

Committee of the Whole (1) Report

DATE: Tuesday, October 31, 2023

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: CITY OF VAUGHAN'S DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
PLAN - ANNUAL REPORT (APRIL 2022 – OCTOBER 2023)

FROM:

Michael Coroneos, Deputy City Manager, Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose

To provide an annual update on the progress and challenges in implementing the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan.

Report Highlights

- This report is a progress of DEI initiatives from April of 2022 to October of 2023.
- The City of Vaughan approved the 2022-2026 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan in April 2022.
- The City was awarded the 2022 Excellence in Diversity & Inclusion by HR Canada.
- The City has made significant advancements in fostering an inclusive culture, implementing data-driven initiatives, promoting equitable employment, strengthening Indigenous relations, championing equity, and enhancing accessibility standards.

Recommendation:

1. That this report be received for information.

Background

The City of Vaughan takes pride in its diverse communities and recognizes their invaluable contributions to our cultural, economic, and social fabric. In our commitment to promote inclusivity and respect, we ensure that all citizens, employees, businesses, and visitors are afforded accessible opportunities for meaningful engagement and participation. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan (DEI Plan) is a road map to this commitment, targeting systemic discrimination and inequities in service access, civic participation, and broader community involvement.

Instrumental in the formation of the DEI Plan was the guidance of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force. Their insights have been paramount in refining our approach to ensure our programs, services, hiring, and tendering practices genuinely reflect and cater to the diverse needs of our residents. As the DEI Plan unfolds, we are making significant strides in several key focus areas geared towards realizing our overarching mission of comprehensive equity and inclusivity.

Highlights of Progress to Date (April 2022 to October 2023)

Fostering and Embedding a Culture of Belonging:

- Updated the City's Respectful Workplace, Accessibility, and Workplace Violence policies.

Data-Informed Decision-Making:

- Developed and implemented the DEI segment within the employee engagement survey.

Equitable Employment:

- Introduced and successfully executed DEI, OHRC, Truth and Reconciliation, and AODA courses, with impressive completion rates.

Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation:

- Progressing towards an MOU and formalizing a land acknowledgment.
- Organized insightful sessions to mark Indigenous History Month.
- Established the symbolic Friendship Garden.
- Organized the meaningful Sisters in Spirit Vigil and celebrated achievements via the Culture Day award.

Achieving Equity:

- Anti-Racism: The Addressing Anti-Black Racism project is on track for completion by January 2024.
- Support for the LGBTQ2S+ Communities: Celebrated inclusivity with the installation of a Pride Rainbow Crosswalk.

Continued Accessibility Excellence:

- Launched the development of the 2023-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, which is expected to be implemented in Q4 of 2023.
- Developed Annual Accessibility Status Reports for 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- Initiated the Information and Communication Accessibility Project to meet compliance with requirements set out in the Information and Communication standard of the integrated [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act](#) (AODA).
- Spearheaded Project SEARCH, in partnership with Recreation, Animal Services, Human Resources, Facility Management, Infrastructure Delivery, Parks Forestry and Horticulture, Transportation and Fleet Management, and Vaughan Public Libraries, to develop and implement empowering internships catering to those with learning disabilities, offering them immersive experiences across diverse departments.

Previous Reports/Authority

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and Community Consultation, Committee of the Whole \(1\), June 1, 2021](#)

[INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, Committee of the Whole \(1\), June 1, 2021](#)

[City of Vaughan's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan and Multi-Year Action Plan, Committee of the Whole \(1\), April 5, 2022](#)

[PROJECT SEARCH – EMPLOYMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES, Committee of the Whole \(2\), June 21, 2022](#)

["Project SEARCH" Implementation Report, June 2023](#)

Analysis and Options

Accessibility

Accessibility remains a rapidly evolving area where service demand surpasses current staff resource capabilities. We are proactively collaborating across various departments to leverage internal support and resources wherever possible. The Site Plan review process, as required by the AODA, is a prime example illustrating the need for accessibility considerations to be woven seamlessly into every facet of our operations from inception.

