

Advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation

in Canadian Municipalities

A Playbook of Promising Practices

TED ROGERS SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT | DIVERSITY INSTITUTE

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DI is the research lead for the Future Skills Centre (FSC). DI leads research on responsible AI adoption in Canada and internationally to inform policies, strategies, and programs. As part of its commitment to advancing inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, DI founded the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) and the Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network (IIE-Net) and offers a range of training programs and advisory services.

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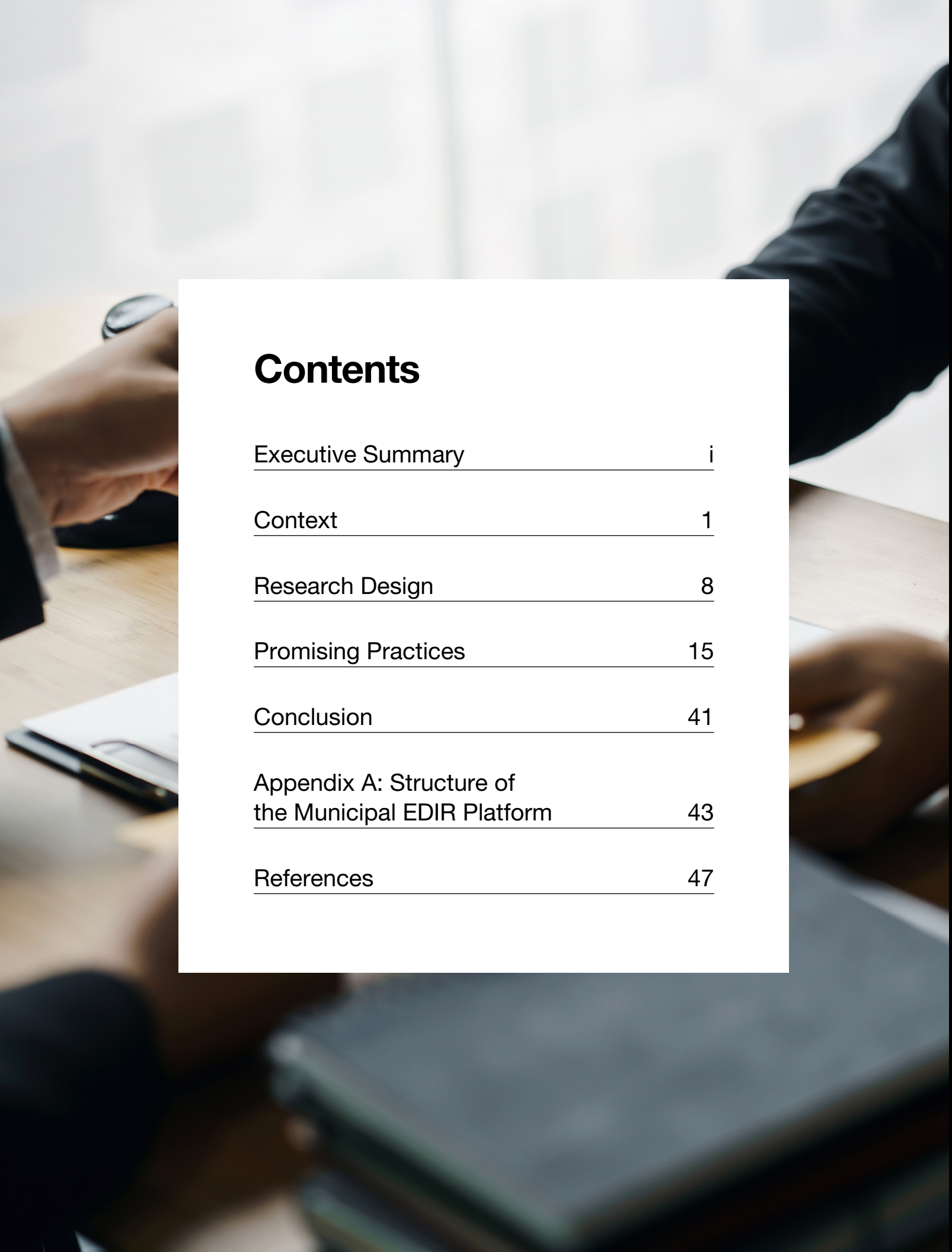

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Executive Summary

Context

Municipalities shape many aspects of daily life. They are employers, policy makers and regulators, service providers, purchasers of goods and services, and partners to community organizations, businesses and other orders of government. Their decisions influence the people who work within municipal government and the residents and communities who interact with municipal policies, programs, infrastructure and services.

The communities that municipalities serve continue to evolve. Immigration, population aging, a growing representation of racialized communities and Indigenous Peoples, an increase in people identifying as persons with disabilities, and other demographic shifts are influencing local needs and expectations. These changes create opportunities for municipalities to strengthen how they attract and retain diverse talent, design policies and programs, deliver services, allocate resources and engage communities.

Equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation (EDIR) provide an important lens for this work. Municipalities are advancing EDIR from various starting points and in different ways. Some have developed comprehensive strategies, while others have focused on priorities such as accessibility, anti-racism, Indigenous relations and reconciliation, workforce diversity or inclusive service delivery. Approaches are also influenced by municipal size, geography, governance structures, resources and community demographics. A practice developed for a large urban centre, for example, may need to be adapted considerably for a smaller, rural, northern or remote municipality.

Research links stronger EDIR approaches with positive organizational and community outcomes, including employee retention, workforce innovation, service delivery, fiscal efficiency and procurement diversity. These benefits are realized when EDIR is embedded into how municipalities plan, make decisions, allocate resources, engage employees and communities, assess progress, and use evidence to strengthen policies, programs and practices.

Research design

The Diversity Institute (DI), in collaboration with the City of Kingston and with funding from the Future Skills Centre, undertook a multi-phase research project to identify, organize and share promising approaches to advancing EDIR in Canadian municipalities. The Municipal EDIR Sharing Platform was developed as a mechanism to organize research and resources for municipalities seeking to advance EDIR.

The project combined review of existing EDIR evidence, tools and municipal resources with DI's applied experience supporting municipalities and direct engagement with municipal representatives. Seven webinars held in August and September 2024 brought together 139 participants representing 62 municipalities. These discussions explored priorities, practices, implementation challenges and the practical resources municipalities considered most useful.

This work informed a municipal-specific framework organized around four dimensions: (1) aligning strategy with organizational goals; (2) internal processes; (3) policies and programs; and (4) community engagement. These are further divided into sub-dimensions and 110 subtopics, allowing users to move from broad areas of EDIR practices to specific municipal functions and actions.

Using this framework, the research team identified and reviewed more than 260 promising practices from municipalities across Canada. Searches included municipalities across provinces and territories and



intentionally considered different municipal sizes, types and geographies. English and French-language sources were actively sought. Municipal contacts also submitted promising practices directly to DI for consideration. Each practice was reviewed by more than one member of the DI research team to assess whether it represented a substantive, practical and useful example of EDIR in a municipal context. Priority was given to approaches that were being implemented or already in place and that could be documented or shared publicly. Evidence of outcomes and impacts was also considered where available.

The digital best practices platform was subsequently used to test the relevance and usefulness of the research with municipal users. Feedback was positive. Respondents gave the resources an average likelihood-to-recommend score of 8.58 out of 10 and 92.5% agreed or strongly agreed that it was valuable and comprehensive. Feedback was also used to refine examples and highlighted opportunities to continue expanding practices from smaller and rural municipalities and across additional areas of municipal activity.

Promising practices

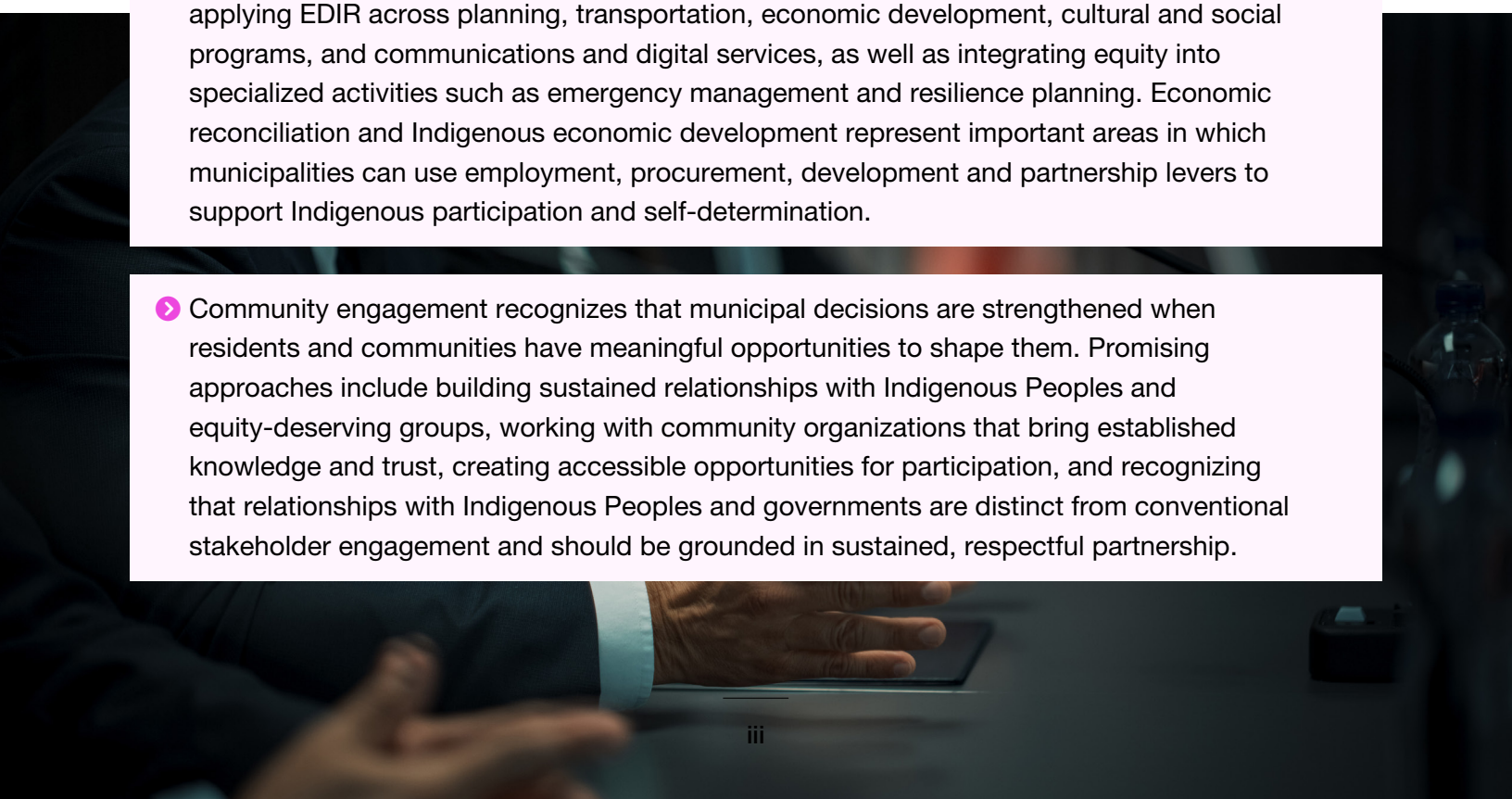
The practices reviewed demonstrate that advancing EDIR requires attention to interconnected parts of municipal organizations and the communities they serve.

- Aligning strategy with organizational goals focuses on establishing clear EDIR priorities linked to a municipality's strategic plan, priorities and goals, and moving from commitment to implementation. Promising practices include grounding goals in municipal and community context, using engagement to inform priorities, assigning responsibilities for implementation, measuring progress and building the skills and capacity needed to put EDIR into practice.

