



Think Again Training & Consulting, LLC  
27 Woodlawn St. Unit 2, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130  
[davey@thinkagaintraining.com](mailto:davey@thinkagaintraining.com)  
[www.thinkagaintraining.com](http://www.thinkagaintraining.com)  
845-417-6518

**Training & Consulting Proposal: Town of Swampscott DEI Consulting Services**

Prepared by Davey Shlasko and Chelsey Branham, Think Again Training & Consulting  
November 10, 2023

**Dear Town of Swampscott,**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal for DEI assessment, planning and training.

We appreciate the commitment to inclusion, equity and continued learning demonstrated in your Request for Proposals.

The enclosed proposal outlines a plan for addressing the RFP objectives and deliverables. Of course, details of the plan are flexible and open to adjustment based on your needs and priorities.

We welcome any questions you may have about the proposal, and look forward to the opportunity to discuss it with you and to adapt the plan together to best suit your needs and priorities.

Warm regards,

Davey Shlasko  
Founder and Director, Think Again Training and Consulting  
[davey@thinkagaintraining.com](mailto:davey@thinkagaintraining.com)  
845-417-6518

## About Our Work

Think Again Training & Consulting is a team of several full-time and about twenty part-time consultants who bring a range of perspectives, skills and knowledge to the work. Each is a skilled and experienced social justice educator, and many bring additional areas of expertise including organizational development, nonprofit management, educational leadership, and public affairs. All Think Again's team members contribute to the library of training curricula, tools and services we can offer you. We work in diverse teams to meet the goals of each project, while modeling the kinds of collaboration and reflective practice we help you to develop. Our headquarters is in Boston, MA with consultants based through the Northeast and beyond.

Our work is always intersectional, understanding that systems of oppression - racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, cissexism, ableism, ageism and so on - are deeply intertwined. The most effective work on such issues addresses them all, even as it must sometimes focus on a specific piece of the puzzle. These systems operate on many scales, which are not separable: individually, interpersonally, culturally, institutionally, and societally. When we wish to address a particular manifestation of oppression – for example, race- and gender-based microaggressions in a workplace – it is often helpful to consider related manifestations at smaller scales (such as individuals' internalized beliefs, values and needs) and larger scales (such as in organizational culture or state/national policy trends).

Our training services draw on a variety of pedagogical approaches and learning modalities including Freirean popular education, intergroup dialogue, creative expression, and straightforward workplace skills training, all involving the interplay between theory and practice (praxis). Training participants should expect a lively combination of presentations, small- and large-group discussions, structured activities, and practical exercises, drawing on the wisdom and experience of the group as well as providing new information and tools.

Our consulting services incorporate an understanding of established best practices in HR, management and supervision, as well as DEI-specific tools like the Multicultural Organizational Development framework, Equity-Focused Community-Centered and -Led Design processes, and a unique model for trauma-informed community engagement. We pay particular attention to the ways in which each organization is simultaneously an institution and a community – a structure of policies and roles, and a network of human relationships; Institutional solutions and human solutions must align to create deep and lasting change.

Organizational change for diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice is a collaborative and iterative process. We integrate the DEI consulting process into existing structures, so that rather than feeling like a separate project that creates “extra work” for staff, it becomes part of the day-to-day work staff are already doing. We start with a solid plan based on what we know at the time, and continually evaluate the process as we go, always ready to see where the process takes us and make adjustments to achieve the best possible result.

## Project Plan

The following outlines our approach to meeting the objectives listed in the RFP within the stated budget and timeline. There is considerable flexibility in the pace, sequencing, breadth, depth and focus of each component of the plan. We can collaborate with you to prioritize which elements may call for more intensive attention and which may need less. This outline is meant as a starting point for our further discussions, so that we can codesign the process that will best match your priorities and capacity.

According to the RFP, our main point people with the Town will be the Human Resources Director and Town Administrator or designee. In addition to these contacts, we recommend bringing together a group of 5 to 8 internal leaders with whom we will collaborate to make sure that each step of the plan continues to align

with your goals, priorities, and capacity. This may be an existing group (such as a DEI committee), or may be one assembled for the purpose of this project. It may include the two point people already noted, and should also include a diverse group of staff members from different departments and levels, not only those in leadership roles. For the purpose of this proposal, we'll call this the Working Group.

Of course, all staff, officials, and some community members will be involved in various aspects of the assessment and training, but the Working Group provides a way for us to check in with a representative group of Town insiders in order to tailor each step of the process to your context and evolving needs. Working Group members will also become internal champions for the project, helping to generate interest and buy-in from their peers and building skills for DEI leadership moving forward.

