

Equity and Inclusion Lens Guideline



Clarington's

Equity and Inclusion Lens

The Municipality of Clarington recognizes that ethno-cultural, race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, religious affiliation, age, and other aspects of identity collectively impact and form our life experiences and how we interact with each other and our communities. We value the diversity of the people and communities we serve.

The need to belong is universal and fundamental. We recognize that there is work to be done to close the belonging gap. Clarington is committed to closing the gap and creating an inclusive, equitable and safe community.

Inclusion is about building environments and cultures where people with diverse identities feel like they belong, can work and live to their full potential with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination, and participate freely in the life of the community while retaining authenticity, uniqueness and autonomy.



What is an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

An Equity and Inclusion Lens is like a pair of glasses that help you see things with a new or different perspective. It's an easy-to-use tool made up of three questions that prompt us to think about inclusion in our work. Using the lens helps us consider potential impacts of programs, services and initiatives on the diversity of our employees and customers.

The three questions are:

- What am I already doing to promote inclusion?
- Who is not included in the work I am doing?
- What changes or recommendations can I make to improve inclusion and create a positive impact?

Why use an Equity and Inclusion Lens?

- To become more aware of the diversity in our workforce and our community
- To incorporate broader perspectives into our work, leading to creative solutions to address diversity and inclusion challenges
- To create an inclusive and respectful work culture that values equity and diversity
- To better understand the needs of our residents and the systemic barriers preventing equitable access

Who should use the Equity and Inclusion Lens?

- Councillors
- Municipal Staff
- Municipal volunteers and committee members
- Community partners, consultants and businesses providing services on behalf of the Municipality

When should you use the Equity and Inclusion Lens?

New initiatives: use it at the beginning of a project or when planning new programs and services to identify impacts that may unintentionally exclude certain groups. Remember to use the lens when developing a Request for Proposal (RFP) or requesting a quote.

Existing initiatives: use it to review a current project, program or service to identify steps to eliminate or reduce any unintended negative impacts or barriers.



How to use the Equity and Inclusion Lens Guideline

The Equity and Inclusion Lens Guideline is intended to be an interactive tool that can help staff to check their own perspectives and potential biases when reviewing, designing and implementing programs, services and initiatives.

Check your Biases

When asking yourself the three Equity and Inclusion Lens questions, consider starting by checking your biases.

We all have conscious or unconscious biases – those unsupported opinions, assumptions or prejudices we make about people or groups that could result in treating some people unfairly.

Unconscious or implicit bias refers to the social stereotypes and judgments that people unknowingly assign to others based on a variety of factors, such as their age, socioeconomic status, weight, gender, race or sexual orientation.

Unconscious bias has the potential to influence the way we work, the way we think and the way we interact with colleagues. These biases can lead to inaccurate judgments and reinforce stereotypes, greatly impacting organizational decision-making.

Questions to ask yourself to check your biases:

- Do I seek out new experiences and interact with people with different lived experiences than me?
- Which issues do I not care about as much? Why is that?
- Am I comfortable with questioning social norms or do I avoid conversations about social issues?
- What privileges do I have that others do not?
- Do I actively listen to other peoples' experiences and perspectives?
- What has formed my implicit biases?
- What will I do next to be more aware of my biases?



Steps to implementing the Equity and Inclusion Guideline:

Identify

Identify a program, service, policy or project. Remember it can be new or already implemented.

Answer

Answer the three questions below to help you determine the potential direct or indirect impacts of the initiative and whether it encourages inclusion.

1. What am I already doing to promote inclusion? Create a list of the programs, projects and initiatives that are addressing equity and inclusion challenges.
2. Who is not included in the work I am doing? Determine if you've missed a group that may be impacted or impact your work:

Consider:

- New Canadians, newcomers, refugees
- People with different educational backgrounds
- People with disabilities (visible, invisible)
- People with different language, literacy levels
- Faith groups
- Families
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Indigenous Peoples
- Low-income households
- Older adults, seniors
- Racialized people
- Women
- Youth
- Rural residents

3. What changes or recommendations can I make to improve inclusion and create a positive impact? Be sure to find ways to consult individuals with lived experience from the groups that you have identified as missing from your work. If you are not making any changes describe why.