- Internal processes shape who participates in municipal organizations and how employees experience the workplace. Promising practices include creating governance and advisory structures that incorporate diverse perspectives into decision-making; embedding EDIR throughout recruitment and the broader employee lifecycle (including retention and advancement); examining where barriers emerge between application, hiring, advancement and retention; and creating policies, employee networks and other supports that foster inclusive organizational cultures.

- Policies and programs demonstrate how EDIR can be incorporated into the outward-facing functions of municipal government. Practices include applying EDIR lenses that mitigate or address barriers for communities during policy and program design, carrying these considerations through implementation, and evaluating outcomes to support improvement. Municipalities are also using procurement to increase access to economic opportunities, applying EDIR across planning, transportation, economic development, cultural and social programs, and communications and digital services, as well as integrating equity into specialized activities such as emergency management and resilience planning. Economic reconciliation and Indigenous economic development represent important areas in which municipalities can use employment, procurement, development and partnership levers to support Indigenous participation and self-determination.

- Community engagement recognizes that municipal decisions are strengthened when residents and communities have meaningful opportunities to shape them. Promising approaches include building sustained relationships with Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, working with community organizations that bring established knowledge and trust, creating accessible opportunities for participation, and recognizing that relationships with Indigenous Peoples and governments are distinct from conventional stakeholder engagement and should be grounded in sustained, respectful partnership.



Across all four dimensions, the research shows that EDIR is not limited to dedicated equity initiatives. It can be incorporated into the routine systems and functions through which municipalities hire employees, make decisions, spend public resources, plan communities, deliver services and engage residents.

Conclusion

More than 260 promising practices identified through this research illustrate the range of ways municipalities across Canada are translating EDIR commitments into action. They also reinforce the value of a system-wide approach. Strategy and goal setting establish direction. Governance and leadership create accountability. Human resource practices influence who can enter, participate and advance within municipal workplaces, while inclusive organizational cultures shape employees' day-to-day experiences. EDIR-informed policies, programs and services help municipalities respond to the needs of diverse communities. Procurement, planning, economic development, accessibility, emergency management and other municipal functions provide additional opportunities to translate broad commitments into practical action. Authentic community engagement strengthens this work by bringing the perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples, equity-deserving groups and other residents into municipal decision-making.

There is no single model for advancing EDIR across Canadian municipalities. Large cities, mid-sized municipalities, smaller and rural communities, and northern and remote municipalities operate in various contexts and with different capacities. The practices in this report are intended as practical reference points that municipalities can adapt, combine and build upon rather than as a prescribed pathway.

Progress depends on turning commitment into action by setting clear goals, assigning responsibilities, building capacity, identifying and addressing barriers, engaging communities meaningfully, measuring progress and using evidence to refine approaches over time. The framework and promising practices presented in this report provide municipalities with a foundation for doing this work while learning from approaches being developed across the country.



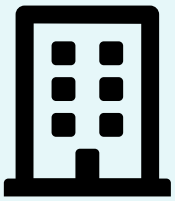


Context

Municipalities shape and reflect the communities they serve.[1] Their responsibilities extend across many aspects of community life as employers, policy-makers and regulators, service providers, purchasers of goods, and partners to community organizations, businesses, and other levels of government.[2] Decisions made at the municipal level influence the people who work within government as well as the residents and communities who interact with municipal policies, programs, infrastructure and services.

Municipal governments, including cities, towns, regional governments and rural communities, vary in structure across Canada, but all include elected officials and employees who work on behalf of residents.[3] Municipal structures vary by province. For example, in Ontario, municipalities fall into one of three types: single-tier municipalities handle all local services, upper-tier municipalities cover broad services (e.g., roads and water systems) and lower-tier municipalities handle local services within the upper tier's boundaries.[4] These structures range from single-tier, such as Toronto, to upper- and lower-tier systems, such as Peel Region, and their constituent municipalities like Mississauga. On the other hand, British Columbia layers its structure differently. Municipalities handle local services, while regional districts coordinate services across municipalities, like water systems and emergency services. Unlike Ontario, BC's regional districts do not hold authority over their municipalities, but rather municipalities lend their authority to regional districts.[5]

Municipalities are also one of the largest employers in Canada. In 2021, out of Ontario's 1.6 million public sector workers, 225,597 were employed in municipal government, roughly 4% of all paid workers in the



***Municipalities** are also one of the **largest employers in Canada**.*

province.[6] By comparison, British Columbia's municipal governments employed 47,600 people in 2021,[7] roughly 2% of the province's 2.4 million workers.[8]

Changing communities, changing municipal needs

The communities that municipalities serve evolve as immigration and broader demographic shifts reshape populations across Canada. These changes create opportunities for municipalities to strengthen how they attract and retain diverse talent, design policies and programs, deliver services, engage residents and support innovation.[9] Equity, diversity, inclusion and reconciliation (EDIR) provide an important lens for ensuring that municipal institutions continue to respond to the needs and experiences of the communities they serve.

However, municipalities are at different points in their EDIR journeys. Some are establishing foundational EDIR goals, while others have developed organization-wide strategies alongside more focused initiatives addressing areas such as anti-Black racism, accessibility, Indigenous relations and Truth and Reconciliation. Approaches also vary in scope. Some municipalities have concentrated on internal practices, including governance, human resources and organizational culture, while others have extended EDIR more broadly across external-facing practices, such as policy development, service delivery, procurement and community engagement.[10]

As municipalities advance EDIR, their approaches are shaped by available resources, staff capacity, competing priorities and varying levels of organizational and political support. Municipalities may also be navigating questions about where to focus their efforts, which approaches are most appropriate for their communities, and how EDIR can be integrated into existing municipal priorities, operations, processes and requirements.[11]

Size, geography, population characteristics and available resources also influence municipalities' starting points and the approaches available.[12, 13, 14] Toronto is Canada's largest municipality, and Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa are home to more than one million residents. By contrast, Iqaluit had just over 7,429 residents in 2021, and its population declined by 4% from 2016 to 2021.[15] Smaller, rural, northern and remote municipalities may work with fewer staff and smaller budgets while also responding to distinct demographic changes, such as young people moving away[16] and gaps in services and infrastructure.[17] These differences mean that the scale and design of effective EDIR initiatives will look different across municipalities.

Municipalities must also consider the needs of residents and communities in EDIR planning and decision-making. Persistent disparities in policing, health care access, housing security and disaster outcomes show how each municipal system has different considerations.[18] In 2021, one in five



households in Toronto were in core housing need, meaning their dwellings were not considered suitable, adequate or affordable. Black Torontonians face additional barriers accessing safe, affordable and stable housing, with 20% of Black people living in core housing need compared to 10% of non-racialized people.[19] Similarly, Winnipeg's 2024 Street Census estimated that more than three in every 1,000 people were experiencing homelessness on the evening of November 5, 2024. Further, a survey of 1,511 people experiencing homelessness in Winnipeg found that 79.9% identified as Indigenous and 12.9% were newcomers.[20] Disparities also exist in systems outside of direct municipal control. A 2025 Shared Health report found that Black and Indigenous patients experienced the longest wait times for emergency care in Winnipeg. Black patients waited an average of 3.9 hours compared to the 3.4-hour provincial average.[21, 22] While emergency room services are a provincial responsibility, understanding systemic racism in health care can help municipalities relate to residents' experiences, address their needs and inform decisions on a variety of services, like housing, transit, paramedic services, community facility locations and advocacy with health partners.

Effective municipal EDIR approaches must be grounded in local context and reflect municipalities' dual role as employers and governments serving residents and communities. Applying this lens allows local governments to address persistent disparities like poverty, health inequities and discrimination to ensure increased well-being for residents and communities. Inclusive policies, practices and services can, in turn, improve access to municipal resources and opportunities, improve responsiveness to community needs, and support the well-being and belonging of employees and residents.[23]

Diversity within municipalities

The demographic composition of Canadian municipalities varies considerably, shaping local priorities and the ways municipalities design and deliver policies, programs and services. Communities differ in the representation of Indigenous Peoples, Black and racialized people, immigrants and

newcomers, persons with disabilities, younger and older residents, and other equity-deserving groups. Demographic trends also affects who stays, who leaves and who returns to a community. For example, in some municipalities, younger residents may leave to pursue education or employment opportunities, contributing to an aging population and affecting workforce availability, population growth and the accessibility and delivery of local services. Understanding the composition and needs of local communities, including where barriers to access and participation may exist, shapes the development and implementation of EDIR strategies that are responsive to their unique context.[24, 25]

Canada is a diverse nation, and no two municipalities have the same demographic profile. Local data can help municipalities understand who lives in their communities, how populations are changing and whether municipal services, infrastructure and engagement approaches are keeping pace. This information can support more inclusive service design, equitable allocation of resources, stronger community relationships and economic growth that benefits residents.[26] These differences become clear when comparing the composition of communities across municipalities and regions.

While women account for about one-half of the population across most municipalities, the representation of many other identity groups varies substantially by place.[27] According to the 2021 Census, racialized people represented 55.7% of Toronto's population, 42.8% of Edmonton's and 34.4% of Winnipeg's, while the proportion of racialized people was lower in St. John's at 10.1%.[28] Indigenous populations also vary significantly across urban centres. Among major census metropolitan areas, Winnipeg had the largest Indigenous population in 2021, at 102,080 people, followed by Edmonton at 87,600 and Vancouver at 63,345.[29] Immigration adds another important dimension to these local demographic differences. Canada's immigrant population was heavily concentrated in a handful of census metropolitan areas in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec. In 2021, Toronto was home to about 2.86 million immigrants, followed by Vancouver at 1.09 million and Montréal at 1.02 million. Patterns differ in Atlantic Canada, where the immigrant population is smaller overall (about 141,410 people) and concentrated in regional centres, such as Halifax, Moncton, Charlottetown and Fredericton.[30]



***Local data** can help municipalities **understand who lives in their communities**, how populations are changing and whether municipal services, infrastructure and engagement approaches are keeping pace.*

Demographic change is also an important consideration for long-term municipal planning. Shifts in population size, age, immigration and the composition of local communities can influence demand for infrastructure, transportation, emergency services, recreation, housing and other municipal programs and services.[31] Local differences are also part of broader demographic shifts happening at the national level. Research consistently highlights that Canada's population is changing, driven by an aging population,[32] shifting immigration patterns[33] and growing representation of Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups.[34, 35] Several national trends illustrate the scale of this change.

