




Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy

2024-2026

The City is committed to
maintaining a positive, open and
respectful working environment
where everyone matters and
differences are viewed as strengths.

A photograph of a modern building with a large, curved glass facade. The building's structure is dark, and the glass reflects the surrounding environment. In the foreground, there is a dense field of white tulips with green stems. To the right, some green foliage is visible. The overall scene is bright and clear.

**We will continue to build a
workforce that reflects the diversity
and strength of our community by
fostering an environment of dignity
and respect for all of our employees.**



Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategy

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Message from the City Manager

To support a workplace that fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion, and to attract, retain, and develop a talented diverse workforce which broadly reflects the community and citizens we serve, the City of Abbotsford has utilized the framework of the **Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks (GDEIB)** as a guide toward our objectives. The GDEIB is designed to guide organizations to achieve best practices. The model will support the City of Abbotsford in implementing strategies that work as an integrated system.

By utilizing the GDEIB framework as a key component of developing this action plan, the City of Abbotsford is meeting its commitment to respecting the fundamental rights, personal worth and human dignity of all members of our community and to acknowledging, understanding, accepting, valuing and celebrating differences among people. This commitment helps everyone at the City of Abbotsford to celebrate differences as strengths and embrace the way in which we are interdependent.

The commitments and actions outlined in the following pages will ensure the City remains in a leadership role in demonstrating the values of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in supporting an involved, safe and engaged workforce committed to customer service excellence. The Strategy will serve as a platform for the City in planning proactively for the ongoing changes in the economic and talent market and assist in positioning the City as an employer of choice.

Peter Spananese,
City Manager





Introduction

The City of Abbotsford's goal is to create a City which leverages diverse talents and ways of thinking to create innovative programs and services that meet the diverse needs of our residents. To support a workplace that fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion, and to attract, retain, and develop a talented diverse workforce which broadly reflects the community and citizens we serve, the City of Abbotsford has utilized the following guiding documents in conjunction with the City of Abbotsford's internal Policies and Practices.

Definitions

The following definitions for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion are from the Centre for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity and guide the framework of this strategy.

Diversity refers to the variety of similarities and differences among people, often called diversity dimensions, including, but not limited to: gender, sex, gender identity and expression, ethnicity, race, First Nations or Indigenous identity/origin, age, generation, disability, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, pregnancy, socio-economic status/caste, appearance, language and accent, mental health, education, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role and function, thinking style, and personality type. Representation of various diversity dimensions within organizations may vary by geography or time.

Equity is about fairness and justice. It is about taking deliberate actions to remove systemic, group, and individual barriers and obstacles that hinder opportunities and disrupt well-being. Equity is achieved through the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that create and reinforce unfair outcomes. The difference between equality and equity must be emphasized. Although both promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same, regardless of need and circumstances. Equity achieves this through treating people differently dependent on need, circumstance and consideration of historical and systemic inequities.

Inclusion is a dynamic state of feeling, belonging, and operating in which diversity is leveraged and valued to create a fair, healthy, and high-performing organization or community. An inclusive culture and environment ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities for all. It also enables individuals and groups to feel safe, respected, heard, engaged, motivated, and valued for who they are.

Guiding Programs and Training

- Respectful Workplace Training
- Ethical Conduct Training

City of Abbotsford Guiding Policies and Practices

ABBOTSFORD CITY COUNCIL DIVERSITY POLICY

(A001-08)

This policy provides a framework for how the City supports and promotes a society diversity is accepted and valued.

RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE POLICY

This policy sets out procedures for responding to reports or incidents of bullying and harassment in the workplace, and ensure that bullying and harassment is prevented or minimized in the future.

CODE OF ETHICS

This policy is an expression of the values held by the City of Abbotsford, and states overarching principles to assist all employees in determining what is right or appropriate in the decisions they make at work each day.

