

Cover Letter

And Still We Rise, LLC
800 Boylston St, FL 16
Boston, MA 02199

Point of contact: Roberta Holmes, Partnership Development Specialist; info@andstillwerise.us;
978-523-2700

Statement of Interest: RFP Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Consulting Services

Greetings,

As a black, woman-owned organization we understand the benefits of diversity, equity and inclusion and the positive impact it can have on a community. We also understand the challenges implementing policies and getting buy-in from a community is no easy task. It was heartening to learn about the Town of Swampscott's deep commitment to to this effort which is evidenced by this Request For Proposals. And Still We Rise, LLC (ASWR) is committed these efforts which is why we are excited to present our proposal to provide Diversity, Equity, and Incluston Consulting Services to the Town of Swampscott (the Town).

Our approach to DEI consulting is rooted in our commitment to collaboration and partnership. That is why our work together will be centered around engaging diverse populations, building bridges between different people and communities, and integrating DEI in the workplace and on boards and committees. Our experience has proven that effective DEI initiatives require sustained effort from community members, stakeholders, and leaders. As mental health providers and consultants who specialize in furthering inclusion and belonging efforts and reckoning with events of racism, bias, or violence, we are committed and uniquely positioned to offer you the support you seek in developing the Town's DEI strategic plan.

Our diverse and highly skilled team is uniquely qualified for this consultation project due to our trauma-informed expertise and work supporting public and private entities in developing and executing DEI short and long-term plans. We will use our foundation as therapists to support individual, group and organizational change using social justice frameworks. We understand the challenges that you will face with inclusivity concerns and commit to working with you closely to ensure that your DEI goals are met together.

As the point of contact, should you have any questions or need additional information don't hesitate to reach out. My direct number is 978-523-2700. On behalf of our entire organization, we look forward to partnering with the Town, and together make significant improvements in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion.

In Solidarity,
Roberta Holmes

Plan of Service

Section 2: Scope

The ASWR Consulting Team will perform and meet the following key objectives for this project. They include the following:

- Define the concepts and definition of DEI that is clear and easily understood;
- Develop an implementation plan for a new DEI staff position within the Town organizational structure to provide strategic leadership, guidance, and vision in order to operationalize DEI initiatives for the Town. The plan will include recommendations on the job description should include defining the scope of work, responsibilities, qualifications, desired skills and salary that aligns with industry standards and in keeping with level of responsibility required for this role. Additional recommendations will include how this position will interact with other Town departments, boards, community organizations, and the community at large to ensure DEI initiatives are integrated and implemented successfully and effectively.
- Provide recommendations regarding the need for a DEI board or group with the purpose of advancing DEI within the Town which includes an operational framework for the new entity with guidelines on the mission, membership selection criteria, decision-making processes, frequency of meetings, reporting mechanisms, etc.
- Develop and provide training to Town department heads on professional assessment tools, such as quantitative analysis, drafting quarterly or year-end documents, and AAP/EEO statistical reports.
- Perform a comprehensive assessment and in-depth analysis of the Town's current DEI practices and procedures to include a thorough SWOT analysis and exploration into hiring, internal and external communications, and overall culture. Our focus will be on uncovering potential areas for improvement and professional development opportunities.
- Provide a review of the Town's current procurement system. By drawing upon our vast experience in this field, we are confident we can help create stronger, fairer processes for all stakeholders by identifying areas where equity can be improved; and introducing best practices to incentivize inclusion and equality.
- Provide a comprehensive assessment of the workforce in the Town, examining factors such as age, gender, minority representation, and their correlation to the Town's year-round population with insights on recruitment of qualified minority candidates and housing considerations.
- Assess the Town's capacity to provide community training and development programs for the purpose of hiring a more diverse workforce, while also ensuring equal opportunities for all employees to progress within the Town's governmental organization.
- Collaboratively develop a written DEI Training Plan and/or Manual that equips employees with the skills to create a welcoming and inclusive work environment and demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion in all interactions. The plan will identify any existing training gaps and result in creating an accessible and usable training manual that includes but is not limited to the following topics:
 - Building a common language and shared knowledge about DEI
 - Understanding implicit bias

