

Equity Ottawa Collective Action Plan • Draft

August 2019

A. Introduction

Evidence shows that immigrants and racialized people experience multiple, systemic barriers to accessing employment, health, education, social and municipal services, and to civic participation and leadership.

Equity Ottawa is a partnership committed to strengthening member organizations' capacities to identify and pursue internal system change strategies and actions that will ensure greater equity of immigrant and racialized populations and improved responsiveness to their needs. Equity Ottawa, founded in 2012 by the Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership and Centretown Community Health Centre, has served as a community of practice and a source of knowledge resources and peer support for organizations as they build their capacities to be equitable and inclusive of immigrants and racialized people.

Racism and other forms of inequity are complex, persistent problems that can only be effectively addressed by collective action. Growing out of this realization, Equity Ottawa is developing a collective, multi-faceted action plan to eliminate barriers to equity for racialized and immigrant residents of Ottawa.

B. Rationale: The Need for Action and the Risk of Inaction

Why do we need to take specific and focused action to achieve equity for immigrants and racialized people in Ottawa? Simply put, because what we are doing currently is not working.

Immigrant and racialized residents account for a significant and growing proportion of Ottawa's population. As of 2016, 25% of Ottawa residents were racialized, 22.6% were immigrants, and 65% of immigrants were racialized. Furthermore, 50% of Ottawa's population is projected to be first or second generation immigrants by 2036. Despite this significant presence in our community, immigrants and racialized people are consistently under-represented in the workforce relative to their qualifications, are consistently under-represented in senior decision-making roles in all sectors, and continue to experience discriminatory treatment and racism, including anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and racism against Indigenous people, as well as anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Evidence compiled from local, provincial and national sources reveals, for example, that:

- 80% of recent adult immigrants to Ottawa have university degrees, but their unemployment rate is three times higher than Canadian-born degree holders;

- More than 50% of racialized and Indigenous Ontario residents, and 75% of Black respondents, in a 2017 Ontario Human Rights Commission survey reported having experienced racial profiling. In Ottawa, police stopped drivers disproportionately more often whom they perceived as Middle Eastern (3.3 times more) or Black (2.3 times more), according to a 2013-2015 study;
- 300 Ottawa residents at a forum in 2016 on anti-Black racism reported experiencing systemic racism in education, mental health, policing and other services.

Inequities arising from race or immigrant status are often exacerbated when they intersect with discrimination based on other social categories including age, gender and abilities.

The costs of inaction are unacceptable:

- Inequity adversely affects the daily lives and life outcomes of Ottawa residents who are immigrants and/or racialized.
- The economic and social well-being of our entire community suffers when some are systematically excluded on the basis of race, culture, immigrant status, faith, gender or other reasons. Ottawa needs and benefits from the skills, talents and contributions of all residents, and to systematically exclude some short-changes not only those individuals but everyone.
- Public and publicly funded institutions are accountable to equitably serve and be accessible to all residents. Legislative and regulatory requirements, such as human rights and anti-racism legislation, represent the obligation of all organizations, institutions, businesses and individuals to act fairly and equitably towards all groups in society.
- Community members are demanding action on these issues. The people of Ottawa expect all organizations and institutions, and especially those in the public and community domains, to include and reflect our community and to offer services that are equitably accessible to all community members.
- Organizations and businesses that successfully implement diversity and equity measures have been shown to be more innovative and achieve better outcomes, such as better client service, increased market share and higher profits and return on investment.

C. Emerging Theory of Transformative Change

Equity Ottawa partners developed a theory of transformative change, summarized below, which has informed the development of the specific strategies and actions. Strategies are initially focused on changes within organizations, engagement with communities, and strengthening cross-sector peer support and leadership. Other areas for attention are promoting public awareness and engagement, and fostering an enabling environment for equity. As organizations achieve progress internally and in their relationship with communities, this will provide a stronger knowledge base for addressing equity issues in the wider public and environment.



D. Goals and Outcomes

Goals:

1. To achieve equity of immigrants and racialized people in the leadership roles, workforce and services of participating organizations.
2. To achieve equity of immigrants and racialized people in Ottawa, through multi-faceted systemic and institutional change.

Outcomes:

- a) Immigrants and racialized people are in employment and leadership positions in participating organizations reflective of their representation in the population;
- b) Immigrants and racialized people have fair and equitable access to services of participating organizations that respond to their needs;
- c) A growing number of organizations and institutions in Ottawa implement equity strategies for immigrants and racialized people, and achieve equity in their leadership positions, workforce and service delivery.

