



# INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND ACCESSIBILITY (IDEA) STRATEGY

**November 2024**

# **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) Strategy**

## **Background**

Annapolis County is home to more than 20,000 residents who individually have different backgrounds, education, experiences, languages, cultures, ethnicities, races, abilities, and beliefs.

It is imperative that all local governments and the communities that make up all of Annapolis County provide the required leadership to ensure our entire community is supportive of ALL residents each day. This support requires a wide breadth of strategies, policies, processes, programs, services, and infrastructure that recognizes while equality is desirable, equity is what is needed.

To achieve equity for all, the four local governments in Annapolis County; Town of Annapolis Royal, Village of Lawrencetown, Town of Middleton, and Municipality of the County of Annapolis, have chosen to develop one joint strategy to support the positive growth and change required to create an inclusive, diverse, equitable county free of racism.

## **Definitions**

As part of this strategy, it is important that all persons reading this strategy understand and use the same terminology. To that goal, definitions from the provincial educational supports are being adopted and attached to this strategy as Appendix "A".

## **General Commitment**

Each of the four local governments individually, and collectively, commit to never intentionally creating any policies, processes, programs, infrastructure, or offer any services, which would, or could be seen or perceived to be discriminatory, exclusive, inequitable, racist, oppressive, or intentionally exclude any person or group that follows these practices as well.

## **Commitment to Principles of IDEA**

As part of each local governments ongoing and daily plan to ensure that its programs, services, and infrastructure are inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible, we commit to uphold and adhere to the following principles:

- a. to articulate and show regularly, our commitment to ensuring that any mission, values, and strategic objectives related to how we are focused on equity, inclusion, and anti-racism, are well documented and communicated publicly.

- b. to ensure that the senior leadership of each local government is educated on, and demonstrates a commitment to, equity and anti-racism principles through their policies and practices.
- c. to undertake a review of all local government policies beginning in 2025 and every five years thereafter, to confirm that the policies and practices of each local government promote inclusion, diversity, and anti-racism.
- d. to reviewing and providing effective oversight of public works and infrastructure operations to ensure equitable placement of future infrastructure and replacement of current infrastructure, scrutinizing for systemic biases and accessibility, while promoting and educating all staff on inclusive and anti-racism training, policies, and initiatives.
- e. to provide ongoing and effective training, awareness, and development opportunities for staff, council and commissioners on inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility to ensure this knowledge becomes part of the daily culture and practices.
- f. to develop a reporting and evaluation system, and work in collaboration with the Advisory Committee, to regularly report on relevant data and initiatives related to improving, advocating for, and completing activities related to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility across Annapolis County.
- g. to regularly and sincerely engage each year with underrepresented and underserved groups and communities in a meaningful way, including developing joint programs, services, and infrastructure where possible and feasible, vocally speaking in favour of IDEA concepts and plans and denouncing publicly and unequivocally any attempts to orally or in writing, spread hate or fear respecting any person, group, or community within Annapolis County or beyond that respects the principles of IDEA.
- h. to carry out all local government functions and decision making with equity, anti-racism, and accessible lenses to show community leadership through transparency of actions, accountability of decisions, and with open and honest discussions regarding racial biases and the basic human rights of fairness and accessibility.
- i. to always consider the physical, geographical, communications methods for local government operations, meetings, and events, by providing the widest range of opportunities and access to public services where financially reasonable and technologically possible.
- j. to publicly commit to fairness and a desire to ensure underrepresented and underserved communities are aware and encouraged to apply for employment opportunities at all organizational levels, with preference given to persons who meet the job requirements but may otherwise not have been chosen because of a non-recognition of IDEA.

- k. to consider the establishment of and support for, an employee resource group for underrepresented and underserved staff to provide opportunities for learning, education, advocacy, support, and training.

### **IDEA Strategy**

It is the intention of this strategy to clearly and unequivocally publicly state each local governments' commitment to IDEA in its organization and to actively promote it to citizens, community groups, businesses, and visitors.

### **Establishment of Advisory Committee**

There shall be an IDEA Advisory Committee established with individual representatives from underrepresented and underserved communities from across Annapolis County who shall meet regularly to provide meaningful and impactful advice and recommendations to all four local governments individually or jointly from time to time, and shall also be tasked with carrying out its own communications and community advocacy role through community events, educational workshops, training, direct advocacy for groups, and consider requests forwarded to them from local governments and the community for advice and recommendations respecting IDEA.

