

APPENDIX A – EQUITY FRAMEWORK

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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Victoria is located on the homelands of the Songhees and Esquimalt People.

REFLECTIONS ON RECONCILIATION AND EQUITY

We thank the Nations for having cared for these lands and waters since time out of mind. As part of this acknowledgement, we recognize Victoria has been shaped by colonialism, racism and other systemic oppressions. We acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and its role in creating and perpetuating systemic inequities for Indigenous Peoples. We strive to honour the Indigenous homelands on which we live and work, while understanding our own complicity in colonial systems.

Our work to advance equity will be informed by the City's ongoing decolonization efforts and actions for meaningful reconciliation with the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations.

INTRODUCTION

The City of Victoria is creating this Equity Framework to guide program and policy design and implementation to ensure that underserved and marginalized populations are experiencing the same benefits and outcomes that are targeted to the general population. Providing an overarching vision, the Framework will help the City to embed equity and will support several equity-related plans and strategies.

The Equity Framework is 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 is intended as a guide to think about the lived experience of others and understand how equity — in its structural, procedural, distributional and intergenerational dimensions — should be applied on an ongoing basis to program and service design and delivery.

The Framework identifies four pillars that will be the focus of advancing equity across departments:

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

The Equity Framework is not like other City plans that have definitive timelines and deliverables. Instead, it provides a structure for how to embed equity by working more meaningfully with the community and for the community.

Embedding equity starts with understanding power, our own biases and assumptions, and how our layered identities (intersectionality) impact how we are with each other. It involves developing capacity in ourselves, building relationships with each other, and working collaboratively to challenge the status quo and dismantle systemic inequities.

The Equity Framework is not an action plan — it is a high-level starting point with pillars that provide general direction on where the City should focus its efforts. How the City embeds equity will look different depending on the project, policy, program or service. The Framework applies to all areas of City operations, and change will take time and this Framework will evolve.

HOW THIS FRAMEWORK CAME ABOUT

In these times of change and increasing focus on issues related to racism, poverty and mental health, the City is not alone in needing to take a different approach to deliver municipal services. In November 2019, Council directed staff to develop an Equity Framework based on community

values articulated by Council through a workshop. Based on the initial Council direction in 2019, Resilience Planning was retained to develop the Equity Framework.

Over the past several years, the City has developed a number of strategies and actions plans with accompanying implementation plans, all of which support equity-seeking groups. For example, the City's Accessibility Framework and Short-Term Action Plan commits to identifying, removing and preventing barriers across services, programs and infrastructure to benefit the community in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

The Equity Framework for Victoria is based on a number of information sources, including other well-developed practices in other jurisdictions, input from over 120 staff through equity workshops, community conversations with non-profits and service organizations, development of a community profile and expertise from the new Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The Framework is intended to be an overarching vision document that complements other existing approved plans, strategies and actions currently underway across the organization that are focused on traditionally underserved populations or support the community as a whole, including underserved populations, such as, but not limited to:

- Childcare Action Plan
- Seniors' Action Plan
- Youth Strategy
- Accessibility Framework and Short-Term Action Plan
- Transgender, Non-Binary, and Two-Spirit + Inclusion Action Plan
- Victoria Housing Strategy
- Welcoming City Strategy and Action Plan
- International Decade for People of African Decent
- Climate Leadership Plan
- Zero Waste Strategy
- Engagement Framework
- Parks and Open Spaces Master Plan
- Urban Forest Master Plan
- Go Victoria - Sustainable Mobility Strategy
- Victoria 3.0 - Recovery, Reinvention, Resilience
- Create Victoria

Shifting ways of delivering programs and services will take time. It will require different approaches to how the City engages the community, builds partnerships and grows towards a culture that is collaborative and built on trust.

OFFICE OF EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion aims to foster reciprocal, supportive and respectful relationships in its work with City staff and the community.

Embedding equity in the City's work requires a lot of time, energy and relationship building, and longer project timelines are needed to allow for critical reflection and deep engagement. The EDI Office is tasked with supporting internal capacity development and making sure City employees have access to the tools and resources they need at the beginning of their projects. City employees are encouraged to reach out to the EDI Office with plenty of time to build

relationships and ensure that the work the City does is driven by community needs and equitable outcomes.

THIS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT

Centring equity in City work is an ongoing process that requires responding to the shifting needs of the community. There is no shortcut to equity, and the journey to building more equitable structures will require us to learn and adapt along the way.

In the time of this Framework's development, the world witnessed a global pandemic exposing vast systemic inequities, from institutionalized anti-Black racism and a rise in anti-Asian racism, to the colonial-enacted genocide of Indigenous Peoples at the foundation of this nation. We also witnessed unprecedented local climate events, from record-breaking heat waves to forest fires that decimated entire communities. These events have not only demonstrated just how much things can change, but also how much things need to change.

To make sure that this Framework reflects the changing needs of our community, and that the City is equipped to meet these evolving needs, this Framework was designed to be a living document.

WHAT ARE EQUITY, INTERSECTIONALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE?

This Framework is deeply rooted in the concept of equity. What do we understand equity to mean? Words like "fair" or "equal" may come to mind when trying to define it. It is common to see equity and equality used interchangeably, though the two terms are distinct.

Equality refers to treating everyone the same or providing the same thing to all. Equity, on the other hand, examines the current and historical social, political and environmental contexts at play, including barriers and power dynamics, which result in vastly different access to opportunity and thus the need for different resources to be successful. To put it another way, equity recognizes that we don't all start from the same place, so treating everyone the same does not necessarily mean we will all finish in the same place. (This definition of equity will continue to evolve as the work evolves.)

