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HUMAN RESOURCES BEST PRACTICES GUIDEBOOK

**How to Increase Diversity and Inclusion in
Recruitment, Hiring, and Promotion**

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Niagara Region is situated on treaty land. This land has a rich history of First Nations such as the Hatiwendaronk, the Haudenosaunee, and the Anishinaabe, including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. There are many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples from across Turtle Island that live and work in Niagara today.



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Executive Summary

Research describes many benefits of hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce, in terms of productivity, creativity, and profitability. Niagara Region and the Local Area Municipalities have a central role to play in building an equitable and inclusive community. In 2020, Niagara Regional Council and Local Area Municipalities joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and committed to reducing barriers for Niagara residents. This guide is a critical step in that direction and serves as a resource for organizations to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in their workplaces. The guide recommends that municipalities begin with performing a diversity audit to develop a better understanding of their own staff demographics and current context. Key metrics can be identified and deliverables related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion can be established, and reviewed periodically.

Recruiting is an integral step in ensuring a diverse workforce. Municipalities should undertake a thorough review of their job descriptions and postings to avoid language discouraging applicants on the basis of race, immigrant status, gender, class or other identifiers. Job requirements should be completely relevant and necessary to excel in the role. Municipalities should collaborate with external organizations whenever possible to attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

In hiring, municipalities must pay attention to the powerful role of unconscious biases. In an effort to combat biases at the screening and shortlisting stages, practices of “concealed” hiring and the Two in the Pool Effect can be used. At the interview stage, diverse interview panels and bias-free interview questions should be embedded when possible. Once an individual is hired, diversity, equity, and inclusion aspects should be incorporated into all parts of the onboarding process.

In promotion, entry of marginalized groups in positions of power and decision-making should be a priority. Promotion opportunities should be widely communicated across the organization. Mentorship and development opportunities should be initiated and DEI competencies or commitment could be included as one aspect of promotion evaluation.

Municipalities need to be transparent about existing barriers for marginalized groups in their own organization and the steps they are taking to reduce barriers. This includes open communication with staff, continual policy reviews, and periodic evaluation of the ability to deliver on key metrics. It is imperative that all parts of recruitment, hiring and promotion align, which creates an effective structure and support system that can be evaluated to ensure barriers are being reduced and change is being realized.



1.0 Introduction

Research describes many benefits of hiring and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce for both employees and the organization. A diverse workforce has proven to be beneficial in terms of cost savings, driving business growth, and attracting the best talent.¹ Diverse workforces benefit from employees that have greater creativity, innovation² and problem-solving abilities³. Research suggests that upper management benefits from diverse leaders who are more effective at leading.⁴

Diversity in Niagara continues to increase – particularly regarding Indigenous communities, visible minorities, linguistic diversity, and individuals with disabilities. However, there has not always been the same increase in inclusivity. Discrimination, barriers, and a lack of appropriate support in organizations remain for a variety of marginalized groups. Niagara Region and the Local Area Municipalities (LAMs) have a central role to play in building a diverse, equitable and inclusive community (see Appendix 1 for more details on diversity in Niagara).

In 2020, Niagara Regional Council and Niagara’s 12 Local Area Municipalities (Fort Erie, Grimsby, Lincoln, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Pelham, Port Colborne, St. Catharines, Thorold, Wainfleet, Welland, and West Lincoln) joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. In doing so, they are committed to actively working towards the Coalition’s 10 common commitments to building respectful, inclusive, and diverse societies (see Appendix 2). The three objectives of the coalition are to improve municipal practices to promote social inclusion, establish policies to eradicate racism and discrimination, and promote human rights and diversity. A major part of honouring these commitments is critically reflecting upon the current practices of municipalities in Niagara and working towards making changes.

This guidebook was created with the intention of reducing barriers for marginalized groups that are current or future municipal employees of Niagara Region and the LAMs. However, the information shared is relevant for other organizations as many of these practices can be adopted in any work organization. This guidebook is a living document and can help inform each stage of recruitment, hiring and promotion. It is a resource for municipalities and organizations looking to:

¹ McKinsey Company. (2015). *Why Diversity Matters*. <https://www.mckinsey.com/~media/mckinsey/business%20functions/organization/our%20insights/why%20diversity%20matters/diversity%20matters.ashx>

² Bassett-Jones, N. (2005). The Paradox of Diversity Management, Creativity and Innovation. *Creativity And Innovation Management*, 14(2), 169-175.

³ Okoro, E., & Washington, M. (2012). Workforce Diversity And Organizational Communication: Analysis Of Human Capital Performance And Productivity. *Journal Of Diversity Management (JDM)*, 7(1), 57-62.

⁴ Martins, L. (2020). Strategic Diversity Leadership: The Role of Senior Leaders in Delivering the Diversity Dividend. *Journal Of Management*, 46(7), 1191-1204.



- Improve diversity in their own workplaces with the resources currently at their disposal
- Implement best practices in recruitment, hiring and promotion to help reduce barriers in human resources (HR) practices

While the document is a detailed guide to improving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) through HR practices, it is important that staff also engage in various forms of diversity, equity and inclusion training to recognize their own biases and complement the material in this guidebook for maximal benefit. Staff should seek the appropriate training related to various aspects discussed in this guide.

It is important to note that collective agreements, internal policies, and other formalized procedures already exist that govern workplace practices at many municipalities. These materials must be reviewed to consider alignment to changed practices. A review of these types of documents or engagement with relevant unions may be necessary before any changes can be actualized. This review of existing documents might also highlight the importance of changing any existing policies themselves as they may potentially be the major existing barrier.

The best practices outlined in this guidebook are aspirational guiding principles to reduce barriers in recruitment, hiring, and promotion. Niagara Region and the LAMs recognize that there can always be more progress made to reduce barriers for people who live, work, learn, and play in Niagara. They are committed to embedding these principles where applicable to compliment current diversity practices already underway.

1.1 Key Terms

Diversity: includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the various characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

While diversity is often used in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, it is important to embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. The definition should also include diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. Diversity related to Human Resources should focus on ensuring that processes are bias-free related to these factors with the goal of increasing the number of underrepresented groups and reducing barriers for them into and within different levels of the organization.



Equity: the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems, as well as in their distribution of resources. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of disparities within society.⁵ An equity lens requires acknowledging that there is not a one size fits all approach when finding solutions and that different groups might need increased resources to reach the same desired outcome.⁶

Inclusion: the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people. Inclusion in the workplace means that individuals should feel like they belong and see themselves within an organization's long term vision. Real inclusivity means that all individuals are free to be their authentic selves and are a part of all aspects of an organization, particularly included in decision making processes. It is important to note that while an inclusive group is by definition diverse, a diverse group is not always inclusive. Increasingly, recognition of unconscious or implicit bias helps organizations to be deliberate about addressing issues of inclusivity.⁷

DEI/EDI: Acronyms for diversity, equity, and inclusion

Recruitment: the process of attracting top talent to an organization. Recruiting happens on a regular basis, not only when a position needs to be filled. Recruitment involves building awareness of the organization among talented professionals, and educating them as to why the organization is the right fit for the candidate's goals and skill set. Recruitment also involves the provision of internal opportunities for existing employees to explore career options and opportunities within the organization.

