



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategy

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Land Acknowledgement

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville acknowledges this land is the treaty territory of the Williams Treaty First Nations. It is also the traditional territory of other Anishinaabeg peoples, the Huron-Wendat, and the Haudenosaunee. We also recognize the contributions of all Indigenous peoples to this place and commit to a continued dialogue and greater respect for the land we have come to share. Recognition of the contributions and historic importance of Indigenous peoples must also be clearly and overtly connected to our collective commitment to make the promise of Truth and Reconciliation real in our communities.

Executive Summary

The Town of Stouffville values the diversity of our community; it is a source of social, cultural, and economic strength. Diversity refers to the differences in characteristics among us all. These characteristics are what make us unique, such as our personality or cognitive skills, and what shapes our identity, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or cultural backgrounds.

To celebrate the full diversity of our community, the Town is dedicated to creating safe and inclusive environments where all voices can be heard. This is accomplished by removing barriers to participation, providing equitable supports or resources, and focusing on building a culture of respect and belongingness within our community.

Our role as government representatives is to serve all residents. To best serve our communities it is imperative that we take action to understand the diverse perspectives and needs that are rooted in an individual's lived experiences. There is not a *'one size fits all'* solution and we recognize that continued effort is needed to ensure we are representing and serving our community in an inclusive manner.

The Town has developed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) Framework that articulates the Town's vision, values, and commitments to DE&I. The framework will help guide the Town in its continued effort to build a diverse and inclusive workplace and provide inclusive services and programs to residents. The framework will drive strategic and operational changes at the organizational level through the development of DE&I focused initiatives that align with the Town's commitment to DE&I.

Glossary of Terms

Ableism – Beliefs or practices that rest on the assumption that being able-bodied is “normal” while other states of being require “fixing” or alteration. This can result in devaluing or discriminating against people with physical, intellectual or psychiatric disabilities.

Accessibility – The "ability to access" the functionality of a system or entity and gain the related benefits. The degree to which a product, service, or environment is accessible by as many people as possible.

Accommodation – A change in the environment or in the way things are customarily done that enables an individual with a disability to have equal opportunity, access and participation.

Ageism – Refers to two concepts: a socially constructed way of thinking about older persons based on negative attitudes and stereotypes about aging; and a tendency to structure society based on an assumption that everyone is young, thereby failing to respond appropriately to the real needs of older persons.

Ally – A person who is not a member of a marginalized or disadvantaged group but who expresses or gives support to that group.

Bias – Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person or group compared to another; usually in a way considered unfair. Implicit bias is unconscious, explicit bias is conscious.

BIPOC – An acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Cisgender – A term used to describe people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth; often abbreviated to cis.

Color Blind – The belief that everyone should be treated “equally” without respect to societal, economic, historical, racial or other difference. No differences are seen or acknowledged; everyone is the same.

DE&I –Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Disability – Having a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. This includes people who have a record of an impairment even if they do not currently have a disability, it also includes individuals who do not have a disability but are regarded as having a disability.

Discrimination – Prejudiced treatment of a person based on the social groups to which they belong and stereotypes about those groups. When committed by an individual, discrimination can be broken down into two types: traditional discrimination (openly negative treatment) and modern discrimination (subtle negative treatment).

Diversity – The condition of being different or having differences. Differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, health, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, religion, physical size, education level, job and function, personality traits, and other human differences. Some describe organizational diversity as social heterogeneity.

Equity – Fair treatment for all while striving to identify and eliminate inequities and barriers. Critically examining systems to identify biases that prevent equal access and opportunity to individuals.

Ethnicity – A socially or politically constructed group based on cultural criteria, such as language, customs, and shared history.

Gender – Refers to an individual's personal and social identity as a man, woman or non-binary person (a person who is not exclusively a man or a woman) (source: Statistics Canada).

Gender Identity – Refers to the gender that a person feels internally and individually (source: Statistics Canada).

Gender Expression – Refers to the way a person presents their gender, regardless of their gender identity, through body language, aesthetic choices or accessories (e.g., clothes, hairstyle or makeup), which may have traditionally been associated with a specific gender (source: Statistics Canada).

Heterosexism – The assumption that heterosexuality is the social and cultural norm as well as the prejudiced belief that heterosexuals, or “straight” people, are socially and culturally superior to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit and queer (LGBTQ2S+) people.

Inclusion – Valuing differences as a source of strength, innovation, and performance; creating belonging. Ensuring everyone is included, visible, heard, and considered.

Indigenous Identity – Refers to whether the person identifies with the Indigenous peoples of Canada. This includes those who identify as First Nations (North American Indian), Métis and/or Inuk (Inuit), and/or those who report being Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band. Aboriginal peoples of Canada (referred to here as Indigenous peoples) are defined in the Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35 (2) as including the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada (source: Statistics Canada).

Intersectionality – The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

LGBTQ2S+ – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or Transsexual, Queer or Questioning, Two-Spirit, and additional sexual orientations or gender identities.

POC – Person of Color

Pronouns – Words to refer to a person after initially using their name. Gendered pronouns include she and he, her and him, hers and his, and herself and himself. "Preferred gender pronouns" (or PGPs) are the pronouns that people ask others to use in reference to themselves. PGPs may be plural gender-neutral pronouns such as they, them, their(s) or they may be ze (rather than she or he) or hir (rather than her(s) and him/his).

