



**Focus Groups Report**  
Town of Lincoln Massachusetts July 2023



# Racial Equity Group

*Making Racial Equity Standard Operating Procedure*

## Executive Summary

A task force was created to keep the Town of Lincoln's (the Town) vision of fostering and supporting diversity at the center of every decision they make. As one step to make these candid discussions possible, the Town contracted with Racial Equity Group (REG) and Elite Research (ER) to conduct a series of focus groups with the goal of gathering feedback from Town staff, citizens, board and committee members on their experiences and perceptions of equity and inclusion in Lincoln. In total, six in-person focus groups were held in the Town Hall; two groups for staff members, two for board members, and two for residents.

From the Town's initial conversations, four themes emerged to help inform future work: (1) understanding terminology, (2) understanding Lincoln, (3) who do we want to be? and (4) measuring progress. The results of the focus groups expanded on those themes, which will ultimately contribute to the change the Town is working to implement. Below are a few major themes that were expressed during the focus groups, with the detailed results following.



### Understanding Terminology

The initial conversations revealed to the Town that the words inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism can be defined in a multitude of ways, leading to the concern of how to make sure that the Town residents and staff have a shared understanding of their meaning and their implications. All three groups seemed to define **inclusion** as creating ways to include people of all races and cultures in every aspect of the Town, and often recognized that there is **little to no diversity** in the Town. Participants from all three groups expressed an understanding of and interest in a **DEI toolkit** that could be accessed regularly in order to implement **the IDEA training** properly and successfully. Most of the participants felt motivated from the trainings and were excited about the implementation.

### Understanding Lincoln

Another theme that came up during initial conversations was the need to understand Lincoln – the lived experiences of residents who identify as a member of a historically underrepresented group, how residents of surrounding towns perceive Lincoln, and how IDEA strategies impact specific characteristics that many residents appreciate about the town.

The lived experiences varied across the groups, with some participants feeling mostly positive while others felt mostly negative. Most of the staff felt **supported** by the Town and like they had the autonomy to make decisions. Similarly, residents perceived Lincoln as **peaceful** and **excellent**, even referring to it as **“home.”** However, a participant from the Board Member groups, who identified as a person of color, suggested that there are times they feel **unwelcome** and like they must **prove that they belong**.

All three groups felt like surrounding towns likely perceived Lincoln as **elitist**, **rich**, and **exclusive**. A few participants suggested that surrounding towns might not even think about Lincoln or know where it is.

## Who Do We Want to Be?

The Town determined that the problems trying to be solved and for whom need to be identified, as well as determining if any IDEA elements are currently being addressed. The staff agreed that there does not seem to be outright cruel intentions from residents towards people of color, but a **lack of understanding**. They also suggested that the ignorance shown by residents towards people of color is likely due to a **lack of diversity** in the Town. All three groups had participants that felt like because of they had **little interactions with people of color**, they could not speak on certain questions. All three groups also had participants that felt that people of color should be asked the questions, as they are the ones with the lived experiences.

## Measuring Progress

A key component of any initiative is establishing how changes will be measured to ensure that the targeted problem is being addressed and IDEA elements are being implemented successfully. The process begins by understanding the current state of the issue, including how does the Town compare to other towns in the nearby area. A concern that was routinely discussed during all six focus groups was the **lack of diversity** in the Town. They also noted concern over working with residents who would prefer for Lincoln to stay the way it is, as they suggested that most residents are comfortable with remaining **stagnant**.



## Recommendations

Each focus group was asked for any recommendations they would suggest for the Town of Lincoln to move towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism within the workplace of the Town government and the overall Town. One of the biggest concerns that the participants stated was for **affordable housing**. They acknowledged that housing had been built with the idea of being affordable but suggested that the housing is not truly affordable. They also called for the need of more affordable housing, even beyond what has been built to date. Another area that the participants recommended focusing on was **outreach**, as they were not sure how the Town planned to get residents who would rather keep Lincoln as it is, involved or to reach people of color who see Lincoln as elitist into moving there. The participants want to see an increase in **diversity** among Lincoln's residents, staff, and education, such as raising awareness of the aspects of Town history that are focused on people of color. They acknowledged that for these changes to become a reality a **change in current policies and systems** is needed, which might involve reviewing policies for gaps or creating a DEI toolkit. The results also showed that the participants want to be involved in the process – they want the Town to continue approaching this initiative **collaboratively** to make sure all voices are heard.

## Introduction

After the murder of George Floyd in May 2020, residents of the Town of Lincoln responded to the tragedy by organizing vigils, by reading and discussing books that address systemic racism, and by asking Town government to explicitly examine the systems and action of the Town. Lincoln residents made it clear that they want to engage in candid discussions about what inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism looks like in Lincoln. A task force was created to keep the Town’s vision of fostering and supporting diversity at the center of every decision they make. To make these candid discussions possible, the Town hired Racial Equity Group (REG) and Elite Research (ER) to conduct a series of focus groups with the goal of gathering feedback from Town staff, citizens, and board members on their experiences and perceptions of equity and inclusion in Lincoln.

Six in-person focus groups in total were held in the Town Hall, with two groups for staff members, two for board members, and two for residents. The Town managed the recruitment of all participants. Although the demographics of the participants were not obtained, two out of the 26 participants self-identified as a person of color. One participant relayed that one individual who had signed up for the focus groups had told them they would not be attending because “nothing would change because of it.”



In the table below is the sample size for each group, for each day, and the total counts.

Participant Counts			
	May 15, 2023	May 16, 2023	Total Count
Staff	7	5	12
Board	5	3	8
Residents	4	2	6
<b>Total # of Participants</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>

One REG team member and one member of ER’s team moderated all the focus groups – ER also analyzed the data and prepared the results. In order to analyze the data, ER staff took a qualitative thematic analysis approach in which they reviewed the data, applied codes to summarize concepts, and organized codes into major themes under each question from the focus group guide. The only exception is for the question regarding recommended changes – every participant’s responses were provided verbatim, rather than going through the coding process in order to keep specific recommendation details.

