

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity Status Update 2024

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** June 10, 2024

**Report Number:** CAO-12-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer  
Community Services Department

**Submitted by:**

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John Romano, Commissioner,  
Community Services

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer**

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### Recommendation:

1. That Council receive Report CAO-12-24 The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity Status Update 2024 for information.

### Highlights:

- The Town embarked on the IDEA Project as an opportunity to understand the current state of diversity and inclusion at the Town of Whitby, both as an employer and a public service organization.
- An outcome of the IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity is a commitment from staff to provide Council with an annual status report on actions taken throughout the prior year that advance IDEA at the Town.
- This year's report provides an updated status on the continued implementation of the recommendations outlined in The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity, Final Report.

- The Corporate IDEA Specialist, who joined the Town in October 2022, has been actively addressing the recommendations from the IDEA Report. This report highlights the ongoing internal efforts and advancements made since then.
- The Town continues discussions with the team from the Abilities Centre to explore opportunities for collaboration, including training.

**Background:**

- *CAO-01-22 The IDEA Project, Whitby's Journey to Inclusivity, Final Report* was presented to Council in January 2022 and recommended forty-one (41) actions, across five (5) priority categories, to be implemented over a five-year period.
- *The IDEA Project, Whitby's Journey to Inclusivity, Final Report* also recommended two (2) new dedicated staff resources to lead and support the recommended IDEA actions.
- Included in the 2022 budget was the creation of a Corporate IDEA Specialist. The intent of this role is to provide support to the Town as employer as it creates structural change across the full range of services as identified in the action items. This may include training, mentoring, research on best practices, and guidance on matters related to IDEA.
- The Corporate IDEA Specialist started with the Town in October 2022.
- *CAO-01-22 The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity, Final Report* recommended an annual status update report to Council on work undertaken to advance IDEA at the Town.

**Discussion:**

Report *CAO-01-22 The IDEA Report, Journey to Inclusivity, Final Report* included a recommendation to establish two (2) staff resources that would steward and lead the work required to respond to the forty-one (41) recommendations in the report as well as advance and support all IDEA efforts at the Town.

Approved by Council in the 2022 budget was the creation of a Corporate IDEA Specialist, whose role is to support the employer in creating structural changes across the full range of services as recommended. This includes training, mentoring, researching best practices, and providing guidance on IDEA-related matters.

Proposed in the 2022 and 2023 budgets were the creation of a Community Idea Specialist to focus on community facing work associated with diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism. In accordance with Council resolution #48-23, passed at the special Council meeting on February 16, 2023, the decision was made to not approve the creation of the Community IDEA Specialist position and remove this position from the 2023 Operating and Capital budget. Consequently, the associated projects for this

position have been suspended until appropriate resource levels are achieved. This includes addressing the externally focused recommendations from the IDEA Project.

Attached is *Appendix A-Annual IDEA Status Update* detailing the status of each action item. In summary, of the forty-one (41) recommendations in the IDEA Report, eleven (11) are internally focused and designated to be led by the Corporate IDEA Specialist, nineteen (19) are externally focused, ten (10) are shared, that is, require the support and leadership of both an internally and externally focused specialist, and one (1) is not applicable.

Status on the internally facing recommendations from the IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity is on-going and is supported by staff across the organization. Work completed to date includes, but is not limited to:

- Development and release of a corporate policy that supports gender identity and expression. Policy 400-065-01 Gender Identity and Expression was released in May 2024. **Recommendation J2I:2.**
- Continued adoption and promotion of the IDEA definitions created by the IDEA Project, integrating them into existing policies, practices, and strategies related to IDEA. By connecting these definitions to our frameworks, we aim to ensure consistency and clarity in the Town's approach to IDEA initiatives, specifically in areas including, but not limited to leadership accountability, organizational development, customer service, recruitment and hiring processes, and policy development and review. **Recommendation J2I:2.**
- Development of the IDEA Equity Assessment Tool (IEIAT): designed to support the Corporation by embedding the principles of equity and inclusion from design to implementation of corporate policies, procedures, programs, projects, plans, services, and budget decisions. Planned release at the end of June 2024. **Recommendation J2I:5.**
- Developed an Unconscious Bias Recruitment Guide for hiring managers. This guide will be included in onboarding and training initiatives for Hiring Managers to ensure they are aware of and actively addressing their unconscious biases during the recruitment process, promoting fair and equitable hiring decisions. **Recommendation J2I:13.**
- Repurposed the First Aid Room at Town Hall into a First Aid & Quiet Room, creating a dual-purpose space to support staff's physical and mental well-being. This room now offers a serene environment for personal tranquillity, facilitates religious practices, and allows for private telemedicine appointments, aiming to provide safe spaces. **Recommendation J2I:15.**
- Developed the *IDEA Technology and Business Applications Requirements Guide*, aimed at ensuring user-centered design and compliance with best practice IDEA standards. This guide, which will be incorporated into the *IT Requirements Standardization Refresh and Configuration Standards*, prioritizes features such as gender expression, pronouns, and preferred names in technology requirements and emphasizes regular reviews to enhance inclusivity and user experience. **Recommendation J2I:37.**

In addition to advancing the recommendations outlined in the IDEA Report, Journey to Inclusivity, the Corporate IDEA Specialist also has and will continue to:

- Continue to partner with Communications and Creative Services (CCS) to consistently reinforce the value of IDEA through ongoing, comprehensive media campaigns across multiple appropriate channels, ensuring sustained visibility and impact.
- Continue to advance the cultural calendar to include more significant days and events, ensuring broader representation. Improved communication strategies by integrating multimedia content such as videos and infographics. Increased outreach by leveraging internal partnerships and offering educational webinars around these significant days to further develop staff.
- Provide ongoing support and expert advice to existing and newly formed Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). The Town currently supports four ERGs: WOW (Women of Whitby), Qween (Queer Whitby Employees Educational Network [formerly GLOW]), TOWN (Transitions of Whitby Now), and NewBees (recently hired employees), with initiatives to foster cross-collaboration between these ERGs to enhance their effectiveness.
- Provide support and expert advice to the Staff Led Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce. There are approximately seventeen (17) staff from across the organization participating in this taskforce. They are committed to advancing IDEA at the Town.
- Advance the annual planning, administration, and implementation of the Corporate Diversity and Inclusion training plan. This has included comprehensive research and updates to existing IDEA eLearning modules on the Town's Learning Management System (LMS), as well as the development and introduction of new training programs to address emerging equity and inclusion topics.
- Provide expert advice to various stakeholders regarding IDEA as it pertains to staff programs.

**Financial Considerations:**

Not applicable

**Communication and Public Engagement:**

Not applicable

**Input from Departments/Sources:**

Not applicable

**Community Strategic Priorities:**

Advancing IDEA at the Town of Whitby directly reinforces/sustains the Corporate Mission: "Together, we deliver services that make a difference in our community," and responds to the Community Strategic Plan's Objectives of increasing opportunities to

acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the community (1.2.1 Enhance Town-led and community-based events and festivals that celebrate diversity) and being the organization that people want to join and build their future (4.2.3 Identify opportunities and take steps to establish a more diverse and inclusive workplace).

**Attachments:**

Attachment 1: CAO 12-24-Appendix A-Annual IDEA Status Update