RESEARCH SHOP

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Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Assessment of the Office of Community Engagement

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Office of
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Contents

Executive Summary

This report presents results of a McMaster Research Shop project conducting an equity evaluation of the Office of Community Engagement (OCE). This evaluation was based on the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) framework developed by the McMaster Equity and Inclusion Office and included a literature review, an accessibility assessment of the OCE's 2019 Ideas Exchange event, and interviews with OCE staff.

A literature review on the topic of equity in post-secondary education and community-based research helped to frame and provide context to the project. Results highlight that efforts to define and implement equity as a concept and practice are varied but limited due to their inherent complexity. Despite challenges with bringing equity into post-secondary education and community-based practice, research stresses the value that diversity brings to under- *and* overrepresented students and in empowering traditionally marginalized groups.

The accessibility assessment of OCE's 2019 Ideas Exchange suggests that the event incorporated a diversity of accessibility features, such as accessible elevators and nearby wheelchair-friendly and gender-neutral washrooms. It also highlighted several gaps in accessibility, such as the unavailability of ASL interpretation and messaging inviting participants to communicate their need for any disability-related accommodations. Staff were enthusiastic about making future events more accessible but identified lack of time, resources, and knowledge as barriers, flagging the need for greater institutional support and tools (e.g., checklists) to overcome these barriers.

Results from interviews with OCE staff offer insights into how the principle of equity is embedded and expressed in the OCE's work. Staff demonstrated mindfulness of inequities within both McMaster and the broader Hamilton community, a willingness to reflexively discuss and learn about equity issues pertaining to day to day work, and a strong commitment to improving the accessibility of OCE services and educational opportunities, especially for equity-seeking groups. While there was little evidence for the embeddedness of equity in formal policies, staff discussed how equity was embedded in formal practices like land acknowledgements and equity statements in job postings and how it was represented in established programs like the Access Strategy and McMaster Research Shop. The most substantial evidence of equity in the OCE's work appeared to be expressed in informal day-to-day practices like staff communication, ongoing education, reflexivity, collaboration/ relationship building, and intentional incorporation of EDI principles by staff.

In addition to providing insights into how equity is embedded and expressed, results from interviews with staff also reveal potential areas where the OCE can strengthen its equity-based practice. Recommendations include, but are not limited to, devoting requisite resources for funding equity-building initiatives and limiting staff turnover, intentionally building partnerships with equity-seeking groups, and maintaining and improving an office culture of inclusion. Staff also provide recommendations for the OCE to monitor its equity-based practices through formal accountability mechanisms.

The last section of this reports draws on insights from our findings to provide three sets of actionable recommendations to help inform the OCE's future equity strategy: 1) Develop formal policy, 2) Become proactive versus reactive, and 3) Improve climate. This perspective may be useful in determining strategic next steps for the OCE when it comes to fulfilling their vision of "an inclusive, sustainable Greater Hamilton" (OCE, 2019).

Introduction

In 2019, a member of the Office of Community Engagement's (OCE) Equity Subcommittee, in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion Office (EIO), approached the McMaster Research Shop to complete an equity evaluation of the OCE. The OCE coordinates the [Network for Community-Campus Partnerships](#) ("the Network") and creates infrastructure to support partnership requests that cover the following: advice and guidance, program development, networking, capacity building, and strategic initiatives. OCE's vision is: "working together for an inclusive, sustainable greater Hamilton."

The main research question for this evaluation was: how is the principle of equity embedded and expressed in the OCE's work?

In addition to this research question, based on our consultation with the community partner, we developed the following sub-research questions:

- how is equity formally embedded in the OCE's strategic documents and day-to-day work?
- what are some ways equity is informally practiced in the day-to-day work of the office?
- how can the office strengthen its equity-based practices?
- how can the office monitor equity-based practice in its work?

The EIO is a co-community partner advising on and supporting this project. The EIO works closely with staff, students and faculty members to advance equity and inclusion by promoting an environment of respect, safety, collegiality and openness. Dr. Arig al Shaibah, Associate Vice-President of Equity and Inclusion, has developed a framework in consultation with a variety of McMaster University stakeholders to help guide the creation of an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy for the university (see Appendix 1). This EDI framework has four goals and areas for strategic action:

1. Institutional Commitment and Capacity
2. Community and Compositional Diversity
3. Academic Content and Context
4. Interactional Capabilities and Climate

The McMaster Research Shop put together a team of five research associates to conduct research to assess how the principle of equity is embedded and expressed through its work using this EDI framework. This assessment will provide a current state of equity practice from which the OCE team will set priorities for action over the next 1-2 years. The research will also provide a baseline data set from which to measure change over time. The report is intended for OCE staff and management, EIO staff and management, and the President's Advisory Council on Building an Inclusive Community (PACBIC).

Methodology and Limitations

The research team conducted three research activities: 1) A literature review of the definition of equity, equity in a post-secondary education context, and equity in community-based work; 2) An accessibility assessment of the OCE's 2019 Ideas Exchange event, and 3) Interviews with staff and management using the EDI four pillar framework. The research team sought feedback from the community partners throughout the process of developing data collection procedures and instruments.

Literature review

To help frame the research findings, as well as the final recommendations of the report, the team conducted a literature review on the definition of equity and its practice in a post-secondary and community-based research context. To locate peer-reviewed literature, the team relied heavily on the McMaster library search catalogue and research databases and Google Scholar and used specific search keywords, such as "equity," "equity in practice," "educational equity," "equity in community-based research," "inclusion," and "diversity." The team largely focused their review on examples of equity in practice in Canada and the United States of America. The team also examined grey literature, specifically internal reports on equity-based initiatives run by the OCE and the definitions of equity at other Southern Ontario Universities.

Accessibility assessment of the 2019 Ideas Exchange event

The Idea Exchange is an annual OCE event designed to create a space for McMaster representatives and community partners to come together to:

- Discuss existing priorities,
- Create new action strategies, and
- Learn different ways to work together to develop and improve campus-community partnerships in the future.

This year's event took place from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on May 7, 2019 at the CIBC Hall in the McMaster University Student Centre. Its theme, "Forward with Community: The Future Direction of Community Engagement at McMaster," provided an opportunity for campus and community partners to build relationships by sharing knowledge and discussing ways to put new ideas into action.

The event began with introductions and a speech by McMaster President Patrick Deane, who highlighted the past year's OCE initiatives, as well as reinforced the importance of community engagement work as a strategic pillar of the university. During the event, participants took part in roundtable discussions led by faculty representatives, the staff of the OCE, and community partners that identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges campus and community partners face and how the

community can address these issues moving forward. The Idea Exchange closed with a panel of community partners discussing their experiences and the challenges of working with McMaster. Susan Searls Giroux, the Acting Provost, ended the event by providing her reflections on community engagement at McMaster to date.

To assess the accessibility of the event, the research team conducted a focus group with the organizers (n=3) on June 13, 2019. The Research Team used the McMaster AccessMac Accessibility Checklist (see Appendix 2) to base their questions (see Appendix 3). The research team conducted a content analysis of the resulting transcripts using the indicators on the AccessMac Accessibility Checklist to structure their themes, including:

1. Physical Accessibility
2. Accessibility features
3. Volunteers (training/visibility)
4. Activities (range/accessibility)
5. Advertising and communications
6. Presentations

The research team also asked focus group participants about the challenges with making OCE events accessible and ways to navigate those challenges. The team used these results to develop a list of practicable recommendations to make future events more accessible.

Interviews with OCE staff and management

In addition to the accessibility assessment of the Ideas Exchange, which only assesses one dimension of equity, to achieve a more comprehensive evaluation of equity the team conducted 9 in-depth interviews with OCE staff and management. The team based their evaluation on the EDI four pillar framework (see Appendix 1). The Associate Vice-President of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Arig al Shaibah, developed this framework to aid the university in generating strategic plans and setting priorities that foster inclusive, diverse, and equitable teaching and research environments. The four pillars are as follows:

1. Institutional Commitment and Capacity - policies, symbols, and procedures that mobilize and sustain a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion. E.g., equity statements in job postings.
2. Educational Content and Context - research, teaching, and training to enhance and innovate local, regional, national and global communities. E.g., equity statement in syllabus.
3. Interactional Capabilities and Climate - a culture of respect and inclusion, and a climate where all members experience dignity, respect and belonging. E.g., welcoming environment.

4. Compositional Diversity and Community Engagement - demographic diversity and inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in post-secondary institutions. E.g., including staff members with diverse experiences.

While intended for an institutional evaluation rather than an evaluation of an individual unit (i.e., the OCE), the team used this framework to help form indicators and create interview questions (see Appendix 4). As part of the interviews, the team also incorporated a question about the meaning of equity in its interviews with the staff and management of the OCE in order to determine how they understood the term in relation to the office's definition of equity. To analyze the data, the team conducted a thematic analysis of the transcript data using the four sub-research questions to structure their findings.

Limitations

The work of the OCE affects groups both on and off campus. However, due to time and resource constraints, for this evaluation the research team only collected data from OCE staff and management. It is important to acknowledge that students and community members who are (or have been) involved with the OCE may have valuable perspectives on how equity can be better embedded and expressed in the office's work. Future evaluations of the work of the OCE should include the perspective of OCE campus and community partners and volunteers.

This assessment was challenging to implement because an equity assessment of this kind has not previously taken place at McMaster. While the EDI framework and AccessMac Accessibility checklist provided the team with a way to structure its data collection and analysis of its research findings, these tools have limitations. First, both were created recently, have not been officially finalized, and are largely untested. Second, the language used in these tools is very high-level and seemingly created for an academic audience that has previous exposure to the terminology. While the team understands that this use of language is intentional, it made elements of the framework and checklist unclear to the researchers and participants. The terminology could also limit the effectiveness of using this tool in future evaluations involving students and community members with a lower educational and/or literacy level. To address this issue, the research team, in consultation with a representative from the EIO, created a plain language handout with examples of the EDI framework for interview participants (see Appendix 5). The team also did their best to provide definitions of complex terms where appropriate.

The term equity is difficult to define. Due to its connection with terms such as equality, inclusion, and diversity, a commonly agreed upon definition of equity is difficult to find in the existing literature. Additionally, while the literature discusses ways to address equity issues (e.g., systemic school reforms) it rarely includes evaluations of the effectiveness of these initiatives. Currently, McMaster University lacks an operational definition of equity compared to other Southern Ontario Universities (see Appendix 6). While the OCE's "Strategic Plan, 2016-2021" does include a definition of equity ("we are

conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities"), this definition focuses more on the office's commitment to address equity than a true definition of the term. To address this issue, the research team incorporated the definitions of equity, diversity, and inclusion that were used by the EIO to create the EDI four pillars framework into the interview guide:

- "Equity is an approach or process that acknowledges social inequalities and introduces actions to provide equal opportunities
- Diversity is a state or condition - the broad "mix" of differences among us
- Inclusion refers to feelings and experiences - a consequence of intentional, active, and skillful engagement across our differences"

Having a clear definition of equity (and examples) at the outset of the project could have made the scope of the evaluation clearer for both researchers and participants.

