

IDEA Multi-Year Plan 2024-2028

Draft final

Prepared for:

Town of Oakville

November 2023



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Why is the Town of Oakville Developing an IDEA Plan?

The Town of Oakville partnered with CCDI Consulting Inc. (CCDIC) to undertake a systems-wide assessment of the Town's current state as it relates to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA) and develop a multi-year IDEA Plan. Though the town has had a history of reporting on diversity and inclusion, this initiative enables Oakville to share learnings and resources with the employees of the town as well as the community and establish reporting practices into a formalized town-wide plan to support inclusion, diversity and equity in collaboration with the town's multi-year Accessibility Plan.

In Council's 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, a key area of focus was dedicated to an *Engaged Community: Foster a community environment that engages residents of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.*

This area of focus led to a Council motion that supported continuing to implement recommendations from the 2017 Inclusion Audit as well as to develop the town's first IDEA Multi-Year Plan.

Why is an IDEA Plan Important?

Employers and communities have compelling reasons to develop an IDEA Plan, recognizing that diversity and inclusion is not only beneficial for employees and residents but also for the overall success and sustainability of organizations. Here are several key reasons to invest in an IDEA plan:

The Business Impact of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility

Diversity and Inclusion is about capturing the uniqueness of individuals and creating an environment that values and respects these individuals for their talents, skills and abilities. A diverse and inclusive organization not only has heterogeneous employees, but also adapts to each person's needs, such as those with disabilities, religious and cultural differences, and varied ways of thinking and working.

But why is diversity and inclusion an imperative today?

Human rights and justice demand it

First, it is necessary to actively promote diversity and inclusion in order to meet standards of human rights and justice. While it is easy to believe that every person gains employment because of their skills and talent, structural barriers mean that it can be difficult for some to be hired and to advance in the workplace. For example, it is next to impossible for a person who has a physical disability to work in an environment that is not accessible. Applying IDEA in both the employee base of the town as well as in the community itself reduces these barriers and encourages equality across employers in the town. Further, unconscious bias and conscious stereotypes, including sexism, ableism, ageism, racism, and homophobia, can

impact whether a candidate obtains a job or an employee is promoted. Legal acts like the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and the *Employment Equity Act* are helpful, but these are not enough to enable workplaces to become truly diverse and inclusive.

Employees are more engaged

Second, there is a very strong business case for promoting diversity and inclusion. For example, diversity and inclusion policies and strategies are vital for attracting, retaining, and engaging employees. Canada is a highly diverse country, and companies that are diverse and inclusive win top talent and meet the needs of different customer bases.¹

Likewise, employees who do not feel comfortable and included in their workplaces are more likely to become disengaged, take unnecessary absent days, or leave their jobs, which can translate to high organizational costs. Lack of inclusion for employees with diverse needs can also lead to “presenteeism”, where employees are physically present but are distracted by unaddressed physical or emotional issues. It is estimated that presenteeism and absenteeism contribute to \$645 million in annual losses in Canada, or an average of 48 days per employee.²

To address this, a 2015 report by Deloitte found that a diverse *and* inclusive work environment can double the level of engagement of employees who feel included, relative to those who do not. This means that a strong focus on *both* diversity and inclusion increases the chances that “an employee is likely to stay with their employer, advocate for their employer and go the extra mile” at work.³ An organization that does not prioritize diversity and inclusion is missing out on a truly talented and dedicated workforce.

Higher organizational performance is supported

Several studies have also discovered that diversity and inclusion lead to higher organizational performance. A diversity and inclusion plan can allow workplaces to harness the varying talents, skills, and knowledge of their employees to benefit the collective. Deloitte found that when employees perceive that their organization is committed to diversity and inclusion, they are also 80% more likely to state that the organization provides “great customer service,

¹ McKinsey & Company, “Diversity Wins: How including matters”, May 2020.