Hiring: involves soliciting and reviewing applications for an open position. Hiring involves evaluating candidates to fill a specific role at an organization through considering a

⁵ Kapila, M., Hines E., Searby M. (2016). [Why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Matter](https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/)
<https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>

⁶ Virtual Policy Conference: Silver Linings Golden Opportunities. A Panel on Building Equity into Renewal: From Talk to Action. 2020. *Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*

⁷ Kapila, M., Hines E., Searby M. (2016). [Why Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Matter](https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/)
<https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>



candidate's knowledge, experience, education/certifications. It typically involves an interview or other assessments.⁸

Promotion: when an employee advances to a position that is at a higher role classification established from job evaluation criteria. This often includes a change in the title of the role and changes in job responsibilities. Promotion can also involve advancement related to salary grade.⁹

Unconscious bias (also known as implicit bias): social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness.

Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize information through categorization. Unconscious bias and its effects are far more prevalent than conscious biases. Unconscious biases are often incompatible with one's conscious values and can be more likely to emerge in certain contexts – such as when multi-tasking or working under pressure.¹⁰ Unconscious bias can be positive or negative, and can result in providing unintentional advantages or disadvantages to a person or group of people.

Marginalized communities or populations: this refers broadly to groups denied opportunities to meaningfully participate in society due to their lack of economic resources, knowledge about political rights, recognition, and other forms of oppression.¹¹ Marginalized communities or populations are often excluded from mainstream social, economic, educational, and/or cultural life.

While marginalization often refers to race, ethnicity and gender, it also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. While the term “marginalized” is an imperfect term, it has been used in this document to highlight the unequal power relationships between social groups in various spheres.¹²

⁸Peek, Sean. (2021). [What is the Difference between Hiring and Recruiting?](https://www.uschamber.com/co/run/human-resources/difference-between-hiring-and-recruiting) U.S. Chamber of Commerce <https://www.uschamber.com/co/run/human-resources/difference-between-hiring-and-recruiting>

⁹ Harvard University. (2021). [Job Changes, Promotions and Types of Pay](https://hr.harvard.edu/job-changes) <https://hr.harvard.edu/job-changes>

¹⁰ UCSF Office of Diversity and Outreach. [What is Unconscious Bias?](https://diversity.ucsf.edu/resources/unconscious-bias) <https://diversity.ucsf.edu/resources/unconscious-bias>

¹¹ Jenson, J. (2000). Backgrounder: Thinking about marginalization: what, who and why? Ottawa, ON: Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc. (CPRN); 2000.

¹² Sevelius, J., Gutierrez-Mock, L., Zamudio-Haas, S., McCree, B., Ngo, A., & Jackson, A. et al. (2020). Research with Marginalized Communities: Challenges to Continuity During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *AIDS And Behavior*, 24(7), 2009-2012.



1.2 Key Legislation to Review

It is important to review and refer to these four pieces of legislation, in addition to this guidebook:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Act (WSIA)
- Employment Standards Act (ESA)
- Ontario Human Rights Code

2.0 Getting Started – Conduct a Diversity Audit

Performing a diversity audit can help municipalities to better understand their organizations and staff demographics. In turn, this can help them identify the most urgent areas for improvement. Key metrics related to hiring and promotion can be identified, and deliverables related to these metrics can be established. This allows organizations to focus on key areas and work towards attainable goals rather than over-extending themselves.

Some key areas of importance include considerations related to leadership and governance, strong and transparent human resource practices, education and knowledge, training and developing talent, quality of life and organizational culture, and current practices to measure and track diversity within the organization. The audit serves as a benchmark to gauge the largest gaps related to diversity which can then be improved upon and reviewed.

For example, through a diversity audit, a municipality might identify a lack of women applying to job openings. In turn, the focus in the next year might be reducing this barrier through reviewing gender-coded language in job postings. By performing an audit, municipalities can evaluate their metrics and progress on a regular basis.¹³

In doing so, organizations can ask:

- Did we reach our goals?
- Which strategies worked and why?
- Which strategies did not work and why?
- How can we improve the strategies so that they can work?

Diversity Audit Tools/Checklists can support the start of this work. See Appendix 3 for one example of a Diversity Audit Tool. The Measuring Inclusion Tool for Municipal

¹³ Virtual Policy Conference: Silver Linings Golden Opportunities. A Panel on Building Equity into Renewal: From Talk to Action. (2020). *Ontario Municipal Social Services Association*



Governments from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA)¹⁴ is another option that has multiple supporting resources.

3.0 Recruitment

Recruiting is an integral step in ensuring a diverse workforce. Without inclusive recruitment strategies, it is impossible for a diverse workforce to be hired, retained, and promoted to higher levels within the organization. All of these benefits of having a diverse workforce begin with recruitment strategies that promote diversity.

Municipalities should undertake a thorough review of their job postings with attention to how job postings are worded. Municipalities should make a concerted effort to avoid language which has the potential to increase barriers for marginalized groups. Language in job postings should not discourage applicants based on factors such as gender, race, immigrant status, and class. Municipalities are encouraged to collaborate with external organizations whenever possible in order to reach and attract a more diverse pool of applicants.

3.1 Reviewing Job Descriptions and Postings

A major step in recruiting diverse candidates involves taking a look at current job descriptions and postings. Since job postings should be based on job descriptions, it is important to review both with the following considerations

- Is the language being used attracting diverse candidates?
- Can the job description or posting be revised to attract more diverse candidates?
- Is inclusive messaging embedded into all job adverts and employment outreach activities that demonstrates an explicit commitment to upholding diversity, equity and inclusion?¹⁵
- Are the job requirements completely relevant and necessary to excel in the role?

Race/Foreign-Trained and Class Considerations

The level of language in the job posting used should be appropriate for the role and the level of education required for the role. Language should always be simplified when possible to ensure that racial minorities, immigrants, and/or those from all income levels that have requisite technical skills are not discouraged from applying based on fear of inadequate language skills.

¹⁴ AUMA. (2021). [AUMA Toolkits & Guides](https://auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/welcoming-and-inclusive-communities/tools-resources/auma-toolkits-guides). <https://auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/welcoming-and-inclusive-communities/tools-resources/auma-toolkits-guides>

¹⁵ City of Guelph. (2020). [A United Vision: Guelph's Community Plan](https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/community-plan/community-plan-our-process/strategic-plan-scan/economic-benefit/). <https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/community-plan/community-plan-our-process/strategic-plan-scan/economic-benefit/>



There must be a concerted effort to eliminate unnecessary requirements. One common example is the phenomenon of over-qualification. This occurs when work organizations seek a higher level of education/experience than what is required for a particular role. This might include requiring an advanced degree and years of experience for an entry-level position. Consideration of those with diverse educational backgrounds should always occur where possible. This includes considering individuals from all post-secondary institutions and valuing different kinds of experience and knowledge including international experience, lived experience, and Indigenous/traditional forms of knowledge. There may be candidates with many years of self-taught knowledge and experience that are excluded due to a lack of formal education.

Other restrictions that can limit candidates from particular class backgrounds should also be taken into account. This includes making it a requirement for an individual to have a vehicle when there are alternative modes of transportation. In many roles, access to a personal vehicle is not essential to complete the role but nevertheless can remain a requirement based on job posting norms. Barriers related to class could also include requiring that an individual have a fixed, permanent address to complete an application. If a position is offered remotely, accommodations where possible should be made to provide a laptop and other resources required to excel. These accommodations should be communicated in the job posting to encourage applications by new immigrants and those from all income levels.