In discussions about the formal embeddedness of equity, the research team also noted confusion among the participants and themselves surrounding the difference between formal policy and formal practice, and formal practice and informal practice. This confusion made it difficult for some staff members to respond to questions surrounding existing equity policies and practices in their work at the OCE. Although in our analysis we worked to differentiate between these terms, having clear definitions at the outset of this project could have allowed research participants to make these distinctions themselves.

Literature Review: Equity in Post-secondary education and community-based research

The following section presents results from the literature review and covers two topics: definitions of equity in a post-secondary education context, and equity in practice in post-secondary education and community-based research.

Definition of equity in a post-secondary education context

The term equity in the educational context varies greatly across institutions. The OCE's definition of equity is, "We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities" (OCE, 2019). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines equity as a fair and just distribution of educational resources and opportunities (UNESCO, 2018). The wide variety of formal definitions used in Ontario's universities (see Appendix 6 for a selection of Ontario university equity definitions) align with the UNESCO definition. Brand (2015) writes that variation in the definition of equity is to be expected as it is a concept that is not static but

is shaped by social groups in accordance with their political, historical, and material privilege. While Brand's focus is community development and neighbourhood planning, the shifting nature of the term implies a periodic review by OCE staff may be required to revisit and update the definition preferred by the office.

Klonoski, Barker and Edghill-Walden (2017) suggest that in order to cultivate a campus culture that is on the path to equity, diversity and inclusion, there must be more than institutional-level policies, procedures and definitions in place. While administrative endorsement of EDI policy is important, the university needs to also actively seek out and support students to address academic equity gaps during their first year as undergraduates (by offering general education courses, for example) (ibid.). The authors recommend that universities signal their commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion by establishing a graduation requirement course on human diversity (ibid.). Another idea for communicating commitment to equity is by publishing student demographics. Malcolm and Malcolm-Piqueux (2013) concur with collecting and using student demographic information to increase diversity on campuses and within traditionally gendered fields. They have also demonstrated the need for persistent efforts - otherwise, any gains will be lost - and that they should take place across multiple scales concurrently (e.g., during one-to-one interactions as well as at a departmental policy level).

Warren's definition of equity extends well beyond campus by the nature of his work in collaborative community engaged scholarship (CCES) (2018). He argues that community and education activists should be working together to build best practices to increase equity and justice as a regular part of their work, which also mirrors the UNESCO definition.

Equity practice: post-secondary education and community-based research

Implementing equity in higher education institutions is complex - a fact that is often not considered when identifying disadvantages faced by students (Willems, 2010). There are numerous factors that influence access to higher education, as highlighted by Hurtado et al. in their Multi-contextual Model for Diverse Learning Environments (2012). Micro-, macro-, individual-, and institutional-level contexts work in conjunction to influence the diversity of the student body (Hurtado et al., 2012). When these contexts are considered and effort is made to reduce barriers, research shows that student outcomes (e.g., retention, attainment, skills) improve across the board and not just for underrepresented students (Hurtado et al., 2012). Thus, striving for an equitable institution is integral to the overall success of the university.

While many initiatives exist to improve equity and access to post-secondary education, they can be lacking in essential ways (Ward, 2006). One of the most common problems with these initiatives is their failure to consider the multitude of factors impacting student achievement (Ward, 2006). To address this, Willems created a survey that is distributed to incoming students (2010). In this questionnaire, students can self-identify as members of equity-seeking groups and be further classified into equity subgroups (Willems, 2010). This allows the institution to account for the gradient of disadvantage

that can exist in equity-seeking groups (Willems, 2010). By being informed about the needs of its students, the institution can implement initiatives and policies necessary to foster an equitable and inclusive environment (Willems, 2010).

When consulting students who self-identified as disabled about their experiences, Hutcheon & Wolbring emphasized the need for having students themselves involved in equity-promoting initiatives (2012). Furthermore, they detailed that actively raising awareness about accessibility issues, creating diversity-conscious course material, and using inclusive language in policies can have a positive impact on equity at the institution (Hutcheon & Wolbring, 2012). Similarly, Hurtado et al. specify that equity and diversity must be ingrained in both the curricular and co-curricular contexts of the university to have an impact on student outcomes (2012). Therefore, practicing equity in the post-secondary context requires a holistic approach involving faculty, staff, and students.

Community-based research and education is characterized by a commitment to engaging with communities throughout the process of identifying questions and objectives, in determining appropriate methods, and in knowledge translation (Minkler, 2005; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2011). This type of research and education is valued for its ability to produce outputs that are more relevant than that conducted without community input (Minkler, 2005; Green & Mercer, 2001). Central to community-based research is the practice of equity. Equity within community-based work is something that may not occur naturally, but instead requires consideration during planning and policy development (Malcom & Malcolm-Piqueux, 2013). Literature pertaining to the practice of equity within community-based research and education affirms the importance of intentionally and critically considering barriers that prevent communities from participating and/or benefiting from academia.

When describing the historical and theoretical underpinnings of community-based research and education, Minker and Wallerstein (2011) emphasize that these processes necessitate critical reflection on the power relationships and issues of participation that may shape research and/or educational outcomes. This idea is likewise reinforced by Juarez and Brown's (2008) scoping review of frameworks for practicing equity within community-based design projects. Juarez and Brown (2008) emphasize that power relationships and neglecting to engage with marginalized communities can compromise the success of a given project. Melcher's (2013) case studies of community-based landscape design approaches also draw attention to how community-based work can revolve around promoting community participation. This goal of community participation can be manipulated by more powerful groups and can compromise the goals of promoting equity and empowering traditionally marginalized groups. Melcher (2013) thus highlights the need to consider how values and goals of organizations are prioritized within community-based work.

The value of intentionally and critically considering barriers to participation is also underscored by Clayton-Pederson, O'Neill & Mcighe Musil (2017) in their framework for acknowledging diversity and inclusion within colleges and universities. They premise their framework by emphasizing that diversity within higher education institutions supports

academic excellence. Based on their consultations with American universities, they understand academic success to be related to knowledge and skills that can be gained from interacting with others from diverse backgrounds. To encourage and value diversity within universities in a manner that supports academic excellence for all students, Clayton et al. (2017) argue for a broad definition of diversity that extends beyond just an awareness of race and ethnicity but also includes an awareness of individual differences, such as learning styles and stages of life, and group differences related to factors, such as sexuality, class, and gender. When critiquing the dominant understanding of equity within U.S school systems, Scheurich et al. (2017) likewise note that understandings of equity and its practice should be nimble so that they can change over time with communities, in addition to being locally developed and democratically negotiated between groups.

Results: Accessibility Assessment of 2019 Idea Exchange

The following section presents results from our focus group with the event organizers of the 2019 Idea Exchange to assess the accessibility of the event.

Physical accessibility (e.g., accessible location and space)

Ahead of the event, the organizers sent participants electronic invitations with directions to the venue, a link to the campus map, and instructions for obtaining a parking pass. Organizers did not include any messaging to encourage a scent-free environment. Organizers did not specifically outline an accessible route to the event, although they felt that the event location was accessible, noting access to push door buttons and accessible elevators.

Organizers felt that the venue itself was accessible due to the nearby location of accessible washrooms (both wheelchair and gender neutral) and a push button on the main doors. They also felt that the spacing of tables at the event was improved from previous years when tables were tightly spaced due to space limitations. One organizer highlighted, however, that because no participants at this year's event required a mobility aid, they could not validate whether the table spacing was wide enough for them to navigate the space unrestricted.

The organizers made several suggestions for improving the physical accessibility of the event location. They noted that they could have done a better job putting up directional signage for those unfamiliar with the campus. In addition, one organizer noted that while there were gender neutral bathrooms in the building, they were not on the same floor of the event. They suggested that for future events they should cover the gendered bathrooms symbols in order to make them accessible to all gender identities.

Accessibility Features (e.g., American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation)

The event did not include advertising for or the inclusion of ASL interpreters or communication access real-time translation (CART). The organizers explained that they had not considered CART in the planning stages of the event since most of it involved disparate conversations across 8-10 tables. One organizer related that they had not considered the option of an ASL interpreter and that they personally were unaware of how to get in touch with and/or book one through campus services.

Volunteers (e.g., identifiable)

Should an event participant have an accessibility concern, the organizers explained that event volunteers (i.e. OCE staff) were identified in the opening remarks and wore name tags during the event. Volunteers were not identifiable, however, through uniforms or coordinated clothing colour.

The organizers noted that all staff had undergone Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability (AODA) training. In addition, two of the event organizers, as well as two other OCE staff, had taken accessible presentations training right before the event. One of the organizers noted that they had missed the training but were taking it during the summer.

Activities (e.g., range and accessibility)

The main activity of the event was a series of roundtable discussions (8-10 people per table) led by faculty representatives, the staff of the OCE, and community partners. The discussions centered around identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges that campus and community partners face and how the community could address these issues moving forward. Participants shared their ideas verbally, as well as on post-it notes, which were then transferred onto a larger piece of paper to use if parts of the conversation were missed. The organizers explained that participants had the option to switch to different roundtables throughout the activity.

The organizers expressed mixed feelings about the scale of background noise at the event. While two of the organizers felt the sound during the roundtables was exciting and reasonable considering the number of attendees, another felt it could be considered excessively loud for someone with a hearing impairment. All participants indicated that no effort was made to make the event scent free, and that they were unfamiliar of McMaster's policy on the matter.

Advertising and Communication (e.g., posters and emails)

Persons with disabilities using accessible transit services need to know about an event as soon as is practicable to book their trip in advance using accessible transit services. Event organizers stated they advertised the event in February 2019, which was at least four months in advance of the event. The organizers explained that they did their best to ensure that all advertising and communications included inclusive language and their contact information. While event advertising and communication included maps and directions to the event location, the organizers were unsure if all the email attachments were compatible with screen readers.

While the organizers did inquire about food accommodations, advertising did not advertise the accessibility features of the event and did not include a statement asking participants to contact organizers about disability-related accommodations. No participants reached out to the organizers about any accommodation concerns.

Presentations (e.g., language, font, visuals)

Having taken the accessible presentations training, the organizers made sure that all presentations were presented on a large screen and that all writing was in the largest font possible. The event also had loudspeakers and a podium microphone for presenters, as well as roaming microphones amongst the discussion tables. The organizers believed that all presentations included inclusive language.

While the opening remarks and information about the facilitation were the same as on the slideshow, the speeches of Patrick Deane, the AVP and the final panel did not have accompanying dialogue slides for participants to read.

One organizer noted that having attended an accessible presentation the week before, there were several areas their presentations could be improved upon for the future. For example, presenters could describe the images used in the slideshows and reduce the amount of text on screen.