E. Principles and Commitments

1. Our vision is a community where immigrants and racialized people equally and fully benefit from all aspects of economic, social, cultural and environmental prosperity and well-being,

and have the opportunity to contribute their skills, abilities and leadership towards the well-being of the entire community.

2. We believe that everyone in Ottawa will benefit at multiple levels from the full inclusion of immigrants and racialized people.
3. We will use an intersectional approach that recognizes the multiple and intersecting aspects of each person's identity and social location, including race, culture, faith, language, immigration status, gender, sexuality, age, income, class and other characteristics. Each of these characteristics, and the interaction among them, has an important impact on every person's experiences in the community.
4. We will use an anti-oppression/anti-racism approach and a decolonization approach, and will seek to embed these in our organizations and institutions in order to move towards equitable outcomes for all.
5. Community engagement will be a key part of our work. We will seek input and guidance from multiple communities in Ottawa about strategies and actions that are needed, about the effectiveness of strategies and actions we are implementing, and about progress towards equity.
6. We will use a collective approach, because persistent, systemic problems require collective, multi-faceted solutions, and because we believe that collectively we can have more impact. We will use aspects of the Collective Impact model, but will not be limited to it and will adapt our ways of work as appropriate to meet the needs and circumstances of the Ottawa community.
7. We will seek to align policy, leadership, knowledge-based practices and investments, within our organizations and across the community. We will use our collective voice to influence policy and actions at all levels.
8. We will build a collective action plan. This is a community plan that Equity Ottawa partners and other stakeholders choose to come together to work on collaboratively and to measure collective progress towards a common goal. .
9. Organizations choose the strategies and actions that are most suited to their organization and that would be most effective in their context. We check in collectively on progress over time, and hold ourselves accountable to the community, through regular monitoring and reporting on progress, engaging and co-designing with communities, and gathering feedback to improve their strategies and actions.

F. Domains and Strategies

The strategies below cover seven domains of action, and work in all seven domains is important in order to make progress. The strategies are inter-connected and interdependent, and actions in one area will have an impact on the effectiveness of other strategies.

Organizational Strategies

1. Establish the Foundations of an Equitable Organization	
Organizational culture	1. Cultivate accountability for equity at senior leadership and throughout the organization.
	2. Clearly communicate to all employees the “why” for equity action. This might include the organization’s obligation to serve all members of the public equitably, legal requirements, a business case about the economic benefits of equity, etc.
	3. Explicitly acknowledge systemic racism and discrimination, including barriers faced by distinct groups, such as anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-Indigenous racism and ongoing colonization.
	4. Create spaces and supports for authentic and open conversations, learning and change on racism, white privilege, white fragility and related issues.
	5. Set clear expectations about an equitable and inclusive organizational culture, with associated incentives and consequences.
	6. Analyze policies, structures and practices with equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression lenses, including analysis of power and privilege.
	7. Conduct equity/diversity audits of all aspects of the organization and act on the results.
	8. Establish structures, dedicate human resources and cultivate champions to advance equity within the organization.
Knowledge and learning	1. Hold education and awareness activities with staff, to reach people on a human level (e.g. with personal stories) as well as sharing facts and analysis about the scope of the problem, the benefits of equity, and actions needed.
	2. Identify competencies related to equity and anti-racism, including attitudes, knowledge, skills (e.g. self-awareness, critical thinking) that leaders and staff need.
	3. Provide education, awareness-raising, training and supports to achieve the identified competencies.
	4. Provide tools to routinely integrate equity considerations into staff’s work.
	5. Develop skills in leaders and employees to hold authentic dialogue on difficult subjects, such as racism. Support leaders and employees through the process of learning and change, including periods of discomfort.
2. Sustain Effective Community Engagement	
	1. Engage racialized and immigrant communities to co-design equity solutions and strategies.
	2. Support and maintain dialogue with leaders and members of racialized and immigrant communities on a range of issues, challenges and opportunities.
	3. Support and build on assets, leadership and expertise of diverse communities.

	4. Utilize a diversity of engagement strategies, recognizing the multiple and distinct communities within racialized and immigrant populations, and recognize intersectionalities.
	5. Undertake partnerships and support community-led initiatives with racialized and immigrant communities.
	6. Establish effective structures and processes for authentic community engagement.

