

eliminating racism  
empowering women



# Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Action Plan

Created September 2025



# Mission Statement

YW Boston is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all.

Founded in 1866 as the first YWCA in the United States, YW Boston has consistently been a leader in advancing social equity for over 150 years.

# Executive Summary

- This action plan outlines priorities for implementation through August 2026.
- DEI Pulse Survey, interviews, focus groups, and Dialogues series revealed several areas for growth:
  - psychological safety, trust, and open dialogue
  - communication and awareness about existing DEIA initiatives
  - individual and collective agency related to DEIA efforts
- Strategies to advance DEI goals include:
  - equip agency employees with inclusive leadership and communication skills
  - strengthen internal communication, feedback, and decision-making practices
  - increase staff DEIA knowledge and awareness

# Background

# Organizational Context

The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is responsible for conducting the federally required metropolitan transportation planning process for the Boston metropolitan area.

In April 2024, Director of Policy and Planning Annette Demchur contacted YW Boston to inquire about opportunities to deepen the agency's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Annette noted that despite the agency's strong commitment to equity in their transportation planning work, they did not apply that same equity lens consistently to their own internal operations. Over the past several years, the agency has devoted time and energy to the development of a DEIA statement and vision for workplace culture, as well as the formation of a DEIA Working Group, currently named the Ideas Group. These efforts were slow to start, and the agency struggled to identify the action steps needed to advance their DEIA journey.

In the fall of 2024, YW Boston engaged the Boston Region MPO in a robust organizational discovery process that led to the creation of a [DEI Pulse Survey report](#) and [DEI Discovery report](#). These documents serve as the foundation for our present engagement to develop a DEIA Action Plan for the agency.

# Summary of Engagement

YW Boston and the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization launched our partnership in October 2024. The next slide contains a timeline of the full engagement.

The discovery process included:

- regular meetings between YW Boston and agency representatives
- an organization-wide DEI Pulse Survey
- twelve interviews and focus groups with approximately 30 agency leadership and staff to deepen our understanding of general DEIA climate as well as specific policies and practices (see below)
- an equity-based review of agency documents and practices related to talent acquisition, employee retention, supervision and performance evaluation, and compensation

Seventeen Boston Region MPO employees participated in the Dialogues sessions to identify priorities and refine the scope of this DEIA action plan.

This current engagement will conclude with a presentation of this DEIA Action Plan at an all-staff meeting in September 2025 and an all-staff DEIA training in October 2025.

# Engagement Timeline

## Discovery 1

October -  
December 2024

- Relationship building between YW Boston and agency
- Onboarding to process
- DEI Pulse Survey
- Interviews / focus groups

## Discovery 2

July - August 2025

- Interviews / focus groups
- Document review
- Dialogues cohort selection

## Dialogues Sessions

August 2025

- Two full-day retreats
- Cohort relationship building
- Identity and systems exploration
- Organizational assessment

## Action Plan Development

September 2025

- Action plan development based on data collected during Discovery and Dialogues phases
- Refinement of goals, outcomes, timeline, accountable parties, etc.

# Additional Documents

## **DEI Pulse Survey Report**

Outcomes of a November 2024 administration of YW Boston's DEI Pulse Survey to all Boston Region MPO employees; *response rate: 79%*.

## **DEI Discovery Report**

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Analysis and DEIA recommendations based on DEI Pulse Survey data, interviews, and focus groups conducted with Boston Region MPO employees in November 2024.

## **Equity Review of Boston Region MPO Policies and Practices**

Equity-focused review of the Boston Region MPO's core workforce policies and practices involving recruitment and hiring, compensation, performance evaluation, and exit interviews; document review and focus groups conducted in August and September 2025.

# Action Plan

# Actionable Data

The information on the following three slides – **Strengths, Areas for Growth, and Strategic Priorities** – form the basis for this DEIA Action Plan.

Data for these slides derive from themes identified during YW Boston's initial engagement with the Boston Region MPO in Fall 2024, and further explored during Summer 2025:

- DEI Pulse Survey (November 2024)
- interviews and focus groups (November 2024, August 2025)
- two-part Dialogues process (August 2025)
- document review (August – September 2025)

# Strengths

## **Mission Orientation**

Staff join and remain with the agency because of its mission and values, demonstrating a deep commitment to DEIA as central to advancing equitable transportation across the region.

## **DEIA Infrastructure**

The Ideas Group provides a dedicated structure for advancing internal DEIA initiatives.

## **Culture of Excellence**

Employees possess a strong commitment to producing high-quality work in service of the partners and communities served by the agency.

## **Equity in Systems**

The agency has already taken concrete to revise policies and practices (e.g., hiring, compensation, performance evaluation), laying the foundation for more equitable employee experiences.

# Areas for Growth

## Psychological Safety

Although it emerged as a relative strength in the DEI Pulse Survey, psychological safety is not uniformly distributed and experienced by all Boston Region MPO employees. One-way communication and limited transparency related to decision-making have further eroded trust and led to reduced engagement among agency staff.

## Organizational Norms and Culture

Limited updates about priorities, progress, and responsibilities leave Boston Region MPO staff uncertain about the effectiveness of existing DEIA efforts and how they should engage in and support the agency's DEIA work.

## Agency to Advance DEIA

Boston Region MPO staff possess limited shared language and understanding on DEIA topics including implicit bias, microaggressions, and inclusive communication across difference.

# Strategic Priorities

## Psychological Safety

By embedding inclusive two-way communication practices, the Boston Region MPO can foster open dialogue where employees share ideas, challenge constructively, and build trust to drive innovation in service of the agency's mission.