Improving Future Events

Based on this discussion, the organizers felt that event organizers could improve the accessibility of future events by:

- Using an "accessibility lens" when planning future events and using the AccessMac Accessibility Checklist in the event planning stages
- Planning and testing the pathways to events ahead of time to ensure they are accessible.

- Putting up clear directional signage on campus
- Facilitating specialized training (e.g., ensuring accessible event spaces, addressing multilingual needs) for event organizers
- Including statements in advertising and communications for participants to contact organizers about disability-related accommodations
- Addressing needs specific to participants as early as possible
- Booking an ASL interpreter for an event in advance, and then cancelling if no participants contact the organizer requesting interpretation services

One organizer cautioned that while the OCE needed to work towards better addressing accessibility accommodations, they need to make sure they have the resources and supports to do this. The organizers proposed that improving the accessibility of advertising and communications (e.g., identifying accessible routes, posting clear event signage) would be the easiest to address due to its limited cost. They also felt that presentations would improve in the future as more staff underwent training.

Barriers Moving Forward

The organizers cited the following barriers to making future events more accessible:

- Small budgets and limited access to resources
- The timing and expected turnaround of events
- Lack of knowledge of resources, including the existence of the AccessMac Accessibility Checklist and how/where to book an ASL interpreter
- Physical accessibility issues outside the control of the OCE (e.g., elevators not functioning the day of or accessibility routes being cumbersome for participants)

In addition, the organizers argued that staff training needed to go beyond AODA. While more specialized training exists for faculty (e.g., making presentations more accessible), it is not always given to staff.

Addressing Barriers

Event organizers discussed how greater institutional support could overcome barriers to making events more accessible. Some accessibility accommodations (e.g., ASL interpretation) require being explicit about budgetary constraints and that opportunities for small grants could help fund the costs of these accommodations. One organizer noted that, "a lot of resources are geared towards faculty. If we are to meet the needs of many communities, we should have access to the same resources." Along these lines, organizers signaled the need for external support to facilitate more

advanced training for OCE staff as nobody in the office is an expert in AODA compliance.

Results: Interviews with OCE Staff

The following section presents results from interviews with the staff and management of the OCE (n=9). To analyze the data, the team conducted a thematic analysis of the transcript data using the four sub-research questions to structure the findings.

How is equity formally embedded in the OCE?

Formal embeddedness of equity relates to its official and intentional presence in the work of the OCE. The participants (n=9) provided various examples of equity in the OCE's work. Examples were initially organized into the following categories: formal policies, formal practices, and programs/events.

A formal policy was defined as a mandatory and well-established action or principle that promotes equity at the office. However, there was a general lack of awareness about any such policies. Six participants struggled to identify any formal policies at the OCE that support equity. Upon further thought, many participants referenced the university-wide policy requiring AODA training. One participant elaborated that they were not given a manual or told about OCE policies upon being hired, as is common at other workplaces. Another participant explained that while there is presently a lack of formalized policy, as the office grows and gains more funding, they believe that more procedures will become formalized.

As instances of formalized policy specific to the OCE were not referenced by participants, examples of formal embeddedness of equity are thereby categorized as either formal practices or programs/events.

Formal Practices

Formal practices include actions, habits, and routines undertaken by OCE staff that may not be mandatory but are well-established, standardized, and resourced ways to bring equity into their work. Participants mentioned various formal practices that they feel bring equity into their work at the OCE:

- Inclusion of land acknowledgements in OCE presentations and documents (n=4)
- Inclusion of equity statements in job postings and course syllabi (n=3)
- Participating in non-mandatory education, diversity, and inclusion training (n=3)
- Participating in equitable hiring (n=2)
- Providing parking and bus passes to visiting community partners (n=2)

- Conducting workshops on equity in community engagement (n=2)
- Establishing equity as a formal principle of community engagement (n=2)
- Implementing the Strategic Plan (n=2)
- Having team meetings and retreats (n=1)

Of the four participants that mentioned land acknowledgements as an example of equity in the OCE's work, three added that they struggle with feelings of tokenism when using them. For instance, one participant stated, "I still struggle with the land acknowledgement, not because of not believing it should be done but because of my own place as a settler and what it means to me to be saying a land acknowledgment."

A few participants also noted that some practices are upheld throughout the office, but not in a consistent manner, thereby preventing them from being classified as "formal". For instance, while two participants stated that equitable hiring is a formalized practice, two others said that it is more of an informal effort by the hiring team. One participant further clarified that the office does "a good job with the equity stuff, but ad-hoc", and that equitable hiring needs uniform guidelines to be considered a formalized practice. Similarly, another participant spoke about how many staff members added pronouns, land acknowledgements, and accessibility statements to their email signatures. However, they clarified that this was not a standard practice.

Interestingly, many formal practices of equity at the OCE also require informal effort from the staff. For example, participants mentioned attending EDI trainings on their own time. These are official training sessions hosted by other organizations at the university but are not required by the OCE. Staff thereby attend them in an unofficial capacity.

<u>Formal Programs/Events</u>

Formal programs/events include specific services and initiatives officially provided and hosted by the OCE that were viewed by participants to enhance equity at the institution. Participants mentioned many programs/events when discussing the OCE's commitment to equity:

- Access Strategy (n=5)
- Research Shop (n=3)
- McMaster Community Poverty Initiative (n=3)
- Community Catalyst Grants (n=2)
- Idea Exchange Event (n=2)
- Community Access Awards (n=1)

Overall, participants tended to lack awareness of formal practices and programs outside of their own work. This information gap was especially pervasive when speaking about the OCE's educational initiatives. Most participants were unable to provide examples of equity in the OCE's educational and research-based programs; most

information about this work came from two participants. As mentioned, there was also a lack of awareness of the existence and types of formalized policy at the office.

How is equity informally practiced in the OCE?

Informal practice encompasses the work done by OCE staff that is not captured in formal policy or assigned duties but is both commonplace and integral to their positions. During their interviews, all participants (n=9) shared multiple ways that equity was informally practiced in their day-to-day work. Responses fell within five major themes that characterize this work – staff communication, ongoing education, reflexivity, intentional incorporation of EDI principles, and collaboration/relationship building – and are listed below along with illustrative interview quotations.

<u>Staff communication</u>

The general climate of respect and openness in the office has provided a baseline confidence to discuss EDI issues among many of the staff. However, this feeling was not universal. One participant noted that there was a limit to the range of issues that could be comfortably raised.

Participants reported that it is common for staff to discuss EDI in both their own work and the group's work in multiple contexts (e.g., meetings, peer to peer, worker to manager). Frequent discussions of complex and difficult subjects are broached through critical review of one's own work as well as that of their colleagues' (e.g. projects, events, hiring practices, and day to day work) with the end goal of improvement individually and as an office. As one participant stated, "I think there is a level of mindfulness on our team where we are comfortable being questioned and will question ourselves."

Six staff members indicate they regularly seek out or provide guidance to colleagues through informal conversations (e.g., critical feedback, additional input, resources, brainstorming solutions). Management has also made efforts to encourage these exchanges with an open-door policy and by demonstrating a willingness to discuss equity issues with staff. One participant stated, "I like to be present with an open door. I like to build relationships with staff, and I like to be open to concerns around equity and I like to put it on the table that this is something I am interested in talking about and working on."

In terms of staff communication, part-time workers may not feel part of the ongoing office dialogue and environment to the same degree as full-time staff. One participant thought there should be more intentional integration of part-time staff - in the office space or in relevant meetings - to remedy division within the staff. They stated:

> So, I don't think I have ever felt like an actual staff member here, I've never felt welcome to just drop-by unless I had a scheduled meeting. There's no space for

me to work here. So, yeah, I guess I always feel a bit disconnected from the space which I guess is the context of my role.

Ongoing education

While it is common for professionals to regularly update their training through workshops and stay informed about developments within their respective fields, interviewees emphasized that the nature of community engagement work requires a willingness to continually educate oneself on the evolving nature of the field and to deepen one's understanding of communities. One person stated, "I try to stay informed in terms of current events, but also my own reading and self education around kind of those historical issues." One staff member also said, "We are going to make mistakes in equity work, there's no way around it, but our commitment to do the work, take some risks and course correct as we go, I'm good with that." Examples of this commitment are as follows:

- Valuing lived experience (of colleagues and community members) as a legitimate source of knowledge, and applying it (i.e. using respectful terminology) (n=9)
- Personal time invested in self-education about the city and its people (e.g., own reading, keeping up with news/current events, volunteering, spending time with people in their communities) (n=8)
- Continuous incorporation of new information, training, and understanding into work (n=6)
- Seeking out formal equity training opportunities and encouraging colleagues to take the training (n=5)
- Expectation of risk, mistakes, and course correction as part of community engagement work (n=4)
- Reliance on staff diversity - sharing own accrued knowledge and experience with coworkers (based on personal membership or work history with marginalized and underrepresented groups) to further educate colleagues (n=4)

Reflexivity/self-awareness

Staff conveyed they are thoughtful about their own privilege and power and how it impacts their relationships with community members and coworkers. For example, one person said, "I come from a privileged spot in terms of my social location, so I don't presume to know…" Staff acknowledged gaps in understanding about some community groups, university structures and policies, and possible unknowns. A staff person expressed this idea by saying "Certainly our conversations are quite complex, appear to be inclusive, appear to be informed. But that, you know, I can hear what I want to hear so I don't know." There was also a mindfulness of other perspectives and experiences and a desire to learn more about these perspectives and experiences. One person summed it up by saying, "I think it's a journey rather than an endpoint. So doing our best and recognizing that we often fail. And looking at ourselves and seeing our unconscious biases. But at least striving as hard as we possibly can to be mindful of it."

Intentional incorporation of EDI into work

Three participants indicated that conversations about EDI has already begun, pointing out the issue that the office works more frequently with services and non-profits but less so with service users or people impacted by non-profits. Staff efforts to rectify this were evident in practices such as the following:

- Prioritization of marginalized and underrepresented groups (e.g. applications, quicker responses to email) (n=5)
- Seeking unreached groups to connect with and support (if wanted by groups) (n=5)
- Efforts to increase diversity in recruitment and hiring processes (n=4)
- Promotion of equity seeking groups and their events through social media (n=1)

The following two quotes also demonstrate one staff member's consideration and incorporation of EDI principles in their work. First:

I have sent the posting to equity-seeking groups that I am connected to and actively encouraged some of the people I know who are experiencing barriers to grad schools and research opportunities and have encouraged them to apply and have supported several in their application process. Made it a soft transition to applying.

They also shared:

When I was scoping projects, there were a couple of times that I really advocated for particular projects to be accepted because the organizations that were applying were not even registered non-profits, grassroots, activist groups, so groups that in other words might not have had access to the shop.

