

Needham Unite Against Racism Initiative Public Comments

This list includes all community input received by the Select Board via the 7/21 listening session and written communications received prior to 8/10/2020.

#	Category	Recommendation
1	Anti-Discrimination Actions	Establish a discrimination complaint process. Can include complaints against Town employees, non-employees, or both.
2	Anti-Discrimination Actions	Post the Equal Justice Placard to designate Needham as an "Equal Justice Town" in all public buildings in Needham.
3	Anti-Discrimination Actions	Post information about the Office of the Attorney General's hotline for reporting incidents of bias or discrimination on the Town's website and widely distribute.
4	Anti-Discrimination Actions	Empower the Needham Human Rights Committee to serve as a repository for discrimination complaints to be heard, validated, and acted upon.
5	Anti-Discrimination Actions	Reschedule the Over Zero launch event to build appropriate responses to bias and hate and build community resilience.
6	Boards & Commissions	Diversify boards and commissions. Set diversity goals for membership.
7	Boards & Commissions	Engage existing groups of active Black, Latino, Asian and other community groups to help recruit new applicants and volunteers.
8	Boards & Commissions	Review the formation of nominated and elected boards to make sure you have the right diversity both in disciplines and demographics.
9	Boards & Commissions	Identify how to better advertise and recruit for appointed and elected positions.
10	Boards & Commissions	Encourage all Boards and Commissions to identify racial equity goals and actions under their jurisdictions.
11	Boards & Commissions	Collect and publish demographic data for Boards & Commissions. Track progress publicly.
12	Boards & Commissions	Empower and better utilize the Needham Human Rights Committee (NHRC).
13	Boards & Commissions	Provide the Needham Human Rights Committee with funding to lead on data collection and learning initiatives for the Town.
14	Boards & Commissions	Ask Needham Human Rights Committee to be the point of contact for story gathering and making recommendations.
15	Boards & Commissions	Have the Human Rights Committee be actively involved as Select Board deliberates next steps for NUARI.
16	Boards & Commissions	Hire a consultant for training on racial issues for the entire town starting with the Select Board, Town Moderator, Town Manager, and Finance Committee.
17	Communication	Remind people that we all have a lot of learning to do. This is ongoing work that needs to be done to reverse and overcome decades and centuries of systemic racism and oppression.
18	Communication	Change the name of Columbus Day to Indigenous People's Day.
19	Communication	Display Black Lives Matter, Hate Has No Home Here, and One Needham signs on Town properties and digital message boards.
20	Communication	Create a town-wide common language that is actively anti-racist and market this with signs, communications, news pieces, etc.

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21	Communication	The Select Board should immediately make a bold series of public statements and actions to inform the public of the specifics of the stories, as they are relayed to the town, repeatedly stating in response to each story that the board unanimously condemns these actions and that treatment of this kind will not be tolerated in our town.
22	Communication	Look at the language we use on the town's website - not much about diversity or equity, inclusion right now.
23	Communication	Collect public questions and post information where it is readily available to all.
24	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Encourage more dialogue and more humility.
25	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Find a way to get white residents to really hear what black and brown people have experienced and not get defensive or hostile.
26	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Teach about and learn true history. Do not be afraid to relate the past to the present. Acknowledge that white people built a great portion of the country's wealth on theft of land and on the backs of slaves. Need to start there to better understand systemic racism.
27	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Do not be defensive or explain away incidents.
28	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Continue the listening sessions and do what you can to get people to use the Lived Experiences survey.
29	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Track down people who left Needham, if possible, to hear their stories, as well.
30	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Don't dismiss personal stories or treat them as an "n of 1". Need to react to them appropriately, transparently, to face imperfections and to create change.
31	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Do not wait for more stories to take action.
32	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Widely share the Lived Experiences Project questionnaire and outcomes.
33	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	When hearing personal stories and lived experiences, start from a place of believing and of gratitude because those who are sharing do so at great personal risk.
34	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Board members should educate themselves on white supremacy with their own resources as many white Americans have begun to do. Relying entirely on the minority members of our community to explain and relive experiences of minor to traumatic racism for our education is unacceptable. We should not demand free emotional and physical labor from BIPOC to dismantle the racism they face. It is the board's responsibility as leaders and the responsibility of all white Americans to understand the structures of white supremacy on which our nation is built.
35	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Defer to the weak, poor, sick; defer to the minority. This will require a moral change.
36	Community Dialogue & Lived Experiences	Can we survey public sentiment? Can we include inclusion/welcoming questions in our annual town survey?
37	Needham Public Schools	Incorporate diversity into the curriculum as we review each subject area.
38	Needham Public Schools	Support and align the Town's efforts with those already underway at the Needham Public Schools.

