

## OSSTF/FEESO Equity Statement

OSSTF/FEESO is a democratic union that recognizes the importance of encouraging and supporting involvement by all members, while recognizing that some members have historically been marginalized. For the Federation to be at its best, all members must see themselves reflected in its goals, structures, and practices. OSSTF/FEESO will strive to identify and eliminate barriers to participation through programs, procedures, bylaws, and policies supported by specified resources and education.

OSSTF/FEESO supports equity, diversity, and social justice within the union, the workplace, and in broader society.

Not all discrimination is deliberate or visible. Inadvertent, hidden, and systemic discrimination must be identified and addressed.

Discrimination and harassment must not be ignored when we see it. Overt discrimination and harassment within the Federation must be challenged and rectified.

The marginalization of certain groups must be specifically recognized. For OSSTF/FEESO, these groups include, but are not necessarily limited to, women, people of colour, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer, intersexed, questioning, two-spirited, First Nations, Inuit, Métis, people with disabilities, francophones, and those whose participation is impeded because of economic circumstances or family status.

Equal opportunity to participate in the Federation does not mean treating all members the same. Within a democratic framework, promoting the engagement of members of equity-seeking groups is a valid and necessary approach to reaching equal outcomes.

OSSTF/FEESO will be guided in its efforts to eliminate barriers by valid research, regular review, and consultation with the membership.

Federation programs and policies designed to eliminate barriers must not only do so, they must be widely seen to do so.

This booklet was first presented at Leadership 2017 and revised in collaboration with the Committee on Addressing Anti-Black Racism/Racism, Equity Advisory Work Group and the New Member Engagement Advisory Work Group in 2023.

### REFERENCES:

*A Leader's Guide to Strengthening Unions, Moving Beyond Diversity... Towards Inclusion and Equity*, Jojo Geronimo, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, September 2014

*Equity & Inclusion Lens Handbook*, City of Ottawa and City for All Women Initiative (CAWI), 2015



OSSTF/FEESO

# BUILDING COMMON GROUND

member engagement from an equity,  
anti-racism and anti-oppression framework

### DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, EQUITY

A union may be diverse but not necessarily inclusive if its diverse members do not feel accepted or treated with respect. One strategy to enhance inclusion is to put in place “supportive measures” intended to benefit all, but with a particular beneficial effect on some equity seeking groups. For example, child care at union events will help parents, especially single parents in particular.

**Diversity, inclusion, and equity** have overlapping meanings. Each term refers to a specific and unique aspect of fairness and equality. Together and separately, they serve as reference points that help mark your progress and evaluate results as you go through the different phases of building equity and growing your union.

**Diversity** is about the external face of the union and whether the union leadership reflects the general membership. For example, leadership can be considered racially diverse if it reflects the racial diversity of the membership.

**Inclusion** is about the internal operations of the union, what is really happening, whether the union is welcoming of differences or not and whose voice is heard or not. Inclusion is a measure of the active acceptance of and respect for all members. Inclusion also means that accommodations are met under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA). For example, an inclusive union demonstrates acceptance and respect by preventing incidents of harassment or overt discrimination. It promotes the rights of all its members.

**Equity** is about results and how disadvantaged groups are impacted by what happens: who benefits and who does not. It points to the fact that equity groups face “systemic barriers” that effectively exclude them – with or without the intention of anyone in particular. These barriers are built-in historically and operate in institutions and society in often hidden ways. To treat everyone “the same way” is to deny the existence of these systemic barriers.

An equitable union will make an explicit effort to identify and unmask these systemic forms of discrimination. An equitable union will put in place positive measures that are specifically directed to benefit all members, especially disenfranchised, and remedy historical disadvantages. The union will treat them “differently” because they experience barriers that others do not. The equitable union will work to empower disadvantaged members.

1. Who is not included in the work that is being done?

2. What could contribute to this exclusion?

3. What is currently being done to promote inclusion?

4. What can be done differently to increase inclusion and participation?

5. What are the next steps?

- 2SLGBTQI+ People
- Black and racialized Members
- Casual workers
- First Nations, Métis or Inuit Members
- Francophones
- Members with religious identities
- New Members
- Older people
- Part-time workers
- People making a low income
- People not born in Canada
- People on leave
- People who experience language barriers
- People with visible/invisible disabilities
- People with family care responsibilities
- Rural residents
- Urban residents
- Women
- Young people
- Who else?



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## J. WORKING WITH PEOPLE

When we treat people with respect, we are taking action to create a welcoming environment and quality service.

