REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: August 9, 2022

FROM:	Strategy, Policy and Communications Department
DATE:	July 26, 2022
SUBJECT:	**Appendix C - August 9. 2022 Council Report - current state inclusivity assessment.docx**
LOCATION:	Town-wide
WARD:	Town-wide Click here for multiple wards. Page 1

RECOMMENDATION:

That the diversity and inclusion current state inclusivity report from the Strategy, Policy and Communications department be received.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The town is committed to promoting a culture of inclusion by providing accessible and equitable programs, services and facilities to residents and employees.
- On June 22, 2020, Council passed a motion for staff to report back on implementation of the inclusion and diversity audit, initiatives already undertaken and further inclusiveness initiatives that can be taken. That staff report on employee demographics and compare this with community demographics and report on initiatives that can be taken to help ensure that the employee pool reflects the demographic make-up of the community.
- On January 25, 2021 staff presented a report to Council on progress to implement the recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit, initiatives already undertaken and ongoing and a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2021 that builds on progress to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome. The action plan established eight key deliverables to lay the foundation to develop the town's first Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan.
- To support the town completing its foundational work, staff partnered with CCDI Consulting Inc., an external organization leading in diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

- This report provides findings from the current state inclusivity assessment conducted by CCDI Consulting Inc.
- This report also provides an update on inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility initiatives undertaken and ongoing by departments.
- Staff will report to Council in the first quarter of 2023 with the town's draft Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan.

BACKGROUND:

The town has been reporting on diversity initiatives and accessibility improvements for more than 15 years.

Key advancements in this commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility include:

2003: Council adopted the three key goals put forth by its Diversity Working Group: to develop a program that demonstrates the town's commitment to an inclusive environment; to identify and implement programming to meet the diverse needs of the community; and to consider staffing requirements to carry out the functions of dealing with diversity issues. In response to these goals, the town established an internal Diversity Steering Committee to encourage diversity initiatives and coordinate annual reporting to Council.

2007: Council approved a motion making Oakville a signatory municipality of the Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination. The network changed its name in 2019 to the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. This network brings together municipalities that want to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance. In Canada, there are 82 municipalities that have joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. Being a signatory municipality has helped demonstrate the town's commitment to promoting a culture of inclusion.

2012: the town established its first Multi-Year Accessibility Plan 2012-2017 to outline the actions the town would take to meet the requirements of the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (AODA), prevent and remove barriers, and the timeframe. A Corporate Accessibility Steering Committee was established to work on the town's plan and ensure the town met its requirements under the *AODA*.

2014: the town established an Age-Friendly Committee to lead the age-friendly baseline assessment initiative comprising staff, members of Council and a community member. The concept of age-friendly was developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 in response to the aging population.

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2016: staff began working with members of the Indigenous community on opportunities for the town to participate in the Truth and Reconciliation process to highlight and advance Indigenous history, heritage and contributions to the Oakville community.

2017: the town partnered with Optimus | SBR and conducted an inclusion audit of town programs, services, practices, and policies, developed a corporate inclusion statement and identified five key recommended actions and initiatives for a corporate plan to support inclusion in the workplace and community.

Also in 2017, the town established a Corporate Inclusion Advisory Group, bringing the town's existing staff committees on diversity, accessibility, and age-friendly under one advisory group to better align town efforts to support inclusion. The committee reported to the Office of the CAO with representatives from all town commissions to ensure legislative and corporate requirements were planned and implemented.

The town also launched its second Multi-Year Accessibility Plan for 2018-2023. The new plan builds on the accomplishments of the town's first plan and incorporates updated requirements under the *AODA*'s Accessible Customer Service Standard. The town is compliant with all requirements to-date, filing successful compliance reports with the province in 2013, 2015, 2017 and 2019.

2018: staff presented a report to Council on progress to implement the five recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit.

