



From Vision to Action: Strategic Approaches to Embedding Equity in Community Health Centres

Alliance Conference

Put People at the Centre:


Advancing Accessible and Sustainable Primary

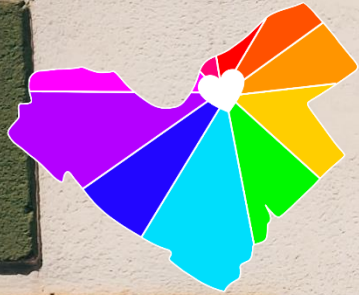
June 4th 2025



Welcome: Leading with Equity in Community Health

As you listen, ask yourself:

- What ideas or approaches can I bring back to my own organization?
 - Is there something here I could share at my next team meeting?
 - How might today's insights help me tackle a challenge we're facing right now?
- 



CENTRETOWN
Community Health Centre

CENTRE DE SANTÉ
communautaire du Centre-ville



Photo by [Cristina Gottardi](#) on [Unsplash](#)

EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

June 4, 2025

Alliance for Healthier
Communities Conference

OVERVIEW

1. Background
2. Progress to date
3. Next Steps & Opportunities
4. Key Learnings



BACKGROUND

HOW WE GOT HERE

- **2020:** Black, Indigenous, People of Colour staff formed informal working group
- **2021/2022:** Consultants engaged
- **2023:** Audit report released

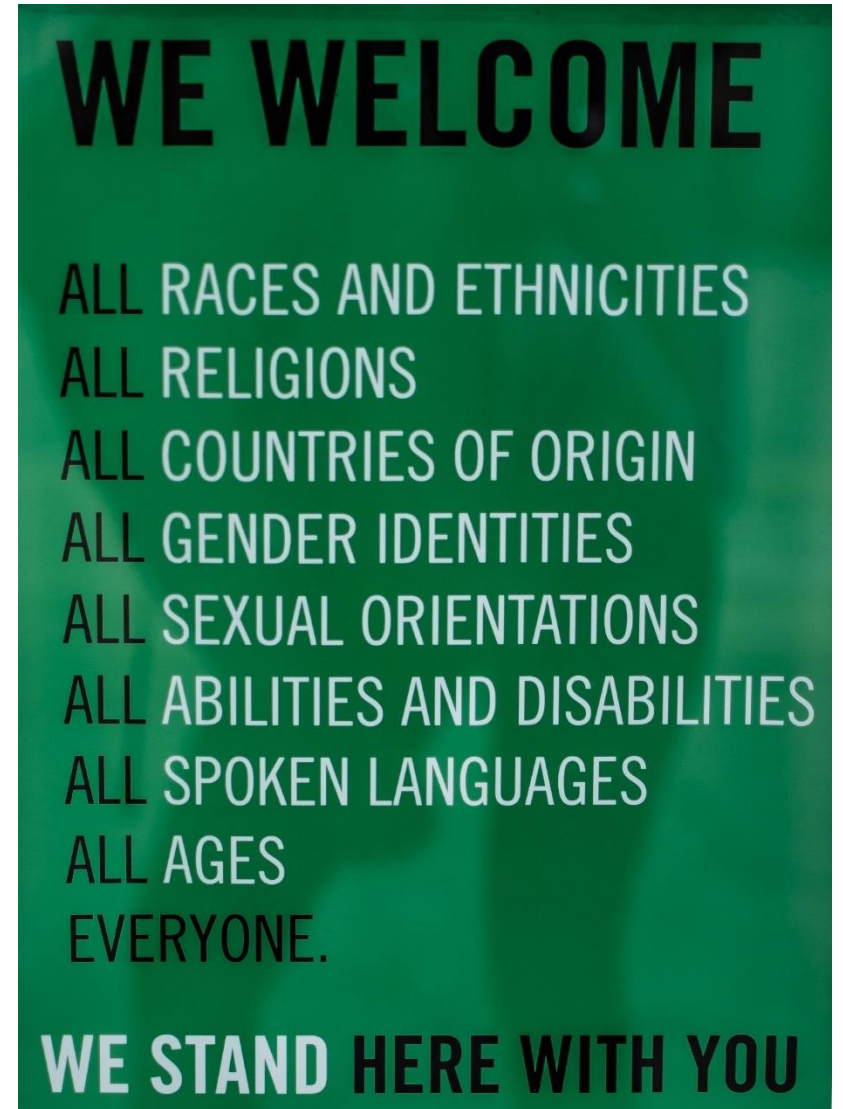
Core Team (management team members) tasked with developing a plan to address identified pain points.



