

Chapter 4

Public Service Commission—Advancing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion in Ministries

1.0 MAIN POINTS

Workplace diversity and inclusion can lead to greater innovation, employee retention and productivity, and ability to meet client needs. Diversity recognizes each person is different and unique, which fosters a variety of skills, ideas, and experiences to help organizations meet their objectives. Inclusion is creating a workplace where every employee feels valued and a sense of belonging.

The Public Service Commission is responsible to coordinate the development and implementation of employment equity policies and programs in ministries, and develop a public service representative of Saskatchewan's diversity. We found the Commission had effective processes to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries, except it needs to:

- Modernize the Employment Equity Policy and expand its inclusion toolkit (i.e., guidance for managers) to include all key diversity and inclusion concepts.
- Monitor ministries' inclusion plans and progress reports. This will allow the Commission to identify where to assist individual ministries with implementing effective actions for increasing diversity and inclusion in their workplaces, and determine changes needed to cross-ministerial inclusion strategies.
- Establish clear indicators (e.g., employment satisfaction scores by different demographic groups) to measure, and then report progress toward achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals. This will promote transparency, show commitment, and help legislators and the public hold the Commission and ministries accountable for results.
- Conduct sufficient analysis of diversity and inclusion data to better assess progress toward cross-ministerial goals and plan further actions for building diverse and inclusive workplaces. As of September 2021, the percentage of employees in ministries who report as disabled, Indigenous, or racialized (e.g., someone who is non-Caucasian) are below the Commission's benchmarks.

One of the best ways to know if diversity and inclusion in ministries is improving is to measure and track it. Effective processes for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion can help ministries to better innovate, problem solve, and provide services to the public.



2.0 INTRODUCTION

The Public Service Commission is the central human resources agency for the Government of Saskatchewan. The Commission operates under the authority of *The Public Service Act, 1998*. As of January 2022, it provides human resources leadership and policy direction to 17 government ministries.¹ The Commission works with ministries on workforce management by supporting the delivery of foundational services such as payroll, staffing and classification, as well as strategic support including labour relations and organizational development.²

In 2020–21, the Commission had 300 full-time equivalent positions in offices in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert. For 2021–22, the Public Service Commission had a total budget of \$34 million (2020–21 actual: \$33.2 million).^{3,4}

We audited the Commission's processes to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries.

Diversity refers to all the ways each person is different and unique. These differences can include factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and/or having a disability. Inclusion is how a person feels they belong. An inclusive workplace creates an environment where employees of every demographic feel safe, welcomed, and supported to succeed.⁵

Workplace diversity and inclusion means taking steps to try to represent all people at all levels in the workforce. It is designed to eliminate barriers faced by designated groups who are not employed in the same proportions in which they are available in the working age population (i.e., ages 15–74).⁶ Designated groups include:

- Individuals reporting an Indigenous identity
- Members of a visible minority (e.g., racialized) group
- Individuals reporting a disability
- Women in underrepresented occupations (e.g., heavy equipment operator)

2.1 Public Service Commission's Role in Advancing Workplace Diversity and Inclusion

By law, the Public Service Commission is responsible for representing the public interest in human resource management in the public service, including in ministries. It is responsible for developing, establishing, and maintaining classification plans; conducting research on compensation and working conditions within the public service, including at

¹ Ministries include Advanced Education; Agriculture; Corrections, Policing and Public Safety; Education; Energy and Resources; Environment; Finance; Government Relations; Health; Highways; Immigration and Career Training; Justice and Attorney General; Labour Relations and Workplace Safety; Parks, Culture and Sport; SaskBuilds and Procurement; Social Services; and Trade and Export Development.

² *Public Service Commission Plan for 2021–22*, p. 3.

³ *Public Service Commission Annual Report for 2020–21*, pp. 4 and 18.

⁴ *Public Service Commission Plan for 2021–22*, p. 8.

⁵ Public Service Commission, taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/access-employee-information/workplace-diversity (22 February 2022).

⁶ saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/2019-employment-equity-targets/ (28 February 2022).

ministries; and coordinating the development and implementation of employment equity policies and programs as described in *The Public Service Act, 1998*.⁷ The Commission also strives to develop a public service representative of Saskatchewan's diversity.

The Commission's Talent Branch within the Centres of Excellence Division leads its work on advancing workplace diversity and inclusion. At January 2022, the Branch had about 25 employees, and is responsible for supporting the acquisition, engagement, and development of the public service, including in ministries, through strategic workforce planning, succession planning, as well as supporting sourcing, recruiting, selecting, and developing talent.⁸

The Commission works closely with ministries to support workplace diversity and inclusion. While the ministries are responsible for hiring and managing employees in ways that will achieve cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals, the Commission provides the policies and guidance to lead and support that work.

2.2 Importance of Diversity and Inclusion in Saskatchewan

A 2018 report showed many Canadians continue to experience labour force outcomes that are far below other nations, and the gaps show no sign of closing. For example, Indigenous peoples, disabled people, and racialized people face significant challenges. The report showed the workforce participation rate for Indigenous people was approximately 10% below that of non-Indigenous people.⁹

The report also showed disabled people face lower workforce participation rates. Only 48% of disabled individuals were employed compared to nearly 74% without disabilities. Many disabled people with jobs were uncomfortable disclosing information about their disability, with 27% of those interviewed indicating their employer was not aware of their work limitations.¹⁰

In addition, across Canada, vulnerable populations disproportionately felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. These vulnerable populations include individuals from marginalized communities (e.g., racialized people, those with lower incomes).¹¹

A diverse workforce provides a larger pool of skills, ideas, and experience enabling an organization to become more innovative in planning, problem solving, and in providing better services to clients. Organizations that value diversity and maintain an inclusive workplace culture may improve retention of workers with diverse backgrounds and enhance their loyalty. In turn, this may reduce costs associated with employee turnover, recoup training investments, and sustain institutional memory.¹² **Figure 1** shows how inclusion benefits ministries.

⁷ *The Public Service Act, 1998*, s. 3(d), 11 (1) and (2).

⁸ *Public Service Commission Annual Report for 2020–21*, p. 4.

⁹ Deloitte. (2018). *Report on Outcomes over Optics—Building Inclusive Organizations*, p. 20. www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ca/Documents/audit/ca-audit-abm-scotia-inclusion-outcomes-over-optics.pdf (28 February 2022).

