



IMPLEMENTING

the Diversity & Inclusion Charter of Peel:

Practice Brief Series 1
Practice Brief Series 2

Creating safer spaces that foster mutual understanding, respect and growth

The purpose of this practice brief is (1) to introduce the concept of safe space; (2) to examine the importance of safer spaces for the cultivation of a more inclusive community; and (3) to provide support and resources around the creation of safer spaces. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to operationalize the commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

While the concept of *safe space* is fluid and ever-changing, its presence plays an important role in creating and sustaining vibrant and healthy communities, where a wide range of (visible and invisible) human qualities are acknowledged, respected and given the opportunity to thrive.

Creating safer spaces is important and beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It ensures a diversity of perspectives and voices are heard;
- It grants program and service access to a range of individuals and communities;
- It fosters the development of healthier, happier, more productive, and more sustainable communities;
- It provides individuals with a sense of both physical and psychological safety
- It allows individuals to feel self-expressed and respected by their families, peers, employers, and communities

It is important to ask: **WHO** are you creating safer spaces for; and **HOW** is that space being created? The goal is to create the most inclusive space for everyone – clients, employees, partners, community members, and other stakeholders - with the recognition that the process is evolving and iterative.

‘HOW TO’: TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Serve everyone:** Remember that everyone who accesses services deserves to be treated with dignity and respect
- **Engage in active listening:** Listen with all the senses, maintain open communication, ensure client/employee confidentiality, be aware of body language and micro-aggressions
- **Cultivate a welcoming environment:** Ensure that physical space, events, policies, and programs are organized so that everyone feels welcome, comfortable, and included
- **Address community needs:** Incorporate recognition for Indigenous land; offer childcare services when needed; provide diverse food options
- **Acknowledge the importance of design:** Create space that connects with the community that is accessing it (e.g., circular spaces for Indigenous communities; bright/bold colours for children and youth)
- **Think about accessibility:** Make sure spaces are easily accessed by those who wish to use them (e.g., employees, clients, others); ensure adherence to AODA standards

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- The Safe Space Network
- LGBTQ Safer Spaces – Regional Diversity Roundtable
- Positive Space Coalition of Peel
- Bullying Prevention & Intervention - PDSB
- Cyber Ambassadors Network –Safe City Mississauga
- Inclusive Design and the Duty to Accommodate (Fact Sheet) – OHRC

WHAT IS A SAFE SPACE?

Spaces can take multiple forms:

Physical: A community centre, a school, a neighbourhood

Relational: A support group, a team meeting, a community event

Online: A blog, a chatroom, a social media platform

A safe space is a place that makes everyone – regardless of diverse characteristics – feel welcome, comfortable and safe.

It is a place where one feels able to express oneself and one's identity without fear of judgement or discrimination.

A safe space provides a network of support and understanding; it ensures that each person's self-respect and dignity are protected.

IS A SAFE SPACE THE SAME AS A POSITIVE SPACE?

Positive Spaces are spaces that are open to individuals of all sexual and gender identities; where LGBTQ2S (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Transitioning, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, Two-Spirited) individuals can access services “with dignity and respect and where service providers can work free from discrimination” (Hamilton Health Sciences; OCASI Positive Spaces Initiative).

The term ‘safe space’ is often used interchangeably with ‘positive space’. The D&I Charter Initiative is using the term to refer to both kinds of spaces.

Supporting inclusive leaders and change champions

The purpose of this practice brief is (1) to introduce the concept of championing change; (2) to examine the importance of everyday leadership for the cultivation of a more inclusive community; and (3) to provide support and resources around becoming an inclusive leader and change champion. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to operationalize the commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

In order to build momentum around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) within an organization or community, it is important to consistently recognize, support and *champion* the change process. Change championing can occur in a multitude of ways – whether by practicing inclusion on a daily basis or by leading long-term systems transformation. Similarly, supporting the change process, from the sidelines, from the middle or from the top (e.g., as a community advocate, a faith leader, a frontline staff member, a middle manager, an Executive Director), is crucial to mobilizing long-term change.

Supporting inclusive leaders and change champions is important and beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It is vital for embedding and sustaining change within organizations and communities
- It builds trust and aids in organizational/community adaptation to change
- It creates a culture of psychological safety within an organization or community
- It encourages critical reflection and community dialogue
- It allows individuals to feel self-expressed and respected as employees, as team members and as members of a larger community
- It makes room for creative collaborations and innovative partnerships
- It fosters the development of healthier, happier, more productive, and more sustainable communities

It is important to ask: **WHO** can be an inclusive leader and a change champion; and **HOW** does one begin the work of supporting and advocating for change? The goal is to recognize and foster change agents that are committed to the vision of equity and inclusivity, that are moving the work forward within organizations and communities, and that are together creating vibrant, innovative and engaged communities.

