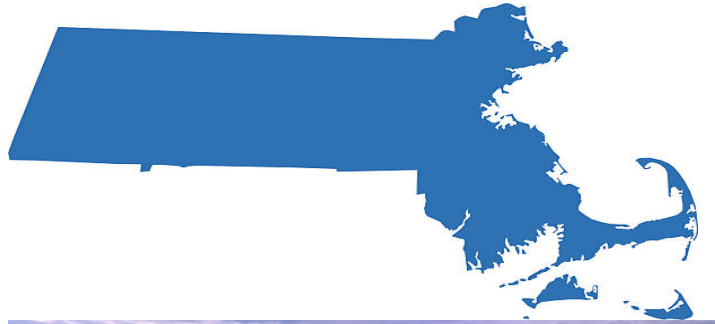


***Changing Negative  
Public Attitudes  
within the Greater  
Boston Area:*** A Policy  
Analysis for the AACA



Team F: Jamie Ruchser, Sophara Eang, Matthew Dornemann, Jiayue Zou, Christina Komar

# ***Changing Negative Public Attitudes within the Greater Boston Area:***

## **Policy Analysis and Recommendations**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit lesser developed and marginalized communities the hardest regarding pandemic-related financial difficulties, disputes about public health measures, and health-related trauma. The world shut down, with the economy crashing and businesses shutting their doors, while many people suffered the hardships of negative health issues including COVID fatigue. The U.S. government provided a federal economic response, and these emergency measures trickled down to local communities. An additional issue and an area of significant concern regarding the impact of COVID-19 is the social impact of the issue. This goes beyond economic impact and is reflected close to home, especially in Boston. A useful tool to address social inequities and issues from COVID-19, including discrimination, is via public policy.

An effective and multifaceted policy to assist in improving negative public attitudes within the Greater Boston area that some members of the public hold about the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community is key to attaining equity for members of this community who have long had to battle against discrimination and unfair treatment. Negative public attitudes have increased against the AAPI community since the onset of COVID-19. Organizations such as the Pew Research Center have documented how this hate can cause trauma for AAPI individuals.

The Asian American Civic Association (AACA) provides the Asian Business Training and Mentorship program (ABTM) to aid small business owners within the AAPI community in the Greater Boston area. The AACA is uniquely positioned to foster equity, equality, and collaboration within this community. By increasing resources and awareness, the AACA can help combat negative opinions directed toward the AAPI community while expanding its cultural and entrepreneurial landscape.

To attain equity and equality, it is recommended that AACA partner with a government representative to lobby for more culturally and linguistically sensitive mental health services for AAPIs within the Greater Boston area; to supplement this recommendation, a hybrid option of increased social media presence from the AACA and a strengthened working relationship with Northeastern University is also encouraged to improve negative public attitudes.

# **I. THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION**

## **Defining AAPI Discrimination and Negative Public Attitudes**

Since the founding of the United States, minority groups, women and various immigrant groups have faced discrimination and negative public attitudes. This trend has unfortunately continued into the 21st century. Depending on social and political contexts; people in power can further exacerbate negative public sentiment against marginalized people. The AAPI community as a specific example has faced discrimination, which has reached high levels during wartime or socio-political conflicts throughout history.

For example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first significant law to restrict immigration to the United States via bans on immigration of Chinese laborers<sup>9</sup>. To reiterate, war and national security threats can spark fear from government officials; in response to the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, former President Franklin D Roosevelt issued an executive order to place Japanese-Americans in internment camps<sup>10</sup>. This goes beyond discrimination and is a civil and human rights violation. Still, this act illustrated the ability of American leaders to impact public sentiment about a minority group (fear of Japanese-Americans).

Fast-forward to 2022, and negative stereotypes about the AAPI community still exist today. These include but are not limited to Asian people as hard workers, Asian people as members of a “model minority,” and Asian people as consistently following rules without complaint<sup>12</sup>. While some stereotypes against AAPI members could be framed as “positive” traits, events that unfold within other countries on the international stage can impact the perception of AAPI members in pernicious ways. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has also negatively impacted the perception of AAPI community members by many members of the public who do not identify themselves as AAPI.

