

**Municipality Of Chatham-Kent**  
**Human Resources and Organizational Development**  
**Corporate Services**  
**Information Report**

**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Rebecca Haskell-Thomas, Coordinator, Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion  
**Date:** January 24, 2022  
**Subject:** Municipal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

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This report is for the information of Council.

**Background**

This report relates to 1ii and 2e of the following motion approved by Council at the April, 26, 2021 Council meeting:

That:

“1. This recommendation report and its two recommended areas of action to address the human and social impacts of COVID-19 be accepted:

- i. Continue to strengthen key determinants of health; and
- ii. Establish and implement a Municipal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategy.

Administration be directed to:

- a. Move forward with planning and implementing actions to address the areas identified in this report, including formal consultation with the Community Response and Recovery Strategy Social Planning Tables and any other groups required to ensure community engagement;
- b. Support current and future conversations with the area’s Urban Indigenous people;
- c. Support strategic and education sessions with Council to prioritize action items;
- d. Update Council on progress and identified needs moving forward; and
- e. Dedicate human resources to operationalize a Municipal DEI Strategy, specifically, hire a Diversity Equity and Inclusion Coordinator to be housed within Corporate Services of the Municipality for a period of 2 years, to be funded from the OW corporate initiatives reserve.”

The Coordinator began a 2-year term in November of 2021, and an Intern of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, funded through new graduate grants, started in late November 2021 for a 1-year term. The Coordinator and Intern are housed within the Corporate Services department in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.

## **Comments**

### **What is Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?**

**Diversity:** At an individual level, diversity describes the unique qualities, experiences, and characteristics we all have. In our workforce, diversity refers to having a range of perspectives, experiences, talents, skills, and abilities. It can also refer to the demographic mix of people, including characteristics like ethnicity, culture, place of origin, geographic location, religion, spirituality, immigrant and newcomer status, education, income, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and age.

**Equity:** Equity is about fairness and justice. It is achieved through identifying and understanding who has been marginalized, how and why, including looking at root causes and systemic barriers, then taking targeted actions to address current and historical inequities through policies, processes, and practices.

Equity is not about treating everyone the same (equally). An equitable approach recognizes that we need to treat people differently to achieve the same outcome. In other words, it is about recognizing inequities - that people have different experiences and advantages or disadvantages, based on their various social identities - and working to address the causes of those inequities.

**Inclusion:** In inclusive environments, everyone is treated fairly, valued for who they are, and has opportunities to be included in core decision making. An inclusive environment provides opportunities for people connected to socially marginalized groups to participate, contribute, and be engaged at all levels of the organization and to authentically be themselves.<sup>1</sup> Inclusive environments contrast models where all workers are expected to conform to pre-established organizational values and norms. A common pitfall organization's experience is focusing on diversity with less attention paid to inclusion. Both are critical to success.

### **Why are Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Important?**

Our existing systems and structures have resulted in under-representation and inequities for specific groups of people. Municipal decision-making, policies, processes, and services can contribute to unequal access to opportunities, resources, employment, and other '[social determinants](#)' that support health and wellbeing at an individual and community level. People most at-risk of being excluded and experiencing inequities include those who identify as or who are:

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<sup>1</sup> Shore, L., Cleveland, J., and Sanchez, D. (2018). Inclusive Workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, 29.

- Indigenous, including First Nations, Inuit, and Métis
- In non-Christian faith-based groups
- 2SLGBTQ+
- Immigrants or newcomers
- Living with disabilities
- Living in poverty
- Racialized
- Women
- Francophones
- Older adults
- Youth<sup>2</sup>

### Legislative Requirements & Agreements

Municipalities have legislated duties to protect specific groups (including those listed above) from discrimination and to prevent direct or indirect exclusion or preference of a specific group of people. These legislated duties can be found in the following:

- [Ontario Human Rights Code](#)
- [Ontario Human Rights Code – Policy on Ableism and Discrimination based on Disability](#)
- [Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act](#)
- [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#)
- [Canadian Human Rights Act](#)
- [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

In addition, several policies and agreements set out requirements, recommendations, and frameworks for Indigenous-Municipal governance, land use, and relationships, including:

- Treaties (locally [Treaty 2 or the McKee Purchase](#))<sup>3</sup>
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- [Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action](#)
- [National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice](#)

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<sup>2</sup> City for All Women Initiative. (2015). *Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities*. [https://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web\\_0.pdf](https://www.cawi-ivtf.org/sites/default/files/publications/advancing-equity-inclusion-web_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Treaties are legally binding agreements that form the basis of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, set out rules of governance, and land use. Although most were signed more than a century ago, Treaties still apply today. In addition to being familiar with written Treaty documents, it is important to understand what was said, done, and/or exchanged when Treaties were created. Symbolic records like Wampum Belts and oral histories provide insight about the spirit or intent of Treaty agreements that may not be reflected in written form. For more information see: [Treaties | ontario.ca](#)

Locally, authors of a recent environmental scan of Urban Indigenous Services in Chatham-Kent made several recommendations to support mainstream organizations to provide culturally relevant programs and services for Urban Indigenous Peoples, including recommendations specific to the Municipality of Chatham-Kent.<sup>4</sup> As a foundation, the authors called on mainstream organizations to build relationships with and learn from Indigenous partners to better understand Indigenous worldviews, ways of knowing and being. These and other recommendations will be incorporated into the DEI Strategy.

### Alignment with Municipal Policies & Plans

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent, like many organizations, has a Respectful Workplace Policy and Program that aims to provide a workplace free from discrimination and harassment and promote respect and dignity. The Municipal Code of Conduct reinforces the principles set out in the Respectful Workplace policy. In addition, The Municipality of Chatham-Kent has engaged in ongoing efforts related to accessibility and inclusion. A diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy will build on and support these existing policies and initiatives.

Promoting and embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in our work aligns with and supports several existing priorities and strategies in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, including, but not limited to CK Plan 2035 and 2018-2022 Term of Council Priorities.

### Return on Investment

As employers, ensuring the municipal workforce is representative of the community provides equitable and inclusive opportunities for all. In addition, diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce benefits organizational performance on multiple levels, including:

- Increased talent pool and ability to overcome skills gaps
- Increased innovation, creativity, and diverse thought
- Increased employee satisfaction
- Reduced employee turnover
- Increased team performance
- Increase in decision-making quality
- Reduction in biases and improved accountability.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Medcalfe, M, & Taggart, C. (2021). *Environmental Scan of Urban Indigenous Services in Chatham-Kent*. Funded by United Way of Chatham-Kent.

<sup>5</sup> Diversity Institute (2020). *Diversity Leads. Diverse Representation in Leadership: A Review of Eight Canadian Cities*.

Cukier, W. (2020). *Diverse Representation on Boards* [presentation]. TRSK Diversity Institute. [https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/Presentations/DL2020\\_Slides.pdf](https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/Presentations/DL2020_Slides.pdf)

Bourke, H. (2018). The Diversity and Inclusion Revolution: Eight Powerful Truths. *Deloitte Review*, 22. <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/deloitte-review/issue-22/diversity-and-inclusion-at-work-eight-powerful-truths.html>

Attending to diversity, equity, and inclusion in municipal policies and programs increases efficiency in, and customer satisfaction with, municipal services. At a community level, equitable municipal programs and policies contribute to:

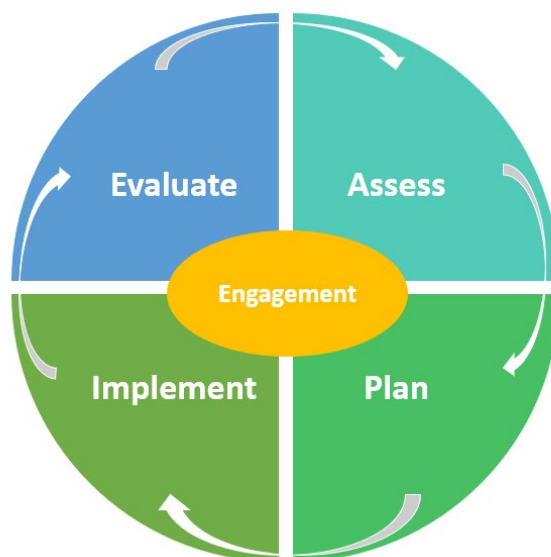
- increased social capital, engagement, feelings of belonging & safety
- decreased health care and social service costs
- increased economic productivity
- increased growth and tax revenue
- better understanding and empathy for decisions made by the Municipality.<sup>6</sup>