BACKGROUND

HOW WE GOT HERE

- Improve our internal structures, processes and work culture to address systemic level discrimination.
- Shift focus away from behavior change.
- Separate health equity from internal equity to hold space for both.





PROGRESS TO DATE

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EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION & BELONGING

(EDIB)

- **Equity:** is about giving people what they need, in order to make things fair. This may sometimes mean giving more to those who need it, which is proportionate to their own circumstances, in order to ensure that everyone has the same opportunities.
- **Diversity:** the individuality or uniqueness of people distinguished by visible and nonvisible characteristics.
- **Inclusion:** intentional acts that demonstrate respect, support, and commitment so that you can do your best work.
- **Belonging:** feeling that your authentic self is welcomed and celebrated, so you can thrive and contribute freely.

Source: QuakeLab Inc., Inclusion Breakthrough, Centre for Global Inclusion

EDIB FRAMEWORK

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Transparent communication:** to facilitate informed decision making and buy-in
- **Empowering employees:** to prioritize lived experiences, build competence and confidence
- **Accountability and Leadership:** to facilitate engagement & shared accountability

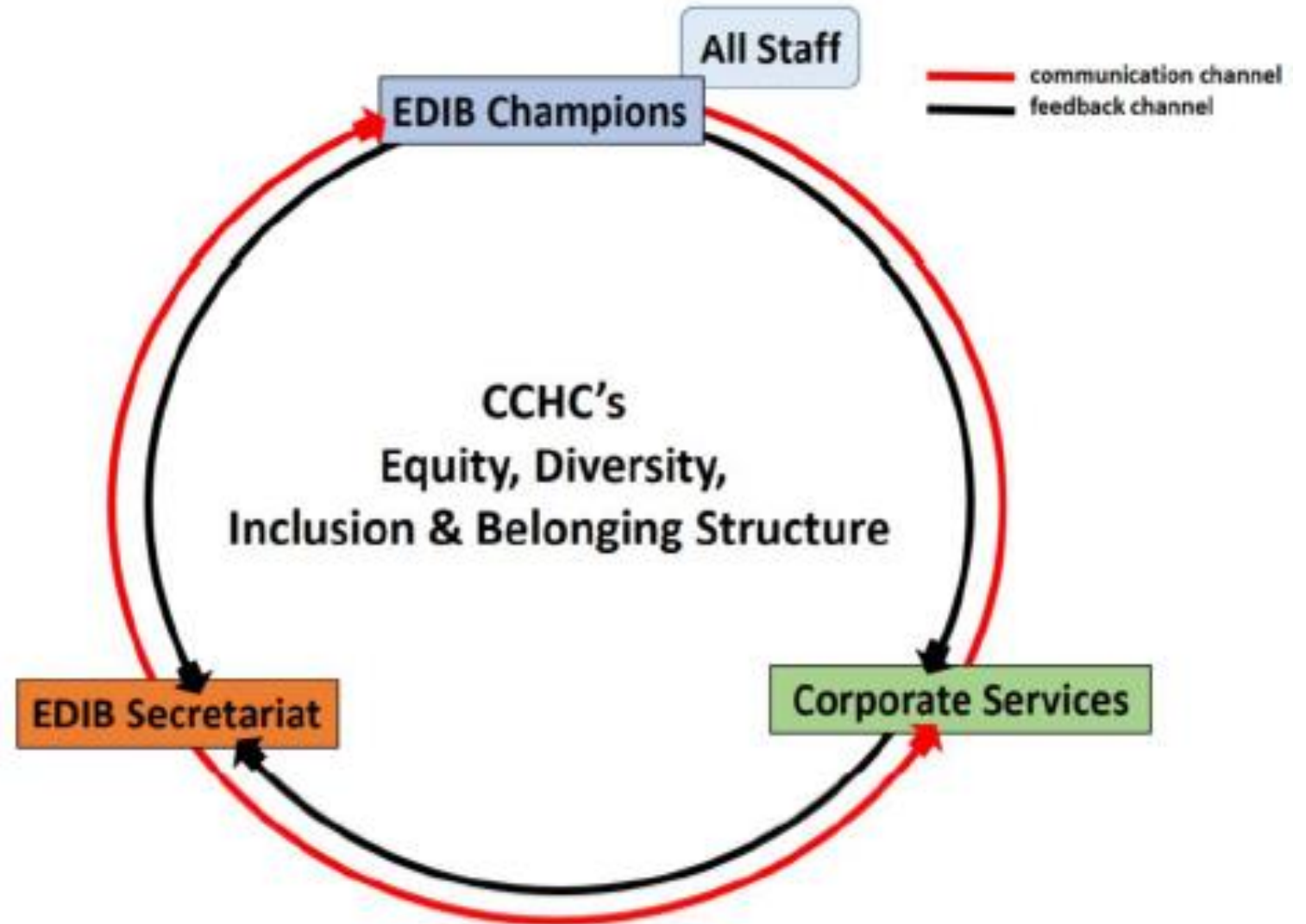
EDIB FRAMEWORK

AREA OF FOCUS

- **Organizational Culture:** fostering of trust, transparency and belonging
- **Equity in People Management:** standardized processes to ensure equity
- **Capacity Building:** shared responsibility to learn and unlearn, embrace diversity, prioritize inclusivity and belonging

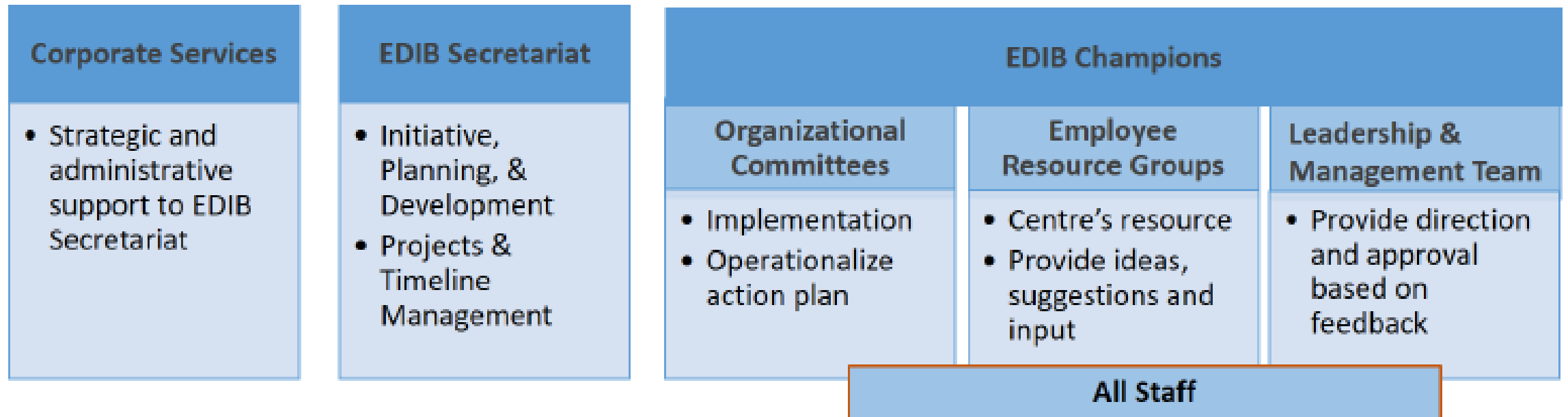
EDIB STRUCTURE

- Employee Resource Groups
- Staff Wellbeing Committee
- EDIB Secretariat



EDIB STRUCTURE

ROLES



TIMELINE: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

2023/24

- Address 1 pain point from Audit report
- Secured small funding for preliminary work
- Consultations with staff (to develop Structure/Framework)
 - Re-structuring of “Human Resources Team” to “People and Culture Team”
 - Formalized role of EDIB Secretariat (TOR, recruitment process developed)
- Inaugural Employee Resource Group (ERG) policy
 - Formalized 2 ERGs
- Launch of EDIB Learning Series
- Launch of staff survey, including demographic questions