'HOW TO': TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Engage in active listening:** Listen with all the senses, cultivate empathy, allow room for different voices/perspectives
- **Cultivate a safe and welcoming environment:** Ensure that everyone feels welcome, comfortable, and included (in conversations, in physical spaces, at events, within organizational structures)
- **Create new resources to inspire dialogue and action:** Challenge old methods and inspire the creation of new ones (e.g., resource groups, team huddles, new community events)
- **Engage in critical self-reflection:** Recognize and manage your own values, beliefs, privileges
- **Seek opportunities to advance the work:** Be proactive – take advantage of existing opportunities to influence change and creatively search for new ones
- **Utilize assets to advocate for change:** Use your unique skills/interests/resources (e.g., subject matter expertise, passion, team-building skills) to mobilize others
- **Adapt toolkits and promising practices to specific contexts:** Don't reinvent the wheel; be open to learning from others and adapt effective practices to your own context
- **Celebrate ongoing contributions to DEI:** Recognition and celebration of individual/institutional success is an important motivator for renewing commitment

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- "How to be a More Inclusive Leader" (The Guardian 2014)
- Moving the Dial – Measuring Inclusive Leadership (Diversity Journal, 2014)
- Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion
- Peel-Halton Project – Social Planning Council of Peel and Community Development Halton (2004)

INCLUSIVE LEADERS AND CHANGE CHAMPIONS – WHO ARE THEY?

Leadership is a fluid concept, most often understood as the ability to inspire, influence and support others towards an identified goal.

In the context of improving diversity, equity and inclusion outcomes, both within an organization and within a community, it is important to think of leadership not as a **position** but rather as an **action** (Maytree 2006).

Thus, a leader is someone, *anyone*, who has a vision and works creatively and collaboratively with others to see it through – whether from the front of the crowd, amongst, or behind. Organizations can be similarly defined as leaders and change champions.

The importance of everyday leadership should not be understated. By reflecting on your own values and taking action to understand and be inclusive of others around you, you are bridging the gap between DEI policy and practice.

Similarly, by acknowledging our roles in driving change forward – *as individuals, as team/community members, and as representatives of an organization or of a larger group* – we recognize the importance of having a *horizontal leadership structure* where diverse voices are heard in the change management process.

With inclusive leaders and change champions driving the work, we move closer to our vision of equitable and inclusive societies.

Partnering and Collaborating to Support and Build Equity and Inclusion

The purpose of this practice brief is (1) to introduce the concept of partnership and collaboration (2) to examine the importance of collaboration and coordination amongst diverse stakeholders for a more inclusive community; and (3) to provide support and resources around forming creative and inclusive partnerships. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to operationalize the commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

Creating diverse, equitable and inclusive communities and organizations is a complex and multifaceted process that requires collaborative solutions. No *one* individual or organization has all of the skills, resources, networks and knowledge necessary to affect large-scale change. In order to move the needle forward on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), it is important to build cross-sectoral capacity to create community-wide and systemic impact. Moreover, it is essential to engage in multi-level collaboration – wherein diverse actors share knowledge, resources and skills – to build credibility, enhance commitment and sustain that impact (Tamarack Institute, 2003).

Partnering and collaborating to support and build equity and inclusion is beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It facilitates the coming together of diverse perspectives and expertise, allowing for more integrated service provision and a clearer policy/programmatic response to complex DEI issues
- It enables the strengthening of existing work in multiple sectors, moving the agenda forward on collaboratively defined outcomes
- It leads to more creative outcomes, particularly when stakeholders have not previously worked with each other, or have generally addressed an issue in sector or industry-specific ways
- It allows for a more efficient use of skills, resources and infrastructure
- It creates more visibility and a critical mass of support around a given issue/set of issues
- It enhances the sustainability of programs, projects and initiatives

It is important to ask: **WHAT** role do diverse stakeholders play in partnering and collaborating around DEI; and **HOW** does one do it? There are multiple strategies by which to engage in effective partnerships and collaborations; irrespective of the method chosen, it is important to remember that by working together, we can create more vibrant, innovative and engaged communities where people have both the feeling and reality of belonging, and where everyone can achieve their full potential.