Gender Considerations

Particular attention should be paid to the use of gender-coded language. Speaking and writing with gender-coded language is a common practice that can contribute considerably to marginalization, as it can unintentionally reflect stereotypical gender roles. The use of gender-coded language is subtle and often outside the conscious awareness of the user.

Review and identify whether there is gender-coded language within the job description and posting. Some examples of gender-coded words include ambitious, competitive, assertive or independent.¹⁶ See Appendix 4 for a detailed list of gender-coded words.

Other considerations

Another recommended practice common in many organizations is including an inclusion statement at the start or end of a job posting. This statement affirms that the organization is committed to a barrier free recruitment and selection process. The statement can be general in nature, such as from the City of Brampton: “The City is an equal opportunity

¹⁶ Gaucher, D. Friesen, J. and Kay, A. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), pp. 109-128



employer. We are committed to inclusive, barrier-free recruitment and selection processes and work environments.”¹⁷ Or include more specifics such as a posting from Vancouver Coastal Health, “We encourage applications from members of communities that are disadvantaged on any grounds under the B.C. Human Rights Code, including Indigenous Peoples, people of colour, people of all genders and sexualities and people with disabilities.”¹⁸ In order to know if candidates belong to a marginalized or disadvantaged group, organizations can ask candidates to self-identify if they belong to any marginalized groups as part of the application process. Candidates may identify themselves within their resume or cover letter, or could complete a survey or questions within an electronic application process. There are various tools and software applications that can support this practice. There may be hesitations by applicants to self-identify who do not trust the system, and therefore the process of how this data will be used should be transparent and clearly stated. You could include a statement such as, “We recognize concerns over self-reporting, this is optional to complete”.

The practice of reviewing and improving language within job postings must be intentional and go beyond a particular job description or a single interview. The job posting is crucial and sets the tone for all other aspects related to recruitment, hiring and promotion – affecting everything from who applies to a job opening, criteria used for screening and shortlisting candidates, and the kinds of questions being asked in an interview. The same approach and language should be considered in all of the organization’s materials, communication, practices, and processes. There should be consistent language applied across all areas of the organization which includes various departments across the municipality and in all Human Resource practices including processes and policies related to recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and promotion.

3.2 Collaborating with Local Organizations to Improve Outreach

Municipalities should consider collaborating with local organizations that serve marginalized communities to help improve the recruitment of diverse candidates. Forwarding job postings to these organizations can increase the quantity and quality of diverse candidates. Please contact the Niagara Region (diversity@niagararegion.ca) if you would like a list of organizations in Niagara to consider forwarding job postings to.

Municipalities should also consider collaborating with local organizations that serve marginalized communities by hosting or participating in employment outreach activities, information sessions, and workshops.¹⁹ Providing co-op, internship, and student placement opportunities are effective ways for organizations to increase diversity. All of

¹⁷ City of Brampton. (2021). Advisory, Equity Office, job posting.

¹⁸ Vancouver Coastal Health. (2021). Advisor, Engagement, Diversity Inclusion, and Equity, job posting.

¹⁹ City of Guelph. (2020). [A United Vision: Guelph’s Community Plan](https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/community-plan/community-plan-our-process/strategic-plan-scan/economic-benefit/). <https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/community-plan/community-plan-our-process/strategic-plan-scan/economic-benefit/>



these opportunities are beneficial for all parties involved such as young people, newcomers, and organizations themselves. These jobs or placement opportunities benefit job seekers by providing them valuable Canadian work experience while simultaneously benefitting work organizations by allowing them to become more familiar with diverse people. There are multiple organizations in the Niagara Region that can facilitate these opportunities such as schools and multi-cultural centres which can connect organizations to specific populations in Niagara.

Municipalities might also benefit from having external organizations review their job postings before they go live to make sure they would be understandable and applicable to a wider audience and individuals from particular demographics. There may be many cultural considerations, or organizational biases included in job postings that could potentially be avoided by a thorough review by an external agency.

4.0 Hiring

When evaluating candidates to fill a specific role at an organization, unconscious biases may influence final decision making on hiring. Unconscious biases can be hard to avoid, in fact, research finds that subjective impressions of job candidates can become the most important determinant of job evaluations.²⁰

To address unconscious biases in hiring, particular attention must be paid when screening, shortlisting, interviewing, and evaluating candidates. Municipalities can focus their efforts on four specific areas: “concealed”²¹ hiring, techniques to shortlist candidates, diverse interview panels, and bias-free interview questions. Incorporating DEI into the employee onboarding process is a key final piece to the hiring process.

4.1 “Concealed” Hiring

“Concealed” hiring helps to reduce barriers at the screening stage of hiring and involves employers making invisible irrelevant job characteristics that can be used against candidates. Employers can use certain context clues on a candidate’s resume to make a variety of inferences about various candidates before speaking to or meeting them, often to the detriment of candidates from marginalized groups.

“Concealed” hiring can be employed to help counteract the power of unconscious biases and stereotypes. “Concealed” hiring involves anonymizing resumes, removing names,

²⁰ Graves, L. and Powell, G. (1995). The Effect of Sex Similarity on Recruiters’ Evaluations of Actual Applicants: A Test of the Similarity-Attraction Paradigm. *Personnel Psychology*, 48(1), pp. 85-98

²¹ While the literature often refers to this practice as blind hiring, this guidebook has instead opted to use the term “concealed” to avoid the possibility of negative and ableist connotations for individuals who are visually impaired.



schools, and addresses so that only job relevant characteristics can be viewed.²² “Concealed” hiring is effective at ensuring the most qualified candidates get passed the screening stage of hiring. As such, “concealed” hiring is effective at reducing a major barrier for marginalized groups: getting call-backs and obtaining interviews. This practice can be done manually or by investing in an HR tool.²³ Manual “concealed” hiring might come in the form of placing data into a spreadsheet and filtering out specific details. Manual “concealed” hiring can also come in the form of creating a standardized application for applicants to only include relevant skills or experience.²⁴

4.2 “Two in the Pool Effect”

A diversity audit might reveal that a specific barrier in hiring practices could be related to candidate shortlisting practices. Ineffective shortlisting practices could result in a strong number of applications from individuals from marginalized groups wrongfully being discounted even before the interview stage, or before entering the final candidate pool.

The “Two in the Pool Effect” is a shortlisting technique worth particular consideration to reduce barriers for marginalized groups at this stage of hiring. After the interview, it is common for the Hiring Manager to make a final decision surrounding candidates or further shortlist candidates for another interview(s) in consultation with an individual or team from HR. To further reduce barriers for applicants from marginalized groups at this stage, research recommends the use of the “Two in the Pool Effect”.