- Recognizing structural inequalities
- Best practices for demonstrating a commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusion in all interactions. By engaging with stakeholders, we will ensure that this plan is tailored to meet your specific needs and objectives.
- Assess the Town's current efforts in engaging minority communities and identify opportunities for improvement by investigating existing outreach strategies and exploring potential program creation and modifications to identify effective tactics that foster trust.
- Host a minimum of ten focus groups in addition to creating surveys to gain insights on DEI knowledge and perceptions, to include opinions regarding a Town-wide DEI program. Participants will include employees, elected officials and appointment officials however the Town may recommend participants from certain department employees or groups.
- Create and develop a written strategy outlining an implementation plan that ensures maximum participation from all stakeholders to include elected leadership.
- Host a minimum of two public focus groups in addition to creating surveys to gain insights on DEI knowledge and perceptions, to include opinions regarding application of DEI.
- Review existing data in addition to data from relevant events or meetings to provide constructive feedback through a process of gathering pertinent information, assessing any challenges, and develop appropriate solutions to include potential training opportunities for staff on how to effectively manage DEI-related topics.
- Create an environment and strategy to engage more than 75% of Town employees with the goal of gathering valuable insights from surveys and focus groups.
- Create measurable and achievable short- and long-term goals for the DEI Strategic Plan. These goals will incorporate DEI into all internal processes, policies, and systems of the Town while ensuring regular evaluations and public reports provided at the top level.
- Create a written strategy and implementation plan to operationalize and institutionalize full staff and public official participation which includes a strategy to engage appointed and elected leadership.

Section 3: Deliverables

- The ASWR Consulting Team will conduct a thorough review of personnel and department policies, as well as analysis of exemplary DEI programs in municipalities and/or like-sized organizations to create an actionable plan for the Town. This process will also include:
 - Facilitate at least ten interactive workgroups for up to 150 Town employees and 50 elected and appointed officials to gain insights on DEI knowledge and perceptions, to include opinions regarding a Town-wide DEI program.
 - Facilitate at least three interactive workgroups with community members to identify trust-related concerns and experiences with the Town and its employees.
 - Provide at least two public surveys
 - Provide at least one Town employee survey
- The ASWR Consulting Team will provide exceptionally thorough and well-researched recommendations to the Human Resources Director with at least monthly updates. Additionally, we will produce draft and final assessment and plans that clearly articulate our findings and recommendations to the Town Administrator or designee and/or as described to the Select Board.
- The ASWR Consulting Team will provide a comprehensive and professional assessment outlining our findings and identifying key insights. Through our research, a written report and presentation to the Select Board will be created and delivered by the end date of the contract, to provide the best recommendations to shape a more equitable and successful future for the Town.
- The ASWR Consulting Team will develop a strategic plan that will include tangible goals and an actionable framework. Our plan will outline who will have primary oversight responsibility, the necessary timeline and resource allocation to accomplish each action, and the associated costs involved in their execution to bring clarity and organizational efficiency.
- The ASWR Consulting Team will propose a short-term plan that will establish clear benchmarks and goals which can be realistically achieved within six months and one year. Additionally, our team will actively monitor and measure success on a regular basis in order to adjust our strategies for optimal result and continuous improvement.
- The ASWR Consulting Team will propose a comprehensive long-term plan for the next five years. This plan will not only focus on short-term changes, but will also incorporate targeted monitoring and evaluation practices to ensure that DEI objectives are met. Our experience in this area provides unique insight and expertise to help you achieve and sustain DEI goals.
- The ASWR Consulting Team will provide employees and elected and appointed officials with one year of targeted training and learning experiences tailored to their specific needs and the DEI assessment results. Our approach prioritizes meaningful engagement and interactive learning sessions that focus on cultivating awareness around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Education and training will:
 - Be for employees at all levels
 - Correspond with the goals and benchmarks laid out in the roadmap
 - Occur in a range or mix of formats and incorporate proven best practices.
 - Take a variety of formats including, in person, small groups, lectures, webinars, etc.

Experience & Resources

- I. And Still We Rise, LLC (ASWR) is a black, woman-owned liberation-focused mental health and consulting practice established in 2018 and is based in Massachusetts. We use our foundation as therapists to support individual, group, and organizational change, using social justice frameworks, life experience, and our 5-step model. We work with local governments, and other private and public organizations to further inclusion and belonging efforts, provide support to marginalized members, or reckon with events of racism, bias, or violence. The mission of our organization is:
 - To create healing spaces for all.
 - To dismantle oppressive systems, liberate marginalized people.
 - To provide culturally affirming psychotherapy, consultation, and life-coaching services.
 - Center the values of community, critical consciousness, and decolonizing mental healthcare.
- II. At ASWR, we understand that DEI work requires a unique skillset and approach. That is why we are proposing to assign these four consultants to your project: Dr. Britney Boyles, EdD, Dr. Richlene Cesar, PsyD, Sixto Munoz, LICSW and Ashley Shen, LCSW.

We strongly believe in the power that our model of co-facilitation creates; an atmosphere of trust, understanding and rapport which allows for positive and meaningful experiences between facilitators and participants. This is essential for successful DEI work. Furthermore, our consultants bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise, and are well-versed in the nuances and complexities of DEI work. We understand that cost may be a factor when selecting a consultant for this project, but we are confident that our unique combination of skills and experience makes us the best choice.