Inclusive Programs and Services: Recreation Services continues to roll out programs and services that reflect the diverse requisites of those with disabilities. Project SEARCH is one area that has been highly successful however, it lacks staff and funding support at this time.

Accessible Infrastructure and Facilities: In partnership with infrastructure and facilities, we are committed to meeting accessibility standards required by the AODA. Our efforts include bringing existing infrastructure up to accessibility standards, incorporating accessibility into new project plans, and conducting accessibility assessments to identify and address barriers. We prioritize engaging individuals with disabilities in all Site Plan reviews, ensuring inclusion in all relevant new projects and retrospectively applying this approach to existing ones. Our goal is to create accessible and inclusive spaces that cater to everyone, ensuring all voices are heard and needs are addressed.

Accessibility Training and Education: We are continuing to ensure the City's staff is well-versed with accessibility, inclusivity, and the stipulations of AODA. Education not only increases awareness of accessibility, but also emphasizes the role in creating an inclusive environment for all, especially those with disabilities.

Community Engagement and Collaboration: It is crucial to continuously engage with individuals with disabilities, community agencies supporting them, and other pivotal stakeholders. This helps to collate feedback, pinpoint accessibility barriers, and develop strategies to address them.

Inclusive Engagement

The Addressing Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (ABR) and 20223-2026 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (MYAP) projects, supported by the Engagement Team, made significant strides in their community engagement efforts. Marginalized communities have vocalized their desire for engagement but often felt overlooked or bypassed in consultation processes. The ABR and MYAP projects directly addressed this issue by revamping stakeholder lists and cultivating relationships that supported these specific projects and became invaluable for future projects. However, engagement without equity and inclusion can inadvertently perpetuate marginalization, especially for communities whose voices are often undervalued or unheard.

Incorporating DEI principles into engagement is vital to achieving comprehensive outreach and fostering a genuinely inclusive environment. Engagement rooted in diversity, equity, and inclusion captures a broader range of perspectives, experiences, and needs. This approach not only strengthens community trust but also ensures that decisions and initiatives are well-informed, equitable, and resonate with all segments of the population.

It is important to consider the integration of DEI principles in engagement strategy in order to promote innovation and inclusivity.

Project and Change Management

We are proud to highlight the introduction of dedicated Project Management to support DEI initiatives. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, this strategic approach ensures the effective planning, execution, and tracking of DEI-related endeavours. Additionally, we believe that change management is paramount to the success of our DEI journey by ensuring they drive a cultural transformation. By intertwining project and change management, we are reinforcing our commitment to creating an environment where DEI principles are not just one-time projects but truly transformative.

Financial Impact

The implementation and ongoing support of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan have financial implications that need to be carefully considered to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the initiatives. All requests will be submitted via the City Budget and Business Planning submission and review process.

Operational Impact

We continue to consult and collaborate with multiple departments to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in a cohesive approach. These proactive consultations have enabled us to adequately leverage internal support and resources, ensuring all our projects, from the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan to the Addressing Anti-Black Racism Project, incorporate equity considerations from the outset.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

N/A

Conclusion

The City of Vaughan's commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) is evident in the comprehensive strides made in the DEI Plan, which seeks to address systemic discrimination and inequities across various sectors. The progress made from April 2022 to October 2023, spanning from fostering a culture of belonging to ensuring continued accessibility excellence, underscores the City's dedication to creating an inclusive environment for all its residents.

Given the positive strides, the City will continue to prioritize and invest in DEI initiatives, addressing resource constraints and ensuring continuous community engagement as they arise. The City will also focus on internal capacity building, ensuring that departments are equipped and aligned with DEI principles. By doing so, the City of

Vaughan will enhance its external image and foster an internal environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion are celebrated and upheld.

Please see the attachment for an overview of our DEI Plan Schedule, including past, present, and future.

For more information, please contact: Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, ext. 8159.

Prepared by

Zincia Francis, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer, ext. 8159.

Attachments

1. DEI Plan Schedule

Approved by



Michael Coroneos, DCM Corporate Services, City Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer

Reviewed by



Nick Spensieri, City Manager