The word “discrimination” comes from a Latin term meaning “to divide” or “to separate”<sup>6</sup>. The denotative definition of discrimination is defined from two perspectives. Firstly, discrimination is “treating a person or particular group of people differently, especially in a worse way than how you treat other people, because of their skin color”<sup>3</sup>. Secondly, discrimination can simply mean to “see the difference” between two things or people<sup>3</sup>. It is important to consider the etymology and the denotative definitions of discrimination because the root of the word is separating groups of people. The practice of discrimination is to negatively treat AAPI members as the “other” due to race.

A “negative public attitude” is a mental, internal form of discrimination. The factor differentiating a negative public attitude from discrimination is that bias is measurable because the government or a third party (community member, engaged citizen, etc.) can identify it. In contrast, a negative public attitude is a personally held belief that is more private.

### **Causes of Discrimination and Negative Public Attitudes against the AAPI community**

The main reason for negative public sentiment against the AAPI community within the Greater Boston area is the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pew Research Center cites reasons for a rise in violence against Asian Americans, including rhetoric from Donald Trump and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbating negative public attitudes. A respondent stated, “People mistakenly assume that all Asians are of Chinese origin and that China was responsible for the start of the Coronavirus”<sup>8</sup>. While there are endless causes and motivations for individuals to discriminate against an AAPI community member, this analysis will focus on the COVID-19 pandemic as a catalyst for discrimination.

Additionally, a Pew Research Center survey from 2021 highlighted that causes of discrimination included but are not limited to scapegoating the entire group for the pandemic and the normalization of racism and bullying by the previous Trump administration<sup>8</sup>. National communications impact public attitudes within local communities. For example, former President Trump honed in on COVID-19’s origins from China and referenced the virus as “kung flu,” an inappropriate and disparaging remark. He also described the virus as the “China virus” or “Wuhan flu,” again emphasizing that “China” as an entity is a scapegoat. This connection trickles down to Chinese individuals and even other AAPI-identifying persons.

Boston Indicators, via research from the Pew Research Center, emphasized that 8 out of 10 Asian Americans say that violence against them is increasing <sup>1</sup>. To reiterate, the policy recommendations within this report will focus on COVID-19 as the independent variable for causes of discrimination and negative public attitudes against the AAPI community within the Greater Boston area.

### **Impacts of Discrimination and Negative Public Attitudes**

The American Psychological Association examined COVID-19-related discrimination in five southern cities (Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, Houston, and New Orleans) and found that discrimination produced negative impacts including psychological distress and trouble with sleep patterns. Their study did confirm high rates of COVID-19 discrimination in the U.S. south. A novel impact that discrimination has on AAPI communities that this study discussed is the concept of “heightened vigilance.” Heightened vigilance is when an individual mentally prepares for discriminatory events before leaving their home; this type of discrimination is the only kind

that negatively impacts sleep within the study. It is a commonsense perspective that discrimination will hurt an individual's mental health, but this 2022 study is included to further emphasize the relevance in the present. The pandemic is a public health issue, but AAPI communities also face this added mental health issue and mental health ailments that the entire population faces, such as depression or anxiety<sup>5</sup>.

### **Discrimination and Negative Public Attitudes within the Greater Boston area**

The Congressional Research Service highlighted that while media outlets have reported increasing possible hate crimes against the AAPI community, the data can be challenging to obtain and analyze due to underreporting. For instance, victims of hate crimes often do not report their stories to the police; even if a victim of a hate crime reports the incident to their local police, the local police may not be able to forward this information to the FBI per jurisdictional issues and disagreements about what qualifies as a hate crime<sup>4</sup>. Due to a lack of effective channels for reporting, the nonprofit Stop AAPI hate created a channel through which to self-report hate crimes and recorded approximately “2,800 self-reported hate incidents against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders from March 19, 2020, through the end of 2020”<sup>4</sup>.