OPPORTUNITIES AND NEXT STEPS



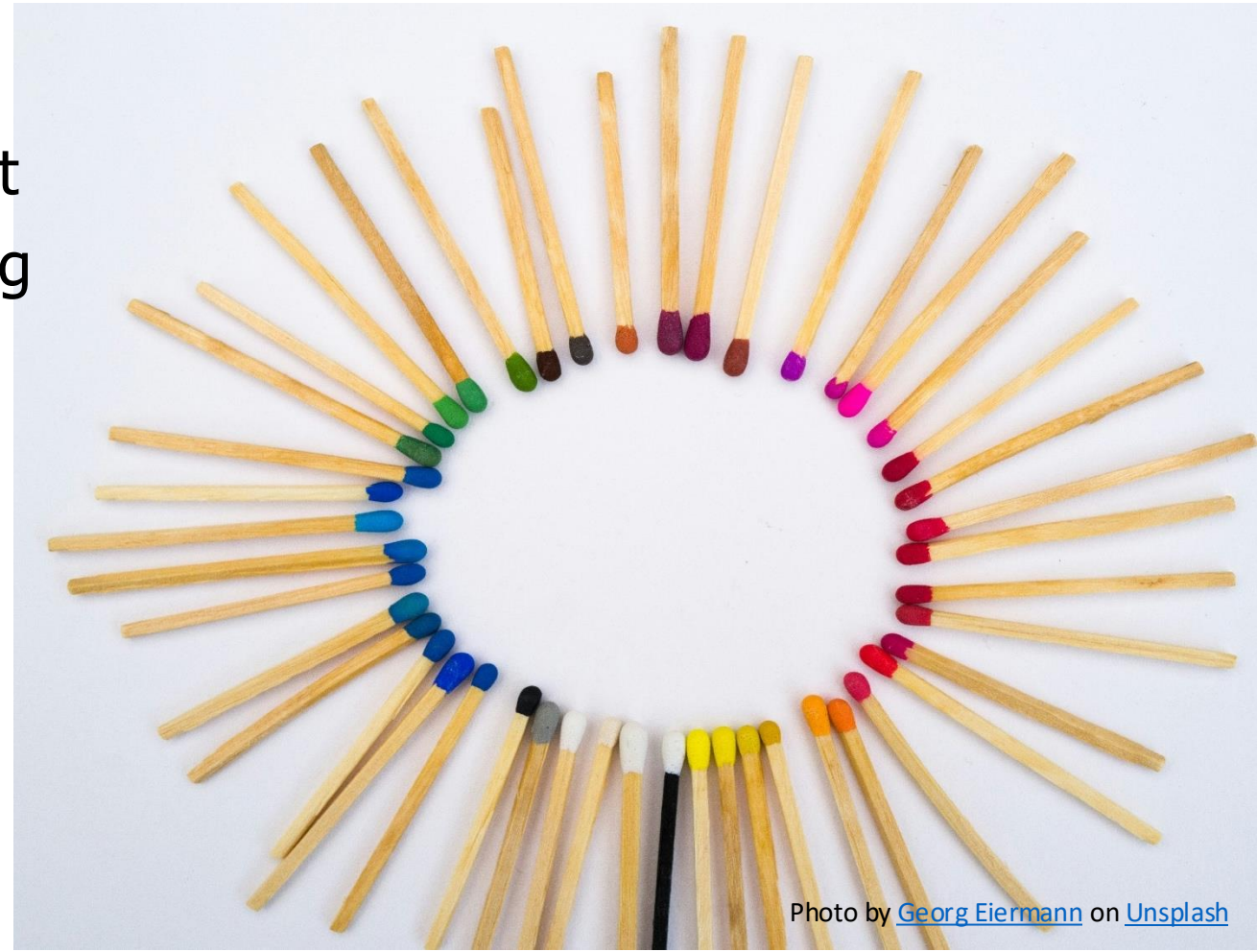
PROPOSED ACTIVITIES

2024/25

- Finalize 3-5 year work plan
- Select another pain point to address
- Review and audit of policies with EDI lens
 - Re-draft of Centre's health equity policy
 - Draft of inaugural anti-racism, anti-oppression policy
 - Re-design and standardize onboarding process
- Develop communication plan (specific focus on advocacy, social justice)
- Continue leadership training on conflict, difficult conversations

INCREASING ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- Assessing model of EDIB Secretariat
- Ongoing leadership capacity-building
- Engagement still developing
 - Shared accountability
 - Mindset shift