Gender neutral language in forms/documents: Remove Mr./Mrs., his/her (or change to them)



Images: Include people of diverse groups



Welcoming facilities: remove physical obstacles, provide inclusive wayfinding

Implement

Record ideas from discussions and reflections. Incorporate and implement outcomes from the lens.

Additional questions and facts when applying the Equity and Inclusion Lens

These additional questions will help you take a deeper look at inclusion in key areas below.

Working Together

When I interact with others, do I:

- Check my assumptions? Am I using information I have, or information I created based on my inferences and personal experiences?
- Avoid stereotypes so I can see the individual for who they are?
- Discourage jokes, insults and negative comments that may be offensive?
- Respect differences and recognize what we have in common?
- Encourage feedback and full participation from everyone?

As a leader, do I:

- Take steps to create a respectful and inclusive environment and encourage staff to contribute to creating an inclusive workplace?
- Clearly communicate to staff and the public that inappropriate behaviour such as offensive jokes and negative comments?
- Actively gather input and ideas from staff or the public with diverse perspectives?
- Have procedures, practices or attitudes that unintentionally prevent some people from fully engaging in our work? For example, scheduling meetings that conflict with religious holidays or not considering accessibility in planning or implementation. What alternatives are possible?



Public Engagement

- What types of engagement and outreach will help to ensure that everyone is able to fully participate? How are you creating opportunities for people less likely to be heard to share their specific concerns? For example, using multiple tactics such as online surveys and focus groups, types of questions asked, communication supports and anonymous feedback.
- Is your team representative of the diversity of the population you are engaging? What steps can you take to ensure you are inclusive of the diversity of perspectives?
- What steps can you take to remove barriers to people's full participation? For example, ensuring the location is accessible, offer communication supports such as ASL or CART, or considering date and time of day.
- Does the time of the event or hours of the service consider potential impacts on people's time? For example, transportation, language, time, religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate content and family responsibilities.
- Which employee(s), department(s), or agencies with experience in these communities or areas help us engage with the community?
- Is the environment welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to share their views? Does the pace, format and language of the engagement accommodate everyone, including participants for whom the information may be new? If not, what can we do to change this? For example, pair a new participant with an experienced one to help the new participant feel encouraged to participate, use closed captioning and translation software or services.
- Are the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in the final product?

Programs, services, policies and projects

- Have equity and inclusion been considered for the current or proposed program, service, policies, or project?
- How is the current or proposed service, policy, project or program designed to ensure that diverse people can participate and benefit with dignity? For example, accessibility for mobility devices, visual and hearing disabilities, language or access to public transit.
- Will the service or program give the community fair and equitable access to resources and benefits?
- Are there inclusion practices in other municipalities, departments or community organizations that can inform the implementation?
- Have the primary target user groups been consulted?

Communications

- Have you considered all possible target audiences? Who might not be included?
- What specific communication strategies are needed to reach them? For example, working with community leaders, community organizations and networks, municipal website, community newspapers or social media?
- Is the way you are communicating easily accessible and understood by the full diversity of our target audience? For example, using plain language, accessible formats, graphics, multiple languages and making information available both online and print). Will any groups be missed by only using certain methods? What other approaches might we use?
- Do images represent the full diversity of employees or residents?
- Will people relate to the images and feel included in the way they are represented?
- Is everyone portrayed in a positive way that promotes inclusion and eliminates stereotypes?

Inclusive Hiring Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to challenge unconscious bias and consider barriers that candidates may face during the recruitment process. Below is a list of questions to ask yourself to support an inclusive hiring process as much as possible.

Pre-Posting

- Do staff in your department reflect the diversity of the residents of the Municipality of Clarington?
- Would it be beneficial to engage in any focused employment outreach activities such as job fairs and information sessions to encourage diverse applicants to apply for positions in your department?
- Are you aware that unconscious biases or perceptions about who is suitable for certain jobs exist for all of us? For example, assumptions that men are more suited to certain jobs, people from certain backgrounds are better or worse at certain positions, or that people are too young/old.



