

# DCIF – Culture Tool 5: Enhancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace

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## Tags

### Who is this tool for?

#### High Level Priority:

- **DEI** and HR Professionals
- Senior Executives and management

#### Practical Information:

- People Leaders

#### Useful to know:

- Frontline staff

### What guidance does this tool provide?

- Understanding the difference between diversity and inclusion
- How to advance diversity and inclusion in the workplace
- Understanding what **equity** means for workers with disabilities
- How to enable an equitable working environment

### Take home messages:

- As an organization working towards diversity, you can leverage for cross-organizational support, create a culture of accountability across the employment life cycle and routinely review workplace policies for inclusion for strategic management.
- With **equity**, an organization understands that they may need to treat people differently, by providing varied resources, privileges, and support, to treat them fairly. When equity is paired with diversity and inclusion, employees do their best work, and the business is primed for success.

## Diversity Includes Disability

Today, socially conscious consumers pay close attention to corporate public stances on global issues such as climate change, human rights, poverty, and more. Industry leaders have learned how to respond to these social needs and are working to create positive change.

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“Companies that embrace diversity and inclusion in all aspects of their business statistically outperform their peers.” – McKinsey Research<sup>1</sup>

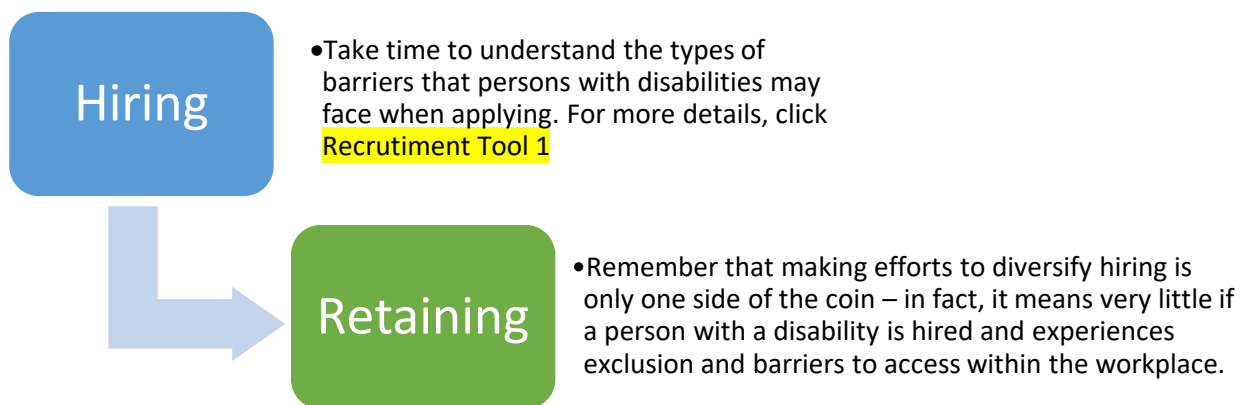
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While businesses have devoted notable efforts towards gender parity, racial equity, and inclusion of the **LGBTQ2S+** communities, one aspect of diversity that must not be left behind is disability. Building a diverse workforce is simply not possible without including workers with disabilities.

*At TD, we believe that inclusion is key to combating racism in all its forms. Our work to further our inclusive journey includes working to improve representation at the executive levels, creating spaces for open dialogue, continuing to host enterprise-wide colleague events, developing and delivering training on and awareness of pan-experiences of Pan-Asian colleagues and further exploring financial investment and volunteering in the Pan-Asian community.*

### It’s More Than Just Hiring Diversely

Our population is changing demographically – 1 in 5 people in Canada have one or more disabilities, and this number will continue to grow as the population ages.<sup>2</sup> Businesses can no longer afford to ignore the many qualified candidates with disabilities – they need to better reflect and keep up with the changing marketplace.