KEY LEARNINGS



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

- **Engaging and working with Consultants:** do your own homework first
- **Strategic planning and resourcing:** importance of embedding in planning
- **Organizational diversity and inclusion:** reminder!
- **Communication:** you cannot over communicate
- **Change management:** embrace discomfort
- **Pace of work:** balance pace and responsiveness
 - building courageous spaces take time
 - be mindful of colonial approach to work



THANK YOU

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SOMMERSET WEST
COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

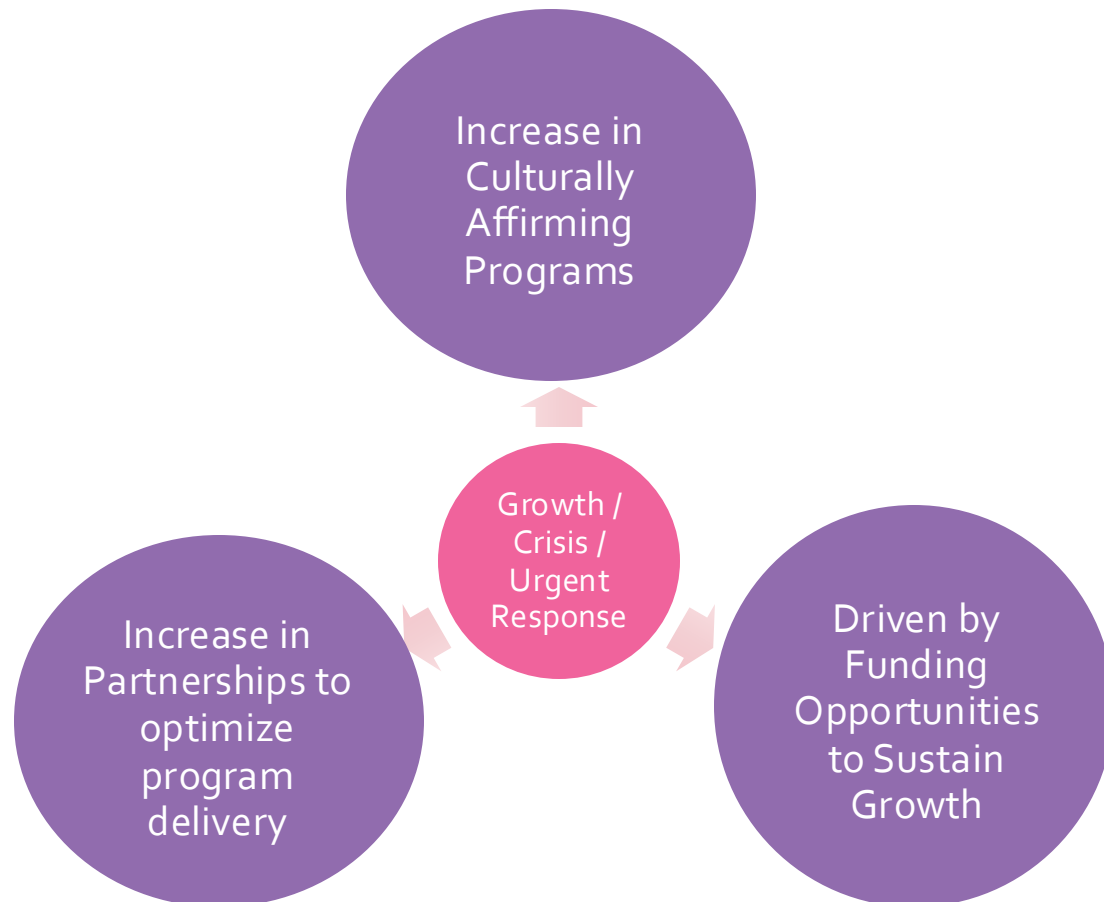
Moving Equity Forward: Lessons from our HR Systems EDI Review



Historical Context

VALUE UNDERPINNING SWCHC

over the last 5 to 7 years



RESULTING STATE OF EDI



EDI investments didn't get prioritized and became secondary to program investments

EDI investments – when they occurred were one-off vs. strategic

Systems could not keep up with growth – individual leaders had to come up with solutions on the fly – solutions sometimes perpetuated discrimination, oppression, and racism

EDI was seen as individual-level responsibility – when what we really need are well thought out systems

Reviewing our HR Systems Through an EDI Lens

- 01  Understand strengths and weaknesses of SWCHC's EDI context
- 02  Identify enablers and barriers to EDI change at SWCHC