The results in this report are presented in three major sections: Staff Members, Board Members, and Community Residents.

# Staff Member Focus Groups

## One Word

Participants were asked to provide one word that describes their quality of life in the Town of Lincoln, as well as one word that describes their work environment. Below are the responses.



## Treatment of POC and White Residents

Participants were asked how they felt people in Lincoln treated POC and White residents, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Lack of Awareness

- Participants expressed that although people in town try to treat people of color okay, there is a lack of understanding, which leads to mistreatment.

*"They try to treat them okay, but there is a lack of understanding – they are unwittingly unkind."*

### Obligated to Be Nice

- A couple of participants expressed that people in town go out of their way to treat people of color well.

*"A lot of interactions are pleasant, but it seems like they are needing to be nice."*

## Lack of Interactions and Diversity

- A few participants expressed that they had a lack of interactions with diverse populations in Lincoln and did not have many opportunities to see how people of color are treated.

*“I don’t interact with people much, and Lincoln isn’t very diverse, so there are not as many interactions to see how they are treated.”*

## Word of Mouth

- A couple participants indicated that, although they personally did not witness any interactions, they have heard stories from others about people of color being treated unfavorably.

*“I have heard stories, but haven’t seen them. Through the grapevine, I heard about a coworker’s partner who came to Lincoln and went into the grocery store – everyone had eyes on him and it made him feel weird.”*

## Lack of Inclusion and Integration

- Two participants shared that people of color are not being integrated into the Town, which makes their lives harder.

*“What happens more is that there’s a sense of not always being included – it’s harder to be accepted when you aren’t integrated into town.”*

## Welcoming

- Two participants expressed that they see inclusion in Lincoln, even though they also acknowledged that there is a lack of diversity.

*“I see inclusion – I have gone into the town meetings. The employees are usually sitting in the back. There is a lack of diversion in the town, no doubt, but I have witnessed when you have a family come in that has adopted children who are a different color and you see smiles.”*

## Generational Wealth

- Participants shared that most White residents have generational wealth and a certain prestige of having lived in Lincoln for a long time.

*“If you see people move in, it’s people moving into houses their family already owned. If you already have an in and generational wealth, then you get to come in which perpetuates the whiteness of the town.”*



## Entitled

- Participants expressed a sense of entitlement among White residents which has often made for tense situations.

*“There is a sense of entitlement. White residents will come to the schools at 8pm to play basketball. If we tell them no, they can’t play at the school that late, they say that their money pays for this school and they have the right to play at that time.”*

# Professional and Social Activities in Lincoln

Participants were asked to describe the professional and social activities in Lincoln.

Professional	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>■ <b>Improving</b></p> <p><i>“The department has two weeks of training every year, interacts with the community, and added an anti-bias policy.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Room for Growth</b></p> <p><i>“The Human Resources policies need to be updated to be more inclusive.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Supportive</b></p> <p><i>“Whether at work or in my own time, I feel supported.”</i></p> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>■ <b>Accessibility Issue</b></p> <p><i>“Many events are free, but if you aren’t in the system, you won’t know what’s happening. You have to be tech savvy and speak English to get information on events.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Diverse Events</b></p> <p><i>“There was a Pride Festival that was well received by the community.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Outreach Complications</b></p> <p><i>“How do you find the information you want to find? What is the best way to communicate with people of color? I don’t know where to start.”</i></p> </li> </ul>

## Lincoln Experiences with Different Races/Ethnicities or Cultures

Participants were asked what experiences have they had, if any, with people of a different race/ethnicity or culture in Lincoln, as well as how they felt the Town treats people of different races, cultural groups, and income levels. Their responses were organized into the following categories.

### Positive Experiences

- Participants expressed that they had generally witnessed positive experiences with people of a different race/ethnicity or culture, specifically noting that most people knew where to get resources and departments knew how to speak with people of color.

*“People know they can get resources at the library. A Ukrainian immigrant wanted to attend a program but didn’t qualify for a library card. The library staff worked with them to get it resolved so they could attend.”*

*“There was one instance where a person of color pulled a gun out and the police department was called. They deescalated the situation without getting violent.”*

### Lack of Experiences

- A few participants shared that there is a lack of opportunity to have experiences with people of color, which leads to residents not knowing how to talk to people of color.

*“They try hard to treat everyone well, but residents don’t know what they don’t know and they don’t have the experience to approach people with a DEI lens.”*

## Respect for POC

Participants were asked if they feel that people of color are treated fairly and with respect within the Town, and to explain why or why not. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Department Dependent

- Participants shared that their answer depended on which department they were specifically discussing, as some departments do treat people of color fairly while others do not.

*“For water department, yes absolutely. Library, no. In town building, everyone is great.”*

*“Police department is generally positive with the rare bad experience.”*

### Assumptions

- A few participants expressed that when they have witnessed people of color being treated poorly, it was typically due to people acting based on their assumptions, such as assuming because a child was a person of color that they belonged on the METCO bus.

*“One teacher tried to put kids on the METCO bus that were citizens of Lincoln because they were POC and the teacher assumed they were part of the METCO program.”*

### Lack of Diversity

- A couple of participants stated that they have not had experiences with people of color, either as a resident or in the government.

*“I have never experienced an interaction with a person of color in the community. I am not public facing and have never met a person of color in the department or in the community. I don’t see their involvement in the government.”*

### Overcompensate

- One participant felt that residents overcompensate to treat people of color well, which they viewed as more ignorant than a microaggression.

*“Residents go out of their way to treat people of color better than others.”*

### Hanscom Air Force Base

- Participants expressed that the air force base nearby has a lot of diversity while the town does not, sharing that they feel like there is a delineation between Air Force Base and Lincoln residents.

