

Town of Whitby Staff Report

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Report Title: The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity Status Update 2025

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: June 2, 2025

Report Number: CAO-16-25

Department(s) Responsible:

Organizational Effectiveness

Human Resources Services

Submitted by:

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

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1. Recommendation:

That Council receive Report CAO-16-25 The IDEA Project, Journey to Inclusivity Status Update 2025 for information.

2. 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 continues to address the recommendations from the IDEA Report. This report highlights the ongoing internal efforts and advancements made since the recommendations were presented to Council in 2022.

3. 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.
- *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.

4. 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, Final Report* is on-going and is supported by staff across the organization. Work completed to date includes, but is not limited to:

- **Recommendation J2I:2:** 2SLGBTQ+ education session held in March 2025 to help staff understand key terms, concepts, and allyship.
- **Recommendation J2I:2:** IDEA lens being applied to Career Development, Talent Acquisition Strategy, and Recognition Project.
- **Recommendation J2I:5:** Development of the IDEA Equity Assessment Tool (IEIAT). The tool is 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 2025.
- **Recommendation J2I:8:** An internal working group, led by Strategic Initiatives, has been formed to develop Indigenous Consultation guidelines for Town of Whitby staff. In addition, several projects in 2024/2025 have included consultation with Indigenous partners including
 - Urban Forestry Master Plan
 - National Indigenous Peoples Day Culture Pop-up event
 - Downie and Wenjack Fund Legacy Space
- **Recommendation J21:10:** The Town has joined the Durham Region Indigenous Collaborative Circle (DRICC).
- **Recommendation J21:11:** The Town participated in the Durham Region Black History Month celebration and will march in the 2025

PRIDE parade in June. In addition, Creative Communities introduced Cultural Pop-up public events including:

- National Indigenous People's Day Celebration at Whitby Waterfront.
- Bollywood on the Pier
- Greek Summer Night
- Boots and Beats
- Rhythms of Africa

- **Recommendation J2I:13:** Inclusive Recruitment facilitated workshop for HR and hiring managers to launch in June 2025.
- **Recommendation J2I:13:** An Inclusive Futures Program is in development. This is an initiative to increase representation of people with disabilities with disabilities, people receiving Ontario Disability Support Program, and Ontario Works. A report to Council is planned for September 2025.
- **Recommendation J2I:13:** Talent Acquisition Strategy is in development. A cross-functional committee of people leaders was established to provide recommendations and advice from each of the business areas. Anticipated launch: Q4 2025.
- **Recommendation J21:16:** Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training for municipal leaders scheduled for Senior Leadership Team on May 26, 2025.
- **Recommendation J21:18:** The Town procured TELUS Health as a new EAP provider, offering a broader variety and more accessible services for staff.
- **Recommendation J21:21:** In March 2025, Council received *PDP 15-25, Planning and Development (Planning Services) Department Report* recommending that Inclusionary Zoning within the Town's Protected Major Transit Station Area not be implemented at this time and that alternative means of creating affordable housing units be explored.
- **Recommendation J21:28:** Service Whitby launched in Spring 2025 – providing a one-window approach, enhancing accessibility in customer service for residents.
- **Recommendation J21:30:** The Town is participating in a LEAD review facilitated by the Abilities Centre. Recommendations are expected to be released in Summer 2025.
- **Recommendation J21:30:** Accessibility design standards are

applied to all new and renovated spaces. For example, The Whitby Sports Complex is a multi-purpose gathering space for inclusive sport and community programming - a place for residents of all ages and abilities to connect, play and get active. The complex includes IDEA considerations, including:

- Barrier-free design incorporated accessibility guidelines and considerations for inclusion
- Barrier-free spaces throughout, gender-neutral and family-friendly washrooms and changerooms, accessibility ramps and elevators.
- Accessible way-finding

Beyond the recommendations of the *IDEA Report, Journey to Inclusivity*:

In addition to advancing the recommendations outlined in the *IDEA Report, Journey to Inclusivity*, the Corporate IDEA Specialist will:

- 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 future 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.
- Lead the Town's 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 advice to various stakeholders regarding IDEA as it pertains to staff programs.

5. Financial Considerations:

Not applicable

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Not Applicable

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

Not Applicable

8. 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).

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1: CAO-16-25-Appendix A-Annual IDEA Status Update