The ASWR Consulting Team consists of 50+ full-time and part-time therapists and consultants to provide backfill if staff are on-leave or positions are vacant. Additionally, our consulting team includes a consulting project manager and consulting project coordinator.

In the last year alone, we have served over 1,000 consulting and therapy clients, completing over 30,000 hours of trauma-informed, anti-racist and liberation services across 3 states. The vast majority of our therapy clients identify as women, BIPoC, queer and/or trans and our consulting partners include government agencies, school districts, nonprofits and private organizations.

- III. We are confident that our consulting team has the capacity and ability to complete the scope of work outlined in this RFP. Below are a few examples of completed projects that are similar in scope:

Supporting Government Officials and CountyCo Department of Health In Improving DEI Processes

- Partnered with a suburb of one of the largest cities in the US to develop a DEI toolkit and review processes following race-based hate crimes.
- Performed initial diagnosis to benchmark scope and situation.
- Brought the voice of the CountyCo's customers into their DEI process and evaluations.
- Built a sustainable toolkit to address racial trauma.
- Addressed the needs of the BIPOC community.
- Supported community members in achieving the goals to address systemic racism.
- Hosted process groups for community members and students.
- Conducted trainings rooted in anti-racism practices, change management and provided feedback reports highlighting KIA (Key Improvement Areas)
- Conducted education sessions regarding, racism, systems of oppression and historical context of race-based hate crimes

Consulted With Government Agency To Develop Safeguards and Processes to Addressing Racial Disparities & Cultural Competency Resulting In Improved Workplace Awareness And Culture

- Partnered with a large governmental agency with 400+ employees following a racially charged incident. ASWR provided an organization climate/culture assessment; created, implemented and conducted anti-racist education and training sessions for management and office staff.
- Helped improve diversity, equity, and inclusion toolkit and processes
- Conducted a diagnostic of the current processes in place and recommended improvements
- Addressed racial trauma, immediate needs of the employees involved and the unique needs of BIPOC employees within the organization
- Provided workplace liberation and cultural competency education and training

Partnered With NonProfitCo Serving Over 35,000 Healthcare Speakers To Improve Employee And Client Experiences

- Serving international clients addressed how to support employees and to increase diversity
- Helped NonProfitCo analyze, size and prioritize interventions to focus resources on areas of highest harm and highest impact potential
- Hosted wellness and team building retreats to train employees to leverage DEI to enhance performance
- Provided racial equity training and employee support
- Conducting ongoing executive leadership training and technical support

- IV. ASWR has no conflicts of interest nor anticipates any conflicts of interest that may arise as a result of business activities or ventures by our firm Identify any conflict of interest that may arise as a result of business activities or ventures by your firm and associates of your firm,

employees, or subcontractors as a result of any individual's status as a member of the board of directors of any organization likely to interact with the Town.

- V. The ASWR Consulting Team has consultants who may be available to assist with communication in the following languages:
- Spanish
 - Arabic
 - Mandarin Chinese
- VI. ASWR is certified as a MBE and WBE with the SDO and the City of Boston, certification is enclosed. As a black, woman-owned organization, with 95% of our employees identifying as BIPoC and/or part of the LGBTQIA+ community, we understand the disparities and inequities in our community. We also understand the importance of supplier diversity and a commitment to social justice by supporting organizations that are reflective of and embedded in the communities they serve. ASWR is committed to this effort in doing business and serving the community at large.
- VII. Below are a list of clients for whom we have provided a similar service during the past five years:
- Meredith Hurley, RN, MPH, Department of Health Director
Town of Winthrop, 1 Metcalf Square, Winthrop, MA 02152
617-846-1852 x 1061
- Dana Pierce, Chief of District & Municipal Courts
Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, 1 Bufinch Place, 3rd Floor, Boston, MA 02114
617-619-4312
- Corbin Muck, Contract Monitor
Public Health Seattle & King County, 401 Fifth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104
206-477-8598

Financial Stability

Enclosed you will find proof of financial stability in the form of ASWR audited financial statements.

Qualifications

All ASWR consultants assigned to this project hold at least a Master's level degree in social work, psychology or a related field and the following qualifications:

- A minimum of three years of demonstrated experience advising organizations (including municipalities with union environments) on the development and implementation of diversity, equity and inclusion centered strategies.
- A minimum of five years of experience facilitating complex learning processes with small, medium and large groups.
- Experience coaching executives and other leaders in organization.
- Experience working with public agencies in strategic planning and development
- Skill, knowledge and experience to facilitate difficult dialogues while recognizing social interactions and team dynamics ensuring a safe and inclusive environment for people of all backgrounds and identities.



