



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of June 9, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** May 12, 2022
From: Susanne Thompson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer
Subject: Equity Framework

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the proposed Equity Framework

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategic direction for the City's equity journey was established through the Declaration of Principles and Values in the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan, which states "Welcoming diversity and fostering a spirit of inclusion and equity in everything we do."

The proposed Equity Framework (attached as Appendix A) will guide program and policy design and implementation to ensure that underserved and marginalized populations are experiencing the same benefits and outcomes as the general population.

The Framework is not an action plan, it is a high-level foundation with pillars that provide direction on where to focus effort. It provides the overarching context for a number of existing City strategies and action plans and lays the foundation for understanding intersectionality, equity and social justice, and is grounded in the following guiding principles:

- Decolonization
- Anti-racism
- Disability justice
- Gender diversity
- Dignity

The Framework includes the approach to embedding equity at the City through the four dimensions of equity (structural, procedural, distributional and intergenerational) and outlines the following four pillars to focus the effort:

- Capacity building
- Relationship building
- Evidence-based decision making
- Dismantling systemic inequities

The Framework was developed with input from community and City staff, and is based on Council's direction and input through several reports and workshops including the establishment of equity values, guiding principles for framework development, equity considerations and implementation

considerations. Evolving practice research from other jurisdictions also informed the development. All departments were involved in a high degree of collaboration in reviewing and providing input into the Framework to facilitate its broad scope and organization-wide application. It is a living document and as this work advances it will be routinely updated by the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI Office.)

The Equity Framework's overarching goal of dismantling systemic inequities is a long-term commitment. This work has already started through supporting strategies and action plans including the Accessibility Framework and Action Plan, the Seniors' Strategy, the Child Care Action Plan, the Welcoming City Strategy and Action Plan, International Decade of People of African Descent, the Transgender, Non-Binary, and Two-Spirit + Inclusion Action Plan, and the Equity Update to the Engagement Framework.

While the Framework provides the structure for how to embed equity, the goal of dismantling systemic inequities is achieved through the implementation plans of the strategies and plans listed above, among others, and through departmental workplans. Related resource requests will be brought to Council for consideration as part of annual financial planning processes.

The EDI Office was formed last year and is the internal support function to operationalize equity and develop capacity across the City. The team has supported several departments with numerous projects such as providing input into policy updates, RFPs, toolkits and grant evaluation criteria. An internal community of practice has also been established to build relationships and capacity. In addition, the core work includes supporting and coordinating several advisory committees (Accessibility, Welcoming City, and IDPAD) and associated strategies and action plans.

To support internal capacity building, resources for staff are being developed including a toolkit with exercises and stories which elaborate on some core equity concepts, templates (such as the questionnaire used for the equity responsive budget pilot) and case studies from other communities. Also, a glossary provides a set of common definitions (attached as Appendix B).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the proposed Equity Framework.

BACKGROUND

On March 14, 2019, Council adopted the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan. The Plan includes a Declaration of Principles and Values Statement for "Welcoming diversity and fostering a spirit of inclusion and equity in everything we do."

In June 2019, Council directed staff to embed distributional, procedural, structural and inter-generational equity into the City's corporate policies guiding hiring, staff training and professional development, procurement and civic engagement. Council also directed that the following principles be embedded in the City's emerging equity policies: apply an equity lens to siting, design, amenity selection, engagement, procurement, and evaluation, to inform decisions about and investment in community; apply an affordability lens to assess total cost of ownership, siting, amenity selection, operating costs, costs to taxpayers and users; invite potential partners and neighbourhood representatives to collaborate to align and help achieve these equity, accessibility and affordability objectives.

On October 17, 2019, Council participated in a workshop to review equity definitions, concepts, approaches and case studies to provide feedback on values and priorities around equity. This

workshop was supported by external consultant, Licker Geospatial. Based on that workshop, Council approved the following motion on October 27, 2019:

- Direct staff to report back in early 2020 with a summary of Council input, as well as a plan to further the equity lens discussions with equity-seeking groups and the community as a whole
- Direct staff to bring forward financial costs associated with the development and implementation of an equity lens as part of the 2020 Financial Plan
- Direct that the report from Councillor Dubow along with the other feedback from Council be referred to staff to inform the report back as noted in #1

In January 2020, Council received a report summarizing the outcomes of the October 2019 workshop and directed staff to use the Council feedback from the equity workshop on equity values, guiding principles for framework development, equity considerations and implementation considerations as a foundation for developing an equity lens along with further community input (attached as Appendix C). This report also outlined resource requirements to advance this work and those were referred to the 2020 financial planning process.

On February 27, 2020, Council received a report seeking amendments to the City's Purchasing Policy to embed equity considerations, based on the Council-endorsed equity values, in the evaluation of procurement competitions.