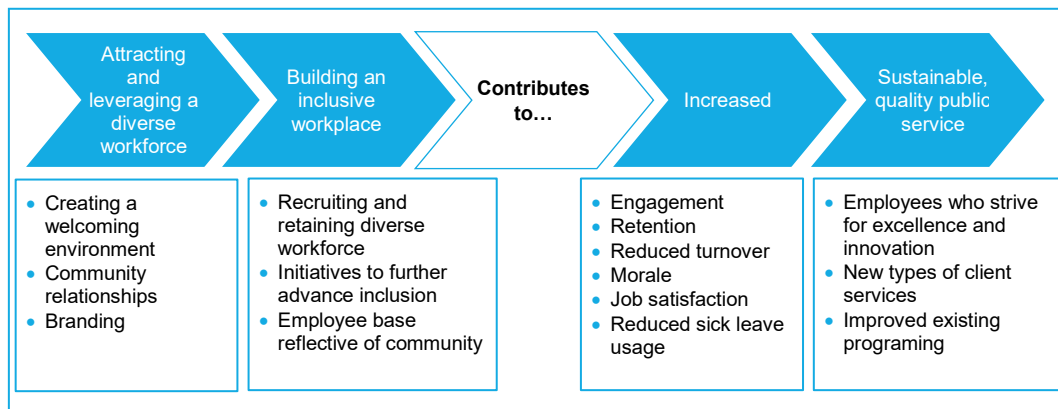
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹ Vosburgh, Elizabeth (2021). *Developing an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Program*, p. 1.

¹² International Labour Organization (2016). *Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Workplace Adjustments – A Practical Guide*, p. 22.



Figure 1—How Inclusion Benefits Ministries



Source: Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Strategy (9 March 2022).

Leaders who engage in addressing workplace diversity and inclusion recognize inequities and bias, as well as disrespect and marginalization in the workplace. By addressing these issues through education, performance management, and formal programs, leaders will help foster the creation of a safe and accountable workplace culture that eliminates barriers to both employment and customer service. **Figure 2** shows how inclusion and diversity works.

Figure 2—How Inclusion and Diversity Works



Source: Ontario Public Service – Inclusion and Diversity Blueprint. www.ontario.ca/page/ops-inclusion-diversity-blueprint (9 March 2022).

Diversity brings creative and innovative thought, makes the workplace more dynamic, and leads to successful business results, as well as an engaged and productive workforce. Leveraging diversity and inclusion creates and supports more ideas, as well as meaningful relationships and partnerships with community groups, and builds value for the people the ministries serve.¹³ As a large employer group of over 11,000 people, ministries require strong policy direction and guidance from the Commission to help them attract and retain a diverse workforce.

Without effective processes for advancing workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries, the Commission may not adequately support ministries' abilities to innovate, problem solve, and provide services to the public.¹⁴ Further, this may also negatively affect certain individuals' ability to fully participate in the economy and may increase their reliance on publicly-funded social programs.

3.0 AUDIT CONCLUSION

We concluded, for the 12-month period ending January 31, 2022, the Public Service Commission had effective processes, except in the following areas, to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries. The Public Service Commission needs to:

- **Modernize the Employment Equity Policy and expand its inclusion toolkit to consistently embed key diversity and inclusion concepts**
- **Establish clear indicators to measure and then report progress toward achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals**
- **Monitor ministries' inclusion plans and progress reports to support ministries with implementing effective actions that increase diversity and inclusion in their workplaces**
- **Conduct sufficient analysis of diversity and inclusion data to assess progress, and plan further actions for building diverse and inclusive workplaces**

Figure 3—Audit Objective, Criteria, and Approach

Audit Objective: Assess the effectiveness of the Public Service Commission's processes, for the 12-month period ending January 31, 2022, to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries.

Audit Criteria:

Processes to:

1. **Set a framework for workplace diversity and inclusion**
 - Set clear policies that support workplace diversity and inclusion (e.g., workforce planning, recruitment, education and awareness)
 - Establish cross-ministerial goals and strategies to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in collaboration with key partners (e.g., ministries, unions, community organizations)

¹³ Public Service Commission (2021). *Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Strategy*, p. 1.

¹⁴ International Labour Organization (2016). *Promoting Diversity and Inclusion through Workplace Adjustments – A Practical Guide*, p. 22.



2. Support strategies to advance diversity and inclusion

- Provide appropriate guidance and tools to support ministries (e.g., procedures, templates, training, working groups)
- Oversee implementation of cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion strategies (e.g., timely monitoring, reviews, feedback, follow-up)
- Address implementation issues (e.g., identified during oversight processes, complaints analysis)

3. Monitor diversity and inclusion results achieved

- Periodically collect data related to workplace diversity and inclusion (e.g., labour force participation, employment recruitment and turnover, employee surveys, complaints, industry benchmarks)
- Analyze data to assess progress toward goals and strategies (e.g., compare success of candidates to labour market representation, compare results to targets, identify root causes for shortfalls)
- Adjust policies and strategies to address shortfalls
- Communicate results to Commission senior management, ministries, and the public (e.g., actuals compared to targets, plans to address shortfalls)

Audit Approach:

To conduct this audit, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Public Service Commission's processes, we used the above criteria based on related work, reviews of literature, and consultations with Commission management and our audit consultant. The Commission's management agreed with the above criteria.

We examined the Commission's policies, procedures, research, and reports relating to advancing workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries. We also assessed training, inclusion work-plans, and meeting minutes. We interviewed key Commission staff responsible for workplace diversity and inclusion. We hired an external equity, diversity, and inclusion consultant to aid in the assessment of the Commission's policies, strategy, and guidance related to advancing workplace diversity and inclusion.

4.0 KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Sufficient Collaboration with Key Partners

The Public Service Commission collaborates, shares resources, and communicates effectively with ministries, diversity networks, post-secondary institutions, community-based organizations, and its counterparts in other Canadian jurisdictions about workplace diversity and inclusion.¹⁵

The Commission established cross-ministerial goals and strategies to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in the *Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Strategy* and *2021–22 Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Action Plan* (see **Figure 5** for further details). Key partners help the Commission to establish and maintain this Inclusion Strategy.