'HOW TO': TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Think about factors affecting successful collaborations:** Environment, membership, process/structure, purpose and resources are all factors worth considering when engaging in a cross-sectoral collaborative partnership
- **Engage in community advocacy:** Advocacy efforts are useful for generating support and fostering a wide variety of partnerships on particular DEI issues
- **Develop engagement strategies to foster local partnerships:** Partnerships and collaborations with local governments, community residents/leaders, faith & culture groups, and local businesses are important for gaining credibility on local issues.
- **Participate in networks, advisory committees, coalitions and taskforces:** Organizations can ensure representation around collaborative DEI tables to build internal capacity and learn from others
- **Identify assets:** In forming collaborative partnerships, it is important to identify and map out where one's comparative advantages lie, and where one can benefit from the assets of others
- **Share promising practices and resources:** Consistent sharing of promising practices and resources with partners and with community members increases support for collaborative efforts; it also allows others to build on the work
- **Celebrate collaborative efforts:** To keep the momentum going, it is essential to consistently recognize and celebrate the work of collaborations/partnerships in moving the agenda forward on DEI issues

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- [Equity and Inclusion – Partnering with Allies](#) (College Student Educators International)
- [Why we Need Inclusive Partnerships](#) (CitiesAlliance)
- [Community-Based Strategies – Multisectoral Collaboration](#) (Tamarack Institute)
- [Building Community Through Partnership](#) (Caledon Institute of Social Policy)

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO SUPPORT & BUILD EQUITY AND INCLUSION?

The responsibility to partner and collaborate around DEI does not fall on any single stakeholder; rather, each has a unique role to play in the collaborative effort. Examples of community stakeholders include (but are not limited to): *funders, small businesses, service providers, lawyers, law enforcement officers, public institutions, planners & policy developers, governments, researchers, community members, and community advocates.*

It is important to recognize that while all stakeholders may be committed to engaging in a collaboration and/or partnership around DEI, there are sometimes competing priorities that limit the nature of and/or the degree to which collaboration can occur. Adapting to the evolving nature of collaboration around equity and inclusion is pivotal to the collaborative effort.

PARTNERSHIP, COORDINATION & COLLABORATION: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

While the nature of the relationship may differ, each is important for collectively furthering DEI work:

Partnership - Individual links between organizations; the strength of partnerships varies by context

Coordination - Relationships built on "compatible goals...joint planning...and consistent communication channels" (ACPA 2015)

Collaboration - Relationships where roles/responsibilities, outcomes and structure/process are firmly in place. Organizations have established long-term/ongoing coordination of activities

Ensuring the Provision of Equitable and Inclusive Community Services

The purpose of this practice brief is to (1) introduce the issue of equitable and inclusive service provision; (2) examine some of the key components of equitable programming and service provision; and (3) make connections between equitable service provision and community well-being. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to implement some of the key commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

Community services, broadly conceived, exist to respond to and address the varying needs of a particular community (e.g., a faith community, a neighbourhood, a school community, an ethnocultural community). Regardless of the sector with which organizations are associated, community services aim to promote the “physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing” of community members (Queensland Council of Social Service).

As defined by the D&I Charter Initiative, equitable & inclusive community services are characterized by:

- The **RECOGNITION** of human diversity in all its forms
- The **ACCOMMODATION** of differing needs and expectations
- The **CREATION** of safe and welcoming spaces that allow individuals to achieve their full potential

In the context of growing community service needs, the development of equitable and inclusive “community health and social infrastructure” is key to ensuring that populations do not become increasingly vulnerable and are not left behind (Portraits of Peel, 2011). Thus, organizations that provide services to the community need to be aware of people’s diverse needs and starting points in order to develop effective programs and provide appropriate and responsive services.

‘HOW TO’: TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

There are a number of key components of equitable and inclusive service provision to keep in mind:

- **Accessibility:** Acknowledgement of visible and invisible (dis)abilities; use of inclusive language; adherence of AODA standards; recognition of structural needs (e.g., food, cost, timing, location, etc.)
- **Relevance:** Examination of who is/isn’t accessing services; understanding the communities being served; ensuring service/program development is informed by community needs
- **Consistent Evaluation:** Regular monitoring & evaluation of programs/services; employment of diverse methods and feedback tools (e.g., surveys, phone calls, focus groups, etc.)
- **Community Collaboration:** Regular community engagement to inform service/program development
- **Intersecting Lenses:** Understanding that there are multiple identity markers that determine individual/community service needs (e.g., race, gender, age, income)

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- PowerPoint – Ensuring Equitable & Inclusive Community Services
- Webinar – Ensuring Equitable & Inclusive Community Services
- Infographic – An Ecological Approach to Equitable & Inclusive Service Provision
- D&I Charter Practice Brief 1.1 – Creating Safer Spaces

MAKING CONNECTIONS: EQUITABLE SERVICE PROVISION AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

When you commit to ensuring equitable and inclusive community services, you are:

- Starting to ‘live’ the commitments in the Charter!
- Improving people’s quality of life by increasing access to needed information, services, supports, and opportunities
- Contributing to a more vibrant, healthy, engaged and connected community

WHICH CHARTER COMMITMENTS AM I IMPLEMENTING?

