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## The Corporation of the City of Stratford Policy Manual

<b>Policy Number:</b>	H.1.38
<b>Policy Section:</b>	Human Resources
<b>Department:</b>	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
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### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)**

#### **Policy Statement:**

The Corporation of the City of Stratford (the City) is committed to building and fostering an inclusive organization for all equity-deserving staff, including those who identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to discrimination and bias.

This commitment extends to all employees, councillors, contractors, and volunteers in their interactions with the public. The City strives to be not only a fair and inclusive employer but also to ensure equitable service delivery to all members of the community. The City aims to educate the workforce on equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism; conduct equity impact assessments and remove barriers; and foster a cultural shift prioritizing these values in decision-making and community engagement.

#### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all City employees, all members of City Council, contractors, and volunteers.

#### **Purpose:**

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion can contribute to a safer community and internal organization for everyone while addressing systemic barriers to access of programs and services. The City recognizes that every employee, council member, contractor, and volunteer has the right to and should have access to a workplace that strives towards Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in all dimensions within corporate development opportunities, practices, policies, and procedures. This policy seeks to proactively create

a safe and inclusive work environment. The City views its diverse workforce as a powerful resource, and the City is committed to leveraging these differences to foster a culture of inclusion, where varied perspectives and experiences are actively encouraged and embraced, ultimately driving innovation, collaboration, and success throughout this organization.

This equity policy serves as a powerful call to action, guiding the City to actively support and uplift equity-deserving staff and members of the public, ensuring their voices are heard, their experiences are valued, and their needs are met with fairness and compassion. Through this policy, the City is committed to using Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as a foundational lens in City internal operations. The City adopts a comprehensive approach to understanding the spectrum of inclusion, recognizing that it encompasses not only visible diversity dimensions such as race, gender, age, ability, socio-economic status but also the diverse and intersecting perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds that shape everyone's unique identity, ensuring an inclusive environment that embraces and values the richness of the City's collective diversity. The City firmly establishes a shared responsibility and unwavering accountability for fostering inclusion at all levels of the organization, acknowledging that by collectively championing diversity and embracing a culture of equity, everyone contributes to building an inclusive workplace where every voice is heard, and all perspectives are valued.

- This policy has been established to provide a framework for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the City. It is dedicated to promoting a supportive and inclusive workplace culture within the City of Stratford.
- This policy will work in tandem with Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada: Calls to Action to respectfully engage and build relationships with Indigenous people.
- This policy also seeks to provide continuous professional education and opportunities for community engagement with Indigenous relationships and other equity-deserving communities.
- This equity policy is designed to be inclusive and adaptable, addressing all forms of marginalization and bias to promote fairness and equity for all individuals, regardless of their specific identities.

#### Equity-Deserving Communities:

All City employees and members of City Council are responsible for embedding equity in all City operations, plans, policies, public engagement, and strategic plan to create an inclusive and equitable space. This policy seeks to take a proactive and systemic approach to encourage individuals to understand systemic discrimination, address barriers and provide guidance on how to create a more inclusive workplace.

The City recognizes the importance of building and nurturing relationships with partner organizations that support equity-deserving communities. The City is committed to fostering collaboration and actively engaging with these organizations to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion. The City will continue to actively seek out partnerships with community-based organizations that advocate for equity and social justice. The City is committed to engaging in ongoing dialogue and consultation with these organizations to better understand the needs and challenges faced by equity-deserving communities.

Secondly, the City is committed to participating in joint initiatives and events organized by partner organizations, which provide platforms for meaningful conversations, knowledge-sharing, and the co-creation of solutions to address systemic inequities.

By establishing and sustaining these partnerships, the City aims to build trust, foster solidarity, and amplify the City's collective impact in advancing equity and inclusion for all.

**Definitions:**

**"City business"** refers to all business activities related to the City's operations, whether conducted on or outside of City work facilities.

**"Diversity"** refers to the differences in the characteristics of City employees and community members including age, race, colour, national or ethnic origin, family or marital status, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, language, physical and mental ability, genetic characteristics, political affiliation, religion, socio-economic status, and other unique attributes.

**"Inclusion"** refers to the process through which the City, as an employer, builds community and creates a deep sense of belonging for employees, where everyone is valued, each one's ideas are heard, and everyone advances this culture for everyone including the community we serve.

**"Equity"** refers to the practice of tailoring tools and resources to meet the unique needs of everyone in the workplace. Continually improving the City's internal and external systems and processes, so everyone can reach their full potential. Equity in the workplace ensures fair access to all employment and promotional opportunities and employee programs.