Collaboration/relationship building

Many staff members said they want to increase the number of relationships they have, both on and off campus, and collaborate further existing partners. Staff members cultivate ties on campus through presentations, advisory board/committee membership and responding to advisement requests. Staff that have invested time in the community to listen and learn thought it was a valuable activity which proved fruitful.

Welcoming guests to campus and extending courtesies was another way in which staff signaled to community members that these relationships are valued, such as:

- Wayfinding signs for visitors unfamiliar with campus (n=1)
- Offering drinks upon arrival to events or meetings (n=3)
- Arranging parking passes (n=2)

Managing the impression given to campus visitors and making it easier to come to campus are both ways to indicate to community members that their needs are important. Respectful attention to visitor needs was seen as very much the norm in the office, as one participant indicated: "Being genuine and approachable and just hospitable is something that is ingrained in the work ethic here and I think that has a lot to do with Dave and Sheila and how they set the office up from the beginning with those practices."

Staff highlighted not only the total number of relationships, but also the necessary attitude and approach staff members take to forge relationships. It is best summed up in the word 'humility'. Staff mentioned that when working with people in the community, they must strike a balance between involvement where appropriate, and not positioning themselves as an authority. They described their role as offering applicable resources or supports that may be useful, while not falling into the role of gatekeeper. For example, one person said, "So not saying 'you have to come through us' but being visible enough to know that we are a resource." Another staff member stated similarly:

> What are the groups who haven't been involved and how can we connect with them and listen to see if there's anything, and knowing that there is not always a role for us to play, but at least people have the opportunity to know that they could connect if there is maybe a role.

How can the OCE strengthen its equity-based practice?

This section entails suggestions provided by OCE staff and management for mitigating gaps between how equity is currently practiced and how it might ideally be practiced in their day-to-day work in the future.

<u>Overcome precarious and limited resources</u>

Participants all acknowledged a gap between the resources needed to practice equity and what was currently available. Reaching out to communities that would traditionally avoid or do not have the resources to approach the university can mean declining partnerships with other community groups that take less time and may provide more resources. Ensuring that educational initiatives and community events are accessible also requires resources, such as mentioned by one participant, funding for translators or sign language interpreters. As building community relationships can be a time-consuming and iterative process, having the human resources to carry out OCE work in the long-term requires the financial capacity to offer full-time long-term contracts. This challenge was underscored when a participant observed, "If we want to continue to broker partnerships with a commitment to EDI, then you need sustainable funding." Likewise, a third participant noted that precarious contract positions can encumber an individual's ability to both incorporate equity into their day-to-day work and to sustain this practice:

People's jobs are not secure so it's hard to move forward on some of these things when people need numbers to prove that their program should have more funding or like their new contract hasn't been signed and they are not sure if they will be here next month. It's hard to focus on equity when we have more pressing resource issues to deal with.

Participant suggestions of how to overcome the challenge of limited financial resources were characterized by a desire to strategically identify the financial resources needed to sustain a commitment to equity and to consider innovative ways of using available resources in a manner that promotes equity practices while fulfilling OCE requirements. In a university and political environment in which linear processes and efficiency is valued over iterative and relational work, the practice of equity can be difficult to justify financially. Suggestions for overcoming these challenges included:

1. Explicitly incorporating the human resource and financial costs associated with equity work into the office's budget and strategic plan, such as costs associated with hiring a translator and establishing a new partnership (n=5)
2. Making permanent positions in the OCE available (n=2)
3. Strengthening relationships within McMaster to fully capitalize on McMaster resources (n=2)

Participants reasoned that equity should be built "into the bones of our work" and that in order to practice equity, there needs to be an "understanding that there's costs associated." Two participants indicated that strengthening relationships with other McMaster faculties and offices could be a means of acquiring external resources and expertise, which in turn could augment equity practices within the OCE. For example, a staff member described how the OCE does not necessarily have the resources to support the various needs of equity-seeking groups. By building connections within McMaster offices and faculties, the OCE could point these equity-seeking groups towards McMaster spaces where they could receive the support they need.

Building partnerships with equity-seeking groups

To further strengthen equity-based practices, participants asserted that they would like to work more closely and build relationships with equity-seeking groups who have limited financial and human resources and are uncertain about how to connect with McMaster. Participant suggestions for addressing this challenge included;

1. Proactively seeking out partnerships (n=7)
2. Having a consistent physical presence within communities (n=4)
3. Making OCE spaces more welcoming via visuals, such as a poster about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (n=2)
4. Encouraging risk-taking when it comes to reaching out to community members (n=1)

To build and strengthen partnerships with equity-seeking groups, participants suggested "proactively establishing partnerships." A staff member emphasized that

when it comes to proactively building relationships, the OCE should take on the responsibility of "constantly reaching out and figuring out what we don't know and who we don't know." This same participant highlighted that building these community relationships might take risks: "I want to be more on the 'wow, we tried to work with that group and that went bad … let's go apologize' side." As a way of building meaningful partnerships with equity seeking groups, four participants also stressed the importance of having a consistent physical presence in the community. After listing examples of McMaster locations within Hamilton, a participant reasoned that "there's a lot of spaces we can occupy and show that we exist to quite different populations." To further foster a welcoming environment for potential new community partners, two participants suggested updating the visual artwork within the office.

Increasing the availability of community engagement educational opportunities

Staff indicated that they would like to increase the accessibility of community engagement educational and training opportunities (n=3). These participants recognized that first year students and students from programs with 'less room' for community engagement, such as engineering students, may be excluded from these opportunities. To address this issue, one participant suggested doing "an audit to see barriers to participation in the [research] shop." Another staff member suggested continuing to "reimagine the minor" so that students within rigid and time-demanding programs can receive a certificate that "shows their commitment to community engagement and allows them to develop those skills" if doing the full minor is not feasible for them. This participant highlighted the importance of collaborating with faculties throughout the process of making OCE education more accessible. Likewise, a participant suggested making community-based opportunities available to first-year students: "If you want to make it accessible and inclusive, you should try very early on to connect students with the community in a principled manner." Promoting the accessibility of training and educational opportunities is in alignment with the OCE's commitment to the principle of equity; to be mindful of "structural inequities" and "to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities" (OCE, 2019).

Practicing equity in the context of an inequitable institution and society

Participants highlighted how the institutional, social, historical and economic context in which they work can impede efforts to practice equity. They described McMaster as historically being "an ivory tower that no one has had access to" and where equity seeking groups may have "had a bad experience" in the past. In addition to a history of inequity that participants had to work against, a staff member brought to light the challenge of having little control over how community members experience McMaster outside of the OCE. This was captured when this participant noted, "It can't just be our little office to figure it out," in relation to promoting equity.

Participant suggestions for strengthening equity practices in light of a historically inequitable environment included promoting equitable hiring practices within the university so that equity-seeking groups see themselves represented and thus included

within McMaster (n=4). To accomplish this, a participant noted that McMaster should encourage the "hiring of people who don't look and sound and act like people who are in positions of power now." Likewise, two other participants highlighted the importance of ensuring that when people retire, the university hires people who support a commitment to equity: "We just need to wait for people to retire to pave the way for new people to come to McMaster who are on board."

To overcome the challenge of a historically inequitable environment, a participant suggested promoting the work of faculty and staff outside of the OCE that support equity-based practices. A participant also highlighted that the OCE can help encourage equity practices throughout McMaster by having a "train-the trainer model" where all staff are "equity, inclusion, and diversity ambassadors." By hiring people committed to equity and from equity-seeking groups, and by both celebrating and encouraging equitable practices within community-based work, staff indicated that the OCE can support positive EDI change throughout McMaster.

<u>Maintaining and improving an office culture of inclusion</u>

All participants affirmed that practicing equity is a continual learning process that requires humility and a willingness to listen to others. Although participants generally felt that the OCE has a culture of respect and inclusion, they acknowledged that there is always room for improvement. Suggestions for how office culture could be improved are listed below:

1. Fostering a sense of 'safety' within the office via regular invitations from management to acknowledge potential equity issues (n=3)
2. Involving everyone in the office (full-time, part-time, management, and volunteers) in systematic planning (n=1)

Within the office, there was an awareness of how people from different cultural backgrounds and who hold different positions within the OCE can provide unique vantage points that enrich conversations about EDI. A participant articulated a desire for "more opportunities and spaces for people to come together and build relationships within the office, not just staff but volunteers as well." Similarly, to ensure that people feel comfortable discussing sensitive equity topics and to keep one another accountable to EDI principles, a participant called for "a recurring open invitation" for dialogue about equity issues. Both management and staff acknowledged power-differentials within the office: "I'm not pretending that there is not power differentials. But it's about how you exchange ideas, how you value other people." Participants' suggestions for improving office culture were thus centered around a desire for continued, respectful, inclusive, and open dialogues about EDI issues both within and outside the office. This overarching theme was captured when a participant stated:

> I don't think that you can ever be an expert. You learn from other people's experiences. It's a lot of listening. So just creating the spaces to offer dialogue and to listen. And then also to be responsible to those conversations.

<u>Creating policy implementation tools by formalizing informal practices</u>

Another gap identified by participants is that the office appears to be lacking policy implementation tools, such as checklists or formalized procedures, for embedding equity in its work. A participant illustrated this gap between where the office is and where they would like to be regarding equity-based practices when stating:

> We have a strategic plan in that we all know intellectually that there are policies around human rights, equity, and that stuff. The policies are there, but what we have to work on is the practices and procedures to ensure that we are working to address equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Formalized EDI policies exist within McMaster and most participants indicated that they had received training in relation to accessibility and EDI principles. Likewise, participants demonstrated a commitment to equity via their informal day-to-day practices. However, one participant described these informal equity practices as "ad hoc." Another worried that due to their informal nature and a lack of formalized accountability measures, the OCE may lose its commitment to EDI with staff turnovers. Staff strongly desired to move beyond conversations about equity issues towards acting out equity practices: "Our goal and our mandate is to think about these things in everything that we do. It's just time to actually do this." Developing formalized policy tools and explicit procedures could thus be a means of supporting staff in fulfilling the OCE's equity mandate and goals.

Participants suggested that these formalized policy tools and procedures can take the form of checklists (n=3), equity or social justice filters in which to better understand an issue (n=6) and a procedure for screening partners to ensure a commitment to EDI (n=1). A participant noted, "I would like to see more of us putting our work through a social justice filter to make sure that we are fulfilling our mandate." Two participants described this filter as being a series of questions that staff can ask themselves about their work, such as "Is this something that supports a social good, is it a reciprocal process, does it value equity?" One third of participants also indicated that checklists might be helpful for tasks such as hosting community events and recruiting volunteers or staff. Formalized policy tools that are tailored to the work of the OCE would also be helpful when it comes to justifying decisions, such as for student scholarships or faculty grant competitions. Participants thus brought to light how the act of formalizing informal equity practices and ensuring McMaster EDI policies are serviceable within their everyday work via tangible implementation tools can support them in enacting equity-based practices.