2019: the town maintained its commitment to diversity and accessibility for its workplace and community, as evidenced through Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan key area of focus – Engaged Community: Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds – and the following strategic goals:
- To treat everyone with respect
- To have programs and services that are accessible
- To be highly valued and widely celebrated for the innovative and outstanding way we satisfy the needs of our residents and employees
- To ensure that our staff receives the same level of respect, commitment and caring that they are expected to deliver to the community
- To be the most livable town in Canada

2020: At its meeting on June 22, 2020, Council passed the following motion:
- Whereas the Town of Oakville is committed to promoting a culture of inclusion and diversity by providing accessible and equitable programs, services and facilities to residents and employees and,

- Whereas the Town of Oakville champions inclusion and diversity through increased opportunities and meaningful engagement to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome,

- That staff report on the implementation of the inclusion and diversity audit, initiatives already undertaken and further inclusiveness initiatives that can be taken. That staff report on employee demographics and compare this with community demographics and report on initiatives that can be taken to help ensure that the employee pool reflects the demographic make-up of the community.

2021: Staff presented a report to Council on progress to implement the recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit, initiatives already undertaken and ongoing and a Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for 2021 that builds on progress to support a workplace and community where all feel respected and welcome. The action plan established eight key deliverables to lay the foundation to develop the town's first Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan.
1. Policy review to further support inclusion in the workplace and community
2. Research best practices and conduct benchmarking
3. Build on initiatives already undertaken and recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit
4. Survey employees and compare to community demographics
5. Establish diversity and inclusion measures
6. Facilitate meaningful conversations with community groups and organizations on inclusion in Oakville
7. Facilitate community engagement with the entire Oakville community including residents, residents associations, and businesses on inclusion in Oakville
8. Assess current state and finalize recommendations for a multi-year plan

2022: In January 2022, staff provided Council with a memo to outline progress of the eight key deliverables.

Legislative framework
The town is required to comply with provincial legislation related to equity, accessibility and human rights such as the *Ontario Human Rights Code* and the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*. Meeting these legislative requirements supports the needs of Oakville's diverse community and enhances the town's reputation.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:
While the town has been reporting on diversity initiatives and accessibility improvements for more than 15 years, the town has not established a formalized

town-wide plan to support inclusion, diversity, and equity. Accessibility improvements continue to be implemented through the town's multi-year plan on accessibility, in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005.*

To build the foundation to create a formalized plan, staff partnered with CCDI Consulting Inc. (CCDI) to undertake a systems-wide assessment of the town's current state as it relates to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA). Key findings from the assessment are outlined below with the full summary attached as Appendix A.

This report also includes an update on the 2021–2022 inclusion initiatives by department (Appendix B) and the 2021 annual accessibility update report (Appendix C).

Current state inclusion assessment findings by deliverable

1. **Policy review to further support inclusion in the workplace and community**: CCDI reviewed over 50 key town policy documents with the aim to assess how inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility are developed through formalized policies in the workplace. Some of the documents they reviewed include orientation/onboarding documents, accommodation and flexibility documents, and employee engagement documents.

   High level results indicate that some language adjustments can be made to clearly identify the town's commitment and remove barriers in interpretation. Further that while the town has solid policies and procedures in place, more work can be done to ensure they are clear, have presence and that staff and the community know how to access them.

2. **Research best practices and conduct benchmarking**: Staff completed an employer benchmarking survey through CCDI. The survey is designed to evaluate an organization's level of progress as it relates to its IDEA strategy, policies and practices. The assessment metrics used in the benchmarking survey were developed primarily from the 2016 Global Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World tool. This comprehensive tool is sponsored by The Centre for Global Inclusion and provides IDEA standards and best practices for organizations across all sectors.

   Findings from the evaluation place the town's overall employer maturity ranking as *proactive* (on a scale of five possible rankings: initial stage, reactive stage, proactive stage, progressive stage, best practice). This indicates that the town is recognizing the value of IDEA and is starting to

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implement programs within the existing organizational vision and strategy framework. Momentum is building throughout the organization and there is indication that the goal is to implement IDEA programs systematically across the organization and through community services. There were sixteen categories and 100 questions as part of this comprehensive evaluation. Staff also conducted a scan of municipalities and other industries for best practices in diversity and inclusion that will be reviewed when developing the town's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan.