1. When we interact with people, do we check assumptions?
  - Do we hold assumptions about people that get in the way of how we work with them?
  - Do we avoid stereotypes so we can see the individual for who they really are?
  - Are we able to respect our differences and yet recognize what we have in common?
  - Do we recognize their contributions?
2. Are we paying attention to those who are not expressing their ideas?
3. How do we encourage feedback and full participation from everyone present?
4. Are we raising issues in a way that encourages dialogue?
5. Do we consider potential barriers in each situation, and work to minimize them? (e.g., language, prejudice, sexual or racial discrimination)
6. If we are not sure what barriers may exist, do we ask our colleagues or the people we serve?
7. Do we discourage jokes, insults and negative comments that are offensive to people?
8. Do we recognize and build on the strengths and assets of all individuals?
9. Are there policies, procedures and practices in place that limit our capacity to be inclusive? Are there others that support our capacity to be inclusive?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Asked the members about supports needed
- Considered potential barriers and worked to minimize them
- Directed external vendors to comply with AODA and review their corporate equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression statements
- Used techniques that encourage everyone to participate

## BUILDING COMMON GROUND

member engagement from an equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression framework

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#### D. LEADING AND MENTORING

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#### E. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

When we consider equity and inclusion in how we measure success, we take action to ensure that all benefit from the process and its outcomes

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When we apply a vision of equity and inclusion to our planning, we take action to create a union for everyone

#### I. TRAINING—Officers, Volunteers and Staff

When we apply equity and inclusion to all stages of the training process, we take action to create an environment where everyone can contribute

#### J. WORKING WITH PEOPLE

When we treat people with respect, we are taking action to create a welcoming environment and quality service

# A. COMMUNICATIONS

When we apply equity and inclusion to all communications, we take action to ensure that everyone is heard and informed in a timely manner.

1. Have we considered all possible target audiences? Who might be at risk of exclusion?
2. What specific communication strategies are needed to reach them? (e.g., newsletter, meeting announcements, website, email blast, community newspapers, social media, personal visits to work places)
3. How do the messages we are communicating foster inclusion, respect and equity?
4. Is the medium easily accessible and understood by the full diversity of our target audience? (e.g., plain language, accessible formats, graphics, multiple languages, both online and print, voicemail)
5. Have we considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods? (e.g., online or social media communications) What other approaches might we use?
6. Do images represent the full diversity of members? (Consider: who is active and passive, who is at the centre, who is serving and being served)

## EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Assessed who was at risk of not being reached in current communications
- Identified ways to reach specific populations
- Used a range of methods to get the word out
- Realized importance of elimination of the passive voice in text
- Plan to apply the principles learned in other programs

# TRAINING Worksheet

1. Who is not included in the work that is being done?

2. What could contribute to this exclusion?

3. What is currently being done to promote inclusion?

4. What can be done differently to increase inclusion and participation?

5. What are the next steps?

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New Members  
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*Who else?*

# I. TRAINING

## Officers, Volunteers and Staff

When we apply equity and inclusion to all stages of the training process, we take action to create an environment where everyone can contribute.

1. Have we considered sensitivity to equity and inclusion issues when selecting trainers? (i.e. able to reduce biases and work respectfully with people across diversity)
2. Have we included this sensitivity to equity and inclusion in our procurement documents when sourcing external trainers?
3. Can we recruit trainers from diverse backgrounds so they reflect the population we serve?
4. Will the learning objectives be designed to influence participants' awareness and consideration of individuals and communities from diverse backgrounds?
5. Will participants develop competency and skills to work sensitively and effectively with individuals from diverse backgrounds?
6. Is everyone able to fully participate in the training? Is specific outreach required to include them? Are barriers addressed? (e.g., safety, language, accessible location, time, avoid religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate, accommodation needs)
7. Have we welcomed the diverse perspectives of people who have specific equity concerns or needs, even if they may not be obvious? (e.g., Indigenous ancestry, LGBTQ identities, dietary, auditory, language needs or preferences)
8. Is the content sensitive to the experience of participants who may experience systemic barriers?
9. Does it include the perspectives of members who will be accessing the service?
10. In the evaluation of the training, do we ask whether there were any barriers to participation or whether they found the facilitator to be inclusive of the diversity of participants?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Offered training in a variety of formats
- Training design was flexible and customized to meet specific needs
- Took into account differing abilities
- Created opportunity for people with disabilities to bring their expertise to the training
- Set out to address barriers to training

# COMMUNICATIONS

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## B. ENGAGING MEMBERS

When we welcome the diversity of perspectives of members and our community, we take action to ensure everyone benefits.