A profile of AAPI communities within Greater Boston described how negative public attitudes from the pandemic had impacted AAPI residents. For example, the report emphasized the mental health and racial trauma components that are at the forefront of conversations due to COVID-19. Furthermore, it is challenging to measure a “negative public attitude,” but the anecdotal and qualitative evidence from Boston Indicators illustrates how the pandemic has taken a toll on this community. Boston Indicators emphasized how the Pew Research Survey regarding discrimination was conducted in English and thus probably understates the realities of AAPI discrimination. The report also showcased the economic hardships of the pandemic on this community, including revenue losses and hardship layoffs, which add stress to the current environment.<sup>2</sup>

## II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The above research highlights that the explicit goal is a matter of equity and equality. America was built on the foundation of immigration and opportunity for all who seek it. However, recent events and systemic oppression have created a socio-political climate that lacks the equity and opportunity that this nation was built upon. The research and analysis of the data above emphasize that discrimination and negative public attitudes directed towards the AAPI community present a national problem that needs to be addressed at the local level, within the Greater Boston area. The overarching goal is to promote cultural inclusion and foster an equitable environment for AAPI-owned business in the Greater Boston area, as social and economic issues overlap. To achieve this, it is critical to address the implicit goals of dismantling unfavorable attitudes, amending negative public opinions regarding the AAPI community, and ensuring that this community has the necessary resources to support a future of cultural and economic success. The following objectives address this issue:

1. **Foster collaboration;** Fostering collaboration with other organizations, institutions, or government bodies can promote a more cohesive cultural environment that will lead to the formation of like-minded coalitions. This could strengthen economic endeavors and other culture-based initiatives in the future.
2. **Connect business and culture;** Cultural diversity and economic affluence are not mutually exclusive. In fact, there is strong economic value in diversity, especially in metropolitan areas. Bridging the gap between business and culture can encourage more open-minded and culturally aware attitudes.
3. **Promote the expansion of news and information;** Through news outlets and social media, promoting the expansion of AAPI-related news and information could better inform the public regarding AAPI culture, community affairs and current issues.
4. **Increase resources;** Increase resources that promote public education via university, social media, or lobbying initiatives, promotes awareness of cultural issues, including discrimination and negative public attitudes that AAPI communities have to combat daily. Additionally, marketing and social media tools can assist in reaching broader, more diverse audiences.

### **III. ALTERNATIVES/ POLICY OPTIONS**

#### **1. Maintain the Current Policy (Status Quo)**

It is fundamental to preserve the current policies and programs that the Asian American Civic Association (AACA) provides to the AAPI community. These include but are not limited to education, employment and training opportunities, and a multi-service center to link community members to social-service resources. Continuing with the status quo catalyzes to achieve the goal and objective, which is to promote equity and equality in the Greater Boston area. In other words, AACA has remarkably contributed to the AAPI community through education, empowerment, and employment; maintaining the status quo would mean no recommendation of organizational or policy change within AACA. Per the focus group session from March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in which Northeastern students listened to some of the members of the business training program, students learned firsthand how AACA is successful and popular; therefore, this policy option would not change the status quo that AACA provides.

#### **2. Facilitate Better Mental Health Resources for AAPI Community**

Mental illness does not discriminate based on gender, culture, race, or ethnicity. However, language and cultural barriers can prevent the AAPI community from receiving the proper services and care for mental health treatment within the Greater Boston area. Therefore, this policy option recommends that the AACA partner with the ABTM and community-based organizations like the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA). The Chinese Progressive Association has extensive capacity to lobby Beacon Hill and the Mayor's Office for culturally and linguistically sensitive behavioral health services. Additionally, this option includes the steps of communicating, partner, and advocating. Firstly, AACA with its partner, the Chinese Progressive Association, must communicate the need to the legislative branch of government for linguistically and culturally sensitive mental health services. Next, AACA and the CPA will partner with members on Beacon Hill to advocate for these mental health needs. Legislative and executive branch figures have immense power, platforms, and communication abilities to change negative public attitudes. These public figures are adept at reaching out to the broader public to change opinions that the public holds about communities that face hardships or stigma.



