

Providing Ongoing Learning that Facilitates Equity and Inclusion at Individual, Organizational and Community Levels

The purpose of this practice brief is (1) to introduce the concept of ongoing learning that facilitates equity and inclusion; (2) to examine the importance of ensuring that this learning takes place at individual, organizational and community levels; and (3) to provide strategies for ensuring that the learning is consistent and that the diversity, equity and inclusion lens informs everyday life and work. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to operationalize the commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

In a globalized world, where diverse perspectives, experiences and social mores are in constant interaction with one another, ongoing learning that facilitates equity and inclusion at individual, organizational and community levels is essential to staying at the forefront of leadership and innovation, and to building a vibrant and thriving community.

Also referred to as *lifelong learning*, this process should take place throughout the life-cycle and should be “embedded in all life contexts from the school to the workplace, the home and the community” (Laal 2011). Essential to creating social inclusion, this method of learning means recognizing the economic and sociocultural imperative of integrating a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) perspective into everyday life and work. It also means engaging in consistent self-reflection, regularly questioning the behaviours and actions of others, consistently increasing one’s awareness and understanding of DEI, and effectively navigating any intercultural setting.

Providing ongoing learning that facilitates equity and inclusion at individual, organizational and community levels is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It builds awareness of the diversity constantly around us
- It facilitates the creation of teams that incorporate a diversity of perspectives
- It better informs policy makers, decision makers, educators, and community members, strengthening capacity and catalyzing the creation of innovative strategies for a more prosperous community
- It informs the creation of working environments that are more representative of the community
- It creates a platform to begin addressing systemic barriers and inequities faced by community members
- It creates opportunities to integrate DEI into the way programs, services and products are planned, designed and delivered

It is important to ask: **WHAT** are some strategies for providing and/or engaging in ongoing learning to facilitate equity and inclusion? **HOW** can you keep this learning consistent? There are multiple ways of ensuring that the learning around diversity, equity and inclusion takes place at all levels; in employing these strategies (and more) it is important to recognize that the learning process is subjective, fluid and ever evolving.

‘HOW TO’: TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Be reflexive about who is being included/excluded:** Thinking about how individual, organizational, and community-level inequities play out on a day-to-day basis can help to orient perspectives, facilitate analytical thinking, and motivate action
- **Create inclusive decision-making environments:** When everyone’s perspective is heard, the learning is consistently enhanced, sound knowledge is brought forward and impactful new ideas are born
- **Create opportunities and safe spaces to engage in conversations and action-planning on DEI:** When the space is created to engage in open dialogue with peers, colleagues and others, a great deal of learning happens; and individuals, organizations, and communities benefit from that learning
- **Create partnerships, share knowledge and resources:** Collaboration is a great driver of ongoing learning on diversity, equity and inclusion, where that learning is shared and acted upon by multiple stakeholders
- **Engage in regular DEI training:** Training on diversity, equity and inclusion issues is a great way to keep yourself, your team, and/or your community engaged in the conversation
- **Be consistent about applying learning on diversity, equity and inclusion:** Remember to continuously ask questions and center the DEI lens; this will bring the learning process to life, resulting in positive outcomes for organizations and communities

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities (City for all Women Initiative, 2015)
- TWI Incorporated: Engaging Human Potential
- The Learning Organization: Principles, Theory and Practice

LEVELS OF LEARNING

Individual

Personal learning around diversity, equity and inclusion is integral to behaviour change and the cultivation of a more welcoming and inclusive community. Strategies for personal learning include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ *critical self-reflection, increased understanding and awareness of bias*
- ✓ *creation and implementation of personal toolkits*

These strategies must of course be complemented by a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, and a willingness to act on that commitment.

Organizational

Organizations are microcosms of communities. Ongoing learning at the level of the organization is important in facilitating equity and inclusion at the societal level. Strategies for organizational learning include, among other things:

- ✓ *diversity, equity and inclusion training*
- ✓ *integration of a DEI lens in strategic planning, in the creation of policies, procedures, and actions for implementation in everyday work culture*

Community

Ongoing learning around diversity, equity and inclusion at the community level is key for long-term sustainable change. Strategies include:

- ✓ *cross-sectoral collaboration, resource sharing and knowledge exchange*
- ✓ *DEI-centered community conversations, action planning, and program creation*

