

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2024 - 2034

City of  
**PICKERING**



# Contents

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy	1
Land Acknowledgement	3
Executive Summary	4
A message from the Mayor	6
A message from the Chief Administrative Officer	7
Introduction	8
What is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?	9
Why EDI is Important	12
Why is the City of Pickering developing an EDI Strategy?	14
What is Pickering's Demographic Profile?	15
The Process:	17
What we learned	23
Theme 1: Lack of EDI Awareness	25
Theme 2: Systemic Barriers	27
Theme 3: Lack of Diverse Representation	29
Theme 4: Leadership Commitment to EDI	31
EDI Vision and Mission Statements	33
Priority Areas of Focus	36
References	43



Commemorative Orange Crosswalk, designed by Jon Cowell of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation

# Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations. This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.

# Executive Summary

The Corporation of the City of Pickering (the City) is committed to embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into the fabric of its organization and community to foster a sense of belonging, empowerment and respect for all. We strive to develop policies, practices and programs that advance EDI as a standard of public service by engaging diverse perspectives and experiences, eliminating systemic barriers, and promoting community cohesion. The City's Corporate Strategic Plan which was approved in December, 2023 identifies EDI as a priority essential for the successful achievement of our corporate goals.

The EDI Strategy was developed through internal and external consultations across two and a half years from 2021 to 2023. Internally, consultations included an employee survey; key informant interviews with Mayor and Council and senior leadership; employee focus groups; and a senior leadership/EDI Steering Committee planning session. Externally, consultations took place through a community-wide online survey; key informant interviews with community partners; community focus groups; and the establishment of a community working group. In total, there were approximately 900 points of engagement throughout this research and consultation process. The City's policies, programs and practices were also reviewed as part of this exercise. The Pickering Library Board (the Library) partnered with the City during this exercise to leverage resources. The Library will be

developing its own Library focused EDI Strategy based upon the collaborative findings and consistent with the City's Strategy.

Findings from the consultations and the review of internal practices revealed important successes including the development of a dedicated section for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion within the Office of the CAO; equitable hiring policies; an EDI Steering Committee; a Mental Wellness Committee; age-friendly programs; and procedures against violence and harassment in the workplace. The City is also taking important steps to integrate community input into critical areas through advisory groups such as the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT), the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Cultural Advisory Committee, the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, and the Community Safety & Well-Being Committee.

Findings from the consultations also identified challenges and opportunities for growth for the City. For example, employee feedback confirmed the importance of developing a healthy workplace where everyone is valued, engaged, and allowed to contribute their intellectual and creative capital to the vision and mission of the City.

Community partners also called for a more active demonstration of the City's commitments to EDI, the elimination of anti-Black racism,

addressing the barriers experienced by the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, and Truth and Reconciliation. Many shared experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and microaggressions within schools, workplaces, and everyday community interactions and asserted the need for City leaders to take a strong stance against hateful, discriminatory and oppressive experiences, especially if they are to honour their commitments in an EDI strategy.

This EDI Strategy aims to address the concerns, interests, experiences and needs of employees, residents, visitors and community members in Pickering. It is imperative for us to recognize that all representatives of the City (Council, Senior Leadership Team and employees) play a role in addressing the priority areas of focus that were uncovered as a result of these extensive consultations and research.

A shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and accountability, will best enable the implementation of the EDI Strategy. Departments are responsible for actioning the

items related to their operational area. This will be supported by the EDI staff team who will also provide leadership and direction at the corporate level.

### Overall, consultations identified five priority areas of focus:

- 1 Education and awareness;
- 2 Structure and resources;
- 3 Community consultation and engagement;
- 4 Policies, Practices and Programs; and,
- 5 Measurement and accountability.

The EDI Strategy document will elaborate upon these priority areas of focus through a review of the common themes found from our consultations, key data sources, wise practices, and actions for implementation.



Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce, Engaging Our Leaders Event, George Ashe Community Centre



# A message from the Mayor



**Kevin Ashe**  
Mayor, City of Pickering

On behalf of the Members of Council, I am proud to introduce the City of Pickering's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. Pickering is a dynamic and thriving city made up of diverse cultures, ethnicities, faiths, ages, abilities, and genders that define our greatest strength and success as a community.

When Council endorsed the creation of an EDI Strategy in 2020, the world bore witness to a number of high profile and alarming incidents rooted in prejudice, racism and historic injustices, that renewed the calls for meaningful change and social justice. As Pickering is a microcosm of the world, these distressing events had a ripple effect in our community, which highlighted the acute need for the development of an EDI Strategy.

I have been fortunate during my time as both Mayor and Councillor over the past two decades to connect with many of you in Pickering. I have learned about unique and rich cultural traditions, languages, histories and accomplishments of diverse groups. I've also learned about the undue hardships and impacts caused by various forms of prejudice, discrimination, and hate and recognize that these

challenges continue to persist even within our community. These have been truly humbling experiences that reinforce our responsibility as elected officials to serve, advocate and protect the well-being and inherent human dignity of all in our community, and I am eager to do so with the guidance of our EDI Strategy.

While no single document can capture the full scope of work and level of commitment needed to advance and sustain EDI, it is my sincere hope that this EDI Strategy will not only set us on the right path but also inspire collective dedication and action in serving our community with integrity, humility and respect.

As Mayor, I commit to championing EDI and ensuring that Pickering thrives as an equitable and inclusive place for all to call home.

# A message from the Chief Administrative Officer



**Marisa Carpino**  
CAO, City of Pickering

On behalf of all staff, I am proud to share the City of Pickering's first Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. This foundational document is essential to ensuring that our organization prioritizes EDI at every level of decision making and operations so that our policies, programs, services and facilities reflect and serve the diverse needs of our community.

We began our journey to develop this Strategy in 2020. Since then, I'm proud of the early milestones we have achieved and the dedicated efforts of staff to translate our commitments into action. This includes the establishment and staffing of a new EDI team within the Office of the CAO, and the implementation of staff trainings on critical topics like Treaty rights and responsibilities, anti-racism,

gender equity, ableism, and human rights. We also enhanced our collaborations with neighbouring municipalities and community organizations to honour Black History Month, International Women's Day, Pride Month, Emancipation Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, among other occasions. As a Corporation, our most notable achievement has been the creation of this EDI Strategy.

The priorities identified in the EDI Strategy are the result of two and a half years of extensive internal and external consultations and research. Through surveys, interviews, focus groups, workshops and policy reviews, people entrusted us with their personal experiences, which offered important insights on how to advance EDI in both our

organization and the broader community. We are humbled and grateful to have learned from all who engaged in this process with such honest and constructive feedback, and we are excited to move forward with sustained and impactful actions.

