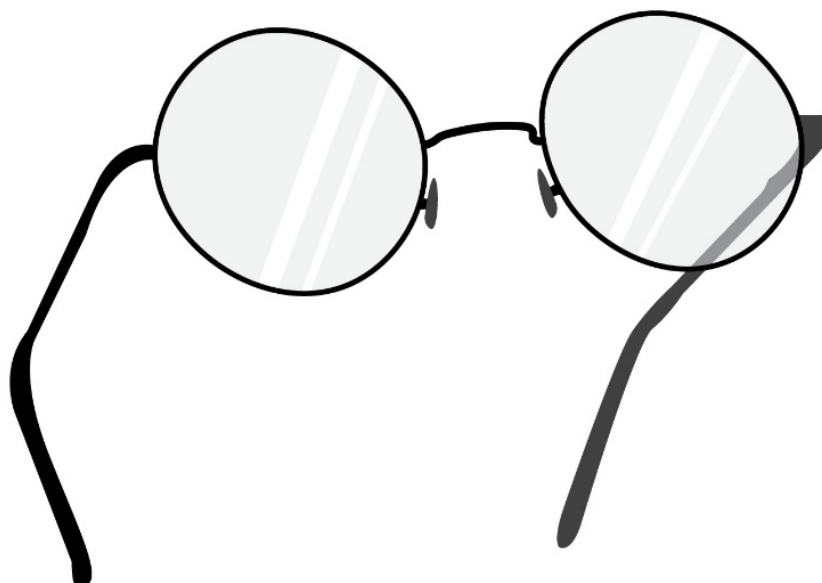




City of Oshawa

Equity and Inclusion Lens

and Handbook



April 2021

Contents

The City's Equity and Inclusion Lens - What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?.....	1
The Purpose of the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook.....	1
Who should use the Equity & Inclusion Lens & Handbook?.....	2
When should I use the Equity & Inclusion Lens & Handbook?.....	3
How Do I Use the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook?	4
Equity and Inclusion Lens Worksheet	5
Communications	6
Engaging Community and Staff.....	7
Gathering Information and Research	8
Leading & Supervising	9
Monitoring & Evaluating	10
Planning for Services, Projects, Programs & Events.....	11
Policy Development.....	12
Recruiting & Hiring Volunteers & Staff.....	13
Training Staff & Volunteers	14
Working with People.....	15
Connecting the Equity & Inclusion Lens to the City's Diversity & Inclusion Plan	16
Considering Equity and Other Definitions.....	19
Inclusive Writing Guidelines	21
Acknowledgements	23

The City's Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook - What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

The Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook is intended to bring insight to help us see things from a clearer perspective, much like a pair of glasses. By using the Equity and Inclusion Lens we are acting intentionally to promote equity and inclusion in the work that we do, the workplace and community.



The City of Oshawa's Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook consists of three main questions:

Who is not included in the work that I am doing?

What could contribute to this exclusion?

What can I do differently to ensure inclusion?

The Purpose of the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook

This Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook was developed to assist the City of Oshawa respond to the core principles outlined in the City of Oshawa's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

The purpose of the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook is to:

- Build awareness of diversity, equity and inclusion
- Incorporate diverse perspectives into our planning and service delivery
- Create a positive and respectful work environment
- Create programs and services that are representative of the community
- Identify, address and prevent systemic barriers and inequities

The ultimate goal is to ensure that as a City, we incorporate the principles of equity, inclusion, fairness, justice and non-discrimination in the development and delivery of programs, services, policies, procedures and decision making.

Who should use the Equity & Inclusion Lens & Handbook?

The Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook is for everyone:

- City Council
- City employees
- Volunteers
- Community partners, consultants and businesses providing services with or on behalf of the City
- External bodies or community agencies

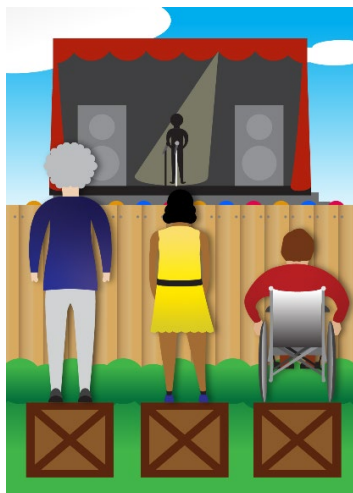
What is Equity?