*“Hanscom Air Force Base is every walk of life, every race, etc. They get the diversity, but Lincoln doesn’t. If you live on the base, you go to the base school. I’m not sure if the schools even interact. People assume that testing results always show Lincoln as lower because we’re grouped with METCO and Hanscom.”*

*“Hanscom school is cleaner and nicer, more respectful, than the Lincoln school.”*

*“There’s a delineation between Air Force Base and Lincoln residents.”*



## Recommend Living in Lincoln

Participants were asked if they would recommend other people of color to live and work in the Town of Lincoln, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Yes

- Participants stated that they would recommend for people of color to live and work in Lincoln, as they see it as a nice town to live in.

*“Yes, it is a nice town to live in. Resources in town are incredible, very responsible. I enjoy working in the community.”*

- A couple of participants shared that they do think they would recommend living and working in Lincoln, but only if changes were made to help people of color feel safe.

*“A lot of employees need to do the work to make a change. I hope everyone feels safe in this environment.”*

*“More people of color will breed more hate until residents calm down and accept that change is happening.”*

### Generational Wealth

- Participants expressed that it is hard to get into Lincoln unless you have had family in the town.

*“Due to zoning, it is hard for anyone to get in unless you or your family have been here for a while.”*

*“Kids may be integrated in while at the school, but parents of new families will still be separated.”*

## Opportunities for Growth

Participants were asked if they feel that the Town is a place where people of color can progress professionally and economically. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Yes

- A few participants shared that they do believe people of color can progress professionally and economically, if they can afford to live in the town.

*“If you can afford to get here, the opportunities are unparalleled. It’s good for building relationships – everyone knows everyone.”*

*“There is a good access to resources to grow here.”*

### Need to Change

- Participants noted that change needs to happen to create an inclusive and diverse environment.

*“No one of color has been hired in higher level positions, and that needs to change.”*

*“You have to deal with the uncomfortable to grow.”*

## Cultural Representation

Participants were asked to describe the representation of different cultures in Town events, arts/culture, and other programs. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Needs Improvement

- Participants expressed that there could be improvements made in the representation of different cultures in events, but noted that it is also hard when people from that culture do not live in the town.

*“It could be better. They try to diversify programs, but we don’t have the representation to keep it around.”*

*“We need to share movies that people will come in for, but are also equally representative of cultures.”*

### Effort Being Made

- Participants shared they could see that the town was trying to be more diverse, such trying to get more backgrounds and cultures present.

*“We have a more diverse population attending events and there is intentional planning of programs.”*

### Lack of Diversity

- A couple of participants felt that they had not had enough experience with people of color to comment.

*“It is hard to say without lived experience.”*

*“I rarely see people of color at any events.”*



## Confidence in First Responders

Participants were asked to describe how much confidence they have in first responders within the Town to treat people of color and White people equally and with respect. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Paramedics

- One participant shared an experience that made them lose confidence with paramedics, although they have always had great experiences with the police department.

*“The police department has always been great, but there was one point where paramedics responded to a woman of color having diabetic shock. They were just making jokes and surrounding her and just not reading the room. She wouldn’t go with them. I had to talk to her to find out she was scared because she couldn’t pay for the ambulance. We took care of her and got her to the hospital, but ever since then, I haven’t had great confidence in paramedics.”*



### Police Department

- Participants expressed that they had mostly positive experiences with the police department and their programs.

*“I’ve been here for 18 years. I’ve seen a lot of turnaround – younger generations are coming in now. It seems that we’re less ‘the good ole’ boys’ and more open.”*

*“They have programs that are very beneficial, such as domestic violence information or self-defense for women.”*

## Discrimination Experiences

Participants were asked to describe any experiences they or their household have had where they were denied, excluded, or treated less favorably than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Disability

- One participant shared that they face many challenges due to their son’s disability.

*“My son has a disability and the school doesn’t involve him at all. They keep him at the side. There are no ramps. Everything is a challenge.”*

### None

- Most of the participants noted that did not have any experience where they were denied, excluded, or treated less favorably than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

## Recommended Changes

Participants were asked if they have any recommendations for change to move the Town towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism within the workplace of Town government and overall Town. Below are their suggestions.

- “We need curb cuts!”
- “Look at our policies for gaps and create a DEI toolkit.”
- “We need more diversity in staff programming.”
- “Meet to brainstorm ways to incorporate the IDEA training.”
- “What we’re doing right here – education. Being able to openly speak about things. There’s always a line we can’t cross because of our positions.”
- “Find a way to bring people in this conversation who will not volunteer to come to these conversations.”
- “Accessibility. Do the people at Hanscom know they have access to the trails? There’s no way to get across Highway 2 and it’s too dangerous to get across. People need access to these areas.”
- “Housing policy and zoning changes. More opportunity for affordable housing in spaces where the town is currently very possessive of. They all seem to think, ‘Not only do I own my land, I own the land I look at.’”
- “Make the history of the town that is not white male more visible.”
- “I ask people how they like Lincoln, and they like Lincoln the way it is. We would have to work with the people who have been here forever and who don’t want things to change.”

## Perception of Lincoln

Participants were asked how they believe the Town of Lincoln is perceived by people of color in surrounding cities and towns. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