1. What approaches and outreach will help to ensure that everyone is able to fully participate? How can we create opportunities for people least likely to be heard to ensure they share their specific concerns? (e.g., use of multiple techniques such as online surveys and focus groups, kinds of questions asked, simultaneous interpretation, sign language, anonymous feedback)
2. Is our team representative of the diversity of the population we are engaging? What steps do we take to make a more diverse population?
3. Which members or committees with experience in specific equity seeking groups help us do outreach?
4. Is there a history within the organization locally that you need to consider? How will we ensure everyone is heard?
5. Is the language we use in our promotion materials and communication easily understood by diverse audiences?
6. What steps can we take to remove barriers to people's full participation? (e.g., dependent care, transportation, safety, language, accessible location, time, multiple formats, religious and cultural holidays, culturally appropriate)
7. Is the environment welcoming to participants who may be reluctant to share their views? If not, what can we do to change this? (e.g., pair up a new participant with an experienced one to help those new to the process feel encouraged to participate). Does the pace, format and language of the engagement accommodate everyone including participants who are least likely to speak up and for whom the information may be new? Are we making assumptions of certain groups who don't speak up?
8. Are the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in reports and final products?
9. How will we report back the findings to the full diversity of people who were involved in the engagement activity?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Considered diversity within the population from the onset of the project
- Developed an outreach plan that specifically targeted diverse groups and stakeholders
- Used multiple methods to obtain information from target groups
- Realized importance of using plain language, elimination of the passive voice in text
- Tailored the community outreach to specific target groups

## STRATEGIC PLANNING Worksheet

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# H. STRATEGIC PLANNING

When we apply a vision of equity and inclusion to our planning, we take action to create a union for everyone.

1. How does your strategic planning process promote equity and inclusion?
2. Do the long-term goals you are defining reflect this?
3. What are the current demographic trends which the federation strategic plans need to align with or address?
4. What equity issues are currently being raised by members in relation to your plan?
5. What are the costs of not taking demographic trends and equity issues into account? What are the benefits?
6. Do strategic objectives and initiatives reflect a broad vision of equity and inclusion? How can it be strengthened?
7. What resources are required to achieve equity and inclusion in this plan?
8. How do we measure whether inclusion is increasing or decreasing?
9. Does the collection of data enable us to measure benchmarks and targets for increasing equity and inclusion?
10. When undertaking strategic review, what improvement opportunities are there to enhance achievement of equity and inclusion?

## EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Reviewed consultation and evaluation information
- Paid special attention to the equity claims of diverse groups
- Explicitly considered diverse populations in the overarching vision and priorities

# ENGAGING MEMBERS Worksheet

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## C. GATHERING INFORMATION

When we consider diversity in conducting needs assessments or collecting data, we take action to be inclusive of everyone.

1. Will our data gathering plan identify specific areas where we may unintentionally limit equity and inclusion? (e.g., safety, accessibility, affordability, cultural specificity, family responsibilities, access to decision making)
2. What current statistics or demographic data would help us understand the members that face systemic barriers and inequities in relation to the issue in question?
3. Will data gathered capture the diversity of the population?
4. Are we using gender-neutral or gender appropriate language?
5. Do questions help us identify who may be excluded and what is needed to ensure they will benefit?
6. Are we making any assumptions that we need to verify? (e.g., all members in a program will be heterosexual, cisgender, etc.)
7. How might you consult with the people most affected by this issue to ensure the reliability of your data, approach and findings? (e.g. ask equity seeking groups about the cultural appropriateness of the data or approach)
8. Have we consulted with others with experience in this area? If not, how will we do this?
9. How will we report back the findings to people who were involved in the research?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Considered diversity from the beginning of the project
- Gathered information and statistics on diverse groups to help paint a comprehensive picture of the community
- Developed a consultation plan that specifically targeted a number of sub-groups within the population
- Took into consideration the findings of the research and consultations in the development of the final plan

## RECRUITING Worksheet

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# G. RECRUITING

## Appointed, Elected and Volunteer

When we integrate equity and inclusion in our leadership development policies, we take action to increase diverse skills and perspectives in federation.