Within Saskatchewan, the Corporate Inclusion Community of Practice (ICoP) is a forum comprised of the Commission, ministry, and government agency members.¹⁶ It meets bi-monthly for sharing, learning, and determining actions to support the work of embedding and creating an inclusive workplace culture within ministries. The forum also gives members the opportunity to provide input into key diversity and inclusion documents such as the Inclusion Strategy and annual Inclusion Action Plan.

¹⁵ Diversity networks assist all employees with learning more about the workplace, growing their careers, and building connections to enable success. These networks include the Aboriginal Employees' Government Network, the Disability Support Network, the Pride Alliance Network, Engaging and Developing Government Employees network, and Saskatchewan Visible Minorities Employees' Association taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/access-employee-programs/employee-networks (9 March 2022).

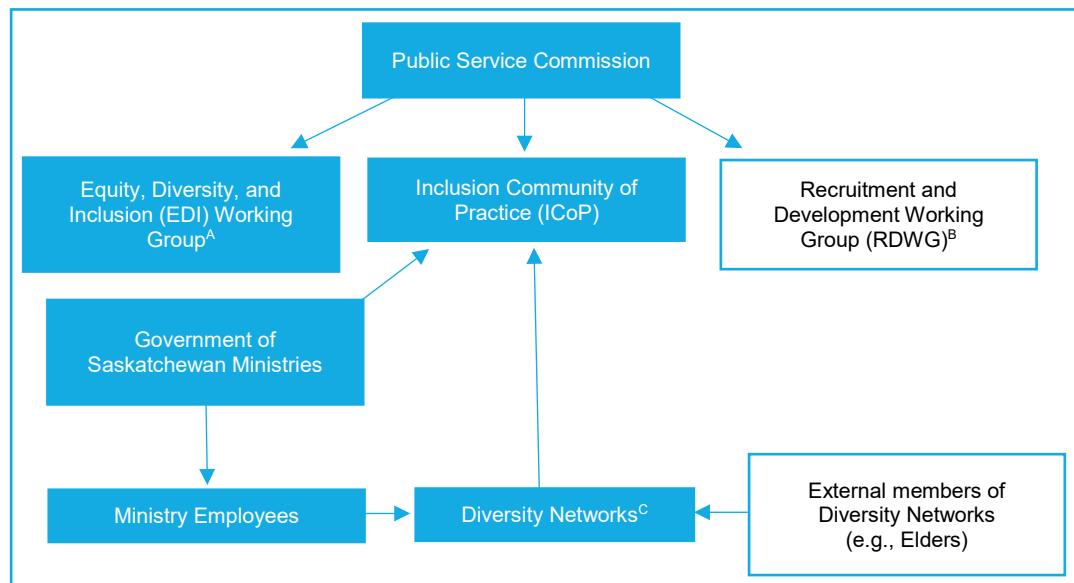
¹⁶ The ICoP comprises the Commission, all 17 government ministries, Saskatchewan Public Safety Agency, Status of Women Office, and four diversity networks (Aboriginal Employees' Government Network, Disability Support Network, Pride Alliance Network, and Saskatchewan Visible Minorities Employees' Association).

Collaboration with post-secondary institutions and community-based organizations (e.g., open-door societies) during the year allows the Commission to identify further practices to support diversity and inclusion in ministries. For example, practices identified include educational programs that increase employment entry and advancement opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Furthermore, the Commission collaborates with other Canadian jurisdictions through monthly meetings of the Recruitment and Development Working Group (RDWG). The RDWG's purpose is to share information on strategies, practices, programs, and services for public sector recruitment, retention, and employee learning and development. It seeks to identify and facilitate access to information across jurisdictions and identify the common needs and opportunities for collaboration. These activities include developing common models, frameworks, and approaches. The Commission also participates in a number of RDWG sub-groups on specific diversity and inclusion topics, such as the Equity and Diversity and Inclusion in Talent Acquisition Working Group and the Inclusive Leadership Working Group.

Figure 4 shows the key working groups the Commission and ministries use to support the Inclusion Strategy. Across the working groups, the Commission included representation from all ministries, persons from all four designated groups, and external organizations or persons who are instrumental in developing and implementing the Inclusion Strategy.¹⁷

Figure 4—Key Working Groups Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Ministries



Source: Adapted by the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan from the Commission's records.

* Blue shaded boxes indicate parties internal to the Government of Saskatchewan.

^A The Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group is the Public Service Commission's internal group that supports implementation of its Inclusion Strategy, and meets weekly.

^B The Recruitment and Development Working Group (RDWG) includes representatives of the Government of Canada, provinces, and territories.

^C Diversity networks assist all employees with learning more about the workplace, growing their careers, and building connections to enable success. The networks are made up of Commission and ministry employees and invited external representatives. ICoP includes representatives of the Aboriginal Employees' Government Network, the Disability Support Network, the Pride Alliance Network, and Saskatchewan Visible Minorities Employees' Association.

¹⁷ The four designated groups include individuals who report an: Indigenous identity, racialized group identity, disability, and/or female gender who are in an underrepresented occupation.



The Commission uses insights from these different partners, leveraging their valuable knowledge and experience to obtain meaningful feedback on key diversity and inclusion strategies. The Commission uses the knowledge gained from these partners to inform its diversity and inclusion guidance for ministries.

Effective collaboration among key partners supports the Commission in developing and maintaining appropriate workplace diversity and inclusion policies, goals, and strategies for all ministries.

4.2 Employment Equity Policy Needs to be Modernized

The Employment Equity Policy developed by the Public Service Commission for use by ministries is outdated and does not contain sufficient and appropriate direction to support achievement of cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals set out by the Commission.

Under *The Public Service Act, 1998*, the Commission is responsible for setting policies relating to workplace diversity and inclusion for ministries. We found the Commission established an Employment Equity Policy and made it publicly available (including for all ministry employees) via its website. The Employment Equity Policy states its purpose is to improve representation of Aboriginal people, people with physical/mental disabilities, members of visible minority groups, and women in management and non-traditional occupations in the public service.¹⁸

The Commission last updated the Employment Equity Policy in August 2000. As a result, the policy does not sufficiently reflect content and language consistent with good practice.