## Framework for Developing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy

### Planning Framework

Figure 1 illustrates the general planning framework that will be followed to develop the Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Strategy (the DEI Strategy) for municipal employees. This planning framework includes activities related to assessment (information gathering), planning (developing the strategy), implementation, and evaluation. Engagement will be a key part of developing the DEI Strategy. An engagement and communication plan is being developed that will include engaging stakeholders in various ways both formally and informally, throughout the process. The engagement plan will be flexible, acknowledging that different communities and people may prefer different ways of communicating. In addition, relationship building can take time, and may not happen within pre-determined timelines.

Figure 1: Planning Framework

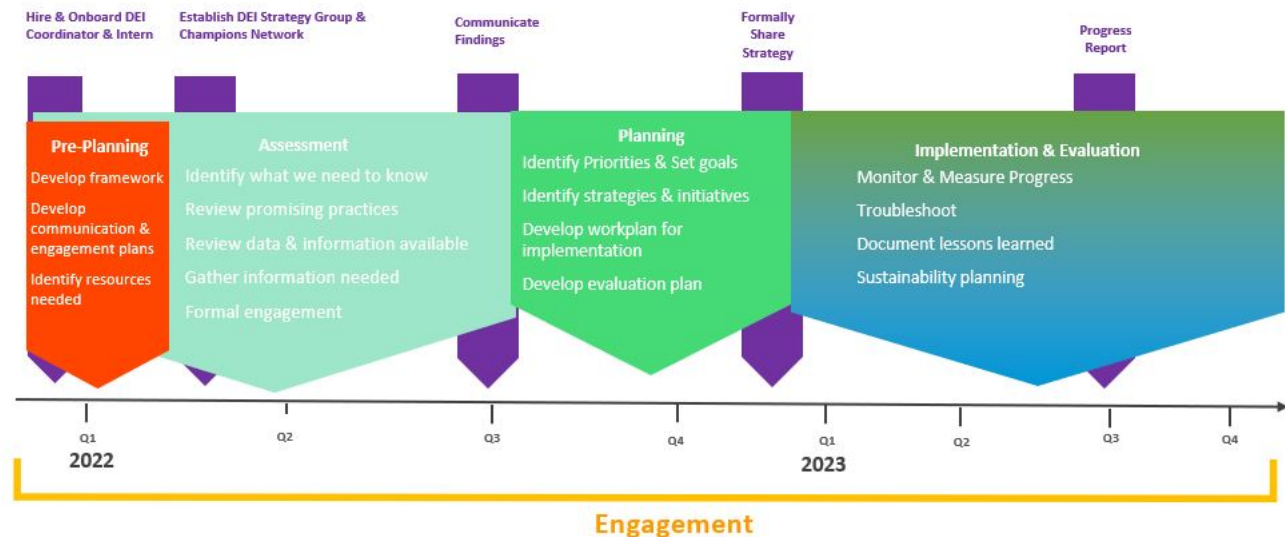


<sup>6</sup> Cukier, W. (2020). *Diverse Representation on Boards* [presentation]. TRSK Diversity Institute. [https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/Presentations/DL2020\\_Slides.pdf](https://www.ryerson.ca/diversity/Presentations/DL2020_Slides.pdf)

## Timelines

Figure 2 illustrates the activities that will be undertaken over the coming months to develop and commence implementation of the DEI Strategy.

