RAINBOW DIVERSITY
INSTITUTE

November, 2022

POLICY REVIEW
&
RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARED FOR:

guelph neighbourhood
SUPPORT COALITION

GNSC Policy Revisions Purpose and Background

In response to the need to support policy revisions, [Rainbow Diversity Institute (RDI)](#) was hired to facilitate a collaborative consultation process and provide recommendations for the *Human Resources Policy* (HRP) to Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition (GNSC).

RDI engaged in a comprehensive, collaborative policy review process which included two consultation working sessions followed by two focus group sessions and five individual interviews to gather staff, board and volunteer feedback. The following summary and report provide an overview of these sessions along with recommendations.

Consultation Sessions

Working Sessions:

RDI facilitated two working sessions to gather feedback and input from employees, volunteers, community partners, and board members of GNSC. During the first working session, the RDI facilitator presented the foundations of effectively using an EDI lens to review policies.

A significant theme that emerged through the working sessions was that staff wanted increased transparency, accountability, and structure built in with flexibility to the processes and policies. In addition, there was a general consensus that the GNSC had informally been doing work to promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles in the organization's day-to-day functioning. However, this EDI work lacked consistency throughout the various segments of the organization.

Some staff felt a significant absence of communication around the HR policy and felt the process of onboarding new staff could be improved by providing mandatory training on the HRP and procedures. Staff also desired a collaborative approach to policy development inclusive of wider organizational participation. Further, RDI understood that the HRP is a revised policy inherited from the City of Guelph. There is a desire for GNSC to forge a separate direction that is more reflective of GNSC's visions and values.

Focus Groups:

RDI conducted two focus groups to gather feedback from staff, board members, and volunteers. The focus group participants explained that they had varying experiences with being exposed to the policy. One participant, in particular, shared that they had a very thorough one-on-one introduction to the HR policy and were able to ask questions about it. However, another participant had yet to review the

HR policy and, in fact, was not aware of its existence prior to RDI commencing the policy review process.

Some participants felt that the Human Resources Policy at the GNSC should include policies specific to human rights. Further, some participants felt that there was a disconnect between formal policies and informal practices. This creates inconsistencies throughout GNSC, with some areas following the values of EDI more than others. Overall, participants would like formal policies implemented to ensure that EDI is consistently embedded throughout the GNSC.

Individual Interviews:

RDI conducted interviews with various stakeholders, including employees, board members, and volunteers at the GNSC, to gather feedback from those directly impacted by the HR policy. Some participants had not been exposed to the HR policy outside of RDI's current policy review process. They felt that more interaction with the HR policy would be beneficial for employees.

Further, some employees felt that the HR policy did not properly protect employees facing harassment or human rights issues within the organization. These employees felt that there needed to be more formal targeted policies to support employees who face workplace discrimination.

Many respondents had concerns about the lack of policy specific to hiring procedures and practices. In addition, these respondents shared their concerns about inconsistent and informal hiring practices across the organization.

Lastly, some participants shared that the HR policy was of no concern to them as they enjoyed their connection to the GNSC and did not see any scenarios that would arise and lead them to need to refer to the HR policy.

Notes on Existing Human Resources Policy for Consideration

RDI reviewed the current HR policy and formulated the below list of considerations mainly concerning language and the framing of concepts to refer directly to equity, diversity and inclusion principles. The suggestions below are small changes that can easily be made to the policy to support changes immediately.

Purpose and Scope (P1)

Currently reads:

"The aim of these policies and procedures is to promote harmony in a safe and healthy workplace between all GNSC employees, volunteers and the GNSC Board of Directors."

Considerations:

The language "promote harmony" used when describing the policies and procedures aim could be more robust and include direct inclusive words (equitable, diverse, and inclusive). Equity-deserving populations are often asked to prioritize "the harmony" and "keep the peace" of the collective at the expense of their well-being and safety.

Harmony may, on the surface, seem positive and inclusive, but the notion of harmony is more aligned with equality and sameness. An equitable outcome process makes room for differences within a healthy process. Prioritizing words that acknowledge the existence of stratification and social hierarchies in society is important in acknowledging the anti-oppressive environment the GNSC aims for.

Vision (P1)

Currently reads:
"Healthy, safe community where everyone feels at home."

Considerations:
This vision statement should be enhanced with inclusive language, which adds to the scope of the meaning or intentions behind the vision.