## Organizational Norms and Culture

By expanding opportunities for interaction among agency employees and embracing shared leadership in decision-making, the agency can strengthen engagement, accountability, and alignment around priorities.

## Agency to Advance DEIA

By building baseline DEIA knowledge for all staff, the Boston Region MPO can empower employees to actively shape and contribute to a sustainable DEIA culture.

# Psychological Safety

- Goal:** Build a culture of psychological safety where all agency employees communicate openly, challenge ideas constructively, and engage across differences in ways that strengthen trust.
- Outcome:** Staff and leadership demonstrate greater comfort in giving and receiving feedback, with employees reporting increased psychological safety and ability to share their perspectives.

## Action

## Timeline

Provide coaching for the leadership team to strengthen team culture and communication norms.

Oct 2025 – Mar 2026

Offer inclusive communication training (e.g., dialogue across difference, giving and receiving feedback) for all employees.

Oct 2025 – Mar 2026

Formalize the Ideas Group’s role as a communication bridge between the leadership team and all agency employees.

Jan – Jun 2026

# Organizational Norms and Culture

- Goal:** Foster collective ownership of organizational culture and decision-making by creating structures and practices that engage all staff in shaping and advancing agency priorities.
- Outcome:** Staff report greater clarity about organizational decisions, increased opportunities to provide input, and improved engagement in the agency's DEIA efforts.

## Action

## Timeline

Normalize intra-agency interactions and shared responsibility for engagement, including social events and staff-led discussions at all-staff meetings.

Nov 2025 – *ongoing*

Continue to identify, implement, and formalize multiple channels for soliciting employee feedback, including open forums, surveys, and supervision 1:1s.

Nov 2025 – Jun 2026

Pilot a shared decision-making structure (e.g., representative staff committee) to make recommendations or decisions on specific agency priorities.

Apr – Jun 2026

# Agency to Advance DEIA

- Goal:** Build shared knowledge and confidence among all staff to actively engage in advancing DEIA by strengthening baseline understanding of key concepts and practices.
- Outcome:** Staff report feeling more equipped and empowered to integrate DEIA practices into their daily work and organizational practices.

## Action

## Timeline

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Develop a plan and schedule DEIA professional development connected to key organizational dates, e.g., performance evaluation, hiring cycles, etc.        | Oct – Dec 2025 |
| Implement ongoing DEIA professional development for all staff, to include focus on identity awareness, implicit bias, and inclusive change management.    | Jan – Jun 2026 |
| Evaluate progress and develop a plan for annual professional development and events that affirm agency values, foster dialogue, and strengthen community. | Jul – Aug 2026 |

# Success Metrics

## Psychological Safety

- Employees report increased safety sharing their perspectives, particularly when disagreeing or challenging existing norms.
- Employees report increased safety taking risks.

## Organizational Norms and Culture

- Agency leaders communicate using transparent decision-making and feedback systems.
- Employees report increased satisfaction with feedback channels and inclusion of diverse perspectives in decision-making processes.
- Employees demonstrated increased engagement in staff meetings, with shared responsibility for leading and facilitating discussions.

## Agency to Advance DEIA

- Employees report increased confidence and ability to address bias, respond to exclusionary behaviors, and advance DEIA goals.

# Implementation Strategies

<b>Team</b>	Establish a cross-functional implementation team with designated leads for each action area.
<b>Structure</b>	Define a consistent cadence for working group meetings, organizational updates, and progress reviews.
<b>Feedback</b>	Collect feedback from staff at regular intervals.
<b>Accountability</b>	Integrate action plan goals into leadership and staff performance conversations.
<b>Recognition</b>	Celebrate successes and spotlight DEI champions.
<b>Support</b>	Partner with the YW Boston team for monthly coaching.

# Barriers and Mitigation Strategies

<b>Absence of Long-Term Strategy</b>	Establish a roadmap with ownership, timelines, and resources to sustain DEIA priorities.
<b>Low Trust</b>	Foster consistent, transparent communication about progress, and create regular opportunities for staff to share input.
<b>Rigid Decision-Making Structures</b>	Establish clear values and shared decision-making frameworks to empower employees to take risks and innovate.
<b>Siloed Communication</b>	Create cross-functional teams with clear channels for sharing successes and surfacing challenges.
<b>Competing Priorities</b>	Align implementation with the organization's annual calendar, scaling efforts to account for peak periods.

# Beyond Year 1

# Year 2: 2026 - 2027

## **Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement**

Identify regular cadence for assessing organizational culture and employee engagement. Consider a mix of frequent short surveys and an annual assessment that is more robust.

## **Recruiting and Hiring**

Increase outreach to professional organizations and strengthen agency presence at graduate school recruitment fairs and other talent pipeline events.

## **Employee Retention**

Adopt stay interviews to learn from current employees about organizational strengths and opportunities for improvement.

# Year 3: 2027 - 2028

## **Organizational Culture and Employee Engagement**

Evaluate the role of the Ideas Group, ensuring that it continues to meet agency needs. Identify additional entities, such as employee resource groups, to support community building and employee engagement.

## **Recruiting and Hiring**

Formalize partnerships with high schools and community colleges to build sustainable talent pipelines. Consider internships or other programs to increase exposure to the agency and field.

## **Employee Retention**

Develop professional development tracks and career progression ladders to clarify opportunities for growth and promotion at the agency.

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**Thank you for partnering with YW Boston! We look forward to working with you to implement this action plan in support of your diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility goals.**

**If you have questions about this action plan**

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