NOVA SCOTIA

Equity and Anti-Racism Plan Guidance for Municipalities and Villages

Office of Equity and Anti-Racism

Introduction

This resource is designed to help municipalities and villages to develop equity and anti-racism plans by April 1, 2025, as required under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and associated regulations.

In addition to this resource, the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA) will provide municipalities and villages with a self-assessment tool that can help identify areas of focus for their equity and anti-racism plans, as well as an equity and anti-racism primer resource that introduces foundational concepts. The Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia will also be supporting municipalities and villages as they undertake this work.

Nova Scotia's *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*

Nova Scotia has committed to addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism, and to supporting underrepresented and underserved communities and the intersectionality between and amongst them.

The *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act*, passed in 2022, was developed by an all-party committee following engagement with Nova Scotians, and it outlines the provincial government's approach to addressing systemic hate, inequity, and racism. Recognizing the important role municipalities and villages play in addressing racism, hate and inequity, the Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy identified them as being the first public sector bodies that would be required to develop equity and anti-racism plans. This exercise requires municipalities and villages to undergo a planning process to identify actions that will promote equity and anti-racism by considering the needs of underrepresented and underserved communities.

Municipalities and Villages as Prescribed Public Sector Bodies (PPSBs):

Municipalities and villages are important partners in becoming an equitable, anti-racist and accessible province. PPSB organizations, including municipalities and villages, represent a wide range of sectors and cover essential areas of the lives of people in the province.

Both the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and *Accessibility Act* allows government to prescribe public sector organizations to meet several legislative obligations including the creation of plans to address the goals of each Act. OEA and the Accessibility Directorate are working collaboratively to support municipalities and villages to meet requirements under both the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* and *Accessibility Act* into one interconnected planning approach. Municipalities and villages are encouraged to use this resource in tandem with resources prepared by the Accessibility Directorate to develop a single plan that meets legislative requirements of both Acts (i.e., combine efforts to produce a single equity, anti-racism and accessibility plan for 2025-28).

Other public sector bodies that are not yet prescribed under the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* are encouraged to consider equity and anti-racism in the updating of their accessibility plans and in other activities and/or planning exercises where applicable. Accessibility plans, to be truly effective, must incorporate the intersectionality that exists within the disability community. PPSBs that are not municipalities and villages are welcome to voluntarily create equity and anti-racism plans using this guide.

Overview of Equity and Anti-Racism in Nova Scotia

Did you know..

- In 2021, there were 52,425 Indigenous people in Nova Scotia, making up 5.5% of the population[1].
- Respondents to the 2021 Census were asked whether they identified with specific categories of visible minority. These racialized groups accounted for 9.8% of the population in Nova Scotia[2].
    - Nova Scotians that identified as Black made up the largest population in a racialized group in Nova Scotia (28,220). This was followed by those who identified as South Asian (21,655), those who identified as Chinese (11,600), those who identified as Arab (10,610) and those who identified as Filipino (6,615).
- Nova Scotia the highest proportions of transgender and non-binary people aged 15 and older in Canada (0.48% or almost 1 in every 200 people living in Nova Scotia) and amongst aged 15 to 34 among the provinces this statistic increases (1.17% or 1 in every 100 people living in Nova Scotia)[3].
- In 2020, the number of police reported hate crimes[4] increased by 70% in Nova Scotia (roughly six incidents per 100,000 population)[5].

Underrepresented and Underserved Communities in Nova Scotia

When we speak of underrepresented and underserved communities, we are referring to those groups who experience discrimination and exclusion because of unequal power relationships across economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions.

This includes systemic hate, inequity and/or racism towards people based on one or more protected characteristics as identified in the *Human Rights Act*, which includes: age, race, colour, religion, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, physical or mental disability, ethnicity, national or Indigenous origin, family status, marital status, source of income, and political belief, affiliation or activity.

Below are examples of underrepresented and underserved groups in Nova Scotia. Each of these groups has their own unique story, historical setting and history of discrimination and marginalization (this list is not exhaustive and may not include all groups who would identify as underrepresented and/or underserved):

- Mi'kmaq and Persons of Indigenous descent
- African Nova Scotians and Persons of African descent
- Persons of Colour/Racialized Persons
- Newcomers (immigrants and refugees)
- 2SLGBTQIA+
- Persons with disabilities
- Minority faith-based groups
- Persons who are neurodivergent
- In some contexts, women.

Intersectionality

It is important to take intersectionality into account as many policies impact individuals in multiple ways as a result of their intersecting identities. The wheel of power and privilege can be used as a visual tool for promoting awareness and understanding of interconnected systems of privilege, oppression, and power dynamics within society. It provides examples within the Canadian context to illustrate how intersectionality of

[1] https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/page.cfm?lang=E&topic=8&dguid=2021A000212
[2] https://novascotia.ca/finance/statistics/news.asp?id=18264
[3] https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220427/cg-b004-png-eng.htm
[4] "Police-reported hate crime is defined as a criminal violation against a person or property motivated by hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation or gender identity or expression, or any other similar factor."
[5] https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00005-eng.htm

thirteen categories of social identity uphold power and privilege and shape our interactions and experiences. Mapping out these complex dynamics can help to recognize personal positions of privilege as well as help to understand how systemic inequalities impact different groups within society. This understanding is essential for:

- identifying and addressing barriers to participation;
- guiding efforts to ensure inclusive, meaningful, equitable and accessible services and engagement initiatives for all members of the community;
- navigating conversations around inequities, ensuring diverse perspectives are heard and valued; and
- developing strategies to address power imbalances and create more equitable outcomes in projects, programs, polices, and decision-making processes.