Research has demonstrated that when the final candidate pool has only one minority candidate, this individual has reduced chances of being hired. For instance, if there are at least two female candidates in the final candidate pool, the odds of hiring a female candidate are 79 times greater. If there are at least two minority candidates in the final candidate pool, the odds of hiring a minority candidate are 194 times greater.²⁵

While the research highlights the effectiveness of the “Two in the Pool Effect” in the context of the United States, Canadian work organizations would also benefit from this practice. A recent study has suggested that visible minorities in Canada are more likely than those in the United States to face discrimination in hiring.²⁶ These employment

²² Bertrand, M. and Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labour Market Discrimination. *American Economic Review*, 94(4), pp.991-1013

²³ Blendor. (2020). DEI Ratings & Analytics. <https://blendoor.com>

²⁴ Embroker (2021). [What is Blind Hiring? \(How to Implement It\)](https://www.embroker.com/blog/blind-hiring/) <https://www.embroker.com/blog/blind-hiring/>

²⁵ Johnson S.J., Hekman D.R., E.T. Chan. (2016). If There’s Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There’s Statistically No Chance She’ll Be Hired. *Harvard Business Review*

²⁶ Quillian, L., Heath, A., Pager, D., Midtbøen, A., Fleischmann, F., & Hexel, O. (2019). Do Some Countries Discriminate More than Others? Evidence from 97 Field Experiments of Racial Discrimination in Hiring. *Sociological Science*, 6, 467-496.



barriers persist despite the implementation of the Employment Equity Act²⁷ and other widespread affirmative action policies. Growing literature attributes persisting discrimination towards visible minorities in Canada, in part, to the rhetoric of multiculturalism and a belief in an equal Canadian society, which play a role in concealing discrimination in the Canadian context.²⁸ Therefore, HR departments/personnel should strive to ensure that more qualified candidates from marginalized groups enter into the final candidate pool.

In addition to the “Two in the Pool Effect”, the use of intelligent shortlisting software has been previously identified in the literature as another possible shortlisting technique. While there is some evidence of its effectiveness, there has also been much literature problematizing its use, particularly in its possibility to create additional barriers. For these reasons, combined with cost considerations, this guidebook does not widely recommend this practice in all contexts. Instead, this technique should be explored by organizations on a case by case basis and must include an equity lens in its implementation and analysis.

4.3 Diverse Interview Panels

In order to reduce biases in interviews, the use of formal interview panels with multiple individuals is ideal. Members of interview panels should establish job relevant pre-determined criteria prior to conducting interviews and evaluating applicants. Pre-determined criteria should be ranked in terms of importance with clear understanding of the criteria constituting strong and weak responses.

The interview panel should be diverse featuring individuals with different backgrounds, experiences, personalities, and ideas which ensures that a single individual is not unduly favoured for irrelevant job characteristics.²⁹ Municipalities should consider using different types of people for their interview panels which might include clients and various employees at the same level as the person being hired, rather than only manager level positions or HR personnel. This is particularly important when there is a current lack of diversity at higher levels of an organization.

Organizations benefit from diverse interview panels as interviewers understand potential cultural differences and nuances. Greater representation of diverse groups makes the organization a more desirable place to work which can contribute to attracting and

²⁷ Government of Canada. (1995). [Employment Equity Act](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html) <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/page-1.html>

²⁸ George, U., & Chaze, F. (2014). Discrimination at Work: Comparing the Experiences of Foreign-trained and Locally-trained Engineers in Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 46(1), 1-21.

²⁹ Prewett-Livingston, A. J., Field, H.S., Veres, J. G. III, & Levis, P.M. (1996). Effects of race on interview ratings in a situational panel interview. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(2), 178-186.



retaining the best candidates. Diverse interview panels are also important for potential candidates to feel more comfortable by being reflected in the panel. This increases the potential for the candidate to develop rapport and decreases the likelihood for miscommunication or misunderstanding from particular language or actions.

If a diverse interview panel cannot be established due to current demographic representation, this practice can highlight current barriers related to representation that may need greater attention. Municipalities and organizations differ in their resources, size, scope and capacity, and should establish realistic goals accordingly, delivering on their own defined benchmark of success.

After each interview, the interview panel should rate the candidate's responses individually, discuss their rationale for their scores, and then calibrate their scores for each question. Municipalities should inform all candidates whether they will move forward with them or if they have decided to go in a different direction. It is best practice to provide feedback to the successful candidate about their interview noting particular strengths and weaknesses. Hiring managers should be prepared to share the reasons for not hiring an unsuccessful candidate as well, in case they reach out for more information. This practice can be beneficial for the organization themselves as they are forced to verbalize and rationalize the reasons they are moving forward with particular candidates (and not moving forward with others). This practice can help organizations choose the most suitable candidate for the position based on job-relevant characteristics, while reducing individual bias.

4.4 Bias-Free Interview Questions

Interviewers should be mindful of the kinds of questions they ask applicants during interviews. Questions themselves can be an unintentional barrier for marginalized groups at the interview stage.

The Ontario Human Rights Code³⁰ makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate, through interview questions or other assessments, based on factors such as age, citizenship, race, creed/religion, disability, family/marital status, sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Questions that are discriminatory and must be avoided are outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code.³¹ These questions should be thoroughly reviewed by employers, HR departments/teams, hiring managers, and any individual involved in making employment decisions.

³⁰ Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario. (1990). [Ontario Human Rights Code.](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19)
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>

³¹ Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario. (1990). [Ontario Human Rights Code.](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19)
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90h19>



However, interview questions that may be deemed acceptable under this legislation, could still contribute to maintaining barriers. Particular attention must be paid in avoiding questions that are:

- Culturally biased
- Heavily weighted on organizational fit
- Best answered by the organizations rather than the potential candidate
- Involve puzzles, riddles or other tricks that are difficult to objectively assess

Instead, research suggests the following practices be adopted to reduce barriers for marginalized groups during interviewing:

- Tailoring interview questions closely to the role
- Ensuring consistency across questions for each candidate
- Pre-determining criteria for ideal answers
- Assigning a score for each of the candidate's responses
- Asking behavioural based/situational questions when seeking to determine competencies related to the position

See Appendix 5 for more information on categories, common examples, and detailed tips on designing and conducting interviews.

Reducing inequalities through hiring can also occur by creating a workplace culture that promotes DEI. One way to do this is by including DEI competencies as part of the hiring process. Questions that relate to competencies, commitment and experiences in upholding DEI are often asked for roles explicitly related to DEI. However, municipalities and organizations more generally can benefit from asking interview questions related to diversity, equity, and inclusion to all potential employees regardless of their role. When asking DEI questions, municipalities should ensure that questions align with the guidelines of the Ontario Human Rights Code so to create DEI questions that are applicable to all positions in the way that they are worded. This practice can be effective by aspiring to make sure every employee is knowledgeable of and committed to upholding DEI, and contributing to a barrier-free work culture. Municipalities such as Guelph have advocated for this practice in their own organizations to create and maintain an inclusive organizational culture.³²

Another way to create an inclusive culture is not to make gender assumptions about candidates. Instead, it is recommended to begin the interview by introducing yourself using your preferred pronouns, and asking the candidate what pronoun and what name they

³² City of Guelph. (2019). [City of Guelph Employee Diversity and Inclusion Plan](https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/). <https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/>



prefer to use. Be aware that in some cases an individual may have a preferred name that is different from their legal name, particularly if someone is in the process of transitioning, or if they were unable to afford the fees associated with changing their name on all legal documents.³³ See Appendix 6 for more information about pronouns and their importance.

4.5 DEI at the Onboarding Process

If candidates experience success during the interviews and are ultimately hired, diversity, equity and inclusion must also be at the forefront of the onboarding process.

