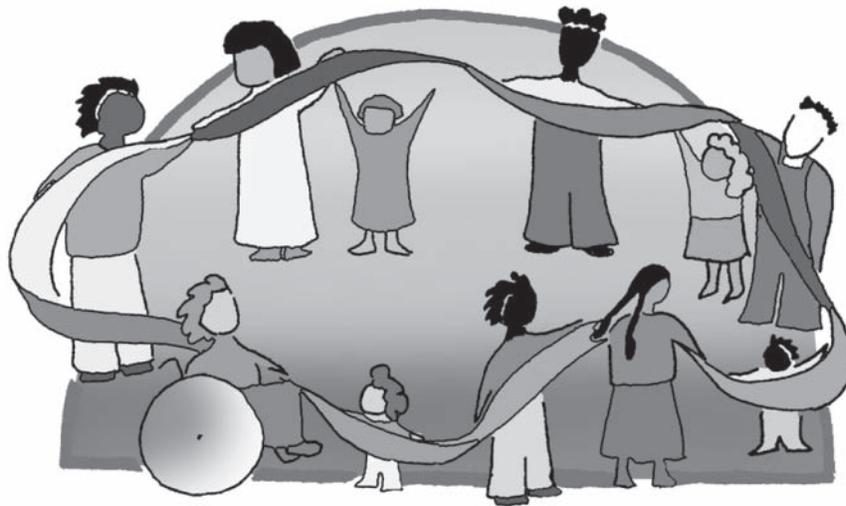


Inclusive Community Organizations:

Organizations:

A Tool Kit



Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition

October 2004

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Preface

Why develop a Tool Kit?

The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition developed this Tool Kit in order to better support and assist community organizations in their work. The Coalition helps communities across the province identify their own needs and assets, plan and implement effective community initiatives and mobilize local resources to improve community well being. Through this work, we've been asked to help local organizations become more reflective of and responsive to the populations that they serve.

Groups wanting to initiate organizational change in the area of diversity and inclusion have identified several motivations for such change:

- a shift in demographics;
- a recognition of problems in delivering services and implementing policies;
- a desire to develop a more appropriate process to achieve accessibility;
- details of another organizations' success;
- community pressure;
- funding requirements;
- a need to implement changes in mission/vision/mandate;

- an obligation to provide good customer service;
- the will to deal with discrimination.¹

Purpose of this Tool Kit

The aim of this Tool Kit is to help community organizations increase their capacity to include diverse groups in a manner that is both appropriate for those groups, and also fitting for the particular organization. This involves enhancing knowledge and skills among members of an organization, planning a strategy, developing a work plan, and implementing tasks that will move that organization from merely acknowledging diversity and inclusion to actually embedding these ideas into their structure, policies and practices.

By providing a method for organizations to analyze existing policies, programs and practices, this Tool Kit can help them determine whether they currently include or exclude particular individuals or groups within their communities. It also offers ways to raise awareness about the importance of diversity and inclusion within organizations and to begin a dialogue with, and plan for the inclusion of groups that have previously been excluded.

¹ Adapted from: "Inclusivity Organizational Change Overview". *Coalition for an Inclusive Community*. United Way of London & Middlesex. 2001

By reading this Tool Kit, it is our hope that community organizations will:

- increase their knowledge about what their particular organization can do to become more inclusive, as well as learn skills and have access to tools to help them implement change;
- become aware of the factors that can help their organization to undertake inclusive organizational change, and also be conscious of the factors that can hinder them in achieving this goal;
- understand the initial planning steps that they can take to get their organization to start the process;
- be able to develop a diversity and inclusion work plan for their particular organization;
- identify potential relationships that their organization needs to develop in order to assist them in meeting the goal of becoming more inclusive;
- learn about a variety of resources that are available to assist them in their work;
- become champions and leaders in the area of inclusive organizational change;
- become better able to effectively respond to the needs of diverse groups in their community, and to do so in an equitable and inclusive manner.

