work is done

### cons

- Being in a primarily reactionary role means less proactive work
- Volunteers may not be able to respond to incidents as quickly as paid staff

## Defining a scope of work

Defining a clear scope of work for your volunteer group will be an important step in its ultimate success. Sometimes this scope comes in the form of a charge from a council, selectboard, or other municipal leadership. Often, the scope of work can be broad and requires significant refining before it becomes actionable.

Because a volunteer group comprises multiple people, it can take a long time to define a clear scope of work—maybe months or even more than a year. Don't let this dissuade you. Various tools, such as SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analyses, have helped other volunteer groups identify specific goals and build action plans to achieve them.

**One of the greatest strengths a volunteer group has is its relationships within the community.** While policies, trainings, cultural events, and other actions are all important, don't neglect the importance of building trust within your volunteer group as you consider your scope of work. Acting as a public-facing body can also take pressure off a municipality's DEI leader, allowing them to focus on more internally-facing work.

## Important Strategies and Considerations

- You're not doing this alone. Find your people throughout the community passionate about DEI goals and build relationships with them.
- Once you've found your relationships, think creatively about how to leverage them toward DEI work. How can you work with these people to elevate conversations and take action?
- Think about cultivating additional DEI leaders within the community. A core role of volunteer groups can be to elevate people who have a passion and giving them the tools they need to succeed.
- A sense of purpose and belonging is what separates coalitions that succeed from coalitions that fail. People will be more motivated with clear projects they can sink their teeth into.
- Elected officials may not appreciate having issues of inequity brought to their attention. However, this is an important responsibility of many volunteer groups. This is a tricky dynamic that is different in every municipality, and one that your group should think about. Is advising leadership part of your charge? How can you bring about change?

### What kinds of budgets do volunteer groups receive?

Some volunteer groups receive budgets upward of \$10,000, while others receive nothing. Advocate for a budget to use on trainings and evaluation. Be creative, too. What partnerships and relationships can you leverage to fund DEI efforts in your municipality?

### What if our municipality is mostly white?

Think about where your knowledge may be limited, and how you could go about educating your group and your community. Consider whose voices are missing and how can you create the platforms and pathways for these missing voices to shed new light? How will you turn what you've learned into action?

## How do I evaluate DEI within my municipality?

Evaluation is critical for accountability and iterative, long-term change. Especially in municipalities, it's common to establish a set of goals, values, or principles without following through on them later. Creating a system for evaluation will help your municipality determine if it's living up to its vision, know what is working, and build on what can be improved.

Evaluation is also important for helping new DEI professionals understand where their attention should go. Evaluation doesn't just have to be at the end of a program, it can (and should) happen as soon as a DEI leader comes on board. Some DEI leaders focus their entire first year on evaluating a municipality's policies, programs, and culture. This approach can help DEI leaders combat the pressure to fix everything at once, and to establish clear priorities and goals which they can then share with other departments and organizational leadership.

Finally, external evaluations and other sources of quantitative data can help lend additional credibility to what the DEI leader is observing and saying. When staff is audited by other staff, it can lead to mistrust.

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### What is an equity audit?

An equity audit is an evaluation method that is shaped around what your municipality is trying to learn. Whose voices are missing from public processes and policies? Are all communities represented in our municipal government? Are our practices and policies unintentionally (or intentionally) harmful to a specific group, or multiple groups? Are our communications inclusive and accessible? Are we doing the best we can?

You can hire an external consultant or firm to help your municipality answer these questions, or a different set of questions that you define. Equity audit consultants might conduct interviews, facilitate focus groups, sift through existing documents and policies, and carry out other forms of research. Bringing in an external expert can be extremely helpful when you feel that you "don't know what you don't know."

An example Equity Audit RFP from the Town of Arlington is available in the appendix at the end of this guide.

## How do I take care of myself in this work?

Burnout is extremely common for DEI professionals, and manifests in many ways, including exhaustion, physical and emotional fatigue, mood changes, a lack of interest and investment, low motivation, and even sickness. Identifying what burnout feels like for you requires practice and self-knowledge.