Equity is not a synonym for equality.

Equality means treating everyone the same. Unfortunately, treating everyone equally often can result in unintended barriers, and therefore, inequities.

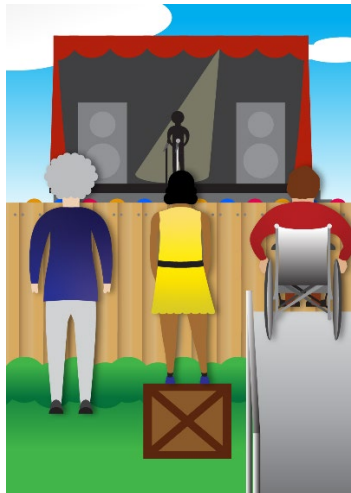
Equity means is treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal results and benefits.

The graphic below illustrates the differences between equality and equity.



This approach assumes that everyone benefits from the same kind of supports.

They are being treated equally. This is an example of equality.



This approach provides different supports to make it possible for all to view the concert. Barriers still remain.

They are being treated equitably. This is an example of equity.



This approach shows a concert without the need for supports as inequities have been addressed.

The systemic barrier has been removed.

Who has Barriers to Participation?

Many populations face multiple barriers due to the discrimination and oppression they experience for being different from the dominant society. The following are many of the equity seeking groups that often encounter barriers to participation:

- Indigenous Peoples
- LGBTQ2S+
- Older adults and youth
- Persons living in poverty
- Persons with disabilities
- Racialized individuals
- Women

Note: It's important to be familiar with all grounds protected under the [Ontario Human Rights Code](#). Refer to the [City of Oshawa Inclusive Language Manual](#) to learn more about equity seeking populations.

When should I use the Equity & Inclusion Lens & Handbook?

Use the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook when developing **new initiatives** to avoid excluding certain groups. During planning for a new project, program or policy, the Lens will help you become aware of potential impacts of exclusion to certain groups, and help remedy this unintentional barrier.

Use the Lens to review and improve **existing programs, and services**. Using it can help identify potential areas of exclusion in various programs, services, initiatives and policies and help identify ways to reduce and eliminate these barriers to inclusion. With this knowledge, the needs of equity seeking groups are incorporated into new or existing programs and services.

Using the Lens can support and enhance existing and future relationships within the community, and ensure that future programs and services are relevant and inclusive.

Consider Diversity

Recognizing diversity within ourselves and others can help us understand how multiple factors influence the way we provide services, design policies and programs, or interact with staff and residents. Diversity is dynamic, and can change over time with new populations moving to the community. Keep this in mind when planning periodic reviews to ensure that programs and services stay current with the population it serves.

Check Assumptions

When we question our own ideas, beliefs and biases, we can open up to new ways of understanding historic perspectives that contribute to systemic barriers. Keep in mind it is possible to identify with more than one group, and that individual traits make each person unique. Broadening our view will welcome more diverse perspectives for more inclusive projects.

Ask About Inclusion

By always asking three questions, we can thread equity and inclusion throughout our work.

1. Who is not included in the work that I am doing?
2. What could contribute to this exclusion?
3. What can I do differently to ensure inclusion?

How Do I Use the Equity and Inclusion Lens and Handbook?

The following pages of this Handbook contain worksheets and reflective questions to ask ourselves in all areas of work, whether it's working with people, supervising and leading, gathering information, communicating or planning services, policies and programs.

- Refer to the **Equity and Inclusion Lens Worksheet** on page 5 for easy reference to use the Equity and Inclusion Lens.
- Use the questions provided on pages 6-18 to guide your specific area of work and help align it to the City's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.
- Use the **Inclusive Writing Guidelines** on page 21 to assist with ensuring your writing is inclusive.

Equity and Inclusion Lens Worksheet

Use this worksheet when you are planning any project. Work with others to brainstorm these questions and explore how to better include populations who are often excluded. Get feedback to make sure you are representing the group appropriately.

Project Title: _____ Project Lead: _____

1. Who is not included in the work that I am doing?
2. What could contribute to this exclusion?
3. What can I do differently to ensure inclusion?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Communications

When we apply equity and inclusion to all communications, we take action to ensure that everyone is heard and informed.