### **3. Strengthen Institutional Relationship between Northeastern University and AACA**

Another policy option would be to strengthen the institutional relationship between the AACA and an institution of higher learning (university) within the Greater Boston area, specifically Northeastern University. If not already accomplished, it is vital to strengthen the AACA's presence on NUWorks by attaining the university's approval to post unpaid internship/unpaid co-op roles in partnership with AACA. These roles would supplement the volunteer internships listed on the AACA's website, including but not limited to journalism, translation, or graphic design. When a user is searching on NUWorks, the AACA is listed as an organization, but there are no job postings. The recommendation is to obtain university approval to post these jobs, which should not be too much of a hurdle to overcome as the roles would be unpaid. This policy option fosters collaboration and connects the policy themes of communication, engagement and culture. Additionally, it can potentially change negative public attitudes since interns can work on attaining the goal of changing negative public attitudes (public relations measures, journalism stories about AAPI community members that frame these members in a positive light). Northeastern students will be motivated to assist the AACA as it increases work experience and provides networking opportunities.

### **4. Strengthen the Presence of AAPI Businesses and Organizations on Social Media**

The advancement of new technology has been critical in shaping the influence of social media, especially with platforms like TikTok and Instagram. Social media facilitates the ability to share opinions and information in real-time through digital platforms. Strengthening the presence of the AACA and AAPI stories through social media utilizes social media platforms to increase visibility. Promoting Asian-American culture on social media in a consistent way has the power to change negative public attitudes. Further examples of ideas for this include posting about Asian holidays, putting up Asian cultural quizzes and contests, or rewarding the audience with relevant prizes like discounts/free trials in Asian-American businesses. This engagement sparks opportunities for Asian-American collaboration among the AAPI community.

To implement this idea in a way that changes negative public attitudes, it is important to follow a specific plan of action. Firstly, the AACA should hire a social media intern to increase the AACA's presence on Twitter and Instagram; upon review of the AACA's social media platforms, it is evident that many of the posts are outdated. On the volunteer portion of the AACA website, there is no role of a social media intern specifically, which is essential to

have. The intern would be unpaid and would have a structured, consistent schedule to engage other prominent social media accounts and post about what AACA has to offer the community specifically. The intern could also create a new social media account (via TikTok) about “AAPI stories” and post them to increase visibility of AAPI individuals within the community. Further, the intern could engage the public with livestreaming and focus on positive and nonpartisan posts.

## **5. AACA Community Nights**

The AACA should not host its own “community night” as there are too many rivalries within different ethnic factions and cultural groups. However, it is recommended that the AACA partners with the Asian Community Fund to host cultural events to connect AAPI and non-AAPI community members. These community nights would focus on major AAPI holidays or cultural events such as Lunar New Year and invite non-AAPI members to attend the celebration, to change negative public attitudes about the AAPI community. Ethnic, religious, and cultural organizations have already successfully implemented this idea. For example, Muslim organizations, such as the Islamic Society of Central Florida, promote Muslim celebratory events like the end of Ramadan and invite non-Muslims to attend; the gathering focuses on bridging cultural gaps, education about the holiday, food sharing, and completing trivia about the holiday for both fun and education. Coalition building, network building, and co-production are key in changing negative public attitudes and the community night idea fosters this approach.

## **IV. CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING ALTERNATIVES**

### **1. Political feasibility**

Political feasibility measures how popular the policy option is with the client (AACA).

### **2. Cost**

Each analysis must include a detailed cost assessment throughout all policy options. The cost criterion considers how much the policy options would cost regarding money.