1. Do leaders in federation reflect the diversity of the community we serve? Who is under-represented?
2. What knowledge, skills, experience and diversity would enhance our team's capacity to serve the diversity of members?
3. Do role requirements and selection process/criteria unnecessarily limit who would qualify?
4. Are we open to considering what new perspectives people from different backgrounds could bring to the position?
5. Have we considered where best to post leadership opportunities to ensure that the widest diversity of people are able to access it?
6. Are interview panels composed of individuals who bring diverse backgrounds and experiences relevant to the position?
7. Have we considered ways to reduce barriers in the interview process so as to make it more welcoming and friendly? (i.e. physically accessible, provide a copy of the questions)
8. Do we consider that members from specific backgrounds may present interview behaviours that are different from what we expect, but still have the skills to do the role?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Took note of who is under-represented
- Identified potential barriers
- Reached out to others to promote
- Went to where the target group would be
- Provided information to overcome barriers

# GATHERING INFORMATION

## Worksheet

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## D. LEADING AND MENTORING

When we become champions for equity and inclusion in the way we lead, we take action to model a union that utilizes everyone's diverse talents and skills.

1. What steps do we take to create a respectful and inclusive environment?
  - Do we clearly communicate to members that inappropriate behaviour such as offensive jokes, and negative comments are not acceptable?
  - How can we actively gather input and ideas from members from diverse perspectives?
  - How can we encourage members to contribute positively in creating an inclusive environment?
  - When we make a mistake in how do we own it, apologize, check for harm and embrace the learning experience?
2. Are there policies, procedures and/or practices and attitudes that unintentionally prevent some people from fully engaging in our work? (e.g., schedules conflicting with religious holidays, workload or schedule conflicting with family responsibilities) What alternatives are possible?
3. Are we aware of our commitments to inclusion and accommodation and do we ensure that members are equitably informed?
4. Is equity and inclusion incorporated into criteria for evaluating candidates for committee chairs or appointed positions? If not, how might we include it?
5. What opportunities could we create to enable people from under-represented groups to bring new perspectives to our team, acquire experience and move into leadership roles? (i.e. mentorships, sharing positions, shadowing)
6. Is equity and inclusion incorporated into our staff performance review? Who does this review? Why?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Took steps to create a welcoming environment
- Identified practices that unintentionally excluded some people
- Was pro-active in developing those engaged being representative of the membership
- Created opportunities for under-represented people to acquire experience

## PLANNING Worksheet

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# F. PLANNING

## Services, Projects/Programs, and Events

When we consider the range of equity issues, we take action to eliminate barriers so that everyone can benefit and participate.

1. Do the expected outcomes of the service, project/program, or event reflect equity and inclusion goals?
2. How will the service or project/program build upon the strengths of the people it serves?
3. Will the service or program contribute to more equitable access to resources and benefits?
4. Have the primary target groups been consulted?
5. How is the proposed service, project/program or event designed to ensure that a full diversity of people can participate and benefit with dignity? (i.e., accessibility for mobility devices, visual and hearing impairments, child or dependent care, transportation, safety concerns, language).
6. Does the time of the event reflect equitably in terms of time considerations? (i.e. religious and cultural holidays, family responsibilities)
7. What human and financial resources are required to address equity, and accessibility in the implementation of this service, project/program or event?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Considered diversity from the onset of the project
- Considered barriers and address them upfront. Were clear about what could or could not be done
- Used plain language
- Consulted with the target population to ensure nothing has been overlooked and to make sure that all materials are understood

# LEADING AND MENTORING Worksheet

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## E. MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

When we consider equity and inclusion in how we measure success, we take action to ensure that all benefit from the process and its outcomes.

1. Have we considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods? (e.g., online surveys, general public consultations) What other approaches might we use?
2. Are those designing and implementing the assessment representative of the target groups who will participate in the evaluation? How can we ensure their perspectives are included?
3. Do the assessment questions allow for consideration of the experiences of a diversity of members?
4. Would it be useful to include those who stopped participating?
5. Can we hold interviews or focus groups at a location where the target population is comfortable?
6. Can we make it easier for respondents to participate by using interviewers from the same population, providing transportation and childcare, and/or offering an honorarium for focus groups?
7. When analyzing our data, did we maintain a diversity of perspectives in the findings?
8. Have we validated the findings with the community so as to minimize any biases?
9. How can we report back to the people who participated in the evaluation process?

### EQUITY AND INCLUSION CONSIDERATIONS

- Involved members in the design
- Drew upon the perspectives of members from diverse backgrounds
- Used multiple methods to ensure participation
- Ensured informants did not incur costs

## MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT Worksheet

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