DEI goals and current values of the municipality should be communicated to new employees. It is common for onboarding programs to include curriculum related to the individual's new position and how to navigate through various organizational software. It is best practice to spend some time providing an overview of various resources related to DEI including resource/working groups, various policies and practices that promote DEI, how the organization deals with formalized complaints, and the resources available to support marginalized groups in their career progression.

It is important for new recruits to be trained and welcomed by a diverse set of employees with different backgrounds and perspectives, whenever possible, which allows new hires to feel more comfortable. The new staff should be introduced using their preferred pronouns. When this is first introduced, the manager or supervisor may need to provide education for the rest of the staff so they understand the importance and reason behind using pronouns. Managers should also ask new hires what name they would like to use and how to pronounce it correctly. Don't be afraid to make a mistake, or correct other colleagues, practice with the employee or on your own if needed. This allows new hires to feel welcome and see how they can fit into the organization.

It could also be effective for new hires to be assigned a mentor that they feel comfortable with, who can support them and act as a liaison with other staff, particularly if challenges arise in the first few months. If individuals do not see themselves in the organization, it can be very alienating and discouraging, making employee turnover more likely. New hires, especially those who self-identify as belonging to a minority group, should be invited to give feedback on the onboarding process to improve its effectiveness for future employees.³⁴

³³ Hixson-Vulpe, J. (2017). Hiring Across All Spectrums: A Report on Broadening Opportunities for LGBTQ2S+ Jobseekers. Pride at Work Canada.

³⁴ Przystanski, A. (2020). [Making Employee Onboarding More Inclusive. Lattice. https://lattice.com/library/4-tips-for-making-employee-onboarding-more-inclusive](https://lattice.com/library/4-tips-for-making-employee-onboarding-more-inclusive)



The onboarding process itself should be inclusive and accommodations should be made as required. For example, an individual may need a computer with screen-reading software to complete orientation training materials which should be provided by the organization.³⁵ The onboarding process is crucial as it sets the tone for new employees. Thus, every attempt to ensure and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout this stage is imperative.

5.0 Promotion

The lack of promotion opportunities is a critical barrier that disadvantages marginalized groups. Barriers into management positions, which are often more highly compensated than conventional employee roles, can lead to an overrepresentation of overqualified minority candidates in lower income ranges.³⁶ A lack of minority groups in upper management positions often means they lack the power to participate in decision making processes surrounding hiring and promotion. Research suggests that when minority groups are prevented from decisions related to workforce composition, historically advantaged groups, like white, upper-class, cis-gender males receive preferential treatment in hiring and promotion.³⁷ Consequently, if minority groups are prevented from access to participation in managerial roles, intergenerational inequalities persist. Ensuring that diverse individuals participate in leadership and have input on organization decisions is when true change occurs and where the impacts of DEI can really be seen.

Similar to hiring, DEI competencies could also be considered as part of the promotion process in order to create, maintain, and uphold an inclusive organizational culture. One aspect of assessing promotion can be focused on an employee's commitment to championing DEI initiatives through their work. As a result, leaders can help maintain an intergenerational culture of inclusion through built-in succession. Over time, this practice is effective because it rewards individuals for promoting DEI which incentivizes all employees to make a stronger commitment to it.³⁸

In order to address inequalities related to promotion, this section discusses the importance of making promotion opportunities and processes transparent, and highlights the importance of implementing mentoring and other development opportunities.

³⁵ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2008). [Interviewing and making hiring decisions](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions)
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/iv-human-rights-issues-all-stages-employment/5-interviewing-and-making-hiring-decisions>

³⁶ Marin, A. (2012). "Don't Mention It: Why People Don't Share Job Information, When They do, and Why it Matters." *Social Networks* 34(2): 181-192.

³⁷ Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., and Kelly, E. (2006). "Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies." *American Sociological Review* 71(4): 589-617.

³⁸ City of Guelph. (2019). [City of Guelph Employee Diversity and Inclusion Plan](https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/). <https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/>



5.1 Best Practices – Promotion Opportunities and Processes

Promotion criteria should be previously established and those involved in granting promotions should be transparent about how promotion is achieved. The criteria for promotion should be communicated to all employees and promotion opportunities should be widely known. This can be facilitated by using a consistent communication platform accessible to all staff and granting promotion through a rigorous formal process.³⁹ One of the barriers for marginalized groups into management is the transfer of job information and resources being concentrated among similar individuals to the disadvantage of minority groups.⁴⁰ It is common for promotion information and resources to exclude minority candidates. Clear internal communication surrounding promotion is particularly important for municipalities, wherein promotion is more often gained through the internal recruitment process and not a separate activity like in many private organizations which can lead to additional disadvantage for minority candidates to attain management positions.

5.2 Mentorship and Development Opportunities

Research indicates that marginalized groups lack formal mentorship and development opportunities that would further support promotion opportunities to management level positions.⁴¹ Formal mentoring opportunities should be provided to ensure that all employees receive mentorship to a similar extent.

The participation of senior leadership, self-identifying from minority groups, in formal mentoring opportunities should be encouraged. However, leaders belonging to marginalized groups should never feel pressured to spearhead initiatives, especially in cases where participation can negatively impact their own career progression.

Development programs⁴² should be made available for individuals to develop the soft skills needed for promotion as weaknesses related to soft skills are often used to discriminate against racialized groups.⁴³ Organizations should encourage continued education and

³⁹ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). [Workplace policies, practices and decision-making processes and systemic discrimination](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-racism-and-racial-discrimination/appendix-%E2%80%93-workplace-policies-practices-and-decision-making-processes-and-systemic-discrimination) <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-racism-and-racial-discrimination/appendix-%E2%80%93-workplace-policies-practices-and-decision-making-processes-and-systemic-discrimination>

⁴⁰ Adams, T. and Flores, J. (2020). Marginalized Inclusion: The Experiences of Visible Minority Engineers in Ontario, Canada. Manuscript Submitted for Publication.

⁴¹ Roth, L. 2004. "The Social Psychology of Tokenism: Status and Homophily Processes on Wall Street." *Sociology Perspectives* 47(2): 189-214.

⁴² Diversity Best Practices. (2017). [Affinity-Based Leadership Development Programs](https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/attachments/2018/04/research_report_affinity-based_leadership_development_programs.pdf) https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/attachments/2018/04/research_report_affinity-based_leadership_development_programs.pdf

⁴³ Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2005). [Workplace policies, practices and decision-making processes and systemic discrimination](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-racism-and-racial-discrimination) <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-and-guidelines-racism-and-racial-discrimination>



should cover the cost of continuing education courses and employment-related training where possible.⁴⁴

6.0 Fostering Transparency and Accountability for DEI

This guidebook has highlighted the best practices in recruitment, hiring and promotion. One key theme connecting the best practices is the need to foster transparency and accountability. In this section, the guidebook reiterates the importance of fostering transparency and accountability for DEI in tangible ways.

Municipalities need to be transparent about existing barriers for marginalized groups in their own organization and the steps they are taking to reduce these barriers. There are a variety of ways that municipalities can improve their transparency and accountability.

One way to do this early on is in the job creation and evaluation process. A strong job evaluation process is an impartial process that has already added 'weights' or 'rankings' to role tasks and accountabilities. Many organizations have some sort of job evaluation process used to establish pay grades. It is important for those involved in the job evaluation process to determine clear 'weight' or 'rankings' to role tasks and accountabilities in order to accurately and appropriately evaluate candidates and avoid bias. Minimizing the impact of subjective impressions of employees is particularly important (and often difficult) in jobs that involve a variety of highly complex tasks, prevalent in white collar work and office settings.⁴⁵ Ranking skills based on importance is particularly crucial in these instances.