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“Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance.” - Vernā Myers, VP Inclusion Strategy at Netflix

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Despite their best intentions, companies that invest in diversity without inclusion will not see the strategic benefits of hiring workers with disabilities. Simply put, **workplace diversity does not equal workplace inclusion.**

## What can a business do to advance diversity and inclusion?

Canadian companies leading the way towards disability inclusion understand the importance of:

### 1. Cross-Organization Support:

- a. Leverage organizational change and initiatives for disability inclusion at multiple levels of influence: senior executives, middle management, and frontline staff
- b. Secure top-level commitment, include disability confidence as a board priority, and add it to an executive portfolio
- c. Create space for dialogue, conversation, and questions among middle management to grow their disability confidence
- d. Equip middle management with the support and resources they need to facilitate staff learning about disability confidence
- e. Engage frontline staff and inspire a sense of responsibility within them to change

### 2. Culture of Accountability

- a. Integrate diversity and inclusion strategies into all aspects of the employment life cycle (e.g., recruitment, interviewing, onboarding, accommodation, performance management)
- b. Provide routine disability awareness training for all employees on essential topics related to the **Accessible Canada Act<sup>3</sup>** and human rights legislation, such as disability sensitivity, accessibility training, **neurodiversity** training, mental health training, unconscious bias, and more **[link to training landing page]**
- c. Create opportunities for employees to drive change through employee resource groups or networks, and disability inclusive initiatives
- d. Invite employees to become disability inclusion champions, lead conversation and initiatives, and bring communities together

### 3. Strategic Measurement:

- a. Routinely<sup>1</sup> review workplace policies for inclusion, with particular focus on strengthening policies that may be specific to people with disabilities (e.g., disability discrimination and harassment, workplace accommodations, etc.)
- b. Identify meaningful diversity and disability inclusion metrics for your company
- c. Develop a detailed implementation strategy to move the needle on any defined metrics for diversity and disability inclusion
- d. Identify areas of success in your diversity and inclusion efforts, and encourage similar activities (e.g., for staff) and externally (e.g., for partners)

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<sup>1</sup> Review of policies and identification of barriers in such policies may occur in unison with the timeline for preparation of accessibility plans under the ACA.

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*“DEI is a comprehensive benchmarking tool that helps us assess our existing practices and identifies opportunities to improve our efforts so that we can boldly grow the good in business and in life. At BMO, Diversity and Inclusion are our core values and we are excited to receive a top score and work with our leaders and employees on making BMO a great place to work for all.” - Tricia Myers, U.S. Head of Inclusion & Diversity, People & Culture.*

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## Adding Equity to the Picture

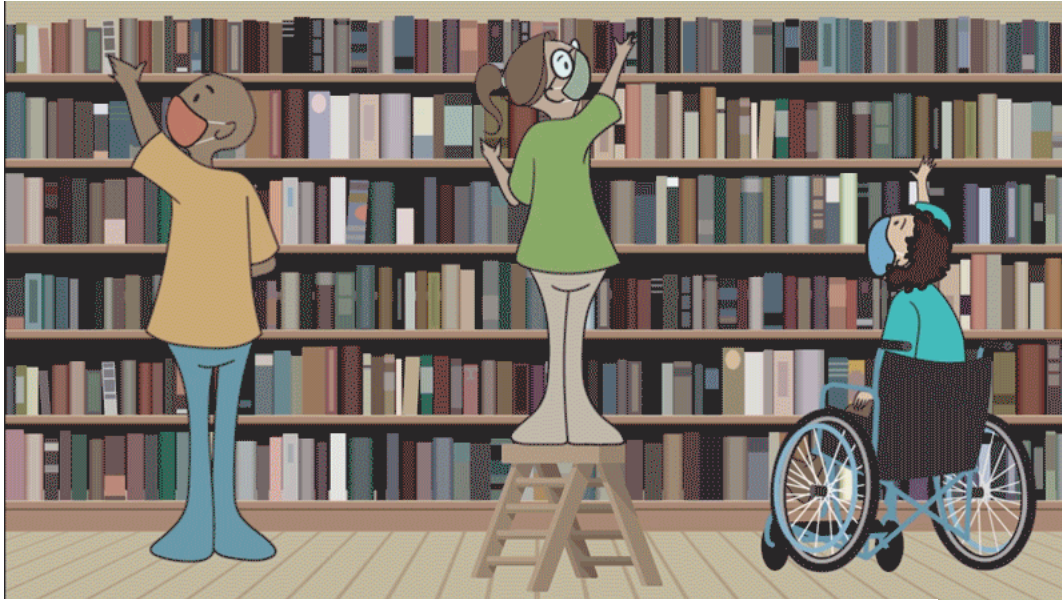
Top businesses are taking concrete steps towards embracing **equity** in the workplace. They recognize that equitable workplaces can elevate the impact of diversity and inclusion efforts and foster an inclusive culture.