However, this Tool Kit is *not* designed to provide the specific, practical training necessary for working with individual clients of diverse backgrounds (i.e., skills such as cross-cultural communication, anti-racism training or conflict resolution). While it includes tips that can be used to think about and become more sensitive to these issues, it does not address them in detail.

Who is this Tool Kit for?

This document is meant for use by voluntary community organizations, from informal grassroots groups in the early stages of formation, to incorporated not-for-profits. It will apply to a wide range of groups regardless of their structure or purpose, but is particularly focused on smaller organizations with low budgets and a heavy reliance on volunteers. Whether an organization promotes the arts, advocates for human rights, focuses on the environment, supports religious faiths or provides recreational, educational or other services, this document can prove useful.

Although this document may make reference to a board of directors, board members, and staff, it is also meant to refer to many different types of community committees and groups, whether or not they are incorporated as an organization and no matter what type of governance structures they use. Regardless of structure, all community organizations have limited resources and need to fully develop

their human and monetary assets in order to reach their goals. A compelling mission, well-thought-out program, sound financial base, effective management and good community relations are essential. Becoming more reflective of and responsive to the diversity within its community will help an organization achieve its goals.

By making use of this Tool Kit, organizations will become better able to develop outreach strategies, plan events, deliver programs and conduct overall operations in a manner that is appropriate to a wide variety of people.

Use of the terms diversity and inclusive within this Tool Kit

Diversity is a broad term that refers to the variety of differences among people. Often used within the context of culture, education, organizations or workplaces, for the purpose of this Tool Kit it will be used to refer to differences among individuals and groups. Diversity among people can exist along a number of dimensions which include, but are not limited to race, ethnicity, cultural traditions, age, gender, religion, place of origin, citizenship, geographical location, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, educational background, literacy, income or economic status, work experience, and marital, parental or family status (other terms used within this Tool Kit, and those that are often referred to in discussions of diversity and inclusion, are defined in the Glossary section).

If an organization is *inclusive*, or practices inclusiveness, it means that it understands, accepts and respects diversity. It includes and actively involves people who are reflective of the diverse groups represented within its community. Such involvement relates to the development and practice of policies, services and programming that are both appropriate and relevant to these different groups, as well as an organizational commitment to eliminating barriers for ongoing participation. An inclusive organization not only recognizes diversity, but also embodies it. This means acknowledging the worth of every individual and their value to their community and to society at large.

The structure of this Tool Kit

To help you to navigate through this document, the Tool Kit is divided into three sections. The first section, Understanding Diversity and Inclusion, presents an overview of what the issues of diversity and inclusion are about, the context in which these issues exist within Toronto, Ontario and Canada, and why these issues are relevant to community organizations. The second section, An Organizational Change Strategy, provides suggestions to help community organizations become more inclusive and steps that they can take to create changes that are appropriate to their particular organizations. The third section, Tools, offers ten tools or concrete tips that community organizations can use as they actually go through the process of becoming more inclusive.

Towards the end of the document is a section, *Additional Resources*, which provides a list of organizations and websites with resources that may be of assistance to community organizations that want to be more inclusive of particular groups or communities (e.g., seniors, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities). Following this is a Glossary that defines terms referred to within the Tool Kit, or those that are typically used when discussing issues of diversity and difference. Finally, a Bibliography lists the resources referred to in this document.

Providing feedback on this Tool Kit

We decided to undertake this initiative in order to continue to increase our own knowledge in the areas of diversity and inclusiveness, and to better support the organizations that we assist in doing their own work. We have definitely achieved the former and hope that you will benefit from the latter.

In order to gain from experience and make any necessary adjustments to this document, we encourage anyone who uses this guide to provide us with information about their own experiences. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send an email to us at this address:

info@healthycommunities.on.ca

Thanks and enjoy!

Introduction

Community organizations play a vital role in society and are the foundation of local democracy. Every day, across the country, community groups make Canada a better place to live, work and play. “These organizations deliver social services, direct housing co-ops and condominiums, offer cultural, educational and recreational programs, and advocate on behalf of business and neighbourhood concerns. Some are small groups with limited mandates; others are large agencies providing a complex mix of programs and services.”² These organizations are guided by boards of directors, advisory groups or councils made up of individuals who have taken on the responsibility for decision-making.