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39	Needham Public Schools	Teach the real history of this country via school curriculum. We need to learn about the past; teach our kids about actual history (slavery, Civil War, reconstruction, redlining, etc). If we ignore the past we are not going to change.
40	Needham Public Schools	Continued development of NPS equity initiatives and curriculum revision in the schools.
41	Needham Public Schools	Have Needham Public Schools analyze participation in accelerated classes by race and if disparities exist, address them.
42	Needham Public Schools	Address micro and macro aggressions in schools, urgently and directly.
43	NUARI Structure & Process	Host smaller, more intimate meetings for discussions. Set at regular, recurring times. Make as standard as other government business (e.g. traffic, budgets, etc.). Consider breakout rooms.
44	NUARI Structure & Process	Set up communication structures and transparency.
45	NUARI Structure & Process	For future sessions, hire a trained facilitator; set clear introduction and goals; commitments to change from town government, law enforcement, local businesses, etc should be made.
46	NUARI Structure & Process	Offer a timetable for future work and a framework for how it will happen.
47	NUARI Structure & Process	Put "Unite Against Racism Update" as the first item on every agenda for the Select Board and make it required for all other town departments and boards.
48	NUARI Structure & Process	Create a roadmap for law enforcement, local businesses, schools, town government, etc to own the equity initiative without Black people having to evidence the racism we know exists.
49	NUARI Structure & Process	Need better options for format and ways to communicate for those who feel uncomfortable in public/on zoom/large groups.
50	NUARI Structure & Process	Do not wait until you know the "perfect" thing to do. Take action now, incorporate BIPOC in decisions, and develop a level of candor and trust because mistakes will be made.
51	NUARI Structure & Process	Do not just create a plan. Need input from communities of color. Map out new ways to communicate with relevant stakeholders and get BIPOC input. Build/strengthen those relationships.
52	NUARI Structure & Process	Balance urgent need for action with mapping out how we will prioritize equity over the long term.
53	NUARI Structure & Process	Convene a diverse group of people to set town's equity goals.
54	NUARI Structure & Process	Do data collection for baseline and determine ways to measure progress towards goals.
55	Partnerships & Engagement	Collaborate with businesses; offer anti-discrimination, implicit bias trainings for employees.
56	Partnerships & Engagement	Convene conversations between members of Needham Diversity Initiative, Human Rights and other equity-focused community groups and the Select Board, neighborhood associations, law enforcement.
57	Partnerships & Engagement	Schedule presentation from Lived Experiences Project in September or talk with them about how they want to present findings and make recommendations.
58	Partnerships & Engagement	Hold multi-cultural events to celebrate diversity and learn about each other.

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59	Partnerships & Engagement	Create a network of different organizations, a "rapid response" network.
60	Partnerships & Engagement	Better engage METCO families in the Needham community.
61	Partnerships & Engagement	Determine better ways of public engagement and reaching people of color.
62	Systemic Change	Put in programs to encourage communities of color, businesses of color to create a critical mass of people in Needham. Change policies and practices to create housing options that bring diversity in an authentic way, that provide business opportunities to bring people of color to Needham.
63	Systemic Change	Do a Town Equity Audit. Hire a consultant who can do a full audit and make recommendations for action, policy revision, and systems change.
64	Systemic Change	Create diversity, equity, and inclusion goals for the Town.
65	Systemic Change	Interrogate systemic policy/institutional issues rather than just individual stories.
66	Systemic Change	Have data you can use to help you understand where there are differences of experiences, outcomes, results based on race. Understanding how your actions contribute to that.
67	Systemic Change	Create a public dashboard and data portal. Have agreed upon measures to track. Have plans that are publicly facing with known commitments of resources and time. Ask the public and staff to be accountable to those goals.
68	Systemic Change	Focus time and energy on fixing processes, procedures, and systems that - nearly always unintentionally - perpetuate racialized outcomes.
69	Systemic Change	Make a long-term commitment of organizational change, cultural change, community change.
70	Systemic Change	Apply a race equity lens to not only police but other community sectors, like public health and our local economy. Assemble a program that hits on many different parts of the community: housing, health, schools, police, commerce.
71	Systemic Change	Build more affordable and middle income housing; if we want diversity we can't just have luxury homes.
72	Town Employees & Departments	Set procurement equity goals. How can we increase participation from minority-owned businesses? How can we include them in more or larger public contracts? How do we help them scale? Review recently updated DCAMM goals.
73	Town Employees & Departments	Increase hiring of Black employees in all departments and in the schools - at all levels of employment.
74	Town Employees & Departments	Provide training for all professionals in the town.
75	Town Employees & Departments	Create targeted changes through collaborative discussion with law enforcement regarding restructuring, training, possible redirecting of funds. Encourage law enforcement to come forward proactively to the community versus responding to demands, reactions, accusations.
76	Town Employees & Departments	Support and fund the Diversity Series at the Needham Free Public Library. Find funds so that they can expand their efforts.
77	Town Employees & Departments	Track and publish employee demographic data.

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78	Town Employees & Departments	The Town should be actively working to make the public, particularly BIPOC, less fearful of police. A PR campaign will not be enough. The Town must make substantive changes to the rules of engagement to assure the public that calling the police is actually safe.
79	Values & Guiding Principles	When listening, start from a place of believing.
80	Values & Guiding Principles	Take a restorative justice approach: acknowledgment of the violation by the perpetrator (or representative of that), offering not simply an apology, but taking ownership of the wrong and pathway for repair. Those who have been victims of racism (whether purposeful or incidental), must be offered opportunities to have a say, be heard and understand that reparations will be offered.
81	Values & Guiding Principles	Acknowledge that Needham is no exception; racism exists here as it does everywhere.
82	Values & Guiding Principles	Create a document of principles or statement of values/commitment to action.