² Manulife Canada, “2022 Wellness Report”, <https://www.manulife.ca/business/news/group-benefits-news/the-wellness-report-2022.html>

³ Deloitte Australia, “Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance”, last modified April 16, 2015, <http://www.globaldiversityexchange.ca/waiter-is-that-inclusion-in-my-soup/>.

shares diverse ideas to develop innovative solutions, and works collaboratively to achieve their goals”.⁴

Diverse teams understand customers’ and clients’ needs better than homogeneous organizations, which often fail to consider different perspectives.⁵

Diversity goes hand in hand with Inclusion

It is important to note that diversity and inclusion go hand in hand, and an organization that focuses on one without the other cannot reap the full benefits. For instance, a work environment that has a diverse pool of employees only sustains diversity if it is also an inclusive culture.⁶ In fact, Deloitte⁷ found that diversity is most strongly associated with high organizational performance when there are practices in place that actively aim to integrate employees. This means not only ensuring that every unique individual has a chance to participate, but also that each employee feels that they belong and has the confidence to speak up.⁸ Alternatively, as explained above, an inclusive and homogeneous work environment will not perform as well as one that is diverse and inclusive.

Overall, diversity and inclusion initiatives in workplaces are not only imperative for the active promotion of human rights and justice in Canada; they are also vital for organizations that wish to take advantage of the talent and potential of a diverse labour force and improve their overall performance in a global economy.

Following on the town’s 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, a key priority in Council’s Strategic Plan and 2023-2026 Action Plan is *Community Belonging: Enhancing community belonging to ensure all residents are invited to engage in a fulfilling community life that is built to support wellbeing*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Bourke, Smith, Stockton and Wakefield, “From Diversity to inclusion”.

⁶ Gallup, “From Appreciation to Equity: How recognition reinforces DEI in the workplace”, 2023.

⁷ Deloitte Australia, “Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?”

⁸ Ibid.

IDEA in municipalities is imperative. Unfortunately, current climates have created cities and towns that don't work for everyone, and as the problem persists it becomes harder to address. Where communities apply an equity and inclusion lens municipalities can better respond to the aspirations of ALL people.⁹

Methodology for Developing the Town of Oakville's IDEA Multi-Year Plan, 2024-2028

The first step in the development of this plan was to conduct a Current State Inclusivity Assessment of the organization. CCDIC has produced diversity and inclusion strategies for a number of private- and public-sector employers, and following best practices, the process starts with conducting a current state inclusivity assessment to determine the issues to be addressed in the plan. The methods used for data collection for the current state inclusivity assessment are based on globally recognized best practices and years of experience assessing organizations.

To create the Town of Oakville's IDEA MYP, the following initiatives were completed during 2021-2022. A detailed summary of the town's current state inclusivity assessment results is attached as Appendix A.

1. Policy Review

Policies and procedures serve as guidelines of how an employer attracts, selects, trains, retains and promotes employees as well as the types of conduct that align with fostering a diverse workforce, inclusive, equitable and accessible workplace. The aim of CCDI Consulting's policy and document review process is to assess how inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility are developed through formalized policies in the workplace. CCDIC 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.

2. Research best practices and conduct benchmarking

Staff completed an employer benchmarking survey through CCDIC called the Maturity Meter evaluation. The survey is designed to evaluate an organization's level of progress as it relates to its IDEA objectives, policies and practices. The assessment measures used in the benchmarking survey were developed primarily from the 2016 Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World tool (GDIB). Findings from the Maturity Meter evaluation serve to identify practices that helped develop the Town of Oakville's overall IDEA plan.

⁹ City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), Ottawa, "Advancing equity and inclusion, A guide for municipalities", 2015.

3. Establish diversity and inclusion measures:

The Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World provide measures across multiple categories. Using the benchmarks helps organizations to understand current practices and measure progress over time as it relates to the state of IDEA.

4. Community Engagement

(a) Community groups and organizations:

This first phase of engagement was conducted through July and August, 2021, led by the town's staff inclusion advisory group. Town staff 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.

(b) Oakville community

The second phase of engagement was conducted during the fall 2021, through an online survey and in-person efforts by the town's staff inclusion advisory group at select locations. Town staff attended in-person locations such as at the Oakville GO station, food banks and town community centres. Overall, over 600 online surveys were completed through this phase.