Sexual Orientation – A concept referring to sexual desire and preference for emotional and sexual relationships with others based on their sex/gender; often implies that sexual object choice is an essential in-born characteristic, so may be problematic to some.

Transgender – People whose gender identity is different from the gender they were thought to be at birth. "Trans" is often used as shorthand for transgender.

Visible Minority – Refers to whether a person is a visible minority or not, as defined by the Employment Equity Act. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." The visible minority population consists mainly of the following groups: South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean and Japanese (source: Statistics Canada).

Background

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategy was created to communicate and advance the Town's commitment to inclusive, equitable service delivery and fostering a safe environment for all to work, live and play. As topics and issues in diversity, equity, and inclusion continue to come to the forefront in society, the Town is committed to listening to our community and recognizing the importance of taking action to address underlying issues.

The strategy was developed through consultation with Town employees, Elected Officials, residents, and community groups. The activation of the strategy is supported by an implementation plan, measurement framework, and accountability plan managed by the Town.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework

DE&I Inclusive Statement

Our Inclusive Statement articulates our vision and purpose to guide all diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. Our statement reads:

“The Town of Stouffville is committed to creating safe and respectful environments where employees, residents, and community members feel represented and comfortable being their true selves. Our strength comes from the diversity of our community and through ongoing learning and dialogue, the Town seeks to ensure inclusivity for all individuals. It is our commitment to remove barriers and provide equitable experiences to ensure full participation in our community and uphold the vision of a town that is unified and welcoming of all.”

DE&I Values

Our values help guide our behaviour and decision-making; to support the achievement of the inclusive statement, the Town has espoused the following values:



Openness – the willingness to embrace new ideas, listen without judgement, and show acceptance of others. This *value in action* includes:

- Being aware of your verbal and non-verbal cues to show that you are welcoming and approachable
- Providing residents and the community an outlet to share their stories and experiences
- Being open to feedback and responding with genuine care and concern



Intentionality – all actions come from a place of passion with tangible, actionable effort to produce results. This *value in action* includes:

- Asking ‘how can I help you’ when approaching residents and community members
- Incorporating a DE&I lens and improvements into planning processes



Respect – valuing and honouring differences of opinion, belief, or experience so that each individual feels acceptance and is treated with dignity. This *value in action* includes:

- Listening and showing recognition of others' experiences and views to create deeper level of understanding
- Remaining curious and approaching individuals or situations without pre-judgement



Integrity – providing transparency, being honest, and taking ownership to build trust. This *value in action* includes:

- Being truthful in all situations no matter how difficult or if you do not have the answer
- Not engaging in situations where there may be bias, a conflict of interest, or favouritism

DE&I Commitments

The following DE&I Commitments identify the Town’s priorities in creating an inclusive workplace and community. To ensure the strategy is actionable, measurable, and attainable, each commitment is supported by tactical steps and initiatives undertaken by the Town.

1 Promote Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Education and Awareness	Sustain lasting and continuous change through the promotion of DE&I education and awareness opportunities. Our continuous growth and commitment to DE&I is based on the understanding and comprehension of our own and others’ experiences.
2 Deliver Inclusive and Equitable Services	Remove barriers and increase participation by applying a DE&I lens in the development and delivery of all programs and services offered by the Town. Enabling full participation of all members in our services will allow us to learn and improve how to best serve our residents.
3 Increase Representation of Diverse Perspectives	Increase diverse perspectives in all levels of employment at the Town to foster a sense of safety and belonging for all residents. We recognize representation is important for residents to have confidence that their opinions are welcomed and heard.
4 Foster Community Belonging	Be a champion of change and a partner to community organizations to enhance the connectedness and collaboration within the Town. We believe it is our responsibility to be leaders and innovators in how we serve our residents.

Roles & Responsibilities

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is a collective effort and journey. We have outlined the roles and responsibilities essential to the ongoing success of the DE&I Strategy.

Role	Responsibility
CAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for DE&I related matters within the organization and to Council. • Attend DE&I training and workshops to promote ongoing learning and knowledge.
Senior Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support an inclusive workplace by addressing issues of harassment and discrimination in a fair, respectful, and prompt manner. • Ensure managers and supervisors are trained and aware of their responsibilities to support and promote divisional and overarching DE&I goals. • Attend DE&I training and workshops to promote ongoing learning and knowledge.
Managers / Supervisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead or support DE&I initiatives within business units as required. • Utilize a DE&I lens, toolkit, or resources when developing programs and services. • Consult with the DE&I internal resources on the audit and creation of new programs and services. • Attend DE&I training and workshops to promote ongoing learning and knowledge.
All Employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support their business unit-specific DE&I goals. • Engage in employee feedback initiatives and sessions to share experiences and make the organization aware of opportunities for improvement.
Elected Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the CAO and Senior Leadership accountable for DE&I initiatives and goals. • Provide constructive debate on all DE&I initiatives proposed to Council prior to a decision.

DE&I
Governance

- Lead creation and/or management of all DE&I initiatives within the organization.
 - Provide consultation and support to Senior Leadership and Management on all matters related to DE&I.
 - Collect and analyze data as identified in the DE&I measurement framework.
 - Support departments on the collection and analysis of DE&I data on a project or ad-hoc basis.
 - Develop and socialize quarterly DE&I report and ad-hoc reports as needed.
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Diversity &
Inclusion (D&I)
Working Group
(external)

- Advise on matters related to DE&I vision, mission, and goals.
 - Volunteer, promote, and/or host DE&I related events associated with the Town or partnering institutions.
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