

For Information

REPORT TITLE: **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Journey for Community Investment Funding**

FROM: Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide the Diversity, Equity and Anti-Racism Committee with an update on the Community Investment Programs approach to embedding equity in its granting program.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In alignment with the Regions of Peel’s commitment to address systemic discrimination the Community Investment Program is committed to applying an equity lens to ensure that the diversity of Peel not-for-profits and community are reflected in decision-making, grant opportunities, policies, and practices.
 - Key steps in the journey include community engagement; development of assessment tools, policies, procedures, and frameworks; data collection; and training.
 - The Community Investment Program will continue to work with Black, Indigenous and racialized Peel not-for-profits to continue to embed and further advance equitable access to funding.
-

DISCUSSION

1. Background

Council Mandate and support for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI)

In June 2020, Council approved a resolution (2020-448) which affirmed its commitment to “...address systemic discrimination by supporting policies, equitable funding, and programs that address the inequities faced by the black community and other marginalized groups continue to experience within Peel.”

Furthermore, in August 2021, Regional Council adopted the following statement on antiracism and discrimination: “The Region of Peel recognizes the impact of historical and ongoing racism and systemic discrimination in its communities. We are committed to learning, evolving, and owning the role we have played in preserving the systems that advantage some and disadvantage others. As a municipal leader and accountable government, we accept responsibility to expose and oppose racism and dismantle the institutional systems that perpetuate social inequities.”

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Journey for Community Investment Funding

Community Investment Program

Through a budget of \$8 million in 2022, the Region's Community Investment Program supports Peel not-for-profits to build stronger, more equitable communities by providing programs to the most vulnerable; supporting capacity and resources for marginalized and equity-seeking populations; and enabling upstream systems change that addresses complex social challenges.

2. Enhancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Community Investment Funding

The Community Investment Program recognizes the importance of equity and is committed to applying an equity lens to its funding grants to ensure that the diversity of our local social service providers and community are reflected in decision-making, grant opportunities, policies, and practices. Through a community focused approach, in 2020, staff undertook a number of initiatives described below with key timelines, areas of focus and results for enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into the Community Investment Program.

a) COVID-19 Community Investment Equity and Diversity Alignment (2020-2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic and emergency response measures from all levels of government drew attention to the disparities experienced by equity-seeking groups across Canada. From the onset of the pandemic in March 2020, the Community Investment Program pivoted to assist the not-for-profit sector to adapt their service delivery models to support Peel's most vulnerable populations. To support the immediate needs, and align to Resolution 2020-448 to address systemic discrimination, Community Investment realigned \$1.3 million to the long and medium priorities of the pandemic and to address racial and systemic discrimination. In 2020 and 2021 thirty-five and thirty-seven percent of successful applicants for the Capacity and Change Fund were Black-led, Black-mandated or Black serving Peel not-for-profits, respectively.

b) Development of a Funding Framework that incorporates Equity (2020 – 2021)

To support the integration of equity and promote the inclusion of diverse local service providers, not-for-profits and groups are reflected in the Community Investment Funding Framework, staff developed an action plan in 2020 that;

- a) Reviewed funding policies, processes and practices that may inadvertently create barriers for individuals, certain Peel not-for-profits and/or community groups applying or accessing funding;
- b) Completed an extensive national literature, environmental and jurisdictional scans on best practice equity funding assessments and auditing tools; and
- c) Conducted external, Municipal, Regional and community partner consultations.

The development of a draft Equity Audit Tool was completed in 2021 by staff to support thinking and discussion around equity within the granting streams. The intention of this tool is to begin the initial steps to applying an equity lens to funding, data capture, and inform future decision making with Community Investment Funds. The process of completing an audit is a statement to the broader community that the Region of Peel Community Investment Program both values and is committed to DEI.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Journey for Community Investment Funding

c) Community and Regional Engagement (2021-2022)

Community Investment has been working and will continue to work alongside community partners and the Office of Culture and Inclusion in incorporating an equity funding lens that addresses systemic discrimination and inequities faced by the black community and other marginalized groups. In 2021 and 2022, Community Investment staff facilitated targeted consultations with the Anti-Black Racism and Systemic Discrimination Table and the Community Response Table and embedded their feedback into the action plan. Staff have also worked cross functionally with other Human Services divisions (Early Years and Child Care, Income and Social Supports, Housing and Homelessness) to share best practices on the alignment of corporate DEI strategic approaches to best support the community.

d) Changes to Granting Practices and Processes to Enhance Access and Equity (2022-2023)

The phased and intentional implementation of an equity approach to the Community Investment Program has been informed directly by consultation and direction from community partners. In 2022, staff made changes to the granting practices and processes by embedding a transparent equity statement, as well as implemented DEI training tools in all funding review committees.

A Community Investment Policy was developed in 2022 to increase transparency, equity, and accountability for all Community Investment funds. In 2023, staff will host targeted consultations with community partners to review the completed policy and equity statement for feedback before it is launched.

To increase access to funds, staff and the Corporate Communications team will refresh the Community Investment website in 2023 to include low barrier tools and aids for not-for-profits to utilize.

The Equity Audit tool has been piloted by staff over the past three years (2020-2022) to collect baseline data. The pilot is a key action for the Region to increase the numbers of Black and Indigenous agencies and equity seeking groups access to funding in Community Investment. In 2023 staff will consult with not-for-profits on implementing the tool in the decision-making process of Community Investment's balanced funding approach.

The Community Investment Program has committed to annually reporting on a corporate performance measure of overall annual funding allocated to Black, Indigenous, and racialized agencies (annual target of 10%). In 2021 and 2022 10 and 11 per cent of all Community Investment funded agencies were Black-led, Black-mandated, Black-serving, and/or Indigenous, respectively.

3. Key areas of Learning

- The Community Investment Program has a relationship-centered approach with Peel not-for-profits that prioritizes the needs and conditions of communities and the organizations serving these communities. To further advance equity and access for racialized and equity seeking community groups, staff will develop and implement a targeted community engagement plan in 2023.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Journey for Community Investment Funding

- The Region currently funds diverse not-for-profits, however, gaps and opportunities to better support and fund racialized not-for-profits not currently accessing the Community Investment Program have been identified. In 2023, staff will carry out research and community consultations on developing a targeted funding approach for Black, Indigenous and grassroots community groups and/or agencies.

CONCLUSION

As part of the Region's commitment to address systemic discrimination, Community Investment has taken important steps in an ongoing journey to incorporate and improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in its granting program. Key steps in the journey include community engagement; development of assessment tools, policies, procedures and frameworks; data collection; and training. This work will continue and evolve over the coming year(s) and staff will report back to Regional Council as necessary on the progress and findings of this important work.



Sean Baird, Commissioner of Human Services

Authored By: Arlene Coventry-Bauer, Manager, Community Investment and Capacity, Social Development, Planning and Partnerships