CCDIC analyzed respondent data from the focus groups and interviews conducted amongst community affiliations within the Town of Oakville as well as the respondent data from the broad community survey.

5. Diversity Census and Inclusion Survey for town employees

This survey captured data on workplace and personal demographics of town employees and their inclusion experiences for 13 dimensions of inclusion in the workplace. The range of survey questions provided the opportunity to apply between-group and group-to-overall demographic and inclusion comparisons to provide different dimensions of understandings and insights into the inclusion climate at the organization.

The survey was conducted from January 27 to February 18, 2022, by CCDIC and compared to the available census data from 2016. 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 updated 2021 census became available during the course of the plan's development and is also included in brackets below.

- 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 the town's workforce provide the following for underrepresented groups:
 - Women 48%; 3.7% less than Oakville's overall population at 51.7% (52% in 2021)

- Racialized persons 22.6%; 8.2% lower than Oakville's overall population at 30.8% (42% in 2021)
- Persons with a disability 17.5%; 4.5% lower than Oakville's overall population at 22% (22% in 2017)
- 2SLGBTQIA+ persons 9.6%; 4.5% higher than Oakville's overall population at 5.1% (4% in 2021)
- Indigenous persons 1.2%; higher than Oakville's overall population at 0.7% (1% in 2021)

6. Development of the Plan

CCDIC held strategy working sessions with the town strategy working group to add more detail, accountability, and timelines to the goals and actions, and to develop the *IDEA Multi-Year Plan*.



IDEA Multi-Year Plan 2024-2028

Objective

Mandate

Defining IDEA

Strategic Goals



Honouring the Land and Territory

Oakville, as we know it today, is rich in the history and modern traditions of many First Nations. From the lands of the Anishinaabe, to the Attawandaron and Haudenosaunee, these lands surrounding the Great Lakes are steeped in First Nations history. As we gather today on the sacred lands of Treaties 14 and 22, we are in solidarity with Indigenous brothers and sisters to honour and respect Mother Earth, the original nations of the trees and plants, the four legged, the flyers, the finned and the crawlers as the original stewards of Mother Earth.

We acknowledge and give gratitude to the waters as being life and being sacred and to the carriers of those water teachings, the females. We acknowledge and give gratitude for the wisdom of the Grandfathers and the four winds that carry the spirits of our ancestors that walked this land before us.

The Town of Oakville is located on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We acknowledge and thank the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Treaty holders, for being stewards of this traditional territory.

IDEA Plan – Objectives, Mandate and Definitions

The following recommendations are based on CCDIC’s years of experience in the area of diversity and inclusion, and specifically on our experience in developing diversity strategies for other public- and private-sector organizations.

The initiatives proposed in this plan have been validated against external benchmarking tools and studies such as *the Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks*.

These promising practices have proven successful in helping address similar issues within other work environments, recognizing those elements that differentiate the town.

Objective statement

To be an inclusive workplace and community where everyone feels they belong.

Mandate statement

A workplace and community where all residents and staff can access opportunities and services, be treated with fairness and respect, fostering a culture of equity and inclusiveness. This is a shared responsibility.

Defining I.D.E.A.

Inclusion

Inclusion is creating a culture that embraces, respects, accepts, and values diversity. It is an intentional and equitable effort to meet individual needs so everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute to their fullest potential.

Diversity

Diversity is about the individual. It is about the variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics we all possess, and the mix that occurs in any group of people. Race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, economic status, physical abilities, life experiences, and other perspectives can make up individual diversity. Diversity is a fact, and inclusion is a choice.

Equity

Equity means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and circumstance. Equity provides resources and opportunities that are allocated based on individual needs that

vary. This creates an environment where each person has the opportunity to achieve the same outcome.

Equality

Equality is providing everyone with the same resources and opportunities, regardless of need or circumstance. This creates an environment of sameness but has the potential to create different levels of outcome.