Intersectionality is a useful context to help illustrate what is meant by saying that we don't all start in the same place or move through life with similar needs. Coined as a term in 1989 by Black legal scholar Dr. Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, intersectionality examines how systems of oppression interact with each other to shape our experiences and opportunities. One important aspect of intersectionality is that the systems at play cannot be separated or singled out from one another, even though it is easy to talk about them as though they can be. For example, a racialized woman with a disability does not experience her labour-based workplace only as a woman, or a Black person, or a person with a disability, but instead through her own lived experience in the overlap of these oppressive systems. The study of these systems of oppression and the creation of theories and practices to dismantle them is known as social justice.

TABLE 1. WHAT EQUITY IS AND IS NOT

EQUITY IS NOT	EQUITY IS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treating people the same • Interchangeable with equality • “Levelling the playing field” • Raising differences • Solely a process or outcome (it’s actually both) • A matter of simply including diverse voices • Ahistorical • Just about inclusion • Justice (but it is a step to achieving it) • A lens you can put on and take off • Tokenizing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multidimensional • Eliminating barriers • A systemic shift • Unpacking root causes of disparities • Recognizing that treating people based upon individual or community needs may be necessary to ensure that people can advance and thrive

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF EQUITY

The four dimensions of equity are used to better understand how to embed equity in the City’s work. Depending on the context, different aspects of equity are emphasized. These four dimensions of equity often overlap.

<p>STRUCTURAL</p> <p>Underlying institutional systems and root causes of social and racial inequities are addressed. Commit to correcting past harms and preventing future unintended consequences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the underlying or root causes? • What are the historical, cultural and institutional dynamics and systems? • In what ways might we be causing harm in the community, even inadvertently? 	<p>PROCEDURAL</p> <p>Inclusive, accessible, authentic engagement and representation in processes are used to develop or implement programs or policies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are processes transparent, fair and inclusive? • Are people treated openly and fairly? • How are people supported and celebrated?
<p>DISTRIBUTIONAL</p> <p>Programs and policies result in fair distributions of benefits and burdens across all segments of a community. Those with highest unmet needs are prioritized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are resources and power distributed? • Who is benefitting? Who is being burdened? • Who is being celebrated? 	<p>INTERGENERATIONAL</p> <p>Decisions consider generational impacts and do not result in unfair burdens on future generations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we take responsibility and action today? • What are some intergenerational impacts we should consider?

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds, races, genders, religions, sexual orientations and other identities that comprise a community, nation or other grouping. In many cases the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of different identities, but implies an appreciation of these differences.¹

Inclusion is 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.²

Embracing diversity at the City means recognizing and valuing the benefits that people with different lived experiences and identities bring to the table. Embracing inclusion means creating the conditions for everyone, especially those with diverse experiences and identities, to feel safe bringing their whole selves to their work.

Both diversity and inclusion are also important when embedding equity. However, they are not able to tackle the dismantling of systems of oppression that equity gets us to. Equity is the foundation of the Equity Framework; diversity and inclusion support equitable outcomes.

WHY EQUITY WORK IS IMPORTANT

The legacy of colonialism, racism and social inequity is still evident today. Cities in Canada have been fundamentally shaped by colonialism, racism and other systemic oppressions.

At times, government processes, at all levels of government, have been explicitly colonial and racist. For example, the Federal Continuous Journey regulation (1908–1947) aimed to limit people of non-European countries from immigrating to Canada, and especially targeted people from South Asia (e.g., 1914, *SS Komagata Maru*). Another example is discriminatory covenants on property title which was highlighted in a recent article in the *Victoria News*³, whereby people of South Asian and Asian descent were denied property ownership in Victoria.

Today, systemic oppression still drives and perpetuates societal inequities. For example, racism can be a major determinant of life outcomes. In Canada, race has played a significant role in how a community is impacted. Examples of displacement include: Sarnia's Chemical Valley in Ontario, Africville in Nova Scotia and Vancouver's Hogan's Alley in BC. Closer to home, a May 2021 report by the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria found that "71% of Indigenous, Black, Asian or other Persons of Colour [reported] that they personally experienced racism in the last five years."⁴

¹ "11 Terms You Should Know to Better Understand Structural Racism," Aspen Institute, last accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/structural-racism-definition>.

² "Glossary of Terms," UC Berkeley Initiative for Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity, last accessed Aug. 24 2021, <https://haas.berkeley.edu/equity/industry/efl-knowledge-bank/glossary-of-key-terms/>.

³ Keri Coles, "Land title forbidding East Indian or Asiatic people raises concerns in Victoria," *Victoria News*, February 5, 2019.

⁴ "Racism in Victoria: A Community Report," Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, Last Accessed: August 31, 2021, Available online: <<https://www.icavictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GVLIP-Racism-Survey-Report-FINAL.pdf>>, 2021.

These are all examples of how systemic oppression may negatively impact people's abilities to make progress on the things they care about and/or may prevent individual or collective action toward the achievement of a particular goal.⁵

DEFINITION: Systemic Oppression

Systemic oppression intentionally disadvantages non-dominant groups of people based on their identity (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, language, religion, etc.), while giving advantage to members of the dominant group. Systemic oppression in Canada has historical roots.

Given the pervasive negative impacts of these systemic oppressions on equity, it is our responsibility to acknowledge, address and repair harm that has been done because of decisions and actions we made or upheld. We must commit to dismantling barriers and co-creating more equitable, fair systems with communities to ensure that everyone is able to thrive. This is moving towards justice, fairness and wellbeing.

Government Processes and Decisions Always Impact Communities

Government decisions and processes at all levels - Federal, Provincial and Municipal - have impacts on communities. Municipal processes and decisions especially have direct impact on community members, benefitting certain groups of people over others and resulting in power imbalances. For example, when a municipality has approved the redevelopment of a property, tenants may be displaced. If such inequitable systems are not acknowledged, and policy is not designed to address them, inequities may inadvertently be caused or exacerbated with the processes used.