Burnout is real in all work, and especially common in DEI work. It happens because DEI work is personal, and because it's easy to take on the burdens of every person impacted by inequity, exclusion, and a lack of diversity in your municipality. Seeing this job as solely your responsibility is a sure way to burn out.

Burnout happens because this work is emotionally tiring. Leading DEI trainings, constantly talking about inequity and injustice, and serving as a resource means you're going to be doing a lot of emotional labor and dealing with other people's emotions constantly.

Burnout can also happen when you set unrealistic expectations for yourself. Even though you're achieving things, you may not be valuing yourself enough. Feeling like you don't belong, that you're not doing enough, and that you're an imposter can all lead to burnout.

Practice identifying burnout early, and take steps to prevent and manage it before it becomes debilitating. What are the kinds of experiences that typically impact you? What have you been internalizing? These are questions you might consider asking yourself as part of a recurring personal check-in.

### Strategies for managing burnout and protecting your humanity

While we have found these practices helpful for managing burnout in our own lives, your ability to implement them will be different depending on your identities, your environment, and the community in which you work. Ultimately, it is most important to know what works for you. Test out some of these strategies and keep notes on what helps.

- **Find your people and create a “sounding board.”** This group of people should be outside your organization and might include colleagues from other municipalities and industries that do similar work. Identify three to five people early and call on them when you're feeling stuck, frustrated, exhausted, and/or emotionally drained. You can also call on them to celebrate your wins, progress you've made, and personal achievements. Your sounding board will serve different purposes at different times in your career and therefore should be chosen wisely. Attending conferences and talking with other DEI professionals can also be uplifting and help you grow your sounding board.



- **Don't take things home.** As hard as it may be, it's important to not take your work "home", as it will quickly become all-consuming. This work is already personal, and letting it consume your entire life will make it harder to go to work every day and be present. If you work from a home office or do some volunteer work from your house, mentally separate the work from your personal life: set boundaries or schedules and stick to them.
- **Don't challenge every issue at once.** This is a similar idea as "pick your battles wisely," but here we mean "be intentional about when you choose to fight each battle." Not only is it emotionally and physically draining to take on every issue at once, but your chances of succeeding will decrease. Some issues will require long-term strategizing with key partners, elected officials, and other stakeholders. Divide the issues into short-term and long-term goals and create an internal timeline and strategy to tackle them.
- **Manage your expectations.** Equity work is not an "end goal" as much as it is an ongoing process. You're trying to undo a system that has been purposefully built and maintained over centuries. As a result, you might not see the fruits of your labor right away. It's okay to know what your limits are, and when it's time to let go.
- **Make this shared work.** We've said it 100 times, and we're saying it again here! Don't expect yourself to do this alone. Make sure you have co-conspirators within your organization who will help you carry the responsibility and emotional weight of this work.
- **Speak up for yourself.** Advocate for your needs, and don't take no for answer.
- **Set boundaries.** This will look different based on your identities and your privileges. It can also look different based on the kinds of work you're doing. For example, if you're planning to lead a tense racial equity training, plan for that to be draining. Block off the rest of your calendar that day. Take yourself to a nice meal. Make time to sleep. Make time to take breaks.
- **Show up as yourself.** If you can't show up as yourself in this work, or if you're putting on a performance, it will cause you to burn out faster. Implementing this recommendation will also look different for individuals inhabiting different identities.
- **Don't take things personally (even though this work is personal).** It's not that you don't care, but you need to be able to let things go. Letting go of things that happened will help you maintain a sense of sanity. It's okay to let go of that conversation that has been replaying in your head for the past week.