While the completion of the EDI strategy is a critical milestone, I know we are still early in our journey. I also recognize that this is an ongoing process that will require constant self-reflection, community input, humility, discipline, and accountability. Our EDI strategy is ambitious, but I am confident in our collective commitment to work together in building a Pickering where all are respected, empowered and feel a true sense of belonging.

# Introduction

With Council’s approval of the 2021 Budget, the City of Pickering formally began the process to develop a multi-year Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy (previously referred to as the D&I Strategy). The Plan was envisioned to be a City staff-led initiative to focus internally on organizational change management for the City, which would provide a foundation to support community-led efforts. Since then, extensive consultations have been undertaken with members of Pickering Council, the Senior Leadership Team, staff, residents and community partners to inform the City’s first EDI Strategy. This Strategy reflects the results of this research and presents the goals, priorities and areas of focus that will inform the City and Library’s joint efforts to advance EDI.

Black History Month Celebration, Chestnut Hills Development Recreation Complex



Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, Commemorative Orange Crosswalk Installation, The Esplanade North



Pride Month Flag Raising Ceremony, Pickering City Hall





# What is Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?

Equity, diversity and inclusion are distinct but interrelated concepts that organizations and municipalities are increasingly embedding into their everyday operations to foster supportive and respectful environments for staff, residents, visitors and community members.

**Although each of these concepts have unique meanings, “it is only in combination that their true impact emerges” (McKinsey & Company, 2022).**

It is important to have a shared understanding of these key concepts to understand the vision and impetus for the EDI Strategy.

Beginning with **diversity**, this concept recognizes that a community is comprised of individuals with unique and differing identities that influence how they experience the world around them for better or for worse. These identities can be defined by such categories as age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, income, employment, immigration status, and many others. Notably, the Ontario Human Rights

Code enumerates 17 protected grounds that prohibit discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, housing, services, unions and vocational association and contracts (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2024), which signifies a legislated responsibility to protect diverse identities. In workplace contexts, diversity can also account for other identifiers such as whether or not one’s job is affiliated with full-time or part-time status, management or frontline levels of authority, union or non-union membership. This is not an exhaustive list but nevertheless showcases the diversity of identities, characteristics, attributes, and statuses that one can possess at any given time. As such, it must be recognized that people have multiple and intersecting identities—the variations and combinations of which can result in power and privilege for some and disadvantage for others that can themselves change in different situations. Advancing diversity in organizations promotes representation of diverse perspectives and experiences.

**Inclusion** builds upon diversity and strives to ensure that community members feel a sense

of belonging and are able to fully participate in society. Inclusion is about ensuring that individuals can bring their whole and authentic selves to a place and feel welcomed, valued and empowered.

**In a recent interview on inclusivity at work, DEI expert Aiko Bethea explains that inclusion cannot exist without diversity, but that diversity can exist without inclusion (Brown, 2020, 9:35).**

It is essential that efforts to advance diversity go beyond mere representation and focus on valuing that representation to ensure that diverse perspectives and experiences meaningfully influence decision-making within organizations. For example, when thinking about gender diversity within workplaces, it is well known that women are underrepresented in senior level positions in comparison to men.

**According to statistics shared in a recent report reviewing ten years of data on gender diversity (McKinsey & Company, 2017), although women represent 50% of the world's working-age population, only 25% are in management positions.**

And this is only one element of diversity. Thus, advancing inclusion in organizational contexts is about ensuring that diverse perspectives and

experiences are used to inform decision-making around policies and practices.

Finally, **equity** strives to ensure fairness in how people are treated with respect to the unique circumstances that shape their lives and access to resources and/or opportunities. This includes accounting for historical factors that have resulted in discrimination and disadvantage for various groups, such as experiences of colonialism and enslavement of Indigenous and Black communities. Equity recognizes that these forms of oppression have, over time, contributed to the marginalization of these communities in ways that have deprived them of fundamental resources and opportunities needed to thrive in the world.

**It is important to distinguish equity from the concept of equality which aims to ensure sameness in treatment as opposed to fairness. Equality does not consider the unique circumstances of individuals and assumes that treating everyone the same is sufficient.**

Values of equality are embedded in many practices. Hiring practices, for example, assume that educational attainment measured in degrees are an adequate measure of one's success and qualifications. However, an equitable approach would account for the fact that some communities do not have the

same access to education on account of factors like economic disadvantage. An equitable approach to hiring would consider comparative assessments and evaluations that help assess a candidate's suitability for a particular position. For example, historically, Indigenous people would lose their "Indian" status and related rights if they pursued a post-secondary education (Crey & Hanson, 2009). An equity lens would recognize

this as a systemic barrier and consider alternative methods of evaluation.

**Simply treating people equally neglects the fact that people have different capacities and often serves to reinforce inequalities as it does not recognize the prevalence in society of systemic barriers.**



City staff recognize Pink Shirt Day, City Hall, February 28, 2024

# Why EDI is Important

The following considerations form the basis of why organizations need to address EDI :



**The legal imperative** highlights the legislated responsibilities of organizations to account for EDI in their policies and practices (Turner Consulting Group, 2023). The Ontario Human Rights Code identifies 17 protected grounds. It requires that employers ensure that workplaces are free from discrimination, harassment, and violence. In addition, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act requires that organizations are accessible to people with disabilities—including those affected by both visible and invisible conditions that may have been present from birth or developed over time. The Employment Equity Act ensures access to the labour market and recognizes the unique disadvantages and discrimination experienced by women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and racialized communities in employment. These and many other pieces of legislation create a legal obligation to prioritize EDI.



**The demographic imperative** emphasizes the diversity of workplaces and communities. It encourages an appreciation for the ways in which employees “bring different life experiences, cultural understanding, language ability, and ways of thinking that help them relate to service users and clients” (Turner Consulting Group, 2023). It also requires an understanding of how demographic shifts can influence diversity.



## According to Statistics Canada (2022)

**51%**

of the Canadian population identifies as female

**27%**

of the Canadian population identifies as racialized

**22%**

of the Canadian population lives with one or more disabilities

**6%**

of the Canadian population is Indigenous

**4%**

of the Canadian population identifies as 2SLGBTQIA+

**23%**

of the Canadian population were born outside of Canada



It is important that organizations reflect this diversity in the communities they serve.



**The business imperative** for EDI focuses on the benefits of attracting top talent by leveraging the strengths of people from diverse backgrounds (Turner Consulting Group, 2023). Greater employee diversity, in turn, can increase creativity, productivity, retention and overall employee and organizational performance as employees feel safe, welcome, engaged and empowered. This has extended positive impacts on clients or service users whose similarly diverse needs and interests are better served.