### What is Workplace **Equity**?

The Government of Canada (2022)<sup>4</sup> defines **equity** as:

*Fairness, impartiality, even-handedness. A distinct process of recognizing differences within groups of individuals and using this understanding to achieve substantive equality in all aspects of a person's life.*

Equity in the workplace refers to a state where every employee, regardless of their **intersectional** identities, backgrounds, and **lived experiences**, has access to fair opportunities based on their individual needs.



**EQUALITY VERSUS EQUITY**



In the first image, it is assumed that everyone will benefit from the same supports. They are being treated equally.



In the second image, individuals are given different supports to make it possible for them to have equal access to the game. They are being treated equitably.



In the third image, all three can see the game without any supports or accommodations because the cause of the inequity was addressed. The systemic barrier has been removed.

With **equity**, an organization understands that they may need to treat people differently, by providing varied resources, privileges, and support, in order to treat them fairly. When **equity** is paired with diversity and inclusion, employees do their best work, and the business is primed for success.

Without **equity**, the business benefits associated with diversity and inclusion can be threatened. Even the most diverse company will fail if employees with disabilities do not have a fair and **equitable** opportunities to fully participate and advance their careers. Nobody wants to feel undervalued or stagnant in their role at work.

## The Importance of Equitable Leadership

*Successful businesses understand the importance of equitable leadership. People who lead with equity ensure that nobody is left behind. They ask questions about who is not at the table, and why? They aren't afraid to challenge longstanding stereotypes, biases, and microaggressions in the workplace.*

When leaders are focused on equity, they challenge negative biases and stereotypes towards workers with disabilities, and act as effective change agents for inclusivity and accessibility for all.<sup>5</sup>

- ✓ They are open to continuous learning, which enables the business to grow
- ✓ They celebrate diversity, and this includes disability
- ✓ They recognize the value in having diverse perspectives – staff with different educational backgrounds, functional abilities, and ways of thinking
- ✓ They are more successful in engaging individual and collective action.

**A culture of equity invites people with disabilities to be their authentic selves at work.**

### Intersectionality Avatars

**Salima:** Let's talk about microaggressions! French is the official language at schools in my home-country and I have been speaking English ever since I can remember! So, when someone compliments me on my French or English skills, it feels like a reminder for me that I am not from here, almost like I do not belong as others who were born and raised here do.

**Taylor:** Ouff, that is harsh. For me, it is when a well-meaning person says they will offer me a makeover, to show me how pretty I could be as a girl. As if that was the sole reason why I am non-binary. I will not even get into how often I am referred to with the wrong pronouns!

**Dante:** It is insulting, and I know exactly how it feels. Being a large Black guy with aphasia, people are constantly amazed by my aptitude at solving difficult issues at work. I have spent 30 years on the job and gotten all the advanced degrees necessary to get to where I am, but I have to constantly prove myself anyway.

## What can a business do to enhance workplace equity?

The Government of Canada has established the Employment Equity Act, which seeks to remove systemic barriers for people in 4 designated groups in federally regulated workplaces:<sup>6</sup>

1. Women
2. Indigenous peoples
3. Persons with disabilities
4. Members of visible minorities

On top of following your legal requirements under the Employment Equity Act [see [Legal Briefing](#)] here are some best practices that you can invest in to enhance workplace equity:

- **Invest in education and wraparound supports for equity-seeking groups.** The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasized the need to account for the systemic barriers and inequities that exist for women, BIPOC folks, individuals with disabilities, members of the LGTBQ2S+ community, and more. To support these equity-seeking groups, invest in workplace education programs or

partner with organizations that provide wraparound supports such as childcare, transportation, or housing for such groups.<sup>7</sup> This can help equip future employees with skills and resources they need to contribute to the workforce.