Demographic Change

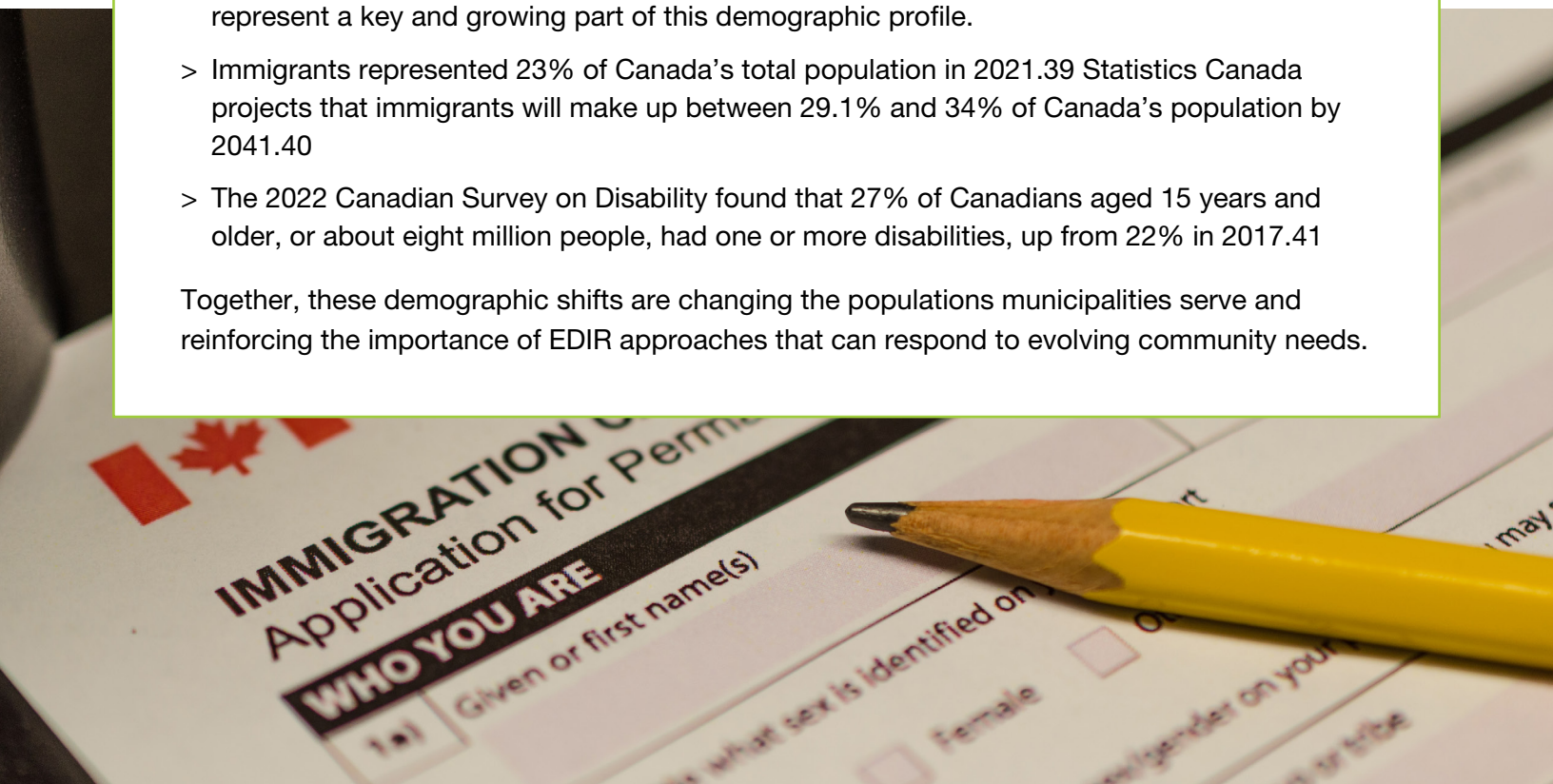
> Between 2001 and 2021, Canada's racialized population increased by 130% to 8.87 million from 3.85 million, excluding non-permanent residents. Immigration was a primary driver, accounting for about two-thirds of this growth.36 In 2021, racialized people made up 34.8% of Canada's workforce and 27.5% of public-sector employees.37

> Indigenous Peoples represented 5% of Canada's total population in 2021, or about 1.8 million people. The Indigenous population grew by 9.4% between 2016 and 2021 and remains considerably younger than the non-Indigenous population.38 Indigenous youth represent a key and growing part of this demographic profile.

> Immigrants represented 23% of Canada's total population in 2021.39 Statistics Canada projects that immigrants will make up between 29.1% and 34% of Canada's population by 2041.40

> The 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability found that 27% of Canadians aged 15 years and older, or about eight million people, had one or more disabilities, up from 22% in 2017.41

Together, these demographic shifts are changing the populations municipalities serve and reinforcing the importance of EDIR approaches that can respond to evolving community needs.

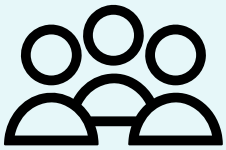


Representation in municipal leadership

As communities become more diverse, the composition of municipal leadership is an important part of understanding whose perspectives are represented in local decision-making. Representation varies across municipalities in Canada and across elected councils, senior administration, and municipal agencies, boards and commissions. Existing research suggests that progress has been uneven, with leadership composition not always reflecting the diversity of the communities that municipalities serve.[42, 43, 44]

Research shows differences across elected and appointed leadership roles. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities found that women held 31% of municipal elected positions in Canada in 2023, including 22% of mayoral positions and 33% of councillor positions. Only 16% of municipalities had reached gender parity on council.[45] The most recent iteration of DI's *Diversity Leads* examined municipal agencies, boards and commissions (e.g., those who manage public services and municipal operations or provide community advice) across 10 Canadian cities and found similar gaps between population demographics and representation. Montréal was among the few cities where representation met or exceeded the population share for both women (53.2% on boards compared with 51% of the population) and Black people (11.3% compared with 7.9%), while Toronto met or exceeded population share for Black representation (9% compared with 7.9%).[46]

These findings highlight the value of examining representation across different levels of municipal leadership rather than treating leadership diversity as a single measure. They also provide an important foundation for considering the governance, recruitment and appointment practices that can broaden participation in municipal decision-making.



For municipalities, the case extends beyond their role as employers, as their ***decisions also shape how residents and communities access services, participate in community life and experience local government****.*

The case for EDIR in municipalities

A growing body of research links EDIR practices with a range of organizational benefits, including access to a broader talent pool and overcoming skills gaps,[47] stronger employee engagement and retention,[48] fostering innovation,[49] creativity[50] and diverse thought,[51] and responding to increasingly

diverse communities and gaining support from diverse stakeholders and communities.[52] EDIR can also help organizations identify and address barriers before they create legal, reputational or operational risks.[53]

For municipalities, the case extends beyond their role as employers, as their decisions also shape how residents and communities access services, participate in community life and experience local government. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities identifies EDIR as central to every function of municipal governments, from strengthening communities' sense of belonging to closing gaps in service delivery to supporting stronger local economies to reducing legal and reputational risks. Embedding EDIR into programs and services can help municipalities identify and address disparities in access and participation related to factors such as cost, timing, accessibility and location, and use this information to improve how services respond to residents' needs.[54]

Evidence from Canadian municipalities provides further insight into these benefits. Recent Canadian mixed-methods research found that more mature municipal EDIR approaches were associated with positive outcomes in areas including employee retention, workforce innovation, service delivery and fiscal efficiency, as well as procurement diversity and productivity.[55] While these relationships do not establish causation, they add to the evidence that embedding EDIR across municipal operations can contribute to both organizational and community outcomes.

Understanding what this looks like in practice requires moving beyond the case for EDIR to examine how municipalities are translating these commitments into policies, processes and action. The following section describes the approach used to identify and organize promising practices from municipalities across Canada.





Research Design

The Diversity Institute, in collaboration with the City of Kingston and funded by the Future Skills Centre, undertook a multi-phase research initiative to identify, organize and share promising approaches to advancing EDIR in Canadian municipalities. The initiative was designed to respond to municipal demand for practical, accessible resources that could help translate EDIR commitments into action across different contexts. The Municipal EDIR Sharing Platform was later developed to organize, share and gather feedback on this body of research and promising practices.[56]

This report builds on the research, municipal engagement and more than 260 promising practices identified through that initiative. It examines how Canadian municipalities are approaching EDIR through internal organizational practices as well as outward-facing municipal functions across several areas, including strategy and accountability, governance and leadership, human resource practices, organizational culture, policies and programs, procurement, and relationships with communities. Rather than identifying a single model for municipal EDIR, the report highlights a range of practices that can be adapted to different municipal priorities, capacities and community contexts.

Note: In the following sections, we briefly describe the approach to developing this platform, based on more extensive details from DI's previous report, *Municipal Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation Sharing Platform*.[57] The focus of this report is not on the development of the platform itself, but rather the promising practices that municipalities can adopt.

Development of the municipal EDIR framework and promising practices

The Municipal EDIR Platform was developed through a multi-phase process that combined a review of existing evidence and tools, engagement with municipalities, creation of a municipal-specific EDIR framework, identification and review of promising practices, and the testing of content with municipal users. The digital platform supported this process by providing a structured way to organize the resources and gather feedback on their relevance and usefulness.

Needs assessment and review of existing resources

The first phase included a review of existing EDIR tools and resources, including DI's Diversity Assessment Tool (DAT)[58] and Diversity & Inclusion Playbook[59] as well as other promising-practice resources and publicly available materials produced by municipalities across Canada. The review was used to identify existing approaches, areas in which municipalities were already taking action, and opportunities for additional practical support.

The needs assessment was informed by engagement with municipal representatives and DI's applied experience supporting municipalities with the development of EDIR strategies and action plans. This work has included reviewing municipal policies, processes and existing strategies; engaging staff, leadership and communities; identifying barriers and opportunities; and translating findings into goals, actions and measures of progress. This experience provided additional insight into how EDIR priorities are operationalized within municipalities and the kinds of practical resources that can support implementation.



The dimensions reflect the evidence reviewed and the ***practical realities of municipal EDIR work****, including* ***municipalities' multiple roles as employers, governments, service providers, purchasers and community partners****.*

Together, these sources informed four broad dimensions for examining and organizing municipal EDIR practices: (1) aligning strategy with organizational goals; (2) internal processes; (3) policies and programs; and (4) community engagement. The dimensions reflect the evidence reviewed and the practical realities of municipal EDIR work, including municipalities' multiple roles as employers, governments, service providers, purchasers and community partners.

Municipal engagement

Municipal input was incorporated early in the development process. Seven webinars held in August and September 2024 brought together 139 participants representing 62 municipalities. Discussions explored municipalities' current EDIR priorities, existing practices, implementation challenges and areas where additional support could strengthen their work. Participants identified value in a centralized resource that could bring together promising practices, templates, checklists, training materials and other practical resources that municipalities could use to support EDIR planning and implementation.[60]

This input helped refine the scope of the research, identify areas of municipal practice requiring greater attention, and shape the types of examples and resources that would be most useful. It also reinforced the value of organizing municipal EDIR content in a way that allowed users to find practical examples relevant to their responsibilities and priorities. It also shaped the design of the digital platform and guided how relevant content was presented to municipalities.

Framework and prototype development

Drawing on the needs assessment and municipal engagement, DI developed a municipal EDIR framework structured around the four municipal EDIR dimensions, including 1) aligning strategy with organizational goals; (2) internal processes; (3) policies and programs; and (4) community engagement (see Table 1).

The framework was informed by the structure of DI's DAT but adapted to reflect the responsibilities and operating context of municipal governments. This helped broaden the DAT framework beyond internal organizational practices to reflect the multiple roles municipalities play as employers, policy makers, service providers, purchasers and community partners. As a result, the framework considers how EDIR is embedded within municipalities as well as how it is reflected in outward-facing functions such as policy and program design, procurement, service delivery and community engagement.

The framework also recognized that EDIR is not advanced through a single policy or organizational function. Municipal strategies, internal processes, public-facing programs and relationships with communities are interconnected, and progress in one area can support action in others. Organizing the research around these dimensions provided a consistent way to bring together practices that might otherwise sit across different departments, functions or policy areas within a municipality.

The framework's four dimensions were further divided into municipal-specific subcategories to make the framework practical and navigable. The subcategories move from broad areas of EDIR practice to more specific points of municipal action. They capture areas such as strategy development and implementation, measurement, governance and leadership, human resources, organizational culture, procurement, policy and program design, specialized municipal functions and community engagement. Each subcategory is further broken down, containing 110 topics (see Appendix A).