What We Examined

We partnered with Strat-ology to guide a comprehensive review

- + Examined HR practices and policies
- + Conducted dozens of staff interviews
- + Surveyed staff and managers
- + Looked at historical trends in EDI efforts
- + Assessed our systems for transparency, fairness, and accountability



What Staff and Managers Told Us: A Snapshot

We asked staff and managers to rate the following on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree):

Statement	Average Score
SWCHC is victim to a colonial mindset, where people from the majority feel entitled to better treatment, and more favourable positioning in the organization.	1.5
Racism, Oppression and Discrimination are intentional	3
Leaders and managers don't know enough about EDI	4
SWCHC has not taken the time to take a deep dive into understanding the sources of systemic discrimination in HR.	7
SWCHC has not invested enough in its managers to ensure they have the capacity and capability to design and drive EDI change	9
SWCHC has not resourced EDI change significantly	9

Practicing EDI

Strato-logy identified several opportunities to practice EDI, including:

- Thinking about diversity strategically vs. in the throws of the urgency
- Stepping back and defining the key positions to maximize performance
- Formal internal identification process for high potentials, including members from EDGs
- **Changing how we interview and select candidates**
- **Integration of EDI principles and values during our onboarding sessions**
- **Defined formal and informal reporting processes for EDI challenges**
- **Career pathing and leadership development training**