In addition to reviewing these questions when focusing on communications, please refer to **Inclusive Writing Guidelines** on page 21.

- ☐ Have all possible target audiences been considered? Who might be at risk of exclusion?
- ☐ What specific communication strategies are needed to reach target audiences? (e.g. working with community leaders, bulletin boards, community newspapers, social media)
- ☐ Do our communication materials get out to the community organizations and networks that serve the diverse populations we need to reach? Do we check periodically to ensure materials are stocked and being used?
- ☐ How do the messages we are communicating foster inclusion, respect and equity?
- ☐ Are there concepts or terms that may be culturally specific and need to be changed to make them more accessible?
- ☐ Is the medium easily accessible and understood by the full diversity of our target audience? (e.g. plain language, accessible formats, graphics, multiple languages, both online and print, voicemail)
- ☐ Have we considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods? (e.g. online or social media communications) What other approaches might we use?
- ☐ Have we considered if there is a budget or alternative resources for translation services?
- ☐ Do images represent the full diversity of employees or residents? Do they capture the diversity within specific communities of people?
- ☐ Will the people portrayed in the images relate to and feel included in the way they are represented?
- ☐ Is everyone portrayed in positive images that promote equity and break stereotypes? Consider: who is active and passive, who is at the centre, who is serving and being served.

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Engaging Community and Staff

When we welcome the diversity of perspectives of staff and community, we take action to ensure everyone benefits.

Review these questions when engaging community and staff:

- ☐ What approaches and outreach will help to ensure that everyone is able to fully participate? How can we create opportunities for people least likely to be heard to ensure they share their specific concerns? (e.g. use of multiple techniques such as online surveys and focus groups, kinds of questions asked, simultaneous interpretation, sign language, anonymous feedback)
- ☐ Is our team representative of the diversity of the population we are engaging? What steps can we take to ensure we are inclusive of the diversity of perspectives?
- ☐ Which employees, department or community agencies with experience in these specific communities can help us do outreach?
- ☐ Is there a history – between city and community, or between communities – that we need to consider? How will we ensure everyone is heard?
- ☐ Is the language we use in our promotion materials and communication strategy plain and easily understood by diverse audiences?
- ☐ What steps can we take to remove barriers to people's full participation? (e.g. dependent care, transportation, safety, language, accessible location, time, multiple formats, avoid religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate)
- ☐ Is the environment welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to share their views? If not, what can we do to change this? (e.g. pair up a new participant with an experienced one to help those new to the process feel encouraged to participate). Does the pace, format and language of the engagement accommodate everyone including participants who are least likely to speak up and for whom the information may be new?
- ☐ Are the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in the report and the final product?
- ☐ How will we report back the findings to the full diversity of people who were involved in the engagement activity?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Gathering Information and Research

When we consider diversity in conducting environmental scans, needs assessments or collecting data, we take action to be inclusive of everyone.

Review these questions when gathering information and performing research:

- ☐ Will our data gathering plan identify specific areas where we may unintentionally limit equity and inclusion? (e.g. safety, accessibility, affordability, cultural specificity, family responsibilities, access to decision making, racial profiling)
- ☐ What current statistics or demographic data would help us understand the people or communities that face systemic barriers and inequities in relation to the issue in question?
- ☐ Will data gathered capture the diversity of the population? (i.e. broken down to make differences visible)
- ☐ When using gender-neutral language (people, head of household, the homeless, sole-support parent, immigrants), are we also distinguishing differences between women and men in that specific group? (e.g. female heads of household versus male heads of household)
- ☐ Do the research questions help us identify who may be excluded and what is needed to ensure they will benefit?
- ☐ Are we making any assumptions that we need to verify? (e.g. all parents in a program will be heterosexual)
- ☐ How might you consult with the people most affected by this issue to ensure the reliability of your data, approach and findings? (e.g. ask community leaders about the cultural appropriateness of the data or approach)
- ☐ Have we consulted with other staff, departments or community leaders with experience in this area? If not, how will we do this?
- ☐ Does our final report include the findings on the specific equity and inclusion concerns we identified?
- ☐ How will we report back the findings to people who were involved in the research?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Leading & Supervising

When we become champions for equity and inclusion in the way we lead, we take action to model a city that utilizes everyone's diverse talents and skills.