## Conclusion

Municipal DEI is an emerging field. Although local governments throughout the country have reflected on their cultures and practices since the racial justice reckonings of 2020, many cities and towns are still struggling to understand how to incorporate values of diversity, equity, and inclusion into their policies, practices, and organizational cultures. We hope this guide has illustrated that no matter who you are, what position you hold, or what community you live in, there are steps you can take to drive DEI work forward in your municipality. Whether you are doing the internal work, conducting an equity audit, assembling a volunteer group, or starting a new position as a municipal DEI leader, we encourage you to consider the recommendations and strategies presented here.

The MA Municipal DEI Coalition will continue to discuss these topics, share emerging practices, and provide mutual support. We are dedicated to supporting our peers in this work, wherever you are in your DEI journey. For updates on this guide or to get in touch for other purposes, please connect with us at [deicoalition@gmail.com](mailto:deicoalition@gmail.com). To get in touch with the Municipal DEI Coalition, please email [jharvey@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:jharvey@town.arlington.ma.us) or [etorres@mapc.org](mailto:etorres@mapc.org).

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## References

- (1) “Jobs in Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Have Risen 123% Since May—Here’s How To Get One.” Indeed Career Guide, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/finding-a-job/diversity-inclusion-and-belonging-jobs-rise>. Accessed 13 Apr. 2022.
- (2) Kaplan, Sarah. “Why the ‘Business Case’ for Diversity Isn’t Working.” Fast Company, 12 Feb. 2020, <https://www.fastcompany.com/90462867/why-the-business-case-for-diversity-isnt-working>.

## [Appendices]

### Job Descriptions

- Chief Diversity Officer (Worcester, MA)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WFD8hqWonSdfXBMnsuPVrsdAcYGA6noD/view?usp=sharing>
- DEI Director (Nantucket, MA)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iobCM6K6I9AVQMIFQIVPUR07wNRq48Lb/view?usp=sharing>
- Chief Equity Officer (Lexington, MA)  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_qV3NbHsy8LdqikL-1G2I98hlxPeuvB4/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_qV3NbHsy8LdqikL-1G2I98hlxPeuvB4/view?usp=sharing)
- Coordinator of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (Arlington, MA)  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1NOVrixQri7dvzMXqO7OS1SXqkXUXkOPG/edit?usp=sharing&oid=109752106414382271330&rtpof=true&sd=true>
- Chief DEI Officer (Framingham, MA)  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qzYq1lZDkshaXE7AGLdx5a7qfenNHNQR/edit?usp=sharing&oid=109752106414382271330&rtpof=true&sd=true>
- DEI Coordinator (Malden, MA)  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IVM3zgGFp9nHnFwHkGnsiXVcE1d8V6OS/view?usp=sharing>
- Arlington Public Schools Director of DEI  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dk2XsN26n9OBN-USGIVytkXINY99XioC/view?usp=sharing>

## Tools for understanding Racial Justice, Racial Equity, and White Privilege

- Diversity Toolkit: A Guide to Discussing Identity, Power and Privilege  
<https://msw.usc.edu/mswusc-blog/diversity-workshop-guide-to-discussing-identity-power-and-privilege/#intro>
- Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook:  
<https://www.dismantlingracism.org/>
- White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack  
<https://nationalseedproject.org/Key-SEED-Texts/white-privilege-unpacking-the-invisible-knapsack>
- White Supremacy Culture:  
[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb02939ba70903a4fdb2e61/t/6050b841ca9ccf56f344093f/1615902785735/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5eb02939ba70903a4fdb2e61/t/6050b841ca9ccf56f344093f/1615902785735/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf)
- Awake to Woke to Work: Building a Race Equity Culture  
<https://equityinthecenter.org/aww/>
- Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization:  
[https://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013\\_ac\\_presentations/Continuum\\_AntiRacist.pdf](https://www.aesa.us/conferences/2013_ac_presentations/Continuum_AntiRacist.pdf)
- Operationalizing Racial Justice:  
<https://www.mpassociates.us/uploads/3/7/1/0/37103967/operationalizingrj.mpassociates.12.19.pdf>
- White People: I Don't Want You To Understand Me Better, I Want You To Understand Yourself  
<https://medium.com/the-establishment/white-people-i-dont-want-you-to-understand-me-better-i-want-you-to-understand-yourself-a6fbedd42ddf>
- Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send  
[https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions\\_Examples\\_Arial\\_2014\\_11\\_12.pdf](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf)
- White Fragility and the Rules of Engagement  
[https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/diangelo-white\\_fragility\\_and\\_the\\_rules\\_of\\_engagement.pdf](https://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/diangelo-white_fragility_and_the_rules_of_engagement.pdf)