The Path Forward

RECRUITMENT



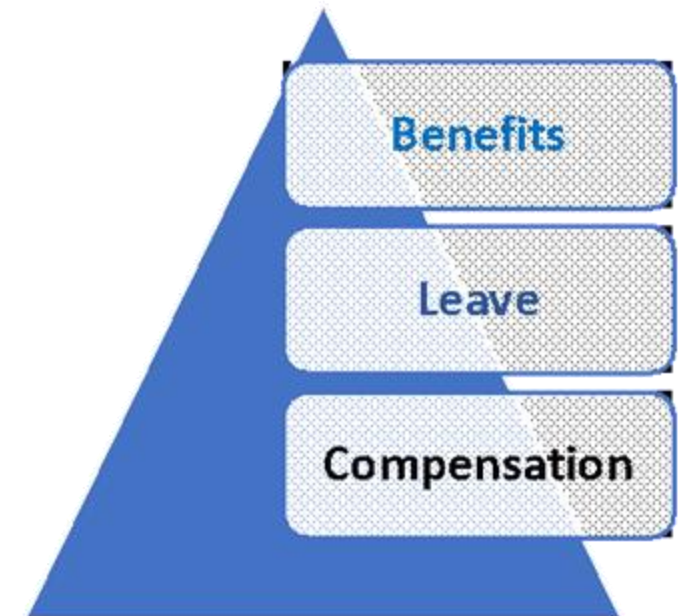
37 Recommendations

CAREER PATHING



18 Recommendations

COMPENSATION & BENEFITS



14 Recommendations

SWCHC's PRELIMINARY FOCUS

RECRUITMENT

WORK CONTEXT

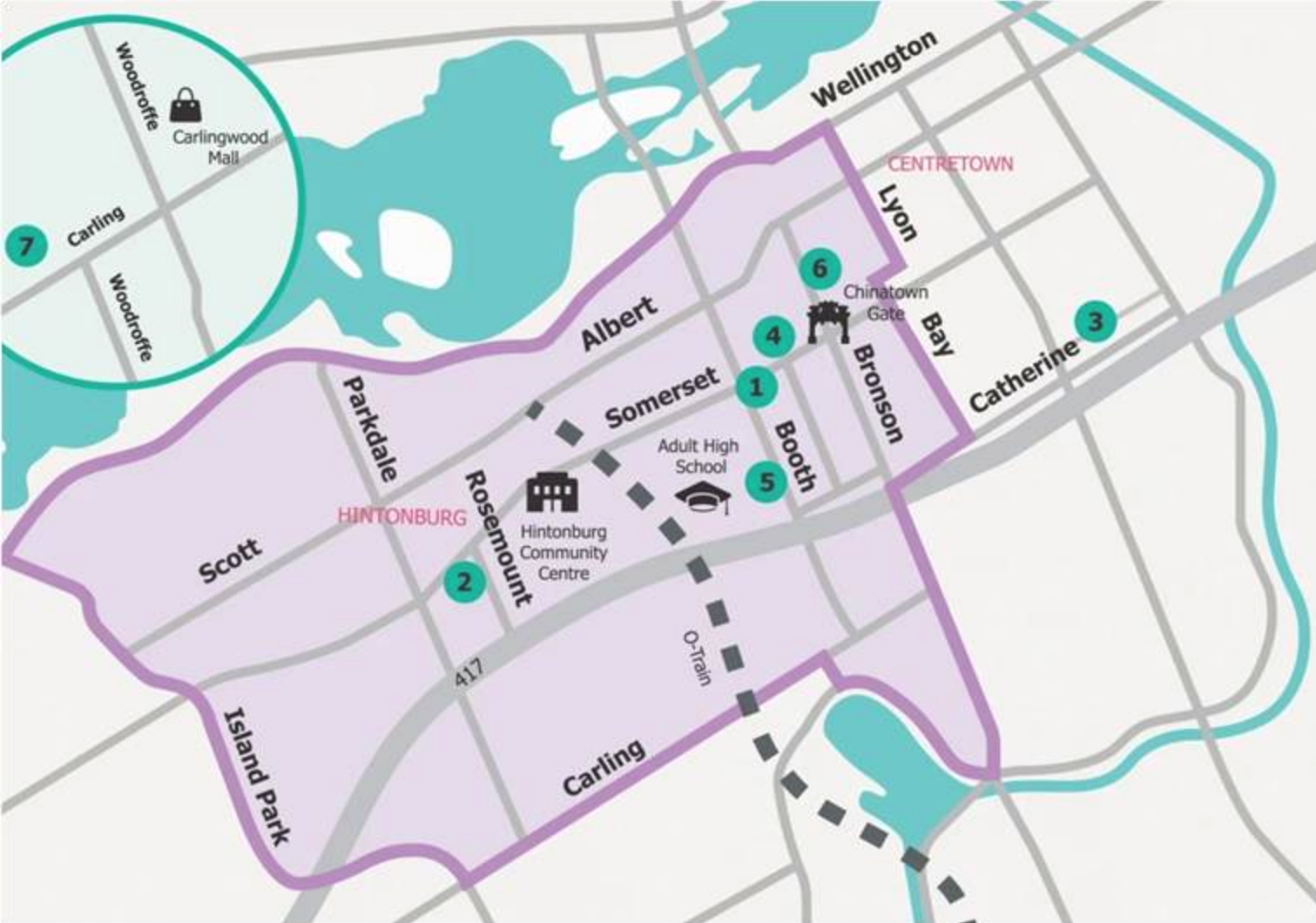
CAREER PATHING

BRINGING DIVERSITY TO THE
TABLE

ONBOARDING

MANAGING EDI CHALLENGES
LIKE MICROAGGRESSIONS

ADVANCEMENT



GET INTOUCH

Suzanne Obiorah

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- | | |
|--|---|
|  Service Area |  Children & Youth Services 755 Somerset St. West |
|  Eccles Branch 55 Eccles St. |  Rochester Heights Community House
299 Rochester St. |
|  Rosemount Branch 30 Rosemount Ave. |  Yet Keen Seniors' Day Centre 211 Bronson Ave. |
|  Ottawa Newcomer Health Centre
219 Argyle Ave, Basement Level |  Ottawa Lung Health Centre
2249 Carling Ave, Suite 200 |



**CREATING SPACE
FOR CHANGE: OUR
PATH TO HEALTH
EQUITY
LEADERSHIP**

FIELD OF DREAMS

If you build it, they will come.





FOUR
FOUNDATIONS





Belonging

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS,
NOT JUST AGENDAS

- Connection
- Contribution
- Celebration
- Consultation



Expression

MANY VOICES. A SHARED
VISION.

- Brave space
- Feelings over facts
- Power of stories and lived experience
- The voice of celebration



Well-being

PROMOTING WELLNESS IN
EVERY POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Guarding Minds at Work
- Benefits
- Your Health Space



Engagement

PARTICIPATION THAT
SHAPES PROGRESS

- Ask people for their input
- Make time, space, and tools
- Celebration
- Encourage initiative



Plot Twist





Don't
Panic!

BREATHE AND
REFLECT





Like roots feed a tree,
inner work fuels
outer change.