Review these questions when leading and supervising:

- ☐ What steps do I take to create a respectful and inclusive environment?
- ☐ Do I clearly communicate to staff and volunteers that inappropriate behaviour such as offensive jokes, and negative comments are not acceptable?
- ☐ How can I actively gather input and ideas from staff or volunteers from diverse perspectives?
- ☐ How can I encourage staff to contribute positively in creating an inclusive workplace?
- ☐ Do I utilize support systems for employees that have been harassed, treated in a disrespectful manner or discriminated against by co-workers, supervisors or clients?
- ☐ Are there policies, procedures and/or practices and attitudes that unintentionally prevent some people from fully engaging in our work? (e.g. schedules conflicting with religious holidays, workload or schedule conflicting with family responsibilities) What alternatives are possible?
- ☐ Am I aware of our commitments to inclusion and accommodation and do I ensure that staff are equally informed?
- ☐ What opportunities could I create to enable people from under-represented groups to bring new perspectives to our team, acquire experience and move into higher-level positions?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Monitoring & Evaluating

When we consider equity and inclusion in how we measure success, we take action to ensure that all benefit from the process and its outcomes.

Review these questions when monitoring and evaluating programs:

- ☐ Have we considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods? What other approaches might we use?
- ☐ How can we ensure diverse population perspectives are included?
- ☐ Do the evaluation questions allow for consideration of the experiences of a diversity of residents?
- ☐ When analyzing our data, did we maintain a diversity of perspectives in the findings?
- ☐ Have we validated the findings with the community so as to minimize any biases?
- ☐ How can we report back to the people who participated in the evaluation process?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Planning for Services, Projects, Programs & Events

When we consider the range of equity issues, we take action to eliminate barriers so that everyone can benefit.

Review these questions when planning services, projects, programs or events:

- ☐ Do the expected outcomes of the service, project, program, or event reflect equity and inclusion goals?
- ☐ How will the service, project, program, or event build upon the strengths of the people it serves?
- ☐ Will the service, project, program, or event contribute to more equitable access to resources and benefits in the wider community?
- ☐ Have the primary target groups been consulted? (See Engaging Community and Staff)
- ☐ How is the proposed service, project, program, or event designed to ensure that a full diversity of people can participate and benefit with dignity? (i.e. accessibility for mobility devices, visual and hearing impairments, child or dependent care, transportation, safety concerns, language).
- ☐ Does the timing of the service, project, program, or event consider potential demands on people's time? (i.e. religious and cultural holidays, family responsibilities)
- ☐ Have we considered and made note of equity and inclusion considerations in our service, project, program, or event management plans?
- ☐ Are there good equity and inclusion practices in other cities, departments or community organizations that can inform the implementation?
- ☐ What human and financial resources are required to address equity and inclusion in the implementation of this service, project, program, or event?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Policy Development

When we make policies equitable and accessible, we take action to ensure that everyone is included in city life.

Review these questions when developing policy:

- ☐ What are the equity and inclusion concerns related to this policy issue? (e.g. accessibility, affordability, safety, culture, gender identity)
- ☐ Have we checked existing policies that may inform how we address equity and inclusion in this new policy?
- ☐ Have we considered and made note of equity and inclusion considerations when developing the business case for the policy?
- ☐ Are the groups most affected by the policy consulted from the early stages of the policy development? How can we ensure their perspectives are included? (See Engaging Community and Staff)
- ☐ What background information can aid in addressing equity and inclusion? (See Gathering information/research)
- ☐ What human and financial resources are required to address equity and inclusion in the implementation of this policy?
- ☐ Can we develop innovative policy solutions that draw upon the contributions and assets of those people most affected?
- ☐ If new resources are required in the policy implementation, how can we build that in from the beginning? (e.g. partner with community groups, collaborate across branches, seek matching funds)
- ☐ How can we communicate the policy so as to reach the full diversity of people affected? (See Communications)
- ☐ How will we measure the extent to which the policy contributes to removing barriers or creating opportunities for people who risk exclusion?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Recruiting & Hiring Volunteers & Staff

When we integrate equity and inclusion in our hiring practices and policies, we take action to increase diverse skills and perspectives in the workplace. Review these questions when hiring volunteers and staff.