We found the policy:

- Does not define workplace inclusion.
- Uses outdated definitions or terminology for designated groups (e.g., Aboriginal instead of Indigenous, visible minority groups instead of racialized groups, people with disabilities instead of disabled people, women in management and non-traditional occupations instead of women in underrepresented occupations, working age population defined as ages 15–65 instead of 15–74).¹⁹
- Does not define roles and responsibilities to set out clear expectations of the Commission or ministry management and employees for leading and demonstrating behaviours to create a diverse and inclusive workplace. For example, the policy states ministries are committed to an employment system that provides equality of opportunity and which leads to equality of results for individuals from the designated groups. However, the policy does not indicate any expectations of their management or employees to make this a reality.

¹⁸ Public Service Commission, *Human Resource Manual: Section 1000—Employment Equity* taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/access-the-human-resource-manual/section-1000-employment-equity#1001 (15 March 2022).

¹⁹ Underrepresented occupations include management, skilled trades, and technical positions such as engineers or transport and heavy equipment operators.

We found certain other Canadian jurisdictions (e.g., Nova Scotia, Alberta, British Columbia) generally included these aspects in their policies. Commission management indicated it plans to update this policy in 2022–23.

Our review of other policies (e.g., Employment Accommodation Policy) in the Human Resource Manual maintained by the Commission found it considered diversity and inclusion aspects. However, these policies could be strengthened in certain evolving areas (e.g., protecting privacy of self-declared diversity information). In addition, once the Employment Equity Policy is modernized, these policies, along with the Inclusion Toolkit provided to managers in ministries (see **Section 4.5** for further details), should be reviewed for consistency and to further embed key diversity and inclusion concepts.

The absence of an up-to-date policy for diversity and inclusion increases the risk ministry managers and employees do not have clear direction and understanding of expectations to support an inclusive and diverse workplace culture, and outline equitable treatment for all ministry employees. This may result in individuals from underrepresented groups (e.g., disabled persons, racialized groups) receiving unequal access to, or even exclusion from, employment in ministries, as well as a lack of clear understanding around what accountability employees from underrepresented groups can expect from their managers and leaders.

1. We recommend the Public Service Commission modernize the Employment Equity Policy to align with good practice.

4.3 Appropriate Cross-Ministerial Goals and Strategies Established

The Public Service Commission collaborated with its key partners to establish appropriate cross-ministerial goals and strategies to advance workplace diversity and inclusion in ministries.

The Commission created the *Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Strategy* in 2017 in collaboration with its key partners (e.g., ministries), and updated it in 2021. The Inclusion Strategy sets goals, themes, objectives, programs, and actions for workplace diversity and inclusion. The overall goals of the Inclusion Strategy are to create an inclusive workplace culture and to develop and implement a sustainable inclusion strategy which creates inclusive programs and services, served by a diverse workforce that meets the needs of ministries' growing and changing demographics.

The Commission worked with key partners through the Inclusion Community of Practice to leverage their knowledge and experience, and to gain support for the draft Inclusion Strategy before its finalization. The Inclusion Strategy included sufficient supporting details for key partner understanding (e.g., context around the need to be more diverse and inclusive to respond to Saskatchewan's growing diversity as indicated by changes in its demographic statistics for designated groups).

The Inclusion Strategy included the roles and responsibilities for ministry senior executives, management, all employee levels, and the Commission in delivering the Inclusion Strategy. For example, the Commission is responsible to ensure human resources policies, practices, and programs support an inclusive workplace, address barriers in employment



systems, build awareness training programs, incorporate current hiring trends and best practices on diversity and inclusion, and report on successes from the annual Inclusion Action Plan. Whereas senior executives of ministries are responsible for ensuring the integration of the Inclusion Strategy into ministry business plans and initiatives, as well as to identify inclusion targets for ministry reporting. All ministry employees are responsible for maintaining an inclusive, welcoming work environment, supporting employees who may be subject to disrespectful or discriminating behaviour, and sharing innovative solutions to address barriers to an inclusive workplace.

The Commission also works with its key partners to develop annual action plans (i.e., *2021–22 Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Action Plan*) built around the four themes defined in the Inclusion Strategy (see **Figure 5**).

Figure 5—Ministry Inclusion Themes and 2021–22 Planned Actions

Themes	2021–22 Actions for Ministries	Performance Reporting by the Commission	Potential Performance Indicators Identified by PAS
Inspire accountability at all levels, starting at the top	Continue to embed and continuously improve the Inclusion Toolkit across the Government, with ministry collaboration and participation by including activities from the Toolkit within their individual plans ^A	Overall employment representation (%) by designated group – we found the Commission did not clearly set this out as an indicator; needs improvement	Employment satisfaction scores by designated group (e.g., overall satisfaction score via employee culture survey)
	Identify, analyze and understand from a corporate perspective current diversity and inclusion measures available within the Government		
Improve intercultural competence through awareness, education, and training	Consultation, approval, and launch of the Transgender Transition Guidelines	Completion of diversity and inclusion training – we found the Commission did not clearly set this out as an indicator; needs improvement	Increase in knowledge following training (e.g., increase in training survey scores before and after training)
	Review of Respect in the Workplace and Aboriginal Awareness training		
Enhance talent acquisition processes and tools	Execute on 2020–21 strategy for hiring students experiencing disability—Summer Student Program.	Number of disabled students hired compared to 2022–23 target	Number of self-declarations compared to those received in applications, and in prior years Hiring rates for designated diversity groups including students who become full-time hires after graduation Ministry satisfaction with processes and tools (e.g., survey) Time to advance into senior positions for designated groups compared to all employees
	Improvements to self-declaration definitions		
Create an inclusive and supportive workplace for all employees	Support Saskatchewan Accessibility Legislation and impacts (consultation in 2021–22)	Overall employment representation (%) by designated group – we found the Commission did not clearly set this out as an indicator; needs improvement	Employment inclusion related scores by designated group (e.g., scores via employee culture survey) Employment retention rates for designated groups Number of separations attributed to a non-inclusive or non-supportive workplace per exit interviews/surveys Complaints by designated groups (e.g., number received, % founded)

Source: Adapted by the Provincial Auditor of Saskatchewan (PAS) from *2021–22 Government of Saskatchewan Inclusion Action Plan* taskroom.sp.saskatchewan.ca/how-do-i/access-employee-information/workplace-diversity (14 December 2021).