Ideally we will meet with the Working Group monthly to give updates, gather input for next steps, and potentially provide mini training sessions. As we learn more about the group's approach to DEI issues, we may introduce new frameworks, information or tools to deepen their shared understanding and equip them to give more informed input and be more effective champions of the work.

## Workplan

### **Phase I: Discovery**

- a. Kick-off Meeting: TATC will work with administration and leadership to solidify timelines, gather contexts, and determine best approaches to the project phases.
- b. Data Collection Tool Design: TATC will work with administration and leadership to craft data collection tools that elicit needed information and to determine best methods of dissemination. These often include surveys, 1:1 or group interviews, focus groups, etc.
- c. Operational Information Gathering: TATC will work with administration and leadership to collect relevant documents, context, policies and practices to identify the institutional, structural and cultural landscape. This will be done through meetings, emails, etc.
  - i. Employee Feedback: TATC will work to gather feedback from staff across various indicators of DEI across teams, within departments, and in the municipality as a whole.
  - ii. Community Feedback: TATC will work to gather some initial community feedback through community leaders identified by both the city and the TATC team and network to establish a baseline of desired interventions and perspectives. This will be done through existing data, focus groups, email, meetings, zoom, listening sessions, town halls, etc.
- d. Assessment: Utilizing information from Phase I, a-c, we will create an assessment to collect any additional information and viewpoints that are unclear, subjective, not ascertainable, or not available from the initial collection. This will be strategically targeted to stakeholders identified by leadership/administration and TATC team members, as holding relevant knowledge or collateral. This may include municipal leadership & staff, council members, contractors, program managers or recipients, community members, etc.

Phase I will focus on and deliver many of the below Key Objectives from the Scope:

- Perform an assessment of the Town's current DEI practices and procedures, including, but not limited to, hiring, internal and external communications, overall agency culture, professional development opportunities, etc. This assessment should include organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvement, and threats (SWOT analysis);
- Review of the Town's Procurement process
- Perform an assessment of the Town's workforce, e.g. the number of minorities, staffing by age, gender, and compare this information with external factors such as the composition of the Town's year-round population, ability to hire qualified minority candidates and housing considerations;
- Assess the Town's ability to provide community training programs with a purpose to hire minorities from the area's population and the ability to provide continuous training and equal opportunities for all employees to advance within Town's governmental organization;

- Assess the Town's community building strategies that can increase civic participation and engagement on local boards, elections, meeting participation, and committees.
- Ascertain, through employee and elected / appointed official focus groups and surveys, employees and elected / appointed officials' knowledge and perception of DEI and their opinions on how to implement a Town-wide program.
- Ascertain, through at least two (2) public focus groups and surveys the perception of Town knowledge and application of DEI;
- Utilize any existing information such as assessments or community agency data already compiled and review such data to develop listed deliverables or identify needed data.

## **Phase II: Analysis & Findings**

1. Report of Initial Findings: Through meetings and generated content, the TATC team will provide a comprehensive presentation of findings, unknowns, needs, and recommendations. [DELIVERABLE]
2. Stakeholder Engagement: Staff and stakeholders of the town, community leaders, youth, experts, etc. will be invited to participate in the visioning process and to provide relevant feedback about public perception, community needs, and other input that will help to inform the strategic planning processes. This can be conducted in a number of ways (public forum, survey, interviews, focus groups, town hall, etc). This is an important step to build consensus, receive critical feedback to successful programming, and to ensure buy-in from stakeholders.

Phase II will focus on and deliver many of the below Key Objectives from the Scope:

- Provide recommendation on potential need for a relevant DEI board or similar group along with a mission, operational structure, and goals;
  - To include short- and long-term goals tailored to Swampscott's unique characteristics and which integrate DEI into the internal processes, policies, and systems of the Town that include systematic reviews and public reporting at the senior level.
- Recommendations within the Town's Procurement process to incorporate elements of equity in the bidding process and awarding of contracts;
- Provide for constructive feedback as well as suggested training to assist boards, committees, staff, etc. on how to manage DEI related topics;

## **Phase III: Strategy and Planning**

- a. Strategic Planning: utilizing all gathered data, the TATC team will lead city leadership and administration through an identity, strategy, and planning process starting with a broad scope and working to narrow and prioritize SMART goals that meet the equity needs of all stakeholders. Using these ideas, we will help the leadership team coalesce around a reimagined mission, vision, and values direction for the DEI project. The team will then assist participants in creating actionable short-term sprints for the overall DEI strategic direction, as well as a 3-year long-term plan.