Figure 2: Timeline of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion work 2022-2023



In the pre-planning and early assessment phases, the following activities have already been undertaken:

- literature review of best practices, resources, and tools for developing municipal Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion strategies
- review of 15 other municipalities Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion strategies
- consultations with other Municipalities about the process of developing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion strategies
- preparation of a research paper for the Regional Single Tier Chief Administrative Officer network detailing best practices for developing and implementing a Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion strategy
- Initial conversations with approximately 50 municipal staff, a cross-section of Councillors, and stakeholders to learn about current strengths and gaps, upcoming opportunities, and facilitators of success when developing the municipal Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy.

Over the coming months, the team will continue assessment activities to understand the current situation in relation to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Municipality. This will include, for example:

- an anonymous census of staff to provide a snapshot of the demographic makeup of our workforce
- quantitative and qualitative data related to perceptions of staff about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Municipality

- conversations with stakeholders and community partners
- an analysis of updated census data
- a review of best practices and potential initiatives to address gaps and priority areas.

Findings from the assessment will be shared in late spring/early summer 2022.

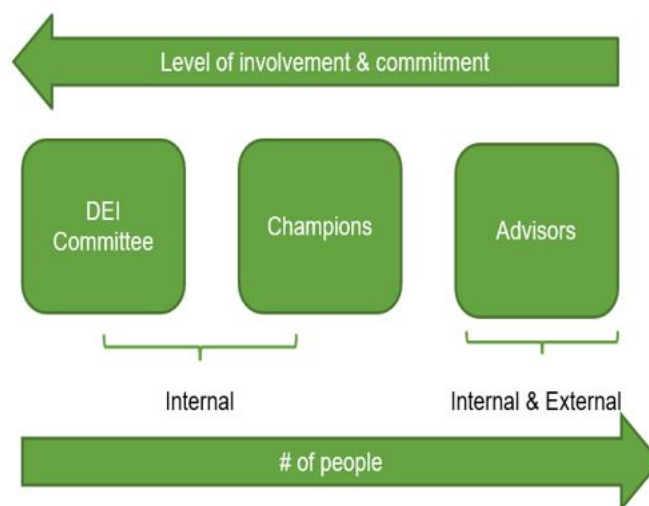
Summer, 2022 will be used to identify the vision and goals for the DEI Strategy, and the initiatives and activities that will support the Municipality to achieve them. The DEI Strategy will include a mix of short and longer-term initiatives that will contribute to the identified goals. An implementation plan will be developed that will include specific activities, roles, responsibilities, and timelines, as well as an evaluation plan to monitor progress as the plan is implemented.

The DEI Strategy will be implemented beginning in fall, 2022. This will include supporting implementation in the relevant departments, troubleshooting, documenting learnings, and planning for sustainability.

### Engagement

The team is developing a formal engagement and communication plan. Two formal groups will be established to support the development and implementation of the DEI Strategy – a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, and a Champions network. “Advisors” will be engaged throughout the course of the work. A brief description of each group is below.

Figure 3: Engagement Groups



### Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee

- small number of people (8-10)
- work closely with the Coordinator & Intern to develop and implement the DEI Strategy

- comprised of internal stakeholders (Staff, Managers, Senior and Executive Management, Council)
- selected for their specific skills, knowledge, and experiences

#### Champions Network

- broader number of people (30-50)
- provide input, feedback, champion diversity, equity, and inclusion, pilot initiatives
- comprised of internal stakeholders with representation of all levels and departments

#### Advisors

- not a distinct group, but a term to refer to the broad spectrum of people, groups, and organizations who will be engaged over the course of the work to develop and implement the DEI Strategy
- provide perspectives, input, and feedback
- leverage existing networks and relationships, where able, facilitate ad hoc engagement sessions as needed
  - examples include:
    - Municipal staff
    - Council
    - Committees of Council & Advisory Groups
    - Union representatives
    - Local Immigration Partnership
    - United Way Social Planning & Action Tables
    - Cultural Associations
    - Community members
    - Other community partners

Engagement and relationship building has already begun with some stakeholders and will continue throughout the course of developing the DEI Strategy.

#### **Areas of Focus**

The DEI Strategy will be an internally focused, corporate strategy. The team will support broader community efforts related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, where able, and work with partners to leverage resources and synergies.