Table 1

Municipal EDIR promising practices framework

Dimension	Definition	Sub-Categories
Aligning strategy with organizational goals	Practices to guide and implement a municipal EDIR strategy, including setting organizational goals, aligning strategy to support them, setting targets and measuring progress.	> Context and goal setting for EDI strategies > Implementation > Measurement and key performance indicators > Training materials > Legislation
Internal processes	Internal processes include the role of leaders, human resource processes and how policies and processes influence values and culture in municipalities.	> Governance and leadership > Human resource practices > Values and culture
Policies and programs	Policies and programs that support municipal functions, including design, implementation and evaluation.	> Design, implementation and evaluation > Procurement > Functional areas > Specialized activities
Community engagement	Practices related to community relationships for municipalities, including how to consult community members and how to collect and implement feedback on programs.	> Examples of interested and affected parties > Authentic engagement approaches

Identification and review of promising practices

Using this framework, more than 260 municipal practices were identified, reviewed and categorized. Practices were gathered through a comprehensive review of research, literature, municipal resources, direct submissions from municipalities, and a scan of publicly available municipal strategies, policies, programs, tools and other materials from across Canada. Resources were collected in both official languages.

The search was designed to capture strong examples from a range of municipal contexts. The research team examined municipalities across provinces and territories and intentionally sought practices from municipalities of different sizes, geographies and types. Searches were conducted in both English and French, supplemented by outreach to municipal contacts to identify additional resources in French that could be shared publicly. While English-language practices make up the majority of the collection, this approach helped broaden the geographic and linguistic range of examples considered.

Identification was followed by a structured review process. Practices were not included simply because they appeared in a municipal strategy or resource. Each example was evaluated by more than one member of the DI research team to assess whether it represented a substantive and useful case of EDIR in a municipal context. The team looked for practices that connected EDIR commitments with concrete actions, policies, processes,



programs or decision-making approaches. In some instances, statements of commitment were also included if they provided a meaningful example of how a municipality formally articulated its direction or priorities.

Priority was given to practices that were already being implemented as well as those for which there was sufficient public information to understand the approach. Public documentation, or confirmation that the material could be shared publicly, was required for inclusion. Information about outcomes or impacts, if available, was also considered during the review. The primary goal was to identify credible, practical and relevant examples of EDIR in action that could support learning across municipalities.

Geographic and organizational diversity was an important consideration throughout the search, but practices were selected primarily for their strength and usefulness rather than to meet predetermined quotas. Multiple examples from the same municipality could be included if they illustrated distinct approaches or areas of EDIR practice. The research team also actively sought examples from municipalities of different sizes and types, urban and rural communities, and jurisdictions across provinces and territories.

Testing and refinement with municipal users

Once the framework and initial collection of promising practices had been assembled, a prototype of the digital platform was developed and used to present the content to municipal users and gather structured feedback. In December 2024, the platform was introduced to 38 participants representing 18 municipalities. A follow-up survey was subsequently distributed to 144 municipal representatives to assess the relevance and comprehensiveness of the content, alongside questions about navigation, functionality and overall user experience.[61]

Feedback from municipal users was positive. Respondents gave the platform an average likelihood-to-recommend score of 8.58 out of 10, while 92.5% agreed or strongly agreed that it was valuable and comprehensive. A further 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed that the platform provided a unique, centralized source of information, and 77.5% agreed or strongly agreed that the resources were relevant to the specific needs and challenges of their municipality.



Open-ended feedback suggested that the ***resource covered many of the functional areas important to municipalities****, while also* ***identifying opportunities to broaden the range of examples****.*

Feedback on the content was also positive. Participants rated the relevance of resources across each section of the platform on a five-point Likert scale. Average ratings ranged from 3.79 to 4.10 out of 5, indicating consistently favourable assessments across the framework. Open-ended feedback suggested that the resource covered many of the functional areas important to municipalities, while also identifying opportunities to broaden the range of examples. Some respondents highlighted the value of including more practices from smaller and rural municipalities and expanding resources in areas such as climate and environmental priorities. This feedback informed further review and expansion of the collection of promising practices before the resource was finalized. The process provided an additional check that the framework accurately reflected municipal priorities and that the examples were useful across different municipal contexts.

Following this research, engagement and refinement process, the Municipal EDIR Sharing Platform was formally launched on May 15, 2025, at an event organized by the City of Kingston and hosted at Toronto Metropolitan University. The platform provides an ongoing mechanism for municipalities to access the resulting framework, promising practices and supporting resources.

Promising practices

The following sections explore the four dimensions of the framework to examine promising practices, beginning with the principles and considerations that shape each area followed by selected municipal examples. The practices are intended to support learning and adaptation rather than prescribe a single approach, recognizing that their application will depend on municipal size, geography, responsibilities, resources and community context.





Promising Practices

The promising practices collected span four interconnected dimensions of municipal EDIR: (1) aligning strategy with organizational goals; (2) internal processes; (3) policies and programs; and (4) community engagement. Together, these dimensions move from how municipalities establish and sustain EDIR priorities internally to how those priorities are reflected in workforce practices, municipal policies and programs, service delivery, procurement and relationships with the communities they serve.

Each dimension is further organized into sub-dimensions covering major areas of municipal practice. These are broken down into 110 more subtopics that allow municipalities to drill down to functions and areas of action (see Appendix A). For example, the broad area of human resource practices covers specific considerations related to recruitment, selection, advancement and retention, and general community engagement includes specific approaches for engaging interested and affected parties.

The sections that follow provide context for each dimension and sub-dimension and draws on selected promising practices to illustrate how municipalities are approaching these areas. The examples are not intended to reproduce the full collection or prescribe a single approach. Rather, they highlight different ways municipalities are translating EDIR commitments into concrete policies, processes, programs and actions, recognizing that approaches will vary according to municipal responsibilities, size, geography, resources and community context.

Aligning strategy with organizational goals

This dimension focuses on the strategic processes municipalities use to establish, implement and sustain EDIR priorities. Effective approaches typically begin with understanding the municipal and community context, identifying priorities and setting clear goals and objectives. These priorities can then be translated into actions, responsibilities

and resources, supported by mechanisms to monitor progress and communicate results to strengthen accountability and transparency.[62]

Aligning EDIR with broader municipal priorities helps embed it within routine planning and decision-making rather than treating it as a stand-alone initiative. Clear links between EDIR objectives, municipal responsibilities and measurable outcomes can support coordinated implementation across departments and functions and help municipalities assess and communicate progress over time.[63]

Context and goal setting for EDIR strategies

Clear EDIR goals help translate broad commitments into defined priorities and actions. EDIR strategies begin with goal setting to help transform high-level EDIR commitments into measurable actions instead of simply good intentions. Measurable goals promote accountability, allowing for organizations to track progress and ensure goals are attainable.[64, 65, 66]

Municipalities can take several actions to not only set practical goals but ensure they are embedded across municipal priorities; actions must be grounded in the needs of diverse communities or use participatory approaches to goal development. Embedding EDIR into municipal strategies and priorities can help connect them to decision-making, clarify responsibilities and support sustained EDIR action over time. Based on the Municipal EDIR Platform's framework, municipalities should consider areas of action, such as anti-racism strategies and initiatives, community-centred EDIR strategies, EDIR metrics and benchmarking, EDIR strategies and frameworks, gender-based analysis plus (GBA+), Indigenous awareness and reconciliation, and youth initiatives.[67] These areas illustrate the range of considerations municipalities may draw upon when establishing goals and determining how EDIR commitments will be translated into action.



Municipalities are setting EDIR goals and priorities in several ways, including:

- **Grounding goals in municipal and community context.** This accounts for community demographics, existing municipal priorities, legislative requirements and emerging local needs. The City of Toronto's long-term vision focuses on creating a sustainable, inclusive and innovative city through various initiatives that address infrastructure, housing, environmental sustainability, economic growth and social equity.[68]

- **Translating EDIR commitments into actionable and measurable goals.** Commitments can be strengthened by identifying specific priorities, actions and areas of responsibility, such as through anti-racism strategies, community-centered EDI strategies, and more. The City of Ottawa's *Anti-Racism Strategy* establishes nine guiding principles focusing on different levels of the municipality, including targeting systemic barriers, programs and services, and community relationships. The goal of this strategy is to ensure each person can access resources and opportunities to realize their full potential.[69] The strategy provides a structure for moving from a broad commitment to anti-racism toward specific areas of municipal action.

- **Using engagement to inform priorities and build shared ownership.** Engaging employees, elected officials, residents and communities can help municipalities understand different experiences and ensure goals reflect the people affected by municipal decisions. The Town of Innisfil's *EDI Update* to staff and Council explained the value and rationale for EDI work; it also included goals and a recommended course of action to help promote uptake and action.[70] A similar emphasis on participation is reflected in the Town of Stouffville's approach, which centred employee input in the development of its *Diversity Equity & Inclusion Strategy*. This inclusive process helped shape a foundational shared commitment to EDI, including promoting EDI education and awareness, delivering inclusive and equitable service, increasing representation of diverse perspectives and fostering community belonging.[71]

Across these approaches, context is important: EDIR goals are more likely to provide a useful basis for action when they reflect municipal responsibilities and community priorities and are specific to guide implementation and measurement.

Implementation

Implementation is the process of translating EDIR strategies and commitments into sustained municipal action. Effective implementation requires leadership buy-in, clear responsibilities, appropriate resources, coordination across departments and functions, and mechanisms to review progress and adjust approaches over time.[72, 73]

Municipalities can take several actions to support implementation of EDIR strategies. The Municipal EDIR Platform framework highlights several ways, including advisory committees and working groups, community-centred EDI strategies, EDI strategies, tools and frameworks, GBA+ frameworks, and employment equity policies.[74] These areas represent various concrete mechanisms through which municipalities operationalize their commitments, responsibilities and resources; however, what is prioritized depends on context and capacity.



Our review found that municipalities use a range of governance and administrative structures to support implementation to help clarify accountability, maintain momentum and create formal mechanisms for incorporating community and staff perspectives into implementation. However, how municipalities implement EDIR strategies varies, with some relying on specific departments or teams to advance EDIR and others take a decentralized approach where everyone across multiple departments are responsible and accountable for advancing EDIR. An effective approach combines the two: a central EDIR team that provides leadership, coordination, and expertise paired with shared responsibility across municipal departments.

An effective approach ***combines a central EDIR team that provides leadership, coordination, and expertise*** *paired with* ***shared responsibility across municipal departments****.*

- **Establish dedicated structures to oversee implementation.** The Town of Stratford has a diversity and inclusion sub-committee that is responsible for regularly reviewing and overseeing the implementation of the Town's diversity and inclusion plan; recommending strategies to increase diversity and improve inclusion; proposing strategies to enhance the Town's reputation as a diverse and inclusive community; and devising and carrying out programs and events in support of the suggested strategies.[75]
- **Create dedicated offices or functions with a broader coordination mandate.** The City of Fredericton's Office of Community Inclusion (OCI) is mandated to ensure that inclusion is a central focus of the municipality; it also develops and implements policies and practices that protect all citizens from racism, discrimination, exclusion and intolerance. The OCI acts a conduit between the city, its citizens and other levels of government, engaging the public through the Social Inclusion Committee, Youth Advisory Committee and the Anti-Racism Task Force; supporting existing community projects; offering expertise to city staff and partners' to ensure EDI is embedded within all city operations; and gathering input from residents to identify barriers to services and opportunities.[76]
- **Establish decentralized governance models where EDI experts are embedded within separate departments.** Rather than relying on a single central EDI office, the City of Mississauga uses a decentralized approach, where responsibility is shared among the city's EDI Community of Practice and individual divisions. Together, this helps advance EDI goals with guidance from EDI subject matter experts. This allows for collaboration across municipal departments to ensure EDI commitments and obligations are built into its policies, practices and processes.[77]

These examples illustrate how municipalities can move EDIR from strategy into practice by assigning clear responsibility for implementation and creating structures that support coordination, engagement and ongoing review.