As part of the 2020 financial planning process, Council approved the addition of three positions to form an equity office, a Recreation Inclusion Coordinator and a Social Planner following a report in March regarding the functions of the positions to support the design and implementation of equity-related policies, plans, programs and services. However, due to the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic hiring for these new positions was put on hold until the latter part of 2020.

In June 2020, the City retained consultant, Resilience Planning, through a competitive process to undertake the development of an equity framework. Their scope of work also included piloting embedding equity for select projects and initiatives as part of the 2022 financial planning process. As part of the 2022 budget deliberations, Council considered several supplementary funding requests that were part of this Equity Responsive Budgeting pilot. Council approved funding for all four proposals, which included Victoria Housing Strategy implementation, Vision Zero program support, website replacement, and newcomer sport and recreation initiative.

On November 5, 2020, Council participated in a workshop which provided an overview of the work undertaken to date, including initial interpretation of community profile information. Council requested a report back, which was provided on November 26, 2020, outlining the planned community interviews which were intended to:

- Learn more about the organizations, how they serve the community and which segments of the community access their services
- Gather information about the data they might collect, what kind of data, what data needs are important to them, where they would be interested in sharing or collaborating on data collection and sharing
- Understand how best to be in a relationship with the organizations and how best to engage with the communities they serve going forward

On May 20, 2021, Council established and appointed an advisory committee for the International Decade of People of African Descent (IDPAD).

The three positions for the EDI Office were filled in the spring and summer of 2021, as was the Social Planner. The Recreation Inclusion Coordinator position was also filled recently.

On July 29, 2021, Council endorsed an interim equity decision-making tool intended to ensure that barriers and adverse impacts are assessed and mitigated for new service and changes to existing program. Council also directed staff to bring forward a revised equity decision-making tool with a focus on positive impacts and to provide recommendations on how to integrate the decision-making tool into staff reports going forward and having a template as a user guide. Through the internal Community of Practice working group, staff have started using an intersectional approach (including climate and equity dimensions) to evaluate policies, programs and projects. Staff will report back to Council, as directed, once this approach has been evaluated as a potential way of developing internal capacity to embed equity and intersectionality lenses and incorporating an assessment or impact analysis into staff reports.

On October 7, 2021, Council received the annual update on the City's Accessibility Framework and the work of the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

On October 21, 2021, Council endorsed the Welcoming City Strategy and Action Plan and adopted the terms of reference for the Welcoming City Implementation Advisory Committee and invited all existing task force members to continue as members of the Implementation Advisory Committee.

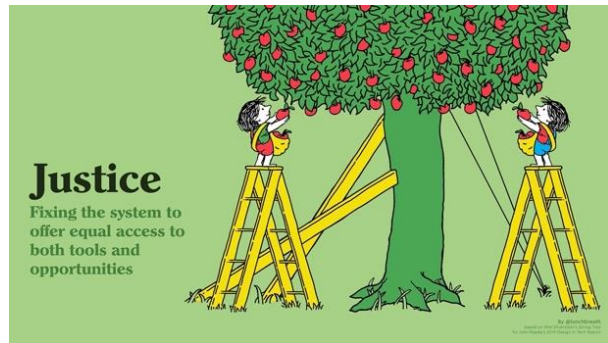
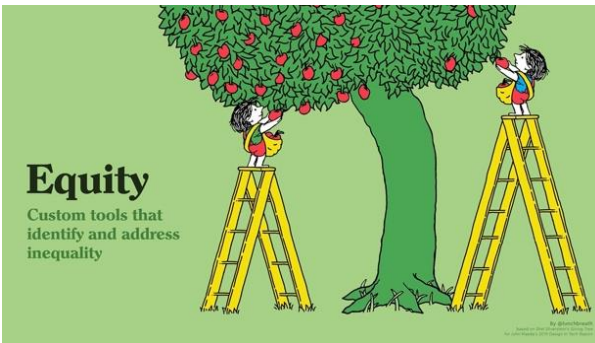
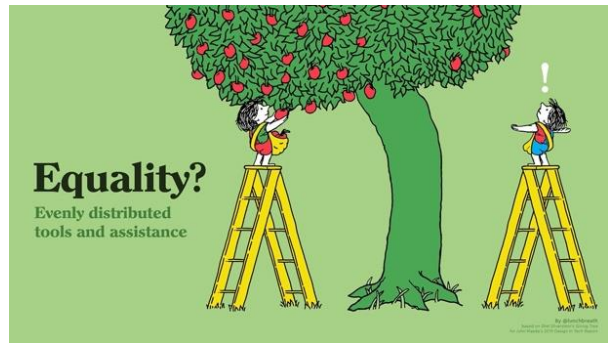
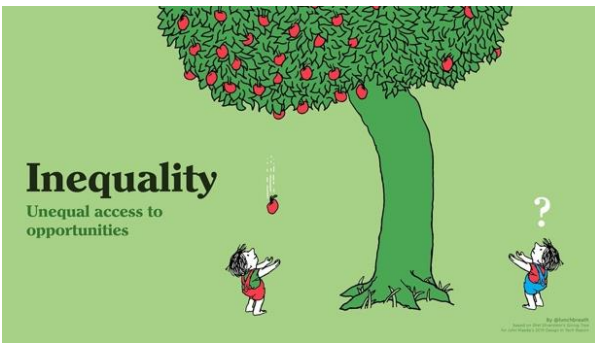
Underway is also an equity and inclusion update to the City's Engagement Framework. The City is working with the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue at Simon Fraser University to update the Engagement Framework so that the City delivers high-quality community engagement informed by a diversity of perspectives, identities and lived experiences. This work is about exploring how the City plans and hosts engagement processes that are safe and open to everyone in the larger community, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or ability. Through this work, the City is building a place where everyone feels welcome and is able to participate in engagement opportunities to help inform decisions that impact their lives.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The Equity Framework provides the overarching vision that provides a structure for how to embed equity by working meaningfully with the community and for the community. The Framework was developed through community conversations with non-profits and service organizations, research from other jurisdictions and input from staff including the expertise from the new EDI Office. The Framework is not an action plan; it is a high-level foundation with pillars that provide direction on where to focus effort. Equity will be embedded differently depending on the individual policy, program, service or project. The Framework applies to all areas of City operations and embedding equity is a shared responsibility across all departments.