Despite the array of organizations and groups working to enhance community well being, there are segments of the population that are often ignored or overlooked when it comes to decision-making. To be successful, community organizations must reflect the needs and views of all members, users and stakeholders in their communities: “the strength of their decision-making lies in their ability to be representative and inclusive”.³

There are many reasons why such groups may not have been engaged in planning and making resolutions within community organizations. Sometimes people are limited in their capacity or ability to connect with and participate in organizations due to real or perceived barriers. These barriers may exist based on factors such as differences in:

- ethno-racial background,
- financial status,
- education level,
- physical or mental ability,
- religious and faith-based beliefs,
- gender,
- sexual orientation,
- age,

and other socio-economic circumstances. In other instances, community organizations have not been able to engage particular groups due to misconceptions or an uncertainty about how to bridge communication and cultural gaps. Yet, there are also many success stories about organizations that have successfully included previously excluded groups in their decision-making processes, and about traditionally marginalized individuals who have made significant contributions to their communities.

² *InvolveYouth: A Guide to Involving Youth in Decision-making*. “Introduction” p.1. City of Toronto website. <http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/involveyouth/index.htm> January 2004

³ Ibid.

A healthy community supports diversity and promotes equitable inclusion for all, throughout its social, economic, political and cultural dimensions. One of the cornerstones of healthy communities is wide participation in planning and decision-making. People of all backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances have concerns and ideas about creating healthy communities. They not only want to be heard and participate in processes that affect their lives and the communities in which they live, but they also have a right to do so. Moreover, people feel valued when their particular gifts, abilities and challenges are recognized; when they have opportunities for growth and development; when they are involved and engaged in community activities; and when all of their basic needs are met.

Individuals often benefit significantly from their participation in community organizations. Involvement in a community organization can provide a person with increased technical, communication and leadership skills, opportunities for networking, employment references, social contact, information about other community resources, emotional support and increased self-esteem. It may even lead to paid employment and new friendships. For some, it may be a stepping stone to other types of community involvement; for example, many local politicians started their public life by volunteering in community organizations.

Organizations and marginalized groups can gain much from working together. On the one hand,

some groups lack the necessary resources and networking opportunities to ensure that they are heard and that their ideas are reflected at the community level. On the other hand, many community organizations that are sincerely interested in involving a wide spectrum of the community lack the information and innovation required to connect in a positive way. By developing strategies that promote inclusion, community organizations become better equipped to respond to individual and community-based needs. And increasing the diversity of staff, members and volunteers in community organizations will have a positive impact on the individual, the organization and, potentially, the community as a whole.

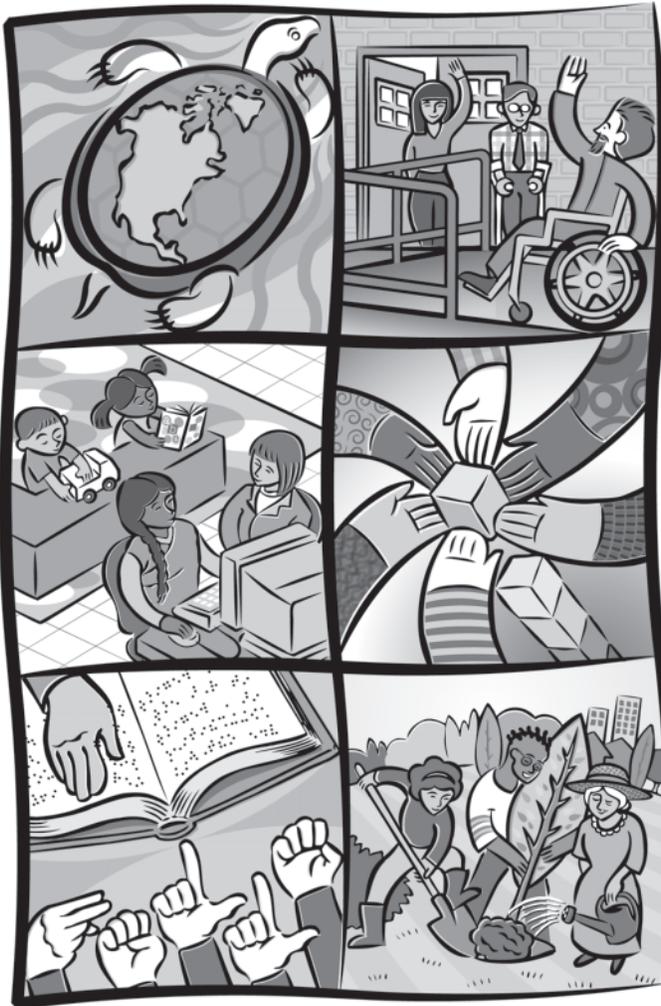
To be truly effective, community-based organizations must educate themselves about issues of race, ethnicity, class, economic status, sexual orientation, age, gender and disability. They must not only accommodate and respond to those who show interest, but also actively seek out others who might have the motivation to become involved. Often an organization can provide greater access and accommodation to others by simply altering the perspective and understanding of its existing members. By wearing a “diversity and inclusion lens,” members of a community organization can improve their vision.