Measurement and key performance indicators

Measurement and key performance indicators (KPIs) help track progress toward equity and inclusion goals, strengthen accountability and transparency, and identify where strategies or actions may need adjustment. Effective measurement begins with clearly defined objectives and indicators, supported by on-going data collection to track outcomes over time and identify areas requiring attention and improvement.[78,79]

Municipalities can employ several mechanisms to put measurement into practice. Based on the Municipal EDIR Platform's framework, they may develop EDI metric, monitoring and benchmarking procedures and ensure effective data collection, evaluation and transparency practices are in place. They may also incorporate these principles into community outreach, engagement and consultation or in policy development and EDI tools.[80]

Our review found that municipalities use quantitative indicators and diagnostic tools to understand progress. Common measures include workforce representation, recruitment and retention, governance diversity, compensation and pay equity, as well as employee experiences of inclusion and opportunity.

- **Track representation and workforce outcomes.** The City of Toronto has set culture and diversity goals in governance and in the workforce, as well as metrics to attract and retain employees.[81] The City of Waterloo has used internal censuses and surveys to understand representation across its workforce. Its first census, conducted in 2019, identified areas where representation could be improved, and a second census and survey were completed in 2024. The City has also continued to assess recruitment and advancement practices to improve understanding of factors contributing to representation gaps.[82]
- **Use transparency and reporting to identify inequities and guide action.** The City of Vancouver's *Pay Transparency Report 2023* provides a detailed analysis of pay equity, highlighting pay gaps by gender, role and employment type. This process demonstrates the city's commitment to transparency in compensation practices and outlines actionable steps toward reducing pay inequities.[83] Reporting these results helps identify pay gaps, track change over time and determine where further action may be needed.
- **Combine representation data with measures that help explain underlying experiences and barriers.** As an equity partner with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, the City of Saskatoon is required to set targets and report on the representation of Indigenous Peoples, racialized people, persons with disabilities, and women. The city complements these workforce data with tools such as the Intercultural Development Inventory, which assesses organizational intercultural competence, and the Equity Quotient Survey, which examines employee perceptions of discrimination and career opportunities. This allows the city to not only identify representation gaps but also explain why these gaps may persist.[84]
- **Collect and analyze user data to understand who is being served.** The City of Toronto's *Data for Equity Strategy* supports city divisions in gathering socio-demographic data to guide program planning and service delivery.[85] They also have *Data for Equity Guidelines* to provide guidance divisions on why, when and how to collect and store socio-demographic data as well as advice on disaggregated data.[86] This strategy ensures the City of Toronto understands who is using its services and whether extra support is needed. The City of Vancouver uses a location-based approach to parks and recreation to help identify priority areas and address inequities. They use geographic analysis to identify patterns of uneven resource distribution and equity factor analysis to improve their understanding of community needs (e.g., demand for recreation or access to nature).[87]



Taken together, these approaches show the value of using multiple forms of evidence in the measurement process. Representation and other KPIs can show where disparities exist, while employee experience and organizational measures can provide additional insight into why they may persist and where action can be focused.

Training materials

Training helps build the knowledge and practical skills needed to apply equity and inclusion across organizations, especially when training combines awareness with skills development and is supported by broader organizational initiatives.[88] It is most effective when it goes beyond raising awareness to teaching concrete skills and when it is reinforced by municipal actions and processes, such as inclusive policies, hiring practices and decision-making. Municipalities across Canada offer accessible customer service training not only as part of their commitments to federal and provincial accessibility legislation, but also to support inclusion within their communities. This training helps shape how staff, volunteers and service providers interact with residents and how inclusive and accessible policies, programs and services are in practice.[89]

Our review found that several municipalities provide accessible customer service training to employees and volunteers involved in service delivery. Common across these practices is an emphasis on practical guidance for interacting with residents with disabilities and meeting accessibility requirements in day-to-day municipal work.

> **Provide role-relevant accessibility training and documentation for staff.** The City of Markham has an *Accessibility Training Booklet*, with content adapted and re-printed, with permission, from the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. The resource provides practical guidance on responding to different accessibility needs and building understanding of disability in the context of municipal service delivery.[90]

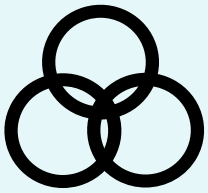
> **Extend training beyond employees where others interact with the public.** The City of Ottawa requires mandatory accessibility training for volunteers, including modules on accessible customer services and integrated accessibility standards regulation for volunteers are available for the public.[91] Extending training to volunteers recognizes that residents may interact with a range of people when accessing municipal programs and services, not only permanent municipal staff.

Internal processes

Advancing EDIR within municipalities requires attention to the internal structures, processes and workplace conditions that shape how decisions are made and how employees experience the organization. This helps establish leadership accountability, identifies and addresses barriers across human resource processes, and helps promote an organizational culture in which employees from diverse backgrounds can participate, contribute and advance equitably.[92]

Governance and leadership

Leaders play an important role in setting the tone from the top by establishing expectations for equity and inclusion and ensuring that commitments are reflected in organizational priorities and decisions. Leadership can demonstrate this commitment by communicating the importance of equity and inclusion publicly, ensuring diverse perspectives inform decision-making and incorporating equity and inclusion considerations across organizational policies.[93, 94]



Research consistently shows that when leadership teams reflect diverse identities, backgrounds and lived experiences, ***decision-making benefits from a range of perspectives, organizational performance improves,*** *and* ***inclusion is supported****.*

Leadership commitment is also reflected in the composition of leadership. Research consistently shows that when leadership teams reflect diverse identities, backgrounds and lived experiences, decision-making benefits from a range of perspectives,[95] organizational performance improves,[96] and inclusion is supported.[97]

Municipal leaders can demonstrate commitments to EDIR through decisions about strategic priorities, budgets, staffing, policy development, performance expectations, community engagement and the allocation of organizational resources. Formal governance structures, designated responsibilities and mechanisms for collaboration can help ensure that responsibility for EDIR is shared across the organization and incorporated into routine municipal planning and operations. Promising practices within this sub-dimension focus on actions municipalities can take to translate EDIR commitments into shared responsibilities. This might include advisory committees and work groups; anti-racism strategies and initiatives; community outreach, engagement and consultation; community-centered EDI strategies, tools and frameworks; leadership and workforce diversity; and accountability monitoring.[98]

Several practices were identified for how municipalities can strengthen EDIR through governance and leadership, including:

> **Communicating leadership commitment and organizational direction.** Public strategies, action plans, and external communications can clarify municipal priorities and demonstrate leadership accountability for EDIR. The City of Pickering's *EDI Strategy* offers messages from both the mayor and Chief Administrative Officer that underscore the importance of EDIR, connecting it with benefits to creativity, productivity, retention and organizational performance.[99]

> **Creating advisory structures that bring diverse perspectives into municipal decision-making.** Municipal advisory committees vary in mandate: some address EDIR broadly, while others focus on specific communities or forms of inequity. For example, the City of Kingston's EDI Advisory Committee offers a structured platform for diverse voices to influence decision-making processes and enhances the municipality's ability to develop policies and initiatives that reflect the needs and perspectives of all residents.[100] Similarly, Niagara Region's EDI Advisory Committee aims to address biases and discrimination, mitigate negative impacts, and enhance the quality of life for diverse communities across the region.[101] More targeted committees can provide focused expertise on individual issues. For example, the City of Vancouver's Racial and Ethno-Cultural Equity Advisory Committee, advises on policies and services related to ethno-cultural engagement, racism and racial inequities, and promotes racial justice and equity.[102]

> **Building cross-organizational and community leadership around shared EDIR priorities.** Some municipalities extend their EDIR work through collaboration with other public and community-serving institutions whose decisions also affect residents. York Region, for example, co-chairs the Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group with York Regional Police. The group brings together 20 organizations, including municipalities, police services, hospitals, school boards, conservation authorities and agencies around a shared commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities.[103] This type of collaboration can help connect municipal EDIR efforts with the broader network of institutions serving the same communities.



This shows that leadership can commit and foster EDIR through multiple channels: individual leadership, formal governance and advisory structures, public accountability and collaboration across institutions.

Human resource processes

Human resource (HR) practices shape the employee experience throughout the recruitment and employment lifecycle. Barriers can arise at different points in the employee lifecycle, from how jobs and qualifications are defined and opportunities are shared and advertised, to how candidates are assessed, employees are supported and evaluated, and how decisions about advancement and retention are made.[104, 105] Research shows that, without deliberate attention to equity and inclusion, bias can become embedded in job design, hiring processes and career advancement decisions.[106] For example, a field experiment found that age-coded language in job postings, such as "digital native" or "recent graduate," reduced callback rates for applicants over 40, with older women affected most severely.[107, 108]

Embedding EDIR across HR processes can help municipalities identify and address barriers to access, opportunity and advancement at different stages of the employee lifecycle. Some considerations, based on the Municipal EDIR Platform's framework, include EDI statements; EDI training and capacity building; employee advancement and retention; employee engagement and exit surveys; internships and mentorship; job design; leadership and professional development; reasonable accommodation strategies; recruitment strategies; selection and interview processes; and standardized employment and pay levels.[109]

Municipalities are incorporating inclusive HR strategies through multiple ways:

- **Building inclusion into job design, recruitment and applicant supports.** Municipalities can broaden access to employment opportunities by communicating EDIR commitments, encouraging applications from Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, providing accommodations and making recruitment processes easier to navigate. The City of Saint John, for example, encourages members of equity-deserving groups to apply for municipal positions,[110] while the City of Toronto's *Hiring Policies and Statements* outlines how candidates can request accommodation during hiring.[111] The City of Markham also communicates its accommodation process to applicants and provides practical guidance on job searching and preparing for interviews.[112]
- **Using structured approaches to reduce bias in selection.** Standardized processes, diverse hiring panels, training and documented assessment criteria can help ensure candidates are evaluated consistently. The City of Mississauga's *Corporate Policy and Procedure* document provides interview guidelines that require interviews to be conducted in a fair and consistent manner. Hiring managers are encouraged to establish diverse interview panels, and at least one panel member must have completed the EDI Hiring Manager

Certification. Candidate evaluations are also documented as part of the recruitment process, creating a more structured basis for hiring decisions.[113]

- **Examining where barriers emerge across the recruitment and employment lifecycle.** Workforce representation only provides part of the picture. Municipalities should understand outcomes from applications and screening to interviews, hiring, advancement and retention to identify representation gaps. For example, a municipality may attract a diverse applicant pool but see lower representation at the interview or hiring stage or achieve diversity in entry-level positions without comparable representation in management and leadership. The City of Winnipeg supports this kind of analysis by encouraging applicants to voluntarily self-declare as part of the recruitment process, creating a potential source of data for understanding representation at different stages of hiring.[114] Where appropriate and consistent with privacy requirements, municipalities can use disaggregated data on applicants, interview and hiring outcomes, occupational and leadership representation, compensation, promotions, access to development opportunities, retention and turnover. Looking across these measures can help municipalities identify where barriers may be occurring and develop more targeted responses.
- **Developing targeted pathways into municipal employment and career development.** Internships, work-integrated learning, mentorship and other professional development opportunities can help municipalities broaden talent pipelines and address underrepresentation in particular roles or levels of the organization. The City of Toronto's *Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism*, for example, identifies increasing employment and training opportunities for Black Torontonians through enhanced internship opportunities for Black youth, including Black queer and trans youth. It also identifies the development of a Black Staff Network to support professional development and employee engagement.[115]
- **Supporting equitable career advancement.** EDIR considerations extend beyond who enters the organization to who has access to professional development and advancement once employed. Transparent criteria and clearly communicated processes can help employees understand how career progression decisions are made. Niagara Region's *Human Resources Best Practices Guidebook* outlines a structured approach to career advancement intended to clarify promotion criteria and support employee participation in the process.[116]

Collectively, these practices demonstrate the value of examining the employee lifecycle as an interconnected system. Recruitment can broaden who enters the organization, but sustained progress depends on examining selection, development, advancement, compensation and retention to understand whether employees have equitable opportunities to participate and progress.