City Council is the governing body for the City and sets the policy direction for staff implementation. As such, they have a responsibility to communities and the public good. This includes the responsibility to move towards more equitable policy and actions and to learn from, and meaningfully respond to, calls from the leadership of communities most impacted.

In addition, when designing policy, considering those who are most impacted or face the greatest barriers will often also benefit many other groups. For example, implementing curb cuts and ramps is essential for people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices, and it also benefits many other groups: people with strollers, people using bicycles, people with suitcases, and many more. This moves us towards fairness (equity) and wellbeing.

Communities know what their needs are. Developing more equitable policies requires building relationships with community members and organizations and making civic participation accessible. Working with communities and eliminating barriers to their self-determination moves us towards justice and fairness.

⁵ "The Lens of Systemic Oppression," National Equity Project, last accessed: September 3, 2021, available online: <<https://www.nationalequityproject.org/frameworks/lens-of-systemic-oppression>>.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE FRAMEWORK

DECOLONIZATION

We acknowledge the legacy of colonialism and its role in creating and perpetuating systemic inequities for Indigenous people and racialized communities. In doing this work, we strive to honour Indigenous land and people, while understanding our own complicity in colonial systems.

Questions for reflection

- Whose traditional territory are we on?
- How is our work honouring Indigenous land and people?
- What Indigenous teachings can be incorporated into our work? How will we incorporate these teachings?

Visit whose.land or native-land.ca to learn more about whose lands you grew up on and upon whose lands you currently live and work.

ANTI-RACISM

We acknowledge the pervasive impacts of race-based discrimination and the role racism has played in creating inequitable systems and structures. Because of this, it is essential that equity work be grounded in anti-racist values. The City commits to actively oppose discrimination based on race by advocating for change. Ibram X. Kendi, the founding director of American University's Antiracist Research and Policy Center, popularized the concept of anti-racism with his 2019 book *How to Be an Antiracist*. In it he wrote: "The only way to undo racism is to consistently identify and describe it — and then dismantle it." ⁶

Questions for reflection

- How can we embed anti-racism in our work?
- In embedding anti-racism in our work, how are we challenging white supremacy?

DEFINITION: White privilege

White privilege refers to the unquestioned and unearned set of advantages, entitlements, benefits and choices given to people solely because they are white. White people who experience such privilege may or may not be conscious of it.

DEFINITION: White supremacy⁷

White supremacy is a political, economic and cultural system in which white people overwhelmingly control power and material resources. Conscious and unconscious ideas of white superiority and entitlement are widespread and relationships of white dominance and non-white subordination are daily reenacted across a broad array of institutions and social settings.

⁶ "Glossary of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Terms," Kendi, Ibram X. Quoted in: Diversity Best Practises. Updated 2020, last accessed March 2, 2021, https://www.diversitybestpractices.com/sites/diversitybestpractices.com/files/attachments/2020/10/dei_glossary_of_inclusive_terms_updated_for_2020_1.pdf.

⁷ Frances Lee Ansley, quoted in The Adaway Group's *Whiteness at Work Training*. 2021.

DISABILITY JUSTICE

We acknowledge that discrimination, oppression and prejudice often intersect many different layers of our identities. Because of this, disability justice is centred in our work, acknowledging that “all bodies are confined by ability, race, gender, sexuality, class, nation state, religion and more, and we cannot separate them.”⁸ In doing this, ableism is challenged. We will also work with people with disabilities and elevate their expertise and lived experience in creating a more accessible and inclusive city.

Questions for reflection

- What barriers may exist in current programs and policies for people with disabilities?
- How can we create more accessible systems and structures to support people of all ages and abilities?

GENDER DIVERSITY

We acknowledge that notions of gender impose a binary view (woman or man) that can be limiting for many people who do not identify as one or the other. Through this work, we strive to better understand the full spectrum of gender, including two-spirit, trans and non-binary, among others. In doing so, we support gender-diverse individuals and commit to challenging harmful and limiting conceptions of gender.

Questions for reflection

- How are we working to challenge the gender binary and create safer spaces for people who identify as two-spirit, trans and non-binary?

DIGNITY

Dignity⁹ reminds us to honour the way people see themselves, how they want to feel and be, and what respect looks like. We do not define dignity for, or on behalf of, others. People define dignity for themselves, which can help us understand how to show up and stand up for people and communities. Dignity includes being understood, having bodily autonomy, having community connection, hope and love, experiencing relief from suffering and having a sense of home, purpose and routine.

Questions for reflection

- How are we honouring each person as their whole self?
- How can we understand and honour each person's agency and create conditions in which that agency and its physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual awareness are respected?

⁸Sins Invalid, “What is Disability Justice?”, last accessed August 31, 2021, <www.sinsinvalid.org/news-1/2020/6/16/what-is-disability-justice>.

⁹ Adapted from Dr. Destiny Thomas. The Dignity Institute. Training.

PILLARS

The pillars of the Equity Framework provide broad direction and a firm base of support for equity work at the City.

HOW THE PILLARS WERE DEVELOPED

These pillars were derived from data collected during the Framework's development through staff workshops and feedback on the workshops, community conversations, community profile research, and more. All data were analyzed qualitatively for common themes; priority areas were defined based on what was heard from staff and communities as needed to embed equity in the work of the City.

A. CAPACITY BUILDING

RATIONALE

It is important to recognize that understanding and embedding equity requires a new and different knowledge base, skill set and experience. For equity work to be successful, it can't be done off the sides of desks. Resourcing equity work both internally and externally is essential for its success.

OBJECTIVE

To shift how the City thinks about governance, service provision and engagement, and to articulate what is needed to do that well both within the organization and with the communities the City serves.

A.1 PRIORITY AREAS – CITY

A.1.1 Education, training, resources and tools

It is important that the City provide resources to build a common understanding of equity issues and create opportunities to advance knowledge.

