

During the past year, the Williamstown Community Chest made [a commitment](#) to assess and align its actions, policies, and practices with our desire to dismantle systematic racism. As part of this process, a DEI working group was established within the board, composed of Annie Art, Juan Baena, Polly MacPherson, Susan Puddester, and Anne Singleton. The group has convened on a monthly basis to outline the steps necessary to begin addressing the following short-term goals outlined in the letter to the community on July 2020:

- seeking guidance from fairly compensated experts on a range of issues including advice on diversifying our own membership through recruitment and retention best practices
- examining our allocations and grant-making protocols by asking specific questions of our member agencies about their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- collaborating with local organizations that are addressing these issues
- adding diversity, equity, and inclusion to our monthly board meeting agenda
- sharing our specific efforts and progress via our [website](#) and our annual report to the community

Much of our focus over the past 9 months has been centered on two fronts: baseline discussion and education within the WCC board as well as check-ins with our member agencies around their own work on DEI and Covid-19.

- **Fall 2020:** This past fall we created opportunities during our monthly board meetings to have discussions around race, systemic racism, and bias in connection with its impact in our community and personal journeys as board members. We invited our board to watch "[Beyond the Board Statement: How Can Boards Join the Movement for Racial Justice? \(Parts One and Two\)](#)" and led breakout group discussions and dialogue around this topic and the connection with WCC. In addition, as a board, we engaged together in taking the [Harvard Implicit Bias Tests](#) followed up with a block of discussion during our board meeting.
- **Winter 2020:** Following the conversations in the fall, the DEI working group felt the need to engage and learn about DEI related work and conversations within the WCC's 17 member organizations. To that end, [virtual Zoom conversations](#) were held with each organization in conjunction with WCC board liaisons. As a partner in this journey, WCC felt it was important to understand the environment under which member agencies have been operating as it relates to DEI and the impact of Covid-19 simultaneously.

### **What comes next?**

As we look ahead, the DEI working group feels that it's important to outline a strategic plan that incorporates both short and long term goals and that lead to a shared DEI vision for the chest and its future. While the DEI working group will be most effective in ensuring the plan is propelled forward, much of the work needs to be immersed in existing structures of WCC: allocations processes and procedures, nominating committee, WCC's own strategic planning work started in 2018 (is this correct?), etc. Similar to [Williams College's strategic planning process](#), we envision the ability to position DEI goals and questions within all aspects of the Williamstown Community Chest.

Below are a series of steps that we hope can help WCC 'walk' towards this work:

- **Seeking guidance:** As outlined in our commitments to the community, we need to seek guidance from fairly compensated experts on a range of issues including advice on diversifying our own membership through recruitment and retention best practices. This past year has provided us with a lot of knowledge both as board members and our member organizations as to where we find ourselves in this journey. However, it has become clear that we need frameworks and tools from experts in the DEI field that can help us address this work in a strategic manner.
- **Creating a centralized DEI resources ecosystem:** It became clear during our conversations with member organizations that they find themselves in a variety of places along the DEI journey. Much like WCC's current situation, a variety of webinars, tools, articles, and conversations are taking place on a monthly basis in a virtual manner. We have featured various of these resources through our social media and email channels. As a next step, we would like to build a centralized webpage repository under the WCC website that we hope can be a resource in this ongoing work.
- **Stewarding community-building among member agencies:** As previously mentioned, there's a great degree of varying progress as it relates to DEI and where various member agencies fit along this journey. WCC would like to identify ways in which we can connect mentorship opportunities through methods such as online webinars, agency leaders, open forums, and sharing of DEI resources when appropriate.
- **Holding ourselves accountable:** It will be important to establish a plan that clearly lays out immediate and long-term achievable goals with a manageable timeline, sensible methods, and responsible stewardship of resources for the WCC. We will commit to utilizing our annual meetings as check-points to share our progress to date in relation to the annual DEI goals we set.