Values and culture

Inclusive organizational cultures help create workplaces where employees feel respected, valued and supported.[117] Employees also

need equitable opportunities to contribute and advance, access to accommodation where required, and confidence that discrimination, harassment and other exclusionary behaviours will be addressed. A 2024 Public Service Employee Survey found that only 67% of federal public servants felt valued at work, down from 72% in 2022, and the share of employees describing their workplace as psychologically healthy fell to 59% from 68% over the same period.[118] Earlier cycles of the survey also highlighted experiences with discrimination and harassment. Employees with disabilities and gender-diverse employees were disproportionately affected, with roughly 20% reporting experiencing discrimination in the past year, and close to one-third reported experiencing harassment.[119]

Municipalities must consider workplace culture as employee experiences can influence how policies, programs and services are designed and delivered to diverse communities. A culture that values different identities, perspectives and lived experiences can strengthen belonging, engagement and retention while bringing a wider range of perspectives into municipal decision-making.[120]

Municipalities can reinforce these expectations through several areas of action, including anti-discrimination and anti-hate resources; community grants; cultural and diversity events; parental leave accommodations; EDI policies, employee resource groups (ERGs); inclusive spaces; Indigenous awareness, engagement and reconciliation; mental health and well-being; and remote and hybrid work policies.[121]



The following practices show how municipalities are strengthening organizational cultures:

> **Establish policies that define organizational expectations for inclusion and respectful workplaces.** The City of Edmonton's *Diversity and Inclusion Policy* articulates a commitment to recognizing and embracing human differences as strengths.[122] Similarly, the City of Charlottetown's *Diversity and Inclusiveness Policy* establishes expectations for an equitable and barrier-free workplace that reflects community diversity and supports a respectful and inclusive environment for all employees.[123]

> **Create clear mechanisms for preventing and responding to discrimination and harassment.** Policies and reporting processes can help employees understand expected behaviours, available protections and what to do when concerns arise. The City of Hamilton's *Harassment and Discrimination Prevention Policy* identifies protections under the Ontario Human Rights Code, defines and provides examples of workplace harassment, and sets out a confidential complaint process.[124] The Town of Innisfil similarly provides a formal respectful-workplace complaint process for employees who experience or witness inappropriate behaviour.[125]

- **Embed accessibility into organizational policies and planning.** Accessibility plans can establish concrete actions for identifying and removing barriers affecting employees and residents with disabilities. For example, the City of Kingston's *2023–2025 Multi-Year Accessibility Plan* sets out actions to advance accessibility and remove barriers across municipal operations and services while fostering inclusivity.[126]
- **Support employee networks that strengthen belonging and provide opportunities for connection and voice.** The City of Mississauga introduced ERGs across the organization in 2023 and has endorsed groups for racialized employees, Indigenous Peoples, Black employees, 2SLGBTQI+ employees and people with disabilities.[127] Similarly, the City of Toronto supports Communities of Inclusion, including the Black Staff Network, Employee Disability Network and Pride Network, which provide opportunities for employees to connect, build awareness and contribute to a more inclusive workplace.[128]

These practices illustrate how organizational culture is reinforced through both formal structures and employees' day-to-day experiences. Policies establish expectations and protections, while accessibility measures, reporting mechanisms and employee networks can help translate those expectations into workplace practice.

Policies and programs

Municipal policies and programs shape how residents experience local government and access services, resources and opportunities. Embedding EDIR throughout the policy and program lifecycle, from design to implementation to evaluation, can help municipalities identify and address barriers, consider differential impacts on Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, and strengthen the responsiveness of municipal services to community needs.

This dimension is primarily outward-facing and examines how EDIR is incorporated into the policies, programs and functions that directly affect communities. It includes the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs, procurement, the application of EDIR across core municipal functional areas, and specialized activities where equity, diversity and inclusion considerations may need to be built into planning and delivery from the outset.

Design, implementation and evaluation

Applying an equity and inclusion lens throughout the design, implementation and evaluation of municipal policies and programs can help identify and address barriers to access, participation and outcomes for Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups.[129]

Municipalities can integrate EDIR and accessibility from the outset, carry these considerations through implementation, and assess whether policies and programs

are reaching and serving communities as intended. For example, this can include applying universal design, accessibility and human rights principles, incorporating the perspectives and lived experiences of diverse communities into design and implementation, and using disaggregated data and other forms of evidence to assess outcomes. Evaluation can then help identify where approaches are working, where disparities remain and where policies or programs may need to be adapted.

Within this sub-dimension, areas of action range from accessibility and inclusive design to community and Indigenous engagement, anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives, and equity considerations in procurement, social programs and policy development.[130] Municipalities are applying EDIR across this cycle through practices such as the following:

> **Apply an EDIR lens when designing and reviewing policies and programs.** Structured processes can help municipalities consider who may experience a policy or program differently, identify potential barriers and incorporate diverse perspectives before decisions are finalized. For example, municipalities can consider whether services are accessible by public transportation, affordable and offered at convenient hours and locations. For example, the City of Toronto's Anti-Black Racism Analysis Tool provides questions for examining policies and programs through an anti-Black racism lens and guidance on engaging diverse communities in the development of municipal services.[131] Similar approaches can focus on other dimensions of equity. Vancouver's *Women's Equity Strategy* applies an intersectional gender lens to strengthen City processes and inform decision-making, with priorities spanning areas such as safety, child care, housing and women's leadership and representation.[132] The City of Edmonton's *Indigenous Framework* provides guidance for incorporating reconciliation and relationships with Indigenous Peoples across municipal policies, programs and services and was co-developed with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community partners and youth.[133] For disability and accessibility, the City of Ottawa's *Accessibility Policy* provides an overarching framework for reviewing and developing City policies, standards, procedures, practices, by-laws and guidelines, helping ensure accessibility considerations are incorporated across municipal decision-making.[134]

> **Carry EDIR principles through implementation.** Inclusive design must be translated into how policies, programs, services and public spaces operate. The City of Calgary's *Anti-Racism Strategic Plan* commits to reviewing and updating municipal policies and processes through an anti-racism lens and improving access to programs and services for equity-deserving groups.[135] Accessibility provides another practical example. The City of Toronto's *Accessibility Design Guidelines* addresses areas such as exterior paths of travel, pedestrian zones, parking, parks and playgrounds, and communication and information systems.[136] Mundy Pond Park in St. John's exemplifies inclusive design through a play space developed to accommodate children with a range of abilities.[137]

> **Evaluate policies and programs and use findings to support improvement.** Evaluation allows municipalities to examine whether policies and programs are reaching communities as intended, if barriers or disparities remain, and where approaches may need adjustment. The City of Toronto's 2024 review of its social procurement program examined program data from 2017 to 2023 against its objectives of advancing supply-chain diversity and workforce development. Findings from the review informed proposed changes to the program, including additional business and community engagement and consideration of disaggregated socio-demographic data to strengthen future measurement.[138] In 2024, the City of Vancouver reviewed its arts, culture and social grant programs, examining equity, access, community participation, data collection and outcome reporting. The review identified opportunities to improve how the city measures the reach and impact of grant funding, including refining metrics related to specific neighbourhoods and community groups. In response, city staff committed to piloting outcome-metric collections with a sample of funded non-profit organizations and exploring how the resulting measures could inform future granting priorities and processes.[139]

These examples demonstrate that EDIR is most effectively incorporated as an ongoing consideration throughout the policy and program lifecycle. Design can anticipate barriers, implementation can respond to how policies and programs operate, and evaluation provides evidence to support ongoing refinement and improvement.

Procurement

Procurement is the process through which organizations acquire goods, services, and infrastructure needed to operate. Organizations' procurement decisions determine who has access to economic opportunities generated by organizational spending. Integrating equity and inclusion into procurement processes helps broaden economic participation for Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups.[140, 141]

Municipal procurement is an important lever for advancing EDIR because purchasing decisions can broaden access to public-sector contracting opportunities; public spending can also be used to generate wider social and economic benefits for communities. Embedding EDIR into procurement can help broaden the supplier base, increase opportunities for diverse-owned and social-purpose businesses, and use public purchasing to advance workforce development and broader social, economic and environmental objectives.[142]



*Municipal procurement is an **important lever for advancing EDIR** because purchasing decisions can broaden access to public-sector contracting opportunities.*

Within this dimension, municipalities can advance EDI in procurement through formal social or sustainable procurement policies, targeted supplier-diversity approaches, outreach to Indigenous and equity-deserving suppliers, and procurement tools that incorporate social, environmental and economic considerations into purchasing decisions.[143]

Our review identified several approaches municipalities use to embed EDIR into procurement:

> **Establish formal social and sustainable procurement frameworks.** The City of Edmonton's *Sustainable Procurement Policy* provides a framework for incorporating environmental, social and economic considerations into purchasing while maintaining open, fair and transparent procurement processes.[144] Similarly, the City of Vancouver's *Sustainable and Ethical Procurement Policy* includes a social-value pillar aimed at increasing opportunities for social-purpose and diverse-owned suppliers and supporting more equitable participation in municipal procurement.[145]

> **Design bid questions and evaluation criteria that support diverse suppliers.** The City of Mississauga's *2025 EDI Strategy* recommends adding questions to its *Sustainability Leadership Questionnaire* on whether suppliers belong to supplier diversity councils or are owned or operated by diverse suppliers. Bidders with community engagement components should include requirements for describing how they will engage local or diverse organizations and be evaluated on their responses. It also recommends that technical requirements, such as annual revenue and project experience, match the scale of the project to ensure equitable processes so that small and local suppliers are not excluded from bidding.[146]



> **Use procurement criteria and assessment tools to incorporate social and equity objectives into purchasing decisions.** The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo uses a social procurement questionnaire that assesses suppliers across areas including economic development and business diversity, supply-chain practices, skills development and inclusive hiring.[147] The City of Calgary similarly incorporates social procurement criteria into purchases above specified thresholds, assessing considerations related to economic, social, climate and environmental, and governance objectives.[148]



> **Broaden access to municipal procurement opportunities.** Supplier-diversity and outreach initiatives can help reduce barriers for businesses that may have less experience navigating public procurement processes. This can include increasing awareness of opportunities, simplifying access to information, engaging diverse supplier networks and building a stronger pipeline of businesses able to compete for municipal contracts. The City of Toronto's Social Procurement Program aims to improve access to the City's supply chain for Indigenous, Black and other equity-deserving communities. The City has also used targeted outreach and engagement with business associations, supplier organizations and community partners to increase awareness of procurement opportunities and connect diverse suppliers with City contracting processes.[149]

These approaches show that procurement can be used not only to acquire goods and services, but also to advance broader municipal priorities by embedding social and equity considerations into how purchasing decisions are structured and assessed.