There are two distinct aspects of training:

1. **Personal learning and growth in building knowledge, skills and capacity**
This is where the City would communicate an expectation, or even chart a path, by identifying core training and curriculum for individuals. These are educational training and workshops that staff pursue individually with support from the City.
2. **Training and development for using tools and resources**
This would assist Council and staff in applying equity tools and resources in their work and would help to establish a shared knowledge base and shared set of experiences.

With these two points in mind, individual and organizational knowledge, skills and capacity with respect to equity needs to be built around the following:

- What equity is and why it matters

- Examining positionality, power and privilege
- Awareness of anti-racism, decolonization, disability justice, gender diversity and dignity
- Application of tools and resources to guide and structure equitable approaches throughout the work

When people are expected to do new or different tasks at their job, training and information to do so needs to be provided.

Tools and resources support staff to embed equity in the work of the municipality. Tools give shape to how work is done, and resources provide reference material or examples for staff to learn from that are relevant to local contexts.

A.1.1.1 Considerations for education, training, resources and tools

- Articulate how the City will balance the implementation of this Framework with strategic and operational objectives. Identify how and when it will be applied to which types of projects or operational work.
- Ensure staff understand the complexity and enormity of equity work and that every little shift that is made towards being anti-racist and being more equitable is important.
- Establish a shared understanding of equity and equity-related terminology through staff training.
- Define equity roles and responsibilities for departments and define core equity competencies for different job positions across the organization.
- Lead by example, whether in a traditional leadership role (e.g., resourcing and supporting staff, engaging in training) or a non-traditional leadership role (e.g., being an equity champion).
- Support mentorship culture for staff.

A.1.2 Build and resource an equity-centred community of practice

By creating and resourcing an equity-centred community of practice, staff will have the opportunity to learn how to embed equity in their work, while building a network to collaboratively develop and apply tools. This will build internal capacity in each department, while amplifying the work of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. It is important that participation in the equity-centred community of practice is supported by management and included in staff workplans. This will allow staff the necessary time to fully engage in the equity-centred community of practice.

DEFINITION: What is an equity-centred community of practice?

Communities of practice have existed for a long time, but the term was initially coined by social learning researcher Etienne Wenger and anthropologist Jean Lave while studying apprenticeship as a learning model. They define a community of practice as “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do, and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”¹⁰

There are three key elements to a community of practice:

1. **The domain:** members come together based on a shared learning need.
2. **The community:** their collective learning becomes a bond among them over time.
3. **The practice:** their interactions produce resources that affect their practice.

The basic idea is that we learn better together and by working collaboratively we are better equipped to understand and address complex issues.

It is also important to note that equity-centred communities of practice could be seen as informal entities within a hierarchy that can challenge existing power structures and colonized ways of being.

A.1.2.1 Considerations for building and resourcing an equity-centred community of practice

- Create a network of staff to work together to embed equity across departments.
- Provide enhanced training and resources to staff participating in the community of practice.
- Articulate roles and responsibilities for staff to participate in the community of practice.

A.2 PRIORITY AREAS – COMMUNITIES

A.2.1 Build capacity in communities

Helping communities to build capacity needs to be done in a way that honours each individual's and each community's unique, self-determined needs. When feedback is sought from communities, it is important to make sure they have enough capacity to provide feedback on what is important to them. Otherwise, conversations with communities are very limited and engagement can become performative and extractive.

Building community capacity can look like providing funding, providing access to space and providing tools and other resources. It is important to dedicate resources and funding to communities as this may be the only way some communities are able to devote time to civic participation. Ultimately, the form capacity building takes should be determined by the community to make sure it is responsive to the community's needs.

A.2.1.1 Considerations for building capacity in communities

- Provide funding.
 - Review all funding streams the City currently provides and embed equity in all grant programs.

¹⁰ “Introduction to communities of practice - A brief overview of the concept and its uses,” Beverly Wenger-Trayner and Etienne Wenger-Trayner, last accessed, September 12, 2021, <https://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice/>

- Address barriers to access for existing funding. For example, consider the capacity levels of organizations. Different supports are needed for differently sized and differently resourced organizations so all can thrive.
- Support grassroots organizations serving communities that have been marginalized, as such organizations can be agile and funding can go a long way.
- Provide longer term, multi-year funding to support communities and community organizations.
- Provide access to places for communities to gather.
 - Offer free and accessible places for communities to gather and ways for them to amplify their voices.
 - Ensure that access to places is provided in an equitable and inclusive manner.
- Provide information to communities in advance of engagement so that they can prepare to provide informed feedback.

B. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

RATIONALE

When mindset is shifted from partnering with organizations to establishing real, meaningful relationships with communities, embedding equity becomes possible and a true reflection of community needs rather than performative gestures or guess work. Building relationships and being in reciprocal relationships with communities help staff better understand the communities, their needs and how to best respond to them.

OBJECTIVE

Identify the ways in which staff can build meaningful, reciprocal relationships among themselves and with different communities to respond to both internal and community needs, so that people can be proud to be in relationship with the City.

B.1 PRIORITY AREAS – WITH STAFF AND COMMUNITIES

This has both internal (with staff) and external (with communities) applications

B.1.1 Build trust and reciprocal relationships

Ongoing and long-term relationships between staff and communities with different lived experiences builds trust. How quickly the City can take action on important issues, and the success of such action over the long term, is defined by how much trust¹¹ the community has in the City. Trust is built, in part, by knowing who we are as individuals and as a municipality and sharing that information with others.

To embed equity in our work, it's important to foster reciprocal, supportive and respectful relationships with the community as well as among City staff, between departments and with

¹¹ This is a concept we adopt from Mervyn Marciano's remix of Stephen Covey's "speed of trust" concept, as found and articulated by adrienne maree brown in her book: *Emergent Strategy*. 2017. AK Press. More information: <https://www.akpress.org/emergentstrategy.html>.