- ☐ Do staff and volunteers in our work area reflect the diversity of the community we serve? Who is under-represented?
- ☐ What knowledge, skills, experience and diversity would enhance our team's capacity to serve the diversity of clients?
- ☐ Do job requirements and selection criteria unnecessarily limit who would qualify?
- ☐ Are we open to considering what new perspectives people from different backgrounds could bring to the position?
- ☐ Have we considered where best to post this employment opportunity to ensure that the widest diversity of people are able to access it? Do we encourage agencies and community partners to access the City's career site so that we can broaden the applicant pool from the diversity groups?
- ☐ Are interview panels composed of individuals who bring diverse backgrounds and experiences relevant to the position?
- ☐ Have we considered ways to reduce barriers in the interview process so as to make it more welcoming and friendly (i.e. provide a copy of the questions)
- ☐ Do we consider that people from specific backgrounds may present interview behaviours that are different from what we expect, but still have the skills to do the job?
- ☐ If a candidate's references are from abroad, what strategies can we use? (e.g. if an English speaking reference is not available then seek translation support)

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Training Staff & Volunteers

When we apply equity and inclusion to all stages of the training process, we take action to create an environment where everyone can contribute.

Review these questions when training staff and volunteers:

- ☐ Have we included sensitivity to equity and inclusion issues when staffing for internal trainers and hiring external consultants? (i.e. able to reduce biases and work respectfully with people across diversity)
- ☐ Have we included this sensitivity to equity and inclusion in our procurement documents when sourcing external trainers?
- ☐ Can we recruit trainers from diverse backgrounds so they reflect the population we serve?
- ☐ Will the learning objectives be designed to influence participants' awareness and consideration of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds?
- ☐ Will participants develop competency and skills to work sensitively and effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds?
- ☐ Is everyone able to fully participate in the training? Is specific outreach required to include them? Are barriers addressed? (e.g. safety, language, accessible location, time, avoid religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate, accommodation needs)
- ☐ Have we welcomed the diverse perspectives of people who have specific equity concerns or needs, even if they may not be obvious? (e.g. Indigenous ancestry, LGBTQ2S+ identities, dietary, auditory, language needs or preferences)
- ☐ Is the content sensitive to the experience of participants who may experience systemic barriers?
- ☐ Does it include the perspectives of residents or staff who will be accessing the service?
- ☐ In the evaluation of the training, do we ask whether there were any barriers to participation or whether they found the facilitator to be inclusive of the diversity of participants?

Applying the Equity & Inclusion Lens

Working with People

When we treat people with respect, we are taking action to create a welcoming workplace and quality service.

Review these questions when working with people:

- ☐ When I interact with people, do I check assumptions?
- ☐ Do I hold assumptions about people that get in the way of how I work with them?
- ☐ Do I avoid stereotypes so I can see the individual for who they really are?
- ☐ Am I able to respect our differences and yet recognize what we have in common?
- ☐ Do I recognize their contributions?
- ☐ Am I paying attention to those who are not expressing their ideas?
- ☐ How do I encourage feedback and full participation from everyone present?
- ☐ Am I raising issues in a way that encourages dialogue?
- ☐ Do I consider potential barriers in each situation, and work to minimize them? (e.g. language, prejudice, sexual or racial discrimination)
- ☐ If I am not sure what barriers may exist, do I ask my colleagues or the people I serve?
- ☐ Do I discourage jokes, insults and negative comments that are offensive to people?
- ☐ Do I recognize and build on the strengths and assets of all individuals?
- ☐ Are there procedures, policies and practices in place that limit my capacity to be inclusive? Are there others that support my capacity to be inclusive?

Connecting the Equity & Inclusion Lens to the City's Diversity & Inclusion Plan

The following section includes questions related to the Strategic Directions contained within the City of Oshawa's Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

Consider these questions to help align your work with the Plan.

Leadership

- ☐ What steps have been taken to create respectful and inclusive environments for coworkers, volunteers and community members of equity seeking groups?
- ☐ How are policies and procedures reviewed and addressed to ensure that they do not unintentionally limit participation by those who have barriers?
- ☐ What support systems are in place to ensure that harassment and discrimination is addressed effectively and in a timely manner?
- ☐ How are equity seeking populations supported to acquire experience for advancement?
- ☐ How is equity and inclusion incorporated into staff performance reviews and branch business planning?
- ☐ How are all departments engaged in fostering the goals of the Diversity and Inclusion Plan towards inclusion and equity of all staff?
- ☐ How is equity incorporated in procurement and outsourcing?