3. **Build on initiatives already undertaken and recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit**: Since staff reported to Council on January 25, 2021 with an update on initiatives being undertaken in departments, there have been many more actions implemented. Some of the initiatives undertaken include installing the first orange crosswalk in Oakville; installation of Treaty 22 and 14 signs in 18 parks as part of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Oakville Community Foundation Debwewin "the Oakville truth" project; focus on diversity, inclusion and belonging as part of the town's leadership development through the Harvard Business Review; hosted an Equity and Diversity Book Club at the Oakville Public Library in Partnership with Halton Equity Diversity Roundtable; and produced a new virtual tour of the Museum's permanent Black History exhibit for Black History Month. A full summary of all initiatives is included as Appendix B.

4. **Survey employees and compare to community demographics**: The town's first survey on inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility was conducted from January 27 to February 18, 2022 by CCDI. The survey had two components: a demographic census and an inclusion and belonging questionnaire. The survey was available to all town and Oakville Public Library staff (full-time, part-time and contract).

   The overall response rate was 49.2%. This response rate is average for employers conducting their first IDEA survey. Findings from the demographic composition of our workforce provide the following for underrepresented groups:
   - Women 48%; 3.7% less than Oakville's overall population at 51.7%
   - Racialized persons 22.6%; 8.2% lower than Oakville's overall population at 30.8%
   - Persons with a disability 17.5%; 4.5% lower than Oakville's overall population at 22%
   - LGB2sQ+ persons 9.6%; 4.5% higher than Oakville's overall population at 5.1%
   - Indigenous persons 1.2%; higher than Oakville's overall population at 0.7%

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Findings from the inclusion and belonging portion of the survey offer the following insights:

- 81.5% feel that the person they report to promotes a respectful and inclusive workplace
- 76.4% feel that related to diversity and inclusion, they are treated fairly and with respect by the people they serve (public, customers, external clients)
- 76% feel their workplace does not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic and other inappropriate comments or jokes.
- 73.8% feel that they are treated fairly and with respect in this organization
- 71.8% feel they have not felt pressured to hide or change things about themselves and feel comfortable being them self in the workplace
- 66.8% feel that senior leaders (senior management team) are committed to a respectful and inclusive workplace
- 66.2% feel this organization is committed to and supportive of diversity
- 64.8% feel this organization provides opportunities for work flexibility and accommodations support related to cultural or religious observances, family, etc.
- 64.7% feel included in this organization.
- 64.6% feel comfortable that if faced with harassment, discrimination or unwelcome comments from others at work, to seek assistance within the workplace
- 61.4% feel employees from all backgrounds and with a range of identities such as age, family status, gender/gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, etc. have equitable opportunities to advance their careers in this organization
- 58.3% feel their unique value is known and appreciated in this organization
- 54.3% feel that the organization supports them in maintaining their overall physical and mental well-being

5. **Establish diversity and inclusion measures**: Through the benchmarking initiative completed and best practice research conducted, CCDI will identify measures and make recommendations for the town to consider as part of the development of the IDEA multi-year plan.

6. **Facilitate meaningful conversations with community groups and organizations on inclusion in Oakville**: This first phase of engagement was conducted through July and August, 2021 by our staff inclusion advisory group. The group conducted 21 virtual focus groups and interview sessions, with representatives from over 60 community groups and organizations participating including those focused on faith, social services, youth, healthcare, and other areas.

7. **Facilitate community engagement with the entire Oakville community including residents, residents associations, and businesses on inclusion in Oakville**: This second phase of engagement was conducted during the fall 2021, through an online survey and in-person efforts by our staff inclusion advisory group at select locations. The staff group attended in-person locations such as at the Oakville GO station, food banks and our community centres. Overall, over 600 online surveys were completed through this phase.

   Findings from the community consultation in phase one and two indicate that participants have mixed feelings when it comes to the town meeting the needs of the community, communications and representation. Most participants agreed that the town values inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in the provision of programs and services and recognized the efforts being made to promote IDEA. There were positive assessments from community groups who noted that the town communicates well and that communication from the Mayor and faith leaders is strong, and information available through websites, newsletters and social media is helpful and accessible, particularly for those with internet connection and who speak English. The town's interest and involvement in IDEA trends was noted by residents, and some suggested that continued communication about, and support of IDEA related topics by the town would improve participation and impact. Participants also noted the town's awareness of education and training programs for town employees, interest in Indigenous issues and anti-racism movements.