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STAFF POLICY

(S10-02)

This policy is intended to create a workplace that fosters a culture of diversity and inclusion, and to attract, retain, and develop a talented diverse workforce which broadly reflects the community and citizens we serve.

CITY OF ABBOTSFORD VALUES: 2022-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

By living its values the City of Abbotsford strives to be an organization recognized for its excellence in city governance and employee, citizen and customer relations. To provide excellence in service delivery, we have a role in understanding our business and fostering a corporate culture that sets the highest standard of integrity, professionalism and ethical behavior. We act with character and integrity and do our best to understand the perspectives of Abbotsford residents while delivering services.

- **Respect:** We treat others as we would like to be treated. We show consideration for each other. We value each person's contribution and encourage the sharing of ideas.
- **Integrity:** We act with character. We are fair, ethical and honest.
- **Openness:** We are accessible, accountable and transparent.
- **Customer Service:** We are accountable to our residents and strive to provide a positive experience for everyone we interact with. We consistently meet or exceed our customer expectations.
- **Collaboration/Teamwork:** We welcome and encourage the opinions and expertise of our residents, businesses and community partners.
- **Inclusivity:** We honour and celebrate our diversity and seek to engage residents in our decisions.
- **Trust:** We are accountable for our decisions and our actions, we continuously build trust with our community. We are proactive in practicing our values.



External Legislation

CANADIAN CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, “Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability.” **(Section 15.1)**

BRITISH COLUMBIA HUMAN RIGHTS CODE

Under the BC Human Rights Code, every person has the right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods, facilities, occupancy and accommodation without discrimination due to race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age of that person or because that person has been convicted of a criminal or summary conviction offence that is unrelated to the employment or to the intended employment of that person.

WORKERS COMPENSATION ACT OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Under the Worker's Compensation Act, all employees are entitled to a workplace free from bullying and harassment. In addition to its legislation (the Workers Compensation Act), the Province through WorkSafe BC has developed policies that mandate the creation and maintenance of a respectful, harassment-free workplace. Significantly, this is not an "Employer-Only" issue: WorkSafe BC has created three different sets of policies: one for employers, one for supervisors and one for employees, including "reporting obligations" on bystanders who are aware of potential bullying/harassment of others. Together, the legislation and policies raise the bar on respect for everyone in the workplace. That is, WorkSafe BC expects all individuals, regardless of their position, to take responsibility for maintaining a respectful workplace. No one individual or group can expect another to "fix" workplace negativity or toxicity. Instead, everyone is expected to work together, in a constructive and positive manner, to resolve workplace conflict early and do whatever is necessary to prevent workplace harassment and bullying.

GLOBAL DIVERSITY EQUITY AND INCLUSION BENCHMARKS (GDEIB)

Developed by the Centre for Global Inclusion, the GDEIB focuses on honouring human dignity; assisting in organizational development; building organizational competence, compliance with law and regulation; and championing social justice in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) realm. The GDEIB consists of proven best practices for organizational standards of performance broken into four groups with 15 categories. The City has utilized the benchmarks, best practices and organizational standards of performance set out in the Centre for Global Inclusion's 2021 Global Diversity Equity and Inclusion Benchmarks publication as a guide as it updated this strategy.



Background Research and Engagement for Strategy Update

Beginning in 2022, staff undertook a series of engagement activities and background research for updating the City's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and corresponding Action Plan.

1. Connected with other municipalities of similar size (including: Richmond, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Guelph) to understand their processes, models, and any best practices they were using (GDEIB was found to be commonly utilized).
2. Completed an informal Employee Statistic Survey at the 2022 Staff BBQ.
3. Included DEI survey questions with the City's annual Employee Engagement Survey (starting in 2022 and again in 2023).