Community Engagement and Participation

- ☐ What approaches and outreach opportunities could ensure that everyone, including persons from equity seeking groups is able to participate?
- ☐ What opportunities could be created to support those voices that are least likely to be heard?
- ☐ Is our work team representative of the diversity of the Oshawa population we serve? How can we bring the missing perspectives to the table?
- ☐ Is plain language being used to ensure the message is easily understood by diverse audiences?
- ☐ What else can be done to support engagement (transportation, child care, translation services, multiple formats, accessible location etc.)?
- ☐ How can we make the environment welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to participate and share their views?

Community Development

- ☐ How do we ensure that equity groups are consulted and involved in program development?
- ☐ How are long term needs of residents from all equity groups considered in long term planning? (e.g. aging populations, new cultural groups moving to Oshawa, retention of students populations)
- ☐ How can promising practices by leading equity municipalities be adopted to expedite development of inclusive programming and services?
- ☐ How are diverse populations engaged in policy and program development?
- ☐ How can community development positively impact the engagement of residents in the everyday business of the City?

Human Resource Development

- ☐ How do the employees and volunteers reflect the residents of Oshawa? How can representation be improved?
- ☐ Do job requirements and selection criteria unnecessarily limit who would qualify (e.g. driver's license for jobs that do not require driving)?
- ☐ How can job postings be easily accessible by equity seeking groups? How can we connect with audiences that we have not yet reached?
- ☐ What efforts are made to ensure a diverse panel for interviews?
- ☐ How can we be responsive to candidates whose interview behaviours are different from what we expect, but still have the skills to do the job?
- ☐ How are equity experiences built into job descriptions to attract a broader representation of community members?

Education and Awareness

- ☐ Have all possible target audiences been considered? Which equity seeking groups are at risk of being excluded? How can that be addressed?
- ☐ What strategies are needed to reach equity populations (stakeholders, newspapers, social media, and direct invitation)?
- ☐ How does messaging intentionally foster inclusion, respect and equity?
- ☐ Are terms accessible to those who have cultural differences and abilities?
- ☐ Has translation and/or interpretation been considered?
- ☐ Are images used representative of all Oshawa residents?

Assessment and Accountability

- ☐ How are the initiatives reflective of the needs of diverse populations? How are we measuring what is important to different populations?
- ☐ What data would help us understand communities that face systemic barriers?
- ☐ Who else needs to be consulted to be positively impacted by our efforts?
- ☐ How does reporting include findings on specific equity and inclusion concerns?
- ☐ How will we report findings to those involved in the initiatives?

Considering Equity and Other Definitions

Diversity is about the individual and the characteristics that make up that person. They are unique traits that can include race, gender, gender identity and expression, religion, age, language, sexual orientation, social class, ability, family make up etc. Your diversity is unique to you. Everyone is diverse in some way. When there are two people present, you have diversity.

Equity is the practice of ensuring fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people, with consideration of individual and group diversities. Access to services, supports and opportunities and attaining economic, political and social fairness is not achieved by treating individuals exactly the same. Equity honours and accommodates the specific needs of individuals/groups.

Inclusion is how individuals are brought together to be part of the community while including differences. Inclusion happens when the organization intentionally creates a culture where all individuals are welcomed, empowered and valued for their uniqueness, talents, skills and abilities. Inclusion creates a sense of belonging where difference enriches the culture for all.

Oppression is the combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups (often called “target groups”) and benefits other groups (often called “dominant groups”). Examples of these systems are racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, ageism, and anti-Semitism. These systems enable dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

Privilege operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominant groups at the expense of members of target groups. In Canada, privilege is granted to people who have membership in one or more of these social identity groups:

- White people;
- Non-Indigenous;
- Able-bodied people;
- Heterosexuals;
- Males;
- Christians;
- Middle-class people;
- Middle-aged people;
- English-speaking people

Privilege is characteristically invisible to people who have it. People in dominant groups often believe that they have earned the privileges that they enjoy or that everyone could have access if only they worked to earn them. In fact, privileges are unearned and they are granted to people in the dominant groups whether they want those privileges or not,

and regardless of their stated intent. Unlike targets of oppression, people in dominant groups are frequently unaware that they are members of the dominant group.