Functional areas

All aspects of municipal functions and operations can benefit from EDIR considerations. According to the Municipal EDIR platform's framework, key functional areas include land-use planning and transportation, economic development, social and cultural programs, corporate services, communications and digital accessibility.[150] Reviewing these functions through an EDIR lens can help municipalities identify how different communities experience policies, programs and services, possible barriers to access or participation, and where approaches may need to be adapted to respond to diverse needs.[151] The appropriate considerations will vary by function, but can include accessibility, affordability, geographic access, cultural relevance, reconciliation, community participation and differences in outcomes across populations.

Municipalities are embedding EDIR across functional areas, including:

- **Integrating equity, accessibility and reconciliation into planning and development.** Land-use and infrastructure decisions influence where people live, how they access services and amenities, and how the benefits and impacts of growth are distributed. Toronto's *Official Plan* explicitly incorporates EDIR into its planning priorities, including equitable access to services and amenities, universal accessibility, Indigenous placemaking and placekeeping, and monitoring equity outcomes associated with policies and actions.[152] Edmonton provides a more specific example through its River Crossing redevelopment. Its *Indigenous Involvement Approach* was developed with input from 32 Indigenous nations and representative organizations and embeds Indigenous participation across project engagement, communications, economic reconciliation and ownership, historical review and operations.[153]
- **Addressing barriers to mobility and transportation.** Transportation can shape access to employment, education, services and participation in community life, making affordability and accessibility important EDIR considerations. Toronto's Fair Pass Transit Discount Program applies an affordability lens to transportation by providing reduced Toronto Transit Commission and Wheel-Trans fares to eligible low-income residents. Eligibility has been expanded over time to include those experiencing financial barriers, including low-wage workers, newcomers and people receiving other forms of income or housing support.[154]
- **Using economic and community development to broaden access to economic opportunity.** Inclusive economic development approaches look beyond aggregate economic growth to consider who is able to participate in and benefit from the local economy. Vancouver's *Downtown Eastside Community Economic Development Strategy* was co-created with community partners and focuses on creating broad and inclusive economic opportunities, including low-barrier income generation, support for low-income self-employment, community benefit agreements, social-purpose real estate and partnerships that increase employment and incomes.[155]
- **Advancing economic reconciliation and Indigenous community well-being.** Municipal economic development functions can also support Indigenous self-determination, entrepreneurship, employment and participation in local economic activity, but should ensure Indigenous Peoples, governments and organizations are meaningfully involved in setting priorities, shaping initiatives and guiding decisions that affect their communities. Toronto's *Reconciliation Action Plan* includes a commitment to improve Indigenous economic development through workforce and training opportunities, partnerships with Indigenous employment organizations, Indigenous procurement and the Indigenous Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (ICIE). The ICIE is Indigenous-led and was developed with guidance from Indigenous entrepreneurs, business leaders, community members and Elders.[156]

- **Designing social programs around differences in community needs and access.** Social programs should use place-based and population-specific approaches to direct resources and supports toward communities experiencing different barriers. For example, Toronto's *Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy* focuses on improving social, economic and physical conditions in neighbourhoods and prioritizes the leadership and participation of Indigenous, Black and equity-deserving groups in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas and other communities of focus.[157]
- **Embedding equity, accessibility and reconciliation in cultural programs.** Cultural policies and programs can influence whose histories, identities and creative work are reflected in public life and who has opportunities to participate. Vancouver's *Culture Shift* plan incorporates cultural equity and accessibility alongside reconciliation and decolonization. Its development deliberately sought the perspectives of Indigenous, racialized, low-income and 2SLGBTQI+ residents as well as persons with disabilities, and included objectives related to Indigenous cultural presence and more equitable access to cultural support and programming.[158]
- **Making municipal communications accessible to linguistically diverse communities.** Municipal information may be available; however, it can be difficult to access when language or communication barriers are not considered. Vancouver's *Language Access Policy* establishes standards for language accessibility in public-facing city services and communications, recognizing that information about municipal programs and activities should reflect the city's linguistic and cultural diversity. The policy prioritizes language access where services have significant consequences for residents or serve large numbers of people with limited English proficiency, while also recognizing the importance of local Indigenous languages.[159]
- **Building accessibility into digital services and information.** As more municipal interactions take place online, accessibility also needs to extend to websites, applications, documents and other digital content. Toronto's *Digital Accessibility Standard* applies to public and internal-facing websites, applications, third-party digital services and documents. It requires accessibility to be considered through design, development and quality assurance, with formal review and remediation processes for identified barriers.[160]

These examples demonstrate that EDIR is not limited to dedicated equity initiatives. It can be incorporated into the everyday functions through which municipalities plan, invest public resources, deliver services and communicate with residents. The specific considerations and approaches will differ across functions, but the common objective is to understand how municipal decisions affect different communities and use that understanding to improve access, participation and outcomes.

Specialized activities

Municipalities may also embed EDIR considerations into specialized planning and response processes. For example, emergency management and resilience are especially important because extreme weather, wildfires,

flooding and other disruptions can affect residents differently depending on disability, age, income, housing, transportation access, language and geographic isolation.[161, 162] Municipalities can strengthen preparedness and response by considering these differences before emergencies occur and incorporating equity and accessibility throughout preparedness, evacuation, response, recovery and resilience planning.[163]

Our review identified several approaches municipalities use to embed EDIR within these specialized activities:

> **Integrate accessibility and lived experience into emergency planning.** Emergency plans and services can create barriers when they assume that residents have the same mobility, communication, transportation or support needs. Vancouver added Emergency Management and Climate Change as a new focus area in its *2024–2026 Accessibility Strategy* after engaging with persons with disabilities and identifying concerns related to evacuation, emergency information, accessible transportation and access to cooling and warming centres. The city subsequently incorporated actions related to partnerships with disability-serving organizations, accessible emergency preparedness and coordination with other orders of government.[164]

> **Develop preparedness resources around the needs of specific populations.** Municipalities can complement general emergency information with guidance that responds to the circumstances of groups who may face additional risks. The City of Surrey, for example, developed an *Emergency Preparedness Guide for Older Adults* that addresses emergency communication, personal planning and extreme heat, recognizing challenges that can be associated with mobility, health conditions and social isolation.[165] Smaller municipalities can take similar approaches. The Town of Lincoln provides specific fire and life-safety guidance for persons with disabilities, including accessible alarm options, individualized escape planning and the use of designated helpers where a resident may require assistance to evacuate.[166]

> **Use intermunicipal partnerships to strengthen emergency-management capacity.** For smaller municipalities, collaboration can provide a way to coordinate expertise, resources and response capacity across neighbouring communities. The Town of Lincoln, Town of Pelham, Township of West Lincoln and Township of Wainfleet jointly established the *Niagara West Emergency Management Program and Emergency Plan*. The shared model provides a coordinated framework for preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies across the participating municipalities.[167]

> **Adapt emergency planning to northern and remote contexts.** Geography and infrastructure can create distinct considerations for northern municipalities, including limited transportation routes and the possibility that full evacuation may not be immediately feasible. Following the 2023 wildfire emergency, the City of Yellowknife updated its *Community Emergency Plan* and *Evacuation Plan* using findings from an after-action assessment. The plans take an all-

hazards approach and include contingency planning for partial evacuation and sheltering within the community, reflecting Yellowknife's remote and relatively isolated location and its dependence on limited highway and air connections.[168, 169]

> **Build equity and community partnerships into recovery.** Emergency management continues after the immediate incident, and recovery processes can help municipalities identify residents who require additional assistance. Following major flooding in July and August 2026, the City of St. Catharines established a Vulnerable Assistance Registry for residents requiring support with water and waste removal. As recovery progressed, the city worked with community and provincial partners to connect residents with food, cleaning supplies, household items, debris removal and mental-health supports, while also maintaining telephone options for residents who required assistance accessing online services.[170]

These examples demonstrate that inclusive emergency management requires attention to the full emergency management cycle. Preparedness can identify differing needs before an event occurs; response and evacuation planning can account for accessibility, transportation and geographic constraints; and recovery processes can direct additional supports to residents who face greater barriers to recovering from an emergency. Partnerships with community organizations, neighbouring municipalities and other orders of government can also expand the capacity of municipalities to respond to complex and changing needs.

Community engagement

Community engagement is a core part of effective municipal decision-making as it helps municipalities understand community needs, identify barriers and incorporate lived experience into the design of policies, programs and services. Meaningful engagement can strengthen trust, improve the relevance and responsiveness of public decisions, and create clearer lines of accountability between governments and the communities they serve.[171, 172]

This dimension focuses on how municipalities engage and who is included. Authentic engagement involves creating accessible and inclusive opportunities for participation, building sustained relationships, communicating in ways that reflect diverse communities, and using community input to inform decisions. Identifying interested and affected parties helps municipalities consider the range of residents, community organizations, cultural and faith-based groups, service providers, institutions and other partners that may be affected by or have important knowledge to contribute to a municipal initiative.

For Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, these considerations can require more deliberate and tailored approaches. Conventional engagement processes may not always reach people who face barriers to participation, while relationships with Indigenous Peoples, governments and organizations should be understood as distinct from general stakeholder engagement and grounded in sustained, respectful partnership.

Authentic engagement approaches

Authentic engagement goes beyond inviting participation at a single point in time. It involves creating accessible and inclusive opportunities for residents to contribute, building relationships with communities over time, being clear about how input will be used, and demonstrating how community perspectives have informed municipal decisions.[173]

Municipalities sometimes draw on standardized frameworks, such as the International Association for Public Participation's spectrum,[174] to structure engagement efforts. However, research suggests that reliance on standardized frameworks can be problematic, as they undermine the need for engagement approaches that are responsive to the needs of specific communities.[175] This is especially relevant for Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving groups, for whom tailored approaches are needed to address barriers to participation and ensure that lived experience is meaningfully reflected across municipal policies.

Within this dimension, the Municipal EDIR platform's framework showcases how community outreach and engagement can help inform EDI strategies; employment, skills development and workforce inclusion; housing and community development; inclusive volunteering practices; community grants; programs and initiatives; and Indigenous awareness, engagement and reconciliation.[176] Our review identified several approaches municipalities use to strengthen the quality and inclusiveness of engagement:



- **Build accessibility and inclusion into municipal communications.** Clear, accessible and representative communications can help broaden participation by ensuring residents can understand municipal information and see their communities reflected in how the municipality communicates. The County of Brant's *Communications and Marketing Plan* incorporates EDI principles into its communications approach, including a commitment to making communications accessible, inclusive and representative of the community it serves.[177]
- **Reduce barriers to participation in community engagement.** Engagement processes can exclude people when they are held at inconvenient times and locations, holding sessions in locations that are not comfortable for communities or are not designed with accessibility considerations. It is key to meet communities where they are at, in accessible, comfortable and well-known locations like local libraries. The City of Mississauga's 2025 *EDI Strategy* recommends that engagement sessions are inclusive and support the needs of diverse communities, including offering both in-person and virtual sessions, providing language support, and considering time and location, among others.[178]

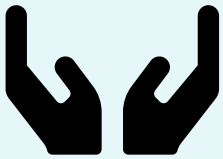


- **Engage communities directly in the development of strategies and priorities.** Sustained engagement can help municipalities understand lived experiences, identify barriers and develop responses with the communities most affected. The City of Vancouver's work on anti-Black racism included engagement with city staff, the Hogan's Alley Society and members of Vancouver's Black community to inform recommendations, principles and practices aimed at strengthening safety, inclusion and equity for Black residents.[179]
- **Work with communities to shape public spaces, cultural initiatives, public art and other visible expressions of local identity that authentically reflect local cultures and histories.** This means ensuring that communities are directly involved in creating the work, for example, commissioning Indigenous artists to create Indigenous art rather than using Indigenous-inspired designs. The City of St. Catharines, launched a process in 2026 to commission a permanent Indigenous public artwork for the Five Corners parkette. The commission opportunity was open to Indigenous artists and Indigenous-led artist teams, and the project was developed in collaboration with the Niagara Academy for Indigenous Relations, which provided curatorial guidance and cultural advisory support. The project also encouraged artists to engage with the histories, knowledge systems and treaty relationships connected to the site.[180]
- **Show communities how their input influenced a decision.** Authentic engagement also involves showing participants how their input influenced a decision, what was changed as a result, or why particular recommendations could not be adopted. Communicating back to communities demonstrates transparency and helps build trust for future engagement. For example, the City of Calgary uses "What We Heard" and "What We Did" reports as part of its public engagement processes. For its local area planning projects, the city summarizes the themes raised by participants and then reports on how those themes were considered or incorporated into subsequent plans. Where suggestions cannot be advanced, the process also provides a rationale. This creates a visible link between community participation and the decisions that follow.[181]

These approaches emphasize that the quality of engagement depends not only on who participates, but also on how participation is structured and how community input is reflected in decisions.