Council. The first step towards building relationships rooted in reciprocity is honouring and respecting the needs of the community/staff. This means allocating time for relationship building to ensure that work is driven by community/staff needs and equitable outcomes, rather than operating from a place of urgency. This is particularly important given that timeline-driven projects and program design often lack attention to equity considerations and the high degree of engagement required to deliver more equitable outcomes.

It's also important to ensure that communities/staff have the resources to learn from and opportunity to engage with each other, and that community/staff members have access to the necessary tools and resources to fully engage with one another.

B.1.2 Embed brave spaces principles

Brave spaces¹² cultivate a productive dialogue where participants are encouraged to speak honestly and critically, from their own experience, toward mutual learning and liberation.¹³ Creating brave spaces means establishing norms, expectations and common rules for how people will interact with each other, especially for conversations that are difficult. Brave spaces disrupt the norms of the right to comfort and perfectionism that exist in white dominant culture by shifting spaces to embrace vulnerability, imperfection and trust.

Embedding brave spaces approaches is important and should be supported at the City by providing the training, tools and resources needed to do this. These spaces should prioritize the needs and wellbeing of individuals who are traditionally excluded from positions of power internally at the City, as well as those who are marginalized by the City because of policies, procedures, practices, regulations, internal culture and more. Notably, this includes racialized people, people who are disabled by society and people who are queer, trans and non-binary.

B.1.2.1 Considerations for creating brave spaces

- Establish common rules, norms and expectations for how people will interact with each other in conversations both within the organization and with communities.
- Embrace discomfort and the growth that it brings: equity is about honouring, celebrating and elevating the voices of people who have been traditionally and consistently marginalized. People who have traditionally held power (e.g., white, abled, straight, middle- and upper-class people) should be open to learn about their individual power and privilege and use it to develop long-term reciprocal relationships with marginalized groups.
- Work with communities to better understand their challenges and create safe and accessible spaces that address their unique needs for participating.
- Consider the impact of different room décor and setups on different communities. For example, who is centred with the type of pictures and artwork on the walls; what type of power dynamic is achieved with how the room is organized (arranging people in a circle minimizes hierarchy).
- Support the creation of employee identity affiliation groups (e.g., affinity groups for Black staff, transgender staff, women staff, etc.) to meet regularly, and especially to debrief training and experiences at work.

¹² Adapted from The Adaway Group. "Whiteness at Work". Training.

¹³ "Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces and Why We Gon' Be Alright," Ellie Mejia, City Bureau, last accessed: September 10, 2021, <<https://www.citybureau.org/notebook/2019/12/19/safe-spaces-brave-spaces-and-why-we-gon-be-alright>>, December 19, 2019.

B.1.3 Redefine and celebrate success

How success is defined is directly related to the values of white dominant culture. White dominant culture defines what success looks like, which has been adopted by institutions almost without questioning. For example, in engagement processes, success is typically measured by the number of people reached — that quantity is more important than quality. Instead, a better measurement of success would be the quality of the relationships built, the quality of the information shared and the depth of understanding developed.

Success of any size can be celebrated. Recognizing good work that is aligned with this framework is worth celebrating. It illustrates to others which behaviours will be rewarded so that others can emulate those behaviours. For example, after a long community engagement process it is important to go back to the community, share what was learned from them, ask if the City got it right and tell them how the City is using that information. Then celebrate with the community all the hard work and learning that came from the process. The celebration could be the success of a new connection made in the community or the success of learning about a connection's lived experience and it influencing the City's work.

Moving beyond mitigating or eliminating harm also means supporting and celebrating different communities. This demonstrates to communities that they are seen and symbolizes that the City is supporting them. Focus on the accomplishments of communities by celebrating and highlighting the many things people with marginalized identities are doing, as this helps elevate their profile in their community. Seeing oneself reflected in the public and celebrated is important for dignity and respect. Representation matters.

B.1.3.1 Considerations for supporting and celebrating communities

- Create programs, partnerships and celebrations to build connections with communities and work with community organizations.
- Showcase success stories of embedding equity in work with communities.
- Ensure different communities are represented in dignified and respectful ways.
- Work with different communities on initiatives to celebrate themselves.
- Promote and uplift community events and days of significance important to different cultural and identity communities.
- Celebrate diverse cultures and commemorate non-colonial histories.
- Offer free spaces for the community to gather with City staff in formal and informal ways.
- Support staff to attend community events as representatives of the City.
- Create a community leadership awards committee to recognize the work of people in communities.

B.2 PRIORITY AREAS – WITH COMMUNITIES

This is for external application with communities.

B.2.1 Support community-driven equity

There's no shortcut to equitable outcomes based on case study research - equity must be community determined and community driven. This means working with community members

and organizations from the beginning of the process to define and articulate the problem, and then working collaboratively to design the process, identify solutions and implement actions. Exploring how communities want to be represented at the City is also important to understand. This might look like an informal group to share advice, providing regular, informal touch points, keeping regular office hours, establishing a formal committee, among other things.

It's important to ensure that communities not only provide input, but that they provide input into shaping the process. The City must make sure that those who have not been traditionally included in municipal governance processes have autonomy and agency to assert their self-determined needs. Collaborating with communities can bring about a better understanding of where communities are at and what they need. Better, more responsive outcomes are possible through collaboration.

Some processes may require redesign in collaboration with communities. It is important that the community feels heard and acknowledged throughout the process. This is building the foundation, so taking the time to change the process together might be necessary.

At the end of the day, communities are the ones most aware of their needs, and it is the City's job to make space, listen and work collaboratively to embed equity in programs, policies and plans. Finally, community-driven engagement and collaboration will enable a collective impact approach to the equity work — where roles and responsibilities are shared and where efforts, successes and failures are evaluated collectively.