How can the OCE monitor equity-based practice in its work?

To answer this question, the team asked the staff of the OCE about existing policies, as well as their suggestions for improving accountability mechanisms in the future.

Knowledge of formal OCE accountability mechanisms to monitor equity-based practices

Based on our interview data, more than half (n=6) of the OCE staff were unaware of any formal OCE accountability mechanisms to monitor equity-based practices in the office. At least four participants believed the office had no such mechanisms. Two participants stated they were aware of such mechanisms, specifically connected to hiring practices, but one of the participants qualified that it "isn't really an accountability mechanism I guess but a procedure or practice here that has demonstrated a commitment to equity." While having a limited knowledge of formal policies, every staff member was aware of or engaged in some form of informal accountability mechanism in their work (e.g. speaking to or asking a co-worker for advice or staff monitoring where they were spending their time and what partnerships they were supporting).

This data suggests that either the OCE lacks formalized accountability mechanisms to monitor equity-based practices in its office, or, if they exist, few people in the office are aware of them. The latter is more likely, as at least half of the participants (n=5) asked for clarity surrounding what the team meant by formal accountability mechanisms.

Suggestions for how equity can be monitored in the OCE moving forward

During our interviews, the staff of the OCE suggested several ways that their equity-based work could be better monitored moving forward:

- Continuing collaborations with and receiving feedback from staff and community partners (n=5)
- Adding a discussion of equity in their work to meeting agendas (n=2)
- Creating checklists for event planning and hiring (n=2)
- Continuing the Equity Subcommittee (n=2)
- Continuing equity-based training (n=1)
- Creating a tracking mechanism (e.g. survey of where are hours being spent, with what groups, and who is being left out) to monitor equity-based work (n=1)

The Equity Subcommittee was responsible for calling for the creation of this equity study of the OCE. However, of the nine participants, only two mentioned its existence, which suggests that the committee has not become fully established within the office.[1]

Recommendations

Based on the literature review, accessibility assessment, and interviews with OCE staff, we conclude this report with three recommendations for next steps.

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[1] According to one member of the Equity Subcommittee, this lack of awareness is unsurprising as the Committee was recently created and has had only one meeting ot date, at which they decided to launch this research project.

1. Develop formal policy

While the OCE has formalized equity policies and practices, there is a lack of awareness of them outside of one's own work at the OCE. Additionally, many participants were confused about whether a policy was specific to the office or mandated by the university. To overcome these issues and to better entrench equity work in formal policy moving forward, the research team suggests the OCE:

- Create a formalized handbook of OCE and University equity policies
- Conduct reviews of existing equity policies
- Continue equity-based training
- Created monitoring tools of equity-based work
- Entrench the Equity Subcommittee in the OCE
- Create the role of EDI note taker in meetings

We elaborate on each of these suggestions below.

Formal handbook

To increase awareness about formal policies and programs, the OCE could compile a handbook available to all staff, volunteers and community partners. This handbook can include information about EDI policies and expectations, and general information about the programs the OCE runs. It can be distributed during orientations, trainings and initial meetings, or a handout summarizing its contents and location can be provided.

A formal handbook will ensure that everyone has access to information about the OCE's work and can direct themselves as needed, since a primary theme during analysis was lack of awareness of other people's work. Furthermore, compiling a handbook will compel the office to be more specific about EDI policies and efforts in their work, as well as provide the opportunity to differentiate between OCE policies versus university-mandated policies. This will serve to officially ingrain equity into the OCE, thereby introducing accountability into the office and dispelling confusion among staff about certain policies.

Additionally, many participants mentioned that while formalized equity policy and procedures may be lacking, OCE staff compensate by being mindful of such issues. While having the appropriate office culture is necessary to do equitable work, without official policies, there is a chance that the culture can shift with staff turnover or changing priorities. The existence of an official handbook outlining expectations surrounding EDI at the office will ensure that the current culture of mindfulness is sustained.

Formal reviews

For the handbook to remain useful and relevant, the team suggests conducting an annual review of its contents and updating as needed. The review can be conducted by the Equity Subcommittee, who can communicate any changes to the rest of the staff at a meeting. To be able to conduct a thorough review of the handbook, the Subcommittee must make a conscious effort to keep up to date with EDI policies and issues at both at the OCE and the university. By doing so, the Subcommittee can not only revise the handbook but also identify areas where policy is lacking and try to introduce guidelines. Additionally, the OCE should continue to conduct equity reviews of the office's work. These reviews could take shape like the one used in this report.

Equity-based training

Currently, the staff of the OCE are very active in keeping their mandated equity training up to date. Many staff members are also seeking out and completing non-mandatory EDI trainings that are relevant to their work at the office. This commendable practice should continue to be supported and promoted throughout the office. Furthermore, management can continually communicate with the Equity and Inclusion Office to learn of any new training opportunities for its staff. By going above and beyond the minimum requirements set by the university, the office is actualizing its commitment to equity and should continue to do so.

In accordance with more training, OCE staff can familiarize themselves with scholarly literature that affirms the economic, educational and cultural value of promoting equity within both university and community contexts. For example, both Clayon et al. (2017) and Hurtado et al. (2012) draw attention to how diverse and inclusive learning contexts support academic success. OCE staff highlighted how equity-informed work can be difficult to justify financially within an institution and community shaped by a history of inequity. Existing research can serve as evidence that counters neoliberal assumptions about resource allocation and time efficiency that may limit equity-informed community engagement work.

Equity monitoring tools

Currently, the OCE lacks a formal way to monitor and assess its equity-based work. Based on staff suggestions, there are several ways that the OCE could monitor this work moving forward. Some of this monitoring could be completed by using existing McMaster equity-based tools. For example, from our assessments of the Idea Exchange event, it became clear that the organizers found it difficult to consider accessibility due to a lack of awareness of existing support tools. The event organizers found the exercise of reviewing the event through the lens of the McMaster AccessMac Accessibility Checklist to be a useful practice. Moving forward, the staff of the OCE could reference and fill out this checklist as they plan their events and submit it to their directors upon the events completion. The directors could then examine the checklist, as well as debrief with the organizers afterward, in order to see how accessible the

event was. These checklists could be compared yearly to show change and/or improvement over time.

The OCE could also create a tracking mechanism (e.g. survey) to gauge the accessibility of its events and the equity-based work of its office. For example, one staff member suggested that the staff of the OCE could complete online surveys at the end of the academic year. These surveys could centre the staff experiences planning and/or attending OCE events, as well as which community partners they worked with that year. Through these surveys the office could gain a better sense of the work being completed, the accessibility of their events and who the office is choosing to work with and what gaps exist. These surveys could also be compared each year to see if the work of the office has changed over time and/or how the work of the office could be improved in the future. Additionally, a checklist or survey could be created for directors to determine and/or keep track of how the office allocates its resources towards equity work overtime.

The directors of the OCE should incorporate its staff in the creation and implementation of these monitoring efforts. Doing so would ensure a variety of voices were heard and could keep the staff more actively engaged in the office's equity-based work. This staff engagement could take several forms. For example, the OCE could expand or rotate the membership of the Equity Subcommittee.

Equity subcommittee

Moving forward, the Equity Subcommittee should become entrenched in the work of the OCE. The existence and goals of the Equity Subcommittee needs to be made clear to all OCE staff. This can be accomplished by having the Committee report on its activities and/or findings in monthly meetings. Membership of the Committee could also be expanded and/or rotated on a yearly basis. A rotating membership would allow different OCE staff members to be active participants in not just the Committee but also the equity monitoring work of the office. It could also ensure that the goal setting and activities of the Equity Subcommittee incorporated as many staff perspectives as possible.

The Equity Subcommittee needs to stay up to date on all relevant equity issues, policies, and training at the University and report on these issues to the OCE. Essential to this would be the continued partnership between the OCE and EIO. Moving forward, the Committee could consult with the EIO's staff on a monthly and/or yearly basis and/or include EIO staff in its membership. The Equity Subcommittee should continue to work with the EIO when conducting future evaluations of the equity work of the OCE.

EDI notetaker

To further ensure EDI is woven into the practices of the OCE, during regular staff meetings one person could be assigned the role of EDI notetaker. The notetaker role could be performed by an Equity Subcommittee member or another meeting participant.

The practice of assigning the EDI lens to at least one person for each meeting has multiple benefits.

The notetaker would be responsible for listening specifically for potential equity issues that may otherwise have passed unnoticed within the course of the meeting. This practice may lead to increased awareness that extends beyond the context of the assigned meeting and begin to habituate EDI within their work. Their brief notes on EDI issues could also be gathered and compiled. This list of issues can be tracked by the Equity Subcommittee and reported back to the office. The list may also inform the Subcommittee's focus and direction if items are determined to be actionable.

Lastly, the rotating assignment of the notetaker role benefits the entire OCE team as members get an increasing amount of practice applying an EDI lens to the work of the office. This experience can then be applied to OCE work beyond staff meetings in formal settings (i.e. board meetings and in advisory capacities) and/or informal settings (i.e. when working with community members). The EDI notetaker schedule should be maintained by the Equity Subcommittee to ensure the role is consistently performed.

2. Become proactive vs. reactive

Most of the staff interviewed (n=6) classified the work of the OCE as reactive. The office waits for groups to contact them and then provides support. However, participants noted that this means that most of the office's work is with larger more established non-profits and neighbourhood associations who can easily reach out to the office for help. Typically, underrepresented and marginalized populations in Hamilton lack the capacity to reach out to the OCE and/or have had past negative experiences with the University. This has led to a gap in the community engagement work of the OCE. To better reach out to these groups both on and off campus, the OCE needs to be more proactive in their community engagement efforts moving forward by going out into the Hamilton community and building trust with underrepresented groups in Hamilton, which we elaborate on below.

<u>Going out into the Hamilton community</u>

To better reach underrepresented groups with limited capacity, OCE staff could increase their presence in downtown Hamilton. For example, staff members could rotate working one day or more days at the downtown campus, or one or two staff members could work permanently from downtown.

OCE staff should also better engage with these groups outside of University spaces by attending monthly meetings or events of local community groups. Additionally, staff members could join the boards of local community groups. Such an action would get the OCE into the community and provide underrepresented groups with useful knowledge and expertise. It would also provide OCE staff an opportunity to develop board governance and leadership skills.

<u>Building trust with underrepresented groups in Hamilton</u>

In addition to being more present downtown, the OCE needs to be more proactive in reaching out to underrepresented groups to see if they would like help with and/or support for their ongoing projects. It is important to keep in mind that these communities may not want the help of the OCE. The office needs to respect this and work towards building trust with these groups and supporting them in achieving their independent goals.

As mentioned before, the staff of the OCE could increase their presence downtown and be more involved in local community events and programs. The OCE could also run informal question and answer sessions with various groups. Staff could also allot time, for example one day a month, to be present and available to answer questions at the headquarters of various local community groups.