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
Executive Office for Administration and Finance
SUPPLIER DIVERSITY OFFICE

One Ashburton Place, Suite 1017
Boston, MA 02108-1552
Charles D. Baker
Governor
Karyn E. Polito
Lieutenant Governor
Michael J. Heffernan
Secretary
William M. McAvoy
Executive Director

July 16, 2021

Dr. Natasha Holmes
And Still We Rise, LLC
800 Boylston Street, Floor 16
Boston, MA 02199

Dear Dr. Holmes:

Congratulations! Your firm has been certified as a minority and woman business enterprise (MBE and WBE) with the Supplier Diversity Office ('SDO') under the business description of PRIVATE BEHAVIORAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER, CONSULTANT AND LIFE COACHING SERVICES. Your firm will be listed in the SDO Certified Business Directory and the Massachusetts Central Register under this description. **This letter serves as the sole proof of your SDO certification.** Your designation as a MBE and WBE is valid for three (3) years unless revoked pursuant to 425 CMR 2.00.

Your firm's next renewal date is July 15, 2024. SDO will send written renewal notices to your business and/or e-mail address on file approximately thirty (30) business days prior to your firm's three (3) years certification anniversary. Additionally, every six (6) years, certified companies that wish to remain certified may undergo a substantive review which will require certain updated supporting documentation.

SDO also reserves the right to monitor your firm and to perform random spot checks to ensure the firm continues to meet the certification criteria. Your firm is required to notify the SDO in writing of any material changes. Examples include but are not limited to changes in its business description, as well as business phone number, fax number, business' physical location, webpage and e-mail addresses. Other reportable changes include business structure, ownership (the business is sold or transferred), control and outside employment. You also have a duty to report decertification and debarment notices from this or any other jurisdiction. Failure to abide by the continuing duty requirements shall constitute grounds for the firm's decertification.

We look forward to working with you and your firm to maximize its business opportunities. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us via email at webmaster.sdo@mass.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "William M. McAvoy", is displayed on a light yellow rectangular background.

William M. McAvoy
Executive Director



July 24, 2023

Dr. Natasha Holmes
And Still We Rise, LLC
800 Boylston Street, FL 16
Boston, MA 02199

Dear Dr. Holmes,

The City of Boston's Supplier Diversity Program is pleased to inform you that, as of **July 24, 2023**, **And Still We Rise, LLC** has been certified as a **Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)** and a **Woman Business Enterprise (WBE)** under the business description: **We work with local governments, and other private and public organizations to further inclusion and belonging efforts, provide support to marginalized members, or reckon with events of racism, bias, or violence.** Small and local businesses are the lifeblood of Boston's vibrant economy -- we are delighted for this opportunity to partner with you.

And Still We Rise, LLC will be listed in the [City of Boston SLBE/MWBE Directory](#), which is available on-line. The Directory is used by general contractors, City departments, and various organizations, which are interested in utilizing small, small local, minority owned and woman owned vendors.

We also encourage you to utilize the City of Boston's Online Supplier Portal www.cityofboston.gov/procurement. On the Supplier Portal you can apply for a City of Boston vendor I.D. number, and also sign up for automatic email notifications of future bid opportunities in any categories of your choice. For detailed instructions on how to apply, please visit <https://www.boston.gov/departments/procurement/help-supplier-portal> or email vendor.questions@boston.gov.

Your certification renewal date is July 23, 2026.

And Still We Rise, LLC will be sent notification from the Supplier Diversity Program at least once every three years requesting an information update.

You will be required to submit the company's most recent **Tax Returns (all schedules, including Form 1120 or 1120S for corporations; Form 1040 and Schedule C for sole proprietorships; and Form 1065 for partnerships)**, and information on any changes in the company's legal structure, ownership or control.



City of Boston
Economic Opportunity
and Inclusion

Congratulations on your successful certification with the City of Boston. We look forward to working with you, and please let me know if I can assist you in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Stacey R. Williams

Stacey R. Williams

Certification Manager

stacey.williams@boston.gov, (617) 635-3720

Note: The continuation of your company's certification is contingent upon its compliance with the City of Boston's Certification Regulations. Pursuant to the Certification Regulations, the Supplier Diversity Program reserves the right to periodically monitor, review, and investigate any of its certified companies. Within thirty days of any change in the information contained in the original application, you must notify the Supplier Diversity Program of such change, and if such change is a material change which warrants further review, the Business Certification staff will notify you. If you would like to expand the scope of services your company is certified to perform, please submit a written request along with a list of work performed in that area of service and business references.