^A The Inclusion Toolkit provides tools, resources, best practices, and ideas to support ministry managers to build a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

We found the 2021–22 Inclusion Action Plan included seven reasonable and appropriate, cross-ministerial planned actions (e.g., consultation, approval, and launch of the Gender Transition Guidelines). These actions aligned with the four themes outlined in the overall Inclusion Strategy. The Commission identified deadlines for expected completion of each planned action and determined who would lead the actions (e.g., the Commission or ministries). See **Recommendation 2** regarding the need for clear indicators for measuring progress.

We found Commission senior management appropriately approved both the Inclusion Strategy and annual Action Plan.

Active involvement of appropriate key partners in establishing cross-ministerial goals and strategies relating to diversity and inclusion fosters deeper trust and more commitment from employees.

4.4 Inclusion Strategy Needs Clear Indicators and Timeframe for Measuring Progress

The current Inclusion Strategy used by the Public Service Commission did not set out how the Commission planned to measure success of the Inclusion Strategy, or over what timeframe.

The Inclusion Strategy and annual Action Plan did not formally set out clear indicators and related targets for what success would look like relating to diversity and inclusion themes and actions (see **Figure 5**). While the Commission used the 2019 Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) targets as long-term benchmarks in internal briefing memos to the Commission senior management, it does not consider these as its own targets, nor has it set other long-term indicators and targets. We note several other Canadian jurisdictions, such as Canada, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, use labour force rates as indicators in their reports to the public.

The Commission and ministries' management set one short-term measure and target related to the cross-ministerial action around hiring disabled summer students (i.e., to identify 40 specific opportunities/positions for 2022–23). **Figure 6** shows the actual number of disabled summer students hired in 2021–22 was higher than the previous two years, and a target to increase this further has been set for 2022–23.

Figure 6—Disabled Summer Students Hired

	2022–23 Target	2021–22 Actual	2020–21 Actual	2019–20 Actual
Disabled summer students hired	40	21	7	18

Source: Public Service Commission human resources records.

The Commission had no other targets. For example, the Commission considers employment participation rates for designated groups compared to SHRC targets, but does not set these out in its plans as indicators of success. It also measures employees who take equity and inclusion awareness training, but does not formally set targets to determine whether it trained the optimum number of employees or whether employees learned anything.



The Commission could also consider other performance indicators as noted in **Figure 5**, such as comparing retention rates for the designated groups to the overall retention rate of all employees, the number of inclusion complaints that are founded compared to previous years, or results of its bi-annual employee surveys to look for improving trends in satisfaction of designated groups. The 2022–23 Inclusion Action Plan includes plans to develop performance indicators for diversity and inclusion.

Furthermore, the Inclusion Strategy did not set out a timeframe for completion (e.g., five years) to support periodic review of the Inclusion Strategy. Our discussions with Commission management confirmed that the Inclusion Strategy has a long-term time horizon, but no specific timeframe (e.g., end date) set.

The absence of clear indicators and timeframe for measuring progress of key diversity and inclusion strategies makes it difficult to hold the Commission and ministries accountable for results, and increases the risk the strategies may become outdated or unfulfilled. Clear indicators and timeframes also show ministry commitment to accelerate progress in workplace diversity and inclusion, and create more transparency.

2. We recommend the Public Service Commission set clear indicators for measuring progress and a timeframe for its inclusion strategy.

4.5 Expanded Inclusion Toolkit Needed to Support Inclusive Ministry Workplaces

During 2019, the Public Service Commission finalized and shared an Inclusion Toolkit with all ministries. The Toolkit provides tools, resources, good practices, and ideas to create a common understanding of diversity and inclusion to aid in building an inclusive culture in ministries' workplaces, although it requires further expansion to align with good practice.

The Commission developed a Toolkit to support ministry managers with embedding diversity and inclusion in their workplaces, and shared it with them in 2019 through its website. The Toolkit has four primary purposes:

- **Getting Started:** Build knowledge on diversity and inclusion
- **Acquire:** Build an inclusive workplace by attracting diverse, talented employees
- **Engage:** Connecting employees to teams, work and organization
- **Grow:** Support employees to innovate and grow in their careers

The Commission reviews and updates the Toolkit quarterly based on feedback from key partners, and shares updates with ministries. We found the Commission shared updates to the Toolkit with ministries in October 2021.

We found the content of the Toolkit contained some relevant and helpful information (e.g., certain key definitions, purpose, focus areas, educational and reference materials). For example, the Toolkit included tools such as videos, self-assessment worksheets, questions to support group discussions, and exercises on topics such as helping managers to be

equitable in processes to hire (e.g., post jobs, screen applicants, interview candidates) and retain (e.g., accommodate, plan work, evaluate performance) diverse employees.

The Toolkit also provides certain information to help managers understand their role in contributing to an inclusive environment by creating a discrimination and harassment-free environment, as well as to reframe their biases and understand the importance of self-declaration.

However, the Commission did not set a formal process to periodically (e.g., every two or three years) research good practice to identify more fulsome changes to the Toolkit. We found the Toolkit had insufficient content to reflect certain current issues and language related to diversity and inclusion. For example, the Toolkit lacked:

- A sufficiently detailed list of key terms and their definitions, such as for workplace equity, intersectionality, decolonization, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, and gender fluidity²⁰
- Further case studies on bias to make the definitions more meaningful and memorable, and help employees find ways to disrupt bias
- Relevant content about accessibility and neurodiversity in the workplace to support accommodation practices²¹
- Further explicit Indigenous content and links to other high-quality, Indigenous-sourced materials
- Further content to support diverse hiring (e.g., examples of plain and accessible language in job descriptions, case studies to help identify biases when reviewing samples of Canadian-born and internationally-trained candidate resumes)
- Expanded content about how to create a safe and facilitated space (e.g., external facilitator) to practice and learn the skills and ideas in the toolkit (e.g., how to talk about current events such as uncovering of children's graves at residential schools or the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Content for building inclusive cultures in remote-work environments, and for when recruiting or working virtually

An expanded Toolkit reflecting evolving good practice can help the Commission provide managers and employees with adequate understanding and support to achieve cross-ministerial inclusion and diversity goals. Without sufficient content in the Inclusion Toolkit, ministries may be less inclusive and diverse than expected.

3. We recommend the Public Service Commission expand its inclusion toolkit to embed diversity and inclusion concepts consistent with good practice.