Phase III will focus on and deliver many of the below Key Objectives from the Scope:

- 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;
- Develop a written DEI Training Plan/Manual to address any training gaps that is accessible and usable

## **Phase IV: Operationalization & Implementation**

- a. Delivery & Operationalization: TATC team will provide a comprehensive summary of the strategic planning session, and outline the operational recommendations for stakeholders at all levels in implementing the plan in short- and long-term increments. [DELIVERABLES: Strategic Plan; Short-term Plan; Education/Training Plan; Long-term Plan]

- b. **Implementation:** working with leadership, program management, and other drivers of change, the team will provide support and feedback to enable the successful implementation of operational goals and plans. While this phase is listed last, some components may happen throughout the other phases to support and enable the project's success. This might include;
- Policy recommendations & revision
  - Leadership development & training
  - Staff training
  - Regular support meetings
  - Rapid iteration planning
  - Reconciliation and healing curation
  - Other methods of support

Phase IV will focus on and deliver many of the below Key Objectives from the Scope:





- Provide professional assessment tools, resources, and training to Town department heads as listed, but not limited to: conducting quantitative analysis, drafting quarterly or year-end department documents, submitting AAP/EEO statistical reports;
- Create an implementation plan for the creation of a staff position for DEI within the Town organizational structure. This will include a recommendation on job description, function, salary, and placement within the organizational chart. Provide recommendations as to how this position will interact and interface with other Town departments, boards, community organizations, and the community in general;

#### Other Recommended Services

#### **Phase V: Evaluation & Change Management**

- a. **Systematic Review:** using processes of internal and external program, organizational, and community evaluation, TATC team members will assist the Town of Swampscott in conducting ongoing reviews of services using a number of methods deemed appropriate. The team might also make recommendations for necessary rapid iterations or implementation of interventions. Both cumulative and long-term reviews will be available.
- b. **Transition Planning:** TATC will work with the stakeholders to guide discussion and planning about next steps, future phases, and potential roles for the DEI committee.

#### **Timeline**

Project Phase	Description	Timeline	
Phase I: Discovery	a. Kick-off b. Data collection tool design c. Operational information gathering d. Assessment	*Timeline: 2 - 4 months	
Phase II: Analysis & Report of Findings	a. Report of initial findings b. Stakeholder engagement	*Timeline: 3 months	
Phase III: Strategy & Planning	a. Strategic planning	*Timeline: 3 - 4 months	
Phase IV:	a. Delivery & operationalization b. Implementation	*Timeline: 3 - 4 months	

Operationalization & Implementation			
Phase V: Evaluation & Change Management	c. Systematic review d. Transition planning	*Timeline: 2 -3 months	

\*Timeline and cost dependencies: Availability, commitment, scheduling.

## The Consulting Team

The lead consultant on this project will be one or more of Davey Shlasko, Chelsey Branham, and Kendra Colburn, supported by each other and by other Think Again team members as needed. The three have a combined 50+ years of experience in DEI consulting, and as a team we have conducted similar projects with dozens of organizations. Brief bios for these and some additional consultants who would likely contribute are listed below.

All services are provided by a team of at least two consultants who bring different perspectives, backgrounds and identities to the conversation. Working in diverse teams allows us to model intergroup collaboration, and is an evidence-based practice for reducing the possible impact of unconscious bias on decision making.

Our team of principal consultants is about 50% people of color, about 70% women, about 90% LGBTQ+, and about 40% disabled. Of the six consultants who would work on this project, 4 (67%) are people of color, 4 (67%) are women, 4 (67%) are LGBTQ, and 2 (33%) identify as disabled. We are a certified LGBT Enterprise with the Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce. We can provide services in English, Spanish, and German, and can subcontract for translation and interpretation services in other languages.

Much of the work outlined can be conducted remotely. Consultants are also available to travel for in-person meetings and focus groups. Davey Shlasko is based in Boston and would likely provide most of the in-person services.

- **Chelsey Branham** (she/they) (Chickasaw) specializes in transformational equity in public administration, public policy, and economic development and has over 15 years of experience in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. As a master's graduate in international studies and a native Chickasaw, she has always sought out diverse and global perspectives to find equitable and innovative solutions to economic, policy, and management issues. Transforming systems through strategic development and policy have been a huge priority in Chelsey's career, as both a former State Representative and a consultant. She also spends considerable time in community-based economic development, community mobilization, community responsive and equitable evaluation (CREE), and leadership development.
- **Davey Shlasko** (he/they) is the founder and director of Think Again Training & Consulting. For over two decades, Davey's work has supported schools, universities, healthcare and human service providers, advocacy organizations, and small businesses to integrate principles and practices of social justice into their long-term planning and everyday action. Davey has an M.Ed. in Social Justice

Education from UMass Amherst and teaches as an adjunct associate professor at Smith College School for Social Work.