Black History Month Celebration, Chestnut Hills Development Recreation Complex, February 1, 2024



Emancipation Day Celebration, Audley Recreation Centre, August 1, 2023



Community Banner Program featuring Pflag Durham Region "Home Town Pride" banner



Consultations for EDI Strategy

# Why is the City of Pickering developing an EDI Strategy?

**In December 2023, the City of Pickering's Council approved its first ever Corporate Strategic Plan which identifies a commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion through the Corporate Priority: Advocate for an Inclusive, Welcoming, Safe & Healthy Community.**

The City's commitment to this EDI Strategy is important because:

- » Decision making affects all constituents.
- » Diverse input into decision-making is necessary.
- » All City functions must be equitable for full participation – resources must be allocated to seek equity.
- » The growing population of diverse communities in the City of Pickering makes an EDI Framework essential.
- » Everyone who lives in Pickering should feel included and that this city is their city!

# What is Pickering's Demographic Profile?



**1 of 8**

lower tier municipalities within the Region of Durham.

Some neighbouring municipalities include Toronto, Markham, Whitby, and Ajax.



**8%**

growth rate from **2016 to 2021**. Population increased from **91,771** to **99,186**.

This is the third highest growth rate in Durham Region.



**By 2042,**

Pickering's population is expected to reach **185,044**.

Estimates from the Region forecasts population growth to reach **256,370 by 2051**.

## Population Growth in Durham Region

Municipality	2016 #	2016 % of Durham Population	2021 #	2021 % of Durham Population	% of increase from 2016 to 2021
Ajax	119,677	18.5%	126,666	18.2%	5.8%
Brock	11,642	1.8%	12,567	1.8%	7.9%
Clarington	92,013	14.2%	101,427	14.6%	10.2%
Oshawa	159,458	24.7%	175,383	25.2%	10.0%
Pickering	91,771	14.2%	99,186	14.2%	8.1%
Scugog	21,748	3.4%	21,706	3.1%	-0.2%
Uxbridge	21,176	3.3%	21,556	3.1%	1.8%
Whitby	128,377	19.9%	138,501	19.9%	7.9%
Durham	645,862	100%	696,992	100.0%	7.9%

# 2021 Census Highlights



**51.9 %** OF PICKERING'S  
POPULATION ARE  
'VISIBLE MINORITIES'

**SOUTH  
ASIAN** 21.2 %

**BLACK** 11.4 %

**FILIPINO** 4.1 %

**36.3 %** OF PICKERING'S  
POPULATION IDENTIFY  
AS IMMIGRANTS

**51.6 %** coming from Asia (specifically  
India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka).

These are only some of the key  
socio-demographic trends in Pickering.



24.5% of the population speaks a  
language other than English or French.



the average age in Pickering is 40.9  
years, and the largest age group is  
between 55 to 64 years.

**65+**

16.6% of the population is aged 65 or older.



53.7% of residents are Christian, 25.7%  
Catholic, 12.6% Muslim, and 8.3% Hindu.

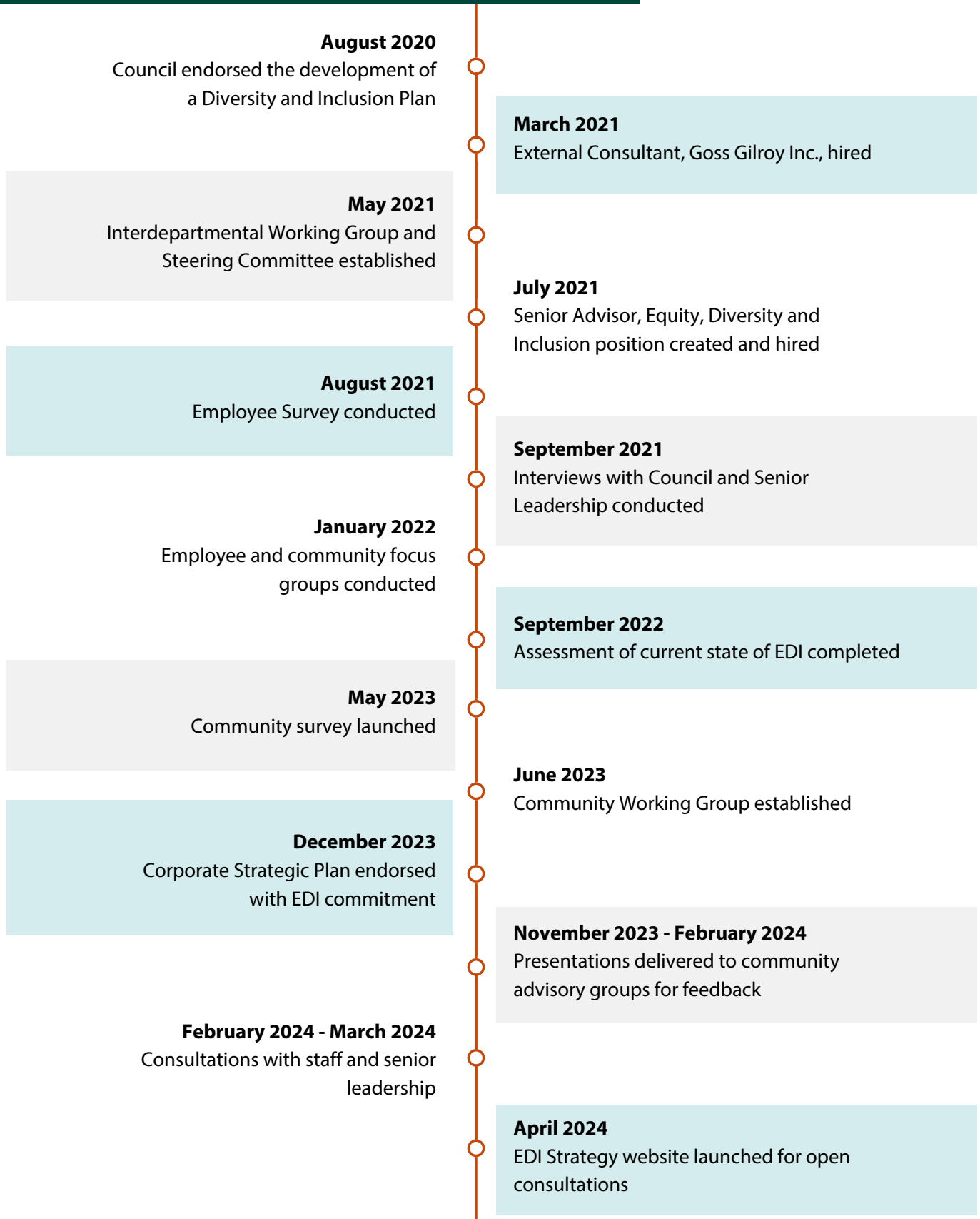


48.5% of residents identify as men, and  
51.5% identify as women.