Initial assessment findings have led us to identify three strategic areas of focus for the DEI Strategy, including:

- Workplace and Workforce
- Council and Committees of Council, and
- Policies, Processes, and Services.



### Workplace and Workforce

This area of focus relates to ensuring the Municipal workforce is representative of the candidates available, and of the various communities that comprise Chatham-Kent. It entails providing welcoming, enriching work experiences that reflect the diversity of the Municipal workforce. This work will align and coordinate with the upcoming Human Resources Strategy.

### Council and Committees of Council

This area of focus involves ensuring that Municipal Council and Committees of Council are accessible to and reflective of the various communities that comprise Chatham-Kent. Initiatives will focus on supporting Council with tools, resources, and training to support equity and inclusivity in governing principles. This work will be done in coordination with the Clerk's office.

### Policies, Processes, and Services

This area of focus reflects the need to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into Municipal strategies, plans, policies, and processes. It involves work to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion into plans and policies as they are created and updated and proactively reviewing and updating policies and processes with a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. Work in this area will include adapting and developing resources that can be used to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in our policies, processes, and services across the Municipality.

### **Measuring Success**

Baseline data will be gathered through our assessment and used as a benchmark to assess progress. An evaluation plan will be developed with the DEI Committee as the DEI Strategy is developed.

### **Risks and Mitigation**

Several risks to the success of the DEI Strategy have been identified and plans are being developed to mitigate these risks. These include:

### Engagement During Emergencies

Many municipal employees are working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. General engagement, discussions about sensitive topics, and the rollout of the Strategy may be more difficult. In addition, municipal staff have been quite busy with several emergencies over the past two years on top of regular workloads. With increased workloads and the toll that the current context has taken on professional and personal lives, engagement could be impacted. The framework to develop the DEI Strategy and communication plan will reflect this reality.

### Safety

Developing and implementing the DEI Strategy may include discussion or disclosure of triggering and sensitive matter and could potentially cause harm if not done with proper supports in place, recognition of barriers, and understanding of content matter.

Facilitation of discussions will be done by members of the team with experience in these topic areas. Members of the team and DEI Committee will be informed of how to handle these potential situations and made aware of supports and resources for those who need them.

### Sustainability

Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, is not a time-limited activity – it requires ongoing effort and dedicated resources. Feedback from other Municipalities indicates that the work suffers when rolled into existing portfolios or fails to be properly resourced. Currently, the Coordinator position is funded for 2-years. Some of the goals and initiatives that will be part of the DEI Strategy may not be accomplished in the 2-year timeframe. Two years will also not allow enough time for adjustments and re-implementation after evaluation. Starting and then halting this sensitive work could harm employees and relationships with community partners. The team will provide regular progress updates, continue to identify risks to sustainability, and engage in sustainability planning to attempt to mitigate these risks.

### Resistance to the Work

As in any project, some stakeholders may not see the value in engaging in work related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The data gathered during the assessment will help to illustrate the current state in the Municipality and to identify best practices for supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion. These will be well communicated to mitigate resistance to this work. The DEI Committee will be tasked with exploring other ways to encourage people to engage with the Strategy and initiatives.

### Credibility

There is a risk that the Municipality could be perceived with skepticism as the organization embarks on this work. To mitigate this risk, the Municipality will need to commit, at all levels, to action that is congruent with DEI messaging.

### **Next Steps**

Next steps include:

- Sharing the framework to develop the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy with staff in Municipal departments, Committees of Council, Union leaders, and external stakeholders
- Finalize the communication plan
- Form the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee and Champions Network
- Carry out assessment activities

**Consultation**

The framework to develop the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy has been shared with the Executive Management Team and Human Resources and Organizational Development Managers.

Initial conversations about the direction of the Strategy, current state, challenges, and opportunities have been had with the Executive Management Team and have begun with some Senior Managers, Staff, and Councilors. Similar conversations have begun with some community partners. These conversations will continue throughout the course of the work to develop the DEI Strategy.

**Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy is funded through the 2021 budget process.

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