BE CODE SMART

The best way to protect yourself from discrimination and from complaints is to know and respect **The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code**.

SASKATCHEWAN
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Employment Equity Best Practices

Employment equity programs are intended to increase workplace participation by under-represented groups. This requires the removal of barriers and the creation of a welcoming environment. Having a representative workforce benefits not only an organization, but also individuals and society, making way for positive change. But achieving positive results requires a sustained commitment over the long-term.

As organizations work toward their equity goals, they may benefit from considering approaches, processes, and practices in use in other places. The following document provides suggestions for improving processes at five distinct phases of employment:

1. Preparation and planning;
2. Recruiting and hiring;
3. Building a positive workplace culture;
4. Retaining and promoting employees;
5. Reviewing progress and making improvements.

Phase 1 – Preparation and Planning

Organizations should ensure they have laid the proper groundwork for pursuing employment equity endeavours. Equity Partners of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission have already completed most of this step, but as circumstances change, elements of an organization's plan may need to be adjusted.

- Secure leadership commitment for your equity goals. This should be explicit and documented in writing.
- In unionized workplaces, employers should work collaboratively to develop consensus around hiring processes, including any goals or preferential hiring practices.
- Develop a comprehensive employment equity plan with specific goals and assign clear responsibility for achieving objectives
- Gather data about your current situation and develop methods for benchmarking progress.
- Review organizational policies and practices for alignment with your goals.

Phase 2 – Recruiting and Hiring

A transparent, barrier-free hiring process ensures that all applicants have a fair opportunity to compete for jobs. Potential barriers to fair hiring processes include hiring by word-of-mouth, holding interviews in inaccessible locations, and screening processes that disadvantage certain people or groups.

- Begin by ensuring job requirements are reasonable and not inflated. Job requirements should be based on the actual needs of the role. Requiring unnecessary credentials in job advertisements may deter many people for applying or render them ineligible – including diverse populations you are seeking to have apply.

- Establish clear criteria for selecting applicants for interviews, and also what criteria you will use to assess performance during interviews and other hiring stages.

- Job advertising processes should seek to create a broad applicant pool that reflects the diversity of the community. Consider creating relationships or partnerships with specific groups and educational institutions to help widen the search for qualified applicants.

- Voluntary self-identification may help the organization understand if it is attracting a sufficiently diverse applicant pool.

- To make sure there is a diverse pool of candidates, some organizations may need to take extra steps when choosing who to interview. For example, an organization might use a "blind screening" approach, where certain details – like a person's name – are removed from the application. This can help reduce negative effects from unconscious bias. In other cases, organizations may take a more direct approach by creating a separate application process for certain groups of applicants. This could involve voluntary self-identification or a more clearly defined applicant streaming process.

- At all times, the goal is to hire people likely to succeed in the workplace and qualified to do the required tasks.

- Ensure all parts of the process are accessible to people with disabilities (e.g., job postings, company websites, documents and forms, and the interview format) and provide accommodation as needed. Lack of accessibility in the hiring process can be a significant barrier for people with disabilities.

- Be deliberate about the composition of the hiring panel. Along with HR or technical expertise, the presence of panelists who reflect equity groups can boost a candidate's confidence in the process, their perception of the

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organization, and their performance during interviews.

- Employees who serve on a hiring panel should be provided with opportunities to gather skills and experience necessary for participation in hiring decisions.

- Cast a wider net. Instead of only considering "culture fit" when hiring, also consider "culture add." People with different perspectives and competencies can be valuable for organizations.

- Be flexible. Where appropriate, focus on skills and behaviours instead of rigid qualifications. An organization can benefit by hiring people with useful skills who can learn or attain the required qualification while in the position. Limiting recruitment to those people who already hold desired qualifications may unnecessarily limit the organization's options and cause the organization to miss out on talented people.

- Ensure onboarding processes emphasize an inclusive and welcoming workplace culture. Demonstrate how each employee is valued. The first day on the job with a new employer can set

- the tone for an individual's tenure with the organization. Consider a process that makes employees feel they made the right decision to join your company.

- After a round of hiring, review and assess how successful you met your goals. Identify areas for improvement in the next round.