Communication is also a key way that municipalities can demonstrate transparency and hold themselves accountable. Municipalities should communicate current recruitment, hiring, and promotion policies and practices to all current and potential employees in job adverts, bulletin boards, emails, websites, onboarding, and interviews. Proposed changes to reduce barriers and the timeline for deliverables related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion can also be communicated.

The development and review of HR practices, policies, and procedures is also important. The review could include ensuring that decisions are barrier-free and carried out with an equity lens. Practices, policies, and hiring decisions can be reviewed by senior levels of the hiring team trained in best practices related to diversity hiring.

[discrimination/appendix-%E2%80%93-workplace-policies-practices-and-decision-making-processes-and-systemic-discrimination](#)

⁴⁴ Lifespeak Employee Well-Being Platform. (n.d.). [10 critical ways to empower women and minorities in the workplace](https://lifespeak.com/10-critical-ways-to-empower-women-and-minorities-in-the-workplace) <https://lifespeak.com/10-critical-ways-to-empower-women-and-minorities-in-the-workplace>

⁴⁵ Kahn, L. and Sherer, P. (1990). Contingent Pay and Managerial Performance. *Industrial and Labour Relations Review* 43(3): 107S



Municipalities need to be clear about the criteria they are looking for in a particular position and how the applicant that was ultimately hired effectively met the criteria for the position. Municipalities should be able to justify the reasons that a candidate was hired or promoted and why other candidates were not hired or promoted based on job-related criteria.

Depending on time and capacity, it may be worthwhile for those involved in particular recruitment, hiring, and promotion decisions to have debriefs following the process to determine what was missed and what could have been done differently. This can promote continuous learning and allow changes to be made quickly.

Municipalities should evaluate their ability to deliver on key metrics identified in their diversity audits as key priorities. Reflecting on the initial diversity audit and periodically evaluating performance is important to maintain, improve, or change the identified strategies. The results of the initial audit and subsequent evaluations should be transparent and made available to staff and the public.

7.0 Conclusion

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are embedded in multiple pieces of legislation that guide human resource practices within municipalities, however this legislation in itself is not sufficient for creating a truly barrier-free workplace. DEI principles need to be embedded throughout the recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and promotion processes. Some key areas to review and adapt to ensure inclusion when recruiting are job descriptions, job postings, and where job postings are shared. Collaborating with diverse community organizations can provide opportunities to widen and strengthen talent recruitment.

When a broad recruitment has been successful, to ensure fair and inclusive hiring, utilize practices such as “concealed” hiring, “two in the pool” effect, have diverse interview panels, and use bias-free interview questions. Help new recruits to feel welcome by embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the onboarding process so they see themselves reflected in the materials presented. To ensure diverse employees are able to progress to higher levels of leadership and access promotions, it is essential that organizations use clear internal communication to provide everyone with the same information about job requirements and opportunities for promotion. Providing mentorship programs for marginalized groups and opportunities for individuals to develop soft skills will increase the leadership capabilities, confidence, and the ability of internal staff to succeed in promotion prospects. Finally, it is important that municipalities foster transparency and accountability through clear communication and making audits and evaluations available to the public.



In all cases, it is imperative that all parts of recruitment, hiring and promotion align. The job criteria used in the job posting should closely relate to the questions being asked in the interview, which should be the same criteria used to select the candidate. Ensuring that all these steps align creates an effective structure of recruitment, hiring, and promotion that can be traced and evaluated more easily. This allows municipalities to evaluate the stage where these processes need modification.

The best practices outlined in this guidebook are aspirational guiding principles to reduce barriers in recruitment, hiring, and promotion. Niagara Region and the LAMs recognize that there can always be more progress made to reduce barriers for people who live, work, learn, and play in Niagara. They are committed to embedding these principles where applicable to compliment current diversity practices already underway, recognizing that individuals, groups, organizations, and municipalities differ in their capacity to impact change.

Any or all of these practices can be adopted to reduce barriers for marginalized groups. The most important part is ensuring that DEI best practices related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion are properly embedded and openly communicated to all employees on a regular basis. Through mutual commitment and encouragement, organizations will see a shift in the staff composition to become more diverse and inclusive, with far reaching benefits.



Appendices

Appendix 1: Diversity in Niagara

Diversity within the population of Niagara is increasing. According to the 2016 census, 8.9% of people in Niagara are a visible minority (38,810 individuals), up from 7.0% in 2011. The majority of visible minorities in Niagara are Black, South-Asian, and Chinese. In addition, in 2016, there were 18,625 people (4.3%) in Niagara with North American Indigenous origins (First Nations, Inuit or Métis). In 2011, there were 14,720 people (3.8%) with North American Indigenous origins.

In Niagara, the 2016 census shows evidence of linguistic diversity – 13.8% of the population have a non-official language as the first language they learned at home, with the top three languages spoken being Italian, German, and Spanish. French was the first language spoken for 2.7% of the population in Niagara.

Research from the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability (CSD) estimates that 1 in 5 Canadians (6.2 million) over the age of 15 has one or more disabilities that limit their daily functions which means that accessibility and removing barriers related to access to Municipal services requires greater attention.⁴⁶ In the St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area, there are 90,500 persons with disabilities (28.9%) compared to 24.1% of the population of Ontario.⁴⁷

Various forms of discrimination and barriers remain for many marginalized groups. LGBTQ2S+ individuals continue to be one of the most marginalized groups worldwide with persisting barriers related to health outcomes, employment, housing, and support services. At the national level, hate crimes are most often motivated by race or ethnicity (45%), religion (35%) and sexual orientation (11%).⁴⁸ Research suggests that while there is increasing belief that racism, discrimination and other forms of exclusion are becoming less prominent, it is more likely that they are occurring in new ways that are harder to identify.⁴⁹ In this way, both overt and covert forms of discrimination persist and should be addressed.

⁴⁶ Statistics Canada (2018). Canadian Survey on Disability, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/181128/dq181128a-eng.htm>. Accessed on 2019-06-24

⁴⁷ Statistics Canada. (2019) Type of disability for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces and territories. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1310037601> Accessed on 2019-06-24.

⁴⁸ Statistics Canada (2018). Table 35-10-0066-01 Police-reported hate crime, by type of motivation, Canada (selected police services). Retrieved from: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3510006601> Accessed on 2019-06-24.

⁴⁹ Sue D.W., Bucceri J., Lin A. I., Nadal K.N. & Torino G. C. (2009). "Racial Microaggressions and the Asian American Experience." *Asian American Journal of Psychology* S(1):88-101



Appendix 2: Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities 10 Common Commitments

The municipality as a guardian of the public interest

1. Increase vigilance against systemic and individual racism and discrimination.
2. Monitor racism and discrimination in the community more broadly as well as municipal actions taken to address racism and discrimination.
3. Inform and support individuals who experience racism and discrimination.
4. Support policing services in their efforts to be exemplary institutions in combating racism and discrimination.

The municipality as an organization in the fulfillment of human rights

5. Provide equal opportunities as a municipal employer, service provider, and contractor.
6. Support measures to promote equity in the labour market.
7. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in housing.