Organizations need to help create and promote unbiased attitudes, beliefs, policies and procedures as well as identify and eliminate discriminatory behaviours, structures and practices. As they

develop new and shared ways of understanding diversity and inclusion, they will be able to use this understanding as the basis for action. By taking action and creating change within community organizations, not only do these organizations become more equitable and accessible, but they can also become true leaders in their fields.



I. UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



Issues and Challenges

- Changing Demographics
- Diversity and Difference
- Exploring Difference, Power and Privilege
- Barriers to Equitable Access

Rationale for Inclusion

- Principles and Assumptions
- Why Inclusiveness Is Necessary
- Organizational Benefits

Issues and Challenges

Changing Demographics

There have been significant changes in the demographic trends of Canada, Ontario and Toronto in the past 15 years⁴. Community organizations need to be aware of and up to date on these changes in order to ensure that they are representative and reflective of their populations. The following demographic statistics illustrate the growing diversity in Toronto and across Canada.

- Toronto is one of the world's most ethnically diverse cities. In 2001, 42.8% of Toronto's population were members of a visible minority; 43.7% were foreign born. From 1986 to 1996, the population of visible minorities doubled, and the city's racial minority population is still growing rapidly. (Statistics Canada: 2001 Census).
- More than 70,000 immigrants from 169 countries come to Toronto every year. (Statistics Canada: 1996 Census). 16% of the current Canadian population are immigrants. (Canadian Heritage: 2001). The composition of the immigrant-refugee pool has changed over time. Prior to and immediately following World War II, most immigrants to Canada were of European origin. Recently, more people have come from Asia and Africa. Currently, the People's Republic of China is the top source of new arrivals to Canada. It is followed by India, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. (Statistics Canada: 2001 Census).
- More than 170 languages are spoken in Toronto alone, and 42% of this population report a language other than English as their first language. (City of Toronto Access and Equity: 2000). The top 10 languages spoken in households in Toronto, other than English or French, are Chinese, Italian, Tamil, Portuguese, Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Persian (Farsi), Punjabi and Vietnamese. (Statistics Canada: 2001).
- According to the National Institute for Literacy (2001), Toronto records an illiteracy rate of 24.1%, which is higher than that of all of Ontario (19%). And it is estimated that 40% of Canadian-born individuals aged 16 to 65 have reading problems.

⁴The City of Toronto very generously provided partial support for the production of this document; hence, the demographics listed here refer primarily to the Toronto area. However, this information can be of use to any community organization interested in becoming more inclusive, regardless of their geographic location.

