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Item No. 15.1.3
Halifax Regional Council
November 28, 2023

TO: Mayor Savage and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: Original Signed

Cathie O'Toole, Chief Administrative Officer

DATE: July 15, 2023

SUBJECT: Diversity and Inclusion Guidelines for Staff Reports

ORIGIN

March 22, 2022 Halifax Regional Council motion (Item 15.4.1):

MOVED by Councillor Mason, seconded by Councillor Purdy

THAT Halifax Regional Council direct the Chief Administrative Officer, through the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO), to develop diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility guidelines for all staff reports, rather than create a specific accessibility impact section. The goal of these guidelines is to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are considered at all stages of the report-writing process.

MOTION PUT AND PASSED

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Administrative Order One, the Procedures of the Council Administrative Order:

Rules Adopted and Suspended

4. [...] (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), any one or more of the rules of procedures contained herein except for sections 5 and 41 and subsections 12(5) and 59(3) may be suspended by Council, Committee of the Whole, Community Council or a Standing Committee by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3rds) of the Members present and voting.
[...]

Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, S.N.S. 2008, c. 39:

7A The purposes of the Municipality are to:

- (a) provide good government;

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- (b) provide services, facilities and other things that, in the opinion of the Council, are necessary or desirable for all or part of the Municipality; and
- (c) develop and maintain safe and viable communities.

[...]

34 (1) The Chief Administrative Officer is the head of the administrative branch of the government of the Municipality and is responsible to the Council for the proper administration of the affairs of the Municipality in accordance with the by-laws of the Municipality and the policies adopted by the Council.

[...]

(3) The Council shall provide direction on the administration, plans, policies and programs of the Municipality to the Chief Administrative Officer.

[...]

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Suspend the rules of procedure under Schedule 6, the Executive Standing Committee Terms of Reference, of Administrative Order One, the Procedures of the Council Administrative Order;
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to adopt the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist* to inform project, program, and policy development at all stages of the work process. (Attachment 1); and
3. Approve the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Guidelines for Council Reports* and direct the Chief Administrative Officer to incorporate the use of these guidelines in all staff reports. (Attachment 2).

BACKGROUND

At the February 28, 2022 meeting of the Executive Standing Committee, the committee requested a staff report regarding the inclusion of an "Accessibility Impact" section in all staff reports. Following this motion, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office (ANSAIO) conducted a jurisdictional scan to explore how other municipalities represent the needs of persons with disabilities and other diverse groups in their council reports. It was suggested in a presentation to Halifax Regional Council by the Managing Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion that it would be more impactful to develop diversity and inclusion guidelines for all staff reports, rather than create a specific accessibility impact section. The intent of the guidelines would be to ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are considered at all stages of the report-writing process. Following this presentation, a motion was passed to develop diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility guidelines for all staff reports, rather than create a specific accessibility impact section.

This motion was approved on the consent agenda of the March 22, 2022 meeting of Halifax Regional Council. Following the approval of this motion, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO developed the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines* (the "Guidelines") for Council Reports as well as the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist* (the "Checklist"). The *Guidelines* adopt an approach focusing on the needs of underrepresented groups and serve as a resource for report authors and collaborators to inform the direction of municipal services, programs, and projects to better meet these needs. The *Checklist* provides a resource that delineates multiple ways to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are taken into consideration when planning, designing,

and managing projects related to municipal policies, services, and programs that may result in the preparation of a council report.

DISCUSSION

Reports are the primary method through which staff communicate to Halifax Regional Council about projects, decisions, and programs within their remit. Applying a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) lens during the preparation of staff reports is an important process for ensuring transparency and highlighting how DEIA was considered during the project; for this lens to be genuine and effective, consideration of DEIA must occur at every step of the process, from scoping onwards. There are many resources currently available to staff to support the development and application of a DEIA lens, however, staff are not always aware of these resources and there is currently no single document to outline the different opportunities for employees to develop and expand their DEIA lens. Additionally, every business unit has an advisor from the Diversity & Inclusion/ANSAIO Office who is assigned to their unit as a first point of contact in navigating DEIA considerations and questions. To support business units in applying a meaningful DEIA lens, the advisors should be consulted at the beginning of the workflow process. The attached checklist not only outlines the different resources available, it also provides an explanation of how each resource may be used and clarifies the role of the D&I advisor. The Planning and Development public engagement guidelines are part of a forthcoming community engagement strategy that is scheduled to be rolled out this fiscal year. This strategy will set direction for how and when staff engage with the public beyond the requirements of planning processes. Planning & Development is currently working with Corporate Communications to create a dedicated page on the municipal website with the guidebook.

