



# Task Force on Workplace Culture (TFWC) 2022 Annual Report

**Boston University**

---

Email: [hryp@bu.edu](mailto:hryp@bu.edu) or [osdo@bu.edu](mailto:osdo@bu.edu)

Website: <https://www.bu.edu/diversity-officer/our-work/task-force-on-workplace-culture/>

# INTRODUCTION

The Task Force on Workplace Culture (TFWC) was established by President Robert A. Brown in October 2021 and co-chaired by Amanda Bailey, Vice President for Human Resources, and Andrea Taylor, Senior Diversity Officer. This 18-member panel is charged with examining employee perceptions of Boston University's work culture and making recommendations to identify and implement best practices to attract, engage, develop, and retain staff to improve BU's workplace culture.

The Task Force is also charged with assessing BU's DEI initiatives in the context of flexible work arrangements, leadership development and communicating the University's values to address gaps and achieve sustainable improvements in workplace culture. The TFWC has been guided by the University's *2030 Strategic Plan*, primarily in two priority areas: **a) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and b) Community: Big Yet Small**. These priorities influenced the creation of three TFWC subcommittees in FY'22: DEI, Flexible Work, and Leader Development. Although the work of the TFWC will conclude at the end of FY'23, implementation of recommendations will be actionable in FY'24 through constituent groups across campus in consultation with HR and the OSD0.

---

## DEI SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT:

### 2022 Goals

The DEI Subcommittee's goal was to identify all forms of DEI work across BU.

#### **Actions taken to accomplish goals:**

- Determined what DEI work is happening at BU and who is doing it (Paid Practitioners [employees] vs. Volunteer Practitioners)
- Collaborate with the Antiracism Working Group (AWG) to create a questionnaire and gather feedback from practitioners around campus
  - The questionnaire should help us understand if practitioners are doing DEI work as defined by BU
  - If they are not performing DEI work, the subcommittee will explore ways to support them
  - The survey will enable us to determine if practitioners are getting the support needed to accomplish their goals

### Findings

There is currently no comprehensive inventory of all DEI practitioners at BU (i.e., FTEs who perform this work 100% within BU) and minimal awareness of whether the work being done aligns with BU DEI initiatives. There is also a need to identify volunteer practitioners (i.e., FTEs performing DEI work in addition to their full-time job) due to the risk of burnout and potential attrition.

A pilot survey is in progress with the Faculty/Staff Community Network (FSCN) board members, who we believe define the role of a volunteer practitioner at BU for DEI initiatives. This additional responsibility coincided with the pandemic's start when their full-time jobs increased in intensity and stress. For these reasons, this group will guide the criteria to identify additional volunteer practitioners dedicated to DEI initiatives across BU. The survey pilot will be administered by interviewing 16-30 FSCN board members, including current and ex-officio board members.

- The timeline is 3-4 weeks for survey distribution
- 2 weeks for data review among subcommittee members
- Findings are tentatively scheduled to be presented in November 2022

## Next Steps

After data from the pilot is shared with the TFWC co-chairs, we will reach out to the broader University community in late 2022. We will begin by focusing on specific units and departments to administer it as follows:

- Split groups into two sections: paid and volunteer practitioners. Separating practitioners into sections will allow us to adapt our surveys as needed.
- We will follow a similar timeline as our pilot survey.
- As we survey participants, we will update the DEI practitioner list (categorized by volunteer and paid practitioners) to ensure we identify BU staff performing this work. We will also note if they engage with additional work unrelated to their jobs to DEI initiatives at BU.

---

## **FLEXIBLE WORK SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT:**

### 2022 Goals

The Flexible Work Subcommittee's goals were: 1) to identify how staff perceives current remote work options and understand why remote work is important to them; and 2) hear from staff not eligible for remote work and identify other work options that may be extended to them.

### Recommendations

The Flexible Work Subcommittee recommends these additional work schedule options and alternative work locations to be considered by the University. There should also be training opportunities for management and staff to understand each option and how each can be implemented to establish a more flexible work environment. Lastly, we recommend that the definitions be added to the remote work guidelines, the University's employee handbook, and relevant University policies. Before any recommendation is adopted, BU must consider how productivity among teams will be managed successfully.