- Over 300,000 youth (aged 15 to 24) were living in Toronto in 2001 — that's 12.4% of the total population. Twenty-three percent of these lived on their own. And 21.8% of youth between the ages of 15 and 19 were unemployed; for those in that age range who were employed, their average weekly salary was \$136. (Toronto Youth Profile: 2003).
- In 2001, seniors accounted for 13% of Canada's population. Projections indicate this proportion will reach 15% by 2011, and seniors are the fastest growing age group. An estimated one-quarter of seniors in Toronto are living alone, and 9% of the senior households use food banks. (City of Toronto Seniors Task Force, 1999)
- Approximately 1.5 million Ontarians had a disability in 2001, representing 13.5% of the population of the province. One out of seven Canadians aged 15 and over (an estimated 3.4 million people) also reported some level of disability that year. (Statistics Canada, 2001).
- Toronto has the largest gay population in Canada, and each year it hosts one of the three largest Gay Pride events in the world, along with New York City and Sydney, Australia. (<http://www.torontotourism.com/AboutToronto/FactFile.htm>). Approximately 10% of the adult population are gay, lesbian or bi-sexual. (Toronto Public Health: 2000).
- In the year 2000, the poverty rate was 18% with child poverty reaching 21%. (Raphael, 2000). In 1999, about 30,000 Torontonians used the city's emergency shelter system, which represented a 40% increase from 1988. During the same period, the number of children using shelters increased by an alarming 130%.
- Among university-educated Canadians, Aboriginal people are four times as likely as white Canadians to be unemployed. People of colour born outside of Canada are at least twice as likely as white Canadians to be unemployed. The unemployment rate for people with disabilities is approximately 50%, and for youth, the rate is double that of older workers. (Toronto Public Health, 2000)
- Religious diversity is wide in Toronto. Residents belong to over 40 religious denominations, sects and groups. Mass is now said in 35 languages in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese. Over 200,000 Muslims observe Ramadan. Over 80,000 Sikhs marched in the annual Khalsa Day celebrations in 2000. Toronto is also home to half of Canada's Jewish population. (Toronto Public Health: 2000).⁵

⁵ Adapted from: "Diversity at the City of Toronto". Tim Rees. Presentation to the Communicating Environmental Messages in a Diverse Society forum of the Sustainability Network. October 2001.

Diversity and Difference

Every day we develop views, beliefs, opinions and attitudes based on information that we pick up from a number of sources: family members and peers, the media, and brief personal meetings. These sources provide a mixture of information that may include myths, stereotypes and prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes. Some of this information causes us to misjudge those whom we perceive to be different from ourselves.

Moreover, as individuals going about our busy daily lives, processing information as quickly as possible, we often consciously or unconsciously make two key assumptions. The first is that everyone who looks or sounds the same *is* the same. The second is that everyone who looks or sounds like us *is* like us. These assumptions are often incorrect.⁶

In addition, each of us also has personal preferences and occasionally we act on these preferences in a manner that is exclusionary and may constitute bias. A bias is a point of view or inclination that may manifest itself through favouritism, dislike, prejudice and even fear because of a person's looks, behaviour, lifestyle or circumstances. Biases can be conveyed through verbal and physical actions.

Given that each of us is a product of our time and our environments to a certain extent, it is unrealistic to expect that anyone is completely without bias.⁷

It is therefore important to become aware of the misinformation and biases that we carry so that we can remove the barriers that exist and keep us from achieving mutual respect and understanding. Since we are not always aware of these attitudes and beliefs, we need to pay attention to how we think and feel about other people, to examine the roots of our thoughts and analyze them for biases.



⁶ *Cultural Competence Workshop for Service Providers in York Region*, presented by Gloria Murrant and Douglas Stewart on April 28, 2003: Newmarket, ON.

⁷ *Building Inclusive Communities*. Workshop Handouts, presented by Janet Gasparini of the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), on June 14, 2001: Sudbury, ON.

Exploring Difference, Power and Privilege

Most of us have different aspects of our identities that either help us to *hold* power and privilege or result in us being *withheld from* or lacking power and privilege. For instance, because of our gender, race, age, physical and mental ability, religious faith or sexual orientation, we may have a greater level of access to power and privilege than others. Or we may have less access. This varies from situation to situation and depends upon what the dynamics and power relations are in each group or circumstance.⁸

It is important to recognize these aspects of ourselves which may hold or are withheld from having power or privilege can both overlap and be contradictory. Moreover, our personal access to power and privilege can change over time (e.g., as we get older or if our economic circumstances change).