## Practical DEI Toolkits

- Racial Equity Core Teams: The Engines of Institutional Change  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-core-teams-the-engines-of-institutional-change/>
- Racial Equity: Getting to Results  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-getting-results/>
- Racial Equity Action Plans: A How-To Manual  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-action-plans-manual/>
- Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunity-operationalize-equity/>
- Advancing Racial Equity and Transforming Government: A Resource Guide to Put Ideas Into Action  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/advancing-racial-equity-and-transforming-government-a-resource-guide-to-put-ideas-into-action/>
- ICMA Equity and Inclusion Toolkit:  
<https://icma.org/documents/icma-equity-inclusion-toolkit>

## Procurement Resources

- Contracting for Equity: Best Local Government Practices that Advance Racial Equity in Government Contracting and Procurement  
<https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/contracting-equity-best-local-government-practices-advance-racial-equity-government-contracting-procurement/>
- Leveraging Procurement for Economic Equity  
[https://www.lisc.org/media/filer\\_public/4d/fc/4dfcd821-7d1d-4e5b-be8a-40013e8b74df/0812109\\_resource\\_implementation\\_guide\\_final\\_32019.pdf](https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/4d/fc/4dfcd821-7d1d-4e5b-be8a-40013e8b74df/0812109_resource_implementation_guide_final_32019.pdf)

## Equity Audits

- Andover, MA Diversity Audit and Assessment Report  
<https://andoverma.gov/947/Diversity-Audit-and-Assessment-Report>
- Framingham Public Schools 2020 Equity Audit  
<https://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/Page/9195>
- Town of Arlington Community Equity Audit RFP  
[https://mapc365-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/jshively\\_mapc\\_org/EQeB7Ev8Xc1Bq\\_rQc-\\_40FcB2WieBH6Wb8fNzNcn\\_QfhWA?e=L2tyvC](https://mapc365-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/jshively_mapc_org/EQeB7Ev8Xc1Bq_rQc-_40FcB2WieBH6Wb8fNzNcn_QfhWA?e=L2tyvC)

## Additional Evaluation tools

- Employee Equity Assessment Administration Protocol (pending)  
[https://mapc365-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/jshively\\_mapc\\_org/EWKfQeD-pwVEi2J\\_RkeRQRMBW0I0KXCEyk-wC5QcAN6yrQ?e=HOlbGa](https://mapc365-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/jshively_mapc_org/EWKfQeD-pwVEi2J_RkeRQRMBW0I0KXCEyk-wC5QcAN6yrQ?e=HOlbGa)
- Racial Justice Assessment Tool  
[https://www.nijn.org/uploads/digital-library/AssessingOurOrganizations\\_RacialJustice%20\(1\)%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.nijn.org/uploads/digital-library/AssessingOurOrganizations_RacialJustice%20(1)%20(1).pdf)
- Democratically engaged assessment: Reimagining the purposes and practices of assessment in community engagement  
<https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/handle/1805/17729>

## Inclusive Language Guidelines

- American Psychological Association Guidelines  
<https://www.apa.org/about/apa/equity-diversity-inclusion/language-guidelines.pdf>

## Common Terms & Concepts

- Racial Equity Tools Core Concepts  
<https://www.racialequitytools.org/resources/fundamentals/core-concepts>
- ICMA Glossary of Terms: Race, Equity and Social Justice  
<https://icma.org/glossary-terms-race-equity-and-social-justice>