The final resource identified on the *Checklist* is the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines for Council Reports*; while there is no specific order in which the resources must be accessed and not all resources will be necessary for each project, the placement of this resource at the end of the list is designed to signify that DEIA must be considered at every stage of the process if it is to be authentically addressed in the reporting stage.

The *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines for Council Reports* are designed to help report authors and collaborators inform the direction of municipal services, programs, and projects with a clearer focus and intersectional perspective. This approach ensures that inclusion and participation of all residents can be achieved and that the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities are sought and reflected in reports, recommendations, and outcomes. The *Guidelines* focus on underrepresented groups with an understanding that authentic inclusion includes everyone. For example, while a ramp may be necessary to allow a wheelchair user access to a building, it can also benefit wheelchair users, parents of children in strollers, and anyone with a wheeled suitcase. Incorporating diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility does not prioritize the needs of specific groups over others, it ensures that the needs of everyone are met, and no one is overlooked in the delivery of public service. The *Guidelines* are designed to support staff in:

- Improving municipal services and programs to ensure inclusion of everyone's needs.
- Creating positive and respectful work/community environments.
- Creating a workforce and services representative of the community.
- Recognizing and addressing systemic barriers and inequities people face.
- Acknowledging diversity and consciously seeking to incorporate diverse perspectives into all municipal projects, programs, and policies.

The *Guidelines* provide a walkthrough of each section of the staff report template and prompt report authors to consider different perspectives and impacts of their work through a series of open-ended questions. While the *Guidelines* are specifically designed to help report authors consider DEIA in the preparation of reports, they also serve a dual purpose as an educative tool that will help its users broaden perspectives and practice applying an intersectional approach. These guidelines will also be a resource to all staff taking

report writer training.

While both attached documents could still be made available to staff as optional resources should Regional Council not choose to provide direction to make them compulsory, it is unlikely that they will be used as effectively or consistently if they are presented to staff as optional tools. If Regional Council chooses to support only one of the recommendations, the *Guidelines* is the document that aligns directly with the Council motion that initiated this report. As the *Checklist* is primarily an information document, Council could choose not to give direction on this part of the recommendation and leave the application of this document to the CAO's discretion.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the information in this report.

RISK CONSIDERATION

No risk considerations were identified.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No community engagement was required in developing this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

No environmental implications were identified.

ALTERNATIVES

Regional Council could choose to:

1. Direct the CAO to only approve the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Guidelines* and not adopt the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist*.
2. Direct the CAO to adopt both the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Guidelines* and the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist* as optional resources for staff.
3. Refuse to direct the CAO to adopt either or both of the *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Guidelines* and the *Diversity, Equity, inclusion and Accessibility Consultation and consideration Checklist*.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist

Attachment 2: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Guidelines for Council Reports

A copy of this report can be obtained online at halifax.ca or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 902.490.4210.

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Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist

The “Staff Report” is the primary method through which employees communicate to Halifax Regional Council about projects, decisions, and programs within their remit. While it is important for report authors to incorporate a lens of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility in the development of each staff report, this communication document is often used to report on work that has already happened. For this lens to be genuine and effective, consideration of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) must occur at every step of the work, starting in the scoping stage. There are many resources available to staff to support the development and application of a DEIA lens; while not all resources will be required for every project, your D&I Business Unit Advisor will be able to help you navigate what is best suited to your individual work.

