Executive Summary:

This report will provide background information to the committee on the Kingston Workplace Inclusion Charter.

In 2017, more than 150 community stakeholders participated in the development of a community-based Workforce Development and In-migration Strategy. This Strategy is housed at the City but anchored at the community level – with 7 working groups, with more than 80 community volunteers representing 36 organizations and institutions that address workforce challenges, including inclusion, diversity and equity in the workplace.

The Inclusive Workplaces Working Group, with representation from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors has completed 2 pilot programs over the past 18 months. The Professional Internship for Newcomers (PIN) Program which saw 13 professional newcomers receive mentorship and employment and employers receive intercultural training.

The Working Group also oversaw the development and launch of the Workplace Inclusion Charter, which creates a system for employers of all sizes, service providers and groups
underrepresented in the labour market to work together on creating more inclusive work environments.

The Charter aims to improve employment practices for general inclusion, and covers all facets of diversity, including newcomers, racialized/visible minorities, people with disabilities, Indigenous people, linguistic minorities, women, youth, older workers, and people from LGBTQ2S+ communities. The Charter Strategy outlines potential employer commitments across four categories (Organizational Culture, Policies & Procedures, Employee Recruitment, and Employee Retention & Career Development) that are vital to improving employment outcomes for marginalized groups while meeting local inclusion needs.

The pilot implementation phase of the Charter was focused on newcomers to Canada (completed in April 2020). The model included a dedicated Coordinator, in partnership with expert community partners and those with lived experiences, that developed tools and resources to help businesses / organizations make greater strides towards diversity and intercultural inclusion in the workplace. The Coordinator promoted the Charter to local employers and secured their endorsement and participation.

Employers that signed the Charter worked with the Coordinator to assess their intercultural inclusion needs/growth areas related to the 20 potential commitments in the Charter Strategy and developed an action plan towards improvement over the course of the year. Inclusion coaches, who are members of the newcomer community, worked with employers to implement action plans.

With funding recently secured through the Canada Future Skills Program, the next phase of the project will take the model established for newcomers and expand to support 3 additional marginalized groups identified under the Charter: racialized people, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous people.

**Recommendation:**

This report is for information only.
Authorizing Signatures:

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY DIRECTOR
Craig Desjardins, Director,
Office of Strategy, Innovation
& Partnerships

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
Lanie Hurdle,
Chief Administrative Officer

Consultation with the following Members of the Corporate Management Team:

Paige Agnew, Commissioner, Community Services
Peter Huigenbos, Commissioner, Business, Environment & Projects
Brad Joyce, Commissioner, Corporate Services
Jim Keech, President & CEO, Utilities Kingston
Desirée Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer
Sheila Kidd, Commissioner, Transportation & Public Works

Not required
Not required
Not required
Not required
Not required
Not required
Options/Discussion:

Employers of all sizes in Kingston, and more broadly across Eastern Ontario, have increasingly struggled to find the required labour force talent to support business growth as the percentage of the working age population declines. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has dramatically disrupted the labour market in the short to medium term, will only add to the challenge that employers face in finding the talent necessary for their businesses.

A number of workforce/labour market trends are worth noting as part of the discussion of inclusion, diversity and equity in the workforce and include:

- The Kingston labour market loses an average of 400 workers each year. This is especially daunting as the percentage of the working age population continues to decline and is expected to drop by almost 10% over the next decade. To help balance anticipated talent shortages and remain competitive, Kingston needs to attract, deploy, and retain talent.
- A 2017 survey found that a majority of Kingston residents (88%) feel our community is enriched by having a diverse and inclusive population. These results are in line with significant evidence that demonstrates the benefits of diversity in the workplace. Nonetheless, members of Kingston’s marginalized and vulnerable communities continue to face discrimination. For example, 7 out of 10 survey participants reported witnessing discrimination in the community. Further, the survey found that workplaces are one of the top four places where discrimination is most prevalent.
- In 2018, recent immigrants to Canada experienced nearly twice the unemployment rate (9.4%) of the general population (5.8%). Immigrants also made almost 20% less than non-immigrants. At over 12%, indigenous people have double the unemployment rate of the general population. Only 59% of Canadians with disabilities aged 25 to 64 are employed compared to 80% of Canadians without disabilities, and persons with disabilities earn significantly less than Canadians without disabilities (12% less for those with milder disabilities and 51% less for those with more severe disabilities).

Despite the identified skills shortages, marginalized and vulnerable groups in Kingston continue to face systemic barriers to employment, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and disproportionate representation in low-pay and low-status jobs.

These under-utilized talent pools represent a potential solution to the above referenced workforce needs of our economy. Unfortunately, small-medium sized employers (95% of businesses in Kingston are classified as small to medium sized) and rural businesses often lack the in-house knowledge to initiate diversity programs. Large employers tend to have dedicated resources in place to develop and implement policies and drive diversity and inclusion efforts in the workplace.
Potential Employer Charter Commitments

The Workplace Inclusion Charter outlines a number of potential employer commitments across four categories that are vital to improving employment outcomes for marginalized groups while meeting local inclusion needs:

- Organizational Culture,
- Policies & Procedures,
- Employee Recruitment, and
- Employee Retention & Career Development

Organizational Culture

- Mentorship:

An in-house mentor is a knowledgeable and experienced employee in the organization who agrees to coach a new colleague. Mentoring allows employees to learn the intangibles needed to succeed in the workplace and provides insights into Canadian workplace culture. The Project staff can help your organization set up a simple mentoring program as part of your onboarding process.

- Inclusive Social Activities:

Optional social activities with colleagues can increase staff morale and heighten an employee’s sense of belonging to a team. The project staff can support your organization in integrating inclusive and accessible social activities into your team-building initiatives.