B.2.1.1 Considerations for supporting community-driven equity

- Explore different ways to collaborate with communities and community-serving organizations, building on lived experience and intersectionality.
- Consider advisory committees with members with lived experience, working groups, community conversations or informal convenings.
- Provide a space for staff to connect with communities.
- Provide information to communities on City projects, programs, regulations and initiatives.
- Build capacity in communities so that they can provide informed feedback.

B.2.2 Listen to communities and implement what is heard

Communities know themselves best — they know what they need and how they prefer to interact with municipal government. Traditional engagement practices can be extractive, especially when no report is made back to a community about what was heard and how that information is influencing the work.

Moving engagement from an extractive process to a reciprocal process means sharing and implementing what was heard. This shows responsiveness to a community's needs and helps to build trust with that community for future engagement processes.

B.2.2.1 Considerations for listening to communities and implementing what is heard

- Respond to what communities need from the City to participate in engagement.
- Seek out the stories and learn from different communities about their lived experiences to understand the impact of municipal decisions on them.
- Co-create feedback processes with community members.

- Elevate the voices of those most impacted by City projects, programs, regulations and initiatives.
- Engage with the community in culturally relevant ways.
- Develop tangible, actionable recommendations based on community feedback.

B.2.3 Create equitable opportunities for engagement and civic participation

Research has shown that traditional approaches to public engagement often exclude those who do not have the time and resources to participate in civic processes. This has typically resulted in an over-representation of certain groups, for example those who tend to be older, white, educated, affluent and male, and an under-representation of people with diverse lived experiences. For example, logistics of engagement (e.g. time and location) may present barriers for some with conflicting work schedules or caregiving responsibilities.

Removing systemic barriers to public participation in civic processes requires analyzing the design and conduct of community engagement, as well as the capacity and support people require to participate in civic affairs. This also includes considering the amount of agency communities have in designing engagement processes.

Creating equitable civic processes requires elevating the voices of those who have been traditionally excluded and under-represented, which will often require adopting different approaches to engagement and co-creating engagement processes with communities.

By establishing ways for people to be involved on their own terms in decisions that will affect their lives (positively or negatively), a higher value can be placed on those conversations. Doing so will help create equitable outcomes for the communities who need them.

DEFINITION: Institutional bias

Institutional bias¹⁴ operates at a systemic level affecting a lot of people at one time. It can show up in people on the receiving end of such bias in the form of stereotype threats, reduced capacity to function within the organization, anxiety, poor performance and negative health outcomes.

It is difficult to see when people experience more privilege than others. Examining our own privilege helps us understand how we benefit from and how we possibly uphold institutional bias.

DEFINITION: Stereotype threat

A stereotype threat is the fear someone has of confirming the stereotype of their social group.

B.2.3.1 Considerations for equitable opportunities for engagement and civic participation

- Seek feedback from the community on the types of tools they find helpful for staff to embed equity in their work.
- When asking what the community wants, give them time to respond so they can define specific needs.

¹⁴ Adapted from Dr. Tiffany Jana and Ashley Diaz Mejias. October 5, 2018. Video. "What is Institutional Bias?". (Based on their book Erasing Institutional Bias.) Last accessed September 14, 2021, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fUWDtiVN7Y>>.

- Design processes that attract groups traditionally under-represented in engagement and civic processes to avoid disproportionate level of participation of homeowners in some processes
- Establish relationships in the community so that staff can easily connect with different groups to seek feedback on simple or complex projects quickly (as opposed to establishing a formal committee). This requires less time and effort from community members.
- Provide transparent and accessible access to information so that the community is aware of initiatives.
- Communicate effectively (e.g. write in plain language removing jargon, provide high-level updates to community organizations, make key City contacts available and include how best to reach them, consider and address language barriers and make it easy for people to engage, and proactively reach out to key organizations, community leaders and influencers).
- Pay people for their time and wisdom.
- Address barriers to participation. For example, provide transportation, childcare (or funding so that people can pay for childcare), food, access to technology, translation and interpretation.
- Review the roles and impacts of advisory committees to ensure they are equitable, accessible and an effective means of civic participation.
- Bring people onto advisory committees who are connected to community organizations so that they can amplify information in their communities.
- Create policies and make decisions that benefit community needs over individual desires.
- Seek out an understanding of the types of environments that will be welcoming for people who may be reluctant to participate and share their views. Ensure the venue location, setup, engagement format and language of participation accommodates everyone who wants to participate, especially those less likely to speak up and for whom the information may be new.
- Report back to participants on what was heard from them and how that information has influenced outcomes.

C. EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

RATIONALE

Gathering evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, to guide decision making ensures City policies and practices are informed by an in-depth understanding of the current landscape and existing challenges and opportunities communities face. Data collection and analysis helps to identify and illustrate patterns and trends and can expose otherwise obscured gaps and disparities that signal systemic inequities. Gathering evidence also helps to articulate specific and targeted approaches that yield better outcomes.

OBJECTIVE

To ensure that decision making, with respect to policies, programs and practices, is informed by comparative research as well as collection and analysis of data and experiential evidence from communities that reflects historical and current realities.

C.1 PRIORITY AREAS – DATA LITERACY

C.1.1 Embracing a culture of data literacy

Data literacy is a consistent commitment to practices of data collection and analysis to inform decision making. Becoming data literate involves building up the City's data infrastructure and management to improve capacity for the ongoing collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, verifying and validating those data and interpreting and reporting findings. To achieve this, the City might consider hiring, contracting or partnering to acquire necessary skills and competencies as well as exploring existing and seeking new and non-traditional data sources.

C.1.1.1 Considerations for embracing a culture of data literacy

- Identify and hire dedicated staff to support the City's data infrastructure and management.
- Seek out non-traditional data sources, including community-generated and open-source data.
- Support community-driven asset-based mapping and create ongoing ways for the community to enrich the data.
- Collaborate with municipalities in the region, local First Nations, the Capital Regional District, Island Health and other institutions for regionally-based data collection, analysis and mapping.
- Collect data on who is using the City's services and use that information to see who is benefiting, who is celebrated and who is burdened and being left behind.
- Create a means for communities to access neighborhood-level data and ask for their help in creating strategies for improving and developing their local areas.