²⁰ Intersectionality is where multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage (e.g., gender, race, disability, sexuality, religion) combine to create discrimination or privilege.

²¹ Neurodiversity refers to the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioural traits regarded as part of normal human variation, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, and dyslexia.



4.6 Diversity and Inclusion Training Provided to Ministry Employees

The Public Service Commission provides cross-ministerial mandatory training courses relating to diversity and inclusion to ministry employees.

The Commission provided two cross-ministerial mandatory training courses relating to diversity and inclusion topics during 2021. 'Aboriginal Awareness' and 'Respect in the Workplace' are mandatory training courses for all ministry employees to attend at least once during their employment. The Aboriginal Awareness training includes terminology, demographic and socioeconomic issues, history including treaty negotiations, Indigenous rights and law, and Truth and Reconciliation. Respect in the Workplace training includes bullying, abuse, harassment, and discrimination.

The Commission selects qualified service providers to develop and deliver content for these two training courses.²² To help it select the provider, it compares training content from multiple potential service providers against predefined objectives and expected coverage areas. It also considers past experience with potential service providers when renewing future contracts.

The Commission also offered additional optional training courses and resources to all ministry employees. These include courses such as:

- Inclusion and You
- Reframing Our Bias
- Disability Awareness
- Accommodating Employees

Commission employees develop and make these courses available to all ministry employees either as ongoing digital (e-learn) courses or periodically throughout the year for instructor-led courses. Employees can use the Commission's Learning Catalogue to find available times and to sign up for courses. Ministries may also help with instructor-led delivery in some cases.

We found the content of both the optional and mandatory training courses offered by the Commission was reasonable and provided appropriate educational opportunities for ministry employees on key diversity and inclusion topics.

Ministries track attendance at these courses within the Commission's human resources IT system. The Commission and individual ministries can run reports of employees who have taken the training and those who still need to be enrolled to monitor training completion. We found the number of employees taking the mandatory training for the period tested was reasonable compared to the number of employees hired in that period given most employees take this training within the year they are hired. Overall, between June and December 2021, about 700 employees took the in-person/virtual two-day Aboriginal Awareness training and nearly 1,800 employees took the 90-minute Respect in the Workplace webinar training.

²² *Respect in the Workplace* training module is delivered virtually through a website on demand (i.e., webinar).

The Commission uses participant surveys taken before and after the course to evaluate the impact of each course. For example, surveys may ask employees to rate their awareness of key areas such as treaty negotiations, myths versus realities of Indigenous people's taxation, or ask whether they have seen or experienced harassment or discrimination in their workplaces. Increased positive responses after the training indicate the employees were better able to understand these areas, or recognize these situations after the training. Increased awareness and recognition increases the chance the employees will respond in inclusive ways in the future. This provides the Commission with information about whether overall employee awareness and knowledge increased as a result of the training.

Providing sufficient training tools to ministries that support diversity and inclusion helps employ these practices consistently across ministries. Training also helps increase the knowledge of ministry employees and build a workforce that supports and understands the importance of diversity and inclusion.

4.7 Inclusion Community of Practice Forum: A Valuable Resource to Share Inclusion and Diversity Ideas

The Public Service Commission used a forum called the Inclusion Community of Practice (ICoP) to effectively share, learn, and support the work of embedding and creating an inclusive workplace culture within ministries.

ICoP provides a community for all ministries and other key partners (e.g., recognized diversity networks) to learn and share tools, practices, ideas and resources. ICoP's terms of reference set out its objectives, meeting frequency, and members' roles and responsibilities. ICoP developed four primary goals (see **Figure 7**) and meets on a bi-monthly basis to discuss emerging and important inclusion and diversity topics.

Figure 7—Goals of the Inclusion Community of Practice

1. To be an education and sharing forum where members learn and share best practices, ideas, experiences and resources related to inclusion
2. To act as a liaison between ministry diversity and inclusion committees, and leverage each other's knowledge and resources
3. To identify the tools and resources that will help to create an inclusive workplace culture across the Government of Saskatchewan
4. To build the knowledge and capacity of ICoP members in inclusion development

Source: Inclusion Community of Practice Terms of Reference.

ICoP develops an annual Corporate Diversity and Inclusion Communications Plan to support ministry diversity and inclusion activities. The objectives of the 2021–22 Communications Plan were to:

- Support ICoP by providing content to distribute to its ministries (e.g., newsletter articles on inclusion topics or to highlight resources in the Inclusion Toolkit)
- Promote important inclusion awareness days (e.g., posters and promotional materials or links for Orange Shirt Day and Regina Pride Parade)



- Promote inclusion and diversity in the workplace by sharing stories from ministry employees (e.g., written or video interviews with employees)
- Support the employee diversity networks by sharing their content (e.g., article or resource links ministries could include in internal newsletters)

We found ICoP met every two months as expected. It shared sufficient materials on ICoP's dedicated internal website for all ICoP members to access. At each meeting, over 60 members discussed key diversity and inclusion topics and events. We noted ICoP gave all members the opportunity to collaborate and contribute during a roundtable discussion that took place at each meeting. The Commission used attendance at ICoP to know about ministry diversity and inclusion activities at a high-level.

Frequent, open, and transparent communication between the Commission and its key partners in ICoP provides a platform for meaningful discussion and educational opportunities for members. It also allows the Commission to informally follow some of the inclusion and diversity initiatives taking place across ministries to help the Commission assess progress toward cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals.

4.8 Ministry Inclusion Plans and Progress Reports Not Monitored by the Commission

The Public Service Commission does not require ministries to submit annual diversity and inclusion plans, or related progress reports. Also, the Commission does not provide regular feedback to support progress by individual ministries toward the cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals.

During 2021–22, the Commission did not require ministries to submit diversity and inclusion plans for its review. Furthermore, the Commission did not provide ministries with guidance such as templates to assist ministries with preparing such plans. Ministry diversity and inclusion plans set out actions each ministry plans to use during the year to contribute to the cross-ministerial annual Inclusion Action Plan and to develop a diverse and inclusive workplace. Given ministries hire their employees and create the environment where they work, these plans will help determine the success of the Inclusion Strategy.

We found the Commission received four plans from ministries during the year. We found an additional four ministries prepared a plan for the year, although they chose not to submit it to the Commission. The remaining nine ministries did not have finalized diversity and inclusion plans for 2021–22.