- ✓ Enabling full participation and engagement by all through equitable access to information, services, opportunities
- ✓ Creating safer spaces that foster mutual understanding, respect and growth
- ✓ Dedicating resources, including people, time and/or money, to equity and inclusion
- ✓ Partnering and collaborating to support and build equity and inclusion

Creating Equitable and Inclusive Workplaces

The purpose of this practice brief is to (1) introduce our approach to equitable and inclusive workplaces; (2) examine some key strategies for creating equitable and inclusive workplaces; and (3) make connections between equitable workplace creation and community well-being. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to implement some of the key commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

Workplaces are microcosms of society; attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviour of individual employees (conscious or unconscious) have a profound impact on the policies, practices, leadership styles and underlying assumptions that shape organizational culture. Whether the space is static, mobile, collaborative, or virtual, creating an equitable and inclusive workplace – where the principles of respect, safety, accessibility, and equality of opportunity apply to the overarching structure and everyday functioning of an organization – is essential to fostering individual wellbeing and community prosperity.

As defined by the D&I Charter Initiative, equitable & inclusive workplaces are defined as **SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS** with structures and systems that **ACCEPT PEOPLE** for who they are and the uniqueness they bring, that **ACCOMMODATE DIVERSE NEEDS** and that allow people to **PERFORM AT THEIR BEST**.

In the context of changing population demographics and the growth of the labour market (PDC 2011-2015), the creation of equitable and inclusive organizational infrastructure is key to cultivating a more motivated and innovative workforce, and ensuring the building of sustainable communities.

'HOW TO': TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

There are a number of key strategies that can be employed by everyone in order to begin the creation of equitable and inclusive workplaces:

- **Reflect on your assumptions, attitudes and behaviour:** Being aware of your biases and taking action to manage them will positively impact your relationships with others at work
- **Seek out training opportunities:** All employees can benefit from increased knowledge/skill-building around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workplace
- **Create a safe environment:** Being respectful of others (in the design of spaces, in the use of language, in relationship-building) will nurture an environment of psychological safety
- **Get involved in organizational policy development:** A transparent and participatory policy development process that values employee input is essential to changing/improving organizational culture
- **Be adaptable to change/ new approaches:** Inclusivity and equity in the workplace hinge on the ability and willingness to change behaviour, practices, policies – and *value* those changes
- **Start a resource group/form a committee:** DEI committees and employee resource groups are proactive ways of supporting colleagues and moving the work forward
- **Have conversations with your team/colleagues:** Creating space to ensure/reinforce equitable and inclusive behaviour will encourage greater participation and equitable collaboration
- **Be an active listener:** Listening to others with an open mind and remembering that 'everyone belongs' will help in understanding different points of view

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- PowerPoint – Creating Equitable and Inclusive Workplaces
- Webinar – Creating Equitable and Inclusive Workplaces
- D&I Charter Practice Brief 1.2 – Supporting Inclusive Leaders and Change Champions

MAKING CONNECTIONS: EQUITABLE WORKPLACE CREATION AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

When you commit to creating equitable and inclusive workplaces, you are:

- Starting to 'live' the commitments in the Charter!
- Improving people's quality of life by making them feel valued and respected at work
- Creating an opportunity to reflect on the impact of attitude and behaviour change both within and outside the workplace
- Contributing to a more vibrant, productive, engaged and connected community

WHICH CHARTER COMMITMENTS AM I IMPLEMENTING?

- ✓ Ensuring equitable and inclusive behaviours, practices, policies with regular review
- ✓ Supporting inclusive leaders and change champions
- ✓ Dedicating resources, including people, time, and/or money to equity and inclusion
- ✓ Building transparent and accountable relationships and systems
- ✓ Recognizing individuals and organizations implementing best practices in equity and inclusion

Recognizing and Supporting Diverse Neighbourhoods and Communities

The purpose of this practice brief is to (1) introduce our approach to equitable and inclusive neighbourhoods and communities; (2) examine some key strategies for recognizing and supporting diverse neighbourhoods and communities; and (3) make connections between inclusive neighbourhoods and community well-being. EDs/CEOs, managers, frontline staff, consultants, volunteers and community residents can use this practice brief in order to implement some of the key commitments in the D&I Charter of Peel.