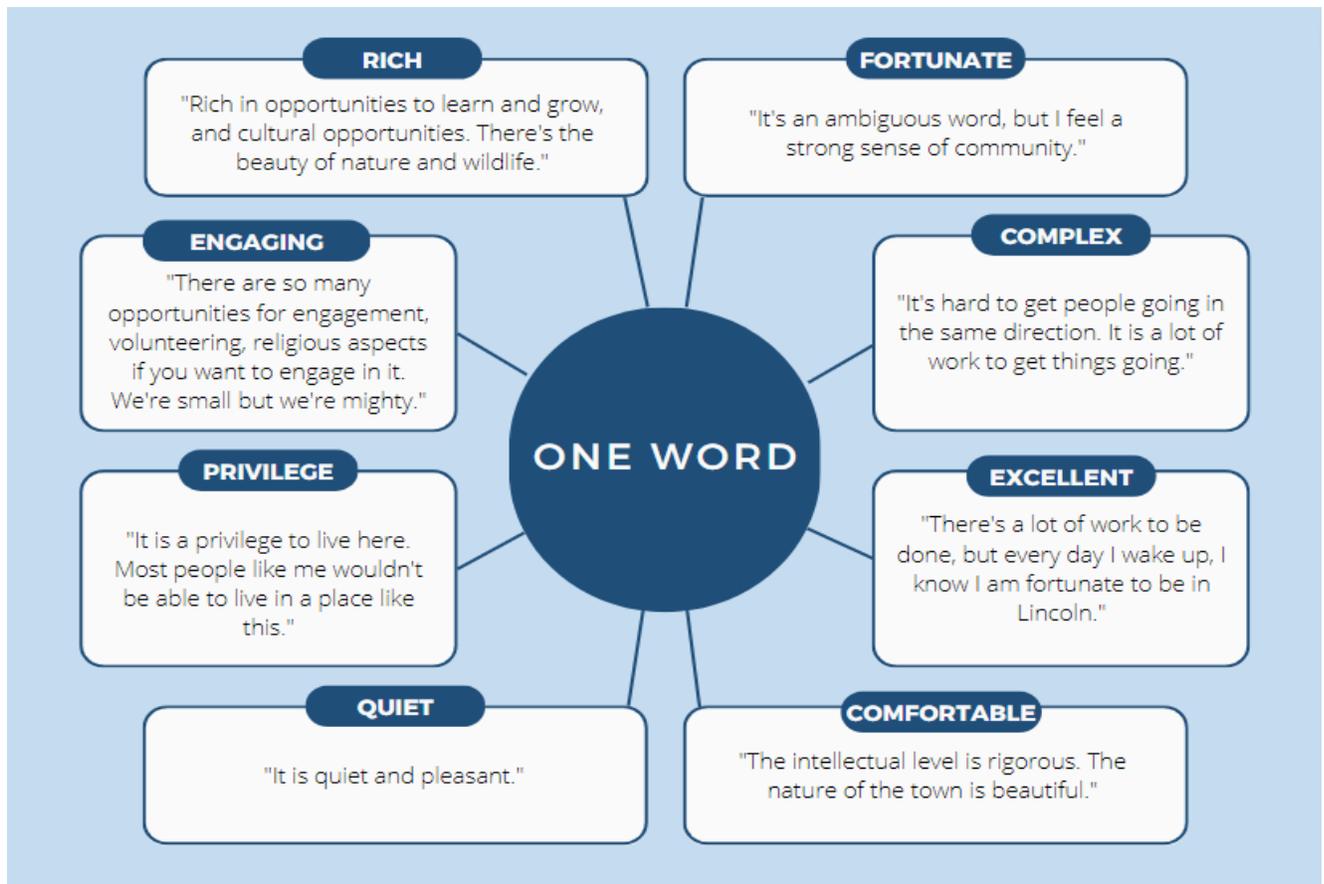
### Elitist

- Participants felt that people of color from other towns perceive them as elitist or completely different.  
*“(Laughs) They see us as elitist! Classist! And they aren’t wrong most of the time. They see us as completely different.”*

# Board Member Focus Groups

## One Word

Participants were asked to provide one word that describes their quality of life in the town of Lincoln, as well as one word that describes their work environment. Below are the responses.



## Treatment of POC and White Residents

Participants were asked how they felt people in Lincoln treated POC and White residents, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Too Complex

- One participant felt like this question was impossible to answer as Lincoln brings in people from different communities and towns.

*"Too many different communities and towns – it is impossible to answer a question like that, but the town has shown interest in raising awareness."*

### Lack of Diversity

- Participants expressed that due to a lack of diversity in the town, they do not have many experiences with people of color.

*"I don't see enough people of color to know – I knew someone at the school and they seemed very integrated, but we don't have a ton of people of color."*

*"12% of Massachusetts residents are black. If 12% of Lincoln was black, I feel like I would have different answers."*

## Microaggressions

- Participants shared that there are microaggressions present in Lincoln, such as assuming a child of color was part of the METCO program.

*“There are a lot of people who want to be aware, but there are microaggressions happening like assuming a child of color was coming from Boston.”*

## Unwelcome

- A couple of participants shared that they felt people of color feel unwelcome in Lincoln.

*“One person of color in our group got the cops called on him while walking around a student area. I normally felt welcomed here until then.”*

*“There are small pockets of people who are not welcoming, but there are people who dedicate their lives to be welcoming.”*

## Professional and Social Activities in Lincoln

Participants were asked to describe the professional and social activities in Lincoln.

Professional	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Not Many</b> <i>“There are not many in the professional atmosphere.”</i></li><li><b>Networking Opportunities</b> <i>“There are many networks here – church, school, town government committees, and activities that you can get involved in. It’s a good way to get connected.”</i></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>A Lot of Social Events</b> <i>“Socially, there’s a lot of opportunities. You can go to a lecture series where they have different speakers come in. There’s a reenactment with the minutemen. A lot of volunteer opportunities.”</i></li><li><b>Marketing</b> <i>“The concern is how does it get publicized – how do people hear about all of the events happening?”</i></li><li><b>Uncomfortable</b> <i>“When I go to events, I get stared at a lot by being one of the only people of color.”</i></li><li><b>Responsibility</b> <i>“It is up to the individuals to take advantage of the activities that are offered here.”</i></li><li><b>Generational Wealth</b> <i>“The people who are attending these events – their paycheck is probably not paying for what they have. It is probably coming from their families.”</i></li></ul>

## Lincoln Experiences with Different Races/Ethnicities or Cultures

Participants were asked what experiences have they had, if any, with people of a different race/ethnicity or culture in Lincoln, as well as how they felt the Town treats people of different races, cultural groups, and income levels. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Positive

- Participants expressed that although they did not have many experiences with people of a different race or culture, the few that they have had, have been positive.

*“It has been very few, but it has been positive.”*

- A few participants shared that there is a lot of diversity in the school and the experiences there have been mostly positive.