- **Support pre-employment opportunities.** An excellent way to attract students, graduates, and workers with disabilities is through the development of bridge experiences. Pre-employment opportunities such as co-op placements, paid internships, and job trials can draw in people with disabilities towards your organization and help them build skills relevant to your business.<sup>8,9</sup>
- **Focus on skills-based hiring.** Many hiring decisions hinge upon factors such as educational attainment and history of work. However, people with disabilities face profound barriers to access and participation in education and employment. They should not be barred from working when they have skills required to do the job. Rather than requiring a university degree or continuous work experience, rethink what ‘counts’ as knowledge, recognize other qualifications, and consider making hiring decisions on the basis of skill and potential.<sup>10</sup>
- **Be transparent with pay structure.** Ongoing and open discussion of pay structure and wages need to be normalized to achieve **pay equity**. Gaps in earnings for workers with disabilities can be kept in the dark if conversations about pay happen in private. To ensure that employees are compensated fairly and address the potential for undervaluation of work, transparency around pay structure is needed and wages should recognize the value of work – equal pay for work of equal value.<sup>11</sup>
- **Include equity-based training opportunities.** Without **equity**, professional development plans would be one and the same across an organization, regardless of the intersecting identities and various levels of education, skills, and lived experiences of workers. To bridge skills gaps among employees, equity-based approaches to training and targeting upskilling is needed.<sup>8</sup>
- **Empower workers through resources groups.** Networks and employee resource groups are effective avenues where individuals with alike interests can rally together, engage in discussion, and develop awareness and initiatives that support a given cause (e.g., disability, **LGBTQ2S+**, intersectionality, etc.). Understand that although workers with disabilities can become champions for **diversity, equity, and inclusion**, they are not point persons solely responsible for the education of others. Encourage the participation of all workers, with and without disabilities, to join these groups.
- **Challenge biases.** Workers with disabilities, along with other **equity-seeking groups**, are disadvantaged in the workplace. Persons with disabilities experience the most significant gaps in their representation in the workforce compared with other designated groups.<sup>12</sup> Through training and ongoing dialogue, organizations can hone increased awareness of the biases that inform negative attitudes and unfair treatment of **equity-seeking groups** and begin to engage in conversation and open dialogue about how to make the workplace more equitable and inclusive.
- **Ensure diverse cross-level representation.** While efforts to hire more diverse workers have increased, equitable opportunities for career advancement are not always the case. Workers with disabilities and Indigenous workers frequently remain in entry-level or low paying jobs.<sup>13</sup> To truly pave the way towards **equity** at your company, performance management and promotions must be equitable, and diverse representation in executive, management, technical, and board roles is needed.



## References

- <sup>1</sup>Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, V., & Prince, S. (2020). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>
- <sup>2</sup>Morris, S., Fawcett, G., Brisebois, L., & Hughes, J. (2017). A demographic, employment and income profile of Canadians with disabilities aged 15 years and over, 2017. *Statistics Canada*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2018002-eng.htm>
- <sup>3</sup>*Accessible Canada Act*, SC 2019, c. 10. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/A-0.6/>
- <sup>4</sup>Government of Canada (2022). Diversity, equity and inclusion learning path for executives. <https://www.cspes-efpc.gc.ca/diversity-inclusion-eng.aspx>
- <sup>5</sup>Link, J. (2019). *The Difference Between Workplace Equity And Equality, And Why It Matters*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2019/08/15/the-difference-between-workplace-equity-and-equality-and-why-it-matters/?sh=3cfbc6093d31>
- <sup>6</sup>*Employment Equity Act*, SC 1995, c. 44. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/E-5.401/index.html>
- <sup>7</sup>Centre for Postsecondary and Economic Success. (2017). Defining on-ramps to adult career pathways. CLASP. <https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/public/resources-and-publications/publication-1/Minnesota-Career-Pathways-On-Ramps.pdf>
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- <sup>10</sup>Langston, A., Scoggins, J., & Walsh, M. (2021c). Advancing workforce equity in Seattle: A blueprint for action. *Policy Link and USC Equity Research Institute*. [https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Advancing-Workforce-Equity\\_Seattle.pdf](https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Advancing-Workforce-Equity_Seattle.pdf)



<sup>11</sup>Government of Canada (2022). Pay gap reporting in federally regulated private-sector workplaces. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/portfolio/labour/programs/employment-equity/pay-gap-reporting.html>

<sup>12</sup>Ng, E., Haq, R., & Tremblay, D. G. (2014). A review of two decades of employment equity in Canada: Progress and propositions. *International Handbook on Diversity Management at Work*, 46-67.

<sup>13</sup>Luffman, J., & Sussman, D. (2007). The Aboriginal labour force in Western Canada. *Statistics Canada*. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-001-x/10107/9570-eng.htm>