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

A multi-level, cross-sectoral and collaborative process, recognizing and supporting diverse neighbourhoods and communities requires that several stakeholders i) engage in self-reflexive practice; and ii) take deliberate and concerted action to ensure that neighbourhoods/communities are well equipped to thrive and prosper. Understanding and responding to the intersections of economic & political, spiritual & psychological, social & cultural, and physical & ecological spheres of community life is key to fostering greater social inclusion within neighbourhoods and communities.

As defined by the D&I Charter Initiative, inclusive neighbourhoods/communities are those in which **COMMUNITY ASSETS** are valued, **CREATIVITY** is showcased, **NETWORKS** are developed, **SAFE/WELCOMING SPACES** are fostered, **LOCAL ECONOMIES** are strengthened, **HEALTH/WEELBEING** is prioritized and **DIVERSITY** is celebrated (Tamarack Institute, 2013). The outcome is ultimately the creation and sustenance of connected, resilient and healthy communities where people feel valued on a daily basis.

'HOW TO': TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS

There are a number of key strategies that can be employed in order to ensure the recognition and support of diverse neighbourhoods and communities:

- **Consistent Self- Reflection, Recognition of Diversity:** As individuals, it is important that we identify what our social identities are and where our privileges lie; and acknowledge the diversity of our community both in personal and professional practice
- **Meaningful Community Engagement & Regular Assessment of Needs:** Service providers and public institutions must ensure that diverse needs are assessed appropriately in developing programs and services, and that communities are engaged throughout
- **Responsible Decision-Making & Resource Allocation:** Decision makers, funders, community foundations, public/private institutions, and local governments must take ownership of inclusive community development
- **Commitment to a Transparent, Egalitarian & Accountable Justice System:** Lawyers, case workers, and law enforcement officials are responsible for keeping *all* neighbourhoods/communities safe and ensuring everyone has equal access to justice
- **Deliberate Capacity Building & Leadership Development:** Public institutions, local governments and funders can support inclusive neighbourhoods by enhancing local capacity and working to develop, recognize and support diverse leaders
- **Conscious Planning, Policy Development, Service Delivery:** Decision makers, local governments, policy analysts, and urban planners should invest in social infrastructure, design/maintain inclusive spaces and programs, focus on inclusive growth, and commit to increasing local access to resources
- **Critical Questioning and Advocacy:** Students, researchers and community advocates can support inclusive community development by thinking critically, questioning systems, advocating for change, and engaging in social innovation

RESOURCES & MORE INFORMATION

- PowerPoint – Recognizing and Supporting Diverse Neighbourhoods and Communities
- Webinar - Recognizing and Supporting Diverse Neighbourhoods and Communities
- D&I Charter Practice Brief 1.2 – Partnering and Collaborating to Ensure Equity and Inclusion
- Deepening Community Online Learning Platform, Tamarack Institute
- Healthy Peel By Design – Region of Peel, Public Health Department

MAKING CONNECTIONS: INCLUSIVE NEIGHBOURHOODS AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETIES

When you commit to recognizing and supporting diverse neighbourhoods and communities, you are:

- Starting to 'live' the commitments in the Charter!
- Facilitating full participation in the social, cultural, and economic life of neighbourhoods
- Deepening the feeling and reality of belonging for individuals
- Contributing to a more vibrant, productive, engaged and connected community

WHICH CHARTER COMMITMENTS AM I IMPLEMENTING?

- ✓ *Integrating the values of equity and inclusion into personal lives, work, relationships and participation as residents*
- ✓ *Supporting vibrant neighbourhoods where diverse people come together as communities*
- ✓ *Providing ongoing learning that facilitates equity and inclusion at individual, organizational and community levels*
- ✓ *Partnering and collaborating to support and build equity and inclusion*
- ✓ *Celebrating Peel Region's rich diversity*
- ✓ *Enabling full participation and engagement by all through equitable access to information, services, opportunities*

This booklet is also available online at
www.dicharter.rdrpeel.org/edu-training-tools-resources/

For more information about the Diversity & Inclusion Charter of Peel Initiative,
please visit www.dicharter.rdrpeel.org

Funded By | Financé Par



Created By | Créé Par

