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Town of Aurora
Committee of the Whole Report
No. CS26-003

Subject: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Strategic Plan Status Report

Prepared by: Gregory Peri, Accessibility Advisor

Department: Corporate Services

Date: February 10, 2026

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CS26-003 be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the Town of Aurora's corporate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (D.E.I.) initiatives and the progress made toward achieving them.

- The Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2021–2024 Strategic Action Plan provides the foundation for advancing D.E.I. across the organization.
- The Town has made progress in embedding D.E.I. principles into its operations and workplace culture.
- Between 2021 and 2025, forty-nine initiatives have reached full completion, particularly those related to employee retention, inclusive recruitment, and the strengthening of strategic partnerships.
- Seven initiatives from the Strategic Plan remain under review. These items require further evaluation, employee-led interest, system readiness, or additional resources to proceed.
- While a new plan is not being developed, the next phase focuses on developing a set of recommendations and identification of resources required that will be used to advance key D.E.I. initiatives.

Background

The Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2021–2024 Strategic Action Plan provides the foundation for advancing D.E.I. across the organization.

The D.E.I. Plan was approved by Council on Tuesday, October 26, 2021, and provides recommendations on how the Town can improve its workplace diversity and equity. The plan was developed based on a review of key Town documents and policies, input from the senior leadership team and key collaborators.

The plan emphasizes the removal of barriers, the promotion of equitable practices, and the cultivation of a culture that values and celebrates diversity. Building on this foundation, the Town adopted a results-based approach for 2025, using measurable objectives and key results (O.K.Rs) to track progress and maintain accountability.

The Town has made progress in embedding D.E.I. principles into its operations and workplace culture.

Upon approval of the 2021 D.E.I. Strategic Plan, Town staff initiated the implementation of its outlined actions. These undertakings varied in scope and complexity as various divisions collaborated to ensure the implementation of the plan was successful.

In 2024, Council received CMS24-044, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Status Update, which was a report relating to D.E.I. efforts within the community. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with information regarding D.E.I. initiatives and advancements made within the organization.

Analysis

Between 2021 and 2025, forty-nine initiatives have reached full completion, particularly those related to employee retention, inclusive recruitment, and the strengthening of strategic partnerships.

Collectively, this work reflects a sustained effort to embed D.E.I. principles into core people practices, talent acquisition, and external collaboration across the organization.

Organizational Culture

Efforts to strengthen organizational culture have focused on fostering collaboration, inclusion, and belonging across the workforce. Feedback from the employee engagement survey and staff feedback sessions with Excellence Canada indicate

positive movement in staff perceptions of inclusion and workplace culture. Town staff will continue to use engagement survey data as a primary tool for measuring organizational culture and identifying opportunities for improvement.

Recruitment

Recruitment practices as it relates to D.E.I. have also improved. Job postings have been reviewed to ensure inclusive and bias-free language, and equal opportunity principles have been embedded throughout the recruitment process. These updates, along with targeted outreach and partnerships with external organizations, have diversified the candidate recruitment pool.

The Town has also established and maintained recruitment partnerships with a range of organization and platforms, each with their own Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs. These include universities and colleges, the WXN Career Centre, Charity Village, Work in Culture, Municipal World, social media platforms and local newspapers.

Combining efforts with those of our partners ensure that the town of Aurora is recruiting from the widest range of candidates possible.

Partnerships

Strategic partnerships have continued to expand, with the Town developing a comprehensive inventory of existing alliances and forming new connections with agencies that support diverse talent sourcing. These relationships are essential to ensuring that the Town's workforce reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

Training and Development

Training and development efforts have focused on reviewing and updating corporate policies to ensure they reflect equitable and inclusive practices. Leadership training has also been delivered, including organization-wide sessions with external facilitators to build awareness and understanding of equity, bias and inclusive leadership. Further mandatory D.E.I. training for all staff and people leaders has been identified as an outstanding item and will be reviewed in conjunction with the implementation of the Town's new Learning Management System (L.M.S.). New onboarding modules and refresher training opportunities are anticipated to be rolled out in 2026.

Seven initiatives from the Strategic Plan remain under review. These items require further evaluation, employee-led interest, system readiness, or additional resources to proceed.

The creation of Employee Resource Groups underwent a pragmatic review, however, best practice is clear that these groups must be employee-led to be successful. The Town supports and encourages the formation of Employee Resource Groups where there is demonstrated interest and leadership from staff, with corporate support available through C.M.T. or E.L.T. The need for such groups will continue to be evaluated, informed by employee engagement survey results, which show improved inclusion benchmarks since 2020.

Building on corporate-wide training delivered in 2025, training for diverse hiring panels and unconscious bias will be revisited through the L.M.S. Efforts to make the workplace more welcoming for diverse employees, including identification of quiet or spiritual spaces, has largely been addressed through existing spaces and inclusive practices. Increasing awareness and additional communication are the next steps to achieve completion.

The development of a formal D.E.I. lens remains an outstanding initiative. While the Strategic Action Plan identified this as a recommendation, implementation requires a multi-year approach and external consultant expertise. Staff will review the feasibility of developing a D.E.I. lens, including the external resources required, recognizing that this tool would support many remaining initiatives, including communications, service delivery, and training.

The implementation of a Talent Management System and expanded use of workforce data remains under review. At present, the Town relies primarily on employee engagement survey data to inform decision-making. Opportunities to leverage additional analytics will be explored as new systems are implemented.

Similarly, a corporate communication strategy focused on D.E.I. will be developed once a formal D.E.I. lens is established, ensuring consistent and clear messaging across the organization.

While a new plan is not being developed, the next phase focuses on developing a set of recommendations and identification of resources is required that will be used to advance key D.E.I. initiatives.

Staff undertook a comprehensive review to confirm completed initiatives and identify outstanding actions. Over the coming months, staff will focus on developing and

refining future Objectives and Key Results (O.K.Rs) to ensure measurable, realistic, and transparent tracking of progress. Staff are also exploring the possibility of partnering with York University to develop further D.E.I opportunities.

Advisory Committee Review

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Strategic Plan has been reviewed as part of the Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, by the Accessibility Advisory Committee.

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

There is sufficient funding within the approved budget in support of the Town's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion 2021–2024 Strategic Action Plan. Should an incremental funding need arise from this plan, staff will bring a report to Council for its consideration as appropriate.

Communications Considerations

D.E.I initiatives are communicated to staff through all staff emails and through internal newsletters. In addition, any D.E.I. initiatives that are training based are placed on the corporate calendar on the employee intranet. This report will also be posted on the Town's website.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendation does not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (D.E.I.) initiatives supports the Strategic Plan goal of **Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all** through its alignment with the objective of **Celebrating and promoting our culture**. This is achieved by advancing initiatives that

create a more inclusive and welcoming community environment where all residents and employees feel represented and valued.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. None.

Conclusions

The Town is making meaningful progress in advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (D.E.I.), including the implementation of best practices, the development of a corporate D.E.I. framework, and the expansion of learning opportunities. These initiatives will carry forward into the next phase to ensure continued alignment with our commitment to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization.

Attachments

None.

Previous Reports

CS21-056, Diversity Equity & Inclusion Strategic Action Plan 2021-2024, October 19, 2021

CMS24-044, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Status Update, December 2, 2024

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on January 22, 2026

Approvals

Approved by Patricia De Sario, Director, Corporate Services/Town Solicitor

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer