



City of Malden Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Report Progress on the 2023–2025 Racial Equity Audit

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Overview

This report shares where we've made progress, what still needs attention, and what is coming up next in Malden's DEI work. It builds on the 2024 Racial Equity Audit completed by HCH Enterprises and is meant to keep the City Council, city departments, and community informed and connected to this work.

Background

In 2021, the City Council established the Racial Equity Commission (REC) to take a closer look at equity in Malden's systems and recommend ways to improve. The REC worked with the DEI Coordinator, city staff, and HCH Enterprises to complete a citywide audit in 2024. The audit looked at hiring practices, community services, communication strategies, and how we engage with residents.

Key recommendations included:

- Elevating the DEI Coordinator's role to increase influence across city operations.
- Expanding internal support for equity-focused work.
- Improving language access and service equity.
- Building community trust and youth involvement.
- Creating data-informed tools to track and improve equity.

Progress So Far (2023–2025)

Even with limited staff and funding, we've moved many things forward by collaborating across departments, being strategic with resources, and staying focused on equity.

1. City Operations & Staff Support

The DEI Coordinator:

- Distributed over 400 wellness kits to city staff.
- Served on multiple hiring panels to help strengthen inclusive hiring as well as on city boards and commissions.
- Conducted a citywide staff DEI survey to inform work culture improvement and training plans.
- Shared health and wellness resources regularly through city email.
- Preparing to launch Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) to support connection, retention, and belonging.
- Completed municipal DEI leadership training through the Commonwealth Seminar.
- Co-led Malden's participation in the MAPC-hosted REACH (Racial Equity Advancement and Collaborative Hub) program, beginning February 2024. A team of ten staff from various departments participated in this multi-month racial equity learning cohort to explore how to apply equity frameworks in municipal settings.
- Reviewing and updating the employee handbook to include more inclusive language and clearer expectations.

2. Community Engagement

- Held two citywide DEI Town Halls (Feb and June 2024) with interpretation, open discussion, and community Q&A.
- Hosted free community movie nights centered on identity and justice ("RBG" and "The Six Triple Eight").
- Planning the first joint Indigenous Peoples Day and Community Connection Day for October 2025, building on the 2024 celebration held on October 5.
- Coordinating upcoming events for Italian Heritage Month (including a community opera night) and a Diwali celebration in late 2025.
- Launched the first "Bright Minds, Quiet Spaces" sensory-friendly celebration for neurodiverse individuals in May 2025.
- Organizing a Hispanic Heritage Month movie night and future themed film events.

- Planning a new youth-centered initiative, Next Up Malden: Youth Voices & Bright Futures, for early 2026, to increase youth engagement. This includes collaborating with the Superintendent of Schools and youth-focused community partners.

3. Internal Structure and Policy

- With the conclusion of the work of the Racial Equity Commission in December 2024, the DEI Coordinator has taken on oversight of key audit follow-up efforts.
- Created the Police Community Advisory Council to help improve transparency and communication between residents and Malden Police Department.
- Working on restructuring the Human Rights Commission to more directly support DEI efforts.
- Building a DEI Funding Request Form for city departments and community groups to support related projects.
- Supporting departments in applying an equity lens to hiring, training, and policy changes.

4. Partnerships and Recognition

- Strengthened connections with DEI teams in other cities and towns.
- Malden will be featured in the MA DEI Coalition's 2nd Edition Municipal Integration Guide.
- Participated in the MAPC's REACH racial equity cohort with a cross-departmental city team in early 2024.
- The DEI Coordinator now serves on the Mystic River Waterfront Community Advisory Council, Malden Pipes Steering Committee, an NAACP chair, Police Community Advisory Council member, and is an active member of the MA DEI Coalition.
- Presented at Ottoson Middle School's Civics Day on racial justice and public leadership.

Grant Funding and Long-Term Support

Malden received a \$50,000 Community Compact Grant to support DEI efforts through 2026. These funds are being used for staff training, inclusive community events, and capacity-building across city departments.

While the DEI work is still led by a single full-time coordinator, we've made consistent progress through strong internal partnerships. Continued progress will depend on sustained support and eventual expansion of internal staffing to help manage projects and secure more outside funding.

What's Next (2025–2026)

- Launch Employee Resource Groups to increase staff retention, morale, and belonging.
- Continue updating the employee handbook and onboarding tools.
- Meet with Malden Public Schools leadership and youth groups to plan deeper youth engagement.
- Develop internship and assistantship partnerships with local high schools and colleges.
- Support community workshops focused on financial literacy, homeownership, and economic access.
- Roll out use of the Inclusive Excellence Scorecard by the DEI Coordinator with departments to track progress and plan future work.
- Expand access to city services by addressing language, disability, and technology barriers.
- Launch the DEI Funding Request Form for city and community use.

Recommendations for City Council by HCH Enterprises

- Support implementation of the Inclusive Excellence Scorecard by the DEI Coordinator and integrate it into planning and budgeting.
- Approve the internal funding request process to back city and community DEI efforts.
- Continue to endorse inclusive public events and staff trainings.
- Approve the launch of ERGs to support staff connection and wellness.
- Support restructuring the Human Rights Commission to focus more clearly on equity.
- Strengthen support for the DEI role and consider pathways to increase its influence across departments and citywide strategy.

Closing

Malden has made strong and steady progress with limited capacity, thanks to shared commitment across city staff and departments. With continued support from the Mayor, City Council, department leaders, and residents, we can keep building a city that's more inclusive, more equitable, and more responsive to the needs of all in Malden.