## Sample Municipal Budgets

- Arlington, MA Department of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, FY23  
<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/60545/637848536238300000>
- Brookline, MA Office of Diversity, Equity & Community Relations, FY23  
<https://www.brooklinema.gov/DocumentCenter/View/29074/TOWN-OF-BROOKLINE-FY23-BUDGET-FINAL>
- Andover, MA DIVERSE Division, FY23  
<https://andoverma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10808/04022022-Saturday-Budget-Presentation>
- Framingham Public Schools, Office of Equity, Diversity, and Community Development, FY23  
<https://www.framingham.k12.ma.us/cms/lib/MA01907569/Centricity/Domain/81/2022%20Packet%20Materials/FPS%20Fiscal%20Year%202023%20Budget%20Book%20FINAL%203.31.22.pdf>

## DEI Coalition Touchstones

(adopted from Community Health Network Area 17):

- Be present, presume welcome and extend welcome
- Listen deeply
- Believe that it's possible to emerge refreshed, surprised and less burdened
- No fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight
- Always by invitation
- Speak for yourself and speak your truth in ways that respect others' truths
- Suspend judgment
- Listen to the silence
- Maintain confidentiality
- Expect and accept a lack of closure
- When things get difficult, turn to wonder

## Frameworks for Coalition-Building

- 7 Strategies for Community Change  
<https://guideinc.org/2015/08/19/cadcas-7-strategies-for-community-change/>  
» This guide helps think about DEI work incrementally and helps us realize that people need to be aware of an issue and build knowledge and skills around that area. Once buy in is established, the group can work toward long-term change, including environmental and policy changes.
- 12 Sector Model  
<http://getsmartdfc.com/our-coalition-partners-dfc-sectors/>  
» For coalition building, Use this model to think about who needs to be around the table.
- Strategic Prevention Framework  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190620-samhsa-strategic-prevention-framework-guide.pdf>  
» A process through which DEI work can happen. This framework is iterative and cyclical and includes assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation, all within a culturally responsive and sustainable framework.
- CADCA's Handbook for Community Anti-Drug Coalitions  
<https://www.cadca.org/sites/default/files/files/coalitionhandbook102013.pdf>

## DEI Strategic Plans

- Andover, MA  
<https://andoverma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10090/DEI-Commission-Strategic-Plan-final-10621>

## Articles on DEI Leader Turnover

- How to Lose a Chief Diversity Officer in 6 Months  
<https://index.medium.com/how-to-lose-a-chief-diversity-officer-in-6-months-6db0dfba6169>



### Checklist: are we ready to hire a DEI officer?

As discussed earlier in this document, there are conditions, environments, and behaviors that empower DEI leaders to do their work, as well as those which hinder DEI leaders. DEI leaders who are disempowered are more likely to leave their roles early, without accomplishing what they set out to do. This checklist is intended to help you think through whether your municipality is ready to hire a DEI leader, or if there is organizational work you need to do before bringing this person on.

- Y • N Are we willing to let them be part of the senior / executive level decisions?
- Y • N Are we willing to let them review all job applications?
- Y • N Are we willing to let them sit in on any job interviews?
- Y • N Are we willing to give them access to all employee information and software?
- Y • N Are we willing to incorporate DEI metrics into every manager's review process?
- Y • N Are we willing to stand up to the staff who create harm?
- Y • N Do we have a closed-door office for the position?
- Y • N Do we have additional budget for the officer (training, resources, software)?
- Y • N Are we willing to allocate the budget, plus eight to 16 hours per person a year, for staff at the managerial level and above to go through training.
- Y • N Are we ready to have hard conversations?
- Y • N Are we willing to give this employee more vacation to compensate for the additional emotional load, microaggressions, and gaslighting?
- Y • N Are we considering additional DEI staff in the future?

If you answered no to any of these questions, consider what steps you may need to take if your DEI leader is to feel fully empowered to do their job.