# The Process:

## Key Developments in the EDI Strategy



Based on best practice recommendations, the first step in the development of the City's EDI Strategy was to conduct an assessment of the current state of EDI at the City. This was necessary to obtain a better understanding of what is working well (e.g., mechanisms, policies, and initiatives that are already in place) and what issues, challenges, and barriers to EDI still exist and need to be addressed in the Strategy. This allows the customization of the EDI Strategy to the specific needs which will in turn contribute to maximizing local buy-in and impact (Hunt et al., 2018).

Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) was hired by the City to undertake a review and analysis of the current state of EDI at the City and help develop the City's EDI Strategy. The EDI Strategy and the recommendations brought forward are the result of extensive research and consultations over two and a half years from 2021 to 2023. In total, there were approximately 900 individual points of engagement throughout this research and consultation process. GGI also conducted a document and policy review during that same period of time. The focus of the document and policy review was to assess processes, policies and practices at the City including governance processes; policies related to decision-making, personnel practices, and administration processes; and documents related to organizational culture, communications, service delivery, and community relations.

A brief overview of the different methods used for the current state assessment is presented below. The consultations ultimately helped to identify both our successes and opportunities for EDI growth.

## Employee Survey

**308** City/Library employees completed the survey between July 23, 2021 and August 23, 2021.

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## Key Informant Interviews with Senior Leaders

**11** interviews were carried out between October 12, 2021 and December 8, 2022. Participants included:

**2** executive leaders (CAO and CEO)

**9** City Council members (two of the interviews were with newly elected Councillors in December of 2022)

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## Focus Groups with City/PPL Employees

**7** focus groups were conducted with 55 employees between November 12, 2021 and April 22, 2022.

**3** focus groups were held with department leaders in:

- Human Resources
- Operations
- Community Services
- City Development
- Engineering Services
- Fire Services
- Corporate Services and City Solicitor
- Finance
- Economic Development & Strategic Projects

**1** focus group was held with the EDI Steering Committee, participants included representatives from:

- Human Resources
- Community Services
- City Development
- Office of the CAO
- Fire Services
- Pickering Professional Firefighters Association
- Engineering Services
- Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 129
- Pickering Public Library

**3** focus groups were held with City employees from across the organization



## Focus Groups with External Community Groups

**2** focus groups were conducted with 15 members between April 27 and May 25, 2022.

- Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT)
- Anti-Black Racism Working Group (ABRWG)

## Key Informant Interviews with External Partners

**4** interviews were held in September 2022, with representatives of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Community (1), Pickering Accessibility Advisory Committee (1) and the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle (2).

## Community Group Presentations

**6** presentations on the identified themes as well as the priority areas of focus were given to community groups comprised of 51 people. Feedback from this was incorporated into the strategy.

- Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT)
- Anti-Black Racism Working Group (ABRWG)
- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Cultural Advisory Committee
- Indigenous Relationship Building Circle
- Community Safety and Well-Being Advisory Committee

## Document and Policy Review

**45** policies, documents, and procedures reviewed.

The focus of the document and policy reviews was to assess processes, policies, and practices at the City, including governance processes, policies related to decision-making, personnel practices, and administration processes, and documents related to organizational culture, communications, service delivery, and community relations.



## Planning Session with Senior Leadership Team & EDI Steering Committee

**24** senior leadership and EDI Steering Committee members participated in a full-day strategic planning session, led by Gross Gilroy Inc. on February 21, 2023.

- ✓ main objectives were to present the consultation findings from various parties, undertake a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the City's EDI processes, develop EDI Vision and Mission Statements, and develop the City's Areas of Focus and Strategic Goals.
- ✓ The findings from the session contributed to the development of the EDI Strategy.

## Community-Wide Resident Survey

**440** respondents between May 21, 2023 and September 14, 2023.

- ✓ The survey was distributed online and in-person at community events. The survey sought input from community members and aimed to provide insight into the background, opinions, attitudes, and experiences of community members with respect to EDI.



## The Community Working Group

The Community Working Group (CWG) acted as a dedicated community voice to provide more focused input on the EDI Strategy based on the diversity of interests that their members represent. The CWG consists of 15 members who are residents of Pickering and represent diverse communities, interests, and needs. Members were selected based on their residence within Pickering and affiliations with the City of Pickering and/or Pickering Public Library through various advisory groups and/or community partnerships. This includes representation from:

- ✓ PFLAG Durham Region
- ✓ Dedicated Advocacy Resource Supports (DARS)
- ✓ Pickering Anti-Black Racism Task force
- ✓ Pickering Public Library Anti-Black Racism Working Group
- ✓ Accessibility Advisory Committee
- ✓ Pickering Public Library Teen Advisory Group
- ✓ Indigenous Relationship Building Circle



**July 6 to August 17, 2023:**

The CWG participated in several discussions to obtain a better understanding of the groups assessment of Pickering from an EDI lens, and to identify both challenges and successes in their experiences. The discussions were also used to identify priority areas and specific recommendations to further inform the development of the EDI Strategy.

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## Municipal Comparators

Efforts to promote EDI have been implemented in numerous municipalities throughout Ontario and across Canada. Municipalities in the Durham, York, and Peel regions, and the City of Toronto, with similar profiles, have also embraced EDI initiatives and allocated resources to showcase their dedication to promoting equity in both the workplace and the community. It proves beneficial to gain insights into the initiatives undertaken by neighbouring and comparable municipalities to establish benchmarks for service standards and resource allocation in the context of EDI.

In establishing EDI “Best Practices” a review of approximately 20 municipal comparators (upper and lower tier) was conducted to determine where the function of EDI lives within the organization, how evolved this function is, and the resources available to the municipality to help achieve their strategic goals.