### **Names and Naming of Public Infrastructure**

Each local government, where practical and efficient, shall forward all requests submitted to a municipality or village for naming of roads, streets, buildings, parks and greenspaces, and other municipal-owned or operated properties, or for which the local government wishes to name or re-name at its own discretion, to the IDEA Advisory Committee for review under a diversity and inclusion lens. Such review by the IDEA Advisory Committee shall take place within 30 days of receiving such a request and prepare and submit a written report back to the requesting local government with its assessment of the naming request and any concerns or recommendations it may have. IDEA Advisory Committee is not tasked with making recommendations for new names.

### **Acknowledgement of Five Governments**

All IDEA documents, reports, and other communications issued by the local governments and their staff shall note the fact that there are four governments within Nova Scotia and recognition of each must be noted when applicable in various situations and always use inclusive language. These governments are federal, provincial, municipal, village, and first nation.

## **Flags**

Where flags are to be flown on properties of one of the noted local governments, recognition shall be extended in order or precedence to the Canadian flag, Grand Council flag, Nova Scotian flag, followed by the local government flag.

## **Accessibility**

Accessibility and access to all local government services is a right that will be protected and advanced. To ensure this advancement takes place, the local governments jointly commit to developing over the next three years, a great practices guidebook, including developing schematics, illustrations, standardized layouts, designs, and dimensions, for various local government infrastructure and services, that meet or exceed national building code or industry / association standards for accessibility. These standards will provide the minimum design criteria for further local government developments and will be shared with community groups and businesses and be recommended for their adoption and implementation as well.

## **New Construction Input**

All four local governments commit to establishing a sub-committee of the IDEA Advisory Committee that will be tasked with reviewing future infrastructure projects, new and major renovations, to provide a review and feedback on accessibility design features both regulated by codes and those not covered by codes but will be appropriate for ease of access by employees, users and guests considering flow, safety, sightlines, physical and visual access and use, along with accessibility considerations to and from the location year round.

## **Education and Training**

All employees and elected officials of the four local governments shall be provided with education and training at least once every four years related to IDEA concepts, practices, and terminology, with such training involving at a minimum, a person or persons from the underrepresented group that the training is related to. At least once per year for employees, and within three months of the swearing in of a new council or commission, such training shall be provided to all councillors and commissioners including previously elected councillors and commissioners, and all new employees hired within the previous one year.

## **Public Meetings**

Public meetings of the local governments shall be fully open to the general public, except where expressly authorized by law for issues which can be, and are decided by the local government to be, held in closed session. All such meetings where technical equipment is available and used, be video recorded with closed captioning as a minimum. All public meetings where advance notice is provided to the local government at least seven days prior to the meeting by a person who wishes to attend and requires sign language interpretation, shall endeavour to have an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter present to sign the meeting, to be paid for by the local government, where such services are available within the Annapolis Valley and can be booked prior to the meeting.

## **Transportation**

It is recognized that access to, and the cost of transportation, can be a barrier to members of our community accessing programs, services, and facilities. To support all community members where possible, each local government will consider in its planning and promotion for meetings and events, the provision of free or low-cost transportation options for persons wishing to attend who otherwise would not be able to attend because of transportation difficulties.

## **Information**

Each local government communicates in various way with residents, businesses and visitors, including websites, social media, newspapers, radio advertisements, community media outlets, newsletters, local government brochures, videos, and in numerous other ways. Each local government will commit to reviewing their current communications uses and mediums within the next 12 months, and thereafter develop a plan for updating current resources to meet at least the minimum accessibility requirements, and to begin implementing all new fully accessible communication uses and tools for existing and new communication products within 24 months of the adoption of this strategy.

## **Events**

Once established, the IDEA Advisory Committee shall recommend to the Governance Advisory Committee in December of each year, an amount that they feel should be budgeted by the four local governments to provide the required funding to support important and meaningful IDEA events in various communities during the following year through the direct provision of events, or the nominal funding of community events where IDEA is a main focus.

## Appendix “A”

**Anti-Racism** is defined as the work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes to political, economic, and social life. This is achieved through the identification and elimination of racism by changing oppressive systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes so that historic, current, and future harm can be eliminated and so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.

**Discrimination** is the act of denying equal treatment and opportunities to individuals and groups. It operates through policies or practices that exclude or limit an individual or groups from accessing services, employment, housing and enjoying all the benefits of society.

**Diversity** means having a variety of people from a range of different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, sexual orientations, life experiences, competencies and faiths represented on teams, in workplaces in general and particularly in processes like engagement.