3. Build Equity in Governance and Organizational Leadership

Board	1. Recruit and retain diverse board /governance bodies that reflect the community served, including racialized and immigrant members of the community, and using an intersectional understanding that acknowledges the multiple intersecting identities of community members.
	2. Embed equity approaches in board decision-making criteria.
	3. Integrate equity strategies and goals into strategic planning, identified in collaboration with racialized and immigrant communities.
	4. Conduct board training on equity, anti-racism, diversity, inclusion and intersectionality.
	5. Integrate equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression considerations into governance policies and procedures.
Senior Leadership and Management	1. Recruit and retain diverse senior leaders and management.
	2. Embed equity approaches in organizational decision-making criteria.
	3. Integrate equity practices throughout organizational policies and procedures, taking account of the specificities of actions needed to address barriers faced by distinct immigrant and racialized communities, such as addressing anti-Black racism and Islamophobia.
	4. Develop a clear organizational framework or plan that explains key concepts on equity, and sets out organizational goals and actions on equity.
	5. Incorporate equity and inclusion goals and measures in the performance reviews of managers.
	6. Provide management training on equity, anti-racism, diversity, inclusion and intersectionality.
	7. Allocate human and financial resources to equity work.
	8. Establish structures and systems with explicit responsibility to support equity and anti-racism in the organization.

5. Integrate Equity in Human Resources and Employment

	1. Analyse hiring, retention and promotion practices for unintentional barriers and bias.
	2. Re-design recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion practices to more effectively recognize skills of racialized people and immigrants, actively recruit from these populations and remove barriers to their access to employment.
	3. Actively engage unions in integrating equity and anti-racism considerations into human resource practices.
	4. Implement measures that support hiring, retention and promotion of

	racialized and immigrant employees. This includes measures for racialized and immigrant employees, such as mentoring, coaching, and employee networks or support groups that provide support and advocacy, as well as measures to create a welcoming environment around these employees, such as staff and manager training.
	5. Integrate equity considerations into the performance management system.

4. Ensure Equity in Service Planning and Delivery	
	1. With community input, re-design services and service delivery to be more inclusive and to remove institutional biases, recognizing that multiple and varied program designs and delivery mechanisms may be needed.
	2. Engage and incentivize employees to implement re-designed services.
	3. Work with communities to adapt services to be culturally and linguistically appropriate and culturally safe, taking into account the experiences and needs of Indigenous, Black, Muslim and other specific racialized and immigrant communities.
	4. Strengthen cultural and anti-oppression competencies of staff.
	5. Gather feedback from clients and service users, disaggregating data from all client groups, including racialized and immigrant clients.
	6. Incorporate measures such as equitable procurement in the delivery of services.

6. Strengthen Equity Outcomes Through Monitoring and Accountability	
	1. Value, gather, analyze and use quantitative and qualitative evidence to identify equity barriers, implement improvements, monitor progress towards outcomes, and strengthen accountability.
	2. Develop clear outcomes, targets and indicators of progress towards, and achievement of, equity for immigrant and racialized leaders, employees and clients of the organization.
	3. Engage communities in designing approaches, systems and measures for data collection, analysis and use for accountability and reporting on equity.
	4. Establish principles, standards and protocols that protect individuals' data rights and prioritize community ownership of data.
	5. Develop effective systems for collecting, analyzing and using data the organization needs (including disaggregated data related to governance and leadership, management, staff, clients and service outcomes) to monitor progress towards equity for racialized and immigrant populations, using an intersectional approach.
	6. Report on progress within and outside the organization, including to the community, and engage communities in analyzing the data and developing improved strategies based on the data.

Context Strategies

7. Contribute to an Enabling Context for Equity	
Peer support and knowledge sharing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain a framework and processes for organizations to come together to sustain and strengthen collective action and progress toward equity. 2. Maintain a community of practice and provide learning opportunities for organizations to share challenges and solutions, and draw on external expertise and knowledge. 3. Compile, develop and share approaches and tools to support participating organizations in the implementation of equity strategies, such as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Effective approaches to community engagement; b) Principles and practices for equity data collection and use; c) Frameworks, matrices and other tools that organizations can use to integrate equity considerations into their work.
Public and civic engagement	4. Explicitly and publically acknowledge systemic racism and discrimination, and the specific issues experienced by distinct groups, such as anti-Indigenous racism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism.
	5. Engage the public on awareness of systemic barriers to equity and on actions needed to address these barriers.
	6. Develop and implement a communications and engagement plan to engage the public on action to achieve equity, using a variety of engagement approaches and communications strategies, and building on community assets, leadership and expertise.
	7. In collaboration with communities, publically acknowledge organizations that have made significant progress towards achieving equity, such as through an annual community award.
Public policy, infrastructure	8. Work towards legislation, policy and funding mechanisms that support equity.