# EDI Positions in Durham Region



## REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF DURHAM

- Director, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)
- Manager, DEI
- Policy Advisor, DEI
- Policy Advisor, Community Safety and Wellbeing (3 positions)
- Policy Advisor, Building Safer Communities Fund
- Policy Advisor, Local Immigration Partnership (2 positions)
- Policy Coordinator, DEI
- Accessibility Coordinator
- Accessibility Program Coordinator
- Program Assistant
- Administrative Assistant (2 positions)

## TOWN OF AJAX

- Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

## TOWNSHIP OF BROCK

- Deputy Clerk

## MUNICIPALITY OF CLARINGTON

- Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Officer
- Accessibility Coordinator

## CITY OF OSHAWA

- Director, Innovation and Transformation
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

## CITY OF PICKERING

- Senior Advisor, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion
- Community Engagement Coordinator, EDI
- Accessibility Coordinator

## TOWNSHIP OF SCUGOG

- Director of Corporate Services / Municipal Clerk

## TOWNSHIP OF UXBRIDGE

- Strategic Planning and Communications Officer

## TOWN OF WHITBY

- Senior Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Specialist
- Manager, 55+ Recreation, Accessibility and Diversity
- Accessibility Coordinator



# What we learned

## Successes

Although the City of Pickering is early in its EDI journey, there have been several significant achievements to date. First, City Council's endorsement of the selection of an external consultant to develop a multi-year strategy was a major milestone that demonstrated the priority assigned to this work and the willingness to make a long-term commitment. This commitment was strengthened with the dedication of key resources including the creation of a permanent, full-time Senior Coordinator, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion position to lead this work internally along with a part-time Community Engagement Coordinator. These early investments demonstrated a willingness to allocate appropriate resources to carry out the City's EDI commitments. In 2023, City Council approved Pickering's first ever Corporate Strategic Plan which clearly identified its commitment to EDI and signified its importance through its values statements and priorities. As well, the EDI team was strengthened by the realignment of the Accessibility Coordinator in April of 2024.

The organizational shift towards EDI also manifested in important policy and procedural changes to address systemic barriers and promote inclusion. For example, the City removed Commissioner of Oath fees for anyone applying for a name change in recognition of the disproportionate impacts this fee has on trans and Indigenous communities. Corporate branding guidelines were revised to incorporate the City's Land Acknowledgement and the option to include preferred pronouns. Mandatory online training was implemented on the Respect in the Workplace Policy, to familiarize staff with the Ontario Human Rights Code and protocols for upholding the Code in the workplace.

Additionally, the City has made important strides in community engagement, adopting a community-driven approach to inform key policies, practices and programs through the creation of Council

appointed advisory committees and taskforces. This includes the Cultural Advisory Committee, the Accessibility Advisory Committee, PAC4Teens Advisory Committee, the Community Safety & Well Being Committee, and the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce. These groups have been integral to ensuring that community perspectives and experiences are accounted for in the decision-making of the City. The development of the Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce was notable as it was the first and only taskforce of the City with an approved budget to action their mandate of addressing anti-Black racism—once again reinforcing the City’s commitments to EDI.

These are only a few examples of the work undertaken so far to embed EDI into the City. More information on the City’s EDI initiatives can be found in the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion 2023 Annual Report (See Appendix).

# Challenges and Opportunities

These early achievements are important to give context to the findings that emerged from internal and external consultations. Although the City has made a concerted effort to advance EDI, several themes across the consultations point to challenges and opportunities that can be addressed through the EDI Strategy. These themes include:

- 1 Lack of EDI Awareness
- 2 Systemic Barriers
- 3 Lack of Diverse Representation
- 4 Leadership Commitment to EDI

Rainbow Crosswalk, Esplanade Park



# Theme 1: Lack of EDI Awareness

Throughout the consultations, participants shared experiences of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization including everything from subtle microaggressions to overt acts of racism, ableism, homophobia, or transphobia, among other incidents. Participants generally attributed these experiences to a lack of awareness and education around EDI including a limited understanding of diverse lived experiences and their impacts.

Participants in the Community Working Group, for example, shared their experiences of discrimination in homes, schools, workplaces, community spaces through everyday interactions, and discussed the need for community-wide education—including within family units. A desire to better understand the Williams Treaties and honour Treaty responsibilities with Indigenous communities was also highlighted as foundational learning for anyone undertaking EDI work. Discussions also emphasized the importance of engaging youth, so that education can begin early on and extend into familial and friendship networks.

These findings were consistent with the community survey where 30.7% of respondents reported experiencing some form of discrimination in Pickering and 39.2% reported witnessing someone else experience

## Community Survey Results



### When asked where they experienced discrimination...



### Respondents identified the following as top priorities for EDI:





discrimination in Pickering. When asked about the nature of discrimination in both circumstances, respondents identified race, colour, sex, ethnic origin, sexual orientation as the main grounds for their experiences and observations. Respondents identified other grounds of discrimination as well, which demonstrated the widespread nature of these experiences affecting folks across diverse and intersecting identity markers.

Further, when asked where these experiences took place, respondents identified public spaces such as parks, recreation centres, and other outdoor settings. This finding was important because such community spaces fall within the scope of responsibilities and influence of municipalities. The public nature of these experiences also suggest that there may be opportunities for bystanders to intervene.

In light of these findings, respondents identified education and training for City Council and City employees as top priorities to pursue in advancing EDI.

Staff consultations also alluded to a lack of awareness and uncovered a need to expand current EDI trainings to facilitate the cultural shift necessary to ensure an inclusive workspace. Although staff were generally aware and supportive of EDI as an organizational priority, they did not perceive it to be well integrated in the organization as a matter of practice. While the City has made important strides in implementing EDI practices, the Planning Session with the Leadership Team and EDI Steering

Committee revealed a gap in communicating these developments and embedding those principles in the organizational culture. Staff felt that communication of the importance and value of EDI to all employees is key and that EDI should be elevated as a corporate value to ensure a positive shift in the workplace culture. Importantly, this workshop took place before the recent formalization of an EDI commitment in the City's Corporate Strategic Plan. 'Inclusion & Respect' have subsequently been identified as a corporate value in the Corporate Strategic Plan.

## Employee Survey Results

64%

agree that workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion is "valued at our organization."

70%

agree that diversity, equity, and inclusion is "one of my organization's stated priority areas."

36%

agree that senior management actively engages in EDI issues that are important to employees.

50%

agree that "our organization encourages employees to discuss diversity, equity, and inclusion and provide input to the organization."

# Theme 2: Systemic Barriers

Another major theme from the consultations was the presence of systemic barriers. Systemic barriers refer to policies and practices embedded within organizations that have the effect of excluding or discriminating against particular people, resulting in limited access to opportunities, resources, or other disadvantages.

In the community survey, respondents mostly agreed that the City values EDI in its policies, programs, services and other initiatives. However, they perceived that equity-deserving communities are among those not served by City initiatives—namely, racialized communities, gender diverse communities, those with disabilities, and Indigenous communities.

## Community Survey Results

**56.8%** agree that the City strives to make everyone feel included through its programs, services, and other initiatives

**58.4%** agree that the City values EDI in its policies, programs, services, and other initiatives

In the employee survey, respondents from the dominant cultural groups were more likely to report positive experiences at work concerning treatment, opportunities available to them,

and the respect they garnered, compared to respondents from equity-deserving groups. Respondents from equity-deserving groups, on the other hand, were more likely to report challenges concerning treatment, fairness, equity, and respect.