**Equality** is one of the central principles of democracy and is based on the belief that all people should have the same opportunities to be successful and have a productive, enjoyable life. The idea of equality is key to the notion that everyone will be able to achieve based on their efforts and contributions to society instead of their status or position.

**Equity** recognizes that everyone doesn't begin in the same place in society. Some people face adverse conditions and circumstances making it more challenging with the same effort to achieve the same goals. Equity advocates for those who may have been historically disadvantaged, making it difficult for them to be successful. What is “fair” as it relates to equity isn't a question of what is the same but rather the point from which a person begins. Equity considers historical and other factors in determining that is fair.

**Hate** means provocation, hostility, or intolerance by means of threats, harassment, abuse, incitement or intimidation motivated by the actual or perceived race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability or sexual orientation of any person.

**Implicit Bias** refers to the unconscious, subtle, involuntary assumptions or judgements we make every day based on our prior experiences and culture. This happens “below the surface”, deep in the subconscious, where there is no awareness or intention of bias. Implicit bias can be positive or negative.

**Inclusion** encompasses norms, practices, and intentional actions to promote participation, engagement, empowerment, and a sense of belonging for

members of historically underrepresented and underserved groups in all aspects of life. It is about celebrating, valuing, and amplifying perspectives, voices, styles, and identities that have been marginalized by promoting an institutional culture and practices to ensure all can experience a welcoming space of fairness, dignity, and human flourishing.

**Inclusive language** is language that acknowledges diversity, conveys respect to all people, is sensitive to differences, and promotes equal opportunities.

**Inequity** by contrast, refers to a state of unfairness or lack of justice in which biases are being perpetuated and individuals or groups are treated differently and unequally, often resulting in systemic and patterned disparities in opportunities, resources, rights, or outcomes. Inequity can stem from past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, policies and the implementation of those policies made on social, economic, racial, or gender-based distinctions, and it can manifest in various areas of life, including education, healthcare, employment, and access to basic services.

**Intersectionality** is defined as the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination like racism, sexism, and classism, combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.

**Microaggressions** are subtle verbal or nonverbal insults or denigrating messages communicated toward a marginalized person, often by someone who may be well-intentioned but unaware of the impact their words or actions have on the target.

**Oppression** occurs when individuals are mistreated and excluded from society due to their identity. Oppression is the combination of prejudice and institutional power which creates a system that maintains advantage and disadvantage based on social group memberships. Oppression discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups.

**Power** is the capability to influence the behaviour, thoughts, and decisions of others, oneself, and/or the course of events. It can be derived from the economy, government, or community. Economic power involves managing money and resources, while political power entails implementing changes in government decision-making processes. Social power involves using cultural values, beliefs, and norms to alter people's actions, thoughts, and emotions.

**Privilege** refers to unearned access to resources that enhance one's chances of getting what one needs in order to lead a comfortable, productive and safe life. It is only readily available to some people as a result of their advantaged social group membership and is often visible to those who have it.



**Racism** means the discrimination or antagonism by, or the prejudice of, an individual, community or institution against a person or people based on the person's or people's membership or perceived membership in a racial or ethnic group, and having the power to carry out that discrimination, antagonism or prejudice through institutional policies and practices that shape cultural beliefs and values of a society.

**Representative diversity** is an outcome of proactive measures to correct systemic disadvantage, and to create equitable opportunity structures and pathways for a critical mass of those who are historically underserved and underrepresented.

**Social identity** is a category of differences that describes a set of common physical traits, characteristics, or attributes. It is influenced by social categories such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and by the social groups we belong to. A social group is a group of people who share a range of physical, cultural, or social characteristics within one of the social identity categories such as sexual identity and romantic orientation, persons with disabilities, race, indigenous identity, religious identity, age, gender identity, and ethnicity.

**Stereotypes** refer to the widely held, oversimplified ideas we hold about a person or person based on their identities, real or perceived. Usually, stereotypes are based on assumptions, popular opinion, or misinformation, are generally negative, are sweeping and simple, and are often characterized by words such as "always" and "never".

**Systems of Oppression** helps us better identify inequity by calling attention to the historical and organized patterns of mistreatment like racism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, and ageism. These systems enable dominant groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

**Underrepresented or Underserved Communities** include Mi'kmaw and person of Indigenous descent, African Nova Scotians and persons of African descent, persons of colour, newcomers including immigrants and refugees, 2SLGBTQIA+ specifically 2 Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual/biromantic, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic and others whose identities are not reflected, persons with disabilities including physical and mental, persons who are neurodivergent, and in some contexts women.