- **Kendra Colburn** (she/her) provides equity and social justice consulting and training to organizations, businesses, and institutions. Before joining the Think Again team, she was a co-owner of [Equity Solutions](#) and worked in agricultural and building trades. Born in a family rich with the history of both New England's white working poor and, more distantly, its WASP elite, Kendra brings an intersectional class lens to her focus on racial, LGBTQ+, and economic justice. She co-facilitates community-based [Cross Class Dialogue Circles](#), and has been on the Steering and Education committees of [SURJ Upper Valley](#) for 6 years, supporting her community to understand and take action for racial justice.
- **T.J. Jourian** (he/him) is a consultant, trainer, and scholar motivated by intersectional and liberatory movements and lenses. In addition to organizational consulting, T.J. brings his experience as a higher ed student affairs practitioner and scholar to ongoing independent research centering the experiences of trans and queer people of color.
- **Janae Peters** (she/her) integrates her clinical social work experience with her social justice analysis to facilitate relational processes of discovery and transformation for organizational change. As an internal consultant at Smith College School for Social Work, and in many other organizations, she has implemented policy and programmatic shifts that center racial equity, racial justice, anti-racist, and restorative practices. She currently serves as Dean of Students on a team that has created and opened a school in Cleveland, Ohio that works hard to transform education as we know it and the lives of people in the educational environment.
- **Romina Pacheco** (she/ella) is the Director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging at the Windward School in White Plains, NY. She is an educator who facilitates learning on issues of equity and social justice with professionals, students, and community members of all ages, and brings decades of experience in educational leadership including serving as an internal and external DEIB expert in both K-12 and higher ed settings. In her consulting work, Romina brings her personal experiences as an Afro-Latina immigrant, a parent, and a community organizer to help diverse teams build trust, belonging, and equity. Romina has a Ph.D. from New Mexico State University in Curriculum & Instruction and Women's Studies, and an M.Ed. in Social Justice Education from UMass-Amherst.

## Past Project Examples

Below we describe the largest and most relevant projects in which we've provided similar services in the past several years. In addition to these we have conducted hundreds of smaller projects including training series, problem-solving consultations, learning needs assessments, nonprofit board development, engagement planning, and more, with clients in a wide range of industries including healthcare, human services, advocacy, public works, education, technology and community arts.

## Assessment Projects

**City of Oklahoma City:** survey of historical human rights commission, analysis of contemporary human rights commission structures in cities of commensurate size and orientation, development of HRC structure and short- and long-term strategic plan for implementation of the HRC, reporting and plan presentation for review and vote of the city council members.

Contact: Maurianna Adams & Dr. Andrea Benjamin, Task Force Co-Chairs, [madams221@outlook.com](mailto:madams221@outlook.com) and [andrea.benjamin@ou.edu](mailto:andrea.benjamin@ou.edu), 200 N Walker Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73102

**Hunger Free VT:** DEI-focused strategic planning including assessment, short- and long-term planning, and staff training for a state-wide advocacy and technical assistance nonprofit with ~20 employee. 2002 - present

Contact: Anore Horton, Executive Director, 802-231-1293, [ahorton@hungerfreevt.org](mailto:ahorton@hungerfreevt.org), 38 Eastwood Drive, Suite 100, South Burlington, VT 05403

**Maine Farmland Trust:** DEI assessment, goal-setting, and staff training for a land preservation nonprofit with ~40 employees. 2022-present

Contact: Amy Fisher, Executive Director, 617-223-1871, [afisher@mainefarmlandtrust.org](mailto:afisher@mainefarmlandtrust.org), 97 Main St, Belfast, ME 04915

**Maine Coast Heritage Trust:** DEI assessment, goal-setting and staff training for a land presentation nonprofit with ~60 employees. 2022 - present

Contact: Ciona Ulbrich, Senior Project Manager, (207) 801-4058 , [culbrich@mcht.org](mailto:culbrich@mcht.org), 1 Bowdoin Mill Island, Suite 201, Topsham, ME 04086

**OM1:** DEI assessment, staff training, and HR consultation (including policy recommendations) for Boston-based medical data technology firm with ~160 employees. 2021 - present