*“The school is more diverse than the town, which is where I have been, and it has been positive.”*



### Diversity

- Some participants expressed that due to a lack of diversity, there are a lack of resources that fit the needs of people of color.

*“There was a person of color who didn’t know where to get a haircut for his hair since the town was all white.”*

- A couple of participants felt that there is diversity in Lincoln if all races are considered.

*“We are more diverse than just black and white. The neighbor behind me is Asian, neighbor across the street is Indian. There is diversity, not just black and white.”*

### Divided

- Two participants shared that they were unaware of any division between income levels.

*“Are there different income levels?”*

*“There is division between North and South Lincoln, but it is not so much an income thing. I feel like they are cut off because of Route 2. People are not happy that the transfer station and the technical school is in North Lincoln. They feel like they have gotten the short end of the stick in decision making, but I don’t think it’s economic.”*

- One participant shared that they felt like they had to prove that they belong in Lincoln.

*“As a person of color, I have to prove myself that I belong at this table.”*

## Respect for POC

Participants were asked if they feel that people of color are treated fairly and with respect within the Town, and to explain why or why not. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Lack of Diversity

- A few participants shared that they did not have many experiences to reflect on because there are not many people of color in Lincoln.

*“There are not a lot of opportunities to observe because there not many people of color.”*

*“I know one person who came here thinking it was a more diverse town, and they were surprised to see the truth.”*

### Yes

- One participant shared that they feel like people of color are treated fairly and with respect in the town.

*“Yes. From my own experience as a person of color, I have never had a negative experience in town, whether with police, in the school, anywhere.”*

### Mixed Experiences

- Participants expressed that there is a mixture of good and bad experiences that people of color have gone through in Lincoln.

*“On occasions, you will hear a comment, but they are individual comments and don’t represent the town or the town government in general.”*

*“Rare occurrences – not even microaggressions. People can say awkward things, but you can’t punish the town. Stupidity reigns everywhere.”*

## Recommend Living in Lincoln

Participants were asked if they would recommend other people of color to live and work in the Town of Lincoln, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Unsure

- Two participants shared that they did not feel like they are qualified to make a recommendation, because they have not experienced what people of color have experienced.

*“I would recommend anyone, of course, but I also think Lincoln is a welcoming community. What do I know? I haven’t experienced what people of color have.”*

*“I agree, I would not feel qualified to make that recommendation.”*

- A couple of participants expressed that they were unsure if they would recommend people of color to live in Lincoln.

*“This is a hard case, because to some degree, you need a critical change to make people of other races feel welcome. While the numbers are as low as they are now, how do we get over that idea? If you are going to spend \$1.5 million, there are a lot of places you can go. Why come here?”*

*“If you create the housing, it doesn’t mean that it will yield racial diversity.”*

## No

- A few participants shared they would not recommend Lincoln to people of color due to the elitism and lack of diversity they have experienced.

*“Lincoln is definitely Elitist. Based on the Elitism of the town, I likely would not recommend it.”*

*“I have to go 2x a week outside of town to get my groceries and see a more diverse community.”*

## Yes

- Two participants felt that they would recommend Lincoln to people of color, if they are comfortable with being alone most of the time and keeping Lincoln the way it is.

*“I would encourage people of color to come if they are okay being alone! Houses are separate, so you don’t have many neighbors. If you value nature and like outdoor things then yes, it is welcoming.”*

*“I would recommend it if they are comfortable with the town the way it is. It isn’t going to change. It is up to the individual to live the life they want to live. I can’t imagine the town being hostile to someone who wants to live here.”*

## Opportunities for Growth

Participants were asked if they feel that the Town is a place where people of color can progress professionally and economically. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Responsibility

- A couple of participants expressed that the responsibility of a person’s success is on the person, not the town.

*“The town has nothing to do with the economics of the people if they are not a town employee.”*



### Networking

- One participant shared that they did believe people of color can progress professionally and economically in Lincoln because of the networking opportunities.

*“Yes, in terms of networking. There are a lot of well-connected people in town.”*

### Affordability

- Participants expressed that people do not gain their economic position from doing anything in Lincoln and the only way they could come to Lincoln is if they already have a high income.

*“If you don’t have the money, you can’t progress here because it is a high entry point and high taxes.”*

*“Nobody gains their economic position from doing anything in town – maybe an independent author or something – but most people commute into Boston or Cambridge.”*

## Cultural Representation

Participants were asked to describe the representation of different cultures in Town events, arts/culture, and other programs. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Diverse Events

- Participants expressed that there are a lot of diverse events taking place in Lincoln, even if it is a small town.

*“We have an Asian American festival this week, a Pride festival, Juneteenth – a lot of it is through the school and library bringing in diverse authors.”*

*“It is a small town, but we are intellectually and culturally elite.”*

*“There are activities all the time trying to promote people getting together.”*

## Confidence in First Responders

Participants were asked to describe how much confidence they have in first responders within the Town to treat people of color and White people equally and with respect. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Positive Experiences

- Participants expressed that they have high confidence in the first responders’ ability to treat people equally and be sensitive to race.

*“I don’t know them all, but I know the ones at the top and they are sensitive to race and other kinds of issues.”*

*“As a person of color, my interactions have always been positive. If I was pulled over, it was for a good reason – I was speeding. I serve on a committee with the chief and have had no issues.”*

*“There is a DARE officer on the school campus who is well informed on how to deal with racial issues.”*

## Discrimination Experiences

Participants were asked to describe any experiences they or their household have had where they were denied, excluded, or treated less favorably than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Disaster

- The participants could not identify any experiences where they had been discriminated against, but one participant was able to share a time they witnessed an individual being discriminated against by the town.