For more definitions, see the Glossary of the [City of Oshawa's Inclusive Language Manual](#).

Being an Ally As allies, we commit to using the information we learn to stand beside and advocate for those who experience discrimination. It is not a one-time action. Being an ally is a lifelong learning process of asking questions so as to apply (and re-apply) insights to action.

By applying the Equity and Inclusion Lens, we develop an awareness of advantages and disadvantages. We can address them to make a difference, unlearn biases and stereotypes, stop using habitual responses that are discriminatory, and speak up against hurtful comments.

Being an ally is more than being sympathetic towards those who experience discrimination. It means being willing to act with and for others in pursuit of ending oppression and creating equality. An ally is someone whose personal commitment to fighting oppression and prejudice is reflected in willingness to:

- Educate oneself about different identities and experiences,
- Challenge one's own privilege and prejudices,
- Learn and practice the skills of being an ally,
- Take action to create interpersonal, societal and institutional change.

Inclusive Writing Guidelines

The following document includes questions intended to help inform your writing to make it more inclusive. Use the guidelines when creating or reviewing materials. Consider these questions when you are writing a policy, webpage content instructions, training materials, speaking notes, bullet points for a news release, social media messages or a report, etc. Your focus will vary depending on your audience.

The Inclusive Writing Guidelines can help to ensure that the broadest possible audience is engaged. The guidelines can also be used hand in hand with the [City of Oshawa Inclusive Language Manual](#) to access more background on different equity seeking populations, a broad glossary of terms, and direction for further research.

Before you write, consider the following questions. After you have completed a draft, revisit these questions and have another read with inclusion in mind. This practice will broaden the reach of your materials, and serve to include all members of our community.

The Guidelines draw your focus to consider: who is included; who is excluded; and is the writing respectful.

How can you make your writing gender neutral?

Use broad terminology to welcome a diversity of people. Challenge assumptions that your topic is only relevant to one gender (e.g. only men are interested in a certain sport, or job). Avoid using gendered pronouns that exclude others. Instead of he or him, or she or her, consider more inclusive terms such as they or their, or use names or titles. The use of “he/she” still excludes transgender members of the community.

How can you use a variety of examples to represent the diversity of the population served?

Include examples and/or images of people from a variety of abilities, cultures, and ages, etc., in order to be inclusive of all members in the community. Ensure your examples are varied and refreshed regularly. Consider what populations are not portrayed. Consider who is active or passive. Be mindful to avoid stereotypes and aim to portray people in a positive light that promotes inclusion.

How can you ensure that references reflect how individuals want to be described?

Consider using terms that come directly from the individual or equity seeking group, rather than speaking as an outsider. What might be common terminology for you may not be respectful from another’s point of view. Invite feedback and include your audience in the wording choice when you are unsure about appropriate language.

How can you make your document more easily accessible?

If you are writing a public document, consider simplifying language in order to include those who may not have English as their first language, or for those with literacy challenges. For example, web standards are generally written at a Grade Five level for comprehension. Clear and simple terminology invites more people to be part of your audience.

What can you do to bring more clarity to your writing?

Avoid the use of acronyms, abbreviations, or terms that are used exclusively by an inside group. Choose words that are descriptive to illustrate your ideas. Provide relevant background when using an example so that more people can relate to your statement. For example, assuming everyone knows the rules when describing an activity can leave out people who are not familiar.

How can you be more respectful in your descriptive terminology?

Stay clear of stereotypes, colloquialisms, or metaphors. Meaning is not the same for all people as language and culture influences interpretation. For example, “walk a mile in your shoes” does not translate well for cultures where it is disrespectful to wear someone else’s shoes.

How does your writing increase opportunities and remove barriers?

Invite others when doing research for a writing project. This broader participation increases opportunities and reduces isolation for groups that have not been included in the past. Think about who is excluded in your materials and aim to include them where relevant. Ask the group you are including for feedback on your project to ensure you represent them appropriately.

Acknowledgements

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