- Community Supports Resources:

Part of increasing organizational support for employees with settlement needs is knowing where they can go for assistance. The project staff can provide information on community supports and resources to department leaders and newcomer employees. If possible, the information should be posted in a location that is easily accessible to employees. Consider whether your team would benefit from a translated copy of these resources.

- Language Learning:

Kingston employers hire newcomers with a diverse range of English language skill levels. With the assistance of the project staff, employers will be able to assess language barriers in the workplace and develop options to reduce them. Depending on the level of English spoken in your workplace, this could include focusing on the
use of plain language, exploring opportunities for language learning in the workplace, or holding on-site workshops.

- **Ongoing Education:**

  The project staff can work with your organization to develop and implement intercultural education initiatives for your employees. These initiatives could range from an added paragraph in your monthly newsletter to providing intercultural competency training or establishing a Lunch & Learn program for employees to share previous international experience.

- **Measuring Knowledge and Adherence:**

  All employees are encouraged to participate in an anonymous employment standards survey.

### Policies and Procedures

- **Memo re: Accessing Support**

  Work schedules can be a barrier to accessing support. The project staff can provide a sample memo to be sent to managers and supervisors encouraging scheduling accommodations for newcomers to attend language class, appointments or workshops for settlement services and other supports.

- **Ethical Purchasing:**

  The project staff can provide resources for your organization to develop a document on ethical guidelines for local suppliers.

- **Plain Language Marketing:**

  The project staff can provide resources on using plain language and intercultural marketing strategies when promoting team events and activities to employees.

- **Equity and Anti-discrimination:**

  The project staff can work with your organization to ensure your policies address issues of equity and inclusion, as well as ensuring that mechanisms are in place for addressing discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

- **Statement of Values:**

  The project staff can guide your organization in developing an inclusivity statement of values that ensures internal communication materials and workplace training reinforce the message that equity and inclusion are core organizational values.
Employee Recruitment

- **Accessible Job Postings:**
  The project staff can work with your organization to create job postings that will be welcoming to newcomers and people with intercultural and international experiences, including examining the assets and requirements listed on job posting.

- **Resume Screening:**
  The project staff can provide your organization with resources to improve resume screening process. The staff can also equip you with resources to better assess international work experience, education, and training.

- **Interviewing:**
  The project staff can offer resources and expertise on intercultural interviewing practices through a competency-based approach that mitigates bias and ensures all candidates receive a fair chance when interviewing for a position.

- **Anti-Bias Training:**
  Employees responsible for hiring and supervising others are encouraged to participate in anti-bias training on inclusive hiring practices. The project staff can also arrange introductory anti-bias training for the management team.

Employee Retention and Career Development

- **Onboarding:**
  Employee orientation sets expectations and clarifies workplace policies and procedures to new employees. To help employees integrate into their new environment, orientation should include information on workplace culture. Employees should have scheduled time in their first few days of work to familiarize themselves with the policies and be provided with an opportunity to seek clarification from the supervisor. The project staff can help your organization develop onboarding tools that will increase retention of newcomer employees.

- **Intercultural Training:**
  Intercultural competency training is beneficial to employees at all levels. The project staff can arrange for your workplace to participate in training.

- **Supervisor Training:**
  Supervisors are encouraged to attend an employment standards workshop as well as intercultural competency training focused on cultural orientations towards work,
implicit bias, and intercultural communication. The project staff can arrange for your workplace to participate in pertinent training.

- **Clear Feedback:**

  The project staff can provide your organization with resources to develop a clear staff feedback and evaluations process. Such feedback should include direct input about an employee’s job performance and clearly outline pathways for professional development within the organization.

- **Equal Opportunities:**

  The project staff can work with your organization on strategies that will encourage newcomer employees to access opportunities for professional development and advancement.

The Charter organizational structure and process are described below:

**Project Organizational Structure:**

1. Inclusion Charter Coordinator (responsible for general program coordination, recruitment of employers, assessment of employer inclusion practices/environment and development of action plans).
2. 2 Facilitators (responsible for program and tool development, implementation of action plans, recruitment and training of inclusion coaches).
3. Inclusion Coaches (represent and contribute lived experiences of marginalized group)
4. Inclusive Workplaces Working Group will provide project oversight and input into the implementation of the charter.

**Workplace Inclusion Charter Process**

**Program and Tool Development:**

The inclusion facilitators, in partnership with community partners and inclusion coaches, develop tools to help businesses/organizations make greater strides towards inclusion in the workplace. New inclusion toolkits under development as part of an expanded workplace inclusion curriculum are tailored to the new target populations: racialized people, persons with disabilities, and Indigenous people.

**Recruitment of Employers:**

The Coordinator will promote the Charter to employers, encourage them to endorse the Charter and make a commitment to develop and implement an action plan that will improve inclusion in their workplace over the course of one year.
Needs Assessment and Goal-setting:

The Charter is designed for organizations of all sizes and at all stages in advancing diversity and inclusion. Employers will work closely with the Coordinator to assess their current practices, determine their needs and growth areas, and develop inclusion goals and metrics that are specific to their workplace. Together, the Coordinator and the employer will develop an action plan that meets these goals and assign checkpoints to track the employer’s progress over the year. Continuously connecting these employers to resources / training / supports to carry out their Action Plan.

Existing Policy/By-Law:

None

Notice Provisions:

None

Accessibility Considerations:

The City will ensure accessibility consideration are adhered to in all projects in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act* and will work with the Municipal Accessible Advisory Committee (MAAC) on projects moving forward.

Financial Considerations:

Projects identified in this report have secured external grant funding to support activities described in this report.

Contacts:

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Other City of Kingston Staff Consulted:

Troy Beharry, Grant & Partnership Development Analyst

Exhibits Attached:

None