The municipality as a community sharing responsibility for respecting and promoting human rights and diversity

8. Involve citizens by giving them a voice in anti-racism initiatives and decision-making.
9. Support measures to challenge racism and discrimination and promote diversity and equal opportunity in the education sector, and in other forms of learning
10. Promote respect, understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity and the inclusion of Aboriginal and racialized communities into the cultural fabric of the municipality.



Appendix 3: Diversity Audit Tool

* Adapted from The International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management⁵⁰

For each of the items below identify if your organization has that characteristic, if you are unsure if it does, or if it does not. You can use this as a baseline to see areas that need improvement, and repeat the audit periodically to measure improvements.

Item	Yes	Not sure or somewhat	No
Leadership and Governance			
Does the board consider diversity in identifying and developing candidates?			
Do leaders reflect the composition of the workforce?			
Is there a diversity council? (An internal group of Municipal employees that are interested/experienced in diversity initiatives and are willing to spearhead change at the organization)			
Are explicit diversity goals and policies in place and communicated internally and externally?			
Are there well-developed mechanisms to handle employee complaints about harassment and discrimination?			
Is compensation for managers tied to meeting diversity targets?			
Strong and Transparent Human Resources Practices			
Do recruiters specifically target underrepresented groups?			
Do all internship, co-op, and placement programs have diversity targets?			
Are selection committees representative?			
Are bias-free interviewing processes used?			
Performance Management			
Is accountability for diversity targets and practices built into performance management systems (processes to evaluate employee performance)?			
Is performance for managers tied to meeting diversity targets?			
Promotion			
Does succession planning take into account diversity targets?			
Are high potential employees from underrepresented groups given opportunities to take “stretch” assignments?			
Are promotional opportunities and processes communicated openly and clearly to employees?			

⁵⁰ Cukier, W., & Smarz, S. (2013). Diversity Assessment Tools: A Comparison. *The International Journal Of Knowledge, Culture, And Change Management: Annual Review*, 11(6), 49-64.



Item	Yes	Not sure or somewhat	No
Education, Training and Knowledge Building			
Is diversity tracked in employee separations (retirements, dismissals, voluntary exits, layoffs)?			
Are exit interviews conducted and are the results acted upon?			
Training and Developing Talent			
Does orientation for new employees address diversity?			
Do all employees receive mandatory training on diversity?			
Do managers receive specialized training on diversity?			
Do individuals involved in the hiring processes receive specialized training on hiring and bias-free hiring?			
Are high-potential employees from diverse groups given access to specialized training and professional development that would enhance their ability to succeed?			
Are provisions available for keeping employees current during/after parental leave?			
Are formal mentoring/coaching programs (internal or external) provided?			
Are formal diversity networks supported?			
Quality of Life and Organizational Culture			
Are flexible working arrangements available?			
Are employee workloads and employer expectations managed?			
Measure and Track Diversity			
Are there explicit diversity targets for participation and for employees from underrepresented groups in management?			
Are there regular employee engagement surveys with self-reported demographic data?			
Are equal pay audits conducted to ensure equal pay for work of equal value?			
Is performance benchmarked against others in the industry?			



Appendix 4: List of Masculine and Feminine Coded Words

Note. The asterisk denotes the acceptance of all letters, hyphens, or numbers following its appearance

*Adapted from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology⁵¹

Masculine coded words

- Active
- Adventurous
- Agress*
- Ambitio*
- Analy*
- Assert*
- Athlet*
- Autonom*
- Boast*
- Challeng*
- Compet*
- Confident
- Courag*
- Decide
- Decisive
- Decision*
- Determin*
- Dominant
- Domina*
- Force*
- Greedy
- Headstrong
- Hierarch*
- Hostil*
- Impulsive
- Independen*
- Individual*
- Intellect*
- Lead*
- Logic
- Masculine
- Objective
- Opinion
- Outspoken
- Persist*
- Principle*
- Reckless
- Stubborn
- Superior
- Self-confiden*
- Self-sufficien*
- Self-relian*

Feminine coded words

- Affectionate
- Child*
- Cheer*
- Commit*
- Communal
- Compassion*
- Connect*
- Considerate
- Cooperat*
- Depend*
- Emotiona*
- Empath*
- Feminine
- Flatterable
- Gentle
- Honest
- Interpersonal
- Interdependen*
- Interpersona*
- Kind
- Kinship
- Loyal*
- Modesty
- Nag
- Nurtur*
- Pleasant*
- Polite
- Quiet*
- Respon*
- Sensitiv*
- Submissive
- Support*
- Sympath*
- Tender*
- Together*
- Trust*
- Understand*
- Warm*
- Whin*
- Yield*

⁵¹ Gaucher, D. Friesen, J. and Kay, A. (2011). Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(1), pp. 109-128



Appendix 5: Bias-Free Hiring – Interview Questions Not to Ask

This appendix was adapted primarily from an article by Tana Turner based on the Turner Consulting Group’s Bias Free Hiring Guide.⁵² Many aspects of this section emerged from suggestions, feedback and brainstorming from those involved in the writing or review of this document including many HR experts. It is difficult to make objective, dichotomous judgements of “good” or “bad” questions. The purpose of this section is to highlight potential biases and challenge notions of assumed neutrality in common questions that are asked for a variety of roles.

Category 1: Culturally biased questions

These questions can be difficult for the candidate to answer because they are culturally biased. Candidates from a number of cultural backgrounds might find it difficult to answer these questions because speaking confidently of accomplishments can be seen as boasting.

Some of these questions include:

- Tell me about yourself
- Why should I hire you?
- Why do you feel like you are the best candidate for the position?
- What accomplishments in your career to date are you most proud of?

While past accomplishments can help predict future career success, consider rewording to “what have you done in your career/previously that will help perform x effectively?” Speaking proudly and confidently of past accomplishments can be seen as boasting which can disadvantage candidates from a number of cultural backgrounds.

Instead of asking questions that are unrelated to the duties of the job or are culturally biased, municipalities should instead identify the essential skills and abilities needed for the job and those related to career success. The interviewers should then ask questions based on those aspects. For instance, please provide an example of a time when you demonstrated a particular essential skill? Or what has been your experience with performing a specific duty? The expectations of the candidate and criteria for selection should be clearly communicated in job adverts and the interview questions should be

⁵² Turner, T. (2014). [Bias-Free Hiring: Interview Questions Not to Ask. Charity Village.](https://charityvillage.com/bias-free-hiring-interview-questions-not-to-ask/#.XBGzbnNKiRs)
<https://charityvillage.com/bias-free-hiring-interview-questions-not-to-ask/#.XBGzbnNKiRs>



developed from this. The job adverts and interview questions should be clearly linked to the skills, abilities, and experience required to excel.

Category 2: Questions on organizational fit

Many organizations are concerned about hiring the right fit that will create or contribute to a positive organizational culture. Although hiring for fit is reasonable, organizations need to be sure that doing so does not exclude people from diverse communities, backgrounds, and identities. Some questions can signal to a candidate that managers and the organization will not be flexible or make adjustments for different personalities and working styles.

Some of these questions include:

- In what kind of work environment do you do your best work?
- What type of people do you like to work with?
- How would you describe your working style?
- When reporting to a manager, what management style supports you in doing your best work?