Phase 3 – Building a Healthy Workplace Culture

Equity plans and programs are more effective when they are embedded into operations and activities across the organization. A genuine commitment to applying the principles of human rights in the workplace, rather than targets alone, can alleviate feelings of tokenism and instead lead to healthy and respectful workplace relationships.

- Good leadership and proper management are vital.

- Create meaningful dialogue with staff, at all levels of an organization, about the organization's commitment to creating a welcoming and respectful workplace.

- Integrate principles of human rights into all areas of leadership, professional development, performance management, advancement, and retention.

- Seek out and listen to diverse voices in the workplace. Employees from equity groups should feel like their contributions are heard, trusted, and relied upon.

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- Encourage employees to bring their authentic selves to work.

- Assess employee satisfaction regularly and promptly address concerns.

- Where appropriate, provide flexible work arrangements.

- Understand, and adhere to, the Duty to Accommodate.

- Conduct a regular analysis of pay equity.

- Provide meaningful opportunities for all employees to learn about human rights and non-discrimination. Make sure the training fits the needs of the organization and the specific role of the employee. Keep in mind that research shows many typical approaches to workplace training used in the past – especially a mandatory approach – are often ineffective or can even have negative effectives.

Phase 4 – Retaining and Promoting Employees

Hiring candidates from equity groups is only one piece of a much larger effort. An

equity plan aimed at increasing diversity should also include strategies on how to retain and promote candidates from the designated groups.

- An equity program must not seek to displace current employees.

- Instead, equity plans need growth and development strategies so that a more representative workforce is achieved over time.

- Over time, representative diversity should extend to all levels of an organization, including leadership positions. This may be difficult for small organizations to achieve, but they should still find ways to support diversity while complying with the broader goal of non-discrimination.

- The goal of a representative work force is one component of complying with human rights legislation. Having a workplace that uphold human rights principles, free from discrimination, is the overall aim of equity programs.

- Support employees in navigating professional environments. For example, help new employees become acquainted with the organization's language and unwritten norms. This could include efforts that promote and encourage mentorship programs and networking.

- Help every employee to see their potential career trajectory within the organization and create opportunities that assist employees along the way.

- Ensure there are role models from diverse backgrounds at every level of an organization.

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- Track retention of the designated equity group members by level and by team.

Phase 5 – Reviewing Progress and Making Improvements

The periodic review of an equity plan should consider overall effectiveness, areas for improvement, and new developments.

- Use both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate progress towards goals.

- Measure the right things.

- Identify ongoing systemic barriers to workplace participation with a focus on hiring, training, and retention of members of equity groups.

- Ensure that workplace policies are well-written, followed, and enforced. Communicate that HR policies are not created just for compliance, but also to demonstrate company values.

- Formalize processes to address discriminatory behaviours in the workplace and enforce policies when discrimination occurs.

- Consider using regular reputational risk assessments for issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, harassment, disability discrimination, and other forms of discrimination.

- Become a learning organization. Learning organizations adapt and evolve to rapidly changing demands. They benefit from the success of others by adapting best practices.

Many of the ideas in this document were adapted from the work of Employment Equity Partners and leading organizations like those listed below. For further ideas, please visit:

- [Rick Hansen Foundation](#)

  The Rick Hansen Foundation has a number of accessibility and awareness programs.

- [Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#)

  The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion is a non-profit organization oversees a process to become a "Canadian Certified Inclusion Professional," which may be a useful certification for some human resource departments.

- [Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks](#) (formed from the Centre for Global Inclusion)

  This organization has developed benchmarks that may be useful for organizations wishing to assess their performance.

- [BlackNorth Initiative](#)

  In partnership with the [Boston Consulting Group](#), BlackNorth created a "Playbook" to provide organizations

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with context on the situation that the Black community faces in Canada, and tools organizations can use to fulfill their goals.

- [Welcome to the Government of Saskatchewan's Inclusion Toolkit!](#)

  The Government of Saskatchewan's Inclusion Toolkit contains many valuable resources.

Information about the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission's Equity Partner program can be found here: https://saskhrc.ca/education-resources/employment-equity-program/

For more information, to become an Employment Equity Partner, or to speak with an Equity Advisor, contact the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission at 306-933-5952 or by email at contact@saskhrc.ca.

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