3. Improve climate

In general, all OCE staff interviewed felt safe and comfortable completing their work and discussing sensitive equity issues in the workplace. Many of our suggestions involve continuing and/or improving upon the existing work of the OCE, specially surrounding personnel needs, office space, and the downtown location, which we elaborate on below.

<u>Personnel needs</u>

It would be beneficial for management to continue their open-door policy for individual concerns but also proactively addressing issues in meetings is useful to encourage larger group discussions and problem solving. While few interviewees felt uncomfortable broaching equity issues in person, the office could put in place a comment box so current and future staff can express themselves anonymously with management. We recommend addressing the disconnect between full-time and part-time staff whether there are formal opportunities created for part-time workers (such as regular participation in OCE meetings, or involvement in office goal setting), or casual social gatherings in which they are included.

<u>Office space</u>

There is room for experimentation with assigned office spaces. Due to the physical limits of the office and the increased number of staff occupying it, some creative solutions may be required (e.g. workspace assignment based on a lottery system and/or switching workspaces periodically, unassigned space available for part-time staff). Accessibility needs and accommodations should take priority in whichever system is chosen. Another approach is to consider which staff members spend the most time in the office and give them first choice over their workspace. If staff have

workspace at the downtown campus, perhaps a preferred space could be given to staff members with less than ideal spaces at the main campus to compensate.

These are unconventional approaches to assigning office space that break with the assumption that management will occupy prime workspaces (e.g., larger, unshared, natural light, etc.) commonly seen in most offices, but are possible ways to demonstrate equity by abandoning a tradition of hierarchy through symbolic assignment of space.

Downtown location

To counteract the unwelcoming impression visiting community members may have by the presence of a uniformed security guard at the main entrance who asks people to identify themselves, we advise staff members expecting guests to greet them at the main entrance, if at all possible, to ameliorate this reception. Continuation of the OCE's hospitality practices, such as offering drinks to visitors, helps to create comfort and signals attentiveness to their needs. Community members should also have a place to leave comments or questions about their visit or the OCE generally (e.g. comment box) before leaving. At the conclusion of the visit, staff should offer to walk them back to the main entrance (particularly if they are new to the campus) to positively bookend their experience at the Downtown Campus.
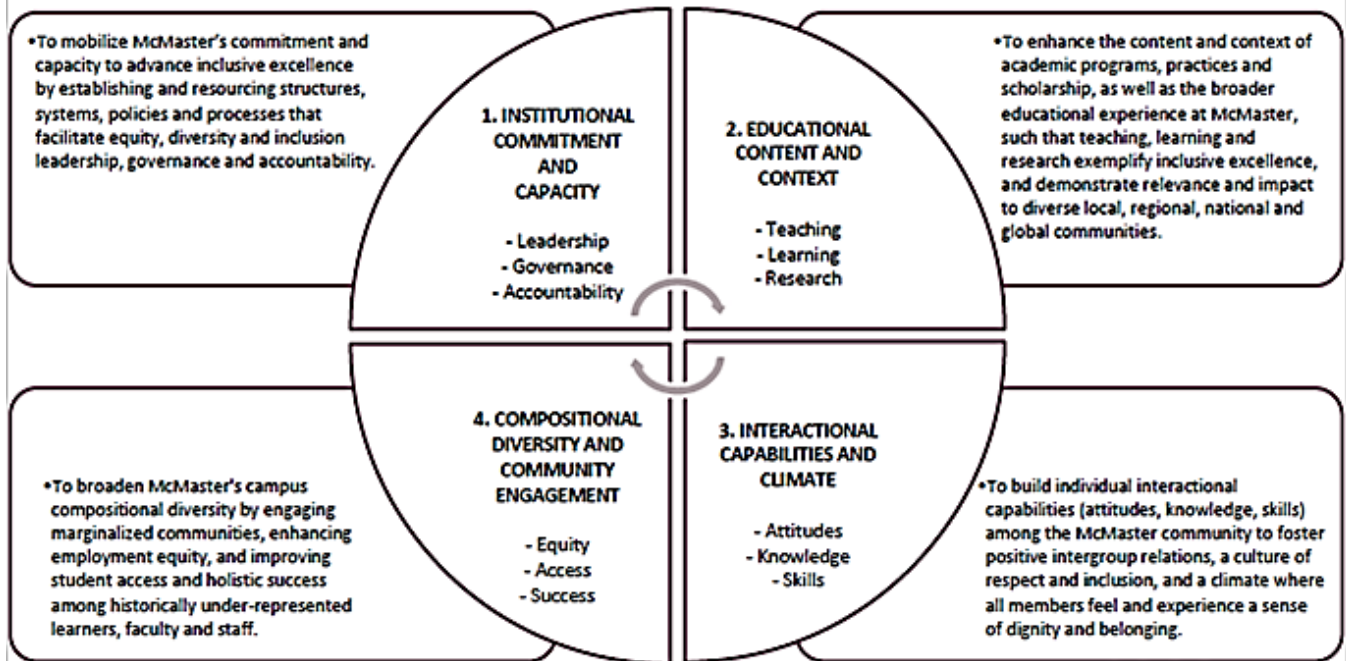
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Appendix 1: EDI Framework

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
McMaster's Strategic Action Goals

- To mobilize McMaster's commitment and capacity to advance inclusive excellence by establishing and resourcing structures, systems, policies and processes that facilitate equity, diversity and inclusion leadership, governance and accountability.

1. INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT AND CAPACITY
- Leadership
- Governance
- Accountability

2. EDUCATIONAL CONTENT AND CONTEXT
- Teaching
- Learning
- Research

- To enhance the content and context of academic programs, practices and scholarship, as well as the broader educational experience at McMaster, such that teaching, learning and research exemplify inclusive excellence, and demonstrate relevance and impact to diverse local, regional, national and global communities.

- To broaden McMaster's campus compositional diversity by engaging marginalized communities, enhancing employment equity, and improving student access and holistic success among historically under-represented learners, faculty and staff.

4. COMPOSITIONAL DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- Equity
- Access
- Success

3. INTERACTIONAL CAPABILITIES AND CLIMATE
- Attitudes
- Knowledge
- Skills

- To build individual interactional capabilities (attitudes, knowledge, skills) among the McMaster community to foster positive intergroup relations, a culture of respect and inclusion, and a climate where all members feel and experience a sense of dignity and belonging.

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October 12, 2018 | 17

McMaster University

AccessMAC

Appendix 2: AccessMAC checklist

Accessibility Checklist

This document has been designed as a tool to help event organizers plan for accessibility.

The checklist should be reviewed at the beginning of the planning stage so that accessibility related costs (if any), can be included in the overall event budget.

For further information please contact AccessMAC at: access@mcmaster.ca ext. 24644.

Physical Accessibility

Getting to the event

☐ Ensure that the route to the location is accessible. Consider the immediate pathways to the location (no construction barricades en route, snow has been/will be removed, pathways are clear of ice, etc.).

☐ Provide directions of an accessible route.

☐ Ensure that electronic maps that are sent via email are accessible using screen reading software.

☐ Adequately post signs on routes to the event.

Event Building

☐ Entrances to the facility are obstacle free and/or equipped with an automatic door with accessible push buttons.

☐ All accessibility features are operational, e.g., doors, elevators, platform lifts, etc.

- [ ] Public elevators can accommodate wheelchairs and motorized scooters.
- [ ] Accessible washrooms are in close proximity to meeting location.

Event Space

- [ ] Layout or tables and chairs are spacious enough to allow participants to move around without running into obstacles or requiring the removal of objects during the event.
- [ ] Setup allows freedom of movement using mobility aids (e.g., guide dogs, wheelchairs, motorized scooters).
- [ ] Background noise is not excessive.
- [ ] Effort has been made to encourage a scent-free environment.

Off-Campus Events

- [ ] Accessible public transportation is available to and from event location.
- [ ] Accessible and safe parking is available in proximity to event location.

Accessibility Features

American Sign Language (ASL)

To identify whether ASL is required at an event, consider the following:

- [ ] Include a statement in the advertising materials (poster, emails etc.) requesting participants to notify the organizers if they require ASL interpretation at the event by a particular date.
- [ ] Tentatively book the ASL interpreters informing them of the possibility of cancelling if the service is not requested.

☐ Consider the cancellation policy of the interpreter(s) when deciding the cut-off date (to avoid cancellation charges).

☐ Cancel the booking if ASL is not requested by the deadline.

Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART)

☐ CART is a live, word-for-word transcription of speech-to-text so that individuals can read what is being said in a group setting or at meetings.

☐ It can be displayed on a laptop screen or projected onto a large screen for lectures, classes, large events and meetings.

☐ This is an example of a broader accessibility feature that will benefit many attendees, not just those with hearing loss.

☐ The service is available on-site or remotely – for details on how to book this service, please contact the Accessibility Specialist in the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services at: access@mcmaster.ca or 905 525 9140 ext. 24644.

Volunteers

☐ For large events, ensure volunteers are available and clearly identifiable

☐ Organize accessible customer service training through the Accessibility Specialist in the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services at: access@mcmaster.ca or 905 525 9140 ext. 24644.

Activities

☐ Ensure that there are a range of activities that are accessible to all fitness levels, including people with physical disabilities and people with varying degrees of athletic and activity ability.

Advertising and Communication

☐ Advertise the event with location details as soon as practicable to enable persons with disabilities using accessible transit services to book their trip as this service often requires advance booking.

☐ Specify the accessibility features available at the location, e.g., wheelchair access and proximity of accessible washrooms.

☐ Use inclusive language, e.g., person with a disability.

☐ If email is used to communicate information about the event, ensure that all attachments are accessible, i.e., readable by screen readers or provide a text only version of the attachment relaying all the information provided in the document, including a text description of relevant images.

☐ Include a statement inviting participants to inform the organizers of any disability-related accommodations they require in order to fully participate or attend the event or include this as a question in the registration process.

☐ Provide contact details of the person who can be reached for accommodation related inquiries or requests.

☐ Consider each accommodation request individually and work with the individual to find a solution that is workable for all parties.

Presentations

Information for Presenters

☐ Describe any visual images used during presentations and ensure a high degree of color contrast between the background and text.

☐ Font size for text documents should be a minimum of 12 points.

☐ Font size for presentation slides should be a minimum of 16 points.

☐ Use sans-serif fonts such as Ariel, Tahoma or Geneva.

☐ Assume that persons with disabilities are part of the audience
(including persons with invisible disabilities).

☐ Use person-first language e.g. person with disabilities.