Add some EDI terminology to the existing vision, such as
- Inclusive
- Fostering Belonging

Mission (P1)

Currently reads:
"We support neighbourhood groups that are inclusive, engaging, responsive and build a sense of belonging."

Considerations:
The mission statement reads more like a vision statement. So, for example, does GNSC only support neighbourhood groups that have succeeded in being inclusive and engaging... or does GNSC support communities that strive to be inclusive and engaging etc.

- What communities do these neighbourhood groups serve?
- Including the communities of focus can strengthen the impact of the mission statement.
- This provides transparency to the communities that these neighbourhood groups serve.

Suggestion:
GNSC supports a collective of neighbourhood groups that promote environments of inclusion, engagement, belonging and responsiveness.

Equity Statement (P2)

Currently reads:
"Our organization is open and welcome to individuals and groups regardless...... We want to celebrate the notion of difference, as it only strengthens our individual and collective decision-making ability and the richness of our neighbourhoods."
We commit to:
"Working with people from within our organization and from the larger community to keep up to date with language.

Considerations:
1. **Regardless**
   ○ Omit the word "regardless" as it can imply othering, making an exception to the norm, or tolerance.
2. **Notion of difference**
   ○ This phrase comes across as potentially oppressive. It implies that the list of equity-seeking groups is not normal. More inclusive language can be used to describe what the organization is trying to celebrate.
3. "We want to celebrate diversity, as it only...."
4. "We acknowledge that the experiences of diverse communities not only strengthen our individual and collective decision-making abilities but also add to our neighbourhoods' richness.
5. **Keep up to date with language.**
   ○ Adding "and best practices" to this sentence strengthens the organization's commitment to keeping up to date with language and inclusive actions.

The GNSC is a values-centred and values-driven organization. (P3)

Courage:
We believe in creating and holding space to question and challenge our assumptions and practices.

Love & Kindness: We believe that a compassionate heart is a powerful teacher and guide.

Considerations:
holding space
● Adding the word "safe" emphasizes that the organization is dedicated to creating a platform for conversation and a safe space for it to be exercised.

Assumptions and practices
- Adding the word "bias" acknowledges that there are some opinions and outlooks that also need to be discussed in order to combat discrimination.

compassionate heart
- Adding the word "non-judgemental" to the description of the heart lets one know that the compassion being felt is without judgment or prejudice. It is an honest, open and pure foundation to be built on.

1.3 Probationary Period (P5)

Currently reads:
"With assistance from their Supervisor, employees are required to develop a learning plan for their orientation period."

Considerations:
- Add that the learning plan that the supervisor and employees will develop will be equitable and conducive to each individual's learning need in an accessible manner.

General Gender Inclusive Considerations
- Gender-inclusive pronouns and non-gendered terminology should be used throughout the policy.

Other Considerations

Bereavement:
Consideration should be given to employees whose families live overseas and who would be unable to attend international funerals without sufficient time accounted for distance, cultural practices, and other relevant considerations.

Holidays:
Sufficient floating holidays and flexible personal days should be provided to ensure that employees whose holidays are not federal or provincial holidays can celebrate their days of significance and ensure equity.

Further, days of cultural and religious significance should be considered when planning organizational events or large commitments.

Future GNSC Policies Recommendations

The consultation and review process revealed several gaps in dedicated EDI policies. Currently, the GNSC relies on the Human Resources policy as its only formal organizational policy. The HR Policy does not include all the necessary policies and procedures to consistently support an inclusive and equitable work environment within the organization. RDI uses the term consistently because it is quite evident that many EDI practices are implemented informally throughout the organization. RDI recommends the creation of the following formal policies to support EDI foundational policies.

Accessibility Accommodation Policy:

General information
- Canadian human rights law acknowledges employees' rights to accommodations for their disabilities in the workplace.
- Accommodating the accessibility needs of employees depend on both organizational culture and formal policies and practices.
- The responsibility of accessibility is shared between employees and employers. Both parties must cooperate to ensure that the accessibility needs of employees are met. For example, employees may need to share sufficient information to identify workplace needs.
- Accommodations can be temporary, long-term or permanent.
- Accommodations can be fluid and should take a flexible approach and adapt to changing needs accordingly.

Examples of Accessibility accommodations
- New policies and practices to adapt to best practices
- Adaptation to workspaces
- Work-from-home options when possible
- Adaptation of tasks
- Flexible days off to accommodate
- Adapted tools and equipment, including software

Benefits Policy

General information
Most group benefits packages favour homogenous populations and fail to consider diversity. An inclusive benefits policy can formalize inclusive practices; some are already being practised informally. In addition, creating a benefits policy can reduce unconscious bias and ensure that all employees have access to equitable benefit options that support their needs.