Equity and Equality

The Framework highlights the importance of noting the difference between equity and equality. Equality refers to treating everyone the same or providing the same thing to all. Equity, on the other hand, is treating everyone fairly by acknowledging their unique situation and addressing systemic barriers. The aim of equity is to ensure that everyone has access to equal results and benefits.



Guiding Principles

The Equity Framework is the foundation for understanding intersectionality, equity and social justice and is grounded in five guiding principles: decolonization, anti-racism, disability justice, gender diversity and dignity.

Decolonization involves acknowledging the legacy of colonialism and its role in creating and perpetuating inequities for Indigenous people and racialized communities. Anti-racism involves acknowledging the pervasive impacts of race-based discrimination and the role racism has played in creating inequitable systems and structures. Disability justice involves acknowledging that discrimination, oppression and prejudice often intersect many different layers of our identities. Gender diversity involves acknowledging that notions of gender impose a binary view that can be limiting for many people who do not identify as one or the other. Dignity reminds us to honour the way people see themselves, how they want to feel and be and what respect looks like for them.

Dimensions of Equity

To better understand how to embed equity, there are four dimensions to help guide the application and they often overlap: structural, procedural, distributional and intergenerational. Structural equity refers to the underlying institutional systems and root causes of inequity. Procedural equity refers to inclusive, accessible and authentic engagement and representation in processes used to develop or implement programs or policies. Distributional equity refers to the equitable distribution of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community where those with highest unmet needs are prioritized. Intergenerational equity refers to decisions that consider generational impacts and do not result in unfair burdens on future generations.

Pillars

The four pillars identified in the Framework – capacity building, relationship building, evidence-based decision-making and dismantling systemic inequities - represent focus areas for moving forward the City's equity work. Each focus area identifies 'considerations for implementation' that could be explored to help guide the City when developing and implementing strategies, plans,

policies, programs and services. It is important to note that these considerations are not action items, but rather guidance to consider when advancing the City's equity work.

As a living document, these considerations will evolve and change over time. The four pillars build on each other to support achieving the overarching goal of dismantling system inequities.

Capacity Building

Capacity building involves shifting the thinking about governance, service provision and engagement. Understanding and embedding equity requires a new and different knowledge base, skill set and experience, and it is essential that this work be resourced properly to be successful.

Relationship Building

Relationship building involves identifying ways to build meaningful, reciprocal relationships to respond to both internal and community needs. This work will support understanding needs and how best to respond to them.

Evidence-based Decision-making

Evidence-based decision-making involves gathering data, both quantitative and qualitative, to guide decision-making to ensure that policies and practices are informed by comparative research and analysis of data and experiential evidence. This will help to identify existing challenges and opportunities communities face.

Dismantling Systemic Inequities

Dismantling systemic inequities involves addressing systemic barriers in policies, programs and processes that result in inequitable outcomes. Understanding the root causes of inequities is critical to removing those barriers.

Any related resource requests will be brought to Council as part of annual financial planning processes.