- **Diversity & Inclusion Advisors:** If you are unsure how best to develop and apply a DEIA lens to your project, the first step is to reach out to your Diversity & Inclusion Advisor. Like Human Resources Business Partners and Financial Business Partners, every Business Unit is assigned a Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Advisor that can help them navigate the resources available. Reaching out to your D&I Advisor early on in a project is important as it helps guide the process from the beginning and ensures that there is sufficient time to schedule a consultation. The role of the D&I Advisor is to consult with staff as required throughout a project and to connect them to other resources as needed. You can find out who your business unit advisor is on the D&I intranet page: <http://intranet.halifax.ca/BusinessUnits/DiversityandInclusion/>
- **D&I Champions table:** The D&I Champions table has at least one member from every Business Unit and has regular meetings every quarter. Staff can work with their D&I Advisors to determine if a document or project summary should be reviewed by this table. If it is determined that this is an appropriate way forward, the D&I Champions Table will consider requests for review and feedback and may book a special meeting for that purpose. The D&I Champions are responsible for informing the Annual D&I Framework Report. To learn more about what each business unit is doing to advance diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility, check out the most recent report here: [Diversity & Inclusion Framework Annual Report 2021/2022 - Dec 13/22 Regional Council | Halifax.ca](http://intranet.halifax.ca/BusinessUnits/DiversityandInclusion/AnnualReports/2021-2022-Annual-Report-13-Dec-2022-Regional-Council-Halifax.ca)
- **D&I training:** The Office of Diversity and Inclusion/African Nova Scotian Affairs Integration Office offers numerous training courses in many different elements of diversity and inclusion such as Accessibility (Going from Support to Inclusion), Mi'kmaq History and Colonization (The Blanket Exercise), Anti-Black Racism, Reaching Out from an Afro-Centric Place, Gender Based Analysis+ and a Diversity and Inclusion Overview. These courses provide important information and perspectives that are geared towards a local, municipal audience. You can find a list of upcoming training sessions here: <http://intranet.halifax.ca/BusinessUnits/TrainingCalendar/index.html>
- **Intranet Resources:** The Diversity & Inclusion Intranet page houses many documents that are helpful for preparing documents and other forms of written communication such as a D&I terminology guide, a guide to the best practices for accessible online engagement and web content, the Anti-Black Racism Framework, and a GBA+ toolkit.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Consultation and Consideration Checklist

The intranet page can be found here:

<http://intranet.halifax.ca/BusinessUnits/DiversityandInclusion/>

- **Advisory Committees:** While all advisory committees of Halifax Regional Council are community advisory committees, there are several that have a specific focus on elements of diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility. The Women's Advisory Committee, Accessibility Advisor Committee, African Descent Advisory Committee, and Youth Advisory Committee all meet monthly. Staff who have work that intersects with the mandate of these committees are welcome to request to present at a committee meeting for feedback at any point in their project. You can find out who the Legislative Assistant is for each advisory committee here: [Boards and Committees | City Hall | Halifax | Halifax](#)
- In August 2022, Halifax Regional Council approved the development of a new set of guidelines for Public Engagement. The sample guidebook is useful for any engagement activity, not just those related to planning and development projects. The guidebook is part of the development of an ongoing, organization-wide community engagement strategy. To access the sample guidebook, review Attachment A of this report: [Planning and Development Public Participation Policy - Aug 9/22 Regional Council | Halifax.ca](#)
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility Guidelines for Staff Reports:** These guidelines are designed to help report authors consider the elements of DEIA in the creation of their report. If DEIA has been considered throughout the project, then working with these guidelines will help communicate how that lens has been incorporated. There may be times when a report author realizes through engaging with this resource that an important DEIA element has been overlooked in a project or program. If this occurs, report authors should work with their leaders to explore the best path forward, which may include identifying the gap when presenting to Halifax Regional Council or extending the date of the report to address it. The DEIA Guidelines for Staff Reports can be found here: [insert link to intranet if approved by Council].

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines for Council Reports

Prepared by:

Office of Diversity and Inclusion/ANSAIO

April 2023



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Introduction

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines (DEIA) help report authors and collaborators to inform the direction of municipal services, programs, and projects with a clearer focus on meeting the needs of underrepresented groups. This approach ensures that inclusive participation of all residents can be achieved, and that the insights from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities are sought and reflected in reports, recommendations, and outcomes. Lists of specific reflective questions are included throughout the document; they can also be found in appendices A-E.

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines focus on the most underrepresented groups, because a city that works for the most underserved groups is a city that works for *everyone*. For example, a ramp can benefit wheelchair users, parents of children in strollers, and anyone with a wheeled suitcase.

Other resources available to support report authors and collaborators applying the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines to Council reports include the [Diversity and Inclusion Framework](#) and the [Diversity and Inclusion Terminology Guide](#).

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines can be used to:

- Improve municipal services and programs to ensure the inclusion of *everyone's* needs when preparing information for Council decisions
- Produce a summary of DEIA considerations in the Discussion section of the report for the benefit of report readers, including Council and members of the public
- Create positive and respectful work/community environments by ensuring there is a process in place to amplify those voices
- Create a workforce and services representative of the community by taking the needs of all residents into consideration

- Recognize and address the systemic barriers and inequities people face by ensuring this is addressed in staff reports
- Acknowledge the diversity around the community and consciously seek to incorporate diverse perspectives into the Municipal work

Who are the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines for?