## **Appendix “B”**

### **Terms of Reference - Annapolis County Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) Advisory Committee**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee is to:

- a. provide meaningful and impactful advice to Town of Annapolis Royal, Village of Lawrencetown, Town of Middleton, and Municipality of the County of Annapolis related to inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility, and
- b. to research, consult, engage, and consider opportunities to educate and inform local residents, businesses, local governments, and visitors on the importance of diversity and inclusion, the value and benefits of equity and accessibility, and ways in which all persons can work together to support a more welcoming and inclusive community. and
- c. act as the voice and advocate for all residents and businesses in Annapolis County, promoting inclusion and accessibility for all, speaking out against and educating those in need when hate, racism, or discriminatory words or actions are promulgated in our community, and being the community voice with the media for such comments and public education, and
- d. recommend to the four local governments individually or jointly, new policies, bylaws, practices, programs, services, or infrastructure changes needed to improve inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility for all.

#### **Authority**

Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee has been granted its legal authority to assist the four local governments by providing meaningful and impactful advice regarding inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility programs, services, and infrastructure throughout Annapolis County by virtue of being delegated this responsibility through permission from their respective Councils and Village Commission with the signing of this Terms of Reference to participate in this Inter-Municipal Group on November ??, 2024. Each Council and Commission gains its responsibility and authority for inter-municipal agreements through various parts of the *Municipal Government Act* including Sections 60 and 61.

#### **Scope**

The scope of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall be to review, assess, and make recommendations to Town of Annapolis Royal, Village of Lawrencetown, Town of Middleton, and Municipality of the County of Annapolis' current operations specifically, and the overall community more

generally, looking for opportunities for each municipality and the community to become more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible. including, but not limited to:

1. a review of the current policies, bylaws, and practices of each municipality with an IDEA lens; and
2. a review of the current properties and facilities of each local government with an IDEA lens; and
3. review all materials provided to Advisory Committee members by the Chief Administrative Officers / Clerk/Treasurer or their designates, along with their own independent research, to prepare for each Advisory Committee meeting; and
4. being open and objective to all ideas, suggestions, and opportunities, while understanding the importance of community awareness and education throughout Annapolis County, focusing on long-term community appreciation of the value and contribution of each citizen and their background, culture, knowledge, and skills; and
5. receive presentations, letters, emails, phone calls, and materials from community members and community experts, or community resources where applicable, related to IDEA, and seek to incorporate the relevant information and ideas into current and future workplans; and
6. carry out a review of provincial and federal legislation to ensure all Advisory Committee members are aware of its legal opportunities and constraints and make recommendations for changes to the four local governments where the Advisory Committee feels changes to legislation are needed to support IDEA within Annapolis County and Nova Scotia; and
7. where financial resources allow, create, promote, and recommend to the Chief Administrative Officer / Clerk/Treasurer small grants to community organizations that create, develop, plan, host, or offer programs, services, events, or functions that directly support the goals of IDEA throughout Annapolis County with public awareness and education; and
8. act as the media liaison and public information source for all activities and actions of the IDEA Working Group.

### **Role of Chairperson**

The Chairperson is ultimately responsible for organizing, chairing and facilitating all meetings, ensuring that appropriate research, directions and recommendations are given by the Advisory Committee to staff, including the

provision for adoption of work plans, policy directions, development of strategies, performing IDEA reviews of individual local governments or jointly, and discussing opportunities for enhancing inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility in each of the local governments, as well as all other items incidental to the effective inter-municipal operations of the four local governments respecting IDEA.

### **Role of Vice Chairperson**

A Vice Chairperson shall be appointed and act in the place of the Chairperson during absences, unavailability or conflicts of interest of the Chairperson.

### **Role of Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk / Treasurer**

Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk/Treasurer shall carry out the functions and roles as requested by the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee from time to time and shall act as staff resources to the Advisory Committee. These persons, or their designates, shall lead the research and report writing aspect of the Advisory Committee's efforts to ensure the Advisory Committee has the best available information upon which to make a decision or recommendations to their own Council or Commission.

### **Membership**

Membership on the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall include up to ten (10) persons from across Annapolis County, duly appointed by the IDEA Governance Committee pursuant to the *Municipal Government Act*. Members appointed to the IDEA Advisory Committee should have first hand lived experiences as a person from an underrepresented or underserved community, or work directly in an employment role with such community members, have strong community knowledge, a solid understanding of inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility policies, practices, and terminology, as well as knowledge and ability to understand and respond to overt discriminatory and racist actions in the community and be comfortable having difficult conversations about such. Each local government's Chief Administrative Officer and Clerk/Treasurer, or designate, shall act as a staff resource to the Advisory Committee.