We found the four ministry plans we reviewed were a good start. For example, the plans included that ministries may hold lunch-and-learn days, share articles, or have a speaker present about topics such as treaty awareness or accommodating disabilities. All four plans could be improved by including content such as:

- Indicators or targets to define success (e.g., employment rate for designated groups, satisfaction and engagement rates by diversity group based on surveys)

- Risk mitigation strategies (e.g., additional training in ministries with low representation of certain designated groups to ensure an inclusive culture supporting retention)
- Critical success factors (e.g., sufficient ministry executive management support, appropriate and well-attended awareness training)
- Actions focused on the most underrepresented designated groups specific to the ministry (e.g., plans to work with universities and community-based organizations if insufficient candidates apply for positions [such as women in engineering])

Ministries also did not submit progress reports on actions taken during the year. Our review of ICoP minutes found the Commission was kept aware of ministry activities at a high-level through verbal roundtable updates, but these updates were insufficient in providing adequate support to ministries, or to enable monitoring of progress across ministries.

Without requiring, obtaining, and analyzing ministry diversity and inclusion plans and progress reports directly, the Commission may have inadequate information to monitor the overall strategic direction related to diversity and inclusion. As a result, the Commission cannot reliably monitor the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion initiatives across ministries and may not identify or offer additional support to ministries where challenges appear to exist. In addition, the Commission may not identify changes to the cross-ministerial Inclusion Strategy to help achieve the ministries' diversity and inclusion goals.

4. We recommend the Public Service Commission monitor ministry diversity and inclusion plans and progress reports to help ministries increase diversity and inclusion in their workplaces.

4.9 Data Collected About Persons in Designated Groups

The Public Service Commission collects data about employees who identify as one of the designated groups and summarizes workforce statistics about these various groups on a quarterly basis.

The Commission collects and summarizes data about four designated groups—individuals reporting an Indigenous identity, persons of a racialized group, individuals reporting a disability, and women in underrepresented occupations (e.g., senior management).

The Commission collects data about these designated groups based on ministry employees voluntarily self-declaring as an individual of one of these groups in the Commission's IT system when they are hired, or as updated during their employment. While the Commission did not formally document the risk associated with using self-declared information voluntarily submitted by ministry employees (e.g., someone belonging to a designated group chooses not to self-declare), it was apparent in our discussions that Commission management understood and accepted this risk.

The Commission prepares quarterly reports on key workforce diversity statistics based on the data in its IT system (e.g., percentage of women in senior management, percentage of Indigenous persons). The Commission independently verifies the accuracy of the reported statistics. We found the data was reasonably accurate and complete.



The Commission uses, as its benchmarks, the targets for working age population for designated groups set by the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) in 2019 for comparison to actual workforce statistics. **Figure 8** provides a comparison of ministries' progress toward the SHRC targets set for the four designated groups. As shown, the percentage of women in management positions is meeting SHRC's targets, but the percentage of employees who report as disabled, Indigenous, or racialized are below the SHRC targets.

Figure 8—SHRC 2019 Targets Compared to Saskatchewan Ministry Results for 2019–20 to 2021–2022

Key Statistics Related to Diversity and Inclusion	SHRC 2019 Target ^A	Mid-year 2021–22 (September) ^B	2020–21 (March) ^B	2019–20 (March) ^B
Number of Employees ^C	n/a	11,373	11,051	10,651
% Indigenous persons	14.0	9.3	9.5	9.6
% Disabled persons	22.2	3.5	3.5	3.4
% Racialized persons	10.6	7.2	6.6	5.7
% Women in senior management	47.0	45.9	47.4	47.0
% Women in mid-management	47.0	56.4	56.1	55.2

Source: Public Service Commission human resource records.

^A saskatchewanhumanrights.ca/2019-employment-equity-targets/ (2 March 2022).

^B Public Service Commission records (9 November 2021).

^C Number of employees represents the total of all ministries' permanent full time and part-time, labour service, and non-permanent employees.

The Commission also periodically (e.g., every two years) conducts ministry employee engagement and culture surveys. The survey asks a variety of specific questions, many of which have a particular diversity and inclusion component (e.g., diversity is valued in my ministry). The Commission summarizes the survey results by question and also groups them (e.g., by Indigenous, racialized, disabled, gender) to identify where answers from a specific diversity group may be below that of the ministries' averages as a whole.

We found results of the last culture survey conducted in December 2021 broken down into specific diversity groups for further analysis, as expected. We noted that generally results for some groups (e.g., disabled and non-binary persons) were notably lower than the ministries' overall averages.²³ Survey results may also help to explain lower employment participation rates for disabled persons shown in **Figure 8**. The Commission had not yet completed its analysis of the diversity and inclusion related survey results and planned focus group discussions as of January 2022 given employees completed the survey in December 2021.

Collecting reliable data allows the Commission to better understand the current workforce diversity and inclusion in ministries. Comparing results to SHRC benchmarks and previous results helps the Commission assess progress in ministries, including where they can make improvements. However, the Commission insufficiently analyzes the data to identify and address potential implementation issues (see **Section 4.10**).

²³ The Commission has not included non-binary persons as a designated group, but does consult with the Pride Alliance diversity network through ICOP to gain input from this community on the Inclusion Strategy. Non-binary relates to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female.

4.10 Insufficient Analysis to Identify Implementation Issues and Support Corrective Action

The Public Service Commission does not have routine processes, such as review of ministry inclusion plans and progress reports or robust data analytics, to identify and track system-wide issues relating to implementing diversity and inclusion initiatives. As a result, the Commission cannot adequately monitor whether ministries are addressing issues in a meaningful and productive manner.

The Commission uses an internal Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) working group to discuss information learned at other working groups (e.g., ICoP, RDWG). We found the EDI working group met weekly as expected.

However, we found the meetings of this group and other working groups (e.g., ICoP) did not discuss or capture overall systemic gaps or system-wide implementation issues (i.e., consider all ministries). Commission management advised us each ministry is responsible for its own performance and the Commission does not actively oversee results from a cross-ministry perspective. As described in **Section 4.8**, the Commission does not review ministry inclusion plans and progress reports to sufficiently support and monitor achievement of cross-ministerial goals for diversity and inclusion.