While establishing the right organizational culture is important, questions like the ones above can give the impression that organizations are unwilling to adapt, are seeking one particular type of candidate, and are not interested in creating an inclusive organizational culture that values diverse individuals.

As an effective alternative to this, municipalities should instead hire and promote individuals that have a track record of knowledge and commitment to upholding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Municipalities like Guelph envision questions surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion being asked during interviews to all potential municipal employees regardless of their role.⁵³ This practice is effective because every employee should be committed to upholding diversity, equity and inclusion in their workplace and every employee has a role to play in contributing to a positive and inclusive organizational culture (not only individuals whose role is explicitly related to inclusion).

In lieu of some bias-laden interview questions noted in this section, it may be in the best interest of all parties to substitute these questions for questions specifically pertaining to knowledge, experience, and commitment to upholding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Some questions that municipalities can consider embedding into their interview process are:

⁵³ City of Guelph. (2019). [Employee Diversity and Inclusion Plan](https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/). <https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/diversity-strategy/>



1. How would you advocate for diversity, equity and, inclusion with colleagues who don't understand its importance?
 - a. Tell me about a time when you advocated for diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
 - b. How would you handle a situation where a colleague was being culturally insensitive, sexist, racist, or homophobic?
2. What does diversity, equity, and inclusion mean to you and why are they important?
3. What steps have you taken to ensure that everyone within your department/team/organization felt included?
 - a. What steps/initiatives have you taken to create an inclusive or learning work environment?
4. What is your approach to understanding the perspectives of colleagues from different backgrounds?
5. What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning?

Category 3: Things you should be telling them

Certain information should either be provided to the candidate or established by working with the candidate once they are hired. Asking candidates about salary expectations could disadvantage newcomers or those transitioning careers that are not familiar with appropriate salary ranges.

Some of these questions include:

- What kind of salary do you need?
- What benefits do you expect to receive if you are offered the position?
- What do you feel this position should pay?
- What is your expected salary range?

Rather than interviewers asking these questions, they should instead provide this information at the start of the interview. Panelists on interview panels should open interviews by telling candidates essential information about the job including job duties, salary, and priorities for the position.

The start of the interview can also be used to review resumes with candidates. This practice is effective because it ensures that the interview panel is fully aware of the skills and abilities a candidate possesses. It also allows the panel to more deeply consider a candidate's prior experience which can help them choose the candidate with the most potential to excel in the position.



Category 4: Puzzles, Riddles, and Other Tricks

This category of questions are not relevant for most positions, are impossible to evaluate objectively, and are not a strong indicator for the ability to effectively perform the position.

- If you were an animal, what animal would that be?
- If you had to eliminate one of the 10 provinces, which one would it be?
- Is there intelligent life in outer space?

If the interview panel wants to get a sense of a candidate's ability to effectively perform and thrive in a position, a behavioural based or situational question can provide accurate and relevant information about critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Like all interview questions, the same behavioral based or situational questions should be consistently asked to each candidate rather than coming up with a different scenario question on the spot. For example, a candidate interviewing for a position as a nurse could be asked:

What approach do you take in communicating with people who do not know medical jargon? Give an example of a time you explained medical terminology to someone who is not medically trained.

The interview panel might conclude that they are looking for an answer where an individual explains step-by-step how they have performed in a similar situation, the specific words and terminology that they used, and the reasons they knew that the individual understood their explanation.⁵⁴

This question is effective because the skills assessed are relevant for success as a nurse, as the scenario gauges a potential candidate's ability to communicate with patients and their families. The interview panel also knows beforehand the criteria they are looking for in an ideal answer and they are able to evaluate a candidate's answer objectively in comparison to the answers of other candidates.

Summary: Tips for Designing Effective Interview Questions and Implementing Effective Interviews

- Use the job description to identify the essential skills and abilities needed for the job. Determine which of these skills and abilities are best assessed through a written or practical test, through an interview, and from reference checks. From there, interview questions should be developed and clearly linked to the skills and abilities required to do the job
- Develop the key criteria which the panel will look for in the candidates' response
- Attach a score to each question

⁵⁴ Gaines, K. (2020). [31 Top Nursing Interview Questions & Answers](https://nurse.org/articles/nurse-behavioral-interview-questions-answers/).
<https://nurse.org/articles/nurse-behavioral-interview-questions-answers/>



- Use an interview panel when interviewing. Require each interviewer to write down each candidates' responses to each question
- Open interviews by telling candidates what they need to know about the job, such as reviewing the job duties, salary range, and priorities for the position
- Review resumes with candidates during the interview in order to ensure that the interview panel is fully aware of the skills and abilities a candidate possesses and their potential for success in the position
- Ask each candidate the same questions to ensure consistency (for many unionized groups, scoring matrices have been established and are a critical part of this process)
- If interested in knowing how someone approaches a problem, a behavioural based or situational question can effectively provide accurate and relevant information about problem-solving and critical thinking abilities
- Though there are few universally strong interview questions, (questions are very much context, time, and job-dependent) questions related to experience, knowledge and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion can be asked in lieu of these potentially bias-laden questions identified. Organizations should consider asking at least 1-2 questions related to this per interview.
- After each interview, the interview panel should rate the candidate's responses individually, discuss their rationale for their scores, and then calibrate their scores for each question⁵⁵
- Interview decisions should be communicated to all candidates
- Be prepared to provide feedback to interviewees about strengths and weaknesses of their interview and the reasons they were or were not chosen for the position, since interview decisions can reflect well on an organization

⁵⁵ Turner, T. (2014). [Bias-Free Hiring: Interview Questions Not to Ask. Charity Village.](https://charityvillage.com/bias-free-hiring-interview-questions-not-to-ask/#.XBGzbhNKiRs)
<https://charityvillage.com/bias-free-hiring-interview-questions-not-to-ask/#.XBGzbhNKiRs>



Appendix 6: Pronouns

Using appropriate pronouns is very important to properly address individuals, particularly if they do not align with the traditional gender binary considerations of male/female. There are multiple options for gender neutral pronouns that can be used by an individual who does not align with the male/female binary. To find out which pronouns someone wants to use, it is best to ask them and then try to use those pronouns when talking to that person, or referring to them in conversation or in writing. Here are some examples of gender neutral pronouns and how to pronounce them.⁵⁶

Gender Type	Subject	Object	Possessive	Pronunciation
Gender Binary	She	Her	Hers	As it looks
Gender Binary	He	Him	His	As it looks
Gender Neutral	They*	Them*	Theirs*	As it looks
Gender Neutral	Ze	Hir	Hirs	Zhee, here, heres
Gender Neutral	Ze	Zir	Zirs	Zhee, zhere, zheres
Gender Neutral	Xe	Xem	Xyrs	Zhee, zhem, zheres

* Used as singular

Another set of definitions relating to pronouns is the difference between cisgender and transgender. Transgender refers to people who their sex assigned at birth is not the same as their current gender identity. Cisgender refers to people who are not transgender, their sex assigned at birth is the same as their current gender identity.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ ACON. (2021). ACON Pride Training. <https://www.pridetraining.org.au/pages/pronoun-page>

⁵⁷ GLAAD. (no date). Glossary of Terms – Transgender. [GLAAD Media Reference Guide - Transgender | GLAAD](#)