*“There was a minister who was a person of color. He was Indian and gay – his husband was white. They adopted two children were black. Socially, it was a disaster. The church claimed it was not race-based, but I am not fully convinced about that. The kids were also special needs and the peculiarity of the New England town was different for them. It goes to the whole idea of a ‘match’ to fit in. There needs to be an economic and intellectual and cultural match. The children were not integrated into the play groups and the minister could not connect with the parishioners. It was a disaster. Most people would say it had nothing to do with race, but there was.”*

## Recommended Changes

Participants were asked if they have any recommendations for change to move the Town towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism within the workplace of Town government and overall Town. Below are their suggestions.

- “More affordable housing, which I think the town knows.”
- “I would like to know another town like Lincoln that has done the work and how they accomplished it.”
- “Improve public transportation and affordable housing, but there is a lot of fight back against those two things due to the goal of preserving the land.”
- “We do have a community rail and ‘affordable housing’ so people assume the problem has been addressed, but we need more.”
- “Let people know that social integration is so important. We tend to stay with what is easy because we are so busy, and there is probably bias. If you don’t know about someone’s culture, you are less likely to invite them.”
- “At a school level, the school board is all white, but the body of students is more diverse, so it doesn’t match. We need to recruit more or make it easier, so it isn’t such a privilege to do it [be on the board].”
- “It is a time commitment to get involved in many of the activities. We don’t know anyone to recruit, when there are only like five people of color in town. It’s hard to come up with a strategy or a program when there isn’t a pool of potential applicants.”

## Perception of Lincoln

Participants were asked how they believe the Town of Lincoln is perceived by people of color in surrounding cities and towns. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Elite and Exclusive

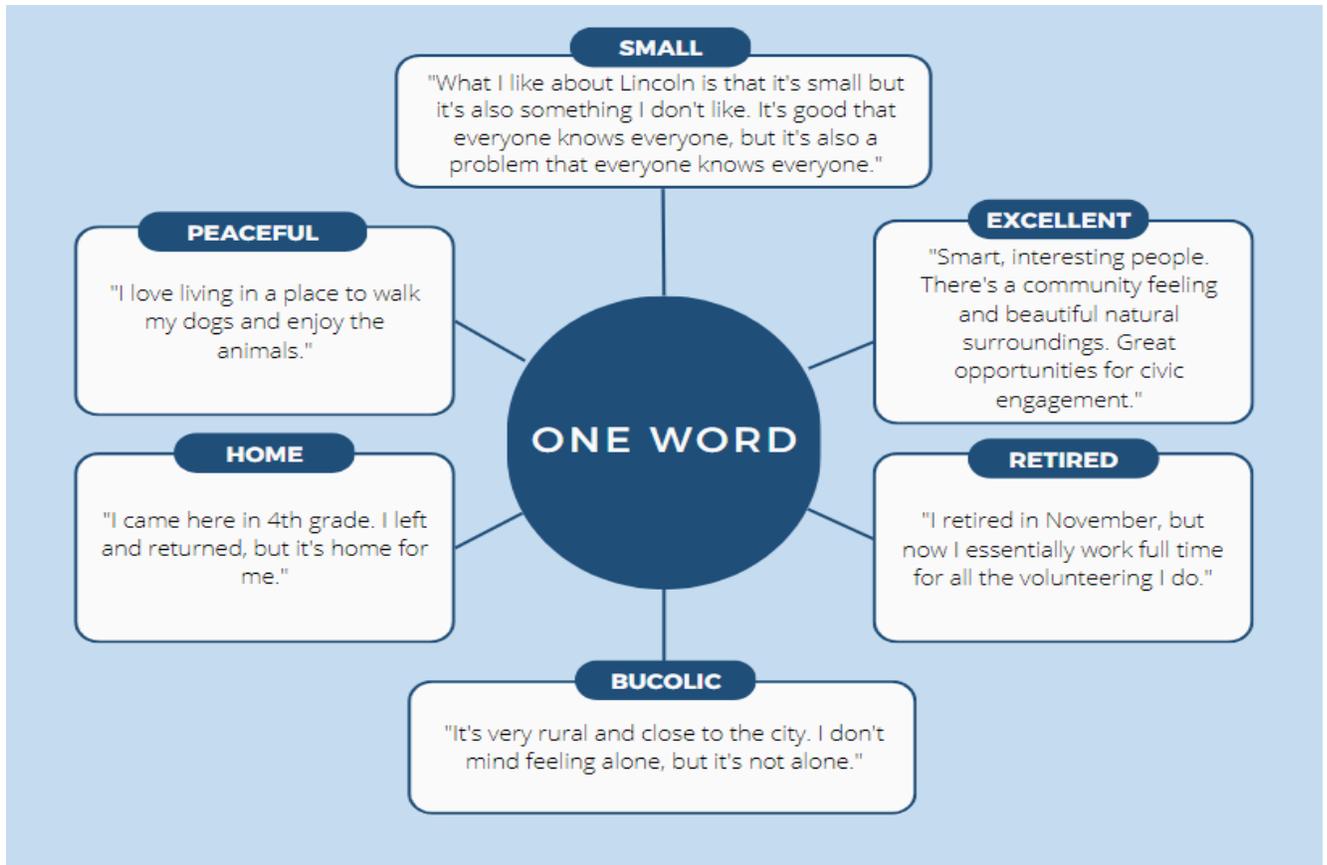
- Participants expressed that people of color from surrounding cities likely see Lincoln as elite and exclusive, even calling it bougie and stuffy.

*“Lincoln is so invisible – many people don’t know where it is, but they likely still see us as exclusive.”*

# Community Resident Focus Groups

## One Word

Participants were asked to provide one word that describes their quality of life in the town of Lincoln, as well as one word that describes their work environment. Below are the responses.



## Treatment of POC and White Residents

Participants were asked how they felt people in Lincoln treated POC and White residents, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Conscious Effort

- A couple of participants shared that they see the town making a conscious effort to treat people of color well, even if they are not always successful.

*"I think our town is trying to do the right thing. It's tough. The way we were brought up in our generation was in systemic racism. It takes a conscious effort to not be that way. We have the outside people making decisions, but how do we get the inside people to play a role in this?"*

### Racism

- Participants expressed that there are several instances where they have witnessed racism in Lincoln.