Appendix 3: Focus Group Guide

FOCUS GROUP IDEA EXCHANGE ORGANIZERS
Equity, diversity, and inclusion assessment of the Office of Community Engagement practices (OCE/EIO)
Focus group leaders: Evan Gravely (rshop@mcmaster.ca), Chelsea Barranger (barrancv@mcmaster.ca)

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Hello, my name is Chelsea and my name is Evan [if research associates can attend have them introduce themselves]. We want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group. We're working on a Research Shop project on behalf of the Office of Community Engagement in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion Office to see how the principle of equity is embedded and expressed in the OCE's work. We'll be asking about what equity means to you, and whether and how the current definition of equity in OCE's materials might be strengthened in individual interviews, but to ground us in a common definition for today's focus group, we'll review the principle of equity as it's described on the OCE website and in the strategic plan as:

> "We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities."

As accessibility is a key feature of equity as part of this research we're conducting an accessibility assessment of the 2019 Idea Exchange. We've based our questions on the AccessMAC Accessibility Checklist developed by the Equity and Inclusion Office.

It's important to note that our goal here is not to pass judgement on anyone for their planning of the Idea Exchange as it relates to accessibility. This project is grounded in both the Community Engagement principle of equity, but also of openness to learning. So, our goal here is to evaluate how accessible the event was, and especially to learn about the barriers to accessibility so that staff can be better supported in making future events more accessible. The information we gather today will be included in our research shop report to set priorities on action over the next 1-2 years.

Does anyone have questions about the project?

Confidentiality - Before we begin our discussion, we want to spend a few moments go over some basic ground rules for our discussion today:
- Everyone's views are welcomed and important.
  - o We may step in to make sure everyone has a chance to speak, and we may also intervene if we feel the conversation is straying off topic.
- The information which we will collect today will be attributable *(connected or associated)* to you <u>as a group</u>.

41

- o If we decide we want to use a quote and attribute it to a specific person from the group, we would contact you ahead of time to see if that was alright.
- We will strive to protect individual confidentiality.
    - o Keep in mind that we are often identifiable through the stories we tell when deciding what to share today.
- We *are* assuming that what we learn about one another's views today remains confidential outside of this group.
    - o Having said this, and having made these requests, you know that we cannot guarantee that the request will be honoured by everyone in the room.
- Your participation in this focus group is voluntary.
    - o You do not have to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable responding to.
    - o If you want to stop being in the focus group you can leave or stay and simply stop talking, but it will not be possible for you to pull out your data from the flow of the conversation because of the interconnected nature of the group discussion where one person's comments can stimulate the sharing of comments made by others in the group.
- You can expect this discussion group to last no more than two hours.

Use of Tape Recorder – with your permission, this focus group will be recorded to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what anyone says.
- All tapes and transcripts will be kept under lock and key by the researcher.
- We will also be taking notes throughout the discussion.
- Only the research team will have access to transcripts of this focus group.
- The tapes and transcripts will only be used for this project, and will be destroyed once the report is complete.

We ask that when using abbreviations or acronyms, you say the full name at least once to aid transcription.

If at any point you feel tired or fatigued please let us know and we can take a short break. We will also ask periodically if anyone would like to take a short break.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Do you give your consent to participate in this focus group?

Focus Group Member _____ Yes [ ] No [ ]
Focus Group Member _____ Yes [ ] No [ ]
Focus Group Member _____ Yes [ ] No [ ]
Focus Group Member _____ Yes [ ] No [ ]

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

[HAND OUT ANY MATERIALS (IF APPLICABLE) THAT THE PARTICIPANTS WILL NEED DURING THE FOCUS GROUP (E.G. FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS, ACCESSMAC ACCESSIBILITY CHECKLIST, etc.]

The following is a list of the questions that we will be asking today. This list is not exhaustive. Sometimes we may ask additional questions to make sure we understand what you have told us or if we need more information when we are talking such as: "So, you are saying that …?, "Please tell me more?".

Let's start with some background questions:

- Please introduce yourselves and what tell us what your role is at the OCE, as well as your role in planning and/or managing the Idea Exchange event.
- So, this year's Idea Exchange took place on May 7th at CIBC Hall here on campus. Tell us about the event: What was the Idea Exchange?

Let's discuss the <u>physical accessibility</u> of the event.
Getting to the event
- Was the route to the event location accessible? (e.g. paths clear, elevators/wheelchair accessible, etc.)
- Were directions of an accessible route provided to participants?
- Were electronic maps sent to participants? If so, were these maps accessible using screen reading software?
- Were signs posted along the route to the event?
Event building
- Were entrances to the building of the event free of obstacles and/or equipped with an automatic door with accessible push buttons?
- Were all accessibility features (e.g., elevators, push buttons, etc.) operational?
- Were the public elevators big enough to accommodate wheelchairs?
- Were there accessible washrooms located nearby the event?
Event space
- Was the layout of tables and chairs spacious enough to allow participants to move around without running into obstacles or the removal of objects during the event? i.e. was there freedom of mobility?
- Did the setup allow freedom of mobility for those with mobility aids (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters)?
- Was there an effort made to encourage a scent-free environment?
- Was background noise excessive?

Let's move on to discussing other <u>accessibility features</u>.
- Did advertising (e.g. posters, emails etc.) for the event include a statement requesting participants to notify the organizers if they required ASL interpretation at the event by a certain date?

- Did anyone tentatively book ASL interpreters, with the possibility of cancelling if the service was not requested?
- Was communication access real-time translation (CART) used at the event? Was it considered for this event?
    - [In case unfamiliar with term - CART is a live, word-for-word transcription of speech-to-text so that individuals can read what is being said in a group setting or at meetings. It can be displayed on a laptop screen or projected onto a larger screen.]

Let's touch on <u>volunteers</u> and the event <u>activities</u>.
- Were event volunteers available and easily identifiable? If so, can you discuss how they were identifiable to participants?
- Did event volunteers have any accessible customer service training through the Accessibility Specialist in the Office of Human Rights & Equity Services? [if asked, this refers to the <u>AODA and Human Rights Code training</u>, that all volunteers, McMaster staff, student leaders and faculty are required to participate in at McMaster]

Let's turn to <u>advertising and communication</u> at the Idea Exchange.
- How long before the event was it advertised with location details? (Persons with disabilities using accessible transit services need to know as soon as is practicable to book their trip in advance using accessible transit services).
- When advertising the event, did you specify any accessibility features? (e.g., wheelchair access, proximity of accessible washrooms)
- Was inclusive language used in advertising and at the event? (e.g. gender-neutral terms, appropriate terms (for example, LGBTQ, First Nations, a person with a disability), avoided generalizations and stereotyping based on race or ethnicity, etc.)
- If email was used to advertise the event, were any and all attachments accessible? (e.g. readable by screen readers, text descriptions of images, etc.)
- Did advertising include a statement inviting participants to inform the organizers of any disability-related accommodations they required in order to fully participate or attend the event?
    - Was this included as a question in the registration process?
    - Did advertising and communication include the contact details of the organizers so that participants could relay accommodation inquiries or requests?
- Did you work with participants to address any accommodation concerns for the event?
    - What was the nature of the accommodations?

Lastly, we want to talk about <u>presentations</u> at the Idea Exchange.
- Describe the visuals used during the presentations.
    - Were they accessible to all viewers? (e.g. high contrasts, large fonts (minimum of 16 of slide shows), inclusive language, etc.)

Final questions:
- How did you find this exercise?
- Were there any questions about accessibility that surprised you or that you weren't expecting?
- Based on the questions we asked, did anything stick out that could be useful in improving the future accessibility of OCE events?
    - Prompt: Do you have any other ideas about how future events could be made more accessible?
- What do you think the main challenges are for event organizers in making events accessible?
- In thinking about the various aspects of accessibility we've talked about today - physical accessibility, volunteer training, event advertising and communications, and presentations - are there some that feel easier or more challenging to make changes around? Why?
- Keeping the challenges you identified in mind, how might the OCE work to address these barriers?
    - Prompt: How can staff be supported?
    - Prompt: Does the office have the internal capacity to remove these barriers, or might it need external support?
- Is there anything we forgot or is there something important that we should know about?

WRAP UP

- Thank participants for their time and remind them about what they're contributing to.
- Remind participants that "what is said in the room should stay in the room."

Appendix 4: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Equity, diversity, and inclusion assessment of the Office of Community Engagement practices (OCE/EIO)
Interviewer(s): Evan Gravely, Chelsea Barranger, Jillian Scott, Hiba Najeeb, Kaitlin Wynia

INTRODUCTION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Hello, my name is _, and I am a member of the McMaster Research Shop Office of Community Engagement (OCE) Equity Assessment Project. We want to thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. We're working on a Research Shop project in partnership with the Equity and Inclusion Office to see how the principle of equity is embedded and expressed in the Office of Community Engagement's work. As part of this research, we're conducting interviews with OCE staff and management this summer to learn more about how they understand equity and how it's incorporated in work at the office. We've based our questions on the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion four pillars framework. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are distinct but related concepts:

● Equity is an approach or process that acknowledges social inequalities and introduces actions to provide equal opportunities
● Diversity is a state or condition - the broad "mix" of differences among us
● Inclusion refers to feelings and experiences - a consequence of intentional, active, and skillful engagement across our differences

It's important to note that our goal here is not to test anyone's knowledge of equity or to pass judgment. This is a learning exercise to see how the office can more strategically incorporate equity into their work, and to recommend ways that staff can be supported in practicing equity in their day to day work. The information we gather today will be included in our research shop report to set priorities on action over the next 1-2 years.

You can expect this interview to last no more than one hour.

Do you have questions about the project?

Confidentiality - Before we begin our discussion, I want to spend a few moments going over some basic ground rules for today:

● Your participation is voluntary. You can leave or stop participating in this interview at any moment you choose with no repercussions on yourself.
● You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.
● The information which we collect from these interviews will unlikely be attributable *(connected or associated)* to you. If we decide we want to use a

quote and attribute it to you, we would contact you ahead of time to see if that was alright.
- I will strive to protect the confidentiality of our discussion or your written responses. Keep in mind that we can be identified through the stories we tell when deciding what to tell me.

Use of Tape Recorder – With your permission, this interview will be recorded to increase accuracy and to reduce the chance of misinterpreting what anyone says.
- All recordings and transcripts will be kept under lock and key by the researchers.
- We will also be taking notes throughout the interview.
- Only the research team will have access to transcripts of this interview.

We ask that when using abbreviations or acronyms, you say the full name at least once to aid transcription.

If you feel tired or fatigued, feel free to take a break or we can end the interview. I will ask periodically if you would like to take a break.

Do you have any questions?