What do we mean by Equity and Anti-Racism?

When thinking about what to include in your equity and anti-racism plan, it is important to understand that this plan is not the same as traditional equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) plans. EDI plans have traditionally been focused internally on an organization and mainly on the employees of an organization. They include actions that promote diversity within the organization and equitable hiring practices.

While equity and anti-racism includes EDI, it is not solely EDI. In your equity and anti-racism plans, public sector bodies are expected to look at: the way that policies and programs are developed; how services are delivered; and how budgetary decisions are made. It is not enough for an organization to be actively improving on the diversity of those at all levels of their organization through traditional EDI plans. Organizations also need to be considering its policy making process including: who they engage with to determine their priorities for a given year; who they engage with to determine what options are appropriate for a particular policy, program or service; how they determine impacts; and how they make decisions on the options to pursue.

The provincial Equity and Anti-Racism Strategy includes this policy and engagement focus. The provincial government is committed to enhancing its policy development process by including equity impact assessments (EIA) and evaluations. The EIA supports departments in incorporating an equity and anti-racism focus at every step of developing, for example, a new law or regulation or a new program. Equity evaluations support analysis of existing laws, regulations and policies to determine if they are perpetuating systemic hate, inequity and racism.

Please keep this policy and engagement focus while considering what to include in your plans. OEA and the Association of Municipal Administrators of Nova Scotia will be there to help you along the way.

Creating your Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

Plan Requirements

Your plan is an opportunity for you to share publicly your organization's commitment to equity and anti-racism. Equity and anti-racism plans **must** be:

- informed by engagement with underrepresented and underserved communities within the jurisdiction that the plan covers;
- in place by April 1, 2025;
- publicly available in an accessible format; and
- updated every three years, in line with *Accessibility Act* requirement.

Planning Process Summary

Municipalities and Villages are encouraged to follow the same process for developing their equity and anti-racism plans as outlined in the Toolkit for Updating Accessibility Plans as developed by the Accessibility Directorate. Municipalities and villages may choose to adapt or follow their own planning process. Appendix A

offers a proposed structure that municipalities and villages may want to consider for the development of their plan.

Some requirements and specific considerations are outlined below that should be embedded within your planning process.

- **Complete an assessment of any previous diversity, equity and inclusion plans**. Document progress including:
    - the actions that were fully completed;
    - actions that were started and are still underway (partially completed); and
    - actions where work has not yet started.
- **Identify and document what you learned** from implementing other equity, inclusion and diversity plans and efforts. Here are some questions that can help:
    - What challenges did you experience implementing these plans? Why did they occur?
    - What successes did you experience implementing these plans? What factors contributed to the success?
- **As an organization, reflect on what actions should your municipality or village take in the next three years to advance equity and anti-racism.**
    - What equity and accessibility issues have emerged over the past few years?
    - For an understanding of hate motivated crimes and acts of hate in your municipality or village, in addition to listening to community voices, considering consulting with your local law enforcement agencies to hear about their experiences.
    - What concerns have underrepresented and underserved communities raised—historically or currently? Are there themes?
    - What policy areas may have significant impacts on underrepresented and underserved communities (e.g., land use and zoning by-laws)?
    - What programs are accessed by underrepresented and underserved communities? Do we know if these programs are meeting their needs? Do we know if there are barriers that are preventing them from accessing programs? Are we aware of gaps in programming?
    - What is working well from the actions that have been taken so far to improve equity and anti-racism?
    - What changes have you noticed in the community in terms of culture, such as inclusion, when people with underrepresented and underserved communities are valued and engaged? What actions should be considered in the plan to address or recognize these changes?
- **Some broader equity and anti-racism priority area examples** to consider including in your plan include:
    - Equity and Anti-Racism in Service Delivery
    - Anti-Racism Training and Education
    - Diverse Representation and Inclusion
    - Equitable Hiring and Promotion Practices
    - Language and Cultural Accessibility
    - Equity and Anti-Racism in Planning and Development
    - Community Engagement and Consultation
    - Equitable Access to Economic Opportunities

Example of an Action within an Equity and Anti-Racism Plan

Recreation Nova Scotia's Anti-Racism Charter in Recreation provides unifying guidelines for the recreation sector to address and combat systemic racism within the sector. Municipalities and villages can become signatories to this charter as a commitment to a more equitable and inclusive recreation system as a part of their equity, anti-racism and accessibility plan and identify specific actions to support this commitment (e.g. initiatives that introduce recreation programs to racialized communities, identify practical and financial barriers and plan to address these barriers).