### **Reporting Relationship**

Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee and its members shall report directly to a sub-committee of the four local governments consisting of the Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Warden and Deputy Warden, and Commission Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of each of their respective local government, or Council and Commission designates for operational support, and indirectly to the four

Councils and Commissions of the local governments for budgetary issues. This sub-committee shall be known as the IDEA Governance Committee.

### **Duration of Appointments**

Persons appointed to the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee are to prepare and implement its own workplan in three-year cycles and therefore all members shall be appointed for 3-year terms, beginning on December 1, 2024.

### **Frequency of Meetings**

Meetings of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall be held on such day as the Advisory Committee decides at the first meeting of the Advisory Committee, with such meetings taking place at the time agreed to by the Advisory Committee. Additional meetings may be held, or the above meetings date and times changed, when agreed to by consensus of the Advisory Committee and prior notification is provided to Advisory Committee members.

### **Quorum Requirements**

No decisions may be made at any Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee meeting unless a majority of the members of the Advisory Committee duly appointed are present.

### **Agenda, Minutes and Resolutions**

Minutes and recommendations of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall be provided to each member of the Advisory Committee within a reasonable time after the conclusion of such meeting. Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk/Treasurer or designates, will endeavour to provide each member of the Advisory Group with the agenda and required supporting documentation at least seven (7) days prior to each meeting.

### **Conflict of Interest**

It is expected that all members of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee will adhere to the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act*, disclosing any pecuniary or indirect pecuniary interest in any matter before the Advisory Committee and refraining from taking part in, or trying to influence either before or after the meeting, any directions or decisions respecting such matters. Any breach of this guideline will require the Chairperson to ask the IDEA Governance Committee to remove that member and appoint another member in their stead. If the breach is by the Chairperson, this shall be reported to the IDEA Governance Committee by the Vice Chairperson.

## **Resources**

Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall have access to the resources of the three Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk/Treasurer and other appropriate municipal and village staff as authorized by the Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk/Treasurer; to undertake the required research it needs in order to make the most appropriate decisions and recommendations in a timely manner. Requests for resources above the annual budgeted amount for this Advisory Committee shall be made by the Advisory Committee to the IDEA Governance Committee, on an as-needed basis. The Advisory Committee may apply for and accept funding for studies or staff support from external sources through one of the participating municipalities that is within the current municipal budgets or otherwise approved by the IDEA Governance Committee.

## **Decision Making Process**

All decisions of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall be made by consensus vote of Advisory Committee members. Where a consensus is not forthcoming, the decision shall be determined in the negative. The Advisory Committee has authority to oversee and facilitate the research and data collection process by requesting such information from the Chief Administrative Officers and Clerk/Treasurer, and their staff, Advisory Committee members, or other private sector or government sources.

## **Confidentiality**

All meetings of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee are considered public, except those matters deemed to be private and confidential in nature and subject to Section 22 of the Municipal Government Act. Minutes and subsequent resolutions of such meetings shall be recorded and publicly available upon approval by the Advisory Committee. Information and reports of the Advisory Committee shall be subject to normal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) regulations.

## **Communications**

All communications and messaging from the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee's work and activities shall come solely from the Chairperson or their designate. It is expected that all decisions of the Advisory Committee will be supported by all members of the Advisory Committee upon ratification. This does not limit the ability of individual member's from speaking freely with the media, but in all such cases the individual Advisory Committee member should be clear that it is their personal opinion and not that of the Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee.

## Reporting

At least bi-annually, the Chairperson shall provide a written report to the IDEA Governance Committee concerning the Advisory Committee's work plan progress to date, focus, strategies, and priorities. Should any Council or the Commission request an oral presentation directly, this request must be made to the Chairperson who will seek the Advisory Committee's permission to do so or provide more information via alternate means.

## Responsibilities

Annapolis County IDEA Advisory Committee shall be responsible for providing advice, feedback and input into the creation of an inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility workplan for Annapolis County. Thereafter, IDEA Advisory Committee shall review, assess, evaluate and monitor its effectiveness and act as the advocate and voice for residents, businesses, and communities through public engagement, public meetings, and public information, discussing options and opportunities for collaboration, and making timely decisions and recommendations in the best interests of all residents of Annapolis County.

## Approved:

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Mayor  
Town of Annapolis Royal

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Date

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Chairman Brian Reid  
Village of Lawrencetown

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Date

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Mayor Gail Smith  
Town of Middleton

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Date

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Warden  
Municipality of the County of Annapolis

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Date