### **3. Effectiveness**

Effectiveness of the policy option means achieving measurable objectives.

### **4. Sustainability**

This criterion estimates how policy options drive in the short term, which also impacts the needs of future or long-term results. Sustainability indicates the implication of policy options that allow communities to encounter demands and contribute to the necessities of the next generation.

### **5. Administrative feasibility**

Administrative feasibility determines how likely the AACA can implement the policy option and deliver the program well without cumbersome bureaucracy.

## Analytical Matrix

**\*\* “Low” ranking means low feasibility, not a lesser cost**

|   | Political Feasibility | Cost          | Effectiveness | Sustainability | Administrative Feasibility |
|---|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Status Quo</b>   | <u>Medium</u>         | <u>High</u>   | <u>Low</u>    | <u>Low</u>     | <u>High</u>                |
| <b>Community Nights</b>   | <u>Medium</u>         | <u>Medium</u> | <u>Low</u>    | <u>Medium</u>  | <u>Low</u>                 |
| <b>Mental Health Partnership</b>  | <u>Medium</u>         | <u>Low</u>    | <u>High</u>   | <u>High</u>    | <u>Medium</u>              |
| <b>Strengthen Institutional Relationship between AACA and Northeastern University</b> | <u>High</u>           | <u>Medium</u> | <u>Medium</u> | <u>Medium</u>  | <u>High</u>                |
| <b>Strengthen the presence of AAPI businesses and organizations on social media</b>   | <u>Medium</u>         | <u>Medium</u> | <u>Medium</u> | <u>High</u>    | <u>Low</u>                 |

## V. EVALUATION OF OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES

### Status Quo

Maintaining the status quo would be cost-effective and easy (high administrative feasibility), but this would not effectively implement any change. Thus, the status quo option is the least effective. Per the focus group sample, it is clear that Mr. Goldberg’s program has fostered a successful relationship with AAPI entrepreneurs and this relationship has produced success within the community. However, the focus of the policy analysis is the increase in negative public attitudes due to the COVID pandemic and maintaining the status quo would not be effective in changing anything within the current context; “effectiveness” is an important criterion, and the low rank of the effectiveness of the status quo is not a compelling option.

Effectiveness should take the stage in the evaluation of policy options. If the policy option implemented is effective, it is possible to improve negative public attitudes directed toward the AAPI community and thus make the community a more equitable place for AAPI individuals. Within the broader community, equity of treatment is a goal to strive towards, and

maintaining the status quo does not connect to this goal. Within the matrix, the sustainability ranking is defined as how equitable outcomes are reflected in this analysis. For instance, if the policy option is “sustainable” it will provide a lasting and equitable benefit to future generations; maintaining the status quo does not connect to the amelioration of the problem statement within the research question, which is changing negative public attitudes. For this reason, it is not sustainable.

### **Community Nights**

In addition to the low ranking of the effectiveness of the status quo, the policy option of community nights also has a low order of effectiveness. Due to the high cost and insufficient administrative feasibility, it will be challenging and time-consuming to successfully facilitate community nights and thus this option is not effective. To reiterate, effectiveness is the ability to achieve measurable objectives such as changing negative public attitudes. While this is hard to measure directly, it is clear that the challenge of administering community nights with AAPI cultural rivalries in mind is not quite sustainable or effective.

Additionally, legitimate concerns about catching COVID at an in-person community night are valid and are not sustainable for the long term. This option is ranked as a medium because the future of COVID and in-person gatherings is uncertain and the public's response to these novel circumstances. While costs to run a community night would not be insurmountable, there are costs to consider such as adequate event space and food preparation/delivery for a gathering; the high cost connects directly to administrative feasibility in that this could burden the AACA in addition to the bureaucratic perspective of getting approval to run the event in the first place.