C.1.2 Relating data to understand historical and contemporary patterns of inequity

It is important to recognize that data collection has long been entrenched in Canada's history of colonialism and continues today as a key instrument that is used to uphold systems that oppress marginalized groups. Collecting aggregated data only has resulted in sustaining powers and privileges of dominant groups and exasperating negative impacts on marginalized groups.

For too long, data analysis has been focused on pointing at problems and weaknesses of communities and exacerbating negative perceptions or stereotypes about communities. Such analysis has been used to inform decisions that benefit majority populations and further contribute to systemic exclusion and negative outcomes for marginalized communities. An alternative is an asset-based approach to data collection and analysis that shifts the focus from problems and deficits to community strengths and opportunities. An asset-based approach invites communities to identify what information is most useful for characterizing and understanding those strengths and opportunities within their own context. It integrates and amplifies local knowledge and lived experience.

Further, Abigail Echo-Hawk calls for the weaving together of art and science to decolonize data practices:

“Decolonizing data means that the community itself is the one determining what information they want us to gather. Why are we gathering it? Who's interpreting it? And are we interpreting it in a way that truly serves our communities? Decolonizing data is about controlling our own story, and making decisions based on what is best for our people.”¹⁵

Advancing equity necessitates developing an understanding of different lived experiences and illuminating their underlying causes. This can help identify patterns of inequity and their lasting and compounding effects faced by communities today. Such patterns can then be addressed and dismantled.¹⁶ Doing this work includes listening to communities about their experiences and being intentional about collecting and analyzing disaggregated data¹⁷. Gathering evidence to describe the current landscape also establishes a baseline against which progress and change can be tracked over time.

C.1.2.1 Considerations for relating data to understand historical and contemporary patterns of inequity

- Explore options for collecting quantitative, disaggregated data and validating the data with communities by seeking community members' input on the extent to which this data reflects their reality. This will help to better understand how well these data represent the community and what it might obscure or not capture.
- Analyze quantitative data (e.g., demographic and socioeconomic indicators), where available, for at least two points in time to understand what is changing; then continue to track and collect additional data points and update indicators to identify patterns and trends over time.
- Review a similar set of data for a comparable municipality or the region to understand where Victoria is performing similarly or differently.
- Use data to identify and illustrate where significant inequities exist, and once actions for addressing them have been identified, track progress and change over time.
- Disseminate data among City departments and cross-sector and community partners to gather thoughts and feedback on interpretation.
- Share this data with community partners and/or community-based organizations who may lack capacity to acquire or analyze such data themselves.

C.1.3 Embracing different types of data

Moving beyond traditional data sources reveals other valuable sources of information. Listening to the stories and oral traditions shared in communities allows learning about them, what is

¹⁵ Abigail Echo-Hawk and Manola Secaira, “*abigail Echo-Hawk on the art and science of 'decolonizing data,'*” last accessed Aug 29, 2021, <<https://crosscut.com/2019/05/abigail-echo-hawk-art-and-science-decolonizing-data>>, May 31, 2019.

¹⁶ The Racial Equity Index is an integrated and holistic measure to compare the state of equity across different places, developed in response to your call for a more comprehensive, summary picture of how communities were doing on our equity metrics. The Racial Equity Index is designed to support advocates, policymakers, and other leaders to quickly understand the issue areas where outcomes are most inequitable, and the populations who are most impacted. This innovative tool can help communities identify priority areas for advancing racial equity, track progress over time, and set specific goals for closing racial gaps. From <<https://nationalequityatlas.org/research/introducingindex>>.

¹⁷ Disaggregated data is data that is separated into granular categories (e.g., rather than “East Asian” we would separate out Chinese, Japanese, and Korean).

important to them, where their strengths lie and where they need support. People are sharing this information widely and sometimes in unconventional ways — it is important to seek out this information and value lived experiences.

C.1.3.1 Considerations for embracing different types of data

- Make good use of existing local knowledge, review existing and previous reports from studies of relevant issues and leverage the ideas of people with lived experience and those who have been working closely with them.
- Gather qualitative information, such as stories from residents and businesses, to better illustrate current realities and to relate quantitative data to individual and community experiences.

C.1.4 Embracing promising practices when working with data

Working with data to advance equity can be a new area for some. Existing examples and ample information are available to inform what types of data will be useful and how they can help decision making. Drawing out the relevant, applicable learnings for Victoria from others means not having to reinvent the wheel but instead learning from what worked elsewhere. Additionally, innovative research and initiatives, such as the BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner's report on disaggregated data,¹⁸ are contributing to the development of guidelines and principles for equitable approaches to working with data. Such approaches include establishing equitable data standards and practices that ensure the purpose, processes and outcomes of data use are guided by reciprocal relationships with communities.

C.1.4.1 Considerations for embracing promising practices when working with data

- Identify valid and reliable types of data and indicators commonly used to describe current conditions, particularly with respect to illustrating disparities and characterizing inequity.
- Research case examples to improve understanding of how cities and communities use data to inform decision making.
- Expand the use of disaggregated data to provide evidence of patterns over time to see if there are or are not emerging within and among subpopulations.
- Collect demographic information on staff and examine how reflective staff are of the communities the City serves.

D. DISMANTLING SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES

RATIONALE

To successfully embed equity in our work, it is necessary to address the systemic barriers that so often result in inequitable outcomes. If such inequities as the lack of access to education, employment, food and transportation are not addressed, communities will continue to be systemically excluded from civic participation. Equity work cannot be performative — it must

¹⁸ "The Grandmother Perspective", BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, last accessed August 29, 2021, <<https://bchumanrights.ca/publications/datacollection/>>.

address the very real barriers that marginalized communities face and improve conditions to ensure that people with all kinds of identities and lived experience are able to thrive.