- **Ensure that underrepresented and underserved communities that your municipality or village serves are engaged in the development and implementation of your plan.**
    - Before you begin planning engagement, develop an understanding of the demographics of the people you serve to inform your engagement approach and ensure underrepresented and underserved populations are included.
        - Appendix B provides a summary of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian communities in Nova Scotia. Where applicable, plan to involve these the community(-ies) in the development of your equity and anti-racism plan.
    - What community-based organizations and not-for-profits exist in your municipality or village that serve underrepresented or underserved communities? Can you partner with them on engagement or for advice and input into your equity, anti-racism and accessibility plan?
    - Before you engage community, identify the key questions you are looking for input on (you may use questions similar to the previous prompt). Since you have already assessed progress made through previous equity and anti-racism plans and efforts, you may have a draft framework and guiding principles ready for direct input.
    - When considering how to include underrepresented and underserved communities in your work, be mindful and reflective of your existing relationships or lack thereof with these communities. Consider previous initiatives undertaken with these communities and how these can positively or negatively impact efforts related to your equity and anti-racism plan.
    - For more information and guidance on community engagement, please review OEA's Public Engagement Guidebook available at oeaengagement.ca.

An Example of Community Engagement

To further the (Halifax) Anti-Black Racism Framework, a phased approach for public engagement was undertaken to aid the development of the Anti-Black Racism Strategy and Action Plan. Collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to receive input, suggestions, and recommendations into the process was central to the development the strategy and plan.

-Halifax Regional Municipality Website

- **Invite feedback from your partners and community on a draft plan,** particularly underrepresented and underserved communities, including persons with disabilities and representatives from organizations representing underrepresented and underserved communities. For example, posting it online or holding an in-person meeting.
    - Consider contacting the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism (OEA@novascotia.ca) for feedback on your draft plan.
- **Revise and update** the plan based on feedback.
- **Publish your plan publicly in an accessible format**.
- **Email a link to your approved and published plan** to OEA@novascotia.ca. While government does not currently approve or endorse each organization's plan, compliance monitoring will be undertaken.

Appendix A – Example Equity and Anti-Racism Plan Template

- **Executive Summary and/or Opening Message**
  - Overview of the municipality/ village's commitment to equity and antiracism.
  - Key objectives.
  - Summary of key initiatives.
  - Can take the form of summary or a message from mayor of municipality, chair of a village, or other lead/sponsor.
- **Overview/How the plan was developed**
  - Purpose of the action plan.
  - Acknowledgement of underserved and underrepresented constituents/members you serve
  - Who did we hear from and work with to create this plan and who will be involved in implementing it?
  - How will we track progress and measure success.
- **Action Plan Commitments/Areas of Focus**
  - Group actions/commitments in thematic areas. Aim for at minimum 3-5 areas of focus for the next three years.
  - Identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) indicators associated with actions and commitments where possible.
  - Identify any key partners for commitments/areas of focus (e.g., community-based organizations, other municipalities).
- **Conclusion/Closing Section**
  - How will we commit to continuous improvement and revisiting the plan as needed?
  - Reaffirm commitments to equity, anti-racism and accessibility, including ongoing engagement with underserved and underrepresented communities.

Appendix B – Mi’kmaq and African Nova Scotian Communities in Nova Scotia

Mi’kmaq Communities

The Mi’kmaq are the Indigenous people of Mi’kma’ki. Mi’kma’ki encompasses what is known as present-day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec (Gaspé Peninsula), New Brunswick (north of the St. John watershed), parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and parts of Maine.

Mi’kmaq have been rooted in Mi’kma’ki for over 13,000 years according to the carbon dating of artifacts from the Mi’kmawey Debert site.



Seven Districts of Mi’kma’ki:
1. Unama’ki aq Ktaqmkuk
2. Epekwitk aq Piktuk
3. Eskikewa’kik
4. Sipekne’katik
5. Kespukwik
6. Siknikt
7. Kespek

Thirteen First Nation communities in Mi’kma’ki:
Acadia First Nation
Annapolis Valley First Nation
Bear River First Nation
Eskasoni Mi’kmaw Nation
Glooscap First Nation
Membertou First Nation
Millbrook First Nation
Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation
Pictou Landing First Nation
Potlotek First Nation (formerly Chapel Island)
Sipekne'katik First Nation (formerly Indian Brook/Shubenacadie)
Wagmatcook First Nation
We'koqma'q First Nation



African Nova Scotian (ANS) Communities

African Nova Scotians inhabited land in Nova Scotia over 400 years ago.

There were multiple known waves of migration into Nova Scotia, such as the Black Loyalists in 1783, the Jamaica Maroons in 1796, refugees from the War of 1812 between 1813-1814 and a Caribbean migration in 1904. In each migration, African Nova Scotians settled in different parts of the province. Many of the original fifty-two historical Black communities still exist within the province of Nova Scotia.



African Nova Scotian Communities Map (Courtesy of African Nova Scotia Affairs)

The relationship between ANS settlers and Mi'kmaw communities started early. This relationship between communities was essential to the survival of ANS communities. Many settlers learned skills and knowledge of how to live off the land. This included using natural medicines, farming, fishing, and building/labour.