Contact: Madelyn Wilson, Chief People Officer, [mwilson@om1.com](mailto:mwilson@om1.com), 800 Boylston St, Boston, MA 02199, Suite 1410

**Poudre River Public Library District:** DEI assessment involving ~100 staff members and over 4000 library patrons followed by policy recommendations, DEI Coordinator position development, and staff training series. 2021-2022

Contact: Sabrina Stromnes, HR Director, [SStromnes@poudrelibraries.org](mailto:SStromnes@poudrelibraries.org), 301 E. Olive, Fort Collins, Colorado 80524

**Windham Windsor Housing Trust:** DEI assessment with staff and residents of low-income housing development (~350 residents), staff training, planning. 2020

Contact: Elizabeth Bridgewater, Executive Director, 802-246-2109, [ebriewater@homemattershere.org](mailto:ebriewater@homemattershere.org), 68 Birge St, Brattleboro, VT 05301

**Madison Roller Derby:** Climate and structural DEI assessment, recommendations and training for 300+ person membership-based nonprofit. 2019.

Contact: Gaile Schwickrath. [executivedirector@madisonrollerderby.org](mailto:executivedirector@madisonrollerderby.org) PO Box 3296, Madison, WI 53704

## **Training-Only Projects**

*All the above assessment projects also include training*

**Baystate Health:** Regular DEI training for clinical and non-clinical staff in groups of 20 to over 300, in a healthcare system comprised of multiple hospitals and outpatient clinics with 11,000 employees. 2022-present.

Contact: Kara Wolf, Diversity and Inclusion Consultant, Baystate Health, 413-322-4656, [kara.wolf@baystate.org](mailto:kara.wolf@baystate.org), 280 Chestnut St, Springfield, MA 01104

**Youth Action Partnership:** Year-long DEI training series for staff members of three Western MA service providers (clinicians, case workers, managers, etc.), reaching about 300 staff members in total. 2020-2021.

Contact: Jena Duncan (they/them), Leadership and Collaborations Coordinator, Community Action Pioneer Valley, 413-768-4538, [jduncan@communityaction.us](mailto:jduncan@communityaction.us), 393 Main St., Geronfield, MA 01301

**VentureWell:** Year-long DEI training series for ~80 person staff of a nonprofit tech incubator, with some as-needed project and process consulting. December 2022-present

Contact: Julianne Boulware, Director of People Partnership & Development, VentureWell, 413-587-2172 ext. 181, [jboulware@venturewell.org](mailto:jboulware@venturewell.org), 100 Venture Way, Hadley, MA 01035

## **Additional Information**

We are not aware of any relevant conflicts of interest.

Financial reference:

Eastern Bank, Jamaica Plain Branch

Joao P. Cabral, Assistant Branch Manager

687 Centre Street

Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

617-971-9547

**Insurance:** The RFP notes a requirement for liability insurance \$2 million coverage. We currently have \$1 million coverage, which has been the maximum requirement for any of our previous consulting contracts including with municipalities. If it is possible to reconsider this requirement, we would appreciate that, since the additional coverage would be a significant expense.

## **Disability Access & Accommodation**

Online and in-person: We follow the principles of Universal Design for Learning to make training sessions accessible to a wide range of participants. If any participants have particular access needs we may need to account for, whether related to a documented disability or not (e.g. need large print materials, have mobility limitations, limited English literacy, sensory processing needs, etc.), please let us know in advance so that we can design the session to include and accommodate everyone.

Online only: To do truly interactive online training sessions, each participant should have their own device with access to high-speed internet, a camera, and a microphone. By default we provide computer-generated captions for all online sessions. Professional human-generated live captions are more accurate and are important for people who are relying solely on captions. If any participant needs human-made captions, ASL interpretation, etc., we will work with you to find the most appropriate way to provide that.

In-person only:

- Based on the current health situation, facilitators may require a space with adequate ventilation, and/or for all participants to wear masks.
- Some of our facilitators require level access (e.g. wheelchair ramps).
- For large groups, a microphone is often necessary, especially if people are wearing masks.
- As a health accommodation, we always ask conveners to request that training participants refrain from wearing fragrances on the day of our in-person session (perfume, cologne, scented lotion, etc.),

and to remove any fragrances from the meeting space (potpourri, air fresheners, etc.) in advance. This is related to a specific health impact affecting several of our trainers, and is a necessary accommodation in order for us to do our best work and avoid becoming ill. We are happy to explain more if needed, and to provide sample language for the request.