**63%** agreed with the statement, “I trust my organization to be fair, equitable, and respectful to all employees.” (15.75% disagreed)

**49%** agreed with the statement, “At my organization, my unique value is known, recognized, and rewarded.” (19.4% disagreed)

Additional barriers were identified in the physical environment of the City. At the Planning Session, for example, concerns were raised around the need for an inclusive workplace. Staff pointed to the absence of a dedicated space for prayer and its impacts on employees. They also expressed a need for education among staff around faith-based practices to ensure that the workplace is respectful and accommodating. When surveyed about accommodations, for example, staff were aware of accommodations made for persons with disabilities. However, they were less clear on accommodations around religious or cultural observances with 41.7% expressing that they “don’t know.” This is consistent with a policy

**67.7%** agree that employees from all backgrounds and abilities are treated fairly, equitably, and respectfully in the workplace (15% disagree)

**70.5%** agree that accommodations are made for persons with disabilities as needed

**29.9%** agree that religious practices and/or cultural holidays are accommodated

**41.7%** don't know if religious practices and/or cultural holidays are accommodated

review of the City where accommodations for those with disabilities are well-established due to the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*. By contrast, there is no explicit policy on religious observances even though accommodations are available.

Community consultations also raised concerns around the barriers to accessing City spaces that require permits and related fees. Participants who represented service organizations shared how this not only limited access but it also prevented those same organizations from providing key services to the community by not being able to utilize common community spaces.

“ EDI is not only about addressing bias, racism, and discrimination but also lack of opportunities for basic activities. In light of this, it is essential to address the broader spectrum of challenges faced by marginalized communities. Improving access to indoor and outdoor sports... and other activities can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. By creating opportunities for everyone to engage in sports, we can promote social integration and overall well-being. In doing so, we not only combat systemic issues but also empower individuals to participate fully in the community... Embracing this holistic approach to DEI will pave the way for a more united and thriving City.

– **Community Survey Response**



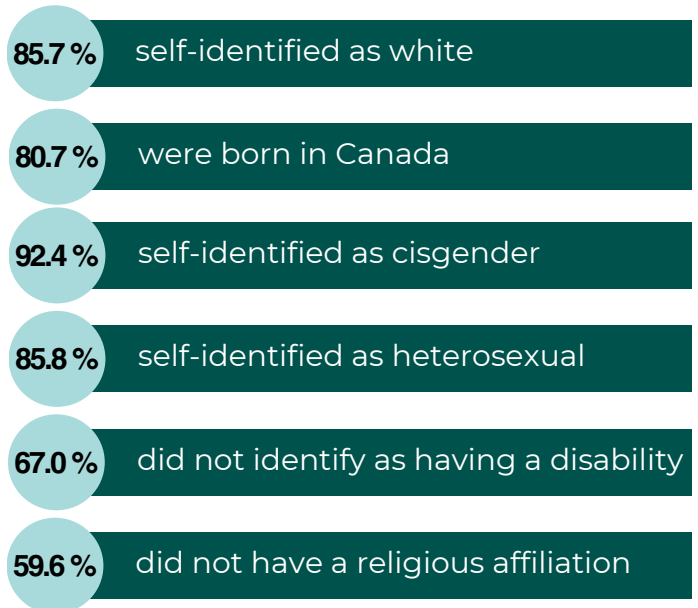
# Theme 3: Lack of Diverse Representation

The topic of diverse representation was consistently discussed at every stage of consultation, with participants critical of how City Council, senior leadership, and staff do not reflect the same diversity as the community members they serve. Participants shared that the consequence of lack of diverse representation is that needs, interests and experiences of those not represented are left out of City policies and practices, which result in adverse and exclusionary impacts.

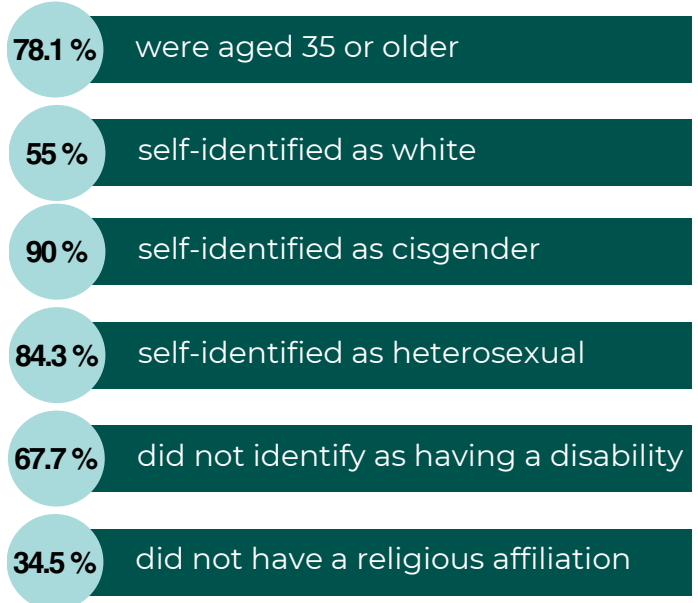
“ Leadership must be diverse to bring all perspectives to the table for consideration. Residents need to see themselves being represented at the highest levels to build trust.   
 – **Community Survey Response** ”

Noting the demographics of Pickering on page 16, participants in the employee survey did not reflect a diverse workforce. Similarly, respondents in the community survey did not reflect a diverse sample. The implication of this is important to note as it suggests that there may be perspectives and experiences from some communities that are not captured in the results of these surveys.

## Employee Survey



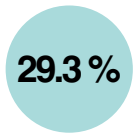
## Community Survey



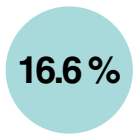
Among survey participants in both the employee census and community survey, there was general agreement that the City Council and staff did not reflect the diversity in the community. Community consultations, in particular, expressed a desire for more “meaningful representation in Council/positions of power.” However, these perceptions shifted slightly when asking about representation among City staff. According to the Community Working Group, the lack of diversity can be attributed to factors such as poor engagement with community, relationships of mistrust, and systemic barriers that prevent access to the City.



of staff disagree that the workforce reflects the diversity in the community (compared to 43% who agree)



of community survey respondents disagree that the City’s leadership reflects the community (compared to 32.5% who agree)



of community survey respondents disagree that City employees are representative of the community (compared to 40.9% who agree)

The City’s workforce has made strides in diversity over the past year due to the increased number of newly budgeted positions and more intentional recruitment and outreach efforts. For example, the document review of Human Resources

practices at the City demonstrated more intentional language to encourage applications from Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving communities. However, the issue remains that with low levels of staff turnover, workplace demographics are slow to change.