Examples of Inclusive Benefits Practice
- Professional Development
- Group Training Opportunities

- Flexible family and school-friendly schedules
- Flexible scheduling

Inclusive Workplace Policy

General Information
An inclusive workplace policy is centred on the commitment to practices in the workplace that support an inclusive culture. The focus of this policy is to create inclusive opportunities and outcomes for all members, especially people belonging to groups that have been historically marginalized. All supervisors and board members need the tools and skills necessary to support inclusion at all levels within the organization.

Examples of Practices that Support Inclusive Work Environments
- Regular education and training programs
- Regular workshops
- A shared plan to remove barriers and support opportunities
- The communal creation of inclusive policy

Job Postings, Job Descriptions & Recruitment Policies

General Information
Language and presentation of job postings and descriptions play an important role in creating an inclusive work environment. Job postings and descriptions should encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds by clearly stating that the organization is an inclusive, equal-opportunity employer. Inclusive recruitment occurs when your hiring process successfully attracts successful candidates. These policies can be separated or merged into one policy with three distinct sections.

Examples of Best Practices
- Distinguish between the necessary qualifications requirements to successfully perform in the role and "nice to have" qualifications.
- Value lived experience when possible.
- Post in both standard and non-standard places consistently
- Connect with community groups serving historically marginalized populations to promote job postings.
- Avoid jargon
- Hiring committees should be trained in anti-bias, anti-oppressive, and inclusive hiring practices.
- Job postings should be posted for a minimum of 2 weeks.

Human Rights, Anti-Racism, & Anti-Discrimination

General Information
Human Rights policies are essential in creating an inclusive work environment. These policies should align with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Follow the OHRC guidance when developing your organization's human rights policy. Further, the

anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies will provide an opportunity to dive deeper into specific EDI considerations. Finally, creating a human rights workplace policy provides added protection for historically marginalized employees.

Best Practise Examples:
- Follow guidelines from the Ontario Human Rights code
- Ensure that all members of your organization receive basic training on Human Rights
- Ensure anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies include specific examples of racism and discrimination that are relevant to your workplace.

Other policies GNSC may want to consider in future policy creation include but are not limited to: onboarding & orientation, performance review and anti-bullying, workplace violence, remote work, and health & safety policies.

New Policy Creation Consideration

- It is important to incorporate the practice of equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, and anti-oppression principles in each policy.
- All new policies should be communicated and made available to all board members, employees, and volunteers in accessible formats.
- A feedback process should be created. This may look like surveys, community town halls, one-on-one consultations, and where appropriate, impacted community members should have access to providing feedback.
- Training opportunities should be offered to staff and leadership to support the implementation of new policies throughout the organization consistently.
- Communicate to the broader community the intentions for new policies.
- One person should not be left to lead policy development; instead, this role should be shared and done communally to ensure buy-in and successful implementation and adoption.
- Distinguishing between manual guidelines that are flexible and policies which are strict.

Questions to Consider

- In what ways is a decolonial lens built into your analysis?
- What accountability measures are in place?
- What pull factors are influencing the policy?
- Are any of the current policy lines performative in nature?
- What new policy areas would you like to see introduced?
- What key outcomes or changes would you like to see in your organization from implementing an EDI lens?

Further Considerations

- Accountability measures
- Creation and maintenance of an organizational chart
- Training
- Mentorship
- Embedding collaboration
- Equitable representation
- Formalizing practices
- Implementation process
- Include the last updated dates on every policy
- Include the date the policy will next be up for review
- Policies should be understood as a living document and updated to reflect the growing needs of the community, organization, law, and best practices
- Include which role(s) and or committees are responsible for updating the policy
- Ensure that diverse voices are participating in the process.
- Look for equity, diversity, and inclusion gaps.
- Conduct regular equity audits to increase accountability of policies and measure their impact.

Conclusion

It is important to note that although the Human Resources Policy Review process has included recommendations to create additional policies, this work should build on one another and not be rushed. RDI recommends that GNSC create a long-term 3-5 year plan for new policy creation in collaboration with staff, board members, volunteers, and other key stakeholders that allows for adequate time in between the development and successful implementation of each policy. In addition, further embedding appropriate training for board members, staff, and volunteers as GNSC works through new policy development would be useful and support the successful implementation of policies.