Accessibility

Accessibility is providing the ability for everyone to access, use, and benefit from their environment. It refers to the barrier-free, inclusive design of all offerings provided, including physical spaces, programs, services, transportation, employment, information and communications, for people of all abilities.

Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Foundational – drive the objective. Be accountable for incorporating IDEA in all areas of organization.

Goal 2: Internal – attract and retain people. Cultivate a work environment that is diverse, inclusive, safe and one where staff feel respected and valued.

Goal 3: Community – listen to, engage and serve the community. Reflect our inclusive culture throughout the range of services we provide to our community.

Goal 4: Sustainability – communicate, track and measure. Align and connect our IDEA efforts through communication, learning and measurement.

The following IDEA Multi-Year Action Plan 2024-2028 lays out the actions that align with each of the four Strategic Goals of the IDEA plan's objective and mandate with associated timelines.

It is important to highlight that the town developed an *Oakville Inclusion Lens* to support staff to consider and incorporate IDEA in their work. In addition to using the lens to implement the Action Plan, the lens is meant to be used in all facets of the town's operations including in the design and implementation of town programs and services, customer service delivery, initiatives and projects, and internal programs.

Goal 1: Be accountable for incorporating IDEA in all areas of the organization

The actions in this goal create the foundation for a strong IDEA plan. The Town of Oakville will have a defined IDEA plan that is understood and embedded in leadership practices. Leaders are held accountable for implementing the plan within their departments and teams, supported by training, policies and procedures. **The plan and actions are reviewed against best practices and academic research / perspectives / studies related to IDEA, to ensure the plan and actions are rooted in research and best understanding of modern IDEA principles in recognition that this is a dynamic space.**

1.1 Objective, Mandate, and Business Impact	
Establish objective, mandate and goals for the IDEA multi-year plan	In progress
Develop IDEA definitions	In progress
Incorporate IDEA multi-year plan into the Town of Oakville Council Strategic Plan and 2023-2026 Action Plan	Complete
Incorporate IDEA in the design and implementation of town programs and services, customer service delivery, initiatives and projects, and internal programs	2024 and ongoing
Review plan and actions against best practices and academic research / perspectives / studies related to IDEA	2024 and ongoing
Review and update Oakville Inclusion Lens	2024 2025 and ongoing

1.2 Leadership and Accountability	
Define inclusive leadership behaviours	2024-2026
Set and communicate expectations for inclusive leadership behaviours within our competency model, with a focus on conflict resolution process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create programs of purposeful interactions • Employee surveys and feedback mechanisms • Department and organizational updates 	2025-2026
Consistent with the roll out of 360 reviews for ELT and SLT, ensure that questions are included that focus on IDEA Phased training for all levels of leadership	2024-2028
Provide training on safe spaces	2025-2026

1.2 Leadership and Accountability	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for all leaders 	
Review current leadership model through an inclusion lens to include cultural competency of leaders	2025
Provide leadership training on areas of cultural competence that have been enhanced into our competency model	2026

1.3 IDEA structure and implementation	
Determine support for commissions and departments to implement the IDEA multi-year plan	2024-2025
Define role of corporate inclusion group and sponsor	2024
Provide certification on IDEA to IDEA working groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and choose training provider • Roll-out 	2024
Provide certification on IDEA to leaders across the organization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and choose training resources • Roll-out 	2025 -2026
Review, update and introduce policies and procedures using IDEA lens	2024-2028

Goal 2: Cultivate a work environment that is diverse, inclusive, safe and one where staff feel respected and valued

Goal 2 focuses on internal workplace IDEA processes that promote a conscious effort by the Town of Oakville to attract and retain a diverse group of employees that is equitably representative across all levels and functions. IDEA best practices are applied to advancement and succession planning guidelines. These actions further support work-life integration and equitable benefits for diverse needs.