The Guidelines are for *everyone* including:

- Council
- Municipal staff (especially Report authors and collaborators)

When to use the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines?

The guidelines should be used during the preparation of all staff reports (both council and staff initiated) to help report writers and collaborators ensure that diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility are embedded in the report. Some planning reports are governed by community engagement standards which help guide the DEIA lens.

Report writers and collaborators should acknowledge their own social positions and power, and how those may limit their ability to appreciate other lived experiences. These Guidelines will help report writers and collaborators be mindful and inclusive of other perspectives and, as a result, provide better Municipal services.

Appendix A contains a list of reflective guiding questions for report writers to ask themselves when planning a report.

How to apply the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Guidelines to Council reports?

These Guidelines can be used for both Recommendation and Information Reports. The following questions help users apply the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Lens to Council reports:

- Have report writers and collaborators consulted with members of underrepresented communities?
- Have report writers and collaborators considered how the report might impact underrepresented members of the community? If so, what has been discovered?
- How will the report bring attention to, mitigate, remove, or worsen disproportionate impacts experienced by underrepresented groups?
- Does the information gathered for the purpose of the report capture the diversity of the population?
- What are the potential unintended effects of the content of the report on the underrepresented communities?
- How can the report be written using accessible and plain language?
- Are the voices from groups who face systemic barriers and inequities reflected in the report, recommendations?

Recommendation Section

When writing the recommendation section of a Council report, it is essential to ensure that it addresses, mitigates, and removes disproportionate impacts experienced by underrepresented communities. Appendix B contains a list of guiding questions which report authors and collaborators may use to demonstrate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) considerations in the Recommendation section, and that may later be used to populate the DEIA section.

- How will the recommendation(s) in the report address, mitigate, or remove disproportionate impacts experienced by underrepresented groups?
- How does the proposed outcome of the report expand or reduce opportunity and access for individuals to municipal services?
- How does the proposed outcome present improvement opportunities to enhance the achievement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility? What is your method for tracking this progress?



- Do the expected outcomes of the service, project/program, or event reflect the diversity and inclusion goals outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework?
 - Based on the above responses, are revisions needed to ensure that the recommendation addresses, mitigates, or removes these barriers?
 - What revisions have been done based on the above responses, and what impacts will they have on underrepresented communities?
- Are the insights from underrepresented groups reflected in the recommended actions and alternatives from the report?
- Is there community support for or opposition to the proposed recommendation(s), actions, and alternatives? Why?
- How does the report promote inclusive opportunities for those who have been historically excluded to participate?

Background & Discussion Sections

Ensure Authentic Representation. The Background & Discussion sections of a Council report provide background information and data to provide context for the reader. Report authors should consider whether the perspectives and lived experience of underrepresented groups have been taken into account. While staff should make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information, they must acknowledge that the story of the area or community is best told from the perspective of, and by, those speaking from their lived experience in the community. Report authors and collaborators should make every effort to engage with the various stories and histories that make up people and places rather than to accept and put forward a “single story” as the whole truth. In the Discussion section, report writers may also summarize the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility considerations that have been identified throughout the report.

- What past experiences has the community had with HRM?
- Have you considered ways to incorporate first-person community perspectives into the narrative?



- What is the history of the communities impacted by the report, specifically their history of systemic injustice? How does the report incorporate an understanding of this history?
 - What factors may be producing, and perpetuating inequities associated with the issues the report seeks to address? How did the inequities arise? Are they expanding or narrowing? Will the report address root causes? If so, how?
- What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequality exists? What evidence is missing or needed?
- Does the data/information gathered capture the diversity of the population? (i.e. broken down to make differences visible e.g. - “disaggregated”).
- When analyzing data, did you maintain a diversity of perspectives in the findings?
- Have you put too much emphasis on empirical studies and tools that produce quantitative evidence?
- Do the messages in the Discussion section of the report foster inclusion, respect, diversity, and accessibility? What additional information could be added to strengthen the discussion?

Financial Implications

Resource considerations are critical to ensuring inclusive and accessible engagements, as well as responsive policies, programs, and services.

Report authors and collaborators should consider the following:

- Human and financial resources required to address diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in the implementation of this service, project/program or event.
- Resource requirements (budget, staff time, etc.) needed to enhance accessibility and inclusion for effective public engagement.

Risk Considerations

There are always risks to consider when writing council reports.