### **Mental Health Partnership**

Suppose a successful legislative partnership is implemented between the AACA and a government/community (Chinese Progressive Association) representative regarding lobbying for more culturally effective mental health services. In that case, this could, unfortunately, be costly. This is because many aspects of mental health care, including culturally or linguistically sensitive mental health services, are very expensive. However, this option has high sustainability because improving the mental health of one generation has a direct positive impact on the next generation. Visibility of the lobbying initiative can change negative public attitudes about the AAPI community. It highlights how cultural or pandemic-related issues have impacted mental health, which is relatable to many even outside of the AAPI circle.

However, administrative feasibility would be challenging because government processes have significant bureaucracy, and any legislative initiative can take time to implement. For this

reason, administrative feasibility does not have a high rank. Despite this, a lobbying initiative has a goal list that can be easily defined and clear, achieving measurable objectives for the community. Further, political feasibility (popularity within the AAPI community via AACA) is ranked as a medium because some people distrust government, which was also highlighted from the qualitative focus group evidence. For instance, there was an anecdotal example regarding distrust in government about loans and this distrust could transfer to partnering with a public figure to lobby for more effective mental health services.

### **Strengthening Institutional Relationship Between Northeastern and AACA**

Since the AACA has already been working with Northeastern, this option provides high political feasibility as the working relationships have already been established. However, they can be strengthened in the environment of high administrative feasibility because bureaucratic hurdles of establishing a relationship have already been surpassed. One could argue that the policy has medium effectiveness and sustainability. It would be relatively challenging to achieve measurable objectives via the use of interns/co-ops as they generally lack experience. While young and motivated people can provide a refreshing perspective, the goal of changing negative public attitudes is no easy task. Even with the students assisting with graphic design, social media, or other necessary tasks, the process could be cumbersome as it is a learning experience for them while they are attempting to achieve measurable objectives.

It is important to note that there would be quite low costs to attain additional undergraduate or even graduate help as the students would be essentially working without pay in exchange for obtaining work experience and the ability to put this experience on their resume. Further, students have access to feedback from professors who have high credentials in their field and can provide helpful insight to the organization at a lower cost than if the AACA were to hire an outside consultant. Since the working relationship is already established, individuals with Northeastern affiliation who have already worked with AACA can even serve as liaisons to teach more students about how to help with AACA's goals.

### **Strengthening AACA's Presence on Social Media**

The current AACA social media landscape is not sustainable, negatively impacting future generations. However, it is essential to note that administrative feasibility is low because it is time-consuming and tedious to run multiple social media accounts in a way that changes negative public attitudes. This endeavor could be similar to a public relations campaign, which is no easy task. It can be a bit challenging to reach a target audience via social media as trends are always constantly changing in addition to the most popular social media outlet at any given time, which is why effectiveness has secured a ranking of medium. For example, TikTok has recently

become a key social media tool for younger generations, which changes the game entirely in terms of how a brand, organization, or company communicates a message to a broader audience. An added challenge to this concept is that some people do not even use social media, so the message would not reach this audience.

Luckily, costs would be relatively low to run social media. In addition, social media is the future, and changing negative public attitudes via social media is incredibly sustainable for future generations as social media is not going away. Therefore, social media is a crucial tool to improve the AACCA's presence and perception of the AAPI community and is ranked as highly sustainable. As the saying goes, the medium is the message, and social media is the medium for the current moment and for the future to change negative public attitudes.

## VI. TRADEOFFS EVALUATION

Maintaining the status quo is both politically and administratively feasible and poses a low cost to the organization. However, if the AACA wishes to expand their outreach and foster collaboration, this option displays low effectiveness and is ultimately unsustainable for organizational growth. This option also poses low effectiveness in combating negative opinions directed toward the AAPI community. In tandem with the goals and objectives displayed earlier, effectiveness presents itself as the most influential criterion. Even though the status quo presents and generally scores high on the matrix, it presents low effectiveness compared with other options such as a more substantial presence on social media or lobbying for cultural and linguistic behavioral health services. Trading effectiveness for convenience is not a recommended compromise.