Do you give your consent to this interview?
Interview Participant _____Yes [ ] No [ ]

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

[HAND OUT ANY MATERIALS (IF APPLICABLE) THAT THE PARTICIPANTS WILL NEED DURING THE INTERVIEW (E.G. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS, EDI FOUR PILLARS, etc.] The following is a list of the questions that I will be asking for the interview or written responses. This list is not exhaustive. Sometimes I may ask additional questions to make sure I understand what you have told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: "So, you are saying that …?, "Please tell me more?" Are you ready to begin?	
Let's start with <u>background </u>questions about you and your work at the OCE	1. Please introduce yourself and tell us what your role is at the OCE. 2. What does equity mean to you? 3.OCE defines equity as a principle of community engagement in the following way: "We are conscious of the historical and structural inequities that exist in society and strive to provide access and opportunities to all residents and members of our communities."

	a) What, if anything, in this definition resonates with you? b) Is there anything missing? 4. Are you familiar with McMaster's Four Pillar Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework? [Explain the four pillars to the participant and walk them through the handout we created. Note to the participant: you may not see yourself as contributing to each one of the pillars depending on the scope of your position. If you cannot comment on a particular area, feel comfortable saying so and we can skip those questions]
Pillar #1: Institutional Commitment and Capacity [policies, symbols, and procedures that mobilize and sustain a commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion]	5. How do you see [or not see] OCE policies and procedures supporting a commitment to equity within the work of your office? Prompt: Are there any formal policies or procedures (that you know of) to make the OCE's work more equitable, diverse, and/or inclusive? 6. Are there any formal accountability mechanisms that you know of to monitor equity-based practice? Prompt: e.g. regular equity assessments, monitoring at monthly meetings, designated staff to evaluate equity? a) Do you have any suggestions on how equity can be better monitored (e.g monthly meetings, surveys, designating staff to monitor it)? 7. Do you have any informal practices in your day-to-day that make your work more equitable, diverse, and/or inclusive? (Discuss some examples) 8. Can you think of any challenges with mobilizing and sustaining a commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion? Prompt: What would be difficult about making formal changes to the work we do in response to these principles?

	[If yes] How might you be assisted in overcoming these challenges?
	9. Is there anything missing in your office in regards to equity, diversity, and inclusion policies and procedures? Would you like to see a particular policy or procedure developed that would address an equity issue?
	Prompt: This could be for the entire office or specifically for your program area
Pillar #2: Educational Content and Context [research, teaching, and training to enhance and innovate local, regional, national and global communities]	10. Are you aware of any educational programs, practices, scholarships, or courses run by the OCE?
	[If no - discuss moving onto the next section]
	[If yes] Are you aware of any policies and/or practices in these educational units that contribute to equity, diversity, and/or inclusivity?
	Prompt: E.g., equity statement(s) in the syllabus? Anti-O training? Land acknowledgment? Have someone from the EIO come in and speak?
	11. Do you have any thoughts on how the OCE could improve its educational and research-based learning initiatives on campus and/or in the community to make them more accessible and/or inclusive?
	a) What would it take to create these improvements?
Pillar # 3: Interactional Capabilities and Climate [a culture of respect and inclusion, and a climate where all members experience dignity, respect and belonging]	12. Do you feel like the OCE fosters a positive climate in which to work and exchange ideas? If so, how so?
	13. Do you feel like the OCE is a safe environment to bring up and talk about equity, inclusion, and diversity issues? If so, why?
	Prompt: Is there open space for these kinds of conversations?
	Prompt: If something happened to you or you had a negative experience that made you feel

	unwelcome or excluded, would you feel comfortable bringing up the issue? Where would you do this? Would you know who to speak to? 14. Are there any ways in which your office can better promote a climate of respect, inclusiveness, and belonging? a) What would it take to create such changes?

Pillar # 4:
<u>Compositional Diversity</u>
<u>and Community</u>
<u>Engagement</u>
[demographic diversity and inclusion of historically underrepresented groups in post-secondary institutions]
	15. Do you feel diversity is reflected in the staff, students, and community members engaged with your and/or the OCE's work? If yes, please explain.
	
	    Prompt: What communities does the OCE typically engage with? Do you feel like there are any underrepresented groups, i.e. groups not accessing opportunities through the office? [If yes] Does the office have, or is it developing, any strategies to reach them?
	
	16. Do you have any suggestions for how the OCE can better engage with marginalized groups, both on- and off-campus?
	
	    a) What are the challenges, if any, to seeing more compositional diversity in the OCE's work?
	    b) How do you think these barriers can be addressed?

Concluding Questions	17. Do you have any final thoughts on how the OCE incorporates the principles of equity in its work, and/or recommendations to improve equity-based practice?
Thank the participants for taking the time to share their thoughts with us.	

Appendix 5: EDI Four Pillars Handout

McMaster's Four Pillar EDI Framework

Institutional Commitment and Capacity	To create and follow systems, policies, and procedures that encourage the practice of equity, diversity, and inclusion. Includes follow-up or accountability procedures to assess these systems. **Examples:** • Equity statements in job postings • Land acknowledgements
Academic Content and Context	To create and use research and educational practices that are inclusive, relevant, and applicable to diverse communities. **Examples:** • Equity statements in syllabus • Accessibility and Disability Training (AODA) • Religious/spiritual accommodations (RISO Policy)
Interactional Capabilities and Climate	To build an inclusive environment that fosters positive relationships and provides a sense of belonging. **Examples:** • Welcoming environment • Aware of and reactive towards EDI issues • Safe and judgement-free discussions of EDI issues
Community and Compositional Diversity	To include diverse groups in the institution, especially underrepresented and under-served groups. Includes students, staff, faculty, community partners, etc. **Examples:** • Including staff members with diverse experiences • Engaging with diverse or marginalized groups • Conducting outreach initiatives in underrepresented communities

Appendix 6: Operational Definitions of Equity at Southern Ontario Universities

University	Definition of Equity
Trent University https://www.trentu.ca/chrea/	Trent University is committed to creating opportunities for all community members to develop and flourish as individuals and global citizens (Trent's Vision Statement, 2010). Such a commitment acknowledges a need for equity in terms of employment and learning. Furthermore, there is the recognition that equity does imply that all people are treated the same. Thus, a commitment to developing and promoting processes and policies that are responsive to the needs of the diverse membership of the Trent University community is important.
Carleton University https://carleton.ca/equity/ https://carleton.ca/equity/employment-and-education-equity/9-myths-realities/	Carleton University is committed to providing equity in employment (including pay equity) and maintaining a supportive, hospitable and welcoming employment environment for all individuals. …initiating special measures as required to ensure full participation and advancement of employees in groups that have traditionally been under-represented, to enable them to compete for positions and work with others on an equal basis. The groups designated for measurement of employment equity include women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, racialized or visible minorities, and such other groups as may be agreed from time to time by the University and its bargaining units or designated by legislation. Employment Equity means treating everyone with fairness, taking into account peoples differences. Sometimes Employment Equity means treating people the same despite their differences. Sometimes it means treating them as equals by accommodating their differences.
Queen's University http://www.queensu.ca/equity/ http://www.queensu.ca/equity/employment-equity/faq	**What is Equity?** Equity is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all. It requires the identification and elimination of barriers that prevent the full participation of some individuals and groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations in the social areas of employment, the provision of goods and services, as well as living accommodations. Redressing unbalanced conditions is needed to achieve equality of opportunity for all groups. **What is the difference between employment equity and diversity?** The concept of diversity goes beyond the historical employment equity legislation enacted both in federal and provincial jurisdictions. Employers that value diversity recognize the contributions that individuals from diverse groups can make to their organizations. Diversity-friendly organizations are totally inclusive. These organizations don't just tolerate those who are different, but celebrate the differences of their members.

York University http://rights.info.yorku.ca/our-expanded-mandate/	Equity - York University explicitly acknowledges the centrality of fairness as it seeks to maximize access to opportunity and services while recognizing that members come to the institution with relative advantages and disadvantages. Inclusion – REI will expand university efforts to value and proactively cultivate difference so that each individual can achieve their full potential and bring their whole selves, without suppressing or denying any part, in service of the Academic Plan.
Ryerson University https://www.ryerson.ca/equity/	Equity – The university values the fair and just treatment of all community members through the creation of opportunities and the removal of barriers to address historic and current disadvantages for under-represented and marginalized groups. Diversity - The university values and respects diversity of knowledge, worldviews and experiences that come from membership in different groups, and the contribution that diversity makes to the learning, teaching, research and work environment. Inclusion - The university values the equitable, intentional and ongoing engagement of diversity within every facet of university life. It is the shared responsibility of all community members to foster a welcoming, supportive and respectful learning, teaching, research and work environment.
University of Toronto http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/ppdec142006.pdf	Equity and Human Rights - At the University of Toronto, we strive to be an equitable and inclusive community, rich with diversity, protecting the human rights of all persons, and based upon understanding and mutual respect for the dignity and worth of every person. We seek to ensure to the greatest extent possible that all students and employees enjoy the opportunity to participate as they see fit in the full range of activities that the University offers, and to achieve their full potential as members of the University community. Our support for equity is grounded in an institution-wide commitment to achieving a working, teaching, and learning environment that is free of discrimination and harassment as defined in the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. In striving to become an equitable community, we will also work to eliminate, reduce or mitigate the adverse effects of any barriers to full participation in University life that we find, including physical, environmental, attitudinal, communication or technological. Diversity and Inclusiveness - Our teaching, scholarship and other activities take place in the context of a highly diverse society. Reflecting this diversity in our own community is uniquely valuable to the University as it contributes to the diversification of ideas and perspectives and thereby enriches our scholarship, teaching and other activities. We will proactively seek to increase diversity among our community members, and it is our aim to have a student body and teaching and administrative staffs that mirror the diversity of the pool of potential qualified applicants for those positions.
University of Western Ontario	Employment Equity recognises the value and dignity of each individual and ensures that each individual will have genuine, open and unhindered access to employment opportunities, free from artificial barriers, whether systemic or otherwise. Employment Equity involves hiring the most

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/policies_procedures/section3/mapp32.pdf	suitably qualified candidate for any open position while ensuring that the hiring process and the qualifications required for each position are fair and equitable for all persons. Accordingly, The University of Western Ontario seeks to integrate fully the principles of Employment Equity with its other human-resource policies and procedures in order to ensure that all present and potential employees receive equitable treatment in all matters related to employment. The University of Western Ontario will take appropriate steps to ensure that, throughout the entire organization, representation rates of historically disadvantaged groups reflect their availability within the labour force of the external community.
University of Guelph https://www.uoguelph.ca/diversity-human-rights/node/302/	Inclusion - An inclusive campus is an environment where every member is a valued contributor. It is a campus that anticipates and encourages diverse perspectives and leverages them to drive creativity and innovation. Fostering a culture of inclusion is a process that begins with acknowledging the diversity among us and the fact that some members of our community experience barriers to education, employment, and full participation due to systemic factors. An institution that is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion continually designs, reviews and rebuilds structures (policies, programs, practices) that are inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all, thereby reducing the necessity for accommodation and remediation. As our community of students, faculty and staff becomes more diverse, a strategic system-wide approach to fostering a culture of inclusion is imperative.
University of Waterloo https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat/policies-procedures-guidelines/policy-33	No direct definition was found on the website despite having an equity office. Human rights and ethical behaviour policy was the closest information found.