“ The City of Pickering is committed to creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive workplace and strives to foster a sense of belonging, empowerment and respect among all employees and community members. We recognize and value that diverse perspectives, skills, backgrounds, and lived experiences contribute to the growth and strength of our organization and community. As such, we welcome and encourage applications from Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving communities including women, persons with disabilities, racialized persons, persons who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+, and other diverse communities.

- Excerpt from the City’s External Job Postings ”



# Theme 4: Leadership Commitment to EDI

A final theme that emerged from consultation was the importance of leadership commitment so that expressed values for EDI are actioned and resourced in ways that result in tangible and sustainable impacts that improve the well-being of the community.

Throughout consultations with staff, the senior leadership staff acknowledged the importance of EDI amongst employees and clients and its relevance to the City’s mandate. Many leaders acknowledge that social inequities exist and are committed to championing positive change for the organization. Likewise, most participants noted that staff members should have the responsibility and be held accountable for creating a culture that is diverse and instills a sense of belonging in everyone.

Community consultations also stressed the importance of the City’s leadership of EDI initiatives. They explained that labour is often placed on equity-deserving communities to support and advocate for one another and would like to see more City resources allocated to these efforts. While they recognized that the City is early in its EDI journey, they also expressed concerns that it is falling behind other municipalities and organizations. Participants in the community working group emphasized accountability and identified the need for City leaders to be vocal and present not only during occasions of significance but more importantly when hateful, discriminatory or oppressive experiences happen in the community and require intervention.

## Employee Survey

- 64.3 %** agree that workforce diversity, equity, and inclusion is valued
- 69.7 %** agree that EDI is ‘one of my organization’s stated priority areas’
- 51 %** agree that senior management is prepared to effectively manage a culturally diverse workforce

## Community Survey

- 58.4 %** believe that the City values EDI
- 40.5 %** believe that City leadership understands EDI is critical to the community’s future success

Overall, our engagement found that as the City embarks on its EDI journey, trust and confidence need to be seen as the norm between staff and management, and between

the City and community. Employees spoke of the importance of a healthy workplace where everyone is valued, engaged, and allowed to contribute their intellectual and creative capital to the vision and mission of the City. Similarly, community members expressed the importance of relationship building and consultation so community members are engaged and included in City decision-making.

In moving forward with an EDI Strategy, it is essential that the City actively promote widespread buy-in and ownership for the EDI Strategy, from Council, all levels of staff and community members representing diverse lived experiences. This shift in corporate culture requires support from leadership to embed the EDI perspective in all that we do.



This is a journey. It's important to understand that we won't be perfect, but I think that's okay so long as we are sincere with our intentions towards EDI, learn from past practices of inequities, are open to reasonable change, and, above all else, are respectful of everyone's perspective and opinions.

**- Employee Survey Response**



# EDI Vision and Mission Statements

In consideration of what we learned through our consultations, the following EDI Vision and Mission statements were developed to reflect our commitment to championing equity, diversity and inclusion in all we do. An Equitable and inclusive City is built upon a set of shared values that Council and staff can use when making decisions and that the community can depend upon when interacting with each other.

Our priority areas of focus flow from our EDI Vision and Mission and are consistent with the Vision, Mission and Values Statements identified in Pickering's Corporate Strategic Plan approved by Council in December, 2023. Specifically the Vision Statement " Pickering: A complete, world class city...inclusive, connected, caring and prosperous", as also illustrated in the stated value of Inclusion and Respect.

## Vision

A City that is committed to embedding EDI, accessibility, anti-racism and anti-oppression principles into the fabric of our City and community without compromise to foster a sense of belonging, empowerment and respect among all community members.

## Mission

The City provides an inclusive and supportive environment where staff, businesses and residents have opportunities to grow, learn, engage, participate and thrive through:

- 1 Advancing EDI as a standard of public service;
- 2 Valuing diverse identities, perspectives and experiences;
- 3 Working to eliminate systemic barriers; and
- 4 Actively engaging community members in ongoing education, advocacy and consultation.





Cultural Fusion, Esplanade Park, September 9, 2023



Cultural Fusion, Esplanade Park, September 9, 2023



Members of Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce at Black History Month Celebration, 2024



Pickering Islamic Centre



Orange Shirt Day Installation at City Hall, September 2023



Community members at Black History Month Celebration, February 2023



Chanukah Celebration, Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, December 13, 2023



Cultural Fusion, Esplanade Park, September 9, 2023



City staff at Pride Parade, Ajax, June 4, 2023



# Areas of Focus

# 1

## Education and Awareness



Develop opportunities and resources to build awareness and understanding.

# 2

## Structure and Resources



Ensure optimal operational structure and resources to sustain EDI efforts.

# 3

## Community Consultation and Engagement



Support meaningful engagement and relationship building to encourage shared decision-making.

# 4

## Policies, Practices and Programs



Integrate an EDI lens to influence systemic and institutional change.

# 5

## Measurement and Accountability



Conduct ongoing evaluation of the City's progress in integrating an EDI lens to ensure accountability.



# Priority Areas of Focus

## Priority 1: Education & Awareness

**Area of Focus:** Education builds awareness and understanding. Education is about the creation of, and engagement with, learning opportunities at all levels --- Council, staff and residents. Education can be achieved through several means including formal educational opportunities such as mandatory staff training as well as informal opportunities through staff lunch & learns, book clubs, community events and community partnerships. Awareness can be achieved by strengthening our internal communications strategy with staff to promote information around EDI internally to increase understanding and engagement.

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To roll out the EDI Strategy within the corporation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host Town hall sessions for all employees to promote the EDI Strategy, Work Plan, expected timelines and next steps.</li> <li>• Provide training on the EDI Strategy (Mission &amp; Values) corporate wide, including a training session specific to Council. Solicit support and engagements by involving employees in the EDI Steering Committee and supporting sub departmental committees.</li> <li>• Facilitate workshops with senior leadership to deploy the strategy throughout the EDI journey.</li> </ul>	Immediate
To develop an education plan that identifies required EDI training around key topics with certification and timelines for completion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop EDI training/curriculum with certification for all employees within 10 years. Training is geared to job levels/ positions at the City, for example, different training to be delivered to part-time and full-time employees, as well as management teams, and senior managers, different departments (e.g., HR, Communications, Operations, etc.).</li> <li>• Develop e-learning module as baseline required training for new employees as a part of onboarding process.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)  Medium term (3-7 years)
To improve reference material	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a practical guide/handbook to guide staff/ community on how to adopt and integrate an EDI approach; helps City to achieve EDI goals with input from all departments.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)

### Priority 1: Education & Awareness (Cont.)

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To promote EDI awareness both corporately and in the community through non-traditional education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore diverse methods of integrating EDI education into all aspects of the City (e.g., programs, services – book clubs, town halls, community dialogue, recognition ceremonies).</li> <li>• Create a communications strategy to ensure the ongoing promotion of EDI initiatives, as well as providing progress milestones.</li> <li>• Develop a dynamic EDI landing page on the City’s Intranet for employees to easily access EDI resources and training opportunities.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)



International Women’s Day Celebration, Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, March 7, 2023



International Women’s Day Celebration, Chestnut Hill Developments Recreation Complex, March 7, 2023

## Priority 2: Structure & Resources

**Area of Focus:** A solid operational structure is essential to ensure the necessary resources are allocated to enable the City to meet its EDI goals. EDI goals are clearly articulated and measured, with progress reported regularly to all staff. Sustained leadership support and direction is necessary to maintain internal EDI momentum.