Alignment with Supporting Strategies and Plans

Over the past several years, the City has developed many important strategies and action plans with accompanying implementation plans. The Equity Framework provides the overarching context for the ongoing implementation of these existing Council-approved plans, strategies and actions that are currently underway across the organization. These plans are focused on traditionally underserved populations or support the community as a whole, including underserved populations, and include the following:

- Accessibility Framework and Short-Term Action Plan
- Welcoming City Strategy and Action Plan
- International Decade for People of African Decent
- Transgender, Non-Binary, and Two-Spirit + Inclusion Action Plan
- Childcare Action Plan
- Seniors' Action Plan
- Youth Strategy
- Engagement Framework
- Victoria Housing Strategy
- Climate Leadership Plan
- Zero Waste Strategy
- Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan

- Urban Forest Master Plan
- Go Victoria - Sustainable Mobility Strategy
- Victoria 3.0 - Recovery, Reinvention, Resilience
- Create Victoria

EDI Office Supports the City's Equity Journey

In June 2021, the EDI Office was established as a new division with the mandate to operationalize equity within the City, in collaboration with community. The initial focus has been on building relationships across the organization and developing an understanding of the pace, resourcing and timelines involved in executing City initiatives. In addition to providing input into the development of the Equity Framework and the equity responsive budget pilot, the core work of the EDI Office includes:

- Supporting and coordinating several advisory committees (Accessibility, Welcoming City, and IDPAD) and associated strategies and action plans.
- Participating and co-leading an internal 'Community of Practice' to develop internal capacity and equity-centered decision-making. The purpose of this working group is to develop intersectional approaches to decision-making by reviewing projects and programs through equity, climate, accessibility and other lenses.
- In partnership with departments and project teams, providing support to embed equity in City programs, services and policies (a few examples include Official Community Plan update, Placemaking Toolkit, equity and inclusion update to the Engagement Framework, Missing Middle Housing project, Call for Artists RFP, Music Strategy, Electric Vehicle Strategy, climate adaptation strategies and My Great Neighbourhood grant evaluation criteria).
- Initiating, supporting and coordinating training opportunities.
- Ongoing engagement process for 'Community Conversations' to ensure lived experiences of equity-seeking groups are embedded into city policies, programs and services and the workplan of the EDI Office.

Tools and Resources for Staff

Resources for staff are being developed including a toolkit with exercises and stories which elaborate on core equity concepts, templates (such as the questionnaire used for the equity responsive budget pilot) and case studies from other communities to support capacity building. Also, a glossary provides a set of common definitions.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

The Equity Framework outlines the context, approach and focus areas for advancing equity for the community. It has a broad scope and organization-wide application and all departments have a role to play in advancing this work. While the Framework provides the structure for how to embed equity, the overarching goal of dismantling systemic inequities is achieved through the implementation plans of other strategies and plans including those listed above, and through departmental workplans. The Framework is a living document that will evolve over time and will be routinely updated by staff. As such, staff recommend that Council endorse the Framework.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The Equity Framework will provide the overarching context for the ongoing implementation of the City's Accessibility Framework and Action Plan. It is part of the EDI Office's mandate and core work. The Office also supports the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The 2019-2022 Strategic Plan includes a Declaration of Principles and Values Statement for “Welcoming diversity and fostering a spirit of inclusion and equity in everything we do.”

In 2020 Council added “Develop an Equity Framework” to its Strategic Plan, under the Strategic Objective #1 Good Governance and Civic Engagement.

Impacts to Financial Plan

Resource requirements related to implementation plans for equity-related strategies and action plans, such as the Accessibility Short-Term Action Plan, the Welcoming City Action Plan, International Decade of People of African Decent and the Transgender, Non-Binary, and Two-Spirit + Inclusion Action Plan and any other related workplan items, will be brought to Council for consideration as part of future financial planning processes.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Social equity is explicitly addressed in the Official Community Plan (OCP) under Community Well-Being to encourage a fair distribution of community services, social services and facilities across the city to support all parts of the population. The OCP also has equity principles, goals and objectives embedded within other areas such as Land Management and Development, Transportation and Mobility, Economy, Parks and Recreation, Arts and Culture, and Housing and Homelessness.

CONCLUSIONS

The Equity Framework will guide the City in embedding equity into policies, programs, services and projects with the aim of dismantling systemic inequities over time.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert Galiev
Lead, Office of Equity, Diversity
and Inclusion

Susanne Thompson
Deputy City Manager and
Chief Financial Officer

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager

List of Attachments

Appendix A – Proposed Equity Framework

Appendix B – Glossary of Common Terminology

Appendix C – Summary of Council Feedback related to Equity Values, Guiding Principles and Considerations (October 2019)