2.1 Recruitment	
Review hiring and promotional process with an inclusion lens, develop and implement a plan for addressing IDEA-related gaps and barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines on hiring process participants Introduce and strengthen consistent practices Include appropriate language and statements Expand relationships with external hiring partners Review employment equity and equal opportunity statements 	2024-2027
Provide training to hiring managers	2025
Improve sourcing of under-represented groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training on new recruitment processes Expand on relationships with different schools and geographies to source diverse applications Engage with professional groups that support marginalized identity groups 	2025-2026

2.2 Advancement and Retention	
Create mentorship programs to support leaders, ensuring the process includes a focus on advancement of under-represented groups.	2026
Develop and implement a framework for talent management and succession planning for all employees, ensuring IDEA best practices are included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect feedback Safe space commitment Succession planning framework 	2025-2026

2.2 Advancement and Retention	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify required skills, experience, education and competencies; understand and adjust for barriers or bias in selection 	
Communicate guidelines on talent management and succession planning to employees	2026-2027
Consistent with ongoing town practices continue to assess total compensation equity across the town	2026

2.3 Work-Life Integration, Flexibility and Benefits	
Continue to clarify and support flexible work options and accommodations through an inclusion lens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update policy language to address attitudinal barriers Leadership training Organizational training 	2024-2025
Within the annual training calendar include cultural competence training for non-senior leaders	2026
Apply inclusion lens in review of current benefit plans	2027-2028

Goal 3: Reflect our inclusive culture throughout the range of services we provide to our community

Goal 3 is focused on the proactive development of programming, activities, and significant events that advocate IDEA interests in the community.

3.1 Community, Government Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility	
Develop a Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Actions for municipal governments Partner with Indigenous community Engage Indigenous stakeholders Include training for staff 	2026-2027
Develop and implement Review and update a Territory Acknowledgement and protocol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with Indigenous community Engage Indigenous stakeholders Provide training on appropriate use 	2026
Design community programs based on consultation with the community and representation of diverse groups	2024-2028
Review town policies and procedures related to naming and renaming (i.e., Park Naming procedure, Street Names for Public Roads procedure) using an inclusion lens	2026-2027
Develop and implement an external communications plan	2025 2024
Reduce barriers to access programs and services	2024-2028
Develop a policy to address when the town responds publicly to IDEA-related issues, events or requests for action	2024
Update the 2018-2023 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to new 2024-2029 plan, highlighting advancements and initiatives the town has pursued. Report annually	2024
Develop an IDEA recognition policy to recognize different awareness campaigns, important months, etc. with a consistent approach for when to use: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flags Lighting Symbols, signs, banners Decals 	2024

- Markers on uniforms, such as crests and epaulettes

Goal 4: Align and connect our IDEA efforts through communication, learning and measurement

Components of the IDEA plan come together in this goal bridging internal and external actions. The sentiment of stakeholders are an important factor in measuring IDEA performance, as is a strong communication plan to keep the workforce and community informed. Training and development across the organization is provided to strengthen awareness and promote IDEA in the workplace. Finally, annually reporting on progress to implement the plan to include emerging best practices and academic research / perspectives / studies related to IDEA, to ensure the plan and actions are rooted in research and best understanding of modern IDEA principles in recognition that this is a dynamic space.

4.1 Assessment, Measurement and Research

Measure progress of IDEA multi-year plan through employee demographics and sentiments of inclusion	2026
Publish an annual report publicly on implementation and progress of IDEA multi-year plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As part of annual reporting, include emerging best practices and academic research / perspectives / studies related to IDEA, to ensure the plan and actions are rooted in research and best understanding of modern IDEA principles in recognition that this is a dynamic space 	2024-2028

4.2 IDEA Communications

Develop an internal communication plan to share IDEA objective, mandate, goals, definitions and action plan	2024
Implement gender pronouns; continue to promote the principles and benefits of using gender pronouns	Complete; ongoing

4.3 IDEA Learning and Development

Through corporate learning and development program, develop tools to create awareness for all staff on IDEA	2024-2025
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4.3 IDEA Learning and Development

Evaluate and grow the cultural competence of town staff, elected officials and leadership to support increased inclusivity

2026