Furthermore, there are aspects of ourselves that are visible, and others that are invisible to people we meet. Each of these aspects is interpreted by the people we encounter. Many of the examples used in this Tool Kit represent aspects of our identities that are visible (i.e., gender, race and age). A visible difference can be seen or heard, and is often noticed upon an initial sighting or encounter with another person (e.g., physical differences). An invisible difference *cannot* be seen or heard upon an initial sighting or encounter and may never be detected.

Generally, people with invisible differences have a greater ability to blend in with the mainstream or more privileged groups than those with visible differences. This may or may not be an advantage, depending on the situation. For instance, someone who does not want people to be made aware of the fact that they have a learning disability can perhaps conceal it by not actively participating in a public forum. However, if they decide not to disclose this information (e.g., to organizers ahead of time), it might mean that they will be unable to or prevented from participating when they choose to do so.

Barriers to Equitable Access

Issues of access and choice are important when examining power and privilege. *Access* is defined as having the right, opportunity or ability to reach, enter or use a facility, program or materials, visit a person or people and/or receive, understand and use information, knowledge or skills. Access is limited or prevented when barriers exist. *Barriers* create limited or restricted access to a facility, program, materials, people or information. Such barriers may be accidental or intended.

People may face many barriers that prevent their full and active participation in society based on their personal identities and/or circumstances.

For instance, systemic discrimination may be encountered by those who have a disability, by people

⁸ *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression*. Anne Bishop. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, NS, 1994

of colour, or by youth and seniors, in situations where programs are set-up for able-bodied, white, middle-aged people. A person's cultural or religious attire, or the fact that they have a speech impediment or limited ability in English can also subject them to discrimination in circumstances where strict dress codes are in effect and verbal communication is important. Such barriers may not only limit their active participation in organizations, but may actually prevent them from even contacting such groups to begin with.⁹

People do not necessarily chose to deliberately discriminate against those who are different from themselves. Many of the barriers to participation within community organizations exist because of a lack of awareness of differing wants or needs. Barriers can be removed and access increased by first exploring what some of these barriers are and how we can learn to notice them in the behaviours of ourselves and others.

Basically, a barrier is an obstacle that prevents an individual or group from accessing certain services or opportunities. A barrier can be physical (e.g., stairs), financial (e.g., lack of bus fare), attitudinal (e.g., individual or organizational discrimination), social (e.g., prevailing norms and attitudes), linguistic (e.g., limited English skills) or geographic (e.g.,

isolated location). Such barriers may be real or perceived. It is key to recognize that there are a variety of ways in which community buildings, programs, services and opportunities can be inaccessible to some people. Access is related to many different aspects of an organization, such as communications, signage, physical design and delivery of services.¹⁰

In some cases, people may find it difficult to fully participate in their communities because of an individual constraint. For instance, an individual who has a hearing impairment may find it difficult to participate in a community meeting. However, they may be accommodated by being provided with materials in print format rather than just orally, by a request that participants in the meeting speak clearly and try to face the hearing impaired person so that they have the opportunity to read lips, or perhaps by the availability of sign language translation.

There is no simple formula for alleviating all barriers, as each person's needs are unique. When we treat people equally we ignore differences. When we treat people *equitably* we recognize and respect differences.

Therefore, the process of determining what accommodations are needed and feasible must be considered on an *individual* basis in each specific circum-

⁹ *Building Inclusive Communities for Ethnoracial People with Disabilities*. Rabia Khedr. Ethno Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario. Toronto, ON, 2003

¹⁰ Ibid.

stance. Since not all needs will be apparent, it is important to find out from every person involved or potentially involved in an organization if there are ways that their participation can be maximized. This may be done as part of an orientation. By consulting all affected individuals, plans for accommodation can often be established within a reasonable and mutually acceptable time frame.