**"Equity-Deserving Communities"** refers to Equity deserving groups as communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This could include attitudinal, historic, social, and environmental barriers based on but not limited to age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, and transgender status, etc.

**"Protected Grounds"** in the *Ontario Human Rights Code* requires an employer to provide workplace accommodation based on the following protected grounds

race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, age, record of offences, marital status, family status, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

**“Systemic Barriers”** refers to policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

**“Equity Assessments”** are systematic evaluations conducted to analyze the impact of policies, programs, and practices on marginalized and underserved communities. These assessments identify potential disparities, barriers, and perspectives, ensuring that decisions promote fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities and outcomes for all individuals.

### **Roles and Responsibilities:**

The City believes that creating a truly equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplace is the responsibility of every member of this organization. Accountability will be maintained through regular progress assessments, transparent reporting mechanisms, and fostering a culture that values and celebrates diversity, where everyone is empowered to speak up and actively contribute to the City’s shared commitment to equity and inclusion. Although the roles and responsibilities primarily focus on staff and management, all councillors, contractors, volunteers and the other community are expected to adhere to the internal procedures in their work with the City. It is the responsibility of staff and management to ensure that the work of councillors, contractors, and volunteers aligns with and supports all internal procedures related to equity, ensuring consistency and accountability across all levels of the organization.

### Management

- Ensure that employment-related decisions are free from discrimination.
- Set individual DEI goals to foster diverse representation and an inclusive environment within their teams.
- Engage in conscious inclusion and other behaviors that promote equity.
- Mitigate potential unconscious bias in employment decisions and talent practices (including performance and development, compensation, hiring).
- Draw from a broad pool of talent to inclusively reach talent, create diverse slates and, ultimately, a workforce that reflects the communities we serve.
- Provide reasonable accommodations when requested by individuals with a disability and for those with needs related to any of the Ontario Human Rights Code protected grounds.
- Create an inclusive and safe work environment that supports DEI that reinforce the City’s values.
- Set clear and measurable department-specific objectives that foster diversity, inclusivity, and equity, ensuring a fair and inclusive workplace for all employees."

- Cultivate a culture that promotes respect for all employees, council members, members of the public, vendors, contractors, volunteers, and others in the work environment.
- Appropriately address any other behaviour not consistent with the roles and responsibilities listed. Respect in the Workplace Policy, or with applicable laws relating to human rights, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consequences will follow respect in the workplace policies.

### Employees

DEI requires purposeful action every day. Every employee will be provided with continual learning opportunities related to DEI and is responsible for:

- Respecting the dignity and diversity of all people.
- Creating an inclusive and respectful environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, and/or bullying.
- Enhancing their awareness of potential unconscious bias and how that might hinder the City's ability to be more inclusive and collaborative with one another.
- Set individual DEI goals to foster diverse representation and an inclusive environment within their teams, subject to approval by the employee's Manager.

### **Procedures and Guidelines:**

Employees are directed to review the detailed internal processes outlined in the policy document on page 7 onwards. These processes are integrated into the core elements of the policy to ensure clarity and accessibility.

### DEI Objectives

1. Educating the Workforce for a Changing Community:
  - a. Development Opportunities: The City will provide ongoing development opportunities for all employees to enhance their understanding of equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism. Topics to be covered include unconscious bias, cultural competence, and historical contexts to foster empathy and awareness.
  - b. Culturally Responsive Practices: Employees will be provided development opportunities on how to engage effectively with a diverse community, respecting diverse cultural norms, communication styles, and preferences. Cultural sensitivity development opportunities will be offered to ensure that city services are accessible and relevant to all residents.

2. Guidance and Examination of Work Processes:
  - a. Equity Impact Assessments: The City will implement a process for conducting equity impact assessments on policies, programs, and services. This involves evaluating potential impacts on marginalized communities and making necessary adjustments to ensure fairness and inclusivity.
  - b. Removing Barriers: The City will conduct regular reviews of its physical spaces, digital platforms, and communication methods to identify and remove any barriers that hinder access for individuals with disabilities or from marginalized groups.
3. Cultural Shift to Prioritize Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism:
  - a. Equity Commitment: The City will work toward equity, diversity, and inclusion by setting a clear tone, modeling inclusive behaviors, and integrating these values into decision-making processes.
  - b. Community Engagement: Foster open dialogues with the community to identify needs, priorities, and concerns related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Collaborate with community organizations to co-create initiatives that address these issues.
  - c. Equity in Decision-Making: Ensure that equity considerations are woven into all decision-making processes, including budget allocation, resource distribution, and policy formulation.