Posting Content

- Have you reviewed the job posting to ensure it continues to include bona fide occupational requirements that are integral to carrying out the functions of the position?
- Are the educational credentials (degree, diploma, certificate, licence) listed in the job description, job posting, pre-screening criteria and/or assessment criteria still necessary and/or required by law to perform the job? Could a candidate with an equivalent combination of education and experience perform the duties of the position?
- Are the years of experience requirements that are listed in the job description, job posting, pre-screening criteria and/or assessment criteria still necessary or valid in order to perform the job? For example:
 - Requiring “recent experience” can create barriers for people re-entering the job market
 - Requiring a specific number of years of experience can create barriers due to age
 - Legally in Ontario, employers are not permitted to ask for Canadian experience in a job posting
- Are you using inclusive language in the job description, job posting, testing materials, during your interviews and telephone discussions with candidates? For example:
 - Are your communications and terms gender-neutral, such as referring to a “firefighter” not a “fireman”?
 - Are you providing examples and communicating messages that reflect diversity?
 - Are you using jargon, idioms or humour that would not be easily understood across different generational, cultural, ethnic and language groups?

Posting Content

- Have you considered where to post your job to reach the broadest pool of diverse applicants? For example, in addition to the Municipal website, the job ad may be shared with community partners, employment agencies that serve diverse applicants, educational institutions, or other places that facilitate access to job postings for diverse applicants.
- Have you considered the language level used in the posting? Use plain language and consider testing your document’s readability.

Screening

- Make sure when reviewing applications you are not allowing irrelevant information to influence your assessment of candidates, such as their name, home address, sex/gender, where or what year they completed their education or training, where they received their prior work experience, etc.

Interview Panel

- Does your interview panel include diverse representatives?
- Have you considered having cross-departmental interview panels to draw on the different experience, skill sets, educational background, professional background, etc. of people outside of your department?

Evaluating Candidates

- Are you evaluating candidates in the same way, against the same criteria, at every stage of the hiring process?
- Are tests/screening tools reviewed for cultural, gender, racial, age or other biases?

Biases

- Are candidates being evaluated on factors that do not predict future job performance and could result in bias, discrimination and/or a lack of diversity in hiring and advancement decisions? These factors could include:
 - Personality, generation, culture, gender, etc.
 - Your first impression or “gut” feeling
 - Perception of “fitting” in or how comfortable you feel with them
 - Communication style such as accent, speaking volume, speaking style, level of formality, etc.
 - Whether they are introverted or extroverted
 - Body language, such as how they shake hands, eye contact, how close they stand to others
 - Physical appearance and dress, facial hair, tattoos, piercings



- Make sure you are not evaluating candidates based on gaps in their employment history. This could result in bias and create systemic barriers for:
 - Individuals who left the workplace to care for children or aging parents
 - Individuals with disabilities who have periods of absence due to medical reasons
 - New Canadians and foreign-trained professionals
 - Youth entering the workforce who face difficulty securing permanent full-time work
 - Individuals who face barriers and are underemployed due to race, ethnicity, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, sex/gender, sexual orientation, etc.
- Make sure you are not rejecting candidates solely because they appear to be overqualified. This could have an adverse effect on:
 - Older individuals, who have significant work experience but are facing barriers to employment, or who may desire a position with less responsibility to transition into retirement or for greater work life balance
 - Newcomers to Canada who are facing difficulties securing employment despite their prior work experience and education
 - Individuals re-entering the workforce after lengthy absences such as individuals with disabilities or who have taken time off for childrearing
- Make sure you are not favouring candidates that are similar to you in gender, race, ethnicity/ancestry/place of origin, ability, sexual orientation, cultural background, education background, similar interests, etc.

Barriers

- Are you able to remove as many barriers as possible upfront? For example:
 - Scheduling interviews in locations that are physically accessible
 - Arranging interview/testing rooms that are large enough for assistive devices
 - Providing a copy of interview questions for candidates to refer to
 - When a candidate asks for accommodation, be prepared to provide test materials in alternate formats.

The Municipality of Clarington would like to extend thanks to the Town of Oakville for sharing their Inclusion Lens.



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