Sometimes the accommodation of needs is not possible without causing undue hardship for the people involved or for the organization that is trying to accommodate them. In these cases, solutions may have to be found to offset the costs or risks involved in accommodation. Also, where accommodation cannot be immediately addressed, it may need to be phased in over a longer period of time. For example, in order for changes to be made to physical infrastructure that may require a large financial outlay, the organization might consider:

- creating a special fund where periodic payments can be made;
- asking individuals and organizations for grants or donations;
- holding a fundraising event specifically for this purpose.

It is also important to recognize that people who require accommodations are unlikely to approach the organization to demand or even request them. It is more likely that they will simply feel unwelcome,

consider not participating or be unable to do so.

Organizations can create a welcoming image by choosing their meeting or activity locations carefully (e.g., ensuring they are physically accessible and on subway or bus routes.). For more information on this topic, see Tool #1: “Tips for Planning Inclusive Events” in Section III.

Exhibiting good faith and a willingness to explore creative solutions for reducing barriers to equitable access and making accommodations is a huge step toward becoming inclusive. Moreover, taking incremental steps toward making *all* people feel welcome and included (*before* someone issues a request or complaint) shows that you are open to change and exercising voluntary responsibility.



Rationale For Inclusion

Principles and Assumptions

We live in a diverse and changing society. While every person has a right to be treated fairly and equitably, barriers exist at all levels of society that result in the inequitable treatment of some individuals and groups. This inequitable treatment means different people have different access to power and privilege and some are therefore unable to fully participate within their communities.¹⁰

Because they are not openly accepted or encouraged to participate in community organizations, particular individuals and groups do not have the opportunity to fully benefit from and contribute to society.¹¹ In order to change this situation and ensure the equitable treatment of all people who interact and engage with community organizations (staff, volunteers, clients), it is important to examine the organizational values, policies, practices and procedures of these organizations. Only then can systemic barriers be identified and removed.

Why Inclusiveness is Important

Removing barriers to inclusion will make a community organization more effective at achieving its mandate. There are many reasons why inclusiveness helps to make an organization more effective:

- It will ensure equal access and participation in your organization by diverse populations;
- It will be easier to respond effectively to the various needs of the community members that your organization serves;
- It will help to ensure that your organization is representative and reflective of the local population;
- It will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of your programming and provide better outcomes for your clients;
- It will help to ensure that community members are represented and validated within the various parts of your organization.

¹⁰ *Cultural Competence Workshop for Service Providers in York Region*, presented by Gloria Murrant and Douglas Stewart on April 28: Newmarket, ON, 2003.

¹¹ *An Inclusion Lens: Workbook for Looking at Social and Economic Exclusion and Inclusion*. Malcolm Shookner. Social Inclusion Reference Group, Population and Public Health Branch. Health Canada, Atlantic Region. June 2002.

- It will ensure that your strategic directions are fully informed by, and are consistent with, diverse representation and inclusiveness;
- It will help people to make good decisions in an environment of change and fiscal uncertainty;
- It will enhance your organization’s ability to effectively respond to future changes in demographics;
- It will make it more accountable to the community;
- It will ensure that your organization fully abides by the legal obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Human Rights Act. (See “Legal Considerations” in Section IV, Additional Resources, for more information).
- It provides social, economic and cultural enrichment through increased diversity;
- It improves morale, especially among board members, staff and volunteers who may currently feel marginalized;
- It builds organizational capacity and expertise;
- Increased participation encourages greater sharing of responsibility and workload;
- It helps to decrease conflict and make the root sources of conflict better understood;
- It complies with relevant legislation, supports risk management and protects your organization from liability.¹²

Organizational Benefits

Inclusivity within an organization creates many benefits, both short and long term, for a group:

- It enhances community input and relationship building;
- It helps to build an organization’s reputation as progressive and inclusive - an employer of choice;



¹² The previous two sections were adapted from: “Diversity at the City of Toronto” Tim Rees. Presentation to the Communicating Environmental Messages in a Diverse Society forum of the Sustainability Network. October 2001, and “Why Diversity?” Paul Kwasi Kafele. Presentation to the York Support Network. 2001