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To leverage existing resources and determine future needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a needs analysis to determine the optimal structure of the EDI team (e.g., potential new positions including, policy advisor, anti-racism specialist, gender equity, learning advisor/strategist).</li> <li>• Review the potential benefits of amalgamating areas related to EDI under one area (e.g. Community Safety &amp; Well-Being).</li> <li>• Consider separating Indigenous Relationship Building Action Plan from Equity, Diversity &amp; Inclusion. Consider creating new position for Indigenous Relations Lead and dedicated financial resources.</li> </ul>	<p>Short term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium term (3-7 years)</p>
To promote departmental ownership of EDI, embedding EDI in our culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish employee resource groups to assist in information dissemination and act as EDI champions.</li> <li>• Allocate EDI training budget funds for each department (e.g., Retain a facilitator to train Firefighters on EDI).</li> <li>• Create a support system for EDI work.</li> <li>• Environmental Scan of City resources related to EDI at the departmental level.</li> </ul>	<p>Medium term (3-7 years)</p>

### Priority 3: Community Consultation & Engagement

**Area of Focus:** To ensure that the City nurtures relationships with those we serve and to include them in the decisions made. To design meaningful engagement activities that bring forward diverse perspectives, experiences and knowledge into City projects and initiatives as early as possible; the creation of digital and physical spaces that promote inclusion by displaying services and symbols that reflect the City's diverse communities; and continuously embedding feedback mechanisms at all community engagement events.

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
<p>To strengthen engagement &amp; collaboration to achieve understanding of community needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop partnerships with Associations in the City of Pickering.</li> <li>• Foster relationships with Advisory committees, including Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce, Accessibility Committee, Cultural Advisory Committee, etc.</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for community-driven initiatives/ recognition (e.g., event, displays, or flag ceremonies).</li> <li>• Develop and implement an outreach plan with external partners (e.g. school boards for co-op positions at the City, community associations to promote job advertisements, expand access to global talent pools) .</li> <li>• Develop targeted awareness programs that are aligned to the needs of the community.</li> <li>• Host community town halls and other community engagements to create dialogue, discussions, and to provide residents the ability to ask pressing questions. Ensure this takes place once per year.</li> <li>• Standardize the provision of honorariums when asking equity-deserving groups for advice and input to recognize labour.</li> <li>• Seek membership/representation in larger networks on EDI.</li> </ul>	<p>Short term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium term (3-7 years)</p> <p>Long term (7-10 years)</p>

### Priority 3: Community Consultation & Engagement (Cont.)

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To create a resource hub that collects information about the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document and analyze statistical information to support evidence-based decision making related to EDI awareness.</li> </ul>	Medium term (3-7 years)
To enhance external communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a dynamic EDI website landing page to inform, engage, and inspire residents.</li> <li>Develop a repository of community resources (e.g., EDI resource directory).</li> <li>Include information and resources on EDI in all external communications including the City’s website.</li> <li>Utilize diverse communication channels.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)  Medium term (3-7 years)  Long term (7-10 years)

Consultations for EDI Strategy





## Priority 4: Policies, Practices & Programs

**Area of Focus:** For EDI to be successful, it must be tied to broader processes of change management which aims to implement changes to the underlying structures and processes, including changes to policies and practices. This requires that the City unpacks our existing structures and practices to determine whether or not they integrate EDI considerations.

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To develop a change management plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed EDI into HR processes and practices (e.g. recruitment and hiring process, wellness, training).</li> <li>• Adapt physical spaces to be inclusive and address diverse needs (e.g., prayer/meditation room and designated safe spaces).</li> <li>• Adapt digital spaces to be inclusive (e.g., accessible markers).</li> <li>• Review technology access for open communication with all staff including those whose jobs require them to work outside of a regular office environment.</li> </ul>	<p>Short term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium term (3-7 years)</p>
To perform an Equity Audit of internal Policies & Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of existing polices by Department in accordance with established timelines.</li> <li>• Conduct a detailed review of Human Resources policies and practices in the area of Recruitment &amp; Selection, implementing best practices as necessary.</li> <li>• Review job description and evaluation with emphasis on minimum entry requirements and removing barriers to employment.</li> <li>• Integrate community guidelines into Council meetings and other public gatherings to establish standards and expectations for respectful engagement.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)

## Priority 5: Measurement & Accountability

**Area of Focus:** Measurement is about being able to assess and evaluate the City’s success in adopting an EDI lens in our daily practices. Importantly, it is a mechanism for ensuring accountability.

Goals	Specific Actions	Timeline
To solicit feedback from the community and employees to promote accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish anonymous and safe means for staff to share experiences, feedback and complaints; Create a communication mechanism for community and staff.</li> <li>Integrate EDI into exit interviews.</li> <li>Measure all awareness activities through evaluation of awareness/marketing programs.</li> <li>Measure EDI awareness and training activities through ongoing training evaluations.</li> </ul>	Medium term (3-7 years)  Immediate  Long term (7-10 years)
To establish EDI measurement metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop EDI measurements; Create performance reports with EDI measurements.</li> <li>HR data tracking - Create a personal information form to collect employee demographic data. Collect information at application phase; Annual collection asking about identity information; Report summary back to staff annually.</li> <li>Measure community engagement with EDI website landing page via website hits, unique visits, etc.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years)  Medium term (3-7 years)  Medium term (3-7 years)
To communicate EDI measurement findings to Employees and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produce, publish and distribute annual EDI report card/audit (staff census, community engagement).</li> <li>Embed EDI updates as a standing agenda item at the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) meetings; measured through yearly reviews of agendas.</li> <li>Undertake annual employee updates on EDI initiatives for accountability and transparency.</li> </ul>	Short term (1-3 years) Short term (1-3 years)  Medium term (3-7 years)

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# Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2024 - 2034

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**PICKERING**