- Will community members face adverse effects? How will findings/recommendations affect each underrepresented group in the community?
- Will the findings/recommendations support building the capacity of a community?
- Will the recommendations promote systemic changes? How will recommendations help increase equity and inclusion?
- How will the recommendation interact with existing policies, programs, etc. to help advance desired outcomes, including equity, inclusion, and accessibility?
- Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important part of involving and consulting with residents in the development of policies, programs and services. Community engagement needs to be delivered inclusively, accessibly, and reflected accurately in reports.

- Who are the underrepresented groups impacted by or may be interested in the report?
 - Underrepresented groups include but are not limited to: African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, 2SLGTBQIA+ community, Francophones/Acadians, youth, immigrants, women/gender diverse persons.
- Have underrepresented communities been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this report?
- Have you considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods of in-person or virtual engagement? What other approaches might you use to ensure meaningful, inclusive, and accessible engagement with all communities?



Appendix A: Reflective Questions to Understand Your Social Position and Power

- Who am I? What social identities and groups do I belong to? How might they colour the lens through which I view the world?
- What privileges and power do I have in this situation? How am I different from the underrepresented communities?
- What am I assuming about the underrepresented groups/communities in the report?
- Who is not included in the work I do?
- What could contribute to this exclusion?
- What can I do differently to ensure inclusion?
- Am I assembling strategic directions, incorporating public input, conveying options and framing recommendations in ways that are equitable and inclusive?
- Have I shifted thinking away from a focus on sameness and treating everyone identically to a focus on treating everyone equitably and appreciating differences as sources of richness and strength?



Appendix B: Recommendation Section Questions

- How will the recommendation(s) in the report address, mitigate, or remove disproportionate impacts experienced by underrepresented groups?
- How does the proposed outcome of the report expand or reduce opportunity and access for individuals to municipal services?
- How does the proposed outcome present improvement opportunities to enhance the achievement of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility? What is your method for tracking this progress?
- Do the expected outcomes of the service, project/program, or event reflect the diversity and inclusion goals outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Framework?
 - Based on the above responses, are revisions needed to ensure that the recommendation addresses, mitigates, or removes these barriers?
 - What revisions have been done based on the above responses, and what impacts will they have on underrepresented communities?
- Are the insights from underrepresented groups reflected in the recommended actions and alternatives from the report?
- Is there community support for or opposition to the proposed recommendation(s), actions, and alternatives? Why?
- How does the report promote inclusive opportunities for those who have been historically excluded to participate?



Appendix C: Discussion Section Questions

- What past experiences has the community had with HRM?
- Have you considered ways to incorporate first-person community perspectives into the narrative?
- What is the history of the communities impacted by the report, specifically their history of systemic injustice? How does the report incorporate an understanding of this history?
 - What factors may be producing, and perpetuating inequities associated with the issues the report seeks to address? How did the inequities arise? Are they expanding or narrowing? Will the report address root causes? If so, how?
- What quantitative and qualitative evidence of inequality exists? What evidence is missing or needed?
- Does the data/information gathered capture the diversity of the population? (i.e. broken down to make differences visible e.g. - “disaggregated”).
- When analyzing data, did you maintain a diversity of perspectives in the findings?
- Have you put too much emphasis on empirical studies and tools that produce quantitative evidence?
- Do the messages in the Discussion section of the report foster inclusion, respect, diversity, and accessibility? What additional information could be added to strengthen the discussion?



Appendix D: Risk Consideration Questions

- Will community members face adverse effects? How will findings/recommendations affect each underrepresented group in the community?
- Will the findings/recommendations be used to build capacity of a community?
- Will the recommendations promote systemic changes? How will recommendations help increase equity and inclusion?
- How will the recommendations interact with existing policies, programs, etc. to help advance desired outcomes, including equity, inclusion, and accessibility?
- Are there further ways to maximize equitable opportunities and impacts?



Appendix E: Community Engagement Questions

- Who are the underrepresented groups impacted by or may be interested in the report?
 - Underrepresented groups include but are not limited to: African Nova Scotian communities, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, 2SLGTBQIA+ community, Francophones/Acadians, youth, immigrants, women/gender diverse persons.
- Have underrepresented communities been informed, meaningfully involved and authentically represented in the development of this report?
- Have you considered what populations will be missed by only using certain methods of in-person or virtual engagement? What other approaches might you use to ensure meaningful, inclusive, and accessible engagement with all communities?