*"What do you do when you see something racist? What do you do when someone yells at an Arabic kid on the soccer field, 'What are you doing here, you racist?'"*

*"A kid that my sister-in-law kind of adopted got pulled over by the cops and got a ticket for his insurance card being expired – which it wasn't."*

## Youth

- A couple of participants showed appreciation towards the younger generation who are introducing a level of openness in Lincoln.

*“I think the youth is getting more awareness and education about human beings as different, whether it’s race or LGBTQ.”*

*“There should be an openness to learn about differences and I’m encouraged to learn from the younger generations. I’m glad that we are working hard to have these conversations, but there are people in my age group that uphold ideals of white supremacy.”*

## Divided

- A couple of participants shared that how people in Lincoln perceive others is dependent on where they live, their socioeconomic status, and even where their children go to daycare. They believe that there is a division between the different groupings that impacts both POC and White residents.

*“It depends on where you live, what people perceive your socioeconomic status to be, where your kids go to daycare. There is definite class division, a caste system, in Lincoln, if you don’t have a pedigree of a certain higher education, known or perceived socioeconomic status. I overheard someone say once that North Lincoln should not even be included as part of Lincoln.”*

*“A lot of North Lincoln residents feel like second-class citizens.”*



# Professional and Social Activities in Lincoln

Participants were asked to describe the professional and social activities in Lincoln.

Professional	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>■ <b>Volunteerism</b></p> <p><i>“There are not a lot of paid opportunities for musicians or artists. The spirit of volunteerism assumes wealth and I don’t have wealth.”</i></p> <p><i>“The spirit of volunteerism is the fabric of the culture in Lincoln but there is an expectation that people will volunteer. If you volunteer, you made it in. If you don’t volunteer, you’re not in the inner circle. But what about the people who don’t have time to volunteer?”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>No Networking</b></p> <p><i>“Networking is nonexistent. They go out of Lincoln to work or work from home. We have so many families where the dad goes out of Lincoln to work at a highly professional job and Mom volunteers. There is a shift where living here is requiring two incomes.”</i></p> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>■ <b>Improving Events</b></p> <p><i>“We started a Juneteenth celebration last year.”</i></p> <p><i>“We’re having our first-ever AAPI celebration this year.”</i></p> <p><i>“We have a lot of good social activities in the Town given our size, but the events are not well representative of the diversity in town.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Inner Circle</b></p> <p><i>“You need to be a certain economic status to be accepted in the inner circle of Lincoln, and a certain profession.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>Community Center</b></p> <p><i>“Should we build a community center and how much should we spend? What kind and where?”</i></p> <p><i>“Having one community center that would have a lot more dual usage – it all boils down to money to build the community center.”</i></p> </li> <li> <p>■ <b>LincolnTalk</b></p> <p><i>“Anyone with an email address can sign up. Everyone just kind of hears about it. If you know, you know.”</i></p> <p><i>“If the school board wants to publicize a public talk, they could just post it on LincolnTalk or on the school website.”</i></p> </li> </ul>

## Lincoln Experiences with Different Races/Ethnicities or Cultures

Participants were asked what experiences have they had, if any, with people of a different race/ethnicity or culture in Lincoln, as well as how they felt the Town treats people of different races, cultural groups, and income levels. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### METCO Students

- One participant shared their daughter's experience at school with the METCO students, as she was concerned that they would influence how other residents perceived people of color.

*"There is some awkwardness in the grade school over METCO. My daughter said that the METCO kids were more troublesome and she was concerned it would influence how White people would perceive people of color."*

### Wealth

- A couple of participants expressed that there are different behaviors in Lincoln and surrounding areas that are focused around wealth.

*"We are speaking from a place of privilege. The difference between Weston and Lincoln is that you have rich people in both towns – the rich people in Weston rebuild their kitchens every five years, the rich people in Lincoln rant about how they've had the same stove for 25 years and it works just fine!"*

## Respect for POC

Participants were asked if they feel that people of color are treated fairly and with respect within the Town, and to explain why or why not. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Mixed Experiences

- Participants shared that there are likely mixed experiences from people of color because how people are treated in Lincoln depends on how they are perceived and who they are speaking with.

*"It depends on who you talk to and if they're perceived to be a Lincolnite."*

*"A lot of people in Lincoln think they're doing a good job and a lot of people still have a lot of work to do to figure out how to be welcoming."*

### Not Qualified

- A few participants expressed that they did not feel like they could contribute to this question, as they had not lived the same experiences as people of color.

*"Lincoln likes to think that it's not racist – people try their hardest but there are microaggressions. From a white woman's perspective, people are very nice, but this should be answered by a person of color."*

### No

- Participants provided examples of experiences people of color have had in Lincoln to demonstrate why they do not feel that people of color are being treated fairly.

*"There's people at the end of Lexington who have a swastika on their fence and are incredibly mean to their Chinese neighbors."*

*"A substitute teacher insisted that a kid get on a bus to Boston because they were a person of color."*

## Recommend Living in Lincoln

Participants were asked if they would recommend other people of color to live and work in the Town of Lincoln, and their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Yes

- Participants shared that they would love for Lincoln to become more diverse and would recommend that people of color move to the town.

*“I would love for Lincoln to be more diverse. It would make it a more interesting place the more varied backgrounds we have.”*

- A few participants expressed that they would like for people of color to move into Lincoln to better the town, but was concerned if it is in the best interest for the people of color.

*“For our sake, yes. For their sake, it’s hard to say.”*

## Opportunities for Growth

Participants were asked if they feel that the Town is a place where people of color can progress professionally and economically. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Will Still Struggle

- A couple of participants expressed concern that even if people of color can progress financially in Lincoln, they will still be perceived by the town as a person of color and will still struggle.

*“Even if you have the money, you will still be perceived as a family of color.”*

## Cultural Representation

Participants were asked to describe the representation of different cultures in Town events, arts/culture, and other programs. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### No Effort

- Participants expressed that there is a lack of effort from the Town to plan and promote cultural events.