**Policy Review:**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually to ensure that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is continually promoted in the workplace.

**Legislative Authority:**

The parameters of this policy adhere to the applicable policies and regulations:

- Ontario Human Rights Code (OHRC)
- Occupation Health and Safety Act (OHSA)
- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)

**Relationship to Other Policies:**

Some activities and initiatives defined under this policy can also relate to other corporate policies.

- H.1.6 Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace Policy
- H.1.23 Violence in the Workplace Policy

- H.1. 27 Employee Code of Conduct Policy
- Council Code of Conduct
- H.1.12 Health & Safety Policy
- H.1.36 Respectful Workplace Policy

## **Internal Processes:**

### Procedures and Guidelines

Employees must always take a proactive approach and consider the ways in which Diversity, Equity and Inclusion fit within their daily work operations and when providing services to members of the public.

The DEI procedures and guidelines are applicable to all City public service interactions, practices and policies on hiring, internal promotions, compensation and benefits, professional development, and social and recreational programming.

1. All employees and management employees will promote respectful communication and cooperation that welcomes and accepts different perspectives.
2. The City will strive to provide safe, welcoming, and inclusive interaction for Equity seeking employees and members for safer community and internal organization.
3. Management employees will ensure that all employees and members of the public are given the opportunity to participate without barriers or bias in the hiring, selection, and promotion process to ensure equal opportunity is provided to all.
4. The City will provide employees with continuous professional DEI development encompassing the experiences and challenges of the changing population in the City of Stratford. All employees will be encouraged to also pursue additional opportunities for continuous DEI learning.
5. Employees will learn to consider and center the experiences of equity-deserving members when creating or administering the City's policies, procedures, programs, services, or in decision-making. Embedding equity in this work will include:
  - a. Educating one-self, understanding, and giving primary focus to the needs, perspectives, and voices of individuals and communities that have

historically faced marginalization, discrimination, or systemic barriers. This approach acknowledges that certain groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, persons with disabilities, and others, have been historically disadvantaged and have experienced unequal access to resources and opportunities.

- b. Employees will identify and reduce bias and systemic barriers to participation through continuous review of City policies, procedures, systems, and programs using a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion lens.
  - c. When creating and initiating public feedback processes employees will identify, prevent, and remove barriers to ensure that diverse communities and individuals have opportunities to be meaningfully engaged.
6. As part of the City's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, the City actively promotes and supports the development of essential competencies that empower City employees to cultivate the skills and knowledge required to effectively practice and champion inclusion, creating a workplace culture where every individual feels respected, valued, and empowered to thrive.
  7. All employees are encouraged to consult the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division in the Human Resources Department within the City if they have questions or concerns about applying and embedding equity and accessibility in their scope of work.

#### For Conducting Equity Assessments

Embedding equity within our organization means integrating principles of fairness, inclusion, and justice into all aspects of our operations and decision-making processes. This commitment involves systematically applying an equity lens to evaluate and shape our policies, programs, and practices. An equity lens is a critical tool that helps us identify and address the unique needs and challenges faced by marginalized and underserved communities. By conducting equity assessments, we can ensure that our actions promote equal opportunities, eliminate disparities, and foster an inclusive environment for all individuals. This approach not only aligns with our values but also enhances our ability to serve the diverse needs of our community effectively and equitably.

#### Embedding Equity: A Proactive Approach

- Understanding the historical and social context that has led to inequity (economic, racial, gender, disability and other)-how did we get here? What Keeps us here?



- Identifying and removing structural barriers that prevent individuals and groups from having an equal and fair experience, outcome, and access to resources and opportunities.
- Equity enables diversity and inclusion by creating the conditions where diversity can thrive and where diverse individuals and groups are part of the process and culture and feel a sense of belonging.

#### Use an Equity Lens

- What racial, cultural, and/or ethnic group(s) and other equity-deserving populations experience disparities related to this policy, program, or decision? Are they at the table? (If not, why?) What is the intended audience? And how might they experience the situation?
- How might the policy, program or decision affect the group(s)? How might it be perceived by the group(s)? What is the impact and intent?
- Does the policy, program or decision improve, worsen, or make no change to existing disparities? Please elaborate. Does it result in systemic change that addresses institutional discrimination?
- Does the policy, program, or decision produce any intentional benefits or unintended consequences for the affected group(s)?

#### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Implications

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion implications outlined in this policy are intended to guide our ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive and equitable environment within the City. These implications represent the broad goals and impacts we aim to achieve through our DEI initiatives. Unlike specific objectives, which are detailed and measurable steps, these implications highlight the overarching outcomes and effects that our DEI efforts are designed to produce. By understanding and addressing these implications, we can better align our strategies and practices with our commitment to DEI values.

1. Diversity:
  - a. Implementing proactive recruitment strategies to attract diverse talent.
  - b. Creating an inclusive workplace culture that values and respects different perspectives.
  - c. Ensuring diverse representation in decision-making processes and leadership roles.
  - d. Organizing events and initiatives that celebrate diverse cultures and identities.

- e. Providing development opportunities and awareness programs to foster cultural competence and understanding.
2. Equity:
- a. Conducting regular pay equity analyses and addressing any disparities.
  - b. Implementing flexible work policies to accommodate diverse needs.
  - c. Providing resources and accommodations to promote an inclusive and accessible workplace.
  - d. Establishing mentoring and sponsorship programs to support underrepresented employees.
  - e. Addressing systemic barriers that hinder equitable advancement within the organization.
3. Accessibility:
- a. Conducting accessibility audits to identify and remove physical and digital barriers.
  - b. Providing reasonable accommodation to support employees with disabilities.
  - c. Ensuring all communication materials are accessible to diverse audiences (e.g., providing alternative formats for print, audio descriptions, closed captions).
  - d. Offering development opportunities for employees on creating an inclusive and accessible environment.
  - e. Collaborating with employees with disabilities to identify and address specific accessibility needs.
4. Anti-Racism:
- a. Implementing a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination and racism.
  - b. Conducting anti-racism development opportunities for all employees to raise awareness and promote understanding.
  - c. Creating safer spaces for open dialogue and discussions about race and racism and other forms of marginalization such as sexism

- d. Reviewing hiring practices to remove bias and promote diverse representation.
  - e. Developing inclusive policies and initiatives that consider the experiences of individuals with intersecting identities.
  - f. Conducting diversity development opportunities that incorporates intersectional perspectives.
  - g. Gathering and analyzing data to understand the experiences of individuals at various intersections.
5. Continuous Improvement:
- a. Establishing regular assessments and metrics to track progress on diversity, equity, accessibility, and anti-racism initiatives.
  - b. Encouraging feedback from employees and stakeholders to identify areas for improvement.
  - c. Engaging in ongoing learning and staying informed about emerging best practices and research in DEI.

#### Other Provincial and Federal Legislation

**“Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada”** was designed by the Federal government to capture the history and the lasting impacts of Canadian Indian residential school system on Indigenous students and their families. The TRC released an executive summary of its findings along with 94 "calls to action" regarding reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous Peoples

**“Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)”** is a comprehensive legislation in Ontario, Canada, that embodies the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. AODA establishes a framework for creating a barrier-free society by setting accessibility standards and promoting equitable access for individuals with disabilities in various aspects of daily life. It serves as a pivotal tool in fostering an inclusive and accessible environment, aligning with organizational policies dedicated to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

#### DEI Framework

The City’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework is designed to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all employees and community members. Our DEI efforts are built on four key pillars: Community, Growth, Education, and

Engagement. These pillars guide our initiatives and strategies, ensuring that we address the diverse needs of our workforce and the community we serve.

Community involves fostering a culture of belonging, supporting authenticity and intersectionality, and embracing and appreciating our differences. Within the community pillar, we strive to recognize an approach to equity that is culturally driven, and leadership supported. Through the on-going work of the IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility) committee and Community Equity Collective, we offer support, guidance, and advocacy for equity-deserving needs.

Growth involves building a diverse pipeline of talent and ensuring equitable access to opportunities, information, and leadership. Within the growth pillar, we understand and uncover equity challenges by studying the data. Working closely with our recruiting and professional-development teams, we develop the pipeline and support paths to success.

Education involves generating opportunities to learn about DEI to elevate our individual and collective consciousness. Within the education pillar, we broaden our mindset by offering presentations and discussions focused on broader societal topics. We offer interactive presentations on a range of DEI topics and provide formal foundational training. At key pivot points in the recruiting, development, and advancement process, we deliver DEI training and provide DEI lenses to encourage individuals to take ownership of their DEI commitment.

Engagement involves collaborating with external stakeholders. Within the engagement pillar, we partner with clients around our shared commitment to DEI, including hosting a DEI client summit. We support the important work of external diversity organizations through sponsorship and collaboration. Work with the community collective to provide educational opportunities for internal employees while looking to understand how we community practices can inform our internal operations.