

## BE CODE SMART

The best way to protect yourself from discrimination and from complaints is to know and respect  
*The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, 2018*



SASKATCHEWAN  
**HUMAN RIGHTS**  
COMMISSION



# Employment Equity Best Practices

Employment equity programs are intended to increase workplace participation by members of equity-seeking groups. This requires the removal of discriminatory barriers and the creation of a welcoming environment. Meeting equity targets not only benefits an organization, but also individuals and society, making way for systemic change. Systemic change requires a long-term commitment to developing and implementing best practices related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

As organizations work toward their equity goals, they create and identify measures and strategies that become templates or best practices. Best practices also emerge when an employer adopts, adapts, or learns from the practices and successes of others.

Below you will find a few examples of best practices implemented by various organizations.

### Step 1 – Improve Recruitment and Hiring Processes

A transparent, barrier-free hiring process ensures that job candidates with equity group status are not disadvantaged. Potential barriers include hiring by word-of-mouth, inaccessible interview locations, and screening processes that disadvantage racialized persons or groups.

- Use blind screening of resumes (without names) to avoid “screening out” names that appear to identify an individual as belonging to a certain group.

For example, assumptions may be made about an individual’s sex based on their name. Assumptions may also be made about whether the person is likely to be a visible minority.

Blind screening is one way to avoid both conscious and unconscious bias to assess all candidates fairly based on merit.

- Ensure there are at least two qualified candidates from the designated equity groups in the pool of candidates to be interviewed. When seeking to hire from designated equity groups, this practice may be preferable to blind screening.
- Make equity group self-identification optional on application forms. This gives candidates the choice to self-identify.
- 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.

- Consider using a diverse hiring panel. The presence of panelists that reflect equity groups can boost a candidate's confidence in the process, their perception of the organization, and their performance during interviews. This also increases the likelihood of a member from an equity group being selected.
- Look into providing anti-bias training for staff, particularly those who may be involved in hiring processes.
- Cast a wider net. Instead of only considering "culture fit" when hiring, also consider "culture add." Inclusion is about valuing people with different perspectives and competencies and allowing them to make meaningful contributions to the organization. In this way, employment equity enhances corporate culture.
- Be flexible. Where appropriate, focus on skills and behaviours, instead of rigid qualifications. An organization may gain more with the addition of an employee with valuable skills and who can acquire necessary qualifications on the job. Insisting on qualifications that are teachable may cause an organization to miss out on opportunities to include skilled individuals with different paths to employment.
- Ensure onboarding processes emphasize inclusion and 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.

- Share information with the union (if applicable) regarding hiring practices, equity plans, and results of workforce surveys.

### **Step 2 – Build a Healthy Workplace Culture**

Equity plans and programs are more effective when they are embedded into every aspect of an organization's operations. A genuine commitment to improving DEI in the workplace, rather than targets, can alleviate feelings of tokenism and lead to healthy and respectful workplace relationships.

- Create meaningful dialogue with staff, at all levels of an organization, about the organization's commitment to improving DEI and the value it brings.
- Integrate DEI 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 trusted, relied upon, and heard. Encourage employees to bring their authentic selves to work.
- Assess team members' job satisfaction regularly and address DEI concerns from employees.
- Provide flexible work arrangements to accommodate diverse needs, such as approving time away from work for an employee to attend a religious ceremony or for health reasons.



### **Step 3 – Achieve Success through Retention and Promotion**

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 should not seek to displace current employees to achieve its aims.
- Instead, equity plans need growth and development strategies that lead to positions being filled by members of the designated equity groups. This includes the provision of training and professional development to enhance skills for all employees.

Over time, representative diversity should exist at all levels of an organization, including leadership positions.

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

### **Step 4 – Implement Best Practices and Policies**

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

- Create measures that address systemic barriers to workplace participation, with a focus on hiring, training, and retention of members of equity groups.
- Use both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate progress towards DEI goals.
- Focus on progressive, comprehensive, sustainable growth and development rather than metrics that do not address systemic issues.
- 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.
- Policies should communicate the organization’s commitment to DEI and a corporate desire for change.
- Formalize processes to address discriminatory behaviours in the workplace and enforce policies when discrimination occurs.
- Consider using regular reputational risk assessments for possible DEI issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, harassment, disability discrimination, and other forms of discrimination.



**Step 5 – Be a Learning Organization**

Learning organizations adapt and evolve to rapidly changing demands. Learning organizations acknowledge that there are many employers actively working to improve DEI in their workplaces. In turn, 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 on how to enhance DEI in your workplace, please visit:

- The [Centre for Global Inclusion](#)  
This organization has developed the Global Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Benchmarks.
- [BlackNorth Initiative](#)  
In partnership with the Boston Consulting Group, BlackNorth created a “Playbook” to provide organizations with context on the situation that the Black community faces in Canada, and tools organizations can use to fulfill their DEI goals.

- [Diversity and Inclusion Consulting | DEI Strategy | BCG](#)

The Boston Consulting Group partners with companies to implement proven diversity strategies and diversity and inclusion best practices.

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

The Government of Saskatchewan’s Inclusion Toolkit contains many valuable resources to support DEI efforts and initiatives.

- The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission’s policy on Employment Equity can be found here: [Employment Equity Program Policy](#).

*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 [shrc@gov.sk.ca](mailto:shrc@gov.sk.ca).*

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