4. Engaged a consultant to help us understand our current DEI culture by:
 - Conducting a review of the City of Abbotsford's current work environment and DEI strategy, using a ThoughtExchange engagement online feedback tool, as well as listening sessions to gather input from participants across all departments. Employees were asked to share: "What are the DEI initiatives that are most important to you that you would like to see the City engage in?"
 - Joined in the LGMA Advancing Equity Working Group to share and support ongoing learnings across municipalities.
 - Became part of UFV's EDI Community Partnerships Advisory Committee to support the co-creation of locally focused learning opportunities.
 - Reviewed our Essential Policies through a DEI lens.

This background work, coupled with the guiding document information, forms the basis for the update to this Strategy.

Diversity and Inclusion Updated Action Plan

From the feedback received through the engagement activities and best practice research, the 4 Action Themes and Opportunities were updated to support the City's ongoing Diversity and Inclusion efforts through December 31, 2026.



THEME 1:

Recognizing and Celebrating Diversity in the Workplace

Promoting, recognizing and embedding DEI within the workplace is one of the best ways for any organization to foster an open-minded, global corporate culture. Our goal is to embed DEI in the values, mission, culture and processes of our organization and ensure DEI plays an integral part in achieving organizational growth and success. Research supports that a diverse workforce is better equipped to meet the needs of a diverse community by reflecting a variety of perspectives. Recognizing, embedding and celebrating diversity within an organization provides an opportunity for everyone to feel that their values, beliefs and experiences are fully appreciated by those they work with.

Actions to support celebrating diversity in the workplace:

- Update processes to ensure the City encourages and attracts applicants from diverse groups.
- Review need for dedicated space for meditation, parental or religious practices.
- Continue reviews to ensure job design, classification and compensation are equitable across key dimensions of DEI.
- Continue to include DEI measurements in annual Employee Engagement Survey(s).
- Ensure that DEI is integrated into talent development and retention strategies.



THEME 2: Ongoing Internal Communications

Ensuring DEI is embedded in the values, mission, culture and processes of our organization will ensure that DEI plays an integral part in achieving organizational growth and success. Additionally, ensuring employees are informed of workplace diversity and inclusion activities and information provides all employees with sense of belonging within the organization and an avenue for their voice to be recognized. Clear communication and follow-through is critical in ensuring that employees are informed, educated, and feel able to support each other in adopting inclusive attitudes in every aspect of their working lives.

Actions to support improved internal communications:

- Continue to enhance internal communications regarding DEI initiatives, successes and opportunities.
- Create a dashboard to support understanding of how DEI is reflected in our workforce as part of HR metrics.
- Continue with CityLine recognition of workplace DEI opportunities.



THEME 3:

Ongoing Training and Collaboration

In today's global work environment, more than ever, we are likely to interact professionally with people from different cultural backgrounds to our own. No matter what role you have in an organization, whether it's as a team member, a manager, or a customer, developing a better understanding of different cultures and perspectives can help to improve communication and avoid misunderstandings for everyone in the workplace. By ensuring leaders and employees throughout the organization receive DEI as a component of their ongoing workplace training opportunities will continue to support the organization's DEI vision and goals.

Actions to support ongoing training and collaboration:

- Include DEI based educational opportunities as part of regular corporate training.
- Identify DEI leadership training opportunities.
- Provide “inclusive language” training opportunities for staff.
- Include community demographics as a component of New Employee Orientation.



THEME 4: **Leadership Commitment and Engagement**

Leadership plays a key role in promoting diversity and inclusion within an organization and in creating an environment where all opinions are valued and every individual can reach their full potential. Research supports that organizations where leadership is seen to model best practice in diversity and inclusion have a higher and more robust customer engagement and satisfaction.

Actions to support leadership commitment and engagement:

- Ensure a lens of DEI is included with all leadership initiatives and policies.
- Ensure our organizational DEI metrics and measurements are regularly included in our communications with staff.
- Continue with Employee Engagement Strategy - including annual surveys and action items; considering alternate working opportunities for employees to support family status and other needs; ensuring health and wellness opportunities are available for employees.
- Apply for a workplace DEI recognition award where feasible.

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