Examples of interested and affected parties

Building relationships with community organizations, cultural groups, Indigenous organizations, and other parties helps ensure municipalities' engagement reflects the diverse communities they serve. Effective community engagement begins with identifying who may be affected by a municipal decision and who has knowledge, experience or relationships that may inform it.[182] Interested and affected parties can include residents with lived experience, community and neighbourhood organizations, cultural and faith-based groups, Indigenous Peoples and equity-deserving communities, service providers, businesses, institutions and other orders of government. The appropriate participants will vary depending on the issue, the communities affected and the potential effects of a municipal decision or initiative.



Community organizations *can be especially important partners because they often bring* ***established relationships****,* ***specialized knowledge*** *and* ***trust*** *within the communities they serve.*

Community organizations can be especially important partners because they often bring established relationships, specialized knowledge and trust within the communities they serve. They can help municipalities understand emerging priorities and barriers to participation and reach residents whose perspectives may be less likely to be captured through conventional engagement processes. Engagement with organizations should complement, rather than replace, opportunities for residents and people with lived experience to participate directly.[183, 184]

Within this dimension, municipalities can embed EDIR into several areas of action, such as arts and cultural inclusion; community outreach, engagement and consultation; and inclusive language, communication, and marketing.[185] Our review identified several approaches municipalities use to engage interested and affected parties:

> **Engage people with lived experience, organizations and community groups representing communities most affected by an issue.** Municipalities can tailor engagement to ensure that the people most likely to experience the effects of a policy, program or decision are represented in its development. For example, the City of Hamilton's community safety and well-being work has involved residents and organizations across sectors and communities. Its Building Safer Communities initiatives are informed by engagement with youth, parents, guardians and service providers and include community partners serving Indigenous,

Black, women and newcomer youth. Hamilton's broader *Community Safety and Well-Being Plan* also uses cross-sector leadership and community partnerships to guide implementation.[186]

> **Recognize relationships with Indigenous Peoples and governments as distinct from general community engagement.** First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples are not simply another group of interested or affected parties. These relationships are shaped by Indigenous rights, treaties, histories, jurisdiction and the ongoing work of reconciliation. Municipalities can support stronger relationships by engaging Indigenous governments, communities and organizations early, building relationships over time, and creating opportunities for Indigenous priorities and knowledge to inform municipal planning and decision-making.[187] The City of Whitehorse, for example, has a longstanding Declaration of Commitment with Kwanlin Dün First Nation and Ta'an Kwäch'än Council that commits the three governments to ongoing communication, regular meetings and collaboration on shared priorities. In 2025, the three governments continued this relationship through a Tri-Council Assembly focused on issues including land-use planning, economic development and joint advocacy.[188] The City of Yellowknife similarly maintains government-to-government relationships with neighbouring Indigenous governments and has formalized its relationship with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation through a memorandum of understanding, regular leadership meetings and collaboration on areas such as community economic development.[189]



> **Build collaboration across departments and roles.** EDIR initiatives may be difficult to sustain when responsibility is concentrated within a single department or individual. In larger municipalities, EDIR must be embedded across several departments to ensure cohesive implementation across municipal functions. For example, the City of Toronto's Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit is responsible for implementing the *Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism* and working directly with municipal divisions to drive policy change.[190]



> **Build cross-sector partnerships around shared community priorities.** Some municipal issues require collaboration among municipalities, community organizations, service providers, institutions and other orders of government. Hamilton's *Community Safety and Well-Being Plan* provides one example, bringing together partners from multiple sectors to address interconnected priorities such as violence, housing, mental health, substance use and access to income. A System Advisory Leadership Table provides ongoing cross-sector oversight and supports shared accountability for implementation.[191, 192]

> **Extend engagement through community-based cultural and inclusion initiatives.** Municipalities can also create opportunities for residents to participate in community life, build relationships and see their identities and cultures reflected in local programming. The Town of Inuvik, for example, hosts an annual festival celebrating the diverse cultures of the North and providing a platform for artists from different backgrounds to share their work.[193] Similarly, the Town of Banff offers activities and events designed to support young adults and newcomers in building social connections and a stronger sense of belonging within the community.[194]

Across these approaches, identifying interested and affected parties is not simply an exercise in developing a longer engagement list. It requires considering whose experiences are most relevant to a decision, whose voices may otherwise be missed, what relationships already exist within the community, and what type of relationship is appropriate. Broad and intentional engagement can help municipalities access different forms of knowledge while creating stronger connections between community experience and municipal decision-making.



Conclusion

Municipalities have an important role in advancing EDIR through their internal operations and the policies, programs and services that shape community life. Research reviewed for this report links stronger EDIR approaches with positive organizational and community outcomes, including employee retention, workforce innovation, service delivery, fiscal efficiency and procurement diversity. These benefits are most likely to be realized when EDIR is embedded into how municipalities plan, make decisions, allocate resources, engage employees and communities, assess progress, and use evidence to strengthen policies, programs and practices over time.

The promising practices identified through this research reinforce the value of a system-wide approach. Strategy and goal setting establish direction. Governance and leadership create accountability. Human resource practices influence who can enter, participate and advance within municipal workplaces, while inclusive organizational cultures shape employees' day-to-day experiences. EDIR-informed policies, programs and services help municipalities respond to the needs of diverse communities. Procurement, planning, economic development, accessibility, emergency management and other municipal functions provide additional opportunities to translate broad commitments into practical action. Authentic community engagement strengthens this work by bringing the perspectives and lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples, equity-deserving groups and other residents into municipal decision-making.

Municipalities differ substantially in population, geography, governance structures, resources and the communities they serve. Approaches that are feasible for a large urban centre may need to be adapted for a smaller, rural, northern or remote municipality, while local demographic, economic and historical contexts will shape priorities in every community. The more than 260 promising practices identified across provinces and territories demonstrate this diversity of approach. Rather than prescribing a common pathway, they provide practical reference points that municipalities can draw on, adapt and build upon according to their own needs, capacities and stage of development.

Sustained progress depends on moving from commitment to ongoing action. This means establishing clear goals and responsibilities, embedding EDIR considerations into routine municipal processes, investing in the capacity of employees and leaders, identifying and addressing barriers, engaging communities meaningfully, and using evidence to understand what is working and where approaches can be strengthened. Progress may take different forms across municipalities, but the common objective is to build institutions, policies, programs and services that are increasingly responsive to the people and communities they serve. The framework and promising practices presented in this report provide a practical foundation for municipalities to continue that work, learn from one another and adapt promising approaches to their own local context.





Appendix A: Structure of the Municipal EDIR Platform

Municipal Category (4)	Sub-Category (14)	Topic (110)
Aligning strategy with organizational goals	Context and goal setting for EDIR strategies	Advisory committees and working groups
		Anti-racism strategies, and initiatives
		Community grants
		Community-centred EDI strategies
		EDI metrics, monitoring and benchmarking
		EDI strategies, tools, and frameworks
		Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) framework
		Equity-responsive budgeting
		Indigenous awareness, engagement, and reconciliation
		Indigenous relations
		Leadership and workforce diversity
		Youth initiatives
	Implementation	Advisory committees and working groups
		Anti-racism and cultural redress
		Community outreach, engagement, and consultation
		Community safety and well-being
		Community-centred EDI strategies
		EDI metrics, monitoring, and benchmarking
		EDI strategies, tools, and frameworks
		GBA+ framework
		Employment equity policies
		Tools and frameworks for monitoring and accountability
	Measurement and KPIs	Community outreach, engagement, and consultation
		Data collection, evaluation, and transparency
		EDI metrics, monitoring, and benchmarking
		Policy development and EDI tools
	Training materials	Accessible customer service
	Legislation	Legislation

Municipal Category (4)	Sub-Category (14)	Topic (110)
Internal processes	Governance and leadership	Advisory committees and working groups
		Anti-racism strategies and initiatives
		Community outreach, engagement, and consultation
		Community-Centred EDI strategies
		EDI strategies, tools, and frameworks
		Leadership and workforce diversity
		Tools and frameworks for monitoring and accountability
	Human resource practices	EDI statements
		EDI training and capacity building
		GBA+ framework
		Employee advancement and retention
		Employee engagement and exit surveys
		Financial investment and resource allocation
		Internships and mentorship
		Job design
		Leadership and professional development
		Reasonable accommodation strategies
		Recruitment strategies
		Selection and interview processes
		Standardized employment and pay levels
	Values and culture	Accessibility plans and policies
		Anti-discrimination and anti-hate resources
		Community grants
		Cultural and diversity events
		Disability, family status, and parental leave accommodations
		EDI policies
		Employee resource groups
		Inclusive spaces
		Indigenous awareness, engagement, and reconciliation
		Intercultural relations
		Mental health and well-being initiatives
		Pride
		Remote and hybrid work policies
		Strategies for fostering inclusive workplace culture
		Workplace culture and safety
		Public education and cultural awareness
		EDI metrics, monitoring, and benchmarking

Municipal Category (4)	Sub-Category (14)	Topic (110)
Policy and programs	Design, implementation and evaluation	Accessibility and cultural diversity awards
		Accessibility plans and policies
		Accessible customer service
		Addressing environmental racism
		Anti-discrimination plans and initiatives
		Anti-racism strategies and initiatives
		Communications
		Digital accessibility
		Community engagement and consultation
		Community outreach, engagement, and consultation
		EDI strategies, tools, and frameworks
		Inclusive and accessible design
		Indigenous awareness and reconciliation
		Indigenous awareness, engagement, and reconciliation
		Language revitalization and cultural preservation
		Policy design and development
		Poverty and community development initiatives
		Procurement and supplier diversity policies
		Social programs
		Corporate services
		Sustainable development
	Procurement	Procurement and supplier diversity policies
	Functional areas	Planning
		Transportation
		Economic development
		Social programs
		Cultural programs
		Corporate services
		Communications
		Digital accessibility
	Specialized activities	Emergency management and resilience strategies
		Partnerships, programs, and initiatives
		Social and inclusive procurement practices

Municipal Category (4)	Sub-Category (14)	Topic (110)
Community engagement	Examples of interested and affected parties	Arts and cultural inclusion
		Community outreach, engagement, and consultation
		Inclusive language, communication, and marketing
	Authentic engagement approaches	Community outreach and engagement
		EDI strategies, tools, and frameworks
		Employment, skills development, and workforce inclusion
		Housing and community development
		Inclusive volunteering and organizational practices
		Indigenous awareness, engagement, and reconciliation
		Leadership, research, and training partnerships
		Community grants
		Partnerships, programs, and Initiatives
		Social and inclusive procurement practices



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