G. Monitoring and Accountability

For learning and accountability, it will be important to regularly reflect on our collective progress, learn from our experiences and build better strategies where those are needed. This requires collecting relevant data. This also requires community engagement, to review the data with us, to add community members' observations, and to reflect together on how to improve going forward.

Collective measurement and reporting will be challenging, given the variety of data systems and approaches among the participating organizations, so we will adopt the following approach to streamline our progress monitoring and focus on key measures. As our collective data collection capacity evolves, there may be opportunities to establish additional measures.

1. An Equity Dashboard of Collective Impact

Based on a small number of easily understood and meaningful indicators of equity focused on the theme of leadership, Equity Ottawa will carry out an annual survey to gather data on the number and percentage of racialized people and immigrants in four leadership roles:

- Chair of the board or governing body,
- Members of the board or governing body,
- Senior staff person (Executive Director or equivalent),
- Senior management as defined by the organization.

The organizations surveyed will be:

- a) all participating organizations in Equity Ottawa,
- b) 100 representative public, private and non-profit organisations in Ottawa.

This data will be collected every 2 years.

2. Annual survey of Equity Ottawa participating organizations to assess workplan progress

Each organization that has committed to implementing the collective action plan will prepare a report annually that

- a) states the strategies and actions they are implementing,
- b) rates their progress on implementing each of them (for example on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means moving backwards and 5 means strong progress),
- c) provides comments on their progress, such as what has enabled them to move forward or has inhibited progress, and possibly observations on the impact of the actions undertaken.

This report would be used for internal analysis and reflection, and also would be shared with Equity Ottawa. This could be used in several ways:

- discussion among Equity Ottawa organizations comparing progress and reasons for success or not, to learn from each other's experience,
- prepare a roll-up summary to share publically,
- prepare for the annual community feedback forum (see point #5 below).

3. Community-level data

Provide a range of demographic data information every five years on the situation of racialized and immigrant populations in Ottawa. This will help frame the dashboard indicators referred to above (item #1) and could be used as a benchmark for the level of representation organizations are seeking within their own workforce. Over time, the indicators would also track overall progress in some aspects of the quality of life of immigrants and racialized people. If available, the data will be disaggregated by gender. Ottawa Public Health and the City of Ottawa have databases that can provide much of the relevant information.

The data assembled would potentially include:

- Number of racialized people and number of immigrants in Ottawa, possibly broken down into more detailed categories,
- Immigration levels,
- Labour force participation,
- Health data,
- Educational attainment,
- Housing affordability,
- Income.

4. Move towards deeper accountability information over time

Collecting information about diversity and equity in leadership positions is a start, but it will be important to expand beyond that over time, and find ways to report on the impact of the strategies on the lives of Ottawa residents, in areas such as services and employment.

Given the fact that data and measurement systems in each of our organizations are different, this will be challenging. As interim steps, we will:

- a) Continue, including through our equity data task group, to identify common areas of equity data collection and use;
- b) Look for opportunities to share information about similar outcomes, even though the data collection systems are different. For example, a number of Equity Ottawa partners are collecting or starting to collect equity-related data on their workforce, in order to track if the number of racialized people and immigrants grows over time. We will look at options for rolling up this information into overall trends to monitor year by year.
- c) Develop, test and implement ways to assess progress on areas of organizational change (e.g. organizational cultures) and their outcomes.
- d) Work with the community to develop measures for other areas.

5. Annual community feedback gathering

Equity Ottawa will convene a consultation with community members each year to report on progress in implementing the collective action plan, and discuss ways of moving forward. The format for this would be planned by participating organizations and community representatives.

Participating organizations may also choose to share these accountability results in their own community engagement forums and mechanisms.

H. Timeline

This is an ongoing initiative and we will continue working on implementation of the Collective Action Plan over multiple years, monitoring progress year by year with community input, and adjusting and revising the Collective Action Plan as needed.