*“It’s basically an American city in the 1950s. We struggled to get a Pride event or a Juneteenth event. They have a fall fest that is terrific for small families. But no effort behind cultural events. Everyone in Lincoln wants to be ‘pleasant’.”*

*“My husband and I love Lincoln, but we can name its flaws and still love Lincoln. There’s still growing to do.”*



## Confidence in First Responders

Participants were asked to describe how much confidence they have in first responders within the Town to treat people of color and White people equally and with respect. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Individual Basis

- One participant shared that their confidence in first responders is on an individual basis, rather than one level of confidence across all first responders.

*"I know a couple of police officers. It's on an individual basis. Great confidence in the police department overall but individually, maybe not so much."*

### Unsure

- A few participants shared they were unsure on their confidence in first responders because they have not witnessed any experiences between first responders and people of color, but suggested that they would guess that first responders would treat people of color with respect.

*"I would say high confidence, but again, what would I know? I don't know so I have no data. I would just guess that they would."*

## Discrimination Experiences

Participants were asked to describe any experiences they or their household have had where they were denied, excluded, or treated less favorably than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Gender Identity

- Participants shared personal experiences of how they were discriminated against, as well as situations they have witnessed of others being discriminated against, for their gender identity.

*"I'm a woman – educationally and professionally that is well documented, so there is that."*

*"There is a child in town who is trans. On the surface, everyone is supportive, but then they will say, 'Why do her parents let her wear so much makeup? Why do her parents let her wear heels?' They judge her for doing the same things other girls in town are doing."*

### Neurodiverse

- One participant shared how their child who is neurodivergent had been discriminated against by peers and their parents.

*"I have a neurodiverse child and there was a lot of discrimination from peers and peer parents. I felt that others could have done more to be more inclusive of him."*

## Recommended Changes

Participants were asked if they have any recommendations for change to move the Town towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism within the workplace of Town government and overall Town. Below are their suggestions.

- “The work is a journey – it requires continuous work.”
- “How do you get people to come to these sessions with people who need to be there?”
- “Changing systems and policies within Town is by changing how we vote.”
- “If the town is serious about making changes, we have to change how we vote. We can’t continue to say that ‘all voices matter’ or ‘all votes matter’ but we continue to operate in this antiquated system. This system is implicitly biased.”
- “Affordable housing – is the affordable housing currently available really affordable?”
- “There is unintentional exclusionary zoning – allow more housing to allow more diversity.”
- “More houses doesn’t equal diversity because the new houses going up are not affordable.”
- “Schools have a lot of work to do, but it needs to start at the town offices. How do we word things and phrase things? What do we include and not include? Who are we including and excluding by the language we use?”
- “It’s like the chicken and the egg – White residents need more exposure to people of color, but why would people of color move here?”

## Perception of Lincoln

Participants were asked how they believe the Town of Lincoln is perceived by people of color in surrounding cities and towns. Their responses were organized into the following codes.

### Rich

- Participants shared that they believe people of color from surrounding cities likely do not think about Lincoln too much, but if they do, they would think Lincoln is exclusive, rich, and tree-hugging.

*“They probably don’t even think about it – just think that it is where the rich white people live in the country.”*



# APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Focus Group Guide

### Introduction and Purpose

Welcome and thank you for participating in this focus group. My name is [facilitator's name]. We also have my colleague [recorder name], who will be taking notes during our discussion so that we are able to capture your thoughts and experiences. We are with Racial Equity Group and Elite Research, two third-party consulting firms that have been contracted by the Town of Lincoln Government to conduct a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Audit. The goal of this DEI Audit is to help the Town become a community that is committed to embracing and fostering diversity, as well as proactively ensuring that all residents have equal opportunity.

The purpose of this focus group is to identify and understand the lived experiences of the Town of Lincoln's residents and stakeholders, and to discover opportunities to "move the Town forward towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism throughout the Town."

### Ground Rules

Before we begin with the questions, I want to go over a few guidelines for our discussion:

- The first one is, please feel free to share your opinion, even if it differs from what others have said, because there are no wrong or right answers, only different opinions.
- Next, your participation in this focus group is completely voluntary and you may choose only to answer certain questions and you may leave the focus group at any time.
- To help us foster an honest and safe discussion, please do not share what you hear in this focus group with others.
- Lastly, all reporting documents will be de-identified and will not link to any individual who participates in this focus group.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

1. For this first question, what is one word you would use to describe your quality of life in the Town of Lincoln and why? (Ex. If needed: supportive, welcoming, friendly, indifferent, exclusionary, ignored)
  - a. What word would you use to describe your work environment?
2. How do you think people in your town treat people of color?
  - a. How do you think people in your town feels towards White residents?
3. How would you describe the professional activities in the Town of Lincoln?
4. How would you describe the social activities in the Town of Lincoln?
5. What experiences have you had with people of a different race/ethnicity or culture in the Town of Lincoln? (ex. Being treated negatively or positively)
  - a. How do you feel the Town treats people of different racial/cultural groups?
  - b. How do you feel the Town treats people of different income levels?
6. Do you feel that people of color are treated fairly and with respect within the Town? Why or why not?
7. Would you recommend other people of color to live and work in the Town? Why or why not?
8. Do you feel the Town is a place where people of color can progress professionally and economically? Please explain.
9. How would you describe the representation of different cultures in Town events, arts/culture, and other programs?
10. How much confidence do you have in first responders within the Town to treat people of color and White people equally and with respect?

11. What experiences, if any, have you or your household had where you were denied, excluded, or treated less favorably than others because of race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or disability?
12. What changes would you recommend to the Town to move towards integrating inclusion, diversity, equity, and anti-racism within the workplace of Town government?
  - a. What changes would you recommend within the overall Town?
13. How do you believe the Town of Lincoln is perceived by people of color in surrounding cities and towns? Please explain.

This concludes our focus group. We appreciate your time and feedback.

Thank you for your participation!