   Feelings were mixed when it came to belonging. Over half of participants shared that they have been reluctant to participate in a town program because they felt as though they didn't belong. Some participants mentioned barriers to accessing existing services and programs such as cost, lack of programming in languages other than English, and limited accessibility for those living with physical disabilities. Some suggested that improved representation and IDEA in programs would be welcomed, and that investment in inclusive programming would help improve the experiences of typically underrepresented groups. When it comes to communications, participants noted that it is sometimes challenging to find information about town services and programs and brought forward the following suggestions for improvement: ensure accessible options for persons with disabilities, provide translated versions for those who do not speak English, improve signage and information in public places, churches, schools, etc., consider communication methods other than the internet and social media, partner with community/grassroots organizations and conduct regular feedback or listening initiatives. In terms of representation, most participants reported feeling as though the composition of town staff is not representative of the

residents of Oakville. Some participant comments noted that representation may be improving, but many mentioned a lack of visible racial/ethnic diversity in town staff and Council Members. When asked how the Town of Oakville could attract and retain a diverse workforce, participants offered a number of suggestions including targeted recruitment of racial/ethnic minorities (job fairs, advertisements, etc.), flexible holiday options for non-Christian religious holidays, community outreach for recruitment of young persons and persons with disabilities, accommodation options for flexible schedules, affordable housing and transportation options, inclusive and accessible interview processes, training and education, and employee resource groups.

8. **Assess current state and finalize recommendations for a multi-year plan**: The completed current state assessment has provided a lot of meaningful data and insights from town staff and the community. In taking a systems-wide approach, we can also look at emerging themes so that they are addressed through the development of the multi-year IDEA plan.

   Four key themes that emerged through the diversity census and inclusion staff survey results are highlighted below.

   o Physical and mental well-being: attitudinal barriers to use of accommodations, flexible options and time off potentially remain unacknowledged and may be impacting behaviours.
   o Harassment and discrimination: there is a disconnect between the content and spirit of the written policies that address workplace harassment and discrimination, perspectives on the efficacy of these policies, and the experiences and perceptions shared by employees about their lived experiences.
   o Equitable opportunities and talent management: there are potentially procedural and attitudinal barriers to the hiring and career advancement of typically underrepresented groups at the Town of Oakville.
   o Perceptions of leadership and management: there is mixed perceptions of demonstrated inclusive leadership and mixed perceptions of management IDEA capability across data collection methods.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility multi-year plan
With the current state assessment completed, staff has further engaged CCDI to support development of the town's first Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan. During the summer and fall, staff teams that include members of the leadership team will be engaged in strategic planning to draft a vision and mission and identify initiatives to support the commitment for the coming years.

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Staff will report to Council in the first quarter of 2023 with the town's draft Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility Multi-Year Plan so Council's feedback can be included. The final multi-year plan will be completed in late first quarter of 2023.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC
Staff engaged 60 community groups in facilitated focus groups and interviews during July and August 2021. In the fall of 2021, over 600 residents participated in a survey about diversity and inclusion as it related to town programs, services, communications and hiring.

(B) FINANCIAL
Funding diversity and inclusion consulting services to conduct a current state assessment was included in the **2020 and 2021 budgets**. Other financial impacts are managed within existing departmental budgets

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS
All town departments are involved in promoting and championing inclusion.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS
This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:
  • provide outstanding service to our residents and businesses
  • treat everyone with respect
  • show respect and commitment to employees
  • enhance our cultural environment
  • be the most livable town in Canada

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION
Groups who are socially and economically marginalized face disproportionate impacts related to the climate emergency. Effectively addressing climate action involves embedding IDEA principles into decision-making processes, including by improving representation and ensuring that solutions are developed with the right people at the table.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – CCDI current state inclusivity assessment
Appendix B – Inclusion initiatives by department
Appendix C – 2021 annual accessibility update

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