- **Compressed work weeks** are arrangements where full-time hours are still worked but are condensed into fewer days. Employees may prefer this arrangement since it allows for a three-day weekend rather than having two days off. Or, staff can break the working week up and fit in other tasks. This arrangement creates a better work/life balance, retaining staff who might otherwise look elsewhere for the flexibility they need.
- **Flextime** is an arrangement where employees and their supervisors work together in selecting start and end times as long as the total number of expected work hours are met. This arrangement is particularly useful in reducing commute times and provides flexibility for employees with other commitments, such as dropping off or picking up children to and from school.
- **Shiftwork** is an arrangement where the workday is divided into multiple shifts, meaning different groups of employees will carry out their duties at different times. This may benefit employees who cannot work remotely. This arrangement is an effective method to avoid putting undue stress on the workforce.
- **Hybrid work** is an arrangement where the work can be done in the office and offsite, emphasizing how employees work instead of where. This arrangement aims to create a happier, harder-working workforce through greater autonomy and better well-being.

### Next Steps

- Our focus for FY'23 is to continue to analyze the all-staff survey to determine critical areas of flexible work enhancements and identify areas of improvement for staff who do not have remote or hybrid work options currently.

- Continue researching how we can make BU more equitable for all staff regarding flexible work.
- Identify training opportunities for management and staff to learn about the implementation of additional, approved flexible work practices.
- Develop an action plan for senior leadership to consider various work scheduling options that align with BU's operational, business, and customer service needs and the employee's personal and/or professional scheduling interests.
- Communicate back to the BU community.

---

## **LEADER DEVELOPMENT SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT:**

### **2022 Goals**

The Leader Development Subcommittee's goal is to recommend institutional measures to identify a set of core leadership principles.

### **Recommendations**

The subcommittee's recommendations create uniformity of expectations across all leaders at BU. In the context of our recommendations, we refer to the leadership life cycle, which encompasses all stages of an individual's leadership journey. Our recommendations do not only pertain to those who manage people; they are for all employees who may lead – or plan to lead – projects, people, initiatives, or units.

- **BU should establish a core set of leadership principles that are applicable to employees at all levels of the leadership life cycle.** Leadership principles set clear expectations for behaviors and conduct exhibited by leaders in the organization. Without a set of principles to which all leaders adhere, BU staff may have vastly different experiences as employees at the same institution. Adopting a core set of leadership principles will help to provide employees with a clear framework for becoming a leader at BU, thus hopefully reducing some of the advancement uncertainty.
- **BU should provide consistent training and professional development opportunities to employees at all levels of the leadership life cycle.** Fostering an environment of leader success will necessitate new and rising leaders to acclimate to BU's culture and its core principles and will require ongoing leader development to meet outlined success factors. These training and development opportunities should fill significant gaps to improve operational excellence and staff morale. We recommend a three-pronged approach:
  - Require leader development onboarding for all new employees managing individuals or teams.
  - Increase institutional support for mid-level, senior, and executive leaders:
    - Establish required refresher courses for leaders to move to the next management level.
    - Create leader networks and learning communities that draw from the schools, colleges, academic, and administrative units to help facilitate the onboarding of new employees and integrate them fully into the BU community.
  - Establish a suite of trainings leaders may elect to enroll in as part of their professional development plans.
- **BU leaders should develop and practice the competencies necessary for fostering an inclusive work environment.** To support a culture of inclusive leadership, we recommend:
  - Adopting a 360-review process for employees managing individuals or teams. Individual staff members can then provide candid feedback on their immediate supervisor and other mid- or senior-level leader with whom they regularly interact.

- Conducting an annual BU climate survey and sharing relevant results with leaders across the institution with the aim of ongoing development and improvement.
- **BU should implement robust training and ongoing guidance related to hybrid and flexible work for all employees managing individuals and teams.** Although the University recently adopted hybrid work for many of its staff members, we have not equipped supervisors with appropriate training and ongoing support to oversee hybrid and flexible teams.
  - We recommend that the Leader Development subcommittee work closely with the Flexible Work subcommittee to formulate training opportunities and guidance for all supervisors regardless of whether they oversee remote/hybrid staff or teams or essential employees who are unable to work remotely. We believe this guidance should be shared with all other employees as well.

## **Next Steps**

Following the approval of these recommendations, the Leader Development subcommittee looks forward to implementing recommendations with various constituents across BU's community.

---

## **LOOKING FORWARD**

Following the President's review, the co-chairs will brief executive and senior leaders of the subcommittees' recommendations. Approved recommendations will be shared with members of the TFWC with the goal of creating action plans in FY'24 and identifying respective constituent groups to implement the recommendations.