On the other hand, lobbying Beacon Hill and the Mayor's Office for culturally and linguistically sensitive behavioral health services presents somewhat difficult feasibility. Still, this option would greatly benefit the community. This option would provide adequate and necessary services in response to recent negative attitudes, opinions, and actions towards the AAPI community; it is clear that the community, through recent protests regarding increases in AAPI hate, is generally concerned about this topic. This option acknowledges the problem, which is a crucial first step in reparative planning. Formal acknowledgment paired with an active and equitable response from City Hall would raise awareness, ultimately the necessary first step towards combating negative attitudes and increasing the public's knowledge of the AAPI community and AAPI owned businesses.

By today's technological paradigm, a strong presence on social media is imperative for any business or social campaign. Social media is the fastest and most direct way to share news and information. It is difficult for an organization to change public attitudes and opinions if no one knows about the organization; it is difficult to do much of anything if no one knows about the organization. The AACA and subsequent ABTM program operate modest accounts with low activity on most social media platforms. Strengthening the organization's presence on all platforms will increase visibility and expand the outreach of news and information regarding the organization and the program. By reaching a broader audience and continuously sharing valuable information, the AACA is in a solid place to facilitate increased empathy and education, which can lead to combating negative opinions of the AAPI community. Many organizations also foster collaboration through connections made on social media; expanding the AACA's presence across multiple platforms will also lead to potential cooperation in other sectors. The ABTM



program should also facilitate a strong social media presence for its alumni so as to further spread information and foster an expanded community of collaboration. Hiring a full-time social media liaison would present an added cost to the organization. However, filling this position with energized interns or co-op participants would help alleviate such costs; therefore, the high cost is a fair trade for the effectiveness of this policy option.

## VII. RECOMMENDATION

Discrimination and negative public attitudes are motivated by many causes, which is why more than one policy solution is recommended for the AACA to implement. The policy recommendation is to strive for the mental health partnership AND to utilize a hybrid option of strengthening the institutional relationship with Northeastern while simultaneously increasing the presence of the AACA on social media.

Negative public attitudes within the Greater Boston area are a grassroots issue; thus, local legislative partnerships and organizing via the Chinese Progressive Association is the first recommendation. Lobbying for more culturally and linguistically sensitive behavioral health services will foster a mutually beneficial collaboration, address the primary issue, and provide the AAPI community with needed resources.

Secondly, the hybrid option of partnering with Northeastern University and NUworks to fill the role of a social media manager with an intern or co-op participant will alleviate costs to the AACA and foster a continued relationship between the University and the organization. An increased presence on social media will provide an opportunity to better share news and information regarding the AAPI community, which will ultimately aid in combating negative opinions directed toward this community.

## APPENDIX

Focus Group – March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Between AACA Business Training & Mentorship Program Alumni and Students from the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, Northeastern University

### Key Takeaways:

- Most of the ABTM alumni who participated in the focus group found out about the program through referrals and organization outreach.
- None of the participants found out about the program via social media.
- Participants cited new friendships, connections and sense of community as one the most impactful takeaways from the program.
- Participants referenced complex relations between the US and China, particularly during the Trump administration, as negatively affecting the AAPI community.
- Participants also referenced the COVID-19 pandemic as creating economic and cultural tension for their businesses.
- Some participants referenced government aid in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic but no one referenced a local community support system
- Participants expressed regrets for not taking bigger risks when first starting their businesses.
- Participants cited unemployment and staff shortages due to pandemic related restrictions and inflation as the most debilitating tensions of the past two years.
- Participants cited a “lack of opportunity” within the AAPI community since the onset of the pandemic.
- Participants cited a lack of clear information and misinformation as the biggest challenge in acquiring necessary resources.
- Participants expressed short-term interest in stabilizing their business post pandemic, and long-term goals of expansion.
- Participants noted that there is a lot of diversity within the AAPI community and individual cultural needs should be recognized

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[Download ACF\\_Presentation\\_20210522.pptx](#)

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