The Commission also does not routinely analyze data that may indicate negative implementation trends. For example, the Commission did not analyze the reasons ministries are not achieving the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission targets or reasons for trends (e.g., past three or five years) to determine whether the Inclusion Strategy and annual Inclusion Action Plan adequately address these issues.

In addition, the Commission advised us it has a process to handle complaints at an entity-wide level (i.e., all complaints and not just those specific to EDI issues). However, it does not analyze these complaints (e.g., trends in the number or severity of complaints) to help identify potential implementation issues. Nor does it routinely analyze hiring or retention rates of designated groups compared to overall cross-ministry rates or complete exit interviews to gather additional information that may indicate issues. Identifying potential hiring issues can lead to more analysis around language in job postings and in interview questions, processes to screen applicants, and processes to reduce biases in interviews and deciding to whom to offer jobs. Identifying potential retention issues along with information from exit interviews can be used to further determine additional training to develop appropriate inclusive attitudes in relevant ministry branches.

The Commission is in the process of replacing the ministries' main HR system, so it is critical the Commission identify key process and data needs, and use this opportunity to build these into the new system to support future analysis and reporting.

Without formal processes to analyze diversity and inclusion data, the Commission may not identify and address implementation risks that could prevent ministries from achieving cross-ministerial goals in a timely manner. As a result, the Commission may not effectively coordinate ministry actions for supporting diversity and inclusion goals.



5. We recommend the Public Service Commission sufficiently analyze diversity and inclusion data to identify and address risks that may prevent ministries from achieving cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals.

4.11 Public Reporting Needed to Show Accountability and Commitment

The Public Service Commission did not receive adequate reporting on diversity and inclusion results, nor did it sufficiently report to the public about such results.

The Commission had not documented what reports it requires, by when, and what type of analysis the reports should include. It also has not documented reporting it expects to provide to the public to demonstrate accountability for creating a diverse and inclusive workplace to best serve all the people of Saskatchewan.

As noted in **Section 4.9**, the Commission currently receives key diversity and inclusion statistics compared to Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) targets quarterly, but these reports do not explain differences between current results and the SHRC targets or changes from prior years (i.e., trends). The Commission shared these statistics with ministries via the Commission's Human Resource Business Partners.²⁴

The Commission prepared bi-annual briefing notes communicating further information on the quarterly statistics for its senior management. In the reports, the Commission began to identify potential gaps and basic root causes for certain shortcomings, but neither analyzed the data to its fullest extent, nor conducted this gap analysis consistently across reports. We found that while the quality of analysis varied across these reports, the reports still provided some useful information to Commission senior management and were consistently prepared during 2021.

For example, the Commission prepared a report on summer student diversity hiring looking at positions posted and filled by persons who identified as one or more of the designated groups. The report identified root causes such as lack of connection with disabled students (i.e., need to bring jobs to students to help with awareness) and inadequately prepared workplaces to support and engage disabled students throughout their placements. The Commission used the analysis in this report to set a short-term target (40 disabled summer students) for 2022–23.

Furthermore, while the Commission reported internally against the 2019 SHRC targets, it did not consider these as its targets, nor has it set other long-term indicators and targets. In addition, the Commission had not set clear, meaningful, and actionable short and mid-range targets to help determine progress toward all of the cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals—see **Recommendation 2**.

Currently, the Commission does not report publicly (e.g., in its annual report) on the diversity and inclusion statistics. For example, it does not publicly report on the percentage of employees who self-declared for each designated group compared to the SHRC targets.

²⁴ Human Resource Business Partners are Commission employees assigned to support specific ministries with human resources functions.

The Commission reports publicly on the percentage of employees completing training and total percentage of employees who self-declared as an individual of a designated group.

Good practice suggests the Commission should publicly report additional meaningful indicators, such as progress toward SHRC targets, and trends in retention and survey satisfaction results of employees belonging to designated groups compared to all employees. Public reporting demonstrates commitment and transparency. For example, the governments of Canada, Ontario, and Nova Scotia report on their employment participation rates for designated groups (e.g., Indigenous, disabled persons) compared to labour force rates for their respective jurisdictions.

Without formal reporting policies (e.g., setting out what information is required to be reported to who and when), the Commission may insufficiently report to its senior management and ministries, hindering these stakeholders' ability to monitor and take action to support progress toward the cross-ministerial diversity and inclusion goals. Consistent reporting would also allow the Commission to work with ministries to address shortfalls identified in a timely and consistent manner, and publicly demonstrate their commitment to building diverse and inclusive workplaces. A consistent and robust reporting process helps all relevant parties receive appropriate information in a timely and consistent manner.

6. We recommend the Public Service Commission implement a written policy for reporting diversity and inclusion results to its senior management and to the public to demonstrate accountability and commitment for workplace diversity and inclusion.

5.0 GLOSSARY

Decolonization – the process by which colonies become independent of the colonizing country. In Canada, it often refers to cultural, psychological, and economic freedom for Indigenous people with the goal of achieving Indigenous sovereignty—the right and ability of Indigenous people to practice self-determination over their land, cultures, and political and economic systems.

Designated Groups – Individuals reporting an Indigenous identity, members of a visible minority (e.g., racialized) group, individuals reporting a disability, and women in underrepresented occupations.

Diversity – All the ways in which each person is different and unique. These differences can include factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and/or having a disability.

Equity – To provide fair opportunities for all employees in a workplace based on their individual needs.

Gender-fluidity – Relates to a person who does not identify themselves as having a fixed gender.

Inclusion – How a person feels they belong, such as being appreciated, respected and valued for what they bring to the table.



Inclusive Workplace – An environment where employees feel safe, supported, respected, welcomed and are able to succeed.

Intersectionality – Multiple factors of advantage and disadvantage (e.g., gender, race, disability, sexuality, religion) that combine to create discrimination or privilege.

Marginalize – To treat a person or group of people as insignificant or peripheral.

Non-binary – Relating to or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that is neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Neurodiversity – The range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits regarded as part of normal human variation, including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), autism spectrum disorder, and dyslexia.

Racialized People – People categorized or marginalized according to their race. Racialized people are defined as individuals who are non-Caucasian. As opposed to racism, which is a belief that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race, leading to prejudice or discrimination directed against people based on their race or ethnic group.

Unconscious Bias – A learned stereotype that is automatic, unintentional, deeply engrained, universal, and able to influence one's behaviour.

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