Systemic barriers and inequities exist because society is based on rules that were established to elevate certain segments of the population at the expense of others.

To dismantle systemic barriers, it's important to understand the root causes of inequities. This involves exploring how systems of oppression — colonialism, racism, sexism, ableism and classism — have shaped power structures and, ultimately, each of our lives. In doing this, it is necessary to explore our own complicity with these systems of oppression. While doing this work, we may learn about or be called to recognize actions that have eroded trust. This could include past mistakes and oversights, or current actions the City is doing. Steps may need to be taken to rebuild trust and communication. This could take more time and resources. It is important to take the time.

In addition to understanding systems of oppression and building trust with communities, dismantling systemic barriers and inequities requires working with communities to help address their needs and create more equitable access to opportunity. This means creating policies, programs and processes that address barriers to success identified by communities, ranging from access to funding for community organizations to creating more equitable municipal zoning and bylaws.

OBJECTIVE

To address systemic barriers in City policies, programs and processes, while supporting communities in creating the conditions for everyone to be able to thrive in Victoria.

SYSTEMIC INEQUITIES IN GREATER VICTORIA

Many groups in Greater Victoria face systemic barriers to meeting their self-determined needs and creating the conditions they need to thrive. For example, a 2021 report from the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria highlighted racial disparities in the region, with “70% of racialized respondents reporting that they feel undervalued, isolated and unsafe in Greater Victoria because of their race.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, it is estimated that 21% of residents in Victoria (approximately 19,000 people) have one or more disabilities, with “the rate of people with a disability living in poverty being consistently higher in all age categories compared to Canadians with no disabilities.”²⁰ This is particularly concerning given that the median rent for a studio apartment in the Capital Region is “93 percent of disability income assistance and the median available rent for a one-bedroom apartment is 117 percent.”²¹ The overlapping crises of housing, unsafe drug supply and the global pandemic result in a particularly challenging landscape of housing precarity and instability impacting many community members, particularly those who are unhoused.

Because of the pervasive impacts of these intersecting systemic inequities on many community members, it is essential to dismantle these systems by prioritizing social development, anti-racism, disability justice, decolonization and gender diversity in the work at the City.

¹⁹ “Racism in Victoria: A Community Report,” Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, last accessed: August 31, 2021, <<https://www.icavictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/GVLIP-Racism-Survey-Report-FINAL.pdf>>.

²⁰ City of Victoria, “Accessibility Framework,” 2020.

²¹ “COVID 19: The beginning of the end of homelessness A report on the barriers and recommendations to ending homelessness in the Capital Region,” Nicole Chaland, 2021. (p. 5), <<https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=69943>>.

D.1 PRIORITY AREAS – NEW APPROACHES

D.1.1 Meet basic needs

Supporting everyone in having their needs met means they can feel at ease and thrive. In particular, the lack of access to affordable housing, employment and adequate health care are significant barriers and sources of stress for many marginalized communities in Victoria. As the City does this work, it's important to consider what kind of support different communities will require to have their basic needs met, which relies directly on building strong relationships and community capacity building.

D.1.2 Use our sphere of influence

When embedding equity, it is important to examine where we, as individuals and as the City, have power and influence and start there. While examining our own power and influence, it is also important to understand the complexity of advancing equity-related work in the municipal sector.

Many of the changes required to meet people's needs are outside of the City's jurisdiction. It is at these times that Council has a responsibility to shift to an advocacy role. As a result, many of the considerations for implementation in this Equity Framework may be intergovernmental in nature and require multi-sector collaboration to be successful.

D.1.2.1 Considerations for using our sphere of influence

- Conduct a review of Community Association Land Use Committees and Advisory Committees and update their Terms of Reference to ensure they are representative of their communities.
- Implement alternate ways for groups to be represented than at Community Association Land Use Committee and Advisory Committees.
- Address barriers that prevent communities from providing feedback on City projects, programs, regulations and initiatives.

D.1.3 Create new internal processes

Dismantling systemic inequities requires shifting how work is done. Ultimately, this will require creating new internal processes to ensure that the City considers the equity impacts of the work, from the start of a program or the development of policy and throughout the implementation process.

Shifting into new ways of doing work can be challenging — literally moving away from “how we've always done things,” and it will take time and patience.

D.1.3.1 Considerations for creating new processes

- Update project management and decision-making processes to embed equity.
- Foster a culture of support for staff to come forward with requests for help.
- Create conditions for advisory committee members to participate in engagement as their full selves with intersecting identities.
- Review recruitment practices to remove barriers to employment for people excluded by current practices. Such barriers may include hiring policies, hiring committee

- composition, job postings and qualifications, not valuing lived experiences, among others.
- Identify ways the organization can support staff with marginalized identities and create the conditions for them to succeed.
 - Review all systems and forms to make them inclusive and accessible.
 - Establish individual equity training performance goals for staff that recognize how everyone is starting from a different level of knowledge and understanding.
 - Define and celebrate success.

D.1.4 Shift mindset to dismantle systemic barriers

Shifting mindsets around how work is approached and how we interact with each other is instrumental to dismantling systemic barriers. An environment that sees mistakes as opportunities for learning and growth on topics of equity and beyond is encouraged. Permission should also be given to take risks, even knowing that sometimes failure and possibly causing harm may occur.

Part of equity work requires organizational change. For it to be successful, it is essential for leaders to role-model behaviours required for change and assist with the work of moving the organization forward. The support and genuine commitment of management and senior leadership is crucial.

D.1.4.1 Considerations for shifting mindset

- Establish equity, diversity and inclusion as core values of the City.
- Provide adequate resources for equity work.
- Encourage staff to be open to new ideas and ways of being.
- Support a culture of learning where mistakes are seen as part of the learning.